



Wolf Streak Beta: Alienation

M. G. Brown

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With fantastical depictions of alien life, Wolf Streak Beta: Alienation is an immersive science fiction adventure.

Intergalactic crews encounter aliens, treachery, and the greatest adventures of their lives in M. G. Brown's science fiction novel *Wolf Streak Beta: Alienation*.

The crew of *Wolf Streak Beta* departed the known human-settled solar systems for a colonial mission in outer space years ago. They met with devastation. Now, stranded on an alien moon in an acidic ocean, the remaining members of the crew struggle to survive. They also hope to be reunited with a crew member who disappeared.

Meanwhile, Jamyk, the missing crew member, communes with a mysterious alien race, the Itcac, through psychic means. He is the first human to make contact with the Itcac. He bonds with one being; the Itcac strive to save his crewmates from predators on the alien moon. The book's depictions of alien life are creative, featuring multiple life-forms embedded in a harsh ecosystem that is not intended to support human life.

Though the humans achieve some safety in their new environment, they are not safe from all danger. The Itcac decide to drop the volatile humans onto a nearby planet that was colonized generations ago; these colonists, too, are hostile to the crew of *Wolf Streak Beta*. With some members captured and some killed, the crew begins new political maneuvers, hoping to understand the colonial culture, which seems dangerous and distorted. Accusations of cannibalism dog the crewmates, even as they face torture, reproductive coercion, and rape from their new colonial contacts. Against the odds, the crew of the *Wolf Streak Beta* fights for their freedom and that of others, holding out hope that their colleagues on *Fox Flash Alpha* may yet arrive to aid them.

While some characterizations are bombastic (the book's sadistic villain, Loveji, is developed in over-the-top terms—torturing a *Wolf Streak Beta* teenager for information and for fun; concocting a scheme to displace his queen and kill millions at the same time), Jamyk is an able lead. He's a young trickster who, in bonding with the Itcac, approaches wisdom beyond his years. He is seen processing his traumas, beginning to mature, and catching up to his crewmates in terms of his wisdom.

But the pacing is irregular, with explosions and other dangerous situations outnumbered by conversations and reflections. This unevenness shows up most at the book's beginning, when Jamyk spends an indeterminate amount of time unconscious, sifting through old memories and learning how to communicate with the aliens.

Still, the prose is inventive, if overly expository. The inner states of characters are explained at length. Many characters have repetitive conversations in which they share each thought that crosses their minds, making for a monotonous tone. The futuristic slang of the *Wolf Streak Beta* crew appears throughout, such that bad things are "vulching toxx" or "toxx nasty" and good things are "cherp." Otherwise the language varies, from captivating descriptions of interspecies bonding to blunt and insensitive portrayals of sexual violation.

The mysteries that opened the book—whether humans can have psychic powers, whether aliens exist, and what

happened to the long-lost colonists—are resolved in due time. Still, a few mysteries remain for future series entries, including regarding Jamyk's origins and what befell the *Fox Flash Alpha* crew.

In the immersive and imaginative science fiction novel *Wolf Streak Beta: Alienation*, myriad catastrophes befall a tight-knit space crew as they struggle for survival in a hostile star system.

JEANA JORGENSEN (January 19, 2023)

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