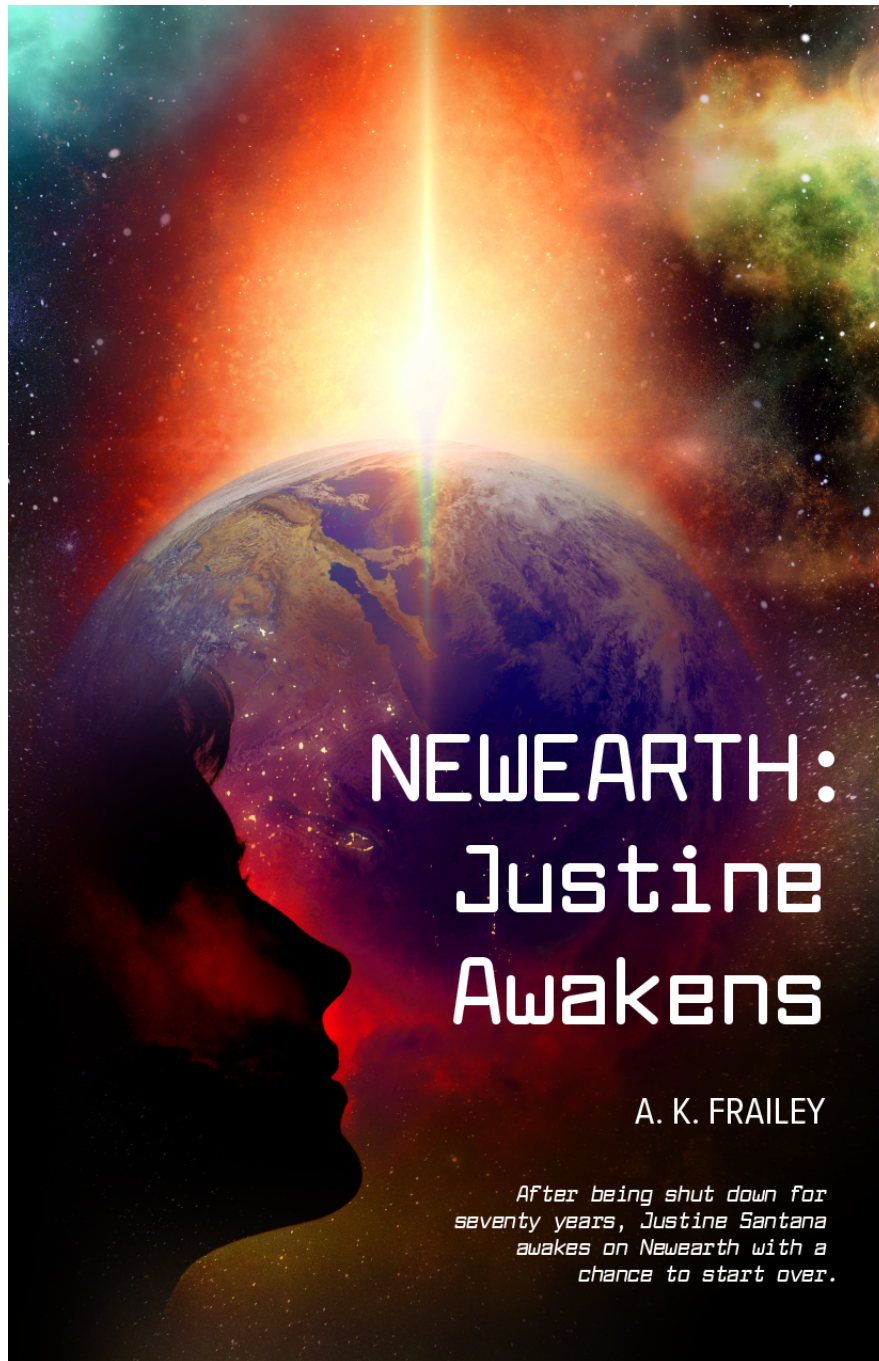


Newearth Justine Awakens

Book Sample



<http://amzn.to/2pq0vWN>

ALIEN RACES

Bhuac: A gelatinous race with no set “form” from the planet Helm. They can mold themselves into the likeness of a variety of races.

Cresta: A techno-organic race from the planet Crestar with long, soft bodies, tentacles, and large, watery eyes. They speak in a synthesized voice, and their large “brain sack” lays hidden behind a spiral shell. They wear breathing helms when not on their own water-based planet.

Ingot: A cyborg race from planet Ingilium that wears bulky techno-organic armor and breather helms built directly into their bodies.

Luxonian: Light beings from the planet Lux. Luxonians send out Guardians on a regular basis to observe alien cultures in order to protect their interests in the region.

Uanyi: Small, slim creatures from the planet Sectine, standing about four to five feet tall, insect-like, with soft, rubbery exoskeletons, enormous eyes, and wear a breathing mask that covers their crab-like mandibles.

Cerulean, a Luxonian light being, prayed to an unknown God amid the swirling masses. The tips of his fingers touched steeple style as he appeared in his favorite form: a muscular, middle-aged man with soulful, blue eyes and a determined chin. He sat on a dais facing a massive assembly and squared his shoulders. The crowded, domed hall decorated with statues of long dead but never-to-be-forgotten members of the Inter-Alien Alliance Committee resonated with numerous murmuring conversations. As his gaze flowed over the squirming court of very-much-alive representatives of six races, Cerulean’s mind slipped back to the love of his life, Anne Smith, whom he had buried under a blooming apple tree on Oldearth twenty-three years before.

He closed his eyes to the memory. After a deep breath, he reopened them to face the trial of another woman of interest: Justine Santana, an android and one of the most notorious weapons ever used during the Intergalactic Oskilth War.

After a despairing human remnant abandoned Earth and fled to Lux, Cerulean crafted a resettlement plan for Newearth, but war intervened. Now, after the last war crimes trial, he would finally be free to help humanity resettle on Newearth.

But this trial must come first. After all, Justine was human too....

PROLOGUE

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CHAPTER ONE

All My Sins Remembered

“We have definite...” The Luxonian Supreme Judge in a trim human form and dressed in a dark blue robe, stirred in her seat, “...proof that you assassinated well over a hundred and fifty beings on the troop transport called...” She glanced down at a datapad, “...the *Generous Sharon*.” She fixed her black-eyed gaze on the lone figure standing on the floating dock with narrowed eyes.

Well over fifty delegates had gathered at Bothmal Criminal Court and sat on comfortable chairs, each tailored for a particular species. Every sentient race on the Inter-Alien Alliance Committee, including Ingots, Uanyi, Crestas, Luxonians, Bhuacs, and humans had at least one representative in attendance. No race wanted to be absent from this trial. Hundreds more sat in the court’s upper wings, savoring the spectacle while millions watched the unfolding drama on holoscreens.

The figure standing silently at the center of this hurricane of watchful emotion was a biomechanical hybrid, an android built in female form, in this case, human. Long black hair fell like a cascading waterfall down her back; her blue eyes stared straight ahead, peering into shadows. Massive cuffs, secured with powerful magnets and chains, were locked tightly about her wrists and ankles.

The android moved slightly, shifting her weight from one leg to the

other. An expectant hush settled over the assembly. The silvery rattle and clanking of chains broke the quiet.

“Well?” The Supreme Judge leaned forward in her chair, fixing the prisoner with narrowed eyes and lowered brows.

“Yes.” The word was a sigh, not of regret, but of weariness or boredom. “Yes, I killed them.” She glanced up at the massive holoscreen hovering over the assembly. On its curved surface the security recordings from the *Generous Sharon* played on a constant loop. “My guilt is...pretty obvious. There’s no point denying it.” A small smile curved at the corners of her lips.

Cerulean shifted to the edge of his seat and coughed lightly into his hand. “If I may ask, why?”

Pondering a moment, the android straightened. “They were in my way.” Her musical, almost bell-like voice would have been lost in the echoing chamber if not for the amplifiers.

“Justine, correct?” Cerulean folded his hands into his long robes, leaning forward.

“That is my name.”

“It was necessary, you say. Did you feel no...revulsion? Pity? Empathy? How could it be necessary to end the lives of over a hundred beings?”

Justine placed her shackled hands on the dock’s rails. “You work in this hall. Did you ask the building permission to occupy it? What its feelings were?”

Two delegates, a Cresta and a human, spoke at once.

“So, you compare yourself to an inanimate object?”

“Are you suggesting that you, as an android, cannot be sentient?”

The human representative's fingers nervously played with a datapad.

Cerulean raised his hand. "Justine, I've read the reports, your psychological profile." He cocked his head. "You've made jokes, noted ironies—shown a full range of emotions. Are you suggesting that, like an inanimate object, you can't feel or rather, that you had no choice?"

Justine looked at the human, turning slightly. "The Inter-Alien Commission declared that it is impossible for a robot to be sentient. That is your belief. I say nothing about my own." She fastened her cold, blue eyes on the Cresta. "I am the product of fetal tissue and a computer. How much choice do I have?" Her lips curved mockingly.

"Well, we know she appreciates sarcasm." The Cresta's dry wit drew a chuckle from the crowd.

The Supreme Judge rapped her gavel on the metallic podium. "Order! Order!"

Silence fell as the Cresta representative raised his voice to speak once more. "What are we doing here?" The silence continued as the Cresta chair detached from its mooring and floated before the assembly. "Does no one here appreciate the irony that we are, in fact, holding a trial for a gun?" The chair slowly revolved as the Cresta looked at each of the delegates in turn. "Thousands of machines, robots, and androids were used on both sides of the late Oskilth Civil War. This particular gun," The Cresta gestured with a free tentacle, "just happened to kill its targets more effectively than most."

The android remained still, her mouth drawn in a hard line.

"No, the real reason we're here is because the ringleaders of the war escaped, and now, like hatchlings, you stage an elaborate

show, desperate to vent your frustrations on *something*.” The Cresta floated back, locking his chair in place, his tentacles wiggling smugly.

The courtroom erupted into roars; many in the assembly leapt to their feet.

“Bold words, coming from you who never suffered an invasion!” The Bhuac representative shimmered as he struggled to maintain his human form.

The Cresta snorted water through his breathing helm dismissively. “To be frank, I don’t care what you do with it. Let’s wipe its memories and be done with it.”

“Memories make us who we are! Wiping her memories is a death sentence.” Cerulean’s voice reflected stern determination in contrast to the discord all around.

“Order! Order!” The hard smack of the gavel echoed over the uproar. “Any further disturbance and this courtroom will be cleared!” Noise subsided as the judge’s sharp gaze scoured the room. “The fate of the accused will be decided by the jury at the proper time.”

“If I may speak before they adjourn?” Cerulean rose to his feet.

The Supreme Judge nodded.

“Thank you.” Cerulean’s chair floated before the assembly. He paused a moment. “Fellow beings, I have studied many different sentient races, my own included.” He looked down at the android, who continued to stare off into space.

“I believe that this being calling herself Justine Santana is both sentient and aware, although,” he raised his hand as the human delegate jumped to her feet, “I’m also aware that this is only my opinion. I believe that she was not fully responsible for her actions.

My argument against the death sentence, or memory wipe, is not based on opinion, however.” His back straight, he gazed into the throng, his hands gripping the guard-rail. “Once destroyed, her memories are gone—forever beyond our reach.”

The Cresta representative’s tentacles gently caressed his bio-suit, his eyes fixed intently on the Luxonian, his tendrils wiggling thoughtfully.

“Who knows when, or how, the data stored in her brain could benefit one of us.” Bowing, Cerulean returned his chair to its original location.

No one in the massive courtroom noticed the subtle flicker in Justine’s eyes as she appraised the Luxonian before he sat down, storing his features in her data files.

Many of the delegates muttered and whispered, while expressions of indecision crossed their faces.

“If no one else has anything to say...” The Supreme Judge’s head swiveled, appraising the vast crowd. “No one? Very well—” she pointed to the assembly of six beings representing each race sitting at her left “the jury may now adjourn.”

Justine sat alone in a Bothmal holding cell, lit only by a dim, red light. Her chains had not been removed, but they did not hinder her as she dabbed paint, faster than the eye could follow, on a bare, white board.

With a hissing squeak a small, thickly barred window opened in the fat cell door.

“You.” Her hand continued to flicker over the white board. She remained focused on her work.

“Yes, me.” The Luxonian tilted his head, peering down through the bars. “You draw?” He nodded at the rapidly filling canvas.

“Paint.” She tilted her head, lips pursed. “It helps pass the time. A cheap means to keep the prisoner quiet. You have the advantage. You know my name, but I don’t know yours.”

“Cerulean.”

“Thank you, Cerulean.”

“You’re thanking me for...?”

“I may be an unrepentant murderer, but I still appreciate those who aid me.” Her brush paused mid-stroke. “Your speech out there is the only reason they’re having any discussion about my fate at all.” Her brush continued to dance across the board.

“I read the full reports.”

“Really?”

“I was probably the only one to do so.”

Justine’s sigh was barely audible. “This trial was pure politics.”

Cerulean wrapped his fingers around the bars, tilting his head to view as much of Justine’s face as possible. “Your objective was to disable the troop carrier?”

She shrugged. “Yes.”

Cerulean’s voice rose slightly. “I’ve seen the carrier’s blueprints. Deck forty-two A and rooms thirty-two C and B were nowhere near the command room. I saw where you breached the ship. You doubled back and deliberately searched those rooms. Why?”

Justine smiled coldly, her hand moving a bit faster, the tip of the brush a blur. “Maybe I just like to kill.” Cerulean pursed his lips. “Then why were troopers Alex and Jerrod left alive?”

Her mouth drew into a tight line. “Maybe I missed them. Maybe I

thought they were already dead.”

“I read your specs. Enhanced senses, hearing, sight.... You can hear a heartbeat from a hundred meters away.”

The brush moved faster.

“Trooper Jerrod thought it was a miracle that the escape pod managed to fire on autopilot.”

Justine’s mouth twisted into a mocking smile. “So, what’s your explanation?”

“You resent humans, hate them, and by extension their allies. You saw it as payback, didn’t you, as justice? But when you saw trooper Jerrod trying to stanch his comrade’s wound, even as he was bleeding out himself, you couldn’t bring yourself to press the trigger. Even though it went against orders, you lowered your gun.”

“A charming story. But why wasn’t that...story used to play to the court’s sympathy?” The brush tip filled in tiny details.

“Unlike the Cresta, I don’t see a gun. I don’t see a cold, calculating machine.” His voice softened. “I see a very scared woman who desperately wants to seem strong in her final moments.”

The brush froze. Justine’s head lowered, and for a second, the proud shoulders sagged. The moment passed as her head lifted again, a confident smile playing on her face. “Really?” She raised an eyebrow. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” She carefully laid the brush aside. “It’s finished. What do you think?” She displayed the painting in the crook of her arm.

His eyes widening, Cerulean stared into a portrait of himself, true to life on even the tiniest of hair ends. “It’s...beautifully done.”

“Thank you. Keep it.” She set the painting aside before making eye

contact with Cerulean for the first time.

Cerulean swallowed a lump in his throat. “I don’t know what to say. I’m honored.”

“You can hang it on your wall or throw it in the trash. Whichever you prefer.” Justine rose. “Anything else?”

Cerulean stood thoughtfully before he shook his head. “No.”

“Then goodbye.”

Cerulean turned to go. He closed his eyes as a sudden wave of dizziness swept over him. Squaring his shoulders, he forced open his eyes and marched down the long, dim hall.

Justine called after him. “You know, if I had killed them and blown up the ship, there wouldn’t have been anything to identify me. I wouldn’t be here right now.” Justine’s voice echoed down the tunnel, her face and hands pressed against the bars. “No good deed goes unpunished, right?”

Cerulean stopped in midstride and looked back. “Everything we do has consequences. Alex and Jerrod are still alive.”

Silence.

“I hope you find happiness.” Justine’s fingers rubbed against the bars as the window slowly moved. “You too.”

“Not likely.”

The window shut with a clang. Cerulean stood in the dim, red light, his hands clasped, his head bowed.

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“This jury has found you guilty.” The Supreme Judge craned her neck.

Justine stood alone on the floating dock, her wrists and ankles bound with chains.

“Do you have anything to say?”

A mocking grin formed at the corners of Justine’s lips. “I regret nothing.”

“Very well.” The Supreme Judge frowned. “I will read your sentence. You are to be turned off, and your body will be locked in Bothmal Penal Internment forever or until such time as the information encrypted into your brain is deemed useful. Do you understand?”

“I do.”

Two security drones placed heavy hands on Justine’s shoulders and led her from the room.

One by one, the delegates filed out and the vast wings emptied. The courtroom grew dark as millions of holoscreens switched to yet another stream. Within a few days, the delegates and judge would relegate these memories to deep storage or utter forgetfulness.

Cerulean stood at the head of a large, metal table. He was the only one in the small, red-lit room that wasn’t a prisoner, guard, or a technician.

“You came.” Justine lay flat on the table. Large metal bands secured her legs, arms, and neck. She twisted her head slightly, smiling crookedly at Cerulean. “To sleep, perchance to dream; aye, there’s the rub...all my sins remembered.”

“Oldearth poetry?”

“A point well made. ‘To be or not to be....’”

Cerulean patted the helpless hand. “It’ll be...all right.”

A frown puckered Justine’s brow. “Being turned off isn’t like going to sleep, you know.” She turned away. “When a human sleeps, their mind is turning, working, dreaming. When a robot is turned off, its mind is completely inert. Dead.” She gazed fixedly ahead, her mouth set in a grim line.

Cerulean sucked in a breath. “But this way, there’s at least a chance...for you to...come back.”

“Thanks.”

A technician cleared his throat. “It’s time. Sorry.”

Justine’s fingers gripped the air, her hand opening and closing, her jaws clenched. Her voice became a whisper. “I’m... scared....”

Cerulean placed his hands on hers.

The technician swiped a bar on his datapad.

Cerulean watched Justine’s eyes widen and freeze, her mechanical body jerking against the restraints like a living thing. Her hand fell limp and no longer gripped his. His jaw clenched as he swallowed hard. “Goodbye, Justine.”

“Sir?” The technician looked up from his datapad, a puzzled frown on his face.

The table slid into a receiving hole in the wall.

“Nothing.” Cerulean turned away.

“It wasn’t human. Sir...?”

The door clanged behind Cerulean.

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As a teacher with a degree in Elementary Education who has taught in big cities and small towns, Ann Frailey homeschooled all of her children. She manages her rural homestead with her kids and their numerous critters. She writes books and a Friday blog alternating between short stories and her *My Road Goes Ever On* series.

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.

She earned a Masters of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing for Entertainment from Full Sail University.

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