

*A call for help has Rowan Layne going rogue, but it doesn't take long for her extraterrestrial heroes and a mystery man to catch up and override her solo quest. Travel through time and root for giants in this seventh Other Worldly novel.*

## **Aliens Watch**

By Lauryne Wright

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# ALIENS WATCH



Author of *Altogether Alien*

Lauryne Wright

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First Edition

# **The Other Worldly Series**

Alienable Rights

Feeling Alienated

Aliens Abound

Being Alien

Alien Sensation

Altogether Alien

# Chapter 1

Don't ask me why I was wackadoodle enough to be traveling in a hired car across the insanely miles-long Chesapeake Bay Bridge toward Maryland's Eastern Shore at the height of beach season. Alone. Except for the Uber driver, who added to my angst by being nigglingly familiar. Even crazier, not a single alien was bossing me remotely in my ear.

The last time I used Uber was with my sister when I moved to Las Vegas, one year after the revelation that extraterrestrials were among us. That driver was Latino and chattered about evil aliens he called *hada malvada*—bad fairies—witnessed atop Mount Charleston. Ironically, he was only right about the fairy part.

After a fascinating tryst in Scotland two years ago, I learned *I* was part fairy.

I'm author and alien rights advocate Rowan Layne. My special gift is hearing aliens from afar, and some can also hear me because I possess extraterrestrial origins like everyone else on Earth, whether they accept it or not. Eighty-three percent of my DNA is alien, along with 14 percent fae, making me a whopping 97 percent nonhuman.

Fine with me. I've sought to help my fellow human hybrids learn more about their otherworldly DNA, but too many don't like me and my alien pals because of it.

This driver wasn't chattering, though she had my attention because her short sandy-blond hair was reminiscent of someone, along with her faintly amused tone. *She* wasn't in a flap about having to drive across this monstrosity of a bridge.

"You seem agitated." She glanced at me from the rearview mirror as I gripped the backdoor handle for dear life, avoiding looking out at sailboats dotting the bay. "Is it about whomever you're going to meet on the other side?"

*The other side?* Was this a clue that she was driving me to my doom? Or perhaps into outer space? And an Uber driver who said *whomever?*

Maybe if I could see her eyes, I could place her. But she was wearing mirrored sunglasses and an olive drab ballcap. Something about that...I'd been down this maddening déjà vu path before.

"I'm wiggy with heights, prone to vertigo and motion sickness," I said through clenched teeth, fighting the urge to gag. "But, yes, I'm headed to meet someone who's intense despite being a baby, and she told me not to tell anyone. That's why I'm in a car instead of an orb or saucer or pistachio craft, and it's going to get me in trouble. I just know it."

"You've turned into quite a mess, haven't you? Deep breaths. We're almost halfway to the other side."

*Yes, but the other side of what?*

"I suppose I am a mess." I sighed, leaning forward to grip the back of her seat. "The last time RR Bellatrix suggested I hop in a car with strangers turned out to be way more than expected and everyone was mad at me as opposed to supportive like she said they'd be. But why on earth am I babbling this to you?"

And could the little messenger have picked a more hectic time than the day before the frigging Fourth of July?

My extrasensory ears intercepted an oddly eruptive sound before seeing its source. Stumpy red ribbons were streaking the sky and bombarding the bridge. "Labyrinthian lasers? Are you kidding me?" Ominous thumping and crashing noises pummeled my psyche, but no explosions ensued.

"More like reverse-engineered weaponry that isn't working out for whomever attempted to copy alien technology." The driver's tone dripped with disdain as she smirked in the rearview mirror.

There she went with *whomever* again. But she was right. Because whatever was whizzing around up there surely weren't lasers derived from Mars red diamonds. They looked more like wriggling red licorice candy—or bizarre sperm tails swimming through clouds. My baffled brain struggled to recall the candy name... *Twizzlers*, that was it!

A sperm-twizzle whizzed past our windshield, slapping against an SUV hood on the opposite side of the bridge, nearly causing it to careen *off* of it.

My palms sweated as one car after another smashed into each other and the bridge's steel metal girders. Of course we were now at the highest point of this infernal feat of engineered torture, metal beams looming above and on either side of us. Like being trapped in a cage.

"Maybe they don't work like lasers, but they're causing one hell of a disaster up here." It wouldn't do me any good to put my hands over my ears to avoid screams and crunching metal sounds. No sirens yet, but I still wanted to puke.

"We need to get you off this bridge," said my Uber driver, sounding urgent but otherwise unruffled after a pickup truck rear-ended our small hybrid vehicle, making my neck feel like it'd been zapped by a laser. "I'm asking you to trust me, despite being aware that it doesn't come easy these days, but we know each other even if you haven't fully realized it. If we don't bail now, you'll be stuck up here for hours, and one of these missile wannabes might work."

Two weeks ago I'd been on the Big Island of Hawaii, where the only thing I had to fret over were active volcanoes and friends who seemed to think I should get married like they did. Though there *were* maniacal men of Earth who'd plotted to attack the Kilauea volcano with a nuclear missile. Was this the work of dudes we hadn't yet exposed for their crimes?

An alarming boom sounded just ahead of our vehicle as one of the odd projectiles whipped around a metal girder and exploded into

scattering red chunks. “I’m fixing to be sick,” I said as my Uber driver dashed outside, opened the back door, and pulled me from the car.

“Who *are* you?” I stumbled against her, trying to right myself as she propelled us toward the terrifying bridge barrier—the only thing keeping us from open air above water way down below. It was a wonder I could hear her reply in the deafening sounds of utter chaos, including the inevitable shouts about aliens attacking. People watched too many dumb movies.

“You first knew me in Austin as Sandy in our graphic arts class at the University of Texas. And yes, I’m alien. Now!” she said. I thought she meant I could now vomit—as if ordering me to do so over the side of the bridge.

But I didn’t because that crazy commandeering driver, who I finally realized was the badass US Marine I knew from college, gripped my arm and leapt with me over the side of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.



## Chapter 2

It was as if the not-really-an-Uber-driver and I jumped from the bridge through a cumulus cloud, descending gently toward whitecapped waters of Chesapeake Bay. Luckily onto a sailboat deck and not into the drink.

Or maybe we'd entered a space vortex. I knew there was one somewhere above the bay. And maybe this boat was a spaceship piloted by Luminarians from Sirius, because the guy at the helm didn't seem startled by our sudden embarkment. Except no, we were headed toward the flat, familiar terrain of Maryland's Eastern Shore. I could spot the patio roof of a crab restaurant.

Not far from there was a rental car business owned by my friend Owen the Marine, no longer a Marine but one formidable Labyrinthian from Mars and the moonship mayor. He probably wouldn't be pleased I hadn't availed myself of his water-taxi and ground transportation services for alien spacecraft landings.

Except, who knew I'd be plunging off the bridge and landing in a boat with this woman—apparently my friend Sandy from UT as well as a bridesmaid at my eons-ago wedding—whom I hadn't seen in decades?

“Your hair is redder and curlier than it was at UT and not as long, but you still look like the Rowan I knew.” She grinned as I stood dumbstruck on the boat. At least I wasn't queasy anymore, though that was a wonder. But she'd removed her sunglasses and cap, and she really was Sandy, now older, with crinkles at the corners of her smiling eyes.

I shook my head and reached out to hug her. “You do realize it's all your fault? You're the reason I can't seem to get away from the Marines. And here you are. WM extraordinaire.” That's what they'd

called them back in the day. WM for *woman* Marine. Sexist, but given there were so few in the ranks, they were a special force all their own.

One of my best Red Orbiter alien pals was a former Marine pilot, basically Superwoman, and a US Senator from Nevada. Also the mother of RR Bellatrix who had put me in this current crazed predicament. Maggie was the twin sister of Roger, the *actual* impetus for Superman back in the day. And, surprisingly, he wasn't swooping in to rescue me from a seemingly dangerous situation—or mocking me about it in my ear.

“What do you want done with the vehicle?” drawled Roger Rogers, as if on cue. I looked up to see him flying toward the bridge, a twizzle-missile tucked under his arm like a football. Funny, because he'd played for the Longhorns circa 1914. He was now almost 130 years old, but he'd stalled his age at roughly thirty-three, as Red Orbiters could do.

As I stood gaping upward with my neck all crunched, Roger caught another twirling red projectile. Sandy chuckled. “Your Superman friend is probably pissed at me.”

I turned to her. “He wants to know what you want done about your car. And what the hell is going on? How many aliens have attended UT? Anyone else I know?”

“I have assistants for the car. I'm with a group of extraterrestrials you have not formally met. We watch.”

“As in *stalk*?”

She smiled. “It's the name of our organization. Watch.”

“An acronym?”

She shook her head. “As in a group of military members making up a guard. Like the expression *soldier's watch* here on Earth. Except, as you know, Marines aren't army soldiers. We're Marines.”

“*Ooh rah.*” I smirked. “You taught me that when you sought to steer me away from my Army boyfriend in college. Why don't you

look like a typical Labyrinthian? Are you not from Mars, where the Marines originated? Or are you a shapeshifter? Does being in Watch also make you a guardian, like some Cinerean messengers? What do you do besides rescue ditzy damsels from flying red pool noodles?”

“You’re not ditzy. But you do ask a lot of questions.” She grinned. “We observe, like Red Orbiters, but unlike those keepers of all known data in the universe, we tend to be more proactive in getting involved here on Earth to instigate change.”

I stood, hands on hips, somehow maintaining perfect balance on the boat as we approached shore. “And what change would you be angling to instigate with me, Sandy?”

“We need you to reconnect with old friends.” Her intent expression sent a chill down my spine. “And my real name isn’t Sandy.”

“I’m reconnected with you, right this very minute. Does that count?” I gaped at her, my heart racing. “And I *was* reconnecting with an old law school friend. It was her house where you picked me up to bring me here. Into all this insanity. Good thing I left my critters with Colleen, because otherwise no way would I have jumped off that nutso bridge. Are you in cahoots with RR Bellatrix, *whomever* you are?”

“I have not met RR Bellatrix, but we are connected. I happen to originally *be* from the star called Bellatrix. It was time to approach, as you were in potential danger, being in the same area as the problematic individuals who are likely involved in today’s unexpected attack on the bridge. For now, I’ll take you ashore so you can attend to the business you came for. I can also help with that, though your many male admirers may not approve.”

I peered at the shore. Was Owen at his rental car business?

Water spray spritzed my cheeks as a dolphin leapt from the bay, shifting into manly form in midair and landing on the deck as Bright, Luminarian selkie messenger from Sirius and the guy who was once a Navy SEAL from my salacious past. Back when I was a civilian

lawyer for the Air Force but no longer married to the Marine whom Sandy introduced me to.

“That’d be one of them,” said Sandy, shaking her head. “Meddling squid.”

## Chapter 3

“What are you doing here?” I managed to spit out at Bright on the sailboat deck where I stood with not-Sandy from UT Austin. At least he wasn’t naked, but instead of morphing into himself—quite yummy in his own right—Bright had shifted into the former SEAL I’d once known him as, Keefe Brogan. So there was a chance I’d hyperventilate anyway.

“You mean *other* than because you just leapt from a bridge bombarded by bizarre projectiles?” He peered at me with those penetrating aqua eyes, light-red hair glinting in the sun now that clouds no longer blotted it. “And what were you doing on it to begin with, counselor? No one knew of your current whereabouts, so of course they blamed me, thinking you absconded into space with Luminarians again.”

*Crapola and cringe city.* “I can explain.”

“Oh, you will.” He chuckled. “Guess who’s waiting onshore? Arriving at the very same time you were sneaking over the bridge.”

“I wasn’t sneaking! Okay, maybe I was, but I had good reason. So wipe that smirk off your face, frog man. I’ve had quite a day of it already.”

He kept grinning. “I’m not a frog. I’m a dolphin.”

Sandy muttered, “And a squid”—her second reference to a not-exactly-complimentary term that Marines dubbed Navy sailors.

I whirled to her. “What’s your real name, and I take it you know the squid?”

“Careful, Rowan,” said Bright/Keefe. “Do we need to go for a swim?”

“Spare me the testosterone.” Sandy rolled her eyes at him before turning to me. “My name is Ellesse, which means ‘other.’” She

pronounced it like the letters *LS*. “Did you know Bellatrix means ‘female warrior’ in Latin?” She turned back to smirk at Bright/Keefe.

I grinned. “*Other?* Uncanny. And given Latin is derived from an alien language, that makes superb sense. Female warrior, badass woman Marine. Your name also includes the French *elle*, meaning ‘female.’”

Bright/Keefe cleared his throat. “A badass male Marine is standing onshore, not looking so happy.”

I looked to see Owen and his cousin, a former spy resembling a Hollywood Western gunslinger. Rinth did indeed look squinty-eyed and ready to draw as our boat docked. Why was I constantly being confronted by multiple lovers peeved at me?

I turned to Ellesse. “I am so glad you’re here.”

“She can’t save you from me.” Roger’s sardonic tone pummeled my ear.

“For fuck’s sake!” I threw my arms in the air. “I am not going through this twice in one year. I am a grown woman—a whopping aged sixty and not exactly tickled about it—so y’all need to cool your jets. You can’t monitor me twenty-four seven to protect me from the universe.”

“Actually, they kind of can.” Ellesse smiled, which somehow made me smile, bless her smartass soul. “Are you responding to Roger? Titus?”

“*Domitian*. Bossy snarky Superman from hell,” I grumped through a giggle, using Roger’s formidable alien name. Bright chuckled as my phone pinged. No question who *it* was. “And now, to top off this potentially pernicious picadillo of a predicament, a text from my mother.” I whipped out my phone.

“Hi Doodles!!! I know you are visiting your law school friend, but I have a sneaky feeling your horoscope could be important!!! It says you might soon encounter someone from the past who you would do

well to be wary of!!! How are critters??? How is weather??? Raining here!!! Ugh. Don't forget about cute shops in Annapolis!!! (dog, cat, shoe, shopping bags, shoe, worried face, cloud, shoe, umbrella, kissy face, shoe, heart emoji)"

Uncanny. Doodles was my childhood nickname, which Mom used unrelentingly in public. Once embarrassing, it'd since been broadcast to all in the known universe, making resistance futile. As was trying to talk her out of making me go shoe shopping.

"That 'someone from the past' is not the Watcher," said Bright, reading over my shoulder. "But Ellesse will want you to engage with persons who are a danger to you."

"It's not you either?" I snarked. "Because you currently appear as Keefe Brogan, and he did kind of break my heart twenty years ago by being a highly unavailable-for-a-real-relationship spec-ops dude. And back then I didn't know he was a shapeshifting alien."

Ellesse said, "Don't worry, Rowan. I'm not expecting you to tackle this mission alone."

"It's that much of a situation? Who's the problem from my past? The Army ROTC boyfriend you didn't like? I already know he's anti-alien, and I unfriended him on Facebook." I rolled my eyes. "Too bad y'all can't save me from ignoramus non-lawyers mansplaining the Constitution because being on social media somehow made them legal experts."

Ellesse said, "Unfortunately, it's a woman. She was a Marine wife, a good friend of yours. Your husbands were stationed here in Maryland, among other duty locales."

"Vonda Shaver?" I sank onto a cushioned boat seat, feeling queasy, though we'd just arrived ashore and I could see Rinth and Owen waiting. "I unfriended her on Facebook for the same reason—and ultimately blocked her for her rabid support of the corrupt ex-

president. Now he's dead, yet we're still dealing with his horrid HUFU cult members."

HUFU, haplessly pronounced by members as *who-fie* to rhyme with *defy*, stood for HUMANS FIRST! The gun-obsessed, anti-alien faction determined to remain willfully ignorant of their own alien DNA—and to attack anyone in disagreement with them. "The only thing they're defying is reality," I muttered.

Ellesse said, "There's another Marine wife, a fanatic with a mind closed to reason, plus a retired Marine and his wife, all of whom you met as a newlywed in Hawaii. They're members of a group engaged in violent activity under the guise of patriotism."

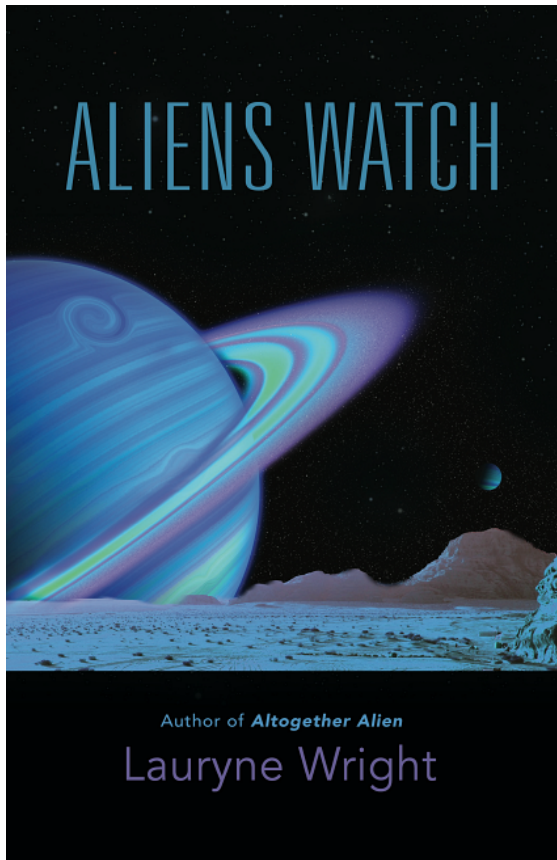
"And you think I can somehow sway them to integrity and intellect?" I scoffed. "They were bigoted long before the alien revelation—my husband and I just didn't realize it. You know how insular and cliquish Marine Corps life is. Everyone voted in lockstep because all that mattered was promoting the military, the *Corps*. At the expense of everything else, including human rights." I shook my head.

"But you attended law school and began to see outside that box," said Ellesse. "You became a problem for their dogmatic way of thinking long before the alien revelation because you challenged the status quo. Beginning with the DoD policy against homosexuality."

"Boy howdy," said bisexual Owen, drawing me into his arms as we disembarked from the sailboat onto shore. He'd attended the US Naval Academy while I was in law school, though I didn't know him then. "Not mad at you, Sizzle, just worried for your safety."

"I might be a little mad," said Rinth, "but it can wait."





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