

(All characters in this story are 18+ and older. This story contains female muscle growth, muscle worship, and nsfw content)

Her hands gripped the handle so tightly her knuckles popped, and the skin of her palms burned. Feet scraped over the ground as she repeatedly took multiple steps forward, yet remained rooted in the same place, just like her target, despite all her efforts.

Her cheeks puffed as she let out a long groan from her throat, making her chest vibrate. Then she took in multiple breaths in a desperate attempt to fill herself with more strength.

Yet it was futile; the sword remained buried in the ground.

When her arms, burning from the strain, couldn't take it anymore, she finally let go and collapsed upon the ground. She felt the dirt and grass stick to her sweaty frame and hair, but she was too tired to care about such things at the moment.

That damn sword refused to budge, much to her shame and frustration.

"I give up..." Connie admitted in defeat.

"Well," A huge shade settled upon her as a huge purple woman with rainbow-colored hair stepped up. She scratched her temple with a thick finger, and Connie couldn't help but wonder that maybe she'd have more luck if she had arms as thick as Bismuth's. "That's a pickle."

Connie groaned as she sat up, brushing her fingers over her ponytail to clean a bit of the dirt sticking to it. "What did you even put in it?"

"Well, you got the steel, of course, then I alloyed some chromium. And I figured to put in tungsten to reduce any risk of the thing breaking. Then I put some homeworld materials--"

"How much tungsten exactly?"

"About an 8-inch cube."

Connie quickly did the math in her head and paled. “That alone is almost *forty kilograms!* Bismuth!”

The smithing gem held up her hands apologetically with a sheepish smile. “Heh, sorry. Guess I got a little too excited about making this one.” She held up her hand to Connie, pretty much covering her entire mouth with it, and held her up with ease. “Keep forgetting humans aren’t as strong as gems.”

“You’ve been living here for a few years now. How is it you still don’t know these things?”

“Cut me some slack. I’m a gem, we measure weight and density differently on account of our bodies being hard light.” She tapped the colorful gem in her chest. “Plus, I’m a bismuth. We go with the flow.”

Connie rubbed her sore arms. “Your flow told you to make a sword I can’t even lift? I don’t even go on adventures anymore.”

She *should* feel happy that Earth was safe. That Steven was okay. And she was! In the years after that incident, he had been doing so great. Traveling around the world, learning, and finding himself. Connie kept on with her studies in college and had been making a lot of progress. She’d be graduating in a year or two after her thesis.

Once... she figured out what to base her thesis on.

Was it childish of her to miss those days? The adventures, the danger? She didn’t know.

“Hey, you always need a sword. You might end up running against a kexomite in the middle of class, and then what are you gonna do? Politely ask it not to breathe phosphine on you?” Bismuth snorted, amused at her own hypothetical situation. “Yeah, good luck with that.”

“Uhhh, what’s a kexomite?”

“Oh, *real* nasty alien beast. Let’s just say it’s one of the reasons that gems didn’t like organic life for a long while.” She tapped her chin in thought. “You know, homeworld still sends up their hunting expeditions to cull them.”

Connie balked in alarm. “Oh god!”

“Oh no no! It’s to keep their populations down! Trust me, those things breed like a plague, already infested several planets, and- I’ve gone off topic.” She scratched the back of her head awkwardly. “Anyway, I’m sorry, Connie. I wanted to get you a nice welcome home gift, and I blew it...”

“Oh, it’s okay, Bismuth.” She patted the large woman’s shoulder. “It’s just not made for my build.”

“Well, you’re still growing, right?” The gem prompted. “Maybe you’ll hit a nice growth spurt! Get the muscle to lift this bad boy!” She patted theommel a few times with a grin.

Connie chuckled. “Maybe. It’d have to be a *huge* spurt.” She had grown up quite a bit, now that she was eighteen. But, well, a young Indian woman like her. It was very unlikely she’d grown any bigger, given her own family. “I... don’t think I’d be able to use something like that without, like, power armor.”

“Then I’ll make you power armor too! And we can go hunt kexomites together!” The smith laughed, slapping the young human in the back and making her stumble. Connie swore she felt her bones rattle. It was a nice sentiment, but it just reminded Connie of her limitations.

“Tell you what, I’ll just get this to your home.” Bismuth easily picked up the sword, making Connie focus more on the gem’s strength than the masterful craftsmanship of the blade. “You talk to Peridot, she’s been wanting your input on something.”

“Sure,” She gratefully replied, hoping her parents wouldn’t mind the presence of a weapon none of them could even move. “Thanks, Bismuth.”

The gem clicked her tongue at her and winked, making a finger-gun gesture. Heh, for all their struggles to understand human culture and idioms, some things came naturally.

Alright, time to see what Peridot wanted.

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Little Homeworld was many things. A settlement for the gems. An integration school. A colonial hub where all the diplomacy between Earth and Homeworld happened. It was very amusing that the collective US government and the rest of the planet decided they did *not* want to deal with the alien empire nobody could do a thing about. Honestly, they had Steven to thank for the diamonds changing their ways.

Little Homeworld was also a research center of its own, where the most scientifically minded gems carried on their projects.

Connie was currently looking at the data from Peridot's tablet, looking over the chemical composition of her new experiment. "And it's safe?"

"The current step is *limiting* the effects." The small green gem spoke up while delicately holding a vial of blue liquid. She dropped a bit of the contents into a box of dirt, which was quickly absorbed. It took a few seconds before plants began to emerge, growing at an astonishing rate.

It was like a piece of backyard in a box, which was quickly growing into a jungle until the box opened on all sides.

"This is amazing, Peridot." Connie breathed out in awe. "Complete soil regeneration, mineral absorption, AND production at this rate... people could farm virtually anywhere." So many people could benefit from this,

"And we can undo the damage done to the kindergarten." Peridot brightly said. "The goal of this project was originally to return life to planets that have been devastated by colony production. But if we take it even further, we could even begin implementing it into beneficial terraforming processes." She coughed awkwardly into her hand. "Earth, uh, still bears the scars of homeworld's prior terraforming after all..."

"You're really are a sweetheart, aren't you?"

"Naturally! I'm the loveable and *brilliant*, Peridot!" She boasted with no small amount of pride. "It's still in the trial stages, of course." She pointed up, and Connie looked to the ceiling. She saw a long series of tubes carrying that same liquid. "It's all being tested on the kindergarten territory. There is ample evidence of the nutrient serum working, but we need to keep a close eye on it in case of overgrowth and potential mutations."

“You haven’t made sentient mutant plants, have you?”

“All test subjects have been accounted for.”

“That’s not a no.”

“All test subjects have been accounted for.” Peridot stressed with a nervous smile that said, ‘please don’t ask me about this’.

“Anyway, I just needed your help here to check the numbers. I figured a human would know their terrain better.”

“You could ask someone specialized in agriculture.” Connie pointed out.

“Why? You’re the smartest human I know.”

“That’s not how it works. Nor is it accurate... But thanks for the compliment.”

Peridot turned her gaze as a metallic groan and a hiss caught her attention. “Hang on, need to make sure the pressure pump is working right again.

As she walked away, Connie looked at the tablet again, looking for anything that might have slipped Peridot.

“There you are!” A sudden voice called out, tearing Connie’s attention from the tablet. “I’ve been calling you all day!”

“Mom?” Connie was surprised to see her here, of all places. “What are you doing here?”

The older Indian woman huffed in exhaustion and relief. “I’ve been looking all over for you. You haven’t answered your phone.”

“That’s weird,” She reached into her pocket and pulled it out. “I haven’t gotten any- Oh,” She winced. “Battery died.”

Priyanka sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "I needed to tell you both your father and I have late shifts tonight. I just needed to make sure you have your house key."

"I have it right here." She patted her other pocket.

"There is frozen food for the microwave--"

"Mom," She assured her with a small smile. "I live most of the year in a dorm, I know how to handle myself."

Her mother let out a tired sigh and have her a melancholic yet proud look. "I know, I know. I just can't help but worry. Trouble always seems to find you."

"Well, I haven't fought with aliens in a few years. So I should be good." Connie replied, ignoring how a part of her *wanted* that. But her mother didn't have to know that. "I'd say my days as a magnet trouble are far behind me."

It seemed that the universe had heard her and taken exception to that.

Because right after she said that, they heard a metallic groan right above them. The two looked up just in time to see one of the tubes rattling, the material was bending outwardly, as if it was overflowing.

"Oh no..."

The pipe *burst*, and the Maheswaran women were completely splattered in blue liquid.

The two remained frozen, their postures hunched over, their arms spread to the side as the blue liquid dribbled all over their forms. They shuddered with disgust as the blue substance coated everything from the last strand of hair to the fabric of their clothes.

Connie spat, tongue hanging as she spoke with a lisp. "Oh god, it got into my mouth...!"

Priyanka shivered, feeling absolutely gross and dirty. "What is this stuff?!"

Peridot walked into the scene with a horrified expression, looking *very* guilty as she squared her shoulders. In her hands, she held... a valve wheel.

"So... pressure valve broke."

The two women stared at her.

"I'll... prepare the decontamination shower for you."

Priyanka hissed through clenched teeth. "*Please do.*"

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After an uncomfortable decontamination shower that smelled of surfactants and very unpleasant soap, along with a fresh change of clothing provided by the gems (as their own had to be... disposed of), Connie and her mother sat tensely in the middle of a medical observation room. Well, medical as long as gem needs were concerned. They required different treatment than humans after all. The room was far more advanced than anything hospitals on Earth had.

When Peridot entered the room, Priyanka's glare intensified. "I do hope you have good news."

"Certainly! The brilliant Peridot delivers!" The green gem proudly stated.

The brilliant Peridot had also accidentally gotten them into this in the first place, but that didn't matter now. "So we'll be okay?" Connie asked. "That thing was loaded with so many chemicals that are straight up *alien* to this planet."

Priyanka paled at the suggestion of alien chemicals in their bodies.

"And that *would* be a concern." Peridot activated a projector on the side of the room, displaying a highly accurate hologram of the human body, along with several diagrams of the human genome and the chemical compounds found in Peridot's soil regenerative fertilizer. "But it is a good thing I took precautions when starting this project. One of the first things I

came up with in my designs was making sure this compound would only have a reaction when exposed to plant matter and mineral soil.”

“Humans share 20% to 50% of their genes with *plants*,” Priyanka exclaimed. “Wouldn’t that still cause a reaction?”

“It would if humans were *made* of plant matter.” Peridot pointedly replied. “You’re not. Animals and humans have protein forms that are much more complex. I took steps to make sure the chemicals would not harm advanced lifeforms beyond plants, otherwise the results would have been *really* unsightly.” She said. “The decontamination was because, well, it is still a bunch of chemicals in development. So, I had to make sure there wouldn’t be any allergic reactions, burns, or any other nasty side effects.”

“So, we were never in danger?” Connie summarized, leaning back in her seat with relief. “Oh, thank god...”

“But some of it must have been absorbed by our skin. It even got into our *mouths*.” Priyanka shuddered at the memory.

“Well, I was also preparing these for you.” She pulled out a couple of tablets from somewhere in her attire. “While the chemicals by themselves will not trigger a risky reaction in your systems, it’s better to be prepared just in case of side effects. At worst, it’ll be a mild mineral overdose.”

The mother and daughter took the tablets filled with pills. “What can we expect?”

“Dizziness, soreness, itchy skin, increased thirst, increased body temperature.” Peridot listed off with her fingers. “Your body will naturally flush the excess minerals. Don’t worry, I promise you that any weird sensation you feel is just your body doing its job.”

“I have work late tonight, Peridot.” Priyanka protested. “And I can’t change my shift. I can’t afford to feel sick.”

“The pills will act as a swift agent to counter any symptoms,” Peridot assured her.

“So, we’ll be okay to be on our own?” Connie asked.

“Definitely.”

Soon after, the Maheswaran duo walked out of Little Homeworld and into Priyanka’s car. “Are you sure you’ll be okay?” Her mother asked in concern. “I don’t like leaving you alone at home under these... conditions.”

“You heard Peridot, it’ll be fine.” Her science more often than not checked out. “What about you?”

“There is a nurse with me at the clinic tonight. I should be okay if anything happens.” Her mother sighed as they drove off. “Didn’t expect my day to go like this...”

“Well, this felt nostalgic for me.” Connie joked, trying to ease the tension.

“Not sure if being in potential danger because of aliens is something I’ll remember fondly...”

What they did not know, what Peridot had not taken into account, was that while human physiology was not made of plant matter, they still possessed the presence of such lifeforms in their systems.

After all, plants are one of the staples in a healthy human’s diet. Fruit and vegetables, seeds. Processed and yet to be processed by the stomach acids within the last twelve hours. Proteins and vitamins found in those foods had been absorbed by the body, and now came into contact with chemicals designed to stimulate growth and regeneration in those substances.

Inside their bodies, the chemicals began to do their work.

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It was barely 9 o’clock when Connie started feeling bored. As the sole occupant right now, the house was very quiet; she had long since eaten her dinner and cleaned her plate. And now tried to keep herself busy by scrolling through her phone.

She kept thinking of today's events (not the fertilizer dumped on her, she had long since grown past that), of the sword Bismuth had gifted her. The same sword that was now buried tip-first in her backyard.

Connie replayed that moment over and over. It wasn't just the weight of the sword and her inability to pull it out that bothered her. It was what it represented in her mind. Not being able to pick up the sword felt like being unable to continue a life of adventure. She wasn't ungrateful for how her life was going, far from it. Studying at college was a rewarding experience that'd prepare her for the future.

But was that the only future that awaited her? A job, an office, or something similar?

She remembered when she first picked up Rose's sword. When she started training with Pearl. Coming from such a previously-restraining home, it felt beyond liberating to engage in fights with her life on the line. The adrenaline, the rush...

Connie did not want to close that chapter of her life. She wanted to keep writing.

But life moved on, blessed peace settled on the world, and the adventures seemed to end.

Such a wonderful part of her life, which had *defined* her as a person and helped her so much in her relationship with her parents. The gems, Steven, they would always be a part of her life.

But without the challenge that came with their adventures? Without the chances to keep growing and marveling at the mysteries of the cosmos? It felt like the only things left in her development would be stagnation, banality.

How was she meant to grow stronger and face greater challenges if she wasn't challenged?

How was she meant to face them at all if she couldn't get stronger?

What a Catch 22...

Connie sighed to herself, leaning back against the couch and putting the phone down. She pinched the bridge of her nose, feeling exhausted all of a sudden. She walked up to the wall to crank up the speed of the fan, feeling her body running hot.

Halfway back to the couch, she realized she was experiencing the symptoms Peridot talked about. She grabbed one of the tablets and popped a pill before going over to the kitchen and filling a glass with water. She swallowed the pill and drank greedily, God, she felt so thirsty...

Her hands were clammy, her skin felt sweaty and irritated, like ants were crawling under it...

Maybe... Maybe she should lie down.

Yeah, some rest would do her good.

“Ugh!” Connie stumbled with a sudden spasm, almost knocking a chair down as she landed on all fours. Her fingers bent as they pressed against the floor tile; she squeezed her eyes shut as another twist of pain made her stomach rumble. “Hng!” She groaned in discomfort, feeling like she was experiencing a stomachache.