

It's Not Easy Being in Love

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A female Irken named Kal leaves her home planet and travels to Earth. There she meets Dib, and falls in love with him. He likes her, too. But Kal soon realizes Dib can't find out she's an alien.

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1 - Leaving Home

I suddenly awoke. It was the middle of the night. I looked around me for a moment, then slowly, quietly got up. I could barely see in the dark. I accidently kicked my SIR unit, Maddy.

"What?" she said. "What's up, Kal?" she asked me.

"Quiet, Maddy," I said. "We don't want to wake anyone." I checked to make sure my "family" of Irkens was still asleep. No one had stirred.

"What are you doing?" Maddy asked me quietly. I ignored her for the moment, quietly walking towards where my friends Sierr and Roko slept. *I should tell them*, I thought. I poked Roko's forehead and he woke up immediately.

"What—" I clamped my hand over his mouth. "Shhh," I said.

"Kal, what's going on? What's wrong?" he whispered.

"Help me wake Sierr," I said. Sierr was a bit of a heavy sleeper.

We woke her, and she whispered, "What's happening? What?"

"I'll explain," I said. "I...I just can't stay here anymore."

"What?!" said Sierr, Roko, and Maddy.

"I can't stay on this planet...Not knowing what happened to Tirm..."

There had been six of us. Tirm, Grey, and Mez, the oldest of us, were all defected Irkens that couldn't be of use to the Empire. Tirm's legs had been unable to move, Grey was blind, and Mez was albino. There wasn't anything wrong with Sierr, Roko, and I, but we had all ended up here somehow.

Now there are only five of us.

Tirm was like a father to me. He raised me and taught me all the things he knew. I'd loved him like I was his daughter. But one day, he went into the city, and something found him and...

Tirm was gone now.

Maddy had once belonged to Tirm. She didn't have a name at the time. Tirm just called her "SIR." After Tirm died, Maddy crashed. I used the knowledge Tirm had given me to repair her. I didn't like the name "SIR" for her. She was obviously female. So I played around with the word "madam" for a while and came up with "Maddy."

Sierr and Roko just stared at me.

"Kal, if you leave, who'll be my best friend?" asked Sierr.

"You're absolutely out of your ever-loving mind, Kal! You don't know what's out there. You'll die!" said Roko.

"You don't know that, Roko," I said.

"Kal..." Sierr's eyes were filling up with tears now.

"Sierr...I'm sorry, but..." She was crying. Sierr had been my friend from the moment I was born. She was just a few minutes older than I was. We were like sisters. "I have to leave. I can't stand this planet anymore!"

Roko sighed. "Kal...If you feel like you need to leave, you should. Just...Don't get yourself killed, Kal. Don't die," he said.

"I won't," I promised him.

"I'm really going to miss you," said Sierr.

"I'm going to miss you, too, Sierr." I hugged them both. "I love you guys," I said. I realized I was crying now, too.

"We love you, too, Kal," sobbed Sierr.

It was so hard to step away from them. Not only because they wouldn't let go of me. Eventually they released me, and I slowly walked away. I can't count how many times I looked back over my shoulder.

2 - N/A

Maddy followed me. "Hey!" she called. "You weren't going to leave without me, were you?" she demanded.

"Maddy..." I started to say.

"Who's going to help you when you get in trouble? Certainly not an alien," she said. "I'm coming with you."

She wasn't going to take "no" for an answer. I really cared a lot about Maddy. She was my friend, she was my SIR! I couldn't leave her behind!

"Okay," I decided, as if I would have a choice anyway. She'd find a way to follow me even if I didn't let her come.

Then Maddy and I started looking for Tirm's old Voot Runner. When we did find it, it was still in the same condition Tirm left it in. Which wasn't terribly good, but it worked. Maddy and I got in the cockpit and I started it.

"Okay, let's go," I said.

Maddy was staring out the window, pointing to every star she knew and saying its name. Then she went on about something about how pretty each star was. Oh, now I knew why Tirm had sometimes regretted giving her a personality.

We flew on for such a long time...I can't remember how long it was...Around six months, probably. We reached a planet.

"Oh...Wow..." I said. It was a beautiful planet. Blue, green, gray, and brown, all swirling together, surrounded by white clouds. From where I was, it looked like a colorful marble.

"Ooh, pretty," said Maddy. "Let's stop here."

"Yeah..." I said absentmindedly. I'd never seen a planet quite like this one before. I wondered what the creatures living on it looked like.

"Uh...Kal?" said Maddy, breaking me out of my trance. *Oh, crap*, I thought, sudden realization hitting me.

"Tirm never taught me how to land this thing!" I shrieked. "What the hell am I supposed to do?"

Maddy pushed me out of the way and took the controls.

"Maddy, you can't drive!" I yelled at her. We fought over the controls for a while, not realizing how close we were coming to the planet's surface.

We crashed, of course. It would've been kind of fun, if it hadn't been so terrifying. "Maddy," I whispered. "are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," she replied.

"Good."

Maddy thought for a moment about something. Then she asked, "Hey, what's this planet called, anyway?"

"Earth," I replied. It sounded so close to the name of my own planet. Earth. Irk. I wondered if there was a reason their names were so similar.

So we made a home for ourselves here, and disguised ourselves as the creatures that lived here. They were called "humans." Maddy and I walked around for a while, looking at everything. Wow, the planet was even more beautiful when you were standing on its surface.

We saw lots of people and other creatures as well, I learned that their names were squirrel, dog, butterfly, and bird. I also saw one human who I'll never forget the face of. He wore glasses and he had brown eyes and black hair.

"Wow, every one of them looks different," I said. Then Maddy and I went back home and waited anxiously for tomorrow to come.

3 - Meeting

Maddy and I were getting ready for our first day at the learning facility the humans called "skool." We weren't paying attention when the bus came and almost missed it.

When we got on, I saw something that seemed weird to me. On one side three to four kids sat in the same seat, taking up all the space. It looked like there wasn't even room to breathe.

On the other side...the kid I'd seen yesterday! He looked annoyed. I wondered why he was sitting all alone.

"Hi," I said to him. He slowly turned his head to look at me. "Um...Hi," he said. It seemed to me like no one had ever greeted him before.

"Can I sit here?" I asked him. "...Sure," he replied. I sat next to him. Maddy sat in the seat behind us.

"So...My name's Kal," I said. "What's yours?"

"Dib," he replied. He was silent for a moment, then he asked, "Are you new here?"

"Yeah, my sister Maddy and I are from...Um..."

"We're from another country," Maddy said, looking over her seat at us. *Thank you*, I thought. Maddy and I had a connection where we could converse through our thoughts. Of course, I couldn't hear hers, considering she was robot and didn't actually think, but she could hear my thoughts just fine.

"What country?" Dib asked.

"Um..." I looked at Maddy. She shrugged. "The name is really hard to pronounce," I said.

"Oh, okay," said Dib.

Wow, Dib seems like a nice person, I thought. "Do you want to be friends?" I asked him.

"Sure!" he replied.

"Cool!"

I realized that all the other kids on the bus were staring at me. "What's their problem?" I asked.

Dib looked annoyed. "They just think I'm crazy because I believe in ghosts and aliens and things like that. And they probably think you're crazy for sitting with me."

"Well, that's stupid," I said.

“Yeah...” said Dib. The bus got to the skool, and we got off.

We went inside and he started walking down the hallway. “Wait,” I said.

“What?”

“I, um...I don’t know where to go,” I said. “I’m in Ms. Bitters’ class...”

“I’m in her class, too,” said Dib. “Come on, I’ll show you where it is.”

“Okay,” I said, following him.

We came to Ms. Bitters’ classroom and she introduced Maddy and I to the rest of the class. Dear God, she was scary. I turned to look at my classmates and noticed a kid with green skin and no ears. He looked familiar. *It couldn’t be*, I thought. But I knew. I knew that it was an Irken named Zim. He’d been my friend for a while back on Irk, before Operation Impending Doom One happened and he nearly destroyed my family.

I sat in the empty seat behind Dib, and Maddy sat next to Zim.

“See the green kid?” Dib asked me. “He’s an—“

“Alien,” I said. “I know.”

“You did? That’s—“ he stopped talking. “Wait, so you don’t think I’m crazy like everyone else does?”

I smiled at him. “Of course not.”

He smiled back.

I heard Maddy giggle. I looked at her. *What?* I thought. I saw her shake her head. I raised an eyebrow.

The bell rang for lunch. When we got to the cafeteria, I immediately lost my appetite for any food. The smell sickened me, and it didn’t look terribly good, either. I wondered if the reason I thought this was because I was Irken.

I saw Dib sitting with a girl with a GameSlave 2 in her hand. I went over and sat down. “Hi,” I said to the girl. She grunted and stayed focused on her video game. “Who’s that?” I asked Dib.

“That’s Gaz,” he replied. “She’s my sister.” Sister...I thought of Sierr, back on Irk, probably wondering where I was. It made me think of Roko, worrying about me, and then of Grey and Mez, probably terrified.

“What’s the matter?” asked Dib. I looked at him. “Nothing. Why?” I asked.

“You look sad,” he said.

“Oh...I was just thinking about...all the friends I had to leave behind...”

“Oh,” said Dib. He was quiet.

Maddy walked by us. I stopped her. “What were you giggling about in class?” I asked her.

“Well...” She laughed again. “I just think it’s nice. First day of skool, and you already have a boyfriend!” She laughed even louder.

I blushed a deep red. “Maddy!” I yelled at her. I threw a pea at the back of her head. She giggled again and ran away. Someone yelled, “Food fight!” and mashed potatoes and corn started flying everywhere. I turned to Dib, hoping he hadn’t heard what Maddy had said. He just stared at me, blushing a little.

4 - N/A

Later that day, I was walking home with Maddy. I looked over my shoulder and saw Dib. I waved.

I'm going to tell him I'm Irken, I thought so Maddy could hear.

"I don't think that's a good idea," said Maddy.

"What's not a good idea?" asked Dib, next to me now.

"Kal was thinking about dying her hair," replied Maddy.

"Why you—" I came close to wrapping my hands around her throat and throttling her. She just walked ahead of us.

"You weren't really going to dye your hair, were you?" asked Dib.

"No! Absolutely not!" I said in an irritated voice.

"Good," said Dib.

"...Why is it good?" I asked him.

Dib hesitated. "Um...It's just that...I like your hair the way it is."

I blushed just a little and smiled. "So, what I was saying earlier that Maddy said wasn't a good idea, I was going to tell you that I'm—"

Zim walked by us. As he did, he put something on Dib's back. "What did he do?" Dib asked angrily.

I took the thing off his back. It was a piece of paper that said "kick you."

"Kick...you?" I said. "Isn't it supposed to be 'kick me?'"

"Yes," replied Dib.

I laughed. "Wow, Zim's an idiot." Of course, I already knew this. I crushed up the paper and put it in my pocket, not wanting to litter.

"When I get my hands on that disgusting space monster, I'm going to see personally to his dissection and study," Dib said.

This scared me. Dissection? Study? Dissection?! Would he do the same thing to me if he found out I was an alien? I didn't really want to find out.

“So, what were you saying?” asked Dib, grinning.

“Um...Nothing...” I replied. I was trembling at the thought of what he had said, at the thought of it happening to me.

“Um...Okay,” he said.

I realized he'd walked with me all the way to my house. “Um...Dib?” I said. Then he noticed it, too.

“Oops,” he said. Then he laughed. “See you tomorrow, Kal!” he said, and ran in whatever direction his house was in.

I went inside and slammed the door behind me. Maddy was putting a 600 piece puzzle together. She's already finished a quarter of it.

“I...don't think Dib needs to know I'm Irken,” I said after I calmed down a bit.

Maddy looked up from her puzzle. “Why, how'd it go?”

5 - I Get First Dibs!

Dib was smiling at me. I smiled back. Suddenly, his expression became horrified. I looked at myself and realized I wasn't in disguise, and when I looked back up Dib looked angry. The next things I saw were syringes and knives carefully being lowered toward my skin...

I woke up screaming. My mind was made up; Dib absolutely could not find out about my being an Irken. If I didn't tell him, we would stay friends and everything would work out. I went back to sleep, I dreamt of Dib and I having a conversation. And the thought of having to lie to my only friend on this planet bothered me even more than my last dream.

I sat next to Dib on the bus again today, and Maddy sat behind us again. She'd brought an 800 page book with her that she was getting through very fast.

"Hi, Dib," I said to him.

"Hey, Kal," he said. "Hey, you know what? I was watching a show called Mysterious Mysteries last night and..." He told me what the show was about and then talked about paranormal stuff until the bus got to skool.

We sat through class which seemed to go on forever as Ms. Bitters gave us a lecture on how mankind will eventually wipe itself out. *Well, that's apparent, with this kind of education,* I thought. Maddy heard and giggled.

At lunch time I didn't eat anything again. I sat next to Dib and tried not to watch as he ate...whatever the stuff the skool served was. Certainly it wasn't any normal food. On any planet.

"Hey..." he said. "My birthday is tomorrow."

"It is?" I said.

"Yeah. I'm going to be eleven," he said.

I got up and went over to where Maddy was sitting at Zim's table. I wondered why she sat with Zim so much. I grabbed her arm and dragged her with me. "What are you doing, Kal?" she asked me.

"Where are you going?" asked Dib.

"Bathroom," I said.

"And...Maddy needs to come with you because..."

"She just does, okay?" I said.

When we got to the bathroom, Maddy said, “Kal, what’s up with you?”

“Dib’s birthday is tomorrow.”

“So? What does that have to do with me?”

“You’re going to help me find him a present,” I said.

“Okay,” she said. “Hey, Kal...”

Meanwhile, in Dib’s point of view...

Lunch had ended. I wondered what was taking Kal so long. I was walking down the hallway, and as I passed the girl’s bathroom I heard, “Do you like him?” It was Maddy’s voice. I froze. There was a pause, and then, “...Yes.” Kal’s voice! Who else could they be talking about besides...me?

Meanwhile, in Kal’s point of view...

“I knew it!” exclaimed Maddy triumphantly. “I knew you liked him!”

I was blushing. “Maddy, please don’t make a big deal out of this,” I said.

She laughed. “Yes, ma’am,” showing she was obeying me but trying to make it sound like a joke.

I walked out of the bathroom and saw Dib had just passed it. *Oh, crap!* I thought. Had he heard Maddy and I talking?

After school, Maddy and I split up and went looking for a gift for Dib. We searched for hours. Eventually, she came to where I was and said, “Found something that I know a geek like Dib would just love.”

“Maddy, don’t call him a geek,” I said.

“Well, that’s what he is, right?”

“Well...Yes, but don’t say it,” I replied. “Anyway, what did you find?”

“Gummy bears.”

“...Gummy bears?”

“*Haunted* gummy bears,” she said.

“Oh, cool!” I said. “Dib really likes all that paranormal stuff.”

“I know,” said Maddy. “He’s all you ever talk about!” She laughed.

The next day at lunch, I sat next to Dib, with the gummy bears in a plastic sandwich bag in my hand. I

had written "Happy Birthday" and drawn some balloons on the bag with a Sharpie marker.

"Happy birthday, Dib," I said, handing him the plastic bag. "I...couldn't find a box or wrapping paper." I laughed.

"That's okay," said Dib. "It's the thought that counts. Hey, these are cool! I had some of these, but...Gaz ate them," he said. "Thanks." He smiled at me.

I smiled back. The next thing he did surprised me; under the table, he took my hand in his.

"I really like you, Kal," he said.

"You...You overheard my conversation with Maddy!" I exclaimed as he was lifting a forkful of corn to his mouth.

He dropped his fork.

"...Only part of it," he said.

He dropped my hand, and I took his. "Then...You must already know that...I like you too," I said.

"...Yeah," he said.

I realized his fork was on the floor. We both stared at it for a moment, and then I got up to get him a new one. I didn't want to let go of his hand and almost ended up dragging him with me.

6 - Realy Crappy Chapter

Maddy and I were at home playing one of the old Sonic the Hedgehog games.

“Hey...” I said. “How come at skool you’re always doing stuff to annoy me?”

“Because,” she said, not looking away from the screen. “Human siblings aren’t supposed to get along all the time. They’re supposed to annoy each other. I’m still the same Maddy, and I’m still your best friend,” she said. She leaned over and gave me a hug.

“And another question, how come you’re always sitting with Zim?” I asked.

“Well, you used to be friends with him, right?”

I dropped my controller. “You didn’t say anything to him about me, right?”

“No. I don’t think he even remembers you,” she said. Then, of course, she beat me to the Goal Ring.

“Ha! I won!” she exclaimed.

I picked up my controller. “You know I would’ve beaten you if you hadn’t made me drop this.”

“Yeah,” she said. “I must be pretty lucky, huh?”

The Next Day, Maddy’s Point of View...

It was lunch time. I was watching Zim stare at his food in disgust. I found it pretty funny. I don’t think he noticed I sat there every single day; he was so busy staring at his tray.

“Zim,” I said. He looked up.

“Huh? Who are you?” he asked.

“Maddy,” I answered. “Remember?”

“Maddy...Hey, you’re Tirm’s SIR unit,” he said. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m Kal’s SIR unit now,” I said.

He looked blank. “Kal...Um...Kal...Kal...Uh...Nope, doesn’t ring a bell.”

This bothered me. “Kal! She was your friend, you idiot! You nearly killed her and her family during Operation Impending Doom One!” I was trying hard not to yell.

He stared at me. It looked like he was very slowly starting to comprehend this.

“Oh, *that* Kal,” he said.

“Yeah,” I said. Idiot.

He looked around. “Where is she?” he asked.

I pointed in Kal’s direction. She was listening to Dib talk about something...probably something about ghosts or crap like that. He stopped talking.

Meanwhile, in Kal’s Point of View...

“What?” I asked Dib, who had stopped talking.

“Zim,” he said.

I turned around, and Zim was staring at me. *Maddy, what did you tell him?* I thought. She made no attempt to answer.

Later That Day...

“Maddy, what did you say to Zim?” I asked.

“Why does it matter? It’s not like he’s out to destroy you or anything,” said Maddy.

“Well, um...Actually...”

“You mean he *is* out to destroy you?” asked Maddy.

“Yeah, that’s literally what he said; ‘I will destroy you!’” I told her.

“Why?”

“I...Can’t exactly remember at this point, but...Now, thanks to you, he knows I’m here, and he knows I’m Irken, and not only that, but he knows Dib and I are good friends, too!” I said.

“That...isn’t good,” said Maddy.

“No crap, Maddy!”

I knew Zim was going to do something horrible to Dib and me. It was obvious, knowing Zim. I realized that one lie to Dib was going to become a million very quickly.

7 - Em...Something

It was Saturday. Thankfully, Dib had mentioned something about not having to go to skool on the weekends, so I didn't make the mistake of going.

Maddy and I were walking around the neighborhood. We saw a bunch of cute little squirrels running around. I liked to see all the different animals on this planet. No two ever looked even similar. On Irk there were...Irkens. There were no squirrels or dogs or rabbits. I liked Earth.

"Hey, Kal," said Maddy as we were walking down a sidewalk. "It's your boyfriend!" She pointed to where Dib was walking in the opposite direction on the other side of the street.

"Hey!" I called. He looked over and I waved. The street was clear, so he ran to meet me on the other side of the street.

Maddy began to walk away. "I'll...leave you guys to do...whatever you do," she said. *What exactly do you mean by that, Maddy?* I thought. She just smirked and continued walking. I looked at Dib and his expression said he had thought a little too hard about Maddy's statement. *Eww*, I thought. Maddy unintentionally heard and laughed, understanding my disgust.

When she was gone, Dib was still trying to get "images" out of his head. He realized I was staring at him, looking a bit disturbed that he would even *think* about such a thing, and he composed himself.

"Um...Moving on," he said. "There's this one place in the forest where there's this clearing, and it..." He went on into this really long and detailed description. "Um...Anyway, you want to go check it out?" he asked.

"Sure," I said. I followed him for a while until we got to the forest.

"Wow, lots of trees," I observed as we entered.

He nodded. "Hey, I just realized, Kal—you're an alien!"

"What?!" I gasped. How could he possibly...?

"You're from another country, aren't you?" he asked.

"Oh...Yeah," I said.

"Just thought I'd point it out."

We walked on. Suddenly, I froze. I thought I'd heard someone yell, "I'M A FIRE-BREATHIN' CHEESE LOG PIGEON WITH ROCKET BOOSTERS!" and then be silenced by a "Hush!" from far away. I decided it was just my imagination, until we got to the clearing and I heard, "ENCHILADA!"

“Hey, Dib, do you hear that?” I asked.

He looked puzzled. “Hear what?”

I shook my head. We sat on this log in the clearing the was near the line of trees.

“Hey, Kal...You don’t think my head is big, do you?” Dib asked me.

“...What?”

“Everyone says so.”

I looked at his head for a minute. I actually thought his question was kind of stupid. “Yeah, it’s pretty big. But, like...that’s because your brain has to fit in there, right? If your head was smaller it’d blow up because you’re smart.”

“Oh...I never thought of it that way.”

I heard something rustle in the trees. I turned around to see what was up. Nothing. Dib started talking again and I turned to face him. When he finished his sentence he thought for a moment about something, and he opened his mouth to speak again, but was cut off when I screamed.

I turned around and there was Zim, an empty bucket in his hands. He’d dumped water on me! My skin started to burn and I had to use all my focus to keep my face from twisting up in pain.

“What...the *hell?!?*” I yelled at him. Thin whips of steam were rising from my arms, but the rest of me wasn’t burning as much. Nevertheless, I was still soaking wet.

“Dib! Look! Her skin! It burns!” yelled Zim.

Dib looked at me. “What are you talking about?” he said, obviously not noticing the steam.

“She screamed in pain when I threw the water on her!” said Zim.

“Maybe she screamed because she wasn’t expecting water to come crashing down on her,” said Dib.

I shivered. Exactly how cold was that water? *Crap*, I thought. *Zim’s trying to expose me as an Irken*. This was not good.

Zim was still going on and on. Eventually he realized he wasn’t being paid attention to and he left. GIR appeared out of the forest next to him and yelled, “PARSNIP!”

“Shut *up*, GIR!” yelled Zim.

I was still shivering from the cold. Dib took off his coat...Or jacket, or whatever...and put it over my shoulders.

“Thanks,” I said to him. *I have to be careful from now on*, I thought, knowing Zim wouldn’t stop his plan here.

8 - Zim is Stupid

Sunday was boring; all I did was play video games with Maddy all day. Then Monday came and it was back to skool.

Ms. Bitters gave us a lecture on how people's carelessness will inevitably lead to mankind's own destruction. I wasn't paying attention. I was too busy thinking about what Zim would try to do next.

When the bell rang for lunch, I was so lost in thought I didn't even notice it. I didn't come out of La La Land until Dib started poking my arm.

"Quit it," I said to him.

"Well, what did you want me to do? Hit you over the head?" he said.

"Let's just go to lunch," I said.

We got to the cafeteria and sat where we usually did with Gaz. I was starting to get along pretty well with Gaz...Well, better than most other people. Which still wasn't too well.

Then...Zim came over. Dib's expression was one of pure hatred when Zim sat down across from us.

"What do you want, Zim?" I demanded.

"Oh," he said. "I just noticed that you don't eat lunch, Kal. Doesn't that seem a bit weird, a bit...*suspicious?*"

"Hmm..." said Dib, "As much as I'd like to be unnecessarily suspicious and say that Zim was trying to get you into a trap, it's true that you haven't eaten lunch since the day you got here. I don't think that's good for your health."

"Um...I probably shouldn't..." I started to say. "...Okay..." I decided, not wanting to look suspicious, or worse, look anorectic or whatever. So I picked up a spoon and scooped up some peas. Ugh, this stuff smelled even worse when it was held right up to your face. I'm surprised I didn't immediately lose the use of my sense of smell.

I put the...stuff they passed off as food...in my mouth and almost threw up just from the taste. I chewed and swallowed, gagging the whole time. Immediately after, my squeedlys-pooch started hurting.

"See, Dib? Her body can't handle the crap the skool serves," said Zim. "Kind of like...an alien." He smiled a creepy evil smile.

"No one's body can handle it," said Gaz, not taking her eyes off the GameSlave 2 she held in her hands. "It isn't even good enough to be called crap."

“Yeah, exactly, Zim,” said Dib.

I got up and ran to the bathroom. I wished Zim would just give up. But I knew it wasn't going to happen.

9 - NOOOOOO!

"Man, I'm bored," I said. Maddy, Dib, and I were walking home from skool.

"Me too," said Maddy. "Hey, are you okay after throwing up so much?" she asked.

"Yes, Maddy. I'm only dehydrated and I can't feel my limbs. How do you think I am?" I said.

"Well, I wouldn't know," she said. "I've never been sick before."

"Stupid Zim..." I muttered. *Sad excuse for an invader. Terrible excuse for a friend,* I thought, remembering that short time before I realized he was a jerk who only thought of himself.

"Oh, you know what?" I said more loudly. "That movie is on TV tonight. You know, the one about the dude and the...what's his name..."

"Oh, I know what you're talking about," said Dib.

"The thing with the evil squirrels, right?" asked Maddy.

"Yeah, that one!" I said. "And they eat everyone's head!"

"That one sounded good," said Dib.

"Kal and I are going to watch it," said Maddy. "You want to come over and see it at our house?"

"Okay," said Dib.

Later that day...

Maddy was making popcorn, and I was sitting on the couch trying to figure out what channel the evil squirrel movie was going to be on.

Dib came fifteen minutes later. I still hadn't figured out what channel.

"Maddy, what channel?" I asked.

"178."

I flipped the channel and it was a commercial. "Crap, I hope we didn't miss anything in that hour I spent looking for it.

Dib looked at me. "Why didn't you just ask Maddy in the first place?" he asked.

“Um...Heheh...” I said. “Good question.” I had no idea. “That’s me, being stupid and stuff,” I said. Then I laughed. “Anyway...”

The movie started. It was like 8:30 pm. Three hours later the movie was still going. Maddy had gone upstairs, Dib had fallen asleep, and I was about three seconds away from falling asleep myself. I thought I heard a door open and then close again, but I was too tired to care.

The next morning...

I woke up. The TV was on and Dib was sitting next to me on the couch, already awake.

“How long did that stupid movie last?” I asked.

“Past 11 pm, I guess,” Dib replied.

“Oh my god,” I yawned. I heard a noise behind me. “What was that?” I asked.

“What was what?” said Dib.

“I thought I heard a noise.” I heard another one. Then I felt something grasp the PAK on my back.

“Hey, Dib, check this out!” Zim yelled from behind me, and he tore my PAK off.

10 - Chapter 10

Dib's Point of View...

Zim tore something off—no, by the noise of the tearing, more like *out of*—Kal's back. It took me a moment to realize what it was. It was the same device Zim had on his back! *No*, I thought. *That must mean...*

Kal's human image flickered and faded, revealing her Irken form. I couldn't believe it.

Kal's Point of View...

Zim ran away with my PAK. I looked at Dib and he was staring at me, looking shocked. *Oh my God, no!* I screamed in my head.

"Dib!" I said. "I—"

"You're an alien..." he said quietly.

Maddy ran into the room, changing back to her SIR unit form. A wire came out of the back of her head and attached to her right arm, which caused her arm to change into a laser cannon, aimed right at Dib.

"Don't you dare do anything to hurt Kal!" she said to him.

"Maddy, stop it!" I yelled at her.

"Kal, your PAK!" she said.

"I know..."

"What? What about it?" asked Dib.

"It means I only have ten minutes left to live," I said, looking at him with a distressed expression.

"An Irken can't survive without a PAK," added Maddy.

"Nine minutes to go..." I said quietly.

Dib's Point of View...

I hesitated for only a second before running out the door to chase after Zim. I looked at my watch. It was 10:13 am. *Okay*, I thought. *So Kal has nine minutes. I'd better hurry.*

I got to Zim's house and ran inside, kicking the door open, so fast that his gnomes didn't even realize I

had passed them.

“Zim!” I yelled. “Where are you?”

GIR walked up to me, pointed behind him and then ran away. I followed him and he led me to Zim. That little robot was so helpful sometimes. I checked the time again. 10:14. Eight minutes to go.

My plan to get the PAK from Zim was simple. Knock him over and take it. To my surprise, it worked—until GIR jumped on my head and said, “YOU’RE A SASQUATCH! GIMME BACK MAH PIE!”

I ran this way and that, trying to get the stupid thing off me. Eventually I did, and he yelled “WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!” after he let go of my head and was flung through the air.

I checked my watch as I was running out the door. 10:19! Only three minutes left!

I ran like I never had before. When I made it back to Kal’s house it was 10:20.

Kal looked terrible. Her skin was pale and she looked sick. Maddy was trying to help her, but there was nothing she could do. I ran over to her and placed the PAK on her back.

11 - Chapter 11

Kal's Point of View...

I opened my eyes. The front door was open and the sun was glaring through it. When my eyes adjusted to the light, I saw Dib standing in front of me.

I tried to get up, but he knocked me to the floor again. I looked up at him.

"So, Kal, are you here for the same reason as Zim?" he demanded. "Are you here to destroy me and take over my world?!"

"No!" I said. "I—"

"Why are you here, then?"

"I..." I didn't think I could bear recounting the story. I turned my head away. "I can't say..."

"Kal, if you don't give me an explanation, you can never expect me to trust you," said Dib.

"...Okay," I said.

"It was five years ago," I began. "I was living with my two friends Sierr and Roko, and three more adult Irkens, Tirm, Grey, and Mez. Tirm was awesome; he was like my dad. He taught me everything I know about everything.

"One day, Tirm went out into the city. I...I followed him to see where he was going. Something—I don't know what—found him..." I was crying now. "All I can remember is watching him die right in front of my eyes!" Teardrops hit the floor loudly.

"I couldn't stay there anymore! I couldn't take having to carry all those memories! So I left...and I eventually came here. The fact that Zim is here is coincidence," I said.

"So why didn't you tell me you were Irken?" Dib asked.

I gave him the strangest look ever. "Because I was scared of you! Don't you remember..."

Flashback...

"So, what I was saying earlier that Maddy said wasn't a good idea, I was going to tell you that I'm—"

Zim walked by us. As he did, he put something on Dib's back. "What did he do?" Dib asked angrily.

I took the thing off his back. It was a piece of paper that said "kick you."

“Kick...you?” I said. “Isn’t it supposed to be ‘kick me?’”

“Yes,” replied Dib.

I laughed. “Wow, Zim’s an idiot.”

“When I get my hands on that disgusting space monster, I’m going to see personally to his dissection and study,” Dib said.

Dissection? Study? Dissection?!

“So, what were you saying?” asked Dib, grinning.

“Um...nothing,” I said, trembling.

End of flashback...

“I was going to tell you I was Irken, but your little ‘dissection’ remark *kind of* freaked me out!” I said to Dib. “I was afraid you would do that to me...”

Dib opened his mouth to say something, and then actually thought about what I’d said.

“Oh,” he said. “That makes sense.”

“So, what are you going to do?” I asked.

There was a long pause. Was he having trouble making this decision? Or what?

“Well, I can’t dissect my friend,” he said. “Especially not if she happens to be my only friend. And especially not if I happen to like her and she happens to like me...”

“Uh...Dib? You’re talking to yourself,” I pointed out.

“Oh...Yeah, I do that a lot,” he said. “So yeah, no dissection for you.” He smiled.

I got up, threw my arms around him and hugged him. He hugged me back.

12 - Chapter 12

I woke up. It was the middle of the night. Something was bothering me. I felt like I had to go back.

"Maddy," I said.

"What, Kal?"

"I have to go back."

"Back where?" she asked.

"Irk," I replied.

"Irk?! But the whole reason we came here is so you'd never have to see Irk again!" she exclaimed.

"I know..." I said. "But something's telling me I have to..."

The next morning...

We were getting ready to leave when Dib came by. Surprise, surprise. We can't have this get any better. *Why don't we throw a party while we're at it?* I thought.

"Hey, Kal," he said. "What's going on?"

"I'm...going back to Irk..." I said.

"What?! Why?" he said.

I shook my head. "I wish I knew. I just have this feeling," I told him.

He looked sad. "Kal, if you really have to go...I'm going to miss you," he said.

Stop it, I thought. *It's hard enough already.* "I'll miss you, too."

Before I knew it, his arms were around me and pulling me into a hug. "I love you," he said. Why did he have to make it worse?

"I love you, too," I managed to say. My tears were staining his jacket/coat thing. *This* was a familiar scene, judging by the fact that he refused to let go of me for over a minute. And that as I walked away, I looked back at him a countless number of times.

Maddy and I got into the Voot Runner, and we were on our way, back to the place I hated.

When we arrived, it was night on Irk, so all was quiet. I stepped out of the Voot Runner, holding Maddy close to my chest. I took a few steps and something hit my head. Hard. I fell back, Maddy flying out of my arms. I blacked out.

13 - Chapter 13

When I came to, I was in a dimly lit room, strapped to a table you would see in a hospital or like a lab, I guess.

"Hey!" I said, hoping there was someone to answer. "What's the big idea?"

A light on the ceiling lit up and glared on my face. "Kal, you are a defected Irken. You are of minimal or no use to the Empire, and therefore must be disposed of," said a robotic voice.

"WHAT?!" I yelled. "Defected?"

Another Irken, a male who was almost a foot taller than I was, came up to me. "Yes, defected," he said. It wasn't the same voice that had given me the wonderful news.

"How?" I asked.

He didn't answer. He just walked over to a table next to mine with an assortment of different chemicals and things. He was preparing a syringe. *No*, I thought.

"I don't understand, how did you find me so fast?" I asked.

He chuckled. I didn't find the answer funny at all. "Kal, we were the ones who made you come here. We sent a signal to your PAK telling you to come back."

What the hell? No! That means I left for nothing... I thought. And now I can't change it. I thought of what Roko had made me promise right before I'd left Irk for the first time. *I'm sorry, Roko. I broke my promise...*

The other Irken said, "Now don't worry, this isn't going to hurt a bit." Somehow, this didn't make me feel better. Gee, I wonder why, I thought.

He injected the stuff into my arm...Or was it somewhere else? I couldn't tell, because right after he did, all my senses stopped working. My vision went white, and I thought I saw the face of a big-headed kid with glasses. The last of my memory as I was losing it, and then the image was gone as soon as it had appeared. I closed my eyes. I didn't open them again.