Test Chapter 1: Lab Rat

Daniel woke up with a start as a Rojovian woman was adjusting equipment beside his bed. His breath caught and his hands clenched at the sight of her, but she wore a nurse's coveralls. A hospital? Daniel saw the IV lines plugged into his left arm, his right in a cast, and a line running directly to his chest. A military hospital? If so, he was in some type of isolation, at least judging by the opaque mnemonic curtain surrounding his bed and instruments. He could hear others talking on his right side and across a short distance.

The Rojovian turned and saw him looking at her. She looked like an aide or technician. *Not the enemy.*

"Sorry, sir. I hope I didn't wake you, lieutenant." She had green eyes surrounded by the red-and-yellow scales that covered her bald head and body. Pretty, gentle eyes – rounded pupils, which strangely made them look more out of place surrounded by her facial scales.

Daniel shook his head. By now, snatches from his dream floated away, leaving him anxious and fascinated.

"Nah, I'm fine." His voice was muddled and he realized he was wearing a mask blowing air into his lungs. He took it off and noticed her nametag – 'Meharabaan'. He thought that translated as "kind" or something similar.

"No, no," she said, reaching to take his mask. "You have to keep wearing it."

Daniel took a deep breath, feeling no discomfort or difficulty. "Really, I'm fine, thank you." He pointed to his chest and the line running to it. "Any idea how this happened?"

Meharabaan shook her head, her eyes widening for a moment before looking away. She pressed a button beside his bed. "I don't know anything. But you don't remember?"

Commented [TLL1]: Nice chapter name if you actually choose to display them: D I'm immediately intrigued.

Commented [TLL2]: Word check. This is like a memory rubric.

Commented [TLL3]: If this is the beginning of the book and this is the first alien we're seeing, then we need more description than this. It's good that we see Daniel at first think she's the enemy, then realizes she isn't. That gives us some clues about tensions between the species. But some more description would be nice.

Commented [TLL4]: How many fingers does she have? Are they scaled, too? Red or yellow or both?

Commented [TLL5]: With her thumb? does she have a thumb? Does she have two thumbs?

Second sample from same book:

After several moments, minutes, hours? – a couple of suits walked in. One was a tall black man in a black suit, the other a medium-sized man in a brown suit. The taller man seemed in charge, asked questions. Daniel could hear him clearly – odd, considering the muffled tones of the others in the room.

"What have we learned?" he asked.

"Still analyzing," one of the white suits answered, "but its some sort of biomechanical entity inside his chest. It's made up of millions of parts of various sizes and shapes."

"Show me," black suit said.

A holographic station lit up towards the back of the room and floating images with complex geometries moving around and on top of each other, not insects, but moving like a hive – at least to Daniel's perception.

"From spectral analysis within the body, almost every known element is present. Molecular biology shows high complexity, including several organic compounds we know and millions we don't. They're all molecular factories, feeding off the body but also giving back."

"What are they doing?" black suit asked.

"They appear to be regenerating his tissues, among other things," white suit says. "But not exactly. The muscle replacements, for instance, appear to have a greater plasticity than the original tissues."

"You're saying it's improving him?" black suit said.

"That's a tentative conclusion, sir," white suit said, "but we don't have enough information."

"What've samples revealed?" black suit asked.

"Well, sir..." white suit waved over another.

The second white suit answered. "We've tried four times to get samples so far. Here..." a button was pressed and Daniel writhed and the instruments showed multiple alarms and then went flat. "Even removing one of the micro-machines stopped his heart. They also destroyed the sensors in that area. An incredibly virulent reaction."

The first white suit spoke. "We could remove the body from suspension and do a proper autopsy. If we were careful in removing the heart, there's a forty-eight percent chance that we can maintain viable samples for several hours."

"For how long?" black suit asked.

Commented [TLL6]: If the other one's black, what's this one? We're on another planet, so I don't think we should assume white by default. If he is white, call it out.

Commented [TLL7]: Probably should split into two sentences. And you don't need to tell us it's Daniel's POV. We've been in his POV this whole time.

Commented [TLL8]: I'm all on board for this now. If I had any hesitation about reading the book before this, I'd want to keep reading here. I want to see what happens to Daniel, and I'm hoping for superpowers. Rapid healing at the very least, which I recall you having in an earlier draft.

Commented [TLL9]: Passive voice. Either he sees it happen (and the actor who did it) or he doesn't. If he doesn't, you need to tell us what he did notice. Pain? What kind? In his chest? Throughout his body? Along his left side? If it stopped his heart, why not use normal heart attack symptoms here?

Commented [TLL10]: Ah, so they're aggressively defending him, too.

Commented [TLL11]: Ewwwwwwwww Now I'm worried for Daniel. Putting the main character in morta peril this early is great to keep us reading.