

A large yellow planet with a ring system and two moons in space. The planet is the central focus, with a bright yellow ring system. Two smaller, brownish moons are visible, one in the upper left and one in the lower right. The background is a dark space filled with stars.

# **Al The Friendly Alien**

**Alina Udrea**

**Vol II**

# AI, the friendly alien

## Volume 2

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Notes: This sequel follows our heroes through their adventures in space and beyond. I hope the reader will find it interesting enough to read it to the end.

I want to thank every who reads it and who has read my other ebooks, too. Also I want to thank my mother who although can't speak English, has patiently listened to me while reading (translating) my first volume for her. She said she liked it and I prefer believing her 😊 so I will translate this for her too. But this book is dedicated to my wonderful 4 year old daughter, Delia, whom I love more than myself. I hope that when she grows up she'll read my books for herself and she'll like them. I hope she'll be proud and not embarrassed. I am not a writer.... But I like to read and... well, I like to write. I think it is an easy and nice read all in all. But that's my opinion.

I'd also like to dedicate this to my husband whom I love, although to tell the truth, he doesn't like to read. In general. So I don't think he has something against my books, it is just how things are.

And last but not least, I will dedicate it to my friends whom I mentioned in my first volume, too : Mr. Scar, his wonderful wife Miihah, Harry, Bobby, Bratty, Mean, Neon, Alien, Sneaky, Killer, Hizzy, Scholar, Noah, my newest friend, Kookoo, and the rest of the gang. Love you all!!

Enjoy 😊

# AI, the friendly alien

By Alina Udrea

VOL. II

## Chapter 1: A bumpy ride

- I can't believe we are in outer space... said Delia a bit wistful.
- You have nothing to worry about, my love, said AI and kissed her passionately trying to take away all her worries. But you might want to fasten your seat belt at least till we get through the Van Allen radiation belts.
- Van... what? She asked a bit worried already.
- Van Allen radiation belts. Sounds nastier than it really is as long as the ship's protective shield is activated. And it is. Was the first thing I fixed.
- What is that AI? The Van Allen belt?
- It's a zone of particles charged with energy coming from solar winds or cosmic rays swirling around Earth due to the planet's magnetic field which keeps them there.
- Ugh... OK never mind... sounds complicated.
- I don't want you to panic but the ship is detecting something beyond the belt. I think it is another ship. And AI pushed some buttons and a large screen appeared in front of them with a blurry image of something which resembled the shape of a long and sharp plane but without the wings.
- What is that, AI?
- The radiation belt might be causing some malfunctioning within the operating system. But that might be a Kersna scout ship...We will know for sure once we go past the Van Allen belt. If I am right then we have to be prepared for anything. They are the most dangerous race in the galaxy. But they never ventured this far up to now. Not that I know of anyway.
- Oh my God! Said Delia who was really scared by now. As if the radiation thing wasn't enough now I have to worry about another alien race?

- Even if it is a Kersna spacecraft, it is just a scout ship by the size and shape of it. We should be able to see it clearly in a few minutes though.
- Al, doesn't your ship have a camouflage option or something?
- Yes, he answered amazed at her quick thinking. It has... but not sure it is still functional. It wasn't a priority to make sure it was fixed before we left as I wasn't expecting any hostile company before we could reach my home planet. Never thought the Kersna would venture in this part of the galaxy.
- The Kersna... said Delia pensive. What are they like? So I can make an impression on what we are up against.
- Well, he finally answered thinking that maybe she was right and it didn't hurt if she had some information about the possible danger, they are very smart but rather fragile. Their strength is their brains. They have hi-tech weapons but are feeble and easily to defeat when it comes to close combat. I think even you without any training could defeat one or two if they were unarmed.
- Oh, not sure if this should make me feel any better, she said with a soft wrinkle on her smooth forehead, a wrinkle which wasn't there before.
- OK, here goes nothing, said Al and he pushed a tiny green button which was on top of a handle connected to his commanding chair. I have just activated the camouflage for the ship. Hope it still works. Then looking at Delia, he added:
  - You don't have to hold your breath you know...
  - Oh, didn't even realize I was doing that!

Meanwhile their ship got out of the belt and was just behind the other ship. Suddenly the image on their front screen became clear and they could see it: a rather small scout ship which Al immediately recognized as belonging to the most hostile race in the galaxy, the Kersna. But as they didn't perceive any movement from it, Al assumed that the camouflage was working and that they were practically invisible to them. But Al understood in a moment what this really meant: this scout ship had discovered Earth, Delia's home planet. And this unfortunately also meant something else: everybody she cared about and loved and left behind on Earth was in

danger. As soon as the scout ship would return to the mother ship with the report about finding the blue planet with all its resources, especially water, Earth's fate was doomed. He couldn't let that happen. Even if he hadn't met his love there he still couldn't stand by while an innocent planet would be wiped away by these creatures. And he got to love Delia's parents and thought that humanity deserved a chance to live even if things weren't perfect on the blue planet. Humans had potential to become better and wiser. They were a relatively new race in comparison to his race or the Kersna who were the oldest race in the Milky Way at least.

So basically he figured what he had to do: destroy the scout ship and kill the Kersna inside. But his ship was a cargo ship and didn't have sophisticated weapons on it. His ship just had a rudimentary laser cannon but that would have to do. But for that he knew he had just one chance, one shot as it would deplete almost all the ship's energy. So he would have to wait until the last moment before he would push the fire button, he would have to wait for the perfect moment when the laser would be fully charged but also be careful not to be overcharged which could blow up his own ship and kill Delia and himself....

These Kersna had to go even if it was the last thing he did. He was determined to save Earth even if maybe he would only buy time for the small blue planet until the Kersna would send another scout ship back in this part of the galaxy. But maybe, just maybe, time was all the blue planet needed.

- Delia darling, said Al in a tense voice, these Kersna will have to die. If we don't kill them, they will bring more Kersna here and they will attack and destroy Terra and everyone you love. You understand?
- Yeah, she answered calm but determined. We can't let that happen, Al. My parents are there. I would do anything for them.
- Listen, my ship is a cargo ship. It only has a laser cannon. We will have to make it count. We only have one shot. If we don't destroy their ship in one shot then I am afraid they will retaliate. And things could get ugly.
- Oh, then make them feel it, Al! You can't let them destroy my home world. Think of my mom and dad, she said and small tears rolled down her cheeks.

I don't like the thought of killing other creatures but if what you say is true, then they deserve what's coming. Save my parents, save my world!

- OK, you know I will do everything I can. I have a clear shot in 55 seconds. Let's hope it will be enough! And Al waited for the remaining seconds to pass so he could push the fire button. 55 seconds later a powerful laser beam was shot from his laser cannon towards the enemy ship... the Kersna ship was heavily damaged but not destroyed.
- Delia, I feel two presences on board our ship. And I am not talking about us, said Al breathing heavily with emotion and fear, not for himself, but for her. He couldn't live without her.
- What do you mean? Asked Delia afraid of his answer as she could already guess what his answer would be.
- Two Kersna from the scout ship have fled their ship which they know will blow up in a matter of minutes and are aboard our ship.
- But how?
- There is only one possible answer: they must have hacked my ship's system and used our teleportation frequency. This means they are below deck, just below us. Here, he said, take this. And he gave her his small laser gun. All you have to do is aim and shoot. Press this button in order to shoot. I hope it won't come to that but I want you to have my gun just in case.
- What about you?
- I will go hunt them down. This is my ship... our ship since I've met you. But in case I can't stop them and they make their way here I want you to have something to defend yourself.
- And how are you going to kill them if you gave me your weapon? She asked sobbing softly concerned for him as well as her.
- With my charms! He said and smiled at her.
- Oh, do you think this is the time for jokes? But he had done it, had managed to put a faint smile on her face.
- I want you to hide behind this fake wall. It is in fact a door leading to a small cabinet. It was my personal touch to the ship... I built it for emergencies but never had to use it so far. Hope it does the job and keep you safe. And



remember, you have the laser gun. Aim and shoot, OK? And whatever you do, don't get out until I come to you. Then he added in a very low voice: if I don't come back let's hope they won't find you. Then they would probably try to contact their mother ship and abandon our ship. You'd have to wait there until you'd probably be tracked down by Nick, my boss. You'll be OK.

- No, we'll be OK. I'd rather come with you and try to help you than stay hidden in there. If... something happens to you then I don't want to live either. So we'd better kill these two Kersna and problem solved.
- You make it sound so easy, he said and caressed her hair. Are you sure?
- Yes, positive. When I agreed to come with you I knew there were risks but I accepted them. So wherever you go I go. And I think the gun is of more use in your hands than in mine. And she gave him back the laser gun.
- OK, then stay behind me and do as I say. And he found her to be brave as well as strikingly beautiful. He loved her.

He took the lead and carefully opened the door exiting the cockpit. He focused his mind to find out where exactly the two Kersna scouts were on his ship. He saw them with his mind, slowly climbing the stairs that lead to them. They were armed and dangerous as long as they had their weapons on them.

Meanwhile fear mixed with a strong will to live took over Delia's entire being. She could feel all her senses stronger than ever. Her sight and hearing were enhanced to the maximum. She was focusing so hard to see the Kersna that her eyes began to sting her. She heard some muffled sounds coming from below and she knew they were coming up the stairs towards them. Then she heard Al whisper to wait and not make another move as he also knew the Kersna were close. They hid behind the wall and waited for the Kersna's next move. The Kersna began to fire their guns and they had to retreat behind a massive door leading to a large corridor that lead back to the cockpit.

Delia covered her eyes and for a split second she saw the two Kersna in all their might behind the massive iron door. How could she see them with her eyes closed? She didn't know and she didn't care. All her thoughts were focused on getting out of this alive. Her life couldn't end now, especially as she had found the

love of her life and they were going to travel through the Milky Way and visit other planets and learn new things. So no way was she going to give up now. The two Kersna standing in their way had to go. She wished them dead so bad. She opened her eyes and without a trace of fear in her body or mind she passed by Al who froze at seeing her go straight for the door and the two Kersna. She saw them standing right in front of her and raising their guns to shoot her. Then it happened: she raised her bare hands towards them and the Kersna dropped their guns and started floating a few centimeters above the floor. Then she clapped her hands violently and the moment her hands touched, the two Kersna smashed their heads and fell dead to the ground. Then Delia too collapsed but Al was there to catch her before she hit the ground.

## Chapter 2: Latent powers

Al had witnessed what happened but he still couldn't believe what he had just seen. What had just happened? Delia had just killed the two Kersna with the power of her mind... no wonder he couldn't read her mind. It seemed she was more powerful than him. But how? She was just a human, right? Or was she?

She was sound asleep now on a couch in his improvised bedroom in a small room of the ship. She had insisted on taking a few pieces of furniture along on the ship for their travels to remind her of her home. So now she was resting on her sofa. She seemed to be in a deep sleep. She probably needed the rest as this must have been the first time she unleashed her latent powers. Surely she herself hadn't been aware she had them until faced with the imminent danger from the two Kersna. That must have triggered them.

Al was watching her sleep and still wondering what all that implied when she slowly opened her eyes. First thing she said was to ask for a glass of water in the calmest voice possible as if nothing unusual had happened.

- Sure, here you go, Al said handing her a glass of water. Do you remember what happened earlier? But instead of an answer he received a question.
- Are the Kersna dead? Are we safe?
- Yes, both dead. You killed them. Do you remember? He asked again.
- All I remember, she finally answered, is that I didn't want us to die. We couldn't have died. That couldn't have been the end of our journeys when we had just started our journey. Anger and frustration took over me and I remember more than anything that I wanted us to live and explore the galaxy. I wanted to see all that you promised. I think I could have killed an entire Kersna army if that was what it took to save us and go on with our journey. But no... no idea what really happened and how I managed to do what I did. This has never happened before. But then again this, our journey through space and meeting you, my love, has never happened before either so I guess you never know what you can do until you have to do it.
- That was awesome what you did! But it was weird too... as I haven't seen any other humans do that! And he laughed more relaxed now.
- Well I am a human and have lived my entire life among humans but have never seen anyone do what I did. This is really strange. How can you explain this, Al?
- Hmm, he said after a short pause, I think that all humans have these abilities when they are born. They are all born with them but they fade

away as they grow old. And probably in life threatening situations some humans can trigger these abilities to save themselves. This is my explanation. I too have lived among humans for almost a year and studied your race during this time. Humans' brain waves are strong and they are smart but as I said, most of them lose their inborn abilities with age. It's the only explanation I can find. And probably a few others, smarter than the average, can develop these abilities. Maybe we really are more alike than I would have thought. And he leaned over and kissed her.

- I hope our lives won't be in danger or at least not any time soon because that display of abilities as you called them has left me exhausted in a way I never thought was possible.
- No reasons to worry, my love. I am sure that the Kersna won't be sending other scout ships in this part of the galaxy any time soon. Their scout ship is destroyed and before the two Kersna died I read their last thoughts. Their final thoughts were that they had just sent a report to the mother ship that all was dead in this part of the galaxy. After having delivered the message they found Terra and were about to send another message when we attacked them. So we killed them just in time or they would have sent the message and Terra's fate would have been doomed.
- So we were lucky to find them when we did. Terra was lucky, she added thinking of her parents. What did you do with their corpses?
- I dumped them into space. Two specks in the vastness of the cosmos. You don't have to worry about them anymore. And by the way, thanks for saving us!
- Ha-ha, she laughed. If I hadn't done it, you would have probably killed them. But we were in danger, you were in danger, ... I just acted the way I did. I had to make sure they wouldn't hurt you... like I told you, all I could think about was seeing your planet and many more with you by my side. For that to come true, the Kersna had to go. And I guess they did go... into space that is.
- Before going to Valles we will have to go to another planet first, to Obita and see my employer, Nick. I will have to deliver the cargo of water that we took from Earth. As for the other stuff I was supposed to deliver... it was all

lost when I crashed to Earth. But he should be content with the water as I will give him three times more than I was supposed to in order to compensate for the other stuff that I lost. So everything should be OK. After that we can visit Valles, my home.

- Nice, sounds very interesting, Delia said as it really was exciting for her. Everything was new to her and thrilling. Even the encounter with the Kersna.
- So you don't mind our little detour? Al asked to make sure she was OK with it.
- Not at all. Why would I mind? I am in no rush to get anywhere in particular. I just want to explore space with you wherever you will take me. Any place is just as good. So how is this employer of yours?, she asked curious to find out more about Nick. Does he look like us or more like the Kersna or something entirely different?
- Well, Al said after thinking a bit about his answer, Nick is different. He has four arms, two on each side of his body. His two legs have claws instead of nails the way we have. He is a very powerful being. Besides that, he looks pretty normal.
- Oh, wow. Four arms, she repeated. Obita should be interesting. Are all the inhabitants like that?
- No, there are more races than one. And they are all different. But you will see for yourself when we get there. Rest now, he said and placed a soft kiss on her forehead. We should get there by the time you wake up.
- OK Al. I can hardly wait to get there, she said and then she fell back asleep.

## Chapter 3: Obita

On the dawn of the next morning Delia and Al arrived on Obita, Nick's home planet. Before leaving their cargo ship, Al gave Delia a tiny device to put in her ear. It was a translation device. Al had added Delia's language to it too. It mainly translated everything that was being said into the language desired by the user. So basically with that device in her ear she could understand what was being spoken around her by the alien races. Al had also used one such device but now he kept it in a drawer on his ship as in time he had learnt the languages of the main races he was in contact with for business so he didn't really need it anymore. But as for Delia, it was a must have.

Unlike Al's planet, Obita was a luxuriant planet with lots of vegetation. It looked very wild with very high trees and tall plants of all sorts and all colors. They didn't need breathing masks on Obita. Quite the contrary: the air was extremely clean due to the large variety of plants and trees. It was the cleanest air Delia had ever breathed although she came from a mountainous area where the air was cleaner than in the rest of the zones anyway. But the air on Obita was not only clean but also full of flowery smells and scents from all the vegetation and flowers and blossomed trees. It was magnificent although rather wild.

Obita was a very small planet. It was as small as Earth's moon or maybe a little smaller. It was like a small paradise with all that vegetation. But exactly because of all that vegetation there were also many types of insects and animals of all sorts and sizes living there among the leaves, trees and thick blades of grass.

And not all those insects or animals were friendly so to say. Some of them, although tiny, were quite deadly.

Delia was awe struck by the beauty and the wilderness of this place. She was happy and grateful beyond words for having been given the opportunity to see it and to have Al by her side. She had to pinch herself to make sure it wasn't a dream. She couldn't believe that only days ago she was a waitress at the local restaurant. And now she was here on this remote planet with an alien by her side, her future husband. She was in love for the first time. And for the only time as she knew she would spend the rest of her life with him. Her life had turned from ordinary and boring to exciting and thrilling. Every day was a day of wonders for her and a day to be grateful for what she had been given by God.

They had to make their way through the tall grass and plants towards Nick's headquarters. Al had to use his laser gun a few times to cut away the grass and bushes which were so tall that they could hardly advance otherwise. The vegetation was teeming with life. Hardly had Delia thought of all the insects she could see everywhere when she felt something small and hairy crawl on her arm. She looked and saw something black and with a shiny red dot as its head. It had many tiny legs, she didn't count them, and it was hairy and crawling towards her shoulder. She panicked and gave a loud shriek.

- Don't move, she heard Al's voice. But his voice seemed to be coming from so far away even though somewhere in the back of her mind she knew that in fact Al was right by her side.
- Huh? She barely managed to answer when it all went black, as black as the back of the insect crawling on her arm.

Nick's headquarters was a square building of glass and steel and it almost looked like a building from Earth, just a little different in design. Nick was the owner of the building. He owned the trading business and had a few other employees besides Al. It was a two storey building with his office on the upper storey. On the first floor there was something like a tavern where aliens of all races gathered to do business and have a drink and something to eat. Nick himself

did business with many of his customers besides selling them food and water; which by the way, was more expensive than the food.

Nick was at his desk in his office when suddenly the door flung open and Al entered with a young beautiful woman in his arms. She didn't seem well.

- Look what the cat dragged in! Said Nick while looking at the woman in Al's arms. She seemed sound asleep. Come take a seat. Who is this young beauty and what's wrong with her?
- She is my betrothed. She was stung by a black grass spider. She is poisoned and needs help fast. Can you please help her?
- Lore-Dana! Come here baby! Al heard Nick say although he had no idea who he was talking to. Had he been gone for that long that Nick had finally met a woman? He had been a loner all his life. He figured he would find out in a moment.

A slender medium dark haired woman appeared from behind a door on the left of his office. She was quite beautiful. She had dark eyes and a small oval face. She was short and seemed rather skinny than slender. But she was beautiful by any standards. Then when she turned, Al saw something out of the ordinary: she had a pair of wings! He had never seen such a creature before. This reminded him that the Universe was humongous and that there were a lot of mysteries to be discovered.

- Yes Nick, she said in a sweet melodious voice and then she kissed him. They were an odd pair to look at: he was a muscular creature with four huge arms while she was so tiny and frail. But her wings were magnificent! She could fly!
- This is my employee and also an old friend of mine, Nick added, and it seems his future wife needs your healing knowledge. It appears she was stung by the most poisonous spider around, the black one! Help her quick or he might lose her!
- Put her down there, Lore-Dana almost whispered and she pointed towards a comfy sofa in the far corner of the office. I'll be right back! And saying that she spread her transparent wings and flew through an opening in the wall which back on Earth would have been a window. But here it was just that: a plain opening in the wall, no window whatsoever. Though there



were windows on the first floor so Al figured here the openings were left without glass on purpose for Lore-Dana to be able to fly in or out whenever she felt like it.

- Where did she go? Asked Al as she had left so fast; although he had tried reading her mind the moment he saw her, he couldn't. The second person whose mind he couldn't read. It was beginning to annoy him, make him feel less... gifted.
- I don't know, answered Nick, but I am sure she'll be back to save your fiancé. What's the name of this beautiful angel?
- Her name is Delia. She is from Terra. She is my soul mate. I can't lose her, Nick.
- You won't, calm down. I am sure... but he couldn't finish his sentence as Lore-Dana flew back inside through the same opening she had flown out a few minutes earlier. See? Told you. And Nick had a smile on the corner of his lips. He was so proud of his future wife as he was sure she would save poor Delia.

Meanwhile Lore-Dana approached Delia with a dark purple flower in her tiny hands. The flower was fading fast. It was obvious it had just been picked up but it was already withering away.

- Ugh... said Al with irritation in his voice, are you kidding? She is passed out and you brought her a flower? Excuse me, he went on nervously because he felt helpless and didn't know what to do, but I don't think she can smell it right now...
- Hush, Lore-Dana said and put her index finger on Al's lips to make him shut up. Then she went straight to Delia and squeezed the flower on her lips until a tiny droplet of juice fell from it on Delia's lips. Delia instinctively licked it and slowly the color returned to her cheeks. Then she opened her eyes and first thing she saw was Lore-Dana looking down at her. Then she saw her wings.
- Oh... Delia finally said. I died. So this is heaven? She addressed Lore-Dana thinking that she was an angel because she saw her wings. What are you doing here, Al? Did you also die?

- Oh, thank you both so much for saving my love, Al addressed both Nick and Lore-Dana with gratitude in his eyes.
- Saving? Asked Delia confused.
- You aren't dead, silly! He said and took her in his arms and kissed her till she could hardly breathe. Welcome back! Although I can understand your reaction at seeing Lore-Dana. I haven't seen such a creature before, either. You were stung by that spider that crawled on your arm earlier and she saved you.
- Oh, and I thought I was in heaven and that she was an angel! Now if I think about it, said Delia in a playful tone, she looks like a fairy! Thank you for saving my life!
- I don't know what an angel or a fairy is but you are welcome, answered Lore-Dana bowing gracefully.
- Eh, never mind... thank you again, Delia said slowly getting up from the sofa. You must be Nick, Al has told me so much about you!
- Yes, Nick answered without taking his eyes off Lore-Dana, and this here is my future wife. Her name is Lore-Dana and we will be married by the end of the month. Nice to meet you. Now if you girls want to excuse us, Nick added on a more serious note, Al and I have some business to discuss. Follow me, Al! And Al winked at Delia meaning that everything was alright and then he followed Nick to his office.

Back at Nick's desk, Nick and Al were already discussing business.

- So what happened? Nick asked him after they both took a seat at Nick's desk. Where have you been all this time? And where is my cargo? You were supposed to get here so long ago that I am not even sure how long it's been.
- It's a long story, Al answered calmly as he read Nick's mind and knew that Nick wasn't upset for his cargo anymore. He was too much in love with Lore-Dana, the beautiful winged little creature.
- Well, could you sum it up a bit at least? Nick asked again.

- Yeah, of course. I crashed on one of the forbidden planets due to a malfunction in one of the engines and most of your cargo was lost. Even water... he said on purpose to see Nick's face. But then he quickly added: but I have bought you three times more water than I was supposed to in order to make up for the other stuff. Fresh water from Earth. So are we even?
- Are you kidding? And he slapped Al in a friendly manner on his back with one of his four hands. Three times more water? Of course we are OK then. Frankly speaking, Nick added more for himself, I thought all was lost. So three times more water is a very good deal. So tell me more about your plans, about this Earth and about her, he said looking back at Delia who was chatting with Lore-Dana.
- They seem to get along well, started Al who was glad at seeing Delia get along so well with Lore-Dana. You know that Valentinians only fall in love once in their lifetime. Well, I have fallen in love with her. She is my soul mate.
- No wonder, said Nick smiling slyly. She is a beauty to behold! But weren't you supposed to fall in love with one of your own kind if my knowledge about your race is not wrong?
- I thought so too. But God works in mysterious ways, said Al as Delia had introduced God to him and Al, although he had never heard of God before, liked and believed what Delia said. In the time they spent together on Earth, Delia had turned Al into a believer. He really believed that a supreme being, no matter what the name of that being was, was responsible for everything. Delia had told him that there were more than one religion on Earth and that other religions called God in different ways, Allah and so on. But it was the same one and only God. And as God had created heaven and Earth and humans and every living thing on Earth, animals and vegetation, he had also created the aliens and their planets. God's might is limitless.
- Huh? Asked Nick puzzled. Who is God?
- Also a long story but you can ask Delia and she will gladly tell you more about him.

- I will. If God is responsible for your meeting her, then he must be a cool guy!
- Ha-ha! You have no idea! Said Al laughing. But I'll let Delia tell you more about him. Who knows, maybe you'll like him too.

Later that evening Al and Delia bid Nick and his future wife farewell and returned to their ship. Their next destination was Al's home planet this time, Valles.

## Chapter 4: Valles

- I want us to get married on Christmas, said Delia, when we visit my parents. Is that OK? Or did you want to get married on Valles?
- No, it is fine. As I said, I have no family left. So your family is my family as well. We will marry this Christmas, he said kissing her softly.
- My parents will be delighted! How long till we get to Valles? I can hardly wait to see where you grew up!

- We should be there in less than two days. But you might be disappointed... I told you that my planet is a sandy planet. Doesn't compare to Earth or Obita...
- It doesn't matter, she uttered in a whisper, thinking of what he said. I am sure I will like it! There must be interesting things there, too.
- Guess you will find out in two days. The air is hotter there and the heat during the day can be unbearable sometimes. But when it is like that we stay indoors till evening. We can go for strolls in the evenings when the air is cool enough or we can go at the local tavern for a drink. Not as fancy as the restaurant where you used to work but good enough I assume. And yes, you might like the evening strolls as Valles has two moons orbiting around it. They are called the Twins as they are equal in size and almost at the same distance from Valles. That should be interesting.
- See? She exclaimed clearly delighted. I knew there would be something nice there! I can find something good or nice anywhere, just maybe sometimes I have to look harder. Just as the saying goes: beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It depends on how you choose to see things.
- Oh, have I told you that you are so amazing? The way you see things... oh I have been cruising among the stars all alone these years and now that I have you with me I realize how lonely I have been! It is so great to have someone to talk to, especially if that someone is as smart and beautiful as you!
- That was so sweet of you! And Delia hugged him in a big bear hug. Same goes for me you know... there weren't many people back home with whom I could have such nice chats or tell them that I believed that aliens were more than just fiction. If I had told the people in my small town that I believed that aliens were living on other planets they would have probably taken me for a lunatic! But I always knew it in my heart that the Universe is too big for our planet to be the only one with life on it. I just couldn't prove it. Now I could prove it, I got pictures from Obita on my new phone, the one pa bought for me before we left. But now I don't care about proving it to anyone. I just took those pictures to remind me of everything I saw there. Will take pictures from every place we shall visit! You have just made my

life so much more exciting and beautiful than if I had stayed in my native town. You have turned my course of life from ordinary to extraordinary! Thank you!

- Eh, I love you too! Al said with a tear of joy in the corner of his eye.

2 days later they were landing on Valles. It was during the day and the moment the door of the small cargo ship opened for them to get out, a wave of heat rushed over them making breathing the hot air something almost impossible. And to make things worse, a powerful gust of wind blew sand in their eyes.

- So how do you like Valles so far? Asked Al jokingly.
- Oh, we just got here, she barely answered because of the wind and dust which was trying to get into her mouth. I hope we get to shelter soon!
- Yes, just a few more meters. The buildings on Valles are scattered among the sand dunes and aren't very tall. But they are vast.
- Wow, she said looking up, so these must be your planes or cars or whatever. She said at seeing a rather small vehicle flying at low altitude, just a little above their heads.
- Yes, answered Al, I told you about them, remember?
- Yeah, when I asked you if you had cars on your planet. This is so cool. I wonder how they can fly with this wind.
- They might be small but are very powerful. Were built for the weather conditions on Valles. Come, this is it. And he opened a small iron door leading the way in what was the local tavern. He kept the door open for her to enter first and then he followed her, quickly closing the door behind them.
- Oh, did something die in here? Asked Delia when the reek coming from some of the aliens reached her nose.
- Ha-ha, you are so funny! Of course not, silly! But some of the other races don't like to waste water at all, not even to wash themselves. And so ...let's just say they don't smell of roses.

- Oh gosh, that is so gross! And faked a faint and rolled her eyes. Ok, not going to complain. And not going to judge either. Just my opinion that they should get a bath. The air in here is so stuffed that I am not sure if it is not worse than outside in the scorching heat. At least outside it didn't stink...
- You'll get used to it, said Al trying to calm her. And they are good customers and honest fellas. Take a seat at this table, I'll be right back with something for you. And he pulled a chair in a very chivalrous manner for her.
- Are you sure? I mean look at how they are watching me...
- Nah, they are just curious. But most of them are harmless. And I'll be back in a jiffy.
- OK... but her voice was so faint that it was hardly audible. She started to study the aliens in the room. Most of them looked like Al, same features of the face and same height. But the room was poorly lit and she couldn't distinguish the aliens in the far corners of the large tavern. Good thing that she had the translation device from Al so at least she would understand them if any got too close before Al would return. But hardly had she thought that when Al was back with two transparent glasses of something greenish and thick with a straw in it. He put one glass in front of her and took the other for himself.
- Ugh... she said after a few minutes of examining the glass containing the greenish liquid. I think I will pass this time.
- Suit yourself, but you won't know what you're missing out on. Try it. Trust me, it tastes better than it looks. And not only that, but it is very healthy for the body and also relaxes the mind. It is made of a local plant. It is a type of cactus. I saw some cactuses at your parents' place. It is juicy and healthy. Good for thirst as well as hunger. It is our planet's specialty.
- Oh, in that case I think I could have a taste... she said and carefully dipped the tip of her lips in the liquid. It tasted bitter sweet. It was quite good and tasty. So she decided to have more of it. Slowly she drank it all and it was just as Al had told her, she wasn't thirsty anymore or hungry. And she felt good.
- So, he asked curious, what do you think? Was it good?
- It was great! Thank you!

- I knew you'd like it. We also have water if you want. I kept some loads of fresh water for ourselves.
- Good thinking! But now I am tired. Where do you live? I want to get to your place and have some rest.
- About that... it is a little complicated... he said stuttering a bit. You see, here on Valles all bachelors and spinsters live in a common building. One for men and another for women. We don't own a place of our own until we get married. And when we have kids, the kids live with the parents until their fourteenth anniversary and then they go and live with the rest of the bachelors. In some cases if the children express their wish to live with their parents, then they are allowed to. But they usually live on their own, take a job and look for their soul mate. You know, Valentinians don't need to own a place until they get married because they spend most of their life away with their jobs and only come back here from time to time. But I guess we should be allowed to own a place if we choose too, married or not.
- Wow, this is too much! First of all, I'd rather sleep back on the ship than with a bunch of she aliens while you go sleep in a room full of other bachelors. As we aren't married yet... and second, when we have a child, he or she will live with us for as long as he or she will want. I will not have him or her taken away and put to live among strangers as you just described.
- Oh, slow down. We could solve this by going to see the High Council of Valles. And we could get married right away and then they'd give us a place of our own but I know you want your parents to witness the marriage so I guess we'll sleep on the ship.
- Your laws stink! She said pouting at him.
- They haven't been updated for centuries. It is how things are here.
- Maybe someone should get some senses into their heads. Do you think they would listen to me, an alien?
- I doubt it. But if I were to talk to them first and tell them of the two Kersna you killed and about the fact that they are getting closer, they might be more willing to listen to what you have to say. But is it worth it?
- Yes, definitely! Can you honestly say that you didn't like to have a place of your own back on Terra when you rented that house?



- Maybe you are right... he said pondering her words. Maybe some things aren't meant to last forever. Some laws should change as time goes on and on and we too change and have changed during the years. I think I can arrange a meeting for tomorrow evening with the High Council. As for tonight my love, I'm afraid we'll have to go back to our ship.
- Good, Delia said sharply. But first I want us to just stroll a bit as we used to back on Earth. I want to see the Twin Moons.
- Sure, we can do that. And he took her hand in his and they went out. The last rays of light had dissipated by then and the air was breathable. Delia couldn't believe the difference between days and nights on Valles. It reminded her of the terrestrial deserts, of Sahara although she had never been there but she had read about it.
- Look, the moons are up! Al said pointing to the sky towards the two moons.
- This is amazing! Wish my mom and dad were here to see this! Oh, she murmured then remembering she had her new phone on her, but I can take some pictures to show them at Christmas when we visit. I am so happy pa bought me this phone!! And she took it out of her pocket and started to take pictures of the two reddish moons. Then she pointed the camera towards the red sand dunes. She took some pictures of the sand being blown away by a gust of wind.
- Let me see your pictures, said Al as he felt a presence beyond the sand dunes in the direction she had just taken the pictures. He didn't feel any threat coming from that direction but he clearly felt something. Maybe it was too far away and he couldn't read its mind.
- Sure, and Delia handed him her phone. Are the pictures clear or fuzzy?
- Uh, he said, stand still where you are. I think I saw the head of a white Zavo in one of your pictures.
- A what? Delia asked more curious than afraid. Should I be scared or thrilled? What is a Zavo?
- It is a very rare and ancient creature which is said to have telepathic powers. I only heard of it. This is the first time I see one even if only in a picture.

- Oh, this is so exciting! Let's get closer to those sand dunes, maybe we can get a closer glimpse of it. I want to see it there, not in the picture!
- Wait, it might be dangerous. Let me try to communicate with it telepathically. If it really has telepathic powers, then we should be able to communicate.
- Ok. But don't scare it away. I want to see it.
- Hush now, let me focus. And he sat there on the sand and started to focus. Delia saw him smiling after a few minutes so she assumed that the Zavo creature wasn't a threat.
- What is it saying? Delia finally asked as she couldn't help herself any longer.
- It is a Zavo female. Her name is Pixy. And she would like to know us and especially you. You intrigue her. She knows you are from a far away place and would like to accompany us in our travels. What do you think?
- How cool is that? I will have an alien pet! Sure if she is not dangerous, please let her come along. I wonder what she looks like because I only saw a white head in the picture.
- I don't see any harm in it. If this pleases you, then she can tag along. And no, if she chose you, then she won't be a threat to you. But she can be a real threat for anyone who might be putting your life in jeopardy if the tales about these creatures are true. The Zavo are said to sometimes come out of their hiding places and choose a Valentinian as their master, a Valentinian who is pure in heart. And the Zavo is said to protect him with his life. I guess you could compare the Zavo with Earth's tamed dogs. Something like that. But no, it doesn't look like a dog. You'll see her soon.
- Oh, and you thought I wouldn't like your home planet! She said teasing him. Ok, tell Pixy she can come here now.

A few moments later, a short white furred creature appeared before them from behind the sand dunes. It had two hind paws and two front paws but it was walking like humans. It looked a lot like a meerkat but chubbier and a little taller. Short white fur covered its entire body and it had a small round black nose which looked very much like a dog's nose. It had two deep blue eyes, almost the same color as her eyes. It didn't have a

tail or wings. It really looked harmless and Delia wondered if Al had been kidding when he told her that the Zavo could be a threat for anyone who threatened its master's life. This creature looked fluffy and innocent rather than dangerous. But then again not everything is as it seems. So she decided to be careful around it. Then she heard a voice in her head which wasn't hers.

- Don't worry, I am not violent by nature. But I could be if that was what it took to save your life. I am Pixy.
- Did you just talk to me? Delia asked out loud.
- Yes, but telepathically just as I am doing right now. You can just think what you want to say and I will know.
- Oh... then you must be really good at this because Al can't read my mind. So have you heard me now? Thought Delia and waited for an answer thinking that the answer might never come.
- Yes, heard you loud and clear. You are the very reason I am here in the first place. I wanted to know you. We are a curious species. We like to know things. And I would like to know more about the place where you come from. And as for your friend here... I think I can help both of you...
- What do you mean? Now Delia was really curious to see what Pixy had to say.
- Well, I can help Al to also communicate with you telepathically. I can help him read your mind if you want to. This could be very useful if you are ever in danger and I am not there to protect you. You can tell him where you are and how to help you.
- I don't know... I felt special because I was the only one whose mind he couldn't read. And I know it annoyed him. It was funny. But if you can do this... yes, it would be great! That way he would know when I am annoyed or angry or tired and I wouldn't have to explain in so many words. Pixy, if you can do this, then do it!

Meanwhile Al was wondering what was going on. He could see on Delia's face that she was thrilled and that she liked the Zavo. But he couldn't hear their mental conversation. Then he heard Delia call his name. He looked at her and heard her again although her lips weren't moving. Then it dawned on him: he had

just read her mind! But how? After so much time now he could read her mind? He wasn't sure but he figured it must have something to do with the Zavo being.

- Yes, Al heard Pixy in his mind, you can read her mind now. This is my gift to both of you for allowing me to accompany you. But this is not all. She will also know what you are thinking. Not just when you want to tell her something and you are reaching for her mind, but anytime she wants. She will also be able to read your mind. I've helped her have access to a larger part of her brain. She was already special. I just had to help her unlock some areas of her brain.
- Thank you... Al was very grateful for the unusual gift.
- Enjoy, this will bring you two even closer.
- I'm tired, Delia said and then she remembered that now she could just think it.
- OK, then let's get back to the ship.
- You know... thought Delia while heading towards the ship, about what we spoke earlier, about the High Council, I don't want that anymore. You are right. I shouldn't meddle where it is not my business. We can just sleep on the ship.
- OK, Al answered thinking that maybe Pixy had something to do with her sudden change of opinion and with the fact that now she saw things in a different light.
- It doesn't really matter as long as we are together! She said and she was grateful once again for having met him. He had taken her where she wouldn't even have dreamt she would go and had shown her things she could only imagine. She was head over heels in love with him. He was the greatest thing that happened to her so far.
- Of course, home is where we make it! And Al pressed his lips on hers and they went back to their cozy little ship, their home.

## Chapter 5: Among the stars

One week later, Al and Delia and their new companion, Pixy, were standing before the representatives of the High Council of Valles. Al informed the High Council about the Kersna scout ship and also about Terra. He gave the High Council new information and his opinion about humans and humanity, hoping that Terra would be closely monitored in order to be protected in case there would be any other Kersna scouts lurking around. He showed them the importance of every species and also the importance of this planet which had been forgotten for too long. The first Valentinians who had built the pyramids knew that Terra had large fresh water supplies but back then the humans were very primitive. Al showed the High Council that humanity had evolved a lot since then and that they deserved to live. Al told the High Council that humans were

funny and smart and kind and inventive and had potential for so much more! It was true that there was political instability in some areas and also not all people were as he had just described them but Terra deserved a chance for those who were as he had depicted them.

- You seem very found of them... of humans, said Mark the Ancient, the head and leader of the High Council and as his name suggested, the eldest and wisest member of the Council.
- In the months I spent on Earth I learnt a lot about them and their customs, answered Al bowing very politely.
- And you truly believe that they deserve saving? That we should use our ships and resources to survey and protect this planet? Must I remind you that this Earth is pretty far away... this would come with a cost for us... to have some ships there and the crew to fly them... is it really worth it? Are humans worth it? That is the question. And Mark looked straight into Al's eyes trying to see beyond them.
- Yes your honor, Al answered in the most simple and sincere way possible. I believe from the bottom of my soul that Earth is a place worth saving. Besides its natural gorgeous landscapes, yes, people deserve a chance. Nobody should be wiped out from existence by another race. Earth is a little paradise and believe it or not, we, Valentinians, could also learn some things from them. Music for instance.
- Music? Asked Mark while getting up from his chair. The other members of the Council also raised their brows at hearing Al say that their species could learn something from a less evolved species.
- Yes, your honor, music. Then Al looked at Delia who had been silent till then, sitting on a chair behind him. Delia darling, could you please play some music for the High Council? Just choose something you have on your phone. They never heard music before.
- Uh, yes of course, she said with emotion in her voice while looking for her phone in her backpack. After a minute of fumbling inside it she finally found it. Then she opened the phone and a music playlist appeared on screen. She scanned it and eventually chose a rock ballad to play for the High Council. It was a very loved band back on Earth. When the first notes of the song were heard, everybody suddenly became curious at first and then...

then every single member of the High Council was mesmerized by the singer's voice and by the guitar notes. It was the first time they had ever heard music and they weren't sure what it was. But by the look on their faces it was obvious they loved it!! They seemed hypnotized by the sounds coming from Delia's phone. They were singing about Heaven but the Valentinians had no idea what Heaven was, although they had translation devices just as Delia had. Heaven wasn't in their dictionary.

- That is amazing! Music is great! I think all other members of the Council agree with me when I say this. Can you tell me more about it, young lady?

It was the first time Mark the Ancient had actually looked at Delia when he spoke to her. The sounds of the guitar and the band singing with so much passion had touched their very cores. All the High Council was awe struck. All the members were looking with new found interest at this female creature who had come from so far away and who looked so much like them but who had come from a primitive planet and who possessed something so divine as music.

- It is sung by a very famous rock band on Earth. They are one of my favorites but I also have other songs on my phone sung by other bands just as great as this. And also other music styles. And Delia played some more rock ballads and then some slow blues. The blues were so sad that some of the Valentinians had their eyes watering. It was all new and amazing for them.
- OK... Mark the Ancient could finally mutter. Could we have some copies of these songs so we can play them whenever we want?
- Of course, Delia answered glad that they had good tastes and that they appreciated her music. Then Al intervened :
- As I was saying, began Al talking slowly as if to let the members of the Council to get disenchanted, this is just one of the many things I got to love about humans while on Earth. So what do you think, your honors? He asked looking at each and every member with pleading eyes. But he knew he had won. He had made his point. He could read it on their faces, he didn't have to read their minds this time. All Council members were old and sage Valentinians with high intellect, intelligence they had accumulated during their long lives and so he couldn't read their minds. All Valentinians had an unusual life span of about four or five hundred years, unlike humans. Al hadn't told Delia about this fact yet as he knew that this would bring a lot

of questions and worries and she was too young to understand it all. He would tell her eventually that he would live for a long time after she would be gone. But even so he wouldn't be looking for anyone else afterwards. The difference of their life span was another fact for which it was strange to him that should be destined to be his soul mate. But after Delia had introduced God to him he decided to stop wondering about such things and he was sure that God must have had a plan and must have known what he was doing when he decided that she should be his chosen one. Not to say that she possessed obvious mental powers. She had killed the two Kersna with her mind knocking their heads into each other. And now with Pixy's help she had tapped into her brain power even more and could communicate with him telepathically. Who knew what else life and God had in store for them?

As Al was having all these thoughts in a matter of seconds, his mind was functioning with the speed of light, he heard Mark the Ancient answering him:

- In the light of the new events and facts we, the High Council of Valles, have decided to grant Earth protection in case of need. We will send a fleet of war ships to orbit around Earth while cloaked so they won't be detected by Earthmen. They will be like the invisible guardians of this planet.
- Fair enough, Al said with a large smile on his lips. Thank you.
- Thank you too, said Delia grateful to this race for offering their protection against the most evil race that walked among the stars. She was infinitely more relieved now thinking that her family back home was safe with such protectors above their heads. Now Earth stood a chance. They would also be protecting it from asteroids and other such perils. It was good to know this. She couldn't be more relieved and grateful.

## Chapter 6: Home again



- I miss her so much... our only child...Christmas Eve is in two days... do you think they will come visit as they promised? Mom was asking Marcel, her husband, the man she had spent her life with and whom she loved more than anyone else in the world besides their daughter. Her love for her little angel couldn't be described in words. There was nothing in this world she wouldn't do for her. Anything. She would give her heart from her chest if it was needed. She loved her daughter beyond words. They had had her pretty late, in their early thirties. She had just turned thirty when they had their daughter and she knew they wouldn't have other children. So she put all her love for this child, their child... who was now a young woman herself and who had promised she would come back for Christmas to visit. She could only hope that their daughter and Al would keep their promise.
- I'm sure they'll be here on Christmas Eve, just as they promised. And Marcel hugged his wife and kissed her forehead trying to push away all her doubts and worries. You know she always keeps her promises. And I am sure that just as we miss her, she must have missed us too. We are her parents. We raised her well. Don't worry, I'm sure they'll be here.

But Marcel was also wondering if she would come visit, if she was OK, if Al was good to her and so on. The only difference was that he didn't want to express his worries not to worry his wife more than she already was. So he kept his feelings and worries for himself. He wanted this Christmas to be perfect, with a Christmas tree and gifts for everyone around it just as they used to do when she was still living with them. He hoped Delia and Al would indeed come and open their gifts...

- I will make her favorite cakes and foods. And we will buy a Christmas tree and put the presents under it. If they don't come, it will break my heart... mom was saying almost crying at the thought.

- You know what? Let's make a deal: no more worries and no tears, OK? If they don't come I'll build a ship and go look for them myself, said Marcel to lighten up the mood and put a smile on his wife's face. Which he managed to do. After all the years spent together he knew what to say to make her feel better and to make her smile. He loved her so much even if he didn't always show her. And she knew it too. He wasn't always good with words but he knew what to say when it mattered most.
- OK, she muttered. I'll hold you to your words! And she smiled at him. You are probably right. They'll be here! She said in a more determined voice starting to believe her own words when she heard them come out of her mouth. OK, you go buy the Christmas tree and I'll go buy the gifts. What do you think Al would like to get under the tree? This would be his first Christmas but no idea what an alien would like...
- Stop worrying! I bet he'll like whatever you choose.
- Remember, this is his first Christmas so I want it to be special, to make them want to come visit us every Christmas, to make him feel like he is part of our family. So you see why I worry?
- Well, Marcel answered chuckling, at least now you stopped worrying that they wouldn't come. Just buy him a perfume or something. I trust you have good tastes and he'll like it too. And what should we buy for our daughter?
- Was thinking of buying her a perfume and a lovely white sleeveless dress for when she goes back to Valles. I saw this dress in a shop downtown. That's what I'll get her. And when I'm done shopping I'll start cooking.
- Sounds like a plan. And Marcel smiled sweetly. He was happy that his wife's mood had improved at least. She was now talking of getting them presents and cooking for the holidays, she wasn't thinking that they wouldn't come. She was a lot more cheerful and more fun to be around than when she was gloomy.
- I want this Christmas to be perfect... she said then she began thinking of the wonderful white dress she saw in the window of the shop downtown.

Two days later everything was ready in their small household. The Christmas tree was just perfect and there were lots of presents for everybody under it. Food was smelling delicious and Mom was busy arranging the table. Marcel got out a bottle of old wine from the larder and put it on the table too. Everything was perfect or almost perfect. Just two things were missing: Delia and Al. They still hadn't arrived but neither Mom nor Marcel were ready to give up hope of seeing them. They didn't even open the subject. It would have hurt too much. So they just avoided talking to each other and kept preparing things for the Christmas dinner as if there was nothing wrong and the two most expected guests should knock on their door any minute. But it was already Christmas Eve and they had finished preparing everything and still there were no signs of Delia or Al. Sadness was carved deeply on both parents' faces especially when carols could be heard being sung outside as was the custom. Finally Mom couldn't refrain herself anymore and without a single word she broke out crying. Marcel forgot about his own pain and tried to comfort his wife.

- Hey, look at me, he said, don't cry. And he wiped the tears that were running like a river down her cheeks. Do you believe in miracles? Because I do. Delia has always been our little miracle. I'm sure she will be here with him just as they promised. The day is not over yet.
- What if we'll never see her again? Who knows on what distant land they are right now... they promised they'd visit every Christmas... she kept repeating not wanting to think that anything bad might have happened to their only child.
- Hush... Marcel said as a tear came rolling down from the corner of his eye. It was too much for him too.
- I don't feel like eating. I'm sorry, and Mom ran out of the kitchen and into the bedroom where she meant to cry herself to sleep. Marcel tried to stop her but then he figured that maybe she really needed a bit of time for herself to deal with the pain in her own way. And this way he could also cry and she wouldn't see him... then there was a soft and shy knock on the front door. He meant to ignore it as he thought there were more carolers knocking on the door. But the knocking was heard again a bit louder. He

wiped the tears from his eyes and went to open the door. He meant to tell them that he wasn't in the mood for more carols. He turned the key in the lock to open the door when he felt a sudden calmness. It was very familiar...

- Daddy!! And Delia jumped and hugged him. She kissed his forehead and then let Al get in too. Marcel was standing there like a statue as he couldn't believe his eyes. Then when he finally came back to himself he returned the kiss and then he shook hands with Al.
- I knew it! Marcel finally said. Miracles do happen! He wiped his tears one last time and then he lead the way towards the kitchen and the goodies waiting for them in there.
- Pa, have you been crying? And where is Mom?
- No, he lied. Have a seat, I'll go get your Mom. I'll be right back. And he left in a hurry.
- He's such a terrible liar. And Delia winked at Al and added: just as Mom. She always blushes if she is lying. Not that she is a liar, but sometimes, like for instance when she wanted to surprise me with something, she always blushed when she was trying to hide it. Mmm, food is smelling so good. Oh, looks like pa bought a bottle of wine.
- Wine? Al asked as he had never tasted wine before. He had tasted beer and he didn't like it.
- Yeah, she said and then she just thought about her opinion of wine and let him know it telepathically.
- Oh, I got to taste it for myself.

Meanwhile Marcel hurried to the bedroom where his wife was still crying as she hadn't heard the commotion down stairs. He knocked on the door and then entered without waiting for her to answer. He approached her and wiped her tears. He was smiling wildly.

- What's with the grin? She asked sobbing.
- Come, we have guests downstairs.
- Guests?? Oh my God, don't tell me! They're here! And she got up from the bed and ran downstairs and into the kitchen. She felt dizzy with hope and emotion. Could it be? Was their daughter and her future husband in their

home for Christmas? Had they really come? Then she saw them seated at the table and she almost swooned with happiness. She felt her blood race through her body and she could barely find the words to greet them.

- My child! Al! Welcome home for Christmas! I never doubted you'd come, she lied blushing.
- Mom, you are a terrible liar, worse than pa! Said Delia and kissed her mother's still red cheeks. Al also kissed her cheeks as he saw Delia do and shook hands with Marcel.
- So how was your trip? How is Valles? What are the other Valentinians like? Mom started asking them so many questions that she was soon out of breath.
- Slow down, mom. The trip back here was smooth and Valles is... hot. Very hot.
- Oh, then you'll love your gift. Come, let's unwrap the presents. I can hardly wait to see if you like them, and saying that she took Delia's hand and almost dragged her in the living-room where she had placed the Christmas tree with the presents under it.

Al was looking curious as it was all new to him. Delia had told him a bit about this holiday before arriving but he really didn't know what to expect. Gifts? Wow. He read Mom's mind to see if there was a gift for him, too. And to his surprise, she had also bought him a gift. Now he wanted to open it. These people, Delia's parents, were now his family too. And he loved them. He was so glad that he and Delia had managed to convince the High Council of Valles to part with a few war ships to permanently survey and protect Earth, this little piece of heaven. And it was profitable too, as they took water from time to time which they sent to Valles. Large amounts of fresh water which Earth had plenty of. So it was good for both sides. He was glad that the Council had seen the importance of preserving this little wild paradise. Then he heard Marcel telling him:

- You know, Al, there's a gift for you under the tree, too.
- Thank you kindly, he answered and took a nicely wrapped gift with his name on it. He opened it and found a bottle of some colored liquid inside.
- Thank you, he repeated, more wine? He asked as he didn't know what was inside and hadn't read their minds about it. He had just read mom's mind to see if they had bought him a gift, too, but was content with knowing that

they had not to be curious what it was until he would open it. And now that he opened it, he didn't know what it was.

- No. And they all laughed, not at him, but with him.
- Smell, said Delia taking off the lid. It's perfume!
- Oh, I like it! He said really meaning it. It smells so... masculine and fresh!
- Exactly! Said Delia pulverizing some of it on his clothes. Now your clothes smell like that. Mmm...
- Wow! Thank you again for the nice gift!
- Now it's your turn, Delia! Said Mom delighted at the thought of the wonderful white dress she had bought for her daughter. Open your gift!
- Mom... you shouldn't have... she said shyly but in fact she was glad that her parents had bought them gifts. No matter how small the gift, it's the gesture that matters and it was so nice of her parents to buy them gifts even though they weren't even sure she and Al would be home in time for Christmas. Then she opened her gift. She took out the dress which had been carefully folded inside and let it loose. It was wonderful! And useful..
- Mom, dad, thank you so much! I love it, I really do! It's the most beautiful dress I've ever had.
- Well, what are you waiting for? Put it on, try it! Said Mom with her eyes moist of happiness.
- Well, Delia started, mom, pa, this dress fits perfectly with the occasion. Al and I are going to get married before we leave again. The day after tomorrow if we can find a priest available. So this white dress is just perfect!
- Congratulations! This is wonderful! She said out loud but inside she thought: I think I'm going to faint! God help me not to! This is too much happiness for my poor heart to handle. And out loud again: OK, no worries, I'll find a priest even if I have to drag him here myself. Now will you try the dress or not?
- No, I will wear it on my wedding day if you don't mind.... And Delia was looking with pleading eyes at her parents.
- Of course, you are right, said Marcel who always took his daughter's side. That's perfect, darling.
- There is one more it'sy bitsy thing... said Delia looking at her parents with pleading eyes again. We brought a friend from Valles with us. She is waiting

for us in the ship in the old mine. I didn't want to scare you two by bringing her with us from the start but I hope you won't mind if she comes tomorrow? She was tired now anyway but tomorrow morning...

- A friend? Asked both her parents while her mom was already thinking that she meant a Valentinian but her father was just waiting to see what she meant by a friend.
- Yes, it is a Zavo creature. Its name is Pixy. Short white furred and really nice and harmless. She's been with us for the last months and we consider Pixy a part of the family now. It's like a dog companion but it doesn't look like a dog... you'll see her tomorrow.
- Yes, Al intervened in the conversation to ease their minds as it was about a creature from his world and Delia's parents were expecting him to have the final word regarding an alien being from his planet. Pixy is totally harmless. I give you my word. And is our friend.
- Then I don't see why not, said mom curious to see an alien creature besides Al because Al resembled humans too much and they stopped thinking of him as alien but rather as one of them. As for the Zavo creature, that was something she had to see for herself.
- Yeah, Marcel added, any friends of yours are our friends, too. Pixy is welcome in our house. Does it bark? Because I take it she doesn't bite...
- No, dad, I told you, Pixy is not a dog. Is our companion like a dog would, but it's got nothing to do with a dog. You'll see.
- OK, OK. And he was content with the answer. Marcel figured he'd just have to wait and see.

On the following day, on Christmas day, Delia and Al brought Pixy with them. Her parents were curiously waiting in the doorway to see the alien being. They were imagining all sorts of monsters with many legs and weird looking faces when they saw it. It was nothing like they had imagined: it was a small creature, maybe as tall as Marcel's knee and it was standing upright on its hind legs and it had short white fluffy fur. It really seemed cute and harmless. Delia and Al chose not to tell her parents that this cute fur ball could be dangerous if it chose to as it wasn't the case. Pixy would only protect them, not harm them so there was no need to scare her parents with details they didn't need to know.

- Oh, this is so cute, I love it! Said Delia's mom who had always had a soft spot for animals, especially the small and fluffy ones. She had had a dog a long time ago and also when she herself had been a child she had hamsters. And Pixy somehow reminded her of both. Can I pet her?
- I'm not in the mood, but if you really want... Pixy answered her telepathically.
- Who said that? Asked her mom vexed.
- That was Pixy, Al answered this time. She can read minds... and communicate with you that way. Which is pretty useful.
- Oh, OK, geez, then I won't pet her.
- She meant no offence, mom. She just doesn't like that. She is not a dog, remember?
- Got it! She answered a bit irritated this time. So one more alien who's going to read her mind. Just great...!

## Chapter 7: A heavenly wedding

Two days later mom had found a priest willing to wed them so soon after Christmas. Of course they had left out some of the details, like for instance the fact that Al was an alien and Pixy, the Zavo little alien who decided to wait for them back on the ship until the ceremony would be over.



They decided to opt for a small wedding with only her parents as guests and witnesses. And of course, the priest and themselves. And they had the priest wed them at Delia's old house, her parents' house.

Delia was looking stunningly in her white sleeveless dress. She was as beautiful as an angel. As for Al, he was wearing a black costume which he had borrowed from Marcel. It almost fit him but it was better than the clothes he came in which would have drawn the priest's attention. It was a short but beautiful ceremony. Then they were finally husband and wife. It was the best Christmas ever for everyone.

After the ceremony was over and the priest left, Al addressed his parents in law:

- How about we officiate this marriage in the Valentinian way too?
- What do you mean Al? Delia asked puzzled. She looked at her parents and saw that they were just as puzzled as her and were looking at Al waiting for a more detailed explanation.
- What I mean is this: we all go aboard the ship and have a virtual Valentinian official unite us in marriage so our marriage will also be recognized on my home planet too. I think it is only fair, right?
- Of course! Delia hurried to accept. Of course I want us to be married on your planet too. You are my husband on Earth and Valles and wherever our journeys may take us. Yes! We are married in heaven and on Earth!
- Then let's go up to the skies, Al said and started to laugh.
- Lead the way... said Marcel wondering what the interior of his spacecraft looked like.
- This is more than I expected, mom burst out joyfully. So we get to see your ship, Al?
- Yep. And more. I'll take you to the stars tonight or wherever you want to go. Just name it. Any place you have always wanted to visit but never could. After we are officially wed first.
- Wow. A thousand times wow. You are the best son-in-law we could have wished for.

- Agreed, said Marcel whose eyes were sparkling with sheer joy at the thought that they would soon be in an alien ship. This really was the best Christmas ever!
- OK, then let's officiate our marriage first after the Valentinian custom too and then we can visit any place you choose. OK? But he was sure they had nothing against this plan. It was perfect.
- Ok, let's do this, said mom with expectation in her voice. We can take our car to the old mine where you said you left your ship.

Half an hour later they were inside Al's ship. Mom and Marcel couldn't take their eyes off everything they saw inside. It was so much technology inside and it was so out of this world. It was interesting. It was just like in the movies with the only difference that this wasn't a movie. They were actually inside an alien ship.

The ship didn't seem that large from the outside but when they entered it, they thought it was a lot bigger than it seemed. It had many corridors and lights and the deck below where the cargo was put was really huge. There were boxes of all sizes crammed everywhere. Some were already full with cargo and others had yet to be filled. Then they went in the captain's cabin, Al's cabin, to officiate their marriage after the Valentinian custom too.

Al first lifted the ship and drove it outside Earth, beyond the clouds and among the stars. Up there it felt as if they were in heaven. It was perfect to officiate their marriage. He pushed a tiny button on the control panel and a hologram of a weirdly dressed Valentinian appeared before their eyes. It was the first time Delia's parents saw a hologram and they were vexed. It seemed so real that at first they really thought that the Valentinian was there in front of them. Al had to explain that the Valentinian official wasn't in fact there but on his home planet and that this was a projection of him, it was just a hologram. Mom had to make sure so she put her hand through him. Then as shivers went down her spine she was sure that the Valentinian was just a hologram.

After Delia and Al's union was legalized in the Valentinians' eyes too, the hologram vanished into thin air, just as it had appeared.

- So, Al asked, where would you like to go before going back home? My treat, he said jokingly.
- Well, said mom, I've always wanted to visit Spain. And the Mediterranean Sea.... So how about it? Could we go to the Mediterranean Sea in Spain?
- Sounds good, said Marcel who didn't really care where they were going as long as his wife was happy.
- Nice choice mom, said Delia and hugged her parents. She was also glad as she had never been to the sea before.
- Then Spain it is, said Al who was already putting the coordinates in the main panel.

Less than 10 minutes later Al was landing the ship close to the Mediterranean Spanish shore, about four meters above the water. He activated the invisibility shield that practically made the ship invisible to prying eyes. It was also invisible to the radars due to its low altitude. And they wouldn't stay long anyway.

- Here, Al said handing everyone except Pixy a small device which looked like a sophisticated shiny bracelet of some kind. Pixy stays aboard the ship. She would draw unwanted attention from the locals and we don't want that. Everyone else put it on their wrist. It is a teleportation device, Al went on. I set them to teleport us to the beach. Then we'll just teleport back. But first let's have some fun!
- Does it hurt? The teleportation process?
- Don't be silly mom, just push the button. And Delia was first to teleport to the beach. Then Al and Marcel followed. Mom was still on the ship looking at her shiny bracelet.
- Here goes nothing! Mom thought and coyly touched the button. Hardly had she finished her thought when she saw she was on the beach next to the rest of them. It only took a second to get from the ship to the sandy beach.
- Wow, that was fun! Mom said while checking her body to see if it was all there. After she made sure she was in one piece she relaxed and enjoyed the Sea breeze and the salty smell in the air.

It had been the greatest and longest day for as long as she remembered. Just the day she had become a mom had been greater than

this. It was perfect. This Christmas had been perfect. Her only child was a married woman now and they were all strolling peacefully along the Spanish Mediterranean shore line. She could see that Delia was happy with Al and that made her happy. If from now on she would only see her daughter and her son-in-law for Christmas, than she would enjoy every moment of it.

- Let's visit the surroundings a bit, too, said Delia who also enjoyed seeing new things. By the way Al, where exactly are we?
- We're in Marina d'Or. The seaside resort Marina d'Or.
- Sounds cool, said Marcel simply, although he was delighted too but he didn't like to use too many words to show it.

They all went sightseeing through the city. It was wonderful. The architecture of the buildings was a little different from what they were used to in Romania. Some streets were so narrow that the houses were very close to each other, unlike the alleys in Romania which were wider and the houses on each sides were more distanced. But it was interesting, it seemed cozy in a way. And the people were extremely nice and open. They didn't know Spanish but Al and Delia had their translation devices in their ears and they worked perfectly, translating what they needed to know. Later Delia asked Al how was it that their devices had the Spanish language in their database and Al said that those devices had in them all the languages his ancestors had ever encountered and learnt during the ages. And as Earth had been frequently visited by his ancestors in the past it could only mean one thing: Spain was one of the countries they had visited in their expeditions.

Even Delia's parents noticed the fact that the Spaniards were very nice people, very kind and talkative. Spain had been a great choice. Mom was very happy that they had come here. She wished that they could visit other places next Christmas when Delia and Al would come visiting again.

Al knew what she was thinking as he had read her mind and waited for an opportunity to make the offer. So they went to a local pub for a coffee and some drinks. Then Al asked them as if it was his idea, although it wasn't but he wished it had been his:

- I've had a wonderful time with you. I have never celebrated Christmas before as we don't have this holiday on Valles but I wish we had. Anyway, I was thinking.... How about we go visit some different place each Christmas when we come home? As Earth is now my home too. Tell you what: this year Mom picked the place. Next year maybe Marcel could pick a destination. And so on every year on Christmas. How about it?
- Al, I can't believe this! Said Mom almost crying with joy! You must have read my mind! I was just thinking this a few minutes ago... but I didn't dare ask you such a favor... of course, we'd be delighted!
- Wow, Marcel finally said. Sounds good, especially as we get to see you at least once a year. It doesn't really matter where we go as long as we are together for the holidays at least. Mom or Delia can pick the destination, it doesn't really matter to me.
- OK, then we have a deal! Said Al content with how things had turned out.

One week later Delia and Al were bidding farewell to Delia's parents and leaving Earth once again for more adventures through space with Pixy by their side. The Kersna threat was still out there but for now they were content with knowing that Earth had a fleet of Valentinian warships protecting it even though humans didn't know it. It paid off to have an alien husband.