

# *Last of Her Kind*

Book Sample



<http://amzn.to/2y1HJvg>

## Prologue

In serene, black-enshrouded silence, Earth turned on its axis, a sharp contrast to the bustling reality on the surface. The gaze of a hidden mind slipped past the blue and white sphere, shifting between burning stars and vast planetary systems, all of which moved according to their own placid, pre-determined paths. His interest focused on one planet, Lux, a world of light beings, luminous in the reflection of their own glory.

On the balcony of the Capitol building, as the sun nestled itself over the horizon, two figures faced each other. Roux, a Luxonian guardian, glowed as a golden brown, humanoid figure, while Sterling, draped in his Supreme Judge robes, shimmered yellow-white, faintly defined by his elderly human outline.

Sterling, somber and erect, turned his back on Roux and faced the Luxonian world gloriously set before him. The sky burst with brilliant colors, while shreds of gray clouds drifted aside and revealed three distinct moons. His voice rumbled.

“You understand your role when you return?” Roux grinned, a mischievous sparkle in his luminous eyes. “I’m your inside man, a guardian and—a spy.” Sterling pulled his mesmerized gaze from the scene and faced his companion. “You use such colorful phrases, Roux. All I ask is that you stay alert. Watch for an opportunity.”

“For what, exactly?”

“I’m not sure. Humanity won’t survive the coming crisis. But Earth will remain.”

The sparkle faded and Roux’s features hardened, defining his human figure in greater detail. His curly, black hair, sharp chin, and muscled arms clarified his youth but little else. His eyebrows rose. “You’re going to harvest an abandoned planet?”

“Whatever is left. Perhaps more. Maybe the remnant. We need help, too. You do realize that?”

Roux sighed, his broad shoulders slumping. As he strode across the room,

his figure gained definition. He snatched up a stack of clothes with a pair of shoes perched on top.

“It’s them or us?”

Spreading his shimmering arms wide, Sterling returned to the setting sun. “Let’s just say that their loss may be our gain.”

In a few steps, Roux retreated behind a partitioned wall. A zipping sound punctuated his grunted words, and shoe thumps pounded against the hard ground. “And Cerulean? You know—how he—feels—about humanity.”

Sterling stepped to the very edge of the balcony, his eyes following the sinking glow. “I’m afraid I do. So like his father. But not like his son. I’ve sent Viridian over, just in case.

Roux reentered the room dressed in jeans, a sweater, and a pair of tan loafers on the wrong feet. He frowned at Sterling. “To take his place?”

Sterling shrugged, stared at the shoes, and then returned his gaze to the horizon line. “We’ll see. Time is running out. Do your job, and we might just survive.”

April

## Their Place in the Universe

Bright sunlight flooded the bedroom, casting a glow around Anne, the center of Cerulean’s universe. Unaware of being observed, Anne stared at the white rectangular stick in her right hand. Her left hand moved to her middle as her eyes widened. Her lips trembled. “Damn!” Taking one last look at the stick, she blinked back tears.

Her disappointment surprised Cerulean; she had never given any indication that she wanted children. The last time he had visited, she had made it quite clear that she never wanted children. She had been seventeen then; she was twenty-seven now. Things had obviously changed.

Dropping the testing stick into the trashcan, Anne flushed the toilet, her face pale and pinched. She stepped into her bedroom.

Peering through the open doorway, Cerulean contemplated the wedding photo on the dresser. Had her husband wanted children? Ten years ago, Anne had wanted nothing more than to concentrate on a career and travel. Framed teacher certificates, graduation photos, and vacation pictures now lined the walls. Cerulean had no doubt in his mind; Anne may be established, but she was not happy.

“Stupid!” Anne pulled on her blouse and adjusted her skirt, “Dang it, why doesn’t this skirt ever hang right?” Tugging at the waistband, she adjusted her clothes and then glared at the mirror. She turned side- ways, smoothed her hand down her slim figure, eyed her 5’ 6” frame, and then patted a few stray hairs back into place. Her weight was good; her brown eyes were steady, her skin clear and tanned. Wiping away the last vestige of a tear, she pinched her cheeks to add color. Her chestnut hair hung down her back in a thick braid.

Cerulean evaluated the grown woman before him. There was nothing extraordinary about her, but then there was nothing to object to either. To his surprise, Cerulean felt a sensation run through his being, a sensation he thought had died with his wife. When Anne’s brows furrowed as she silently surveyed the room, Cerulean dimmed his exuberance. Could she feel his presence?

Anne looked at the closed door and then the window. The view went on for miles with no interruption in sight. Only the birds flying by could see anything. If they tried. Which they wouldn’t. “Stupid birds!” Anne hurried into her stockings and bundled her nightclothes onto the bed. “Later.”

Cerulean’s gaze shifted as Anne’s husband, Philip, walked into the room. The lawyer tapped his expensive watch. “Do you know what time it is? You’ll be late.”

With an exaggerated sigh, Anne scowled. “Don’t remind me, Philip. I’m never late, and I don’t want to start a rumor that I’ve died or something.” Anne wiggled her foot into her shoe and shook her head. “Fifth grade is precarious enough without giving them that anxiety.”

Slender with sandy blond hair and deep blue eyes, Philip moved across

the room in fluid, confident steps. “Anything wrong? You seem a little tense. I could—” His hands opened in a beckoning motion.

Anne stared, daring him to say one more word. Philip’s hands dropped to his side as he shut his mouth. Anne waved her finger. “You better stop. I’m in no mood. Now grab me that sweater, and I’ll be out of here.”

Surveying the assortment of skirts, sweaters, and various apparel draped across a chair, Philip gestured. “Which one, the black or the blue?”

“Give me the black one. I feel like I’ve been to a funeral.”

After handing her the sweater, Philip ignored the earlier warning and reached out, putting his hands on her shoulders and gently massaging them. “You going to be okay?”

Anne stiffened as she blinked back new tears. “No, but that doesn’t matter. I’m an idiot. I should have my head examined. Or my heart.” With an unrelenting shrug, Anne moved past her husband. “Sorry, but I’ve got to go.” She rushed through the door.

Philip shook his head as he watched her disappear, her shoes clicking down the steps. A moment later the front door slammed. Walking over to the dresser, Philip swiped up his car keys. He started to whistle and then stopped. The sound of water running caught his ear. Stepping into the bathroom, his gaze fell on the towels lying askew. He frowned.

After jiggling the toilet handle, he snatched up a piece of paper from the floor and bent over to throw it in the garbage. The testing kit caught his eye. He lifted it, examined its single pink line and, with another shake of his head, dropped it into the trashcan. While examining his reflection in the mirror, Philip adjusted his tie with a slight nod of approval to his well-tailored suit. Running his fingers through his hair, he appraised his chin where he had nicked himself earlier. After a final adjustment of his suit coat, he left the room. His footfalls made hollow thumps as he sped down the steps. In a moment, the front door slammed a second time.

A brief flash of light illuminated the bedroom as Cerulean appeared with

his son at his side. Dressed in jeans and a brown leather jacket, Cerulean had assumed the look of a muscular, middle-aged man. A few streaks of gray in his dark hair and a couple days' growth of beard gave him a casual but dignified look. His somber, brown eyes bore testimony to a spirit, which had experienced more than words could say.

His gaze rolled over his son. "Observe, Viridian: humans have the capacity to lie, even to themselves. We are not allowed that luxury." A flash of anxiety filled the youth's eyes. His bulky figure with brown hair, brown eyes, and tan skin stood hunched in dejection. Flicking a lock of his son's hair back into place and examining his human form, Cerulean changed the subject. "I like it. The look suits you. It took me a long time to get used to a human body, but now the transition is easy. I like the sensation: limiting yet strangely safe. I understand them better this way."

The lock of hair slid back into Viridian's eyes. "I hate it. Humans don't admire fat boys. I'm as ordinary as a rock."

Cerulean nodded. "Exactly. You're an uninteresting, teenage boy, a boy who will excite no comment and attract no attention. Besides, I like your coloring: variations on a simple theme, so different from our natural state. Light captures every color, but humans, they make do with less. They can find great beauty in mere shades. And you're not unattractive—plump maybe, but not overweight. In any case, *I* know what you really look like. Humans would be overwhelmed. As it is now, you won't excite much interest."

"Interest? I'm repulsive." Viridian paced across the room. "Humans will avoid me like one of their plagues! And besides that, I can hardly move. How do they see anything? It's like being underwater. Everything is so distorted and blurred."

"You'll get used to it. True observation is more than seeing with the eyes. Besides, if we are to observe, we must be able to interact, at least sometimes. And we can't interact well if we don't at least appear human. Though there are guardians who like to take animal or plant form." An image of a rodent-guardian he once knew came to mind. Cerulean stifled a shiver. "I don't enjoy that so much."

Hunching his shoulders, Viridian stuffed his hands in his pockets. “But what if something happens—something unexpected? What if someone attacks us? Or there’s a storm and the house falls on us, or one of their insane vehicles crash into us? What then?”

“We get out of the way if possible, but if necessary, we die and come back later.”

“Humans will want to know who we are, who our bodies are any- way.”

“Humans face conundrums all the time. Eventually, they just close the file.” Cerulean’s brows furrowed. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were frightened.”

“I am not frightened!” Viridian scowled. “I just don’t like it here. Sorry if this offends you, but humans are pitiful. They’re not like us at all.”

Taking a few steps away, Cerulean folded his arms over his chest.

“You’re not here to do a comparative study, just learn your place. You’ll be a guardian when your time comes, and you must be willing to see everything but not judge. Judging is for others.”

Cerulean gazed out the window. His son would have to learn, as he had learned after long years of service. How long ago? It had been centuries. He had followed in his father’s footsteps, as he did his, a long tradition that wound back seven thousand years, for as long as Luxonians had been observing this race. Before that time.... Well, there hadn’t been much to see.

Viridian surveyed the silent room. “So why here? Why this one? What’s so special about her?”

With a deep sigh, Cerulean marched into the bathroom. “It’s an odd thing about humans. They’re surprising. I once heard a well-known, human author declare that no one cares about the man on the bus or the woman in the grocery store. But he was wrong. That’s where I first noticed Anne—in the grocery store. She was with her mother, and though she was only seven, she actually helped. Unlike most children, she knew how to keep to the designated list. Her mother was ill, a frightened woman, terribly frightened. Margaret—that was her name—she saw danger everywhere.

She once told Anne that when they drove up a hill, the other side might not be there. Anne learned to cope with fear early on. I could see her strength—even then.”

Stepping over to the trashcan, Viridian pointed inside. “She was afraid today. She was afraid when she thought that she might be pregnant.” “No, that’s where you’re wrong. You must be more careful. Don’t leap to conclusions too quickly. You must not only look at the actions but the motivations.” Cerulean’s eyes darted to the wedding picture on the wall as he moved back into the bedroom. “Why did Anne act as she did? She was not frightened that she might be pregnant; she was frightened when she realized that she *wanted* to be pregnant. And well she might be.”

Viridian sneered, one eyebrow rising. “Why?”

Pursing his lips, Cerulean strode to the window. A sharp pang of disappointment disturbed his usual equilibrium. With forced detachment, he pointed at the sky. “We can come and go. We know there are more worlds than our own. We’ve been observing various races from time out of mind. But she,” Cerulean turned back to the picture of Anne and Philip on the dresser, “she knows nothing about us, or our kind, or that the human race is not alone. She both fears and craves intimacy, the kind of intimacy motherhood would demand. Humans are often blinded by fear. I have observed for a full year every decade. This is the third time I’ve met Anne, but I never know when it will be the last.”

Viridian bit his lip.

Cerulean patted his son on the shoulder as a brief flicker of hope welled up inside. “It’s time to go. Anne will be at school, and our job is to observe. Let’s see what she’s up to now.” He started forward, but his son stood silent, unmoving. Cerulean heaved a heavy sigh and stopped. “What?”

“How long will we watch them? I mean; will I have to do this my whole life?”

Cerulean tried not to let the question hurt too much. “I don’t know. The human race won’t last forever.”

Gazing up at the sky, Viridian stepped to the window. “Is it a punishment? Their not lasting very long?”

A cloud covered the sun, plunging the room into shadows. “Remember, we don’t judge. We observe. Funny, though. Humans believe their end will come with fire and storm, war and pestilence. But not necessarily. Their end might come slowly, quietly, like a sunset with no sunrise.”

Viridian sucked in his breath and glared at his father. “Should we warn them? What’s the point of observing them if they’re just going to die anyway?”

“That’s not for us to decide. We observe to learn. Eventually, humans will understand their place in the universe, and we’ll watch until they do.”

With one last look around the silent room, Cerulean raised his hand in command. “Let’s go.” He stepped forward.

Viridian hesitated for an instant. With a brief flicker of intense light, they both disappeared.

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Her nonfiction work focuses on the intersection of motherhood, widowhood, practicing gratitude, and rediscovering joy.

Her fiction novels expand from the OldEarth world to the Newearth universe—where deception rules but truth prevails.

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