

Lost in Space (12 million light years from home)

You rescue a terrified human lab rat (Alien Orin x Human Max- wholesome, caring, gaining trust, strangers to friends)

This is written as a full conversation, with the intention that it should be fairly easy (I hope!) to infer what the other is saying regardless of which character you'd like to play, Orin or Max.

Orin is the Alien rescuer, Max is the human captive. Both characters are written intentionally as gender neutral so any ASMRtist who would like to use this script should be able to play any interpretation they wish.

General flavour: Orin is about 7ft 6' in height whereas Max is around the 5' 6"

Orin is a Craxian, blue skinned with horns, the average Craxian is 7ft tall.

Craxian skin tone ranges from light sky blue all the way to midnight blue. Orin's skin tone is kingfisher blue. Their eye colours range the full visible spectrum of the rainbow. Orin's eyes are a deep purple.

All notes looking like this;

[written between square brackets and in italics are effectively stage directions/scene setting and should not be read out, they're just for flavour!]

Setting and background; (Authors notes for context)

Max is coming to in a private hospital-like room (it's part of the med bay on a spaceship), sound is muffled, the setting is warmly sterile. They've been rescued and are now safely in bed being monitored by Orin who has been waiting worriedly by their bedside, they were in a terrible state when they broke through the door of their cell, they'd been drugged with something and were covered in puncture wounds, bruises and cuts. The ship Max the human was being held on had been badly damaged when targeted by Orin's ship. It had crossed several treaty lines and they'd had the tip off that it was part of an illegal smuggling network.

What they found when they boarded to arrest the enemy ship's crew was much worse.

Max has been their prisoner for at least two weeks, no one has ever seen a species like this before and the captors had been taking their time examining, investigating and traumatising them in order to a) find out what they were and b) If they could exploit them for money using the samples they'd taken.

The captors have never spoken to Max, they have no idea where they are or why this is happening to them. They don't even know how they got there.

(As it turns out, it was a rift in space time (am I stealing the concept from Torchwood? Yes I am. Am I sorry? Not in the slightest), snatched them from earth and spat them out the far side of the universe, they would have died but were picked up by the ships scanners automatically. They regained consciousness in a cell and the rest is traumatic history)

At time of rescue Max has been treated like a lab rat, they've been beaten, half-starved, zapped, touched, prodded, poked, pricked, sampled and scanned more than enough for 3 lifetimes. And all without their consent. They are absolutely on the edge of their sanity and everything medical terrifies them.

Prelude:

Commander: "Check the cells, they're smuggling all sorts of contraband.

Rescuer: "On it!"

Checks doors

Rescuer: "Lacra's scales! There's got be several Agrons here of Spice!"

Captive: (Muffled) "Help! Help! Please!"

Rescuer: "What the...?is there somebody there?"

heads to the door

Captive: (Quieter, like they're fading away) "Please, please help me!"

Rescuer: "I can hear you! Don't worry, I'm coming, get away from the door!"

Tries door, locked. Tries lock override, fails.

Captive: "....Please...."

Rescuer: "Stay with me, the door's locked! Just let me- Ah drack it", *shoots the locks and shoves door open*

Rescuer: "What in the twelve?!"

In the cell is a creature that's unlike anything they've ever seen. Scaleless, furless, hair on their head dressed in some sort of medi-wear gown. It, like their skin, was filthy, they were tethered to the wall, ends of their limbs marked with the pain of restraint. But the eyes are what makes them forget everything else, wide and terrified and begging for salvation.

Rescuer: (Horried) "Aggorwrath's beard!" (turning back to face the corridor) "We've got a live one, captive creature in one of the cells, badly hurt, medi evac now!"

At the sound of their raised voice the creature recoils, trying melt into the wall.

(Contrite and softly) "Hey, hey," *shoulders plasma rifle* "hey, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you, please don't back away, you're safe now."

They scootched closer as the prisoner tried to make themselves smaller.

Captive: "Please, please, please, please—"

Rescuer: (Soothingly) "Shh, shh, it's okay, it's okay, I'm not going to hurt you, you're safe now."

Max: "Please, please, please, I can't, I can't—" Their eyes began to unfocus.

Rescuer: "Hey, hey, it's alright, stay with me, you're okay, who are you? Why are you here?"

Captive: "Don't know, don't know, please, please, I want, I want—"

Rescuer: "What is it you want? Water? Are you in pain? I can get you out of here. My Name is Orin, I'm going to get you out of here."

They fix them with the most desperate, pleading look they'd ever seen.

Captive: "I...want...home."

With that their eyes rolled back into their head and they passed out.

[Sound of them collapsing]

Orin caught them before they hit the floor, holding them gently. They're obviously moved by this creature's plight.

Orin: (Urgent) "Medi-evac! NOW!"

Orin: (speaking tenderly to the captive) "We'll help you, I'm going to get you out of here, it's going to be alright. No one is going to hurt you again."

Current situation:

Captive: (*Coming to, mumbling in fear*), "No, no please, not more, please let it be over, please, please, I just want to go home."

Orin: (*Soothingly, relieved they've come round, he was worried they wouldn't*)

“Hey, you're coming round, I was so worried, Shh, it's alright, it's alright, you're safe now.”

[The captive's eyes flew open as they sit bolt upright, Orin takes a step back from the bed, hands up to be placating.]

Captive: (*panicked*) “You, y-you spoke! You never speak!” They look about frantically and realise there's nothing on their wrists or ankles. It's the first time they've woken up not strapped down or restrained.

They scramble off the bed, putting as much distance between Orin and themselves.

Orin: (*Soothingly, like they're dealing with a spooked horse*) “What do you mean I spoke? Oh, the Gredacs, the ones that had you, they wouldn't have ever spoken... Whoa, whoa, please don't back away, it's alright, it's alright, you're safe now. You don't have to be scared of me, my name is Orin, I rescued you from your cell. ”

Captive: (*rising disbelief*) “No, NO! That's not possible!”

Orin: (*calmly, moving slowly towards them, trying to put them at ease*) “It is possible, you're safe, we rescued you from the ship you were on. No one is going to hurt you anymore.”

Captive: (*full of disbelief now with rising venom in their words*) “St- stay away from me! This is a trick, I won't go with you! I won't go back to the room! You'll have to kill me, you hear!”

They backed themselves into the corner, looking like a wild animal, tears are pouring down their face.

Orin tries to ease forward carefully, Max tries to melt through the wall, panic obviously rising.

Captive: (*terrified*) “S-s-st-tay back, I -I just want to go home! Leave me alone! You've taken enough from me! (sob catches in their throat) What more is there?!”

Orin: (*horrified but staying calm, trying to be reassuring in the face of such upset*)

Look I know you're terrified, I would be too but this isn't a trick, we really did rescue you, I don't want to hurt you, I don't want to do anything to you and I don't want anything from you, I know you're scared but I promise I'm not going to hurt you, can you please try to calm down, you look like you're trying to melt into the wall.”

Captive: “Scared? You think I'm scared?!” (They laugh bitterly) “You don't know the meaning of the word! I don't believe you! You **will** hurt me! That's what you all do! (*growing anger*) You come, and you grab and stab and swab! You take what you want and do what you want no matter how much I beg! I'm not coming closer to you!”

Orin: (*sincerely, trying to be calm but is obviously growing upset at the level of trauma this person has suffered*) “I know they hurt you badly, but I won’t do any of that, no grabbing or stabbing, I swear, I don’t have anything like that, look. See? Empty hands. ”

[They gesture with their empty hands.]

Captive: “Your kind does! You all do! With your white hands and black eyes that just stare and stare!”

Orin: (*confused*) “What do you mean I do grab and stab with my white hands? My skin is blue, and my eyes are purple, (*realisation is dawning*) can, can you see me?”

(*NB-Orin looks absolutely **nothing** like the beings that had them captive. They are so traumatised they’re only seeing those figures and not their Orin, it’s like there’s a filter over their eyes*)

Captive: (*ignoring the question, noticing something else instead*) “W-w-wait, wait, where’s your stick?”

Orin: (*more confused*) “What do you mean where is my stick? I don’t have a stick—”

Captive: (*manic, filled with hysterical glee*) “No pain stick!” The captive saw their chance and darted forwards, making an obvious break for the door.

They didn’t stand a chance.

[Smaller and half-starved as they were it was easy to catch them with a gentle firmness, Orin couldn’t let them charge free, they’d only get themselves more hurt, the rest of the ship’s crew was frantic with the containment of the enemy craft, their survivor would only be charging into harm’s way. They couldn’t allow that. They scooped them up easily, holding them gently, braced against their chest, arms trapped harmlessly, their feet a good foot off the ground.

(It’s the sort of trained hold that professional orderlies or prison officers excel at. Orin is very tall, much taller than the human.)

What they were not prepared for was the unholy scream of terror that erupted from the survivor.

Captive: (*Terrified beyond all reasoning, fully believing they are about to suffer their worst nightmare*) “NO! NO PLEASE! OH GOD! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! I WON’T GO BACK TO THE ROOM! I WON’T! PLEASE! I JUST WANT TO GO HOME! PLEASE! PLEASE DON’T HURT ME ANYMORE!”

[The survivor was fighting tooth and nail to escape, with all the strength and desperation of a cornered animal. It took every ounce of strength to hold them.]

Orin: *(trying desperately to stay calm themselves)* “Woah! Woah! Please don’t run! I’m sorry I had to grab you, please calm down, I know your feet are off the floor right now, I am sorry, but you aren’t safe out there, please stop screaming, it’s okay, it’s okay, I promise, I PROMISE, I’m not going to hurt you. I just can’t have you leave this room right now, it’s not safe outside. Please, please calm down.”

Captive: *(Hysterical)* “NO! NO IT’S A TRICK! GET OFF ME! PUT ME DOWN! YOU’VE DONE THIS BEFORE! LET ME GO! DON’T HURT ME! I CAN’T, I WON’T, I CAN’T TAKE ANYMORE!”

Their hearts broke for them. They didn’t really know what to do, they’d never seen such distress before. They needed to do something quick before the sedative gas was deployed. It was standard in these rooms but they had no idea if that was even safe for this creature. But they were going to hurt themselves with all this exertion if they allowed it to continue.

They decided to use their size and strength to their advantage. Following the instinct all Craxians had when faced with the distress of smaller beings, usually the young of the species they began to rock them, as though they were a child.

Orin: Please, please calm down, I’m not going to hurt you, I swear, I know you’re in my arms and you can’t break free but I promise you’re safe, I’m just holding you till you calm down and you stop trying to escape this med room. Please, please, stop screaming. Ah drack it, look I don’t think you’re a child but I’m going to try something.

Starts humming a lullaby/gentle tune

Captive: *(Desperate)* “WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GET OFF ME! LET ME GO!”

Instead, Orin begins to hum, cradling the back of their head like they were their own young.

[After a few long minutes their struggles began to slow then stop all together.]

Orin: I’m trying to help you calm down. It’s a craxian lullaby, it can help soothe distress. Yes my hand is on the back of your head, I’m just trying to help you relax.

Captive: *(Quiet now, brokenly)* “It hurts, it’s going to hurt, please don’t, please, please just let me go.”

Orin: *(devastated)* I’m so sorry, so sorry, I’m not going to hurt you I promise, but I just can’t risk you running into the main ship right now, there’s too much going on and you need to rest.”

Captive: *(Defeated)* “I want to go home.”

Before they could even reply the captive began to cry, slow, aching tears of despair and utter hopelessness. They can’t even cover their face.

Captive: (*in total misery*) "Please, please,"

Orin: (*consoling*) "Shh, shh, I know, I know, you want to go home and we will, I swear we'll do everything we can to get you home but right now I need you to rest. Please don't cry."

Captive: (*defiant, they still have some fire left in them*) "Why? So, you can torture me again?! Start afresh?!"

Orin: (*absolutely horrified*) "No! No of course I am not trying to trick you so I can torture you! Look, can, can I put you down on the bed without you trying to run? I just want to talk to you and I'm worried all this has done you more damage. I'm not going to hurt you. I'll even back away as soon as I put you down. Please?"

They searched Orin's face, realisation dawning.

Captive: (*Surprised*) "Wait, wait you, you look different now, you're, you're all blue. You're not blue. You're white, you're all white! Everyone whose been—(*starting to panic*) When did you change?!"

Orin: (*Worried*) "I haven't changed my face, I've always been blue, I promise I haven't ever had white skin."

Captive: "This is a trick! It has to be! (*Growing hysterical once again*)

Orin: (*Also now trying not to panic*) "Please believe me! This isn't a trick. The people who had you, they're Gredacs, from Vraknear. They're mostly tall with white skin, six arms and black eyes. It's because there's a high concentration of Irridium in their atmosphere. They need to be as visible as they can in the spectrum, it's why their eyes are black, to absorb the light. They communicate via telepathy, they have no vocal cords so they wouldn't speak to you. They can't."

Captive: (*Very confused*) "W-w-what?"

Orin: (*Calmer, trying to push through their worry*) "My name is Orin, I'm a Craxaian, from Craxos,"

Captive: (*Uncertain, trying to piece everything together*) "O-Orin? A C-C-Craxaian w-with b-blue s-skin? Y-you rescued me? The, the Gredacs, they're, they're white, have h-have six arms and white, white skin with b-b-b-black eyes, they, they're, the ones who c-c-captured me. T-they can't talk. N-no vocal cords. Not, not, not y-you. You're Orin, you're so tall. A-and you talk. You can talk. Y-you're a C-C-Craxaian And your uniform is green. "

Orin: "Yes! (*relieved*) That's right me, tall, tall for a Craxian in a uniform of green and not white at all and the crew here on this ship, we're a mix of members of this galaxy, we hunt down the crews like the ones that had you. The ones doing illegal things.

We rescued you, I promise, *promise* you're safe now. I'm not going to hurt you. I swear. I just want to help you."

[Orin watches them taking this in.]

Captive: (*Guarded*) "Why? Why would you help me?"

Orin: (*In a bit of a rush*) "Because what they were doing was horrific and I am so, so sorry we didn't find you sooner. I will never forgive myself that's taken so long to track the ship once we were alerted."

Captive: (*Genuinely surprised*) "Because of what they did? P-people have been looking for me?"

Orin: (*Pushing this advantage*) "We have, we have been looking for you, we were told there was illegal smuggling in this sector and there had been a suspicious craft. We've been hunting them for days."

Captive: (*Thinking*) "They were being illegal? Smuggling? I've been there two weeks maybe more, I think?" (In a small voice) "It's hard to tell."

Orin: (*Shocked*) "You've been there two weeks?! By the gods. And you're still so strong. Look, please can I put you down without you running or trying to fight me? We can keep talking, I won't hurt you."

[*The fight seemed to have drained out of them. They pressed their face into their Orin's shoulder and nodded, beginning to shake.*]

Orin: (*consolingly*) "Hey, hey, it's okay, it's okay, please don't cry, it's alright now, I've got you. You're safe. They're never going to touch you again I swear it."

Captive: (*small and hopeful*) "P-promise you won't hurt me?"

Orin: (*solemnly*) "On N'shvar herself, I promise no harm will come to you. I won't hurt you. What's, what's your name?"

Captive: (*making a decision*) "O-okay, okay, please, please put me down. I-I w-won't run. My name is, it's Max."

Orin: (*relieved*) "Thank you Max."

(NB-instead if you don't want to name listener you can just comment what a nice name it is)

Orin: "it's going to be alright."

[*Gently, with the upmost care they place the survivor, Max, back on the bed. Once settled they backed off immediately. The creature seemed to relax a fraction.*]

Orin: "There, you okay?"

They curled up on themselves but nodded. “I’m, I’m o-okay”.

Orin: “Good, good, that’s good. You’re doing great.”

They gave a tiny nod, hugging their knees.

Max: “So—?”

Orin: “Yes?”

Max: (*Shakily*) “H-How, how can I even understand you?” They cut in over themselves, “I mean, how are you speaking English?”

Orin: (*puzzled*) “What do you mean how I can understand you? What’s English?”

Max: (*frightened but trying to cover it*) “The language we’re speaking right now.”

Orin: “Oh, the language we’re speaking right now? We have a universal translator, it’s translating our words for each other. I’m speaking spiral common, it’s the most widely used language in this sector of the galaxy.”

He watched them turn pale. Evidently this was the wrong thing to say.

Max: (*With supreme effort, looking like they were about shatter*) “A universal translator? And, and, what’s the name of this galaxy?”

Orin: (*now worried he’s going to say the wrong thing*) “Er,”

Max: “Is it called the Milky Way? A long strip of stars, linear pattern?”

Orin: (*Fully aware this galaxy they are describing looks nothing like the one they are in right now*) “Um, “

Max: (*determined, staring directly at Orin*) “Tell. Me.”

Orin: “I don’t know that name.”

Their breath hitched.

Orin: (*trying to be comforting*) “I’m sorry, I don’t know individual species names for places, when you’re a bit better you can speak to our navigation officer.”

Max: “What do you mean ‘individual species names?’”

Orin: “Uh, I mean individual species names like, (*realising they are on very dangerous ground*) I’m a Craxian and you’re a—” He flailed for a term.

Max: (*deliberately calm*) “And I am a Human, yes.”

Orin: (*relieved, trying to cover it*) “Yeah, like you’re a human.”

Max: (*dangerously calm*) “You’ve never seen a human before have you?”

Orin: *(scared but knows he has to be honest)* “Er, no, no I haven’t seen a human before.”

[Their shoulders slumped for a moment and they braced for the human to start crying again but they surprised them.]

Max: *(desolate and furious)* “THEN WHERE THE HELL AM I?!”

Ah. Right.

Orin: *(Takes a deep breath before beginning)* “Please calm down, I know this is a lot but I promise it’s going to be okay, look, right now you’re in deep space.”

Max: “O-okay, I had sort of guessed that we’re in deep space. Are we near anything?”

Orin: “Er, we’re heading to the nearest starport.”

Max: *(Getting frustrated)* “I mean planets or, or, stars or, (getting a bit desperate) something I might recognise! Mars! Venus! Jupiter! Sodding Galifrey! Where. Am. I?!”

Orin: *(Realising what they want and knowing they won’t like the answer)* “Oh, um. Planets, planets you know the name of. Er, look, like species names I’m not good at individual planet names either, I’ve never heard of those specific names like Mars or Jupiter but I can tell you we’re in the Eastern spiral Nebula, you’d er, according to the translator, you’d call it being part of the Centaurus A Galaxy.”

He watched their eyes grow huge. This was concerning. He braced himself for another verbal explosion.

Max: “I’m in Centaurus A?” They swallowed, curling in on themselves, all hope seeming to evaporate.

They buried their face in their hands.

Max: *(In a miserable, disbelieving whisper)* “That’s 12 million light years from Earth. My home planet.”

Humans used light years?! Interesting thought Orin.

But also. That was a shockingly long way from home for them. Seemingly arriving from nowhere.

Max: “I don’t know how I got here. How am I going to get home? Did they do this to me? Did they bring me?! Tell me!”

Orin: *(Earnest and honest)* “ Oh, I, that’s, that’s so far, Centaurus A is 12 million light years miles from your home planet? No, I don’t know I don’t know how you got here

but I don't think it was them that brought you here. They don't have that kind of technology. We will find out, I promise."

Max: *(In a small voice, realising the likely truth)* "Did they do this to me because I'm human?"

Orin: "I," *(Knowing he needs to be honest and concise)* Yes. [Sighs sadly] Based on what we've seen so far, and it isn't a lot, the others are going through their records now and interrogating the survivors. It looks like it, it looks like this was done to you because you're a human. Like they were trying to learn about you, see how you worked and how they can exploit you for profit. All the tests they were doing were to gather enough material from you so they could synthesise it as rare materials, probably to sell on the black market for medicines and curiosities. I'm so sorry."

Max: *(Coldly)* "I see, bastards. They treated me like a lab rat. A thing. Something to poke and prod and hurt."

Orin: "I can't imagine how horrific that must have been, being treated like a lab rat for weeks, I'm truly sorry."

Max *(Voice starting to shake with emotion)* "It hurt so much."

[They make eye contact with Orin]

"And they wouldn't talk to me, I screamed till I lost my voice, begged till I had no words left and still they came. All because I'm human."

This time they did cry, huge gasping, gulping sobs of misery.

Orin waits for an awkward moment then gives in.

Orin: *(Trying not to sound both desperate and despairing, failing miserably)* "Please, can I put my arm around you? I can't bear to see you suffer like this alone, not when you're crying so badly. You did not deserve any of that, especially not in silence."

[They give a tiny nod.

With a reservation he was proud of he carefully moves to sit next to the human. With infinite gentleness Orin wrapped an arm about their shaking shoulders.

It was like a switch had been flicked.

With a short cry they threw themselves at Orin, clinging on for all they were worth, sobbing brokenly. Orin wrapped them up with all the strength he had.]

Orin: *(Reassuring)* "There, I've got you, you can lean against me, let it all out, that's good, I promise no one will hurt again, I won't let them. You're safe now. Safe from them, I've got you."

[They cling to Orin like they were their only lifeline. He rubs their back, cradling their head as they cried out all their fear, their misery and bitter, bitter loneliness.]

It takes a long while for them to stop crying.

He didn't rush them, they needed this.]

Max: (*Wobblily*) Uh, sorry, I didn't mean—" wipes their face on their sleeve.

Orin: "Shh, it's alright. Here. Have my cloth" [Hands them a cleaning cloth]

Max: "Thanks." [*They wipe their face more carefully then blow their nose.*]

*[He watches **fascinated.**]*

Max: "Sorry, that's probably deeply unpleasant to see."

Orin: (*honestly*) "No, don't worry, it's actually quite interesting."

Max: (*sceptically*) "Blowing my nose is interesting?"

Orin: "Blowing your nose? Evacuating your sinus cavities?"

Max: (*chuckling weakly*) "That's the most sterile way I have ever heard nosing blowing described."

Orin: "I'm sorry, the translator, it has a way of making everything sound incredible formal—"

Max: (*They chuckle more heartily*) "It's doing a good job for never having heard this language before."

Orin: "Is, is that something all humans do?"

Max: "What? Blow our noses?"

Orin: "I mean, yes 'blowing your nose' but also the producing water from your eyes?"

Max: "You mean cry? Yeah, we do it when we're sad, scared, frustrated, happy, it's, it's an emotional outlet."

Orin: "Oh I see."

Max: "Craxians don't I take it?"

Orin: "Oh, we have emotional outlets, just not like humans. Other races cry like you do though."

Max: "Huh, fair enough."

It seems to hit them again where they are.

Max: "I, I can't really, it's not sunk in yet that I'm in space. That, that this is all real, I don't want to think about what's happened but I'm, I'm the first human who, who's made it this far."

Max: (realisation) "Oh god I'm the representative, of my whole planet! I—"

Orin: "Please don't panic, there's no expectation of you right now. You might be the only human I have ever met and I have about 5,000 questions I want to ask you but not right now. That can wait, I mean, technically you're a representative of your race but no one can expect you to be the pinnacle of your race, no one is. Everyone is good at something but not everything. You can't know everything about your planet. I would not be a perfect example of a Craxian. My eyes are a darker purple than average, my horns are shorter and I am taller than the average Craxian, by the translator it says I am 7 of your earth feet and 6 inches. I am a scientist as my primary role, though being a part of this crew I dabble in most aspects of ship life and responsibilities but I know little of our arts and sports and other specific ancient cultural practices lost to time."

Max: "You're a scientist?"

Orin: "Yes I'm a scientist."

Max: "What, what's your field?"

Orin: "What's my field?"

Max: "Area of study, on Earth, it's, well, we have biologists, physicists, chemists, meteorologists, geologists as an example and then lots of smaller subsections of those."

Orin: "Ah, I see, well, I suppose, I'm mainly a chemist? We don't have quite those divisions you speak of like biologists, physicists and the rest but I suppose that's the nearest."

Orin: "Speaking of, I wanted to ask you something."

Max: "Oh?"

Orin: "I need to take a sample of your saliva."

Max: (*immediately on guard*) "What?"

Orin: "Your saliva, I've got a sampler here, it won't take a moment."

Max: "No, look, there's, well, surely there's enough everything on that cloth I used."

Orin: "I'm sorry, if I could take it from the cloth I would but it has to be directly from your mouth."

He showed them the device, it was harmless looking enough,

Max: (Immediately scared and defensive) “NO! I’ve ENOUGH of stuff being forced into me! You’re NOT taking my saliva!”

Orin winced at the phrasing. It was unsurprising they’d been so traumatised.

Orin: “I won’t force you, I promise, it’s your choice, but, well, we’ve never seen anyone like you before. I have no idea what’s safe for you to eat or drink. We were lucky with the atmosphere in here that it didn’t kill you but I don’t want to risk anything else.”

Max: “What?! What do you mean you need it to make sure your food won’t kill me?”

Orin: “You’re, well, like you said, we’ve never seen a human before, I’m worried I’ll bring you something to eat and it will poison you. Or just kill you. The swab is completely painless. You just put it in your mouth, let it analyse the details in your saliva.”

Max: “So stuff won’t kill me? Like what? What details do you need from it?”

Orin: “The details we need are like, DNA, enzymes, proteins. Then we can create a map of safe parameters for you. Temperature, hydration, constitution, just the basics so we can keep you alive without harming you.”

Max: “O-oh. All of that, DNA based safe parameters?”

Orin: “I wouldn’t ask this of you if it wasn’t important. I can’t begin to imagine what you’ve endured. I swear this is just to help us help you. Please?”

Max: “O-okay. You promise it won’t hurt?”

Orin: “I promise it won’t hurt. And it only has to be a few microns, just till it beeps. When it’s done you take it out and let it analyse your results. Then I can work out what you can eat, drink and how I can best treat all your surface wounds.”

Max: (Puzzled) “What do you mean, you can treat my surface wounds?”

Orin: “Your surface wounds, the cuts and marks and bruising you’ve got. We ran an initial scan for your internal makeup to check there wasn’t anything that needed immediate attention.”

Max: (*Suddenly guarded, looking nervous*) “What do you mean you ran a scan?”

Orin: (*Confused but trying to be reassuring*) “You were still unconscious, and we were worried you were dying.”

Max: “Me being unconscious, even if you were worried I was dying still doesn’t give you an excuse to stick things in me!”

Orin: (Very confused) “What? What do you mean (repeating in genuine horror) ‘stick things in you’?”

Max: "To run scans! You stick big needles in me! Or the gauges! It generates the image! I've seen it! It's the way it works! It really hurts!"

Orin: (Shaking his head violently, looking absolutely horrified) "Oh those SADISTS! BASTARDS!"

Max backs up a bit, looking scared.

Orin: (Immediately reassuring) "Not you," (tears welling), "I promise, it's not you." (chokes back a sob)

[He tries to pull himself together.]

[They stare at him for a moment.]

Max: *(Completely deflates, genuinely concerned)* "Are, are you okay?"

Orin: "Um," (getting more upset that this person who's been through so much horror is now concerned for *them*.) "That's, that's not, (they swallow hard) that's not how scans work. I'm sorry, I'm so, so, sorry."

[He should be holding himself together, he was a scientist for twelve's sake! But the fact they even twisted that. Utter bastards. He folds in on himself a bit.]

Max: *(Asking gently- realising that he is genuinely horrified over what's happened to them.)* "How do they work?"

Orin: (Distraught) "How do they work? How do scans work?! They just scan you! From a distance! It's not suppose to hurt! It's not invasive! That's the whole point! It's only supposed to take a few seconds! They're not supposed to stick ANYTHING in you."

[Their eyes widened, he really did care, sure he'd comforted them earlier but this? He looked so utterly devastated. It gave them real hope.

The human surprised him again. They wrapped their arms around him.]

Orin: (Startled) "What? But! Why are you hugging me?! You're the one who has survived so much, you are the one in need of comfort"

Max: *(Genuine)* "Thank you for caring. I can't tell you what this means, I've been alone and tortured for God knows how long. That you're this upset? For me? It's, well, it makes me feel safe, thank you."

[They hug Orin harder.]

[Orin took a moment to appreciate their kindness, their strength, even when they themselves were in so much pain.]

Orin: [He hugs them back, wrapping their arms around them, holding tight] “ You are so kind human, so strong to want to comfort me when you have faced so much, please never fear about being a representative of your species, if all humans are as kind as you then you are truly from a race worthy of knowing.

[Considers his words]

Look, about the salvia sample, I swear to you, I wouldn't do anything to hurt you. If we need to do anything, anything at all, like the swab, I'll ask you and I won't make you. It's just to help me treat you better and not give you anything that might hurt you accidentally. Like, I want to create a salve for your wrists and ankles. And something for all those scratches and puncture marks to help you heal up properly.”

They took in his words then made a decision.

Max: “O-okay, I'll, I'll do the swab thing.”

Orin: (*Their eyes widening*), “Are, are you sure you'll do the swab? You don't have to, I won't make you!”

Max: (*resolved*) “No, but, unless you're an Oscar-winning actor I believe you that you don't want to hurt me. And, and I need that right now. I need that belief. Else I—”
(voice wobbling, beginning to spiral into unpleasant thoughts)

Orin took their hand.

Orin: “I understand. I don't know what 'oscar winning actor means, but I can assure you I am not one. I truly just want to help you, I can't believe you'd comfort me, after everything you've been through.”

Max: (They sniff). “Humans are remarkably good at being kind on an individual basis.” They explained

Orin: “So I am learning, humans have apparently a great capacity for kindness it seems.”

Max: (*Quiet, full of urgency*) “Just, just don't let go.”

Orin: “I won't let go of your hand, I promise, I am right here, this isn't going to hurt. Are you ready?”

Max: “No. Hand it over.”

[*Marvelling at their courage Orin hands them the digital swab.*]

Orin: “Okay just put it in your mouth. It will beep once to say it's taking a reading a beep twice to say it's done.

Max: “Right.” (*Takes a deep breath*) “Death or glory.”

[They put the swab in their mouth with a shaking hand.

At the first beep their grip on his hand doubles in strength. As the microns ticked on their grip got tighter and tighter and their shaking deepened.

The second beep sounded, it was out of their mouth and on the bed faster than he could blink.]

[They are breathing like they'd just run the Garrick.]

Orin: "It's okay, it's okay, it's done, you did so well, so well. I've got all the data I need." *[He rubs their back in consolation]*

Max: *(Trembling, trying desperately to hold it together)* "I, I, don't, don't ask me to do anything else for a while. I-I-I can't, anything like that, science or m-m-medical, I-I-I c-c-can't, I-I-I—"

Orin: "Whoa, whoa hey, hey, shhh, it's okay, it's okay, it's over. It's okay, you did so well, so well, this is all I need. You did it. You helped me help you. I promise that is the only medical thing you have to do today. "

Max: *(On the verge of fracturing)* "I-I kept, I-kept expecting it to have spikes."

Orin: *(absolutely horrified)* "What?! You expected it to have spikes in it?! No! I promised! I promise it wouldn't hurt!"

Max: *(Shaking harder, PTSD is beginning to kick in hard)* "I-I-I know, but, but—"

Orin: "Okay, okay, it's okay, it's done. Oh, you're shaking, I'm so sorry, you were so brave. It's done and over. You're safe, I've got you, you're safe and it's over."

Max: *(Trying to make light of the situation but failing)* "T-T-Thanks. Er, if, if, you need to do anything else? Don't, don't let me be awake. Please."

They fixed Orin with a terrified plea.

Orin: "Yes of course. I promise. If we need to complete any examination of you, any test to make sure you're healing properly, I promise we'll sedate you, you'll be fast asleep, you won't have see anything and you won't feel anything, we have diffusers, they don't pierce the skin, it won't hurt."

[He squeezes them gently.]

"Speaking of sleep, you should probably rest. You need to give yourself a chance to heal. The analysis and suggestions will take a while to calibrate, you should rest while I put together some food for you."

They immediately grabbed his hand.

Max: *(begging, voice small and vulnerable)* "Don't go. Please."

Orin: "I won't go. I promise, I won't leave you."

They looked like they were debating something internally.

Max: *(In a voice as fragile as spun glass)* "Can, can you hold me?"

All the lessons he'd taken on patient management and safeguarding and appropriate conduct flew out of the airlock.

Orin: "Of course I can hold you."

[He agreed easily, he'd do pretty much anything they asked at this point.]

Max: *(In a rush)* "I wouldn't normally, it's not fair, I know it isn't, on you I mean, but, but you've made me feel safe. First time in weeks and I just can't take the idea of being in a room on my own again. Please."

Orin: "It's no problem. You are not forcing me and I am honoured I have made you feel safe. Do you want to lie down? You must be exhausted."

Max: "No I," Their lie was interrupted by a huge yawn. They sighed.

Max: *(Defeated, obviously drained)* "Okay yes. I'm dog-tired. Everything hurts."

Orin: "Good, please rest, I'll work out a pain relief for you I can give you as soon as the analysis comes back with the list."

Max: They managed a weak smile, "Thanks. I'd really like some pain relief that won't accidentally kill me."

Orin: "Here, come on, lie down and rest. You can listen to my breathing so you know you're not alone"

(Softly) "That's it,shh, relax next to me, I have you. Can I stroke your hair?"

Thank you, I know it's something we Craxians do to comfort one another so I thought it might help. I promise you human, I won't let anyone hurt you again. Sleep well, I've got you, just rest. You're safe now."

[They melted into him.]

'Huh,' he thought, this was nice. They were quite a lot smaller than him, they fitted against him neatly. He could hear their breathing slow and even out till it was clear they'd fallen asleep.

He felt so proud he'd been able to offer that level of comfort to someone who had no reason to trust him.]

-Fin-