Immiscible

Immiscible is a futuristic dystopian setting in the year 2037. It shows a future where Earth has been conquered a decade prior by the Bashien, a race of bipedal reptiliods that fled their destroyed system in cryostasis ark ships. James is a human living in the wake of the Xeno takeover, at odds with the system they installed desperately trying to find footing in the new world, but his passion leads him pining closer the invaders than he ever imagined.

1: Occultus

> *James*

Dew was brewing on the window of the train as I was jostled awake from my daydream by the intercom, announcing the impending arrival to sub district five of Atlanta. The car was sparsely populated, same as how I remembered it when entering, with the added sight of peacekeepers from the Stellar Union standing about four people to my left. I shifted my seating to place the squad in my vision, making an effort to watch from the corner of my eye as not to stare which I was easily able to verify in the officers' reflective visors. I counted three. Two humans and one bashien, because while the visors and outfits did their job in concealing individual identity, it wasn't hard to tell when skin or scales, respectively, were showing around the mask. I pondered about the peacekeepers for the remaining time it took the train to pull into the station before shuffling through the sliding doors and onto the platform.

My senses were immediately met with the smell of wet paint in the air. Tracing the perimeter of the room with my eyes I found the culprit: that being a human custodian moving a paint roller along the concrete wall. Leering to the side I could make out the scene depicted in the soon-to-be defaced graffiti of a velociraptor with a feathered mullet (likely added to better fit the portfolio of a bashien) facing impending doom by a meteor. I silently scoffed to myself at the mural before making my way to the exit amongst the crowd of humans and reptilian xenos alike, quickly punching my ID into the exit turnstile before exiting through the stairs.

I was greeted with the sight of the perpetual foggy overcast, forever enforced by mirrors orbiting the planet as my head made its way above ground level. Pulling to the side of buildings to be out of the way of foot traffic, I quickly slid my phone out of my pocket to punch in the address given to me by Georgia Housing Organization. Instantly the device highlighted a zigzagging path cutting though the city blocks with my soon-to-be home at the end. Satisfied with the directions I merged back into foot traffic in the direction of my address, speedily maneuvering through the dense packs of man and xeno.

A little after 4 AM, I found myself on the street of my building and began sweeping the signs out front for a 'Peach Ridge' as outlined on the paper, eventually finding it nuzzled behind a corner store on the other side of the road. Examining the building it became evident that it was a post liberation prefab with the abundance of bike racks out front of the building being a tell tale sign, cars falling out of the public fashion post-invasion. I walked through the twin glass doors into the foyer to find two people inside. A bald man in that appeared in his 70s sat in a red recliner against the wall by a coffee machine reading something on his phone, and behind the desk was a middle aged man whose face I couldn't quite make out with it behind the desks monitor. I walked up to the desk and greeted him to introduce myself.

"Good morning," I said despite the unchanging daylight outside.

"How may I help you sir?" the man responded deadpan, failing to peel his eyes from the screen.

I pulled the yellow paper from my pocket, "I was allocated housing from the Georgia Housing Organization in this building and I would like to claim my room, please."

The man now turned to face me now with his plastic name tag, 'Liam,' now visible, "Hand me your slip and ID please," Liam said in his same deadpan voice.

I dug through my wallet to fish out my state ID, and left both it and the paper on the counter for Liam to examine.

I watched Liam's grey brow furl as his hazel eyes darted across the card and the paper before he started punching information into the computer, "Alrighty Mr. James, your unit is 417. Here's your key and have a great morning," Liam said a bit

more attentively, leaving both the key to my room and my ID on the counter before promptly reclining back in the chair to do busywork on the computer.

I said and waved thanks before making my way to the elevator, tapping my electronic key on the reader and pressing the button before waiting on the lift to only hear scoffing from Liam's desk.

"Hehe. Sorry buddy, elevators been out since Monday,"

I heard the old man in the recliner scoff at the remark.

"I emailed the GHO to come fix it but I haven't heard back from them yet. You are gonna have to take the stairs I'm afraid," Liam chortled from his chair.

I thanked Liam again making my way to the wood door that led to the staircase and taped my key again to unlock the door before entering the concrete shaft and ascending the flights of stairs to the fourth floor.

I entered my floor and immediately felt warm air. A quick glance to the thermostat confirmed that the hallway had been set and locked to a crisp 80°F by the building manager, likely an attempt to shave down operation costs, no doubt. I moved my way down the laminated wooden floor, passing by the public kitchen and washing room on my way hunting for number 417, which I found behind the bend at the end of the hall. A tap of the key, and a happy chirp from the electronic lock, confirmed it was indeed my room. I walked through the entryway and tapped the lock again to lock myself in before immediately making my way to the thermostat, and set it to the lowest temperature the manager would allow at 70°F. The AC unit roared to life with dust being kicked up from the now moving air, a reminder I needed to purchase a stick vacuum in the coming future, but also a hopeful sign that I wouldn't be without utilities until maintenance could come around. A sweep of the 290 square foot flat and bathroom confirmed all utilities and furniture promised by the GHO were indeed present, and functional.

Satisfied I wouldn't have to quarrel on the phone with a dinosaur at the GHO for cool air, I threw my bag on the cot and plugged my craptop in the corner of the room to charge before pulling out my phone. Moving into the city from the middle of bumfuck nowhere meant I had some prospects for dating people my age, instead of the derelict remains of society that remained in rural America. A fact I constantly

reminded dad, promising him I'd find a girl once I was in the city. As instructed by my online compatriots I downloaded the dating app 'Entwine' off the app store before setting up my profile, taking a photo of myself cheezing in front of the dry wall of my apartment before typing some biography of how I was new to Atlanta, along the books I enjoyed reading. After a quick upload of my ID for verification, I was off to the races and browsed some potential suitors. With prejudice, I made sure to deny the names that sounded Bashienian, it would be convenient if i was allowed to just filter by species, or the visiobibliophobic dinos uploaded photos of themselves more often, but unfortunately either was a far fetched reality on this planet. The second I was done with that thought, 'Sarah' with the profile of a pristine white lily in a glass pot, came up next in the queue, seemingly just to punish my observation. Regardless, reading her bio it seemed she also enjoyed history and reading fantasy as much as I did, so I swiped my finger to the right, willing to take the risk of the girl turning out to be horizontally gifted.

Done with the dating app for now, I rotated to my phones privacy browser of choice and punched the onion address for 'Jurassic Chat' directly into the search bar, taking a swig from my water bottle before looking out the window to the Atlanta skyline while the page loaded. While often inconvenient, the eternal twilight and fog that smothered the planet did produce a mesmerizing effect with the buildings. My head snapped back to my phone to see the page had indeed loaded. It was an ironic twist that the supposedly more advanced species had struggled to police the internet, as they never actually invented a world wide web on Ross 128 b, thus lacked the generational knowledge to do so effectively. The discussion was the same as it has been for the last few days, centered around an mp4 titled 'Total Dino Death' featuring CCTV footage of some Latino beating a Bashienian peacekeeper with a crowbar while they screamed through their visor's voice modulator. It turned out the video was actually cut short, and that the peacekeeper managed to pull out her handheld laz before burning a hole in the man, something the trolls on the server were now pointing out to the dismay of the regulars. Ignoring the trolls as any responsible poster should, I shared with my friends that I had downloaded Entwine as recommended, as allegedly it was the least monitored of the dating apps at the moment.

After a quick banter on the internet, I pulled up my contacts to call my parents and to let them know that I had made it to my apartment and sat on the foot of my cot as the phone rang. Two rings later, my mom picked up and I put her on speaker so I didn't have to hold the phone to my head.

“Hello?” my mom said customarily, as if she didn't see my name calling her.

“Hey!” I said mirroring her, “I’m calling to let you guys know I made it to my flat as promised.”

“Oh thank goodness. I was worried that you'd lash out at some poor Bashien and get in trouble.”

My eyes rolled at my Moms plight. We talked about the Bashien all the time and despite her agreeing that they're a problem she likens me to some sort of skinhead caricature.

“Tom! Come here your sons on the phone!” I heard through the device, followed by the sound of my dad making his way to the phone.

“Hey, hows my baby boy doing?” I heard my dad coo through the microphone.

“Good, just got in and decided to call you guys,” I lied as if I hadn't spent the last 30 minutes dicking around on my phone.

“Well that’s great to hear! Everything in the apartment okay? Nothing's broken right? If you need I can Amazon you a fan if your air conditioners broken.”

“No dad everything's great, only thing broken is the elevator. Lucky I didn't get a flat on the seventh floor right?” I said in a joking tone.

“Yea... You get yourself a girlfriend yet like you've been on about?” my dad said switching to match my tone.

“Dad I’ve been here for like an hour, I don’t see how I’m supposed to do that.”

“I'm just messing with you. If you need anything just call us okay?” he said in a more serious tone.

“Will do,” I said nodding my head like he could see me.

“Just watch out, and don’t get in trouble okay? I’ll make you regret it more than those Bashien ever could,” my mom threatened lovingly.

“I got it, I got it” I said reassuringly.

“Okay. Just make sure to call us got it?”

“Will do,”

“Alrighty, we love you James, good luck on getting that job mkay? We love you!”

We exchanged goodbyes over the phone before I hung up.

Before I was lulled into another bout of daydreaming, hunger began to pang in my stomach. Looking at the time, I confirmed I was running behind on my usual meal schedule, and it was a good idea to get some food before the 6AM meal rush came into effect. Instinctively, my fingers opened the GPS on my phone so I could some comfort food in my area. I found a Wendy’s five blocks down that I wouldn't even need to cross the street for. Pinching my fingers, I zoomed out a bit more and found a Walmart across the main road I could use to pick up some food, a vacuum, and some supplies for my flat. If I bought a foldable cart the only issue would be getting it up the stairs, which I’m sure I could manage. Satisfied with my little plan, I put my phone in my pocket, and gathered my wallet and keys I left on the counter. I tapped the key on the door and was in the process of leaving when I felt a buzz in my pocket. Sliding the phone out to examine I saw I had a made a match on Entwine.

2: Investigare

> *Sarah*

I laid belly down on my bed, with my feet in the air, as the girl on my phone talked to me.

“Then apparently my bitch of a roommate drank all the beer in the fridge, and we were left without drinks for the Bulldogs game-”

I watched my friend attentively as she recollected her weekend to me over the face time. I always liked watching Zahif rant, she was always passionate when talking.

“She brought her boyfriend, for some reason, even though I just invited her. Is that a human thing? Doesn't matter, clearly-”

I was lucky to have met her in school. Honestly, without the Bashien and her friend group I probably would've ended up a recluse. I had always struggled to make new friends.

“-and now she’s blacklisted from Mike’s Place for throwing up on the bouncer. Anyway, how’d your weekend go?”

Quickly, I was pulled from my trance, now put on spotlight in front of my friend. The horrifying reality was I had spent the weekend reading *The Great Gatsby*, and on Pinterest try to copy any of the drawings I thought were cool or cute, not something I was keen on sharing with my socialite com-padre. I rolled my bone pendent between my fingers in thought while I thought of a satisfactory response.

“Oh you know... Just running errands and stuff I had a busy weekend...” I said, failing to make eye contact.

“Damn that’s too bad. Sucks when life gets you like that y'know?” She said with earnesty.

“Yea that crap sucks...”

A wave of relief washed over me, as I hadn't been caught in my ruse.

“Anyways, check out this girl on Instagram. She uses those fake eyelashes humans use to make it look like she has them and low key-”

While Zahif was ranting again, I decided to pull up Entwine. I’ve had no luck so far in the love world, outside of the endless tide of bot accounts pestering me. I started my quick routine of getting a few swipes in, planning to close the app before Zahif was done. However, after liking on some human boys profile it turns out I had a match.

“Oh my gosh! Zahif I got a match!” I said feet beginning to swing in the air.

“Wait really? Send his profile let me see,”

Hurriedly, I sent her a photo of the profile.

“Eh, he looks pretty good,”

I shot her an annoyed glare .

“I mean he’s cute for human,” Zahif corrected in an attempt to placate me.

I studied ‘James’ profile, seems like he’s new to Atlanta, having moved into the city recently. Looking up the district looks like a good ten minute drive away. Reading a bit more I found he also liked books. Now armed with that information my tail began to slowly sway, slapping against my beds pink duvet, and my brain raced to simulate peachy visions of the future.

“Talk about gentrification. First girls parents give her a human name after we liberated Earth and now she’s dating one? Bitch your grandkids aren't gonna have scales at this rate,” Zahif said in a teasing tone.

“It was so I could fit in better, and I’m not dating him yet! I haven't even messaged the guy,” I corrected.

“Oh yea? Did you buy that big ass human SUV so you can ‘fit in’ too?”

“Bashienian cars are tiny! Human cars are nice and roomy. You know they're better too your always asking for me to drive whenever we go out,” I said defending the honor of my Chevy.

“You look like a toddler driving that thing. I'm sure James will appreciate the purchase anyway. It’ll be useful when your dropping your kids off at school!” she said with a toothy grin.

“Freaking shut up!” I said blood rushing under my scales, as I pressing my fingers to my, now closed, eyelids.

My attempt of silencing Zahif seemed to have only fueled her, as now she broke out into laughter.

“Alright, alright I’ll stop I’m sorry, hehe” she said, coming down from her laughing fit.

I paused for a moment.

“Well thanks for calling Zahif. I gotta go now, I hope you have a good day!” I said with the most cheery voice I could muster.

“Oh, yea. Don’t want keep the boyfriend waiting Sarah! Haha!”

And with a blip of the phone, Zahif disappeared from my screen.

I sighed and rolled over onto my back, now with the temple of my head laying on the side of the bed. I stared out of my window that I was now facing, and recollected the events that led up to my situation. I moved the phone in front of my face to see that I had indeed matched with the golden beige colored human. I groaned as I peeled my body off the bed, realizing I’d have to initiate conversation, and pulled myself out of the bedroom and into to the kitchen so I could prep of the occasion.

I pulled a lime ceramic bowl from the cabinet before pouring myself some Goldfish. Setting that aside, I dove back into the cabinet and pulled out a glass cup that I poured some water into from the facet. I finished off by pouring a flavor packet into the water and quickly stirring it with my finger. After sucking my pointer finger to get the juice off, I brought my collection to my living room, dropping it off on the end table next to the armchair. I curled my tail onto my lap and sat down, pulling the blanket over I had set aside to cover my lap. After lobbing a goldfish, and a few of his friends, into my maw I pulled up the app ready to message James. I stared at the screen, unsure of what would be the correct way to introduce myself for a while, before seeing that luckily the app had already done the work for me, suggesting a few GIFs for me that I could utilize. Scrolling for a little while, I found one of a character I recognized and tapped it before thinking twice, only for my blood to freeze when I saw that it had instantly sent itself to James instead of just attaching itself to the message.

“Crap,” I whispered to myself silently, due to sending the cringe inducing image.

Before long however, activity began on my phone, with an animated thought bubble forming on the left corner to signify that James was responding to my message. I stared at the device with anticipation, ready to converse with the human.

Hey!

My fingers quickly pecked a response into the keypad.

How are you? I saw that you just moved in recently hows that going?

I moved in today actually. I just set up and am heading out to eat rn.

The scales on my face scrunched up at that remark. Not even a day in and he's on Entwine? I hope I'm not talking to some kind of 'player'.

Oh that's nice, I hope the move in was easy.

It was thanks for asking :) How about you? What are you up to?

Not much atm. I'm just chilling in the living room eating some Goldfish.

Goldfish is chill. What all hobbies you got? Anything you liek doing?

A toothy smirk formed on my face seeing James' typo.

*like**

Shut up.

That got a quick scoff out of me.

To answer your question tho I've been reading, drawing and sometimes I like to crack open a video game.

Oh shit fr? Mind showing me something? Also what you been reading?

Language.

I was smiling from correcting James again, but I was skeptical to share my drawings with a stranger. However, I figured it'd be rude if I said no, so I attached a PNG of a squirrel I drew after it had manifested on the deck of my building while I was lounging.

Here's a squirrel I drew I know its probably bad :(

I watched the screen intently as I watched the dots in the thought bubble ripple.

What do you mean bad that's amazing! I could never make something like that.

My brain, comprehending the response, quickly pumped blood into my face, and my the tip of my tail started slowly slapping the cushion. Seeing an opportunity, I decided to fish for another compliment.

Oh stop your just saying that.

I'm being for real that's gorgeous. I always wanted to get into drawing but I never got around to it.

I got another hit from that response, albeit not as much as before. Law of diminishing returns I suppose.

To answer your other question I've been reading The Great Gatsby this weekend I'm about 3/4ths the way thru.

I liked Gatsby, I remember reading that in school. Not a big fan of the movie tho.

Lucky. We never read Gatsby in school.

The Stellar Union has been trying to phase it out of the curriculum. They've been trying to slot in more Bashien text.

I love the union, but I always thought they could be a bit 'pushy' at times. It is important that as our species societies merged that our culture gets represented, but it sucks it has to come at the human's detriment. The choice to pull Gatsby however, I thought was stupid.

That’s dumb, and that’s part of our culture they cant just get rid of it!

Exactly! I'm glad I found someone that agrees.

I paused for a moment, and threw some more Goldfish in my mouth. I chased it down with some water and resumed typing.

Alright now your turn. What all you enjoy doing?

Well as you already know I enjoy reading, I too enjoy a good video game, and I'm also into sports betting.

A twinge of fear formed as I saw that James partook in gambling. I remember the half hearted remark my mom gave me of how she'd cut me if she ever found that I was gambling.

You know gambling isn't good for you right?

Ohnono, I'm just gambling points. Not real money.

I gave a quick breath of relief.

Good, never gamble. So what all games do you play?

Recently Ive been playing Frostpunk 3, game is hard as hell tho.

I too have played from the Frostpunk installment, and built my little British civilization in the face of the winter. I haven't played the third one, but I can recall the controversy when they reconnected the series in the 3rd game to introduce Bashienian characters into the story. Detractors had claimed that ‘it wasn't accurate’ to the 19th century. In my opinion, an ice age manifesting in that short of a time wasn't accurate either, I don’t see the inherent problem.

Oh I love Frostpunk! Don’t spoil me tho I'm waiting for it to go on sale.

Got it. Just know its ball bustingly hard.

I don’t have balls.

You get my point.

Anything else you play?

I like chess.

I liked chess too. The human game always intrigued me. Being interested in it never made me any good at it however.

I always wanted to be good at chess.

I used to suck, still kinda do. The important thing is to try just not to blunder, already puts you above the competition.

My train of thought was interrupted as the familiar hum of a Union hovercraft flew overhead, likely being summoned somewhere to deploy a peacekeeper squad to some distant crime scene.

I'll have to take that into account.

We can play a game later if you want.

I'd love too! Just go easy on me please.

Of course, we can play later today. I'm going to the store rn.

That reminded me, I needed to pick up a cake for Zahif's friend later today. I should probably do that now. I continued texting back and fourth with James as I snarfed down the rest of my snack and left my bowl, along with drink, in the sink. I was folding up my blanket when James asked me the next question.

What's your opinion on the Bashien?