

STARBORN ALIVE

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- *An ancient alien artifact.*
- *Two sisters.*
- *A desperate journey for survival in a galaxy on the brink.*



2249

Humanity's expansion has reached its limits—technologically, politically, and morally. Deep beneath the surface of a distant asteroid, one of our solar system's oldest secrets is about to be discovered. This is the beginning of a journey through personal loss, resistance, and the forgotten truth of who we once were.

1. THE ARTIFACT

The asteroid's surface stretched like a bombed-out battlefield, scarred by eons of cosmic bombardment.

A distant star cast a pale, ethereal light, making faint shadows dance across the barren rocks.

Tall truss lampposts stood as solitary beacons, their lights cutting through the oppressive darkness.

In contrast to the stillness of the asteroid, human activity buzzed in isolated patches.

Small spacecraft with flashing navigation lights darted across the surface, emerging from massive drilled openings.

They formed lines toward the distant freighters hovering in the void. After unloading their cargo, the ships vanished back into the asteroid's winding tunnels.

The barren surface hid the asteroid's precious minerals beneath.

It had become a hub for the relentless mining efforts of humans.

Though small in size—barely eight or nine kilometers across—the asteroid held ancient secrets that were now on the verge of being uncovered.

The mining tunnels beneath were vast and dark.

The curved walls, smooth and efficient, guided the haulage vehicles deeper underground.

Illuminated zones of the mined ore pockets gave the scene a stark, almost artistic quality.

Miners in silver suits moved alongside the machines, their communications cutting through the static of the radio frequencies.

Without an atmosphere, the machines' vibrations spread only through the solid rock, creating an eerie soundscape where technology met bedrock.

The chatter over the radio was mostly about life in the colony—new rations, station updates, mundane details that grounded the workers in the familiarity of their lives, despite the alien surroundings.

The sounds of their voices blended with the buzz of machinery, creating a

rhythm that was both unsettling and comforting in its normality.

"We should get paid more for this shitty job," Miller muttered, his voice a low rasp through the helmet communicator.

He was the oldest of the crew, and his words carried the weight of years spent mining the coldest, most remote corners of space.

"The company always skimps on the risk allowances. It's like they don't realize we're risking our lives here."

His eyes scanned the dark tunnel ahead, the machines' low hum vibrating through the walls like a reminder of their monotonous existence.

"I mean, what is this even?" he continued. "Just more rocks to catalog. Then the bosses get all the credit. Give me something that actually matters, for once."

Harper, the youngest and most eager, let out a loud laugh, shaking her head slightly.

A grin spread across her face, visible behind the visor of her helmet.

"Oh, Miller, you're hopeless," she teased, her childlike enthusiasm breaking through the otherwise oppressive gloom.

"But what if we actually find something unique this time? Not just diamonds—"



that would be too easy—but something rare, something unpredictable. Like Jason’s mission to Eunomia last year. They were experiencing strange gravitational anomalies, so much so the company almost canceled it. But here’s the crazy part—they kept breaking drill bits. No one knew why.

But guess what they discovered? Fragments of neutronium! Can you imagine? Neutronium, Miller! What if we find something like that? Something that writes us into the history books?”

Miller snorted softly, his disbelief clear.

“The only thing anyone’s writing about us is how much it costs. And every year, they just cut a little more. You really think the company would let us into the history books?”

Bennett, ever cautious, stopped to check his instruments. He frowned behind his visor, adjusting his sensor.

“We shouldn’t wander too far from our area,” he said, his voice tinged with concern.

“There’ve been strange fluctuations in the energy systems today. And now these readings... something’s not right.”

They reached the freshly blasted section of the tunnel, where jagged stones gleamed faintly, still shimmering with frozen moisture from the explosive charges.

Dust and ice crystals floated lazily through the void, catching the light from their helmets.

The narrow passage suddenly gave way to an expanse. Fallen columns sprawled across the floor like gigantic steps, leading toward an elevated circular structure that dominated the chamber.

Harper gauged the cavern at over a hundred meters across. Its ceiling curved into a near-perfect sphere, a design so precise it felt alien against the raw, chaotic rock they had left behind.

Despite the others’ warnings, Harper was already climbing the steep slope toward the opening.

Miller grunted but followed without hesitation.

Bennett let out a heavy sigh, muttering under his breath, “I can’t believe I’m doing this.”

He trailed behind reluctantly, his voice tinged with frustration.

Normally, they would have expected a typical rocky surface.

But as they climbed the slope, it became increasingly clear that this was anything but.

When Harper reached the top of the cliff, she froze, her gaze locked on the ground ahead.

The texture was smoother—almost polished—and it glistened faintly under the light.

She raised a hand, her breath catching in her throat, and pointed toward the shadows ahead.

“Look... you have to see this. It’s something... something I’ve never seen before,” she whispered, her voice a mixture of awe and unease.

Miller and Bennett, drawn by her tone, climbed the last stretch of the hill with care.

Their headlamps sliced through the darkness, scanning the area.

There, half-buried under rocks and dust, were strange structures.

They looked like ruins, but the shapes—twisted, almost unnatural—defied the geometry they were familiar with.

“It looks like buildings,” Harper said, her voice filled with both wonder and doubt.

“But... it can’t be... not here. Not inside an asteroid.”

Miller leaned against one of the pillars, his skepticism clear.

He ran his gloved hand over the surface, inspecting it like an inspector searching for flaws.

“Well, if there was a civilization here, it must’ve rotted away thousands of years ago,” he said, his voice gruff, though uncertainty lingered behind his dry tone. He shook his head and glanced over the ruins.

“And whatever it is... I doubt it’ll make our lives any easier. The hell, I know what we’re up against.”

His voice sounded brittle—nothing like his usual persona.

Bennett paused, his eyes flicking over the surroundings. Though his face was hidden by the visor of his helmet, his stiff posture betrayed a growing concern.

“We should stop and report this,” he said, his voice sharp.

“This doesn’t feel right. We don’t know what we’re dealing with.”

Driven by curiosity, Harper moved deeper into the chamber, her steps slow and deliberate.

She pulled a powerful lamp from her backpack and swept it across the room.

Then she froze, her beam landing on something at the center of the room—a small pedestal.

Atop it lay an odd, glossy artifact.

As she stepped closer, she realized it was chiseled from a faintly purple material she couldn’t identify.

Strange characters were etched into its surface, glowing faintly with an inner light.

As Harper’s light illuminated the artifact, the atmosphere in the chamber shifted.

The air grew heavier, the void thickening around them as if it were reacting to the light.

At first, Harper thought it was just her imagination—the way the lamp’s glow seemed to dull at the edges. But then the beam flickered. Faintly. Then again.

Could it be a power fluctuation? No—the dimming didn’t stop. The beam weakened further, as though the artifact itself were drinking in the light.

She glanced around. The others’ headlamps were faltering too, their beams weakening, stuttering in and out.

“Do you see this?” Harper whispered, her voice trembling—not yet from fear, but from something close to wonder, even as the shadows thickened around them.

“It feels like... it’s pulling everything in,” she said. “Everything around it.”

Bennett shifted uneasily. His eyes, visible through his visor, flicked from the

artifact to his failing light, and then to the retreating tunnel glow. The first hint of panic crept in.

Then, all at once, their helmet lights went out. Total blackness pressed in. Even the distant beacons, once faintly visible through the tunnel behind them, were gone.

“We need to pull back. Now!” Bennett barked, his voice cracking, overtaken by fear.

But before they could react, the ground shook beneath them—a violent jolt that rippled through the rock and their suits alike, as if space itself had buckled.

The shock was overwhelming.

In an instant, their instruments went dead.

The hum of the mining equipment outside that vibrated through the tunnel walls—

all ceased as if someone had cut the power to the entire universe.

The airflow inside their suits faltered. Systems dimmed. Then silence.

The cold seeped in—first a tingling in the fingers, then a bite that stiffened joints despite the insulation.

They tried to move, to cry out, but panic turned to paralysis.

The exoskeletons that once enhanced their strength now failed them, locking their limbs in place.

It was like being trapped inside their own skin.

One by one, they collapsed, hitting the cold stone floor with dull thuds, limp, silent, and still.

Time seemed to stretch as they lay motionless, the weight of the silence pressing down on them.

Finally, the emergency lights flickered to life, casting a sterile, cold glow across the chamber.

The once bustling mine had become a motionless, eerie tomb.
The miners' bodies lay scattered across the floor,
while the artifact remained untouched on its pedestal,
pulsing softly with an unidentifiable, faintly glowing power.

Nearby transport ships immediately detected the disturbance.
The energy wave sliced through the vacuum of space like a hidden scream,
the shockwave echoing across the dark expanse.

Warning lights flashed, and alarms blared,
their shrill sound cutting through the silence of space.

Within seconds, all eyes were glued to the screens
as the asteroid's surface, once illuminated by beacons and the hum of machinery,
was swallowed by impenetrable darkness.

"All radio channels are dead!" the communications officer, leaning over one of
the station's comm panels.
His voice was thick with panic, the static crackling from the speakers making
it feel as though space itself had fallen silent.

Captain Kestrel stood frozen at the console,
her gaze fixed on the darkened asteroid on the screen.

A chill ran down her spine,
the weight of responsibility settling heavily on her chest.
Her crew was down there, trapped in the unknown.

Kestrel's mind raced through worst-case scenarios—each one worse than the
last.
For a moment, she felt paralyzed, caught in a web of uncertainty and hesitation.

"I should have seen this coming..."
The thought echoed in her mind.
"But how could I have?"

She forced the thought away, taking a steadying breath.

Then, with the calm that only years of experience could provide,
she broke the tension that had settled over the room.

"Notify United Earth immediately," she ordered, her voice firm and controlled.
"Get the backup systems online. I want a full status report on what's happen-
ing down there."

The communications officer scrambled to his controls, fingers flying over the
panels.
Engineers at other consoles worked furiously to bring the systems back online.

The sound of frantic key clicks filled the room as the crew tried to regain con-
trol of the situation.
"The power sources are down... we're working on bringing them back online
now!" one of the engineers responded, his voice tight with the effort.

Kestrel turned to her nearest officer, the concern in her stomach gnawing at
her insides,
but her expression remained unshaken.

"Send down the rescue teams.
The miners are down there, and we have no idea what we're walking into.
We need to move fast."

There was no room for hesitation. Not now.
Protocols kicked in. Lives were at stake.
Every second counted.

Her eyes returned to the screen—
to the now motionless asteroid.

The darkness seemed to be spreading,
growing with every passing second.
The field around it had gone silent.

Small transport craft that had once zipped to and from the surface now drifted
without power, their lights extinguished.
Some continued along their last trajectory, gliding outward into the void with
no way to slow or return.

Others, caught mid-maneuver, spun helplessly—
tumbling into each other with dull, glancing impacts, or scraping across the
jagged terrain before vanishing into shadow.

A few slammed into the surface, leaving twisted wrecks scattered across the
rock like broken tools.

There were no explosions. No sound.
Just the grim ballet of powerless vessels,
still moving—until the asteroid's rocky surface brought them to a brutal stop.

And at the center of it all, the asteroid sat in silence—
a growing shadow bleeding into space,
consuming light, motion, and time itself.

A sense of dread crept in, coiling in her chest,
deepening with every beat of her heart.

Whatever they had disturbed down there...
It was something beyond them.
Something that acted back.

Her jaw tightened. There was no time for fear.
They had people trapped inside.

The rescue craft were already descending toward the surface,
their hulls trembling under the lingering effects of the energy wave.

Onboard systems flickered—screens blinked, lights dimmed—
as if reality itself fought back.

Pilots gripped the controls with white-knuckled fists,
exchanging tense glances across the cockpit glass
as their ships lurched in invisible currents.

No one spoke. They just flew.
Because that was the job.

And maybe—just maybe—friends and colleagues were still alive inside that
asteroid. That alone was reason enough to keep going.

Amidst the turbulence, the artifact remained dark and enigmatic.
Its faint purple glow was gone, replaced by a heavy, oppressive stillness.
Its purpose remained a mystery, and no one knew if or when its dormant pow-
ers would awaken again.



2. EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF LANGUAGE

The university's large auditorium—spacious and well-lit—was a blend of modernity and history. A quiet energy filled the air. It was the kind of hum that always emerged when minds gathered to explore the unknown.

Morning sunlight streamed through tall windows, casting a warm, peaceful glow over the students scattered across the neatly arranged rows of seats. Old maps, archaeological artifacts, and sketches depicting scenes from ancient civilizations adorned the walls, hinting at the university's rich academic tradition.

In one corner stood a large globe, a quiet monument to the world that had once cradled human civilization.

Its surface might have puzzled a twenty-first century observer. The shapes of the continents had changed—not through the slow drift of tectonic plates, but through war, rising seas, and the scars of industrialization.

Earth no longer resembled the world it had once been—a memory eroded by human ambition.

At the front of the room stood Dr. Andersson, still a dynamic presence despite her imminent retirement.

Her passion for research hadn't faded—her eyes sparkled with energy as she paced the podium, lecturing with the same lively enthusiasm that had defined her career. Her gestures were as animated as her voice, carrying a deep knowledge and love for her subject.

If she had any flaw as a lecturer, it was her tendency to wander off on tangents when unexpected questions sparked her curiosity.

In the center of the front row sat Nova Clearwater.

Her auburn hair was neatly brushed, though a few strands had slipped free, framing a face marked by quiet focus.

There was something both disciplined and expressive about her—an edge of a sketchbook peeking from her bag offered a silent nod to the creativity beneath the composure.



Around her, a diverse mix of students engaged in different ways—some focused intently on the holographic projections from their personal communicators, while others leaned toward their neighbors to quietly discuss the lecture. The soft hum of the devices hovered above their heads, flickering gently in sync with the ebb and flow of attention.

Dr. Andersson was deep into her lecture on the Paleolithic era. Her voice resonated with both authority and excitement as she spoke of humanity's first steps toward symbolic thought. "The Middle Stone Age offers some of the earliest evidence of human creativity—engraved ochre and shell beads from Blombos Cave that hint at symbolic behavior and cultural expression far older than we once believed."

As Dr. Andersson continued, one of the students, Rachel, raised her hand, her curiosity piqued. "Professor, I'm curious about the role of art in early human societies. Was it primarily a means of communication, or did it serve other functions?"

Dr. Andersson smiled thoughtfully, then glanced around the room. "A great question. Before I answer—does anyone have a theory or reflection of their own?"

Sarah, seated a few rows behind, leaned forward. "Well... could it be that these societies used art to preserve cultural knowledge and traditions—especially since they didn't have a formal writing system?"

Dr. Andersson nodded appreciatively. "Exactly. Both of your thoughts touch on something fundamental. Art in early human societies wasn't just decoration or communication. It was memory. Identity. A way to make meaning.

Think of cave paintings, body ornaments, even rhythmic patterns in songs—they were all part of how people passed on knowledge and beliefs. In a world without writing, repetition, performance, and symbol were how culture endured."

A few students leaned forward, intrigued. Nova was already ahead. She raised her hand confidently, her personal communicator shifting as she

did. "Professor, how did written language evolve from those early symbolic expressions?"

Dr. Andersson's face lit up. "Ah, that's where it starts to get really interesting, Nova. The transition from symbolic expressions, such as cave paintings and carvings, to a structured written language was indeed monumental. Cuneiform in Mesopotamia and hieroglyphics in Egypt emerged much later, toward the end of the Neolithic period—mainly for accounting, religious texts, and storytelling."

Nova followed up: "Would you say that the development of writing was driven more by practical needs, such as accounting, or by cultural and religious expression?"

Professor Andersson tilted her head, considering the question. "It's a bit of everything, really. Initially, writing served pragmatic functions—tracking trade, harvests, property. But it quickly evolved into something more: a vessel for cultural memory, a way to preserve stories, beliefs, even identities."

Nova raised her hand again, eyes shining with curiosity. "Has the development of written language always been seen as gradual? Or were there leaps—sudden changes in how people used symbols and writing?"

Professor Andersson smiled. "That's an excellent follow-up, Nova. This is where recent discoveries have sparked fascinating debates. Traditionally, we've seen the emergence of writing as a slow, organic evolution—from simple marks to complex systems like cuneiform and hieroglyphics."

She paused, then added, "But newer findings suggest a different narrative.

There are signs of surprisingly advanced symbolic systems appearing very early in the Neolithic period—perhaps even earlier. What's puzzling is that this knowledge seems to have vanished without clear lineage, as if it bloomed briefly and was then lost."

The room had gone quiet. Even the hum of the communicators seemed to fade. “It suggests,” she went on, “that the development of writing wasn’t a steady climb, but a series of discontinuous leaps—unexpected bursts of complexity, possibly triggered by cultural or technological shifts we don’t fully understand.

And if that’s true, it changes how we view ancient civilizations. It speaks not only to human ingenuity, but also to how much we may have forgotten—or never truly understood.”

The room had gone quiet, each student absorbed by the weight of what they’d just heard.

Nova’s thoughts swirled with questions—half-formed ideas about lost knowledge, forgotten systems, and what might have sparked those sudden leaps in understanding.

This wasn’t just history. It felt like a mystery.

A sudden movement outside one of the hall’s large windows caught Nova’s attention.

As she turned, her communicator adjusted fluidly above her, mirroring the shift in her gaze.

Outside, a sleek, small flying passenger ship dove steeply toward the university’s parking lot.

It decelerated rapidly, executing a smooth and elegant landing.

Even from a distance, Nova could make out the worn pastel blue paint of the ship, covered in a collection of old-fashioned stickers.

A smile tugged at the corners of Nova’s lips as she recognized the familiar sight.

“Typical Amalie,” she whispered softly to herself, amusement flickering across her face.

“Always making an entrance.”

Her smile faltered for a brief moment, a flicker of unease crossing her expression, but she quickly turned her focus back to the lecture.

Professor Andersson was now discussing the potential social and cultural implications of the new findings on the early history of language. Nova’s attention was drawn back to the room, but her thoughts still lingered on her sister’s arrival.





3. BENDING THE LAW OF PHYSICS

Amalie's ship, old but sleek, stood out among the modern spacecraft parked on the spaceport's metallic landing pads.

It glided effortlessly into place, moving with a grace that defied its weathered exterior.

The eight-meter vessel, compact and sharp-lined, was a testament to its owner.

Earlier that morning, the spaceport had been a hive of activity.

The roar of engines and the chatter of students had filled the air, mixed with the scent of ozone and the metallic tang of the hangars.

But now, as the day's lectures had begun, the spaceport had quieted, the once-bustling area now at rest.

The hatch of the ship opened with a soft hiss, releasing a faint scent of hot oil and burnt steel, the cooling engines whistling in response.

Amalie stepped out with the same unapologetic confidence as her ship—

dressed in a simple, elegant outfit that belied her fiercely unconventional nature. Her straight, light brown hair caught the morning light as she walked with easy confidence, the sharp glint in her eyes hinting at a mind always two steps ahead.

She took a deep breath of the crisp fall air, the familiar mix of university life and the technology of the spaceport greeting her.

The trees around the area had started to turn brilliant shades of red and yellow, their warm hues sharply contrasting with the cold, metallic surroundings.

All eyes turned as she crossed the landing pad—drawn not just by the ship, but by the kind of confidence that didn't ask for permission.

As she approached, Simbar, a security guard in his mid-20s, stood waiting. He was no stranger to their routine exchanges.

His eyes lifted as she neared, a mix of mild irritation and something more—an unspoken fascination.

As always, he crossed his arms and blocked her path with a playful smirk.

"Again, Amalie? You know I can't let you get away with this every time," he said, his voice stern, though his eyes sparkled with the challenge.

Amalie stopped in front of him, meeting his gaze with a wry smile.

"I'm just being consistent. It's a form of discipline, right?" Her voice was easy, but there was warmth beneath the cocky tone.

"Besides, I wouldn't want you to get bored, Simbar."

Simbar leaned in slightly, his gaze flickering with the thought of pushing her further.

"You know, Amalie, one day you'll regret constantly pushing the limits. It's not all about charming your way out of trouble."

He raised an eyebrow, the hint of admiration slipping through despite his words.

"But I guess that's just what you always do."

Amalie shrugged, her laugh low and knowing.

"Maybe. But if you want to keep an eye on me, I've got to make it worth your while." She leaned in, winking playfully.

Simbar sighed but couldn't hide the laugh in his tone.
"Go to your lesson, Amalie. And for once, try not to get into trouble."

As Amalie approached the university's registration terminal, the familiar hum of the machine greeted her.

Its digital voice was as monotone and impersonal as always, registering her arrival with robotic efficiency.

"Student Amalie Clearwater. You are registered as late."

Her lips pressed into a thin line at the sound of her last name—always there, always following her.

"Clearwater," she muttered to herself. Her mother's name. Her legacy.

It carried with it expectations she could never escape.

She dressed in sarcasm to shield herself from it.

"Oh, you noticed? Good job," she said dryly, not sparing the terminal a second glance. "Wouldn't want to be punctual by mistake."

Her words were playful, but in her mind, they felt more like a small rebellion—a subtle resistance to the world that always expected her to be someone she wasn't.

As she walked down the wide university corridors, the cool air against her skin was a comfort.

The sterile scent of detergent and metal filled her lungs, offering a brief respite from the weight of expectation.

The murmurs of students echoed around her, but they fell silent as she passed. Their eyes followed her, curious, assessing, perhaps even impressed.

But behind her confident façade, behind the straight back and deliberate steps, there was always something that scraped at her.

She reveled in the feeling of being an undeniable force, of being someone who couldn't be ignored.

Yet every time she met the eyes of others, she wondered—did they truly see her?

Or was it just the outer shield she'd constructed?

Amalie Clearwater—the daughter of Sofia Clearwater, the Secretary-General of United Earth.

A role so large, it sometimes seemed to block out the sun.
Her mother, ever absent, always saving the world, always unreachable.
Though Amalie knew she owed no one anything, the weight of the name was always there, a silent pressure she couldn't shake.

She was late. She broke the rules. Small acts of resistance against a world that already thought it knew who she was.

Amalie smiled to herself.

She knew what most people saw when they looked at her—someone who was always about to ignite something.

And if that made them nervous, well... good.

The lab hummed with quiet energy.

Monitors flickered with cascading equations, and the soft buzz of quantum machinery blended with murmurs from focused students.

Personal communicators hovered above their owners like attentive shadows, their lenses shifting in response to movement.

Vaulted ceilings soared nearly six meters overhead, amplifying the layered sounds of flickering monitors, the buzz of quantum machinery, and the soft murmurs of focused students.

Rows of modular workstations stretched across the polished floor, each surrounded by halos of ambient interface light.

Personal communicators hovered above their owners like attentive shadows, their lenses shifting in response to movement.

The door swung open with a soft hiss, and Amalie stepped into the room.

She didn't so much enter the room as announce herself to it. Conversations faltered, and students exchanged glances, their expressions a mix of curiosity and judgment.

"Sorry I'm late," Amalie announced with a grin, her voice carrying across the

room.

“Didn’t want to steal the show too early.”

A ripple of quiet chuckles moved through the group, though a few skeptical stares held steady.

Near one of the consoles, Professor Stevens—graying, calm, and unfailingly composed—looked up from his notes.

His eyes landed on Amalie with a cool, measured expression, and his lips pressed into a thin line.

“Ms. Clearwater,” he said, voice even but edged with dry patience.

“I see your timing is as impeccable as your reputation. Take your seat.”

A few students smirked behind their hands, others glanced away, embarrassed on her behalf.

Amalie smirked and gave the professor a mock salute before sliding into the empty chair beside her lab partner, Lily Marquee, who was already absorbed in the careful calibration of their equipment.

The two sat at one of the lab’s standard quantum workbenches—a large modular station, roughly three by six meters, enclosed by a retractable protective shell mounted on spring-loaded arms.

The transparent viewing panel curved over the working surface, allowing the shell to be easily lifted and lowered like the hood of a heavy-duty industrial washer.

Beneath the clear panel, the core of the setup pulsed faintly with soft blue light, wires and quantum nodes arranged with surgical precision inside the sealed chamber.

The enclosure shielded them from energy surges while still allowing direct visual monitoring of the quantum reactions inside.

Lily nudged her, her tone dry but tinged with amusement.

“Cutting it close again, aren’t you?”

Amalie leaned in, her eyes glinting with mischief.



“Quantum mechanics, huh? Let’s bend some laws of physics.”

Lily rolled her eyes but couldn’t suppress a smirk.
“Just don’t break them completely this time.”

Amalie laughed lightly, then glanced over the instructions for the day’s exercise.
“A little too rudimentary, don’t you think?” her voice revealed a tone of disappointment. “What can we do to spice it up a bit?”

Lily frowned. “Don’t start. We haven’t even run the baseline yet.”

Professor Stevens clapped his hands once to regain attention.
“You all know the assignment: basic entanglement calibration. If your interface shows stable patterns within the set parameters, we’ll consider it a pass.”

Then, as he consulted his tablet, another instructor appeared at the door. They spoke in hushed tones.

Stevens looked back at the class.
“I’ll be gone a few minutes. Get your setups in order—and...” he paused, eyes locking briefly with Amalie’s, “...don’t get creative.”

He left. The door whispered shut.

A beat passed.

Amalie tilted her head toward Lily, a grin forming.
“Now, where were we?”

Her fingers flew across the controls—efficient, precise.
But she wasn’t just initializing the assignment.
She was rewriting it.

“Amalie—” Lily began.

“We’ve already done these baseline tests a hundred times,” Amalie said. “But what if we went further? Pushed the field just a little beyond?”

Lily hesitated. “We could get disqualified. Or worse.”

Amalie didn’t flinch.
“If we play it safe, we’ll end up like everyone else. I’m not aiming for average.”

Their setup grew bolder with each passing minute. Amalie rerouted the interface logic. Lily, drawn in despite herself, enhanced the modulation range.

They scavenged spare parts—extra sensors, deeper field stabilizers.

Soon their modest bench looked less like student work and more like something smuggled out of a classified lab.

At the far end, Jasper watched them, tension in his jaw.
His rivalry with Amalie went unspoken but well-known. He nudged his partner.
“Let’s see if she still thinks she’s the smartest in the room.”

Meanwhile, Amalie hit start.

The interface came alive.

Buzzing. Vibrating.

Tendrils of light slithered through the glass shell, curling like static fog.
Students paused. Eyes turned.
Even those who tried to focus on their own assignments found themselves drawn in.

Amalie glanced through the viewing window, her voice suddenly softer.
“It’s like it’s... breathing.”

“Are you sure this is safe?” Lily murmured.

“Safe?” Amalie replied, not taking her eyes off the display.
“Maybe not. Exciting? Definitely.”

The humming deepened. The energy in the room thickened.

Then—everything stopped.

The light inside the bench froze mid-air.
Motionless, like silk suspended in water.

Amalie's brow furrowed.

She reached for a dial—
—and her hand slowed.

Like moving through syrup.

A gasp...
What?—this shouldn't be possible. The field wasn't supposed to expand beyond the shield.

Someone waved an arm, leaving a shimmering trail of distortion.

Lily whispered, "It's... not possible. Is it?"

And then—
The moment shattered.
Light collapsed.
Sound came crashing back.

Students flinched. Chairs scraped.
The monitor screamed with error codes:

Negative entropy shift. Temporal variance. Photon lag.

Amalie stared—the numbers kept rolling!
"What the hell did we just do?"

Professor Stevens, who had stepped into the room just a minute earlier, stood frozen in the doorway, his expression a volatile mix of frustration and disbelief. His eyes widened as he took in the scattered equipment, the flickering emergency lights, and the stunned faces of the students.

The room, still humming faintly with residual energy, seemed suspended in a moment of aftershock.

Stevens rushed toward the main fuse box on instinct, not yet realizing the system had already shut down automatically.

The storm had passed. The equipment had sputtered, glitched—and then died.

Now, the only light came from the red emergency strips casting long, eerie shadows across the floor. A faint trace of ozone hung in the air, and Amalie's communicator glitched softly above her head, as if uncertain whether time had fully restarted.

Lily exhaled sharply, releasing the breath she didn't realize she'd held. "Well," she muttered, dryly, "that was dramatic. Even for you."

A few uncertain claps echoed through the room, quickly silenced by the tension that lingered like static in the air.

"Ms. Clearwater. Ms. Marquee," Professor Stevens said at last, his voice cutting through the quiet like a scalpel. It was stern, but beneath it lurked something else—curiosity, maybe even awe. "That was... an interesting demonstration. Care to explain exactly what you did?"

Amalie stood, brushing fine dust from her sleeves with a practiced air, though her smirk wavered before she pulled it back into place.

"We simulated singularity conditions," she said, breathless with excitement. "Pushed entanglement parameters past conventional tolerances. We might've... touched the edge of a localized time dilation."

Stevens raised an eyebrow, arms folding across his chest as he surveyed the aftermath.

"You're telling me you created a time anomaly? In a fourth-year lab practicum?"

Amalie's confidence dimmed just enough to let sincerity through. "We didn't mean to. But something in the photon entanglement feedback loop amplified beyond what we modeled. It stabilized—briefly."

She motioned toward the monitor, now dark.
“We didn’t shut it down. The anomaly collapsed on its own, forcing a stasis failure—and that triggered the failsafe shutdown.”

Stevens exhaled slowly, the weight of what she said settling in.
“Walk us through it,” he said, voice still firm but no longer accusatory.
“And then we’ll talk about how ambition and caution are not mutually exclusive.”

Amalie nodded, already falling back into the rhythm of explanation, her voice gaining momentum with each word.
“We adapted the experimental model to test entanglement at macro scales—by modulating photon polarity in sequence and applying an iterative Schrödinger solution with gravitational variables. The result wasn’t chaos, but coherence. Just... extreme.”

She caught his expression, intrigued despite himself, and continued.
“We saw energy behavior consistent with negative entropy and localized temporal distortion. Light slowed. Motion delayed.
Not an illusion, sir. Real spatial lag. We may have witnessed an emergent gravitational-like interaction—without any actual mass present.”

She couldn’t help but smile now.
“But for a moment... I actually think we bent time.”



About the Author – Daniel Gislén

Daniel Gislén is a storyteller and media creator with a background in both film production and education. His passion for crafting immersive, character-driven narratives that leave a lasting impact is at the core of his work.

Industry Experience

- Founder of a production company specializing in film, commercials, and animation
- Look Development and rendering for the animated feature Beyond Beyond (Copenhagen-Bombay)
- Media educator since 2006, teaching film production, narrative techniques, and cinematic aesthetic

Commitment to Crafting Impactful Stories

- Driven by a desire to create immersive, character-driven narratives and complex worldbuilding
- Writing stories that not only captivate but also resonate deeply
- Starborn Alive – 25 years in the making, reflecting a lifelong passion for storytelling

Inspiration & Influence

A lifelong reader across a variety of genres, Daniel continually returns to fantasy and science fiction. His deep interest in history, politics, and societal development heavily influences his writing, providing constant inspiration for the worlds and characters he creates.

Join the Journey

Daniel invites you to join him on a journey through Starborn Alive, where worlds collide, identities are tested, and humanity's future is in question.



Thank you for reading this exclusive preview of Starborn Alive.

The story continues with secrets, betrayals—and a war that will reach far beyond Earth.

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