
Nina Dallas is inside of the botany lab, late in the night cycle. Laurel Scoresby is scratching out the last few lines in her lab book for the night, tallying up the amount of solvents used and making reminders to top up various jars and vats bubbling away quietly within the lab. A tumbler shakes a bottle of algae loudly in the corner.

NINA DALLAS

Dr. Scoresby?

Nina's voice is quiet, timid- as she closes the cabinets, having put her microscope back in for the night, it's extension cord coiled tightly around the body of the piece.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Yes, Nina?

Laurel doesn't look up from her work. She crosses out a line- the ink of her pen thick and vividly blue, rewriting carefully, in a smaller, cramped hand. The page is claustrophobic with information.

NINA DALLAS

Is it alright if I ask you a question?

Nina is shifting her weight from foot to foot, nervously. She brushes some of her dark hair out of her face, eyes liquid and watery underneath the dim lighting of the laboratory at large, contrasting with the bright amber pool of light from Laurel's desk lamp.

LAUREL SCORESBY

You've already done so.

NINA DALLAS

...Oh.

Nina falters, shoulders slumping downwards. Her cheeks are bright with embarrassment.

LAUREL SCORESBY

But you're free to ask me another.

Laurel chuckles.

She sets her pen down on the desk, presumably giving Nina her full attention- or at least a larger slice of it, as she lets her hair down from its tight bun, the red curls cascading and framing her face.

NINA DALLAS

Well- I wanted to know what drew you to the ISS Pathfinder, in particular.

LAUREL SCORESBY

For many of the same reasons you find yourself on board, I imagine.

Laurel sounds bored, dismissive- her voice dry, as usual.

NINA DALLAS

But- it wasn't exactly, well. How to say this... As prestigious as it was, when you were young.

Nina fidgets. She twirls a little plastic bracelet around her hair- meant to be a hair tie.

Her wrist is delicate enough that it fits snugly, the sparkles embedded in the clear plastic shimmering as she twists it to and fro.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Do you think that I'm *that* old?

Laurel's voice is playful.

NINA DALLAS

N-no, of course not!

Laurel laughs, as Nina's eyes widen, hands held up as if to show that her palms are empty- and she means no harm.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I'm only ribbing you. I am turning 48 this coming weekend, it'd be a fair assumption- and a correct assessment.

NINA DALLAS

Oh- well, a happy early birthday, Dr. Scoresby!

Nina seems surprised. She recovers quickly though, voice bright and cheery as she wishes her well.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Thank you, Nina. Circling back to the point...

Laurel pauses for a moment. Her voice is soft, dreamy- far from the cold tones of academia and someone who is deeply comfortable with her position within those lofty towers that she normally uses.

She props her face up with one hand, the pen rolling away from the inside of her ledger book as she does so. She doesn't move to catch it, but it stops very slightly from the edge of the desk.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I suppose you could say- that escaping to the stars was something I heavily romanticized, when I was about your age.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I wanted to see what more the universe had to offer. I was hungry for it.

Nina smiles. The nerves seem to have drained from her, as she settles down onto one of the stools inside of the lab.

NINA DALLAS

That's rather romantic. I didn't- exactly expect that, out of you, Dr. Scoresby.

LAUREL SCORESBY

What can I say? I'm a woman of many hats.

Laurel's smile is slightly crooked to one side- the slant making it look like more of a smirk. She turns to face Nina, pivoting in her chair at the waist- as she considers Nina thoughtfully, looking at her backlit by the burbling aquaponics tanks streaming away in the background.

A tilapia slaps up against the side of the glass tank, disturbing her consideration of Nina.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I think you have a little of that same yearning, Dr. Dallas.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Cherish that.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I can't tell you where it'll take you- but it'll take you far.

NINA DALLAS

Do you really?

Nina's voice is small, awed- as she looks up at Laurel with shining eyes.

She clasps her hands together, unconscious of the gesture, folded in her lap- like a model student drinking in words of praise from her favourite school teacher.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I wouldn't say it, if I didn't think it to be true.

NINA DALLAS

Gosh...

Nina touches her face slightly, as if to make sure that she really isn't awake- that she isn't dreaming.

Her cheeks are dusted in pink, smile widening to a toothy grin.

She has a slight gap in between her front teeth.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Don't forget to scrub the glassware, now. I'll leave you to get to it.
Lock the lab up when you've left.

Laurel picks up the pen- places it into a holder on her desk.

She dusts her knees off, and unbuttons her lab coat, before folding it tidily.

She slides it into a chute meant to shuttle it off towards the laundry room on board, the linen sliding and thudding around in the metal tunnel as it goes off on it's way.

NINA DALLAS

Yes, Dr. Scoresby- I'll see you in the morning!

Nina hops up from her seat, eager to show her willingness to commit to her job.

Laurel just smiles, looking off to the side- a tinge of nostalgia touching her expression.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I'll see you in the morning, Nina.

Laurel exits the lab, making sure to catch the edge of the door with her fingers as it swings shut- quieting the sound as the latch clicks into place.
