

In this fifth book of the Other Worldly series, Rowan Layne travels further into space before taking on Congress once again. Her pursuit of alien rights is aided by extraterrestrial pals, plus human hybrid friends and family.

Alien Sensation

By Lauryne Wright

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Alien Sensation



AUTHOR OF *Being Alien*

Lauryne Wright

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Chapter 1

“Rowan Layne, your book makes an outlandish claim that Thomas Jefferson was an alien with parents from Proxima Centauri b, was it?” The reporter scoffed, brandishing his network’s mic like it was a weapon—or propagandist red flag. “And Ben Franklin was supposedly a Red Orbiter? Do you have proof of that besides pillow talk with your alien lovers?”

The air current shifted, I flinched, the crowd gasped—including journalists with a modicum of credibility—and the taunting reporter dropped his mic and stepped back from me, swearing and hissing like he’d been zapped by electricity. A fae thing.

Raucous Wilde rose to flank me at the podium, where I stood under the arched glass roof in the main atrium of the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem, Massachusetts. We were on the last leg of a book tour for *Observing*, my much-lauded tome about Red Orbiters. The species who compiled all known data about our universe had requested I write it to share their observation of Earth’s human inhabitants.

“This is a question I should answer,” said Rauc, turning from me to the now quaking reporter. Perhaps it dawned on the sniveling pincher that he’d insulted a badass alien leader whose expression resembled a thundercloud.

“Why? Don’t *you* have proof of *your* great-grandfather’s genetic origins?” Rauc’s delectable voice boomed with authority as the head of NARO, or North American Red Orbiters.

I looked askance at him, my first alien love, but not my last. Which would have been a great big puritanical hysterical hissy fit of a problem in a place known for witch trials—several centuries ago. Today it was merely an issue for sanctimonious misogynist media members obsessed with the consensual sex lives of others. Why was that?

And how was it Rauc had managed to fail once again to impart such critical information as his familial relation to Benjamin freaking Franklin?

I’m Rowan Layne, author and supporter of otherworldly rights. Not an alien, but an extrasensory auditory ability means I hear Red Orbiters speaking from great distances.

Red Orbiter observers also hear me, a tad tricky if I don’t heed what I say aloud. Kind of like writing a book with bombshell revelations those on Earth might be reticent to accept. Along with the embattled reality that not only do the otherworldly live among us but every human has alien entwined in their DNA. An ancestral gift.

The reporter took his no-longer-functioning mic and departed the room as a crazed-looking man entered.

A maniacal glint in the newcomer’s eyes mirrored toxic energy wafting from him like waves of sarin gas. He smelled as vile as he looked. It was a bible not a gun he brandished as he rushed the podium, but the searing threat from this rabid being was no less daunting.

I touched the alien stone worn on a chain at my throat, its sudden heat portending danger.

“You’re an abomination!” the man screeched, sounding like grinding metal gears.

Rauc moved his body to block access to me as I glanced at the glass ceiling to see Roger Rogers fly through clouds toward the museum. My personal bodyguard, Red Orbiter love interest number two, and the inspiration for Superman back in the day. He’d been around Earth for a while, like more than a hundred years. Plenty of time to become jaded and snarky.

And enough time to know I’d need to wear the round, clear gemstone he’d provided last year to warn of bad guys coming for me.

“How do you want to play this, beautiful? I’m headed inside,” Roger’s cool drawl slipped into my ear as the harbinger of hate continued to scream.

“Aliens are an abomination! Whores who fornicate with aliens are an abomination against all that is holy!” My estimation of him as rabid appeared all too accurate as foam spittle spewed along with anti-alien epithets.

It wasn’t anything I hadn’t heard. Especially from militant members of Armed Evangelicals echoing their televangelist leader.

I stepped out from behind Rauc just as Roger’s towheaded six-foot-seven frame sauntered in, coming up behind the lunatic fringe as the audience gasped and more than a few women swooned. Roger had that effect on females. Damn it.

“I’ve got this,” I said over my shoulder to Rauc, knowing Roger would also hear, before turning back to face my accuser.

“Y’all holier-than-thou males need new material. *Whore?*” I shook my head. “The epithet hurled at outspoken women since time immemorial. You think I’m Hester Prynne? You want to *burn me at*

the stake here in Salem? Tell me, do you brand men with the same puritanical standard? Or is this heinous hypocrisy reserved only for females?”

Female reporters and women in the audience snickered.

“Silence, whore!” The stinky man waved his bible as if to threaten me with the written word. Please. More like his putrid presence threatened the now roiling contents of my stomach.

“We have a thing called freedom of speech, not to mention free association—as in free to associate *with aliens*—under the First Amendment to our Constitution, drafted not too many miles from where we are now.” I glared. “I’m not moved by your attempt to silence or shame me with pseudo religious control. The US is a secular nation and has been since the ratification of the Bill of Rights.” My gaze shifted to the reporter who’d reentered the room at the sound of a man spewing rot that his network would eagerly lick off the floor to falsify a story.

“You want to paint me with a scarlet *A* for loving aliens?” I challenged both men, hands on hips. “I’ve been there, thwarted that. Those who judge with hatred or attempt to injure others usually end up doused in paint themselves. *You* are the ones who might just get burned.”

“Die, whore!” The frothing fanatic lunged, pulling a pistol from the hollowed-out pages of his bible.

Just another gun worshipper after all.

Rauc covered me with his body, an ability to repel bullets being a Red Orbiter specialty. Pretty much the same way their planet of origin, Cumulus, known to us as Jupiter, uses magnetic gravity to protect Earth from destructive asteroids and comets.

Roger had the filthy gun monger within his grip before he could fire off a shot, handing him off to police storming the room while the crusty crazed one continued to bellow about whores and aliens, and alien whores.

I turned back to the visibly shaken reporter. “When you file today’s story, do try to refrain from referring to the arrest of a dangerously deranged man as a witch hunt—as your network so often has with the indictment of the former president and his cohorts in crime.” I channeled some Luna Moth Woman mojo, my fictional superheroine journalist. “Bone up on the factual history of actual witch hunts that took place on this very soil—and whom they mostly targeted. It’s *men* who perpetuated and perpetrated witch hunts in a pathetic attempt to control. The systematic, targeted persecution and burning of females for such oh-so-shocking things as having sex.”

I paused to drive my point home. “Given how you’re so preoccupied with intimate details of private lives of women you don’t personally know. *Pillow talk?* This isn’t some 1950s Doris Day fantasy world we’re living in.”

Chapter 2

The good news was, most people had not glimpsed the gun before Roger moved to take the bad guy down, so no panicky stampede ensued.

The bad news? I *had* seen the pistol, and the demented face behind it. Snarling with rage as he was handcuffed and hauled away by police.

“I think I’m going to be sick,” I whispered.

Both Roger and Rauc heard, carting me posthaste to a restroom stall. A few women skedaddled out the door, squealing at the sight of two strapping Red Orbiter males in the women’s restroom.

As I vomited the contents of my stomach, I lamented not having my alien gal pals on hand for awkward moments. But Maggie was busy being a senator for our home state of Nevada, and Genie was in Vegas tending to sextuplets, six redheaded Red Orbiter girls several months from being five human years old in their first year of life. Look out, Earth.

I walked from the stall to wash my hands, grateful my two guards were outside the door rather than inside the restroom. At least until water could be heard running in the sink.

Roger strolled in, and I whirled to face him, looking way up at his alien-green eyes, unnaturally bright but showing signs of concern. “You should have just flown me away from here.”

“You wanted to upchuck in the air, raining puke from the sky like a bird pooping its revenge on humans?” He grinned, and my knees grew weak. Hot flashes were soon to follow when Roger got that *look* on his perfectly sculpted face.

I had a satisfying visual of the picture his words painted, making me think of a rubber stamp in my collection. It said, “If I was a bird, I know who I’d poop on.”

“Rauc’s speaking with police, who’re waiting on us, beautiful. Do you feel up to giving a statement?”

“Not really, but I suppose flying away with Superman isn’t an option. I sure wish I hadn’t eaten that pizza last night. And why did I drink *beer*?”

“If I recall, you insisted we eat at Flying Saucer Pizza Company so you could try the garlic knots with rosemary and parmesan called Spaceballs. And you chose the local Cloud Candy pale ale due to tropical aromas reminiscent of mango. But you said it didn’t really taste like mango, so you wished you’d gotten wine instead.”

“You’re making me want to puke again. I hope garlic and mango aren’t ruined for me forever. Plus, Caesar salad, what that Venus Salad turned out to be. The walnut pesto pizza was okay, but I prefer pine nuts. At least I didn’t eat any of their specialty pizzas with pickles or spicy buffalo sauce, or I might never eat pizza again. And who puts goat cheese on pizza? That ought to be a crime,” I muttered as Roger took my arm to usher me out of the restroom.

“This is dire indeed if Rowan Layne is turning her nose up at pizza,” said Roger. “Or are you babbling about food to distract from the task at hand?”

“Are *you* trying to divert me from this distressing disaster of a situation? I am so done with this blasted book tour. It’s literally *making* me sick. Why on earth did I dream of being a celebrated author, a literary sensation?” I pulled my arm from Roger’s grasp. “Here I am, two weeks shy of my fifty-ninth birthday, yet too many still target me as an alien-loving adversary and can’t seem to focus on anything but my *sex* life. Doesn’t it matter that I spent last year giving speeches before Congress and British Parliament? What’s the point of advocating for otherworldly rights and universal unity when all folks want to do is kill the messenger over an alien revelation they’ve had almost three flipping years to adjust to?”

Roger said, “Roger that,” but not in response to me. Rauc was probably in his ear. He forced a smile. “I’m perfectly willing to discuss your sex life later, but we’re headed to the research library to talk with police, away from your freaked-out fans.”

“Do I *have* fans? They seem to be outnumbered by the sexist and the psychopathic, especially here in Salem.”

The museum we wound through dated back to 1799, one of the oldest in the US. It housed a collection of artworks, and its Phillips Library had a reading room with controlled capacity. Excellent for me on this day, as the noise of the distressed audience departing the premises was hard on my hairless cochlea, bestowing hearing sensitivity greater than moths. But, oh sure, I was supposed to see it as a special gift.

Now if only the police officer wouldn't speak so loudly, booming questions as if I were deaf, or of addlebrained brain. *He* was the one who seemed to grapple with the reality that an armed intruder had pulled a gun from a bible.

You can't make this stuff up, but perhaps the police thought you could. Then again, it was pretty disturbing.

Thank goodness for hard evidence. Something the ladies of the Salem witch trials certainly didn't have to exonerate themselves. But neither did their accusers or prosecutors have concrete evidence of guilt. How did one disprove another cavorted with the devil or engaged in *devil's magic*?

Would I be charged with bewitching men, of being a *cunning woman* in such a way that conveniently absolved men of all responsibility for their actions? This wasn't 1692, but some things hadn't changed much for human females since the Salem witch trials. I wasn't accused of having sex with the devil, just fornicating with aliens.

Perhaps I shouldn't have done so much research before visiting here.

"Thank you for your time, Ms. Layne. And we apologize on behalf of the people of Salem. We hope what happened today won't prevent you from enjoying the rest of your stay," said the cop who looked like he wanted something more. Not good.

"I'll be fine, and I appreciate your help. Is there anything else you need from me?"

"Not officially, ma'am," said Officer O'Shea, and I almost laughed when I saw both Rauc and Roger flinch. They were worried I'd cop an attitude at being called *ma'am*. "But there is one thing I'd be grateful

for, if you wouldn't mind?" He pulled copies of *Observing* from the table next to ours. "My mother is a huge fan and couldn't be here today because she's with my sister who just had a baby—she also greatly admires you. She named her daughter Rowan."

I looked at the officer's flushed face and felt like an ignoramus. He hadn't been talking loudly to intimidate me. He was nervous talking to me. His sweet smile melted the ice forming around my heart.

"That is such a lovely thing to hear. I'm honored." Inspiration dawned. "I would very much like to send a gift for baby Rowan. There are two ladies in Scotland who knit the most wonderful booties and sweaters, perfect for your chilly New England winters."

We were interrupted by a museum employee who approached the table where I signed the books for Officer O'Shea. "Ms. Layne? Some folks stayed behind to have their books signed. In case you want to meet with them when you're done with the police."

"Wow," I said, standing up from the table. "If they weren't driven away by a bigoted bully, I won't be either."

My cell phone pinged an incoming text. It had to be Mom.

"Doodles!!! How is your book signing going??? Dad is worried!!! He heard you might be in danger!!! Please let us know you are okay and if they have good shoe stores in Salem!!! (face with starry eyes, kissy face, heart, shoe, worried face emoji)"

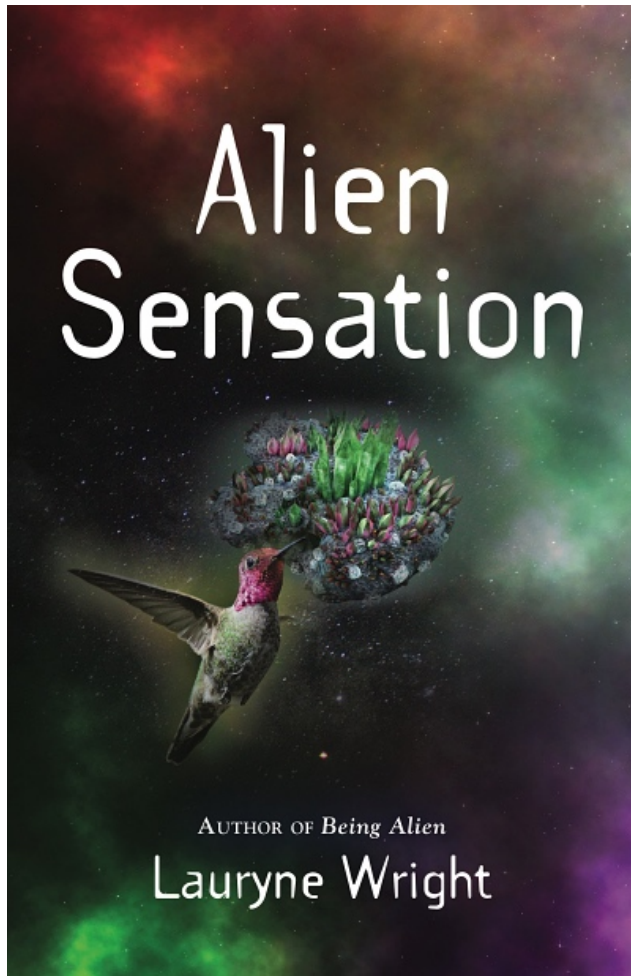
Yep, Mom. An octogenarian with a flair for texting and a penchant for shoes. And if she were on this tour with me, everyone in the book-signing universe would know my childhood nickname was Doodles.

Dad, hard of hearing but capable of detecting high-frequency communications similar to Morse code from his Navy days, had likely heard my pals the Greens' electronic chatter about my most recent

encounter with yet another gun-toting maniac. Indeed, if police hadn't taken the puritanical bigot away in cuffs, Greens would surely have abducted him. And messed with his mind—or what was left of it.

No billowy clouds entered my cerebral cortex with telepathic, robotic tones of little green aliens—as humans imagined them because they didn't know what I knew. Greens likely now knew I was fine. Or some semblance of it, enabling me to return to the atrium to face two dozen people after I hastily replied to Mom that all was well.

A whopping fib.



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