Summary

Yellow Diamond and her Pearl have brought along a Ruby soldier to the Galactic Council meeting. The debate? A discussion that will determine the fate of that miserable planet-Earth. (Rated "T" just in case...for some cursing and action scenes!)
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Earth was the most despised planet among all the aliens. It seemed that this random hunk of rock was cursed—bringing bad luck to anyone who would get close to the thing. Despite its lush resources and prime location, the primitive ape-like creatures of this world always seemed to triumph one way or another. Anyone who dared to get into the vicinity of the place, either transformed into a brainwashed freak who would spew out nonsense about the "wonderful" planet, or simply not return at all. All had tried, none had succeeded.

"Perhaps this was the reason for the convention?" the Ruby thought to herself.

The small sentient rock was having to sprint to keep up with her leader—Yellow Diamond. The tall Gem had a very solemn, and regal look about her. She had also brought her Yellow Pearl as well. The secretary was currently walking on the opposite side of the large monarch. She had a pen and paper, and was madly jotting down notes and dictation as she was asked to do so. Any time spent away from her clipboard was normally followed by a spiteful, and somewhat-hateful glance toward the Ruby on the opposite side of her mistress.

Why the stars they had chosen a small, insignificant Ruby over a Quartz solder was anybody's guess. Rubies weren't exactly known for their height, but rather their flaming temper, and lack of (to put it bluntly) intelligence. This Ruby, however, had a slightly higher IQ than her sisters. Someone once told her it had something to do with the placement of her gem—smack dab in the middle of her forehead. The red alien was dwarfed in size when compared to her Diamond. A measly 4 feet to her 20.

As the poor thing huffed along to keep up, she took a brief second to gawk at the strange array of creatures that seemed to be slowly trudging toward the same destination. She couldn't recall all of their names—with the exception of a few species. Irkens…what were THEY doing here?

Much like the Gems, the Irkens seemed to partially base their hierarchy on height. UNLIKE the Gems, their ENTIRE hierarchy was based on height. Sure, Diamonds were tall, but others could become taller if they fused together. Both the Ruby and Yellow Pearl scoffed at the two tall green leaders that shifted by. The Irkens really didn't seem that interested in the planet in the first place. Some species even held rumors that the creatures denied Earth's mere existence. This thought made Ruby upset, considering how many species had fallen beneath the planet's skies.

A pair of mice ran past the little Ruby's feet, and gave her a warning stare, as she nearly trudged on top of them. In a quick movement, she shuffled her feet to the side. The gem stared at the rodents with fear before the two nodded in hurry, and gave quick chase. The gem sighed in relief. They may have been smaller than her, but the two mice were important, and deserved upmost respect. They were the brain child of the construction of the planet in question after all. It would defiantly look like an act of treason if an invasive gem stepped on one of the two. Considering the species here were at a truce, it would certainly violate the peace code.

Some Incubators jaunted by. While adorable, their vacant stare made the poor Ruby shiver. Gems lived off of soil. Incubators lived off of souls. They would probably defend the safety of the planet during the meeting— but only in order to feed.

It was strange just how many creatures wanted this place— wanted to save it, wanted to destroy it, wanted to preserve it, wanted to consume it. How just one measly planet could cause the epicenter of so much strife one could only guess.
The main reason this place had recently become such a hot point of interest was because of the type of company it kept. It held several nearly-extinct species... including a Krypton and a Time Lord. It also had a LOT of intergalactic criminals on it- such as Rick Sanchez, The Crystal Gems, and that awful array of bounty hunters.

Humans in general, were thought of as a nuisance. Some found the species "adorably primitive", while others found the pests just plain annoying. The creatures were quite stubborn, and not terribly well behaved. A majority of them were egotistical, and had little interest in negotiations. The Humans were evolving at a significant rate, however. During the last few decades, they had already accomplished space travel. At this rate, the small planet would not be up for discussion, but rather, become part of this group of interstellar travelers. Despite the most peaceful alien's intentions, no one was quite sure if they wanted such a violent species to become a part of the Galactic Council.

The fact was, alien life was becoming so prevalent on Earth, that the primitive natives had to create their own branch of government- The MIB just to keep track of everyone.

Ruby thought that this entire scenario could have been easily avoided if the Gems were just allowed to destroy the planet in the first place. The small red being began to mumble obscenities under her breath. She quieted when the leader and corresponding Pearl both gave her a warning stare that would probably result in a shattering if she didn't shut her yap. The small Ruby clamped her mouth closed quickly. Yellow Diamond, satisfied, glanced away, and began to talk rhetorically to neither subject in particular.

"Look at this sad array. Do these puny creatures REALLY think they can debate against me?"

"Certainly not my Diamond! They are all lower then us! So much more...fragile." The Yellow Pearl was quite complacent. The servant normally agreed, and repeated everything her mistress said on a dime- much like an annoyingly tall parrot.

"What say you, Ruby?" The Diamond stared at the Gem opposite her Pearl. Ruby gulped in intimidation.

"Erm...well. There's a lot of creatures here..." Yellow Diamond's eye's narrowed. Ruby responded quickly with a quip: "-BUT CERTAINLY NONE AS BEAUTIFUL AS YOU MY DIAMOND!"

The loud, fearful response echoed through the galactic hall, gaining the attention of several species. The leader smirked with satisfaction at the extra attention before continuing her journey toward the debate hall. She continued her conversation: "Do you know why I choose to bring you Ruby?"

"Stars, I have no clue!" The small gem quickly clamped her hands over her mouth at the realization of the overly-casual tone in her conversation. The Diamond simply smirked in satisfaction at the red gem's fear before continuing: "Every leader here had to bring a soldier of their choice to make sure that peace is kept, but honestly, I don't want to be out shown by my own Quartzs'. They can be so...rambunctious sometimes."

"My Diamond?" Ruby didn't want to point out that most of her gem type were equally known for having a short fuse.

"-but you...you're one of the more intelligent Rubies- or so I've heard, which isn't saying much really." The leader sighed with dissatisfaction. The small red gem felt slightly insulted and quite embarrassed, but managed to keep her composure. The leader continued-

"Your just so...insignificant, so weak. Certainly people will see that I don't need a grand soldier just to protect myself. It demonstrates confidence. A mighty leader, being protected by a small
pathetic thing, such as yourself."

At this, the Yellow Pearl glanced at the slightly mortified soldier, with a big, smug, stupid, grin on her face. Ruby's completion was flushed more red than usual. She glanced down at the floor, her confidence completely shattered, as she began to walk slower. She managed to choke out a:

"Yes, my Diamond. That's an excellent strategy."

…before continuing the now degrading journey toward the debate hall.

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As the three approached the door, Yellow Diamond gave permission for her Pearl to enter first. Ruby began to follow the Pearl with blissful ignorance.

"WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING?" The leader roared at the small red gem, whom quickly stopped in her tracks, and turned with a fearful, guilty look on her face.
"I only gave permission for my Pearl to enter first. NOT you! How dare you proceed your own Diamond through a court of law without permission!"

The Ruby shivered on the spot, slightly rattled from the situation- her feet began to create burn marks on the tile. "I'm sorry my Diamond! I wasn't thinking!"

The leader settled, but only slightly. "Of course you weren't. You're a Ruby. I'm still surprised you can form complete sentences with that pebble-sized brain in your head."
Ruby dropped her head in shame.

"I will talk to you about your actions, and come up with a decent punishment later. Right now, this debate requires my full attention- AND I DON'T WANT YOUR IDIOCRACY MUCKING IT UP!"
Ruby squinted in fear, the leader pointed toward the hall just outside of the debate room. "See there Ruby? All species have instructed their soldiers to stay in that hall during the debate. That is your job. All you have to do is STAND THERE. Do you think you can HANDLE THAT, or do I need to repeat myself three more times for you to comprehend?!"

"No my Diamond! I- I understand!" The Ruby gave the equivalent to a salute- a stand at attention, and a diamond shape in using her hands, before the massive leader rolled her eyes in annoyance and bowed through the (slightly shorter) door to enter the debate court.

Ruby stood stiff for a few seconds, and made sure her leader was out of eyesight. She finally relaxed and sighed slightly, when it was certain she was safe. The incredibly nervous gem trotted toward the soldier's hall which was flourishing with different species. They all stared at her with amusement, before the Ruby sat down next to them, and attempted to ignore their judging glances. She buried her head in her arms.

Perhaps her Diamond was right. Perhaps she was a worthless nothing- only created to make all others around her feel better about themselves. Why else would Homeworld create soldiers that were so small and pathetic? The only way a single Ruby could accomplish anything on the battlefield is if they fused together to make themselves taller and stronger. Perhaps, even…Rubies only existed in order to give the opposing soldiers targets at the front of enemy lines, so that the larger Gems could get through with less damage. That's all she was- a worthless piece of nothing. A tear began to form at these thoughts…which no one could see through her folded arms.

"Rough day?"
The sudden gruff voice, made the small Gem jump! She quickly wiped away the stray tear, and glanced up to see whom had made the strange comment.

It was a Keronian…. or more specifically- a Keronian infantry soldier…as indicated by the red color of his flesh (which had three specks under each eye), and the strange radioactive symbol on his brown military hat. He was also handling a very impressive-looking blaster which was strapped to his side with a belt.

The Ruby looked at the soldier with surprise, as the enemy extended his hand, offering to help the Gem on to her feet again. The slightly embarrassed rock took the gesture, and soon stood face to face with one of her Homeworld's enemies.

As the two glanced at each other, it suddenly occurred to the Ruby how similar they looked. Both were the same height, same color (red), both soldiers, and both had a head piece that looked oddly familiar. Ruby had her slightly reddish-brown hair, the Keronian had his brown cap. If they were to be stared at from afar, one might mistake them for two aliens with trapper hats.

Ruby did not know much about Keron life except for the basics. The Babelfish that was required during these intergalactic meetings always seemed to lose some translation with the Keronians. The frog-like aliens always seemed to refer to "Earth" as "Pekopon". This rarely happened with species, but seemed to be a more common miscommunication among aliens with different names for things. She also knew that Keron had completely ulterior plans for the planet in question. Specifically- invasion based. Like the Irkens, they wanted to spread their empire as much as possible- but unlike their green counterparts, Keron did believe (and know) that Earth existed. There were also rumors that the Keronians had wanted to enslave humanity…not destroy it.

The Ruby tilted her head in confusion. "Why are you helping me? We're all enemies, remember?" "Yes…but we're under truce."

That…was…true. No use being uncivil when there was a truce instated. They might be enemies, but (unlike humans), many aliens only followed orders of the higher ups. If there was no tension present, then certainly there was no reason to be hostile. Most of them were just pawns following orders- after all.

The two of them leaned against the wall of the hallway.
The frog nondescriptly began to speak with a bit of sarcasm in his voice. "Does she treat all of her soldiers like that?"

"Excuse me?"

"That horribly ugly toad you call a leader?"

Ruby flushed with embarrassment, before looking in all directions just to make sure Yellow Diamond wasn't going to spring out of some unknown crevice somewhere unexpectedly. She turned back to the other soldier in a slight rage. "How dare you speak about one of our Diamonds like that?! Such disrespect for other cultures…it's a wonder our Gems can get along long enough with your kind to have a debate at all!"

The frog scoffed. Completely uninterested in the Gem's sudden mood change. He continued: "Your species…they want to destroy the place- yes?"
He was referring to the Earth of course. The Ruby paused before answering: "Of course! It would make Yellow Diamond so happy!"

"Why?"
"HM?"

"Why do you wish to destroy it? What will it accomplish? Have the Pekopons attacked you?"

The Gem thought for a second…no. There were no recollections of the humans ever attacking Homeworld. The Crystal Gems lived there…but they hadn't really bothered any other Gems except for a few mysteriously lost scouting ships that had been sent to the planet in the first place.…

The Ruby had her answer. "-Because! It will make Yellow Diamond happy!"

"Gama! Gama! Gama!" The frog laughed slightly with a strange repeated accent. "She has you tied around her finger, doesn't she? You don't even know what you're fighting for…do you?"

The Ruby stared in a rage. "I know enough! If my Diamond is happy, then I'm happy too! If my Diamond is happy then I won't be-"

The Ruby stopped mid-sentence, and suddenly had a very traumatic flashback. They would always display executions around the planet as a force of power. She could see them...hear them. The sound of groveling, the sound of hopeful forgiveness...before the shattering. Stabbed, tortured, forced to retreat into their gems- and finally stepped on- crushed by the corresponding Diamond they had angered.

The Ruby shivered unconsciously, her eyes darting wildly in all directions, as horrendous nightmares flooded her psyche.

The frog snapped his fingers repeatedly, attempting to get the red Gem's attention. "Hey! Hey there! You all right?"

The Ruby gulped, and shook herself, before returning to the present. "Yes! It is good when the Diamond Authority is happy!" She concluded with a nod.

The fellow soldier showed concern. "You just zoned out there for a second. What has you so riled up? You're the most nervous, jumpy soldier I've ever seen…."

"Oh and you're one to talk! Your species invades planets too!"

"Yes, but at least our leader doesn't treat us like worthless garbage! We get punished for going against orders, but according to the expression you just fed me, you Gems go through a lot worse…."

Ruby glared at her fellow soldier with a look that could probably kill. She didn't have time for this. The small red Gem had to figure out some way to get out of the the punishment she had been promised. Other Gems had been tortured for less.

She stood in silence while her mind wandered- a very dangerous thing to to attempt for such an oppressed creature.

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Inside, the various leaders took their seats in preparation for the meeting in the gigantic hall. The wall was covered in a seemingly infinite amount of balconies. There were two chairs on each balcony...in case any particular planet was ruled by multiple leaders. Unfortunately, Yellow Diamond's size required both chairs...leaving her Yellow Pearl to stand at the side.

This was nothing new to the Pearl. She usually stood at attention anyway- sometimes for weeks without rest. It certainly helped that Gems didn't need food or sleep...it also didn't hurt that she had been doing this for several millennia. Yes, she was quite used to this sort of thing.

She stood silent, and obedient, as her leader began making rhetorical remarks again.

"Just look at those Klingons! Such ugly brutes! Now THERE'S a forehead nobody could love in a billion rotations."
"Yes, my Diamond."
"...and look there Pearl! Decapodians! How can they even speak with those horrid appendages all over their faces!"
"Not very well, I'm sure my Diamond. You are the best at linguistics!"
The leader sighed. "Of course I am. You are such an obedient Pearl...always speaking the truth."
"Of course my Diamond. Anything else I can assist you with?"
"Yes. I would like you to dictate the parts of this debate that seem significant to our cause."

The obedient servant nodded in compliance, and proceeded to materialize her pen and clipboard again from the inside of her gem.

"Make sure to pay extra attention to any leader that questions my methods. Those will be the ones we most likely have to...DEAL with once this idiotic truce is lifted."

"Yes my Diamond. As you wish my Diamond."

The Pearl immediately glanced around the balconies, and began to take notes on any species that was looking at Yellow Diamond funny— which was just about everyone considering the size difference was so noticeable and impossible to ignore.

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When the room had settled slightly—there was the hammering of a gavel which quickly erased any leftover chatter that filled the room. Yellow Pearl could hear the moderator, but was having difficulty seeing where the sound was coming from. The place was so tall and crowded at this point, it could be coming from anywhere. This was—of course, a safety precaution. The room was shaped like a 50-story tube, and the moderator was never placed in a directly obvious place. This would help dissuade anyone who wanted to start trouble in the hall.

"ORDER! ORDER!" The mysterious voice boomed.
The room grew incredibly silent with an eerie stealth.
"NOW! We all know why we're here..."

A cough was heard in the briskness of the silent forest.
The moderator made the obvious clear. "We are here to decide the fate of a very troublesome planet."
A holographic projection of the Earth appeared in the middle of the room to the sound of surprised gasps.

Pearl rolled her eyes. She could project such things from her gem on a dime. The fact that there were SO MANY creatures that found this simple trick fascinating, showed the sheer amount of intelligence that the galaxy had to offer.
The moderator continued: "This...EARTH...and its fate, are now open on the floor for discussions."

Immediately, there was an uproar from every direction! The sound shocked the poor servant, as she attempted to try to jot down anything she could hear that was significant.
"It will never be found, if we BURN IT TO THE GROUND!" Overlord Glee shouted in the most adorable voice Yellow Pearl had ever heard. Gigglepies may have been cute, but their invasive nature was fairly transparent here.

"The Earth requires no assistance. All matter will eventually cease to exist." There went the Tralfamadorians again. Clearly not giving two shakes of a lamb's tail in their attitude for execution of the matter at hand. The species reminded Yellow Pearl of the Sapphires— the future-tellers of
Homeworld. Very quiet, and a total buzz-kill to any excitement that was present at any given situation.

"It seems that no one has considered leaving the planet as is? It's just soo….warm there. Plus, we have the humans eating right out of our…hmph…paws?" The talking cat- a Thubanian, piped up with a grand rebuttal.

"For once we agree with the Thubanians!" Shouted one of the mice Pearl had seen earlier. "We are the brains behind this project! May I remind you, that the planet exists to ask the ultimate question!"
"YES! YES! The ultimate question!" The other mouse agreed in unison.

"LET'S SMASH IT!" The servant heard a shout come from an unseen place, which resulted in all species leading to an uproar of din again.

Yellow Pearl glanced at the Irken's Tallest. They sat peacefully, and said nothing while enjoying the show with some sort of frozen drink. "Typical. They just came here to watch the fireworks" mumbled the servant in annoyance.

"ORDER! ORDER!" The moderator banged her gavel. The room hushed again. "NOW! We are going to do this diligently, and orderly! Each species with concerns will have their turn, and will be followed by a vote. We will go in alphabetical order by title! IS THAT CLEAR?!"
No one seemed to have any objections to this. After all, they were intelligent beings, not just a pack of mindless wild animals. The different species nodded in agreement at the compromise.

"GOOD! Now we'll start with…"

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Ruby began to pace back in forth in the soldier's hall. She was chewing on the tips of her fingers- a bad habit she had picked up when nervous.
The frog watched with casual interest as the trail of heated scorch marks and ash on the floor grew ever so slightly bigger with each pass.

"(STARS….What is she going to do to me when she gets out of there….what if her idea gets voted down? She's going to take it out on me…that's what she'll do….I'll be shattered for sure….)"

"Your mumbling to yourself." The frog piped up.
The red Gem's expression evolved from fear to annoyance. She stopped her pacing just long enough to glare at the Keronian, before deciding to ignore him, and continue her thought process. "(Maybe if I slowly opened the door, and watched the debate, I'll have a better idea of what's going on…I'll have time to prepare…I really don't want to be shattered…maybe she'll just poof my physical form?)"

A sudden unison muffled shout of "NAY." Echoed from inside the debate hall on the other side of the wall. All the soldiers looked up in interest, before resuming their various boredom-induced activities.

"OH NO! THEY'RE ALREADY VOTING?!" The Ruby grabbed her hair in her hands, and tugged at it slightly, clearly stressed.
"Of course they are! There's nothing else on the ballet today…didn't you read the schedule?" The Keronian nodded toward the sign that was standing about ten feet away from them.

The red Gem's eyes became wide with fright as she read the sign. Sure enough, the discussion
"I…..I…I GOTTA GO!" The Ruby quickly jaunted toward the door her leader had entered through. The frog rolled his eyes.

"Such a jumpy little rock…wonder why she's so scared?" The Keronian had a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach. Something was very off about that soldier…she was acting way too irrationally.

Ruby was very careful to only open the door a crack…just enough to see and hear what was going on. She could make out the back of Yellow Diamond's Pearl, as well as a fraction of Yellow Diamond herself. If she knew her leader as well as she thought she did, the woman would not empathize with the other species in the room. She would probably make rude comments, and ramble to her Pearl like she always did until her turn was up.

A species the Gems had never seen before proposed that the cameras on Earth provided one of their best-rated TV shows, and thus, the planet should be left alone (until the series was cancelled), Yellow Diamond grimaced in boredom.

"Seriously? This is a planet, not a form of entertainment. That useless rock has caused me more trouble than it's worth."

"My Diamond?" The Pearl naturally would inquire the leader to expand on her comments- it seemed to make her happy.

"Hmm." The leader looked almost bored to tears as she waited impatiently for her turn. She changed the subject in an attempt to entertain herself. "What should we do about that insolent Ruby?"

The small Gem that was listening behind the door perked up. She could care less about the fate of the planet in question, but HER fate…that was a different matter altogether.

In a voice that seemed in almost a drone, the Diamond sighed, and simply stated: "I was thinking about shattering her. It will give me something amusing to look forward to once we get back to Homeworld."

If Gems had hearts, the Ruby would have felt like hers had just fallen onto the floor. Her leader was talking about death- HER death- with about the same amusement of someone discussing the weather.

The Pearl complied as she always did- "Yes my Diamond. That sounds like a wonderful time!"

Thrown under the bolder! Set aside like a mere plaything! That Pearl was saving her own hide but guaranteeing the death of another!

Ruby felt sick.

"NAY." The various aliens voted down the species' idea.

The small Gem slowly closed the door to contemplate her fate, as the moderator announced that it was the Gem's turn to state their case.

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Yellow Diamond rose to her full intimidating 20-foot height. The small Pearl next to her immediately began madly writing her leader's words as she spoke with elegance and grace.

"As many of you know, Earth was going to be my sister- Pink's Diamond's first colony." The
leader glazed over the lesser beings with a since of disgust as she surveyed the room. "...however, she was destroyed by those retched traitors to my Homeworld- the CRYSTAL GEMS." She emphasized the last part with pure hatred, before continuing: "Every time I look at that planet- all I can think about is the death of my sister. I've also noted that a majority of you dislike the rock- and all the life that lives there as well. This is why I purpose, we destroy that horrendous eyesore off of our maps, and end this ridiculous feud- PERMANENTLY." The leader gave an intimidating gaze around the room. For a beat- no one said anything.

....and then the mice spoke:

"What about the ultimate question?"
"Yes! Yes! The ultimate question!"
They liked repeating themselves- clearly. This comment led to another uproar- none of which was most pleasant:

"Why should we listen to YOU?! You kill your own people as much as you kill everyone else's!"
"We should never trust HER! She's so incredibly RUDE!"
"That Yellow Diamond is an eye sore! She's already killed 3 of our colonies- just to expand her own military, and ends up shattering her own army anyway!"
"So wasteful!"

"She made fun of my forehead- I heard her!"

"ORDER! ORDER!" The moderator banged her hammer on the unseen podium again.

The Pearl was watching her leader in fear, as Yellow Diamond's face contorted into a murderous rage toward the blatant comments that had been spread around the room. Yellow Pearl had the sudden urge to run and hide somewhere. She had seen this behavior before- which would probably result in more than just a simple pathetic Ruby being shattered. The last time the leader had gotten this upset, there had been a rampage through the corridors of Homeworld- about 25 Gems had lost their lives- all because one Amber had accidently fallen on the floor from exhaustion during one of the Diamond's long-winded speeches.

"All those in favor?"
"NAY."
The answer among the other species was so quick and immediate, it was somewhat insulting.

The Diamond gritted her teeth as she sat down. Her fingers tapped impatiently on her leg. Pearl could tell that there was an unspoken rage boiling inside of her. This is why she was always so compliant. Even the slightest urge of defiance would result in a temper that could probably destroy anything in an immediate radius- including Pearl herself.
The small slave gulped, as she noted that tiny bits of electricity were being discharged from her leader's fingertips.

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The frog noted that upon re-arrival, the rock seemed to be having some sort of life crisis. If he thought she seemed nervous before- then she was on fire now- literally. She was steaming and a slight flame had ignited on the top of her hair.
The Keronian thought he should say something- until he noted that the entire Gem (including the hair) seemed quite fire-retardant.
"WHAT AM I GONNA DO?! SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO SHATTER ME! SHALE! WHAT SHOULD I DO?! WHAT SHOULD I DO?!" The Ruby began to pace again, much quicker this time. She gasped, before shouting "I DON'T WANT TO BECOME A GEO-WEAPON! I DON'T WANT TO BE HARVESTED! I HAVEN'T EVEN GOTTEN TO SEE ALL OF HOMEWORLD YET!"

"A geo-weapon? What was she talking about?" The Keronian wondered silently to himself. He wasn't quite sure what was going on, but anything involving the Gems, and the word "weapon" was never a good sign. He had learned this through years of war observation. He decided to try to calm the soldier down- she was getting hysterical. "Hey! No one is going to "shatter" you! Not while I'm around anyway. Calm yourself soldier. Who knows? Maybe they agreed on your leader's proposal!"

The Gem paused and looked at the Keronian with a tinge of both sadness and hope. "You really think so?"

"You really think so?"

"Yeah! Sure kid! Just watch! I bet she'll be so happy coming out of there, she'll forget about the erm…"punishment" she promised you and such!" The Keronian lied. He lied so hard. There was no way they were going to approve a plan that ultimately destroyed a planet full of precious resources. If what this Gem said was true, however, the least he could do was settle her down before her initial "shattering"…whatever that was…"

The Ruby took a deep breath, and calmed herself slightly. The steam disappeared, and the small flame in her hair slowly dissipated.

"You know what? You're right! Yellow Diamond is so great and amazing, that they will HAVE to take her proposal seriously! I bet they add some compliments about her beauty too!"

The Gem sat next to the Keronian, and smiled up at her new friend. The frog felt a surge of guilt go through his veins. He wasn't stupid- he had heard what people had said about the Diamond on the journey over here. Almost everyone agreed, that even for a manipulative leader, she was especially cruel, rude- and certainly not "beautiful". He had heard another "B" word tossed around, but knew not to tell the Ruby such insults- she seemed so happy and blissful now.

He couldn't tell if she had been brainwashed, or was just incredibly stupid.

Never-less, it felt good to bring some peace to a fellow soldier- even one that wasn't his own. He had done his good deed for the day, and sat next to the Ruby, forcing a smile that he hoped seemed genuine. She smiled back.

The two minds wandered as they began to swap humorous war stories. All seemed calm for the time being.

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….and then the meeting ended.

As the various alien leaders piled out of the massive room, all of the soldiers broke their conversations, and immediately stood at attention. The Keronian saluted. The Gem seemed a bit nervous, but puffed out her chest in pride and gave a diamond symbol as she waited for her happy leader to return and give her the good news.

The frog glanced at her quickly, and began to brace himself. He wasn't sure how this day was going to end, but he had a feeling he was about to see something very unpleasant.

As the crowd grew, the Ruby noticed something…particular. None of the alien leaders were smiling- not one (with the exception of the Irkens who were going on about how "marvelous of a show" they had just seen).
The Ruby overheard one of the tall aliens state plainly "I LOVE politics!" before they retrieved their soldier, and turned the corner out of sight.

The Keronian noted that the room was starting to get warmer. As he stood next to his new soldier friend, he saw that she was making a nervous groaning sound, as if beginning to suspect something. The frog took a discreet step away from the Ruby in hopes of not drying himself out. Keronians had to stay hydrated, and he couldn't afford passing out in the middle of all these important people.

Finally, there were the familiar sounds of Yellow Diamond's thundering steps. The Ruby- still clinging on to a smidge of hope gave the proudest look she could muster.

That hope soon faded.

As the leader's came into view, the small Ruby's face transformed from pride to instant terror. She had never seen her leader this angry-looking before. Yellow Diamond's face was contorting into a scowl that the soldier didn't even think possible. The small rock broke her stance slowly. She took a step back in fear as the leader came closer. It was obvious that her flight and fright response was going into full meltdown mode. The temperature of the area rose significantly. The Keronian squinted- trying not to seem too obviously fatigued by the situation.

"RUBY!" The leader approached with a thundering voice. The shock made the small Gem fall over in a moment of terror. She quickly got up again.
"Yes my Diamond?!
"Come here! We are going home! I will further discuss your punishment when we arrive!"

If there was any pigment left in the Ruby's face, it instantly drained. She quickly looked toward her new Keronian friend, whom seemed to be in a slight state of shock himself. She looked at the leader frozen in terror.

"DID YOU HEAR ME? I SAID COME HERE!"
The soldier did not do as she was told. She continued to stand in a state of panic.
"I'll take care of it my Diamond." The Yellow Pearl saw an opportunity to impress her leader, and (perhaps) avoid punishment herself. She stepped toward the soldier, and bent down to the Ruby's level.
"Perhaps you didn't understand? Your Diamond is commanding you t-"

"RAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH"

What happened next was such a shock, that it immediately gained the attention of the entire room. The Ruby screamed- snapped. She quickly grabbed Yellow Pearl's arm. The servant let out a surprised yelp, and proceeded to fall to the ground in a painful lock the Ruby had learned during her soldier training.

The Keronian broke his stance quickly, and stood back surveying the entire fiasco. He glanced at the Diamond who had a mixed look of rage and amusement on her face.

"Keep away! Or….I'll…I'll shatter her! I'll do it!" The Ruby made threats as a fireball formed in one of her hands- very uncomfortably close to the Pearl's face.
"My Diamond! HELP! SAVE ME! I'm a good Pearl, your FAVORITE Pearl….remember?"

The leader looked at her two subordinates, before displaying an amused smirk. "Sooo…you're going to shatter my Pearl assistant Ruby?"
"Yes! Yes! Unless you leave me alone!"
"Hmmm….let me help you with your task at hand. I think it will be easier for you this way!"
The Yellow Pearl gave a fearful "My Diamond?!"…before the leader pointed one of her fingers at the Pearl casually.

In a split instant, a shock of electricity surged from the leader's fingertips. The poor Pearl took the blunt of the attack, and screamed with agony as she could feel electrical shocks coursing through her entire body. In a whiff of dust, her physical formed poofed, the Pearl's gemstone clattered to the floor.

"There. Now all you have to do is smash her. Let's see if you have the brazen to do it- you pathetic soldier…"

The Ruby looked at the gemstone with fear. She bent over, and picked the pearl up. She proceeded to look at her leader with sad eyes.

"Well? Go ahead then. I'm waiting…"

The frog looked toward the scene with unfiltered terror. He didn't know half of the stuff that was going on, but he felt like he was getting a crash course in Homeworld lifestyle and politics- and he didn't like what he was seeing one bit.
The Ruby cradled the gemstone and held it close to herself like a precious egg. The Pearl may have been a jerk, and thrown her under the bolder- but she didn't deserve to be shattered…not by a long shot.
For a moment, nothing happened. The leader's eyes narrowed. "You are trying my patience, Ruby."
The small Gem noticed that there was another electric shock stabilizing in one of the Diamond's hands. In a quick state of panic, the Ruby looked around for anything she could use to save herself.

She spotted the Keronian.
The frog looked in fear, as the Ruby grabbed his arm. He yelped slightly, as her hand gave him unintentional third degree burns.
"See this?!" she held up the frog for every witness to gaze at. The poor creature struggling in the Gem's mighty, scorching, grasp.
"If you attack this Keronian, it will be a declaration of war!"

The frog knew that his fellow soldier was desperate, but he didn't appreciate being used as a living shield. He continued to struggle to break free.
The leader narrowed her eyes in annoyance, before giving the last thing the frog thought he would ever hear come from her mouth.
"Good. I LOVE war. Another bunch of planets for us to conquer…in exchange for a pebble, and some slimy thing? Seems like a reasonable trade to me."

Yellow Diamond lifted her hand toward the duo. The two soldiers stood in fear as the electrical charge became bigger and bigger. The other spectating aliens began to scatter away in terrified droves. The leader's eyes burned with passion at the thought of death…
The Keronian had a sudden realization.
"To HELL with THIS!" The frog used his free hand to unholster his blaster.

"POOOW!"
He pointed it at Yellow Diamond's charged hand, and proceeded to shoot a very painful-looking radioactive plasma ball toward the leader's elemental limb.

The leader screamed in rage as she held her hand in pain. The shot was only enough to scorch the
limb in question- which surprised both soldiers. Ruby let go of the frog in a state of shock. The poor creature briefly examining the accidental burns on his arm. He looked at the briefly distracted Diamond, and his gaze veered toward the stunned Ruby. Without thinking, he yanked at her collar to get her attention, before sprinting off in a hurry.

"RUN YOU FOOL! THIS COULD BE THE ONLY CHANCE YOU GOT!"

Ruby snapped out of the situation quickly, and made sure she had the poofed Pearl's gemstone in her hand, before running after her fellow soldier down the hallway of uncertainty.

Chapter End Notes

OK…so…I haven't written a crossover in a while…I'm a bit rusty. Normally, when I write stuff like this I tend to go a bit overboard. I like the concept of mentioning different characters and species from multiple sources- but in a way that the audience can still enjoy the story without knowing every single little reference. That being said, I compiled a list! (because I'm a HUGE Science Fiction nerd that's why!)

*Gems- A species of sentient rocks (or, more specifically, gemstones) with an Oligarchy government. The "Diamonds" are the dictator-like leaders of this society. Pearls are kept as slaves, while Rubies are typically small foot-soldiers.

*Irken is the name given the main invasive species from Invader Zim. They are typically green with black antenna, and large red bug-eyes. The species is slightly naive, and their government is solely based on height. Thus their leaders are referred to as "The Tallest", due to their stature in government.

*Incubators - (SPOILERS!) Incubators are a species of very-cute cat-like creatures with ears that feature long cloth-like appendages. They are all identical looking with a white plume, and a large fluffy tail. The most famous of these being Kyubey from Madoka Magica. They feed on the souls of other species giving their overly-cute appearance a very grim underside.

*Mice – (SPOILERS!) According to the series "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" – Earth's mice are actually a super-intelligent race that created and commissioned the planet as a type of "computer". The reason for Earth's creation? To find the QUESTION to the ultimate answer of the universe (that answer, being the number 42)

Kryptons – Being an alien race of super-powered flying beings, Krypton and all its people were (supposedly) destroyed long ago. Superman is the most famous one here on Earth.

*Time Lords – Another race thought to be long-extinct. Time Lords have the ability to manipulate time and space. The one referred to in this particular story is the beloved Dr. Who!

*Rick Sanchez – The famous intergalactic criminal and trouble-maker from the series Rick and Morty.

*MIB – Short for "Men In Black". A secret society on Earth that regulates alien
populations and spats.

*Keronians – A species of invasive alien that wishes to conquer the Earth. Keronians are very "frog-like" in appearance. The typical species has a unique symbol that is mimicked on both their trapper hat, and stomach (much like that of a Care Bear). Despite their froggy appearance, the species walks on two legs, and normally overpower their foes through superb technology. They are typically quite short- but make up for it with their smarts and determination. They often travel and conquer in numbers- usually in sets of five.

*Gigglepies – About a foot tall, Gigglepies represent multi-colored rabbits with single antennas on their heads. They often use their adorable charm to conquer planets. They always speak in rhyme, and were first introduced on The Fairly Oddparents.

*Klingons – A warrior species in Star Trek, Klingons are probably most noticeable for their bizarre appearance. They are completely humanoid- with the exception of their foreheads which are normally covered in bumps.

*Decapodians – An aquatic-type species that are typically orange colored, and have crab-like claws for hands. They have tentacles that dangle over their mouth, and a hidden fin on their head that lifts when angered. Dr. Zoidberg from Futurama is a Decapodian.

*Tralfamadorians – Most prominently featured in Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse 5", Tralfamadorians live (and are able to see) in every timeline and era. They are described as looking like "upright toilet plungers with a hand on top that holds a single green eye". They also (apparently) have a very impressive zoo on their planet- humans included.

*Thubanians – Essentially talking cats. They enjoy Earth due to its satisfactory weather (of which they wish to take for themselves). Another species that manipulates using their adorable looks- Thubanians are very self-centered. Featured in the cartoon Futurama.

Two special thank you notes! - one to my good friend VonSmore who actually encouraged me to post this thing, and a thank you to CompletelyDifferent/Dragon Elexus for letting me borrow her made up curse word "Shale" for the dialogue in this story (Borrowed from Chapter 43 of Little Rebellions)

Go read their fics right now! They are both awesome writers! YUS!
Running away was kind of a cop out for any soldier. The entire scenario was somewhat embarrassing for both parties. However, given the circumstances of being chased by a 20-foot enraged rock with electrical powers, both creatures figured their actions were justified.

As the duo turned the corner, the two stopped briefly to re-collect themselves. If the leader was following them, she was not very fast.

The soldiers paused in a state of panic. The frog leaned against the wall in exhaustion, as the Ruby bent down, hands on her knees—huffing and puffing.

"WHAT... WAS... THAT?!" The Keronian was not the least bit amused. "What's the big idea?! Dragging me along as a living hostage... how will I ever be able to face my officer after that embarrassing display?"

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry- it's the only thing I could think of on the fly!"

"You're going to FEEL like a fly if you don't tell me how you plan to get us out of this mess!"

"Hrmmm..." Ruby was just grateful she wasn't dead right now. She didn't think she would get this far. She emphasized this fact: "Hey! At least we're alive!"

"Some good that does us then! How do you expect me to face my platoon after getting captured by a ROCK?!"

The Ruby looked at the frog with a slight aghast state. She wasn't sure whether to feel insulted, or enraged by the fellow creature's quip.

Fortunately, she didn't have to answer. There was a massive explosion of electricity that shot off close enough to be a near-death experience if the two of them hadn't been so close to the side wall.

The thundering of massive footsteps coming closer shook the ground, and quickly made the duo much more aware of their surroundings after the surprising blast.

"TRAITOR! YOU SHALL BE EXECUTED AS A TRAITOR TO HOMEWORLD! HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS ME IN FRONT OF THE COURT!" Yellow Diamond was obviously not in the best of moods, as her screeches became ever closer.

The soldiers turned toward each other in fear.

"Shall we run away then?"

"Yes. THAT'S a plan even I can agree with."

The two sprinted off again. Yellow Diamond managed to catch up with quick determination, upon finally being able to clearly see her pray. Ruby looked behind herself as she ran, and immediately regretted her decision upon seeing her very pissed of leader... and a trail of deadly electricity coming out of every orifice of her enraged body.

"What are we going to do?" She asked between huffs and aerodynamically avoiding electrocution beams aimed toward her.

The frog looked around desperately, before getting a crazy idea. "Can you melt the floor?"

The Ruby looked at him surprised and nodded with determination as she realized his plan.

Suddenly, the duo stopped and faced the Diamond. The surprised leader seemed rather amused at the sight of being faced down by these two pathetic creatures.

"Have you decided to meet your fate?" Yellow Diamond gave a menacing grin. The Keronian
slowly pulled his blaster from his belt and aimed it at the massive yellow beast. "Do you really think I'm going to fall for THAT again? You're pathetic! You've only got one trick up your sleeve! Such a stupid creature!"

"You will eat those words, you MASSIVE TOAD!" The Keronian felt a lot better reporting his made-up insult to her face.

The leader's gaze evolved into a scowl. "I'm going to enjoy destroying you..." she insisted, before the frog lowered his gun, and re-aimed it at the floor. This creature was dumber then she thought! That gun was the last protection the two had against her. Perhaps the fools thought they could grovel? Barter for their lives? It certainly wouldn't be the first time she had witnessed such stupidity.

The Keronian said nothing.

"POW! POW! POW! POW!"

He wasted all of his ammo! WHAT A FOOL!

The leader stared at the duo in shock, and then noticed something...particular.

The two idiots were becoming shorter...how were they becoming shorter? The leader realized a bit too late that, in fact, the two of them were NOT becoming shorter- but rather sinking! YES! They were sinking through the floor!

The leader screeched and lurched forward- just in time for the Ruby's heat and the frog's radioactive blaster to create a small escape hole though the tile. She reached for the two of them, but it was too late! The soldiers fell through...the tiny hole was way too insignificant to fit a 20-foot leader.

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In retrospect, they probably should have thought this plan through a bit more than they had. There was a 200 foot drop underneath them that led to the ship docking bay.

The frog realized that his idea was one of desperation, but had expected a much smaller fall.

The Ruby, meanwhile, was clinging to the pearl, and curling herself into a somewhat defensive stance- seemingly more worried about the small egg-like object than herself. Her eyes were shut closed. As time passed, she squinted against the blaze of air rushing by. The two fell toward their demise! She saw her new friend twisting helplessly next to her- spinning wildly out of control. The Ruby glanced around her surroundings quickly, and spotted a water pipe on the ceiling.

In a split second, several things happened. Thank the stars this Ruby was a generation 1. The small gem stretched and contorted her arm to grapple the massive pipe, and then followed suit by doing the same for her friend. The frog yelped in pain as the overheated oversized hand grabbed him in desperation. The resulting scene looked comical- like two stretchy-sticky hand toys tied together. The Ruby lowered the two of them to the ground slowly, and caught the pearl with a surprising amount of grace. As her arms and hands transformed back to their original position, she realized that the Keronian wasn't doing too well. The poor thing looked near unconscious from shock- and was covered in oversized burn marks that resembled fingerprints.

The small gem gasped, and approached the creature in a hurry. She attempted to put her hand on his shoulder- only resulting in another hand-shaped burn mark.

Ruby retreated quickly. It seemed that her shock mixed with her well-intended nature was hurting the poor thing. She stared at the frog- helplessly and began to pace in a panic. She wanted to make sure her friend was okay, but had no means of doing so. The small gem felt a tinge of guilt as she
tried to come up with another plan.

She stared at the pearl in her hand.

She stared at the frog.

She stared at the pearl in her hand.

She stared at the frog.

In a sudden flurry of smarts, the Ruby approached the Keronian…lifted the Pearl high above his head….

…and proceeded take his hat off. She placed the pearl inside the head piece. There! It would make a perfect carrying place for the gem until it regenerated! Wait- what was she doing again? Oh… right! The friend! She looked at the Keronian, and proceeded to scream: "YOU OK?!"

…right into his ear. The frog awoke with a startled gasp, and flailed slightly at the loud noise. He immediately regretted his decision, and groaned upon realizing that the sudden movement had brought awareness to the pain of his burns.

"You're up! Good!" The Ruby smiled. The frog gave her an unamused gaze. "What are you?"

"I'm a Ruby!" that was an easy question! Of course she was! She grinned even wider. The frog scowled. The question was meant to represent a rhetorical annoyance at the situation. The Keronian began to attempt to stand up…groaning with each movement. He sat up, and touched his hand to his bald head. BALD HEAD?! Where was his hat?!

"GAMA!" The frog looked around in a shock. He glanced everywhere before spotting the Gem carrying it. "Give me that!"

"NO! I'm borrowing it!"

"That's a military hat! Now give it here!"

The Ruby was stubborn. She looked at the frog in distaste, and a panic surged over the Keronian, as he realized the added stress was causing her hands to steam… All he could imagine was his precious head piece going up in flames. "OK! OK! You can hold on to it for now! Just…don't destroy it…OK?"

The Ruby smiled. "Pearl is in it!" she said a bit more enthusiastically then he would've expected "…..of course she is." The Keronian gave the Ruby a concerned gaze. The fact that she was cradling around the last souvenir of a dead Gem in his favorite hat was incredibly disturbing to him. However, he sympathized that she would probably want to give a proper burial for the rock once they came to an appropriate place. Goodness knows how many of his fellow soldiers he had to bury…

He nodded with sympathy, and drooped his head in respect for the fallen for a couple of seconds. The Ruby tilted her head with curiosity and confusion- not quite knowing what the foreign gesture meant.

After a beat of silence, the creature (painfully) rose to his feet. "Well, what now?"

"BOOOOM!"

With an ear-defining explosion, the two soldiers jumped in surprise! The melted hole in the ceiling was not big enough to fit a 20-foot leader, but it WAS big enough to fit one finger and her ugly mug
on the other side- just enough to see what was going on and aim lighting strikes accordingly. The situation would have seemed some-what comical if the duo wasn't fighting for their lives.

Yellow Diamond shouted something angry and obscene from up above- or...at least...that's what the two soldiers imagined. The 200-foot ceiling was so high up, that her shouting was slightly muffled by the distance and acoustics.

Another blast of nearby electricity sent the two running again!

As a multitude of spaceships passed them by, questions arose.
"CAN WE TAKE YOUR SHIP OUT OF HERE?"
"NOPE."
"WHY NOT?"
"ONLY YELLOW DIAMOND HAS CLEARANCE TO OPEN THE DOOR!"

That...was the dumbest thing the frog had ever heard. What if there was an emergency-LIKE THIS ONE FOR INSTANCE?!

"FINE! WE'LL TAKE MINE THEN!" The Keronian was not keen on leaving his leader and a portion of his fellow platoon on this galactic station without a means of escape, but he had confidence in his team. There was no way the council would let that renegade Diamond freak near his species now...especially after the aggression she had displayed toward his planet publicly.

A silver oval with a rim came into view- a terribly stereotypical looking spaceship (as far as alien technology goes). The frog quickly approached the seemingly door-less item, and stuck his hand on a specific location to the side- its secrecy was somewhat given away by the fact that it already had several handprints on that particular spot. A door slid upward, and the two tumbled inside the thing, and re-closed the door- just in time to avoid getting hit by another bolt of lightning which charred a good bit of the vehicle.

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The outside was deceptively small. Much like a Ruby spaceship- the inside took advantage of pocket-dimension technology. There was an obvious main room, which held five seats for the platoon specifically. Each seat was designed to perform an obvious different job- with the captain’s chair in the highest point of the middle of the room.

Ruby noted that this particular vehicle was very different from a Gem's- specifically the color. Instead of vibrant yellows or reds, the inside was a dull silver hue. There was also a strange hallway to either side of the main room with various different doors. Ruby wanted to explore, but a sudden jostle from a second bolt of lightning woke her up from her train of thought.

She spotted the frog fumbling with the wires under the main viewing screen.
"I hope you know how to drive this thing! I'm only the ammo expert on this ship!"
"Wait...WHAT?! I don't even know what these buttons say!" Ruby looked desperately at the buttons with the foreign Keron writing on top of them. The Pearl had driven them here- and while the small red gem had SOME driving training, she certainly had no such luck piloting another species' ship.

"Well, you better learn fast! I'm only in charge of the ship's blasters! Do...something! Otherwise, we're going to be charred to bits!"

The frog finished messing with the wires. Immediately the ship lit up with life! The monitor turned on, and the buttons on the various panels began to light up and dance with excitement.
"Did...did you just hot-wire your own ship?" The Ruby inquired as the screen showed the outside world.
"Had to. My sergeant has the keys. Now get us out of here! QUICK!"

"Hmmmmm…" The Ruby struggled with the stress of the situation. She stared at the large panel of flashing buttons which seemed terribly complicated and challenging. Having no other choice in the matter, the small gem put her hand over her eyes, and began to tap buttons at random.

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Outside, Yellow Diamond watched through her peep hole in anger and fascination, as the ship in question suddenly reared backwards, and hit the side wall of the ship bay- causing one of the metallic panels to bend significantly. The vehicle seemed to struggle and rotate in place for a few seconds, before completely flipping upside down- and then zooming off into the distance.

Chapter End Notes

I must apologize for being so quiet on the writing stuff lately... these past few weeks have been a physical and emotional roller coaster for me. I've been battling a massive headache and neck-ache for the past three weeks. While I am fine- the entire fiasco did result in me going to the ER to get a cat-scan...as well as multiple aura migraines. ...that election didn't help either...URGH. Promised myself I wouldn't discuss politics too much on my writing blogs...but YEAH. THAT WAS A THING...THAT HAPPENED...TOO...

Needless to say, it's been difficult to write- especially on the computer- due to my neck hurting and added light-sensitivity from the migraines. Chapter three of this story is (actually) completely written already- but it will take a bit of time to put it up. I ended up handwriting the entire thing traditionally because of the light sensitivity problem...

...anyway! Must stay positive! New SU episode coming out tomorrow (Gem Harvest), getting Pokemon Sun on Friday, AND my good friend Karl Hadrika finally got around to posting his cartoon animatic- "Becky Prim"! (Look it up on Youtube- but be warned there is cursing in it and such...)

I also preordered the "Log Date Zine"...because...you know...Peridot is AWESOME like that!

...anywhos, thanks for being patient with me guys! Appreciate!

Look forward to the next chapter! We learn the Keronian's name- and the two aliens begin to discover cultural taboos about one another! FUN!
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

As the ship sped into the distance—both on warp speed AND upside-down, its two passengers were struggling on what could be considered the vehicle's ceiling. With all the gears and buttons now out of reach up above, the two aliens were plastered to the back wall of the ship, caused by the brunt force of its speed.

It took a few seconds, but the Ruby's body soon adjusted to the extra gravity. She stood quite normally, blinking in surprise, as her froggy counterpart continued to struggle against the force. She tilted her head in confusion and curiosity. The Keronian gritted his teeth, and gave her the most menacing scowl he could muster. The speed attempted to keep his eyes shut. Through the flapping of his mouth, Ruby could understand him… kinda.

"How…are…you…doing…that?!!"
"Doing what?"
"…nevermind. Turn…off…the…hyper…drive."
"Hyper Mive?"
"DRIVE!…DRIVE!"
"Where's that?"

The frog struggled to lift his arm, and pointed feebly at a large red button on the (now) ceiling.

"Oh!"

The rock stood in the middle of the room, and extended her arm to press the button above. Immediately, the ship slowed to a crawl. The Gem watched in fascination as her friend floated and tumbled upward toward the buttons. The Keronian was feeling quite nauseous at this point from all the differentiation in gravity changes. The Ruby felt a bit jealous. How come SHE couldn't float like that?!?

The frog struggled to get to one of the handles on the ceiling. With a mighty yank, the ship flipped right-side up again. The ruby stayed put, and casually walked down the side of the ship so that she could stand next to her friend. The Keronian pressed another button, and the ship's artificial gravity returned to normal, making the frog stagger slightly. Thank the stars he could at least read the labels on some of the more common buttons. The Ruby stayed quite calm throughout this entire nerve-wrecking fiasco.

The Keronian gave her a menacing glare. The Ruby smiled, hoping to ease the obvious tension in the room.

"OK. We're going to have a serious chat. I need a few obvious questions answered…" The Keronian looked burnt, annoyed, frightened, and slightly sick. The Ruby suspected she was about to get a mouthful.

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The next thing she knew; the frog had invited her to sit at a table in one of the spare rooms down the hall. The chamber was filled with all sorts of gadgets, and included a bunch of interesting smells that the Gem couldn't recognize.
The Keronian poured himself some water from what appeared to be a sanitation station. The small cylindrical cup was a new object to the Ruby, and fascinated her as the frog sat across the table with his newly-poured beverage. As he tipped it up to drink, he witnessed the small stars of fascination in her eyes. He stopped mid-sip, and looked at her.

"You're staring."
"Are...are you doing the ate-ing?" Ruby asked with curiosity.
"Ate-ing?" the frog was clearly confused.
"YEAH! I hear lots of other aliens need to...erm...ate?"
"OH! Eating?!!"
"YEAH!"
"You...don't eat?"
The Ruby shook her head. "Don't have to. Sometimes the more important Gems will import stuff and try it though!"

The frog put his glass down-now more confused than ever. "How...how do you survive?"
The Ruby smiled, and pointed at her gemstone. This only raised more questions.

STARS! The Keronian immediately wished he had paid more attention in that mandatory species class he was forced to take. He sighed. "Okay. Let's just start from the top. How are you able to melt and burn stuff?"

The Ruby shrugged. "I don't know. All Rubies are made like that!"
"Can you shoot electricity, like your leader?"
"No..."
"...can she melt stuff...like you?"

The Ruby shrugged again. For being so loyal to Yellow Diamond before, she seemed pretty clueless about her history now.

"Okaaaay...what was that thing you did with your hands earlier?"
The Ruby stared at her hands for a second, before displaying them for the frog to get a closer look. "They're just touch stumps!"

"NO! THEY'RE NOT!" how in the galaxy they had gone from "hands" to "touch stumps" was beyond him.
Stupid Babblefish...he wished he could have his hat back. The translation software was much more accurate. The frog tried again- slower this time. "How, did, make, hands, bigger?"

The Ruby was slightly insulted by this de-evolution of communication. She rose one hand in the air, and increased its size easily.

"Yes! That!"
"Lots of Gems can do that! It's called shape shifting! Man! Are you DUMB!"

The frog flushed in a slight rage. This entire conversation was the epitome of "dumb", and yet...and yet...HE was the one asking all the questions. Never once had the Gem asked him anything about himself. She may not have been very bright, but at least she was being compliant.

The Keronian suddenly felt guilty- like he had been performing an interrogation. Perhaps a more friendly approach would get a better response?
"What is your name?"
"Ruby!"
"No...that's what you ARE. What is your NAME?"
"Ruby!"
"Ok…ok…erm…how do they tell you guys apart? Like, if someone wanted to call you over specifically?"
The Gem thought for a second before responding. "OH! In that case my cut and facet number are Ruby…"

…and the sentence that followed was a mish-mash of letters and numbers that only a programed computer could possibly memorize on the fly. The Keronian was actually slightly impressed at the length of the code- but there was no way in the hay he was going to remember the entire bit.
"(Hmmmm…no good…")"

The Ruby frowned in disappointment as the frog displayed his displeasure. Had she said the wrong thing again?

"…there's no way I'm going to be able to remember all that."

…so this Keronian really WAS dumb than! Facet and cut numbers were easy to remember. The Ruby felt a bit badly for the creature…but was feeling especially guilty for pointing out the stupidity directly to his face.

The two aliens drooped in shame.

Suddenly, the Keronian had an idea!
"What if you had a nickname!?"
"What's a nick-name?"
"It's…kind of like a name that only friends use. It can be anything you want!"

The Ruby thought about this for a second. "It's not like the things Yellow Diamond calls me, is it? I don't want to be called "pathetic"."
"SHE is not your friend." The Keronian wanted to stress this point. The less this Gem talked about that ugly dictator, the better.

The Ruby glanced around the room, and attempted to spot something she found interesting.
"What's that called?" she asked, pointing to something.
"Hmm? That's a toaster." The Keronian was happy that the Gem now felt comfortable with asking questions too.
"Can I be called "toaster"?"
"Gama! Gama!" the frog laughed slightly, as the Ruby's smile faded into an unpopular scowl.
"Oh…you're serious." The Keronian stopped laughing. "I think you should put a little more thought into it then just the first thing you see. A name is an important thing. It defines who you are!" The frog nodded in agreement at his own wisdom.
"What do you think would be a good nick-name then?"
"Hmmmm…Magma?"

The Ruby frowned. Using one of the basic elements of Gem production didn't seem any better than her "toaster" idea. It reminded her of Homeworld…and the entire terrifying fiasco she had just been through. The Keronian spotted her disappointment.

"Gama! My idea is no good though! I just came up with it on the spot! I was just using it as an example…you can choose whatever you want!"
"Whatever I want…" the Ruby felt overwhelmed. She normally didn't have this much freedom of choice. The Gem glanced at the frog, and came to a realization. "Do YOU have a "name" then?"

The frog blushed terribly. "I do…but it's sort of embarrassing…"
"Ohh! Tell me!" The Ruby leaned in with an upmost curiosity. The Keronian perspired heavily, before mumbling something. "(It's g-ma)"
"What did you say?! Speak up!"
"IT'S GAMAMA, OKAY?!"

The little Gem was so shocked by the frog's yell- she nearly fell out of her seat. The Ruby straightened herself up quickly and gazed toward the Keronian with interest. "Gamama?"
"Yes." He grumbled back.
She tilted her head again. "Why is THAT a bad name?"

He looked at her with shock. Everyone had made fun of his name since he was a tadpole…why was she not reacting like the others? "Well…it's bad because…you know…it's kind of…weird? It has the word "mama" in it after all…"
"What's a…"ma-ma"?"

The frog looked at her with shock and disbelief.
"You don't have a mother?"

Ruby shook her head. "Is a "ma-ma" and a "mother" similar? Is it something you ate?"

Gamama suddenly looked very sad. The Ruby wondered whether she had said something wrong again.

The Keronian tried to explain: "A…mother is someone that creates you…someone that takes care of you…"
"-Yellow Diamond?"
"-NO!" the frog was harsh with his response. "Yellow Diamond is not your mother- or anyone's! She doesn't care about anything!" the frog nodded. "A mother is someone who always watches over you, and makes sure you're safe-"
"-like you? Are you my ma-ma?"
"NO!" the frog was becoming impatient.

Ruby wondered who her real mother might be. Maybe her other platoon mates…or the Peridot that checked her gem's progress until she emerged from the ground- they had been nice, and (sort of) created her…

The Gem looked increasingly confused.

"Look, the other Keronians just tease me a lot because of my name…ok?"
"Why don't YOU create a nick-name then?!!"
"I already have one. Most people call me "Gamma"…my parents based my name around that word anyway."

The Ruby had a slight enlightenment, and inquisitively pointed to the radioactive symbol on Gamma's stomach.

The frog answered this gesture automatically: "You would think so, but no. My job and status symbol are just a coincidence. My mother named me after the "Gama System"…where my planet is located."
"OH! That's a much better reason!" The Gem nodded and smiled again. "-then, can I call you Gamma too?"
"I would prefer that."

Well! This conversation was going much more swimmingly then expected! The Gem may have been a bit thick, but at least she was nice. Gamma stood from the table, and began to prepare
something to eat. The small Gem watched with intrigue, and followed…perhaps she could learn something new about "ate-ing"?

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The next few hours were filled with an annoying intrigue. The Ruby continued to question the Keronian on various names and purposes of objects around the ship. Gamma attempted to keep light hearted- but was becoming slightly agitated and exhausted from the constant barrage of questions. Throughout this entire fiasco, the frog had located his hat on the floor, and secretly placed it inside of a locked metal drawer in his barracks. The Gem was preoccupied with his bedding at the time- and he took advantage of the situation to put both the hat and Pearl's remnants in a safe spot.

After the exploration was nearing its end, the Keronian gave a mighty yawn…hoping that the Gem would take a hint.

Instead, the Ruby tilted her head in confusion- a gesture that Gamma now realized meant more questions were on the way.
"What's wrong? What does that mean?"
"That was a yawn. I need sleep kid."

"Sleep…." The Ruby looked thoughtful. She struggled to remember where she had heard the same word earlier that day. "-OH! PILLOW!" the Ruby rushed down the hall into Gamma's room, and re-emerged- handing the frog his fluffy friend.
"Gama!" The frog laughed slightly. "Thank you…but you need more than a pillow to sleep…"

"Oh yeah! A bed!" The Gem ran back into the room, and immediately a dragging sound could be heard.

"GAMA!"

The frog ran into the room in a panic. Obviously the Gem had great strength, but didn't understand the concept of leaving the bed in the room.

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Ruby sat in the main chamber with all the computers, quite bored. Gamma had instructed her not to touch anything while he slept, but had given her a heat-resistant pan to examine. The Gem had interest in warming up the pan, and watching the color change from a silver to a bright orange without melting. Unfortunately, this novelty had worn out several hours ago.

"How long did sleep take?!" The Gem wondered to herself…

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Meanwhile, the frog was exhausted and sleeping on one of the top bunks of his quarters. The room held several bunk beds (3 to be exact), each belonging to a different platoon member (and one for the Keron leader that had been lugged along) making the grand total of 6 beds in all.

Gamma was not looking forward to the morning. He would have to contact his platoon and planet, and inform them of the situation- that he had stolen the ship in a cowardly display, and was currently housing an enemy soldier. Of course, if they had seen the galactic news- they probably knew this already (or so the Keronian assumed).

Still, it would be nice to receive instruction on how to pilot the ship past basics. He was a bit
worried about the Ruby though. She was blissfully ignorant about how much danger she would be in once they got back to Keron. Perhaps he could convince them that she would make a great spy and asset once he told them how she had helped save him from instant doom…

As Gamma snoozed, a shining light could be seen through the cracks of the locked drawer at the foot of the bed….

Chapter End Notes

(A strange person appears)

"Hello! I am the narrator of this tale! At this point, you're probably wondering: "where did a Keronian soldier get ahold of an Earth toaster?" Well! I'm here to tell you said story- although it's not terribly interesting."

Several months earlier….

The frog platoon decided to take a day off to visit an Intergalactic Swap-Meet. Everyone was given a certain amount of money to spend. (It was always a good idea to keep to a budget at these sort of things.)

Most of the platoon purchased items that increased their job production, however, Lilolo (one of the two females of the group) decided to use her money to get something more unique. As the purple-colored Keronian walked through the seemingly never-ending rows of intergalactic junk, she came across a…peculiar booth.

This one had not one owner, but a set of owners. There were two men, a woman, a female tadpole, and a small fluffy thing creating quite a ruckus. At first, the strikingly rugged group dissuaded the shy purple creature from approaching. She watched with curiosity from a distance. Unlike Gamama, Lilolo found foreign species absolutely fascinating, and was always collecting stuff from various planets for studies.

After watching the group for some time, the frog finally built up the courage to approach the odd family.

As she looked with curiosity at the random items, one of the two men began to start up a conversation with her. Apparently, the family unit didn't really want to part with the items in question, but were desperate for food money.

Feeling sympathetic (and slightly guilty) Lilolo quickly showed interest in a strange metallic box with a window on the side. "Oh, that? That's a toaster oven! You can cook biscuits in there--as well as other stuff! We don't ever use it though--you know--lack of food and all. It's been modified to be safe for space travel too!"

The odd box seemed to be a most helpful tool. It was going for 7000 Woolongs, but Lilolo offered her full 10,000 for the item. She smiled as the family whooped with gratitude and thanks. They split the money for dinner-- although the older woman mentioned something about gambling the money away-- which created a slightly worrisome attitude within the frog.
The "toaster" gained fascination from the entire platoon. They found slightly browning food items to be much easier with the mysterious box around. There were several mishaps where the "toaster" had needed extra care- specifically when one of the frogs choose a non-food item to watch cook through the box's window. There had been several attempts to melt certain plastics and metals- which resulted in a horrible mess, and various sparks emitting from the thing.

Lilolo always gave a stern talking to whomever would break her "toaster"- before having to fix it once again. Still, the little appliance was well-loved, and kept a prominent spot in the kitchen.

….  

(the narrator re-appears)

"See? I told you it wasn't that interesting of a story….just thought you should know…"
As the light became brighter, the metallic drawer began to shake with violence. The noise woke up Gamma with a startling realization. As the creature crawled from the head of his bed to the foot, he peeked over the edge to see what was happening…

All at once there was a loud banging sound. A large dent formed from the inside of the metal furnishing! The frog fell back to his bed in surprise and terror. The loud noise continued in more rapid session as the drawer contorted into shrapnel of its former self.

With one final "BANG!" the light quickly exposed itself, and then receded.

Silence.

At this point, Gamma was under his comforter (as if that would protect him somehow). The sudden lack of noise gave him the courage to peep out from his hiding place. He figured one of his weapons had malfunctioned, and secretly hoped that his special hat (and the other Gem's remains) had not been damaged in the process. He peered over the edge of his bed's foot side, just in time to hear another loud clanging of metal. Gamma retreated briefly, before being witness to an even more horrifying sound.

"AAAAAARRRRGGGGHHH! WHO LOCKED ME IN A DRAWER!? STARS! THAT WAS PAINFUL! WAIT UNTIL YELLOW DAIMOND HEARS ABOUT THIS!"

Gamma recognized the noise all too well. It couldn't be…she was dead! He had seen the entire thing with his little froggy face! He peeped over the side again.

The Pearl spotted him.

Gamma gave out a vibrant yelp at the ghost, and high-tailed it out of there!

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!"

The small Ruby looked up quickly as her startled friend ran down the hallway. She assumed "sleep" was over…considering how hyper the Keronian was. WOW! That technique worked wonders for his kind! She wondered if the screaming was a tradition of some-sort.

The frog let out a few startled gasps, and leaned against one of the machines in support. The Ruby's eyes became wider when Gamma located one of his blasters, and armed it in preparation. He looked back toward the hallway with a determined (and fearful) glare on his face.

"What's going o-"
"-Shhhhh!"
"I just want to know why you're-"
"-SHHHHHHHH! Keep it down!"

The Ruby quickly transitioned to a whisper. "(What's going on? Why do you need that blaster?)"
"(The dead have risen…it's just like those creepy movies I used to watch…)"
Ruby didn't really know what the word "dead" or "movie" meant, but if Gamma seemed scared, she probably should be too. The red gem Gem began to steam with fear and determination. She was on the alert, in case the "dead movie" attacked her friend.

The two fell silent, and stared at the hallway- both of their adrenaline on full throttle.

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Yellow Pearl, meanwhile, was terribly confused and completely enraged with the situation. She looked around the sleeping chambers and heightened one lip in disgust. She located dust using her finger on one of the furnishing's surfaces.

"Dead skin cells…disgusting." She stated to herself.

Yellow Diamond was right! Organic life was inferior- not to mention gross. The Pearl attempted to remember how she had ended up here. The last thing she recalled was that damn Ruby threatening her. She distinctly remembered a Keronian standing nearby as well. Perhaps the Ruby had poofed her physical form…only to be picked up and locked in a drawer by that disgusting alternate species?

Well, no matter now. She could easily contact her leader to pick her up. The Pearl reached into her gemstone. With a flash of light, she produced a small beacon device and pressed a button. Immediately the thing began to blink red and send out an S.O.S. to Homeworld.

There! She stuck the thing back in her gemstone. Now all she had to do was wait for a ride.

The Gem glanced around the room again, before realizing that there were six beds! SIX! She could certainly take on one of those monstrosities, but was not willing to be ambushed by so many of them. Yellow Pearl would have to act discreet until the ship came to her rescue.

The Gem slowly opened the door and glanced around the hall, examining her surroundings….

"POW!"

A sudden radioactive blast zoomed inches away from her face! The Pearl jumped back in terror! The ammo hit the ship wall, which resulted in some of the metal melting a bit.

----------------

The Ruby was about to lunge at the sight of the moving object, but quickly stopped herself when she realized who it was. She glanced quickly at Gamma- who was reloading his blaster, and cursing under his breath for missing such a close target.

The small red Gem quickly ran up to the frog and angrily swatted the gun out of his grasp. "HEY! What are you doing?! You're going to get us killed!"

Ruby pointed at the hallway- fuming. "THAT'S NOT A "DEAD MOVIE"! THAT'S PEARL!"

"What?" Gamma had no clue where this Gem's vocabulary was evolving from. He could really use his hat right about now… "I know that's a Pearl! She came back from the dead to destroy us all in revenge!?!" "What? She's just reformed! All Gems are fine unless their gemstone gets cracked!"

"Gama? So…she's NOT a zombie?"

"What's a zo-m-way?"
The frog blinked in surprise. He seemed a bit confused at the situation. "A zombie is someone that eats your brain."
The Ruby tilted her head. "That's ok. Yellow Diamond says that my brain is pebble-sized."

Gamma almost laughed at this, but quickly decided to re-focus back to the more serious task at hand.

Ruby continued: "Pearl is not a "dead movie". Pearl is Pearl!" The small Gem nodded.
"Then she won't hurt us?"
"No."
At this, the frog calmed down. Satisfied, the small Ruby cupped her hands around her mouth and began to shout: "HEY PEARL! IT'S SAFE NOW!"

The yellow Gem peeked out cautiously from the room again- just in case there was another ambush. When nothing happened, the Pearl walked into the hallway and dusted herself off.

At first, the new Gem seemed more interested in getting the dust and shrapnel off of herself than anyone who was on the ship.
That attitude, however, changed immediately when the tall alien finally looked up from her busy work, and witnessed who had called her out.
"YOU!" The Pearl gave Ruby a hateful scowl.

The Red Gem seemed terribly confused at the hostility. Had she done something wrong again?

"YOU'RE THAT DAMN RUBY THAT TRIED TO SHATTER ME!"

…oh yeah…that.
"...but I didn't shatter you! Don't you remember? Yellow Diamond poofed your form!"
"That's preposterous! Why the stars would she do that?!"
"I don't know…" Ruby shrugged in ignorance.

Gamma stepped in. "I hate to say it, but it's true. I saw it with my own eyes. Your leader sacrificed you. That's why I was so scared when I first saw you. I thought…you…were…you know….
"-Shattered?"
"If that's what you want to call it…" Gamma nodded.
"...and why on Homeworld should I believe either of you?! A traitor and an enemy soldier?! Stars! You must think I'm an idiot! I mean…you LITERALLY just almost BLASTED MY HEAD OFF!"
"Yeah…sorry about that. I thought you were something dangerous."
"...Well, I never denied THAT…" The Pearl smirked maliciously. "I AM very close to Yellow Diamond, after all. I could have you both wiped from this star system if I wanted to…"

The Ruby shivered. Gamma looked unamused.
The frog piped up: "I think you're all talk."
"Excuse ME?"
"That's right. I saw how my new friend here threw you back at that meeting. You were helpless…begging for your life even! You're just full of hot air, Gama!"

"WELL! You obviously have no respect for upper crusts! I assure you, my Diamond could destroy you in a millisecond!"
"I have no doubt of that…but I highly doubt she would take such an order obediently from the likes of YOU."

The Pearl gasped in shock! Such disrespect! Did this creature even know whom he was speaking to?!
Gamma sighed. "Sorry. I didn't mean to be so harsh. I'm just a bit stressed…given the circumstances. What's done is done. At this point we should at least attempt to put our differences aside and move forward."

"-YOU can move forward! I just want to go back to Homeworld!"
"Afraid I can't do that."
"...and WHY NOT?!"
"Well, 1: I'd rather NOT die today, and 2: Even if I wanted to, no one on board knows how to pilot this ship."
"...how are we moving then?"
"Auto pilot."
"..."

The Pearl smacked her hand to her head. "Can I see the controls please?"
"Be my guest." Gamma beckoned her to the control panel.

The Gem sat down and looked at the various screens and buttons with little interest. The frog scoffed. Certainly if he couldn't figure it out, she wouldn't be able to either.

In one fail swoop, the Pearl unexpectedly dove her arms into one of the ship's screens- almost like a hologram. Immediately the Gem's eyes went static, and a strange sound erupted from her mouth- it almost sounded like a combination between a groan and auto tune.

The frog gasped in terror! Was she purposely submitting herself to electrocution?! STARS! He didn't want her hurting herself!

Gamma approached the Gem quickly, and yanked her away from the system. The Pearl fell to the floor, and blinked surprisingly a few seconds as her consciousness returned to normal.

"Are you NUTS?! You're going to hurt yourself!" the frog scolded the Gem intensely.

The Pearl stood up- nonchalantly, and brushed herself off again.

"Well?! What do you have to say for yourself?!"

Yellow Pearl looked at Gamma with a tinge of annoyance. "IF you had let me stay on the system longer, I could have gotten more intel on the ship's mechanics. I was AT LEAST able to verify that there has been significant electrical and physical damage done to the outside of this ship's surface."

Gamma looked at the Pearl, quite surprised. "I thought...you were trying to...erm...shock yourself..."

"Electrocution?! Stars no! Why on Homeworld would I ever do that?!"

"I don't know! You scared the life out of me!"

The Pearl glanced at the Keronian and smirked suddenly. The gaze made Gamma nervous.

"You don't know anything about our species, do you?"

The frog blushed with embarrassment. "I...I know enough..." He looked away from the Pearl in a state of shame.

The yellow Gem approached him with an intimidatingly tall pose. As the Keronian looked up at her, she suddenly bent down to his level...uncomfortably close. Gamma began to back up slowly. He didn't like where this situation was going. The Pearl answered the fear on his face with an incredibly creepy mumble: "(Well, I know a lot about YOUR species...much more then that idiotic Ruby over there. I know what your weaknesses are...what you're afraid of...)"

The frog gulped.

In a split second something very odd happened. The Pearl's face began to contort- a polyp formed from her hair. Suddenly her eyes formed into that of a serpent- as did her tongue. The face merged quickly into a familiar creature- A NYORORO!
"GAMA!" the little frog put his hands over his head, and began to shiver violently in fear. The slithering beast now attached to the Pearl's body gave the poor thing a sudden panic! The face soon contorted back into its original form- revealing a (now laughing) Pearl.

"THWANG!"

The yellow Gem fell over in surprise, as a flying heat-resistant pan smacked her on the side of her face.
"Leave Gamma alone! He helped save you!" Ruby had been very patient, and was tired of seeing the two bully each other. Pearl turned to the Ruby in a rage. "You insignificant pebble! How dare you throw things at a Diamond's secretary!"
"SO WHAT IF I DID?! YOU NEED TO TREAT GAMMA NICE!" The Ruby shouted toward her taller, yellow counterpart.
"Nice? Why?" the Pearl looked at the red Gem, unamused. "He's organic…useless…and definitely NOT as superior as us."
"YOU'RE WRONG! Gamma is not useless! He saved me AND you!" Ruby began to steam in a rage.

Pearl rolled her eyes. "Just like every other Ruby – stupid and short-tempered. You're all the same."
"I am NOT Ruby!"
"Of course you are-"
"-NO! My name is…TOASTER!" the Ruby lit on fire in an increased rage.
"HA! HA! HA! HA! What kind of idiotic name is that?! The Pearl immediately began to laugh in the small Gem's face. "Did that slimy-thing name you that? Are you his pet now?"

"I named MYSELF THAT!"

The Ruby ran toward Yellow Pearl, and aimed a swift flaming punch toward her stupid face… Unfortunately, Pearl was prepared this time. She simply took a few steps out of the Ruby's way, and purposely tripped her.

Toaster tumbled downward, and fell with a sharp "Oomph!"

"You're pathetic." As the Pearl gazed down at her, Toaster scuttled toward Gamma to protect him as best she could.
"I'm done playing with you two. By the way, the ship told me you have an incoming call from Keron. OH! It would also like that dumb creature to stop shooting at the walls- it "hurts" it… supposedly…"

Yellow Pearl casually walked off, just to see if she could find the rest of the Keronian's platoon. Certainly there was someone more…intelligent on this ship to talk to?

The two soldiers sat, shocked and slightly flustered. That entire display had been unevenly one-sided…and slightly embarrassing.
Toaster calmed down to her normal self, and offered to help Gamma onto his feet.

As if on que, the main screen in the room made a chirping noise- indicating that there was a call incoming from Keron.

Chapter End Notes
Soooo…I thought I was going to work yesterday….and SURPRISE! They gave me Thanksgiving off!

...So what did I do? I typed this of course! Happy…erm…Black Friday…I guess? I don't know if I'll be able to update another chapter this week (we'll see)…so I'm releasing this one a bit early!

An FYI – The next chapter is completely written (traditionally) but still has to be typed. I finished writing it today…but YEAH…
…the next chapter is a DOOZY….just prepare yourself. It's going to get INTENSE! HOO-BOY….
(or maybe it's just intense to me…I tend to be a very sensitive person?)

Anyway…I'm thankful for all my followers, commenters, and readers! Even if you just follow the story…I'm thankful for you all!

Hope you enjoyed this Thanksgiving treat…full of arguing and bickering! The OPPOSITE of what Thanksgiving is about! YAY?
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In a state of panic, the frog pushed Ruby away from the main screen. Gamma whispered to her harshly: "(Listen! Don't get in their line of sight unless I tell you!)
"Why?"
"(We're supposed to be enemies…remember? I don't know how my species will treat either of us if they know you're on board.)"

Ruby looked slightly terrified at this.

"(Lay low-ok?)"
The Gem nodded.
Gamma quickly trotted over to the panel, and pressed the "call" button. The creature saluted and stood at attention as the call came through.
The screen suddenly displayed a much more important looking Keronian. He was wearing an impressive uniform that included lots of extra metals, service pins, and other shiny things.
The leader looked down down as if he was going to say something serious to Gamma, but let out a gasp instead!
"Where is your hat soldier!? Show some respect!"

"GAMA! Hang on!" the frog left in a panic, and ran to his quarters. He came back with his hat on- finally looking decent.
The (now slightly embarrassed) Keronian stood at attention once more.

"That's more like it! Now, are you the soldier we have on file?...Name…Gamama?" The important Keronian chuckled slightly at the title.

Gamma flinched before stating: "Yes. That's…erm…me."

The leader became serious once more. "Are you aware of the consequences of your actions?"
"Excuse me? WHAT actions?" Gamma tried to act innocent, but was failing miserably. He waited for the news to hit him that he was harboring an enemy soldier-

"-that you deliberately shot at a Gem leader, causing a near war between our two species?"
"Wait….WHAT?" Gamma seemed slightly agasp.
"Did you, or did you not shoot at Yellow Diamond?!"
"...Well...yeah...but it was in self-defense!"
"Doesn't matter." The leader gave Gamma a stare of upmost seriousness. "Have you been attentive to the news lately?"
"Erm…not exactly. I've been a little-" Gamma stared at Ruby off screen "-preoccupied."
"I…see." The Keronian leader looked most displeased at this news. "Perhaps I should bring you up to speed than?"

The superior pressed a button, and immediately the screen transitioned to a news broadcast. A crowd of curious alien news folk attempted to keep up and interview the massive Yellow Diamond. The camera in question pointed upward toward the leader…who was weeping!...no…..bawling! Tears ran down her face as she held her slightly singed hand. One of the reporters began prying. "Yellow Diamond! Yellow Diamond! Can we get a witness testimony? What happened?"
Between incredibly pathetic sobs, the Diamond could barely wail her response – "A…Keronian… soldier! Threatened…and…attacked…me…with his weapon! He…kidnapped…my…poor… poor…Pearl!"

"WHAT?! That's not what happened at all!" Gamma was fuming!

Pearl, meanwhile, peeped out from behind the ship's wall. "(I knew it!)" she whispered to herself. "(That stupid Keronian was lying the entire time!)

As the news video continued, one of the reporters spotted the remainder of Gamma's platoon exiting a nearby door. The poor group was immediately bombarded with paparazzi, and the place was so crowded that only fragments of sentences could be heard:
"-what do you have to say-"
"-Gamma wouldn't do tha-"
"-that camera out of my face-"
"-there they are! Those Keronian brutes! -"

The screen went static for a few seconds, before transitioning back to the live feed of the higher up once more.

Gamma immediately began to interject. "LIES! That horrendous woman was about to kill me! She had electrical discharge coming out of her fingers and everything!"
"It doesn't matter if it was a lie or not! It's your word against hers…and she has the upper hand! Do you know the strings we had to pull to prevent war just now?!"

The screen transitioned to another news broadcast. It showed a different Keronian leader, attempting to shake hands with the incredibly tall Yellow Diamond. The gesture looked terribly awkward- as the Diamond was having to shake the frog's entire arm.

Gamma noted that the Gem's other arm was in a medical sling.

A broadcaster began to narrate.
"Today, a peace treaty was struck to null the horrific events at the Galactic Council meeting yesterday!"

The monitor suddenly displayed footage of various Keronian civilians (and a few other species) being led to evacuation ships from some foreign planet.
"In an effort to relieve tensions between the Gems and Keronians, the small species has gladly, and willingly, given up one of their controlled planets to Yellow Diamond for drilling purposes!"

"WHAT?!" Gamma was obviously furious. "WHAT IS THIS?!" he gestured to the screen in a baffled state of shock.

The report continued.
"…but what will happen to the soldier at the epic center of this controversy? Live footage of the negotiation speech has THIS to say!"

The screen cut to the Keronian and Gem leader standing side by side at a podium. The Keronian spoke. "As part of the peace treaty between both worlds, we have decided it would be in Keron's best interest…to exile the soldier in question- Gamama from any further contact with our residents."

At the mention of the frog's name, the spectating crowd laughed slightly.

Gamma felt sick to his stomach.

The screen went back to the live feed. The leader continued his conversation automatically. "You are allowed to keep and utilize your current ship any way you see fit, but you are never to land on
Keron, or contact your platoon again. Is that clear?"

Gamma's face contorted into a pathetic state. It was clear that he had gone from his tough soldier physique, to a sad husk of his former glory.

He asked the question he didn't want an answer to, in an uncharacteristically soft voice: "What about my family?"

"I'm…..sorry."

The leader really was sympathetic. In one phone call, his fellow soldier's life had been destroyed. He had not looked forward to the chat at all, but had secretly hoped Gamama had heard some of the news on his own. The Keronian leader thought it appropriate to end the call now, so that his subordinate could grieve. "Soldier…"

Gamma looked back at the screen, tears in his eyes,

"…you are dismissed." – and with that, the leader hung up.

Gamma fell to his knees and began to weep.

The ship's computer chirped, and made an announcement: "All of the ship's contacts have been manually overwritten! There are no remaining contacts in the system."

The soldier lost it, and began to bawl. "I'll never see my friends again! I'll never see my home again…or my family! My dad! My mother!"

The frog wailed to the heavens in hope the aliens he cared so much for could hear his grieving cries! "Not even a letter! I can't even send my family a letter to let them know I'm ok…."

Pearl stepped into the room. "That's what you get for messing with Yellow Diamond."

Toaster butted in: "SHUT UP YOU CLOD!"

The Pearl looked offended, but obeyed. She walked down the hall again in a huff.

The small Ruby approached the weeping alien. "Gamma? Will you be ok?"

The frog curled himself into a fetal position and continued to weep on the floor. He mumbled something under his breath: "(This is YOUR fault. If I hadn't met you, I would still be able to see my family. If you hadn't grabbed me- I would still be…HAPPY…)

With the last word emphasized, a horrific stench filled the air.

"URK!" Toaster held her nose quickly and tried her best not to get sick. The smell was so powerful; the Gem's eyes began to sting! The Ruby retreated quickly, wondering what had caused the foul odor.

Pearl reappeared holding her nose as well. "NARS! What is that horrific snench?!!"

Toaster thought she she sounded funny with her nose plugged. The small Ruby simply cupped her hands over her own face.

"I don't know! I was talking to him and all of a sudden, this smell came out of nowhere!"

"Mmmmm…"

The Pearl had heard of this before through her own research on different species for Yellow Diamond, but had never seen such a thing in action.

"Ne's depressed." She answered.

"Who's knee's depressed?"

"Not knee…NE, you nidiot!"
Toaster was confused.

Pearl sighed, and attempted to explain the situation in a simplistic manner. "When NE…" she pointed to the frog "-gets sad, a smell is reweased to mord off mreditors!"
"What's a med-it-or?"
The Pearl thought about correcting her –"predators" was the word she was trying to say- but thought better of it. She wanted to get as far away from this room as soon as possible. She decided to just go with a definition. "-someone who will hurt him." She answered before gagging slightly, and retreating into one of the alternative rooms to get away from the smell.

The Ruby looked at her depressed friend. He DID say that this entire situation was all her fault. SHE must have been the evil creature he was trying to scare off with his scent. He would never get to see his platoon- or "ma-ma" again because of her.
Toaster began to weep with guilt. If she hadn't been so stupid, her new friend wouldn't be in this predicament! If she hadn't existed- perhaps things would be better for everyone.
The small Gem wailed. The smell was bad- REAL bad, but she deserved it. As the Ruby cried, the room began to heat slightly.

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Yellow Pearl, meanwhile, was having a miserable time in one of the back rooms. The stench mixed with the unbearable heat was creating a horrific smelling humidity on the ship. The air was so thick, it felt like she was eating the fumes with each breath. The yellow Gem gagged again. As much as she hated to admit it, she was going to have to calm these two idiots down if she wanted to be picked up by her rescue ship as comfortably as possible.

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Legends have said, that of all the alien species in the galaxy, Gems had one of the most beautiful singing voices. Of course, these were just rumors. No one had actually heard a Gem sing in thousands of rotations. The Diamonds had banned the activity long ago.

…little did anyone know that the reason WHY the activity was banned, was because the Diamonds were selfish – they believed themselves to be the only creatures regal enough to hear any song a Gem would produce.
This same rumor said that Pearls always had the most beautiful voices- and a Diamond's Pearl would have the loveliest voice of all…they were made in their master's image, after all!
This Yellow Pearl, however, was special even among the other Diamond's slaves. She had been mistakenly created with an extra gift- which she would often use to calm her hot-tempered owner of stress and anger. This is why she had lasted so long- her voice WAS her weapon.

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The yellow Gem gagged again. The law stated that only her Diamond could hear her song…but she would never find out about THIS. These two idiots couldn't recognize something illegal if it smacked them in the face. The Pearl opened the door, and struggled through the thick atmosphere. As she coughed and sputtered, she wondered if there would even be a chance to complete the task at hand.

Yellow Pearl finally made it to the main room once more. She could see the heat radiating off of the wailing Ruby- as well as the frog laying on the floor. The Gem cleared her throat the best she could, and began her song:

"This beautiful Homeworld
This world is my home,
If all Gems do their part
We'll never feel alone

Everyone has a purpose
No matter where they roam,
Because this beautiful Homeworld
This world is my home!”

The thing sounded more like a national anthem then a regular tune, but it would have to do for now.

As the Pearl sang, both soldiers began to feel woozy. A calming sensation came over Gamma. In his tired grief-stricken state, his eyes began to droop. He forgot stuff. Why was he upset? Why was he crying? He couldn't remember. He was laying down though. Was he about to sleep? Yes. That must have been it.

The smell dissipated.
Gamma closed his eyes and began to snooze.

Toaster, meanwhile, felt very similar. The only difference was that her physical form was beginning to dissipate. Groggily, the Ruby stared at her hands in wonderment as they mimicked the static on a television set. Her eyes fluttered with a strange woozy sensation that was new to the Gem. She decided to close her eyes- just for a bit. Maybe that would make her feel better?

As soon as Toaster fell asleep, her physical form became more solid. The Pearl looked around the room, quite satisfied with herself. Her song was not strong enough to dissipate any physical form- but WAS strong enough to put any Gem to sleep, even her Diamond!

THIS was the reason why only her master could hear her sing. If the knowledge of this power got out to anyone else, the results would be devastating.

The Pearl scoffed at the two dumb soldiers, before going down the hall again. She could use some peace and quiet herself.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter…..

I must apologize in advance. I don't write drama all that frequently, so I hope I did the genre justice?

Not-so-fun Embarrassing Fact: I was crying when I wrote this. Don't judge me.

Next chapter has already been hand written BTW- Yellow Pearl might learn an important lesson…maybe. LOL!

…also YES. Yellow Pearl is the Jigglypuff of this world! Had lots of Pokemon on the brain lately! Trying to make an SU-themed Pokemon team on the side of playing Sun! (Pearl is going to be a Pikipek!)
Gamma woke up feeling a bit sore. He was still half asleep, but had noted that he had woken up on the floor of the ship. The Keronian attempted to lift his hand so that he could get up…

…the hand wouldn't move from his side.
Frustrated, he attempted to move his other hand.
That one was stuck too!
The Keronian flailed, before realizing his entire body seemed paralyzed. Gamma glanced around in a panic, before realizing someone had taken his bed sheets and tied him into multiple knots. The end result seemed to resemble a cloth caterpillar with a frog face.

Gamma wiggled and attempted to roll with little success. He suddenly spotted Toaster. She was sitting against one of the machines and snoring quite loudly. The little gemstone on her forehead was projecting something. Upon closer inspection, it seemed to be a movie. Toaster was in a world of massive pillows, bouncing on the things happily like a trampoline.
The frog was bewildered for a second, before noticing that the little Gem had her hands tied together with metal chains. It seemed someone had located the room on the ship with the emergency parts.
"Hey! Hey!" Gamma tried to get the Ruby's attention.

The movie quickly disappeared with a popping noise as Toaster's eyes fluttered open. She looked toward Gamma and smiled. "I was bouncing! Did you see?"
"Yes. Yes. I saw. See if you can wiggle out of your chains!"
At this, the Ruby finally realized that she was tied up. She struggled with her arms for a bit, before attempting to warm the metal.

No good. Apparently these chains were heat resistant.

"Hmph." The frog was frustrated, but tried to relax so that he could think of a plan.
Toaster frowned at him, before coming to a grim realization. Her guilt bubbled to life again, and the Ruby began to cry in shame.
Surprised by this, the frog's eyes became large with shock.

Toaster wept. "I'm sorry Gamma! I'm sorry I was made! I'm sorry I used you to save myself! If I was never here, you would still be able to go back….hwhooOooOOooommmeeee!
She wailed the last part, as boiling tears ran down her face.

Gamma remembered the previous day's major events. He softly began to weep too. The Keronian was still somewhat mad at the Gem, but it's not like she could go home now either. Plus, he had promised that no harm would come to her while he was around. The frog remembered saying something like that when he was trying to calm her down at that debate.
Not to mention, HE had approached HER FIRST at that hall…not the other way around.

Toaster saw his tears. "Are...are you...mad at me?"
"OF COURSE I AM!"
The Ruby looked at him in surprise.
Gamma continued: "-how DARE you say that you've never wanted to exist! Keep in mind, you saved me a bunch of times in the last few days too!"
"...but yesterday...when you were crying...you said this was all MY fault..."  
"I said a LOT of dumb things yesterday! I'm...so sorry I said those things...I'm so, so sorry, gama...."  

The Ruby continued to gaze at the Keronian with sad eyes. The frog continued: "You are an awesome individual, and an awesome friend. Don't let anyone convince you otherwise...not even ME! YOU ARE ONE OF THE NICEST ALIENS I'VE EVER MET!"

There was a slight pause, before Gamma concluded... 
"...and the only friend I have left that I can trust. Promise me you will never say that you don't matter again... PROMISE ME!"

"I...I promise Gamma! I'm sorry for all the things I said too!"

The two cried, and forgave one another over and over again. They had both lost everything, but at least they still had eachother.

The massive din lured Yellow Pearl back into the main room. She surveyed the pathetic scene. "Stars! There's so much sap in here, one would think you're making Ambers!"

The two soldiers glanced up at the tall alien with anger. "Why did you tie us up like this?!"
"Let us go!"

Yellow Pearl answered quickly. "Not in your lifetime. I'm expecting a call from Yellow Diamond soon, and I want to make sure her gifts are still wrapped when she arrives."
The soldier's eyes became wide with terror.
"Gifts?!" Gamma seemed shocked.
"YELLOW DIAMOND?!" Toaster was absolutely mortified.
"Mmm-Hmm!" Yellow Pearl nodded. "You two are my ticket out of this mess! Once she sees that I, single handedly captured you both, she'll welcome me back with open arms!"
"HOW?! She will never find us in this vastness of space! You're delusional!" Gamma wanted to believe that the Pearl was lying as another scare tactic.
"On the contrary! My beacon tracking device says otherwise." The Pearl proceeded to take the blinking device out of her gemstone, just long enough to to terrify the pair before putting it away again.
"Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to make sure my form is appropriate before they arrive."

The Pearl went into the washroom down the hall to check herself in the mirror.

"That CLOD." Toaster was upset again – the temperature in the room rose slightly.

Gamma seemed in a state of shock, but then realized something. "Not much we can do about it now.....by the way, did you REALLY decide to name yourself "Toaster"?"

"...Do you like it?"

"It's.....awesome...perhaps I should tell you what a toaster is though?"
"I would like that!"

-----------

Pearl expected the two soldiers to be weeping upon her return. Instead, she found the Keronian trying to describe what "bread" was.

"-It's made out of flour- which is a kind of plant- and then you slice it after it gets fluffy-"
"What are you two idiots doing!? You're tied up! Stars...you don't even know how to act when your life is on the line!" Yellow was surprised by the lack of tension in the air. Gamma piped up again. "I was just explaining to "Toaster" here, what a toaster does..." "Don't YOU start calling her by that inane name too!" "...but, that's her name now." "-YEAH! That's my name now!" Toaster butted in, smiling from ear to ear.  

"ARRRGH! You're...both...just...IMPOSSIBLE! I'll be glad to be rid of you soon!"

Within a beat, the ship began to shiver violently, as if something huge, and with a much larger amount of gravity had passed nearby. Gamma and Toaster suddenly became very silent, in a grim realization that there was now an extra presence of something on the outskirts of their tiny spacecraft. The ship chirped. Yellow Pearl's mood immediately changed for the better. She clapped her hands together, pleasantly. "Speaking of which..."

The yellow Gem straightened her clothing a bit, and cleared her throat before pressing the button for the call to come through. The screen connected. Pearl smiled as nicely as she could, expecting to see her leader. 

...Instead, she saw.....herself?!

"Wha?" the Pearl tilted her head in confusion. Yellow Pearl looked back at her on the screen, mostly unamused, before squawking: "You have an incoming message from the Diamond Line! Would you like to accept this call?"

"Who are YOU?!" "I am Yellow Pearl, Yellow Diamond's assistant." "No....I'M Yellow Pearl! I'M Yellow Diamond's assistant!" "Do you want to receive the call or NOT?" "...yes, yes...of course." The Pearl put her head in her hand, clearly stressed. She turned to her two hostages. "Probably a temp." she mumbled more to herself then them.

...and then, there she was! Yellow Diamond! In all her 20-foot glory! The camera somehow made her look taller, and more regal than usual. Pearl straightened herself out quickly, and gave a diamond salute. Ruby shut her eyes in fear! Gamma noted that the leader's arm sling was missing. "My Diamond!" Pearl seemed excited and happy to be in the presence of her leader again. The Diamond wasn't on her regular throne, but seemed to be in the captain's chair of a starship. This was especially obvious by all the other types of Gems who were running around in the background, actually piloting the thing.

The leader spoke: "Pearl! So nice to see you again! ...and look!" she turned to Gamma and Toaster "-You even brought me presents!" "Yes my Diamond! I thought you would like that!" "Oh! I do! I do! You were always such a good Pearl!"

The yellow Gem beamed with pride! Her leader continued: "...It's a shame I'm going to have to destroy you now..."
The Pearl's eyes suddenly became huge with fear. "My...my Diamond? I...I don't understand..."
"Oh Pearl...my poor, poor, Pearl...did you not see your replacement when you answered the call? She's nearly identical in every way! My new servant even has your annoying sense of sarcasm, paid heavily to commission her too...."
"I...I...but...I thought...I saw you on the news...you were so worried..."
"It's called LYING dear. How else was I going to get the sympathy I needed to con those idiotic slimy-things out of their planet? Remember Pearl, this is ALL for the good of Homeworld."

Yellow Pearl gulped in intimidation, as her master continued:
"I just can't have a bunch of witnesses ruining my little bluff, and you've so conveniently put all of my loose ends on one pathetic ship too!"
"Wait, so that weird thing in the corner didn't shoot you?" The Pearl pointed to Gamma.

The Diamond's menacing smile turned into a scowl. "Of course he did...but only to protect you two morons, or himself. Either way, it doesn't matter. You will ALL be gone soon." The Diamond turned her chair to the crew. "Ready the weapons."

"Yes my Diamond." The crew was incredibly compliant.

The Pearl stared in upmost terror, as the Gems prepped the ship's guns for an attack. The Yellow servant had to know, she had to ask: "...but, I thought I was a good Pearl...your FAVORITE Pearl, remember?"
The Diamond answered: "You thought wrong. Your job is easily replaceable. Do you know how many other Yellow Pearls came before you?"
The servant began to sweat, as her leader continued: "...way too many to count. Sometimes, I shatter them for fun...just because I can. Pearls are useless for anything other than doing chores and holding things of interest. You did what you were programmed to do, but have now overstayed your welcome. I no longer wish for your existence."

Yellow Diamond turned to her team again. "You may fire when ready."

"WAIT!" As the yellow Gem shouted in desperation, the Diamond turned back to the screen looking quite annoyed.
"You are trying my patience."
"I just...have one last thing to say!"

There was a slight pause. Should she do it? At this point she would be shattered either way.

"Well?! I'm waiting..." the Diamond was growing agitated, but decided to humor her ex-servant. It was always so amusing to see her subjects beg for their lives before their un-avoidable demise.

Yellow Pearl took a deep breath. The thing she wanted more than anything else right now was time. This was the only way she could think of getting it.

The Pearl began to sing:

"This beautiful Homeworld
This world is my home..."

Yellow Diamond attempted to interrupt. "What are you doing?! TREASON! I demand you to stop!"
The other crew members on the leader's ship gazed at the screen in shock. They had never heard such a beautiful noise before.
"If all Gems do our part
We'll never feel alone…"

Yellow Diamond's eyes began to sag. "I demand…that you cease…right…now…." Immediately, all of the Gems on screen began to drop like flies. Their physical forms shuddered slightly before the team member in question would lie on the floor to sleep.

Gamma and Toaster- who had been surprisingly quiet throughout this entire fiasco weren't faring much better.

"Everyone has a purpose
no matter where they roam…"

The leader struggled to stay awake, but soon became victim to the Pearl's song as well. As she sat in her massive chair, her head drooped, no longer responding.

"…because this beautiful Homeworld
this world is my home!"

Everyone on screen was now quite unconscious. Any Gem who happened to have their gemstone on their forehead was projecting various images.

The Pearl quickly hung up the call, and dove her arms into the system's computer again. She instructed the machine to drive as far away from this location as fast as possible. The ship obeyed.

The yellow Gem then retreated from the mechanics, took the tracking device out of her gemstone, and proceeded to smash the thing with her foot until it no longer worked. Tears swelled in her eyes. She had been such a fool! They had been telling the truth the whole time, and she had been too stubborn to listen to them…

She glanced at Gamma and Toaster. The pair was now entirely passed out again. Dry tears sat on both of their faces.

The frog had curled himself into a little cocoon. While the Ruby was loudly snoring again. This time the small Gem's "dream movie" featuring her trying to eat "bread", or, at least, what she thought bread looked like. It seemed to resemble an oversized white marshmallow with green plants growing out of it.

Yellow Pearl sighed with defeat, approached Gamma first, and slowly began to undo all of the knots keeping him restrained.

Chapter End Notes

OH MY GOD YOU GUYS! Did you see the promo picture for the new SU bomb coming on January 30th?! SOOOO HYPED!

(Me thinks we are going to see some Diamonds, me thinks!)

Which makes me both nervous and excited! I'm concerned how cannon this fic is going to be if we find out more about Yellow Diamond. This begs the question: even if Yellow Diamond is COMPLETELY different than my version of her, would you still like me to continue with this story? I'm actually quite fearful of any backlash for her being "not really cannon" by fellow fans if my characterization is (probably more than likely) proven to be false.
In other news- the next chapter is already written traditionally, but when I had the initial idea for this story, I only had it fresh in my mind up to this point in the tale. I have a general idea where the story is going from here, but this is usually the point where the characters take over as I nudge them in the right direction. It's going to be interesting to see how they react to the random scenarios my brain comes up with… LOL!

On another note, sorry I haven't been updating as frequently! The holiday season is tough at work, and I've been dealing with ALL SORTS of crazy stuff! (none of which I'll talk about here). Hopefully, it will speed up again after the New Year!

But yus! Everyone have a great Holiday season! Hope you guys liked this chapter as an early gift! YAY!

(I don't know why, but every time I read this chapter, I am never satisfied with it. It's necessary to the plot, but the thing always seems short to me. On the other hand, the next upcoming chapter was fun to write- and is quite sweet- literally!!)
Chapter 7

When the frog came to, he was woken up much more pleasantly than the previous day. He was in a soft place now, much more preferable over the cold, hard ground of the ship. The Keronian also noted that he was having a bit of difficulty breathing…

Gamma's eyes popped open, only to face a large white something in the darkness. It appeared that he had somehow found the way to his bed in his unconscious state. It also seemed that someone had untied him from the sheet cocoon… and mistakenly put a pillow on top of his face instead of under his head.

Gamma moved the pillow to the side quickly. What had happened? Had Yellow Diamond captured the ship? If she had, this treatment was miles above what he had expected after being caught by the enemy.

A sudden muffled "SNORT!" made the frog jump slightly in surprise. He spotted Toaster in one of the bottom bunks across from his. She had a pillow on top of her face too.

"(Toaster! Hey! Wake up!)") the whisper resulted in another:
"SNORT!"
…before Toaster stretched her arms, resulting in the pillow falling to the floor. She smacked her lips slightly, before looking toward Gamma. The Gem smiled. "Hey Gamma! I'm in a bed!"
"I can see that. How did we get here?"
The Ruby shrugged. Gamma noted that she no longer had chains on her hands. This fact didn't seem to faze her one way or the other.

Toaster looked around the room for a few seconds, before finding her pillow on the floor. She picked up the item in question, and hugged it as tightly as possible without breaking the thing. "I like pillows Gamma! They remind me of bread!"
"Gama?" the frog tilted his head in confusion. "How can they remind you of bread? You've never even SEEN bread before…"
"...but...but...you said that bread is fluffy...and pillows are fluffy too!"
"...I guess I DID say that! Although bread is normally brown, not white."
Toaster looked at the pillow for a second. "Hmmm...a brown pillow..."
"-ANY WAY..." Gamma felt that the subject was going a bit off topic. "...I wonder what happened yesterday. I'm kinda scared of going out there..."
"...me too..."

The two sat on the separate beds, nervous as all get out. Toaster began to sniff the air with curiosity as Gamma stared with confusion. The little Gem replied to his gaze with a response. "I smell something...different!"
Gamma now noticed the new scent too. It smelled kind of like food...although the aroma itself was somewhat unrecognizable.

The two climbed out of their beds respectively, and cautiously opened the door expecting a trap or ambush.

...Nothing happened.
The smell led the duo to the next room over—the kitchen. On the inside was a massively strange sight.

The place was clean…like REALLY clean. Gamma hadn't seen the ship this reflective since…well…EVER. It was a standard military ship after all, and had been used by many platoons before his. The Keronian had to squint to see what was going on because the entire place was so shiny.

Yellow Pearl was fluttering about, obviously cooking something. As she grabbed various pots and pans, her movement almost looked like that of a ballerina. From time to time, she would pull something out of her gemstone with a flash of light. Most of these items seemed to be exotic spices, but once-in-a-while the dancer would pull out something different, like a whisk…

All the while the Pearl was humming to herself pleasantly. The action was (surprisingly) NOT making the two bystanders groggily in any way.

The yellow Gem had heard the two walk toward the doorframe, but pretended like she hadn't. She turned around with a pleasant smile on her face that neither soldier knew if they should interpret as kind or creepy.

"Well! Hello there!" The Yellow Pearl seemed eerily out of character. "I made foods!"
She presented the pair with a strange dish neither of them had seen before. It resembled some kind of cake-like starch with drizzled syrup on the side.
The "foods" smelled good, but the two soldiers seemed pessimistically nervous about the entire thing. The Pearl looked back and forth at their grim faces. Her pleasant smile transformed into a scowl. "What's wrong with you? Look! Foods! I cleaned this entire hideous room too! See how much better it looks now?! Be grateful!"

Gamma looked at the plate of food, before glancing up at Yellow Pearl with sarcasm. "You're trying to poison us…aren't you?"
"WHAT?! NO!" Pearl's friendly disposition had been completely shattered. She now sounded more like a squawking macaw. "I'm trying to be NICE! IDIOTS! …erm….I mean…friends?" The Pearl attempted to fix her language quickly.

Gamma scoffed, before delivering a cruel irony:
"...and why should we believe YOU?! You tied us up-"
"-you're not tied up anymore-"
"-and scared me silly-"
"-sorry about that-"
"-and tried to hand us over to Yellow Diamond-"

"-NOW THAT!" The Pearl raised her voice quickly in a blind rage, before settling down again. "-did not work out. She….was going to completely shatter you, and I did not agree with her tactics." The Pearl lied. "You're lying." "AM NOT!"
"She wanted to destroy you too…didn't she?"
"…AND WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?!"
"You didn't start your "little lullaby" until after she told you. You may think I'm stupid, but I'm not THAT stupid. I saw the entire thing Gama…"

The Pearl suddenly looked quite shocked! She blushed with embarrassment. Obviously, the stress of the previous day had scrambled her memories a bit. The Gem drooped in shame.

Gamma continued: "See? You're already lying again! Can't be trusted at all."

"I'm not lying!"
"You're not?"
"I'm NOT!"
"You can't trust us?"
"I can….and...you're lying!"

"You’re lying."
"AM NOT!"
"She wanted to destroy you too…didn't she?"
"AND WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?!"
"You didn't start your "little lullaby" until after she told you. You may think I'm stupid, but I'm not THAT stupid. I saw the entire thing Gama…"

The Pearl suddenly looked quite shocked! She blushed with embarrassment. Obviously, the stress of the previous day had scrambled her memories a bit. The Gem drooped in shame.

Gamma continued: "See? You're already lying again! Can't be trusted at all."
"...but...but you don't understand! I'M the one in trouble now!"
"Yeah? How about that? We've been in trouble for the last couple of days, and you didn't seem to
give a croak."
"But...I'M in trouble now! Not YOU...ME!"
"Yes. Yes, you are."

The Pearl fumed at the Keronian's smugness. This conversation was going nowhere quickly. The
Tall Gem quickly turned to the Ruby.
"Ruby! You'll help me, right? We are from the same planet after all!"

Toaster stuck her nose up and ignored the desperate Pearl.

"Hey! Don't be like that..."

Toaster closed her eyes in defiance.
Pearl tried a different tactic. "How DARE you ignore such an important Gem! You must do what I
say....you...DUMB RUBY!"
"It's Toaster."
"EXCUSE ME?!"
"My name is Toaster now! If you aren't going to call me by my real name, I'm not going to talk to
you!"
"...You have GOT to be kidding me..." The Pearl gritted her teeth.
"I'm waaaaaaaiiiting...." The smaller Gem taunted.
"Errgh...fine. TOASTER, can you help me?"
The Ruby answered "Hmmm...I don't know....can you be nice to Gamma?"
"Why you little SCUM!"
"Hmmm...seems I can't hear you anymore. You used the wrong name again."

The Pearl's face changed colors in anger. "Well FINE than! But just so you know, when they come
to shatter me, they are going to do the same to you!"
"Fine!"
"FINE!" the Pearl sat at the table in a huff, plate still in hand. She slammed the contents on the
table and immediately began to force-feed herself in aggression. Whether she was doing this out of
anger or spite, neither soldier knew.

As she continued to try to eat, she kept chewing and chewing- but refused to swallow the stuff. She
questioned her own knowledge on the activity, before gulping the wad down.

Her eyes widened in surprise. The Pearl immediately began to cry. Soft sobs were muffled as she
took another bite of the meal. At first, the duo thought she was either going to wine some more, or
say something sympathetic.

What they got instead, was a completely different comment: "This...this "foods"...it's...really
good. It's...wonderful..."

The soldiers looked at the Pearl with confusion in their faces. Certainly, if she could create food,
she had eaten it before?

The yellow Gem's tears continued to flow as she had a flashback of the past....

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In the royal kitchen, a bowl full of food was thrown to the floor. The Yellow Pearl had spent hours
attempting to make an incredibly difficult dish from a recently captured planet.
The recipes' language was hard to translate, and the slave was having the worst time trying to determine measurements.

The bowl full of her latest attempt had been thrown on the floor, yes, but the Pearl was pretty sure the Diamond had been aiming for her head.
"MORON! CLOD! That was the worst batch YET!" The Diamond spat at her servant's feet. She had taste-tested the dish, only to be disappointed yet again. Yellow Diamond didn't eat per-say, but DID have a terribly nasty habit of trying exotic dishes and spitting them back out again, not unlike a human would do at a wine tasting.

All the Upper Crusts that actually DID like eating had been bragging about this particular dish for a while now. Yellow Diamond knew that (as ruler) she should be up to par on all the latest trends. There were only two problems with this, however.
One: Neither Diamond nor Pearl knew what the dish was supposed to taste like, and two:……

Yellow Pearl piped up: "My Diamond, may I make a suggestion?"
"What is it?"
"If I could just try a little bit of the dish before serving you, I could make sure that the "foods" are luxurious enough for your sensitive pallet…"

The leader roared with laughter. "HA! A mere servant eating the dish of her master! If I have a sensitive pallet, then you have no pallet at all! These ingredients are terribly expensive to import, and would be wasted on the likes of you…even for taste testing!"
"...but..." the Pearl glanced at the giant bowl of food that had been thrown to the ground. The Diamond saw her confused face.
The leader scowled. She knew exactly what the Pearl was thinking. "Don't even think about it." She stated calmly. "That floor is MUCH more expensive then you were. If anything, it disserves to have exotic foods thrown on it. Now, clean up this mess!...and if you so much as taste ONE ingredient, you WILL be shattered."

Yellow Diamond took a cooking rag, and threw it toward her servant as the Pearl cowered in fear. "I expect this recipe to be perfect by tonight. My sisters are coming to visit. If the dish does not suit their tastes…there will be…EXTREME consequences…."

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As to be expected, the Diamond would check on the Pearl's progress throughout the day. The above scenario would repeat over and over again.

Yellow Pearl would never taste any of her own cooking- in fear of her life. To add insult to injury, the leader constantly forced Pearl to store the various ingredients and cooking supplies in her gemstone. This way, no lesser Gems in the court could try any of it either.

It seemed that no matter how many dishes the Pearl created, or how many parties her master put on, the Diamond would always come back from the shindig- only to slap Yellow Pearl for her indecent food once more.

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Little did Yellow Pearl know, that her dishes were always the talk of Homeworld. Everyone would always want to attend Yellow Diamond's parties, just to taste the exotic meals from around the solar system. Perhaps, if the little Pearl had been present for these joyous occasions, she would have known better. However, her Diamond was constantly giving her busy work to prevent such a horrendous thing from happening.
This entire situation put Yellow Diamond in an awkward position. Without the food, no one would come to her parties. WITH the food, everyone would complement the meal instead of their beautiful leader. The entire situation would constantly put Yellow Diamond in a mood most foul—which she would then take out on her famous servant after the event was complete.

The Pearl continued to cry as she put another bite in her mouth. All this time…all this time she was led to believe her cooking was horrendous. Only the wealthiest of Gems could afford it, and the leader of them all had repeatedly told her that her "foods" were awful…

Perhaps it was because she had never eaten anything before? The Gem's eyes grew in fascination and hope, as she stared at Gamma intensely.

The look made the frog nervous. Was she going to turn into something creepy again?
In a sudden burst of energy, Yellow Pearl rose from the table, and snatched up Gamma easily. The Keronian yelped in surprise, as Toaster readied a fireball in one of her hands.
Yellow Pearl sat Gamma down at one of the tables' seats quickly. The soldier blinked in surprise at this action, before the Gem took a spoon of food, and attempted to force-feed the poor Keronian.

Gamma clamped his mouth closed in fear, wondering what on Keron had come over this insane creature.
Yellow Pearl began to shout: "EAT IT!"
"NO!" Gamma talked through the side of his mouth in utter terror.
"EAT IT YOU IDIOT!"
"NO! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?!"
"Eat it! I…I need to know…I need…" the Pearl began to cry again, tears streaming down her face. Gamma looked up at the Gem, utterly confused. "Wha?"
Pearl took advantage of the situation, and quickly forced a spoon full of food into the frog's mouth.

In a shocked realization, the Keronian was going to quickly spit the stuff out in retaliation, but then, something amazing happened.

It was wonderful! A meal that could compete at a five-star restaurant. It was a dish he hadn't tried before, but the frog could already tell that this was the best food he had ever eaten. The Keronian's eyes dilated with wonderment- a single tear of joy went down his face. The frog swallowed, and gasped. "…..wow….."

"Well? Is the "foods" good to you?!...Tell me!...NOW!"

The frog looked up at the Yellow Pearl, and coughed slightly. "It's…decent. It's definitely eatable…if that's what you mean…"

The Pearl frowned at the response. She sadly began to take the plate of food off of the table. Perhaps it had just tasted good because she hadn't tried eating before? Must have imagined the taste….

Gamma grabbed her arm quickly. "I said it's fine, dammit! Don't waste good food reserves in space. Who knows when we'll find another market around here." Gamma aggressively yanked the plate out of the Pearl's hand, and began to eat off of it voraciously. He had just realized that he hadn't eaten anything in a long time, and his stomach was protesting with pain.

The Pearl looked at the hungry frog in surprise for a few seconds, before displaying a gentile smile. The tears slowly fell from her face at the realization that all her cooking skills could be used
for something useful. She had never gotten a compliment on her "foods" before, and secretly knew
that the enemy soldier had too much pride and dignity to express himself correctly at this exact
moment.

Toaster's fireball disappeared, as she stared at the starving friend in wonderment. She sauntered
next to the Pearl. "Wow…he's really a-eating a lot…isn't he?"
"Yes. Yes he is."
"Could I try some too?"
"OH!" The Pearl went to the counter, and grabbed another plate of food. She handed it to Toaster, a
bit nervous.

The Ruby glanced at Gamma, wanting to mimic him. She held her spoon (some-what awkwardly),
before attempting to balance food on top of it. She brought the stuff to her mouth, hand shaking the
whole way…
"GLUMP!"
Her eyes became wide as she nearly choked herself while swallowing it. The Ruby coughed
slightly.
"You have to chew first Toaster!" Gamma stated, slightly muffled through a full mouth.

The Red Gem attempted a second time, much more successfully. Her face transformed into a
pleasant smile! "WOW! This is the best thing I ever ate-ed!"
"That's the ONLY thing you've ever eaten." Reminded Gamma.

Pearl smiled. Watching someone enjoy her hard work was a pleasant change, one she thought she
would never get to see in her lifetime…

Chapter End Notes

Whoo! FINALLY got a chapter up! Finally!

A big thanks goes out to VonSmore and CeruleanIntrospection for all the support and
inspiration to put up this chapter! Sorry it's been so dead guys…work is really busy
right now. Haven't had a lot of time to write traditionally OR digitally….

This chapter came about when I wondered how Pearl was so good at cooking without
enjoying the activity of eating. Maybe she doesn't like to eat because it's what the
Diamonds always did…bad memories for all. The whole time I was writing this
chapter, I was thinking about three things:

1. The Disney version of Cinderella. I'm sure Yellow Diamond and Lady Tremaine
would have made wonderful friends…if Yellow Diamond liked humans.
2. Sanji from One Piece. Did I ever mention that I really like One Piece? Imagining
Yellow Pearl with curly eyebrows amuses me…
3. Toriko. Most manly anime about food EVER! LOL!

I Hope you guys liked reading this chapter as much as I liked writing it!
As the days went by, Gamma started to have a bit of dread. Being trapped in a tiny spaceship with two completely different species was incredibly exhausting. Yellow Pearl was especially difficult to get along with. Gamma discovered through prying that the Gem was described as a slave in their culture. He couldn't help but notice that the reason why her Diamond master had probably replaced her so quickly, was because the dictator would have struggled to function at all without her. She cooked, cleaned, piloted ships, knew about alternative species, and had an amount of extra space in her gemstone that could rival that of an entire kitchen.

Unfortunately, the frog also discovered her attitude was not terribly respectful toward either himself nor Toaster. Gamma found the entire scenario increasingly awkward…especially because he did not want the Gem to think she was still a slave in her current situation. However, whenever he aided with a helping hand, it was most often met with pessimism, or screeching.

Gamma would get a glass of water. Yellow Pearl would yell at him for slightly moving the mugs in the cupboard, and dirtying the sink handle.

Gamma would try to help clean. Yellow Pearl would screech about his technique, and do his job all over again from the beginning.

Gamma would attempt to eat something on his own. Yellow Pearl would break down in tears about how he had not asked her to make "foods" for him (and add that he had caused crumbs on the floor).

The entire back and forth made the frog feel rather helpless. The situation was making him guilty, and bringing about new ideas of the whole "Keronian's must enslave all Pekoponians" thing his species was trying to accomplish.

The more the Pearl refused to allow him to help, the more he hated the idea of his own species having a goal to treat any creature to the point that they felt they were unwanted unless condemned to this sort of norm.

Between Toaster's constant intrigue, and the Pearl's spontaneous attitude changes, the frog also felt slightly outnumbered (not to mention a bit jealous). He was the only one of his kind on the ship, and his own intelligence didn't even compare to the shape shifting, stamina, and elemental paralysis of a Gem. He got along with Toaster…okay…

…but even so, he did miss the company of his fellow Keronians (even if he was slowly moving away from his own planet's ideology). This yearning for companionship of the same species resulted in an internal conflict of longing and guilt.

Basically, the frog was turning into an emotional mess…questioning his own past and morals.

Perhaps this is why he was currently lying in his bed, feeling both sorry for himself and his previous activities as an invader at the same time? He didn't want Toaster worrying about him, and had "accidently" locked the door while he "slept".
Toaster seemed fine with this, at first. …But after a day's worth of no interacting or "ate-ing" from the frog, the Ruby was becoming concerned and impatient.

"BAM! BAM! BAM!" she knocked on Gamma's door with such a force that it threatened to rip the thing in half.
"GAMMA! I know loud noises make you sleep less! Why are you still in there?! Your sleep doesn't take this long! Are you okay?!" The small red Gem shouted a bit, before pressing her ear against the door in anticipation of hearing a response.

Nothing.

The Pearl approached the door in a huff. "Did you mention how insulted I was that he missed the "foods" I prepared yesterday?!!"

Toaster shook her head, and proceeded to yell perhaps the worst thing she could have at that moment. "…HEY GAMMA! YOU HURT PEARL'S FEELINGS YESTERDAY TOO! NOW COME ON OUT!"

Instead of any audio response, a horrific stench began to wallow through the crack between the floor and the doorway. Toaster retreated quickly in surprise, and Pearl quickly got some washcloths from the kitchen. She stuffed them underneath the door to prevent the smell from spreading.
"Stars..." Pearl held her nose again. "Well, at least we know he's alive now...."

Toaster frowned. She was REALLY worried about Gamma now. She wondered what he could be so afraid of. Certainly it wasn't her? They were friends now…right?
"Gamma…please come out…what's wrong?"

Still no response.

Toaster was becoming frustrated. "If you don't at least answer me, I'LL BREAK DOWN THE DOOR!" The ruby's temperature rose in a rage.
Pearl quickly grabbed her by the cuff.
"HEY! Let me go! You can't just carry me around like this!"
"If that thing smells as bad as I remember him smelling you are NOT breaking down this door and letting that ghastly aroma into the main chamber! Understand?!"

Toaster went limp with defeat. She stared at the Pearl, and nodded slowly before being put down again.

The Pearl contemplated to herself. "We have to lure him out with something. What do Keronian's like?"

Toaster thought next to Pearl a few seconds, before coming up with an answer. "The toaster!"
"Eh?"
"He likes talking about the toaster!"
"Does he like that, or is that just something YOU like?"
The Ruby suddenly looked somewhat disappointed in herself. "Oh…yeah."

The two tried to think of another idea.

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Throughout the next few hours, the duo attempted to lure the frog out of his room with various
bait. Among which, included: a glass of water, his blaster, and a plate of food. None of these worked.

Becoming slightly bored and desperate, Toaster tried a few extra items- the heat resistant pan, and his chair from the table. However, these showed an even smaller success rate.

"Why would he want a chair?! He's already lying down!" Yellow Pearl thought the idea was a waste of time.
"Well, I don't know! He always sits in the same chair! Maybe he misses it!"
"That's idiotic. A chair is an intimate object!"
Toaster frowned. "Well, I don't see you coming up with any ideas!"

The two Gems suddenly came to a grim realization. Neither of them knew anything about Gamma. They didn't know any of his hobbies, or likes, or dislikes. At this point, Toaster wasn't even sure what he did during his previous Keronian lifestyle. This entire "Gem" scenario, had just kind of unexpectedly blown up in his face.

"We've gotta get him out somehow. His species can't live without foods or water…" Pearl tried to think of another idea.

Toaster suddenly had a thought…a conniving one at that.
"I know! One time, when Gamma was sleeping, he told me not to touch anything!"
"Yeah, so?"
"Soooo…. if we find where he hides all of his favorite and personal stuff, he'll HAVE to come out of his room to stop us!"

The Pearl thought this over. "You know…that might just be dumb enough to work! Good work Ruby!"
"It's Toaster."
"Right….right….whatever."

The two set to work attempting to find something that seemed important. The entire time, Toaster shouting things like:
"HEY GAMMA! WE'RE GOING THROUGH ALL YOUR STUFF!"

"HEY LOOK AT ALL OF THE PRETTY BUTTONS ON THE CONTROLS! I WONDER WHAT THEY DO?!"

"HEY LOOK PEARL! I'M PUTTING GAMMA'S MOUTH COMB UNDER MY ARMPIT!"

The last comment got Toaster screamed at by Pearl. She then spent 30 minutes attempting to sanitize the toothbrush.

The smell dissipated, but still no frog appeared.

….and then they found it.
It was a room neither of them had bothered exploring yet. A door with enough padlocks on it to cover the entire thing. There were chains and locks all over the place.

Yellow Pearl piped up: "HEY RUBY GEM LOOK AT THIS DOOR! IT HAS SECURITY CHAINS ON IT!"

"YES IT DOES PEARL! LET US SEE WHAT'S INSIDE! …AND MY NAME IS TOASTER!"

"ALLRIGHT! I HOPE NOTHING DANGEROUS OR EMBARRISING IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS THING!"
The two Gems snickered under their breath. Being mischievous was fun for Pearl, and new to Toaster. It was weird and unfamiliar, but strangely satisfying for the two to be working as a team. Still no Gamma.

"Whelp! Looks like we're going to have to force this thing open! RUBY! Take the locks out!"

"Erm...right!"

Toaster began to heat the padlocks to weaken the metal. Pearl then produced a strange clamp from her gemstone.

"What is THAT?!

"It's a cooking press! I was holding it for Yellow Diamond, but I think it will work in this case too."

Pearl clamped the cooking press around the already weakened padlock and snapped the metal easily. The entire chain barricading the entrance fell down with a large din of rattling.

As the door slowly opened, it revealed a pitch black room. Neither Gem could see anything on the other side. The entire place was quite musty, and an eerily cold air that was trapped inside wafted slowly outward toward the hall.

Toaster instinctively clung to the Pearl's arm in startlement. Yellow shook her off, annoyed at the gesture. "Hey! What kind of a soldier are you?! YOU should be protecting ME from creepy stuff!"

"I'm not going in there!"

"...and why NOT?"

"It's dark!"

"Oh for Diamond's sakes! Don't you have a light in your gem!?!"

"OH!...Right..." Instantly, Toaster made her gemstone glow so they could see inside. The beam was not strong enough to see the end of the room. The only thing visible was the hard floor.

Pearl poked her head in the room cautiously. "Hmmm...can't see anything. Ok, you go in first!"

Yellow tried to shove poor Toaster ahead of her. The little Ruby attempted to stop by creating skid marks on the floor. Frustrated, the Pearl gave her very logistical reasoning: "Come on now! You're the brave soldier, you have the light, AND I'm more important then you! In...you.....go!" With one final shove, Toaster fell on the floor in the middle of the room.

"TOOOOMMB!"

Toaster jumped in fear of the noise!

An incredibly bright light had turned on and then faded slightly inside the chamber. Blinded, the Ruby staggered about the place for a few seconds, before falling over again.

Yellow Pearl stepped in easily and surveyed the (now) dimly lit room. She chuckled at poor Toaster who was trying to find her bearings.

"Such an idiot! You were afraid of a lightbulb! See how bravely I walk in after you? This Pearl is not afraid of a bit of light! You were worried for no significant reason!"

As the Pearl bragged-

"SHUNK!"

"AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!"

A large set of rounded teeth came inches from her face! The only thing that stopped the creature from devouring her entirely was the fact that there was a very thick plane of glass surrounding the beast. Yellow Pearl fell over, acutely aware that this random animal could probably cause her a great amount of pain if it got out of its enclosure.
Toaster would have laughed at the irony, if it wasn't for the fact that this creature was so horrifying and grotesque. The two Gems stared at the thing with terror.

Apparently, the wall to the left of the door had a built in aquarium. As time went by, the light aggravated more of the strange beasts that were on the inside. The creatures resembled massive slugs- slimy, no legs, and each baring a very intimidating round set of carnivorous teeth.

"What...what are they?!" Toaster was horrified that she had been living on the ship with these things and didn't even know they were here.

Pearl observed the creatures briefly, before shivering slightly. "They're Space Leeches."
"Wh-why are they on the ship?!"
"Some invasive species use them for...interrogation purposes." The Pearl shivered again.
"You mean like...TORTURE?!"
"That's EXACTLY what I mean."
"I think we should leave. I don't like it here..."

The Pearl dusted herself off. "Nonsense! This is just a standard tool used for conquering planets! Besides, look at these stupid things! They can't leave their container without assistance!"

Pearl thumped on the cage in bravery to prove a point. This resulted in several hissing sounds from the leeches.

She continued: "Come along now! There has to be something much more interesting in here for all that security we had to go through!" She paused, thoughtfully. "...and you are the soldier, so you must go in front in order to escort me!" Yellow Pearl edged Toaster along with a massive amount of resistance.

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Gamma, meanwhile was still in his room feeling badly for himself. The only thing that was making him stir slightly was the fact that the Gem's threats to damage his stuff had silenced.

He knew exactly which room they were threatening to go into – the war room. Certainly a door with that many locks and chains was an obvious sign that they should not enter the place?

Had they given up? He had even heard Toaster rattling the chains for the full effect of the threat. Still, it was awfully quiet...especially if Pearl was out and about.

The Keronian sighed in defeat before crawling out of bed, and cautiously unlocking and opening the door.

He looked left...
he looked right....
he looked left again...
...and suddenly his blood ran cold.
Not only was the door open, but it had been entered!

The frog ran! He ran as fast as his little froggy legs would take him!

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The room was looking less and less like a room, and more like a hallway. Pearl shoved the hesitant Toaster along, creating skid marks on the floor the entire way.
"MY STARS! You're being difficult!"
"I don't like it in here Pearl! It's Creepy! I wanna go back!"
"We can't go back NOW! Just imagine all the neat stuff we'll find in here!"
"We shouldn't be going deeper...I...I just wanted Gamma to come out of his room! I didn't REALLY want to go through his personal stuff."
"Nonsense! This is an opportunity of a lifetime! How many Gems do you think have been inside of
a Keronian base!? We're probably the first ones EVER!"
I don't care! It doesn't seem…right?!

With Toaster's last word emphasized, the duo turned the corner. The hallway had opened up to a gargantuan pentagon-shaped room with a 20-foot ceiling. The entire place was filled to the brim with machines, blue prints, and books.

Pearl's eyes got big. "Whoa-ho-ho-ho! We hit the jackpot!...but seriously…. it's like they have no clue what the word "clean" means." The Gem surveyed the massive amount of clutter and dust with disapproval.
"Great! We found the stuff. Can we go back NOW?" Toaster (while impressed), had little interest in getting into trouble.

"STARS! I bet Yellow Diamond wishes she would have kept me now!" Pearl turned to Toaster- completely ignoring her previous comment- grinning from ear to ear. "She would probably kill just to look at some of this foreign secretive tech!"

Yellow Pearl stepped forward- completely oblivious to the little Ruby's ques of unease. She began to attempt to translate some of the Keronian writing taped on the machinery.

Toaster's fears calmed slightly, as she attempted to distract herself. It seemed obvious to her that each corner of the room was filled with significantly different clutter- as if the place was a working station for five separate beings.

A wall filled with various blasters caught her eye. This must have been Gamma's work place! She approached a metallic table that was covered in bits and pieces of ammo and gun machinery. Toaster spotted something more colorful in the corner….

They were photographs- two of them to be exact. The pictures weren't in frames, but were simply leaning against the wall in display. Toaster picked up the items, curiously, to get a better look.

In one was Gamma, completely surrounded by different frogs in multiple colors- five in all. They were all laughing, and smiling, and making funny faces at the camera. The group seemed to be standing in front of a busy place. There were all sorts of lights, buildings, and more oblivious Keronians in the background.

The second picture was a bit more foreign. There was a little red frog that kind of resembled Gamma in the middle – only much shorter and sucking on his thumb. Behind this little froggy, were two similar, but different taller Keronians. They were looking down at the little one with pride.

Toaster wondered who these strangers were. Perhaps she should ask him the next chance she got?

The Ruby was so inundated with the photos, that she didn't notice Yellow Pearl sneaking up from behind. The taller Gem examined the photos as well, before shouting:
"WHATCHA DOING?!!"
"EEP!"
"FOOOOOOOOOFF!!"

Toaster jumped in surprise! In a split second, both of the old pictures combusted into flames and turned into piles of smoke and ash.

The poor little Gem attempted to catch her breath, before succumbing to the realization that she had probably just completely destroyed something incredibly important.
"BWA-HA! HA! HA HA! HA! OH MY STARS! You should've seen the look on your face!" Pearl laughed with tears in her eyes.

The Ruby flushed in anger. She turned around before shoving Yellow Pearl aggressively! "WHY'D YOU DO THAT?! Those pictures were probably important to Gamma!" Toaster began to tear up in angst.

"Hey! Come on! It was just a joke! Jeez…lighten up!" Pearl continued to explore, leaving poor Toaster to stare at the pile of ashes in her hands. She stuck the ash under a folder-hoping no one would notice it.

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Toaster traveled from desk to desk. She was being much more cautious now about what to pick up-just in case Pearl decided to bully her again.

One table had a whole bunch of research all over it. It included lots of different pictures of various alien species.
Another one had a bunch of weird machines. Toaster was cautious around this desk. She didn't know what any of this stuff was for.

-and then, she saw it! A spoon! A plain un-odd spoon! Toaster certainly knew what THAT was for! It had probably been brought back here from the kitchen by mistake!

Perhaps Gamma would forgive her for charring his pictures to a crisp if she returned the spoon to its rightful place? The little Gem grabbed the object quickly! It must have been sad…sitting here all by itself for so long….

"WOMP!"

Something smacked Toaster on the head! She groaned at the pain. Obviously, the table was booby trapped to ward off invaders.
The Ruby naturally assumed whatever had hit her was quite terrifying as well. She could hear Pearl giving an audible shriek through the pain throbbing in her head.

As Toaster opened an eye, expecting the worst, the surrounding area surprised her! She was now in a small room- a REALLY small room. Had she been teleported to a different spot? Perhaps the harmless spoon wasn't so harmless after all.

Toaster attempted to put her hand on the floor and find an opening somewhere. She could barely move in the cramped spot. It felt like she had been shoved into a box.

A second audible shriek came from Pearl. The Ruby froze, before attempting to turn her head left and right in the cramped space.

"Pearl?! This better not be another trick!...are you ok? Why are you screaming? What's so scary?!" "YOU! YOU…GIANT CLOD!"

Toaster looked around in shock. She still saw no one. The Ruby began to crawl in an attempt to get her bearings.
"FREEZE!" Pearl was yelling from somewhere.
Toaster froze.
"Don't move!"
Toaster obeyed.
"Look down you idiot!"
Toaster glanced down. She saw Pearl! …or, at least, a very SMALL version of Pearl. The Ruby seemed surprised at this realization.
"Pearl! How did you get so small?" Toaster attempted to bend down to her level.
"I am my correct size! YOU grew you…moron!"

Toaster looked around. Sure enough, everything was still there-just doll sized (and incredibly broken and squished).

The Gem was confused. "Did-did I fuse with someone?"

"No you CLOD!" Pearl screamed from below, cupping her hands to her mouth. "You probably just touched something you shouldn't have!"

Toaster seemed thoughtful, but her head was still throbbing. "(What hit me in the head anyway?)" She attempted to mumble to herself, although Pearl obviously heard every word she said, because she replied:

"The roof! You hit your head on the roof of the ship!"

"OH! Is that all?" Toaster smiled. "For a second there I thought it might have been something dangerous!"

Pearl smacked herself in the face. "You ARE the danger! STARS! Stop moving around so much!"

"AAAAAAAHRRRRR!"

Toaster saw a very small Gamma enter the room. She tilted her head in intrigue. "Gamma! You're so small! I bet this is what the Diamonds feel like all the time!" The Ruby smiled again.

"TOASTER!" Gamma seemed quite cross. The Ruby looked down at him with guilt.

The frog shouted at her, fuming: "PUT…THAT…SPOON…DOWN…..NOW!" he pointed at the floor in a huff.

"Spoon?!" Pearl looked at the Keronian as if he was nuts.

Toaster opened her massive hand. The (now nearly microscopic) utensil was still there, slightly smooshed. The Ruby sadly dropped the spoon.

As the thing clattered to the floor, there was a sudden rush of colors! Toaster shrank back to her original size quickly. The experience was slightly dizzying, and the Gem purposely fell to the floor until the room stopped spinning.

"Ooog…"

"WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING IN HERE!?!" Gamma was obviously not pleased. "YOU COULD HAVE REALLY HURT YOURSELVES!"

Pearl wasn't paying attention at all. She was tapping the spoon curiously with her shoe. Toaster was completely out of it. She closed her eyes hopping the spinning would stop.

"RRRRRRR….WILL YOU TWO LISTEN TO ME?!" Gamma took a piece of paper and picked up the spoon. He proceeded to throw it into the air-tight garbage shoot and blast it away into the vacuum of space- where it would probably float into the abyss- forevermore.

"I can't believe you two came into our war room….and without permission! Do you know how much of this stuff could KILL you if you're not careful?!"
Gamma scanned the room, and suddenly realized how much destruction had been brought upon his sacred place.

"Oh…" The Keronian created a pitiful sound, before slowly walking over to his friends various working spots. He approached the table that had contained all of the research and alien photos. The metallic table was now bent sideways. The papers that had previously been on top, were now wrinkled and on the floor. Gamma bent over and picked up one of the papers- looking at it sadly. "Oh…Lilolo, you would be so disappointed. Your research is all mixed up…” the frog attempted to scoop the papers into a pile. The final result kind of looked like a hay stack, but at least the papers were all together now.

Gamma's view then transitioned to the next table over. This one had been completely flattened. All the inventions that had been on top now looked like metallic pancakes. "…all your hard work…years of research…” The frog picked up one of the objects, only to have a single lonely spring fling off of it. Gamma then proceeded to hug the piece of shrapnel like a teddy bear.

The Gems stood by idly. Toaster felt an extreme amount of guilt. Pearl rolled her eyes in sarcasm. Gamma suddenly had a realization. He had remembered something important! The frog quickly rushed to his own station and began to dig furiously through the (now) disarrayed pile of stuff. "Where are they?! Where?!"

"Where's what?" Pearl answered with a hint of droning. "My pictures! My pictures!" Gamma stated in a panic. "There were two of them here! One of my platoon, and my only baby picture! It had my mom and dad on it!"
"Mom? Dad? Baby?" Pearl didn't know what these words meant.
"Yes! Yes! They were important to me!"
"Certainly they weren't THAT important…"

"THEY WERE!" Gamma shouted at her. "They were probably the most important thing in this room! They're irreplaceable!"

The frog continued to dig with a smidge of hope that his precious treasure could still be found in the disarray.

Pearl seemed slightly annoyed at this answer. How could any creature have such a bond to an intimate object? How idiotic. It's not as if the creatures in those photographs were really there. They were just images.

Toaster, meanwhile, was not doing well at all. She was growing quite pale and her feet were starting to form scorch marks on the floor. "Mmmmmmm…” she moaned, nervous.

…and then, Gamma lifted a folder on his desk.

The pile of hidden ash sat in the open for the world to see. The Keronian shuffled through this strange finding quickly, before discovering the charred corner of one of the missing photographs in question.

The frog slowly looked toward Toaster- a glaze of rage and death on his face.
The Ruby had a horrendous poker face. Her shoes and hair suddenly burst into flames in fear.

"Toaster…you…you…didn't…"
"IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! I DIDN'T MEAN TO! I…I…"
"You were trying to hide it…you…thought I wouldn't notice…that I wouldn't CARE!!?" Gamma shouted the last word in a pint up rage.
"NO! NO! I didn't want to see you sad anymore! That's why…I'm…I'm sorry, and- "
"-That was the ONLY picture I had left! The ONLY one!"
"I…eggh…"
"You destroyed my memories! The only things I had left from my home planet!"

Toaster was in tears trying to defend herself of this horrendous crime.

"You're all the same! We're….WE'RE all the same…" The frog became eerily silent. "We're…we're created to destroy…to ruin lives. That's why we all exist, to bring misery to others. I-I'm the same. I…deserve this…" Gamma looked sadly at the pile of ash. "Stars, I'm a hypocrite…" The frog had tears in his eyes.

"Gamma…” Toaster attempted to approach her friend.

"I…I…DON'T LOOK AT ME!"

In a swift movement, the frog turned the symbol in the middle of his trapper hat sideways. The Keronian suddenly disappeared entirely! Pearl seemed shocked at this development.

Toaster immediately began to panic! She didn't want her friend to disappear forever! She ran toward where Gamma had stood a few seconds prior.

There was a sudden noise- like footsteps and crying quickly running past the two Gems and leaving the room entirely.

"Gamma?!" Toaster tried to signal her friend- but it was too late.

He was gone.

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The next few days were filled with dread for everyone.

If the Keronian was re-entering his bedroom, he was no longer bothering to close the door, not that it mattered anyway. Neither Gem could see him.

To Pearl's frustration, the horrific smell continued. She begged and pleaded with the frog to show himself so that she could figure out how to dissipate the smell easier. He refused. Perhaps it was out of spite, or depression. She wasn't sure. To add insult to injury, the Keronian was secretly stealing "foods" from the kitchen. Pearl would step away to retreat from the ungodly scent, only to return to crumbs all over the kitchen floor.

Ruby wasn't fairing much better. She didn't seem to mind the foul odor as much as Pearl, but would spend hours lying on the floor, or hiding inside small spaces so that she could grieve. There was no heat radiating off of her- in fact, the little Gem felt numb with sorrow.

Pearl began feeling slightly depressed herself. As much as she hated to admit it, she missed the entertaining, idiotic, banter and socialization. She hadn't been cooking either. No one wanted to eat or talk to one another.
She had to do something. This isolation was unbearable. No one would acknowledge her existence, or listen to her for that matter. It was as if all the life had been sucked out of the ship.

Fortunately, she had a plan. It wasn't a very dignified plan, but some sacrifices had to be made for the sake of everyone's sanity.

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The Pearl stood in the kitchen, guarding the food. She knew if she could bear the horrific smell longer then the creature needed to eat, then she could catch the little stinker during his thieving escapades.

Sure enough, after standing there for the equivalent of two Earth days, Pearl heard footsteps attempting to sneak around her.

This was immediately followed by a lower cupboard opening on its own, and a box of snacks hovering just outside of it.
Pearl didn't want to spook the creature. She just wanted to make sure she knew where the invisible being was before continuing with her plan…

"LAAAAAAAALAAAAAA!" she let out a high pitched "E" note, and noted a loud "Thud!" as something that was NOT the snacks hit the floor. The smell dissipated, and snoring could be heard.

Satisfied, the Pearl found some cleaning soap underneath the sink…..

"BLOOOPLH….."

She poured the sticky substance all over where the creature had supposedly landed. From the drizzling, an outline of a Keronian appeared! Pearl quickly turned the pin on his hat as she had seen him do prior.
The frog became visible! -and only slightly skinnier and discolored then previously remembered.

Yellow Pearl quickly removed the hat from the Keronian's head and hid it in a high enough cupboard so that he could not reach it.

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When Gamma woke up, he found himself on the floor and entirely covered in liquid soap. He attempted to get up, but slipped, and fell on his face.

"Ohhhhh…." He tried to rub the spot on his bald head that had hit the floor….

BALD HEAD?!

"GAMA!?" The frog looked around for his special hat! Instead he found a snarky Pearl staring at him from above. This all seemed…very familiar…
"What is it with you Gems always stealing my hat?!!"
"Sorry," Pearl seemed more sarcastic than apologetic. "I just didn't want you doing your "disappearing trick" again before you heard what I was going to say."
"….and why on Keron would I want to listen to YOU?! You're the last species in the galaxy I want to talk to right now!"

"OK, first of all- Ouch. That's just a smidge bit insulting. Secondly, you're going to want to hear
The Pearl suddenly blushed with embarrassment. "-It's about the pictures that got destroyed." Gamma looked at the Pearl, now slightly more curious.

"It-it wasn't the Ruby that destroyed them…it…was…me."

The frog seemed surprised. "How?!"
"While that idiot was looking at them, I snuck up to her from behind. It was only supposed to be a joke!"
"Are you saying, you let TOASTER THINK THIS WAS HER FAULT THE ENTIRE TIME?!" Pearl flinched. "That…seems a bit harsh. She was the one that lit them on fire after all…"
"Only because YOU scared her! STARS! You really ARE evil!"
"Look! I'm trying to confess here! This is hard enough as it is!"
"I gotta find her and apologize!" Gamma suddenly looked panicked. "She doesn't have a lot of self-confidence! She probably feels awful- "

"-I'M NOT FINISHED YET! My stars are you impatient!" The Pearl cleared her throat. "You've been having awful thoughts about being an invader, haven't you?"

Gamma looked at her with shock. "-and what would you know about it?"

"Well, this may come as a surprise to YOU, but I'm a GEM. Concurring planets is kind of our thing. Needless to say I'm also starting to realize that all of our knowledge on Homeworld isn't… entirely accurate."
"Gee, ya think?"
"Shut it you CLOD! I'm trying to make a point!"

It was obvious to the frog that the Pearl had no experience with apologies, nor speeches.

"Anyway…as an invasive species myself, I can honestly say I've seen my share of…unpleasant things…" Pearl recalled wars, shatterings, and being bullied by other Gems. She glanced at the frog again. "If you don't learn from your past, how can you make your future better? Are you going to let it consume you or, are you going to use it as a stepping stone?"

The frog thought to himself. "This is…unusually philosophical for you…"

"Yes, well…there are a lot of shatterings I witnessed. I could have interfered, but I was too scared. I was too selfish. I feel horribly about it. Many of those Gems were friendly too…that Ruby though…" Pearl thought for a beat. "She could have shattered me and saved herself. Instead, here I am! She's more brave then I've ever been." The Pearl looked at Gamma quite satisfied with herself.

"We need more Rubies…like that one."

"Yeah…I know. I just wish…I could get those pictures back. I know they don't mean much to you, but they were really important to me…."

"Oh yeah! About that! I still have them!"
"What?"
"I saw them before they got destroyed. All Pearls have a holographic memory!"
"Don't you mean a photographic memory?"
"No! Clod! A holographic memory!"

Yellow Pearl's gem began to glow. Immediately a larger than life copy of Gamma's photographs were projected onto the wall.

Gamma couldn't believe his eyes! He slowly walked over to the wall in awe. There they were… plain as day! He never thought he would see them again. He put his hand on the picture of himself
as a baby.

"Sorry it's not in full color. My capabilities can only go so far."

The Keronian turned around, tears in his eyes. "Th-thank you."
"Yeah. Yeah. I can save it to my permanent memory if you want. You tell ANYONE I sympathized with a Keronian though, and I'll delete them on the spot!"

Gamma couldn't help himself. He stepped forward and gave Pearl a hug in gratitude.

"AAAGH! Get off of me!" The pictures on the wall flickered before disappearing. "You're still covered in cleaning fluids! Gaaaaahhh!"

Pearl shook the creature off, forcefully. "SEE IF I EVER TO THAT AGAIN! That was one of the most unpleasant experiences of my existence! Stars!"

Gamma was slightly surprised at the reaction, but smiled anyway.

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Toaster was curled up between the ship's heater and wall. Most species would become burnt from this activity, but the little Gem found it comfortable. She hadn't produced any of her own heat in days. The Ruby didn't feel angry, or scared, or surprised. Instead, her feelings had evolved into a sense of dread and regret. She had really screwed up this time, and she knew it too.

As the little Gem buried her head into her arms and curled herself into a warm spot, Gamma poked his head into the room, cautiously.

He had been looking for her all over the ship. Pearl mentioned that she had been hiding in cubby holes and warm places. Now that he had finally found her, he didn't want to scare her away.

"Toaster?"

The little Ruby looked up in surprise. "GAMMA! I can see you!"
She got up quickly, as excited as could be! She thought the frog had disappeared forever!
Toaster ran as fast as she could toward the frog and gave him the biggest hug she could muster!

"SNAP! -CRACKLE! Urk!" Gamma's eyes became large with pain. It felt like some bones had become dislodged.

It was obvious the Gem had forgotten her own strength in the joy of the moment. She stopped the hug quickly.
"OH! I'm so SORRY Gamma! I…forgot you have bones…"

"ThAat's OkAy…" The Keronian staggered slightly. He now felt a smidge bit light headed. The frog quickly tried to shake himself back to reality. "Pearl told me what happened," Gamma confessed, sheepishly.

"She…she did!? So, you know I destroyed your special pictures…"
"Yeah, but it wasn't your fault Toaster! You didn't do it on purpose…right?!

Toaster shook her head quickly. "I would never do something like that to you Gamma. It was an accident."
"I know it was. I'm sorry I blamed you for it."

Toaster looked at her hands with guilt. "I guess I need more practice trying to keep my cool. I can't
just go around lighting stuff on fire. The things on this ship, aren't as "Gem-Proof" as the stuff back on Homeworld. We didn't really have beds, foods, or pictures—we had computer screens and murals though." These two things were as close to "pictures" Toaster could recall. "I'm… not so used to being surrounded by so much flammable stuff…"

"That's OK. I understand." Gamma patted Toaster on the shoulder. "You just need more practice, Gama…"

"Still, I'm SO SORRY I destroyed your memories!"
"You can never destroy memories… not really anyway. They are always in your heart."
"I don't have a heart…"
"Sure you do!"
"No… I don't. I don't have any internal organs."

Gamma looked at the Gem, surprised. "How… how do you eat Pearl's food?"
"I have to shape-shift a stomach."
"That's weird."
"No it's NOT!" The Gem flushed in embarrassment.
"Yeah, it is."

Toaster knew at this point Gamma was just kidding around, but made a pouting face at him anyway.
She suddenly became more serious. "I saw the Space Leeches. Did you… you know… ever have to use them?"

"The leeches?! Gama! Gama! Gama!" the frog laughed before continuing: "Nah. We were a scouting ship! All Keronian ships are required to have those! We put them at the front of the war room to scare off trespassers." He then added in a mumble, somewhat sarcastically "(Yeah… that plan worked greeeeeat…)"

Toaster smiled. "They were scary. Can we get rid of them now that we aren't allowed to contact Keron anymore?"
"Only if you promise not to touch my stuff again."

Toaster nodded in agreement. "Hey Gamma?"
"Yeah?"
"While we're clearing the air… I put your mouth comb under my armpit."

"You did WHAT?!!"

Gamma began to spit sourly all over the place. "DAMMIT TOASTER! I use that toothbrush!"

The Gem giggled slightly. It was nice to have her friend back to normal.

Chapter End Notes

(A strange person appears)

"Hello! I am the narrator! You're probably wondering what the fate of that Flash Spoon was (and yes, it IS called a Flash Spoon). Well, Just in case…"
As the spoon spun through the abyss, it came across a Space Dog— a puppy to be precise! I don't know how much you know about space dogs, but they're already pretty huge…like..."Death Star" huge.

The space puppy spotted something shiny! As he floated toward the strange, tiny object, he bit down on it— obviously still teething. At this point, poor old "Mr. Spoon" got stuck in one of the canine's…er…canines. Too bad the "little" one couldn't floss. The utensil was stuck between his teeth.

The creature didn't seem to notice his immediate growth spirt. Puppy's don't have time to worry about this stuff.

The dog, however, DID notice a lovely line of "green tennis balls" in the distance of the dark matter.

The young one ran toward the "tennis balls" with joy!

-Incidentally, this would come to be known as "The Buster Incident", leading to a near extinction of an entire species…in addition to the destruction of planets "Ballzeria I-IX".

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If anyone wants to know why I've been so inactive, THIS chapter is the reason! A big thank you goes out to VonSmore for proof reading this 6490 worded-19 typed page monstrosity...

Next chapter- Gamma makes an important decision! FUN!
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It started very discreetly. Every breakfast, lunch, and dinner Yellow Pearl's meals were becoming less and less flavorful. Eventually, the meals had no flavor at all. The Keronian finally decided to say something the morning he received a plate full of nothing but condiments.

"Pearl…"
"Hm?"
"This food…"
"Yeah? You got a problem with it?"
"Well…it's just that…I can't survive on this alone."
"Nonsense! It was in the foods cupboard! It's foods! Now, be a good Keronian and eat your salt! See?! Toaster likes it…"

Toaster was eating her pile of salt like a small child would eat a bowl of cereal.

Gamma frowned. "Pearl…how are we doing on food rations anyway?" the frog hadn't bothered to look. Yellow Pearl was extremely aggressive around the kitchen, and would yell at him if he ever entered the place without permission.

"Oh, we're doing fiiiiiine!" Pearl began to dig in the cupboard to prove a point. "Look! More salt…"
She pulled out a large cylinder of the stuff.
"-this paste…"
She took out some substance that resembled mayo.
"-and look! A can!"
A can without a label appeared. Lord knows what was inside.

"That's it?! I can't live on THAT!"
"Sure you can! Stop being so picky!"
"I need vitamins!"
"Salt can be your vitamins!"
"NO…NO IT CAN'T!"

Toaster continued eating while watching the two bicker. She piped up: "I'll eat whatever's in the can if Gamma doesn't want it…please?"
"NO!" Gamma interrupted "Whatever's in that can could be the only bit of food we have left!"

"OH! Stop being over dramatic!" Pearl handed the can over to Toaster. " You still have the salt and the paste!"

Toaster stared at the can causing so much strife. She decided (for the time being) to get rid of the thing, so that her friends wouldn't bicker anymore.

As a giant flash of light erupted, Gamma and Pearl looked toward the Ruby in surprise – just in time to see Toaster finish shoving the can into her gemstone.
As if on que, both aliens asked at the same time:
"You can store stuff in your gem!?"
"Uh-huh." Toaster nodded. "Not as much as Pearl, but for some reason I was made this way. I keep important stuff in it! See?"
Toaster proceeded to reach into her gemstone, and take out (what looked to be) a good sized glass marble.
"I thought…only Pearls could…" Yellow Pearl began, but couldn't finish her sentence.
Toaster shrugged before putting the marble back into her gemstone.
Gamma suddenly stared at the Ruby very seriously. "Now…Toaster – that can of food is VERY important. It could be the only thing that keeps me alive."
Toaster nodded.
Gamma beckoned his hand in a calm manner "May I have it back, please?"
Toaster shook her head.
"What!? Why!?"
"I don't like to see you fight with Pearl."
"TOASTER!" The yell made the Ruby jump in fear. "-GIVE ME THAT CAN!" Gamma dove toward the small Gem across the table- knocking all the dishes filled with salt onto the floor.

Yellow Pearl began to squawk with rage within the massive tussle that had erupted in her kitchen.

----------------

After the din had calmed down a bit, Gamma found himself desperately looking for a nearby source of food on the ship's computer system. Hungry and tired- he was happy to see that there was an intergalactic food and antique show happening about 20 minutes from their current location.

"Pearl! Take us here!" Gamma pointed at the spot on the map.
"Mmmmm…no! You have enough foods already!"
"Dammit woman! Will you just please listen to me for once?!"
Pearl stuck her nose in the air in retaliation.

"RRRRR…..FINE! I'll do it!" The frog took the ship's controls, and immediately began to steer. His lack of knowledge on the subject resulted in the ship slowly tipping to the side. Yellow Pearl ended up slamming into the wall. Toaster (who had hidden somewhere nearby after being yelled at) suddenly emerged – tumbling down the hall toward the same wall Pearl was plastered to.

In a horrified realization, Yellow Pearl suddenly became acutely aware of a groaning sound, as all of the unbolted (and bolted) objects on the ship threatened to topple in the same direction.

"Alright! Alright! Stars! I'll take you there!"
Gamma fell to the side as he unbuckled his seatbelt. Pearl struggled to climb onto the seat from the side wall, before straightening the ship.

"(Stars…what a drama queen.)" she mumbled to herself as she dove her arms into the ship's computer, and instructed it to the new location.

----------------

As the ship flew toward the planet in question, Toaster had her face glued to the viewing screen.
She was currently bouncing up and down with an excitement that had never been experienced before!

As the ship descended, the landscape became more recognizable. Various alien species walking around white tents full of merchandise could be seen. Toaster noted that there were quite a few speed transportation circuits as well! The whole place looked like a mixture between a carnival and a nice farmer’s market. The ship made a successful landing within a sea of other metallic vehicles.

"Oh boy! Oh boy!" Toaster was gleeful. "This place looks like fun! I can't wait to explore!"

Pearl piped up: "I will admit – it will be nice to get off of this retched ship and walk around a bit-"

"Oh no you don't!" Gamma yelled, getting the attention of both Gems. "I have all the money on this ship! We can't afford to waste it on frivolous stuff! This is strictly a food run, and a food run ONLY."

Both Gems looked upset. Pearl spoke up: "What if we promise not to ask for anything?"

"...You still can't go.
"...and WHY NOT?!"

"Gems don't usually visit food markets. If they see the two of you walking around, you'll start a panic out there!" Gamma gestured toward the door before continuing: "The only time a Gem shows up at one of these things is if they want to take the place over!"

Toaster looked sad and betrayed. She responded: "What if I gave you the can back?" she took the thing out of her gemstone, and slowly rolled it to Gamma's feet. The frog folded his arms before answering:

"The can has nothing to do with it Toaster. I don't want you guys getting hurt!"

The little Ruby pouted in a huff. She stomped over to a corner of the room and sat down – temper rising in a heated tantrum. She really wanted to look at all the neat stuff outside too….

Pearl spoke in a slight rage: "Will you at least get me something to READ or DO on this miserable ship then?! I've been bored to tears! I can actually feel my intelligence slipping the longer I stick around you two idiots…"

Gamma mumbled: "(I'll try my best…)", before exiting the ship, and leaving his two odd crewmates behind.

----------------

The place was bustling with life! Various species were bargaining and haggling for just about anything you could possibly imagine. The entire atmosphere reminded Gamma of when he used to go to these sort of things with his platoon- you could find all sorts of stuff from around the galaxy here…

A food cart came into view. It was being run by a large blue creature with a trunk. After some well supported haggling, the frog ended up with a rutsack full of fresh alien meat from various planets. Gamma wondered if Pearl knew how to make a space omelette like his mom used to cook for him.

After collecting some (very odd-looking) vegetables, and a couple of emergency cans of preserved meals –the frog went on the much more difficult hunt to find what Pearl had requested. Books were not exactly easy to locate- most species had evolved to the much more improved tablet and computer reading systems.
Still, it WAS partially an antique market—perhaps Yellow Pearl just wanted some foreign writing to translate and occupy her time.

After 30 minutes of unsuccessful searching, the Keronian finally spotted a booth with a large pile of retro-looking books.

There were some classics—like "The Hitchhiker's Guide", and some novella from Kilgore Trout. Gamma knew just about every well-read alien had copies of these already though.

The remainder of the pile was in a language the Keronian had never seen before. In fact, most of the gargantuan pile was made up of this weird foreign text.

"That's Earth lingo right there."

Gamma jumped at the noise! It had come from a Betelgeusian. He was obviously the owner of the tent. The creature had somehow snuck up behind the frog during his search.

"Heh. Did I scare 'ya?"

The tall cat-like creature spoke with a wise humbleness—as if he had come from the country somewhere. Betelgeusians were a fairly peaceful race. They enjoyed simple things, like tinkering and taking care of family. The species was certainly a far cry from the way Gems or Keronians treated other species.

"Yeah…a little…" Gamma attempted to catch his breath before inquiring: "I didn't think Pekoponians had a written language…"

"Not A written language son, HUNDREDS of 'em! Them's species unique. All humans speak different depending on where they live on the planet's surface."

"They must use Babel Fish a lot."

"Nah. Don't have 'em. Many of their own folks can't understand each other."

"Doesn't that get confusing?"

"Very." The cat paused—thinking deeply.

"You seem to know a lot about Pekopon…"

"That's because I live there son!"

"Wait…WHAT?!" Gamma gasped in surprise. Certainly he didn't mean that?! Who would even WANT to live in a place constantly plagued by limited tech and violent primates? Intrigued, the frog continued to pry: "But…don't they cut off your legs and eat them?!!"

"Heh…nah. I don't know what you've heard 'bout humans, but they ain't so bad." The Beattlejusian scratched under his chin, thoughtful. "They have good weather and lots of sea life there. Humans are fairly smart too! They wrote all these books." The alien beckoned to the pile.

"ALL of them?!"

"Yup. Ain't even half of them either! They have entire buildings filled with the stuff."

"Huh…go figure." The frog seemed truly impressed.

Gamma knew Lilolo had an interest in the Pekoponians, but regrettably droned her out every time she talked about the species. He had mostly learned about their human toaster machine because he had broken it once, and gotten quite a lecture from his fellow platoon member.

"Sooo…I didn't think other species were allowed to interact with humans?"

"There are exceptions." The cat seemed quite happy discussing his home. "Lots of species that have no other place to go, choose Earth as their new dwellings n' such. Heh…that planet is in so
much governmental gridlock that it will be YEARS before everyone agrees what to do with the thing. It's a safe haven for any creature without a home…"

Gamma's eyes lit up. "Really?!
"Yup. Rumor has it some endangered species live on there too… a Time Lord…a Kryptonian… heh, can you imagine? It's like a massive time capsule!"
The Betelgeusian turned to Gamma. "-of course, I just live there because it's typically peaceful. France is beautiful ya know…"
"France?" The frog had never heard of it.
"Oui. Je m'appelle Mrmph-Mow, et vous?"
"??" The sentence confused the Keronian. Perhaps his hat had difficulty with cryptic Pekoponian languages?
The cat chuckled to himself. "But yeah. Earthlings are interesting critters! Anywho- were you looking for something specific? I could tell you what the books are about, if you want…"

Gamma went back to the pile, and began to rummage with a new-found interest. The cat had books in various Pekoponian languages. Some had squiggles, others had lines and circles. Some used the same types of characters but in different orders. Lots of books were long and very wordy, others were short and filled with beautiful illustrations of foreign creatures.

The Keronian had a crazy thought. He decided to purchase three books. One was a Pekoponian Encyclopedia (of which language he wasn't sure). He found a massive cookbook which the cat claimed was a staple in Earth kitchen cuisine. It was written by some woman named "Betty". The frog thought it was strange to name a Pekoponian on something like gambling, but perhaps it was a cultural thing?

The last book was large and thin. It only had a few words and a lot of pictures. The Betelgeusian said it was called "Firenze's Light", about a strange Earth creature called a firefly. Apparently, a "firefly" was a type of insectoid that lit up at night. This book was more so for Toaster. The drawings were cute, and he thought she might enjoy it.

As Gamma was checking out with his various Earth novels, a stack of something behind the register caught his eye.

It was a massive pile of stuffed animals- toys probably. Many of them had sewn on button eyes and stitched smiles. The animals did not interest Gamma in the least, but one toy did catch the Keronian's fancy. He actually (surprisingly) recognized what it was!

It was a slice of bread, in plush form! The only difference between it and an ACTUALLY piece of bread was the fact that it had a set of stubby arms and legs, two adorable embroidered eyes, and a cat-like smile. It was also massive…about the size of a throw pillow and very fuzzy.

"What IS that?!" The Keronian pointed to the plushie in question.
"Hm? Oh, that? He's called "Fred the Slice of Bread". Cartoon-thingy from Earth. Teaches the little ones about eatin' right and exercising. Apparently, obesity is a big problem on the planet."
The cat nodded, before turning back to the frog. "The little kids there just love him to bits!"

Gamma had a sudden brilliant idea! "Is he flammable?!"

The Betelgeusian looked at the frog as if he was nuts. "Excuse me son?"

"You heard me! Is the toy flammable?! Will it go up in smoke if you light it on fire?!"
Still slightly shocked (and somewhat worried), the cat turned to the adorable item in question. "Well...he's made out of cotton and cloth, so...YES. I would say it's EXTREAMLY flammable."

"I'll take it!" The Keronian smiled with glee.

As the Betelgeusian grabbed the plushie from the pile, he wondered with fear what kind of horrible fate awaited the poor thing with this weirdo...

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As the door opened, the two (still slightly) peeved Gems bore witness to an incredibly enthusiastic Gamma- whistling and lugging a massive pile of various bags full of stuff.

Pearl crossed her arms in disdain. "WELL! I'm glad YOU had a good time while the two of us were stuck in this forsaken scrap heap."

The frog ignored her. "I have some great news!" he clapped his hands together in excitement. "Really?!" Toaster perked up.
"Yes...really! I found us a new home!"
"NEW home?" Toaster's smile faded. "What about the ship?"
"We can't stay on this ship forever Toaster. We'll just keep running out of supplies...or go stir crazy."

"I'm ALREADY going stir crazy." Pearl was obviously not in good spirits.

"...ANYWAY..." the frog wanted to continue his joyous speech. "This new place is going to be great! I won't tell you where we're going, but I want you to guess using the gifts I bought!"

Gamma began to rummage through the groceries.

"OH BOY! Presents!" Toaster was hopping with excitement.

"What happened to the whole 'food run only' rule?"
Gamma looked up at Pearl, slightly annoyed. "You asked for reading material! Of course there was going to be something other than food in here!"
"Just seems a smidge bit hypocritical...don't ya think?"
"Oh hush! Here!" Gamma handed her the Encyclopedia. "Stop bickering and learn something!"

The surprised Gem flipped through the mysterious object in her hands. "Hmm...cute. This is...so archaic..." As she turned the pages quickly, she saw several pictures and foreign symbols on the inside. "What language is this in?!" The Gem seemed more puzzled than pleased.
Gamma shrugged. "You'll figure it out, I'm sure...unless you're not up for the challenge?"
"Of COURSE I am!" the Pearl huffed. "It- just takes time to decode foreign texts like this!"
The Gem proceeded to lean against the wall, and flip through the thing again in puzzlement.

"Me next! Me next!" Toaster was so excited at this point; she could hardly contain herself.

Gamma dug through the groceries again, and produced the book about the insect.

Toaster's eyes lit up when she saw the item.

He explained: "The salesman said it was about some sort of insectoid – called it a "Fly fire" or something. He said they light up at night!"
"Wow! Just like my gemstone!" Toaster grabbed the book carefully, and lied down on the floor to
look at the pretty pictures.

While the duo was distracted with their reading material, Gamma took advantage of the situation, and snuck past Pearl into the kitchen to put some of the groceries away.

Upon returning, he found a confused Toaster and a very frustrated Yellow Pearl. The Ruby sprinted up to Gamma looking concerned. She opened the book and pointed to one of the illustrations. "Gamma! Why does the creature look sad here?! Did something happen to it?!!"

"I…don't know Toaster. I can't read it."

The little Ruby ran over to Pearl, desperate. "Pearl! Can you read this?! Why is it sad?"

"How should I know!?!" The Pearl barked back, making the little Ruby cower. "This language is so cryptic! And-" she paused suddenly as she gazed at the book Toaster was holding. To the dismay of the smaller Gem, she snatched up the children's novel in a rage.

"HEY! Give it back!" Toaster hopped up and down with little success.

Pearl displayed both books to the frog at the same time. Angry, she shoved the items into his face. "What's the deal you slime?! These languages don't even LOOK the same!"

Unfortunately for Gamma, he had bought a children's book in English, and an encyclopedia in Mandarin Chinese.

"Well…the guy DID say that there were a bunch of different languages around the planet…"
"What kind of an idiotic planet doesn't use a universal language?!" the Pearl snapped "How does anyone understand each other?!... do they have Babel Fish?"
"Nope."
"What is this awful primitive place?! Stars! I don't want to move THERE!"
"Oh come on! You don't even know what planet it is yet!"

Obviously, some more convincing was needed. Gamma had to bring out the big guns!

The frog began mumbling to himself as he dove into the grocery bags again.

"You bought MORE?! Do you think we're billionaires?!"
"Shut it! It's something for you!"
"Oh." The Pearl calmed down. "Well, that's different then!"

As Gamma lifted the massive cookbook out of the bag, Pearl snatched it before he could even present the gift.
"BOY! You're awfully grabby today…"
"Mine!" Pearl horded the book in her clutches, and trotted to the far corner of the room to prevent her prize from being taken away.

"I swear…it's like taking care of tadpoles…" the Keronian was actually surprised Pearl had not guessed the planet yet…the encyclopedia especially had lots of illustrations of Pekoponians engaging in various careers.

Yellow Pearl was looking at the various pictures of food in the book. The recipes seemed simple enough to construct – even if she couldn't understand the cooking instructions. She secretly appreciated the fact that the Keronian had remembered her love for cooking- and had managed to locate a text that utilized the foods of whatever primitive rock she was going to be forced to live upon.
…and then she saw the back cover of the thing.

With a loud "THUD!" the book hit the floor. Pearl looked as though the thing had been full of spiders – disgust and horror on her face. On the back cover sat a picture of a friendly human with an apron- perhaps the strange "Betty author".

The tall Gem slowly looked up at the frog in a terrified stare. She simply said: "No. Not there. Out of the question." Before calmly handing the book back to Gamma.

Confused, the Keronian decided to inform: "I thought they were bad too…there was a rumor going around on Keron that they cut off your legs and eat them…” the frog shuddered slightly, before continuing: "…but this shop keep who actually lives on the planet said that they were just that – rumors."

"Wait, wait, wait- some other species actually LIVES there?!
"A lot of species…apparently."

Pearl's hue suddenly drained. "Did…did he mention how many-?"
"Well, he did say something about a Kryptonian and a Time Lord- and he was a Betelgeusian…”
"I- I thought THOSE were the rumors…” the Pearl looked uncharacteristically serious. "There were only supposed to be those idiotic Humans and rebels on there…”
"?" The Keronian didn't like his shipmate's tone. She was hiding something….he could tell.

Toaster was even more confused than usual. She wondered why the atmosphere had suddenly become more sullen. The Ruby piped up: "Why is everyone so quiet? What's going on?"

"Humans Ruby! This moron wants us to go to Earth!"
"EARTH?!" Toaster looked at Gamma, absolutely terrified.
"What is with you two?!” Gamma knew the idea was a long shot, but was not expecting so much resistance.
"We can't go to Earth Gamma! Please don't make me go…” The small Ruby walked up to the frog and began to beg. "Do you know what humans do to Gems?! My platoon told me that they shatter you, and then wear the shards on their necks and fingers n' stuff!" The small one began to cry in fear.

"That's not true you clod! Humans are dumb creatures! I've seen them in a zoo! They certainly aren't intelligent enough to write THIS!" Pearl picked up the cookbook and waved it around. "I think that Betelgeusian just conned you into making a sale!"

"But…he seemed so humble…”

"Yeah! Con men can do that." The Pearl slammed the book on the floor in frustration.

"Hmmm…." As Gamma looked at the tall Gem, he noted she was glancing at the main computer screen and gnawing on her hand. It was obvious she was unsettled by something.

"What's wrong?” He asked.
"None of your business!” She snapped back.
"You look awful."
"Thanks. That's just the commentary I needed right now."
"No…I mean…you're shaking."

Sure enough, the Pearl was shivering in fear.

Toaster noted this too. Gems did not get cold or warm. She approached her fellow Gem in concern.
"Pearl?" The tall one looked down upon the Ruby. Toaster continued: "What's wrong?"
The red Gem hugged Pearl's legs, warming herself slightly- hoping the gesture would be enough to
calm her sister's nerves.

Yellow Pearl didn't move. In a surprising change of heart, she patted Toaster's hair. "I'm...I'm just
concerned." The Pearl responded.
"About what?"
"If what that shopkeeper said is actually true...then Gem kind could be in grave danger. There
could be a massive war."
"I thought Yellow Diamond loved war?"
"Perhaps, but if we were to attack several species at once, the differentiation in numbers would be
catastrophic."
"Why would Yellow Diamond do that?"
"I-I don't know if she's aware...but one thing's for sure, we can't go to Earth."

"-and why not?" Gamma was not at all pleased with this development.

Pearl turned to the frog slowly. "-Because of the Cluster."

Chapter End Notes

YAY! Another chapter done! Whoo!

A big thank you goes out to VonSmore and CeruleanIntrospection for your continued
support on this piece!

So....yeah. The next two chapters are written, but not typed yet. This one, and the next
two I had been wanting to write for some time- so jotting them down went quite fast!

Incidentally, several of Gamma's gifts are based on real life objects!
-"Firenze's Light" is an actual children's book by Jessica Collaço and Angela Li.

-Also "Fred the Slice of Bread" was inspired by the "Comfort Food " line of "Toast"
and "Loaf of Bread" plushies currently available on the Squishable website.

In case you're wondering, YES. I DID take two years of French. "Oui. Je m'appelle
Mrmph-Mow, et vous?" – literally translates into: "Yes. My name is Mrmph-Mow,
and yours/you?"

...just in case anyone was curious!

NEXT CHAPTER! – A massive blue marble appears!
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Gamma was more confused than ever now. "The WHAT?!"

"The Cluster!" Pearl replied back
"What's that?" It was obvious Toaster didn't have any intel on the mysterious object either.

"It's...it's a Geo-weapon...inside the Earth."
"What?!" The frog was increasingly uncomfortable. "What do you mean a weapon?! What did you Gems do?!"

"It...was an experiment. Kept under wraps by the populous. Most Gems don't even know about it. The only reason why I know it exists is because I belonged to Yellow Diamond." Yellow Pearl seemed increasingly uncomfortable, before continuing: "Yellow Diamond had so much confidence in herself- she thought she was going to win that debate at the Galactic Council...and the weapon wouldn't matter..."

"Exactly WHAT kind of a Geo-weapon are we talking about here?"
Pearl looked at Gamma in complete horror. "It's...it's made out of..." she swallowed in nervousness.
"Gem shards" she concluded.

Toaster's eyes became big in fright. Gamma stood with his mouth agape. "Woah! Woah! Whoa! Are you saying this thing is made out of dead Gems?!"

"Not dead...Gems never really lose consciousness- even after they've been shattered, they're just...in pieces. Constant pain- one shard trying desperately to find its match. The entire thing was made out of rebels that defied the Diamonds and wanted to save the Earth. I guess Yellow Diamond thought it was going to be hilariously ironic or...something..."

"That's...that's really croaked up...like seriously...what the Hell?! Your species just- takes pieces of your people's body parts, and sews it into some sort of freakish exploding hybrid of pain, agony, and severed limbs?!!"

" Basically- yes. There's a reason why no Gem wishes to be shattered by their Diamond."
Toaster looked up at Pearl with fear-remembering Homeworld's system of punishment was not exactly pleasant.

"So...wait. If Yellow Diamond had shattered YOU..." Gamma looked at Toaster.
"-or if Toaster would have shattered YOU..." the frog glanced up at Yellow Pearl. "-than that means..."

"-Yes." Pearl finished his thought for him. "Our pieces would've been collected and utilized for different purposes- like the Cluster."

Gamma's eyes grew wide with fear. He collapsed into himself. "Stars...that's so...SICK. No wonder there was a rebellion on your planet."

"It's...the norm for us. Fear mongering is common on Homeworld." Pearl nodded. "-The point
being- we cannot go to Earth. That rock is a ticking time-bomb-set to explode and destroy everything!"

"Than we gotta go there!"

"Excuse me?!

"We've gotta try to save as many species as we can! I've been destroying livelihoods for my entire life, and I'll be damned if I can't start helping folks now!"

"You're crazy! We'll never make it in time!" Pearl yanked a small, strange device that resembled a time piece out of her gemstone. "Yellow Diamond gave me this to inform her of the Cluster's growth. That thing is going to blow in..." Pearl looked at the device "-two hours."

"Good! Even if we have enough time to save ONE creature, I'll feel accomplished today! This ship has an abduction beam- let's do this!"

"I'm not going anywhere NEAR that thing! You can't make me!" Pearl stuck her nose in the air.

"That's fine. I'LL just drive us there again!"

Yellow Pearl's eyes became large with fear. She mumbled: "(I'm going to regret this...I just know it...)" -before instructing the ship to set a warped course for Earth.

-------------

As the ship arrived in the Milky Way, it slowed to a crawl while approaching the large, blue orb.

"THERE! EARTH! You've got 3 minutes left!" Pearl seemed highly annoyed.

Gamma quickly began to scurry at the controls- desperately trying to lock the abduction beam onto something- ANYTHING on the planet's surface. He only had enough time to beam up three things, and he needed to make them count.

The first few lucky life forms the ship's sensors locked onto were the three the Keronian chose. Immediately, a beautiful green beam separated in three different directions from the ship's bottom.

A few minutes past, before the mighty beam appeared in the ship's main chamber. The three aliens waited and watched with anticipation.

Earth objects began to materialize from the nothingness. The trio leaned in- hoping that their catch was notable.

The first thing that appeared was a small sun fish. The guppy gasped and flopped about on the ship's floor for a few seconds, before going limp from lack of water.

A (very small) mound of sod appeared. It was still very intact and alive, but not terribly interesting.

The last thing was an orange monarch butterfly. It fluttered about for several seconds, before Toaster decided to give chase to the interesting creature.

Pearl piped up: "Well that was...very underwhelming. I thought we would have saved ONE quadruped at least..."

Gamma seemed deflated. "This ship doesn't have enough juice to try the beam a second time either...oh...I feel simply awful!" Gamma put his hands on his head in shame.
Pearl felt sympathetic—despite her normal sarcasm. She put her hand on the Keronian's hat. "Hey...at least you can say you tried. That's better than anyone else did..."
"Are you sure we can't just land and fill the ship that way?"
"It would not be wise. NO ONE would come out of that alive—completely pointless—and hey! At least we got...erm...whatever that thing is..." Pearl beckoned towards the butterfly that had landed on Toaster's head.

Toaster grinned. "I think it likes me! I'm going to call it...an "Orange Wing"! Because it's orange...and has wings!"

"Mph. Creative." Pearl seemed unamused. "Can we go NOW!? Not much more we can do here...".

"-No. Pekoponians have an elementary space program, correct? I want to make sure we can help them if they exit the atmosphere on time. We will watch...from a safe distance here."

-------------

Thus, began a very long wait. Everyone flinched when Pearl's time piece struck "0:00"—but nothing happened.

"There could be a delay..." stated Pearl. "These things sometimes happen with experimental weapons."

-------------

Several hours later, Gamma began to get ready for sleep. He wasn't very tired, but knew he would need the stamina if something significant happened. He instructed Pearl to watch for any movement on the screen.

Toaster seemed...unsettled. She watched the massive blue planet slowly revolving on the screen. The Ruby really had no desire to see anyone else get hurt or upset, but seriously hoped she would see some more "Orange Wings" flying through space...so that her new friend would not be alone. The butterfly had stopped moving—asleep probably. The thing was still resting on Toaster's head. It was the warmest spot on the ship—a preferable temperature for the creature.

Gamma spotted the little Ruby looking at the planet all by her lone. He decided to sit next to her briefly, before going to bed.

Toaster spoke: "It's so pretty...like a giant glass marble. Is it really going to be destroyed?"
"That's what Pearl said..."
"I heard about Earth a lot, but this is the first time I've actually gotten to see it." There was a slight pause. "Gamma?"
"Hmm?"
"I-I've decided. I wanna help too." The little Gem looked toward the Keronian. "I'm tired of being used by the Diamonds to destroy things. I-don't like it, I've never liked it. I want to help...NOT hurt. It's because of the Diamonds that "Orange Wing" isn't going to have a home anymore..." the little Gem looked toward the sleeping butterfly in her hair. "I-I don't wanna see another planet get destroyed...but I don't want to miss any animal we could save either. I'm scared Gamma..."

The frog nodded in respect. He could sympathize. A sudden thought came to mind! "Wait right here Toaster! I have something special!". The Keronian got up, and ran to the kitchen. He found the lone grocery bag he had forgotten over the course of all this excitement.

The frog attempted to hide the plush behind his back upon returning. The task was proving itself
rather difficult, considering the object's massive size.

Toaster gazed toward him, curiously.

"I bought this for you while I was in the market today. I...thought it might cheer you up!" He revealed the massive bread plush with a smile.

The look on Toaster's face was priceless. She had no clue what the strange object was, but glanced at it with stars in her eyes. It was as if she had never been given such a wonderful surprise in her life! She questioned the fuzzy item: "Wh-what is it?"

"It's a piece of bread!"
"Really?!!" Upon this realization, Toaster attempted to take a bite out of the thing, and ended up with a mouth full of fluff. "BLEAH! This doesn't taste good at all!" The little alien spit out pieces of fuzz all over.

"Gama! Gama! It's not an actual piece of bread Toaster...it's a toy!"
"A...toy? What's that?"
"Well, a toy is...erm...well, this one is kind of like a pillow!"
"GASP! A bread pillow?!"
"Yeah! Exactly!"

Toaster hugged her new buddy with glee! "I'm sorry I tried to ate you pillow friend! Does he have a name Gamma?!!"
"Yeah. The guy called him "Fred"...I think..."Fred the Slice of Bread". He was actually made on Earth too!"
"That's so neat! I guess YOU could be friends with "Orange Wing" then! Huh Fred?!!"

The stuffed bread said nothing- but smiled in contempt.

"Now Toaster! You have to be extra-super careful with Fred! He's very flammable, and will easily catch fire. It will be a great way for you to practice controlling your temperature!"
"Oh!" Toaster seemed a bit more nervous handling the doll now.
"Don't worry Toaster! I'm sure you will take very good care of him!"

Toaster nodded with determination, before hugging the plush again.

Satisfied, the frog smiled, before returning to his quarters and falling asleep. At least Toaster had a friend to keep her company now...

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"BOOOOOOOMMMM!"

A massive jostle of the ship woke Gamma up with a start! At first, he thought the inevitable had happened, and the pretty planet was no more.

Shocked and confused, the creature bolted upright literal seconds before Pearl barged in-screaming at the top of her lungs. "Hey you CLOD! We've got a problem out here!"
"Wha?...Is-is Pekopon exploding?!"
"Worse than that!"
"Worse than THAT?! What could be worse than THAT?!"
"We're being dragged toward that ticking time bomb! I can't get the ship to turn around!"
"WHAT?!"
Gamma bolted from his bed, and immediately ran toward the main screen. Sure enough, the spaceship was becoming ever close to the massive marble.

"Gamma! I'm scared! I don't wanna get blowed up!" Toaster wailed, hugging her new plush tightly.

"What's causing this?! Gravity?!!"  
"No! We weren't close enough! Something is pulling us in!!"

Immediately, Gamma and Pearl began running around the main room frantically- trying every button they could get their hands on.

Toaster noted that her temperature was rising, and quickly put Fred down. The butterfly became startled from the massive din, and proceeded to flutter off toward the kitchen.  
Toaster continued to cry- Pearl and Gamma ran circles around eachother...

...and then the ship chirped.

"Incoming transmission from: Pekopon!"

The screen transitioned to two not-so-nice-looking humans wearing sunglasses and suits. This shocked the trio in different ways.

Toaster had never seen a human before.

Pearl had never seen a human in a SUIT before.

...and Gamma was flabbergasted that a Pekoponian had the necessity to contact an alien ship in the first place.

One of the men spoke: "This is the MIB. You are currently in restricted airspace. We are bringing you into headquarters for questioning. Do not try to resist. Your ship is locked in our system."

Chapter End Notes

Well! It's been a while hasn't it guys?! Not going to lie to anyone- I've been sitting on this chapter for some time

(in fact, the next 5 chapters are already handwritten...just need to type them out!).

Oh boy! Did anyone see the newest SU episodes?! Yellow Diamond has electrical powers! (Yessss! I LOVE it when cannon matches up with my fics!). Anyway...this is basically the beginning of a new arc (what I like to call "The Terminal Arc"!)

If you think going through airport security is bad- you ain't seen nothing yet! Settle down folks! Our trio's introduction to Earth is going to include some turbulence!

I also wanted to mention that I'm going to be creating both an Etsy account- AND an ask Toaster blog on Tumblr! I'll mention more on that as soon as the things are past production stages!
Immediately there was a panic.

None of the aliens had encountered a human directly, but if the message on the screen had been any indication, not only were humans much more intelligent and hostile than any of them realized-but they were now stuck- and heading toward a planet on the brink of exploding.

Gamma was frozen in place. He was not quite sure what to do. Pearl immediately grabbed the books she had been given. It was the only object she owned that was on the ship. Toaster ran off to goodness-knows-where. In the distance, one could hear the Ruby attempting to call to her butterfly friend.

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The ship landed within a spotless, white facility. The entire thing was currently surrounded by MIB agents carrying various weaponry being pointed at the metallic sphere.

The ship door was forced open using an incredibly strong device connected with magnets.

The agents readied their guns.
"Come out with your hands up! No weapons or we WILL shoot!"

...Immediately a large mound of sod was thrown outside of the ship

The pile of unexpected shrubbery was instantly blasted to oblivion by several shots at the same time.

"SHALE!" A yell could be heard from the inside of the ship. "I'm not going out THERE! If those humans do that to their own life form, they're going to tear US to shreds!"
"Let's try the "Orange Wing".
"NO! Gamma! You CAN'T!"
"He moves slower than the plant life...plus- he's an animal. I think they will be more sympathetic toward him."
"No! No! Pearl! Don't let him use "Orange Wing"!"
"Ruby, I'm sure if these HUMANS ARE PEACEFUL-" Pearl yelled the last part, hoping the agents would take a hint. ".-they will not hurt your friend."

A wailing was heard.

The MIB personnel lifted their guns again at the sight of movement...only to be pleasantly surprised by a single oblivious butterfly exiting the ship. The thing fluttered about, before landing on the floor to take a rest. This odd occurrence managed to ensure a greater sense of empathy among the two parties. The agents lowered their weapons slightly.

"Are we good?!" The Pearl screeched from the inside.

No response.

The tall, yellow Gem stuck her head out of the ship, cautiously. The guns lifted again in fear-but no
rounds were shot.

Slightly spooked, the Gem retreated again.
"There's like...fifty of them out there!"
"Gamma! I'm scared!"
"It will be okay Toaster."

The MIB were all somewhat confused by the back-and-forth banter among the three mysterious voices. It seemed that whomever these beings were, they were terribly afraid- and not willing to leave their safe spot easily.

A most regal agent- Agent Zed, decided to step forward. "If you come out empty handed, and with your hands away from your gemstones, we won't harm you."

Slightly surprised that the humans knew what the gemstones were for, the trio finally got coaxed out of the ship- unarmed and compliant.

Upon seeing Toaster exit the metallic sphere, Agent Zed's eyes became wide with concern. The man signaled something discreetly to several subordinates in the crowd using his hands.

Toaster looked at the massive crowd with fright. She was unsure what to make of these creatures. They were tall and incredibly intimidating. The little Ruby spotted a female agent wearing a necklace with an opal attached to it.

Toaster froze upon seeing the object, and began to shiver in fear. The situation was a bit overwhelming for her. The Gem was having trouble moving her legs forward. Her temperature began to rise in defense- the floor gained a new set of foot imprints...

...someone grabbed her arm! The Ruby yelped in surprise. Gamma and Pearl turned behind themselves, just in time to witness several agents with rubber gloves- struggling with Toaster from every angle, and shoving her into a strange transparent cube-like container.

"TOASTER!" Gamma yelled in surprise as his friend was locked inside the strange prison.

The Ruby looked terrified and desperate in the little box. She mouthed something that looked like: "GAMMA!" in the cage, but no one could hear her.

The Keronian grunted in a rage before facing the crowd of humans again. "LET HER GO! YOU SAID NO ONE WOULD GET HURT!"

"Apologies." Zed replied. "We are not going to hurt her. We're merely...containing her. Rubies are well known for their thermokinesis. We wouldn't want her burning the place down...now would we?"

"You CLOD!" Pearl butted in. "That Ruby has to be one of the most peaceful, harmless, Gems I've ever come across!"

"That may be so, but precautions must be taken." The human replied. "We will let her go...after the debriefing."

"I-the what?"

-------------

Apparently, being a species known for invasion was not in the aliens' best interest.
...and the MIB agents knew it too.

The entire process was incredibly degrading.
Gamma and Pearl had to enter a large chamber, and become completely doused with sanitizing liquid, to kill off any alien bacteria. Toaster had to go through the same traumatizing experience— but the humans simply filled her tiny cube with the strange goop, before draining it.

...then the ship was raided-heavily. All of the remaining food Gamma had bought the day prior was confiscated as "foreign fruits and meat". Apparently, humans were very particular when it came to bringing in items from other planets.

Toaster would admit that she was somewhat relieved when they confiscated the Space Leeches.

Next, came the process of displaying all worldly possessions.

Gamma had to take off his hat and belt for inspection. The frog cursed under his breath until he realized that both Gems would have to empty their entire gemstone's contents.

This was going to take a while.

With a large amount of frustration, Pearl began to yank massive objects from her gemstone— her new books, the whisk, mixing bowls, the cooking press, several foreign spices (those got confiscated), her notes for Yellow Diamond (also confiscated), and (as a massive surprise) a giant convection oven (which the Gem lifted easily and dropped with a massive "THUD!")

Toaster was much more hesitant about emptying the contents of her gemstone. She was already quite terrified, and was not willing to show off her treasures after seeing some of Pearl's items get taken away.

One of the agents noted Toaster's peculiar habits, and called in a special alien social worker who was good at talking with little ones. She was known by others as "Agent &", but preferred the nickname "Mary" when talking to aliens to make them feel more comfortable.

Mary approached the cube with the little Ruby curled up inside.

"Hello there! My name is Mary!"

"Go away! I don't want to talk to you!" Mouthed Toaster.

"That's fine. I understand." the human decided to sit patiently next to the cube, before continuing:

"It must be very scary...being on a new planet...stuck in a cell..."

The Ruby looked up through tears. She couldn't understand anything the human was saying in her sound proof box— but did enjoy the company of someone that wasn't acting so aggressively toward her.

Mary had come prepared with some Earth toys. She displayed a teddy bear for Toaster to see. Curious, the Gem looked at the item with interest, before pulling Fred out of her gemstone. She showed her similar friend to the lady.

Mary smiled.

The human bounced a small red toy ball up and down. Toaster watched it, before pulling out a similar looking marble...

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Quite some time passed. This was proving to be quite a task. Along with Toaster, there was now: Fred, three pillows she had taken from the ship, twelve giant glass marbles, the book Gamma had given her, various snacks from the kitchen, a drawing, some string, a small amount of sand, and a fork.

A nearby agent scanned the cube while Mary distracted the alien.

To his frustration, the scanner showed that Toaster's gemstone was still packed full of unknown objects.
It was soon evident that Toaster had, indeed, attempted to pack the entire ship into her gemstone—or, at least, everything on the ship she believed to be important.

Despite her previous promise to the Keronian, she had obviously been into the "War Room" again. First, Toaster began to pull out dozens of research papers, and then squashed machinery, pieces of weapons...
At this point, the tiny cube was so full, that (with permission), Mary convinced her manager to move the Ruby into a bigger fireproof cell.

Toaster was happy to be able to stretch and move around more. The agents transported the pile of assorted items into the cell with her as well, so that she would not become upset.

Now that the little Gem was in a more advanced containment space, she could easily talk to the female agent on the other side too.

"Ruby..."
"My name is Toaster!"
"Toaster?"
"Uh-Huh."
"That's a neat name!"
Toaster blushed.

Mary continued: "You probably want to see your friends again, and get out of this dumb box, huh?"

Toaster nodded sheepishly.
"I want you to be reunited with your friends too! We just need you to take everything out of your gemstone first."
"EVERYTHING?!"
"Yes. Everything."
"Why?! That's going to take forevers!"
"It's just to make sure you don't have anything dangerous."
"I don't!"
"I believe you, but everyone else is scared of you. I know it's a lot to ask, but it would really make everyone happy."
Toaster thought about this for a bit, before nodding in agreement.

What followed was not only humorous, but also chaotic.

A fork, a spoon, a spoon, a spoon, Gamma’s chair, a smooshed table, a fork, the heat-resistant pan, some bedsheets, another table, a spoon, the ship's heater, a toothbrush, a towel, another towel, a fork, a spoon, a Diamond Communicator, some random rocks, a leaf, a foreign shell, a spoon, another fork, a pile of broken Gem tech, some dirt. A glass bottle, an empty soda can, some wrappers, a broken computer screen, a spoon, a discarded button, a jacket, and (for some odd reason) a picture of a plant.

The more massive cube was now full again.
Toaster sat in the middle of all the items, looking slightly tired. Taking all this stuff out of her gemstone was making her fatigued.

Mary displayed slight panic, as it looked like the little Gem was lying down to nap for a bit.

"Hey! Toaster! Don't fall asleep!"
"But, I'm so tired..."
"Come on now! You can do it!" The woman signaled her fellow agent to come over and scan the
alien through the glass again.
The statistics showed that there were only two items left in the gemstone.
"I don't have any more stuff." Toaster lied and looked slightly guilty as her eyes began to sag.
"Now, Toaster! It's not good to lie. Come on now...there has to be more! You can do it!"
The Gem sat up and blushed again. "You promise not to laugh?"
"I promise."
Toaster reached into her gemstone- with a massive amount of light, appeared a tiny, red, slingshot.

It was her weapon.

Mary thought it was kind of cute.

Toaster teetered over to her side, now completely exhausted.
The agent began to panic! " Wait! Toaster! You can't fall asleep! There's still one thing left in your
gemstone!"
"I...can't...take...it...out..."
"What?! Why?!"
"It...doesn't...like...to...be...in...the...open...space..." the Gem began to nod off.
"Wait! At least tell me what it is!"

Dreary, Toaster said nothing. She weakly pointed to the human's red bouncy ball on the other side
of the glass, before completely zoning out, and beginning to snore.

----------------

Pearl was in a dark room with a lightbulb shining directly in her face. As annoying as this was, it
didn't even compare to the lecture she was about to receive.

Apparently, the notes she took for Yellow Diamond were the cause of the hostility. The list she
had made included over twenty different alien species whom had bad-mouthed the leader- and
what they had said toward the royalty.

"WHAT IS THIS?!" A male MIB agent slammed the notebook down on the desk in front of Pearl.
The Gem looked at him sarcastically. "My previous job." She answered calmly.
"Are you still working for your Diamond?!!"
"Do you think I would be on this forsaken rock of a planet if I was?!"
"ANSWER THE QUESTION, DAMN IT!"
"NO. I am NOT working for my Diamond anymore." Pearl scoffed in annoyance.
"Hmmm...if you had any intel on your previous employer, it would make this go much faster..."
"Why would I tell YOU such things?! You've treated all of us like criminals ever since we got
here!"
"That's because you ARE criminals."
"NO we're NOT! What makes you say that?!"
"You're a Gem." The agent was blunt and unsympathetic. "-He's a Keronian, and I'm no dummy.
There's only one reason why your kind hangs around planets like ours."

We're not here to invade...if that's what you're implying!"
"Then why ARE you here?!!"
"We...we were..." the Pearl had a loss of words. She decided to try the truth for once. "We were
trying to save some of this world's life forms before the entire planet was destroyed."

"What do you mean DESTROYED?!!"
The Pearl flinched. This entire situation reminded her of the "lovely" conversations her Diamond
used to expose her to. She answered the man: "The Cluster! There's a massive geo-weapon in your
planet set to explode! THAT'S why we weren't landing! In fact, it would be wise to exit the atmosphere as quickly as possible, and-
"-YOU'RE LYING!"
"AM NOT!"
"We already know about that damn "Cluster"! That thing was marked as dormant MONTHS ago!"

Pearl stared at the agent with a look of shock on her face. "-How?!"
"You really think you're the first Gem that has landed on this planet? We have our sources. I don't know how far your intel goes when it comes to our species, but we are NOT as helpless nor idiotic as you have been led to believe."

The Pearl sighed, and slumped down into a chair. A wave of relief flooded over her, as she began to laugh manically.

"What's so funny?!!"
"By the Diamonds! Yellow's going to be SOOOOO pissed off! YOU, random primate, have just made my day!"

The human looked increasingly confused. Pearl seemed gitty. "That dumb Keronian is going to be so happy!" She looked up at the man with a smile so wide, that he could swear her mouth was trying to jump off her face. The agent had never seen an invader so damn happy about her own planet's plans being thwarted before. He decided to ask: "Why is he going to be so happy?"

"Because! We've got a home now you CLOD! We have a home!"

----------------

Gamma, meanwhile was also being questioned in another room by the human they called "Mary".

"Species?"
"Keronian."
"Occupation?"
"Weapons Specialist."

(The agent paused slightly at this answer before continuing) "Full name?"
Gamma hesitated. "G-Gamama..."

The woman stopped entirely. Her eyes became big as she stared at the creature in surprise.

The frog pipped up: "YEAH! I know! It's a dumb name! Go ahead and laugh!"

Mary did not laugh. "Please excuse me for a minute, sir."

The agent left the room, before approaching her coworker. "Did you hear that?"
"Yes. Yes I did."
"Do you think it's really him?"
"I'm...not sure..." the man was looking at a flier. It featured a wanted poster with a similar looking Keronian on the front- except the picture included an Afro and a handlebar mustache.

Mary continued: "Why is she looking for him so badly? She ended up with an entire planet!"
"I...don't know. I will tell you this though: that Pearl is NOT acting like she was kidnapped. If anything, she's grateful that Yellow Diamond's plan didn't work. She seems to want to stay on Earth."
"That Ruby doesn't seem like a kidnapper either. She was scared of us shooting at a butterfly!"
Both agents contemplated, deep in thought.

"This entire situation is very...odd. Nothing adds up! Gems and Keronians don't exactly get along...they are rivals! Enemies! The two species disgust each other!"
"Did you see how that Keronian acted when we locked up that Ruby?"
"...or how the Pearl reacted?"
"What do you make of it?"
"Not sure."
"You want to know what I think?"
"Shoot."
"I think Yellow Diamond is lying to the press again."

Mary laughed. "Well, OBVIOUSLY! When does she NOT lie to the press!?"
"Do you think they can be reformed into society?"
"Not sure. It would be beneficial though. We don't have many friendlies of either species living here..."
"I think we should ask them what happened."
"I don't...I think we just need to ask the Ruby."
"Why say?"

Mary smiled. "She seems to trust me, and has a HORRENDOUS poker face when she lies. I think we would get more honest information out of her than the other two."

-------------

"Toaster?...Toaster?"

Toaster was shaken awake by someone. The little Gem opened her eyes, and took a gander around to see whom had disturbed her nap.
She was no longer in the cell, but was now in a large room with a bunch of Earth toys. She saw that her pile of treasures had also been moved into the area as well.

The Gem stretched. "How'd I get HERE?"
"Well! Good Morning!" The familiar agent smiled. Mary explained: "We brought you here! Isn't it much nicer than that cold cell?"

Toaster nodded, before displaying a slight panic! She stood on the floor quickly. "Oh! Where are Gamma and Pearl?! Are they ok?!"
"They're fine! You can see them in a little while. They are just outside that door-" Mary pointed to the one door in the room.

Toaster calmed down...but not before realizing her feet had scorched some of the room's carpet. "Oh! Oh noes! I'm so sorry! Your floor!" The Gem blushed with guilt and embarrassment.

The human laughed. "It's ok! It's ok! These things happen! Thank you for apologizing though! You are a very polite Gem!"
The Ruby sat down in a nearby chair, and smiled. "Thanks for saying I'm polite! Gamma has been teaching me about manners!"
"Has he now?"
"Uh-huh..." Toaster spotted Fred nearby, and picked him up. "He gave me Fred too!"
"Well! Gamma sounds like a pretty nice guy!"
"Yeah!" Toaster nodded "He saved me and Pearl!"
"Saved you? Whatever from?"
Toaster paused, looking a bit more upset. "Urg...Yellow Diamond."
"Yellow Diamond! My goodness! What happened?"
"She...was going to shatter me. She told me I would be okay if I shattered Pearl instead, but I didn't wanna. I...I saw Gamma, and grabbed him. She didn't seem to care. She was about to electrocute us...and then Gamma shot her arm..."

The little Ruby began to cry. "I-I was so scared! I was using them as a shield! I've been trying to be nice to them since, but that bad memory won't go away!" Toaster began to cry heavily. "I'm NOT a polite Gem! I am a BAD, SELFISH Gem!"

Mary felt sympathetic for the poor creature. She knew from experience how intimidating a Diamond was- considering their massive height. This poor little Ruby was so small in comparison... "It's ok Toaster! It's ok! You guys are friends now...right?"

Toaster nodded between sobs.

"-Well, if you guys are friends, I'm sure they have forgiven you by NOW, right? They know what happened, and still care about you! They must be very good friends!"

Toaster thought about this, and realized that the human was right! "Yeah...they were even scared when you put me in that box!"

It was the agent's turn to feel guilty. She attempted to change the subject. "So...why did you come to Earth Toaster?"

"Well...Gamma wanted a new Home. Keron won't let him back because Yellow Diamond said so...and Yellow Diamond was going to shatter Pearl because she was a...erm...a...white-ness?"
"Witness?"

Toaster nodded. ",-but then a lot of other stuff happened between that too...Pearl made foods, and I woke up on the floor...and then a bed, and accidentally ruined Gamma's memories, but Pearl made them better again!"

The agent was slightly confused by the barrage of information, but listened politely anyway. "Why didn't you guys just land here if you wanted to come to Earth so bad?"

"Pearl said the planet was gonna explode because of the Cluster...THE CLUSTER!" A sudden realization came over the Ruby. She grabbed Mary's arm quickly. "Come on! We've gotta get you out of here! I don't want you to explode!"
"Toaster! Toaster! Wai-OW!" A burn mark appeared on the human's arm where the Ruby was grabbing it.

The Gem let go in terror. She looked at the agent's eyes, as the human gritted her teeth in pain.

"No! No! No!" Toaster held her hands on her face. "I-I hurt someone else! I hate having heat! I HATE it! I HATE it!" The Ruby began to cry.
"Toaster...It's ok! Humans heal! It just takes a little longer- it will be ok!"
"NO! It's not ok! I hurt you! I'm bad! I've always been bad...and now the Cluster's going to hurt this planet too!"

The room's temperature began to rise significantly. In a sudden shock, Mary realized she had to do something- and fast. "Toaster! The Cluster's not going to explode! Some friends of ours found out about it, and stopped it WEEKS ago!"

"You're lying to make me feel better!"
"No! I'm telling the truth! They were Gems- like you! A Peridot-"

"A...a Peridot?" The Ruby calmed down a bit. "Peridots aren't made for saving planets...they create Kindergartens. If anything, they destroy planets..."
"Well, this one didn't!" Mary smiled. "She used her knowledge and technology to help Earth instead of hurt it...or, so I'm told." The agent looked thoughtful. "I bet you could find a special way to help people with your heat too!"
"Y-you think so?"
"Yeah! You just need to think creatively!"
"Creatively..." Toaster thought deeply, before coming to a realization. "Wait- are there other Gems living on Earth?!"
"Not many, but a couple! I hear there's even a Ruby...just...like...you!" The woman booped Toaster on the nose.

The little Gem giggled.

"There! See? A smile is always a step in the right direction!"
"Does-Does that mean I can stay on Earth? With Gamma and Pearl?"

Mary's smile furrowed slightly. "We-we'll see. There are still a lot of things to do first..."
"That's ok! If it will make Gamma and Pearl happy, I will help as much as I can!"

Toaster had stars in her eyes with determination!

The agent attempted to smile again. This Ruby would be fine...so would the Pearl.

It was the Keronian she was worried about.

Chapter End Notes

WOOF! Finally got this posted! Only...5 prewritten chapters before I catch up with myself...(groans)

....LOL! XD

Hope you guys liked it!!
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As the agent opened the door to the room, she was pleasantly surprised at the reunion she witnessed. The Keronian and Pearl were on the other side- and quite surprised to receive hugs from the released Ruby.

She noted that upon entering the room, the Keronian was incredibly upset about seeing the large pile of "treasures" that had come from the Ruby's gemstone.

"Toaster! You told me you weren't going to touch my stuff anymore! You've obviously been in the war room again!"
"But- before we landed- I thought they were going to take your memories away! I had to do something!"
"You deliberately disobeyed me! That room is dangerous! I didn't want you going back in there because of all the hazards!"

As the Keronian scolded the ashamed Ruby. The agent couldn't help noticing the parallels between the two of them, and a parent attempting to teach a child a life lesson.

The entire thing was rather adorable.

After the initial confrontation, the trio then had to decide what to do with the massive pile of mess.

Some of the items had to be confiscated- such as the research, Diamond Communicator, and smooshed alien tech. Yellow Pearl seemed enraged that Toaster had raided the kitchen's silverware drawer, and immediately questioned the Ruby on why she only aimed for the forks and spoons. "They're my favorites!...and knives are scary."

It was finally decided that Toaster could choose 3 items from the massive pile. She decided on Fred, the book Gamma gave her, and the set of oversized marbles.

-----------------

The trio was now sitting in an office at the same table. All of them were nervous, and unexpectant of what was to come next.

Agent Zed, the head honcho, entered the room. He proceeded to sit across the desk from the three misfits. "Soooo...you want to become citizens of Earth?"

Toaster immediately gave a look of determination. The other two stayed stone-faced.

The agent continued- "Well, before we come to that decision, we need to do your evaluations."
"Evaluations?" Pearl seemed...less than enthusiastic.
"Right. Nothing too difficult. We just want to check your vitals and see what you're capable of. It helps us create a file on your potential, and figure out where you can be safely placed on our planet."

The agent glanced at the trio: "-think you're up for it?"

"YEAH!" Toaster seemed excited and more than willing to do what was required.
Unfortunately, the first test was terribly underwhelming. It was (basically) a visit to a set of doctors that specialized in checking alien vitals.

The doctors examined the rhythmic heart beat first. As expected, neither Gem had a pulse, and Gamma's two hearts seemed to be working fine.

They then separated the trio into different rooms according to species. They began asking about medical history:

"Has anyone from your mother stone had a weak gemstone?"
"Any irregularities in facets?"
"Have you ever experienced cracking?"
"Are your forms prone to static discharge?"

"This all seems...very personal..." Yellow Pearl folded her arms.

"It's just a precaution 'mam. We need to make sure we have medicine on hand if you're suffering from any...abnormalities." The doctor nodded.

Gamma wasn't faring much better.

"Have you ever experienced symptoms of Red-leg?"
"No."
"Does your family have a history of "Spring Disease"?"
"Not that I'm aware of..."
"Have you ever caught Dropsy?"
"What are you implying?! Do you think I live in a mud pit or something?"
"No! No! These types of questions are mandatory for all Keronians. It's just standard procedure!"
"Hmph. You Pekoponians sure are overly paranoid about this sort of thing..."
"Humans aren't as exposed to alien bacteria as the rest of the cosmos. Every few years a common alien disease gets out into the public. Several have even threatened our entire species!"
"Fine. ...but your species needs to start growing a backbone! All these questions are terribly embarrassing...
"Duly noted. May we continue?"
"Yeah...yeah..."
"Great! Let's just check your temperature really quickly..." The doctor placed a thermometer inside Gamma's mouth. "...room temperature! You're fine!"

"Can I go NOW?!"
"Hm? Oh yes! They will be expecting you in the office two doors down."

Grumbling, the Keronian got up from the medical bed, and headed down the hall...

"80 degrees fahrenheit! Perfectly normal for a Pearl!" The female doctor smiled.

Yellow Pearl's brow furrowed. "Why do you even have to take our temperature?! Gems are not able to get sick through biohazards!"

"Any differences in temperature could signify internal abnormalities in the gemstone." The doctor
was becoming quite impatient with this taller Gem. The alien had questioned every step of the examination. Truthfully, checking Yellow's temperature was the human's favorite part of the visit. Sticking a thermometer in the Gem's mouth made her shut up for a few minutes at least. Toaster was also having her temperature taken. The thermometer in her mouth looked...different though.

It was a set of two wires (one iron, one copper), and they were both hooked up to a votimeter machine. After a few minutes, the doctor checked the odd machine, and did some basic calculations. "2,053 degrees fahrenheit! Good job...Toaster, right?" The Ruby smiled at the human. Apparently, this was a decent temperature for the Gem.

The doctor proceeded to give Toaster a sticker and piece of candy for good behavior.

Pearl stared at the odd ritual with confusion. "What the?! How come the Ruby gets free foods?!" The human turned toward the yellow Gem, looking cross. "It's because Toaster was a good patient, and behaved during the appointment!"

Yellow looked like she was going to say something offensive, but decided against it. To her, it wasn't terribly fair that the moronic Ruby would be able to try Earth cuisine first, when SHE was the rightful cook on the ship...

The Pearl suddenly felt very bitter.

----------------

Gamma was now in a padded room. The new male doctor was currently wearing a gas mask.

Neither of these facts eased the Keronian one bit.

The human spoke through his mask: "Do not be alarmed! I'm just here to check your reflexes. Would you mind turning around? This won't hurt."

Nervously, Gamma agreed. The doctor proceeded to (very carefully) remove the Keronian's hat, and poke a certain soft spot on the exact tip of his head.

The Keronian shivered unconsciously. Immediately, a foul odor spread around the room.

Embarrassed and surprised, the frog proceeded to blush.

The Pekoponian's comments were not helping either... "WHOOF! Well! Your defense gland is working quite nicely! :Cough! Cough!: Let me look for contaminants real quick..." The agent used a meter to check the air. "Yup! You're clean! No sign of foreign molds or germs anywhere! You must be a very tidy Keronian!"

The frog blushed with even more embarrassment. "Was that absolutely necessary? I didn't even know I had the ability to do that on a whim..."

"You probably thought your hat was only for camouflage and communication, huh? Turns out, it also protects that soft spot too."

The human turned on a vent, which got rid of the horrendous scent easily.

"Are we done here? This is becoming degrading..."

"Almost! Two more tests to go..."
One of these tests involved taking a vile of blood. The frog wasn't terribly squeamish around needles, but still couldn't stand to look as the man retrieved two vials of green platelets from his arm.

The last, and final test involved temperature reflexes. The doctor supplied the frog with a glass of water, and instructed him to see how long he could last before taking a drink.

The man then slowly began to turn up the thermostat, one degree at a time. As the heat rose, the Keronian began to become more and more dehydrated. Much like a human in a body of water, the frog's skin began to shrivel like a raisin.

Eventually, Gamma couldn't take it anymore, and swigged down the water as the heat in the room reached around 123 degrees fahrenheit.

The doctor quickly turned the room temperature back to normal. "Excellent! You can live in many of Earth's tropical climates comfortably! Would you like some more water?"

The alien nodded quickly. He ended up drinking at least three more cups.

... The opposite temperature switch had a completely different effect. At 60 degrees the Keronian began to feel dizzy, at 46 degrees the frog's eyes began to sag, and finally, at 21 degrees the alien completely fell asleep on the medical bed.

The doctor turned the room's temperature back up slowly, but decided to let the amphibian rest for a bit. His health seemed to be reacting normally, but the alien would probably not do well in a place with a bunch of snow.

-------------

After the terribly embarrassing process of getting a clean bill of health, the trio was separated into three individual rooms.

It was time to test temperament and empathy!

As Toaster waited in her room patiently, an agent suddenly entered with a beautiful bird displaying a lovely green plume!

Toaster's eyes lit up! She had never seen such a beautiful creature before!

The agent explained: "This is a bird! It's called a Budgie, or a Parakeet." "Pair-of-keys..." the Ruby attempted to mimic.

"A lot of humans keep them as pets." The agent proceeded to coax the creature onto the table in front of Toaster. Without a perch to stand on, the small bird hobbled around the surface awkwardly.

Toaster seemed intrigued, and a bit nervous. This was the largest Earth animal she had come across so far. The Ruby looked toward the agent for some guidance.

The human decided to give her a hint- "It looks like he wants a perch onto something! Maybe he would like to climb onto your finger? Be very careful though...he's small and delicate!"

As the Ruby stuck her pointer finger out, the small bird hobbled toward it quickly. He used his beak to hoister himself up, and stood on top of the new perch majestically.

Toaster was super nervous, but trying to stay calm. She didn't want the poor thing to be burnt to a
crisp. Its feet felt slightly chilled and wrinkly. The animal was just...so tiny- even compared to her! As much as Toaster was attempting to keep her cool, there was still a smidge bit of warmth radiating off of her. The bird seemed to find this rather comfortable. In a sudden amount of excitement, the bird shook itself, puffed up, and proceeded to tuck its head under its left wing.

The animal grew silent.

Concerned, and slightly surprised, the little Gem looked at the agent, confused.

"Excellent job! You made him fall asleep!"
"Wha-he's asleep?!"
"Yup!"
"That's not how you sleep! He's standing up! It looks...uncomfortable..."
"That's how birds sleep! It may not look comfortable to you, but HE seems to enjoy it!"

Toaster was surprised! What a strange way to fall asleep...

-------------

Pearl was sitting in her chair, drumming her fingers against the table impatiently. What on Homeworld was taking these idiotic creatures so long?!

The answer came quickly, as a large: "BORK!" could be heard right outside the door. The door swung open quickly. Two agents attempted to hold a massive, giant, furry monster!

The Pearl lept with a strange amount of grace onto the table. "STARS! What IS that thing?!” the Gem seemed more terrified then anything.

Both of the agents laughed at the alien's reaction, slightly, before completely letting go of the leash, and allowing the massive St. Bernard to barrel head first into the room.
As the gargantuan dog jumped and barked with enthusiasm, the poor Pearl attempted to stay in the center of the table with fear. The massive canine bounded up and down, threatening to topple the table with love.

The Pearl screamed: "Control your beast! He's trying to eat me!"
The two agents laughed. "He's not going to eat you! St. Bernard's are friendly! Humans keep them in their homes for company."
"They keep this thing in their living chambers?! Are they nuts?! How destructive is this thing?"
"Very." one of the agents responded.

In a final bound, the gigantic animal toppled the table sideways- flinging poor Yellow Pearl against the wall.
"Ohhhhh..." the Gem was dazed for a few seconds before (unpleasantly) being bombarded by weight, fur, and dog spit. The creature wagged its tail happily as it licked the Pearl's face- ready to play!

"Get...OFF OF ME!" The Gem screamed in rage.

At the sound of the angry noise, the dog whimpered slightly, and backed off- looking like he had committed the worst crime of the century. The agents quickly jotted something down on their clipboards, transitioning from their happy selves to a more serious tone.

Pearl had forgotten amidst her fear that this was supposed to be a temperament exercise. She
looked at the massively ashamed creature, with the rude realization that this was one academic test she was failing... miserably.

She stuck her hand out toward the large creature, but the animal's trust had already waned. The dog whimpered, and backed up even further in fear.

The agents wrote something else on their clipboards.

"WILL YOU ALL STOP THAT INFERNAL SCRIBBLING?! YOU'RE MAKING ME NERVOUS!"

The agents stopped writing, and glanced at the Gem in a state of shock.

Yellow Pearl had an idea. "PUT YOUR HANDS OVER YOUR EARS!"

The agents obeyed.

The Gem stared at the frightened pup maliciously. "I am NOT going to let some giant, slimy Earth creature prevent me from having a home!"

The St Bernard shivered, waiting for the worst.

The Pearl began to sing:

"You are rancid  
Perhaps even rabid. 
But I won't let you get the best of me! 
You may smell awful, 
But I must stay lawful. 
I won't let you get the best of me!"

The dog's eyes began to droop in exhaustion. The agents stared in bewilderment as the creature went from a frightened mess- to a snoring bag of hair.

"Good Earth creature." Pearl pet the dog easily before grinning at the MIB agents with triumph.

The two uncupped their hands from their ears, and stared at the alien in absolute terror.

-------------

Gamma was having the most difficult time with his test as well. The size or temperament had nothing to do with the difficulty.

The creature in question was nothing more than a harmless Pekoponean cricket. It was a larger species of locust, but not terribly interesting. Once in a while it would crawl or hop about.

The Keronian was not quite sure what to do with the creature- but he knew exactly what NOT to do with it.

The frog hadn't eaten in some time, and his primal instincts were telling him that this strange green insect would make an excellent snack.

The agent simply sat, and stared at the alien silently. He had chosen this particular creature on purpose. He knew frogs (and by default, Keronians) enjoyed the occasional cricket as a food source. He wanted to see how much self-control the alien had at the sight of a treat that was this important to preserve.

Gamma licked his chops discreetly while staring at the thing.

The agent smiled slightly. He knew the meal was tempting, but the alien was doing an excellent
Gamma knew that eating this creature would result in a failure. He couldn't afford such a risk when his new home was on the line. The Keronian decided to distract himself with some simple questions. "Sooooo... what do you want me to do with this thing? Pet it or something?" "I'm just here to observe. What would YOU do to make the cricket more comfortable?" "Erm...I'm not sure...it's an insectoid, right? It probably just wants to be left alone..."

To the Keronian's surprise, the small creature began to emit a pleasant chirping sound! "Chirp! Chirp!"
"Wow...that sound it makes...it's beautiful!"
"The test is over."
"Eh? It is?"
"Yeah. I wanted to prove a point. I knew you wanted to eat the cricket."

Gamma blushed in embarrassment.

"-However, if you had, you wouldn't have been able to hear its song. Keep this in mind the next time you want to destroy a specific creature- you must observe before you act."

The frog nodded at the wise statement.
The agent stuck the cricket back in his cage.

Chapter End Notes

I had this sudden boost of a whole bunch of people reviewing my fanfictions...the resulting stamina gave me the power to type this chapter (and the next) within two days! HUZZAH!

Some fun facts on this one:

~80 degrees fahrenheit is the correct temperature to harvest clams and keep them happy
~2,053 degrees fahrenheit is the average temperature of lava
~Frogs are cold blooded, so their temperature is always the same as their environment.

~A votimeter machine is the device used to calculate the temperature of volcanoes.
~Red-Leg, Spring Disease, and Dropsy are all names of actual diseases frogs can get that make them sick.

~My first pet was a "pair-of-keys". I loved her dearly. Parakeets are awesome!
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The final test was not really a test at all, but it was the MIB agents' favorite part of any Earth citizenship—strength and stamina.

The title was pretty self-explanatory.

The frog had been given his two blasters back. There was currently a massive concrete block in the middle of the testing room. Each side of the chamber was covered in bullet proof windows. A large crowd of human agents had conjugated around the spot. Being stared at by so many folks made the Keronian nervous.

Pearl and Toaster were among the crowd as well. It seemed that many agents had "conveniently" taken their lunch break at this point in the day, just to witness the show that was about to unravel. This was especially evident by the massive amount of Earth cuisine that the crowd was nibbling on. As the frog stood in the middle of everything, he suddenly remembered that he was hungry again.

Grumbling, the amphibian was happy that he had been notified: this challenge would be the last one needed before the agency decided what to do with the trio.

A voice suddenly boomed over the intercom: "Are you ready for the final test?"

The Keronian was becoming impatient. "Of course I'm ready! Can I please have something to eat after this?"
"Certainly. Sorry about that...we would have given you something to eat if we knew you were that hungry...would you like to stop now, and eat first?"
"Nah. Let's just do this and get it over with. It will relieve some of my nerves."
"Fair enough. You see the massive tower of cement in front of you?"

The frog nodded.

"We want to see how accurate your weapons' training has brought you. We would like the concrete block destroyed within three minutes."
"That's it? That's the test?!" the frog seemed somewhat underwhelmed.
"Yes. Yes. Are you ready?"
"Hang on a second."

The Keronian proceeded to circle the massive stone monolith. He touched its surface with his hand—examining the giant block. "...ok. Ready."
"-are you sure?"
"Yup."
"Alright. Three minutes! Starting...NOW!"

In one swift movement, Gamma casually lifted one of his blasters and aimed a single shot toward the cube.
"POOOOW!"

...as the single radioactive bullet hit the object at a precise angle— the entire structure heaved a sigh
and quickly crumbled into a pile of rubble.

Shocked (and slightly impressed), the crowd surrounding the area cheered! Gamma puffed up his chest, quite proud of himself.

Apparently, the alien had found a weak spot while examining the massive slab. Concrete could easily fall if he had plastered the thing with bullets, but he didn't want to waste ammo—or time. Gamma was very hungry after all...
"Can I eat now?" The alien was impatient.

Slightly stunned, the mysterious voice replied: "-Y-Yes! Certainly!"

-----------------

Several minutes later, the testing room had been cleaned of the rubble pile.

Gamma was now standing among the crowd behind the glass. The MIB agents had provided him with something called a "burger". To the frog, it resembled a sandwich with a massive piece of meat in the middle. One of the agents mentioned that other Keronians seemed to enjoy the "burger sandwich". The meat was from some Earth creature called a "cow".

Gamma did not know what a "cow" was, but the human was correct in assuming that he would enjoy the food. It didn't even remotely compare to Pearl's cooking, but it WAS tasty. Perhaps she could improve on the recipe later?

Not now though.

Yellow Pearl was standing in the middle of the test room. She had a look of udder boredom on her face. What kind of a test could one give a Pearl? How to stand at attention the longest? This entire process was quite idiotic.

The door to the bullet-proof room opened. A human wheeled in a cart full of miniature sandbags—each with a weight measurement on the side. Then another human came in with the same cargo—and another—and another...

...eventually, the entire room was filled with sandbags. The last agent to enter the room brought a slightly different object: a snake in a small cage.

Pearl was incredibly confused.

The voice on the intercom began to speak: "Sooooo...I heard you are an "Era One" Pearl?"
"None of your fracking business!" The Gem snapped.
"Hmmm...well, I don't believe you're an "Era One" at all!"

The Pearl's mouth gaped open, slightly insulted. "Oh YEAH?! Why don't you show yourself and say that to my face?!"
"Why don't YOU prove it? Turn into that Earth snake— the creature in the cage there!"
"FINE! I will!" The Pearl huffed.

The Gem glanced at the snake, and immediately her form began to warp in a beautiful beam of light. The glow disappeared—in its place was a snake, identical in every way...except color. The new snake was yellow.

"HA!" Said the new snake. "I told you I could do it!"
In another flash of light, the Pearl changed back into her normal self.

"Oh no. You proved me wrong. How embarrassing." The voice didn't sound the least bit convincing, but the tall Gem beamed with triumph anyway.

As Gamma ate the burger, he mentally noted this technique. It seemed that the Pearl's ego was so huge, she had no clue that these humans were getting her to do exactly what they wanted- through reverse psychology.

The intercom's voice continued: "Some of the boys here said that you put our St Bernard to sleep by singing to it."

Yellow Pearl seemed a bit nervous at this. That particular test had not gone well at all.

The audio concluded: "I told them that was a load of crap. Pearls don't have the capability to do such things- especially one as...aggressive and unempathetic as you..."

The Gem flushed in a rage at this. "What do you mean "unempathetic"?! I have plenary of empathy! I'm the nicest Pearl on Homeworld!"

Toaster made a strange snorting noise at this statement.

The voice seemed to be enjoying itself: "Well, that snake over there hasn't slept in weeks. Only a really nice Gem would help him with such a horrible conundrum...if what you say is actually TRUE that is..."

"Of course it is! Just watch me!" As the Pearl aggressively approached the snake cage, someone from behind tapped Toaster and Gamma on the shoulder.

Both the aliens turned around. There was an agent passing out earmuffs to the crowd of spectators. "You may want to put these on..." he handed the two aliens a pair each. The man didn't need to ask twice. Both Gamma and Toaster knew that Yellow Pearl's singing could make even the most powerful of beings fall unconscious.

The Pearl approached animal with determination. "Laaaaaah!!"

...the snake glanced at the odd creature with curiosity.

Surprised, Yellow Pearl tried again: "LAAAAAAAAAAAA!

The snake stuck out it's tongue.

Toaster glanced down at the spectacle in surprise. "Why isn't it working?" She asked- although no one could hear her.

The Pearl paced around the cage, more frustrated than ever. It didn't help that the human over the intercom was mocking her: "HA! I knew they were lying! You can't make things fall asleep by singing to them! Someone owes me some betting money."

"I-I don't understand. It should have worked..."

Little did Pearl know, this animal had been chosen on purpose. Snakes had no ears, and found their pray through vibrations in the ground.

Angry, and more determined than ever, the Gem decided a different tactic was needed. The Pearl began to produce a different sound from her previous attempts. It was foreign, and unlike anything the agents had heard before. Her voice fluttered in an attempt to find a perfect pitch. The
thing sounded like someone attempting to adjust an auto tune radio. As the Gem's voice fluctuated up and down on the scale, an incredibly low tone was produced. The note was so low, and filled with base, that the entire building began to shake.

The snake's eyes suddenly grew with shock, as it felt the odd vibrations run through its body. The animal began to coil into itself, before becoming lifeless.

"HA! I did it! Did you see...that?"
As Pearl looked up, she realized that she might have overdone it a bit. Not only was the entire crowd wearing protective headgear, but the massive amount of oddly produced vibrations had made the entire group pass out. The incident had been so bad, that, anyone who had even FELT the vibrations in the building, immediately became victim to the circumstance.

The Pearl blushed. She had never had an opportunity to try her voice so openly. Apparently, she had the ability to manipulate sound waves, and turn her song into a more physical attack.

The Gem would have loved to brag- especially to the voice that was on the other end of the intercom, but all she could hear from the other side was snoring. Her bragging would be wasted if no one was awake to hear it.

------------

Some time passed before the crowd began to stir again.

Gamma woke up with ketchup and pickles on his face. Toaster was snoring nearby...as well as about 37 various MIB agents.

Pearl, meanwhile, had begun sorting the random sandbags in the testing room. She was piling them from "most new and shiny" to least.

Once a majority of the crowd had woken up, the voice on the intercom grumbled for the Pearl to stuff as many of the sandbags into her Gem as possible.

As much as the Pearl wanted to brag, the anger in the mysterious voice intimidated her into being compliant.

A Gem putting this many sandbags in her gemstone, would be the human equivalent of a hotdog eating contest.

After about 40 minutes of it, Yellow Pearl was feeling woozy. Finally, one of the sandbags only entered the gemstone half way.

The final result of the test showed that the Pearl could hold 46,200 pounds- about the equivalent of three African Elephants.

Fortunately for Toaster, this challenge was not needed. The agency had taken the liberty of measuring the contents of her gemstone while she slept earlier. The result was about TWO African Elephants. Not as much as the Pearl's, but still quite a significant amount!

The sandbags were carried off.

-------------

Yellow was now standing next to Gamma. The fact that the frog had bits of foods all over his face bothered her immensely. She was still feeling dizzy, however, and decided to let the filth slide for the time being.
It was Toaster's turn now.

The little red Gem stood in the middle of the room looking quite nervous. It was obvious she didn't like having so much attention.

A different, more feminine voice erupted from the intercom: "Toaster? Are you ok?"
"Mary! Where are you?!" The Ruby glanced around the crowd with a sudden burst of excitement. She seemed disappointed when she could not see her human friend.

Mary answered: "I'm right here Toaster! You can't see me because I'm in the back room!"
"Oh. Ok!" Toaster was happy that someone familiar would be helping her through this.

Mary continued: "Ok...first things first-you saw a bird earlier today, didn't you?"
"Yeah! The pair-of-keys! It was neat!"

It was a good thing Toaster couldn't hear the crowd on the other side of the wall easily- there was a unified: "DAAAWWW!" among the human spectators. Gamma and Pearl seemed surprised at this reaction. Gamma was more confused than anything.

Pearl simply rolled her eyes in sarcasm. "Oh brother."
Gamma was not aware, but Pearl knew the real reason Homeworld made Rubies so tiny. The smaller you are, the cuter you are. The cuter you are, the more the enemy lets their guard down. Rubies were made adorable on purpose, in order to gain access to enemy facilities...before completely burning the place in question to a crisp.

Even if Toaster was not aware of this hidden ability, Yellow Pearl certainly was- making her immune to the tactic.

Mary continued: "Yes! That's right! The parakeet! You remember!"

Toaster looked proud of herself.

The human continued: "Would you mind turning into one? I would like to see what it looks like!"
The small Gem nodded happily, before shining brilliantly. As the light faded, a red Parakeet stood in the Ruby's place. "Does that look ok?"
"That looks wonderful Toaster! Good job!"

The little Gem turned back into her normal self, smiling again.

"Now, this next test is a little more difficult. I want you to make yourself as warm as possible."
"Erm...are you sure? That seems...erg...dangerous?"
"It's fine Toaster. That room is heat proof. It's held aliens made out of lava before."
"Erm...well...ok...if you really think it's alright..."

Toaster had spent so much time controlling her temperature- no one had ever really given her permission to just "be herself" and not worry about destroying stuff. Even on Homeworld, if her heat became too intense, other Gems would give her nasty stares.

...but now...now these beings were asking her to not care anymore. They wanted to see how much she could burn up the conversation- no hold bars.

Toaster relaxed for the first time in a long time. Immediately the temperature in the room rose to an uncomfortable 300 degrees. She then decided to let off some steam- quite literally. Steam began to bellow from every orifice in her body. It fogged up the window, making the entire spectacle extremely difficult to see.
Toaster then thought of many things she had been repressing...stuff that had made her incredibly happy, or upset, or angry, or scared...

The heat rose freely with her emotions. If nothing else, this challenge was wonderfully therapeutic for the little Gem. She felt sad for Gamma, and angry about things Pearl had done to her. She HATED Yellow Diamond, and felt relieved for being on Earth. Tears formed in her eyes. It just felt so awesome not bundling up all her emotions inside like she normally did!

"500 degrees...1,000 degrees...1,227 degrees..." a nearby agent was recording the internal temperature using a digital thermometer. "1,500 degrees...2,132 degrees...3,000 degrees...3,245 degrees..."

The windows began to groan with pressure.
As Toaster's temperature reached 5,000 degrees, Mary suddenly came over the intercom (surprisingly calm): "Alright Toaster! That's good! You can stop now. This part of the test is over."
"Aww...do I have to stop? This is fun!"
"Yes. Unfortunately. You can always come back and visit to do it again."
"Ok..." Toaster heaved a sigh, and began to calm herself.

It was decided upon reaching the 5,000 degree mark, that Toaster could easily melt just about any man made structure. Fortunately, the testing room had been created from alien metals and glass-perfect for allowing Rubies to chillax for a bit.

It was time for the last challenge. Not even Mary thought that Toaster was ready for this one, but she figured she would ask anyway. "We're almost done Toaster! You've been doing great!"

The Ruby beamed.

"This last test is the hardest though...are you ready?"
"Yeah! Toaster had determination in her eyes!"
"I need you..."
"...yeah?! Yeah?!
"- to use your gemestone's weapon."

The Ruby's smile faded. She looked nervously with embarrassment at the large crowd staring down upon her. The small Gem gulped. "Can't...can't I just tell you what it does? Everyone will laugh at me..."
"No Toaster. In order to verify your citizenship, we must witness your full potential."

The small Gem shuffled her feet, looking away with shame. All of the Gems from Homeworld she had shown her weapon to, had made fun of her- certainly humans would too...Toaster decided to barter a compromise. "Can...can I just show it to you then Mary? I...don't want all these people staring..."

Surprised, (and slightly flattered) the human replied: "Why of course! If that's what you really want...you don't even want Pearl or Gamma to see?"

The Ruby shook her head violently.

"...well...ok then..."

Immediately a black curtain was drawn around the windows by several agents- blocking the view of the disappointed spectators. The curtain was typically utilized more for light-sensitive aliens, but would work just as well for this situation.
Pearl and Gamma seemed more disappointed than usual. They were somewhat curious about what strange object she could possibly be so embarrassed about...

A few moments went by and the crowd began to politely disperse. It was not their place, after all, to force an alien to take their citizenship test the way THEY desired. If this Gem wanted a bit of privacy, then so be it.

Eventually, Pearl and Gamma were the only two left. The duo waited patiently to see their friend once more.

...and then...

"BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMM! KA-BLAM!"

"SHATTER!"

It was an immediate good thing that the curtain had been set in front of the viewing station. Every single glass window had been blown out in a storm of shards and pressure.

All beings in the building fell over from the sheer force of whatever had erupted from the testing room. The massive explosion immediately made everyone's ears ring with a high pitch screaming sound.

Gamma and Pearl were both knocked back about 20 feet from their standing spot.

The Keronian had a large wedge of glass shoved between his eyes. While in much pain, he attempted to find Yellow Pearl, who had gotten flung somewhere to his left. Apparently, her form had gotten hit with quite a bit of glass too- the shards of window were surrounding a now (once again) lone gemstone. Gamma crawled over to the pearl, and grabbed it quickly before glancing around slowly to see if he could find Toaster. It almost seemed like a massive bomb had gone off.

Exhausted, Gamma shuffled to one of the building's corners and placed the pearl between himself and the wall. He (painfully) yanked the massive piece of glass from his forehead. The resulting cut immediately began to quickly bleed green platelets, and heal itself in a rapid manner. The frog closed his eyes and waited patiently for his immunity to correct itself.

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When Toaster finally emerged from the testing room, she looked around the destruction with a state of panic!

The little Ruby quickly set off at a sprint to find her friends, and make sure they were safe.

She found the (now healed) Gamma asleep in a corner- seemingly protecting Pearl's gemstone from being stepped on. The little Gem quickly flagged down the closest agent for assistance.

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When Pearl reformed, she found herself on top of the Ruby's plush bread-thingy.

Confused and slightly startled, she glanced around the new location quickly. Upon expection, it seemed to be a rather nice hotel room. There were multiple beds- 4 to be exact. Gamma was curled up in one, and Toaster in another. Yellow Pearl had appeared on the third, and the forth was unoccupied. As Pearl attempted to get her bearings, she noted that someone had taped a note to her
gemstone. She peeled the thing off easily and began to read the crude Gem handwriting on its surface-

"-Dear Pearl,
I'm sorry I blew up the windows and broke your form. I feel really bad about it. I've got some good news though! They said we all passed the test! We're going to become Earth citizens tomorrow! Isn't that exciting?! Get lots of sleep! Fred will protect you!
-Toaster"

Pearl stared at the bread plush with sarcasm. She paused, slightly thoughtful, before sighing with relief. It seemed one adventure was ending, but another was just beginning.

Chapter End Notes

Two chapters in one day! I just finished writing the rough for 14 too!
I will let you guys know: Chapter 14 is the end of "The Terminal Arc", and the beginning of what I like to call: "The New Home Arc"

That means we will be leaving the MIB folks in the next chapter (sadness...yup...).
On the PLUS side though...more adventures to come! YAY!

I'm also slightly curious- which character in the story is YOUR favorite and why? Feel free to leave a comment with the answer if you like!
HUZZAH!!
^0^
Chapter 14

The next morning- the trio found themselves in Agent Zed's office. The man beamed as he walked into the room. "Congratulations to all three of you! You passed each test with flying colors!" Toaster piped up quickly: 'I'm SO SORRY for breaking your windows! I've felt bad about it all day!"

The man chuckled. "It's fine. We shouldn't have asked you to use your weapon in the building."

Pearl and Gamma glanced at Toaster with curiosity.

Gamma inquired: "What is your weapon anyway?!"
Pearl butted in: "Yeah, seriously. You broke windows that can withstand 5000 degree temperatures..."

The little Gem blushed and looked away.

The two aliens turned toward the MIB agent for assistance with the question.

Zed answered their stares: "I'm sorry, but this Ruby has decided to withhold that information for personal reasons. I am not allowed to disclose anything."

The two friends glanced at Toaster again, more concerned for her well-being, than curious about the item in question. The Ruby blushed even harder at all the attention. She hoped her friends would understand. A slingshot was more of an immature item than a REAL weapon after all...at least...that's what the other Gems had told her.

The human decided to change the subject quickly before things became more awkward. "Anyway...I would like to discuss where you three will be living!" The man pressed a button on a remote that was sitting on his desk. A slideshow began on the far wall of the agent's office. The first slide featured a beautifully quaint city by the beach. The MIB leader explained: "This is Beach City in the state of Delmarva. The reason why I'm mentioning it, is because it is the only area on our planet currently where Gems are residing."

The place looked pretty enough- although Yellow Pearl did not seem thrilled with the amount of sand in the area.

Agent Zed continued: "YOU will not be living here, however. We will be sending notifications to the current aliens in the area about your arrival so that there will be no...miscommunications." The gentleman stressed the last word before continuing: "-No, THIS is where you will be living..."

The slide changed. It viewed a quaint family home surrounded by woods and flowers. The place was definitely more inland and secluded than the previous photo. "This is a home in the neighboring city of Ocean Town. They are in the process of rebuilding after a massive fire destroyed a good part of the place. As you can see, it's further inland and much more spaced apart...lots of room...lots of trees..." Agent Zed turned to the trio looking inquisitive. "We've been wanting to expand the living space of Gems so that humans can become more used to their presence. Ocean Town has been visited by Gems before, but currently has no one from Homeworld in the area."

The man clapped his hands once: "-It would be wonderful to have some resident Gems there! We here at MIB have found that slowly integrating humans to alien culture has been the most efficient way to introduce two species!"
"Hmmm...I guess that makes sense?" Gamma sat there wondering what the best way to intertwine two cultures that didn't know much about each other would be.
Zed frowned at the Keronian slightly, before responding: "Yes. The humans there are becoming more and more used to GEMS." He emphasized the last word.
The frog looked up, slightly confused, before realizing where the conversation was going.  
"...wait...you don't mean..."

Gamma and Toaster quickly looked at one another. The MIB agent changed the side again. A new place appeared on the wall. It had cobblestone, trees with pink flowers, and a couple of buildings with odd, triangular, red roofs.

"-This is southern Japan." Zed explained. "While they are technically still in hiding from humans, this is the only known Keronian squad's location on Earth." The agent turned to Gamma before continuing: "However you are a...SPECIAL case Mr. Gamama."

The frog flinched. He hated people using his full name.

Yellow Pearl took note of the frog's reaction. Up until this point, Toaster had only been calling him "Gamma". The tall Gem had no clue that this was a nickname for the creature.

Zed continued: "Unlike other Keronians, your government has made it forbidden for you to communicate with your own kind...even on various planets. This has put us in a...difficult position."

The MIB agent suddenly looked at Gamma with sad eyes.

As the next slide appeared, the three aliens gasped in horror!
The image was awful- structures (if you could even call them that) were sloppily put together with mud and pieces of metallic scrap. Several bug-like humanoids were huddling around a lit trash can for warmth. Everything was really close together too...no plants- only clay, filth, and dusty plains.

"This..." the agent explained "-is District 9. This is where aliens go on our planet when there is no other option. It's...admittedly not the most beautiful of places...but it's better than being killed by Yellow Diamond...am I right?!"

Gamma gasped: "It's...it's a hovel! How the Hell is anyone supposed to live in a place like that?! I rather just stay in the ship I brought! At least it has clean beds and water..."

Toaster frowned at the human. "Gamma can't live there! That's not where Toaster is living!"
"Ruby..." Pearl knew this was going to be difficult for her smaller counterpart. "Don't you understand? The Keronian can't come with us..."
"No! Gamma can't be alone! We're friends!"

"Pearl's right." Gamma looked toward the floor. "I-I want you to stay here Toaster. The place you're going to be staying at...it looks so nice. If I were to come, I would just scare away all the humans. I don't want such a wonderful opportunity to be wasted for you guys..."

"Gamma...no! No! No! No! No! Mr. human! You have to let Gamma stay with us! He's all alone! He-He has no one!" Toaster gave the agent a look that was so adorable and desperate, her eyes could probably slaughter puppies.

Agent Zed persperated heavily. He was well aware (much like the Pearl) of a Ruby's ability to manipulate emotion- especially empathy. Despite this knowledge, he could feel his natural instincts to keep this creature happy caving in. The agent knew there was nothing he could do about the situation. Keeping two friends together was not worth starting a humanoid panic over. Although, he wouldn't blame the Keronian if the alien wanted to simply go back to his ship. It was, admittedly,
much nicer than the houses in District 9.

The Ruby began to sob in desperation.

He couldn't take it anymore. Agent Zed stood up, and walked out the door briskly and unexpectedly. He saw another agent in the hall. "You there! Break the news to the Ruby would you? I'm too busy for these sort of things..."

The new agent - curious and oblivious, entered the room...
...only to find one of the most adorable creatures he had ever seen...crying her eyes out.

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A few minutes later, the man came running out of the room- gasping for air. He...he couldn't do it. She was just so innocent and adorable...

The agent spotted another MIB worker eating a sandwich across the hall. The man offered his coworker $20 in order to do his job for him. Enthusiastic to earn some extra cash, the agent with the sandwich walked into the room...

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...

Five minutes later, the man came out of the room feeling defeated and ashamed. Not only was he unable to break the bad news to the Ruby, but he had somehow been conned out of his lunch...and his new $20 bill.

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This process repeated itself over and over again.

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Eventually, Agent Zed re-entered the room, flustered. He was slightly ashamed of his employees. None of them had been able to tell Toaster the grim news straight- not even some of the alien employees. In addition, several people had given up money, food, and several types of office supplies in an attempt to coax the red Gem into a better mood.

Toaster was still quite upset (and now surrounded by presents). The leader sighed in defeat, before sitting down with exhaustion. "Look- Toaster was it? If I pull some strings in order to get special permission for Gamama to stay with you, will you PLEASE stop crying?! PLEASE?!!"

Toaster looked up at the man with big, hopeful eyes. She nodded in agreement. "Thank God." The agent thought to himself. He figured that Earthlings and Keronian's would have to get used to each other eventually, and there was no time like the present. Perhaps this situation was a blessing in disguise...

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A compromise was made. Gamma could stay with the Gems, as long as he used the invisible "cloaking device" on his hat while in town or walking among humans.

"Well, I guess a congratulation is in order. You are going to be the first Keronian living on Earth outside of Japan! You should thank your friend! You guys are pushing glass ceilings today."

Toaster turned and beamed at Gamma.
The frog was truthfully, very grateful. However, he would have to teach the Gem how begging was not the way to fix your problems. That lesson would be for another time though. At this point, the amphibian was not going to complain about his living situation.

"Well...now that THAT'S all...err..."settled" I must discuss the conditions for your residency." Zed nodded.
"Conditions? WHAT conditions?" Pearl looked thoroughly annoyed.
"Well, you didn't think we were just going to GIVE you a house for free, did you? You have to earn your keep if you are going to be living here...you know...model citizens and all that crud."
"Mph... there's always a catch with these sort of things...alright PRIMATE, what do we have to do NOW?"
"Well, you have several options actually! Let me explain each one..."

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The aliens stood in front of a one-way mirror. They could see the inside, but any creature in the room could not see them.

-Which was probably a good thing. The entire place was filled with human children playing with toys.

"ADOPTION!" Agent Zed said enthusiastically!
"STARS NO!" The Pearl replied.

"I've never seen LITTLE humans before!" Toaster was fascinated. "Can we keep one Gamma? I promise to walk it every day!"
"A baby is not a pet Toaster...you can't just walk it. They require food and sleep- like me."

The agent shrugged before explaining: "We partner with a LOT of the orphanages in the area. Aliens get a new home- abandoned humans get a family. It's a win-win."
"Yeah...I don't think this is the route we want to take. None of us know anything about Pekoponian care..." Gamma was impressed with the program, but the idea seemed a bit too far out there for his fancy.
"That's fine. That's why we have options."

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The other three options did not have as spectacular a presentation...just a couple of pamphlets. The agent explained: "We actually want to encourage you to make the decision after you settle into your new place. This is a choice that should not be taken lightly...especially if you're going to be living here for a while." The pamphlets each had a specific title: "Hero", "Community Service", and "Creating your Career".
"You can read those later. The last thing we need to do is get a picture for your E.S.S."
"E.S.S.?" Gamma seemed confused.
"Extraterrestrial Social Security card. We were going to call them "Alien Social Security cards"...but most people thought that would be in poor taste."
The Keronian looked up at the human- unamused.

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Thusly, each alien received a card. The creatures were also able to include hobbies and skills on the things as well. While a helicopter began to fly the trio to their new home, the MIB began to create files:
Name: Gamama
Nickname: Gamma
Species: Keronian
Previous Occupation: Weapons Specialist
Gender: Male
Height: 4.2 ft
Specialty Skills: can handle radioactive material with ease/ an excellent shot/ enjoys whittling in his spare time
Temperament: Has concern for others safety. Demonstrates good self-control and empathy. Is slightly blunt, but kind.
Weapon of Choice: Radioactive Blaster
Current Status: Wanted by Yellow Diamond. Currently under Earth protection for self defense

Name: Ruby
Nickname: Toaster
Species: Gem (Ruby)
Previous Occupation: Foot Soldier
Gender: Unknown (uses feminine pronouns)
Height: 4.2 ft
Specialty Skills: Pocket Space/ can use Slingshot and "weapon" from gemstone to create massive explosions/ Transformation / has the ability to manipulate emotions/ Thermokinesis
Weapon of Choice: Slingshot (classified)
Current Status: Runaway (?)

Name: Yellow Pearl
Nickname: (Pearl?/ Yellow?)
Species: Gem (Yellow Pearl)
Previous Occupation: "Secretary" to Yellow Diamond (slave)
Gender: Unknown (uses feminine pronouns)
Height: 5.6 ft
Specialty Skills: Can use voice to manipulate sound waves and lure other creatures to sleep/ can successfully translate foreign texts/ Transformation / knows how to operate ships internally/ Cooking / Pocket Space
Temperament: Horrific temperament. Angers easily, conceded.
Weapon of Choice: Voice
Current Status: Runaway (?)

After the initial files were made, a most important letter was sent to the Crystal Gems- informing them of their new (and very interesting) neighbors.

The whole thing was rather...odd. Jamie normally only delivered mail to Steven's house if the boy had ordered some sort of parcel...but this was a letter- no! A packet! The thing was stuffed into a massive office envelope. It had Steven's address on it...as well as a: "Important! Open
Immediately! Time Sensitive Information!" stamped on the front cover. However, it was not addressed to anyone specific, no name on it what-so-ever. The return address was equally mysterious. In its place was an odd "Federal US Postal" stamp the human had never seen. Still, mail was mail. It was none of his business what was on the inside of the massive envelope.

The boy found Amethyst- asleep on a beach bolder. She was snoring quite loudly on the thing. He didn't really want to disturb her, but there was no one else he could spot to take the envelope. "Hey? Hey!"

Amethyst woke up slightly annoyed. "MMMPH...whaddayawant?" She was obviously still groggy from her nap.

"Mail. It looks...important." Jamie handed Amethyst the letter to the top of the bolder.

The purple Gem stared at the thing, slightly surprised. Nobody ever sent her mail...nobody she knew anyway... "Thanks." She replied, attempting a smile through her fatigue. "I'll put it in a safe place."

The letter in question, ended up in Amethyst's room- underneath a pile of old calendars.

It sat, unopened.

"Probably just some junk mail." Amethyst had thought to herself at the time, before falling asleep again.

Chapter End Notes

LAST CHAPTER OF THE "TERMINAL ARC"! HUZZAH! (I did it!)

Now we will get to see how our alien friends react to human life! For anyone inquisitive or curious - the Crystal Gems WILL appear again (obviously), but not for a while yet.

I'm sure they won't be surprised AT ALL by their new neighbors...NOPE! NOT ONE BIT!

XD

A huge thank you is in order here! - To the awesome writer: Fanfic-Rick42! They recommended "Aliens With Trapper Hats" for a crossover nomination on TV Tropes! I was super surprised (to say the least!)

To any new reader from TV Tropes, I welcome you to my silly little story! I hope it entertains, and gives you a few chuckles along the way!
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The house was surrounded by several acres of fields and woods- it was terribly secluded. The nearest market was a 30-minute drive away. The trio would have to deal with this conundrum later. None of them had a car or any means of transportation at this point (the MIB had kept Gamma's ship). The house itself was quite beautiful (if not a bit overrun with weeds). The thing had two stories, was made of brick, and included a locked storage shed on the side. There were massive trees in the back, with lots of wildlife, and a small brook.

As the three aliens entered their new dwelling, the emptiness of the place shocked the trio. The home had yet to be furnished properly, but did include a spacious open kitchen with an oven, refrigerator, and microwave. There was also a bulky retro TV set, and video player. Gamma noticed that while the kitchen was tiled, the rest of the house seemed to be covered in white carpet. This may cause a problem...considering Toaster's ability to warm things quickly. The frog would have to keep an eye on the little Gem to make sure she didn't burn the thing to the crisp. The only item that stood out in the room was a massive gift basket that was left on the kitchen counter.

Curious, Pearl stepped into the home first. The carpet was new to the tall Gem...it felt...strange. Yellow walked over the slightly squishy surface awkwardly- much like a cat that had gotten one of its paws wet. Toaster was the next to enter. Unlike Pearl, she remembered burning the carpet in the MIB room with all the toys. The Ruby quickly (and carefully) jaunted toward the kitchen tile to avoid damages. The carpet was softer then the industrial one she remembered, however, and the little jaunt ended up looking just as awkward as Pearl's walk. Gamma walked in nonchalantly. Keron had similar carpeting in their houses. He was quite used to the stuff. Keronians were not as big of fans of metal and tile work as Homeworld was...when it came to flooring at least.

The three aliens stared at the gift basket in the kitchen.

"Can-can I open it?" Toaster was the first to pipe up. The thing was incredibly tempting to rip apart- despite how pretty it was.

Pearl stated: "Perhaps I should do this Ruby. The gift looks...incredibly delicate."

"I don't care who opens the thing- but can someone do it soon? I feel like this is kind of a time sensitive thing..." Gamma was becoming equally as impatient.

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What followed was the very pain-staking process of Pearl opening the basket. Not really knowing if the saran wrap around the thing was significant or not, she carefully removed the object...flap by flap- as if performing surgery.

...

40 minutes later, the plastic was finally off.

The white basket revealed an array of goodies- including some crackers, several microwaveable bags of popcorn, some books, an envelope, and a huge array of strange shiny disks wrapped in plastic boxes.
Pearl knew that the envelope should be opened first. It was customary when receiving any gift. She had always been in charge of opening things sent to Yellow Diamond- and (on occasion) had a small explosion from said parcel dissipate her form from the chore. Apparently, a lot of people enjoyed sending her Diamond bombs and explosives.

The Pearl squinted in fear as she opened the envelope, and was internally relieved when the thing did not explode. As she checked the envelope's contents, the Gem was pleasantly surprised at the discovery.

It held two letters.

Someone had spent the time translating the letters into their native languages- one was in Gemmish, the other Keronian.

Loosely translated, the note stated the following:

"Dear Attendants,

Welcome to your new home! Inside this basket you will find some Earth snacks, as well as some recommended films and books that would benefit your further understanding of our planet. Also: please remove the plastic (transparent clear stuff) before putting popcorn in the microwave. Please put the DVDs (shiny disks) in the DVD player (shiny side down). Please do not attempt to eat the basket. Enclosed in this envelope is a card with 3,000 Earth dollars to get you started with food and furniture.

Best of luck!
-the MIB HOA"

After Pearl read the letter out loud. She glanced curiously at the basket's remaining contents. She placed the important plastic "money card" into her gemstone, before attempting to translate the titles of the books, and boxes holding the primitive-looking "DVDs".

Toaster seemed much more interested in the basket's food. She tore apart the plastic from one of the popcorn bags, and turned it every which way, wondering what a "microwave" was.

As the Ruby held the thing with curiosity, the heat from her hands made one of the kernels pop! Spontaneously, all three aliens jumped in surprise! Toaster dropped the bag quickly! Gamma upholstered his blaster, and disintegrated the bag into oblivion- making a small burnt mark on the tile in the process.

"It...it...BARKED at me!" Toaster didn't know what to make of the odd thing.

"What kind of "foods" is this?!!" Pearl examined another bag and glanced at the pictorial instructions on the back. The pictures on the bag immediately led her gaze to the microwave in the kitchen. Following the (incredibly crude) drawn instructions on the package, she removed the bag from the plastic, opened the microwave, threw the bag in, and closed the device door. The Yellow Gem noted a button on the machine that matched the "popcorn" lettering she had seen on the bag.

Immediately, the machine began to function! The Gem could see the bag revolving on a small plate through the device's window. For a couple of seconds, it seemed that the machine was defective...and then-

"POP!"

The sudden noise made the Gem cower in fear!

"POP! POP!"
Quickly, the trio hid behind the kitchen counter in a fright. The popping became more rapid as time went on! The three stayed close, knowing this was the end for them all!

"DING!"

With a pleasant bell chime, the popping stopped. The trio looked at the microwave with curiosity. The window now displayed a full puffed-up bag where the previous flat one had been placed. The Pearl cautiously approached the machine and opened the hatch. The puffed-up bag smelled good at least. She removed the item and placed it on the kitchen counter. "Well...now what?"
The three beings looked at the thing...unsure to cut into it, or put it on a plate, or...what?!

Toaster was curious to see what had made the massive din. She approached the bag, and proceeded to rip it.
"RUBY!" The Pearl yelled in shame. "You BROKE it!"
Toaster sank into herself in response to the yelling- the little Gem shivered in fear.

Gamma decided to approach the item, and try one of the fluffy things that had appeared inside.
"Hey!" Pearl yelled again "Don't go eating random parts of it! How are we supposed to fix it now?!"
Gamma took another handful.
"HEY!...HEY!"
"It's good." The frog said plainly. "This strange creature's entrails are...REALLY good!"
"That's disgusting!" The Pearl looked at the Keronian with disapproval. "You're just going to rip through the carcass and eat the insides with your bare hands?! At least use a utensil!"

"Let me try!" Toaster was excited at the thought of eating new cuisine.

"Be my guest!" Gamma stepped to the side, before Toaster stuck her entire hand into the carcass as well.

"Ugh! Will you two stop that! Hang on a second! I'll...try to find some plates..."

Fortunately, the house was equipped with exactly 3 sets of dishes. Pearl was quite insistent that they eat the stuff not only on a plate, but with utensils as well. The two of them were having the most difficult time trying to stab the kernels with a fork...

Toaster spotted an unpopped kernel in her pile. "Hey! This one looks different!" She held it up with curiosity. The Gem attempted to eat the thing, but was terribly unsuccessful. "Blea!" She spit it back on to her plate. "It's hard to chew."
"Don't be gross." Said Pearl with a bit of sarcasm "Either eat it, or don't eat it."
"Mph." Toaster carefully picked up the unpopped kernel from her plate, slightly frustrated. She was going to fling the thing at Pearl in retaliation, but instead, fell back as the item popped unexpectedly and aimed toward her face! Surprised and scared by this, the Ruby hid behind the kitchen counter again.

Gamma came to a realization! "Toaster! Come back! I think I've figured it out!"
The Gem hesitantly waddled back toward the frog, cautious, but curious. Gamma handed her another unpopped kernel, which made Toaster flinch slightly.
"Now...heat it up!" The Keronian stated excitedly!
Toaster obeyed, and almost instantly the thing popped and flew into the air!
"HA! I knew it! Heat turns it into food!
"Woah!" Toaster was impressed! This was a dish even SHE could create easily!
For the remainder of the meal, Toaster had a massive amount of joy finding unpopped kernels, and turning them into food.

Chapter End Notes

Been feeling a bit anxious today- decided to put this chapter up to make myself feel better! Hopefully, you guys liked reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it!

...and with THAT I have finally caught up with myself! I still have a couple of handwritten bits and pieces that need typing, but this was the last fully completed chapter written traditionally.

It is affectionally called: "The Popcorn Chapter" (for obvious reasons). It's not one of my longer chapters, but my protagonists need a break once-in-a-while!

^_^
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Several months prior....

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Rage.

As Yellow Diamond woke up from her unexpected slumber, that's the only thing she could feel-rage.

All of her ship's emergency vessels were gone. All of the ship's crew members were gone. All of the ship's extra rations were gone.

The only other Gem left on the ship, was her Pearl servant- who was currently snoozing underneath the main control panel.

Apparently, all of the crew on board had awoken before her. They only knew three things:
1. They now understood their Diamond's secret motives on securing the Keronian planet, and would also be considered witness to her plight (which would result in a guaranteed shattering)
2. They had fallen asleep on the job (also a guaranteed shattering)
...and 3. They had (unintentionally) heard a Pearl's song (which would result in a shattering).

Thusly, the crew had gotten spooked, and fled as fast as possible upon awakening from the fiasco.

Annoyed, Yellow Diamond kicked her sleeping servant (hard enough to cause pain and a sudden awakening, but not hard enough to dissipate her form). After the kick flipped her a couple of times across the floor, the Yellow Pearl responded with an: "OOF!".

"Get up." The leader barked. "Set a course for Homeworld immediately. The traitors that abandoned this vessel must be dealt with."

"Yes...my-Diamond..." the Pearl struggled through her pain and forced herself onto her feet. The poor thing staggered to the control panel, and dug her hands in...forcing the ship to set a course to Homeworld as instructed.

What the Pearl did not know, was that her master's promptness in waking her up had more so to do with the fact that the leader could not drive the thing.

A Diamond had no such need for the common skill. She was typically chauffeured everywhere by her people. (Her fingers were too big to control the ship's computer anyway).

It was a good thing her new Yellow Pearl was such a deep sleeper- otherwise, there was a fair chance the leader might have been stranded in the middle of space.

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As the vessel arrived back on Homeworld and landed safely, the Gems at the ship bay all prepared a salute in order to welcome home their radiant, glorious, beautiful leader!

....

There seemed to be a pregnant pause. Slightly concerned, the surrounding Gems mumbled among themselves, before a brave Agate decided to step forward, and open the ship door from the outside.
There stood Yellow Diamond! She looked aggravated at the Agate, but was (secretly) internally grateful.

After the ship had landed successfully, the Diamond immediately shattered her new Yellow Pearl into teeny-tiny pieces (both for falling asleep and being a witness to her crime)....only to remember that she needed a tiny pair of hands (as well as her massive thumb print) in order to successfully upon the ship's door.

The leader sprinkled her new servant's remains into the Agate's hands. "I expect you know what to do with these? I wish to speak to the Peridot in charge of the Pearl Kindergarten....privately, so that I may order a new one."
"Yes, my Diamond."
"Also see to it, that I receive an entire list of this ship's crew. They all abandoned me in the vacuum of space. We must send out our best bounty hunters to shatter them for treason, and abandoning their post."
"Yes my Diamond."
"I also require two Quartz solders, and a meeting with Ruby squad XTS1. Is that clear?"
"Yes my Diamond."

The leader then thundered off in a massive huff. She was in a mood most foul. This entire scenario had to be fixed as soon as possible. NO ONE would know the truth.

--------------------
She was worried sick.

Her baby...her only son, was alone. Was he still alive? Did he have any food left? He couldn't drive ships by himself. Was he going to starve?

She would never know.

Prolulu was Gamma's mother. She was currently sitting in her living room, attempting to distract her mind with some knitting. She was using alien yarn she had gotten from a craft fair that was borderline invisible, and incredibly soft.
The Keronian figured a relaxing activity might distract her mind from the realization that her only child was forcefully abandoned...forevermore.

It wasn't.

Frustrated, she looked at a strange clock that was hanging on her wall. It was somewhat holographic, but an older model.

Ahh!

It was time to make dinner! Perhaps THAT would distract her from her sorrow?

....probably not. But at least it would make her feel accomplished. Her husband, Atmomo, would be home from work soon. He was more gruff than most, but this entire fiasco had affected his mood terribly. He would pretend like nothing was wrong, but the situation bothered him immensely- she could tell.

Prolulu put down her knitting craft, and sauntered sadly into the kitchen. Whichever dish was created, salt was not required. Her tears would take care of that.

----------------
Toaster's Ruby squad was called in for a meeting with Yellow Diamond. The team was blissfully ignorant. They didn't know much of the galaxy outside of Homeworld. News from most planets was blocked and unavailable...so they had NO IDEA as to anything that had gone on throughout the past few weeks.

They were just happy to get their friend back.

The group of five had always been very close (such is the case with most Ruby squads). They had visited and scouted out various planets together! They had valiantly fought numerous beasts! The squad also had a love for telling eachother stories, and tussling playfully in their spare time. Gems didn't need to sleep, and the extra wrestling sessions served as wonderful practice for their training exercises.

They all knew that OL-56 was especially special though! She had a pocket space, and seemed to be a bit more timid than the rest when push came to shove. This made the rest of her squad incredibly protective and empathetic toward her.

At one point, one of her platoon members had witnessed her collecting soil from the current planet they were trying to concur, and shoving the pile of dirt into her gemstone.

"What are you doing OL-56?"

Toaster jumped, before blushing. "I-I was saving it...as a memento."

"I...see. You wanna remember all the fun stories and stuff that happened here, before the planet gets destroyed, huh?"

Toaster nodded, sheepishly.

The friend had an idea...

----------------

The planet had successfully been destroyed, and Toaster couldn't help but feel a bit disheartened. The squad surrounded Toaster once they were back on the ship. Surprised, OL-56 looked around with curiosity.

"We got you something!"

"Yeah!"

The squad presented a massive sand ball from the planet that was no more. Toaster was certainly surprised from the gift! "Wow! You guys did this for me?!?"

Her friends chuckled. "You haven't even seen the best part yet!!"

The four other Rubies held the sand ball at the same time. Their combined heat immediately began to transform the odd object from a wad of dirt, into a beautifully unique glass sphere.

Toaster's eyes lit up in wonderment! "There you go OL-56! Now you can remember all the good times we had without getting your pocket space dirty!"

The little Ruby did not know what to say, but hugged her friends with gratitude.

This odd ritual became somewhat of a tradition between the squad. Every foreign planet visited by the team, resulted in Toaster receiving a new glass sculpture made from a sand ball. She had gathered quite a collection- 12 marbles in all! They were her most cherished possessions!

Needless to say, the squad was terribly close.

----------------
....and then, THAT day arrived....

An Agate had approached the squad's quarters, with a direct order from Yellow Diamond.

She wanted Ruby OL-56- and ONLY Ruby OL-56 to accompany her to an important intergalactic meeting.

The group found this request rather...ODD. They had never been separated before! They had always been together! The request was strange, but un-nogoshable. It was their Diamond's will.

Toaster attempted to comfort them all- promising to have lots of new stories to tell when she returned!

-this day....would never come.

-------------

As the squad excitedly walked toward their Diamond's chambers, they all gossiped with inquiry. Perhaps their little OL-56 was going to receive her own Pearl or...something...and wanted them all to be present? What an honor!

The group entered Yellow Diamond's chamber, and gave a salute in pride!
"At ease." The monarch seemed...unamused at the pathetic display.
The Rubies stopped saluting, before the leader continued: "Now, I know your squad has been...incomplete for sometime now..."
The group waited with anticipation! They were all so excited to get their friend back!
"...which is why, I have this surprise for you! Show yourself FT-5!"

...a small, cowardly Ruby came out from around the monolith's chair. She saluted and composed herself the best she could. "It's...it's going to be an honor to serve on your team!" The Ruby squeaked.

The remainder of the platoon seemed...confused....
"What happened to OL-56?" The leader of the team asked, slightly irked.
"Shattered for treason." The Diamond lied. "Now off with you all, or you will meet the same fate."
The massive leader shewed the group away in an annoyed huff.

The soldiers left the room quite melancholy. Their special pal was gone forever. Never again would she smile or tell them stories....

-------------

"BAM! BAM! BAM!"

The knock on the door made the two Keronians jump slightly!

Grumbling about how people always interrupted during meal times, Atmomo got up, cursing under his breath that his wife's lovely space omelette had been disturbed.

He opened the door, incredibly annoyed: "WHAT DO YA WANT?!? WE'RE TRYING TO EAT HERE!!"

Atmomo never figured out what "the intruders" wanted. In front of him stood two massive Amethyst soldiers...looking incredibly tall and intimidating. The duo was about a foot and a half taller than the door frame. The husband could barely see behind himself, but did note that a Gem
spaceship had landed in the coldasac. His neighbors were rubber-necking at the spectacle.

The two purple Gems said nothing, but forced themselves into the dwelling. They pushed Atmomo to the ground, who landed with a: "OOMPH!!" 

Prolulu ran into the room quickly to see what all of the fuss was about, before giving an audible shriek!

The two massive Gems immediately began to tear her home apart! They broke her glass Tribble collection! They knocked art off of the wall to inspect their opposite side! They dumped out the contents of several storage units!

The duo was not exactly graceful, nor small. Any time they stood up to their grand height, or tripped on something, they would cause massive cracks in the ceiling and wall. Despite the chaos, Prolulu ran to her husband to make sure he was ok. Her spouse was on the floor near the front door, rubbing his head in pain.

"Are you ok honey?? What is going on?"
"No clue." Atmomo was gruff and irritated. He piped up: "Hey!!! What's the big idea??!! You're causing property damage!!"

"Diamond's orders." was the only response they got.

"Are you looking for something speci- DON'T TOUCH THAT!!!"

To late. Atmomo's limited edition winning Blernsball had been smashed to oblivion. "Ohhhh.....that was signed too....." the husband felt deflated.

Prolulu couldn't take the chaos any longer. Despite her better judgement, she found a broom and began to wack one of the Gem soldiers with it. "OUT! OUT!!! Haven't you caused my family enough heartache already?!!? OUT!!"

The Amethyst looked down at the frog in anger. The broom didn't hurt in the slightest, but this creature WAS becoming rather annoying.
"We'll leave, as soon as we get what we came for."
"...and what is THAT?"
"A modern photo of the one they call: Gamama."

Prolulu glanced at the pair in surprise, before inquiring: "Why...do you need that?"
"Classified." The soldiers answered in unison.

Atmomo thought about this for a second, before coming to a realization. There was only ONE reason someone would want a modern picture of a "wanted fugitive". They were going to send out posters...they were going to send bounty hunters.
This realization was bitter sweet. It meant two things:
1. They were going to try to kill his son.
...and 2. His son was still alive! By the forces of the galaxy!! He was still alive!!

The father cooked up a plan: "Why didn't you say so in the first place?!? If you stop destroying stuff, I'll go fetch one for you!"

The two quartz soldiers seemed surprised at this, but nodded in agreement.

Atmomo pulled Prolulu into the back room quickly where the family albums were.

"What are you doing?!?" The wife asked in a concerned mumble. "I don't want to give those goons..."
any more of my son than they've already taken!!"

As she complained, Atmomo dug through the large piles of traditional books and photos. He suddenly found whatever he was looking for, before answering: "I humbly disagree dear. I think we should help the nice soldiers, with THIS picture HERE..."

He showed her the photo in question, before she answered with a smirk. "You know what? You're RIGHT!!!! I DO think that photo is perfect!....and those Gems have been SO polite...they deserve a prize..."

The photo featured Gamama at a costume party- with included afro and handlebar mustache, making him look like a completely different being.

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The two Amethyst's seemed pleased with the photo. It was obvious they had never seen the REAL Gamma before. The Gems took the picture and thanked the family for their time.

After the brutes left, the two Keronians hugged eachother with joy!!!

Prolulu began to weep with happiness. "Gamama's alive dear!! Our son is OK!!!"

Chapter End Notes

Hello again everyone! I have some great news!!
Have you ever wanted to ask Toaster, Pearl, or Gamma a question?! Want to get a free drawing response?!?
Well now you CAN!!!
The asktoastertheruby tumblr account is finally open for business!!!
You can get there via that username, or through my own Tumblr on askthetoonfreak!
This is gonna be FUN!!! XD
The Peridot was perspiring heavily. She was nervously waiting for Yellow Diamond to enter her
office.

Stars...why had she called a private meeting? Was one of her Pearls defective? Was she going to be
punished?

The green Gem would have felt significantly better if she was not the only one in the room.
However, her Diamond had requested these conditions.
She could hear the rhythmic thunder of her leader approaching. The Peridot stood and saluted in
preparation for her Diamond's entry.

An Agate let the leader in.
So THAT must have been the reason for her visit! She had shattered another Pearl...yet again.

The Peridot was internally relieved that she was in no immediate danger. She decided to greet the
monolith. "My Diamond! To what do I owe this pleasurable visit?"

The leader said nothing, but shewed away the Agate so that the conversation would be private.

Only after the two of them were alone did the leader continue the conversation with a strict
mumble: "I would like a Pearl like the one that got stolen from me...EXACTLY like the one that
got stolen from me."
"No problem! So the standard Yellow model than?"
"No you CLOD! The one that was taken from me was incredibly unique!"
"How so, my Diamond?"

The leader glanced around quickly as if concerned about being watched by someone. "That Pearl
was...slightly defective-off color, but in a more...beneficial way..."

The Peridot gasped in surprise! Certainly her leader didn't want her to attempt to make a defective
Pearl...on PURPOSE?!? It was taboo! Unorthodox!
The leader continued: "She had a special secret talent because her gemstone was slightly closer to
her neck than her chest. She was able to force sleep upon others due to the disability."

This was news to the Peridot. There had been no report on such a major defect within a Pearl.
Apparently, this secret had been tightly guarded upon its discovery.

"My Diamond. I would be honored to recreate your previous "secretary"...but the placement of the
gemstone- especially such a defective placement, is not easy to duplicate on a whim..."

"I don't CARE if it's difficult to duplicate! You will try until you get it right, or be shattered! I
demand all other Pearl orders be put on hold until you give me what I want! That is a direct
command!"

"But...but...my Diamond...think of the resources that will be wasted..."

"Are you questioning me?!? Are you attempting treason?!?
"Ahhh!! No! No my Diamond! I'll get right on it!"
Not really wanting to be smushed into a pulp, the Peridot went over the intercom, and informed her subordinates of the new instructions immediately...

Thus began the painful process of perfecting a Yellow Pearl...a defective Yellow Pearl at that. The project was kept well under wraps. If the secret that a Diamond was attempting to purposely create an off-color Pearl got out, all moral on Homeworld would be questioned.

Every day was the same.

The leader would visit the Kindergarten to see that day's spoils. She would ask each Pearl to sing for her. All the Pearls that could not make her woozy by doing so, would be instantly shattered (pretty much all of them on a daily basis).

As tyrannical as she was, she was certainly a woman that knew what she wanted. Both the Pearls and the Peridots were suffering for it too. Because the Kindergarteners were purposely encouraging defaults into the Pearl's programming, the end result somewhat resembled a horror show.

Pearls with arms growing out of their heads.
Pearls with feet coming out of their face.
Pearls with humps, Pearls with four legs, Pearls that had no mouth......
.....the list went on and on.

Of course there were Pearls that seemed normal too...but had been born with extra-special abilities...just...not the one the leader was looking for.

There had been one near-fatal incident where the leader had asked a seemingly normal Pearl to sing for her....
.....only to have a massive stream of fire bellow from the servant's mouth during the attempt.

The unfortunate incident resulted in extra safety precautions. All Pearls were instructed to stand with their backs toward Yellow Diamond when attempting their song.

Finally, the day came.

The Pearls all stood with their backs facing Yellow Diamond. One by one they sang, one by one the leader zapped their form and stepped on the owner's gemstone.

....

...by the time the leader got to the last two Pearls, the duo was shivering in fear.

"Sing." The disappointed Diamond stated to the second to last Pearl. She clearly wanted to get this task over with.

"LAAAAAAAAAAAA!" The Pearl's voice fluctuated slightly with nervousness. To her surprise, all of the Peridots dropped like flies and began to snooze. The Diamond would have come to the same fate if she hadn't caught herself. Fortunately, the Pearl stopped almost instantly. It took much more
power than that for a Diamond to become a victim to a Pearl's song.

Yellow Diamond smiled maliciously. "You. You will be my new Pearl."

"R-really?!!" The Pearl turned around with excitement, and immediately regretted her decision. The leader gasped in horror, and heightened her lip in disgust...at least...that's what the Pearl THOUGHT she saw....everything was just a smidge bit...blurry....

The servant squinted, struggling to make out what was going on. It turns out, her vision spheres were somewhat reflective. The equivalent to a human cataract issue. She wasn't completely blind... but she was a terribly sad sight as she saluted to her Diamond in the incorrect direction. "Oh. That's a shame." The Diamond pointed her finger toward the Pearl-static discharge growing as she aimed...

As the Pearl looked up at the blurry bright light with curiosity, her only remaining sister shoved her out of harm's way quickly. The two dodged the bullet literal seconds before it hit its mark.

Slightly enraged, the leader looked at the duo in surprise. The Yellow Pearl with the more superior eyesight brushed herself off, and gave a Diamond salute. She spoke "Please my Diamond! You have worked so hard to find a Pearl with a perfect voice! Keep me for show, and her for the singing!"

The leader was going to say something about speaking out of terms, but instead, thought about this compromise for a bit.

She chuckled to herself. A Diamond with TWO Pearls! Who had ever heard of such a thing? Still, the leader was growing impatient and tiresome over the amount of time finding a perfect Pearl was taking...

She made her decision. "Fine. Your idea is...adequate. Know this though....DEFECT..." she turned to the blind Pearl "-YOU will stay hidden in my chambers....never to be seen by another. It is taboo for a leader as grand as myself to keep something so....wrong in her presence..."

The disabled Pearl lowered her head in sorrow. "-as for YOU...." the massive one turned to the opposite Pearl. "You are incredibly lucky. The only reason for your survival is because you were last in line- remember that. Now come along Pearl...and bring my Pearl with you."

The two sisters helped each other up and out of the Kindergarten. Because there had never been a Diamond with two Pearls, the leader decided to give each of them pet names- CRUEL pet names so that they would remember their place....

Lucky, and Iris.

Chapter End Notes

Sooooo...I have a quick question for you guys! What do you think of me making a side story about Lucky and Iris? Just curious!

Thanks for all the positive response on the Tumblr Toaster ask account: asktoastertheruby!
Make sure to give it a chance if you haven't yet! I can always use more followers and questions! Huzzah
Hello awesome readers, and welcome to the one year anniversary "behind-the-scenes chapter" for "Aliens With Trapper Hats"

Man! I cannot believe it has been an entire year since I started writing this thing! I don't think I have ONE published fic that has been consistently worked on for THIS LONG. In order to celebrate, I thought it would be fun to give you guys a rare glimpse on how AWTH came to be!

The Beginning

"Aliens With Trapper Hats" actually started out as an idea for a piece of fanart! The image I thought of was a Ruby soldier and a Giroro-looking Keronian, guarding a door while their respective leaders debated and bickered in a conference room over invader-like matters.

I noted the two would look very similar to each other if they stood close by. Ironically, I was having the most difficult time drawing this picture, so I ended up thinking of a way to write it instead!

My initial idea was actually a one-shot crossover. The thing was going to be banter between the two soldiers as they swapped stories and taboos of their own cultures. The fic was to be short, and read sort of like a monologue. The ending would have the two soldiers go their separate ways with a new perspective on life!

....

Pfffftf!!!
YEAH. That totally did NOT happen!!

When I was in the pre-writing process, I wondered if anyone would even read such a thing! Sgt Frog is not exactly the most popular fandom on the net.

I knew I had to find someone who was a fan of BOTH series in order to understand the crossover.

I had read the works of one of my online friends- VonSmore. During our regular chats on the writing process, I told her I had this initial idea for a crossover between Sgt Frog and Steven Universe...but was unsure if I should publish the thing.

To my absolute surprise (and relief), VonSmore just happened to be a fan of both shows, and encouraged me to post the first chapter anyway.

So I did.

By this point, the story had changed slightly. Yellow Pearl was never in the original concept of the plot, but somehow ended up being written into the story anyway. I figured she would make an excellent antagonist and source of conflict.

So the revised story went up. The chapter ended much more rebellious than I originally intended. I still was quite unsure whether this was going to be a one-shot or not. The tale ended with hope, but I did want to see how folks reacted to the story.

As expected, the views increased, but only VonSmore provided any critique- wanting to read more.

My brain had this sudden urge to continue. (You would be surprised how much one nice comment can motivate a writer). I decided to write a chapter 2....and than a chapter 3....
The Story

I knew walking into this fic that Steven Universe's fandom was MUCH bigger than Sgt Frog's. Thusly, I purposely wrote "Aliens With Trapper Hats" with a prominent Steven Universe focus- so that fans could still understand the story and the characters.

I am always very careful when writing crossovers. Even in the fanfiction community, crossovers have this horrendous rep of feeling rushed and being used as an easy way to cause conflict. There are a lot of cliches within the crossover world- most prominently, one set of characters being zapped into another set of character's world using some magical device.

I decided from the get-go, this was going to stay as close to cannon as possible, while discreetly mixing as many science fiction stories as possible. These aliens were going to know OF each other, but minimally. It would only make sense that aliens would have their own version of the UN- even if their separate parts of the universe were very far away from each other.

I chose the Earth being the subject of controversy NOT because it was cliche (although it is), but because so many aliens seem to want to take over and rule this dumb individual planet in the middle of the Milky Way- and no species can seem to accomplish that simple task.

When I was doing research for "Aliens With Trapper Hats", I had to look up a LOT of extra Intel on various alien species to make the story as authentic as possible. I had to do research up the wazoo...just to get the personalities and name for every species correct. Fortunately, I'm already a HUGE science fiction fan...so this process was not terribly labor intensive. I enjoy hiding Easter eggs within the story in a way that the reader doesn't need to understand them to get the story- but can get an extra chuckle if they find the reference.

I've had a LOT of fans tell me that "Aliens With Trapper Hats" is the "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" of sifi fanfiction- a compliment I beam at!

"Who Framed Roger Rabbit" is my most FAVORITE film of all time. I really did write the thing as sort of a respective tribute to all the science fiction stories I have fallen in love with over the years. In case you are curious, there are references to: Rick and Morty, Lilo and Stitch, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Fairly Oddparents, Star Trek, Dr. Who, Madoka Magica, Slaughterhouse 5, Cowboy Bebop, MIB, Superman, Wander over Yonder, Invader Zim, Futurama, Space Dandy, South Park, and many others scattered among the fic.

The Plot

When I realized "Aliens With Trapper Hats" was going to become one of those "suuper looong" fanfictions, I had to come up with a decent plot for the massive story.

I had a basic idea where the thing was going up to the point where the MIB evaluated the trio. As is the way with most science fiction tales, politics actually played a huge part of the story (although incredibly discreetly). "Aliens With Trapper Hats" was first posted (literally) about two weeks before the 2016 presidential election...and most people don't realize how much history was effecting the fic's story during that time.

In chapter 1 for instance, there is a line said by Yellow Diamond:

"Good. I LOVE war. Another bunch of planets for us to conquer...in exchange for a pebble, and some slimy thing? Seems like a reasonable trade to me."

The "I love war" line was almost a direct quote from Donald Trump at the time (and if you don't believe Donald Trump influenced Yellow Diamond's character in this story- you are lying to
A lot of chapter 11 was also inspired by how minorities were being treated in airports at the time. Because both Gems and Keronians are stereotyped as invaders, our protagonists would have the most difficult time convincing the MIB agents that they were good people. While writing that particular chapter, it was the peak of the Muslim-dominant countries being banned from flying into the United States. The people that did get through were treated so poorly by the TSA, that it caused protests and riots.

Like MOST science fiction, AWTH was written (not only), to entertain, but to also bring up specific points in the way the world was evolving at the time.

The Characters

At the time AWTH was written, we had only seen Yellow Diamond and her Pearl on screen in ONE episode for about two minutes (that episode being "Message Received").

Both "That Will be All" and "The Trial" would not be released for many months later. It was actually pure dumb luck that I guessed Yellow Diamond's electric powers correctly (boy...was I happy that was confirmed canon when The Trial came out too!)

Gamma-
Gamma is the straight man in the story. I made him look like Giroro on purpose, however, I always found Giroro's character in the original series somewhat....creepy? I defiantly wanted my readers to know that this was a Keronian with a similar uniform and job, but a completely different soldier from Giroro.
Gamma (or as his planet calls him: Gamama), really was named after a gamma ray. It was only after doing my research that I remembered Keron was located in the "Gama System", and thought it would be adorable if his mother named him after where their home planet was located.

Gamma's hatred for his own name stems from my own experiences. In real life, I have a very common name. It frustrates me to no end when a random person calls said name....only to have 5 of us answer at the same time.

I wasn't quite sure how Gamma and Toaster were going to interact with each other when they first met. Their relationship ended up being that of a father and child. Gamma is very protective of Toaster's well being these days...especially because the Ruby's confidence is so low. Toaster sees Gamma as family- and believes him to be incredibly brave and strong...despite the fact that she's probably five times more powerful than he is.

When creating Gamma's backstory and kin, I had to come up with personalities and names for all the Keronians in his life.
Lilolo, the only other platoon member that has been mentioned by name, was actually named after "Lilo" from Lilo and Stitch.
Prolulu, Gamma's mom- was named after a Proton.
Atmomo, his dad- was named after an Atom.
I wanted to keep the chemistry theme in the family!

Yellow Pearl-
Yellow Pearl was NOT going to be in the original story (as I said before), however, I am glad that I included her. She's definitely the most intelligent one on the ship, and yet...she's an absolute JERK! She is the perfect addition for both exposition and conflict. She COULD drive the ship to a place you need to go in order to survive, but if she doesn't WANT to...than you're out of luck.
Because there was only a few seconds of Yellow Pearl shown in Steven Universe when I started writing her...I (basically) had to create her personality from scratch too.

Yellow Pearl's personality was highly inspired by two things:
1. The kids that bullied me when I was in school.
   ...and 2. The stuff I wish I could shout to people when frustrated (but never do).

If someone cuts me off while driving, I normally just go about my business.

In reality though, I'm cursing at that person like crazy in my own head- THAT is the Yellow Pearl inside me.

All bark, no bite, Yellow Pearl has to bully others in order to make herself feel superior- it's the only way she knows how to treat people (you can thank Yellow Diamond for that).

Throughout the story, I wanted her to gain and evolve a sense of empathy. She's a fast learner when it comes to academic things...but struggles when attempting to not be such a bully.

...she is at least trying now though!
Yellow Pearl is definitely my favorite to write dialogue for. She gets to behave and say stuff that I never would!
Speaking of.....

Yellow Diamond-
Once again, I had to create Yellow Diamond's personality (basically) from the ground up. She is highly inspired by many different things.
I look to a LOT of female Disney villains to get her personality correct- specifically: Maleficent, Cruella, and Medusa.
She was also highly inspired by Meryl Streep's performance in "The Devil Wears Prada", and (of course) Donald Trump.

She is an unsympathetic tyrant of a ruler...a dictator, bully, manipulator, AND a psycho all rolled up into one! She gets everything she wants...even if it means killing and hurting people's livelihoods along the way. I wanted Yellow Diamond to be completely unempathetic to anyone but herself.

Toaster-
Ok so...Toaster seems to be the fan favorite in the story. On the rare occasion when I do receive comments, they are typically about Toaster!
Toaster was written as somewhat blissfully ignorant, but also absolutely adorable. She has a LOT of self-confidence issues and is constantly frightened and scared of doing the wrong thing or being yelled at.

Toaster defiantly has the most of me put into her character. I have very low self esteem, adore animals, feel guilty for things I did seven years ago, and constantly question my own purpose in life.
Toaster has inherited a LOT of my own insecurities. She also has a lot of difficulty controlling her own temperature because of it. If she gets even remotely emotional, she tends to accidently destroy the things around her. This gives the poor dear a major flaw, and makes her a sort of ticking time bomb when it comes to people bullying her (or even bringing up things that upset her).

I wanted to give the Ruby a nickname from the get-go. Magma (which is mentioned by Gamma as an inside joke), Lava, and Thermos were all considered for the running. "Toaster" was the winner in the end though...it seemed to suit her the best! A name that was both silly and adorable...just like
she is!
(In case you're wondering- YES. Yellow Pearl will have a nickname eventually as well- the two top ones at the moment are "Melody" and "Treble".)

Da Rules!-
There are several rules that have been put in place for the characters within the story. Not all of them are obvious. Here are just a few!

-Gamma always refers to "Earth" as "Pekopon" and "Humans" as "Pekoponians" respectively.

-Yellow Pearl always refers to Toaster as "Ruby", or "the Ruby"...simply for the principle of the thing. She thinks the name "Toaster" is stupid, and refuses to accept it whenever she can.

-If Toaster doesn't know, or can't comprehend the proper name for something, she will create her own name for it. Her speech also calls for "approximate knowledge" of things. "Parakeet" turns into "Pair-of-keys"; "Snake" turns into "Snack"; and "Duckling" turns into "Dumpling".

-If Toaster is talking about eating something, she always uses the past participle "ate". This is mostly because when her platoon used to tell her stories that involved the activity, they always used the past participle of the word.
Ex: "...and then...the wolf ate her up!"
"??? What's a wolf?" OwO

-similarly, Yellow Pearl always uses the plural word "foods" instead of "food". The story behind this is rather interesting and cruel...
The first time visiting the human zoo, Yellow Pearl and her Diamond were examining the humans during feeding time. When the fruit appeared on the trees, the humans began to yell "FOOD'S UP! FOOD'S UP!" In excitement.
Confused by this odd behavior, the Pearl asked her Diamond what all the hullabaloo was about. (Annoyed) Yellow Diamond replied that that's what the humans called the nourishment used for survival.
From that day forth, Yellow Pearl always referred to anything eatable as "foods"...thinking it was the proper name to use.
Yellow Diamond never corrected her (and informed her fellow subjects not to correct her either), because she thought it was amusing to have Yellow Pearl look idiotic in front of others. Yellow Diamond is so nice... pffft....
Extra Fun Stuff! (spoilers...kinda?)

Each character in the story has their currently unknown secrets! I'm not sure if I'll ever include any of these in the actual story...so I'm putting them here for your enjoyment! Straight from the AWTH bible! Enjoy!

-Both Toaster and Yellow Pearl are era one Gems...but for completely different reasons!

-The reason why Toaster has her own pocket space is because she was one of the last three Rubies that appeared in the era one set (the three last Rubies appeared at the same time). The Peridots that made her had a bit of extra pearl injection liquid that would just be tossed away anyway, so they figured:
"Eh...why not?"

-Yellow Diamond is well known for smashing her Pearls on a regular basis. The Yellow Pearl in AWTH was her longest lasting Pearl! (Hence why she was still an era one).
The only reason why Yellow Pearl lasted so long, is because she could sing her master to sleep every time the Diamond became aggressive enough to shatter her. Yellow Pearl's voice was her only line of defense.

-Yellow Pearl's record for keeping her Diamond asleep is approximately 6 Earth months...during which time absolutely NOTHING got accomplished on Homeworld. Many Gems needed the Diamond's signature on things- but no one was brave (or dumb) enough to wake her up during that time. The only reason why her court wasn't shattered to pieces when she awoke, is because the leader felt so well rested...maybe she just works too hard and constantly needs a nap?

-Gamma has worked A LOT with radioactive materials and weaponry, making him somewhat immune to the stuff. There are some...interesting side effects to this job. Gamma's eyes actually glow in the dark due to his exposure!

-Speaking of the radioactive Gamma... Despite Gamma being a part of a scouting platoon, he has actually won three metals for helping fellow soldiers! Because of his own immunity to radioactivity, he has been called to several highly toxic areas on rescue missions in order to save other Keronians in battlefields where radioactivity is too dangerous for most!

-If Yellow Diamond ever tried Earth cuisine- her favorite dish would be Flan with a gram cracker crust. Not sure why...just seems like something she would like...

-Toaster's favorite foods are sweets! She doesn't know this yet, but she also has complete immunity to spicy foods. Everything from wasabi, to ghost peppers do not affect her in the slightest.

-Ever since the St. Bernard incident, Yellow Pearl has a fear of Earth animals...even her favorite one (the cockatiel!)

-"Fred the Slice of Bread" is based on the large "Toast Squishable" available on the Squishable website! A Toaster DOES need a piece of toast after all! (I totally bought one of these plushies after starting this story....for...erm...research purposes! Yeah!) It has absolutely NOTHING to do with...

-Toaster has a fascination with soft things (like pillows) because I, myself, like to collect stuffed animals! (I have well over 100 of them displayed around my room right now...)

-Toaster hadn't tried sleeping (or even knew what it felt like), before Yellow Pearl sang her to sleep! She seems to have enjoyed the experience so much, that she typically sleeps now whenever exhausted, or when nighttime comes around!

-Chapter 7 was highly inspired by Cinderella.

-Also, I have had to research a LOT on proper cooking techniques in order to get Yellow Pearl's character down! My family has no clue this is why I went through a "cooking phase", but they didn't seem to mind in the slightest! I ended up making an EPIC recipe for the perfect brownies, and figuring out that fresh meat tastes a LOT better when you don't freeze it...

-Gamma's tongue can stretch twice his height! It is a personal headcannon that Keronians are very similar to Earth frogs. They all have a sort of slimy film around their bodies that they need to keep moist at all times. Keronians can also climb and stick to walls- but rarely do so unless absolutely necessary.

-Toaster may seem a bit ignorant, (despite her gemstone being on her forehead), but her
intelligence actually stems from the fact that she likes to learn! She also has the ability to use her imagination and question the norm—she is smart, but has more of a right brain than a left brain (like Pearl and Peridot).

-Yellow Pearl does not like anyone touching her hair...it takes a lot of prep work to get it to stick up like that...

-Toaster likes hugs!! Yellow Pearl does not. Hugs in my stories are actually very significant. Normally, my characters only resort to hugs if they want to display the ultimate gratitude or reassurance. Because all these aliens see each other as family members now, hugs are rare...but very important!

Welp! I hope you enjoyed this random chapter of stupid AWTH facts! Sorry in advance about the long hiatus! (Been having lots of writer's block, medical stuff, and setting up an official Etsy account to make monies! ) (Toonfreakstreasures BTW)

No worries though! Several segments of the next three chapters have already been written! Get ready for some awkward Earth taboos.....as well as the Crystal Gems meeting our favorite trio! It's going to be a hoot!

Thanks again for all the support! You guys are awesome!!!!
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

...back on Earth...present day...

"So...what does it say already?!

"Give me a minute! These things take time!" Pearl was desperately attempting to translate the top of the DVD boxes. It seemed the most common symbol in this language was the character "E"- but this trivia didn't seem terribly helpful...

"Can we just watch it already?!" the frog was becoming impatient. "Maybe we can learn more about it if we just put it in there..."

It had taken several hours to figure out how to open the stupid "DVD player" in the first place.

"Fine! Here!" Pearl put the thing in the player, and closed it carefully.

Toaster tried all the buttons on the TV, until the thing finally turned on.

A picture of the massive blue marble they now called "home" appeared on the screen...as well as several DVD menu options the trio could not understand.

The frog shrugged. "Try the first one...I guess?"

"Right!" Yellow Pearl approached the TV screen and proceeded to poke the first word with her finger.

... She tried again. The TV responded by giving off a brief static shock. Slightly surprised by this, the Pearl shivered. Her form flickered slightly as well. Obviously, her gemstone did not enjoy the small bit of electricity the machine had given off.

Concerned, Gamma nudged the Pearl away from the television set before she hurt herself again. "Let me try. This thing is archaic. I don't want you disappearing on us again."

"Oh PLEASE! That was barely enough electricity to do anything!"

"Just let me try it, will you?!" Gamma forcefully butted in, and attempted to poke the screen. Another static shock surprised the amphibian! "Weep!" The frog created a small yelp in surprise.

Toaster butted in: "Maybe it's voice activated?" The little Gem figured she would give her theory a whirl. "Computer! Start DVD!"

... Nothing happened.

"Computer! DVD command!"
"Turn on!"

"Please?"

"I don't think saying "please" will help in this situation. Good attempt though Toaster!" The frog nodded in pride before giving the Gem a thumbs up. He was incredibly proud of how much her manners had improved since their first meeting.

"Now what?" Pearl was annoyed again.

Toaster quipped: "Let's try the square with all the buttons on it. You know? The one that opened the "DVD player" in the first place?"

All the aliens looked at the remote control at the same time, and began to wildly push buttons on the poor thing in an attempt to make it work.

The screen on the television set immediately began to transform. The Earth being displayed went from a beautiful blue-to a muddy yellow and neon green color. The tribble was changed so that the peaceful orchestraic soundtrack sounded like a drumbeat concert. Yellow Pearl somehow managed to find the volume button.

Instantly, the horrific sound filled the house and shook the walls! The volume was so intense, that all three aliens held their ears in pain! Among the shocking din, Toaster saw that the machine was plugged into the wall. She hobbled- struggling bravely towards the source of the noise, before yanking on the chord and unplugging the thing.

The trio gasped in shock and relief, as they stared at the (now lifeless) box.

"Evil-EVIL THING!" Pearl had decided right then and there that this device was obviously defective, and should never be used again under any circumstances.

"That-that was scary! I didn't like that Gamma!" Toaster wailed.

"Shhhhh...It's ok now." The frog patted the Gem on the shoulder. "It can't hurt you anymore."

It was decided that the entertainment system be shoved into the closet- DVDs and all. The sight of the scary box was upsetting Toaster especially.

The three decided-out of sight, out of mind as it were.

After the entire television fiasco was taken care of, Yellow Pearl began to glance at the books provided as an alternative route to "Earth Education".

She couldn't understand a word of it.

...but at least the pictures on the inside were interesting! The yellow Gem wondered what the significance of each photo was...
-An ancient leaning tower
-A furry creature in plant life
-Statues of humans
-An insectoid
-Some crude photos of space...

The Gem tilted her head, more confused than ever. None of these images seemed to have anything in common...

"-Maybe we should just go outside?"

The sudden remark from the Ruby made Pearl jump and drop her book. She looked down at Toaster...quite annoyed. "We can't just go outside without educating ourselves first! This is an unknown place- with weird organic life everywhere!"

Toaster looked at Pearl sarcastically. "Me and my platoon used to do it all the time! That's how WE learned 'bout stuff..."

The taller Gem scoffed. "That's because you're all a bunch of idiots! You can't just go into foreign territory like that unprepared! What happens if something attacks you?!"

"-you attack it back!" Toaster quipped, with a determined look on her face.

"That's the dumbest strategy I've ever heard!"

The Ruby settled down a bit, before mumbling: "Well, it always worked for us..."

Pearl huffed with annoyance before going back to her reading material.

Perhaps Gamma would be more open to the idea? The little Ruby wanted to explore- and had no clue whether or not the frog's previous platoon had similar experiences to her own...

...unfortunately, she found Gamma asleep on the floor's soft carpet. Despite the fact that it was mid-day, the poor creature looked exhausted (and slightly uncomfortable) without a bed to rest upon.

Toaster decided it would be up to herself to collect intel on the wide world and report back on her new home! Her original programming and soldier-like instincts yearned for adventure! The little Gem snuck past Pearl (still invested in her book), and slowly opened the back door leading to the woods.

_______________

Toaster walked along the peaceful wood side. There were a bunch of dead leaves on the ground littering the area. The Gem decided that (because there was no name for anything she recognized), she would begin to name stuff herself!

She decided to call the dead leaves "crunchies" (because of the sound they made when walked upon) and the green alive ones on the trees "greenies".

While gazing up at one of the grand oak trees, Toaster attempted to come up with a decent name for such a tall thing. She finally settled on: "Majestic Cylinder". It seemed to fit the object in a strange way.

As Toaster wandered deeper into the forest, the amount of discoveries (and names) increased. She
saw one of the pre-named "Orange Wing" friends, and quickly gave chase! A pleasant chirping made the Gem pause and glance upward. There was a Yellow Warbler making quite a ruckus in a nearby tree.

"Pair-of-keys..." Toaster stared at the creature with wonderment, stars in her eyes.

To the startlement of the Warbler, the Gem began to climb the tree in an attempt to try to coax the creature onto her finger.

The bird quickly flew off in a panic!

Discouraged, Toaster gave up her chase, and jumped back down to the forest floor...

"Click! Click! Click! Click!"

A sudden strange noise earned the Gem's attention! She became acutely aware of a series of rustlings coming from behind the tree.

"Click! Click! Click! Rustle! Rustle!"

Curious, Toaster looked behind the tree, and was immediately surprised at the source of the strange ruckus.

A Northern Short-Tailed Shrew was busying itself, digging in the dead leaves. The small creature was probably working on a burrow, looking for food, or both. Toaster's landing had apparently caused a small cave-in for the shrew. The tiny animal was attempting to re-dig in a panicked hurry.

The Gem attempted to get closer to the animal, and was "clicked" at angrily as a result. Toaster backed off, and decided to watch the animal from a distance.

As the shrew huffed and puffed- dirt and debris went flying in every direction! The Ruby had no clue what the point of this exercise was, but decided to join in...in hopes of getting a better understanding of the activity. The small Gem began to mimic the shrew and shuffled through the debris several feet from the creature. It didn't take long before the alien was completely covered in the stuff.

Surprised by this strange development, the shrew paused, and watched with a new found interest.

After several minutes of digging, Toaster hit an underground boulder- as well as several pockets of white maggots, and a smooshed can. The Gem placed the crushed can in her gemstone for safe keeping.

The shrew, (slightly annoyed but equally curious), wattled over to the Ruby's more massive hole. The animal couldn't help but feel like he was being mocked, but also had a sting of jealousy as he poked his head into the large hole, and bore witness to the massive pockets of maggots on the inside.

"HI!" Toaster appeared from the cavern so suddenly, that the small mammal jumped in surprise! The shrew let out a tiny shriek, and ran off in a panic.

Toaster frowned. Why were all the animals afraid of her? They weren't acting like any of the Earth creatures she had met previously… The Gem felt rather deflated. She wondered if there was a way to bribe the creature into being her friend?
While the Ruby sat, pondering - the clever shrew snuck up from behind...careful not to bring attention to itself. The rodent than snuck into the enemy's burrow, and began to gorge on an insect feast!

Several minutes went by, before the creature was stuffed. It struggled to wattle back out of the hole, and realized that the massive meal had made him entirely sleepy. While the shrew's eyesight was poor at best, he did manage to sniff out a warm spot to nap...

Toaster looked down in surprise as the shrew fell asleep on her hand. She has been using it to lean back while sitting on the ground, but was now entirely pleased that she had been so patient....

"BAM!"

The back door to the house slammed open! Pearl jumped slightly, before looking up from her book.

"Look what I found Pearl! It's NEAT!" Toaster walked into the home, holding up the sleeping shrew with pride!

Pearl sat with her mouth agape. She had no clue what to do first.

The Ruby was FILTHY.
The Ruby was making the new white carpet FILTHY.
The Ruby was bringing FILTHY vermin into the house...while being FILTHY, and making everything around her FILTHY.

"NO! STOP YOU CLOD!"

Toaster froze.

"STARS! Don't move! You're making a mess!"

The Pearl got up quickly and picked Toaster up by the scruff before luging her into the house's washroom, and forcing her smaller counterpart to soak in the tub until the filth disappeared.

Toaster took the opportunity to gently wash off her new animal friend, before drying him off using the heat from her hands, and setting him free to roam the house. All this occurred rather quickly while Pearl's back was turned.

The shrew had woken up with an unpleasant start!

Apparently, the large red creature had not only brought him into her den during his nap, but had also attempted to drown him before letting him go.
The shrew took note that there were now two massive creatures in the area instead of just the one. He decided it would be best to escape while the duo was preoccupied.

Being incredibly careful not to bring attention to himself again, the shrew wattedle slowly out of the washroom and into the carpeted hallway.

What a strange place this was! The den was terribly empty, and the grass was white and short. The animal sniffed at the air several times in hopes of getting his bearings. He seemed disappointed when there were no smells of the woods nearby. While the creature was poor of sight, he was determined! He wattedle about and attempted to sniff the air again.
It...was not the woods, but he did smell...something...familiar...

The rodent trudged along the carpet, until he (unexpectedly) bumped into a massive wall of red. He sniffed the air again- the familiar smell was the strongest here! It wasn't the woods, but it was something quite surprising! FOOD! A frog to be precise! Could it be? Certainly not...frogs were not this big. The shrew licked one of Gamma's fingers curiously...

IT WAS! A FROG! What a meal! What a find!

"YEOW!" Gamma woke from his napping place with a start! Some sort of odd Earth rodent had bitten down- incredibly hard on his hand. In a state of panic the Keronian flailed in pain- the shrew hanging on for dear life- not wanting to let go of such a spectacular piece of pray.

Through the tussle of all the excitement, Gamma managed to find and open the back door to the house. With one final massive flick of the wrist, the shrew was flung into the air, and went sailing back to whence it came.

To his complete horror, the Keronian's hand began to swell like a balloon! The alien struggled uncomfortably as the din finally caught the attention of Pearl and (a now newly cleaned) Toaster.

"STARS! What happened to your hand!"

"Some weird Pekoponian rodent BIT me!"

"Hang on! I've heard putting something cold on swelling helps organics..." The Pearl madly began to rummage through the kitchen for something to help the dangerous situation as fast as possible.

Toaster seemed surprised. "I...I don't understand...the dig-dig didn't bite ME when I was carrying him into the house..."

"Dig-dig?" Gamma questioned, more confused than ever, before giving an audible yelp! Pearl had found a washcloth, soaked it, and was quickly tying it around Gamma's hand.

"Oh stop being SUCH a pebble! This should help the swelling at least..." The Pearl put her hands to her hips. "...and as for YOU Ruby..."

Toaster cowered in fear.

"-no more bringing in Earth vermin from the outside! Is that CLEAR?!

There was a slight pause, before Toaster nodded quickly.

"Stars...what a fiasco!" The Pearl desperately wished to sit down, but with no furnishings, she was forced to lean against the wall.

For the remainder of the night, Gamma was in considerable pain. He whimpered for about three hours, before the swelling began to subside.

The Keronian finally ended up falling asleep on the floor again, exausted.
Fact 1: Did you know Northern Short-Tailed Shrew saliva is slightly venomous?

Fact 2: Did you know Northern Short-Tailed Shrews eat frogs?

There! Who says you can't learn new things from Fanfiction! XD

By the way I’ve started an Etsy account (it’s called: toonfreakstreasures), And was curious whether you guys would like to see products based on AWTH? I can make keychains, buttons, and bracelets!
Also, is there any particular quote from the story you would like to see on a button or shirt? I would love to hear suggestions!

Next chapter: Interacting with the local human population! Fun! Fun!
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Shortly after the "shrew incident" the last bag of popcorn was consumed…and then the last box of crackers.

The trio was left in a familiar situation. They were out of food…yet again. Completely clueless in terms of how to cope with the situation, the two (entirely fine) Gems set out to find a source of food, while Gamma struggled with his own hunger.

Yellow came back nearly empty handed - she did manage to find a discarded chip bag while wandering about the property, but the thing was quite empty.

Toaster went in the opposite direction, and quickly hid on the edge of the forest when she spotted a group of humans waiting next to a strange circular sign- seemingly in the middle of nowhere. The Ruby's curiosity peaked as she witnessed a large transportation device drive up, pick up the humans, and disappear.

Gamma was becoming desperate. To the disgust of Yellow Pearl, he escaped into the backyard, found an ant pile, and plowed himself into the thing- head first. It was an incredibly odd behavior the Gem had never witnessed before. There hadn't been a lot of research pertaining to Keronians becoming this desperate when it came to food.

…She also didn't realize Keronians could do…THAT.

The Pearl looked on in horror, as the frog began to contort into an odd primitive state. The alien had become so desperate for a meal, that he seemed to be attracted toward any little thing he witnessed moving- particularly, Earth insectoids.

The Keronian crouched - twitching slightly. The ant nest he had plowed into was now disassembled…the minuscule Earth creatures running in a panic. As the Keronian watched the bunches of insects closely, his tongue, especially, was the thing scaring the Pearl so badly.

She had never realized it before, but (apparently) a Keronian's tongue was not only twice their own length- but also, quite sticky. The thing flung rapidly from the amphibian's mouth…collecting any Earth insect it could find.

"STARS! What are you doing?! That's disgusting! Don't eat THOSE!" the Pearl was completely ignored.

"BAM!"
Toaster entered the front door of the home, excited as could be! She was going to loudly announce that she had found a spot where humans gathered, but became quickly distracted upon seeing Yellow Pearl's horrified expression.

The Ruby joined her at the window, and soon bore witness to the horrifying event unfolding in the backyard.
"GAMMA! NO!" the Ruby ran out the back door before Pearl could stop her, and quickly restrained her fellow soldier. "DON'T ATE THOSE GAMMA! THOSE ARE STILL NOT SHATTERED! Don't ate those…"

The frog flailed in his crazed state, but could not gain freedom from the Ruby's superior strength.

A lullaby from Pearl, and one set of sheets to restrain him later: the frog was now asleep, tied up, and lying on the floor.

"Stars, that was terrifying. We've got to find him some foods…and fast!" Pearl seemed determined.

Toaster suddenly remembered her initial excitement!
"HEY! While I was wondering around, I found a place where humans were gathering!"
Yellow Pearl looked down at her in surprise, before the Ruby continued: "We could ask them where to get something to ate!"

The yellow Gem contemplated to herself. Well…none of the other resources that M.I.B had offered had been much help…yes! She supposed asking the locals would be the quickest way to gain assistance! They were certainly running out of time, and had no other options.

The two Gems waited at the bus stop.

As the minutes ticked by, the Pearl was becoming increasingly frustrated. “So?! Where are these "humans" you were speaking of?"
"They were here before…"
"Well, we need them NOW."
"They'll come! I know they will!"

As if on cue, the bus rumbled down the road toward the sign.

Yellow Pearl lifted her lip in disgust. The vehicle was primitive, huge, and was emitting pollutants…as well as a hideous smell.
"What…is…THAT?!"

Her question never got answered. The vehicle stopped in front of the sign. Its doors opened.

The bus driver looked down at the odd pair, but quickly shoved it off. This was a public transportation vehicle after all. He had seen weirder.
There was a slight pause as the two parties stared at each other in bewilderment.

The bus driver was the first to speak: "Well?! Ya' gettin on?"
"Gettin on?" Pearl was not sure what a "gettin" was…
"Yah! gettin on the bus!"
"OH! GETTING on! My word! You really must work on your dictation…I am barely able to understand you!"
The man seemed increasingly frustrated with the insult. "WELL? Ya' gettin on, or NOT?!"
"It's "getting", and I would like to know where your…erm…"bus" is going before entering." 
"Goin to market."
"It's "going"…and does this "market" have foods?"
"Food."
That's what I said! FOODS!"
"Don' need an "S"…just: "food".
"Foods?"
"FOOD!"

Toaster looked back and forth, helplessly as the duo attempted to correct each other's grammar. She decided to pipe up! Perhaps the manners Gamma had taught her would come in handy here…. 
"Please mister! Our friend is not feeling too good! He needs something to ate….real bad!"
"EAT."
"?"
"It's Eat, NOT ate. An yah. The market has food for sale."
"Did you hear that PEARL?! Food for Gamma!"

"I heard, I heard. Fine! We will get onto your…erm…"bus". The Pearl looked over the thing in disgust again.

The duo climbed on, and were going to try to find a seat, however…

"Where do ya think YOU'RE going?!"
"EXCUSE me sir?!"

"You have to pay you to go places!" the driver pointed at the payment box.

"OH!" Pearl placed her hand in her gemstone, and produced the credit card. "Here you are! This should be more than enough!" The Gem attempted to hand the man her card.

The bus driver stared at it. "Sorry. Cash only."
"Cash? Is this this not your currency? The "cash"?"
"That's credit."
"Cred-it?"
"You can use it to get cash at a bank."
"Where's a bank?"
"There's one at the market."
"Can you take us to the bank to get some than?"
"Not without pay."
"…"

This conversation was immediately followed by frustrated squawking from the Pearl.

After a horrendous argument between the two, the driver finally caved in- and decided that they could pay later.

Toaster helped quite a bit with the situation. Apparently, having the ability to look cute on a whim had its perks.

As the two sat in the bus seat, the massive vehicle began to barrel forward. Yellow Pearl looked
around in a sudden panic! "My stars! This thing is a death trap! Where are the safety restraints?! " The Pearl desperately looked for a seatbelt in terror. Toaster, meanwhile, was occupying herself with the window. She was curious in seeing as much as she could during their short journey.

"MY WORD!" a sudden shout on the bus alerted both Gems from their distractions.

It was only now, that the two aliens realized that every single set of human eyes on the bus were staring at them. The duo froze in shock.

The shout had come from a somewhat elderly-looking woman sitting directly in front of them. The human continued: "What is wrong with you?!!"

Pearl answered: "Excuse me?"

"Just look! Look at your child! She's burnt to a crisp!"
"Child?" Yellow Pearl’s gaze veered toward Toaster- whom looked back up at her....increasingly confused.

"Yes! Your child! Have you never heard of sunscreen? She is beet red!"
"Sun…screen?"
"Yes! YES! Sunscreen! What kind of a horrible mother are you?!"

Toaster suddenly came to a realization, and snickered slightly. The woman looked at her, confused. The Ruby responded: "Pearl isn't my mother!"
"Oh?"
Toaster replied: "Gamma is my mother!"
""" Gamma"? Little one, are you sure? Is this your grandma then?"

This comment left Toaster a bit confused. "What's a grandma?"

"Your "Gamma"! You must be talking about your grandma…correct?"

"...erm…no?"

There was an awkward silence between the two parties. The woman decided to change the subject. She turned back to Pearl: "...and what about YOU mam? You look so pale...do you have jaundice?"
"Excuse me?!!"
"JAUNDICE! Kidney problems! You should see a doctor!"
"I just saw a doctor! He said I was fine!"
"Well, maybe YOU should get a second opinion!"
"Personally, I think you should- MIND YOUR OWN BUISNESS!"

The woman huffed in insult. "I was just trying to help! The news was right! Your kind are absolutely horrendous!"
"OUR KIND!?!"
"Don't think I didn't notice! Your little one has a jewel in the middle of her forehead! You're a part of one of those EVIL religions- ain't 'cha?"
"What are you even talking about?!!"
"I'm talking about your country! You should go back to where you came from!"
"We CAN'T! That's why we moved here!"
"Yeah. Yeah. They ALL say that."
Pearl was more enraged than ever! Who was this random woman?! Telling her to return to Homeworld to be slaughtered?!
She wanted to punch this human right in the nose!

Fortunately, it was at this exact moment that the bus arrived at the market.
The woman quickly got up and left in a huff.

Pearl was fuming and wanted to pursue her, but Toaster managed to hold her back using all of her strength.
There were other things that needed attention at the moment, and the Ruby knew that the rude lady was not worth their precious time.

The Gems exited the bus, and were soon greeted with an entire outside strip worth of stores.

Toaster beamed with excitement! She wanted to explore! Yellow Pearl held the Ruby's hand instinctively. She would've preferred not to…but knew for a fact that the small red Gems were programmed to explore and collect intel. She did NOT feel like chasing the idiot down if she happened wander off.
"Come on. Let's make this as quick as possible." the Pearl gritted her teeth with frustration.

There was a long line of stores-each window filled with more bizarre human objects than the last.
The first store seemed to be nothing but pieces of appearance enhancers made from various cloth. Another store was filled with nothing but animal life.
Toaster wanted to look inside this one when she saw a cage full of parakeets, but Pearl stayed persistent with the task at hand-knowing that the foods were much more important.

Finally, a grocery store came into view! Upon entering (and jumping in surprise at the automatic doors) the Pearl found herself quite overwhelmed!
Not only had she never seen so much foreign food in one place at the same time in her life, but (in addition) she had no clue what the Keronian would eat, how to prep anything, nor what to buy.

Toaster looked up at Pearl's baffled face-stars in her eyes with both amazement and shock. The Ruby tugged on her arm slightly, hoping to gain her attention.

Toaster had an idea: "Maybe we should just look for the popped corn. We know how to make it, and it's something everyone likes..."

The Pearl nodded, before trudging through the aisles in the most brisk and orderly matter-attempting her best to ignore all the other interesting ingredients.

Toaster was the first one to spot the popcorn- or, perhaps, (the more appropriate name) popcorn(s).
There were...just...so many...
Boxes of popcorn with different colors, instant popcorn, air popped, kettle corn, lightly salted, no
salt, cracker jacks, high butter, no butter, jiffy pop, oriville popcorn, smart pop, carmel corn, lime flavored, movie theatre styled, homestyled, small bags, chocolate popcorn, pre-popped bags...

Pearl felt overwhelmed with all the choices...

Slightly panicked, the yellow Gem began to madly empty the shelves. She decided to get (at least) one of each, just to be safe...

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The cashier’s face was agape. An incredibly strange, tall, yellow-ish woman was currently yanking every single brand and variation of popcorn out of (what appeared to be) a...massive pearl broach?

As It turns out, Yellow Pearl found her pocket space much more convenient than a grocery cart.

The confused cashier was left baffled...wondering if he was witnessing a magician practicing an act?

Overall, the Pearl ended up purchasing about 42 boxes and bags worth of the stuff. She handed the man the "plastic money card", and claimed she would not need any assistance or bags. Being fairly insistent about re-stuffing her purchase back into the pocket space for safe keeping.

"Are you quite sure...erm...miss?"

"Certainly! My! You humans are so...insistent on every little thing!"

Toaster saw and opportunity, and butted in: "HEY! Do you know where the bank is? We need "not card" money for the bus thing!"

The teller couldn't seem to stop staring at Toaster's gemstone as she spoke. He attempted to be as polite as possible, and decided to go the extra mile to help the duo with their card problem.

To the Pearl's relief, only one stop was needed! This organic being with his archaic machine was somehow able to turn whatever digital files were on the plastic card into physical coins and green paper.

"It's called "cash back"...although you could use the bank next time- it's three stores down..."

"Thank you for your assistance primate. You have been the most helpful of all the humans we have met so far!" Yellow seemed unusually grateful and relieved.

The duo exited the store- pleasantly enough- leaving an incredibly confused cashier behind.

Chapter End Notes

....and thus ends another ark!
Next arc will be introducing certain crystals of the Gem variety! Fun! Fun!

An interesting note: I’ve met people like that old lady on the bus. Listening to them insult people is worse than claws on a chalkboard.....

>~~<
While Gamma was incredibly grateful to the Gems for getting him some food, he did wish he had something to eat OTHER than popcorn.

Pearl was equally as frustrated...but for a completely different reason. She still couldn't READ anything on this miserable planet. She was incredibly embarrassed by all the supposed taboos she had broken on her last trip. She hated to admit it, but she needed help...like...a lot of help. There was no literature she had found in Gemmish- no hints to this foreign language. There were no alien roots that connected Earth language to any languages from well known interstellar alphabets.

But what to do? The Pearl had no leads...no hints on how this planet's culture worked. She had just been tossed into this entire scenario completely unprepared...

She noted that the disassembled gift basket had a card with an MIB phone number. After attempting desperately to figure out what a "phone" was, she finally managed to copy the number into the device and (after an hour on hold), proceeded to scream at the call agent on the other end of the line!

The conversation concluded with the spooked phone agent hanging up on the Pearl. Enraged, the Gem called back and had to go through the process all over again.

"Why don't you visit the Gems living in the next town over?" The agent suggested. "According to our records they've been living here for several thousand years..."

The Yellow Pearl rather not bother complete strangers- ESPECIALLY Crystal Gem strangers- however, the agent did assure her that they had sent a letter informing the rebels of their arrival, and had received no complaints or concerns in return from the neighboring residents.

Thusly, the trio decided to attempt another bus ride- with Gamma in tow this time (he wanted to pick up some more varied food).

This was going to be a challenge. No one could see Gamma or know he was on the bus...which resulted in the current situation they were in now.

Pearl had the window seat this time.

Toaster was sitting in the middle.

"Fred the slice of bread" had the aisle seat on the bus.

Gamma blushed in his invisible state. He was having to sit as flat as possible with Toaster's plush taking up the majority of the seat.

"Don't worry Gamma!" Toaster attempted to comfort her invisible friend. "This is a short drive! The bus human said so!"

The frog grumbled to himself.
In a sudden amount of excitement, a large human male entered the bus and decided to sit on Fred—despite the obvious fact that the seat was reserved.

"Weeeeat!"

The man was slightly surprised as the plush made a high painful squeal!

"Hey! Big human! Get off of Fred! He's my friend!" Toaster was clearly upset.

Rolling his eyes, the man moved to another seat. The Gem whispered to her plush: "Gamma...? Are you ok?!"

All she got in response was a low groaning noise.


"Next stop! Beach City!"

The trio exited the bus. Toaster placed Fred back into her gemstone. Gamma's voice echoed from an empty spot. "That was...most unpleasant. Next time we do that I rather be placed in a plastic container with holes...at least I won't get sat upon..."

Toaster was a bit nervous. "Soooo...do we just go to these Gem's house...or...?"

"Certainly not Ruby!" Pearl butted in. "It's customary to bring a gift when introducing yourself...especially when asking for a favor. Stars! I can't believe I'm going to be asking rebels for advice..."

"Mary said they have another Ruby there!" Toaster seemed excited. "I wonder what platoon she's from?!"

Gamma's voice seemed nervous "I'm surprised they haven't complained to the agency about me...Gems typically don't like Keronians...I hope this doesn't get too awkward..."

"Well, either way- we need to buy a gift before approaching them. It's just polite! Now let's see here..." Yellow had written down some information on a tiny piece of paper—which she had stored into her gemstone. "According to this there should be a Ruby, Pearl, Amethyst, and Sapphire at the residence...we should buy gifts accordingly!"

As the Gems walked down the boardwalk, Toaster couldn't help but notice some of the local residents were staring.

Some of the Beach City folks had seen the small red Gem wandering about before (typically looking much more angry), but the Yellow Pearl was somewhat...nerve wrecking. She sort of resembled Pearl- THEIR Pearl- but the outfit and color...

The odd situation reminded the residents of every other time a new Gem had entered their town—resulting in kidnappings, explosions, and general destruction.

Someone had to tell Steven's family...and fast!

A small boy- Peedee, ran toward Steven's beach house quickly...

As the trio entered a tacky souvenir shop on the boardwalk, the owner seemed slightly spooked.
The human briskly walked into the back room and locked the door.

Yellow Pearl attempted to find something fancy that the Sapphire would like. She began to rummage through a basket of seashells. "Ruby!"

"...it's Toaster."

"Whatever. Find something in the store that a Ruby would like!"

Toaster puffed up her chest in pride, before wandering toward a section that had some beach-themed stained glass mobiles.

The invisible Gamma seemed somewhat lost. He had NO CLUE what a mysterious Gem would want as a gift. He decided to mindlessly explore. Maybe if he found something HE liked, a Gem would like it too?

Toaster chose a stain glass wind chime with a blue macaw on the front. She showed the item to Pearl in hopes of getting her approval.

"It seems...kind of breakable...for a Ruby."

"-but...but...Rubies turn stuff into glass all the time! Plus, LOOK! It has a Pair-of-keys on it!"

An invisible Gamma butted in:"What about this?" It was a floating smooth rock with plastic googley eyes pasted onto it.

"That...has to be the most IDIOTIC, OFFENSIVE, stereotype I've ever seen! Put that wretched thing back!" The Pearl huffed with insult as the floating rock was returned to the shelf.

The Pearl found a section with creams in tubes...perhaps the other Pearl could use this? She wasn't sure if it was a cleaning solution, or some sort of gem polish, but it did smell pleasant...and if it WAS Gem polish- she knew that it would certainly make for a relaxing spa treatement. Most Gems enjoyed receiving gemstone polish on Homeworld. It was considered a leasurely activity-and could be quite relaxing!

Yellow Pearl grabbed several more tubes- hoping to also impress the Sapphire and Amethyst.

The three tubes, fancy shell, and wind chime were decided upon, as an excellent array of items to impress the neighboring aliens! Now all they needed was for the human to return from the back room so that they could pay...

The Pearl tapped her foot with impatience, while waiting.

So the trio waited...

...and waited...

...and waited some more.

"STARS! What is taking that primate SO long! The star will disappear before he comes back!"

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Meanwhile, on the outside of the store, the trio was being watched from a safe distance.

Garnet, Amethyst, and the renegade Pearl were scoping the situation from around the corner.
Sure enough, Peedee was right! There was a Yellow Pearl...AND an extra Ruby in there.

"They're pretty stupid, showing their mugs around here in broad daylight. I wonder why they're here?" Amethyst was confused, intrigued, but barely surprised. She knew for a fact that Rubies were not the most intelligent Gem type in the Galaxy...

"I'm more concerned about that other Pearl. She looks identical to the one that follows Yellow Diamond around..." Pearl knew for a fact that a Yellow Pearl- or any Pearl for that matter meant that another powerful Gem could be in the area. "They might have given her to the Ruby...although, it's not terribly common..."

Garnet nodded in agreement. "We should be cautious, and handle this situation carefully-"

"RIGHT! Carefully!" Amethyst bounded from the hiding spot, rolled into a spin dash, and aimed herself straight at the store's window...

Yellow Pearl was becoming more and more impatient as time went on. Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately) she didn't have to wait long before a massive purple something completely barreled through the store's front window!

Shocked and surprised by this, the three aliens ducked behind the cashier's desk as massive shards of glass rained upon the shop!

The purple Gem stood with pride! "ALRIGHT! The window has been CAREFULLY busted! Which one of you dorks wants to fight me first?!" Amethyst seemed incredibly pumped. It was obvious that the purple Gem's definition of "careful" was completely different to everyone else's definition of "careful".

"AMETHYST! WHAT are you doing?!" The Crystal Gem's Pearl approached the storefront and was obviously not the least bit amused with her friend's behavior.

"Fighting! You guys wanted to fight...right?"

"NO! Not "RIGHT". We have no clue what THIS-" the Pearl gestured to the new party quite rudely with her arm "- even is! You just destroyed public property!"

"Hmph...whatever. Your just jealous that I got here first."

As the two new Gems bickered, Yellow Pearl was a bit...disgusted with the situation. Toaster seemed surprised but confused. Gamma was suddenly quite relieved that no one could see him- he rather not get into a brawl...especially now that he knew how powerful a Gem was- not to mention a Gem that seemed on the cusp of wanting to scrap.

Of course, Yellow Pearl was the first to interrupt the new pair: "Are-are you an- AMETHYST?! Stars! You're so...off color...why do you look like that?!"

"EXCUSE ME?!" Amethyst turned to the new Pearl with a hint of rage.

"Your form it's...short...and...certainly NOT what I expected. Stars! How did you pass inspection without being harvested?!"

"! EXCUSE YOU?! What the HELL?! You don't even know me...and already you're insulting me! The "F" is wrong with you?!"
"Absolutely nothing" the Yellow Pearl answered back. "-unlike YOU obviously."

"THAT'S IT! I'm going to punch you into yesterday you snooty banana!" Amethyst quickly yanked two whips from her gemstone, and snapped them with intimidation.

"Wait! Wait! I'm confused..." Toaster needed a minute to comprehend what was going on. It was rather odd to see an Amethyst like this, but not completely unheard of...the little Ruby didn't want to cause strife- even if the Amethyst did look quite different.

It was about this time when Garnet appeared, and looked over the damage with disapproval. She said nothing, but did emit a groan in frustration.

"What the-a...a FUSION?!" So you really DO wanna fight than?" Toaster seemed incredibly disappointed. She never liked fighting for real...her fellow platoon used to brawl for fun, but Toaster didn't like the idea of being forced into such a confrontation with someone she was attempting to befriend.

"No. We don't want to fight." Garnet answered slightly annoyed and blunt.

"Than...than...why are you together? I'm confused..." Toaster sat on the floor-more puzzled than ever.

Yellow Pearl decided to pipe up again. "Well this is just...PERFECT. An off color Amethyst, a fusion that doesn't fight, and a renegade Pearl. YOU are the Gems we came all the way over here to see? Stars! My expectations were low, but they weren't...THIS low. Shale!"

"Language!" The renegade Pearl was fuming with rage. Unsure if the group was hostile or not, the Pearl yanked a spear from her forehead's gemstone as a precaution.

Time seemed to freeze for a split second before the renegade Pearl made a somewhat rash decision. She sped over to Yellow Pearl quite quickly and pointed her weapon eerily close to her counterpart's face. The Pearl gritted her teeth. "Where...is...your...Diamond?!"

Slightly spooked from the extra threat, Yellow Pearl's confidence was shattered almost instantly. "I-I-HOW SHOULD I KNOW?!" She wasn't certain how to answer the question. She really did have no clue where her Diamond was...for all she knew, the monarch could still be drifting on her ship somewhere in the cosmos.

"You're lying!" The renegade Pearl put her spear even closer to her sister's face.

"Pearl! That's enough!" Garnet was quite insistent. The leader didn't say anything, but did notice that the room was heating up rapidly. The tall Gem turned to the small Ruby- who seemed most upset with the current situation. Toaster was staring at the strange Pearl threatening her friend.

For a pregnant pause, no one did anything. It seemed like the situation had frozen.

...and than...suddenly (and seemingly out of nowhere), something invisible bumped into a shelf. A beach-themed snow globe fell and shattered on the floor.

What happened next could only be described as chaos.

The renegade Pearl jumped at the unexpected noise, and acedently dissipated Yellow Pearl's form as her spear impacted her side. The Yellow Pearl stared at the renegade for a few seconds before poofing- her gemstone landing on the floor.
Immediately, Toaster wailed in grief- the heat in the room rose significantly, making all three Crystal Gems squint slightly. In an emotional rage, Toaster created a fireball, and looked toward the renegade Pearl with betrayal.

Amethyst had a general sense of the threat, and quickly snapped her whip. With a sudden, quick movement the Purple Gem managed to wrap it around the Ruby, and tighten the weapon quickly.

"AAAAAAAGH!" Toaster wailed in pain before there was a sudden "POP!" noise. With a clatter, Toaster's gemstone fell to the floor- along with Yellow Pearl's. Her form had disappeared.

The trio of Gems stood for a second- not quite sure what had just happened. The whole back and forth between them and these new invaders had been rather...odd.

Pearl quickly bubbled her sister, while Garnet bubbled the Ruby.

"Well...that's...over..." Garnet was surprised the confrontation went so quickly.

"Yeah...where did these weird Gems come from anyway?" Amethyst was more confused than ever.

Suddenly, Garnet seemed to sense something! She turned around unconsciously, and quickly side stepped to the left...just as a random yell of anger, followed by a plasma ball blasted the floor she had been standing on.

In an odd turn of events, the bubble holding the Ruby's gemstone popped. The rock hovered a few seconds in the air before disappearing entirely.

"What the-?!" Another plasma blast hit the floor near the renegade Pearl, making her jump in shock!

This was immediately followed by the same action- the bubble popped, and the Yellow Pearl's gemstone disappeared.

"Gems! Huddle!" Garnet now knew they were not alone. The trio formed a circle, facing all directions. "There's someone else here..."

"A Gem?" Pearl inquired.

"Mmmm...no. NOT a Gem." Garnet briefly used her future vision, and seemed...slightly shocked at the concluding possibilities.

 Gamma was currently on the ceiling, being very cautious. Keronians (like regular Earth frogs) could walk on vertical as well as upside-down surfaces, but did so rarely unless the situation called for it. His two friend's gemstones were currently underneath his hat. Gamma had aimed the shots of his blaster accurately. He did not strive to hurt anyone- he just wanted his friends back. Thusly, he had aimed toward the floor in order to spook the opposing party.

The invisible frog clung upside down...perfectly still. Maybe if he stayed up here long enough, the other Gems would give up and leave? One thing was for sure- he never wanted to see either of his friends disappear in such a painful way again. He knew they would regenerate- but absolutely hated seeing his new family suffering to the point where their form disappeared.

He especially never wanted to ever see Toaster suffer like that again...
As the Keronian stayed motionless, the tallest Gem walked directly below him. The frog shivered in fear as Garnet looked directly up at the invisible nothingness. To Gamma, she seemed to be staring directly at him- but certainly THAT wasn't true! No one could see him right now...

In one swift movement, Garnet transformed her hand so that it was five times bigger than it should have been, and extended it to the ceiling.

Gamma yelped in surprise as the massive hand snatched, and tore him from the ceiling. He couldn't move! He was trapped!

The Keronian expected to be squashed into a pulp!

...but instead, the hand lowered toward the floor slowly, but firmly.

While Garnet was careful not to hurt the mysterious invisible blob, she did use her future vision to figure out where the pin on the alien's hat was. She turned it herself- finally revealing the invisible culprit.

The Pearl gasped, as she put her hands to her mouth in shock!

Amethyst looked incredibly confused. "What is THAT?" She went toward the frog-looking at the creature with the upmost curiosity. Gamma shivered in fear. It's not like he could move when being grappled by this massive Gem hand.

"It-it's a Keronian!" Pearl was too shocked for words.

"A WHAT?" Amethyst seemed more confused than ever.

"A Keronian." Garnet answered. "It is a alien species- not a Gem."

"Woah! A completely different type of spaceman, huh!" Amethyst nodded in agreement.

"The question still remains though- Garnet lifted the frog so that they could see eye to eye. "What are YOU doing on our planet, Keronian?"

Chapter End Notes

Well! That was...unexpected! I somehow ended up writing an entirely NEW chapter in one day! I think it was all the new followers and comments that motivated me to do so! (You'd be surprised how comments on our stories motivate us writers into getting things done faster...)

A big thank you goes out to VonSmore, Vanessa Masters, Toblerone Deprivation, and Fanfic-Rick42 for all the feedback! You guys are awesome!
Gamma seemed a bit dazed by the question. The folks at the MIB had assured them that a letter had been delivered-explaining their current situation.

"Did...you were supposed to receive a letter?"

"WHAT letter?" The Pearl seemed aggravated at this foreign creature not being completely blunt with his conclusions.

"THE letter! The letter explaining who we were? The Pokoponians at the MIB said that you received it..."

"MIB..." Garnet became incredibly quiet. She quickly twisted the pin on the Keronian's hat to make him turn invisible again. "Gems- retreat back to the house. We can not speak any further here."

While Gamma was now invisible again, Garnet did not loosen her grip.

The annoyed frog attempted to squirm his way out of the situation, but found his attempts useless.

As the Gems re-entered their abode, Garnet proceeded to turn the pin on Gamma's hat again. The Keronian became visible, but also paranoid when the same hat was taken from him-revealing his bald head once more. Gamma was embarrassed, and incredibly worried as the trio of Gems emptied out the hat's contents. The Pearl ended up re-bubbling Toaster and Yellow Pearl's gemstones, and allowed them to peacefully float toward the ceiling, well out of reach. The same was done for his two blasters, and the hat itself- not before Pearl located his MIB citizenship card though.

Without his hat, friends, or tools the frog was (pretty much) helpless at this point. Garnet finally released the small creature, who landed on the floor with an: "OOMPH!"

"Now..." Garnet crossed her arms looking incredibly intimidating. "...talk."

"It's kind of a long story..." the Keronian felt nervous and unnatural without his head piece.

"I'm several thousand years old. One little story is just a blip on my existence. Take all the time you need."

The Keronian could swear that this massively tall Gem smirked slightly as she said this, but he was not entirely sure...she was very difficult to read-emotion-wise.

"Well...OK...you see, it all started when—

As Gamma wove his unique tale of hardship, he noted that the Gems began to relax slightly. Eventually the trio ended up sitting on the living room's couch as they clung on to every word of the story.
The Amethyst seemed impressed when Gamma told them about shooting at Yellow Diamond to save the Ruby.

The trio gasped in horror when he informed them about being re-found and almost destroyed by the same leader.

Gamma could swear he saw the tallest Gem shed a tear when he told them about being forced against contacting his family and home planet forever-more.

He told them about finding how nice Earth was from the farmer's market, having to go through MIB's rigorous citizenship test- The kindly Toaster, the slightly sympathetic Yellow Pearl- her singing, the shrew- everything he could remember.

"...and we were trying to get some homecoming gifts for you at that store, before visiting- but you attacked us...and well...yeah. I think that's the entire bit."

The trio of Crystal Gems now had incredibly guilty looks on their faces.

"Oh! ...and sorry about the plasma blasts! You were acting so hostile- I just wanted to make sure you weren't going to hurt Pearl or Toaster. They are the only family I have now." The Keronian looked slightly sheepish at this- although the comment seemed to make the trio feel even more guilty.

"Dude! That's like...the most intense story I've ever heard!" Amethyst seemed impressed.

The Pearl seemed unusually sympathetic toward the creature, as tears ran down her face. "You-you poor thing!"

"Hmm. An unusual story for sure." Garnet nodded in amusement. "A Keronian and a Gem becoming friends...what a fascinating and unexpected journey you've had!"

"That was...ONE OF THE BEST STORIES EVER!" A surprising new voice wailed from above in the house's loft.

The sudden voice made all the aliens jump in surprise!

It seemed that, through the excitement of the last few hours, the Crystal Gems had forgotten that Steven had been playing video games in his room before they left. The half-human had been quietly eavesdropping, and heard the Keronian's entire tale.

"Steven!" The Pearl seemed to surprise herself! She had completely forgotten that Rose's son was in his loft throughout all this excitement.

As the boy poked his head over the side of the loft to get his first look at the storyteller, the frog jumped in surprise!

He was not expecting a human nearby!

The Keronian quickly hid underneath a coffee table in hopes that the boy hadn't seen him. He did NOT want to risk losing his Earth citizenship over something as trivial as being seen by a Pekoponian.

Gamma twisted himself into as small of a ball as possible, and huddled beneath the wooden table-shivering and hoping that his cover had not been blown.
"Oh! I'm sorry! Did I scare you?" Steven seemed empathetic.

Garnet piped up: "Do not worry Keronian. Steven is half Gem- not a full blooded human. I don't think he counts."

"Oh!" Gamma came out from under the table, before staring at the boy. "A...hybrid?" he questioned. Steven nodded in agreement. What a unique circumstance! Aliens typically only fell in love with their own species. It was an uncommon occurrence, but not an unheard of one...

Gamma nodded in agreement as Steven showed off his gemstone.

The boy ran down the stairs in excitement, and proceeded to circle Gamma with curiosity.

The Keronian sweated, nervously- not really appreciating being stared at from every direction.

"So he's a different alien...right?"

"Correct Steven" Pearl confirmed his suspicion.

"How many types of aliens are out there...other than Gems- I mean?"

"Lots." Garnet's answer was blunt.

Steven circled the Keronian again. "He kind of looks like a frog...but...you know-if a frog could stand on two legs."

"Very good Steven!" Pearl clapped her hands. "Keronians share the most genetic signature with Earth amphibians!...specifically, toads and frogs!"

"What's a- frog? What does one look like?" Gamma seemed...confused.

"Like THIS!" Amethyst transformed herself into a small purple creature the Keronian didn't recognize. "Ribbit!" She croaked with much enthusiasm.

"That...doesn't look like me at all..." the alien seemed...disappointed.

The Pearl piped up: Earth frogs have many similar traits to Keronians! They can stick to walls, and and enjoy eating-" She shivered a bit before finishing: "-insects."

"Does that mean you only eat bugs?" Steven pestered the creature with a bit of annoyance, sticking out his tongue in a playfully disgusted manner.

"No- not necessarily. As far as I know, I can eat both meat and plants-as well as insectoids..."

Steven seemed disappointed. The small boy's attention soon turned to the two bubbled Gems floating near the ceiling. "Soooo...when can we meet your friends red froggy?"

"My name is Gamma, if you please." He wasn't sure why, but the word "froggy" seemed somewhat degrading.

"Well, his story seems to check out..." Pearl examined the MIB citizenship card, before handing it back to Gamma. "There's only one question- why did that letter never arrive? You would think such an important document would've been hand delivered personally..."

At this comment, Amethyst remembered something, and blushed in embarrassment.
Garnet stared into the distance before turning to the purple Gem—"Amethyst? Is there something you need to show us?"

The Gem sheepishly and slowly sauntered toward her room to rummage through her piles—before shortly returning with a (somewhat) rugged envelope.

"Amethyst!" The Pearl put her arms on her hips with disapproval.

"I-I thought it was junk mail..." the purple Gem blushed, as she handed the filthy envelope over to Garnet.

Sure enough, upon opening and inspection—the packet contained all the information needed, including: a personal note encouraging the Crystal Gems to visit and help assist their new neighbors with Earth ediquite and taboos.

Garnet took a glance at the thing before her gaze shifted to the frog.

Gamma answered her stare "It's...been a bit rough. We haven't been able to read anything— and have been eating nothing but "popped corn". It's— it's the only thing we could figure out how to make...and that's only because there were pictures on the bag..."

"Do you mean "popcorn"?" Steven asked.

Gamma tilted his head and shrugged. He supposed he had been saying it wrong, which was not terribly surprising...considering his situation.

"So...you haven't eaten ANYTHING from Earth except for POPCORN since you got here?!"

"Well...I did have something called a "burger" when we were at the MIB headquarters. I think I might have also eaten a pile of something when I became desperate for food..."

"A pile?"

"Yeah." The frog blushed slightly. "There were Earth insectoids...they were small, and black, and making a pile of dirt..."

The Pearl stuck out her tongue "Ants...you were eating...ants."

"Aunts?" The frog seemed somewhat baffled. "Don't be ridiculous! I would never resort to cannibalism! I love all of my aunts...even if I can't see them anymore!"

"Not AUNTS...ANTS!" The Pearl attempted to enunciate the difference between the two words.

"Ooh boy...this might take a while..." Steven was a bit overwhelmed, but attempted a smile anyway.

"Jeez...you guys are really clueless—huh?" Amethyst's comment made the Keronian frown.

"What do you expect? None of us were prepared for such a rapid change in lifestyle! We were all kind of...just...thrown into this situation..." Gamma grumbled to himself.

"Sooooooo...can we meet your friends NOW?!" It was obvious that Steven was trying to veer the conversation back to getting to see the Gems he had heard so much about during the frog's story.

Gamma thought to himself for a second. "While we did originally come here to ask for your assistance, I fear you guys may have not made the...best first impression..."
The Crystal Gems all frowned at the same time—knowing this fact was quite true.

Gamma continued: "Perhaps we should introduce them one at a time...might be easier. Both Toaster and Pearl have VERY different personalities." As Gamma nodded he suggested: "We should try Toaster first. She isn't nearly as aggressive, but she does tend to scare easily. She does not have very good control over her heat powers yet." He turned to Garnet. "She was especially afraid of you. I don't know what a "fusion" is, but she seemed to think you wanted to fight her for some reason?"

Garnet moaned. The subject was obviously a sensitive one.

Pearl attempted to explain: "Garnet is a fusion. Fusion Gems were traditionally used only for battle purposes during wartime. That's probably why she was scared. Honestly though, Garnet stays a fusion because it makes her more...comfortable."

While Garnet gave a scowl, she butted into the conversation: "It's fine. For the sake of explaining things, I can un-fuse until she understands..."

To the complete shock of the Keronian, the tall Gem began to shimmer like a shining star! The creature squinted—trying desperately to determine what the heck was going on...

As the light subsided—two new Gems had appeared! The frog fell over in shock—certainly not expecting whatever had just occurred.

Gamma squinted at the duo...he looked toward the Ruby. "Toaster?" He questioned in disbelief.

"I ain't no Toaster!" The Ruby rebutted in a huff.

She was right. Upon closer inspection, her gemstone was in the wrong place.

Gamma gasped! "What...just...happened?!"

"Fusion—or rather- un-fusion." The Sapphire answered. "Gems can combine together to create an entirely new being."

"Since WHEN?!" The frog was baffled.

"Since- a long time ago." The Ruby answered—slightly aggravated.

The frog seemed more impressed than offended. "Hell, is there anything you Gems CAN'T do?!"

"LANGUAGE!" The Pearl attempted to cover Steven's ears with disapproval.

"Oh! Erm...sorry! It's just...I had NO CLUE Gems could do that! It's...kind of awesome..." Gamma glanced at the two new Gems—quite impressed!

"Glad you think so...at least..." the Ruby mumbled to herself. She was certainly no Toaster...that was for sure...

"Soooo...does Toaster like anything specific? Maybe that will make it a bit easier..." Steven was attempting to try his best to help.

"Well...she seems to like soft things- pillows, bedding, stuffed animals...that sort of stuff. OH! She also likes "pair-of-keys"!"

"Like this?" Amethyst proceeded to turn herself into a set of house keys.
"No! No! No! A "Pair-of-Keys"! It's a small Pekoponian creature..."

The group stared at Gamma, completely confused.

"You know...a "pair-of-keys"! That's what the Pekoponians called it. It was like- a small animal
that had wings...and was green-I think? Toaster said that the MIB agent told her Pekoponians keep
them as pets?"

"OH! I think you mean a Parakeet!" Steven came to a realization!

"A Budgie?" Pearl asked inquisitively.

"Like this?" Amethyst transformed again- this time into a purple Parakeet.

"YES! YES! That's the one!" Gamma pointed at Amethyst with excitement! He was just so
relieved that he had found fellow aliens whom (if nothing else) could easily figure out what he was
talking about.

Steven went up the stairs to his loft quickly, and brought back his pillows, sheets, and M.C. Bear
Bear. He proceeded to toss them into the air- and they landed every which way.

"Anything else?" Pearl was obviously not a fan of the miniature mess Steven had just made.

"Erm...yeah! You!" He pointed at the Pearl. "I hate to ask this, but could you hide for the time
being?"

The Gem seemed slightly appalled at this request. "WHY?!"

"Well...you kind of...erm...stabbed our friend in the chest? I don't know how comfortable she
would be if you were one of the first things she saw when she comes back?"

The Pearl blushed a shade of blue. Of COURSE that was the reason! As embarrassed and ashamed
as she was of her previous behavior, she knew that the frog was probably right.

"I'm- I'm sorry—I didn't mean to offend you or anything-" Gamma hated asking such a thing.

"No. No...it's completely understandable. Just...let me know when to come out...ok?" The Pearl
sadly retreated to her room in the temple.

Gamma felt absolutely awful, but knew this was the safest way to prevent the house from burning
down.

"Ok...that's all I can think of for now..."

Amethyst the Parakeet flew up and retrieved the bubble that had Toaster's gemstone in it. She
proceeded to hand it to Gamma.

"I hope this works..." Gamma popped the bubble, and immediately a bright light formed as the
Ruby began to regenerate...

Chapter End Notes

Good Grief! Two chapters in two days!! Keep the comments coming guys! They seem
to be motivating me into writing at a pace that I haven’t seen in YEARS. LOL!!!!!
As the light began to dissipate, Toaster's form became more solid. She slowly drifted to the floor, opened her eyes, and immediately began to panic.

The Ruby straddled the floor quickly in an attack stance, breathing rapidly, and looking in every direction. It was clear she was ready to defend herself, as the house's temperature rose significantly. The wooden floor began to burn, as the rest of the party squinted from the increased temperature.

"Toaster! TOASTER!" Gamma attempted to get his friend's attention quickly. The small Gem saw the Keronian- and (very slowly) her breathing slowed, and the temperature dropped slightly.

"G-Gamma? Gamma! I can see you!"

"Yeah! It's ok Toaster! I don't need to hide here...it's ok now!"

The Ruby looked around the new environment in curiosity. "I'm...this is a NEW place! I'm in a new place!" Toaster suddenly realized that they were no longer in the store. She blinked surprisingly, before tilting her head in confusion. "Where is this? How'd I get here?"

"I brought you here!" Gamma nodded in agreement.

"Oh!" Toaster suddenly noticed the crowd standing behind the frog. "Oh wow! A Pair-Of-Keys...and the Ruby!" The little Gem suddenly seemed quite excited! She approached the Ruby first: "Hi Ruby! I'm a Ruby too!" Toaster smiled while looking over her counterpart.

"Oh...um...yeah. Hi." The Crystal Gem's Ruby was attempting to be polite...but it was obvious she wasn't nearly as enthusiastic. "Erm...this is Sapphire!" The Ruby attempted to change the subject quickly, as she coaxed her partner in front of her. The Sapphire made a low groaning noise.

"Oh! A Sapphire!" Toaster made a Diamond symbol. "Hello Sapphire! It's nice to meet you!"

"Please...don't..." Sapphire beckoned Toaster to stop making the Diamond symbol.

Toaster lowered her hands as instructed. It was...odd...but the Sapphire seemed uncomfortable by the common greeting.

Her interest switched quickly to the bird standing on the arm of the couch. "Pair-of-Keys! A purple one!" Toaster stuck out her finger and Amethyst obliged. "Look Gamma! I'm holding it! Just like the lady showed me!" The Gem smiled in blissful ignorance.

"Yes! I can see that! Now Toaster, there are some things that we need to discuss..."

"Oh...ok!" Toaster found one of Steven's pillows on the floor and sat on it.

"Now...what happened at the store...it was a...misunderstanding"

Not really comprehending, but wanting to make Gamma happy- the Ruby nodded in compliance.

"For instance: that Earth creature on your finger?...is actually an Amethyst-the same one you saw at the store."

Surprised by this, Toaster turned to the bird with interest.
"Hey..." Amethyst waved her wing in greeting.

"WAGH! It talked!" Toaster shook the creature off her hand quickly! Amethyst straightened herself out and flew onto a table.

The parakeet continued it's speech: "Sorry for scaring you...and making your form poof and stuff- I thought you were going to throw a fireball at Pearl..."

"Wha- why did you transform into an "pair-of-keys"?"

"It was his idea...don't shoot the messenger here..." The parakeet pointed at Gamma.

Toaster glanced at her friend in question.

"Erm-I knew you liked "pair-of-keys" and I thought if she turned into one it would be...less threatening?" The Keronian shrugged in guilt.

"Oh! You're actually the weird-looking Amethyst than!" The Ruby nodded at the parakeet.

Amethyst immediately transformed back to her normal self, slightly distraught. She grew incredibly silent and sober.

Toaster looked at her- confused- and proceeded to turn to Gamma for assistance.

The frog shook his head in disapproval. "Now Toaster...do you remember what I taught you about feelings?"

"Feels? Oh...oh no...I said something bad...I'm sorry I said something bad! What did I say?"

"If you NEED to ask, than you DON'T have the right to apologize!" Amethyst gruffed in annoyance.

"Ehh?! Ehhhh?!" Toaster stared at the Amethyst- tears beginning to form in her eyes. "I'm...I'm sorry! I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!" The Ruby desperately attempted to make the Amethyst feel better through her tears.

The room immediately began to heat up rapidly again. Sapphire especially noticed the change. She quickly turned to Amethyst in a hurry. "AMETHYST! Accept to her apology...NOW!"

"WHY SHOULD I?! SHE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT SHE DID WRONG!"

"BWAAAAAAAAAAA!" Toaster began to bawl! The heat rose to an uncomfortable level instantly.

M.C Bear Bear's plastic eyes melted off!

The water pipes in the wall started groaning strangely as their contents began to boil!

The pillow Toaster was sitting on caught fire!

"JEEZUS!" Amethyst looked around in fear as items around the entire house began to warp.

"SHE DIDN'T MEAN IT AMETHYST! SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND! FOR STARS SAKE! ACCEPT THE APOLOGY!" Sapphire found herself in a panic. The Gem rarely yelled, but if nothing was done soon, Steven would have to live in Greg's van for over a year...

"OK! OK! JUST...DON'T CALL ME "WEIRD"! ALRIGHT?! IT...MAKES ME FEEL BAD!"
Amethyst shouted through the chaos.

"I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY! I-I'm sorry...I'm sorry...kind Amethyst..." Toaster began to settle down again.

"PFFT-!" Amethyst couldn't help herself. She snickered at Toaster's adorable attempt to flatter her. "It's alright! Just don't do it again..."

Toaster rubbed her wet eyes and attempted to smile through hiccups. The temperature began to transform back to normality.

"I've...I've never seen such a temperature change with a singular Ruby..." Ruby whispered to her Sapphire. "She's like a ticking time bomb..."

The Sapphire nodded. She is...unique...but kind. She has much empathy...she will make a good ally. Sapphire smiled before approaching Toaster. "Toaster?"

"Hi Sapphire!" Toaster waved.

"Hello! I need to tell you something important."

"Ok..."

"Do you remember the fusion you saw before?"

"Y-yeah...that was scary! I don't wanna fight..."

"I understand. Well...that fusion's name was "Garnet"-a mixture between Ruby and myself."

"Oh! Were you scared of me? I'm sorry if I scared you..."

"No, quite the opposite really. Me and Ruby stay fused because we...like each other's company. Do you understand? We like to always know where the other one is. To...stay together."

Toaster thought about this for a second. Before coming to a realization! "OH!" She nodded with a minimal understanding of the concept. "You don't want to lose each other!"

"Close enough." The Sapphire smiled. "Would you mind if we fused back together now?"

"Can I still talk to the Ruby sometimes?"

"We'll see." The Sapphire chuckled before returning to her partner. In a massive amount of light, the duo fused together again, forming Garnet once more.

"Hello again Toaster." The fusion smiled.

Toaster tilted her head..." Gar...net..." she attempted to pronounce the name correctly.

"That's right!"

"Garnet! You're Garnet!" Toaster seemed proud of herself for remembering.

"Heh...that was intense..." Gamma rubbed his head awkwardly. At least it's all been settled. I hate to ask this, but could I have a glass of water?"

"Yeah! Sure thing red dude!" Amethyst got up to get a glass for the Keronian.
"Oh...M.C. Bear Bear..." Steven looked as his plush sadly, before putting some spit into his hand and fixing his toy's eyes- "You took one for the team...

Toaster glanced at Steven curiosity "...a human?"

"Oh...um...kind of...see?" Steven showed Toaster his gemstone. "My name is Steven!"

"Stee-van? Stee-van!" Toaster attempted to mimic.

"Yeah! You've got it! Steven smiled.

"Can I come out now?" Pearl's voice was muffled from behind the temple door.

"Not yet." Garnet was blunt. The fusion glanced around the house and looked at everything that had partially melted. "Steven...could you help fix up the house so that Pearl doesn't have a conniption?"

The boy nodded before fixing up every damaged thing he could find in the home. The only thing that was too far gone...even for him to fix- was the pile of ash that used to be his pillow.

"Ok. You can come out now Pearl- slowly." Garnet nodded.

Pearl exited the temple as instructed. Toaster immediately jumped up in surprise, and quickly stood in front of Gamma. She spread herself out as much as possible to protect Gamma from the new threat's view.

Toaster's expression transformed quickly. She glared at the Gem with hatred as the room's heat rose slightly again. It was obvious that Toaster wanted nothing to do with the Gem that had harmed one of her friends.

"Erm-h-Hello...I'm Pearl..." the Gem gave a pathetic wave.

"No YOU'RE NOT! You are not PEARL...you hurt Pearl. Stay away from Gamma." Toaster had all of her defenses up. It was obvious that this Gem was not in good standing with the little Ruby.

"I- I am truely sorry...I really didn't mean to hurt your friend. It...was an accident..."

"You had a pointy thing! You...you HURT her..."

Pearl looked toward Garnet for assistance. The fusion stared in the distance for a second before coming to a realization. "Toaster! Would you happen to have a...book?"


"You've been wanting someone to read your present...right?"

Toaster pulled the book from her gemstone, and hugged it dearly. She said nothing.

"Toaster, Pearl- our Pearl, can read the book to you."

"I can? Oh! Yes! I CAN!" Pearl clapped her hands together. "I know how to read human languages!"

Garnet turned to Toaster: "Pearl can read the book to you Toaster. You might be scared, but Pearl is actually very nice. It really was an accident."
Toaster looked down at the book, before looking up at the Pearl-suspiciously.

Pearl attempted a forced smile- praying that Garnet's idea would work.

Toaster put the book on the floor, and carefully slid it over to the tall Gem.

While she never stopped glaring at the Gem, Pearl proceeded to pick up the literature, and flip through it a bit.

It was a basic children's book- like the kind she used to read to Steven. Pearl sat on the floor, and began to read:

"Firenzie's Light...

Firenzie likes dancing.

Firenzie likes books!

But there is one thing Firenzie doesn't like..." the Pearl turned the page. "Firenzie does not like her light. "It's always shining at the wrong times!"

As the Gem continued to read, Steven decided to crawl over to Pearl and lay down to listen to the story. He was secretly hoping that the gesture would encourage Toaster to to the same.

The Ruby squinted. Despite the Pearl showing off the pictures in the book as she read- Toaster was too far away to see the illustrations properly.

""Your light makes you unique." Said her mother. "No one shines just like you!"" Pearl proceeded to show Steven another picture.

Toaster tilted her head with curiosity at this. "A mother..." Toaster looked toward Gamma whom encouraged her to join Steven.

"It's ok Toaster. I'll be fine! I know you've been wanting to hear the story..."

The Ruby seemed a bit...unsure...but very cautiously began to inch her way toward the Pearl. She was about four feet away, when she decided to sit down. It was an ideal spot to see the book's illustrations, but also run away if the strange new Gem became scary again.

""Your light is making my art even more magical! What a wonderful gift you have!"

"Oh no." said Firenzie. "I don't like my light. I wish it would go away..."

As the Pearl continued the story, Toaster couldn't help but relate to the fire bug in the tale. She felt similarly about her own heat- and how it affected the people around her. She felt sympathetic, as a single tear ran down her face...

"Firenzie grew to love her light, even when it was difficult...

As Pearl finished the story, she slowly closed the book and looked up from her distraction- in hopes that the atmosphere of the room had changed.

Sure enough, Toaster was now laying on the floor, quite relaxed. She seemed a bit upset and deep in thought- but did not show any more signs of fright or aggression.

Pearl sighed in relief. "Thank the stars...it worked. Toaster?"
The Ruby looked up at the Pearl, snapping out of her own train of thought.

"Here! Would you like your book back?" Pearl stretched her arm toward the Ruby with the literature in tow. The small red Gem approached, and snagged the novel quicker than expected! It was obvious she was still slightly afraid of Pearl, but at least progress was being made.

 Gamma sighed with relief. "Ok. You all did wonderfully. Toaster? How do you feel?"

Surprisingly, the Ruby said nothing. She climbed onto the living room's couch, and tested how soft it was- before laying down, (book in tow), and fell asleep-emotionally exhausted.

"Daaaaawww! She tuckered herself out!" Steven thought the little Gem was adorable.

 Gamma smiled smugly. "It seems you read her a bedtime story." He looked at the Pearl, who blushed slightly.

"Does-does she sleep often? It's kind of uncommon for us Gems..." Pearl seemed...slightly concerned.

 Gamma nodded. "She does sleep on a regular basis. Ever since Yellow Pearl-" The frog cut himself short as he stared at Yellow Pearl's gemstone floating above. "Oh, right. Yellow Pearl..."

"Should...should we let her out?" Amethyst inquired.

 Gamma sighed. "You might want to take a bit of a break first. Yellow Pearl acts completely differently from Toaster. This is going to require an entirely new approach."
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As Toaster slept on the couch, Steven announced to the world that he was hungry.

This started a debate on what to eat for dinner. Amethyst was the only other one in the initial household that had any interest in consuming food.

Gamma was terribly confused by the random foods the duo was discussing. Apparently, they were both incredibly excited to introduce the Keronian to as much Earth cuisine as possible.

"Pizza!"

"Candy!"

"Fries!"

"Cupcakes!" Steven and Amethyst giggled as they bantered back and forth.

"-Vegetables and whole grains?" Pearl piped up in hopes for a more healthy option...which only resulted with the duo laughing even harder!

Pearl put her hands to her hips. "I know I don't eat- but what's wrong with a healthy option?!"

"We have to introduce "Red" here to the BEST food Pearl!" Amethyst insisted.

"-...says the Gem that consumes plates and TIRES!" The taller Gem huffed.

Amethyst shrugged at this, before continuing her fun banter with Steven.

Gamma was excited to try new cuisine- but couldn't help but think of Yellow Pearl as the conversation continued. He felt extremely guilty, knowing she would absolutely LOVE to join a traditional Pekoponian meal.

Gamma decided to pipe up- if for no other reason than to ease some of his own guilt. "You know...Yellow Pearl is an excellent cook..."

The room became quiet as everyone's attention turned to the frog. Gamma sunk a little at the extra attention. "-Erm...yeah! She used to be a professional cook for Yellow Diamond on Homeworld...she will not admit it, but I think half of the reason why she wanted to visit you guys, was so that she could learn how to utilize Pekoponian food and tools."

Garnet suddenly looked very deep in thought, before Gamma continued:

"I bought her a Pekoponian cookbook you see...she's been having the most difficult time attempting to read it and figure out measurements and ingredients. Yellow Pearl may be a bit..."rough around the edges"..."

"-you mean RUDE?" Amethyst interrupted.

"Mmph- but she becomes absolutely flattered when people compliment her cooking! Apparently, she was treated very poorly on Homeworld...Yellow Diamond used to insult her meals on a regular
bais.

The frog nodded in agreement. "She doesn't have a lot of tact, and can be quite blunt- but she falls head-over-heels for compliments. She has a heart- she just...doesn't show it very often. She did save us from Yellow Diamond that one time after all!"

"-after her "master" rejected her...right?" Pearl inquired-rolling her eyes.

"Well...yes...I suppose... but she has done other nice things too..."

Garnet piped in: "How would you suggest we approach her Gamma?"

The frog thought for a second, before remembering how the MIB were able to train the unruly Pearl. "Oh! Reverse Psychology!"

"It won't work." Garnet answered back.

"Why say?"

"I can see few scenarios where Yellow Pearl does not try to force us all to fall sleep...upon being released from her bubble."

Imediately, there was a bustle of information from the other Crystal Gems to aid the issue at hand...

"Earplugs!"

"Earmuffs?"

"Just put duct tape over her mouth when she reforms. Amethyst smiled maliciously.

Gamma interrupted: "No! No! No! There's got to be SOMETHING else we can do..."

"There is...ONE scenario I see where she doesn't try to run off...although it is a bit...odd."

"How would you know?"

"I have future vision."

"WAIT! REALLY?! What the Fu-?!"

"-LANGUAGE!" Pearl interrupted while covering Steven's ears again. "My stars! You're almost as bad as Peridot!"

"Oh. Sorry." Gamma blushed. He must have picked up a foul vocabulary from being in the army for so long...

Amethyst piped up: "Soooo...what do we have to do G?"

Garnet slowly went through the plan in her head, before dictating the idea to the others...

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Yellow Pearl could feel herself reforming! Thank the Stars! She had no clue how long she was out for...

When her feet finally touched the ground, she blinked a few times in surprise. She seemed to be in the main living chambers of a new human house.
The Pearl looked around in shock for a few seconds, expecting the worst, before realizing that there seemed to be...NO one around...no off color Amethyst, no strange fusion, no Gamma, no Toaster...

There WAS something rather...out of place in the room though. It seemed someone had set up an entire spread of warm human cuisine on a massive table. There was a pizza, hotdogs, an entire bucket of candy, tea, soda, a salad...it was as if someone had set up for a party that nobody had bothered to come to.

The Pearl was more confused than ever...until a note on the table caught her eye.

It was written... in Gemmish! The Ruby?! No...her handwriting was much more sloppy. This was professional penmanship...almost as if it was written by a...

"Pearl. THAT PEARL!" Yellow was suddenly reminded how her form dissapated in the first place! There was an odd Pearl that had stabbed her. For a second, she wondered if the entire thing was a set up? Was the food poisonous? She took a closer look at the note:

"Dear Yellow Pearl,

Gamma said that you wanted to try Earth cuisine, so we made you this spread. I do humbly apologize for dissipating your form. A noise in the store made me jump and miscalculate my weapon's projectury. We have all taken precautions and are currently outside of the house-if (or when) you wish to join us. I would be happy to teach you and your crew how to dictate and execute proper Earth etiquette and cooking techniques (if you so desire), please note however-foul language and derogatory terms toward my fellow Crystal Gems will NOT be tolerated..."

The previous servant rolled her eyes in annoyance before continuing the letter:

"...Please help yourself to the cuisine before exiting the home. Gamma and Toaster are perfectly safe, and have decided to join us outside until a decision is made.

-Pearl"

Yellow also noted at this point, that there was a signature written in Keronian (which she assumed was Gamma's), as well as a sloppy signature written in Gemmish that simply said: "Toaster! :D "

Yellow Pearl put the letter down, and walked around the spread wondering what to try first.

To her surprise, it seemed the rebel Pearl had taken time to put notes next to each piece of Earth food- describing what it was.

"Pizza- a meal that is served warm in a circular shape. Strangely enough, the object is put in a square box, and sliced into triangles. Traditionally, a piece of bread is used, and covered in a sauce made from a fruit- the tomato. A pizza is also typically topped with cheese- an item made from an Earth animal's nutrient drink. (Typically a cow or goat). The first "Pizza" was invented in-..."

...this paragraph went on for some time. There were equally informative paragraphs in front of the other types of food as well.

Yellow Pearl was a bit...overwhelmed. She didn't know what half of the words meant. A LOT of the exclusive Earth lingo had to be spelled in Gemmish phonetically...tomato...cow...goat...cheese...pizza...

The Yellow Gem was completely clueless on WHAT this food was actually made of.
...at least she knew how to say its name though...

"Pea-Zach?" She tried to pronounce it...what a...strange name...

The Pearl looked at the pizza from all directions. There were no plates nearby. Was...was she just supposed to pick it up? With her bare hands? Not terribly sanitary...

The Pearl managed to figure out where the kitchen was, and wash her hands using a similar sanitation station that the Keronian had on his ship.

She went back to the pizza...the steam that had been bellowing from it before was slowing down—a sign it was getting cold.

The Pearl decided to (bravely) dive in to it! She was wasting too much time worrying about idiotic things anyway...

As she attempted to grab one slice, it's neighboring slice clung to it! The Gem attempted to flick the twins apart—only resulting in several ropes of cheese stringing between the two.

It was at this point, that the Pearl noticed a third rope of cheese connecting the two slices to the main pie. The alien attempted to take a few steps back from the table to disassemble them, only resulting in the layer of cheese from both slices...

"Plop."

...landing on the floor.

Terrified about the mess she had made, the Pearl now had a sudden urge to clean. She was unsure where to put the two slices of bread with tomato sauce on them though.

The poor creature attempted to fold the triangles and hold them using her arm, while trying to find something to clean the cheese with.

To her upmost displeasure, this resulted in a massive amount of red sauce covering the front of her beautiful, yellow attire!

Even more panicked, she attempted to wipe the sauce off...resulting in an even bigger mess. The Pearl quickly bit down on the two eatable triangles in order to hold them, while attempting to wattle over to the sink.

She poured water on herself, which resulted in a very wet outfit with a massive red stain on the front.

Yellow Pearl growled to herself in frustration, before acedently gritting her teeth—resulting in her taking a bite of the Earth cuisine.

The two disassembled pizza slices landed on the floor...

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Garnet began to count down: "3...2...-

"AAAAAAGGGHHHH!" A massive scream of frustration erupted from the home!

"Yeup." The fusion nodded to herself. "Didn't even get past the pizza..."
"Will you PLEASE tell me why you insisted on me hiding all the plates and napkins NOW?!" The Crystal Gem's Pearl did NOT like things out of place. Garnet had instructed her to store all the eating utensils and plates in her room.

"All in good time Pearl. Let's see what she does next..."

Yellow Pearl attempted to find something...ANYTHING to assist- a towel-some floor polish- a garbage can...

...nothing.

Yellow could not clean up the horrendous mess she had made.

Feeling slightly distraught and helpless, the Pearl began to weep in sorrow. She collapsed on the wooden floor. The Gem recalled that if her Diamond would catch such a horrendous blunder: she would often be smacked about-or worse!

...and these Gems-THESE Gems! She didn't even KNOW them yet!

Despite being a cuisine expert, she had already made a mess of things!

The Pearl knew-she knew that she would be punished for this! Damn that Earth pizza! It would be the end of her!

With much embarrassment, and quick wits, the Pearl decided to stuff as much of the mess as she could into her pocket space- throwing the layer of dismantled cheese and "tomato bread" into her gemstone. She would worry about cleaning its contents at a later time.

At this point, Yellow was much too frightened to handle any other Earth food. Her appearance was foul, with tomato stains all over! She could not face anyone like this...

Garnet heard a very small- "click!" of a door closing in the distance. She nodded in agreement. "Now we can go back inside." She stated to the others, before walking toward the house again.

The mess that was greeting them when they wandered back inside, was quite massive.

Amethyst was actually very impressed how much tomato sauce was covering the room-despite the fact that only TWO slices of the pizza were missing.

"My Kitchen!" The Pearl seemed most distraught. "Why Garnet?! Why?! It...it was so clean before...it's going to take me HOURS to fix this!"

"It had to be done-" The fusion nodded. "-for the good of the people."

"Good of the people?! What does that even mean?!"

"Yes. Peace will be accomplished."

At this point, Garnet's comments were so vague, not even Pearl could come up with a rebuttal.
"Toaster..." Garnet looked down at the Ruby "Please go down that hall, and try that second door on the left."

"Erm...ok?" Toaster obeyed, and slowly opened the mysterious room in question.

It was a storage closet. There were specifically themed decorative nick-nacks and colorful clutter on the inside. In the middle, there was also a very distraught, embarrassed-looking Yellow Pearl completely covered in water and tomato stains.

"Pearl!" Toaster was pleasantly surprised, despite her sister's lackluster appearance. "I found you!" The Ruby smiled.

"Go away Ruby!" Yellow Pearl hissed in a stern whisper. "I don't want anyone to see me like this! I look...indecent!"

"It's ok Pearl...the Earth Gems may look different, but they are all really nice!...besides, I think they know you're already hiding in here. They told me to check this room specifically..."

Yellow Pearl blushed slightly, before pausing and weighing her options. "OK...but...give me a second will you?!

Toaster nodded.

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Several minutes later, Yellow Pearl appeared from the closet- completely wrapped in a massive thermal blanket. It somewhat resembled the robe Blue Diamond was known to wear...with the exception of the entire thing being covered in a "Crying Breakfast Friend" print.

Garnet smiled. "Well! Look who decided to join us!"

"Pfft-that's a great look on you Yellow Pearl!" Amethyst couldn't help herself.

"Shut it you defective off-color!" Yellow Pearl snapped (to the annoyance of the opposite Pearl). However, the comment was lost in the context. The Homeworld Gem looked so idiotic at this point, that the insult just made the purple Gem laugh even harder.

Garnet smiled again. "Pearl, go get the plates and napkins...I think it's time to finally eat dinner."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again for reading guys! Feel free to review! XD
Dinners can be incredibly awkward.

This is why so many folks watch tv while eating together.

THIS dinner-howeve-r, was the epitome of awkwardness.

__________

Yellow Pearl was still in her "Crying Breakfast Friends" printed blanket. At this point she had been given food, a fork, and a plate- but was having the most difficult time eating anything through the embarrassment of her appearance.

The renegade Pearl wasn't eating anything either. She was giving her yellow counterpart a nasty glare-possibly due to the mess in the kitchen.

Gamma, on the other hand WAS eating, but as SLOWLY as humanly possible. He really did want to focus on how this new cuisine tasted, but it was incredibly difficult with the awkward silence in the room. He thought if he said nothing, and just kept eating no one would bother him.

Toaster seemed oblivious, if not slightly confused. She had picked up a hot dog and bun, and was attempting to eat the strange item like someone would do to a corn on the cob.

In addition, Amethyst didn't seem to notice anything- either that, or she was distracting herself by snarfing all items in her radius that were edible.

Steven saw Garnet with her arms crossed. He wasn't sure if she was upset, or waiting for something important to happen. The small half-human decided to break the silence. "Um...Pearl?"

"Yes?"

To the boy's surprise, both Pearls in the room answered at the same time. "Oh...uh...sorry...the-erm Crystal Gem Pearl? Would you mind passing the salad?"

"Certainly Steven!" Pearl abliged, before staring daggers at her counterpart again.

The opportunity Garnet had been waiting for had finally showed itself. The fusion began to inquire: "Hmm. This won't do at all. Pearl- or-rather- Yellow Pearl, have you ever considered choosing a nickname like the rest of your crew?"

"NO! Of course not! Why should I?! I AM a Yellow Pearl after all! It would be atrocious to call me by any other name! I am not ashamed of my Gem type!"

"I understand that. But it would make things much easier if you were to give yourself a new nickname. As you just witnessed, being called "Pearl" is confusing to humans. Having such similar names can cause problems in conversation.

"Than make your clody renegade change HER name!"

Pearl interrupted: "I will do NO such thing! I have lived on this planet far longer than you, I
"So- you refuse to re-nickname yourself, just because a bunch of idiotic primates and some freakish hybrid will become a bit...inconvenienced?!

At this comment, Steven's head dropped in shame. It was clear calling him such horrific nicknames was not boosting his esteem.

Garnet unconsciously gritted her teeth. This new visitor was out of line. How dare she use such slurs against her friends and family?! The fusion decided to put her foot down. "If you do NOT choose a nickname yourself, WE will choose one FOR you."

"Oh! Oh!" Amethyst raised her hand enthusiastically spitting food slightly through her full face. "-how about "Loud Mouth"?"

To the absolute horror of Yellow Pearl's remaining dignity, a conversation started!

"Yellow?"

"Lemon!"

"I think "Ignoramus" would suit her just fine."

"Fred 2!"

"She kind of looks like an Onion...no...wait...we already know someone named Onion..."

Yellow Pearl could not believe this conversation was even going on! They- they were forcing an idiotic brand name upon her- not unlike one would give a pet or a space ship!

"Oh! I know!" Steven piped up. "Gamma said that you can sing people to sleep- right?"

"What of it, defective hybrid?"

"It's Steven- but, what if you had a nickname that was MUSIC oriented!? That would make sense...right?"

"I suppose..."

"Here! I'll look up some terms online...let's see here..." The boy proceeded to take out his phone, and begin to do a basic search. "Treble...Melody is kind of pretty...OH! How about this one?!

The boy squirmed with excitement. "A capella! It's when a singer is not accompanied by instruments during a song...kinda like a solo, I guess? It says here that people usually say it as two words, but I think it would sound kind of neat if you stuck them together...like "Acapella"!

As much as the Yellow Pearl hated to admit it, she did enjoy the fact that the name was a play on words, as well as having a double meaning that highlighted one of her best talents. It was certainly a better choice than "Fred 2"...The Gem seemed hesitant for a few seconds, before responding: "Acapella...it's...decent." Yellow Pearl huffed, and looked away from Steven in defiance.

"HA! That means she likes it!" Gamma laughed. "I said the same exact thing the first time I tried her cooking!" The Keronian smiled at the newly named Acapella.

The Pearl blushed a horrific shade of dark yellow, and proceeded to sink further into the "Crying Breakfast Friends" blanket.
Garnet smirked, quite pleased with the outcome. They had reached a compromise with surprisingly little strife. The Fusion decided the conversation should shift gears. Garnet turned to the frog. "So, Gamma. Tell us about your new home."

Surprised by this sudden inquiry, the Keronian gulped down whatever he had been chewing on. "Well...it has a LOT of white carpet...3 bedrooms...all upstairs...two bathrooms. One on the first floor, and one on the second." The frog nodded. "It's a nifty little nook, but is lacking in substance. There are no beds, decorations, or furniture...but the flora around the place is plentiful. OH! It also came with a "microwave", Pekoponian oven...I think...and an evil box!"

"Evil box?" The description piqued Amethyst's interests.

"Yes. Yes. We have put the "evil box" in one of the closets. It's very loud, makes the house shake, and sends an electric shock to anyone that comes close to it!"

"-It's scary!" Toaster added her quip before going back to eating.

"What an...odd thing to come with a household!" Pearl seemed intrigued...wondering what sort of electronic device the Keronian could be describing. Perhaps it was a stereo system?

"Well, if you guys wish us to donate the "evil box" to your...erm-temple home? You are welcome to take that horrific thing off of our hands." Acapella nodded in agreement.

"I...don't think that will be nessesary. I just want to see what it is first!" Pearl attempted a smile equipped with a nod. "I think it would be most beneficial to start teaching all of you right away!"

"Teaching? From YOU?!" It was obvious that Acapella did not think this other Pearl was up to the task.

"Yes, from ME." Pearl stood up with her hands on her hips. "I taught Steven how to read, so I can CERTAINLY TRY to teach YOU. Steven seems much more...intelligent...but, what can I say? I like a good challenge!" Pearl smirked at the Yellow Pearl's insulted face.

Steven blushed terribly at the flattering compliment.

"We start first thing tomorrow! Oh how exciting! I haven't taught human linguistics to a Homeworld Gem in eons...let alone a Keronian! This should be fascinating for everyone!" The Pearl seemed...giddy.

Garnet was appreciative of her fellow Gem's enthusiasm, but decided to politely interrupt: "Pearl, perhaps we should get them some decent food and furniture FIRST...BEFORE diving into spelling and grammar?"

"-Oh! Oh...yes! Yes of course!" The Pearl blushed suddenly. "The Keronian, at least, does need a bed and some decent nutrition..."

"I wanna bed too!" Toaster raised her hand eagerly! "-with lots o' pillows, and soft stuff!" If Gamma was going to get a bed, Toaster certainly wanted one as well! It was only fair...after all...

At the little Ruby's quip, the room lit up with enthusiasm!

Tomorrow would be a busy day for sure...

Chapter End Notes
A special thanks goes out to Fanfic-Rick42 for the suggestion on Yellow Pearl's name! Thanks again!
The trio decided to spend the night with their new friends. By the time the meal was done, nighttime had arrived.

Plus, Toaster had fallen asleep on the couch again. Her gemstone's film was filled with static. Steven supposed this meant she was having a dream-less slumber.

"She sleeps a LOT...for a Gem.." The boy seemed concerned.

"I think she finds the activity relaxing. She also projects a great amount of enthusiasm and heat when she's awake." Gamma nodded "Perhaps she gains her energy back faster when she naps."

"I think she's just lazy." Acapella butted in.

Gamma gave the Pearl a stiff glare.

"Time for bed." Garnet unexpectedly lifted Steven from behind, and carried him up the stairs, back into his loft.

With a mighty yawn, Amethyst seemed to agree. "Yeah, I'm hitting it too. Night guys!" The purple Gem retreated into her room in the temple, waving her hand casually before disappearing.

After tucking Steven in, Garnet managed to find an extra sleeping bag, and two pillows in the storage closet- one for Gamma, and one to replace Steven's destroyed bedding.

The Gem also located a thermal blanket, and proceeded to throw it over Toaster.

Garnet nodded in satisfaction, before retreating herself. "Don't be jealous Pearl." The fusion plainly stated before disappearing into her room.

Completely baffled by this statement, the Pearl wondered what the stars her friend meant?

She soon found out.

"Pearl! Peearl!" Steven wailed from upstairs. Pearl quickly obliged, and went up stairs to see what all the fuss was about...a glass of water perhaps?

When she entered the loft, Steven seemed disappointed. "Oh! I'm sorry Pearl...I actually wanted Acapella."

Pearl frowned, concerned by this. Acapella, however, overheard the quip before going up the staircase. She gave the renegade Pearl a pompous smirk while walking past her.

The Yellow Gem stood in the most proper way possible.

Steven seemed, slightly embarrassed.

"What do you want primate hybrid?"

"It's Steven...but...now that it's time to go to bed, I wanted to see your awesome singing power! It puts people to sleep...right?"

"Indeed" Acapella nodded.
"-Well, would you mind singing something?"

The Yellow Pearl seemed annoyed at this, until she witnessed the renegade Pearl's agape face. Acapella smiled in amusement.

"Very well hybrid! Give me one second..." the Yellow Pearl cleared her throat, before singing an eerie tune:

"Strong is the chain
As weak as its link
we must go forth and prevail.
Thus the weak link,
will soon be extinct
-and we shall become stronger."

The haunting melody disturbed the renegade Pearl deeply. She recognized the tune all too well. It was Diamond-based propaganda encouraging Gems to snuff out (what they considered to be) off colors, traitors, and rebels. Pearl would have screamed at the choice of song, but her form immediately started flickering unexpectedly. The renegade Pearl sat down in a nearby chair, feeling unusually woozy and faint. She noted that Steven seemed slightly spooked by the song's lyrics as well, before closing her eyes, and going completely unconscious.

indeed, Steven was quite disturbed by the tune. He supposed the only songs Acapella had ever heard were eerie Homeworld jingles that the Diamonds liked. Still, his eyes begin to sag, and his brain felt fuzzy as he drifted off into slumberland.

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Acapella seemed quite proud of herself! She had chosen the tune on purpose in order to further upset the renegade. Now that everyone was asleep though, she could finally do what she wanted.

Yellow Pearl briskly walked down the stairs, and (quietly) began to empty the contents of her gemstone. She disposed of the pizza slices and layer of cheese, before locating the paper towels in the kitchen. Despite the long day, Acapella wiped clean all the extra tomato sauce that had spread across the other items in her pocket space. She also managed to clean the pocket space itself, using nothing but her own shape shifting powers to extend her arm into her gemstone, and a wet washcloth she found nearby. This process was not a terribly common one...even among Gems. Acapella had learned to do this without hurting herself over the years- due to the fact that Yellow Diamond had forced her to store food objects inside, causing quite a mess if a jar leaked, or if a container of spice broke while in her gemstone.

Finally satisfied with the cleanliness, Yellow Pearl placed all of the appropriate items back into her gemstone, before occupying her time attempting to clean the rest of the kitchen. The renegade Pearl had done most of it, but Acapella felt slightly guilty, and decided to clean the area even MORE so. When finished, she moved to the storage closet she had hidden herself into, and began to organize that as well...

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As the sun rose, the lifeforms of the home began to stir. To the shock of everyone, the house was now sparkling clean...more so than it had ever been! Even some of the more stubborn stains caused by Amethyst's shenanigans had been removed!

Baffled by this, the party turned to Acapella, who was now rid of the tomato and water stains that had littered her outfit.

As Gamma woke up and looked around, he seemed to be the least surprised by the transformation. The party turned to him, curious. The frog shrugged. "She likes to clean while everyone is asleep." He explained in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I find the activity...relaxing." Acapella butted in. "Plus, it was clear that the resident Pearl, does NOT have the time to clean properly."

At this comment Pearl (who was already quite upset about Acapella's choice of song from the night before), began to shout in a rage! Acapella returned the favor by arguing back, and soon, both Pearls were shrieking and squawking at eachother in a massive brawl of words.

Garnet sighed, and (to the surprise of both Pearls), picked them up: one in each hand and refused to release them until the duo had calmed down from exhaustion.

"Good Grief." Steven sighed, overwhelmed. "Are they going to be at eachother's throats for the rest of eternity?!"

"Probably not THAT long." Garnet answered.

Pearl, meanwhile, was feeling quite malicious! She remembered something she had that Acapella did not: "Oh Steven! Let me make you breakfast!"

The boy whooped with excitement!

"What would you like for breakfast Steven?"

"Everything! Gamma hasn't had an Earth breakfast yet!"

Pearl smiled. Steven had played right into her hand. She immediately gathered up several cookbooks and a ton of ingredients. "Oh Acapella!" Pearl called her counterpart over "-would you mind helping me out? I could teach you some new recipes!"

Slightly baffled by this kind offer, the Yellow Pearl obliged.

"Alright! To make pancakes I will need some FLOUR. Can you please pass the FLOUR Acapella?"

Yellow Pearl seemed confused by this request as she glanced at the various ingredients. She ended up giving Pearl a carton of eggs.

"NO Acapella! The flour! NOT the eggs!"

In a bit of a panic, the Yellow Pearl gave her the Tupperware of sugar.

"That's sugar! I need the FLOUR. Here..." Pearl grabbed Acapella's sholders and switched places. "How about YOU read the ingredients, and I'll do the mixing!"

The Yellow Pearl looked down at the book, completely overwhelmed. "Erm...uh..."
"Come on now Acapella! If you are such an AMAZING cook, certainly you can read the ingredients for a SIMPLE Earth recipe?!!"

Yellow Pearl fumbled with her hands a bit. Her face blushed a dark shade of Yellow in embarrassment.

"PEARL!" Garnet crossed her arms with disapproval. "That's ENOUGH."

"(She started it...)" Pearl mumbled to herself as Garnet led the poor embarrassed Yellow Pearl to the couch so that she could sit down.

Steven approached Pearl looking cross. He whispered to her: "(That wasn't very nice Pearl...you know she can't read yet.)"

"(But Steven! You heard her! She insulted my cleaning abilities!)

"(I KNOW that...but two wrongs don't make a right. You have to show her how a NICE Pearl acts...through example! If she sees YOU being mean, she will think it's ok to act like that too!)

Pearl blushed a shade of blue. Steven was correct of course...she had been acting quite immaturity. She was better than this- she KNEW she was better than this. The guilty Pearl turned to the couch and her mood sank even lower, as she saw the worried Toaster trying her best to cheer Acapella up. The Yellow Pearl was on the cusp of crying with embarrassment.

Pearl spent the next thirty minutes cooking in silence. She was internally thinking about how to apologize for her actions.

When the pancakes were finally finished, Pearl took the liberty of making a short stack, and handing the first bit to Acapella.

The Yellow Pearl looked up from the couch in tears as the renegade handed her the plate of food.

"Look..." Pearl addressed her counterpart. "The way I was acting...just now...it was completely out of line. I know you came to us for help, and I just used that fact to embarrass you. I'm...sorry. I shouldn't have stooped that low. I really AM quite thankful for all the cleaning you did last night...you were just trying to do something nice, huh?"

Acapella's mood imediately changed. "Of...of COURSE not! This place was FILTHY! It was obvious that it needed a professional scrub down!" The Yellow Pearl blushed again.

Pearl smiled. She understood what the Keronian meant now- Yellow Pearl was kind- in her own way. She handed Acapella the pancakes. "Look...eat quickly...alright? We're going to take you guys furniture shopping today! Your house is going to look AMAZING by the time we're done with it!"
The name of the store was: "Bedrooms, Bathrooms, and Bungalows". It was a massive place that included all types of furniture, home gear, and necessities.

Pearl and Garnet decided to leave Steven in the care of Amethyst for the day. The duo was going to have enough trouble corralling two new Gems, and one invisible Keronian. They did not have enough eyes to babysit Steven and Amethyst too.

As the group of misfits entered the massive store, Toaster's eyes lit up in wonder! Stars in her eyes, it was clear that the little Ruby was on the brink of simply running into the warehouse-sized building, and getting herself lost. Acapella grabbed Toaster's hand quickly again...just as she had when visiting the grocery store. This time, however, the little red Gem was insistent on pulling and hopping about with excitement! Yellow Pearl was strong, but NOT as strong as the Ruby. The situation ended up with Acapella being forcefully dragged into multiple sporadic directions.

Garnet smiled. "She seems...excited."

Gamma's voice answered: "Yeah...she's easily stimulated when surrounded by so many new things."

As he said this, the Yellow Pearl almost looked like she was water skiing, as she was forcefully dragged toward the bedding section. "RUBY! CALM DOWN! You're making me scuff the floor!" Acapella was having the most difficult time trying to hold on to the small red Gem. It was the equivalent of attempting to corral a 4-year old with the strength of a rhino.

The rest of the party decided to take Toaster's lead. It was not like they had much choice in the matter.

"WOW! Look at all the beds Gamma!" Toaster's eyes lit up as she saw all of the display mattresses on the floor. "I want the biggest, best bed ever!"

"That might not be the most...cost efficient way to go..." the renegade Pearl looked at the short Ruby, and figured that a child-sized bed would be much more convenient.

Toaster ignored the quip, and immediately dragged Acapella to the largest "California King-sized" mattress, before jumping upon it in order to test it out. "This one! I want this one! It's the biggest!"

"Toaster...you can't just choose the largest bed on the floor..." Gamma's voice insisted. "You have to make sure it will fit in the room-AND that it's comfortable enough to sleep on."

"It will! It is! I want THIS one!" The Ruby was insistent.

Pearl looked at Garnet for answers. The fusion moaned in response. "It...will fit...but Pearl and Gamma have a point Toaster." The fusion nodded.
"But, but...Gar-net...I...I LOVE it!" Toaster hugged the mattress in plea, while displaying the most adorable face she could muster.

The fusion persperated heavily, as she felt her empathy caving in...

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As the party continued through the store, Garnet found herself carrying two boxes. One was a conservative child-sized mattress for Gamma, the other hand held a MASSIVELY HUGE box with a big "California King" size printed on the packaging.

Pearl looked at her fellow Crystal Gem with disapproval. "Really Garnet! I thought your will was stronger than that!"

"It's...it's pretty much the only thing she's going to want in the store...plus, she said she LOVED it." The fusion blushed.

"Garnet...you can't just buy something on a whim...just because someone says they really want it..."

Garnet said nothing to this. She had already made up her mind on the issue.

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A branded leather couch was chosen for the living room. Everyone agreed that the slightly smokey pattern could easily hide burn marks if the Ruby became unintentionally excited.

Gamma chose a standard pair of beige and green conservative sheets and matching comforter for his little bed. Toaster chose the most loud, tie-dye, colorful spread the store had!

Acapella had little interest in the bedding. She was much more interested in looking at the kitchen section.

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Some of the basic tools in the kitchen department Acapella recognized immediately. Specifically, the plates, bowls, and silverware. The Yellow Pearl found it most interesting that (despite) the human race being (essentially) cut off from the rest of the cosmos- it was the SILVERWARE that was exactly the same.

When it came to the food appliances though, Acapella was utterly baffled. She recognized the toasters immediately (Toaster wouldn't let her walk by before pointing every single one of them out), but the blender...and the popcorn machine...

There...there were so many machines...for slicing, dicing, stewing, chopping, popping, and brewing. She supposed it made sense with such a large society dependent on foods for energy....but still...

It would have made her life SO MUCH EASIER on Homeworld if she had obtained access to so many machines and tools instead of doing almost all of her cooking by hand. She began to get emotional when she bore witness to the mighty zester!

The renegade Pearl rolled her eyes when Acapella began to cry over the cheese graters. "Oh for goodness sakes! Acapella! We will get you all the nessesary tools for a fine kitchen! Do calm down! Your getting your...fluids all over the garlic presses!"
Acapella sniffed, attempting to calm herself. "It's just...so beautiful...so many tools...I've...I've never seen...I...I could make anything so easily!" Yellow Pearl continued to cry.

"There...there..." Garnet put the mattresses down and patted Acapella on the shoulder in reassurance. "We will get you many blenders and spoons." The fusion nodded in agreement.

"Oh brother..." Gamma rolled his eyes in his invisible state. He had never seen someone get so emotional over a tea infuser before...

As the group got to the checkout line, a majority of the surrounding humans couldn't help but stare at Garnet. The fusion was carrying two mattresses, bed sheets, cooking tools, utensils, a couch, several bed frames, about 24 kitchen appliances, and a bag of chocolate...just about as easily as someone would carry a piece of paper.

With a massive:

"THUD!"

...she placed the large pile onto the treadmill in front of the shocked cashier.

"We'll be paying for all of this..." Garnet was insistent as she presented her own credit card.

Acapella suddenly became very defensive. "Um...fusion? We have...erm...our own card of credit...to pay?" The Yellow Pearl took her own credit card out of her gemstone, and attempted to hand it to Garnet.

The fusion held out her hand in defiance. "It's not "fusion"...it's Garnet...and think of this as a gift- a homecoming gift from US to YOU." Garnet nodded, as Acapella looked up at her with stars in her eyes! Such...kindness...

"(This card is under Greg's name anyway. He's like...a millionaire now...)" Garnet mumbled to herself.

"What did you say?"

"Don't worry about it." Garnet smiled, and gave a thumbs up.

As the group left the store, Garnet bubbled the purchases and offered for Toaster to tap her hand on the bubble top. The Ruby abliged, and the items were teleported instantly to the new house.

A sudden loud gurgling noise echoed from an empty spot. Gamma blushed in embarrassment...although no one could see him.

Pearl clapped her hands. "Perhaps we should demonstrate what lunch is! It seems one of you is hungry!"

It was obvious who had made the sound, although Pearl was attempting to spare the frog's feelings.

Gamma blushed even more so, as he followed the crowd of Gems toward a strip mall with various restaurants.
Just a quick heads up to you guys- Pokemon Ultra Sun is coming out on Friday, so I maaaaaay be a bit distracted during the next few days...because...you know...I'm a nerd...and Pokemon is awesome. LOL!
Also, feel free to leave reviews! You guys are awesome!
As the array of eateries came into view, Garnet decided to ask: "So, what are you guys in the mood for?"

"in the mood for?" Acapella seemed confused.

"Yes, you will learn this soon Acapella, but humans classify their foods much like their various languages. Different parts of this planet utilize different ingredients...typically depending on whatever plants and animals are available in the location." Pearl nodded in agreement.

"Huh, well than...I guess I'll try whatever you like first?"

Pearl hesitated at this statement. "Erm...well...I...uh...don't actually eat anything."

Acapella was surprised at this. "Wait, you cook...and you CAN eat, but you DON'T?!" Yellow Pearl seemed internally confused. Here was a Pearl that had a chance to eat whatever and whenever she wanted without being yelled at, and yet...she would not?

"It's a personal decision. I don't like the process." Pearl nodded.

"How do you know if your cooking tastes desirable than?"

"I look at cooking like a science! It's a set of measurements and ingredients that must be mixed in a proper order!" Pearl nodded. "I enjoy cooking...just not eating."

Acapella seemed surprised and a bit disappointed about this. She wanted this Pearl to not only teach, but approve her cooking techniques. She was hoping to impress Pearl with her own skills—but this new fact made her feel somewhat downtrodden.

Garnet noted the Yellow Pearl's mood change. "I don't eat very often, but don't mind the activity! I will happily try your dishes Acapella." the fusion nodded.

"Oh! I'm so sorry Acapella! I didn't mean to upset you..." Pearl seemed sudenly more aware of her fellow Gem's disappointment.

Toaster was becoming impatient, and wanted to get back to choosing a restaurant. "Oh! I know!" Toaster piped up! "Why don't we just choose the place that smells the best!"

"I have a better idea." Garnet smiled, almost maliciously.

"Welcome to "Loco Taco"! How many in your party?" A polite waitress inquired as the group of aliens entered the eating establishment.

"Five" Garnet answered.

Slightly confused, the waitress only counted four. "Oh! Are you waiting for someone to arrive?"

There was a pregnant pause, before Garnet answered: "Yes...but they told us to start eating immediately. They'll just catch up with us later."

"Oh! Ok! Right this way then!" The waitress grabbed several menus, before seating the party.
"Your server will be right with you!" The waitress went back to the front of the restaurant.

Toaster's head could barely reach the top of the table. She attempted to grab a menu, and look at the pictures on the inside. "Garnet..." she stated after a slight pause "-I can't read anything! It's all in human language!"

"It's fine." Garnet nodded "I'll order for you. This place is known for its spicy food...my Sapphire side tolerates it, but my Ruby side absolutely adores it! We come here often on dates."

"What's a...da-tee?"

Garnet blushed. "It's when...two people, or, Gems that stay fused, go out to eat and have fun." The Gem tried her best to describe the situation in a way Toaster would understand.

"Oh! OK! Soooo...what should I eat here?" The little Ruby inquired.

"I'll order you the super-spicy burrito...it's the same thing I get every time we come here."

"What should I get than?" Acapella inquired.

"Hmmm..." Garnet looked toward the future. "Acapella you will like the mild soft tocos, Gamma will enjoy the traditional bean tocos." The Gem nodded to herself, before adding: "I would highly recommend not trying eachother's meal. It will cause...discomfort."

The three new aliens glanced at one another, nervously, as the server approached the table. "May I take your order?"

"Yes. One order of the mild soft tocos, one traditional bean taco, and TWO orders of the super-spicy burritos."

Garnet nodded, before handing the menus to the concerned-looking human. She inquired: "Are you sure about the super-spicy burritos mam? There are bits of ghost peppers in there..."

"I'm well aware. It's fine!" The fusion smiled.

"Alrighty then.." the server picked up all the menus, before disappearing in the back of the restaurant.

With nothing better to do with her time, Pearl began to lecture. "This eating establishment caters "Mexican Food". She put air quotes around "Mexican Food" for emphasis. "I say it in that way, because a lot of the food served here is actually a mixture of different dishes from various parts of South America...ironic, because the country of Mexico is ACTUALLY located in NORTH America. I must also point out that many of the dishes here (I have heard) do NOT compare in taste to their authentic counterparts. To receive the best tasting human cuisine, it is normally recommended to visit the actual part of the planet it comes from, and-"...

...as Pearl droaned on, Toaster began to go into a state of daydreaming. She really didn't comprehend half of the stuff the Pearl was saying.

"Excuse me?" A human walked up, interrupting Pearl and gaining the attention of the entire party. He proceeded to grab the chair Gamma was sitting in. He continued: "May we borrow this chair for our table? We are one short, and this one seems to be empty..."

Garnet frowned. "No."
"Huh? Why not?! None of YOU are using it..."

"Yes we are. The chair is currently being occupied by my invisible friend."

The man looked at Garnet as if she was absolutely nuts, before briskly walking away, slightly spooked.

Gamma sighed. "Thanks Garnet. This entire "invisibility" rule has been driving me a bit crazy. People keep bumping into me...there has to be a better way to get around..."

"You could always wear a costume," Pearl suggested. "...at least than people would know where you are."

Garnet shook her head. "Be patient Gamma. These things have a way of eventually working out." The fusion nodded.

In a sudden burst of excitement, the waitress came out from the back room carrying everyone's orders. "Ok...so we have the mild soft tocos, one traditional bean taco, and...erm...the two orders of the super-spicy burritos." The human placed the orders on the table. She (mistakenly) put the traditional bean tacos in front of Pearl, since Gamma was not visible. The human nervously looked toward Garnet and Toaster. "Would...you two like a glass of milk? Just in case?"

Garnet fell silent for a second, before smiling, and giving a friendly nod. "That would be lovely. Thank you."

The waitress walked off briskly, as Pearl discreetly handed Gamma his food.

Gamma seemed to be enjoying his meal almost instantly. The bean tocos hovered one by one, before disappearing into the abyss.

Acapella seemed a bit more...hesitant. Her meal had a soft outside instead of a hard shell like the Keronian's. The item almost resembled an edible blanket with other editable stuff tucked inside. Yellow Pearl piped up: "Do...do I just pick it up with my bare hands or...?"

"Traditionally, yes." Answered Pearl "-although if you're not comfortable with that, you can always use the utensils."

Acapella nodded, and used the provided fork and knife for her meal. It was...a decent meal, but she couldn't help thinking of ways to improve the recipe as she indulged.

Meanwhile, The waitress brought the two glasses of milk, and made sure everyone’s food was decent before dissapearing again.

Garnet was slowly eating her meal, and experienceing the upmost amusement as Toaster attempted to mimic her. The little Ruby was not nearly as graceful as her fusion counterpart, and was getting sauce and meat all over herself.

Still, the Ruby seemed to be enjoying the experience thoroughly.

Pearl shook her head. "I still don't understand how you can stomach incredibly spicy food like that Garnet. Ghost peppers...of all things! Why do they even include that item on the menu?!"

"Maybe it's because I order it every time I come here?" The fusion smiled.

At this point, Toaster had scarfed most of her burrito. All that was left on her plate was the garnish-
an extra ghost pepper.

"I don't see what the big deal is." Acapella stated in a drone after seeing Toaster eat the thing quite easily.

Garnet attempted to explain: "Ghost peppers are one of the most spicy peppers on this planet. Many humans only eat them on dares. They can cause physical pain. It seems, however, Gems that regularly work in hot environments such as Rubies and Bismuths can eat the peppers without any side effects." Garnet nodded. "They taste quite good, if you are immune to the flavor..."

"Hmph!" Acapella stuck her nose in the air. "Certainly if that RUBY can handle the strange foods, I can too!"

"I wouldn't recommend that." Gamma's voice echoed from the empty spot. "We have pretty spicy food on Keron too. It can be most unpleasant if you aren't used to it."

"Oh POSH! You just don't think I can eat it!"

"Listen to the Keronian." Garnet nodded. "There is a reason why I ordered your meals for you. I can only handle this food because my fusion is half Ruby."

"So YOU don't think I can eat it either?!"

"I didn't say tha-"

"-RUBY! Hand me the red vegetable on your plate!"

Toaster seemed upset at this request. "NO! You already ate yours! This one's mine!"

"GIVE IT HERE!"

Toaster glanced at Garnet for assistance. The fusion nodded. "I will get everyone ice cream if you let her have it Toaster...it's not like we didn't try to warn her..."

"What's "iced cream"?"

"It's a dessert. You will like it." Garnet was insistent on this, so Toaster (hesitantly) handed Acapella her last ghost pepper.

As Acapella grabbed the tiny vegetable, she began to gloat: "HA! Look at this stupid tiny thing! Watch how I bravely overcome the pathetic "ghost pepper"!" The Yellow Pearl than proceeded to pop the thing into her mouth, chew on it several times and swallow it whole!

"Oh dear..." The renegade Pearl seemed concerned. "Garnet, can you pass those two glasses of milk?"

"That's why I ordered them..." The fusion obliged.

For several seconds, it seemed like Acapella had triumphed over the challenge...but then, her face began to turn interesting shades of red. Soon the Yellow Pearl was gasping for air...or anything that could relieve the barbaric pain she was in!

She proceeded to swig down both massive glasses of milk, and when THAT didn't work, she began to drink her water, than Pearl's untouched water. Strangely enough, this method only seemed to increase the pain!
With a final "POOOF!" Acapella's form dissipated...yet again.

"OH MY STARS! PEARL!" Toaster was completely terrified that the random bland object she had been eating literally seconds before, would be powerful enough to dissapate a Gem's form.

"I tried to warn her..." Garnet crossed her arms shaking her head sadly.

"Gamma seemed the most shocked from the event. "Jeez! What did you just give to her?! Damn!"

"LANGUAGE!" The renegade Pearl snapped.

Garnet shrugged. "She will be fine. Acapella's just...stubborn. She's the kind of being that has to learn things the hard way."

"Remind me never to eat any of those...EVER." Gamma stared at the lone gemstone in the chair for several seconds, before placing the object under his hat again.

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After paying the bill, and leaving a tip- the group of aliens exited the restaurant.

As promised, Garnet led the croud several stores over to a ice cream parlor.

It was about this time when Acapella's gemstone began to glow again. Gamma quickly removed the object from his hat, as the stubborn Pearl came back to life- slightly startled and gasping for air.

"Well! You made it just in time for the ice cream!" Garnet seemed pleased, knowing this experience would be far less traumatic for the Pearl.

Acapella continued to gasp, and glance around in shock. "SHALE! What just happened?!"

"LANGUAGE! Honestly! I'm going to have to start a swear jar for you two!" Pearl seemed most displeased.

Garnet sighed. "Come on you guys...and Acapella? Please do listen to my advice from now on..."
The fusion nodded as she led the group into the ice cream parlor.

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"Hello! Welcome to "Cool Cones"! How can I help you today?" The human behind the cooler greeted the croud as pleasantly as possible.

"CREAMED ICE! CREAMED ICE!" Toaster was hopping with excitement, as she smooshed her face against the sneeze guard glass of the cooler.

The worker smiled awkwardly as Garnet nabbed The Ruby and held her underneath her arm. "Sorry about that...she's excited." Garnet smiled. "I think we should just get something simple- three vanilla cones, and one vanilla with red hot candies on top." The fusion smiled.

The woman happily abliged, and soon the group had found another place to sit down.

Toaster attempted to snarf her ice cream cone as she had with the burrito, but was surprised by the results. "It's...it's cold! This food is cold!" Toaster shivered slightly.

Pearl piped up: "That's correct Toaster! Ice cream is a frozen food! It has to be served cold to stay
fresh!"
"I like it...but eating it is making me sleepy..." Gamma's eyes sagged slightly—although no one could tell.

Acapella just stared at her cone.

"What's wrong Acapella? Don't you want to try it?" Garnet inquired.

"Is...is it dangerous?" It was obvious that the Pearl's confidence had been shaken.

Garnet smiled. "NO Acapella. The ice cream is safe. I only put hot candies on my own ice cream."

Acapella Finally got the courage to take a bite out of the dessert. "It's...it's COLD!" The Yellow Pearl shivered slightly, before taking another bite.
Chapter 29

After eating, there was a debate whether to go home or continue shopping. The sun was falling fast from the sky, and Toaster's increasing fatigue was becoming evident.

As the little Ruby began to nod off while walking, she started to stagger behind the rest of the party at a slow rate.

Garnet quickly noticed the excess fatigue, and picked Toaster up. As she held the Ruby, the little Gem fell asleep in her arms, and began to snore. The entire scenario reminded Garnet of what it was like taking care of Steven at a younger age.

"Toaster acts...very similarly to a human child." The fusion made this simple observation.

"Yes...a Keronian tadpole too." Gamma nodded. "It's a bit odd...I'm pretty sure she is MUCH older than I am. I can't see a Gem like her being used as a soldier..."

"On Homeworld, you are assigned a job and status depending on your Gem type. It doesn't really matter how your personality forms. Some Gems simply turn out more...immature than others." Pearl nodded.

Acapella spoke up: "Speaking of strange things...when we were riding on the human bus the other day- that odd word came up again..."mother". This incredibly rude woman thought I was the Ruby's "mother". However, the Ruby said that YOU were her "mother" Keronian. What exactly does this word mean?"

"S-She...said that about ME?!" The frog blushed in his invisible state.

Garnet butted in:"Typically, a "mother" is someone kindly that raises and protects you. In organic life, the term is often used for whichever individual gave life to their younger little one." The fusion attempted to explain the best she could.

"So, Toaster thinks that you're her mom? That's adorable!" Pearl clapped her hands in excitement.

Gamma laughed slightly. "I've never had kids before...guess I have someone to spoil rotten now...". The Keronian felt flattered that the little Gem classified him so highly.

As Toaster continued to sleep, a holographic film appeared from her gemstone. She was sitting with a group of other Rubies, and excitedly telling them stories, while giving each one of them an ice cream cone. Suddenly, the ground began to shake. A massive crevice appeared, swallowing all of her Ruby friends. In a state of panic, Yellow Diamond emerged from the crack in the ground, and proceeded to shoot thunder at the little Toaster...

The Ruby suddenly woke up in Garnet's arms! She was shivering terribly, gasping for air, and her body temperature had significantly increased. The Gem looked around frantically for a few seconds, before seeing Garnet, and falling back asleep.

"A nightmare." Garnet nodded. "That was probably her previous platoon we saw just now."

"Poor dear. She's been through so much..." The Pearl nodded sadly.

"I still can't believe how intense the punishment on Homeworld is." Gamma's voice mumbled to the crowd. "How can you stand it?"
"We couldn't." Garnet replied simply. "That's why we moved here and rebelled. You must know this though Gamma- Toaster, as well as Acapella have probably seen some very disturbing things. You must be there for them when these memories manifest themselves in different ways."

"PSSH!" Acapella scoffed. "I'll be fine! Yeah, I've seen some horrible stuff-but they're just memories...nothing to worry about!"

"Denial will get you nowhere. It is ok to admit when help is needed." Garnet was blunt to the Yellow Pearl. The comment was followed by an uncomfortable silence.

"So...we might as well go to your house and help set up the new furniture!" Pearl attempted to make the conversation less awkward. "How did you guys get here in the first place?"

Pearl was uncomfortable. She was currently smooshed between two human strangers.

Garnet was still holding the sleepy Toaster, with Acapella, and "Fred the Slice of Bread" sitting next to her on the bus. Pearl had to choose a different row however- resulting in the current uncomfortable situation she was in right now.

When the bus finally arrived at the right station, the party left the vehicle briskly. Pearl seemed to be on a verge of a panic attack. "STARS! That...was...AWFUL!"

"I KNOW! ISN'T IT?!" Acapella nodded as she led the new party into the house.

The massive pink bubble that was hovering in the middle of the living room was popped, resulting in an avalanche of furnishings and appliances falling to the ground.

The din of all the items hitting the floor woke Toaster with a start. The Ruby looked about quickly before seeing her new mattress again. Toaster struggled out of Garnet's grasp, before approaching the pile with excitement!

Garnet was easily able to carry the matresses and bed frames up to their respective rooms on the second floor. Pearl, meanwhile, assisted by following the instructions to a tee in order to install all furniture that required extra assembly.

After (finally) setting up the beds Pearl demonstrated to Toaster how to use the fitted sheets, pillows and blankets properly. She then assisted Acapella with her various cooking appliances.

The Yellow Pearl looked at all of her new cooking toys with stars in her eyes.

"Now Acapella...I need you to promise me NOT to mess with these tools until I teach you how to use them...ESPECIALLY the electronic ones...Alright?!"

"Yeah...sure...whatever..." the Yellow Pearl seemed...increasingly distracted.

Pearl rolled her eyes, before walking toward Gamma again. "Soooo...where is this "Evil Box" you guys were having difficulty with?"

The Keronian hesitantly pointed to the living room closet, and braced himself with fear, as the Pearl stuck her head in the miniature space with curiosity.
"OH!" Pearl pulled the object from the closet. "This is just a television set!". The renegade seemed proud of herself as she plugged the thing into the wall, and pressed the "on" button...

"BBBOOOOOOOOMMM!"

The television emitted a massive blast! Pearl held her ears in shock, desperately looking for the remote.

Gamma quickly jumped behind the new couch in a panic!

Pearl located the tool and turned the volume down quickly. She fixed the treble and picture. "My goodness! No wonder this thing was making such a ruckus! The volume was turned to the highest setting!" The Pearl turned to the couch and smiled. "You can come out from behind the couch now Gamma..."

The Keronian peeked out from his hiding spot.

Pearl began to explain while pointing to the appliance. "This is a human television set. Humans use it to receive news and entertainment. Here...let me show you..."

The Pearl poked several buttons on the remote, until the main cable was enabled.

Immediately, the frog was hypnotized. The channel landed on a colorful array of cartoons. Curious, The Keronian sat in front of the box and tilted his head. "What...is this? A broadcast?"

"That's a children's cartoon. It's used to entertain young humans."

"Sooooo...with these than..." Gamma got up, and dug through the closet to fish out the DVDs.

"OH! Those are nature documentaries! They educate on different types of Earth creatures and natural phenomena! I can understand why they would want you to see those!"

Toaster came downstairs from her bedroom. When she spotted the "evil box", the tiny Ruby dashed behind the couch- much like Gamma had done prior. She peeked around the furniture in a slight panic.

"It's alright now Toaster! I fixed it for you!" The Pearl smiled.

There was a pause before Toaster slowly scooted herself on the floor from behind the couch. The Ruby carefully planted herself, and began to look at the strange box.

On the tv, there was a cartoon cat howling at the moon. Toaster tilted her head slightly, before approaching the cat to pet it...

...which resulted in a slight electrical shock!

"Ahh! Aggghhhh! What is this? What? What?!"

Pearl piped up: "Calm down Toaster! It's just a film...a series of images being projected from a station. As long as you don't touch it, the television won't shock you."

"Oh!" The Ruby nodded before sitting down again.

The cartoon seemed to almost hypnotize the little red Gem. The story concluded with all the animals joining the cat to howl at the moon. Toaster tilted her head in curiosity again.
Both Gamma and Pearl jumped as Toaster mimicked the television characters and let out a howl of her own.

Concerned, Pearl quickly turned the television off.

"HEY! I was watchin that! Why'd you turn it off?" Toaster began to snap at the Pearl.

The Gem ignored her. "Gamma...May I speak to you...PRIVATELY?"

"Um...sure, I guess?" The Keronian got up, and followed the renegade to a small nook around the corner.

Pearl immediately began to whisper in a very serious tone: "(Did you see how Toaster mimicked the television set just now? I hate to recommend this, but she seems...very malleable when it comes to mimicking what she sees. A LOT of human entertainment can be...scary or violent. If you don't mind, I would like to get a few lessons under my belt before we allow her to watch any more television...just so I can teach her the difference between what is real, and what isn't.)"

The frog thought to himself, before nodding. "(Well, if you think that would be best...)

The duo re-entered the living room, before proceeding to push the tv back into the closet.

"Hey! Why are you doing that? Hey!" Toaster tilted her head.

"Pearl said that the tv still isn't working quite right. It will take a bit in order to fix it." Gamma lied.

"Oh...ok than." Toaster accepted this answer, before getting up from her sitting place, and proceeding to climb up the stairs to admire her new mattress again.

After everything had settled a bit, everyone re-gathered in the living room.

"Well! This visit has been most pleasant! Thank you for inviting us into your home." Garnet smiled.

Indeed...although I didn't particularly like the bus ride it took to get over here. I will try to contact Peridot tomorrow and see if we could create a Warp Pad easily nearby." Pearl nodded

"A...kindergartener?" Acapella seemed...skeptical.

"Maybe on Homeworld...but here on Earth she has a vast knowledge of science and technology." Pearl answered.

At this comment, goodbye's were exchanged and thanks were given.

"We will be back tomorrow." Garnet smiled before closing the front door.
Back on Homeworld...

There seemed to be some sort of delay.

Delays were inexcusable.

Delays were bothersome.

Delays were not tolerated well.

Of the 48 Gems that had accompanied Yellow Diamond on her trip before abandoning ship- only 45 had been found and slaughtered. Three were still missing.

In addition, NO ONE had located the Keronian yet. Yellow Diamond could not understand why good help was so difficult to find these days. She had to figure out what the stars the hold up was...if ONE more Gem entered her chambers with some lame excuse- she was going to lose it.

Unfortunately, she knew EXACTLY what the problem was, and EXACTLY which Gems were going to enter her chamber next - the two Amethysts she had sent to Keron in order to retrieve a picture of the slimy neucance she wished to distroy.

Both Amethysts entered the Diamond's chambers nervously, before saluting in respect.

"At ease." Yellow Diamond seemed almost bored with the common greeting. She continued: "I suppose you are wondering why I called you here today..."

Both purple Gems seemed rather nervous at this.

The dictator continued: ":I have called you here today, to inquire the answer to a basic...idiotic...question...WHY HAS THAT DAMN KERONIAN NOT BEEN FOUND YET?!!" The leader slammed her fist onto the arm of her throne so hard that the entire room shook!

Her new Yellow Pearl- Lucky toppled over entirely, while the duo of Amethysts did their best to stay standing through the miniature earthquake.

"You see...the only conclusion I could come up with...was that something was wrong with the creature's wanted poster...the same poster I asked the two of you to secure a photo for."

Yellow Diamond smiled maliciously. "Well, I made the mistake of trusting you two dimwits. Does THIS look like the treacherous Keronian to YOU?!!" The leader displayed a hologram of the wanted poster- it included Gamma- wearing his costume party attire. "WELL?! What is this SHALE?! This creature looks NOTHING like the one that attacked me!!"

Both Amethyst soldiers flinched. One of them decided to (unwisely) speak up. "To be completely frank, we...had no clue what the Keronian looked like my Diamond- you never gave us a description. This is the picture that the creatures from the same cut provided us..."

"Did they now? So his...kin provided you with this picture, and said it was accurate?"

"Yes my clarity!"
"I see..." The leader stared at the two shivering solders, before sending an electric shock their way, dissapateing both forms, and grinding their gemstones to a pulp using her thumbs.

Lucky, the Yellow Pearl who was close by, flinched uncomfortably.

"LUCKY! Please dispose of these...shards properly, and get my palanquin prepared! I think I need to have a word with this...Keronian's...associates..."

It had taken several weeks, but the entire neighborhood came together to assist.

Prolulu and Atmomo's home had been badly damaged during the raid, but with some dry wall, community teamwork, and a lot of elbow grease, the place looked almost good as new.

"I don't get it." One of their neighbors had piped up while fixing the cracks in the ceiling. "Why are they still looking for your son? We already reached a truce..."

"Who knows?" Atmomo shrugged as he held the ladder. ",At least we know he's alive now..."

"Smart thinking on your part- giving those damn Gems a picture from the costume party too...idiotic bafoons." The neighbor nodded. "If it had been MY kid, I would've done the same thing."

The Keronian's neighborhood had finally settled back down to a (somewhat) normal state.

Of course Prolulu and Atmomo still missed their child very much- but if nothing else had come out of the raid's terrifying experience, at least there was much more peace of mind that Gamama was out there- somewhere in the cosmos, avoiding capture.

It was a particularly calm afternoon in the middle of Keron's summertime, when a massive:

"THOOOOOOMMMM!"

...shook the entire coldesac. Prolulu, Atmomo, and the rest of the remaining Keronians, ran outside in a panic to see what had made the massive din! It felt (and sounded) like a giant meteor had crash-landed on the planet somewhere nearby.

There was a familiar shouting from several streets away. It sounded almost like the Keronian ambasitor! Her name was Corfifi. She generally handled negotiations between other species. "HEY! HEY! I'm talking down here! Don't you know how many laws you're breaking right now?!

There seemed to be a rhythmic thunder noise accompanying her...getting ever closer to the neighborhood with each second. The next sound made both Prolulu and Atmomo's four hearts stop.

"Treason! Treason I tell you! Those idiotic voters of yours directly lied to my Amethyst guards!"

"...and who gave you authorization to land a ship on this planet for a search warrant in the first place Diamond?! I was not aware a vote had been put to trial on such matters!"

"Oh you silly, STUPID, creature! Who said I needed permission to do such a thing?"
"It's in the galactic law book- and YOU know it! We already reached a treaty! Why are you even meddling further in this matter?!"

"I have my reasons."

It was inevitable. It was obvious. Yellow Diamond was coming. Yellow Diamond herself- as well as Corfifi were coming toward the neighborhood at top speed! With each step taken- car alarms went off...sidewalks were cracked.

Two things were plainly obvious from the beginning- Yellow Diamond was here, and she was INCREDIBLY pissed off.

The neighborhood scrambled about quickly...attempting to come up with some way of saving their kind neighbors. One of the houses had an underground storage facility with several nooks and hiding places. Prolulu and Atmomo were quickly corralled into the tiny space mere seconds before the Gem leader turned the corner. Yellow Diamond gazed at the miniature houses in the most terrifying of manners. It was almost eerie how much the scene mimicked that of a giant monster film.

Corfifi appeared near the Diamond's shoe- huffing and puffing several seconds later. It was obvious she had been running to keep up with the massive Gem. "Will you stop with all your stomping around at least?! You're causing property damage!" It was obvious that the Keronian ambassador was none-to-pleased with the Diamond's reckless behavior.

"Well! Would you look at this!" Yellow Diamond glanced around the neighborhood- most pleased. "It seems my presence has gained the attention of the entire block!"

The Keronian's expressions were a mixture of anger and terror. A baby tadpole cried within the eerie silence.

The Diamond's expression transformed quickly from a malicious smile, to a most serious scowl. "I don't want to be on this retchid rock any longer than I have to be, so I'll make this simple for you slimes. I wish to speak to the kin of the one they call- "Gamama"- certainly you have heard of him with all the dreadful things going on..."

There was a dead silence for several seconds, before one of the brave neighbors stepped forward: "Th-They aren't here right now! You just missed them!"

"Oh! I see...that's an absolute TRAGEDY...a real SHAME...because if they WERE here, they could have stopped me from doing: THIS." With incredible strength and speed the Diamond swung her massive arm, completely toppling over someone's house!

Corfifi put her hands over her head as chunks of brick, concrete, and rubble threatened to seriously injure her and crush her like a sardine.

There was an audible gasp from the crowd standing in the street. The Diamond's smile become intense once more. "Woops! Silly me! I guess I become a bit more clumsy when I get upset you see..." The Diamond began to walk toward the coldesac- the poor neighbors frozen in fear. Every step she took managed to purposefully crush something of value- a car...a space ship...a tree.

"As you can see-"

Yellow Diamond "accidently" smashed another house to bits.

"-I can be very persuasive when it comes to getting what I want."
In the chaos, there was a terrible howl from one of the dwellings. Apparently, the terrifying destruction had woken up one of the neighbor's tadpoles.

"What is that...HORRIFIC noise?! What a nuisance!" As the Diamond walked slowly to the house that was producing the crying, the corresponding neighbor's eyes turned big.

"No...no...DON'T YOU DARE!" The Keronian began to scream. Her young child was in the house napping.

"Oh? It seems there is something rather important to you in this dwelling, hm?" Yellow Diamond looked down at the frog in question, her insane smile only growing.

"You stay away from my house you DAMN monster! My baby is in there!"

"Baby...I do not know what a "baby" is...I think I will be doing BOTH of us a favor if I snuff out whatever is making that highly annoying sound though..."

As the Diamond lifted her palm to make the building in question collapse into itself, the neighbor wailed in desperation, running toward her home in hopes of saving her child...

Prolulu could take it no longer. She quickly opened the door to their hiding place, and appeared before the Gem leader- fuming and absolutely furious. "HEY! Diamond! It's us you want! NOT them! Leave our friends out of YOUR business!"

Atmomo also appeared out of the hiding spot behind his wife. She was brave- he gave her that. One of Prolulu's best attributes was her empathy toward others. He was absolutely terrified, but was also incredibly proud of his spouse! He internally thought that if they somehow got out of this mess alive- she deserved a second honeymoon...Hell, a second summer home!

Yellow Diamond stopped her rampage, and stared at the duo in surprise for several seconds. Her focus quickly changed as she stomped over to the two Keronians, and bent down to them curiously.

"So...you finally decided to show yourselves! You're dumber than I thought!"

"What do you want?!" Prolulu yelled up to the dictator- shaking in her boots, but standing her ground.

"So...this is Gamama's kin- are you the duo that misinformed my Amethyst soldiers by providing them with doctored pictures?"

"What business is that of yours? Why are you looking for our son in the first place?!"

"My goodness! You are a confident, STUPID thing aren't you? The truth is, catching that traitor that embarrassed me is ALL of my business! But, since the picture you provided was not helpful in the slightest, I have come up with a...shall we say...much more efficient plan?"

With a flick of her wrist, both of Gamama's parents were quickly bubbled. The duo shouted from their spherical prison as they attempted to escape.

The massive monarch stated: "If I can not find this-Gamama", I'll just have to get HIM to come to ME. You two seem like the perfect bait!"

Yellow Diamond began to stomp back toward her spaceship- the bubble prison hovering gently in her hand. She stopped briefly to look down toward Corfifi. "I assume you are smart enough not to report this incident...not unless you wish to have a war on your hands. The Gem nodded, before returning to her ship, and flying off into the atmosphere.
Chapter 31

Yellow Diamond realized it a bit too late.

In retrospect, kidnapping two foreign organic lifeforms and holding them hostage, was NOT one of her...better ideas.

...especially because the creature she was attempting to blackmail was currently in an unknown location.

As the monarch re-entered her ship, she handed the bubble over to Lucky. The shocked Yellow Pearl put her hand on top of the bubble, and looked at the two new animals on the inside. Prolulu glared up at the Pearl still in a hot rage. Atmomo seemed frozen in fear. Lucky tilted her head-slightly confused. "My Diamond?"

The leader gritted her teeth in annoyance. "What do you want now?! If you are going to ask what those DISGUSTING things are for, I'm not going to answer you- the information is classified."

"No, it's not that...but...where are we going to put them?"

Yellow Diamond's eyes suddenly grew in shock. She...she had NO CLUE where to put these clods. Her chambers did not have the nessesary tools in order to keep organic life alive. In addition there had been tests...most Gem machinery and cages did not effect organic animals. She couldn't put them in the human zoo...not unless she wanted a whole load of unnecessary questions...plus than she would have to get rid of the entire zoo team in case they heard something from the Keronians and started gossiping...

...Blue would never allow such things anyway.

As it turns out- the dictator's own crimes had driven her into a corner. Yellow Diamond thought to herself before coming to a conclusion. "They will stay with Iris."

Lucky seemed surprised. "What about nourishment?"

"I will use my own food."

"What about sanitation?"

"YOU will be in charge of that Lucky. This will work. I have a plan." It sounded like the Diamond was attempting to convince herself more than the Pearl.

Lucky displayed a disgusted face at the thought of dealing with organic sanitation. She looked at the Keronians again, wondering why on Homeworld her master would wish for such "Pets" in the first place...

"That reminds me. The same rules with Iris apply to the Keronians. NO ONE is to know of their exsistance- not even Blue Diamond."

"As you wish my Diamond." The Pearl glanced at the two frogs again - more so in curiosity than disgust. She hadn't ever seen another alien species this closely before.

As the Diamond re-entered her chambers, she held the bubble discreetly so that no one could see it.
After making sure the coast was clear- she put the bubble on the floor and instructed Lucky to bring the creatures to Iris.

Lucky was still a fairly new Gem, and didn't know much about organic life. The servant ended up rolling the bubble a bit too quickly to a (seemingly) hidden door behind the Diamond's throne. The two poor Keronians on the inside of the bubble ended up tumbling every which way before entering the mysterious room.

Slighty nauseous, the duo stood up, and glanced at their (apparently) new, temporary, "home".

The room was dimly lit, and very empty, but not completely dark. It seemed that there were only two lights in the entire place- both of which were flickering. A second Yellow Pearl was standing obediently in the middle of the room. The Gem seemed to recognize the sound of the door closing behind her sister.

Iris turned and smiled.

The two Keronians gasped!

The frogs had never seen a Gem like this before- her eyeballs were like mirrors...no pupils at all!

"Lucky! Hello!" The fact that the Gem was in a plain yellowish room with only two lightbulbs did not seem to dampen her enthusiasm what-so-ever.

"Hello Iris...we have...Erm...something interesting today..."

"-is that why you have a big, yellow blob?"

"It's...one of our Diamond's bubbles Iris..."

"Ah! Ok than!" The Pearl nodded.

"Yellow Diamond-OUR Diamond has decided to keep...Erm...Keronians."

Iris tilted her head. "Keronians?"

"They are an organic species. I am unsure why our Diamond wishes to keep them. She...seemed very hush-hush about the whole thing..."

Iris’ head drooped in shame. "-like me?"

Lucky nodded, before popping the bubble encasing the Keronians.

There was an immediate rush of panic from the two creatures. Both Prolulu and Atmomo ran toward the door they had just entered. The two aliens scuffled in an attempt to open it.

"It won't work. Only Yellow Diamond can open the door out of here. This is basically her storage closet." Lucky was blunt. "It's not like we haven't tried..."

"THAT'S for sure..." Iris sat down in a huff.

Prolulu looked at the two Gems in a panic. "Is...is she going to torture us?!"

The two Yellow Pearls stood-thinking for a second. "Not sure." Lucky answered. "She's not really the "torturing" type...she has a more "insult you" and than "smash you" kinda attitude." The Pearl nodded.
"A-are you going to hurt us?"

"Stars no." Iris was blunt. "As far as I can tell, we are all in a similar situation. I've spent nearly my entire life cycle in this room. I'm considered "too ugly" to be seen by the general public."

"That's...that's horrific!" Atmomo hated to admit it, but he was now more frightened than before. "How long are we going to be stuck here?!"

"Who knows?" Lucky shrugged. "This is going to sound absolutely dreadful, but I'm actually glad you two are here." The Keronians both seemed slightly insulted by this, but patiently waited for an explanation. "Iris here cannot see very well, and is not allowed outside of the room. She gets very lonely standing here on her own..."

"LUCKY! Don't tell them THAT...I don't want anyone to feel badly about my situation! I am perfectly fine!" Iris huffed in embarrassment as her cheeks blushed yellow.

There was the sudden sound of rhythmic thunder, before the door to the prison opened again. The two Keronians struggled toward the door, but Iris grabbed their legs quickly. "Are you guys nuts?! Yellow Diamond is always right outside that door! She'll smash you to bits if you try to escape!"

"LUCKY! LUUUUUCKY! Do get out here you useless clod! I need your assistance for an important meeting!" Yellow Diamond was quite insistent. The Pearl trudged through the open door- looking absolutely miserable- "I will be back as soon as I can Iris. I will try to get some nourishment for you guys too." The Pearl nodded towards the Keronians before disappearing- the door shutting behind her.

Iris looked quite guilty as she let the two Keronians go. The Pearl blushed again. "I'm sorry I had to stop you...there really has been a lot of carnage in our Diamond's chambers. I do not wish to see you parish as well. It's rather interesting...she has never insisted on anyone coming in here other than Lucky..." The Pearl looked toward the two blurry blobs. "You two must be a part of something she wants to hide dearly if Yellow risked both of you seeing me..." Iris frowned, before squinting. "There...ARE only two of you...right? I see pink and yellow..."

Prolulu raised her hand. "That's right. My name is Prolulu- I'm the pink one." Prolulu quickly raised her husband's hand for him. "and this is Atmomo. He's my spouse. He is the yellow one!"

"Sp-Ow-As?" Iris looked incredibly confused. She was unsure what the word meant.

"Erm-it means we're married! Atmomo is my husband."

Iris looked even more confused than before. "It must be a cultural gap. Perhaps you should explain further. I don't have anything in my personal files about this subject."

Well...it wasn't like they could go anywhere...the Keronians sat on the cold floor, and began to tell the story about how they met...
Chapter 32

Back on Earth...

The next morning seemed to come very quickly. Gamma finally had a decent sleep on his new home planet. The sleep didn't seem to last nearly long enough though, due to the frog's complete exhaustion.

Toaster's sleep had gone quite well too...however, she woke up in a predicament. The Ruby had insisted on SUCH a fluffy comforter, and SO many soft blankets, that she ended up twisting herself into a cocoon of fluff. The Ruby struggled for a few seconds before breaking free of the massive blob of comfort.

She surveyed the mess, before shrugging to herself, and skipping into the hallway.

The Yellow Pearl had been too excited to sleep. She was sitting in a chair, impatiently staring at the blender. She had been in the same position all night, waiting for her new lessons to begin.

Fortunately, she didn't have to wait long. At approximately 8:00 AM sharp, there was a prompt knocking at the door. Acapella jumped with such enthusiasm, she had to calm herself before answering. As the door opened, she expected to see Pearl...or Garnet. Instead she was greeted by...a massive stack of books.

Acapella tilted her head in confusion. "Oh! Hello! Sorry about the books Acapella...I didn't have enough room in my pocket space for everything..." the familiar voice from the renegade Pearl erupted from the book pile. The pile of books invited itself in, revealing Garnet behind. The fusion had seemingly dozens of full paper bags all over herself, including several balanced on her square haircut.

"We brought groceries." Garnet stated quite obviously before inviting herself in as well.

"OH WOW!" A new voice expressed itself giving Acapella a slight jump. It was...a Peridot? At least...she THOUGHT it was a Peridot...

The small green Gem looked on the inside of the house with stars in her eyes. "Your...your dwelling! It's so...habitable!"

"...and, WHO are you?" Acapella looked down at the Gem sarcastically.

"Oh! How...uncouth of me! A-him...I am the great Peridot! Here to fix you up with a Warp Pad!"

"You're a...Peridot?"

"Yup!"

"..." Acapella seemed...surprised? Confused? Disturbed? Peridot couldn't put her finger on it...

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're just so...short? Where are your limb enhancers?"

"Erm-Ahh...yes- about that...Amethyst said they were somewhere...on the seabed? Although I've
never seen the ocean sleeping..." The Peridot blushed.

"Alright...whatever." Acapella seemed very unsurprised by this random fact. She figured at this point every single "Crystal Gem" had something defective about them. "Come on in." The Yellow Pearl (very unenthusiastically) led the green Gem inside.

"Wow, thanks?" Peridot was a smidge bit confused with the mixed messages, but causiously entered the home anyway.

Immediately the house was filled with bustle. Garnet went to work putting the groceries away. She had noticed the night prior that the home had come with a refrigerator, and had taken the liberty to convince Pearl to pick up some cooking staples to avoid any extra drama of having to go to the grocery store with the entire party.

Pearl began to pull dozens of things from her pocket space, and set up (what looked to be), a small school house room. She had (somehow) managed to bring along a whiteboard, blackboard, giganic maps, a globe, AND a full fake human skellington.

Peridot went to the backyard, and immediately began to take measurements and evaluate the land for the best spot to excavate a Warp Pad.

Gamma and Toaster slowly sauntered down the staircase at the addition of the extra noise. The Keronian blushed slightly when he saw all of the new friends were already here and prepping for the day. He hadn't even showered or brushed his teeth yet.

Toaster seemed more enthusiastic than anything. Her eyes lit up especially when she spotted all the new and interesting things Pearl had brought over!

The renegade seemed most happy and humbled that the little Ruby seemed to trust her well enough now to approach the Gem willingly, and inquire about the different teaching materials.

____________

Everything seemed to be going smoothly, until Peridot re-entered the house, slamming the door. "OK! I found a perfect spot out here! It's slightly hidden, but won't disturb any of the wildlife and-"

The Peridot stopped her rant quite abruptly at the sight of Gamma. There was a slight pregnant pause as the Peridot stared at the (slightly nervous) Keronian.

"OH...MY...STARS! I thought you were kidding Garnet!"

"I don't "kid"...often." Garnet smiled.

The Peridot rushed toward Gamma and immediately began to get uncomfortably close to his personal space. The green Gem looked at him all over and immediately began to question him on all sorts of things. "So you're a Keronian? You ARE a Keronian RIGHT? Are all Keronians red like you? Can you eat through osmosis? Oh! Oh! Do you have tv on Keron? I have to show you Camp Pining Hearts! It's human entertainment, but quite good...once you get into it! Is it true you can emit a foul scent as a defense mechanism? OH! Do you mind if I measure you?!

"Erm-erg..." Gamma didn't know what to do with all of the extra questions. Fortunately, Garnet came to the rescue. The fusion picked Peridot up by the scruff before stating: "Leave him alone Peridot. He's had a long week." To the relief of the frog, Garnet dragged the Gem back outside to her backyard post to finish the new Warp Pad.

____________
Pearl clapped her hands with joy! "Oh! This is so exciting!" She glanced around at Gamma, Toaster, and Acapella who were all sitting on the couch- facing the teacher and waiting for their lesson. "I guess I should take roll call first!"

"WHY?" Acapella droned. "There's only 3 of us..."

"Protocol, Acapella. Everything must be done in a proper manner! Now...Gamma?"

"Here."

"Toaster?"

"Presents!"

"Acapella?"

"Pbllltph." To the unamusement of Pearl, Acapella blew a raspberry. The renegade glared at her, before checking her off the list.

"Ok! I think the first thing we should start with is-" the Pearl glared at Acapella "-ediquite."

"Hmph!" The Yellow Pearl huffed in insult.

"Here! We'll start with something simple!" Pearl pulled an item-large and red from her gemstone. "This is an Earth fruit called an apple! We will practice with this! Here-"

Pearl handed the apple to Toaster. The Ruby looked at the fruit enthusiastically!

"Now as you can all see, I have handed Toaster the apple. Toaster...what is the first thing you do when someone gives you an apple?"

"MUNCH!" Toaster took a large bite out of the fruit, only to discover that the inside was filled with wax! "BLEAH!" Toaster spit out the wax sourly. "That was the worst Earth food evers!"

"Toaster!" The Pearl grabbed the wax fruit back quickly. "This is just a prop for the lesson! It is NOT meant to be eaten!"

"...than why did you say it was food?"

"It's just supposed to represent a theororedical apple!"

"Why did you lie to me Pearl? I don understand..."

"When someone gives you a gift, you are supposed to say: "Thank You."

"...But...But...This present is awful! Why would I thank someone for such awful food?"

"It doesn't matter if the present is awful. It is still polite to thank the person and PRETEND you like it...even if you don't. It helps make the other person feel better."

"OHHH!" Toaster's eyes lit up as if something had clicked. "Thank you for the awful apple Pearl!"

The renegade smacked herself, as Gamma snickered slightly. "Yeah...see...you don't admit that the apple is awful...even if it IS. You would just say:"Thank you for the apple."

"Oh! Ok!" Toaster nodded.
"Let's try something else. I have here a REAL piece of food!" Pearl took something small and covered in shiny paper out of her gemstone. "This is an expensive chocolate bonbon. It's a rare human sweet!"

Acapella's eyes lit up! She quickly attempted to reach for the candy, but Pearl backed up quickly. "App! You can't just grab whatever you want Acapella! Use your words!"

"GIMME!"

"No...you have to ask politely."

"GIMME NOW!"

Gamma sighed. This was incredibly painful to watch. The frog piped up: "Excuse me Pearl?" The Gem looked in his direction. "If you don't mind, could I please have the bonbon?" The Keronian beckoned toward the treat with enthusiasm.

"Very GOOD Gamma! Here..." Pearl handed Gamma the candy. "-you've earned that! One Pearl Point for you!" Pearl approached the white board and quickly wrote all three of her friend's names in English. She stuck a sticker with her face on it underneath the column that said "Gamma".

"What the?! What just happened? That was MY foods! What the stars is a "Pearl Point"?!!" Acapella seemed incredibly confused.

"I use these stickers with Steven to encourage positive reinforcement! If you get a certain amount, you get to choose a treat! You earn them for doing a good job."

"...but...but...I wanted the foods..." Acapella seemed disappointed and confused.

"If you want something that someone else has, or if you want someone to do you a favor, you typically say "please". Try it on Gamma."

The Yellow Pearl nodded. "A-him- Keronian, PLEASE give me the bonbon." Acapella's dictation needed work. The sentence sounded somewhat awkward.

Gamma looked toward Pearl for assistance. She nodded hesitantly after a few seconds. The Keronian handed Yellow Pearl the candy. Acapella proceeded to stuff it into her gemstone for safe keeping.

"Hmmm...perhaps we should try something else? Here!-" Pearl wrote something on the blackboard. "-This is the English alphabet! I want you all to copy the alphabet on your own...then I will tell you what sound each letter makes..."

For the remainder of the day, the lessons continued. Acapella was stubborn, but seemed to grasp the alphabet and linguistics much better than the other two. Gamma had already learned manners from his parents, so that was a breeze for him.

Toaster seemed to be struggling the most. She continued to make mistakes, and give objects their own name of her choosing.

By the end of the lesson, the poor Pearl was exhausted. Fortunately, she had some helpful presents that had been used to teach soldiers human languages in the past. Pearl had spent the entire night relocating them.
"You probably noticed the stack of books I brought in this morning." The renegade beckoned toward the large stack. "All of these are Earth books with side translations in Gemmish. I translated them myself! These are all common pieces of literature that you can use to help translate human writing! There is an encyclopedia, dictionary, grammar book, several scientific texts, and an ethics book. These will help you translate and read proper sentences." The Gem nodded after handing the books to Acapella. "I would suggest to read them immediately to get acquainted with Earth culture. The renegade Pearl than sadly looked toward the Keronian. "I am truly sorry Gamma. I don't have any books written in Keronian. Toaster and Acapella will have to help you with the lessons."

Gamma shrugged. "It's ok! I'll learn." The frog nodded. He was a pretty quick learner, and figured he would get used to the written language eventually.

"What about the cooking lesson?! You did say you would teach me today. I've been very patient!" Acapella seemed insistent.

Pearl sighed with exhaustion. "How about this...I'll teach you how to cook something new every day, alright? There are just...so many rules to follow with food safety and prep. Let's start with something more simple..."

---------

Pearl ended up showing Acapella how to cook a frozen Eggo Waffle in the toaster. The lesson seemed...incredibly simplistic, until Pearl began to teach Acapella about the toaster itself. She demonstrated how to adjust the heat, clean the appliance carefully, not to place it anywhere near water, and wrote down a list in Gemmish about the specific types of meals that were appropriate for the device.

"Do not put flavorings-like jelly or butter on any food before sticking it in the toaster. It will result in a huge mess."

"No...you can not put raw dough in the toaster."

"Remember- this part gets hot! Don't let Gamma touch it, or he'll hurt himself!"

Acapella was surprised how many rules came with the appliance, but she nodded, listened, and saved all the notes into her permanent memory files.

---------

"SUCCESS!" Peridot entered through the back door carrying a set of tools, and looking rather flustered. "I had to bring in some extra recycled Gem tech in order to build a proper one, but this Warp Pad is good to go!" The Peridot have a thumbs up.

"That...was fast." Garnet had a very suddle hint of surprise in her voice.

"Pssshhh! It was nothing! Warp Pads are easy to construct if you aren't planning on going off planet. Now if this was a COSMIC Warp Pad, that would've taken weeks!" The Peridot looked toward her new trio of friends. "Would you guys like to test it?!"

"YEAH!" Toaster threw her hands up in the air!

"Certainly." Acapella nodded.

"I'm sorry but...what is a Warp Pad exactly?" All the Gems looked at Gamma, slightly surprised. Through all the excitement, every single Gem has failed to inform Gamma what a Warp Pad even
"It's a device used to warp Gems from one place to another quickly!" Pearl explained.

"Basicly, NOT the bus." No one could really tell if Garnet was being sarcastic or not.

"Huh...well...can Keronians even use it?" The frog tilted his head.

"As long as there's a Gem on there with you, everything should be fine." Pearl nodded.

"Well...alright...I guess I'll give it a try than..."

Gamma found himself on the new Warp Pad in the middle of the woods with both Pearls and Toaster.

"Alright. We'll try somewhere nearby first. The house in Beach City should suffice! Brace yourselves..." the renegade nodded.

There was an immediate bright light that engulfed the entire party! While all three Gems seemed perfectly at ease, Gamma immediately started to do cartwheels. It felt like all gravity had dissapated! The mixture of the blinding light and switch of gravity made the frog feel extremely disoriented.

"WAM!"

Almost as quickly as the journey began, it stopped. The gravity returned to normal, as the frog hit the floor-HARD.

While the party had successfully transported into Steven's home, Gamma proceeded to crawl away from the Warp Pad weakly, and lose his lunch.

Both Pearls lifted their lips in disgust.

The oblivious Toaster threw her arms in the air! "WHOOO! AGAIN!"

"Ughph..." The Keronian moaned in pain.
As the weeks and months passed, the trio began to get used to their new life. Acapella, especially, picked up Earth reading and cooking rather quickly. She gained the skills to store food properly, utilize her new kitchen, and make just about everything in her cookbook. During her outings, she would often pick up extra books pertaining to the activity in order to try new challenges.

Gamma STILL couldn't read very well, so Toaster would sometimes read to him. The Gemmish in the encyclopedias Pearl had revised was incredibly helpful. If nothing else, at least he knew a little more about Earth animals, items, holidays and taboos.

Toaster, meanwhile, had gotten into an annoying habit of luring different wild animals into the house. At the alert to this news, Pearl invited Amethyst over. She instructed the Purple Gem to shape shift into different creatures, while she educated the Ruby on which Earth animals were dangerous.

All in all, the trio was adapting to their new environment very well- if not without a bit of their funny little quirks, and strange habits still intact. It even became (some-what) of a tradition for Acapella to cook everytime the Crystal Gems came over. Her Earth cooking was, indeed, some of the best they had ever tried. Now that the Yellow Pearl had basic recipes, safety, and food sanitation down to a tee, she could cook just about anything...and even began to experiment with new flavors! The renegade Pearl was incredibly proud of all her students- even if she couldn't eat anything.

There was only ONE problem- Garnet. As the days went by, the fusion became increasingly irritable. She was separating more, her two half’s arguing and wandering the beach. She was ignoring and avoiding basic questions about her change in demeanor. When visiting their new neighbors, she always seemed to hang around Gamma the most...like some sort of incredibly tall, quiet, creepy body guard.

Gamma always felt scared when she did this. The day finally came where he had to say something: “Erm...Garnet? Would you mind not standing so close? You're making me...incredibly nervous...”

Garnet said nothing and did not move. It was worth a try though.

Finally, the answer to the mountain of questions came on the morning of a seemingly normal day, in the seemingly normal place of Ocean Town. Acapella had made eggs and pancakes. Like always, she had created them from scratch. They tasted heavenly.

The Warp Pad in the backyard activated. Garnet appeared shortly afterward. The party of three could see her through the window. She did not approach the house, but simply stood on the edge of the woods looking into the home like some sort of creepy stalker.

A bead of sweat went down Gamma's face.

"Perhaps I should talk to her." Acapella offered. "She is acting rather...clingy...isn't she?"

The Yellow Pearl exited the home to confront the fusion. "Erm...Garnet? Is every-"

"-SHHHH! I'm trying to listen!"
Slightly spooked, the Yellow Pearl hushed.

"It's here." The fusion stated simply, before aiming one of her gauntlets toward a seemingly invisible nothingness in the sky. The massive fist fired off like a rocket, and managed to hit a ship of some type wearing a cloaking device. While the ship sustained little damage, it did require a rather fast landing in front of the house.

When the door to the odd spacecraft opened, there stood an alien species completely covered in green armor. His face was obstructed by an odd metallic helmet. He glanced around the area to see what had dinged up part of his ship. His outfit was completely overpowered by the size of the weapon he was carrying. It was so big, miracles were probably being performed just so that he could hold the damn thing.

Gamma and Toaster heard the din of the ship landing in the front yard, and got up from the kitchen table to investigate the source of the noise. Toaster opened the front door. Gamma stood slightly behind her, curiously.

The Keronian had forgotten to turn the pin on his hat. He was clearly visible.

The mysterious armored stranger said nothing, but pointed at Gamma in the most ominous of manners. He began to march forward to the front door, massive gun in tow.

Toaster jumped in fear, before shutting the front door quickly. "Who...who is THAT? Why do they have such a massive weapon?!"

"No clue. Lock the door. Let's go upstairs-quickly, now." Gamma turned the pin on his hat, and proceeded to become invisible. Toaster could hear him scudding up the stairs in a panic.

Toaster retreated to her room as well, and hid under the covers on her bedspread. Not exactly the most inconspicuous hiding place—but it made her feel better.

"Ding-Dong!" The house's doorbell rang, followed by an eerie silence. "Knock! Knock! Knock!" A somewhat more threatening knock at the door. The Keronian was internally surprised that a creature brandishing such heavy artillery would be polite enough to even attempt a doorbell. The locked front door's handle jiggled in frustration. Finally, there was a massively loud "PEW!" Noise, as the creature shot off the doorknob, and forced himself in.

Gamma recognized the sound all too well from his years of weapons training. It was a laser-based weapon—it sounded like a Blaster Rifle.

The invisible Gamma began to scale the wall in a panic. As he stuck to the side, the Keronian looked at the stranger down below. The man was getting closer as he climbed up the stairs, but didn't seem to detect Gamma what-so-ever. As the frog slinked onto the ceiling, he quickly scurried into Toaster's room to make sure she was ok.

It was not exactly discreet that Toaster was hiding here. The obvious mound of sheets mixed with the sauna-type temperature were a dead giveaway.

The mysterious stranger entered this room first. He lifted his gun at the obvious mound of sheets. Toaster was shivering in fear. Gamma slowly unholstered his blaster from the ceiling, and turned the safety off...

"click..."

The threat quickly changed his weapon's projectory, and re-aimed his gun to the ceiling! Several
rounds of lasers were shot off...all barely missed the Keronian's exact location. The frog jumped off the ceiling quickly, and proceeded to shoot two radioactive blasts toward the creature's feet!

There was a muffled yelp of pain as the radiation began to melt the Mandalorian armor to the intruder's flesh. Gamma took advantage of the distraction to grab Toaster's hand in his invisible state. The movement spooked the Gem slightly, as the frog gritted his teeth in pain. Her hand was burning his at an incredible rate. Despite this, the Keronian's adrenaline was to a point where he was able to work through the pain. He whisked the two of them down the stairs, before turning the pin on his hat once more.

"Gamma! You're safe! I can see you!"

The frog nodded, as he desperately looked for Acapella...

Garnet saw the duo through the window, and quickly entered the back of the house, before grabbing both Toaster and Gamma...just as the figure upstairs started firing random blasts in pure frustration.

"MOVE IT!" Garnet didn't have to ask twice as the group dashed toward the warp pad, and were instantly transported to the beach house.

The crowd tumbled into Steven's home so violently, that they basically dog piled off the Warp Pad. Gasping, adrenaline gunning at full force, the breathless Gamma immediately piped up: "What WAS that?!"

"Bounty Hunter." Garnet nodded. "They seem to be looking for YOU Gamma."

"ME?! What did I do?"

"Not sure. It may have something to do with Yellow Diamond..."

"Well isn't THAT just perfect! She already took my entire lifestyle away...might as well take my LIFE too!"

It was at this point that they noticed Pearl, Amethyst, and Steven all staring at them. They had (apparently) interrupted their breakfast unintentionally.

"GARNET?! What's going on?" Pearl was obviously not expecting extra company.

The Fusion grunted in response. "Not good. They know. They know where he is now..." Garnet stood up looking like she was ready to punch someone in the face.

"Calm down "G". There's no one here..." Amethyst attempted to put her friend at ease.

"Pearl. I need to speak with you...PRIVATELY." Garnet was incredibly solemn.

"Erm...ok?" The Pearl joined her friend into the temple and disappeared.

Everything suddenly became eerily quiet. No one really knowing what was going on, nor what to say.

The two Gems re-appeared in the house several moments later-Pearl looking much more pale than usual. The Gem turned to the Keronian. "Gamma, you...have been an excellent student...however, I
do believe it's time to...erm...test your knowledge a bit further..."

"Could you AT LEAST tell me what's going on?!

"Erm...ugg..." the Pearl turned to Garnet who shook her head in denial. "Erm...well, I CAN tell you some things. It seems that bounty hunter you saw WAS sent by Yellow Diamond. It also seems that more of them will arrive now that your hiding spot has been found. You cannot return to your house for the time being. It's too dangerous."

"WHAT?! All of my cooking tools are in there!" Acapella screamed in a rage.

Pearl huffed. "I'm SORRY Acapella. You should know that your friend's lives are MUCH more important. You can use my tools for now."

Acapella looked incredibly guilty at this comment.

Garnet piped up. "I think it's time to teach you all a lesson...of a different type-specifically, in defense." The fusion nodded.
Chapter 34

The trio soon found themselves in the Sky Arena. Gamma and Acapella were sitting on the sideline. Garnet and Toaster were in the middle of the arena. While the fusion did not want to admit it to the rest of the team, she could tell that Toaster had the most potential in terms of power. If the Ruby was going to help protect Gamma and Acapella from bounty hunters, she would need some encouragement and confidence.

"Alright! Toaster! You're up first!" Garnet knocked her gauntlets together.

"Ehhh?! But...but...I don't wanna fight...this is all very sudden..." the Gem blushed before looking away. "I told myself I didn't wanna hurt anyone else before landing on this planet..."

Garnet seemed to calm down a bit at this statement. She mumbled something, before shimmering, and unfusing with herself.

"The...the Ruby!" Toaster yelled in surprise as the Ruby approached her sternly. The Ruby's glare was harsh at first, but settled slightly as she glanced at Toaster, who seemed to be slightly frightened.

Ruby sighed. "Listen here Toaster! You are a soldier...correct?"

"I was..."

"NO! You still are! This is serious! Someone wants to hurt Gamma!"

"Noes...no one would hurt Gamma...Gamma is nice."

"...well, Yellow Diamond wants to hurt Gamma...really bad! Are you going to let her hurt Gamma?"

"noes...NOES! NO ONE HURTS GAMMA! HE'S MY MOTHER!"

"THAT'S RIGHT! If Gamma gets super hurt, he can't reform like a Gem. He will be gone...forevers!"

"NOES! I must protect Gamma!" Toaster nodded with determination!

"That's the spirit!" Ruby bellowed with pride! "Now! Show me what you've got soldier! Let's brawl!"

Ahh! A pretend fight! Toaster used to do this with her squad all the time! Both Rubies got into a fighting stance before beginning to tussle in a somewhat playful manner. Ruby, (at first) seemed like the much more experienced fighter...however, Toaster was no pushover and had the advantage of being slightly smaller and faster. Toaster also began to lose control over her heat again as the fight continued.

The smaller Ruby began to pant with exhaustion. Releasing so much extra heat was making her fatigued.

Ruby formed her gauntlet, and punched Toaster square in the face! The smaller Ruby flew through the air and skidded to the other side of the arena. "Use your weapon Toaster! This is not an even fight without it!"
Toaster looked at her friends in the stand while thinking about this. "N-NO! They'll laugh! Th-they ALWAYS laugh...even during brawls...n-noes..." Toaster curled into a helpless ball at the horrific memories.

Ruby decided to take another approach "So...You rather let Gamma shatter over someone laughing at you?! You rather just see him disappear forever?"

"Noes...no...Gamma...Gamma is worth more than Toaster..." Toaster looked at Ruby with hatred. "Toaster can come back...Gamma can not." With a massive amount of rage sparking in her eyes, Toaster reached into her gemstone, and produced her little red slingshot.

"Pffft-THAT'S her weapon?! That little thing?!" Acapella couldn't help herself.

Toaster tried to ignore the Pearl, and grabbed an adorable-looking red bouncy ball from her gemstone. She readied her slingshot...

"Bwa-ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! It's... it's so CUTE! What kind of a weapon IS tha-"

Acapella never got to finish her sentence. Toaster shot the ball directly at the Ruby. The resulting explosion was so intense, that the Sky Arena completely ripped in two!

"SHALE!" The Yellow Pearl clung for dear life as her side of the stadium began to fall toward the ground below. She quickly grabbed Gamma, who had passed out from the explosion. Toaster swayed slightly, before surcoming to fatigue, and falling asleep.

Ruby ran toward Sapphire, and quickly reformed Garnet. She proceeded to nab all the spectators, and make a bolt to the Warp Pad that was falling at an ever faster rate.

The group warped back to Steven's house, and ended up dog piling off of the Warp Pad again.

Pearl stood above the pile hands on hips, survaying how scuffed up everyone was. "Honestly Garnet! What are you doing? You guys keep landing like this!"

The Fusion gasped in surprise before smiling. "Gamma will be fine. He has the best security system I have EVER seen! Oh and..." Garnet began to mumble: "The Sky Arena kind of doesn't exist anymore...sorry."

"Wait...WHAT?!" Pearl squawked in a rage.
Acapella was clearly shaken up upon re-arrival at Steven's house. She was currently sipping a glass of calming tea, and boring a warm blanket that Pearl had provided her. She watched cautiously as Toaster went back and forth from checking on the unconscious Gamma, to helping Steven complete a puzzle. 

She hated to admit it, but what she had seen had spooked her so badly, that she was now slightly fearful of the little weirdo. How on Homeworld could one singular innocent Ruby hold THAT much fire power? It didn't make any flipping sense. She had never seen such power come out of a small Gem, plus, Rubies were more physical fighters-so their weapons usually reflected that strength. Simple, little, tools, like: gauntlets, pocket knives, chisels, cleavers, and nunchucks. But Toaster...Toaster had an elemental weapon...similar to an electric whip, or water manipulation.

"Ruby..." 

Toaster looked toward Acapella with curiosity. She really could not understand why the Yellow Pearl still refused to use her nickname after all this time. Still so, Toaster approached Acapella- her head tilting with intrigue. "What is it Acapella?"

"I need to discuss your...erm..."weapon"..." 

Toaster blushed in embarrassment, and shuffled her feet. It was obvious that she didn't like talking about it. She looked increasingly uncomfortable. "Ye-yeah? What is it?"

"What I saw...I mean...what happened...is that...normal?"

"whatdoyamean?"

"Like...is your weapon ALWAYS that powerful?"

"N-Noes...it depends on my mood."

"How so?"

Toaster glanced at Acapella, and than toward the front door of the house. "I-I can show you...if you promise not to laugh again." Toaster gave Acapella the stink eye.

"I promise I won't." Acapella was quite somber. There was no way she was ever going to make fun of that slingshot ever again.

"Ok! Follows me..." The Ruby led Yellow Pearl toward the front of the beach house. As the two went down the stairs, they stood in the sand facing the shoreline, Toaster began to make demands. "Make me happy!"

"What?"

"Do something to make me happy!"

This was not the Yellow Pearl's area of expertise. She dug through her gemstone, and managed to find a chocolate bar. It was the only thing she could think of. She handed the confectionary to
Toaster, and hoped that the sacrifice of her cooking materials was worth the point.

Toaster proceeded to gobble up the chocolate- getting a good majority of it on her face. Acapella seemed slightly disgusted by how messy the creature was, but Toaster smiled with glee!

The little Ruby than proceeded to take a bouncy ball out of her gemstone, and toss it in the air. Acapella flinched slightly in anticipation of the thing blowing up half the beach.

Instead, there was a pleasant small "pop!". The thing exploded in mid air- creating some beautiful blue sparks- not unlike a fire cracker exploding.

Acapella looked up in surprise. "Huh! Well...that's...different..."

Toaster nodded. "If I get super mad or scared- the 'splosion becomes bigger!"

Acapella stared at Toaster cautiously. "How...big...can it get?"

Toaster shrugged. "I don't know. I've only used it...like...6 times in my WHOLE life! I...don't like people laughing at me..." Toaster blushed. She was clearly quite embarrassed of the tool. "I prefer using fireballs...like the other Rubies." She nodded. "Most of the time, I forget it's even there. In the heat of battle, I always feel more comfortable using my physical strength instead..."

There was a pregnant pause, before Toaster came to a realization! "Oh! Acapella! What is YOUR weapon?!"

"I...don't have one. I'm a Pearl."

"...but...but...the OTHER Pearl has a weapon! The pointy thing! So you must have one too! Right? Yeah?"

"I've never pulled any weapon from my gemstone Ruby..."

Oh! You've gotta try! It's only fair! I showed you mine...now you show me YOURS!" Toaster sat in the sand and waited patiently.

"Erm- uh...well...I'll try..." Acapella attempted to concentrate the best she could. She put her hand in her gemstone...and...

...

...another candy bar.

"WOW! More food!" Toaster beconed towered the candy bar in enthusiasm! Acapella sighed, before handing the treat over.

"That wasn't my weapon Ruby. That was just more cooking ingredients..."

"Well, I thought it was awesome anyways!" Toaster was difficult to understand with her mouth full.

"Perhaps I can be of some assistance?"

Acapella and Toaster looked up in surprise at the new voice. It was Pearl. She was standing on top of the stairs watching the two down below.
"Agggh! Noes! How much of my weapon did you see?!” Toaster was distraught.

"...All of it. It was actually quite lovely!"

Toaster blushed.

"HEY! Have you been eavesdropping on our conversation this ENTIRE time?!” Acapella was not amused.

"Yes." Pearl was blunt.

"Well that wasn't terribly polite of you, Miss: "manners and ediquite"." Pearl sighed. "Do you want my help, or NOT?"

"Mmph." Acapella mumbled her response.

__________

Pearl was now facing Acapella on the beach. The teacher began her lesson: "Ok. To summon your own weapon is quite difficult...especially if you're a Pearl. It took me YEARS to perfect doing it, but trust me when I say, ALL Gems have a weapon—even us Pearls...Homeworld just doesn't want you to believe that you do. It's a mind trick."

Acapella nodded.

"It takes lots of concentration! Try visualizing what you want to pull from your gemstone—like this!” Pearl concentrated, and in a flash of magnificent light, produced her spear. "See? Now YOU try!"

Acapella concentrated really hard, and mimicked the movements of her teacher. She produced a basic whisk. Disappointed, the Yellow Pearl allowed the cooking tool to fall into the sand.

"That's OK! Try again!"

Acapella did the exact same movement, and ended up with a spork.

This entire scenario repeated itself, until the entire beach was filled with food and cooking utensils.

The Yellow Pearl looked weak and distraught (if not a tad bit exhausted). At this point she had (basically) emptied out the entire contents of her pocket space again.

Pearl huffed as she surveyed the mess. "Let's...try a different approach. Some Gems produce their weapon in the heat of battle! Here...” Pearl produced a Holo-Pearl easily from her gemstone.

"DO YOU WISH TO ENGAGE IN COMBAT?!" The robotic voice spooked Acapella slightly.

"What is THAT?!" Acapella tilted her head—completely baffled.

"It's a Holo-Pearl! I use them to practice combat—typically with swords, but also with my spear as well! Perhaps a combat simulation will encourage you to produce your weapon?"

"Wait...you want me to...to...fight this thing?! But...I've never been in a fight in my life!"

"It's quite alright Acapella. If things begin to look bleak, I can simply terminate the sequence...now..." Pearl suddenly looked rather devious. "...let's see what you can do! Initiate duel
mode!"
"DUEL MODE INITIATED!"

"Wait! Wait! At least let me find something to defend myself with first!" Acapella dug through the sand, but was only able to find the whisk. The Holo-Pearl zoomed forward, sword in hand!

It took all of Acapella's speed and strength to counter the sword with her whisk. She held it over her head, as the sword clanged repeatedly on the utensil...shredding it to ribbons with each strike. Acapella managed to get a single kick in, knocking the Holo-Pearl backwards, just long enough to shuffle through the sand, and attempt to escape.

"CALL IT OFF! CALL IT OFF!" The Yellow Pearl screeched while running in circles, being chased like a criminal.

Toaster was watching with Pearl, and obviously was not liking the very chillax attitude the renegade had about her friend getting attacked. "PEARL! PEARL! MAKE IT STOP!"

"In a minute Toaster..."

The little Ruby couldn't take it anymore. "Acapella! Use your voice!" Toaster was willing to fall asleep briefly, if it meant her friend would be safe.

The Yellow Pearl nodded quickly. "LAAAAAAAAA!"

Toaster and Pearl dropped like flies, and fell asleep- as was expected.

The Holo-Pearl, on the other hand...did not.

Acapella's eyes grew in fear! She...was alone...she was now completely alone. The Holo-Pearl kept thrusting her sword every-which-way, as the Yellow Pearl desperately continued to dodge within the sand.

Now that the renegade Pearl was asleep, she could not terminate the program. Acapella would either have to beat this thing, or poof trying.

Her singing didn't seem to have any affect on the AI. The Yellow Pearl kept backing up until she was trapped between the retchid thing, and a massive beach bolder. She looked up in fear as the Holo-Pearl raised it's weapon to throw it's final blow!

Her adrenaline running at full speed, the Yellow Pearl instinctively reached into her gemstone in hopes she had something...ANYTHING left in her pocket space to defend herself with. Acapella squinted, and closed her eyes with anticipation.

"CLANG!"

The sword did not hit her. Acapella opened one eye in surprise!

The scene was rediculous.

The situation was so odd, it was almost humorous.

...hell, it WAS humorous.

She had finally done it. She had called upon her gemstone's weapon...which just happened to be a massive, yellow, six-foot...spatula.
Yes, indeed. It was a massive cooking utensil used to flip pancakes.

Acapella's mouth hung agape for a few seconds, before she pushed against the sword using the handlebar of the massive spatula with all her might. The Holo-Pearl took several steps backwards, attempting to regain her footing.

Acapella spun the massive tool like a baton quickly. It was strange how natural and weightless the spatula felt in her hands. As the Holo-Pearl attempted to charge at her once more, the Yellow Pearl simply used the massive flat side of the tool to hit the monster, and send the competitor flying toward the sea at a terrifying rate.

Acapella covered the sun from her eyes using her free hand, as she watched the annoying creature sail miles into the distance—it's form dissipating from the sheer speed of the fall.

The entire thing felt rather satisfying—especially after all the trouble and fear the damn thing had caused.

As Pearl finally woke up after a long nap she looked up at the bright sun. Standing directly above her, was a very annoyed-looking Acapella.

"Clod. Moron. Never do that again without my permission. I almost got slaughtered because of you."

"Did...did it work?" Pearl mumbled...slightly groggy.

Acapella said nothing.

in the distance, Garnet had been watching the brawl from the house's porch. She nodded in satisfaction. Pearl had done exactly what she had told her to do. As the fusion predicted, the risky plan may have been slightly dangerous, but the results were spectacular.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! It's me again! I just wanted to give a special thank you shout out to Vanessa Masters for reviewing EVERY SINGLE chapter that I've been posting the last couple of weeks! Seriously! Your comments have been motivating me like crazy! If you guys like the story, or have any questions, do feel free to comment and review! You'd be surprised how much even one comment can motivate a writer! LOL!

Anywhos...I hope you guys have been enjoying the story so far! Oh!

...and I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving too!
"A SPATULA?! BWA! HA! HA! HA! Ha! Oh man! Your "great and awesome" weapon is...a giant SPATULA?!!" Amethyst was rolling on the floor laughing!

Acapella bushed a horrific shade of Yellow.

"OH MAN! Sucks to be you! What are you going to do with THAT? Fry your enemies to death?!"

The Yellow Pearl stuck her nose in the air. "I assure you! The tool was most efficient with getting rid of the Hollo Pearl!"

"It will also be good for pancakes and burgers." Garnet couldn't help but smirk a little at her own quip.

Acapella gave the fusion a nasty glare.

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This training was all well and good, but Gamma was still the most weak of the trio. His only two defenses were his invisibility and blasters. He had none of his major artillery- every other weapon he had created had been confiscated by the MIB

The little frog seemed...quietly out of place. He sat in a corner of Steven's house, thinking to himself, as everyone else ate a well deserved lunch.

All of this stress training, the loss of their new home...was all his fault. If he hadn't been with Toaster and Acapella in the first place- perhaps they would still have a safe spot to call their own.

As everyone chatted and ate, only Garnet and Toaster seemed to notice the Keronian's somber mood. The frog stood up, and headed toward the front door. He turned the pin on his hat to cloak himself.

"Gamma? Where are you going?" Toaster seemed concerned.

"Out." The frog responded bluntly, before the front door seemed to open and close again on it's own.

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Looking around- not exactly knowing where to go, the frog walked by the shore. He thought about why Yellow Diamond wanted to kill him so badly- that dictator...did she have no empathy? Gamma knew he was a piece of the puzzle...a puzzle that the damn Gem leader wanted to snuff out. He was one of the only creatures that would be able to testify, and create a loophole in her lies.

He certainly didn't want to drag any of his friends down with him...

As the frog got closer to the woods borderlining the shore, he decided he needed a bit of space to think things over.

Gamma walked into the woods for a good half a mile before finding a small swamppy marsh. The frog thought the area seemed inviting, and decided to go swimming. Fresh water seemed to relax the creature, as he was left alone with his thoughts.
As he swam about, he spotted some dragonflies and flicked his tongue instinctively. He caught three, and seemed quite satisfied with the small snack. Yes...this place seemed habitable. Perhaps he could stay in this small body of water, while Toaster and Acapella could ask the agency for another home? Perhaps he could just contact the MIB, and ask for his ship back. He would leave his new family here...it would be a very lonely life, but at least the aliens he cared about would be safe? He wondered if he turned himself in, would the Diamond leave the Ruby and Pearl alone?

Probably not. Wishful thinking.

Weighing his options, the Keronian felt trapped and very much depressed. An awful stench began to form...immediately killing all the fish in the marsh.

There seemed to be some sort of din outside the house! Steven opened his front door to investigate, and immediately regretted his decision. A foul odor was affecting the air. The boy held his nose sourly as he began to tear up with discomfort. Down below, was (perhaps) a once-in-a-lifetime event taking place! There was a major stampede of animals running away from the woods that bordered the beach-deer, rabbits, turtles, birds, mice- all scrambling to get away from (presumably) the source of the un-godly scent.

"STARS! What IS that?!” Pearl cupped her hands in front of her face. "Steven! Please shut the door!"

The boy obeyed.

"UGH...I would know that scent anywhere." Acapella held her nose as well. "It's that damn Keronian again! What on Homeworld is he upset about NOW?!"

"Gamma's doing this?! Wow! I've had some interesting smells in my room before, but nothing this pungent! Good for him!" Amethyst nodded in enthusiasm. The smell seemed to have no effect on her what-so-ever. In fact, she seemed somewhat impressed.

Garnet stared into the distance before speaking up: "Amethyst, find Gamma. He is in need of a talking to."

"I'll go!" Toaster scarfed the remainder of her lunch before heading toward the door.

"No Toaster. You stay here." Garnet looked down at the Ruby most seriously. Toaster was confused by the behavior, but behaved and sat upon the floor.

"Why do I have to do this again?" Amethyst quipped, slightly annoyed.

Garnet's answer was blunt: "You seem to be the only one that can handle the smell." she lied. Deep down, Garnet knew that Amethyst had to be the one to talk some sense into the frog.

Grumbling, the purple Gem exited the house, and began to walk toward the woods in the opposite way as all the animals.

Gamma was not terribly difficult to find. The odor became more pungent as she got ever closer. The amount of wilted and dead shrubbery also increased as the smell did.

Amethyst finally located the small marsh. The scent had attracted a bunch of flies. The water was
filed to the brim with dead, floating, fish. Every flower, plant, leaf, and shrub had shriveled up into nothingness.

Gamma was still quite invisible, but the excess amount of moss, scum, and dead leaves had clung onto a mysterious blank spot in the water. The plants made a small outline indicating a Keronian's hat and face.

As Gamma noted the unwanted guest, he dove underwater, and stayed there for several minutes in hopes that the Gem would leave. When he re-surfaced, he found Amethyst sitting down patiently by the water side.

"What do YOU want?" Gamma was not in the best of spirits.

"I don't know..." the Gem shrugged. Everyone told me to come here, so I did! By the way, nice musk! You must give me the recipe sometime! I could prank SO MANY people with a smell like this..."

Gamma blushed "It's...biological. This smell wards off enemies when Keronians feel...erm...vulnerable?" The frog attempted to find any word that would cloak his sadness and depression at the moment.

"Ah..." Amethyst nodded, not really understanding but wanting to change the subject.
"Soooooo...why do you feel vulnerable anyway red? There's no bounty hunters or Diamonds anywhere around here..."

The purple Gem heard another "Bloop!" as the Keronian dove under the water again. It was pretty obvious that the frog didn't really want to talk all that much. The Amethyst recognized this behavior all too well. Something was on the creature's mind that was disturbing him. Since the smell wasn't terribly bothersome, Amethyst waited patiently by the water for the frog to resurface again.

She heard something breach the water about 30 minutes later. To Gamma's frustration, the Gem hadn't moved. She could hear the frog grumbling to himself.

Amethyst put her hands on her hips. "Now look here! I don't know what your problem is...but I ain't moving until you get...whatever it is...off your chest! I can stay here as long as you can- Hell, I don't even have to sleep or eat! Just spit out whatever's troubling you red! You'll feel a lot better- I should know!"

The frog grumbled a few more seconds, before caving in. "I- I'm a burden! Alright!? It's because of ME we can't go back to the house! It's because of ME Toaster and Acapella have to take defense classes! It's because of ME shooting at Yellow Diamond that we are all screwed in the first place! If I wasn't here...there would be no danger! If I wasn't here..." the frog stopped, sobbing slightly.
"M-My old platoon...with my old platoon I used to be the one that would protect everyone. I was the weapons specialist, everyone relied on me to keep them safe. NOW it seems like I'm nothing more than a weak child. How am I supposed to protect anyone when I'M the reason the danger is following us in the first place?!" Gamma continued ranting on: "I don't have "special magical" powers! I can't reform, or transform, or fuse, or pull weapons from nothingness! I can't sing people to sleep, or create fireballs, or do ANYTHING like that! I'm the weakest one now! ME! The one that used to protect everyone...I am...completely useless...I can't see my family...Hell no one is allowed to even look at me on this planet! I'm just a speck of nothing that no one knows about-a piece of dust to be sat upon and shuffled about."

With another "bloop..." The frog sunk into the bog again. The smell increased. He...was so
tired...so very, VERY tired.

Minutes passed.

When he resurfaced, Amethyst was gone. Figured as much. No one wanted to listen to a stupid sob story from a Keronian. The frog swam a couple more laps around the bog, wondering what to do now. Perhaps he could just stay here for the time being. Everyone would be safe...no one would have to worry about protecting him. Gamma sighed, and finally crawled out of the body of water. He began to clean himself of the bits of plant life that had been stuck onto his side. He wasn't sure what to do at this point. He figured the only decent thing would be to (at least) return to the house, and bare a fairwell. Toaster would certainly be upset, but it was the right thing to do to keep her safe.

The frog sadly walked along the shore again. Dusk was beginning to show it's face. He could see the lights on from Steven's home- wondering how on Keron he was going to break the sad news to the group. He sadly sauntered up the stairs, turned the pin on his hat, and opened the door...

At first, Gamma was unsure what he was looking at. The entire place was FILLED with different colored Keronians. The aliens had all frozen in place as the frog entered the home. It seemed he had interrupted some sort of odd activity involving everyone getting ready for a shindig.

Needless to say Gamma was...completely confused. It took a few seconds before he could process what was going on.

"NOES!" a red Keronian shoved Gamma out the door! "We're not readies yet! Out!" The mysterious Keronian led Gamma back out the door, and closed the entrance quickly.

The frog blinked in surprise! What the devil was going on?! He stood on his tip toes, and peeped through the window with a new-found curiosity. The whole house was filled with them! Keronians! Where had they come from? They were making food, setting up streamers, selecting music...everything needed for a party...

After several minutes, the same Keronian that had pushed him out the door re-appeared. "Okays! You can come in now! It's time to ate!"

Ate? It's time to ate?! Gamma squinted at the Keronian suspiciously. Sure enough, she had a ruby gemstone in the middle of her forehead.

Shape shifting.

As Gamma entered the room everyone yelled "Surprise!" in unison!

A dark red Keronian wearing a nifty pair of sunglasses approached. "Amethyst said that you were felling a bit down about being away from Keron, so we decided to plan this to cheer you up!"

"You better appreciate this you slime..." the yellow Keronian (formally known as Acapella) yelled from the stairway. "I've never even thought of taking such a ridiculous form before..."

Gamma looked around with stars in his eyes! "You guys did all this for ME?!"

"YEAH!" Toaster smiled. "If you want to be around Keronians, we don't have to look like Gems..."

"We are still family. No matter what we look like!" Amethyst nodded, reminding herself of all the times her form had been made fun of. She could certainly sympathize with the frog.
"Thank you! Thank you everyone!" Gamma had tears in his eyes. "I...I don't care what you guys look like either-as long as your safe...I just want to keep you all safe..."

Garnet put her hand on the Keronian's shoulder. "I think we can help out with that. I have a plan- a plan that will help you keep Acapella and Toaster safe." The fusion nodded in her froggy state.
Chapter 37

"Well, well, weeeellllll! Glad to see you finally saw my upmost intelegence, and great potential!"
Peridot beamed with happiness, as Garnet and Gamma approached the barn.

The frog mumbled curses under his breath. This is NOT what he had in mind when the fusion said she wanted to help.

"I am to assume you have told him the conditions?" Peridot looked up at the fusion.

"I have. Gamma has...reluctantly agreed." Garnet answered.

"Good! I'm glad everyone understands! Let's get started!"

Garnet had, indeed, explained the conditions to Gamma. Peridot could bother, question, and test the Keronian as much as possible, and, in exchange, she would help him advance his weponry by providing blueprints, tools, and assistance.

"Alright! If we are going to optimize your weapons system- I need to know about any skills, hobbies, and abnormalities in your lifestyle!"

"What?"

"(sigh) What makes your species DIFFERENT from all others? It can be anything trivial- like (for instance) us Gems can reform...and you Keronians caaaaaannnn..." Peridot beconed for the frog to finish her sentence for her.

"erm...not?"

"Very good!" Peridot wrote the information down on her tablet. "One stray shot and your gone forever. Got it."

"Is this...absolutely nessesary?"

"Yes."

Gamma grumbled again.

"Perhaps you would like to expand on these notes Garnet?" Peridot looked up at the fusion for assistance.

Garnet shrugged. "He smells bad when he's depressed."

Gamma blushed horribly.

Peridot nodded at the info before writing it down. "Is there an external trigger for this defense mechanism?"

The Keronian instinctively clasped his hands over his headpiece. He did NOT want another Gem messing with his hat! Both Gems glanced at the behavior curiously. In a sudden tussle, Garnet grabbed the frog as Peridot forced the hat from Gamma's grasp.

Bald again. The creature blushed. Garnet used her future vision to locate the mysterious soft spot.
"Here." She pointed at the center of the frog's bald head. Peridot used a permanent marker to carefully circle the pressure point without disturbing it.

The Peridot then began to examine the hat with the utmost curiosity. This was her first time seeing Keronian tech, and she seemed utterly giddy at the chance to look at it up close. "There's a basic translator in the right flap! Fascinating! It seems to be made of waterproof material as well!"

"Be careful with that!" Gamma did not like some stranger messing with his most personal attributes.

Peridot turned the pin on the front, and jumped in surprise when the hat (as well as her hand holding it) disappeared entirely! "OHMYGOSH! A portable cloaking device! This is AMAZING! I've never seen a mechanical one fitted in such a small space before!"

"Do you two quite mind? I still want to keep my dignity..." Gamma looked up at Garnet quite annoyed. The fusion was still carrying the frog under her arm like a flour sack.

"Oh. Sorry." Garnet placed the Keronian on the ground. The frog stomped over to Peridot, and whisked his hat back with a massive amount of annoyance. "NO MORE touching my hat without my permission!" The alien scolded Peridot. The green alien attempted to grab the hat back, and Gamma smacked her hand quickly! "NO! This is mine! MINE!"

The Peridot looked a bit sheepish, before nodding in agreement.

"Mercy..." The Keronian straightened his headpiece.

"Sorry about that. I became...overly excited." Peridot straightened herself. "Let's continue..."

The next few hours were filled with an interesting set of tests.

Peridot introduced Gamma to her "Smaller-Than-Average-Lake" she found that the frog seemed quite comfortable in the water. He could hold his breath up to 45 minutes, dive well over 20 feet down, and seemed more entergetic and fast in the liquid than on land.

Peridot made Gamma sit in the direct sunlight, and took note of his extreme vonerability to dehydration. She let him swim again afterward, and saw that the frog's skin seemed to re-absorb the water quite easily. It seemed that the creature had to stay slightly moist at all times to be remotely comfortable.

Garnet was actually a great help. She informed Peridot that Gamma had the ability to stick to walls, and had been told by Acapella that the frog's tongue was twice his height and very sticky.

Gamma showed off his artillery capabilities by using his blaster to shoot some cans off a fence. in terms of hobbies, he showed Peridot his whittling skills. He located a piece of wood, and carved an earth flower from it as an example.

The Peridot measured his time when running from one end of the barn, to the other.

The green Gem also (to the paranoia of the frog) began to examine one of his blasters to see how it worked. She nodded as if agreeing to herself.

Finally, after all was said and done, Peridot whispered to Garnet and had her defuse.
"Sooo!" Peridot clapped her hands, excited! "Sooo...yes! I think I can assist you with improving your skill set! This won't hurt a bit! Sapphire! Would you do the honors?"

The small Gem nodded in agreement, before sending a small wave of frigid air Gamma's way. The frog began to droop in exhaustion. "Wha...why? Why are you making me s-sleepy?" Gamma yawned.

Sapphire smiled. "We are going to help you optimise your skills and weaponry! If you are asleep, I predict the process will go by faster. We will also need this..." The Sapphire lifted the Keronian's hat from his head.

"N-no... my special hat...please don't take it..." Gamma made a feeble attempt to reach for the headpiece with little success. He sat on the ground, and yawned again.

"Gamma...I need you to trust me." The Sapphire nodded. "My future vision tells me that this is the most efficient way to keep Toaster and Acapella safe. We will not do anything to your hat without your permission though...do you trust me?"

The sleepy Keronian thought about this for several seconds. Was his special hat more important than his friends? Of course not! The frog decided to make the ultimate sacrifice...it was a no brainer. Even though his hat was very important to him- his new family was MUCH more important.

"I-I trust you. Just...be careful with it...OK?"

The Sapphire nodded and smiled before increasing the chill factor-resulting in the frog hibernating.

The Keronian woke up about three days later.

Groggly and surprised he glanced around attempting to find his bearings. He had been moved to a pile of hay inside the barn. It also seemed that Garnet had re-fused. She was keeping watch over the creature while sitting on one of the hay bales.

"Well! Good morning! Did you have a fruitful rest?"

"Erm...yeah...the last thing I remember is something about my hat...MY HAT!" The Keronian stirred in a sudden panic! He felt his head-the hat was still there. He checked the cloaking device, and made sure the material was in tact. It WAS! Thank the stars! The creature sighed in relief. The headpiece still fit perfectly!

At first it had seemed nothing had changed at all. Perhaps the short nap was some sort of silly prank? As Gamma's hands went over the familiar material of the ear flaps, he felt something...new and different. Buttons! Very small and discreet buttons had been added to the bottom of the right inside flap of the hat.

"WHA?! What did you DO?! Why are there buttons...this- this isn't right..." Gamma suddenly looked incredibly panicked!

Peridot heard the din, and decided to see how the creature was enjoying his improvements. As she poked her head over the hay bail, the frog pointed at her accusingly. "YOU...What did you do?!"

"Um...improved your headpiece?"
"N-no...It was fine the way it was!"

Slightly disheartened, Peridot began to defend herself. "Um...have you even attempted to TRY any of the new functions yet? It was very difficult to install you know...the fusion especially insisted that I mess with the material as little as possible. Also, you could have warned us that the hat was a part of your skeletal system...that came as...quite a shock for both of us. I felt like I was performing surgery..."

The Keronian flushed in a rage. "Why did you think I was so protective of it?! It may seem like just a hat to you, but Keronians are born with these hats! They're a part of us!"

"What are those bones used for anyway?" Peridot inquired.

"They hold up a system that allows me to hear properly!" Gamma nodded. "They are more flexible bones that can bend easily to prevent breakage!"

"I see...WELL, regardless!" The Peridot clapped her hands! "-give it a try! I think you'll be pleasantly surprised!"

Gamma hesitated.

The frog cautiously pressed the first button- there was an imediant pleseant mist of water that surrounded the Keronian from the hat. The alien could slowly feel his stamina growing quickly.

"It's a humidifier! Just in case you end up in a desert...or something!" The Peridot nodded. "It collects water from the air and stores it, so refilling the device is not required!"

Regrettibly impressed, the frog attempted the second button. This one was producing a warm heat which the creature shut off quickly in discomfort.

"For the cold...so you don't fall asleep." Peridot stated plainly.

The third button opened a nifty pocket space within the hat to store stuff. "You could fit an entire plaster canon in there if you wanted to! It works similarly to a Gem's pocket space!" Peridot seemed increasingly giddy as she witnessed the frog's eyes light up!

The fourth button caused a surprising conclusion. The ear flaps curled up entirely. In surprise, Gamma could see that the Peridot was attempting to explain something...but could not hear a word she was saying. He pressed the button again, and the hat's flaps unfolded just in time to catch the last part of the sentence: "-for when the Yellow Pearl sings."

Excitement filled the frog as he willingly pressed the last button!

"WAIT! DON'T PRESS THAT ONE YET-"

Too late. A singular, cylinder block that had had been manually installed into the hat gently tapped onto the very tip of the Keronian's head before retreating back into the hat's fabric.

Gamma shivered in surprise, as a foul odor filled the barn. Garnet and Peridot coughed and gasped for air before retreating from the building quickly.

The Keronian blushed horribly.

Through gasps, Garnet laughed slightly. "Well, at least we know it works now!" She smiled.

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"Here we are!" Peridot had one last surprise for the frog. She handed him his blasters. I have modified your weapons with an electrical piece. This should help stun enemies without hurting them, as well as defusing a Gem's form...just in case Yellow Diamond or one of her body guards comes looking for you. You should be safe against all sorts of elements and threats now!" The Peridot nodded.

"Th-Thank You!" Gamma was incredibly humbled by the gesture and assistance.

"Nah...Wow! Thanks for helping me with my research too!" Peridot nodded.

Gamma thought deeply for a bit. Perhaps their new home would be safe to reoccupy now that the trio was armed to the teeth...
Chapter 38

When the trio cautiously arrived at their home, they were expecting the worst.

Surprisingly, the house was pretty much intact. Toaster's room was riddled with bullet holes, and the doorknob was still missing...but it seemed the bounty hunter had given up and left rather quickly after his prey escaped.

"HEY!" Accepella yelled as she checked the cupboards "-that JERK stole all the cashews!"

Gamma laughed. "I think that's the least of our worries right now Acapella."

While Toaster was somewhat nervous about staying in the house again, no one could be more on edge than Gamma. Fortunately, it seemed the mysterious bounty hunter had lost interest and moved on once his prey had escaped.

As the days lugged on, things started evolving back to normality. Acapella cooked, Gamma kept his equipment in top shape, and Toaster went on regular journeys into the woods in the backyard.

Everything seemed absolutely and unapologetically average.

Steven was spending some "jam time" with his best friend Connie. The duo was sharing a picnic of sandwiches on the hill.

"Soo...what's new?" Connie broke the awkward silence of eating with innocent banter.

Steven gulped down the piece of sandwich in his mouth so quickly he nearly choked himself. Coughing slightly, the boy responded in the most guilty way possible: "Ha-HA! Yup! Everything is fine! Yes! No changes here!"

"Erm...Steven? Are you alright? Why are you acting so-"

"GEM STUFF! YES! Lots and lots of Gem stuff happening lately! Nothing new or abnormal!"

Steven had been told specifically by Garnet not to tell Connie about the new alien neighbors staying down the road...especially for Gamma's contract and safety.

Connie put her hands on her hips in frustration. "Steven, WHAT is going on?! You're acting awfully guilty...it's not too difficult to tell when you're hiding secrets..."

Steven sighed. "I'm sorry Connie. I made a promise. I really, REALLY want to tell you what's going on...but I can't..."

"I thought there were no secrets between us anymore Steven." Connie seemed disappointed.

"I know...I know...but someone's lifestyle is on the line..." the boy's head dropped somewhat sheepishly.

"Ah! Well that's different than..." Connie nodded before smirking maliciously. "...I'll just...ASK PEARL!" Connie got up quickly, and began to run toward the beach house!
"Noooooooooooo! Connie! Come back!" Steven ran after his friend in a hurry! He hoped that Connie was just kidding...

"BAM! BAM! BAM!" There was a violent knock on the door.

"Hang on! Hang on! I'm coming!" Pearl interrupted her reading material in order to open the door. Connie was standing at the doorway completely out of breath- huffing and puffing.

"Connie! What a pleasant surprise! Our sparring lesson isn't until Wednesday..."

"IKNOWTHATPEARL!BUTSTEVENISIMPLYINGTHATSAOMETHINGAMAZINGISHAPPININGANDHESWONTELLMEWHATITISANDIREALLYSUPERWANTTOKNOW!"

"H-wha?" Pearl seemed utterly confused at the human's outburst. It was about this time, that Steven appeared behind his friend-also completely out of breath.

"I'm sorry Pearl I tried to stop her..." the boy huffed in exhaustion.

Utterly confused, the Gem eyed her pupil curiously.

"Steven says he can't tell me something!" Connie's eyes sparkled with hope.

"Oh?...OH! That!" Pearl clapped her hands together nervously. "That's NOTHING! Nothing to worry yourself over Connie!" The Gem smiled pleasantly.

"Great. Now I'm even MORE curious...GARNET!" Connie waved over the fusion who happened to be walking by in the background. "Garnet! What's going on?!"

The fusion paused before answering: "Walking...around the house." She answered bluntly.

"UUUGGGHHH!" Connie groaned in annoyance. "FINE! I'll just have to figure it out myself!" The girl stomped off in a huff.

"Oh jeez..." Steven followed his friend in a hurry.

After the duo had left, Pearl turned to Garnet with concern.

The fusion answered her concerned face. "She will learn the truth eventually...just...not right now. Give it time."

"How am I supposed to explain why we can't train at the Sky Arena anymore?"

There was a pause before Garnet smiled. "You won't have to wait until Wednesday."
Chapter 39

It was the following Monday.

Acapella hated taking the human bus, but she wanted to try some new recipes, and rather not interrupt the Crystal Gems again by suddenly appearing...uninvited...in their living room...just to pick up some groceries.

Acapella prepped herself by storing the money card and some loose change for the bus into her gemstone. The Pearl was ALMOST out the door when Toaster suddenly appeared enthusiastically.

"Hey Acapella! Where are you going?! Can I come too?!

Frustrated, the Pearl shook her head. "I just need to pick up some stuff we're low on. The trip will go much more quickly if I don't have to hold your hand the ENTIRE time."

Toaster seemed deflated for a few seconds, before coming up with an alternate plan!

"What if Gamma came with us?!!"

"Me?" The frog had been evesdropping from the couch.

"YEAH! Gamma watches me while you food shop!"

Acapella thought about this for a second. "I...suppose that could work...you'll need to ask the Keronian first though..."

Toaster proceeded to approach the frog, and began to beg. She displayed the cutest face Gamma had ever seen. "Pleeeeeease Gamma?! I wanna look in the aminal store! Acapella never lets me look..."

The frog persperated heavily. "Fine! Fine! Let me just...get some things first..." Gamma ran up the stairway in order to retrieve his improved blasters. One could never be too sure when danger would strike...

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As the bus pulled into the market, the group of aliens exited the vehicle. Toaster was overly excited! She was finally going to see the animal store!

"Meet me back here in an hour." Acapella informed the invisible frog. "...and keep an eye on her...she tends to wander..."

"Sure thing." The frog nodded in his invisible state, as Toaster unexpectedly tugged the invisible hand she was holding toward the business she had wanted to see for so long!

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Toaster attempted to use what she had learned to read the outside sign. "P-Pet shop!" The Gem nodded in satisfaction.

Of course, upon entering, the small Ruby made a B line to the Parakeet cage. "Oh! Look at them all Gamma! Could I have one...pleeeeeease?!!" The Ruby displayed her cute face again.
"Maybe for your Birthday Toaster."

The Gem gasped in excitement! "What's a Birthday?!"

"You...don't know what a "Birthday" is?"

Toaster shook her head.

"Erm...well...it's a celebration! It's a party that represents the day you were created! It typically happens once a year. There are sweet things to eat, and friends, and presents!"

Toaster frowned slightly. "Gamma...I- I don't remember what day I came out of the crust. I don't know when my Birthday is!"

Gamma chuckled. "We'll figure it out. This planet's rotation is slightly different from Keron's- so I don't know what day my Birthday would land on either..." The frog rubbed his neck sheepishly.

Toaster continued to journey through the shop, Gamma in tow. She found a cage full of small white mice, and watched in fascination as they ran and flipped themselves using the metal wheel.

"Why are they all on the wheel at once? They should take turns...look Gamma! That one went upside down again!"

The frog was happy his friend was having such a grand time. Toaster had really taken a shining to the planet's wildlife as of late...he DID wish she would stop bringing non-domesticated animals into the house though. He had been bitten on more than one occasion since the "shrew incident".

The Ruby interrupted Gamma's train of thought as she held something big and fluffy directly in front of his face.

"Look Gamma! A bun!"

The frog persperated as the massive rabbit seemed to stare at him. It was obvious that Toaster had no clue where the frog was standing-otherwise she might have held the animal slightly further away. "Erm...you're kind of close Toaster...where did you get that thing anyway?"

"OH! Sorries..." The Ruby pointed at an open pen on the floor that was filled with rabbits. "Look at them all Gamma!"

"Yes, Yes...I see..."

The duo glanced down at the creatures with curiosity. Most were asleep...some were hopping about.

"I wonder what they think about us Gamma!"

"I don't think they can see me Toaster..."

A bell chimed inside the store, indicating that another customer had entered. The human had a massive dog on a leash- a Doberman. The creature sniffed the air for a few seconds, before producing an incredibly unfriendly growl. The animal pulled on his chain leash with as much brute force as possible while seemingly staring at the invisible Keronian.

"Cupcake! Heal!" The human commanded while yanking on the leash. The dog obeyed, but continued to growl at the invisible threat.
Gamma stared at the beast, nervously. "Toaster...perhaps we should go...I don't think that animal likes me..."

"...but Gamma! We just got here! Plus, you're invisible! The woof can't see you!"

Gamma tested this theory by moving about several steps at a time. The dog followed the Keronian's movements like a hawk. "I REALLY think he can see me Toaster..." Gamma mumbled very seriously.

"You worry too much Gamma! Besides, That woof is on a chain! It can't hurt you!" Toaster blissfully walked toward the cat section of the store. Gamma felt very uneased at this point, and kept looking over his shoulder.

As the frog turned around, he suddenly found his face full of fluff again-grey this time.

"Look Gamma! A mew!"

The cat in question looked extremely agitated. It was obvious the animal didn't like being picked up. Gamma spat out some fur that had gotten into his mouth. "Will you PLEASE stop shoving animals into my face Toaster?!"

"MERRROW!"

In a sudden amount of excitement, the cat batted at Gamma's face aggressively! The paw did not successfully deal any significant damage to the alien, but did manage to hit the pin on Gamma's hat- making the creature visible for all to see.

Chaos.

Gamma gasped and quickly attempted to finagle his pin in the correct direction...only to have the item fall off the hat entirely. He picked it up from the ground, and scrambled to fix it, but the thing would not stay put. The frog grumbled to himself- wondering if the Peridot had broken it while messing around.

A human screamed at the top of her lungs! "WHA-WHAT IS THAT?!" The cashier of the store pointed directly to Gamma in absolute terror.

It was over. He had been seen.

The human that had been holding the dog leash immediately went slack. Cupcake the Doberman took advantage of the situation, and galloped toward the Keronian-baring his teeth and growling the entire way!

Gamma jumped. He jumped higher than he ever had before! The Keronian stuck to the wall, and looked down at the chaos that was unfolding! The alien quickly scurried higher up the wall, before ending up on the ceiling again. The dog below barked at the creature aggressively, and followed the best he could from the floor level of the store.

The ruckus quickly gained the attention to all the passerby's in the market. It didn't help that the cashier had run out the front door, screaming at the top of her lungs.

Toaster stood in absolute shock as she glanced around, looking desperately for something to help with the situation. The humans pointed in horror at the freakish creature that had plastered itself to the ceiling of their quaint little pet shop.
"What IS that?"

"Monster!"

"Is this some kind of show?"

Gamma heard the rude remarks from the humans, and quickly gave in to a last resort. He pressed the fifth button on his hat- resulting in a horrific smell filling up the store. The humans quickly retreated from the scene. Cupcake the dog took one whiff of the smell before barreling out of the shop- whimpering and wailing in the most cowardly of fashions.

"Gamma! Fall down!" Toaster yelled from below. The Keronian obeyed and was immediately caught by the Ruby before the Gem began to run from the scene of the crime as well.

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Acapella was paying for her groceries when the smell hit her like a ton of bricks. Instead of complaining or running away like normal, the Yellow Pearl ran outside in a sudden panic- completely forgetting all of the groceries she had just payed for.

The Yellow Gem looked at all the chaos that was unfolding! Humans and animals were running in every direction! Acapella seemed absolutely terrified as she madly attempted to find her friends in the stampede. A fire truck, and several cop cars arrived- someone must have called the authorities.

The Gem ran toward the pet store- and soon found a very frightened Toaster carrying a completely visible Gamma in a small hidden nook. The Yellow Pearl grabbed the duo quickly- immediately understanding the severity of the situation!

Acapella faced the crowd: "LAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

The single note did the trick. The police passed out. The crowd dropped one by one. The Keronian's smell began to dissipate...even Toaster began to snore.

The Pearl ran- carrying one friend under each arm. She ran back to the house as fast as her legs could carry her.
Acapella was completely exhausted by the time she got back to the house. As it turns out, walking (or more accurately, running), was MUCH more labor-intensive than taking the stupid bus.

The poor Yellow Pearl had NO CLUE what to do. Her friends were still asleep, she was on the verge of passing out, and (as much as she would hate to admit it), she had grown fond enough of Gamma's help and assistance to protect him from being booted off Earth by the MIB.

Acapella placed her two friends on the couch, and then proceeded to collapse on the soft furniture herself. Stars...what a disaster! She supposed the best thing to do at this point was to lay low and wait...

Yellow decided to take a short, rare nap. She recalled Amethyst telling her at one point: "Naps make everything better!" Acapella had several tears run down her face—as she contemplated her friend's fate, before falling asleep.

The headlines the next day were horrendous. It was (perhaps) a good thing that the trio did not watch television or read the news.

The titles were all over the place-
"Mysterious Swamp Creature!"
"Terrorists Attack!"
"Biological Weponry!"
"Cruelty to Animals!"
"New Sleeping Gas!"
"Mixed Stories Conflict Serious Event!"
"Strange New Creature Appears!"

The news had witnesses, arguments, witnesses, conflicting stories, witnesses, cell phone footage...and (of course) witnesses. All the humans were incredibly spooked and concerned. What was that thing? Where had it come from?

Acapella woke up as the house's phone began to ring. The trio had (apparently) slept on the couch all night.

Groggily, The Yellow Pearl got up and answered the phone. "H-hello?"

"Well, you did it. You REALLY did it. You guys had ONE job! ONE! ...and you blew it!"
The Yellow Pearl recognized the voice instantly. It was Agent Zed- the head of the MIB. "Uh-I don't know the whole story-but I'm sure this entire thing was an accide-"

"-OH! YOU don't need to worry about THAT...I know EXACTLY what happened! The Keronian showed himself, used his own biological defense against humans, and then YOU sang a little lullaby in order to cover everything up!"

"I'm...erg..."

Gamma suddenly appeared in the room. He had (apparently) woken up at the addition of the extra noise. The frog angrily snagged the phone from Acapella. It seemed he already had a good idea who was on the other end of the line. Gamma began to scream: "My cloaking device malfunctioned! I was nearly attacked by a huge Pekoponian animal! I had to defend myself!"

"Malfunctioned? Your hat was in perfect working condition when we examined it in customs. It should be working FINE...unless...unless you allowed illegal customization or modifications to your headpiece?"

"I-illegal?" The frog's mood changed immediately. He sweated heavily.

"Yes! Any modifications to alien tech is strictly illegal- because of reasons EXACTLY LIKE THIS ONE!"

Gamma squinted as Agent Zed screamed at him from the other end of the receiver. Gamma screamed back: "WELL, HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT?!"

"IT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE!"

"NOT TO ME!"

As the duo bickered- the warp pad in the backyard suddenly activated. It was Garnet...yet again.

"Great. The fusion is here," Acapella rolled her eyes as she opened the back door. "What do YOU want? We're kind of in the middle of something here-HEY!"

Garnet ignored the Pearl completely, and simply shoved her way into the house.

"HEY! HEY!" Acapella screamed. "WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?! HEY!"

Garnet quickly grabbed the phone from Gamma. "HEY!" The frog had a very similar reaction as the Pearl.

There was a pause of silentness on the phone. The confused Agent Zed finally decided to speak up: "Hello?"

"Hello." Garnet answered,

"Who is this?!"

"Garnet."

"GARNET?! What the FUCK? What are you even doing on this line?! How did you get into this house?!"

"That's not important right now."
"OH?! ...and why not?"

"There are more significant matters at hand."

"Well, OBVIOUSLY."

"Yes. For instance: I am the one that requested that the Keronian make modifications to his headpiece."

"...and why the devil would you do that? You know better! I KNOW you know better!"

Garnet smirked slightly. "Are you aware that this house was attacked by a bounty hunter less than two weeks ago?"

Zed fell silent.

The fusion continued: "I was suggesting the modifications in order to keep the Keronian safe-something that YOUR agency obviously failed to do. The MIB is supposed to guarantee safety to aliens in it's witness protection program, correct?"

Zed put his hand on his head in frustration. "Dammit Garnet...why do you pull this shit on me...ALL THE TIME. The Peridot...That Lapis..."

Garnet smiled.

The agent grumbled to himself. "I don't need to know the future in order to figure out that this is blackmail. FINE. What will keep you quiet THIS time?"

"The Keronian walks freely- no cloaking."

"...FINE. We'll make him a town mascot or something..."

"Give the Pearl a restaurant license-to sell food and beverages. Her cooking is exquisite, and she sticks to Human-safe ingredients."

The agent grumbled. "Anything Else?!"

"Yes." Garnet nodded "The Ruby..."

Toaster glanced up at Garnet with curiosity. "I want you to give her a BC. An OFFICIAL one. In fact, I want one made up for the Keronian and Pearl as well."

Zed continued to grumble. "FINE." The man hung up the phone before the Gem could demand anything else.

Garnet hung up her phone soon after.

She looked at Gamma very matter-of-factly. "I came to give you this..."

It was the backing for Gamma's pin. The incredibly confused Keronian placed the pin back on his hat, and tested it. The cloaking device now worked perfectly. The pin refused to fall off or malfunction.

Garnet walked out the door without another word, and whistled slightly as she went back on the Warp Pad and disappeared.
The lesson learned here? Never mess with Garnet. She knows enough about human law to find loopholes using her future vision. In case you're wondering- yes. Garnet and Agent Zed have had similar conversations before- specifically, giving rights to Peridot and Lapis. Garnet is...well known, but not well liked by the agency. She knows how to get what she wants using her own skills...
The trio stood, completely surprised and confused.

"What...just...happened?" Gamma was baffled.

"I think...the fusion just saved our asses." Acapella replied.

"Huh." Toaster was quite unsure how to react. "Does anyone know what a BC is?" the little Gem inquired.

"No clue."

The next few days were filled with confusion and chaos. A random MIB building company came in to fix the doorknob and bullet holes littering Toaster's room.

Next, a massive moving truck appeared. The thing was filled to the brim with random nicknacks—extra eating tables, table cloths, chairs, cute plushies, blocks of sculpting wood, massive amounts of dishes, kitchen appliances, and (to the joy of Toaster) a green parakeet in a cage (which she proceeded to name "Chirp").

Mail began to be delivered on a regular basis...mostly fan mail for a mysterious someone named: "Uncle Stinky". Apparently, the government had blown off the entire horrific incident as a publicity stunt to promote Ocean Town's new mascot: "Fire Safety Frog- Uncle Stinky! Snuff Out Fires! Don't Leave Your Campsite Unattended!"

This was accompanied by Gamma receiving boxes and boxes of horrendous-looking merchandise—plushies...stationary...pins...all of which bared a characterization that borderlined the adorableness of a Disney film.

The nickname itself- "Uncle Stinky" was already demeaning enough...but did the town have to plaster this horrific caricature over EVERY piece of sellible merchandise known in the galaxy?! Gamma stuck out his tongue. "Yeeesh...these don't look anything like me...since when does ANYONE have dimples this big?!"

Accapella laughed at the boxes of odd trinkets, as well as the godly horrific nickname. "Hey! At least you can show your face in public again...UNCLE STINKY!"

Gamma flinched at the jab, before responding: "Yeah...but at WHAT cost?!"

Toaster held up the odd Gamma plushie, and squeezed it.

In an incredibly goofy voice, the plush announced: "HUH-YUCK! MAKE FOREST FIRES EX-STINK! HUH-YUCK!"

Toaster threw the horrifying plushie, and began to wail in fear! "BWAAAA! SCARY!"

"Oh for goodness sakes!" Acapella grabbed the stuffed toy, and threw it in the closet. "THERE!
See?! The plush is gone now!"

Toaster attempted to calm herself down through hiccups.

"Mercy...let's just...put all this stuff in the closet. What an embarrassment..."

The trio shoved all of the boxes into the closet, hoping to never see their contents EVER again.

It was about a week later, when Pearl traveled through the Warp Pad to invite the neighbors over for a special dinner. The trio accepted, and followed the Pearl back to Steven's home.

As they arrived, Garnet, Amethyst, and Steven cheered!

"Congratulations on everything!" Steven bellowed!

"I have something special for you all!" Garnet displayed three large packets that the Crystal Gems had received in the mail.

"Hiiiiiii "Uncle Stinky"." Amethyst waved at Gamma most sarcastically. The Keronian blushed.

"Oh...I'm so sorry about that Gamma." The Pearl seemed sympathetic. "The MIB gave us a call shortly after they called you- asking for "cover up" ideas. I suggested "Smokey" as the name, but it had already been taken by another similar mascot..."

""Uncle Stinky" was my idea!" bragged Amethyst. "It's funny...AND accurate!"

Gamma gave the Purple Gem a death glare. "So...because of you, I'm going to be known as "Uncle Stinky" for the REST OF MY LIFE?!"

"YEAH! Pretty great...right?" The Amethyst stuck out her chest in pride.

Gamma mumbled obscenities, followed by a very low: "I'm going to kill that Gem..."

The front door was knocked suddenly, making the trio of aliens jump in surprise!

"OHMYGOSH SHE'S HERE!" Steven gasped with glee!

"Who?" Inquired Acapella

"Connie! She's like...my best human friend! I've been wanting to tell her about you guys for MONTHS, and now- I'm FINALLY allowed to do it! I know...why don't you guys hide, and then jump out and surprise her when I give the sign!"

"Erm...alright...If you think that would be best..." The neighbors hid behind a support wall of the home, The view obscured from the front of the house.

"Alright everyone! Get ready..." Steven opened the door for Connie. "CONNIE! Thanks for coming on such short notice!"

"Thanks for inviting me! You said you had something important to tell me?"

"Well...sorta. There's some new folks I want you to meet! Come on out guys!"

Instead of jumping out in surprise, the trio simply walked out into the open. Connie certainly
jumped though! "Is-is that...a PEARL?! She doesn't look like our Pearl..."

"I am a YELLOW Pearl." The alien was quick to correct the child.

"Oh! I see!" Connie nodded, before turning to the Keronian. "-Erm...Steven? Why did you invite the new "Uncle Stinky" mascot to dinner? I'm not 5 anymore..."

Gamma boiled in a rage! "My name is NOT "UNCLE STINKY" it's Gamma damnit! GAMMA!"

"YEEEEAAH...about that..." Steven looked a bit awkward. "The whole "Uncle Stinky" thing is kinda a cover up. That's Gamma- he's a...erm."

"-Keronian" Gamma responded.

"-YEAH! A Keronian. He's the reason for all the secrets lately. He's actually an alien...like the Gems- but from a completely different planet..."

"ARE YOU SERIOUS?!" Connie's eyes lit up!

"-Yup! Sorry I couldn't tell you sooner...his life was on the line there for a while..."

Connie approached Gamma enthusiastically. "WOW! This is just- ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!" She shook the creature's hand with glee! "It's an honor to meet you...Gamma...right?"

The frog nodded. "Likewise!"

"Holy cow Steven! Do you know what this means?!!" Connie was beside herself.

The boy shrugged.

"...this means that there is more intelligent life in the cosmos than we ever imagined!"

"I could've told you that. You never asked." Garnet nodded.

"Wait...Garnet...how many different intelligent alien species are there?!!"

"Lots." The fusion gave Connie the same answer she had dictated to Steven earlier.

"Wow..."

"-and I'm Toaster!" The small Ruby butted into the conversation, not wanting to be ignored.

"Oh! Hello!" Connie squatted to Toaster's level. "You're a Ruby...right?"

"YEH!"

"So your name is "Toaster"?"

"YEH! YEH!" Toaster nodded in enthusiasm. "I like pair-of-keys, and mews, and other Earth aminals, and sweet things, and collecting stuff, and Fred, and—-"

...as the Ruby went on listing all of her favorite things, only one thought came to Connie's mind- this was the most adorable Gem she had ever met! "OHMYGOSH! You're sooooooo cute!" Connie unexpectedly hugged the creature, surprising Toaster, but making her smile with glee!

"Heeeeee!" Toaster grinned, not minding the extra attention in the slightest.
"A-him!" Acapella coughed slightly hoping to get the new guest's attention. Connie gazed up at the Pearl...while still hugging the enthusiastic Toaster.

The Yellow Pearl said nothing. She was only wanting to gain Connie's gaze. She was much more important than a Ruby after all...

"Perhaps...we should start the dinner?" Steven attempted to make the situation less awkward.

"YEAH! FOOD!" Amethyst yelled at the top of her lungs.

As the night went on, Garnet remembered the packets that had been delivered. "Oh! That's right! We got these in the mail today!" The fusion handed over each envelope to its respected owner.

Toaster was the first one to open the packet, and showed a bit of disappointment at its contents. It was filled with legal documents, and a certificate of some sort. Confused, Toaster looked up at Garnet for an explanation.

"It's an official BC-a Birth Certificate!" Garnet nodded.

"Wait- does that mean...

"Yes! You all have an official Birthday now!"

Toaster whooped! "Did you hear that Gamma?! I got a Birthday! We ALL got a Birthday nows!"

"Yes! Yes! So I see!" The frog smiled at his friend's enthusiasm.

The remaining visit was filled with food, stories, and exciting banter about the future.

Chapter End Notes

My god...I was laughing the ENTIRE TIME I was writing this...like some sort of immature brat.

For anyone curious- the name “Uncle Stinky” is a reference to one of the companies that creates the SiFi comedy- “The Last Man on Earth”. (It works quite well for Gamma too though....LOL!!!)

A quick question to you fans! What days/months/Horoscopes/Zodiac signs do you think would make good birthdays for Gamma, Toaster, and Acapella? Just curious!
Chapter 42

It was about 6 in the morning several days later, when the phone rang again. Acapella picked up the device. She was the only one who was ever up at this ghastly hour. "Hello?"

"Hello! Is this the residence of "Uncle Stinky"?!"

The Pearl groaned. The hilarious nickname had lost its commodity over the past several days. It had evolved from humorous, to just plain annoying. The Pearl put her thumb and index finger over the bridge of her nose in stress. "-yes. May I ask who's calling please?"

"This is Sarah Brown. I'm in charge of a new ASPCA branch opening up later this morning. I was wondering if "Uncle Stinky" would be available to promote the event, and cut the ceremonial ribbon?"

Acapella had NO CLUE what an "ASPCA" was, but figured any good publicity for Gamma was worthy of the Keronian's time. "Sure. What time is this ceremony starting?"

Gamma was startled awake several hours later, when Acapela shook him violently.

"HuH?! WhAzIt?! eH?!" The frog gasped in shock.

"Get up. You presence is needed oh, great and powerful "Uncle Stinky"."

Gamma glared at the Pearl in annoyance. "What is this? You've never woken me up early before..."

"You got a call this morning. It sounded like they wanted you to do some sort of "ribbon cutting thingy" today. Sounded important."

"...Let me guess...you already volunteered me for this this "event" without even asking first...didn't you?"

"It wouldn't kill you to try to identify with the humans a bit more...especially because your first impression kinda freaked everyone out..."

"MMPH." Gamma moaned in annoyance before putting the bed sheet over his head in defiance.

"OH...GET UP, and stop being SUCH a pebble!" Acapella whisked the sheets away from the frog so he couldn't reach them. Gamma shivered in discomfort and smacked his lips, annoyed, before attempting to open his eyes.

The early bustle of the morn woke Toaster up from her sleep too. "What's going on?" The Ruby rubbed her eyes in fatigue.

Acapella answered: "Gamma has been invited to a grand opening of some sort."

"Grand opening?" Toaster yawned.

"Yeah. If you want to come with us, you better get ready quickly. The lady on the other end of the
line said they would be sending a car to pick us up...

"OH BOY! A trip!" Toaster rushed back into her room with a burst of excitement to make herself decent.

The car arrived at the house about thirty minutes later. A mysterious driver walked down the driveway, and knocked politely on the front door.

"JUST A MINUTE!" There was a yell from the inside. The door opened several seconds later, with all three unique characters barreling out the doorframe. "Thank you for being so patient." Acapella stated as she locked up the house. "These two can be a handful to corral in the morning..."

"...and thusly, I...Erm...U-Uncle Stinky, proclaim this new building officially opened!" Gamma cut the cerimonial ribbon with the humorously oversized scissors. The crowd of humans below cheered! There was a distant scream of: "We love you Uncle Stinky!" from someone in the crowd. The Keronian blushed.

Sarah Brown turned to the mascot and his friends on stage, grinning from ear to ear. "Thank you for showing up on such short notice. It really does mean a LOT to the community. Would you and your friends like to take a tour of the new facility?"

Gamma shrugged. "Why not? I'm already here...might as well!"

The woman smiled. "Excellent! Please follow me!"

As the trio followed the lady inside, the bustle of the crowd deminished with the closing of the front doors.

"Now, while this was the cerimonial opening for the facility, we've actually already been fully operational for two weeks!" Sarah explained. "If you follow me, I will show you some of our first patients..."

The three aliens still didn't know what an "ASPCA" was, but as they turned the corner, the trio was certainly NOT prepared for what they were about to see.

There were about 22 animals...all in separate cages.

At first, Toaster was elated! So many animals!

...but as the little Ruby got closer to the cages, the Gem's eyes became huge with fear. She backed up looking quite horrified and traumatized. "Wha...what did you do to them? Why...WHY? WHY?! WHY?!" The Gem was becoming overcome with grief! The room began to heat up intensely as the Ruby began screaming and crying at the same time.

"Oh! I'm so sorry! I did not mean to upset the little one..." Sarah approached Toaster in hopes of calming her down...

"NO! STAY AWAY FROM ME! AWAY!" The Ruby was screaming!

"What has gotten into you?!" Acapella looked at her smaller counterpart before approaching the cages herself... "Oh!"
As the Yellow Pearl looked inside, she could certainly see what had made the Ruby so upset. In a cage was a cat-missing one of it's vision spheres. In another cage was a dog with only two legs instead of the normal four. A macaw was missing the top half of his beak-a prosthetic in its place. There was another puppy- covered in burn and boil marks.

"STARS! What is this place?! Why do all of these...organics look so...defective?!"

"Humans did this to them." Sarah responded as the Yellow Pearl turned to her in shock.

"HUMANS?!"

"Yes, humans...bad ones I'm afraid. Some people do cruel things to animals...throw rocks at them...tie them up...forget to feed them. Here at the ASPCA, we save sick and neglected animals, before nursing them back to health and giving them to loving families."

Toaster calmed down a bit. "So...you didn't hurt the aminals?"

"Of course not! I would never! We just take care of them until they get better. It's very difficult to find homes for some of them though...people usually won't adopt cats with only one eye- like Peaches over there..."

"Merr..." The cat mewed slightly as it heard it's name.

"Toaster...Toaster wants to help! Toaster wants to love the aminals!" The Ruby looked up at Sarah with determination!

The woman chuckled. "Well, most of our workers and volunteers have vet and medical training...however, we're always looking for junior volunteers to help clean cages and play with the animals that are ready for adoption..." 

"Gamma! Gamma!" Toaster looked at the frog with stars in her eyes! "I wanna help! I wanna make the aminals happy!"

The Keronian put his hands on his hips in pride. "Well, If that's really what you want to do Toaster. It would be very nice if you helped these Pekoponian creatures while they wait for forever homes..."

The Ruby looked giddy! Acapella mumbled: "Anything to entertain her and stop her from bringing wildlife in the house..."

"Oh." Toaster realized something. "...but how would I get here every day? It's far..."

Sarah smiled. "I'm sure we could arrange a car pool or...something..."

The Ruby tilted her head in confusion. "How do you put a pool in a car?"

Sarah chuckled.

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Thusly, Toaster began waking up a bit earlier in order to prep herself going to the ASPCA every day.

The first day on the job, Toaster rushed outside as she heard a car horn honking. "IGOTTAGO!BYE!" The Ruby slammed the door with excitement!
Acapella seemed...HIGHLY annoyed. "Hrmph. Didn't even eat breakfast..."

Toaster soon found herself in a place known as "The Play Room". It seemed to be a very small steril room with white tile and a window. The place had several cat and dog toys spread about the floor. A secondary volunteer exited the room in order to retrieve the first animal needing exercise. She returned several minutes later with a familiar looking orange tabby- it was Peaches, the cat with only one eye.

The poor cat clung to the volunteer, shivering horrendously. It was obvious that she wasn't used to being held or moved about.

The volunteer put the cat on the floor, and proceeded to sit down on the only chair in the room. Even though Toaster was a volunteer, she was still new, and needed supervising, just in case things went south.

Toaster sat on the floor.

Peaches seemed incredibly scared. She hid behind the chair while looking at the new stranger in a fright.

"Come here mew! Come over!" Toaster patted on the tile floor in hopes that Peaches would be less frightened. The Gem's cooing had the opposite affect, however. The cat hid further behind the chair.

"You have to be patient with Peaches, Toaster. She's an older cat. She also frightens easily. She's been though a lot...try calling her name!"

Toaster nodded. "Peaches...come here Peaches...come on..." The Gem attempted to be a bit more calming, and less enthusiastic with her cooing. "Peaches..."

"Mrrph?" The cat responded to her name.

"That's right! Come over..."

The feline cautiously began to slink over toward the stranger. Toaster put her hand out, but came no closer. Peaches sniffed the limb with curiosity. Toaster stayed frozen and patient. She had learned from the shrew, that sudden movements typically scared off most Earth animals. Finally after some more curious sniffing, the one-eyed cat rubbed her forehead on Toaster's hand.

"Yeh! See? I'm safe! I won't take your other vision sphere..."

The cat began to rub the Ruby all over. She circled several times before lying on Toaster's lap. She tucked her paws underneath, closed her eyes, and began to rumble.

The Gem looked at the human for further assistance on what to do next.

"Just pet her slowly. She enjoys getting her chin scratched. She's not as active as a baby kitten...but she likes sitting on laps!"

"She-She's making a rumble..."

"She's purring! That's how cats tell you that they trust you, and feel safe!"

"OH!" Toaster pet the cat happily and gently. "I wish I could rumble back...I don know how to
Peaches ended up falling asleep on Toaster's lap. The Gem felt sleepy just looking at her. As much as the volunteer hated to disturb the duo, other animals needed exercise as well.

Toaster seemed disheartened as the woman picked up the sleepy Peaches, and with a distressed: "Merow!"- took her back to her cage to retrieve another creature.

The next animal was the puppy with two legs. His name was Lucky. He wagged his tail happily as the human brought him into the play room. The dog's attitude was completely different from Peaches. He began to hobble around with glee and bliss- as if he had no leg problems at all!

The pup ran up to Toaster, and wagged his tail happily, as he covered the Gem's face with kisses!

"Heeeeee!" Toaster laughed and flailed about in glee. The dog barked excitedly, before picking up a squeaky toy on the floor and handing it to Toaster. The Ruby squeezed the toy as the dog barked enthusiastically.

"He wants to play fetch." The human explained. "Try throwing the toy."

Toaster abliged and the puppy hobbled to the toy, and quickly brought it back to the Gem- wanting her to throw it again.

The remainder of the day ended up being just as successful for the little Gem. The only animal that didn't take to Toaster was (understandably) the puppy covered in mysterious burn marks. The dog barked aggressively when the Ruby's warm hand touched him. The animal slinked into the corner of the room, and proceeded to spend the remainder of his playtime shivering and whimpering in fear.

Overall, Toaster seemed to have found her niche!

By the time she got back to the house, the little Gem had all sorts of amazing stories to tell both Acapella and Gamma.
From that day forth, Toaster came home, happy as could be! She was delighted to share all of the adorable stories involving her new group of animal friends! She had even started bringing oven mitts to work, just so that she could comfortably pet the puppy with the burn marks.

_____________________

...and then, one day, something was...different.

It had been raining, and thus the air was somewhat musty. The regular car full of vets and volunteers pulled up to the house, as Toaster walked out, glumly.

She entered the house, but said nothing. The small Ruby then proceeded to sit on the couch in an ominous silence.

Both friends noted the change in mood almost instantly. Gamma walked over to the piece of furniture, worried about his pal. "Toaster? What's going on? Are you ok?"

The Gem said nothing. Upon closer expection, the Ruby seemed exhausted. Her eyes were slightly puffy from an obvious earlier cry.

Concerned and confused, Gamma stated: "When you are ready to talk, we'll be here...alright?"

At this, Gamma returned to the kitchen with Acapella. He attempted to distract himself by setting up the dinner table (a fairly useless task, since Acapela ended up rearranging all the dishes in the "right way").

When the food was finally ready, Gamma yelled to Toaster enthusiastically. "Come on! Dinner's done!" The Gem obediently got up from the couch, and sat at the table. The Ruby's head drooped. She would not eat what was in front of her.

Both of the aliens looked at the Ruby, concerned.

Toaster finally broke the silence several minutes later. "Gamma...are you going to die?"

The frog nearly spit out his meal, but ended up choking on it instead. He attempted to cough a bit before answering. "Toaster that's...a very sensitive subject! Where is this coming from?!!"

"It's PEACHES!" The little Gem began to wail! Gamma recognized the name immediately. Toaster always talked about the one-eyed cat the most. It was obvious that the feline was one of her absolute favorites. "When I went in today...Peaches is always the first aminal they put in the room! But...but today...Lucky was the first! I asked where Peaches had gone...and they said she was a very old cat...and...and..." Toaster wept with boiling tears-turning into steam as the hit the Gem's arms. "I asked when I could see her again...an...an...they said she had gone to a "Rainbow Bridge"...and that she wasn't coming back! Gamma! I didn't get to pet her...or make her rumble like she likes! I didn't get to say goodbye!" The Gem began to wail in grief!

"Oh Toaster...I'm so sorry. I- I think Peaches knew you cared about her though...you always talked about how much she liked being around you..."
"- but...but...Gamma...no one ever adopted her! Everyone that came in said she was old and missing a vision sphere, and they wouldn't take her! She never got to have a home! They... they didn't even give her a chance!"

The little Gem got off the chair, and proceeded to curl up-sobbing on the kitchen tile, before continuing: "...and then...and then I thought...Gamma's organic...and Connie...and Sarah...are you all going...to...the Rainbow Bridge? Will I never see you again? I don't want you to go..."

"Oh Toaster... Gamma sighed. Before approaching the Gem. "You don't have to worry about those things for a loooong time."

"...you didn't say "no" Gamma...you didn't say "NO"!" The Ruby began to cry harder.

"Toaster...all organic matter, myself included...do eventually...erm..."get old"...and yes...we do...disappear after that...but that's why it's so important to spend as much time with the people you care about while you still can...and like I said before, I'm not planning on going anywhere anytime soon!"

Toaster got up quickly, and hugged Gamma with all her might -resulting in the frog being slightly steamed, and a part of his spine making a weird sound.

"ERK! Toaster! Too hard! Too hard!" The frog attempted to gasp!

Toaster let go quickly, and proceeded to attempt a sheepish smile. "Sorry Gamma...I forgot you had bones again..."

The Keronian attempted to calm himself a bit. "You know Toaster...It's ok to feel upset when someone disappears. If you need a few days to grieve, I'll call the ASPCA and tell them not to pick you up until next week..."

The Ruby reflected on this for a bit, before nodding in agreement. Gamma proceeded to call the ASPCA, and inform them what was going on. Sarah, who was on the other end of the line, nodded. "Yeah. She seemed pretty upset today. I think it's a good idea to give her a few days to recover before she comes back. Take all the time you need." Sarah agreed.

Toaster did feel a bit better after getting her thoughts out in the open, but refused to eat. The small Gem climbed up the stairs and decided to play with her parakeet, Chirp, while contiploting all this new information about mortality.

Gamma looked at Acapella rather concerned. "Perhaps...Perhaps we should try to find something to help cheer her up. This stuff can be pretty heavy if you don't know about it..."

"Yeah...for once I agree with you. I think she had a basic concept of mortality, but it didn't really hit her until today..." Acapela nodded.

Thusly, a phone call was made to the Crystal Gems. Pearl was the one to answer, and (after hearing the entire situation) warped herself as quickly as a jackrabbit on a date.

Pearl knocked on the back door in a hurry. Acapella let her in, and the friend immediately started emptying contents from her gemstone onto the kitchen table. "Ok...I brought puzzles and board games...Steven wanted me to bring some of his toys over too..."

As the pile began to grow, Acapella looked agitated. "Gee...you think you brought enough stuff?"
"OH! That reminds me!" Pearl pulled a DVD out of her gemstone. "Steven thought Toaster would like this!"

Pearl went to the closet and (after removing a surprising amount of Uncle Stinky merchandise), located the TV and DVD player. She set up the system, cable, and DVD player, before explaining to Acapella how everything worked.

"Now...remember. Many shows on TV are NOT real- even if they are called "reality TV"."

"Got it."

"Don't Let Toaster watch anything after 8:00PM- that's when the more mature and scary shows start."

Both Gamma and Acapella nodded.

"Call if you need anything else."

The duo nodded and thanked their neighbor over and over.

"No worries. You can just bring back the toys and puzzles at your leisure!" The Pearl smiled, before bidding a fairwell, and exiting through the back door once more.

Chapter End Notes

I had planned on Toaster discovering the consequences of mortality somewhere in the story.

What I HADN'T planned on, was me crying the entire time I was writing this chapter.

This one hits close to home pretty hard- I used to have a cat named Patches who died two days before I came home from college. I wasn't really able to say goodbye to her either...

When Patches passed away, the vet we took her to handed me this poem called "The Rainbow Bridge". It goes something like this:

"Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he
begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together....

Author unknown....

-To this day, the poem still makes me cry.....
The next morning arrived, and Toaster still hadn't left her room. There was no extra heat radiating from the dwelling- so the Gem was probably either napping, or numb from shock. While the two friends waited patiently for Toaster to grieve, they decided to try out the new "TV system" Pearl had installed.

As the duo flipped through all the channels with curiosity, Acapella located a station completely dedicated to food prep and history. At this point, the frog knew that changing the channel would be near impossible for sometime, and thus, gave in to the Pearl's curiosity. It's not like he hadn't seen similar shows and gadgets on Keron anyway.

On the screen was some sort of competition. Everyone was attempting to make the best cake in four hours. Acapella seemed incredibly amused as the humans messed up and dropped things in their mad scuffle.

The Pearl physically laughed at all the stress the primates were going through, but was secretly internalizing data on the different tools and techniques the humans were using to make more successful pastries.

The next show featured the history of Earth's spice trade, and the next featured a man finding the world's best restaurants.

Acapella nodded in enjoyment! She had certainly located her favorite human entertainment broadcast channel!

...and thus, she watched...

...and watched...

...and watched some more.

Several hours passed.

The strange din finally lured out Toaster, as she suddenly appeared at the top of the staircase. The Ruby climbed down cautiously, still slightly wary of the frightening box...

Gamma nudged Acapella, and glanced toward Toaster. The Gem huffed, slightly annoyed, before retrieving the special DVD Pearl had lent to her. She quickly changed the channel so that the Ruby could watch...whatever the hybrid human found so amusing.

It was incredibly obvious that the show was from someplace far away. As the title popped up in an odd Earth language with English subtitles.

The subtitles read: "Inko Colors- the Animation!"

The Ruby sat down on the floor, her head tilted in curiosity. She still couldn't read quickly enough to catch ALL the subtitles...but the cartoon was visual enough so that she was able to understand
the majority of the plot.

The cartoon featured all sorts of different Parakeets helping each other out, and rescuing a bird that had gotten lost.

Toaster looked at the tv with stars in her eyes! "PAIR-OF-KEYS! Look Acapella! They all helped the little one!"

"So I see." The Pearl humored the sad Ruby, in hopes of cheering her up.

Toaster smiled weakly. It was only now that Acapella realized that the Ruby's Parakeet pet, Chirp, seemed to be nesting in the Gem's hair.

Slightly, surprised by this, Acapella backed up as if she had seen a spider.

Toaster looked at her friend in confusion. "What's wrong Acapella? It's just Chirp!"

"I KNOW that! Just...keep her in your room, ok? I don't want her making a mess out here..."

"-are...are you afraid of Chirp Acapella?"

The Pearl stuck her nose in the air, while blushing horribly. "O-of course NOT! I just...don't like animals running around the house!"

Toaster tilted her head in confusion again, but abided by the Pearl's wishes, and took her pet back into her room.

Soon after, the Ruby walked back down the stairs hugging Fred as a replacement.

Acapella nodded in satisfaction.

Gamma decided to step in- "How are you doing Toaster? Do you feel any better?"

The Ruby shrugged. "A little...I guess?"

"Good! Good!" The frog smiled in relief. "-Let's get you something to eat!"

____________________

Unfortunately, Acapella seemed incredibly distracted as she changed the channel back to the food shows. So Gamma ended up making Toaster a bag of popcorn. The little Gem didn't seem to mind, and ate it with a thankful aura. Gamma smiled, relieved that his friend was feeling better.

As the duo looked outside, they could see that the sun had gone down. Both Gamma and Toaster bid a "Goodnight" to Acapella, who waved obliviously before staring at the television in a somewhat hypnotic state again.

Gamma was a little concerned about the Pearl, but shoved it off as a regular tv bingeing session. He had done similar things with the shows they made on Keron that he enjoyed...

____________________

The next morning came quickly. As Gamma walked down the stairs, he could see that Acapella was STILL in the SAME spot, watching the SAME channel. Surprised, the frog approached the Pearl. "Have you been watching this channel ALL NIGHT?!"
"HEY! Answer the question!" Gamma walked around the couch, and stood in front of the Pearl to gain her attention. As he saw the Gem’s face, he gasped in shock! Not only was Acapella frozen, and slightly drooling, but her eyes were displaying static!

Incredibly freaked out, Gamma retrieved Toaster quickly in hopes she could explain the odd behavior.

The Ruby looked over her friend, and nodded in agreement. She smiled at her froggy friend, in hopes of calming him down. "Acapella will be fine! She just overloaded herself! Too much information at once...she must have been storin’ a LOT of new stuff in her permanent memory!"

"Well...how do we fix her?!"

"Hmmmmn..." The Ruby thought to herself before coming up with a grand idea! Toaster ran into the kitchen, retrieved a bottle of hot sauce, poured a large amount of the stuff into a cup, and proceeded to pour the entire cup into Acapella's agape mouth- forcing her to drink it.

There was a pause, a slight shiver from the hypnotized Pearl, and sudden "POOF!" As Acapella's form dissipated.

"Toaster! What did you do?!!" Gamma was certainly not pleased with this technique.

Toaster seemed a bit guilty...but explained to Gamma that it was the only thing she could think of. "She'll regenerate, good as new! It may take her a bit longer to process all of the information she's collected though..." The Ruby put the lone gemstone on a couch pillow. "Just...give her some time!" Toaster smiled.

Gamma nodded.

Several days passed before the Pearl reformed at around two in the morning. Acapella barely even noticed that she had been poofed in the first place. The Gem clapped her hands with excitement, before walking briskly into the kitchen- quite inspired!

...it seemed the Pearl had a bee in her bonnet...

Chapter End Notes

Just to let you guys know- "Inko Colors- the Animation!" is an actual anime! I swear!
Chapter 45

The smell interrupted Gamma's slumber with a start. It was only about 4 hours since the Pearl reformed.

The frog had had a dream of eating a sandwich- and woke up unpleasantly when he realized that the "soft bread" he had been chewing on, was actually his blanket.

The scent wafting from the downstairs area was strong and foreign- but also quite pleasant! As the Keronian woke up from his slumber and opened the door, he noted that Toaster had been woken up by the smell as well- the Gem standing in the doorway of her bedroom, directly opposite of his. As the two of them descended the staircase, they did NOT expect the sight that lay before them.

The downstairs floor was absolutely COVERED in platters and platters of pastries, soups, finger food, fried things, homemade candies, and (somehow) a fully cooked turkey. The plates of food were covering the couch...the counters...the tables...

"STARS..." even the Ruby seemed agasp at the sheer amount of edibles spread about the area.

"Well!Well!Well!Helloyoubitho!" Acapella nearly danced herself over to the stair base-gracefully ballerina-tip-toeing between dishes.

"Wha...what is all this?!" Gamma seemed shocked.

"FOODS!"

"I can see that...why did you make so much?"

"OH! Itwasthefoodsshowssaw!IjustHADtotryEVERYrecipe!...didyouknowthere'saEarthbeveragecalledCOFFE..."

"Erm...no? Honestly though Acapella...what are we going to do with ALL this stuff?! There's like...over ten types of full blown triple layered cakes alone..."

"YES!YES!Aren'ttheybeutiful?!!"

"Well...yes...but I don't think the three of us can eat ALL of this by ourselves..."

Acapella looked discouraged.

"-NOT that it doesn't look GOOD...but us...erm...Keronian's can get sick if we eat too much..."

"BAH! Youworrytoomuch!EatsomethingwhileImakesomemorecoffe!"

The Pearl proceeded to gracefully prance to the coffee machine. By the looks of things, she had already tried (at least) 12 different types of the bitter beverage.

Gamma seemed most concerned at this random increase of activity.

Toaster attempted to eat a raw oyster. She spat it out discreetly. It tasted like cold, salted, rubber.

As the Pearl chugged another cup of coffee-she began organizing the food by palate! In one final swift movement, the Gem suddenly began to stagger, sat at the kitchen table, and completely crashed. She began to snore quite loudly as her head rested on a pile of loose flour.
Both Gamma and Toaster were left completely baffled. Neither of them had seen such strange behavior from Acapella before...

As the Warp Pad unexpectedly activated, Steven yawned before looking at his Cookie Cat Clock. 6:00AM...it was 6:00AM in the morning. Slightly annoyed, the boy looked down at the ground floor of the house, only to see Gamma and Toaster- probably searching for advice. Steven felt slightly irked as he realized the neighbors seemed to be taking way too much advantage of the Crystal Gem's generosity. The boy moaned in annoyance before attempting to go back to sleep.

Fortunately, neither Pearl nor Garnet slept much. The duo welcomed the guests with open arms, before having a barely audible conversation. Garnet walked back into the temple, and re-exited several minutes later carrying an unconscious Amethyst. The group than piled onto the Warp Pad, before disappearing again.

Relieved that the din was over, Steven fell back into a deep slumber.

"Soooo...when you woke up she had just...made all these meals...just for the fun of it?" Pearl seemed confused.

Gamma nodded. "The whole thing was very...odd. She kept drinking this strange Pekoponian brew..."

Garnet sniffed the warm pot that had held the strange liquid. "Coffee. It’s a bitter Earth drink that also serves as a stimulant."

"Stem-you-lent?" Toaster asked.

"It's a substance that makes beings hyper."

"She WAS talking rather fast..." Gamma thought inquisitively.

Pearl stared at Acapella with a look of distain. She shook her head in disapproval as the Yellow Pearl continued to snore on the flour pile. Pearl grumbled to herself: "So irresponsible...what a waste of food and energy..."

"What should we do now?" Toaster asked with an innocent banter.

"We wake up Amethyst." Garnet nodded simply, as she poked the purple Gem in the shoulder.

"mmmMMMPPPHHH-mmmmm..." Amethyst attempted to shove away Garnet's annoying behavior.

"Get up Amethyst. You're the only one that can help with this big of a mess." The fusion was insistent.

"MMPH?" Amethyst opened an eye, and immediately stirred at the sight of the massive banquet. "WHOA-HO!HO! What's with the FEAST?!"

"Acapella made it...with no purpose but to try to make it." Garnet answered. "It's taking up unnecessary space. We need to get rid of it in the most useful way possible."

"Ahhh! Gotcha!" Amethyst winked.
Gamma felt nauseous. He stuck out his tongue. "I have never...in my life...seen someone eat THAT much food...THAT fast."

"It's a skill." Amethyst nodded-looking quite smug of herself.

"The question remains though. It's obvious that Acapella is passionate about her hobby." Garnet nodded. "We need to encourage her to use her skills for something a bit more...productive." The fusion smiled. "-hence why I asked the MIB To get her a restaurant license!"

"Ah!" Gamma came to a realization. "That's why the moving truck brought so many extra tables!"

"I asked them to." Garnet smiled.

The frog seemed impressed. "Future vision?"

Garnet's shades shimmered with pride. "Future vision!" She gave the Keronian a thumbs up.

"Still...we should probably keep Acapella away from coffee." Pearl decided as she dragged the sleeping Yellow Pearl to the couch so that she could rest in a place that wasn't completely covered in flour.

"Yeah!"

"Yup"

"Toaster also agrees."

The entire crowd nodded in agreement. Pearl proceeded to unplug the coffee pot and confiscate it.
Chapter 46

Back on Homeworld...

It was surprising.

It was surprising how often Yellow Diamond would forget that she had two Keronian hostages hiding in her storage closet. She would neglect to feed them, neglect to remember them, neglect to provide any basic necessities.

Fortunately, Iris nor Lucky could ever forget- both them and the frogs were in the same awful situation.

It turns out, Lucky had a hidden ability to help out her new friends. While, yes, the Pearl seemed absolutely ordinary, the encouragements of mutation during her creation had concluded in a very...SPECIAL skill- not unlike that of a Keronian.

The Yellow Pearl had the ability to turn herself invisible- a nifty tool during her master's rants or parties. She could sweep away discreetly, and swipe food and supplies when no one was looking.

No Gem ever caught on to the Pearl's rouse. Despite the fact that both Pearls and Keronians were in Yellow Diamond's extra hidden space- the place itself (as well as the door) were way too small for the Diamond to enter or see inside.

"In you go! I grow tired of your dancing Lucky." The leader pressed the button to open the prison, and shoved her servant inside using one of her massive fingers, before locking the door again.

Lucky looked toward the door entirely annoyed. "I do wish she wouldn't shove me about like that..."

"Lucky! You're back!" Despite the Pearl's negative quip, Iris, Prolulu, and Atmomo all seemed equally as enthusiastic about the Pearl's return!

"What did you bring today my sister?!" Iris knew that most of the gifts were for the Keronians, but she still found each new item Lucky brought every day interesting and exciting!

The Pearl proceeded to pull a throw pillow out of her gemstone. She had found the item on a commonplace chair in one of Homeworld's halls.

"Oh! How lovely!" Prolulu grabbed the item and examined it. It had been made from a shiny red silk-like substance. The frog added the pillow to a small pile of soft things that had collected in the corner of the room. The pile included various other blankets and differently colored pillows. The two Keronians used the horde to sleep from time to time. Iris would often sing to them to help them rest every night- it was the least she could do to make the couple feel more comfortable.

"Did you find anything else?" Atmomo was equally as excited. Lucky produced something that resembled a fancy loaf of bread...as well as a cup of something drinkable.

"Dinner!" Atmomo clapped happily!

"Yes indeed!" Lucky smiled. "I do apologize...there wasn't enough time to get anymore than that..."
"It's fine!" Atmomo responded. "I'm just happy you remembered!"

"Of course! Of course!"

Over the course of several months, both the Pearls and Keronians had become close friends. The group would sometimes listen to the wall of their prison, just for the sheer entertainment value of making fun of Yellow Diamond when she believed herself to be alone.

Among other things, the group had found out that she frequently talked to herself, used a special cream to get her hair to stick up like that, and had an unusual habit of using taxpayer's money to order alien sweets for "stress eating".

Today though, there came a knock at the chamber door. The group could hear the Diamond allowing the being to come forth...

Lucky straightened out her dress attempting to look decent. "Duty calls..." she spoke to herself, before waiting for Yellow Diamond to call her name for assistance...

...nothing happened. Confused, the group pressed their ears to the wall. Something was not right. The leader was mumbling something to someone. Realizing this could be something majorly important (or embarrassing) Lucky became suddenly solemn.

"Everyone hush! Be as quiet as you can! Iris! Do your thing!"

The Pearl nodded before pressing her ear against the wall, and began to store what she could hear in her memory banks. Iris may have not been able to see very well, but she could hear a pin drop from 3 rooms over.

The mumbling continued for several minutes, before there was annoyed shout! The room quaked slightly as the leader (obviously) banged her fist against her throne again. The mysterious guest left the Diamond's room, and than...nothing...silence.

Iris' color turned pale.

"What was THAT all about?" Atmomo inquired.

The Pearl looked at the Keronian couple with sad eyes- it was obvious that the intel she had just received was not humorous, nor pleasant. "Sh-She was talking to a bounty hunter-Fett or something like that.."

The Keronian's eye's went wide as they waited patiently for the Pearl to continue.

"They-he- found your son." Iris persperated. "He's apparently on Earth."

"Pekopon?! Why would he choose Pekopon?!" Prolulu was confused.

"Did the bounty hunter...?" Atmomo was afraid to ask.

"No. Gamama was able to escape- that's why our mistress was so upset."

"Thank the Stars..." Prolulu felt she was on the brink of passing out.

"I don't know what happens next, but it is NOT good news that she has located the whereabouts of your son. She'll probably send out more bounty hunters...fortunately-or...erm...not fortunately? It
seems she wants them to bring Gamama alive...she wants to- have the pleasure of destroying him herself..."

Atmomo began to spew curses. "What the FUCK is wrong with that woman?! She's a monster! Getting pleasure killing people off like that..."

"Aparently, she has always been this way..." Lucky shivered, reminding herself of all the Gems that had died underneath her master's fingers...

"Well...at least he's safe...for now." Prolulu nodded. "He's a strong soldier. He knows what to do in an emergency."

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Meanwhile, Lilolo, Gamma's previous platoon member, was attempting to get her mind off of recent politics. She was currently engaging in her favorite pastime—antiquing or (more specifically) Pekoponian antiquing! As the frog walked through the bustle of the crowd, she (finally) spotted her favorite booth! It was a shop typically filled with Pekoponian reading material, and was owned by a chipper Betelgeusian by the name of Mrmph-Mow.

The Betelgeusian spotted Lilolo, and proceeded to wave at her with enthusiasm! She WAS one of his best clients...after all! The frog waved back pleasantly, before jogging to the tent.

Mrmph-Mow put his paws on his hips in satisfaction. "So nice to see you again Lilolo! We don't get many Keronians around here!"

"Likewise! It's good to see you too Mrmph-Mow."

"I thought something had happened to ya'. You had me concerned there for a couple of months..."

"I'm so sorry." The frog looked slightly sheepish. "I didn't mean to worry you. My platoon has been dealing with...the loss of one of our crew members."

The cat looked disheartened. "Oh I'm sorry dear...was it...a battle?"

"No- (thank goodness)...exile."

"Exile?!" The Betelgeusian seemed surprised. "What did they do?!"

Lilolo laughed slightly while crying at the same time. "They...they defended them self..."

"Merrrrf?" The cat tilted his head...most confused.

"It's...it's nothing. Anyway, do you have anything new today?"

"Funny you should ask!" The Betelgeusian dug through one of his random piles and produced an odd notebook. "Looky here! Found The strangest thing in an Earth discount bin the other day!"

The cat handed the journal to Lilolo. The item in question was obviously for smaller children, as it had a picture of a strange adorably-frightening character on the front.

"A new Earth mascot. They call him "Uncle Stinky"...helps spread awareness about fire safety. You know...it IS the oddest thing...he sort of looks like another Keronian customer I had a few months back..."

Lilolo put her hand on the journal, examining the thing in interest. The odd picture featured a creature with a radioactive hazmat symbol on the front of his hat...
In a sudden panic, Lilolo thought the picture resembled...no...it couldn't be...too much of a coincidence. "Mrmph-Mow! You said you saw another Keronian in your shop that looked like this?!" The frog pointed at the picture in a panic.

"Well, Hang on there miss! Don't get your hat tangled..." The Betelgeusian scratched under his chin, thinking about that day... "Yes...he was red, and had a big bag full of food...he also had a brown hat with a flap on either side! Bought some books from Earth and...a "Fred the Slice of Bread" plush If I remember correctly? Kinda gruff- but he seemed most intrigued by the fact that aliens such as myself could live on Earth discreetly..."

The cat turned to Lilolo, before chuckling. "Maybe he took my advice to heart and became the model for that there mascot?"

"Could...could I buy this?! Please!" The Keronian looked suddenly desperate and nervous.

"Alright! Alright! Calm yourself Lilolo! I'll sell ya the journal!" The old cat shuffled behind the register so he could complete the sale.

After the transaction was complete, Lilolo ran toward her ship in a hurry, shouting the entire way: "THANK YOU MRMPH-MOW! THANK YOU!"

The Betelgeusian scratched his head, incredibly confused. "Heh...those Keronians...such a jumpy bunch..." The cat began to calmly sweep the store and wait for his next customer to arrive.
Chapter 47

Back on Earth...

After a stern talking to, the group began to plan an awesome restaurant outline for Acapella. The Yellow Pearl (at first) just wanted to make food, and watch people enjoy it. However, Pearl knew this was not a very savvy business technique, and had to explain how profit worked to Acapella.

"We need to make enough money in order to at least buy more ingredients." The Pearl nodded.

"Egh...FINE. I just want to see if the humans like my cooking."

"I understand Acapella...but a business needs to be...somewhat profitable to make ends meet-"

"...and how...may I ask...do YOU guys make ends meet? You just fight corrupted Gems?! How is THAT profitable?!"

Pearl stuck her nose up. "Well, If you MUST know, I am very talented at machanical matinance! I have fixed several machines for some extra currency!"

"Oh yeah?! What about the rest of you guys?!"

"Greg." Amethyst spoke matter of factly.

"Scratch-off tickets." Garnet nodded to herself.

"Of course." Acapella stared at the fusion sarcastically.

"...ANYWAY- the point being- we should create a menu and some prices accordingly." Pearl nodded

"I can basically make anything eatable...how do we choose what to put on there?"

"Boy...your humbleness is as strong as ever I see...why don't you take a poll? Ask the humans around here what kind of food they like?"

"Hey! I have a GREAT idea!"

"...and that would be...?"

"I'll take a poll, and ask the humans around here what kind of food they like! I'm a genius!"

"What the...?! But I just said that! That was MY idea!"

"Now...now Pearl...who came up with the idea isn't important. What's important is that it's a great idea! (That I came up with.)"

"Wait...what was that last part you just said?"

"Let's get started!" Acapella ignored Pearl's quip, and began to write a long list on various styled foods from around the planet for the poll.
After a (very) long and awkward process of asking (and scaring) a whole bunch of humans about their favorite foods- the poll concluded that the locals wanted anything but seafood.

It was not terribly surprising, considering this was a sea town- fish was probably boring everyone.

"Well that poll was not terribly helpful..." Garnet observed the results. "Maybe you should just offer one dish from each region that was chosen?"

Acapella nodded, and decided to ask Garnet for advice. "Can-can you use your future vision? To see what people would enjoy the most?" The question took Garnet by surprise, but she nodded and smiled- happy that Acapella felt comfortable enough to ask for her assistance.

Finally after all the prep was nearing completion, the night of the grand opening fell upon the family! Fliers had been passed out! A sign was hanging from the house's front door! The entire first floor of the home had been transformed into a dainty restaurant that could easily seat 20!

As some interested foodies began to arrive, Toaster welcomed everyone as adoreably as possible. Lots of folks ended up handing the Ruby their coats.

Confused by this gesture, Toaster ended up piling everything in the corner. Pearl rolled her eyes at Toaster's behavior, before hanging up the coats properly.

Garnet decided to take orders. Accepella worked madly over the stove as food requests came in.

Before long, the place was bustling and quite full! Everyone was chanting with pleasant banter and compliments! Acapella finally filled out all the orders, and when no more customers were able to enter, the Pearl took the greatest pleasure listening to dozens of humans complimenting her cooking while she cleaned dishes.

it was obvious that the opening night was a grand success! The profits and tips alone were more than enough to pay for the ingredients and labor.

As the weeks continued, word got around about the magnificent restaurant.

Everything was going great!

Toaster went back to help at the ASPCA.

Gamma was keeping busy promoting events and boosting the town's morale.

Acapella had her restaurant.

Everything was good...everything was great...

...and than, two weeks later...

It was a typicly normal morning. Acapella was cleaning dishes, Gamma and Toaster were watching tv.

"KA-BOOM!"
The house shook violently as the blasters of a landing ship roared into the front yard.

The trio jumped in surprise! All three aliens readied their weapons...even Toaster took out her little sling shot in anticipation.

The Ruby opened the door slowly. The ship that had parked on the lawn looked...oddly familiar...

As the ship opened, a silhouette appeared. The alien walked into the open, looking around both curiously and with a bit of urgency. It was a Keronian! A purple one! Toaster closed the front door slowly, and turned toward Gamma concerned. "It's... it's another Keronian!

Gamma stared at the little Gem in fascination! "Was...was it- a bounty hunter?"

Toaster shrugged.

Gamma peeked out the front door, and gasped in shock! "Li-Lilolo?! Is that you?! How the Stars did you find me?!"

Lilolo spotted her exiled friend, and quickly ran toward Gamma-tears in her eyes! The duo embraced.

"I never thought I would see you again!" The purple frog wailed.

"I never thought I would ever see another real Keronian again!" Gamma smiled sheepishly. "Come! Let's get inside the house!" Gamma welcomed his friend in with open arms.

The duo sat at one of the spare tables and quickly began to banter. Toaster and Acapella stood to the side with curiosity. It was unlike Gamma to not introduce his friends to new people...

Acapella coughed slightly in hopes of getting some attention.

"OH! Right! Lilolo, this is Acapella and Toaster! Acapella and Toaster- Lilolo!

"They..they’re Gems?" Lilolo seemed concerned.

"Yup! Really nice Gems too! The frog nodded.

"I'm surprised you would have...erm...Gems for friends? After everything you've been through...being exiled and all..."

"All Gems are different, and (to be honest) Yellow Diamond is really the only one I've met that has ended up being hostile..."

"Yellow Diamond..." Lilolo looked away. She began to get upset. "Oh Gamma...I know you are probably not...entirely aware of what's been going on between our species..."

Gamma tilted his head in curiosity. "Well, I do know that Yellow Diamond has still been sending bounty hunters after me...not entirely sure why...I guess she really doesn't want me hanging around..."

"It's...not just the bounty hunters Gamma...she..." Lilolo began to tear up.

Surprised by this, the red Keronian patted his friend on the shoulder. "Why don't you just start from the beginning?"

Lilolo attempted to calm herself. "Ok...here it goes: I figured out which planet you had traveled to
when I found some "Uncle Stinky" merchandise as one of the galactic swap meets."

"Oh. You saw that?" Gamma blushed terribly.

Lilolo nodded. "Naturally, my first thought was to tell your folks that you were ok- they have been so worried about you..."

"Good 'ol mom and dad...always there for me..." a tear of sympathy went down Gamma's eye. "I bet they were relieved, I bet!" The frog nodded.

"Gamma...I-I don't know how to tell you this...you're parents...weren't home."

"Out on the town?"

Lilolo shook her head. "Your entire neighborhood looked like a war zone! There were toppled buildings, smooshed cars, massive footprints in the road and sidewalk..."

Gamma's eyes became huge with shock.

Lilolo continued: "I-I asked around the neighborhood. They...they said the government was covering up the incident in order to prevent war. She...took them Gamma. Yellow Diamond took them as hostages."

There was a brief pause. Gamma sat stoic several seconds before completely loosing it, tears in his eyes. "No. No. NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!" The frog grasped his hands onto his head in grief. "I'LL KILL HER! THAT DAMN BITCH! THAT MONSTER! I'LL PULVERIZE HER INTO TEENY TINY PIECES!"

"Gamma..." Lilolo began to tear up again.

"-NO!" Gamma immediately stormed up the staircase and entered his room. He loaded and grabbed his blasters, before stomping down the staircase, and exiting the front door.

"Where the Stars is he going?!" Acapella asked incredibly concerned.

"COME ON!" Gamma was standing in the doorway of Lilolo's ship. "LET'S GO! COME ON!"

Lilolo put her hands on her hips. "Are you NUTS?! You can't just fly a foreign ship to a hostel planet, and slaughter one of their major figureheads! What are you thinking?!"

Toaster looked up at Lilolo, before poking her in the sholder. The purple frog jumped slightly, before glaring down at the strange creature in surprise.

"Um...uh...Low? Well...the thing is...Gamma is a good mother. He takes care of me, an protects me, an always makes sure I'm happy! Gamma is a good ma!...and...if Yellow Diamond took Gamma's mother, and he's this upset-she must be a good ma tooos! I think...I think we should help him get his ma back!"

The frog blinked surprisingly at the Ruby. She thought it incredibly curious that this odd Gem had (essentially) imprinted on her friend. Her adorable speech melted the purple Keronian's heart.

"That's a given. Although we're going to need a plan first-a good one...and LOTS of allies to make this work..." Acapella thought to herself, contemplating.

It was obvious to Lilolo that this trio was not going to argue WHETHER to rescue the hostages, but HOW.
There was no debate regarding the issue.
Chapter 48

The group was stuck.

What to do now?

Every single idea had its share of flaws. If they told the MIB about the hostages, a war would break out between the two species.

If the group attempted to save the couple on their own, they would certainly be slaughtered on the spot.

No, this was going to take planning...a LOT of planning. If they somehow rescued Gamma's parents without getting completely destroyed, Yellow Diamond would either have to deny the alications, or commit to her own lies.

Naturally, their best bet was the one Gem who always planed three steps ahead-Garnet.

The fusion persperated heavily as every pair of eyes in the group looked toward her in desperation. This entire scinario reminded her of when Greg was taken away to the human zoo. THIS was a completely different monster though. Going directly to Homeworld to steal hostages right under Yellow Diamond's watchful eye was going to be a trick.

For days, Garnet sat in a quiet spot of the temple and meditated. She went through every singe possible plan and conclusion she could think of. Finally, after about 3 days, the fusion had her answer. It was incredibly specific, and risky, but it was the only option she could come up with that would benefit everyone.

The Fusion re-emerged from the temple. The entire party that had been waiting looked up with surprise. Garnet spoke: "I know how we can do it. I know how we can save your parents without getting hurt, or hurting anyone else. It is going to be tricky though...and fairly unpleasant." The Gem nodded. "Lilolo-"

"Hmm?"

"-your ship has a cloaking device?"

The Keronian nodded,

"...and you can turn invisible...like Gamma?"

Lilolo turned the pin on her hat and immediately disappeared from view.

The fusion then turned to Gamma. "Gamma, is the pocket space in your hat still functional?"

Gamma attempted the corresponding button, and a incredibly small space revealed itself from the side of the hat.

"Good. Acapella- do people fall asleep if your voice is recorded over an electronic device?
The Yellow Pearl shrugged. "I don't know... It made Yellow Diamond fall asleep over a phone call... as well as some of the MIB agents..."

"Well than!" Garnet clapped her hands in excitement! "-All we need to make this work is a boom box, a taser, a blank CD, and some super glue! Oh! Also, Steven!"

The boy beamed!

---------

Garnet was poring an obscene amount of super glue on the inside of Gamma's hat. The activity was making the frog incredibly nervous. She quickly placed the hat on the Keronian's head:

"BLUT!"

With a massive amount of enthusiasm, Garnet instructed the frog to adjust the hat on his head until it felt comfortable. "Do it fast. The glue dries quickly... and that hat is going to be stuck on your noggin for a WHILE..."

---------

Greg was called in to help create a CD of Acapella's singing. He had to put on sound muffs to protect himself. While the father had little intel on what was going on (or even who these new Gems were anyway) he gave the Yellow Pearl a thumbs up as he recorded several hours of her singing an ominous melody.

The CD was tested that night during bedtime. Sure enough, the effects did roll over to digital formats. Everyone in the house fell asleep peacefully.

---------

The next day Garnet presented the taser to Lilolo.

"Do you know how to use one of these?"

"Erm... not really..."

"You hold it like this, and then turn the button on here-" as the fusion flicked the switch, the taser came to life making a radical popping sound and producing a small electric charge.

Garnet turned to the party, most serious. "In three days time, a Topaz fusion will be coming to kidnap Gamma. This will be our only chance to make this work! Steven..."

The boy stood at attention!

"-Unfortunately, you can not join us on this rescue mission. If they saw a human amongst us, it would blow the operation."

The boy looked a bit disappointed. Garnet approached him and simply stated: "We love you Steven." before kissing the child's forehead.

Immediately, there were images and stories that filled the small boy's head. He knew what was going to happen. Steven hugged Garnet's leg, before letting her break the news to the others.

Garnet turned back to Lilolo. "This is going to sound... rather odd, but I need you to tase every Gem in this room- except for Steven of course."
"Wait...WHAT?!!" The crowd seemed equally shocked at this command.

Lilolo seemed mortified! "I don't wanna do THAT...it breaks every code I follow with alternate species! Why on Keron?!!"

Garnet put her hand on Lilolo’s shoulder. It will be fine. Us Gems can regenerate after our form is destroyed. Think of it as...hibernation!" The Gem nodded.

"I did NOT sign up for this! The fusion has gone looney!" Acapella bickered.

"Garnet responded: "I warned you that this plan was going to be...a bit unpleasant. It is the only successful way of saving the hostages though. Lilolo, please trust me."

The Keronian hesitated before shocking Garnet in the side. The fusion poofed- her gemstones falling on the floor.

Steven followed the instructions Garnet's future vision had shown him. He quickly bubbled both gemstones.

This process repeated itself over and over again. Soon, Acapella, Toaster, Pearl, and Amethyst had also been bubbled.

By the end of it all, Lilolo seemed distraught and (slightly) traumatized.

Steven turned to Gamma with instructions. "Gamma, could you please open the pocket space that Peridot made for your hat?"

Slightly confused, the frog abliged.

Steven proceeded to grab all the bubbles, and forcefully stuff them all into the pocket space until they fit. The boy than proceeded to do the same thing with the battery powered boom box, and CD.

"There! You're all set. Now for Lilolo..." the half human turned to the purple Keronian with determination. "You can drive the space ship...correct?"

"Y-yes! I've had several lessons!"

"Good! There were two outcomes I saw...either the Topaz will take your ship for the parts, OR will leave it here on Earth. If she takes it, you have to stay on the inside, invisible. If she doesn't take it, you will have to follow her ship using your ship's cloaking device. ...Either way, you are going to be the getaway ride once they rescue Gamma's family."

"Ah!" Lilolo nodded with understanding.

"What about me?" Gamma asked, hesidently.

Steven looked slightly sheepish. "Actually Gamma, I hate to tell you this...but you're the bait. We want you to get captured! Your hat is going to sneak everyone in...like a Trojan Horse!"

"Trojan...Horse?"

"It's an old human story, where the enemy was tricked into letting the aposing army in their walls by hiding in a giant wooden horse."

"That sounds...weird..."

"Yeah, it's kind of a strange story...OH! By the way, Yellow Diamond is hiding your parents inside
of a hidden room on the right side of her throne. You need to somehow make her press the button to open it...her fingerprint is the only way to get the door to work."

“Wait...how do you know all this stuff anyway?!?”

“Garnet told me.”

“Ahh...”

There was an ominous silence. It was odd not having the regular set of Gems bantering about.

"Well...NOW what do we do?"

"We...wait."
Chapter 49

The next three days were filled with nervousness and dread.

With the Gems all dormant inside of Gamma's hat, Steven decided to stay with his father, Greg, to prevent himself from going stir crazy.

Lilolo turned invisible, and the two Keronians proceeded to ride back to Gamma's house on the bus. The Warp Pad was no longer a choice. Without Steven or the other Gems, the thing refused to function.

Lilolo did the best she could to keep Gamma's spirits up. It was obvious that the red amphibian was nervous as ever. He was losing sleep over this. It got to the point where Lilolo forced the frog to take the boom box out of his pocket space temporarily, and held her ears while playing the CD...just long enough so that the soldier could get some rest.

Finally, the third day arrived. As instructed, Lilolo turned herself invisible and sat quietly on one of her ship's beds in hopes of being ignored.

Gamma was pacing inside the house, chewing on his fingers. He had no clue what a "Topaz" Gem even looked like...but if one could single-handedly kidnap any being, he assumed that the creature was probably massive.

There was a sudden rush of air outside! A teardrop-shaped ship zoomed into the atmosphere! The grass around the house shivered in waves! A flock of birds scattered from the trees!

The ship landed. A door formed from the nothingness...as well as a ramp. The silhouette (as Gamma expected) was incredibly tall, and incredibly well built.

The frog watched in terror from the window, as the massive Gem that was Topaz walked down the driveway. The new alien paused periodically to examine and admire the ship on the front lawn, before continuing their journey, and approaching the front door.

Gamma braced himself expecting the door to be completely smashed inward!

"Ding! Dong!"

The Keronian opened one of his eyes in a bit of disbelief! He turned to the door curiously. What was with all these bounty hunters using the doorbell?! One would think if you were attempting to kidnap someone, using a doorbell would kind of give away the element of surprise?

The frog decided that, perhaps politeness would make this horrendous nightmare go smoother? He opened the door and gazed at the intimidating wall that was Topaz.

"H-Hello there! How may I help you today?" Gamma was nervous, but polite all the same.

The Topaz said nothing, but glared down at the frog, before producing a strange Diamond-shaped object and turning it several times over. The object began to light up and expand. Soon the device transformed into a screen...and displayed...

"A-Acapella?!!" The Keronian forgot for a second that the Yellow Pearl he knew was currently
laying dormant inside of his hat.

"THIS IS THE YELLOW DIAMOND CONTROL RO-" the Yellow Pearl stopped her scripted speech and stared at the frog in surprise. Her voice went almost to a whisper: "G-Gamama?"

"What the?" Gamma tilted his head in confusion. How did this Pearl know his name?!

Unfortunately, he wasn't able to ask. There was a familiar voice of evil that suddenly blurted from the background of the call. "Lucky? Who is on the Diamond Line?!" The Pearl contorted in fear, before answering: "Erm...I...it's...a...Keronian? My Diamond?"

"Ahh! Yes! I have been expecting this call! Give it here Lucky." The massive Diamond grabbed the screen.

...there she was. The cause of all this unnecessary strife: Yellow Diamond in all her horrendous massive glory. The leader smirked in the most ominous of fashions. "Well! Look who we have here!"

Gamma's mood immediately changed. "YOU!" the frog narrowed his eyes in hatred.

"Yes indeed! ME!"

"What do YOU want?!"

"Now! Now! There's no reason to be so hostile! Especially because I'm here to make you a deal!"

"...and why the HELL should I make a deal with YOU?! Give me ONE good reason!"

"Actually, I have TWO!" The leader lifted one of her hands. She was holding a massive yellow bubble with a terrified Atmomo and Prolulu on the inside. It was evident that the duo was attempting to shout something to Gamma on the other line of the phone. Their shouts, however, were being muffled by the massive bubble.

"MOM! DAD!" Gamma was expecting something like this, but seeing it right in front of his face still came as a heart-breaking shock!

"Ah! So you DO know these two!" Yellow Diamond nodded, proud of herself.

"DON'T YOU DARE HURT THEM!" Gamma shouted in a rage. "DON'T YOU DARE!"

"Hmmmhmm...how about this- I won't harm these two...disgusting creatures, if you come to Homeworld peacefully! We'll do a basic trade- your one miserable life, for these TWO! Quite a bargain! You come here and I'll let them go...without any harm or hair out of place!"

"...and how am I supposed to know you aren't lying about this "deal"?!

The Yellow Diamond smiled maliciously. "Do you really want to take that risk?"

The call ended.

Gamma stood in shock for several seconds, before he began to get histirical. "CALL HER BACK! CALL HER BACK RIGHT NOW!" Gamma hopped up and down in desperation, as the Topaz held the device just out of the creature's reach. Instead of calling the Diamond again, the Topaz casually turned toward the front yard, and chucked the device high in the air. The thing proceeded to self-destruct, and explode about half way through the stratosphere.
"AAAAAAAHHHH! WHY?!” Gamma held his head in confusion and grief!

The Topaz turned to the frog most casually. "Are you going to run? Or come peacefully?” The Gem's voice did not fit her size at all. Instead of a booming or intimidating presence, the Topaz had sort of a motherly tone to it.

Gamma glared at the Gem. "Well, it's not like I have much of a CHOICE NOW...DOES IT?!”

The Topaz nodded in agreement before being completely engulfed in light. The result was two nearly identical smaller Topaz standing side by side. The duo stepped forward, one on each of Gamma's side, before fusing once more. The sinesis felt odd to the frog, but he soon found himself quite stuck in the Topaz's middle chest. The Keronian could still talk, but his arms and legs were completely useless.

"Wait...what is THIS?!” The Keronian struggled for several seconds before caving in to this very...ODD ritual. "Do you capture ALL organic life like this?!"

The Topaz said nothing, but began to stomp toward the Keronian's ship with curiosity. They managed to find the hatch, and walked around inside. Lilolo stayed perfectly still, as the massive Gem passed by her sleeping chambers. Eventually, the fusion nodded to herself, before placing a teather connecting the Keronian ship to her own. If the frog was going to parish anyway, perhaps the foreign spaceship would hold useful information and tools to help the Peridots and Bismuths become more efficient?

The Topaz than entered her own ship. She sat in the captain's seat, and programmed the vehicle to take the fastest route to Homeworld.

The object lifted off the ground, pulling the Keronian ship behind it- and proceeded to zoom off into the depth of space.
Chapter 50

The flight did not take long—probably no more than a day and a half. At some point, Gamma must have fallen asleep, because a sudden meteor shower woke him up.

At another point in the trip, a regal Gem contacted the Topaz and asked her to disarm Gamma by taking his hat away. Fortunately, human super glue must have been created from reinforced steel. The episode hurt the Keronian something fierce, as the Topaz attempted to tug the thing off. The hat refused to budge from the frog’s head.

The remainder of the journey was fairly uneventful. On several occasions, Gamma attempted to strike up a conversation with his captor...just to fight boredom and nervousness.

The Topaz was very stoic, and not much of a talker. Gamma did find out through random bantering that she did not particularly enjoy her line of work. He also found out, that the Topaz greatly wished for some down time so that her two halves could mingle and relax a bit.

Gamma recommended some fun and romantic spots across the cosmos if her wish ever came true. He told her that "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe" had a spectacular dinner show, and that the planet Coruscant had excellent shopping and museum tours.

While the Topaz seemed doubtful that she would get to see any of these places for herself, she appreciated that her hostage was willing to tell her about such nifty spots...just in case!

Finally, the ship docked at one of Homeworld's ports. The frog was suddenly paralyzed with fear as he began to shake uncontrollably. Topaz immediately noted this change, and patted the frog on the head a few times, not unlike someone would pet a scared puppy. Gamma found this gesture somewhat demeaning, but didn't complain. If nothing else the shaking had subsided a little bit.

As instructed, the massive fusion took underground hallways to her Diamond's chambers. The leader had been VERY specific that no other Gem should know about her kidnapping an alternative species. The Topaz wanted to keep a low profile for safety reasons.

After climbing up a final flight of stairs out of the underground tunnels, it seemed the kidnapper had reached her destination. There was a massive set of double doors- completely covered in a golden finish. The Topaz used a gargantuan door knock to get the resident's attention. One of the doors opened, and a Yellow Pearl appeared. The servant looked down at Gamma with a strange sense of pity- before quickly signaling the duo to come inside.

"Well! Well! Look what the Topaz dragged in!" The massive leader was sitting on her throne, smiling in the most malicious of manners.

Gamma grumbled to himself. "Yes. Yes. I'm here. We had a deal Diamond! Let my folks go!"

"Hmmmm...yes the deal. I have been thinking it over you see...at this point, your kin knows just as much about this entire mess as you do. So I thought about it, and figured it would just be easier to...destroy ALL three of you."

"WHAT?! NO! We had a DEAL!"

"Indeed...and deals are meant to be broken! Not to worry though! I'm going to give you a special
treat! You will...parish...last. So you'll still get to see your...family? Is that what organics call it? A "family"? YES! You get the honor of seeing me crush your family before distroying YOU. A lucky organic you are!" The Diamond smiled even more maliciously.

"You're...you're INSANE! What is WRONG with you?!" Gamma's rage had peaked he wanted nothing more than to escape from this fusion's grasp and shoot his blaster at this monster until she was a pile of rubble.

"Hmm...you seem a bit big headed. Perhaps I should show you your place before distroying your kin. Let him go Topaz."

"My-My Diamond? Are you sure?"

"OF COURSE I'M SURE! DO NOT QUESTION MY AUTHORITY! Go...stand watch outside or something will you? Make sure no one disturbs me."

"Y-Yes my Diamond." The Topaz saluted before shining like a brilliant star, and splitting apart. Gamma could hear both Gems mumbling apologies to the frog before walking outside and closing the chamber door behind them.

Gamma couldn't help but feel sorry for the duo as they left the room. He felt that they weren't enjoying the situation anymore than than he was. After both Topaz were completely out of sight, the frog quickly refocused on his target.

That woman...that damn woman. Gamma was now very much free, and incredibly pissed off. The frog glared at the Diamond, before producing both of his blasters. His gaze alone could probably end lives.

"Ahh. Back to your old tricks I see. Going to try to destroy me again you pathetic slime? I guess it's only sporting of me to give you a good show before I completely destroy you..."

For a split second, Gamma contiplated. The easiest thing to do would be to release his Gem family from his hat to assist...but than he thought about Toaster-how scared she would be. How this monster's electricity could probably hurt his friends in a heartbeat. He made a difficult decision. Family and friends came first. He would attempt his best on his own...to keep his loved ones safe.

What the Diamond was expecting was for the idiotic creature to shoot at her arm again. What she WASN'T expecting was for the Keronian to turn the pin on his hat and become completely invisible!

Shocked by this sudden development, the leader scowled. "Using a cloaking device I see? A coward's move!"

Gamma quickly climbed the chamber wall to get a better vantage point. He could see the button leading to his parents cell somewhat hidden on the right side of the Diamond's throne- just as Steven had informed him.

As much as he hated Yellow Diamond, he loved his parents a hell of a lot more. Their safety took priority.

As the Keronian crawled toward his destination, it was obvious that the leader was becoming impatient.

"Why won't you shoot you idiotic organic? I'm right here!" Yellow Diamond glanced around the room- attempting to get a vantage point on her enemy.
Gamma quickly crawled to the massive button and examined it in hopes of figuring out a way to short circuit the thing. No wire panel was visible. Frustrated, the frog attempted to see if he could open the door manually...

...no dice. He was going to have to do this the hard way. The frog crawled on top of the door's button, and proceeded to turn the pin on his hat. He immediately became visible again, and stuck out like a sore thumb on the yellow wall.

The Keronian shot at the floor to get the massive leader's attention.

Yellow turned, surprised and smiled. "There you are you disgusting nuisance!" The Diamond quickly attempted to snuff out the slime using her thumb! Gamma jumped off the button quickly, resulting in the massive leader accidently pressing it. The door swung open immediately!

Gamma shouted quickly: "MOM! DAD! GET OUT! NOW!" The frog rolled quickly and managed to dodge Yellow Diamond's attempt to smoosh him with her massive fist. No one in the prison had to be told twice. Both Atmomo and Prolulu, as well as the surprised Yellow Pearl-Iris- escaped instantly.

The group immediately began to run out of doge.

Yellow Diamond made a face of intense rage. As Gamma attempted to get his footing, the leader, grabbed the frog rather aggressively.

"How dare you?! HOW DARE YOU?! Trying to make a fool out of me by using my own chamber against me?!

The Diamond proceeded to grab the creature's blasters, and squash them with her giant fist. They were both hendered useless.

Gamma was currently lying in the giant's hand. It was clear that he was not doing very well. The leader grabbing him so recklessly had resulted in his leg twisting in the wrong direction.

Yellow Diamond quickly threw the creature to the ground as aggressively as possible. His family and her two Pearls were so spooked, that all they could do was watch over the horrendous sight in shock. It was not everyday her majesty got the opportunity to maim an organic creature. A Gem's demise was quick. This event, however, was painful and slow.

Gamma attempted to crawl away from the monster upon the ground. Only one of his arms was functioning properly now. The sad alien cried and wept as his body struggled against him. His left wrist was floppy and un-responsive. The Yellow Diamond stared down at the pathetic creature, before plastering the frog beneath her massive boot.

"Perhaps there should be a change of plans. You slime- have lost your privilege of seeing your kin parish. You shall die first." The leader began putting more and more weight on her foot. As the Keronian began to scream in pain, Prolulu began to shout: "Gamama! GAMAMA! Leave him alone you MASSIVE TOAD!"

The leader stared at the kin, but shrugged off her insults. She would die as well, but the leader wanted to enjoy this. She had waited so long to kill this creature...

Gamma attempted to use his last remaining limb to press one of the buttons on his hat flap. Almost...almost... as the massive shoe crushed his body further and further, the action became ever
more difficult.

...almost...

With his head throbbing, the pressure and the pain of the leader's massive weight finally made the poor creature fall unconscious. It got to the point where Gamma was almost completely flat. His head rolled slightly, and managed to press every button on his hat at the same time...

In a sudden amount of excitement, Gamma's pocket space opened! The extra pressure of the leader's weight created a massive flurry of pink bubbles to fly out into the open! A horrific odor was also released from the unconscious Keronian, making Yellow Diamond rear quickly in disgust!

Iris saw the blurry pink objects fly in every direction. Curious, she managed to grab one and pop it. There was a massive shimmering of light, as the Renegade Pearl reformed in the chamber. The new Pearl quickly attempted to gain her bearings as she produced a sword and a spear in her hands-ready to fight. She glanced around quickly before spotting the incredibly injured Gamma and his two parents attempting to awaken him.

Horrified, the Pearl worked quickly. She bounded in the air, as light as a feather- popping all the remaining bubbles, before landing back on the ground. The Pearl approached Gamma and his family grimly. She looked over the gruesome scene

To Yellow Diamond's complete horror, Pearl created 3 bubbles- one around each of Gamma's family members, and quickly tapped on the top of all them in a hurry. The Keronian family disappeared in an instant.

_____________________

While the Gems were not close enough to Earth to send the bubbles back to the temple, the family was quickly transported to the next best place- Lilolo's ship.

Needless to say, the frog was most shocked and surprised when three bubbles suddenly appeared in her sleeping chambers. Lilolo quickly popped the bubbles of both Gamma's parents, and began to asses the damage done to the poor soldier.

_____________________

"What did you do?! WHAT THE FRACK DID YOU IMBECILES DO?!" Yellow stared at the new Pearl as static discharge began to emit from her fingertips. As the leader screamed at the top of her lungs all of the other Gems began to reform. Needless to say, both Iris and Lucky were internally surprised as the massive party appeared in front of them!

Ruby and Sapphire formed Garnet quickly, and immediately asked Pearl what the damage was.

"Severe." She answered. "He was nearly crushed to death, and had multiple broken bones and fractures."

The Garnet gritted her teeth in anger. Gamma had unintentionally taken the most risky path- using himself as bait to open the prison cell FIRST, BEFORE releasing the entire party from his hat. "Idiot." Garnet cursed to herself quietly. It was obvious that the frog was incredibly loyal, as he had sacrificed his own safety before even considering risking the safety of his family or friends.

Garnet quickly grabbed Pearl by the arm and pulled her out of dodge- just in the nick of time in
order to avoid one of Yellow Diamond's thunderbolts. "YOU SCUM OF THE COSMOS! DO YOU NOT KNOW WHAT THOSE KERONIANS WILL COST ME IF THEY ARE LEFT ALIVE?!"

"You might as well forget about them!" Pearl yelled at the leader. "I sent them to a safe place where you cannot go!"

The leader screeched in a rage as more electricity flew from her body. Amethyst formed next and rejoined her group quickly! If it was a fight this Diamond wanted- a fight she would get!

The Crystal Gems began to merge into a terrifying fusion! From the depths of the trio's anger and revenge formed the beast that was Alexandrite! The fusion roared at the terrifyingly appalled Yellow Diamond using her secondary maw, before charging toward the leader and releasing a massive barrage of fireballs from her mouth onto the Daiamond at close range!

A good part of Yellow Diamond's form fluctuated in pain, before the leader hit back at the monster hard with a massive wave of electricity! It was about this time that Acapella and Toaster reformed from their bubbles. The scene that welcomed them was complete chaos. Two gargantuan kaijus- Yellow Diamond and Alexandrite were completely filing the room with a massive fight! There was barely enough room to avoid the exchanging blows between the two beasts!

Through the tussle, Acapella spotted two additional Yellow Pearls shivering in the corner. She quickly scooped up Toaster before making a mad dash across the brawl in the room to ask the two familiar servants what the Stars was going on.

Iris and Lucky were surprised to see another Yellow Pearl barreling across the room. She hid with the new duo and asked for a quick subnopsis of what the dickens was going on.

"Your other friends fused to form...THAT..." Lucky pointed at the terrifying fusion who seemed to be loosing the battle at this point. Yellow Diamond's similar size and use of electricity was providing her the upper hand. Lucky continued: "Gamama sacrificed himself to save his parents. He was in pretty bad shape when that Pearl bubbled him away in order to keep him safe..."

"She...Yellow Diamond hurt Gamma real bad? Like...going to the "Rainbow Bridge" bad?!" Toaster was clearly freaking out entirely. Lucky had no clue what a "Rainbow Bridge" was, but she nodded solumly, somewhat understanding the Ruby's inquirely.

"No...NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!" Toaster held her head in grief, before glaring at Yellow Diamond- hatred in her eyes.

Alexandrite was quickly falling apart from the sheer amount of electricity being thrown at her. As the fusion disassembled, Toaster approached the leader. In that moment, she didn't care if anyone laughed at her weapon. She yanked the slingshot out of her gemstone, and aimed the artillary toward her Diamond's face.

Toaster's weapon hit its mark. The explosion was so great, that the entire back of Yellow Diamond's chamber wall crumbled, and completely topled into a pile of rubble.

Several Gems that were on the other side of the wall peaked through the new massive hole with interest.

Certainly a blast of that caliber had caused SOME damage?

...No such luck. The Diamond was still standing, and looking even more pissed off than ever.
Garnet gasped in fatigue. "PLAN B! WE GO WITH PLAN B!"

The crowd immediately understood, and held all of their ears. Lucky and Iris were the only ones slightly confused.

"LAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" Acapella produced a singing note which began to make the Diamond woozy. Lucky dropped like a fly. The sound didn't bother Iris in the slightest. The nearly-blind Pearl understood, as she joined her new sister.

"LAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

"LAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

The Yellow Pearls sang in unison. The massive leader finally collapsed in exhaustion. She fell asleep, snoring quite loudly.

The Crystal Gems grabbed the sleepy Lucky, and bolted out of the door of the chamber quickly.

The duo of Topaz was still watching guard, when the massive barrage of new folks ran out of the Diamond's chambers.

The two parties stared at each other in a quick shock, before Garnet used her electric powers to make both Gems poof. The fusion quickly bubbled the two Topaz, and tapped the top of their new prisons. The group of rebels (as well as Iris carrying a sleepy Lucky), followed Accapella to the ship port. The great thing about working for a prestige Diamond for so long, was that Acapella knew Homeworld's hallways like the back of her hand.

The ship came into view. The group shouted Lilolo's name to get her attention. The method seemed to work, as the group ran through a door that immediately opened on the Keronian's ship.

The spacecraft left in such a hurry, that the tether connecting Lilolo's ride to the Gem ship immediately snapped!

As quickly as a rabbit, the spacecraft sped off into the cosmos, and disappeared from view.
"GAMMA! WHERE'S GAMMA?!!" While everyone else was attempting to process all that had just happened, it was obvious that there was only one thing on Toaster's mind. The Ruby finally located the room with the beds where Gamma's parents were watching over their injured son.

"Gamma!" Toaster entered the room quickly, and immediately bore witness to a terrifying sight. His limbs were contorted, it looked like half of his scull had been crushed, there was green blood everywhere, and the Keronian's breathing was labored.

"GAMMA!" Toaster was going to run over to her pal to comfort him, but was quickly picked up by the scruff by Acapella.

"LET ME GO!" I need to stay with Gamma! He's my ma!"

The Pearl sighed. "You're too emotional and warm Toaster. You'll dry him out and he won't be able to heal."

The Ruby attempted to contort her way out of the scruff hold, before realizing something. "Acapella! You said my name! You called me "Toaster"!!" The Ruby looked at the Yellow Pearl with stars in her eyes!

Acapella simply nodded in approval.

"Could- could I at least leave Fred to watch over him Acapella? Someone has to make sure he stays safe!"

The Pearl nodded. Toaster proceeded to pull Fred from her gemstone, and handed the plush to Gamma's parents. The duo attempted to smile at the gesture, as they put the plushie near the bed's headrest.

Acapella walked the Ruby to a spare room on the ship away from others. She allowed Toaster to sit on her lap.

As the Ruby mourned in fear, the Pearl began to sing a very soft calming lullaby. It had no lyrics-just a soothing tone. Acapella rocked Toaster slightly while singing the song softly. Soon, Toaster was asleep, tears in her eyes.

The Pearl was unsure if the Keronian would be ok, but at least she could hold Toaster, and allow her to seep for a bit. Strangely enough, holding the small warm Gem seemed to be helping Acapella as well. She felt a bit better knowing she was bringing peace of mind to someone other than herself.

As the Keronian vehicle reapproached Earth. A incoming call was alerted by the ship.

"Incoming transmission from: Pekopon!"

"I'll get it." Garnet nodded as she answered the phone.
The screen transitioned to two not-so-nice-looking humans wearing sunglasses and suits. One of the men spoke: "This is the MIB. You are currently in restricted airspace. We are bringing you in-" the man stopped speaking when he saw Garnet staring back at him. Agent Zed removed his glasses with frustration. "God DAMMIT!" The agent put his head in his head. "Garnet!" The man shouted in frustration. "-GARNET! What the FUCK? How is it half the time when there's trouble, you just happen to be SOMEHOW involved?! You totally ruined my awesome intimidating speech!"

The fusion crossed her arms. "That's the least of your worries right now Zed. We are currently carrying seven unexpected noobs, and one crit- a red level crit."

"Oh for FUCKS sake..." the agent held the bridge of his nose in frustration. "The HELL did you Gems do?! FINE...I'll bring you into headquarters ASAP."

The call ended as the ship jostled slightly while the MIB tractor beam honed in on the Keronian ship.

When the ship landed in the agency's station, chaos ensued.

Agents ran in the ship with a stretcher quickly, and inquired where the "crit" was. The party led the doctors to the injured Gamma. The humans carefully moved the body and rushed him into the alien emergency room on hand.

This was immediately followed by all new aliens- Lilolo, Atmomo, Prolulu, Lucky, Iris, and the two bubbled Topaz going through customs.

The remaining shipmates were taken in for questioning in terms of what had caused all this chaos in the first place.

When all was said and done, there was one thing that was terribly obvious: Yellow Diamond was in trouble...a LOT of trouble.

Lucky and Iris explained the terrifying experience of seeing all of their sisters being horribly slaughtered before (basically) being locked in a room barely larger than a shed for a majority of their lives.

Lilolo had to explain Keron's taboo with the massive leader kidnapping Gamma's parents, and threatening war if news of the crime went public.

Gamma's parents explained being taken away from their home, and mistreated as hostages before being used as bait in an attempt to kill their son.

The two Topaz' were apparently threatened of being separated unless they kidnapped the frog (to which they added the creature seemed very "nice", and even gave them some very sound advice on places to visit if they ever got the chance.)

Acapella admitted that the leader had apparently set up this web of lies in order to take a Keronian-owned planet illegally.

Between all the witnesses, the crimes piled up quickly: lying, murder, threats, war crimes, trespassing...the list just kept growing larger and larger.
The MIB had no choice. There were way too many witnesses and too much built up galactic crimes to ignore. However, the agency wanted to be as sensitive as possible with this information. They decided to call Blue Diamond in order to get her opinion on this matter.

Blue Pearl answered the Diamond line. "Erm...hello. This is the Diamond Line for...uh...B-Blue Diamond?" The servant looked confused and tilted her head at the humans on screen.

Agent Zed answered: "Yes. On behalf of the MIB and Galactic Law I wish to speak to Blue Diamond."

"Who is it my Pearl?" A soft voice resonated from the background.

"It seems to be Humans my Diamond. They are calling on behalf of Galactic Law."

"Give it here my Pearl." The massive leader picked up the screen and looked down at Agent Zed in the most curious of manners. "How interesting... I have never gotten a call regarding Galactic Law...certainly not from Humans. How did you get this number?"

Agent Zed ignored the question. "Are you aware your sister has committed multiple acts of treason according to Galactic Law? Including murder?"

Blue Diamond looked appalled! "I have not heard anything from either of my sister's courts as of recently! On what basis do you have proof of this?"

Agent Zed placed a horrendous picture on the screen. Blue Diamond gasped in horror before covering her mouth with her hands. The picture featured Gamma in his current state. The photo was grotesque and quite graphic. Agent Zed hid nothing. There were contorted limbs, blood, bruises, and scars. Zed continued: "Your sister, Yellow Diamond, just caused injury to this Keronian. He came into our agency on the brink of death less than thirty minutes ago."

Blue Diamond not only seemed surprised, but also absolutely mortified.

"Now, there are several witnesses to this and many other crimes your sister has hidden within the past few weeks. I would highly suggest that you speak with her, and replace her for the next few Galactic meetings until the heat dies down. Also inform and STRESS to her that all these witnesses are now under protection of the MIB Code of Honor."

Blue Diamond nodded in a rage. "Trust me when I say, Yellow Diamond will be getting a...very INTERESTING call from me after I hang up with you. I must apologize for her behavior. This is not the kind of image I wish to portray upon our species." The Diamond hung up immediately, obviously embarrassed and irked.

"Well...that was...unexpected. It seems that she had NO CLUE Yellow Diamond was involved with such...horrendous behavior." Zed smiled. "Now all we have to do is pray for the frog's recovery!"

Chapter End Notes

Sooo...the story is nearing it's end! Yes indeed! Curiously wondering to my readers: would you guys like me to write more AWTH stories? There were a whole bunch of short ideas that didn’t make the cut, because they didn’t really progress the plot. I also
have a (very) vague idea for a sequel, and wanted to know if you guys would be interested in such things?
The frog’s life was teetering on fate.

Garnet ended up going back to the house briefly, and gathered two viles- one with Rose's tears, and another with Steven's spit.

Both were used on the injured Keronian with...mixed results. Some of the bones with more minor fractures healed instantly, while more major injuries were still partially evident.

Extra surgery was needed to fix one of the frog's legs...as well as to ease some of the swelling that had occurred in the creature's skull. As it turned out, there was a lot of damage done to Gamma's skull, but the pieces were held together by the frog's hat.

Aparently, someone had poured an obscene amount of super glue under the hat, which kept everything in place quite nicely. Unfortunately, this also meant that the MIB had to remove the hat to perform the surgery. This required quite a bit of finagling with the super glue.

After four major surgeries, the Keronian's immunity began to strengthen, and heal on its own.

The wait was unbearable for the entire party.

Finally, after what seemed like DAYS of waiting, an MIB alien doctor entered the waiting room from the surgery deck. Everyone stood up in anticipation.

As the doctor smiled, all the tension of the previous events blew away with the wind. The doctor spoke: "Gamama has some new battle scars from the multiple surgeries...but his immunity has returned to normal. He'll need three more days of sleep, and a bit of recovery time, but he should be fine!"

Overjoyed with emotion, Toaster gave the doctor the biggest hug she could muster!

...which resulted in turning the doctor's scrub PANTS into scrub SHORTS. The Gem blushed in embarrassment. Her heat had ruined the human's clothing. The doctor was just happy that the family of the injured alien was joyous and greatful!

When Gamma finally awoke, he was in a hospital bed. His head hurt...as well as the back of his left leg, and several parts of his torso and face. He turned his head to the left slowly, and his gaze was met with a fluffy, brown, cat-like smile.

"Hello Fred." The Keronian chuckled to himself. "I can see you've been watching over me, eh?"

The plushie said nothing- of course. He glanced in the opposite direction, and saw his mother and father asleep by his bedside. In that instant, Gamma knew that everything was going to be alright.
The alien closed his eyes and began to rest once more.

It was just another day...another day for a bunch of aliens with trapper hats.

Chapter End Notes

...and with that, I hope you guys all enjoyed "Aliens With Trapper Hats"! It was a pleasure tackling such a major project! I hope my silly little story made you all smile!
HELLO! HELLO ALL YOU AWESOME READERS! I'm taking a break from my regularly planned stuff to write a special Two Year Anniversary "Easter Egg" guide for the first segment of "Aliens With Trapper Hats"! (Perhaps I will do the second segment "Brave Little Toaster" and beyond NEXT year. This upcoming surgery I'm having on November 1st has kinda gotten in the way...sorry about that folks...)

That being said...I NEVER in a BILLION years thought that this fic would go on for THIS LONG (nor have ANY readers what-so-ever)! I am just...absolutely overjoyed that you guys have shown overwhelming support again and again for these silly characters and ideas that my brain materializes on a daily basis! At this point in time, I'm working on the FOURTH installment of this story "Final Frontier" which is absolutely nuts!

First released on October 26th 2016- "Aliens With Trapper Hats" has turned into...quite a project! Let's get the ball rolling...shall we?

ALIENS WITH TRAPPER HATS (Part 1 Easter Eggs)- 52 Chapters/ 110,340 Words

Chapter 1- The first chapter of the series was meant to display what the reader was getting themselves into. As you all know, the ending to this chapter already has its own Easter Egg section (less work for me! Whoot!).

THAT being said, there are several extra scenes that many people miss in chapter one:

The "Galactic Council's Courtroom" was inspired by both the courtroom in "Lilo and Stitch", as well as the one in "Star Wars". Platforms with various alien species can disconnect from the wall and hover into the middle of the room if necessary. For some reason, I always imagined the room and platforms being yellow (or beige) instead of blue- not sure why.

Also, the "Grand Council Woman" that always hides behind the curtain is the same leader featured in "Lilo and Stitch" as well.

This line here: ""LET'S SMASH IT!" The servant heard a shout come from an unseen place, which resulted in all species leading to an uproar of din again."- was actually meant to be yelled out by the Omicronian leader: Lrrr, from Futurama.

Also this segment: "A species the Gems had never seen before proposed that the cameras on Earth provided one of their best-rated TV shows, and thus, the planet should be left alone (until the series was cancelled), Yellow Diamond grimaced in boredom."- is a reference to the "Joozian" Aliens from "South Park" Season 7, episode 1: "Cancelled"

Chapter 3-

I didn't realize it until recently, but the name: "Toaster" is actually a reference to a deleted scene from "Lilo and Stitch" where Lilo tells her sister a story about a sad bear named "Toaster". You
can actually find the scene quite easily on YouTube!

The short story at the end of this chapter also introduces the audience to Gamma's fellow platoon member: "Lilolo" (once again, the name is a "Lilo and Stitch" reference...shut up! I really like that movie! LOL!)

The family Lilolo meets up with at the "Swap-Meet", is actually the crew from "Cowboy Bebop"! You can tell from the "Woolongs" (a source of space money on the show), as well as the family's description:

"This one had not one owner, but a set of owners. There were two men, a woman, a female tadpole, and a small fluffy thing creating quite a ruckus."

-The conversation that Lilolo has when bargaining for the toaster, is actually between herself and Jet!

Chapter 4-

"In a split second something very odd happened. The Pearl's face began to contort- a polyp formed from her hair. Suddenly her eyes formed into that of a serpent- as did her tongue. The face merged quickly into a familiar creature- A NYORORO!" - A "Nyoro" IS an actual alien from Sgt Frog. They are these MASSIVE, disgusting, things that feast on humidity, and will often hunt Keronians in order to drain them of their water and energy. Big, yellow, slimy, and absolutely terrifying- they kind of resemble a mix between a giant leach and a snake.

Chapter 5-

The song Yellow Pearl Sings in this chapter: "This is my Homeworld", has actually been written in a format that you can listen to! It's kinda buried in the "AskToasterTheRuby" Tumblr blog...but it IS in there! (If you want to hear what it sounds like!)

Chapter 8-

"The creatures resembled massive slugs- slimy, no legs, and each baring a very intimidating round set of carnivorous teeth.

"What...what are they?!!" Toaster was horrified that she had been living on the ship with these things and didn't even know they were here.

Pearl observed the creatures briefly, before shivering slightly. "They're Space Leeches."

"Wh-why are they on the ship?!"

"Some invasive species use them for...interrogation purposes." The Pearl shivered again.

"You mean like...TORTURE?!!"

"That's EXACTLY what I mean." -Space Leeches are another species highlighted in the Sgt Frog anime and manga. Acapella describes them...PRETTY accurately here. (Shivers).

The "Flash Spoon" in this chapter is ALSO an actual object found in the Sgt Frog manga/ anime. Anyone who touches the spoon grows to terrifying heights!

The last story in the notes of chapter 8 is a (sort of) prequel to season 1 episode 13- "The Ball" from the animated series: "Wander Over Yonder".

Chapter 9-

"A food cart came into view. It was being run by a large blue creature with a trunk." - This creature is actually an Ortolan from the Star Wars Franchise.

"There were some classics- like "The Hitchhiker's Guide", and some novella from Kilgore Trout."
Gamma knew just about every well-read alien had copies of these already though." - These two books are obvious references to "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" (of course), and the ghost writer Kurt Vonnegut uses in his science fiction novels: Kilgore Trout.

"Gamma jumped at the noise! It had come from a Betelgeusian. He was obviously the owner of the tent." - Betelgeusians are the cat-like species from the Anime: "Space Dandy". This also marks the first appearance of Mrmph-Mow- who appears again at the ending of the first story as well. In the anime, the Betelgeusian that rides on Dandy's ship is named "Mymyamo", but the crew members simply call him "Meow" because they can't seem to pronounce his real name properly.

"He found a massive cookbook which the cat claimed was a staple in Earth kitchen cuisine. It was written by some woman named "Betty". The frog thought it was strange to name a Pekoponian on something like gambling, but perhaps it was a cultural thing?" - this is NOT a science fiction reference, but worth noting still! It's a Betty Crocker cookbook! (The very first cookbook my parents received as a gift after their wedding!)

...and MY GOD is that book falling apart now! LOL! I've had to disconnect the spine of the thing, and preserve it in plastic...it's over 30 years old! XD

"Yup. Rumor has it some endangered species live on there too… a Time Lord…a Kryptonian…heh, can you imagine? It's like a massive time capsule!"

Well, he did say something about a Kryptonian and a Time Lord- and he was a Betelgeusian…"- More "Superman" and "Dr. Who" references in this chapter...yup!

Chapter 10-

"Incoming transmission from: Pekopon!"

The screen transitioned to two not-so-nice-looking humans wearing sunglasses and suits. This shocked the trio in different ways.

Toaster had never seen a human before.
Pearl had never seen a human in a SUIT before.
...and Gamma was flabbergasted that a Pekoponian had the necessity to contact an alien ship in the first place.

One of the men spoke: "This is the MIB. You are currently in restricted airspace. We are bringing you into headquarters for questioning. Do not try to resist. Your ship is locked in our system."

aaaaand...in chapter 10 we finally get our first glance at the MIB! (From the film of the same name...of course!). The MIB Headquarters ends up becoming a prime location throughout the remainder of the fic...which is...weird, right? Perhaps the "MIB" should be included in the crossover description...

Chapter 11-

"A most regal agent- Agent Zed, decided to step forward. "If you come out empty handed, and with your hands away from your gemstones, we won't harm you."" -our first introduction to "Zed", the gruff boss that runs the MIB! (I actually had to look up his name to get it right...)

Chapter 14-

"As the next slide appeared, the three aliens gasped in horror! The image was awful- structures (if you could even call them that) were sloppily put together with mud and pieces of metallic scrap. Several bug-like humanoids were huddling around a lit trash can for warmth. Everything was really close together too...no plants- only clay, filth, and dusty plains.
"This..." the agent explained "-is District 9." - District 9 is (of course) a location from the movie of the same name. There is dust, poverty, garbage, sand, and a general unpleasantness about the place. Refugee aliens (named "Prongs") live here.

""You can read those later. The last thing we need to do is get a picture for your E.S.S."
"E.S.S.?" Gamma seemed confused.
"Extraterrestrial Social Security card. We were going to call them "Alien Social Security cards"...but most people thought that would be in poor taste."
The Keronian looked up at the human- unamused." - this was a bad joke than, and is STILL a bad joke NOW...

Chapter 15-

The letter in this chapter from the "MIB HOA" is a small nod to the video game "Animal Crossing".

Chapter 16-

Toaster's cut number "OL-56" is a reference to one of the first fanfiction stories I ever wrote. The number "56" was a code name for the main character in the story.

The cut number for the Ruby that replaces Toaster "FT-5"-stands for "Fake Toaster- 5th Ruby".

"The two massive Gems immediately began to tear her home apart! They broke her glass Tribble collection!" - Tribbles are a fuzzy invasive species that represent living wigs. They are from the show "Star Trek".

"Too late. Atmomo's limited edition winning Blernsball had been smashed to oblivion. "Ohhhh...that was signed too..." the husband felt deflated." - Blernsball is a sport similar to baseball (with the exception of the ball being connected by a tether). It was introduced in the show: "Futurama".

Chapter 21-

The souvenir shop in this chapter is heavily inspired by the hokey "Tourist Trap" gift stores scattered around Florida...my current home state.

Chapter 23-

Toaster's book "Firenzie's Light" makes another appearance in this chapter. The quotes from the book are in the actual (real life) story too! (Had to buy it on digital to get the book quotes correct).

Chapter 25 -

The scene where the family is trying to choose a nickname for Acapella originally included a humorous song (being led by Steven and his ukulele of course!) Unfortunately, the song was scrapped...because...well...it's a FANFICTION! The jingle would have been too complicated to write, considering all seven characters in the room were going to sing their own parts. It would have come off as too confusing to the reader, and I had NO CLUE how the melody would have played out as a sample...

Chapter 26-

(speaking of songs...)
When I was writing Acapella's eerie serenade in this chapter:

"Strong is the chain
As weak as its link
we must go forth and prevail.
Thus the weak link,
will soon be extinct
-and we shall become stronger."

...all I could think about was the song "Come Little Children" from the film "Hocus Pocus". So if you ever wondered what it sounded like...YEAH. THAT.

**Chapter 27**

"Bedrooms, Bathrooms, and Bungalows" is a spoof name based off of: "Bed, Bath, and Beyond".

**Chapter 33**

"When the door to the odd spacecraft opened, there stood an alien species completely covered in green armor. His face was obstructed by an odd metallic helmet."
-YUP! This is totally the bounty hunter "Boba Fett" from the Star Wars franchise! The gun mentioned (a "Blaster Rifle") is also a weapon commonly used in the franchise. There is also mention of "Mandalorian armor" - the exact name for the green armor used by Fett in the movies.

**Chapter 41**

As mentioned in the author's notes, the name "Uncle Stinky" came from one of the studios that helped create the post-apocalyptic show : "The Last Man on Earth" (Unfortunately I have heard that the show is NOT getting picked up for another season...phoo...)

**Chapter 42**

The scenes from the "ASPCA" were highly inspired by several animal rescue shows I had seen on TV. I used to watch "Animal Cops"...an...incredibly disturbing, but insightful show about humans saving abused animals.

**Chapter 43**

The first mention of "The Rainbow Bridge" (and its poem). When it came time to teaching Toaster about mortality, I wanted to utilize a place that was (not necessarily) connected to any religion. I decided on "The Rainbow Bridge" because it describes the afterlife of beloved pets...not necessarily humans. It seemed to be the best fit that most could relate to.

**Chapter 44**

Once again: YES. "Inko Colors- the Animation!" IS an actual anime about Parakeets! (It's on Youtube!)

**Chapter 46**

Fett and Mrmph-Mow make their second appearance in this chapter! Huzzah!

**Chapter 49**

""A-Acapella?"! The Keronian forgot for a second that the Yellow Pearl he knew was currently
laying dormant inside of his hat.
"THIS IS THE YELLOW DIAMOND CONTROL RO-" the Yellow Pearl stopped her scripted speech and stared at the frog in surprise. Her voice went almost to a whisper: "G-Gamama?"
"What the?" Gamma tilted his head in confusion. How did this Pearl know his name?!

- Gamma is actually speaking to Lucky here! How does she recognize him? The personal family stories that Prolulu and Atmomo have been telling her to pass the time of course! (This is also why the Pearl knows his full name "Gamama" as well!)

Chapter 50-

"Gamma recommended some fun and romantic spots across the cosmos if her wish ever came true. He told her that "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe" had a spectacular dinner show, and that the planet Coruscant had excellent shopping and museum tours." - "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe" is from "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy". The planet of "Coruscant" is one of the more urban planets in the "Star Wars" franchise.

Chapter End Notes

..and...that's all the Easter Eggs I can find (or remember anyway). I'm sure I forgot something...but it's rather fun creating a fanfiction where you can casually stick random references in there! I hope you guys enjoyed this silly bonus chapter! Here's to another year of laughs and excitement with our Gem and Keronian friends!

-The Toonfreak

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!