

*AI, the friendly alien*

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# AL, THE FRIENDLY ALIEN

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PS: I want to thank my family and especially my mother for supporting me and also my readers for taking the time to read it.

This book is dedicated to my daughter Delia who is the light of my life. She always puts a smile on my face no matter how tired or upset I may be. Just hope she will be proud of me someday. My books may not be the smartest ones but were written with a lot of love and pleasure whenever I could find a bit of time for them. Also not to forget my husband whom I have to bribe to listen to my stories.

Also I want to thank my friends from Celtic Heroes for reading my books and encouraging me to write. This is also for them. If it hadn't been for them and the game I would have never started writing anything. They inspired me with my first book which although has nothing to do with this one has been the starting point for me. So lots of love to: Miih, Bratty, Mr. Scar, Mongo, Harry, Neon, Mean, Adi, Alien, Zav, Tenbear, Demonizer, Sneakalistia, Hizzy, Scholar, Noah/Josh, Killer, Eto and the rest of the gang 😊. Would have mentioned Ulo too but he left the clan, he left us, his friends, to make a clan of his own. Not going to say anything more on the subject. Enjoy 😊

## Chapter 1: The forbidden planet

Somewhere far into our Galaxy a small alien ship is crashing towards Earth. The only passenger is freaked out as he knows he can't control the ship anymore. Nothing seems to work any longer and his small ship seems doomed in its fall towards the blue planet. The ship is already on fire as it hits the atmosphere of the blue primitive planet, a planet he had never visited before as he had learnt from the elders that it was primitive and torn between conflicts and wars. It was one of the forbidden planets in the Milky Way.

Al, the only passenger of his small cargo ship was wishing he had crashed on another planet but this one, any other would have been better, even the uninhabited ones...but first of all he had to survive the crash and then worry about the aliens inhabiting this forsaken planet. With that in mind, Al braced himself for impact hoping the small ship wouldn't be his grave. It was enough it had been his life, his home, as he had spent most of his adult life on this ship transporting goods from one planet to another so he hoped it wouldn't be his grave too.

The impact made a huge hole in the ground but he wasn't dead. The ship was almost entirely destroyed but he was pretty much alright. Besides a few bruises and a headache he was ok. Now that he was ok he checked the damage of the ship wondering if he could ever fix it to leave this planet. Good thing he had nobody home to worry about him, no family at all, just his employer who was expecting his cargo to arrive next week. Well, he will be in for a surprise as there was no way he could fix the ship in time if he could fix it at all. Besides other stuff

he was also transporting a few loads of the most precious cargo of all, clean, pure water. He was wondering if his cargo was precious enough for his employer to come looking for him. Then he would be saved. But even if Nick, his employer, would send someone after him it wouldn't be before next week when Nick would realize he doesn't have his water. So until then he would have to blend in with the beings inhabiting this planet. He knew that the most evolved beings were called humans and looked just like him, the only difference being that they lacked a lot of the abilities his race enjoyed. But he was going to find out for himself and he was going to try to avoid direct contact with any of them. Just blend in, get some food supplies and maybe some materials for his ship and that would be it.

Al took out a navigation system and set it from where his ship had crashed so he could find his way back after getting some supplies. He was lucky his ship had crashed in a remote area, no humans nearby for miles. He was surrounded by tall trees covered by a thick layer of snow. He was on top of a mountain. He took out a small device, pressed a tiny button and a hologram of the Solar System appeared before his eyes. He found the planet he was on, Terra, and then zoomed in to the place of the crash. He was somewhere in the Carpathians, in Romania.

His race, the Valentinians, was a peaceful race. The Valentinians were highly intelligent and lived in harmony with a lot of other races on their home planet, Valles. Valles was a medium sized planet and it was his home. It was where he would go at the end of each week's work to rest. It was a desert planet covered in red and yellow sands and it was often windy. Almost no vegetation. Just some types of cactus which lived for years without any water as it only rained once in five or more years. So water was scarce and priceless. They had to import it from nearby planets. He was a good merchant and diplomat and always got what he wanted for the lowest prices but still it wasn't good enough to make a living as his small cargo ship needed maintenance and it was expensive to replace broken parts. Then he met Nick during one of his business trips on another planet. He was wealthy and he offered him a job, mainly to do what he was already doing but to do it for him. To buy from a planet and sell to another. So he was transporting cargo from one planet to the other.

Al loved the fact that he got to meet so many different races due to his job. He loved to learn as much as he could about all the races he met. Al knew that knowledge was power. Al was a skilled observer and diplomat which helped him get out unharmed from possible dangerous situations and also helped him obtain what he wanted. But it all seemed so far away now... He was on Terra now, one of the forbidden planets due to the fact that it was considered still primitive and dangerous. Humans were a danger to themselves too, least to say to others. Most of the human race lived in darkness so to say, believing that they were the center of the Universe and that it all revolved around them. They had no clue that there were other races out there in the vastness of space. They were far from being the only living or intelligent creatures in the Universe.

- I wonder how humans can be so naïve to think that they inhabit the only life supporting planet in the whole universe. At least they live in a blissful ignorance as there are a lot of hostile races out there too. Good thing they don't represent a point of interest to any of them...or a threat, Al was thinking to himself while descending from where he had crashed.

He had to get to a town for shelter and supplies. He had his small laser gun by his side in case he needed to defend himself. He didn't have too much information about Terra, just basic stuff which should be enough to get him out of trouble. Gravity on Terra was different from the one on Valles and it made him move a lot faster than on his own planet and with more ease.

The concentration of compounds in the atmosphere on Terra was almost identical to the one on Valles so he didn't have to use any breathing mask. This made things a lot easier. But it was so cold up here, he had to reach lower level ground soon or he would freeze to death. He wasn't properly dressed for such low degrees. But the snow was magnificent. It was something which didn't exist on Valles but he saw it on a few other planets. He loved how it felt on his skin, the shivers it sent through his body in comparison to the constant heat on Valles. He liked to see it melt against his skin.

Suddenly Al heard something behind the tall pine trees. He felt for his gun to make sure it was in its place. Then he waited quietly to see what was creeping behind the trees. He didn't have to wait long. A huge brown bear appeared before him. It roared so loudly that all the trees nearby shook from his roar. But Al wasn't afraid. He didn't know what the large creature was but it looked wild and dangerous. Being afraid would solve nothing. He had to act quickly but as he didn't want to be responsible for the death of any living being on this planet he decided to just use his hypnotic power to make it stop on his tracks. Back on his home planet he could use it on creatures with lower intelligence. He figured it should work on this being too as it just seemed dangerous but not an intelligent being. If hypnotizing it won't work, he will have to make use of the gun. But not before trying. Al waited until the bear came close enough and then he looked straight in its eyes, focusing on the bear's eyes, trying to reach its mind. Al locked the bear's gaze and he did it, the bear stopped as if paralyzed on the spot. It was as if he had used a tranquilizer. Then Al got close to it and watched it. It was a huge, a majestic creature. He was glad he didn't have to use his gun. Then Al left in a hurry as he knew the bear would come back to his senses shortly but with no memory of what happened. It was better if he was gone as far as possible by then.

## Chapter 2: Delia

After walking at a fast speed for hours Al finally saw a small town up ahead. The buildings looked old but cozy. Smoke could be seen from every

chimney as it was a cold winter. Some dogs started barking as they must have felt his presence but they were all chained up and couldn't reach him. He wished he could silence them. He realized they were only doing their jobs, protecting their homes, their families. Al could enter their minds and read their thoughts. They were anxious because they felt a stranger's presence and they were trying to alert their masters. Al sat on an old log and started to visualize what he wanted to happen: all the dogs calming down and going back to sleep. He focused on this image until quietness and serenity enveloped the small mountain town once more. All the dogs had calmed down and were fast asleep dreaming happy dreams, chasing cats and gnawing on old bones.

The Valentinians were extremely smart and could learn a language in a matter of minutes. They were good listeners and could reproduce the language with accuracy which helped them blend in with the rest of the races on the nearby planets. It was an inherited skill from their ancestors and it proved very useful more than once.

- Good, now to find some food, Al thought and he approached one house in particular as a smell of fresh baked food was coming through an open window. He had never felt such an inviting smell before. He wasn't a food lover but this smell was really something else or maybe it was because he was starving. He wasn't sure.

Al went carefully near the open window and peeked inside. An old couple was sitting at a table full of foods smiling to one another and laughing loudly. But there was one more chair drawn from the table which he quickly realized meant someone else was also coming. Then he saw her, the most beautiful woman he had seen in his entire life. He had never seen anyone half as beautiful as her and he had seen quite a lot of women till now as he had traveled on all the planets near Valles. Who could have thought that such a beauty could be living on one of the forbidden planets, a primitive planet?

She was slender, had long chestnut hair and a pair of large blue eyes in which you could get lost without even realizing it. He knew his fate was sealed. The moment he laid his eyes on her he felt the rapid beat of his



heart as if his tiny little heart was trying to get out of his chest and run to her.

What was wrong with him? It was as if his entire body was malfunctioning, like a broken toy. He couldn't control his feelings. He wasn't even sure what he was feeling...so many emotions were running through him flooding his mind and all of his senses. For a split second he forgot who he was and what he was doing there. Then when he remembered he had come to get some food he heard her speak as if on purpose to hypnotize him once again. Her voice was as sweet as music to his ears. He knew he was trapped forever. He didn't care about Nick's cargo anymore or about his home planet or his job. All he cared about was standing right there in front of him. Somehow she was all that mattered to him from the moment he saw her.

She sat down at the table next to the elder woman. Al realized that the elder couple were her parents. They started eating and his mouth was watering at seeing all that food and seeing them eat. He was really hungry. Then he saw something which gave him even more pleasure: they were drinking water from bottles and they had lots of them. There was water running from a sort of hose and the woman was wasting it to clean the dishes. He couldn't believe it. Back on Valles water was too scarce and precious to waste it like that. All the food was canned and they just threw away the cans after they ate. Not wasting water to clean. Even their clothes were being chemically cleaned, no water involved. It was all new and strange to him.

He focused and blurred all other sounds so he could hear only the three people. He had an acute sense of hearing which proved useful many times as he had heard lots of things and many weren't destined for his ears.

- How was your day, Delia? Asked the woman.
- Fine mom, just another boring day at the job. And Delia went on eating and avoiding her mother's gaze as she knew that her mother wanted to know something entirely different but didn't know how to ask without upsetting her again.
- Let her eat, said the husband. She will tell us when she finds her prince charming! And he gobbled down another piece of pork meat. He was

always like that, he liked to say what was on his mind without thinking of the consequences.

- Marcel! What in God's name were you thinking? Replied the woman in a hurry, her cheeks all red with shame that even her husband had seen through her and knew what she wanted to ask their daughter. She was also mad at him because he had just said what she wanted but lacked the courage to ask. The mother wished for her daughter to find a good husband and get married as she was 20 years old already and had no boyfriend. She just did the same thing day after day: went to work and then back home with them, helping them with the household and reading or playing video games. While she wanted a grandson or a granddaughter.

Delia swallowed her piece of food but when she heard her father it got stuck in her throat. She had to cough it out. And she blushed. She was so mad at both of them for not minding their own business.

Al was watching them wondering if she would like him and feeling happy beyond words at hearing her that she was single. He would be her prince charming... just not what her parents were expecting. Then his stomach started growling wildly asking him for food. He looked at the three in the room and decided to knock on their door and pretend to be a tourist from another town who got lost and he would see how the conversation would go from there. So he approached the door and knocked softly. Then he heard the Mom ask:

- Who can be at our door this late in the evening?
- I am not expecting anyone but I will go check, answered the father. He went towards the front door and looked through the small window in the hall to see who was standing at their door before answering. When he saw a good looking young man his heart jumped a beat. He was dressed rather odd but if his daughter liked him he didn't care about his fashion sense.
- Delia darling, the father said, I think it is for you. Why didn't you say you had a boyfriend? You could have saved your mother the trouble of asking.
- What did you say pa? Asked the poor girl almost swooning with embarrassment as she had no boyfriend and had no idea what her father was talking about. She was a shy girl who avoided men company. If she thought about it she didn't have girl friends either. Of course she talked to her colleagues at work but she couldn't say that any of them was a friend.

Just colleagues. She was a rather lonely girl who liked the company of books and video games more than the company of real people. She didn't trust them. In the two years she had been working at the local restaurant she had seen her share of bad behavior and back stabbing from her colleagues to be anything more than just that, colleagues at work.

- What? Mom also asked not believing her ears. Delia darling, don't let the man waiting, it is not polite.
- I am not expecting anyone, said Delia in such a low tone that she could barely hear her own voice.

Al was standing behind the door and chuckling to himself. He didn't know that humans were so funny. Who knows, he might even like Terra. As for Delia, he was head over heels in love with her. She was so simple and kind. And her parents were good people too. So he thought he ought to do something to get the poor girl out of the situation he had created. He focused on Marcel's mind and as much as he hated to intervene in other creature's free will, he made him open the door. Al usually just read others' minds but he rarely made them do anything, just read their minds to know what to expect from them. He didn't like to abuse his powers. But now he felt Delia's distress and wanted to help her.

- Come in, said Marcel. We were just having dinner, won't you join us?
- I'd love to, answered Al and took a seat next to Delia who was looking at him and at her parents stupefied. It was as if her parents were in a trance. They were acting as if they knew the young man but she was sure she had never seen him before in their house. Finally she broke the silence:
  - Uh, excuse me but who are you?
  - I am Al, he answered with a false calmness while drinking a full glass of water. He had eaten and then he was thirsty and he was glad and astounded at seeing all the bottled water. He poured himself a glass and was enjoying it. Meanwhile he was pondering what was to be done now. It was too late to coward out and he couldn't have said he was a lost tourist now that her parents let him in so easily so he decided to plant a false memory of him being an old acquaintance in both of Delia's parents' minds fast. That way they would trust him and let him stay overnight. It was a tricky thing to do and usually required lots of focus and a calm environment. And the environment was anything but calm as he was on a

foreign planet in some strangers' home and in love with their daughter. He was trying his best to keep calm. Anyway he wasn't hungry or thirsty anymore at least. He managed to easily fool the parents who were old and naïve. But he didn't want to deceive Delia. He didn't even try. If she would someday love him it would be her choice. He wouldn't mess with her mind. But reading her mind was something different and couldn't hurt, right? So he decided he should read her mind and find out what she thought of him. But what he discovered shocked him. It was not something he had been expecting....He couldn't read her mind!!!

- Something wrong with me? He asked out loud when he finally gave up trying to read her mind after a third unsuccessful attempt.
- No, she answered. I mean I don't remember you but my parents seem to know you.
- Yes, we are old acquaintances, he said not sure what to say next. They said to come by if I was ever in the neighborhood and needed shelter. So here I am. I was on holiday when my transportation vehicle broke and I was wondering if I could stay until I fix it?
- Of course Al, answered both her parents. You are welcome to stay as long as you need, her Mom went on.
- Thank you kindly, Al answered. He felt guilty but he needed food and shelter and they seemed nice people. And of course there was Delia, a gorgeous and mysterious young girl who stole his heart and his desire to go back to what he once called his home. He felt more at home here than he had ever felt on his own planet.
- Uh, I guess you can have the small room on the right then, said Delia wondering who he really was and why her parents had never mentioned his name.
- Thank you, answered Al still wondering why he couldn't read her mind. I will get some rest now, see you tomorrow. And he left the dining room and headed towards the small room Delia had pointed to him. He was too tired from all the walking and he needed rest. On his way to sleep she was all he could think about. Her large blue eyes...

Delia followed her Mom in the kitchen. She was curious about the stranger in their home.

- Mom, I don't remember you or pa ever mentioning Al before. And she started washing the dishes while her mother was cleaning the table.
- Uh... Al... said her Mom as she wasn't sure what to say about him. There was something strange about him. Her memories of him were old and blurry and she really couldn't remember much about Al .The more she tried to remember the more she seemed to forget.
- Uh, Mom went on after a considerable pause, Al is an old friend. He is my friend Ana's distant cousin. I can't tell you much about him, she finally said, as I don't know much myself. Only remember having seen him once long time ago while visiting Ana. But I have a weird feeling of calmness when he is close by. And you know I am good judge of character.

Al had chosen to plant a memory of him being Ana's distant cousin as Ana had been Mom's best friend until she died last year in a car accident. He had read her mind and chose this option as Mom couldn't ask Ana anything about him now. So she just accepted the memory Al planted as being her own memory.

- OK Mom. Love you. Going to sleep too, you know I work tomorrow. Oh, there is one more pot on the oven which needs to be cleaned... and Delia was going to take it when her Mom stopped her and kissed her cheek.
- You get some rest, I will clean that.
- Thank you Mom, you are the best! And Delia kissed her mother's cheeks and then went to sleep.

### Chapter 3: Soul mate

Al woke up early. He had slept well on a comfy bed and was feeling full of energy. He couldn't remember when was the last time he had felt so

good about his life which was pretty weird as he was stranded on this planet. His life had been pretty boring so far... buying and selling and doing pretty much the same thing day after day. Maybe having crashed on Terra was the best thing that happened to him. As much as he had wished for Nick to track his ship and find him when he crashed he was now wishing he wouldn't ever find him.

Why was Terra forbidden? These people were so kind. He could read their minds and see that they were good honest people. But maybe not all humans were like them. But then again it didn't really matter what the other humans were like. He was glad that these ones were nice. He was 29 years old and had never been in love before but he was sure he was in love now. He had finally found his other half no matter how strange that sounded.

The Valentinians only fell in love once in their lives and they stayed with their other half for the rest of their existence. Their race was one of a kind in this aspect. They were destined to find their half, their mate, from the moment they were born. Even if it took them most of their life to find that special person. It was something both the male and the female felt when they first met. And it was to last till their last breath. If one of them died, his or her mate would live out the rest of his existence without ever looking for another mate. It was a union for life. It was special and wonderful. And no Valentinian had ever been wrong in choosing his mate for life. This is what made him wonder how he could fall in love with a human. How was she destined for him? It made no sense. But maybe true love didn't have to make sense.

Al heard Delia leave for work. He heard her say that she worked at the local restaurant and as it was a small town that wouldn't be too difficult to find. He would go later and have lunch there. But how would he pay? He forgot about that. He didn't even know what the local currency was. He had to figure something out. So he decided to talk to Delia's mother, tell her that he had been away for a long time and ask her a few things. She was a really nice lady and a good source of information. He found out all he needed to know about how things worked on this planet. What she didn't tell him he could just read her mind and find out. So he mainly needed a job

to make money. Just like where he came from. He decided to tell her that he was going to move to their town as he really liked life here. There was a nice house down the street which he could rent after he got a job. It had a garden and beautiful flowers just as their house had. Until then he would stay with them.

- So you went touring the country and decided to stay here for good? Mom asked him.
- Yes, was wondering if I could stay with you until I can rent the house down the street. And Al put on his best smile while waiting for her to answer.
- You are welcome to stay. I can also give you a tip. I heard that one of the two stores that sells computers downtown needs to hire someone for computer maintenance. I also heard they pay well if you know about programs and stuff. As you are young I bet you know about computers like most of the teenagers nowadays. You would think that they were born with a laptop in their hands, Mom said and giggled.
- Thank you so much for everything, said Al and bowed his head with gratitude. I will go and see if I get the job.
- Good luck! But Al was already out the door.

An hour later Al was signing the contract with his employer. Getting the job had been a piece of cake. He knew everything about computers. He used to fix his own systems on his ship. Besides being a good merchant he really knew about computers and programs. It was cheaper if he did his own maintenance instead of paying someone. But when a piece would break he would have to pay for a new one of course. So at least save money by doing the maintenance himself. Maybe he used a bit of his ability to persuade his employer to choose him over other candidates but he deserved the job. He really knew what it was all about so no harm done, right? Best man, or in his case alien, got the job.

He couldn't believe he was doing this. Mainly he was giving up his former life for a whole new one on Terra among humans. Was he really giving up that much? He had a job as a pilot on a cargo ship and as a merchant as he did the bargaining too but he had no way of repairing his ship any time soon if he could ever fix it at all and he had a job here now.

And he met the love of his life... he just wondered whether she had felt anything when she looked at him for the first time. If she had been a Valentinian then she would have felt for him what he felt for her but she was a human and Al couldn't remember any other Valentinian having chosen a soul mate from another race before so he practically had no idea if Delia felt the same way.

He would start work on the following day but he needed money now as he wanted to have lunch at the restaurant where Delia was working. Hmm, maybe a bit of more persuasion wouldn't harm... convince Bobby, his new employer, to pay him a whole salary in advance. It wasn't stealing, just taking the money a bit before...

It was so easy to read people's minds and to convince them to do anything. It didn't require too much focus for minor stuff such as getting the job or a salary in advance. Terra was almost too good to be true. He went straight to the restaurant. He entered and saw that everyone turned their heads to examine him. A little bit of mind reading and he found the reason: he was the new guy in town and they were all just curious as it was a small town where everybody knew everybody else so when someone new came it was like an event or something. And there were a few women at a table in the corner drinking orange juice and eating pancakes who found him quite attractive. He chuckled to himself content especially as it meant that he had managed to blend in among the humans without anyone suspecting that he was from another planet. But he didn't care about the young ladies in the corner, all he cared about was seeing Delia.

Al sat at a table waiting to see her. Then he saw her enter with a tray of drinks and heading towards the young ladies in the corner of the small restaurant. They were envious of her because she was simple yet she was a real beauty. Delia didn't need to wear make up to underline her beautiful eyes or her full lips. She was a natural born beauty and it was the main reason she didn't have friends. As for the guys, there were a lot who had showed interest in her but she never found anyone interesting enough. She kept telling herself that one day she would leave this God forsaken town and move to a bigger city or even a different country and then she would probably meet someone with whom she could have a relationship. Some



smart, interesting guy to be able to have a conversation with him and if he would be good looking too, then that would be a bonus. Not like the guys from her town who couldn't say more than a few simple sentences without trying to kiss her or worse. She hated her own town. It was too quiet, too boring, nothing interesting ever happened. Until now when this handsome guy entered their home. Then she saw him a table in the restaurant and she almost tripped with the tray of drinks.

- Hey Emma, said Nicole, one of the three girls at the table in the corner. Did you see the new guy?
- Of course! Geez, you'd have to be blind not to! And all three laughed.
- Look at how he is gazing at Delia, Nicole went on once she got the others' attention. You'd think he likes her.
- What? She is the most boring girl in town. She never even had a boyfriend. She is a geek.
- She may be a geek, intervened Natalia, a beautiful dark haired young girl who was the most decent and kind of the three friends, but Nicole is right. He does seem to like her.
- Really? Said Emma with an evil grin. Let's see if he likes her now! And she tried to make her trip over but Al was one step ahead of her and he moved as fast as lightning and got the tray of drinks in mid air, put it on the table with one hand and grabbed Delia's arm with the other preventing her from falling. It all happened very fast. Emma's cheeks were red with anger.
- Are you OK, Delia? Al asked in the sweetest voice on purpose to spite the three girls.
- Yeah, thank you... I am usually not this clumsy, Delia tried to explain. I almost spilled your drinks. Let me know if you need anything else, she said addressing the girls. Then she left in a hurry, her cheeks red as she almost tripped in front of the girls.
- It was not your fault, said Al and he eyed Emma in such a way that she was sure he knew she had been to blame. Emma's cheeks turned red again with embarrassment.
- Won't you sit at our table? Asked Nicole, a skinny red-haired in her mid twenties who wasn't used to getting no for an answer.

- Thank you but I just want to have lunch and then I will be going. Maybe some other time. And Al went back to his table leaving the three girls agape.
- Wow, did that just happen? Asked Emma frustrated. Did he just turn you down, Nicole?
- Uh, no... he said he was busy.
- No he didn't. And Emma started to laugh loudly. This must be a first for you!
- Just shut up Emma! And Nicole got up from the table, put the money she owed for what she had consumed and wanted to leave.
- Oh, don't mind Emma, said Natalia trying to calm them. You know how she is. Let's finish our drinks and then we can go for some shopping, OK?
- OK. And Nicole took her seat back at the table determined to ignore Emma until she would apologize.
- OK, sorry. Said Emma. Natalia is right, let's finish our drinks and get out of here!

Al went back to his table. He couldn't believe that such pretty girls had such rotten cores. Then he focused on Delia trying to reach her mind again to see what she was thinking. In vain. He just couldn't read her mind. How? Why? He could read everybody else's mind but not hers. There was something special about her. It just made him love her even more. Her mind was a total mystery to him, a mystery which he was planning to uncover little by little.

- What can I get you? Delia asked him with a little tremor in her voice.
- Anything. I just want to have lunch.
- Ok, how about pizza?
- Sounds good, he said although he had no idea what a pizza was. But if she recommended pizza, then that was what he would have.
- Will be ready in 10. And Delia left to serve at another table.

Al loved the taste of pizza. He had never eaten a pizza before and found it lovely. He started to love food here. It was totally different from what he was used to anyway. But in a good sense. After lunch he went straight to the owner of the house he wanted to rent. It belonged to a nice old lady

and he paid the rent for two months in advance. Then he went to Marcel and Mom's house to say goodbye and tell them he managed to rent the house already to their surprise.

- Oh, wow, said Mom, I thought you'd be staying with us for a while.
- Yes, but fate has smiled upon me and I got the job you told me about. So I rented the house down the street. I am so excited.
- Congratulations! Marcel congratulated him on both having gotten the job and renting the house.
- Thank you for your kindness. And Al left to move in his new home.

## Chapter 4: Two rotten apples and an unexpected confession

He was so happy. He was having the adventure of his life. Terra had proven by far the most interesting planet he had visited so far. People were so complex and complicated but they could also be so kind and sensitive. He decided to try gather materials to fix his ship in case he ever wanted to go back to his former life. Maybe with Delia by his side as his wife and soul mate. So he figured he needed a car, a truck to transport the materials back on the mountain to his ship. Delia had a car but it wasn't large enough to transport materials. He needed a truck. But how to make enough money fast to buy one? Maybe Delia's Mom had useful information again. So after dinner he figured to pay them a visit.

He had dinner and then headed towards Delia's home. He knocked on their door and waited for an answer. Marcel opened the door but when he saw him he had a worried look on his face.

- Hello, Marcel said. I thought it was our daughter. She should have been home from work by now. Dinner is on the table, we were waiting for her. Won't you join us?
- Is she usually late from work? Al asked as he began to worry for Delia too after hearing Marcel and reading his mind and worries.
- No, she is almost never late... Mom also intervened clearly worried for her daughter. Her shift was over an hour ago. And I can't reach her on her phone.
- OK, I waited enough. I will go to the restaurant and see if she is still there, said Marcel. Maybe they had lots of customers and she is still cleaning or something. And he took his coat from the peg ready to exit the door when Al stopped him. He put his hand on his shoulder and induced a state of calmness in him by just touching him and talking to him.
- I will go look for her, Al said. She would probably be embarrassed if her pa came looking for her like she was a child. But I can go and pretend I was having an evening stroll, how does this sound?
- Al is right, Mom said already a lot calmer. Let him go. If there is nothing wrong, I guess he can indeed say he was just out for a stroll. Just be careful Al, the streets can be dangerous at night. There are many kids who went rotten due to harsh life conditions or who knows why. Many thugs out at night ready to jump anyone who is alone. This city needs more policeman to patrol at night especially in dark alleys.
- No worries, I will get her home, and Al left towards the restaurant. When he was far from their house he sat on a bench and focused his mind to try read the minds of the other people as he couldn't read Delia's mind. He figured that if she was in trouble it must be from some males whose hormones had gotten to their heads. So he filtered the thoughts of the females and then focused on those of men. Then he focused on those who were anxious leaving the calm ones alone. He heard thoughts of men worried about being seen with their mistresses and hoping their wives wouldn't find out, he heard a man worried that he had drunk too much and couldn't remember where he had left his bike and then he heard them. Two men worried not to be seen by anyone while attacking a young woman. He quickly focused on the two and he could see Delia in their mind. So she was in danger on a dark alley with the two ready to jump her. Al

hated what those two had in their minds and what they meant to do to her. He had to find her fast. He focused until his temples hurt but then he saw a shop sign in one of the two men's mind and he knew where that was.

He got up from the bench a little dizzy from focusing too much to read so many people's minds at the same time but he quickly came back to his own self. He started running as he had never done before, his feet barely touching the ground due to the difference of gravity from his own planet. It almost looked like he was flying or floating above the ground. He was on the dark alley in less than three minutes. He saw the two men cornering Delia and he could see the panic in her eyes. He heard their voices as they thought there was no one there besides themselves and the poor girl.

- Come closer, said one of them grinning in expectation. We don't bite! And they both started laughing.
- Yeah, how come a beautiful thing like you is all alone at this hour? Said the other guy wanting to make sure that the girl wasn't expecting company to deter them from their plans.
- She is not alone! Delia heard the voice clearly, she was sure of it but didn't know where it came from. Who had said that? She couldn't see anyone besides the two bullies. Then from a dark corner behind the bullies she started to distinguish a shape coming closer. She couldn't believe her eyes! Al?? Was she just imaging him, was her mind playing tricks on her? Because it wasn't funny if it was just her imagination. She was sure the two would probably kill her after they would be done with her so she wouldn't go the police. Maybe her panicked mind was hallucinating in her final moments. But then she clearly saw and heard everything. It was all real. It was a miracle.
- You two had better go if you want to wake up in the morning with all your limbs intact! She heard Al saying while he came closer, standing in the neon light of a closed shop. It really was him!
- Ha-ha, listen to this sucker! The two laughed. Go back home skinny man until it is too late. Or you want a piece of her too?
- Suit yourselves, said Al while already breaking the first man's legs with a quick and powerful blow that left him crawling in the dirt unable to get up. Then he dodged a blow from the other guy who was trying to hit his head

with a brick he had picked up from near an old and derelict house. He then touched his forehead with his palm and the man bent to his knees and started crying as if he was in tremendous pain. Delia couldn't believe her own eyes. The man was acting as if he was really hurting although Al had just touched his forehead gently. She was sure now that there was something odd about Al, their new neighbor, but who cared? He had just saved her life. If he had secrets, he could rest assured she wouldn't blow the horn. She was sure that those had been her final moments on this earth until he appeared practically out of nowhere and saved her life. She got up from the corner where she had been waiting for her doom a few moments ago and hit the man's face with the phone she was holding. At least it did something right, leaving a dark mark on his face where it touched his skin.

- I will have to buy a new phone. This one's battery sucks. Couldn't use it when I needed it most. Said Delia with the color coming back to her cheeks. Then she approached Al and she kissed him. It was her first kiss and his as well. For a brief moment she thought she could see the night stars in his eyes. It was a magical moment.
- Thank you for saving my life! I don't know why I went down this alley this evening. I usually go on the other street but I had a lot of work this evening and didn't want to be late for family dinner and thought to take the shortcut. It almost cost me my life. How did you find me?
- Uh, Al mumbled, not wanting to lie but he couldn't tell her the truth either. I was having a stroll and then I saw the two guys and I realized they were up to no good. Then I saw you and you looked like you needed help so ...you know the rest!
- I know that if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be going home right now... speaking of which, please don't tell my parents about any of these. They would just worry to death about me. Let's just tell them I had to work a lot because of some late customers and we met by accident and you decided to walk me home, OK? It is just a white lie... I don't want them to worry for me every time I get out the door, OK Al?
- OK. Just glad I was here in time. And he took her hand and they both headed for her home while the two bullies were both on the ground in pain. It served them right, Al thought to himself. Then he walked Delia home and they both entered as her parents invited him for dinner, too.

- Oh my God Delia! Cried her mother at seeing her daughter unharmed. You scared us to death. Why didn't you answer your phone?
- The stupid thing's battery died. Sorry, I just had so much work and didn't realize it got so late. Al was strolling by and he offered to walk me home.
- Uh, said her father, after dinner go look on the internet and choose another phone. I will pay for it!
- Wow pa, you don't have to. I will be able to afford one on my next salary, Delia said trying to calm her father. If he offered to buy her a new phone it meant he had really been worried about her. He was very strict about spending money as they were always short on money.
- Nah, you deserve a better phone. No worries sweetheart, and Marcel hugged his daughter relieved beyond words to see that she was OK.
- I'll go change into something more comfortable and then I'll be joining you for dinner, Delia said already in the doorway.
- Thank you so much for bringing her home, Mom whispered in Al's ear when Marcel wasn't paying attention. What really happened?

Al thought for a moment what his answer should be and decided to tell her the truth, she was her mother and deserved to know, especially as she had sensed that things hadn't been as Delia told them. He thought about how to tell her and then he decided to tell her his own way: he touched her hand and looked straight into her eyes and flooded her mind with the vision of what had happened earlier. So he let her see what had happened without even using words, just the power of his mind. He liked this family too much to lie to them anymore. He decided to tell them who he really was and where he came from. He was sure they would keep his secret safe. But he waited for Delia to return from upstairs first so she could also hear him. Meanwhile Mom was not sure what had just happened. She had seen images in her mind of her daughter attacked by the two men and also how Al had saved her. She didn't know what was going on thinking that maybe she had lost her mind. Then Delia joined them for dinner. It was time for him to come clean. It was the best thing to do.

- There is something I need to tell you, Al started still wondering if it was a good idea. But he had never in his life been wrong about anyone and he was 100 percent certain that they would keep his secret and wouldn't run away terrified. They were smart and honest people, just the sort he liked.

- Anything wrong with the pancakes? Asked Marcel thinking that maybe his wife had put too much jam in them and were too sweet for Al's taste.
- I don't think it has anything to do with the food... said Mom who was now sure that she hadn't lost her mind and that the stranger in their home had put those images in her head. But as weird as it seemed, she wasn't afraid of him. There was something about him, she couldn't put her finger on it, but she felt safe in his presence.

Delia stopped eating and started to bite her lips nervously thinking that maybe he was going to tell her parents that she had kissed him. Maybe he was just another boor thinking that if she kissed him he could propose to her or something. Maybe he was just like the other guys from her town. Her ears were red to their tips waiting for Al to speak and embarrass her but what he said was not what she had expected to hear.

- I really don't know how to say this so it won't sound crazy or something...Al started and waited for their reactions so he would know how to go on. Delia was all red although he had no idea why as he couldn't read her mind, her Mom was listening very carefully as she knew that there was something weird about him although she didn't know what and Marcel was still wondering about the pancakes thinking that maybe Al really thought Mom had used way too much jam in spite of the fact that he had repeatedly told her not to put so much jam or they'll turn diabetics.
- I come from far away... he went on.
- We know that, said Marcel. But by the look on your face it must be something serious. I don't think you want to complain about the pancakes, do you?
- Uh, what's wrong with my pancakes? Asked Mom upset that her husband was criticizing the way she cooked in front of a stranger.
- Uh, nothing honey, just that you put too much jam, that is all... .and Marcel was already sorry for having said that as he was sure she would scold him later on when they would be alone in the bedroom.
- No, your pancakes were a real delight. Stop worrying about the way you cook, the food is great. What I meant to say is that I come from another planet.



- Ha-ha, laughed Marcel with both his hands on his belly as he couldn't stop laughing. That was a good one. Did you also put poison in them? He said still laughing but then he saw that he was the only one laughing and he saw that Al was dead serious. So he thought that maybe the kid was soft in the head. He stopped laughing anyway.
- Nope, I am not soft in the head although your reaction is quite normal. I guess you don't hear this every day.
- Whoa, I was just thinking that, said Marcel a bit afraid. How did you know?
- Told you, I am not human. I look like you but I am not one of you.
- Oh my good God, said Delia not believing her own ears. You mean you are... an alien??
- Yeah I guess so, although to me, you are the aliens. But as I am on your planet, you are right.
- And I thought I was losing my mind earlier, said Mom although Marcel and Delia didn't know what she meant by that. I knew there was something weird about you but this is too much.
- Well, I am a friendly alien. And he put on his nicest and most seductive smile. There are a lot of other races out there who are not this friendly. But my race is a peace loving race who never starts a war unless it is absolutely necessary. We love peace and harmony and never attack unless attacked. But don't get me wrong, we are very powerful.
- Oh God, said Delia again, I hear what you are saying but my mind can't seem to process what my ears are hearing. Prove you are an alien before you go on.
- OK. And Al took her hand and gazed into her beautiful blue eyes and let her see images from his own mind, memories of his home planet, of his journeys to other planets, of the wonderful as well as dangerous things he had seen so far and ended with showing her the image of his small cargo ship crashing to earth. Then he slowly let go of her hand and waited for her reaction whatever that may be as he never knew what to expect of her, she was unpredictable because her mind was a mystery.
- Oh! !! It is true! I can't believe this!
- Huh? As Al didn't know how to take her words when...

- Oh my, oh my, oh my! I am so excited I could almost kiss you again! I have an alien friend, how cool is that? Oops...and she blushed for having reacted the way she had and for admitting to have kissed him already!
- This went better than I expected, Al thought to himself. Wow.
- What? Kiss again? And Marcel acted upset then he burst out laughing. See? He said addressing his wife. Told you she would find her prince charming....or charming alien... and he hugged Al to his utmost surprise.
- We've been through so much emotions today from worrying about our daughter's safety to... well ...discovering we have an alien in our home, said Mom. Oh and what was that about the kiss?
- Mom, dad, Al is an alien and all you two think about is the fact that we kissed?
- Well to tell you the truth, yeah. I thought you would never marry, honey. So who cares he is an alien? We get to have grandchildren someday. Thank you lord for sending him to us.
- Now it is my turn to be speechless. I think I've shown you that I really am a friendly alien but still I am an alien. You took the news pretty well.
- I was sure there were other creatures in the universe besides us. There had to be or there would have been such a waste of space for us to be the only living beings and all the rest of the universe to be just dead space with dead planets. I knew it! Told you pa but you would never listen to me.
- I never gave it much thought until now when we have an actual alien in our house. So tell us more about you, about your life.
- Hmm, there's not that much to say. I crashed to your planet up in the mountains and came down looking for materials to repair my ship. I am a merchant and I pilot my own ship. I buy and sell different stuff but the most precious of all is something which it appears you have plenty of: pure water. Water is life. My first intention was to fix my ship and go back to my life but then I met you all and this changed the course of my life. You, Delia, have changed my life.
- Pinch me, said Mom, I can't believe my daughter has a boyfriend!
- I can't believe he is an alien! Said Marcel ignoring his wife who was jubilating. We have a genuine alien in our living room.
- I was convinced there were aliens out there, Delia finally said, but I always thought they were grey and ugly and with huge black eyes and no eyelids.

Spooky sort, like in the movies. Instead you look just like any normal human. You could go for somebody's neighbor and nobody would notice that you are different unless maybe at a close look. But now that I know that you are different I look at you with different eyes and I can see small things which could make a difference. The shape of your eyes for starters and the fact that you hardly blink at all. I don't know how you do it. And your hair is so black. And you are a bit taller than the average people I know.

- Yes, there are some differences but we are not that different. I didn't know what to expect when I crashed to Earth. I thought humans were savage. But that is so untrue. You aren't technologically as advanced as our race but you are far from being savages.
- Savages? Oh my God! Said Mom feeling offended on humanity's behalf. We may not be as advanced as your race but we are far from being savages.
- I see that, said Al smiling sincerely.
- Then how come I have vague memories of you being an old acquaintance, Al? Asked Mom puzzled.
- Oh, sorry about that. It was a harmless trick for which I really am sorry but it was late and I was tired and hungry and in need of shelter. Couldn't have said I was an alien, right? So I hypnotized you to believe that so you would trust me and offer me food and shelter.
- Yes, said Mom seeing things from his perspective. You are right and no harm done. So it was a fake memory...
- Yes, but will never deceive any of you again about anything. You know you can trust me and understand my reason for my little trick.
- Strange enough but I really feel that I can trust you, said Mom. And as I said, I understand why you did that. So are you going to fix your ship? And if you fix it, will you go back to your old life?

Delia's eyes were fixed on Al's and she was so attentive not to miss a word of his answer or a gesture that might betray his real intentions.

- Yes, I will try to repair my ship. Doesn't hurt to have an advanced functional ship, right? As for going back to my old life... no. Not soon anyway. I really like it here. It is an adventure and a break from my job. It is new and exciting. I will be staying here for a good while, said Al thinking of Delia. He couldn't leave without her. He was sure she was the one for him. So either

he remained on Terra or maybe she would go to his planet with him. But first he would have to win her heart. He had thought that being an alien would be a major drawback but now after having seen her reaction to his confession he thought that maybe, just maybe, instead of being a drawback as he had believed it turned out to be an advantage as she not only wasn't afraid of him but she seemed thrilled with the idea of having met an actual alien.

- Dinner was great but it's getting late and I got to wake up early for work so I'll be heading home. Have a good night, and Al left them wondering about all he had said.
- Let me walk you to the door, Delia offered. When they were alone, she whispered in his ears in the sweetest voice: thank you Al for saving me from those guys. And she leaned in and placed a kiss on his cheek. It was so gentle that he barely felt her lips touching his skin. But it sent shivers of pleasure throughout his body.
- Sleep well and don't let that one incident affect your beautiful nature. Trust me, it is not worth your time. And I assure you those two will never attack anyone again. Have a good night!

## Chapter 5: The Kersna

Al left feeling like a huge burden had just been lifted off his shoulders. He wouldn't have to hide them the fact that he was alien from now on. It was such a relief to be able to be himself at least around them. He had never been wrong in judging characters and he knew he wasn't wrong now either. He could really trust this family. These people were like the family he never had. He didn't know anything about his family. All he knew was that his parents had

died during the last Kersna attack. The Kersna were the most dangerous intelligent creatures in the Milky Way. They raided planet after planet killing everyone in their path. They rarely took prisoners but once in a while they did take prisoners as their old slaves died and needed to be replaced. He was an infant during that attack and he was found after the battle was over among the ruins of what used to be his home. His parents were never found and he grew up in an orphanage among other children whose parents had been killed. Valentinians never abandoned their offsprings but since the first Kersna attacks about 400 hundred years ago orphanages had to be built for the surviving children whose parents had died. The Kersna were manipulative evil creatures who were nothing like his race. They were the exact opposite. They were technologically more advanced than the other races because they were the most ancient race in the galaxy and had had more time to develop. Now their planet was dying as they had used up all its resources. So they started to plunder the surrounding planets to refill their own supplies. Whenever they attacked they left mayhem behind. The Kersna were tall skinny creatures but with a high intellect. They had hollow eyes and longer necks than people or Valentinians had. They had no hair whatsoever on their bodies and six fingers on each hand and only four toes on each leg. Their skin was dark grey. Their strength was their intellect alone. They had no sinew, no physical force. Quite the opposite, they were feeble beings. But they had smart gadgets and weapons to compensate for that. So their intelligence made them so dangerous.

Al hoped they would never venture this far into the galaxy so they wouldn't find this planet. Everyone deserved to live but humans were very primitive compared even to the Valentinians which meant they would stand no chance against the Kersna. He just hoped this little planet would remain hidden from their view. When he got home he fell asleep almost the instant his head hit the pillow. So much had happened in such short time and he needed rest. That night he had nightmares of the terrible Kersna attacking this little piece of heaven which he now called home.

The Kersna were a walking nightmare. They were pure evil and had to be stopped once and for all. He just wished that his race would sign the treaty with the other races and make an alliance against them. It was the only way to

stop them. United they might just win whereas divided they would suffer defeat after defeat. With the Kersna gone, the Milky Way would be a much safer place.

## Chapter 6: Winning the lottery

Al woke up early to go to his new job. His boss Bobby showed him his office and let him know what he was supposed to do. Bobby was a nice guy and he only had three more employees as his firm was a small one: Dorian, his driver, a middle aged man who had been his driver for the last 20 years and two younger guys, both salesmen. They sold computers and Al had to make sure everything was functional and also pay and keep track of bills. The younger men were brothers. Al had a strange feeling about them the moment he saw them so he figured that maybe he should pay attention to them. He settled at his desk and then he focused on the two employees. They were planning to rob Bobby, their employer. They knew he would be away on holiday for two days next weekend and were planning the burglary for the first night Bobby would be away. They knew he had a safe behind an old picture where he kept his money. They were planning to crack the safe and steal everything. Al couldn't let that happen. The salesmen would probably end up caught and in jail for the rest of their youth and it wasn't worth it. They were young and poor and they wanted to rob their boss to be able to buy an expensive car thinking that would help them find girlfriends. Al didn't want the brothers to end up behind bars for such a foolishness just to impress girls but he couldn't let them fulfil their plan. He thought about the situation for a while and decided to give them a helping hand, not to steal but to win at the lottery. If they won, they wouldn't need to go on with their plan.

- Hello, Al addressed the two brothers. I'm Al, the new guy.

- Hi, answered one of them, I am Tom and this is my younger brother, Adi. Nice to meet you!
- I am new here and I was wondering if you'd like to join me for a cup of coffee after work. My treat.
- Yeah we could. See you after work Al, said Adi.
- At the local restaurant? Are you two OK with that place?
- A bit too fancy but OK, answered Tom.
- Then see you after work, and Al smiled to himself. They weren't bad boys, they just needed a little push, a little help to go in the right direction.

When they finished work they went to the local restaurant, the one where Delia worked. They grabbed a table and started chatting. Meanwhile Al ordered the coffee for all three and some snacks.

- So you are new to this town, said Tom who was more talkative and was the mastermind behind the burglary plan. How do you like it here so far?
- I can't complain. I got a job, rented a house and the scenery here is fantastic. I really like it here. Then in order to get the chat where he wanted he added: could use some extra cash though. He saw that he immediately got their attention. I consider myself to be a lucky guy and I feel extremely lucky today. My first day on my new job. You know what? I'll try my luck with the lottery. I bought a ticket. How about we all bet on it? Each say two numbers and see if we win anything. When is the grand draw?
- On Friday, answered Adi. Sounds interesting. Why not? OK let me see...
- First number that comes to your mind, said Al to encourage him. Then he told himself that it didn't really matter. Anything they would choose would be the winning numbers because that Friday he would be on his couch focusing on the TV or rather on the show on the TV and more precisely on the person who would draw the winning numbers. He would make the person choose their numbers. It was a day before they would commit the burglary. Winning a large sum at the lottery should make them change their plans and keep them out of trouble.
- OK, 27, said Adi. And 3. Now it is your turn, Tom. Choose two numbers.
- I don't see the harm in it so here goes: 7 and 23. What about you Al?
- I choose 1 and 13. Ok now how about you two come over on Friday for a pizza while the numbers are drawn?
- Uh.. Ok and we can bring the beer, said Tom.

- Sounds good. So we have a deal!
  - Thanks for the coffee, said Adi, see you tomorrow at work.
  - Ok, have a nice day. And the two brothers left in a cheerful mood. Al remained a little longer. He wanted to see Delia and ask her out. It annoyed him that he couldn't read her mind. Then he saw her coming his way.
  - Hi, he said, how about we go for a stroll after you finish work?
  - I should go home first and change. Maybe later?
  - You are perfect the way you are. You don't have to change. Not on my account, anyway.
  - Oh... and Delia blushed. She was so beautiful he could hardly get his eyes off her. So see you when you finish?
  - Ok. I'll call my parents so they won't worry about me. See you in two hours.
- Al could almost jump for joy. He had a date with her and also he would win the lottery on Friday, saving the two brothers from themselves. He felt as if he had already won the lottery as he had a date with his soul mate and could hardly wait for the two hours to pass to be with her.

Two hours later he was standing in front of the restaurant door waiting for her. She was wearing a blue blouse beneath the black unzipped jacket which matched her eyes perfectly and a pair of blue jeans. She looked perfect.

- So where would you like to go? Delia asked him as she too enjoyed his company and it didn't really matter where they went. She trusted him, she felt safe in his presence.
- Hmm, Al answered after a short pause, how about I show you my ship? It's on top of the mountain but we can take my car. Shouldn't take us more than 3 hours to get there and get back too. Al had rented a truck and had learnt to drive in less than an hour. He was very intelligent and he thought that driving a car was less difficult than piloting a cargo ship anyway.
- Wow this must be the most interesting date anyone could have taken me on! I'd be delighted!
- Thought so, he said smiling at her.
- Do you have cars back on your planet? She asked him as she entered the car.
- Nope, not like these anyway. We have other ways of transportation. Small flying ships or we use teleportation. But teleportation is usually used by the



more important Valentinians. Normal Valentinians use these small ships with four seats. I guess you could say they are our cars, and Al laughed.

- Teleportation? Wow... said Delia daydreaming about all the things Al was describing and imagining even more which he hadn't described but she had a good imagination. Have you ever used teleportation?
- Yes, every big ship has one. I mean every ship which is bigger than a family ship which is only used on our planet to go from one place to another. The way humans use cars. But all spaceships which go to other planets and beyond have a teleportation device on board. It's a must have. And whoever leaves the ship to go on the surface of the planet has a tiny device with the help of which he can teleport back on the spaceship in case of an emergency. If he gets in trouble he can just get back on the ship with the simple press of a button.
- Oh wow I wish I had such a device... So you have one? Can you teleport back to your spaceship?
- Yes, it is still functional. But I need the truck to carry materials back to the ship to fix it. Can't teleport those too so I have this small device to guide me back to my ship. And he showed her the gadget.
- Nice! Your planet must be very interesting. I wish I could visit it and see for myself some of the wonders you are telling me about...

Al could almost jump through the ceiling of the car at hearing her. So she would like to see his planet. So she would go there with him. He couldn't believe his own ears which by the way were a bit smaller than a human's and a little pointed at the top.

- If I ever manage to fix the ship you are more than welcome to come with me, he said and kissed her on the lips. She kissed him back to his utmost joy.
- Yes I would love to but what would my parents say? We would come back to Earth, right?
- Of course, as often as you'd like.
- Then I hope you fix your ship and show me what lies beyond the stars....
- I will do my best to fix it, Al said with a large smile. This was the most beautiful day he had spent on Terra so far.

By the time they got on the mountain it was already dark and Delia started to be a little afraid. She knew there were bears and wolves in the

wilderness. And Al didn't seem strong enough to face any of the wild creatures. He was very handsome and smart but not physically strong and she was wondering if he could protect her or himself in case they were attacked by beasts. He saw her fidgeting on her chair but as he couldn't read her mind he didn't know what the cause was. So he finally just asked her:

- Why are you fidgeting? Are you nervous or you need to relieve yourself? I noticed that humans do this when they need to go to the bathroom.
- Oh, it's nothing. I was just thinking that we could encounter some wild beasts here and didn't know if you had any weapon for defense...
- Yes, I have this laser gun but I'd rather not use it. It is deadly in most cases. But you don't have to worry, you are safe with me. And he kissed her again to reassure her that everything was under control. It seemed to work as she obviously calmed down. Here it is, he finally exclaimed!

Some trees were burnt almost entirely where the ship had crashed and there it was: the alien ship, Al's cargo ship. Delia still couldn't believe it was all true, that she had indeed met an alien and now she was standing in front of what remained of his ship.

- Wow! She finally said! So this is your ship...
- Yes, he said and opened a trap door and showed her in. This way and watch your head, he said not wanting her to get hurt. They entered a large hall dimly illuminated and then he opened a massive door which led to his cockpit. There were tons of colored buttons and two seats, the captain's and a copilot's. But Al had no copilot. He always worked alone. The ship was about 80% damaged but with the right tools and materials it wasn't beyond repair. And Al was now determined to fix it.
- This is where I work and live most of the time... crashing on Terra was not such a bad thing. First of all, I met you... and of course life here is so interesting. Terra is a very interesting planet.
- Maybe... but I bet you've seen lots of places with your spaceship. I want to see some of them someday if you fix it and if you take me...
- I'd take you anywhere you'd ask me. I'd do anything for you... he said and he bowed his head and lowered his eyes... I... I... I love you! I've loved you from the moment I first saw you take a seat at the table with your parents. If you are wondering how I can say this, it is because it is true. It really is what I feel. We, Valentinians, only fall in love once in our lifetime and it is

for the rest of our lives. And I love you. There can be no other for me. I hope I didn't scare you. I don't know what you feel, but this is how I feel. If you don't feel the same you have no reason to be afraid, just tell me what you feel...

- I don't know what to say... it is all so sudden...and I've never been in love before either... but I guess the butterflies in my stomach when I see you and when you look at me must mean that I feel the same way for you...
- You've made me the happiest Valentinian on Terra!! He said jokingly and passionately kissed her just when she was about to say that he was the only Valentinian on Earth so...

Then AI pressed a button and a hologram of the Milky Way appeared in front of their eyes enveloping them.

- Look, he said pointing to a distant planet on the holographic map of the Milky Way, this is Valles, my home planet. And then he swirled the map and showed her Terra, a small planet in comparison with the rest she saw on the map. And this is Terra, he went on.
- You are a long way from home, she finally said.
- My home from now on will be wherever you are, either here on Terra or on Valles or on any other place where you'd like to go. My home is where you are...
- Wow... thank you I guess... it's getting late, shouldn't we go back?
- Yes, we should. Come, he said and took her warm hand, let's return before your parents get worried.

## Chapter 7: Two happy brothers

That Friday after work the two brothers were at AI's door as they had agreed. He welcomed them in and offered them pizza and drinks. He could

use some friends while he stayed on Terra and the two weren't bad people, they were just young and needed help and guidance.

- Let's turn on the TV and see if we win anything, said Al when the lottery draw was near.
- Yeah, both brothers agreed. Although I never won anything at the lottery, said Tom grumpily.
- Hah, how could you? Laughed his younger brother, Adi. You never played the lottery.
- Oh, I knew there was a reason I never won! Tom said afterwards and all three started laughing, the two brothers a bit tipsy from the beers they drank.
- Now hush, said Adi again, they are picking the lucky numbers. Al could use a bit of quiet so he could focus on the woman who was going to pick the lucky balls with the numbers so she would pick their numbers. He totally ignored his guests and focused on the woman on TV.
- And the first number is... they heard her say... number 3.
- We have number three on our ticket, said Adi. Need 5 more numbers..
- Second number is... the woman went on... number 1.
- We have number one, too. Said Al. Tom, we might have a chance, Al went on trying to get Tom's attention.
- Lucky 2 I guess... but we still need four more and what are the chances, let's be honest, he said and poured himself another pint of beer when he heard the woman say 27 as the third number. He spilled the beer as he was standing with the ticket in his hand and saw they also had that number on their ticket.
- Oh my god, we got three numbers. I can't believe this. At least one more and we win anyway. Not that much, but we win some money. Just one more number baby!
- Fourth number this evening is...and the woman made a long pause and then went on picking the fourth colored ball from the huge recipient with balls... number 13.
- Geez, we won! Both brothers were dancing with joy. How much do you think we won for four correct numbers!? asked Adi when Al hushed him just in time so they could hear the fifth number being called out by the same lady on TV.

- Number 23.
- I think I will faint. This can't be happening. We got five numbers? Adi, I am going to get drunk tonight. You might have to carry me home.
- No worries, said Al, I will drive you home. I haven't drunk at all. But let's hear the last number too first at least.
- And the last number for the draw this evening is...lucky number 7. This is all for today and see you all next week. Have a nice rest of the evening, the woman was saying but neither Tom nor Adi could hear her beyond the last number, number seven. They had guessed all six numbers!!!
- Oh my God, Al! We won?? All six numbers? The grand prize? Tom kept repeating as he still couldn't believe. Somebody just pinch me please. Ouch, what was that for? He asked Adi who had just smacked his face with a moderate blow.
- Well, you wanted somebody to pinch you... sorry.
- You nincompoop, I was just saying, wasn't expecting you to actually hit me. Lucky we won or I'd smack you back!
- I said I was sorry, geez! Next time make up your mind!
- Don't push it, Adi. I'm not that drunk!
- Hey guys, we won! Can you believe it? Al intervened before they jumped to one another's throats.
- Yes, meeting you was the best thing that happened so far. Thank you for buying the ticket and all... I could almost kiss you, said Tom who had calmed down by now.
- OK, you must really be drunk, said Al laughing. I'll take you both home.
- Thanks a bunch! Said Adi who was also grateful to him for everything.

Al took them home and he was sure they had given up their initial plans of robbing their boss on the following night. There was no need for that now. After they had just won the lottery they were wealthier than their boss. But they could use the money just as well as anybody else. And he needed money himself to buy materials for his ship. So why not them? But he promised himself he wouldn't interfere again with the lottery. That night he went to sleep extremely happy: he had helped the two brothers have a better life and had saved them from committing a robbery and ending up in jail eventually. And he had also won as the three of them were to split the grand prize. It had been a great day he thought before falling asleep.

## Chapter 8: Away

One month later Al's spaceship was looking a lot better. He had been carrying materials and working on repairing it. By the way things were looking he figured he might be able to repair it by the end of summer. He figured he needed 3 or four more months of daily or rather nightly work on it as he had his job during the day and he liked it. Although at first when he crashed on Terra he intended to interact as little as possible with the humans now he loved their company. He found humans funny and very interesting and witty.

Tom and Adi had finally bought the car of their dreams and gave up their other thoughts. But they didn't give up their jobs so Al could maintain the friendship with them as he really got to like the two. But not as much as to tell them that he was an alien. That was a secret he only told Delia and her parents about. They were the persons he trusted most in this world. He read their minds and knew that her parents also trusted him and liked him. Without him influencing them. It was what they felt. They used to invite him over for dinner every night and he loved to go. He liked to listen to them talk about their day and especially listen to Delia talk about her day as she was the only one who's mind he couldn't read. So it was always nice to listen to her as he never knew what she would say.

At the end of summer Al's spaceship was as good as new. All shiny and functional. He was 99% sure he had fixed it but he wanted to try it with Delia, wanted her to be there by his side when he would lift it off the ground. So the next evening after she finished work he bought her flowers as he had seen Marcel buy his wife flowers not long ago and although Al wasn't sure why, he saw that had brought so much happiness to her soul

that now he was hoping Delia would also be happy if he bought her flowers before telling her about the ship.

As he had heard Marcel's wife say and think that it was the gesture that mattered and not the price of the gift so he was hoping that Delia would also appreciate his purple hyacinth. It smelled so nice. He sat on a nearby bench waiting for her to finish her shift when he saw a pack of stray dogs looking for food in the dumpsters behind the restaurant. They were starving and were desperately looking for leftovers when a child about 10 years old with a ball in his right hand and a ham sandwich in his left hand passed by them. He saw the dogs and froze on the spot as the biggest of the dogs, the Alpha dog of the pack, started to snarl at him because he had food in his hand. Al immediately reacted as he knew the boy was in danger. He ran towards the boy with such a speed that neither the boy nor the dogs saw him before he was standing between them. The alpha dog attacked the boy but Al was faster and with a swift move he pushed the dog aside just a moment before he could bite the boy's hand. That would have left an ugly scar if not worse. So Al pushed him so hard that the dog remained on the ground while the pack pricked their ears and turned their attention to Al and the alpha dog which was whining on the ground. The boy closed his eyes and just froze like that in fear and expecting the attack. Al focused on the alpha dog and made him call back the other dogs which were going to leave them alone anyway when they saw their leader on the ground. They were too feeble and undernourished for an attack against an adult. Would have ripped the boy to pieces though if it hadn't been for Al. The alpha dog slowly got on his feet and crawled after the pack not wanting the boy's food anymore and glad he had escaped from the situation.

When everything was over Al touched the boy gently on his shoulder.

- You can open your eyes now, you are safe.
- Thank you, said the boy, but where are the dogs? I was sure the big brown one was going to bite me.
- Uh, I guess dinner plans changed and they left to look for food elsewhere, answered Al to lighten the mood a little as he felt the boy was still trembling with fright.
- Thank you sir, the boy answered feeling better already as the danger was gone. Sorry for your flowers though...

Only then Al noticed that the flowers he meant to give Delia were all torn as he had fought the dog with them in his hands. It was too late to buy her other flowers as she would be finishing her shift any minute so he thought he should probably just throw them away. But that moment there she was, Delia was standing in front of him. He tried to hide the torn flowers at back in one hand and he took her hand with his other hand.

- Hi, what do you have there? She asked him wondering why he was holding his left hand at his back. Then as he was about to throw the flowers somewhere behind him the child he had just saved and who was still standing there spoke:
- The nice Mister brought you flowers, miss... but they don't look too good now. I bet they looked better before he fought off the dogs.
- Huh? What flowers? What dogs? Delia asked. And who are you, kid?
- The dogs that were about to eat me, the child went on exaggerating everything. He saved me. But guess he couldn't save the flowers too.
- These were for you, Al finally said as he realized it was too late to throw them now. And he gave her the torn hyacinth. The boy is right, the flowers were looking great 10 minutes ago...
- Thank you, Delia said and smiled. What happened?

Al took her hand and they went back to his car where he had to tell her about the stray dogs. When she had something on her mind he knew she wouldn't let go until she found out what she wanted. She had a strong will or maybe she was just stubborn. Either way it was better to tell her than to make her think that things were worse than they really were.

- So nice of you to bring me flowers, she said while they were in the car, but what's the occasion?
- I think I have finally repaired my spaceship. We're going to check it when we get there. How's this for an occasion? And he smiled broadly as he knew she would be just as excited as he was.
- Oh my God, I can't believe this!
- You had better believe it! Or rather wait till we get there and see.
- I hope it works! She said so thrilled that he thought that maybe she was happier than himself with fixing the ship.

Two hours later they were standing in front of the control panel.



- Ready, Delia? If it works we will just take it on a tour above your country. It is late already and your parents will be expecting us for dinner soon. By the way, do you know a place closer to home where I could land this after we give it a ride? So we won't have to come back on top of the mountain every time we want to use it.
- I know the perfect place. There is an old mine not far from town. It hasn't been used in ages and nobody ever goes there. It was closed long time ago when the ground gave in and some miners were badly injured. I saw it on TV. It is off limits, no one is allowed to go there anymore. It is big enough to hide your spaceship if you can check the place first and see if it is not too dangerous and can hold the ship. But I think it should be OK. I think they closed down the mine for political reasons. A big company bought the land to build an airport there and the mine was in their way. So in my opinion they payed the miners to frame everything and close down the mine.
- Thank you Delia, said Al realizing how smart she was besides being beautiful. Perfect! Here goes nothing then, he said and started pushing some buttons and pulling some handles. Then it happened: the ship began to make a low buzzing sound and off it was! He had really fixed the ship! They were flying above the Carpathians.
- You might want to fasten your seat belt, Al advised her. Here, let me help you. And he fastened it for her. Then he pushed another button and they were flying so fast that she couldn't see anything out the small window in front of them. Then 10 minutes later she felt the ship landing.
- Where are we?
- Wait till we get outside. You'll know, he answered smiling with warmth.
- Oh, sounds interesting... .she said not knowing what to expect. Then he opened the door and they were standing in front of the great pyramid of Giza, the oldest and largest Egyptian pyramid which he told her had been built by his ancestors very long time ago.
- Wow please tell me I'm not dreaming, Delia whispered overwhelmed with emotions and joy. Is this Egypt? The great pyramid of Giza? But how? We were on top of the Carpathians only about 10 minutes ago. And you said we'd only fly a bit above Romania and now we are in Egypt.

- Yeah, that was 10 minutes ago. No worries, we can visit the pyramid and still be in time for dinner at your parents' house as it will only take another 10 minutes to get back.
- The three pyramids... the aliens built them? Your ancestors? Why?
- They built the pyramids to serve them as bases on Terra whenever they had long journeys ahead and they needed to restock. They refilled their water and food supplies and then they moved on to wherever they needed to go in the first place. Humans were really primitive and savage beings back then so my ancestors were safe inside the pyramids.
- Look at all the stars on the sky! They are so bright here in Egypt!
- Yes, especially as there are no others lights around us.
- Thank you for such a wonderful night, AI! You are amazing!
- You are the amazing one! You are so brave and kind and .... Have I told you how much I love you?
- Only a thousand times! She laughed.
- OK, then I will tell you again... and again ...till my last breath. I love you!

They kissed under the starlit sky at the foot of the great pyramid of Giza. She knew he was the one for her just as he knew it the moment he first saw her that she was his soul mate.

- I'm starving, let's get back OK? She asked although she wished they could stay like that and there forever.
- OK. You parents are probably expecting us just as we speak.

35 minutes later they were already at the dinner table. They left the spaceship in the mine Delia had told him about and then they took a cab home.

At dinner after the usual conversation about their day, AI almost choked with the food when he heard her say:

- Mom, dad, what would you say if I were to go on a vacation with AI?
- Uh, a vacation? Asked her father. Where would you like to go?
- Nowhere fancy, Delia answered chuckling. I am not asking you for money to go to the Black Sea or anything, I want to go to Valles.
- Valles? Asked her mother as AI had just told them he had come from a far away planet but hadn't told them the name. Sounds fancy to me. Where is that? Spain?

- No, it's Al's home planet. Now Delia was hardly breathing and waiting for her parents to say something, anything. Instead, her mother swooned, her father turned red and Al himself turned pale.
- Mom, are you ok? And Delia rushed to her mother's side. Her mother slowly came back to her senses.
- My child, forgive me, she could finally find the strength to utter, you've grown so fast. Leaving us already?
- Oh leave her alone, came her father's voice to everyone's surprise. His cheeks had meanwhile come back to their usual color. Weren't you the one who not too long ago was bugging her about finding a boyfriend and stuff? Make up your mind, woman. She has found her prince charming or rather charming alien. I'm sure they'll come back, right darling? And he kissed his daughter's forehead.
- Of course, Al took the lead now as he saw that Marcel was on their side and everything had calmed down by now. I promise I will take care of her with my life and treasure her for as long as I live!
- Whatever makes her happy makes us happy, her Mom could barely say. If this is what you really want...
- It is! There was determination in her voice. Don't you see? I will get to see other planets and travel with Al wherever he goes. If I stayed here I would just work at the restaurant for a lousy pay and wouldn't even afford a holiday. So yes this is definitely what I want! Don't cry Mom, we'll visit whenever we are in the neighborhood.
- Whatever that means... her Mom grumbled to herself but Al heard her.
- I promise we will visit at least once a year every year. How is that?
- Sounds ok I guess... she answered with a heavy burden on her heart. She wanted her daughter to get married but closer to them so they could visit anytime they felt like it. Then you visit every Christmas, ok?
- Ok Mom, I love you. And Delia kissed her Mom's wrinkled cheeks. Every Christmas, that's a promise!

After dinner they packed lightly, bid Delia's parents farewell and were off towards Valles and a new life for both of them living as a couple.

PS: Might be thinking of a sequel if this one is read. Cheers

