



**The Old Kind**  
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# **The Old Kind**

By Claire Farrell

A sci-fi tale

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I could hardly believe my eyes when the alien fell to his knees. We all glanced at each other, not quite sure what to do now that we'd achieved that previously unattainable goal. The rock had hit the right spot. He sank down slowly, his face finally resting on grass that was stained purple from his blood. A few seconds silence was followed by a quiet celebration that we had finally captured one of them. We still called them aliens, even now, after three centuries of colonization by the Raffians. This one had probably been born here but it would always be an alien to us. Of course, born was a broad term, their process was nothing like our methods of reproduction.

I approached the alien's lifeless form. He was alive; I knew that of course, they couldn't die. But he seemed less than alive there on the ground. I knelt beside him; it was the closest I had ever come to a real Raffian. I had been well sheltered in our hiding place. Born and reared there. There were few of us left, small groups all hiding in secret places scattered around the world. Doing anything to avoid them. The aliens. The ones who had come to our world with promises of peace and favours only to take us and dump us on planets they wished to harvest. Dumped our kind there to see if we could survive the atmosphere firstly,

then forced us to work. I grew up knowing I would rather die than see that happen. Those they took were given the same concoctions they used themselves, the ones that preserved their spirits forever. Suicide was not an option in that case.

With angry thoughts growing in my mind, I rolled the creature over, rougher than I had originally intended. I wondered how many of us they had enslaved, with their weapons and armour and superiority although I had to admit that this one was completely stripped of any sort of protection. Its rough skin felt strange under my fingers, it appeared to be almost iridescent despite its texture. I noticed tiny pulses of purple swirl under the surface. Its arms were bare so I could plainly see its lean muscle and inky black tattoos. The tattoos were almost beautiful, designs so unusual to my eyes that I couldn't bring myself to look away. I had never seen the like of it before. I was beginning to trace the curves of the ink in childlike wonder when my father pushed me out of the way. He and another carried the Raffian into our shelter and he bade me to watch over the alien while they celebrated. I was the youngest so I was tasked with the most boring job. Besides, as a teenage girl, I was the lowest ranking human around.

They took the alien into the smallest portion of our underground home. There had been caves there once upon a time but over the years our group and those who lived before us had worked hard to go deeper underground. To keep away from the aliens who did not like the darkness under the earth. I often wondered why this was so and what would happen to one who was taken underground. All I had to go on were the stories passed on through the generations by word of mouth. I had heard them all so many times and yet I had never learned much about how the Raffians lived. I had lots of questions.

When the Raffian had been tied up tightly, they left me to keep watch. I wanted to know why he had come. How he had spotted our patches of vegetables and grains. Never before had a Raffian come so close to us. We only managed to capture him through sheer luck and the element of surprise. We were lucky, next time we might not be. We needed answers to protect ourselves. Noisy sounds of unrestrained happiness echoed through the shelter from outside so I knew that they would all celebrate late into the night, leaving me completely alone with the alien. I was grateful when my mother brought me some food and water to keep me going. I was surprised she had remembered me.

I yawned in boredom soon after. I wasn't yet hungry and had nothing to do. So I studied the face of the alien with interest. He didn't look so

different from us up close. He wasn't as ugly as I had expected. His skin was strange but not repulsively so, in fact I found myself comparing my arm to his in envy. My skin was light brown like all humans and never changing while his seemed to ebb and flow right before my eyes. It had an unsettling affect. His ears were tiny and his nose slim and almost pointed. Raffians had no hair or fingernails and their heads were a slightly different shape to ours. His lips were full and dark purple.

I lifted his upper lip to see his teeth. To my surprise, they almost sparkled, they were so white. I often imagined these creatures to be dirty flesh eating monsters but he seemed clean apart from where he had fallen. His teeth were different to mine. He had less of them; his seemed shorter, less sharp. I wasn't sure what that meant. He was tall but I figured him to be a young adult male. I had heard tales that told of giant Raffians above seven feet tall. I traced my fingers along his arm, distractedly. I wondered if Raffian men were built like human ones. His trousers were thin leathery looking things. I lifted the waist with some curiosity.

"Stop," he grunted. I jumped back with fright. He didn't move. I crept back towards him, trembling with fear or excitement or both. He could speak English perfectly. I peered at his face, beginning to wonder had I imagined him speaking. He opened his eyes, making me gasp. They were things of beauty, those eyes. No whites, just pure purple all over and shining like jewels. The colour in his eyes seemed to move perpetually just like the veins under his skin. He blinked in the darkness, his eyes adjusting. Being underground didn't seem to affect him badly. Then he stared at me for a moment, taking in his surroundings.

"I need to go home." His voice was raspy and desperate. Even a little scared. But I shook my head. If he left, he would lead the rest of his people to us. We would be captured and enslaved. That couldn't happen.

"Help me." He ran his tongue over his now badly chapped lips.

"I can't. I won't be taken alive." My voice came out shakier than I liked. Better if he feared me. I picked up my water and gave him some, unable to be entirely cruel. He drank thirstily; his voice sounded less dry and cracked when he spoke again.

"You are a...what, some sort of a terrorist? What are you looking for, money? Fame?"

I gazed at him blankly. I didn't understand the terms. He shook his head in agitation. We remained in silence for a couple of hours until I heard his stomach rumble.

"Hungry?" I asked. He nodded, not looking in my direction. I realised he was angry. Angry at being caught and probably angry at being watched over by a female.

"You couldn't expect a man to get this job," I spat, suddenly angry. Being considered as a lesser being by my own people because I was a girl had always irked me. But an alien had no right to judge me. No right at all.

He looked straight at me expectantly. "What does that mean?"

"We hate your kind; we would hardly spare a man to keep watch." I scoffed at him, at his arrogance.

He gave a sound akin to a laugh. "That's your tradition, not ours. Females are adored by my *kind*. I see you are one of the *old* kind then."

I wasn't sure what the old kind was but it sounded derogatory. I also couldn't believe that any female was adored anywhere so I ignored his words. I picked up a piece of bread. "I'll give you this if you tell me how many of us you have condemned to slavery."

"Slavery?" He seemed astonished but it was hard to tell. "None."

"Lies!" I shouted. I stalked around the room in a temper. Anger was better than fear and deep down I was terrified that his kind would come looking for him. If they found us, I would face an eternity of slave labour. The thought was more horrifying than I could express but it was the one thought plaguing my mind.

"What's your name?" he asked after a moment, with a gentler tone than I could have imagined was possible. I stopped stalking to glare at him. "My name is Erdon," he said.

It sounded strange to my ears. "I am Lila. And you are a monster." Hot tears welled up in my eyes but I gave him the bread anyway. I held it to his mouth while he took a bite, his eyes on mine constantly. When he had finished I sat back in my chair and wallowed in silence. The Raffenian was nothing I had expected him to be. It was hard to hate a creature that spoke the same language as me, that had the same needs as me. I thought it would be easy. I had to keep reminding myself of the atrocities his kind had exacted upon my people. That it was his fault, I rarely saw the sun.

He surprised me by speaking again. "Your name is an ancient one. Were you born here?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever...been away from here?"

"No."

"Why do you call me a monster?"

I looked at him in confusion. Surely he knew how reprehensible it was to turn a whole planet into slaves. I shook my head in disbelief and dipped back into my own thoughts. If he didn't have a conscience that was his problem. He closed his eyes and seemed to sleep. Not long after, Marron arrived to give me a candle and a cup of wine. It made me nervous because I knew then that he intended to sleep in my bed that night as part of the celebration. Even before the wedding. He smirked at me when he handed me the things and my heart seemed to shrivel up and die. My hands shook until he left the room.

"I'll see you later," he said, his tone obvious.

I put the candle and the cup on the ground and rubbed my hands over my face in a panic. There had been nothing I was dreading more than that wedding. Until now. The idea of Marron anywhere near me made my stomach turn and my skin crawl. But I had no say in the matter. It was my father's choice. I wasn't entitled to an opinion.

"Friend of yours?"

"You ask too many questions."

He sighed. "Maybe you don't ask enough."

"You're very cocky for someone who is tied up."

"What are you lunatics planning on doing with me?"

I raised my eyebrows. "Lunatics? At least you know we won't make a slave out of you."

"What are you talking about? What is this slave business? Why won't you let me go?"

I gave a derisive snort. "Let you go? So you can lead your armies to us? No thanks."

"What armies?" he persisted. "This planet has been at peace for 50 years, there are no armies. But kidnapping is still against the law."

My jaw dropped. "Laws? As if you aliens deal with laws!"

"Alien...I was born here same as you. Don't you know what's going on in the world?"

"Sure. Your people came and captured ours then sent us off to be your test dummies and slaves on other planets. You sicken me."

He gazed at me for a few moments. "Are you serious?" His voice was barely a whisper. I decided that wasn't worth replying to.

"My people haven't captured anyone," he said at last.

"So you're denying colonizing my planet?"

He shook his head vehemently. "Of course we colonized, our own planet imploded, we had to find somewhere else to live. But we live here peacefully, amongst the natives."

He sounded so sincere that I actually listened to him. Then I remembered who he was.

"Of course, you would say anything to get yourself free. Anything so you could get a chance to enslave me."

"You're already pretty much enslaved if you ask me. Do you really believe everything you're saying?"

"Yes, I believe the truth."

"Lila, let me go and I'll show you you're wrong."

I laughed harshly.

"Really, Lila. Listen to me. There are those called the old kind, groups of people who hated the idea of other races living on their planet. They hated the colour of our skin. They hid away in seclusion to avoid tainting their children with our presence. They never came back but the rest of the world went on. Raffians and humans made peace and settled together. That was so long ago, nobody thinks there are any left. I had no idea that this...is where they went."

I looked at him disbelievingly.

"It's true. My brother is married to a human; my niece is a mixture of both races. That's not unusual."

"Your brother forced marriage on one of us?" I was horrified by this.

"Forced? No! She asked him and he said yes because he loved her."

This was a concept I couldn't grasp easily. Women with choices? Love? He left me to think on things for a while but periodically he told me new pieces of information that made my head spin. He was so insistent that I began to believe him. Or maybe I would have done anything to avoid spending the night with Marron. I couldn't let him leave. But I wanted to leave. I wanted an excuse to run away. A life with Marron would amount to slavery. His last wife had died young, a broken woman.

"Fine," I said, coming up with a plan. "You tell me where to find proof of all these wonderful things and I'll go see. If it's true, I'll come back and let you go. If not...well, you'll just have to rot here."

He nodded his head so readily that I was taken aback. I had expected him to cajole me into setting him free. Instead, he gave me directions and wished me luck. As soon as I was sure everyone would be too drunk to notice me, I made my way outside quickly and quietly. I followed the path that Erdon had described to me. I travelled for a long time, sweating with the effort. It was so dark outside but something about the smell in the air made me feel untouchable. I was careful to stay hidden as I approached the nearest town he had told me about.

I saw big buildings, houses I thought they were called, with lights on so I crept up to the nearest one and looked in the window. A couple, they looked human, sat curled up on a long chair, their arms wrapped around each other. I wasn't sure what to make of this so moved to the next building. Peeking through the window I saw a Raffian soothing a baby. It was hard to tell from outside but the baby didn't seem to be as iridescent as the adult female. When I saw a human man walk into the room and kiss the Raffian on the cheek affectionately, my mouth dropped open. I ran from house to house, tears streaming down my face. Each sight cost me. Each home unveiled something new and proved something else wrong.

I saw the truth. The whole truth. My life had been a complete lie. I had hidden underground for seventeen years for a lie. I would have been forced to marry Marron for a lie. The Raffian, Erdon, had saved me by trying to save himself. If I hadn't been desperate to find a reason to escape a life with Marron, I would have never found out.

When I broke down completely and began to scream, people came to help me. Raffians and humans alike. They took in my attire in surprise but they tried to sooth me. They didn't believe me at first but when I had calmed down enough, they began to listen. They went back to find Erdon and arrested everyone I lived with. To their surprise, we all had the same story. We were all hiding away for lies we had been brought up to believe as fact.

But now the truth was out. And it freed me.

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