

# *Emet and Memi*



*by  
Amos  
Hawkins*

# Emet and Memi

by Amos Hawkins

©1976 by Amos Hawkins

# FOREWORD

This book was written by my father over several years starting about 1974 and ending about 1976. He wrote the book in cursive using a pencil. By the time I got the manuscript in 2025, almost 5 years after his passing, the pages were yellowed and the pencil faded. In addition, somewhere along the line, the pages got scrambled and none of them had a useful page number. This meant that I had to painstakingly figure out where every page went. Not only that, but he had editing marks that were next to impossible to figure out without an ordered frame of reference.

So I read the book, page by page, into a voice recognition program and then sorted the pages as best I could. Then I used AI to correct the errors made by the voice recognition process. I also allowed AI to find and correct grammar errors, which were few. Amos was once an English teacher in school so English and grammar were things he was good at.

He had included some hand drawings that were difficult to visualize. For the simpler ones, I redrew the diagrams, but on others I used stable diffusion AI image generation software to create images that are close to what the book implies. Stable diffusion is not an exact science and frequently generates goofy images. I went through several hundred before settling on the images that are used here. Maybe future generations can use better software and make better images.

Finally, I have to warn the reader that this book is R rated in some places. There is nothing really bad, but if you knew my dad, you would find some of it unexpected. I also found his approval of a certain system of government to be disjointed from his political views as I know them.

That said, its a nice science fiction story with a message. I thought it was good, but probably not quite good enough to get on the best seller's list.

Dennis Hawkins.

# DEDICATION

Dedicated to all those who read this book and make a correction in their own lives to meet the standards set down by Emet and Memi.

# PREFACE

This is the recollection of an adventure that I had into interplanetary and interstellar space. No one person, nor group of people can claim to have traveled as I did, nor to this unknown planet.

The people from this unknown planet have been watching our planet and the people on it for some time now. They will at times come close enough to examine us, but they will not harm us unless we try to harm them first. They have a true democracy governed by the people.

They have technology that is superior to anything here on Earth. They have the ability to disintegrate all living things on an entire continent with a single button press. Such power is not to be considered lightly. They could easily just take what they wanted, but they are a peace-loving people with ill will towards none.

They desire to establish trade relations with our world which includes giving us some of their technology, but they cannot afford to establish relations with people who are so barbaric that their own weapons might be used against them. Whether these trade relations are good or bad depends upon the response humanity is willing to place on the authenticity of this book.

The facts concerning this book have not even been discussed with my own family. I had all that I could do to keep from telling my wife, family, and friends about my first space travels, but I had promised, and it turned out to be a test, that I would keep my exploit secret until I had written this book. I was sworn to secrecy and I have tried to keep that secrecy. The only person who has seen or known of the contents of this book is the typist who has graciously kept my secret.

This is an opportunity to have a better world. It is an opportunity to take giant steps forward in technology by doing what these people ask. If this book does no more than to bring this world to the knowledge that they have an obligation to future generations to overcome all aggressive behavior and to live peaceably, then it will have accomplished something, and my trip and trials on a foreign planet will not have been in vain.

Is this world truly ready to take this giant step or is this world too barbaric to accept this challenge? The future generations of this world deserve better!

Many people will pick up this book or hear about it and claim that it is a fraud. I say to those who would do such a thing — if my word and the facts of this book do not substantiate or collaborate the facts already known by scientists, then believe what you want to believe! I will swear on the Bible that every single word in this book is the absolute truth, except for the parts that I made up.

*Amos Hawkins*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preliminaries	Page
Foreword	iii
Dedication	iv
Preface	v
Chapter	Page
I    The Invitation	1
II   Off To The Moon	9
III  Mars	16
IV   Jupiter	22
V    Tragedy	27
VI   Jim and the Saucer	34
VII  Interstellar Flight	40
VIII On To Emet's Planet	47
IX   Arival	54
X    Supper And Bed	60
XI   Home Away From Home	66
XII  Economy	74
XIII The Structure of Government	81
XIV  The Courts and the Constitution	87
XV   Schools	92
XVI  The Voyage Home	101
Appendix	107
A    AI Generated Chapter Summaries	108
B    AI Generated Commentary	113

# Chapter I

## The Invitation

The room was totally dark. There were no windows, only a profound, velvety blackness that appeared in every direction. The only way to tell that you were in a physical place, and not floating in the void, was by the faint, rhythmic humming of unseen machines. The sound was low, constant, and strangely soothing — it was the breath of a vast, complex computer intelligence.

Suddenly, a clean, sharp line of light sliced through the darkness. An electric door slid open and revealed a blindingly bright white exterior that starkly contrasted with the room's interior. From the darkness, a friendly deep baritone voice boomed, "Enter!"

A sharp silhouette against the glare of the doorway paused for a moment before stepping through the threshold. The figure walked straight into the room, and as it passed the door, the lights in the chamber began to gradually brighten.

The room was vast, circular, and nearly silent. Its purpose was instantly clear: this was the seat of power, the International Council of Countries. The room held no people, only rows and rows of intelligent computers, 1,000 in all. These were the computers that collectively oversee the democracy of this planet. And this planet was, emphatically, not Earth.

The man, dressed in a high tech gray looking jumpsuit, walked swiftly to a central podium and stopped. He looked up at the ceiling, though he was clearly addressing the council-computers that surrounded him.

"I have completed my study of Earth," he announced, his voice steady and professional. "I believe I have found one man who meets our requirements. I have studied him and his family for a full Earth year and believe he is the man we are looking for."

"Very well," replied the baritone voice coming from nowhere and everywhere at once. "You are to devise several tests to examine his purity and fitness. Then take a star craft and invite him to return here with you. Take him only if he agrees to come. After the experiment is concluded, you can return him back to his world."

"As you wish," said the man I would later come to know as Emet. After a brief pause he asked, "May I bring my sister Memi with me?"

"Yes," the voice immediately agreed, "but do not invite any of the Earthling's family or friends. I am not convinced that the rest of the Earth is ready for the knowledge of our existence."

Emet gave a slight nod, then turned around and walked out through the same door he had entered. The door again opened automatically for him, sliding closed with a silent seal once he was outside. His mission had begun.

Back on Earth, early one June morning, I was hard at work in my garden on my farm. My

name is Amos. I have a small farm in Loxahatchee, Florida. It isn't much, just a small piece of land with a barn, a tractor, and a few chickens. One day I hope to build a house there and move in to it permanently with my family.

While I was hunched over, pulling up a particularly stubborn weed, I heard a loud female voice right next to my ear. "Hello, Amos."

Startled, I instantly stood up and spun around, heart pounding. Nobody was there. Nothing but humid air and a few buzzing insects. I'd never heard voices before, and a cold wave of worry washed over me. Was I hallucinating? Could I be having a heat stroke in the hot Florida sun?

"Who is that?" I said nervously, trying to sound calm while scanning the empty field.

"My name is Memi. I am on a star craft orbiting your planet," the perfectly clear voice replied.

Still gripping my hand trowel like a weapon, and not at all certain of my own sanity, I muttered, "I want you to know that whoever you are, I am not accustomed to talking to people who aren't there."

"Just a second," the girl said, a slight tone of amusement in her voice.

For about thirty seconds, the only sound was that of several horses nickering in the distance. Then, from nowhere, a pencil thin column of smoke came down from the sky and hit the ground directly in front of me, about ten feet away. It bounced off the ground forming the shape of a large upside down mushroom and then it began to swirl rapidly, forming a sphere, getting denser and denser until finally it looked exactly like a giant, perfectly round cotton ball about six feet in diameter.

At that moment, a projection of a young girl's face, with large, bright eyes appeared on the cottony surface of the sphere.

"There," she said, her voice now emanating from the giant cotton ball. "Is that better?"

I took a deep, shaky breath, finally able to connect the voice with a face. "Yes, much!" I said. I lowered the trowel slightly. "Why are you here?"

"We have selected you to represent your planet," Memi stated with a serious tone. "We have much to show you and talk about. May we bring you aboard our ship?"

A strange mix of terror and total disbelief washed over me. This was impossible. This must be a heat stroke hallucination. Still, a reckless curiosity took hold so I replied while shrugging, "Sure, Why not?"

With that, the cotton ball image dissolved back into a rapidly swirling blob of smoke and then quickly dissipated into the air, leaving nothing behind.

Just then, I noticed a large round shadow on the ground approaching and then covering me. The sky above my small garden darkened as a large, doughnut-shaped object appeared silently and directly overhead. Before I knew it, a beam of intensely white light coming from the doughnut 'hole', shined down on me, just like a massive spotlight.

I felt a sudden, full-body tingle, like a million static charges running across my skin. I looked out over my farm and saw the rows of vegetables, the barn, and the chickens scratching in the dirt, then the entire scene faded to pure white.

Then, almost immediately, the pure white scene gradually cleared and a new scene appeared in front of me. I was now aboard a craft of some kind, most likely the giant flying doughnut I had observed before. Now I was standing on a featureless metal floor, but I didn't see any people. After a few minutes, when my heart began to slow and my mind started working again, I felt a slight chill across my body. When I looked down, I immediately realized why. I was buck naked.

I could tell the craft was moving, though it was almost imperceptible — like standing up on a slowly moving bus. Then I heard a muffled noise, a deep thunk, suggesting we had hit or connected with something, yet I felt no impact whatsoever.

Shortly after, a quiet hiss preceded a spiral staircase descending silently from the ceiling, displacing the central 'doughnut hole' overhead. There was no central column or support; it looked like a double helix spring stretching downward, with solid, transparent steps growing into place as it descended.

When the staircase reached the floor and the last step locked into place, I heard the faint thud of footsteps as a creature began descending. I've heard stories of alien abductions so a jolt of anxiety hit me. As the figure came further down, I could see it was wearing a smooth, gray, high-tech jumpsuit.

When the creature finally reached the bottom and looked up at me, my fear evaporated into surprise. This was no big-eyed, gray skinned, bald-headed, Roswell alien, it was Memi, the young girl whose face had appeared on the cotton ball.

"Welcome aboard, Amos!" she said cheerfully.

"Where exactly am I?" I asked with a strained voice.

"You are aboard our shuttle craft that we sent to pick you up," she replied. "It has now docked with our star craft. Come with me, I'll take you to our main control room."

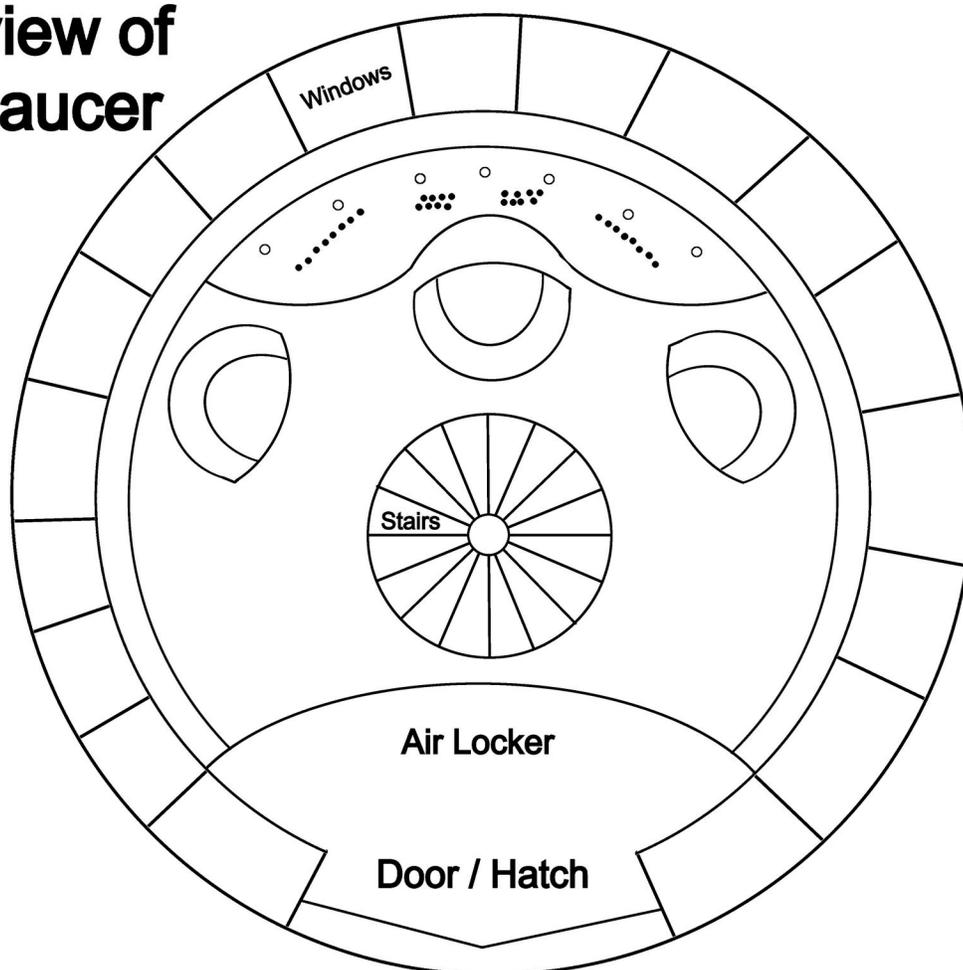
I was in such total amazement that I completely forgot that I didn't have a single stitch of clothing on. Everything was gone. All my clothes, my watch, my glasses and even my wedding band had vanished. I just followed her up the staircase, which felt remarkably solid considering it had been nothing but a giant Slinky a few minutes earlier.

When we reached the top, as I stepped off the last step, the staircase immediately retracted,

ascending from below and sealing shut, leaving a solid, round pedestal in its place.

Memi led me over to a young man intently working at a nearby console. "This is my brother Emet," she said. "He is commanding this star craft."

## Top view of the Saucer



Emet stood up from his console with a welcoming smile. He was a nice-looking young man, about my height but with a slight build. Memi, in contrast, was shorter than me and had a hard, muscular, yet distinctly feminine build. I'm considered less than average height on Earth, maybe a lot less than average, so it was a pleasant change not having to look up at anyone here. Both Emet and Memi were clearly adults, but Memi's short stature made it hard not to mentally think her as a child.

"Hello, Amos. Thanks for agreeing to come aboard," Emet said with a monotone voice.

I suddenly realized I was still completely naked and started to feel embarrassed. "Could I please have my clothes back now?" I asked in a whimpery voice. "I'm not used to being naked in front of other people."

Emet abruptly and sternly said, "No!" He sat back down at his console, clearly indicating the

subject was closed.

I didn't argue, but I looked at Memi wondering why.

As if she had read my mind, Memi walked closer. "He means you can't have 'your' clothes," she said apologetically. "But we have a suit here you can wear."

Memi walked to a closet panel that blended seamlessly with the wall and returned with a jumpsuit identical to the ones they wore. She handed it to me.

The jumpsuit, which they simply called a 'suit,' looked a bit like a toddler's romper but was covered in subtle circuitry and gadgets, making it undeniably high-tech. It had integrated boots and gloves, but it was certainly no bigger than something that would fit a two-year-old. Not only did it look far too small, I couldn't even find an opening to climb into the thing.

I held it up. "This looks a bit small for me," I commented.

Without even looking away from his console, Emet said, in a completely matter-of-fact tone, "It will stretch."

Confused, I replied, "And how do I get in it? There's no opening."

"You have to unzip it," Memi said with a slight chuckle.

"Where?" I asked. "There's no zipper."

She walked over and put her finger on a small blue dot at the neckline. As she dragged her finger down the suit, the material split apart instantly. "There," she said. "Now just put your legs down in there and your arms through here."

I noticed right away that while the suit had split, there was no physical zipper — at least not like any I'd ever seen. It looked more like someone had precisely sliced the material with a pair of scissors, leaving clean edges that only a needle and thread could put back together.

With the suit open, I began to climb into it as instructed. Just as Emet had stated, the material stretched easily as I entered. Even the boots expanded and enlarged to my exact foot shape. The only problem was that everything, and I do mean everything, was still fully visible through the opening.

"Now what do I do?" I asked.

Emet spun around, took one look at me in the open suit, and made a brief, strangled choking sound, his face contorted as he desperately tried to hold back some serious laughter. He spun back around and pressed his forehead against his console. I could see his ears visibly turning red. Meanwhile, Memi didn't bother trying to hold anything back. She laughed so hard I thought her tonsils were going to fly out.

After Memi finally calmed down a bit, she wiped her eyes. "You have to zip it back up, Amos! Here, let me show you." She extended her finger and moved it straight towards my crotch.

I recoiled abruptly. "Don't do that!" I protested. "I'm a married man."

"Don't worry," she said. "This is how the suit zips up." With that, she touched the suit at the bottom of my crotch. I heard a faint, distinct snapping sound, followed by a soft buzzing as she dragged her finger upward.

As her finger moved up, the suit sealed seamlessly, even though there was no zipper. When it was closed, there were no visible seams; it was one single piece again. But that wasn't the important part, the important part was that I wasn't naked anymore.

"I'm curious why you removed all my clothes in the first place," I asked.

With his composure fully regained, Emet replied, "We didn't. We used a matter transporter called the BeTran to bring you aboard our shuttle. It will not dematerialize, and thus not transport, anything except living cells. That is why your clothes and other objects were left behind."

"Why not just land the thing and let me walk aboard?" I asked.

Emet replied with a serious tone, "No offense, but you Earthlings are contaminated with numerous bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens. That, not to mention the pathogens harbored in your clothes, would be dangerous to us. We simply can't risk you contaminating our shuttle or our star craft."

"If the BeTran transports living matter, what about all those pathogens you say I carry?" I pressed.

Memi interjected, "The BeTran has a bio-discriminator. It will selectively fail to re-materialize any pathogens. So when you were brought aboard the shuttle, your whole body was sanitized inside and out."

"What happens if I get one of your pathogens?" I asked.

Memi replied, "There are no pathogens aboard this craft. It is completely sterile."

"I guess that is why my glasses did not come aboard as well. Just so you know, I can't see very well without those," I said.

"I'll take care of that for you," Memi said as she pressed a button on a console and a drawer slid out with several instruments. She picked up one that looked like a cross between a small mallet and a flashlight. She came over to me and shined a blue light from it into my eyes. At first, it made my vision all blurry, much worse than before, but then in a matter of seconds, all the blurriness cleared and I could see perfectly. "There, how's that?" she asked.

I was amazed at how well I could see. I hadn't been able to see that good in years. I replied, "Excellent! I can see just fine now."

She said, "The effect is only temporary, but it will allow you to see properly without your glasses while you are with us."

Memi then turned around and began to punch some buttons on the console. As she did, I walked up behind her with more questions and gently put my right hand on her right shoulder, then began to ask, "How..."

In a flash, Memi had grabbed my arm, twisted it, and what happened next I don't exactly remember, but I do remember flying through the air and landing in a heap on the floor. It was a very painful experience.

I yelled, "Ouch! Why did you do that? I think you've broken some of my ribs!"

"Your ribs are not broken," Emet said after abruptly getting up from his console.

"Amos!" Memi stared down at me and exclaimed, her tone condescending and seemingly uncharacteristic. "Never touch me without my prior knowledge and consent!"

Emet walked toward me and helped me to my feet. "The suit acts like an exoskeleton and won't allow any of your bones to break. But that doesn't mean they still can't hurt. So you had better not touch her again if you know what's good for you."

Still in pain, I struggled to say, "Somehow doing so seems like a bad idea, so I won't."

After catching my breath, I paused and then said, "You have told me your names, but getting back to my first question back on Earth, exactly who are you people? You look human, but are you? Where do you come from? Why are you here?"

"We're..." Memi started, before being interrupted by Emet.

"We come from a planet hundreds of light years away from your solar system," Emet said. "We are humans just like you are, but there are several small, yet distinct biological and psychological differences. As you might have guessed, our planet has technology vastly superior to that of your world. Our goal is to open up trade relations with your world, but our requirement is that the people of your world must cease all hostilities against each other and learn to embrace peace. As of this moment, your world does not meet this requirement."

"Because trade relations would involve us sharing our technology with you," Memi added, "and right now, the violent and barbaric people of your world would not hesitate to use our own technology to destroy us. We can't take that chance."

I asked, "So why am I here?"

"We have selected you to write a book describing our people and your interaction with us,"

Emet replied. "We have determined that you have the skills and qualities necessary to write such a book. The goal of the book is to quietly introduce our people to yours. People who read the book will either believe it or they won't. The hope is that everybody who reads it will use it as a means to improve their own lives, reject violence, and to seek out peace."

"What Memi just did to me didn't seem all that non-violent," I quipped.

Memi answered, "That wasn't violence. Consider it a deterrent. It's a reflex that females are trained from childhood to do when someone touches them without consent."

"I'll try to remember that, but regarding the book, why did you select me?" I asked. "Why not some other author who is better known and has more experience?"

Emet said, "We have already tried using other authors with more experience. One author, you have probably heard of him, his name is Gene Rodenberry. While he was well intentioned and truly wanted for the world to reject violence, his creative tendencies caused him to write books and scripts that were more science fiction than about reality. Of all the manuscripts he has written, not one of them mentions anything about our people or planet. We are happy for him, but making him famous was not the reason we contacted him."

Emet continued, "Simply put, other authors have qualities that are not acceptable to us. For now, just accept that there are significant reasons known to us that you were selected over everyone else."

I asked, "So am I supposed to start writing it now?"

"No," Emet said. "Your journey has just begun. We will tell you when it is time to start writing your book."

"OK, enough shop talk," Memi interjected. "Now let's have a little fun and take a quick trip around the solar system. We need to start now if we are going to get Amos back home before his supper."

"Agreed," said Emet.

"Sounds like fun," I said.

"You need to be seated," Memi said as she extended her arm towards a chair.

"Next stop, your moon," Emet said, and there was a slight jolt as we accelerated forward.

## Chapter II

### Off to the Moon

The slight jolt from the acceleration was the only indication we were moving, but it was enough to make me clutch the arms of the chair. The view out of the large forward window was magnificent. We spiraled away from Earth, watching it get smaller and smaller until the Moon appeared in the distance, growing larger and larger.

It felt like I had just settled my aching body into the seat when Emet announced, "We're here."

"That was fast," I managed.

Memi laughed. "We weren't exactly obeying your standard 55 mph speed limit, Amos. Welcome to the Moon."

As Emet and Memi worked quickly at their consoles, the star craft slowed and entered a perfect lunar orbit.

"We won't be taking the star craft down to the surface," Emet said, gesturing to the center of the bridge. "We're going to use the shuttle."

"The one I materialized inside?" I asked.

"The very one," Emet confirmed.

"Don't worry, it's safer than jumping," Memi joked.

Memi led me to the pedestal where the spiral staircase had formed earlier. She touched a button, and the sleek, transparent staircase once again descended into the shuttle below.

"After you," she said.

The descent was smooth; the transparent steps felt more solid than steel. Memi and I stepped into the shuttle, a much smaller craft. When Emet joined us, the steps retracted, and he went over to a control panel on the wall. The shuttle had no seating, so we stood. Emet hit a button, and several blank gray panels around the perimeter suddenly became transparent windows. He hit another button, and the shuttle shot away from the star craft as if being fired from a gun. Despite the velocity, I felt nothing more than a slight jolt. The windows were so clear it was as if there was no glass at all, and come to think about it, maybe there wasn't. Either way, they gave us a close-up look at the dusty, cratered lunar surface rushing up to meet us.

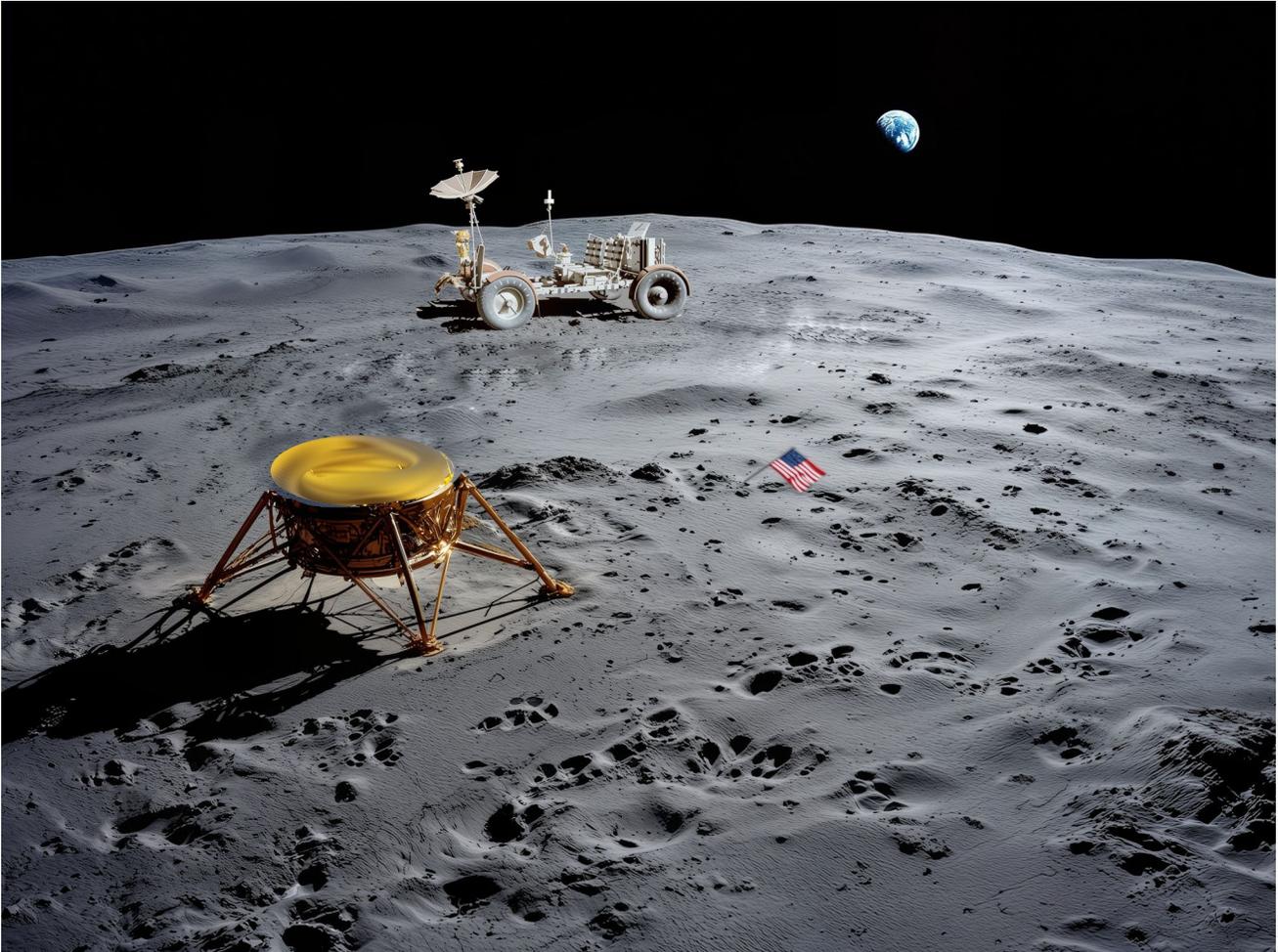
"We are keeping a safe distance," Emet said. "We have strict orders not to disturb any of the historical Apollo landing sites, but we can fly low enough to almost touch some of them."

As we slowly drifted over one Apollo site, I spotted the American flag laying flat on the ground.

Surprisingly, it wasn't covered in much dust. Nearby was the descent module, a shiny retroreflector, and a camera still mounted on its tripod, pointing toward space. Other cameras and discarded scientific equipment lay heaped in a pile. Human boot prints were everywhere, and some of them were leading toward a lunar rover parked a short distance away. I had seen this all on TV, but to see it in person was a very humbling sight.

"It's incredible to see this," I whispered.

"Indeed," Memi replied. "Those early explorers were very brave, but our destination is on the far side. A completely remote area."



The shuttle craft sped away from the Apollo landing site, slowing almost imperceptibly, and then settled gently into the fine gray dust on the far side of the moon.

"Time for your helmet, Amos," Emet instructed.

Memi took a metallic helmet from the closet and placed it over my head. It was lightweight and sealed with a soft gasket that clicked tightly into the collar of my suit. The sudden hiss of pressure equalizing was loud in my ears, but I could hear their voices perfectly over the suit's

integrated comm system.

"Can you hear us clearly?" Memi's voice crackled through the comm.

"Loud and clear," I confirmed. "It's a perfect seal."

Emet hit a button and said, "Depressurizing now!"

I could feel the suit tighten slightly as the atmosphere inside the shuttle was evacuated.

Over the comm, Emet said, "Now retracting roof." A portion of the side and roof slid away, exposing a direct view of the lunar landscape. "Extending ramp," he added. The lower side folded out and extended to become a walkway.

"Follow us. This is the fun part," Memi said.

Stepping out onto the lunar surface was surreal. The low gravity made every movement a delight. My boots kicked up small clouds of fine dust as I easily jumped six feet up, only to slowly descend back to the surface.

"Try to keep your balance, Amos," Memi cautioned, already hopping gracefully several feet away.

"This is amazing! I feel like I weigh nothing," I exclaimed.

As I looked up, I noticed the stars had all disappeared. "What's with the stars? Where did they all go?"

"They are all still there," Emet said, "but you can't see them against the bright surface of the lunar day. When we leave, I'll fly you through the Moon's shadow, and the stars will all reappear."

Looking completely comfortable, Emet walked toward a cluster of small rocks. "Just a word of warning: you'll likely feel a strange urge to act like a giant child."

"Too late," I grinned under the helmet, pointing at a boulder easily the size of a small engine block. "Do you think I could lift that?"

"Give it a try," Memi challenged.

I went over and strained, managing to pick it up only about a foot off the ground. I tried as hard as I could, but if I had tried any harder, I would have certainly hurt my back. Although the moon has less gravity than the Earth, it still has 'some' gravity.

Memi laughed. "Silly boy. Let me show you how it's done."

She went to the same boulder, picked it up with ease, and tossed it about twenty feet away.

I watched this astonishing feat. "There must be some kind of trick. How did you do that?"

"No trick," Emet said reluctantly. "Remember I told you that there were a few biological differences between people on my planet and people on yours? Well, that is one of them."

I thought to myself, "She must be a real life 'Wonder Woman'."

Emet replied as he was attempting to do a handstand, "Charles Moulton, the creator of the comic book character 'Wonder Woman', was another author we tried that didn't work out."

"I was just thinking about Wonder Woman," I said.

"I know, I heard your thoughts," Emet said.

I stopped in my tracks. "Are you serious?" I asked, "Are you saying you can read minds?"

"Yes," he replied, "That is one of the psychological differences between our races."

"Wow! You're a regular Kreskin," I said in amazement.

Emet replied, "No, we looked at him, but decided he didn't write the kind of books we wanted, so we didn't contact him."

"But wait," I cut in. "You hear every thought? All the time?"

"No," Memi clarified. "We hear thoughts that are loud enough to hear. We hear the loudest thoughts when we are up close to someone, but after about 10 feet, we hear nothing. But yes, we hear the core intent of your thoughts easily."

"So, if I'm thinking, 'Memi is graceful and strong,' you hear that?" I asked while I threw a rock as hard as I could only to have it land about 1,000 feet away.

Memi bounced about 20 feet up. "Every word. It's how we avoid conflict and misunderstanding. It's very difficult to lie or conceal your intentions, which makes our society function smoothly."

"That's terrifying," I admitted. "My mind is... well, cluttered."

Emet chuckled. "We've learned to tune out the noise, but the core judgments are clear. Trust me, we hear much worse than 'Memi is graceful.'" With that, Emet did a double back flip.

"And the strength?" I steered the conversation back. "Is everyone on your planet exceptionally strong?"

Emet answered, "No. Only the females have an exceptionally high strength to size ratio. While females are smaller in size, they are physically stronger than males. We males are fit,

but far weaker. We tend to be better at intellectual things, but we can't physically pull our own weight."

Memi joined in. "We females have a superior musculoskeletal system. We might look frail and helpless to you, but we are not." With that, she picked up a smaller rock and threw it so far that I couldn't tell if it ever landed or not.

"I'll say," I said. "How much stronger, exactly?"

"It varies with age and other factors, but typically, we are about 2-3 times stronger than a male. If we were on Earth, I could easily lift the two of you by your bootstraps, one in each hand," Memi replied matter-of-factly.

"And your males?" I asked Emet.

"The average fit Earth male has slightly more muscle mass than a male from my planet of the same age," Emet confessed. "Memi, and all the other females on my planet, operate on a completely different scale."

"That explains how I ended up in a heap on the floor," I said.

Emet replied, "That was because you touched her without her prior consent. Nobody is allowed to touch a female without her consent, not even another female. However, anybody can touch a male anytime they want. It seems a bit unequal, but it's been the rule for thousands of years."

"It's a bit like watching my mother-in-law drive a new car off a cliff," I observed. "How did the strength difference arise?"

"That," Emet said, his tone turning serious, "is one of the secrets we need to discuss later. It is tied directly to the history of our civilization and what we will ask of yours."

"And the consent rule?" I pressed. "Is that enforced by law?"

"It's enforced by reality," Memi said simply. "If a female were to be touched without consent, her reflexive counter-reaction would be devastating. Given our strength, the outcome for the aggressor would be catastrophic. It simply doesn't happen."

"So, you're saying I'm safe with you, Emet," I said, "but highly vulnerable to Memi."

"Precisely," Emet confirmed with a slight bow. "Your safety is our priority, but the rules are the rules."

For several minutes, we took turns exploring, leaping, and throwing rocks, the silence broken only by our chatter over the comms. It was pure, childlike exhilaration.

Finally, Emet signaled it was time to leave. "Duty calls. Back aboard the shuttle, Amos."

We all walked back into the shuttle craft. The walkway retracted and the ceiling slid back into place. As the craft sealed and the cabin pressurized, Emet looked out at the surface as the shuttle slowly rose.

"We can't leave evidence of our visit," he explained. "We are committed to non-interference."

A powerful blue beam of focused light descended from the shuttle's undercarriage, sweeping across the area we had just disturbed. As the beam passed, the tracks we had left — my large footprints, Memi's graceful hops, and the gouges where the shuttle had landed — all vanished.

Astonished, I asked, "What was that?"

"A simple static field manipulator," Memi replied as she unsealed and removed her helmet. "It neutralizes the static charge that bonds the regolith particles, essentially letting the dust settle back into its original, undisturbed pattern. Zero evidence."

With the moonscape outside now pristine, the shuttle smoothly lifted away from the surface. A moment later, we were docking with the star craft.

Since Memi and Emet had already removed their helmets, I figured it was safe to remove mine. I grabbed the sides and pushed up, but nothing happened. The helmet stayed stuck. I tried several more times, but it wouldn't budge.

Memi saw my struggle. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm trying to get my helmet off, but it's stuck," I replied.

Memi laughed. "That's not how it comes off. Let me show you."

She reached both her hands to the base of my helmet, one on each side, and pressed for about two seconds. I heard a click, then a hiss. "Now you can remove it," she said.

I grabbed the sides and pushed up just as before, only this time, the helmet easily came off.

Memi gathered up all of the helmets and stowed them away.

"Just curious, but why is the Moon always facing the same way towards the Earth?" I wondered.

"That's easy," Emet said as we all ascended the spiral staircase back into the control room of the star craft. "It's because the Moon isn't a perfect sphere, and the side that faces Earth has more mass than the far side so its locked to the Earth's gravity and magnetic field."

Emet sat back down at his controls. "I'll reposition the orbit of the star craft so you can see what happens when we go into the Moon's shadow."

A few minutes later, the glow outside the ship darkened and we passed into the shadow of the Moon. Just as Emet had said, all of the stars reappeared as if by magic.

Emet said, "And now if everybody will take their seats, we can get off to Mars."

## Chapter III

### Mars

I stood at the windows and looked out at the stars in our galaxy and the universe in general during the flight to Mars. As we neared the Red Planet, I was amazed at its craters and dry riverbeds. The polar ice cap was tremendous in size. I could almost feel the cold from it as we neared the planet. I could see that there must be some atmosphere as occasionally a small dust devil would move across the face of the planet.

We flew over a section of the planet that looked like a huge gouge in the side of the planet. It looked to be thousands of miles long.

"Amos, come to the locker and lets get your helmet on for your trip out onto the surface of Mars," Memi instructed.

I followed her into the locker, as she called it, where she handed me a helmet. I was able to put it on my head all by myself this time, but my mind wasn't on the job I was doing. My mind was on the fact that I was about to stand on the surface of Mars. The first Earthling to ever do it! This was a big thrill for me. Then I wondered if anyone would believe me when I told them.

Memi intercepted my thoughts and remarked, "If you don't lock your helmet, you will never find out what people will say because you will never get to walk on the surface of Mars!"

"I'm sorry, but this is a big day for me. Already, I have seen and done things I never dreamed I would be able to do. I just can't help but wonder about things a little."

"You are going to see more and do more before this is all over. You will have so much material for your book that you will hate to leave a little bit out! For now though, you need to lock your helmet."

I was able to lock my helmet and heard the distinctive hiss as it sealed. I stood with Memi in the locker waiting for Emet. I felt a slight bump and a setting down of the star craft. I don't know why we didn't just take the shuttle like we did on the moon, but I guess Emet had his reasons for landing the star craft directly on the surface of Mars.

Emet came into the locker and Memi helped him put his helmet on.

After locking his helmet, Emet pressed the button that depressurizes the locker. As soon as the locker was depressurized, Emet pressed the button that caused the door opening to slide away. We were now standing facing the Martian landscape. The main difference I could note between this and the Moon was the greater horizon. The Moon had a horizon with a distinguishable curve; Mars did not have one. While this was clearly not the same as Earth, it did share some similarities in its geography.

Unlike the shuttle which had a nice ramp, there was a good 10 foot drop to the surface. Memi, sensing my concern, came over to me and said, "Amos, I'm going to help you off the

craft and onto the surface."

Memi put her arm around my waist and then jumped off the craft and onto the surface of Mars. The Martian gravity was double that of the moon, but still only a third of Earth.

I was now standing on the surface of Mars! The first Earthling to ever do that! I was feeling exuberant when Emet said, "Come down out of Cloud 9 and I will show you something about this planet." Having said this, Emet brought the shuttle around to take us where he wanted to go.

As I walked over to the shuttle, I noticed the soil on Mars was both sandy and dusty. It was kind of like a mix of desert sand and talcum powder. Still, it was dry and loosely packed so my boots pressed into it about an inch.

After we entered the shuttle, Emet piloted it to the bottom of the large gouge on the side of the planet I had spotted earlier. From space, it looked like a huge gouge, but now that we were at the bottom of it, it looks like a huge canyon. This thing was really huge. I've seen the Grand Canyon on Earth, but this thing makes the Grand Canyon look like a mountain creek.

Emet pointed to a spot on the side of the canyon wall. There I could see a large indentation. Emet flew closer and finally landed the shuttle in the mouth of a cave. We all got out. Sand had drifted across the entrance way to the cave and as we went toward the entrance, I could see that the sides of the canyon were nearly vertical. We were about 100 feet up from the bottom at this point, but still what looked like several miles from the top of the canyon. I judged it to be near the equator of the planet as the Sun was directly overhead.

Emet motioned for me to come to him, so I walked over to him. He said, "I want to show you something."

I went with him back into the cave a ways and he brushed off the wall of the cave. The dust fell almost instantly to the surrounding ground. This indicated to me a very thin atmosphere, but it was what Emet had uncovered that really surprised me. There in the wall of that cave was the corner of a metal tablet much like we use on the cornerstone of a building. I would say that from the looks of it, there was only about a fourth of the tablet there. The edges had been melted away and the entire surface had seen some very terrific heat!

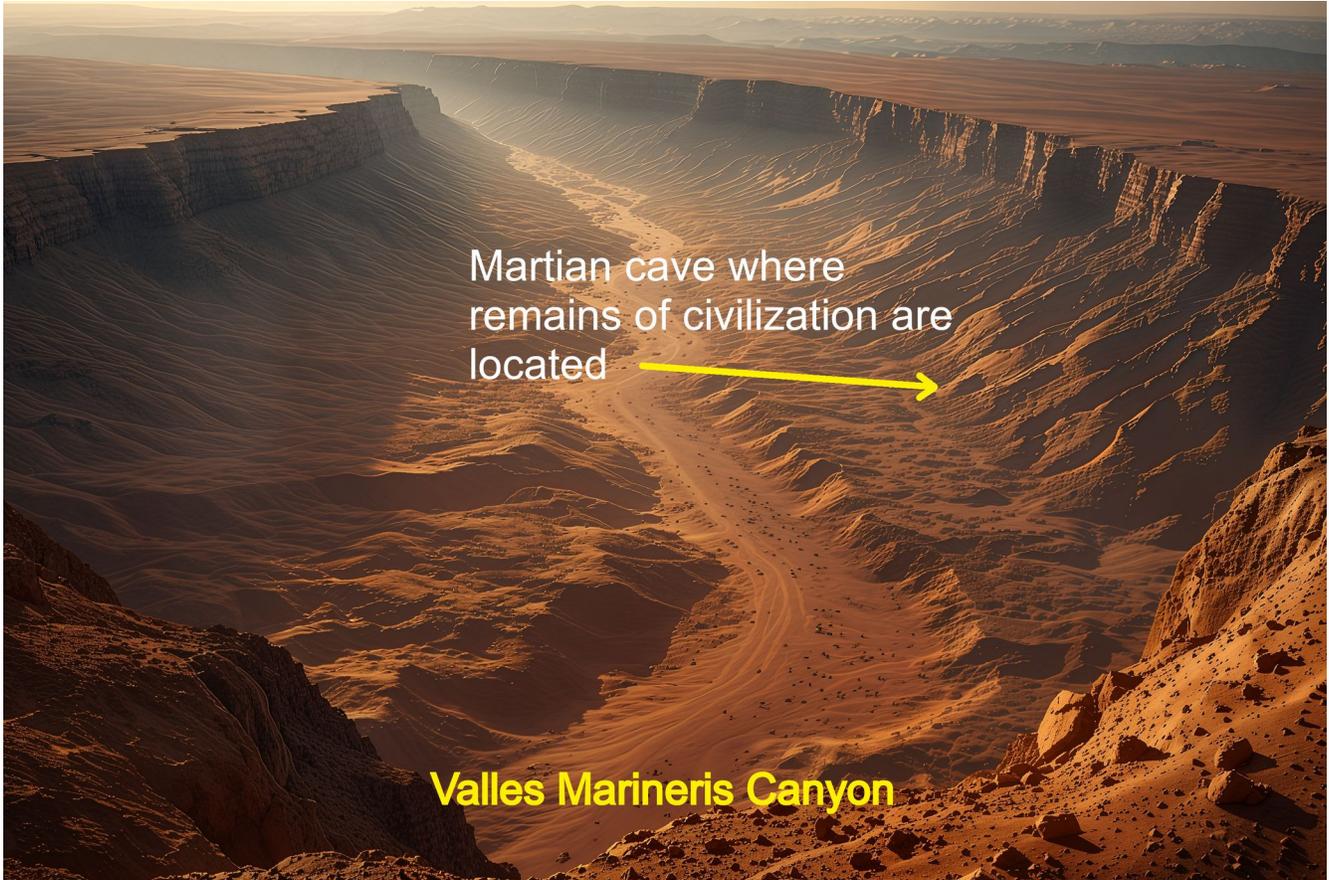
I asked, "Where did this come from?"

Emet explained, "This was found floating in space several light years from here. It is all that we have been able to find of the civilization that once thrived here. This planet was a living planet such as yours about 5,000 years ago!"

"How do you know this?" I questioned.

Emet replied, "Our people have been observing this planet and yours for some time now. We were not able to travel to it as we do today, but we could see it. We observed these people for centuries. They were highly intelligent, but also extremely barbaric. Murder was no more

of a crime than parking your space ship in the red zone. They were bipedal humanoids, but they were not humans. They called themselves the Oshwell. They were twice a human's size and were covered in a thick fur, much like your sheep. The fur would grow to about one foot thick all around their bodies which kept them warm. They did not wear clothing, but they were far from being naked with all that fur."



Emet continued, "Their system of government was more like a military organization than a true government. There were numerous ranks that a citizen could hold. Nobody was promoted, they rose through the ranks by killing and eating their superior officers." They were fierce fighters so that didn't happen as often as you would think.

"Despite all of the murders, they still managed to overpopulate the planet. Unlike Earth, there was only a small percentage of dry land. Their planet was 90% covered in water. There were 6 large island continents - each with its own military style government. Due to overpopulation and competition for resources, they began to wage war with each other."

"Over the years, they got better and better at killing each other. Until one day they figured out how to make an atomic bomb. That was a fatal mistake."

"In the final days, they had a rather thick atmosphere. The lower atmosphere was composed primarily of oxygen, krypton and xenon so even with the lower gravity, the air was still fairly dense. The upper atmosphere was almost pure deuterium which is a type of hydrogen."

"So krypton, like Kryptonite, Superman's Achilles heel?" I remarked.

"No," Emet responded, "We invited Jerry Siegel, who later created the comic book character 'Superman', but he declined our invitation due to family obligations."

"I think that was his loss," I said.

"It's a matter of opinion I guess. Anyhow, when the people of this planet first started killing their enemies with these atomic bombs, they were no more destructive than those of your Earth. Then one day they detonated several fusion bombs all at once. Because their upper atmosphere was composed of pure deuterium, it turned the whole planet into one large fusion bomb."

"In an instant, the atmospheric deuterium fused and the entire planet became a huge fireball. All life was gone, the oceans were gone, the atmosphere was gone and the planet's magnetic field was gone. This canyon was formed at that time," Emet said. "Of course, with overpopulation of the planet and poor ecological practices, these people would have destroyed themselves in other ways if it had not been for this atomic incident."

"How did the tablet get in this cave?" I asked.

"After we found the tablet floating in space, we brought it here and made this cave into a memorial to the people of this planet," replied Emet.

Just about that time, the ground began to shake. "What is going on?" I asked.

Memi replied, "That's just a Mars Quake."

Within a few seconds, the ground stopped shaking but it made me nervous standing inside a cave.

Memi, hearing my thoughts said, "They are no big deal and usually don't do any serious damage."

"Today," Emet continued, "Some of Mar's ocean water has drifted back and settled on the polar ice caps and some has landed on other planets, including Earth, but the rest was blasted out into interstellar space beyond the sun's heliosphere which will most likely never return."

"Is that what caused the global flood on the Earth", I asked.

Emet replied, "No, while the Earth did get a significant amount of Martian ocean water, it was not enough that anyone on Earth would notice. The people on Earth most likely just considered it part of the rainy season. It was not enough to raise your ocean levels and took many years for your planet's gravity to capture all it could."

"Did any of the people on Mars survive?" I asked.

"No," Emet replied, "Everyone on the planet was instantly vaporized, however, we suspect that one of their manned space probes did find its way to Earth. I say this because, while we have no proof, the descriptions of your planet's 'Big Foot' do tend to resemble that of a Martian. Its possible that the Big Foot sightings are actually descendants of those original Martian astronauts."

"Do you think Mars could ever be repopulated?", I asked.

"Not likely," Emet said, "The absence of a decent magnetic field makes that extremely unlikely. Without a magnetic field, anything on the planet is vulnerable to cosmic radiation and micro-meteors. Even a fully enclosed Mars base would not survive long. In order to bring Mars back to life, the first thing you would have to do is figure out how to re-magnetize its core."

"That certainly is an interesting story," I said.

"That is more than a story," Emet said. "That is a fact and your world better take heed because if they continue as they have, they will do the same to your planet. This is the reason for this book you are to write."

"I will write it," I said, "but I can't guarantee that anyone follow it or even believe it."

"All I can say is try it. They might fool you!" Emet added.

We walked back to the shuttle and we all got in and Emet piloted it back to the star craft where it docked. I somehow had lost the enthusiasm that I had when we left the star craft.

Sensing something was wrong, Memi put her arm around me. Somehow this didn't fill me with enthusiasm. Memi looked at me and said, "What is wrong, Amos? Have we done something to hurt you? I can't understand your thoughts! Tell me what is wrong!"

"I don't know that you would understand, but I am despondent. My world is headed for the same kind of end. We are going to destroy ourselves and I have the only cure or hope. Whatever you folks want me to write about is what may save my world! I can't afford to make a mistake! This places an even bigger burden on me than you already have told me about! As of this moment, I do not feel equal to the task. I am inadequate."

"It's no wonder I couldn't read your thoughts. You've been driving your mother-in-law over the cliff again!"

I had to laugh at Memi for saying this. "You haven't got the saying right, but I understand what you mean. I would like you to know that I didn't drive my mother-in-law over any cliff! That is just a saying."

By now Emet had docked with the star craft and we were routinely taking our helmets off. We

all ascended into the control room. Emet went to the control panel and started launch procedures as Memi and I sat in the seats provided.

"Next stop, Jupiter!" Emet exclaimed.

In the windows I could see that the craft was spiralling away from the red planet. Then came the jerk that made my seat move and turn. We were on our way to Jupiter.

## Chapter IV

### Jupiter

When this initial speed lurch was over, Memi got up and took me by the hand again and led me to the windows. This time she pointed to a distant star and said, "That star over there is your planet Earth. Isn't it beautiful?"

"Yes, I think it is. What is that big one over there? Is that Jupiter?" I asked.

"You guessed it," she said, "and that is where we are headed now."

I said, "Mars gave me a morose and melancholy feeling."

"Don't worry about that," Emet said. "You can't write well if you are going to brood over that. Just remember the mission you have!"

For the next few minutes no one said anything. Jupiter grew larger in size as we closed in on it. The asteroid belt had jolted the ship some as the asteroids were deflected from the craft by the navigation shield around it.

As we passed one particularly large asteroid, I noticed a shiny yellow metal on it that appeared to be like gold. I would have normally wanted to know more about it, but at this particular time I wasn't even curious.

Out there in front of us was the planet Jupiter, and in the other direction I could see Mars which looked like a star, and Earth was even more distant looking like a small blue star. Earth looked a little like Venus does when viewed from Earth.

The fact that Earth was so far away and I had just had the weight of Earth placed on my shoulders caused me to feel melancholy.

Memi smiled at me and said, "If you ask me a question, I will try to answer it!"

That rascal had been reading my thoughts!

I couldn't help but smile back at her for making such a statement. I said, "I'll ask you one and I'll see how well you do with it. How does that BeTran thing work?"

"I said I would answer the question so I will. The BeTran works with a special light beam. This beam took your body apart atom for atom and reconstructed you aboard the shuttle craft. If there is nothing that will obstruct the beam, such as clouds, we can transport directly from space, but in the case of clouds, we have to send the shuttle under the clouds."

"Do you ever have something happen to the machine to where atoms of people are put together wrong?"

"That never happens!" she said. "As atoms are removed from your body, they are linked together in a chain and transmitted to their destination. It's a bit like having your body reduced to a very long thread and then layered back together at the destination. They can't be reassembled wrong because they only fit one way."

As we pulled into orbit around Jupiter, Emet said, "Jupiter is a large gas giant with a huge gravity well. It has no land for us to land on, but I can get us into the upper atmosphere for a quick look around. This is going to be a bumpy ride so you need to be seated."

Memi and I both went to our chairs and sat down. Emet piloted the craft through several openings in the clouds of Jupiter. Dodging the toxic clouds was a bit like Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. There were swirling and colorful gases all around us. A bit scary, actually, with all the turbulence. I wasn't sure if we were flying through the atmosphere or if we were being kicked around by it.

"A little of both," said Memi, responding to my thoughts.

Suddenly a light started flashing on Emet's controls, and I could hear an alarm. "Plasma bearing failure!" he exclaimed. A few seconds later we pulled out of the atmosphere and then went back into orbit where everything settled down.

Emet and Memi started furiously punching buttons on the consoles. Emet said with an anxious voice, "That did it! We need to set down somewhere to make repairs."

"Ganymede is right up ahead; we can land there," said Memi.

Emet hit a few buttons and the next thing I knew, we were orbiting one of Jupiter's moons called Ganymede. Without a lot of time to waste, Emet piloted the star craft down to the surface. This time, the landing was a bit rough. I was knocked out of my chair when we hit the surface.

Everybody took a sigh of relief after the star craft landed and we were all in one piece. "What just happened?" I exclaimed.

Emet replied in a calm tone, "One of our plasma bearings failed and shut down our main generator that supplies energy to our propulsion system. I switched to the backup energy storage unit, which is how we got out of Jupiter's atmosphere and landed here. For right now, the main generator is offline, so we aren't going anywhere until it gets fixed. The backup storage system is nearly depleted because pulling out of Jupiter's atmosphere was a heavy drain, but we have plenty of power to restart everything once the plasma bearing is repaired."

"Why didn't you perform a diagnostic prior to entering the atmosphere?" Memi asked tersely. "You know that is required when approaching heavy gravity planets - especially ones that have no life."

"All of the instruments showed that everything was normal. I didn't think it was necessary. It was my error. I apologize, but right now, we have become deceased in a puddle," said Emet

in a sorrowful tone.

"Huh?" I said, thinking about what he just said. Then I said, "You mean we're dead in the water?"

"Yes," Emet said, "I just said that."

"Amos," Memi asked, "We are on the surface of Ganymede, which is a moon of Jupiter. Would you like to go out and look around while my careless brother fixes the ship?"

"I suppose so, I guess so," I replied with a clear worry in my voice.

"Don't worry about the craft," Memi replied. "My brother might be a bit careless and reckless sometimes, but he is an excellent mechanic."

Emet took some tools out of a storage locker and then opened a panel in the floor.

"Is that all right with you, Emet?" I asked.

He replied, "Yes, go ahead. This is going to take a little while."

Memi and I went to the locker and put our helmets on. We depressurized and jumped out onto the surface of Ganymede. The locker is a room that is sealed off from the rest of the ship, so Emet was not in danger when we depressurized it.

Although I was still very concerned about the star craft situation, Memi and I played around on the surface, doing child-like antics. Ganymede is not unlike our moon, except that I think it is a bit larger judging by the curvature of the horizon - almost as flat looking as Mars. Despite that, gravity on Ganymede seems slightly less than that of our moon. On the moon, I could jump up 6 feet, but here I could jump 7 feet, maybe 8.

We threw some smaller rocks around and did back flips and such. The soil was covered in a thin surface layer of black sand, but underneath was white sand. So when we walked, we left white footprints on dark soil.

"It's interesting how our footprints expose the white sand underneath," I said.

"That's not sand," Memi said. "That's ice crystals."

"Cool!" I said, looking at the tracks I had made.

"Yes, the surface temperature is  $-200^{\circ}\text{F}$  where we are right now," Memi said.

"No I didn't mean it that way; saying 'cool' is just Earth slang that means something is impressive," I said. "Come to think about it, any suit that can keep you at a comfortable  $74^{\circ}\text{F}$  when the outside temperature is  $-200^{\circ}\text{F}$  is very impressive also."

"So then you are saying your suit is 'cool'?" Memi stated.

I replied, "Yes, I believe I am. This suit is VERY cool."

Emet, who had been listening to our conversation over the comm, broke in and said, "Amos, if your suit is too cool, you can swap it out for one of the extra ones on board the star craft. For right now, I have repaired the plasma bearing so we can get going back to Earth."

Memi and I both laughed and then Memi said, "We'll be right there."

We walked over to the craft's opening. I had forgotten that it was 10 feet up. When I was jumping around earlier, the best I could do was only 7 or 8 feet high. Sensing my concern, Memi said, "I'll help you," as she put her arm around me and we jumped up to the opening. It's easy to forget that such a small woman is so strong.

Back inside the star craft, gravity was about the same as it is on Earth. Playing on the low gravity moon was fun, but it was also nice to get back to a normal gravity.

Memi and I pressurized the locker and then removed our helmets. We went back into the main control room where Emet was sitting at his console. He said, "If you two will be seated, I can restart the generator so we can get going."

We took our seats and Emet said, "Beginning starting sequence now."

Emet hit a button on his console. I heard something that sounded like a little motor running for a few seconds, then Emet said, "Reduction coils charging." A few seconds later, there was a loud bang, and the floor panel where Emet had been working blew off with a small explosion. Right after that, just about every light and alarm in the craft started flashing, beeping, and screaming. This went on for about 30 seconds, and then everything went dark. A few seconds after that, the room glowed red.

"What happened?" Memi screamed.

"Why is everything all red? Are we burning up?" I asked in terror.

"No," Emet said. "We are not burning up. The red is emergency lighting."

When he said that, I felt better, but still very concerned about everything else.

"I thought you said you fixed it," Memi asked rhetorically.

"I did," Emet replied, "But we have an even bigger problem now. Our backup storage unit is completely discharged. We aren't going anywhere. We don't have enough power to restart the generator. I'm afraid that's all she typed."

"That's all she wrote," I said.

"Yes," Emet responded, "That's what I just said."

"So what do we do now?" I asked.

Although I have only known Emet for less than a day, I noticed that he doesn't make eye contact much. This time, he looked me straight in the eye and said in a calm, monotonous tone, "We die."

## Chapter V Tragedy

Memi interjected, "Don't be ridiculous, we can call Dad and have him come get us."

Emet abruptly answered, "Weren't you listening when I said we have NO power? The quantum communicator won't work!"

"What about the comms in the suits? Will they work?" I asked.

Emet answered, "The comm system uses low-power electromagnetic communicators. They will still work, but they only work short range. We could boost them to maybe get to one of the other moons, but they would never reach our planet."

"How about the shuttle? Could we use that to fly to Earth and return with something that could be used to power the star craft?" I asked.

Memi answered, "The shuttle is designed for short-range travel, such as to and from the star craft and around a planet. It doesn't have a star drive. It can only fly at well under sub-light speeds. If we got in the shuttle and left for Earth now, we wouldn't get there for over a month."

"So then it's doable?" I said.

"Except that the life support systems on the shuttle will become depleted in less than a week without connecting to a working star craft for recharging," said Emet.

"Does the shuttle have a generator that you could use for the main star craft?" I asked.

"It has a generator, but it is far too small to run the star craft engine," Emet said.

"What about the backup storage unit?" I asked.

"That is completely discharged," Emet said.

I replied, "Yes, but can we use the generator in the shuttle to charge it enough to get the main craft's generator started?"

"Wait," Emet said, thinking about it, "That might work."

Memi said, "If we did that, we would have to breach the hull of the shuttle in order to get the power conduits connected. We would not be able to use the shuttle after that."

"Sounds like it's better than just sitting here waiting to die," I said.

"Agreed," Emet said. "Memi, you take a look at the main generator to see why it failed a

second time, and I will start rerouting power from the shuttle to the backup storage unit."

With that, they both grabbed some tools from the locker and started working on their tasks. Memi sat down at the open floor panel, and Emet hit the button to activate the descent stairs into the shuttle. Nothing happened, then Emet said, "There is a problem. There isn't enough power to work the descent stairs. I can't get to the shuttle."

"What about from the outside?" I asked.

"Yes," Emet said, "The shuttle has an independent power system so I can open it and extend the ramp from the outside. But the trip through the locker of the star craft is one way. I can depressurize it manually, but pressurization takes energy, so unless I can restore power to the star craft, it will be a one-way trip."

"I'll go with you," I said.

"No, you stay with Memi in case she needs your help," Emet replied.

Emet then grabbed his tools and went to the locker, put his helmet on, manually depressurized, and then exited through the star craft door. I could see through the window that he was able to successfully extend the shuttle's ramp and get aboard.

I forgot that the comms were in the helmets and now they were locked behind the locker door. We had no way to communicate with Emet. Then I remembered, these two are telepathic. "Can you communicate with him telepathically?" I asked.

"Yes, he is on board and starting the modifications," Memi said.

In a few minutes, the lights came on in the star craft. Emet's voice crackled through the main comm system, "I've connected the auxiliary circuit to the life support system of the star craft. It's not enough to charge the backup storage unit, but you should be able to breathe now. I'm going to start work on the power conduit for the backup storage unit."

"What did he mean when he said we could breathe now?" I asked of Memi.

She replied in a calm tone, "Life support went out when the lights went out. We only had a few hours of oxygen left, but it's OK now."

Alarmed, I replied, "That's comforting!"

A few minutes later, Memi said, "I found the problem. There were two bad plasma bearings, not just one. That created an imbalance. Unfortunately, now both are bad."

Emet replied over the comm, "Then get busy fixing them then. I'm almost done here."

"Do you want to race?" Memi queried.

"No!" I said, "Take your time and do it right."

Memi giggled.

About 20 minutes later, Emet said, "I've connected the shuttle's generator to the star craft's backup power unit and it's now charging."

"That is really good to hear!" I said.

Emet replied, "I think it is. What's the holdup, Memi? Why aren't you done fixing it?"

Memi answered, "You forgot that I have two bearings to repair. One is done and the other will be fixed in a few minutes."

"Don't rush," Emet said. "The backup storage unit is going to take at least another half hour before it can charge up enough to make another attempt at starting the generator."

"Amos, it's going to be a while, would you like to come down here and learn a little bit about Ganymede and how it relates to Earth?" asked Emet.

"Sure, are the stairs working now?" I asked.

"Yes," Emet replied, "But you can't use them. The shuttle lost hull integrity when I had to route the conduit. You'll have to exit through the locker and jump down like I did. The locker should be fully functional now. Just don't forget to put your helmet on and seal it."

"OK," I said, "I'll see you in a few minutes."

I went to the locker and it had already closed the outside door and pressurized. I went in and put my helmet on and locked it like I had done before. I heard the familiar click and hiss so I figured it was on right. I hit the button to depressurize and then the one to open the outside door.

I jumped down to the surface of Ganymede and there I saw Emet waiting for me. "This way," he said.

I followed him up the shuttle ramp and into the shuttle. Inside, there were no seats, so we both sat on the floor. "So what about Earth and Ganymede?"

Emet said, "Under us right now is a subterranean ocean made of liquid water. It is vast. So much so that even though this moon is much larger than your moon and almost as big as Mars, it has less mass than your moon, and hence, less gravity. Simply put, water is less dense than rock."

"I noticed the difference in gravity when we were outside before," I said. "So how does that affect Earth?"

Emet began, "Because of the distance from our planet to yours, and the speed at which light travels, we have been able to observe your planet thousands of years in the past. Back then, Earth also had a subterranean ocean. There were already people, plants and animals living there. Then, one man built a huge wooden box and filled it with his family and two of every kind of land animal. It was almost as though he knew what was going to happen."

"We're not sure exactly what caused it, but a deep, unstable crack formed in the Earth's crust from pole to pole forming a fissure. This allowed the water and steam from the subterranean ocean to shoot out under extreme pressure. The pressure was so explosive that some of the water left the atmosphere briefly before raining back down on the planet."

"This continued for over a month. As it did, the planet's crust was forced apart at the fissure. This caused the rest of the Earth's crust to be compressed laterally. As it did, the crust folded in some spots, almost like an accordion. This caused some areas to fold up and some to fold down as the fissure widened. The areas that folded up became mountain ranges and the areas that folded down became oceans - all parallel to the fissure. Water continued to flow out of the now wider fissure for about 4 more months at a much lower pressure so it no longer shot into the air. The fissure is now known by your people as 'The Atlantic Ocean'."

"Originally, the Earth had very little surface water. There were some lakes and streams fed by stable, tiny conduits to the subterranean ocean, but nothing of any significance. Some lakes were deep enough to support large sea creatures like whales. After the fissure released all that water, we could see that the entire Earth was covered with water and most of it was bulged up on the side of the planet with the fissure. It took about 6 more months before the planetary water was able to completely equalize and multiple land masses appeared."

"Before the flood, the atmosphere was extremely arid. With the new rain and water, it caused the Earth to cool rapidly. So much so that snow and ice completely covered the poles. As more and more snow fell in these areas, it packed down, forming glaciers which spread out, covering much of the northern parts of the land masses. Over many centuries, as the atmosphere became warmer and more humid, these glaciers receded from much of the land masses exposing the mess that the glaciers had carved into the Earth."

"Anyhow, I thought you might like to know about the early times of your planet," Emet said.

"Yes," I said, "I never knew any of that happened. It certainly wasn't like anything I was taught in school."

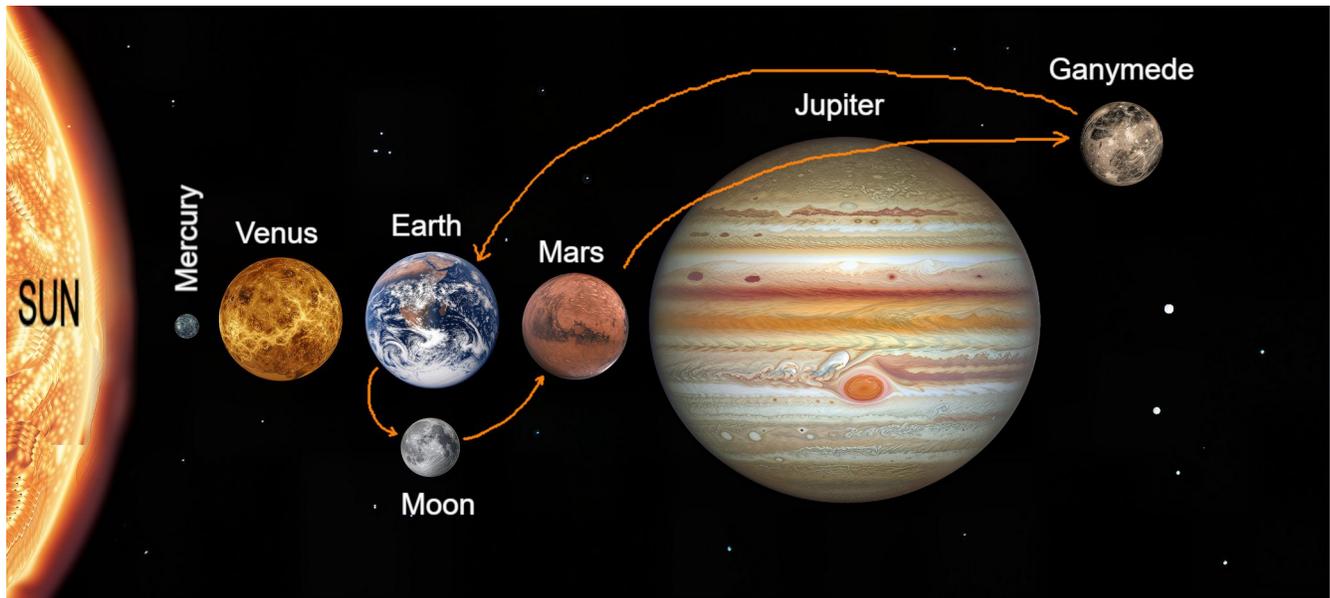
Memi said, "If you two are done having your moment, I'd like you to know that I have finished repairing the second bearing. I also ran a diagnostic and everything checks out fine. The instruments show we can restart the generator in about 20 minutes."

"That's the best news I've heard all day!" I said.

Emet replied, "No, you mustn't contact the news. Wait until the book is finished."

I said, "So I guess we still can't use the stairs. Should we go outside and hop back into the

star craft door?"



*We traveled from Earth to the moon where we visited one of the Apollo moon landing sites. We then left the moon and traveled to Mars. On Mars we visited the remains of an ancient civilization. From Mars we traveled to Jupiter and went through the upper atmosphere where we had engine problems and were forced to land on Ganymede which is one of Jupiter's moons. After we repaired the ship, we traveled back to Earth where I was sent back to my citrus grove. Later, I was picked up again and taken to Emet and Mimi's planet.*

"That would be correct," Emet said, and we both got up and went outside, retracted the shuttle ramp, and went to the star craft door.

I said, "That thing is 10 feet up. How are we going to get up there without Memi to carry us?"

Emet said, "No worries. There is a winch above the door just for this purpose." He hit a button on his suit and down came a rope. We both grabbed it and up we went. In just a few seconds we were back in the star craft.

We arrived in the control room and Memi spun around in her chair and said, "It's all yours," while pointing to the command console.

I sat down in my chair and Emet sat in the chair at the command console. He hit a button on the console and said, "Reduction coils charging."

I heard something like a large motor spinning up and this time there was no bang. Suddenly, several of the previously red lights on his control panel turned green. "We are up and running, all sensors show good. We are ready to leave," Emet said.

We lifted off the surface and spiraled away from Ganymede and then Jupiter itself. We were finally on our way back to Earth.

"I wish I could come back to Ganymede someday and explore the moon's geology," I said.

"You may get a second chance someday if your book is a success," answered Memi. "We have something more important to talk about just now. We want to take you to our planet and let you visit there. When can you go?"

I replied, "During the summer is the best time for me. How long do you want me to be gone?"

"I think you better plan for 3 weeks to a month. A month away would be the best. We need to get back home where we can do more permanent repairs to the star craft," said Memi.

"That would have to be during the month of July then. That would give me time to make preparations before I go and to straighten things up before I have to go back to work," I said.

"That sounds good to me. We will contact you at your place in Loxahatchee on the first day of July. You can then tell us which day you will leave. We will then pick you up and head for our planet," Memi said.

"I don't know what time of day I will be out there to the place," I said. "If you try to contact me and I'm not there, just wait until I get there."

"We will be able to see you and will know when you get out there and when you are ready to be contacted. Don't worry about us leaving you or giving up," inserted Emet.

"I guess it is all settled then. May I tell my wife?" I asked.

"No! Don't tell a soul. If you tell anyone, we won't be back to pick you up!" said Emet.

I asked, "How come?"

He replied, "They would put you through a lot of questions and tests to see if you were telling the truth. Besides that, a whole gang of them would be around to see you off on the day of your departure. They might even try to come aboard also. We only want you! We don't want you subjected to anything as yet. You will have your turn."

The remainder of the trip I stood by the windows and watched the stars hurry by. I saw Jupiter shrink in size. Mars increase in size. Then the Earth began to grow in size. I believe the Earth was the most friendly looking planet. It has a bluish cast and a friendly looking face.

Just before we went into orbit around Earth, Memi used the quantum communicator to call her Dad and let him know what had happened. He will rendezvous with them at about the half-way mark to make sure they get home all right.

When we were almost into position over my farm, Memi took me into the star craft's BeTran room and unzipped my suit and helped me get out of it.

"We can transport you directly from the star craft because there are currently no clouds between us and your farm. We will contact you the first of July and then pick you up on the

day you say. Remember, don't tell a soul," cautioned Memi.

The craft arrived at the position necessary to send me back to my farm. Someone pressed a button or something and an odd sensation came over me. The next thing I knew, I was standing buck naked in the middle of my orange grove. I gathered up my clothes and put them on.

Everything looked fuzzy, but then I remembered that my vision was temporarily restored to 20-20, so my glasses were making things worse. I removed my glasses which was an easy fix, but I suspect I will need them again in a few days.

If it wasn't for that, this whole thing would have seemed like a dream. Emet said it might.

I walked over to my car, locked the place up and drove home. No one seemed to notice my return.

## Chapter VI

### Jim and the saucer

Although it seemed like July would never come, it finally did, just the way it always does — right after June. I had no communication with Emet or Memi since they had returned me some time ago, and I was getting a little anxious to know if they were going to contact me today.

I walked over to the spot in my grove that I had come to know as 'the pickup spot'. Suddenly I could see a large round shadow approaching me. I looked up. As I did, I could see the shuttle hovering above me.

I heard Emet's voice saying, "When can you leave?"

This time there was no smoke and no giant cotton balls, so it was a voice only communication that apparently only I could hear.

I answered, "Anytime now. When is best for you?"

"How about July 4th?" Emet suggested.

"That will be fine with me," I replied.

"Very well then. We shall plan for July 4th at whatever time you can get ready," Emet said.

With this, the the shuttle disappeared, and not a moment too soon. My neighbors were approaching me, and I could see the sheriff's helicopter churning towards me in the distance.

My closest neighbor, Jim Claxton (not his real name), came puffing up to me and, between puffs, asked, "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay," I said. "Why?"

"You mean that you didn't see that UFO over top of you?", questioned Jim.

"Of course I did, but it didn't hurt me," I replied.

By now, all of the neighbors who had seen the shuttle had arrived. They were all puffing from having run so hard.

"Are you sure you are all right? You look funny!" said Jim. "I think we ought to take you in to the doctor and have you checked over."

"I'm okay! Honest!" I said.

By now, the sheriff's helicopter had spotted the gathering and landed in my pasture. One of

the deputies left the helicopter and ran to where I was standing.

"Did anyone here see a UFO?" the deputy asked.

"We did! It was right over this man's head!" contributed Jim.

"Are you all right?" the deputy asked of me.

"Yes, I'm okay," I answered.

"He looks strange to me. He should see a doctor, I think. He doesn't look natural to me!" offered Jim.

"I think that would be a good idea," confirmed the deputy. "You come with me. I'm going to take you to the hospital. Can one of you drive his car in so he will have something to drive home in later?"

"I'll be glad to do it for him," said Jim.

"You get his car and meet him at the emergency room of the hospital," the deputy was talking directly to Jim, "If I were you, I wouldn't say a word about this to anyone until you are told you can by the doctor and the sheriff."

"If you think I shouldn't, I won't," answered Jim.

This was the deputy's first mistake. Telling Jim not to talk was like trying to shut up Martha Mitchell. He had a big mouth, and when he had a few 'nips' — which he had — you could always figure the mouth was well oiled and worked untiringly — a little on the order of perpetual motion.

Whenever Jim told something two or three times, you could figure on it getting bigger and better with each time he told it.

The deputy took me to the helicopter and helped me into my seat behind the pilot. I had always wanted to ride in a helicopter, but somehow this didn't seem quite like what I had in mind.

The deputy radioed into the hospital that we were coming, and this proved to be his second mistake. Every character with a police band on his radio could hear what was going on.

The news media had picked up the broadcast and were on their way to the hospital!

Jim was on his way in my car, stopping every few miles, telling all his friends!

Somehow I hadn't pictured in my mind that this was what the deputy had wanted.

The helicopter was slow and cumbersome compared to the craft Emet flew me in, but I knew

better than to say anything about that now.

We landed on the hospital helipad. The emergency team was waiting. Two male nurses had a stretcher; a man in a white suit and what looked to be a sloppy plastic raincoat was standing beside the stretcher-bearers with a radiation detector. He had on big earphones, a plastic helmet, and with one hand he swept the probe over me. Now if anyone looked like a supposed creature from Mars, he did. I must have passed that count, because he stepped back and took off his helmet.

The stretcher bearers came over, placed me in the stretcher — I didn't need it, but I thought it would give the news hounds a good picture. This was my mistake. From here on it was all uphill! No one would listen to me until the doctor had examined me completely in the emergency room.

As we got off the elevator at the emergency room, news hounds began to swarm up to me and started asking questions. The sheriff had arrived with deputies, and so they cordoned off the area. So when the crowd started to press around me, they moved them all back to a safe distance. The emergency team carried me into an emergency room.

The doctor on duty looked at me and had the nurses transfer me to the examination table. They cut my shirt off, cut one pant leg up to the knee. Before I knew it, they had popped a thermometer into my mouth, a nurse was drawing blood samples, a male nurse was connecting an encephalogram machine to my head, and another was standing by with an electrocardiogram machine. The doctor attached a blood pressure cuff to one arm and was pumping the bulb, and as he placed his stethoscope — he must have kept it on dry ice when not in use — on my arm, and read my blood pressure. After the blood pressure came the 'breathe-deep-while-I-freeze-your-chest-with-my-cold-stethoscope' bit. He thumped my chest between the wires dangling all around. All this went on while I still had a thermometer in my mouth! They must surely have put the thermometer in my mouth to keep me from talking!

With the encephalogram machine now attached to my head, the doctor began to take a reading. If that machine could have read what I was thinking, it would have melted, for by now I was getting a bit angry.

They took the thermometer out of my mouth, and the first thing I said was, "Have you called my wife?" No one paid any attention to me. They just kept looking at the machine and the scribbles on the paper.

One little nurse said, "I'm going to call his wife before she hears it on the news." With this bit of wisdom uttered, she left the room.

In a moment or two, the doctor told the male nurse to disconnect the encephalogram machine, which he did.

The doctor began to hook up the electrocardiogram machine to my chest as the other one was being disconnected. As soon as he could, the doctor turned the electrocardiogram machine on and watched some more squiggly lines being made on a piece of paper. He

seemed satisfied and told the nurses to disconnect it. He began to press hard on my abdomen and asked, "Does that hurt?"

"Of course it does! You would hurt too if somebody tried to flatten you like a pancake?" I snapped.

"Temper, temper," he retorted as he had me sit up on the edge of the table while he cracked my knee with his little mallet. My reflex, always being good, nearly clobbered him.

He stuck pins in my now bare foot and asked if I could feel it. This he should have known when I pulled it away from him.

Finally, he looked at me and said, "I give up! What is supposed to be wrong with you?"

I started to answer him when a nurse came in with the results of some of the blood tests that were being conducted. She handed them to the doctor, and he just looked at them and said over and over again, "Ah ha, Ah ha!"

I looked at him and was about to ask him if he was stuck in 'second gear' and needed a push. When he came out of it he said, "You have very peculiar blood! The sample that was taken shows some very interesting things that will warrant waiting for the final results."

"Why can't I go home and wait?" I asked.

"That would never do! You must stay here! It will only take about half to three-quarters of an hour or more, so I suggest you sit quietly where you are. Would you like to see your wife?" He asked.

"Yes, I would. I'll bet she is very upset by now," I said.

The doctor opened the door, and the crowd descended on him like a swarm of Florida mosquitoes after a Yankee snowbird at the beach. I got a fleeting glimpse of my wife outside the door and my two sons.

In a moment or two, my wife entered the room, and the doctor pulled the door shut. The curious all began to try to peek through the door at me. My wife looked worried, and she looked at me and asked, "Are you all right? Just what did happen?"

I told her all about the UFO coming over my head and turning a spotlight on me.

She added, "Is that all that happened?"

"That is all that happened," I said.

"Jim is surely having a field day," she said. "He had the UFO sitting on your head and knocking you down while two green men got out to get you. Of course, he saved you by scaring them off as he came up!"

"That guy!" I said, "He'll have me dead yet from some unknown cause!"

"I guess I better go out and tell the newsmen and the curious that you are all right before he does tell something that will scare everyone," interjected the wary doctor.

I said, "Let's leave him alone! Let him tell what he wants to! I want to cure him of that bad habit. Maybe if he can really be embarrassed over something, he won't do it again!"

Doc slid the door open slightly and I could see the newsmen taking Jim's picture while he told them about the episode. His version, that is! He even had the sheriff and deputies listening to his story.

The nurse came in, handed Doc a paper, and stood by while he read it. Again, all I got was a vocal "Ah ha!"

He turned to my wife and me and said, "There is nothing wrong with you, so you can go home now."

I said, "I told you there wasn't from the start! If you had listened to me, we wouldn't have had all this trouble and expense!"

"Look here now! People were concerned about you, and that is why we gave you the checkup!" he said.

"I'm sorry, Doc, but all that I have been through today is getting to me, I guess," I said.

"You're tired, I'm sure. Why don't you call your sons and Jim in so you can tell him what to do with your car, while I talk to the reporters?" asked Doc.

He called my sons and Jim into the room. I told Jim to call his wife to come and get him and that my eldest son would drive my car home.

He began to realize that the show was over by now and that he better head for home before some irate newsman cracked his skull. He went out of the room to call his wife.

While he was gone, I asked Doc, "Is there some way I can get out without being hounded by the news and curious?"

"You can go out this way." He said as he pointed to a doorway that the nurses and doctors use.

My family and I went out of the emergency room by the back way as the doctor went out to talk to the newsmen.

We arrived home and turned on the TV just in time to catch the best of a bulletin about me. It was reported that I had been injured by these creatures and wasn't expected to live. I knew

where they got that bit of information and laughed with my wife as I said, "What did I tell you?"

My wife just nodded and laughed. The news then added a flash that all previous statements were false and that I was okay.

At this time, the doorbell began to ring and the telephone began ringing also. I looked at my wife and she said, "I'll take the phone. You take the live ones at the door."

I went to the door and opened it. As I did, I guess some of the people there thought I was a ghost, for they slipped away. I explained to them that I was all right and that the stories had gotten out of hand. They all seemed satisfied, for they turned and left quietly.

My wife handled the telephone calls and came back to me.

"I don't want you to go to the farm again until I can be sure you are all right," my wife said.

"I promised that I won't go out again until the 4th. How about that?" I asked.

"That will do for now, but you may not get to go then if something develops," she said.

"Nothing will develop because I am okay," I said.

Jim had slipped away from the crowd at the hospital and had gotten home without anyone seeing him, but one of the reporters later nominated Jim's story and Jim for the liar of the year award!

## Chapter VII

### Interstellar Flight

July 4th arrived, and my wife began finding things for me to do at the house in an effort to keep me from going to my farm.

I reminded her that I had promised her that I would stay home until July 4th and that on that day I was going to the farm. She admitted that she remembered and reluctantly told me that I could go.

"You don't need to give me permission. I'm going to go anyway, but it is nice to know that you approve!" I said.

"When can I expect you back?" she asked.

I replied, "I won't be back for about a month this time. I'm going away for a while from the farm, and I'll be back on or about the 1st of August."

"You've got to be kidding!" she said. "You can't go anywhere without your clothes or shaving gear! Please get home before dark tonight. I'll have a hot supper ready for you tonight."

"I'm not kidding," I said. "I won't be back before the 1st of August. I'll be able to tell you all about this after I get back, but I've got to go and it is very secret as of now. Please believe me."

"You're not kidding, are you? All I can say is that you better have a good reason or story when you get back!" she said.

"I want you and the family to go to your mother's for a vacation if you want to. Just be certain to take good care of yourself while I am gone," I said.

"I will, you take care of yourself too," she said.

"I hope to be able to. Bye!" I said then kissed her goodbye and went to my car. I turned as I got into the car and saw her standing there at the door, dabbing her eyes with her fingers.

When I arrived at the farm, I unlocked the gate, drove through, closed the gate, and locked it. I drove the car on to where I always park it, got out, and locked it. As I locked the car, my heart began to beat faster and I became excited about what was going to happen to me.

I walked rapidly to the spot I had begun to call in my own mind 'the pickup spot.' As I walked up to the spot, the shuttle craft appeared, the light came down on me and I was immediately taken aboard.

I went through the tingling sensation of the BeTran sanitizer again, except that this time it wasn't nearly as bad as before. Before I knew it, the shuttle craft had docked with the star

craft and Memi was there to greet me.

Memi entered and helped me get my suit on. I had to let her zip it for me because I still didn't have the hang of it, but other than that, I was able to get into it with her help better this time. She laughed at my clumsy efforts to zip the material and zipped my suit for me.

We went immediately to the control room and I said, "Hi, Emet! Did you get everything fully repaired?"

"Hi, Amos. Yes everything is like factory new," Emet said. "Please be seated and we will take off for my planet immediately."

I sat down in the chair I had used before. As I sat down, I felt the craft surge at a very rapid rate of speed and Memi became uneasy and said to her brother, "Don't get in too much of a hurry! We can get home in plenty of time to show Amos around without taking a chance on tearing the star craft up!"

"I'm not going to go faster than 50 light-years per hour!" he said. "That will get us there soon enough and still satisfy you!"

"Just make certain that you don't go any faster than that," demanded Memi.

"I won't unless you start nagging me," replied Emet.

Memi stated, "I'll not nag you. You know I don't do that."

"May I interrupt this domestic scene long enough to ask a question?" I asked.

"Certainly!" said Emet, "We have quite a while to talk and answer your questions as well as to instruct you on what we want done and said. What is your question?"

"I was just wondering how long it will be before we arrive on your planet?" I queried.

"It will be several of your days. Let me see... How long it will be?" Emet said. With this, he began punching some buttons on the control panel. In a moment he looked up and said, "We will be on my planet in about 80 hours or 3.3 days."

After he said this, he turned to Memi and said, "Memi, come and help me get the navigational instruments set."

Memi went to the different control panels under the windows and punched buttons. As she did, lights lit up and flashed on and off. The whole control room began to look like a Christmas tree. In a moment or two, she had finished her task and sat down in her chair as though waiting for something to happen.

I didn't know what to expect, but I was certain that something was going to, because Emet and Memi both were seated and waiting. I was about to ask what they expected when I found

out. The ship lurched forward with terrific speed. I felt the ship quiver as it picked up speed and then balanced out. No one was able to say anything for a moment or two until the ship had reached the speed it was to travel.

"Do you go through that every time you go anywhere," I asked?

"Yes, we do. That is a thing about going this fast," Emet said. "We have to put up with a little discomfort in order to travel this fast, but if we didn't travel this fast, we would never get where we are going! Three days is a long time to travel. We could reduce that to about 2 days, but my sister, the 'worrywart', won't let me."

"I have a month to stay so don't hurry on my account," I said.

Emet laughed as he said, "I won't. I just like to get where I am going!"

"That's your trouble, Emet! You speed along and miss some of the finer things in life," informed Memi.

"Maybe I do, but I'm never late for appointments," he said.

"You two surprise me! I thought you never argued or disagreed with each other and here you have done nothing but argue for the last little bit. Can't we find something you can both agree on so we can enjoy these three days?" I asked.

"I'm sorry, Amos," said Emet. "I guess it does seem like we are arguing, but really we are not. We love one another too much to do that!"

"Speak for yourself, brother dear!" Memi said, "I think it is time that we began to introduce Amos to some of the things he is going to have to do on our planet and let him know what is going to be expected of him."

"You are so right, Memi," said Emet. "Shall we tell him about our planet or shall we begin him on the language learner first?"

Memi replied, "I vote for the language learner for a short period of time today, tomorrow, and the next day."

Emet said, "That sounds like a very good idea! Amos, come over here and sit down in this chair. I want you to begin to learn our native tongue so you can talk to people on my planet."

"Just how am I going to do that?" I asked.

"Just sit down and I will explain this to you as I get you connected," he said.

I sat down and Memi took something out of a cabinet. It looked a little like a harness orthodontists use in straightening teeth, except that it had another strap on it and wires coming out of the top. The wires were very thin and bare where they contacted my head.

They were extremely close together and then they went up into a single thin cable that she plugged into a wall console.

"I am going to put this on your head now. You will feel the wires going into your scalp. It will feel a little uncomfortable at first, but when I turn the machine on, you will feel a tingle. It won't be a shock, but it will surprise you at first. Later it will feel like someone massaging your scalp. When I disconnect the machine you will wish you could keep it on for a while," explained Memi.

She put the helmet on my head and it was every bit as uncomfortable as she had said. She activated the machine and I thought it was going to drive me out of my skull! Then almost as soon as I had felt that way, the feeling changed to that of comfort.

I sat in the chair with this machine connected to me for what seemed like a long time. The thing had become so comfortable that I went to sleep.

I must have slept for quite a little while because the next thing I knew, Memi was taking the helmet off and I was wanting it to stay on like she had told me to begin with.

"That thing was most uncomfortable at first, but it certainly did get comfortable later!" I said.

"It must have. You went to sleep while it was on and slept through the whole operation!" answered Memi.

"I know I slept," I said, "but I didn't have any idea of how long."

"That's all right," she said, "You have a little of our language on your brain now and at the end of 3 days you will be able to speak our language as well as we do yours!"

"Why don't I know some to where I can speak it now?" I asked.

"You do!" Memi responded, "We have to speak in our native language to trigger the reaction. We don't want to until the whole process is over and then you will be able to be fluent in our language. Right now I would like to have you come to the window to where I can show you where we are going. I can't show you where we have been because that light can't reach us. I'll show you your sun when we get on our planet to where you can see it."

Memi reached down and took me by the hand as she led me to the windows. Everything to the rear of us was all black like the lights had been turned out in that part of the planetarium. The stars on the left and right of us were streaks. The only stars we could see clearly were those directly in front of the craft. The light of the forward stars were extremely odd looking and varied in intensity and shape.

Memi saw me watching with wonderment on my face, so she said, "These lights or stars are varying in intensity because of the craft. Our engines fire bursts of power for propulsion and do not operate steadily. This makes the light we are 'bumping' into vary in speed so it gets brighter and dimmer accordingly."

"We had a great man of mathematics who used math and proved that light was the ultimate speed," I pondered, "He said that nothing could travel faster than light."

Memi replied, "I'm familiar with his theories, but they don't apply in this case. While we arrive at our destination faster than light would get there, we don't actually exceed the speed of light itself."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Our star craft is able to warp space time and then skim across the peaks," she said. "Think of it this way, suppose you were in the desert and needed to walk 100 miles in less than 10 minutes. Ordinarily, this would not be possible, but if you had a machine that could temporarily bend the flat desert into steep valleys and hills to where the peaks of the hills were only a step away from the previous, you would be able to get to your destination with only a few steps."

"That absolves his great theory, but it still doesn't explain how this craft can warp space!" I said.

"I guess it doesn't," she said. "Learning how this craft can go so fast is one of those things you will have to wait to learn until your planet agrees to the terms that will be in your book."

"I may never learn then!" I whined.

"That is always a possibility, but that is the way it is going to have to stand for the time being. I'm sorry!" she said.

I asked, "Is there anything you can show me that I can take back and show people?"

"You will have lots of things to take back," she said, "but you will have to take everything back in your mind because anything else will not go through the Betran."

"How come?" I asked.

"Because it only works on living matter. That is why you came aboard naked," she replied.

"I guess I forgot," I said. "Suppose I forget some of the details that are supposed to go into the book?"

"You won't need to worry about that," she replied. "We will make certain that you won't forget the important facts."

"How are you going to do that?" I asked.

"Don't worry about that now, Amos," Memi said, "It is time for all of us to rest. If we were on our planet, it would be past time for our rest, so I suggest that we all get naked for the next

few hours."

"I'm ready for it," answered Emet as he got up from the control panel.

I was surprised at this action, so I started to ask who was flying the ship when Emet read my thoughts and said, "Don't worry! We will be on the same course for the next little bit so we can put the craft on automatic control. The automatic control can do better than I can with the exception of certain things that I have to correct for occasionally and that won't be necessary for hours yet."

Memi was busy getting things out that looked like an inflatable rubber mattress and covers for the same. The mattress seemed to be a little larger than a standard mattress. I was curious about how I was going to sleep and where.

Memi read my thoughts and said, "We will all sleep on the same mattress! You may just as well get used to our family living if you are going to be a part of our family for a while. Before we retire though, I will get us something to eat."

This was the first time we had mentioned about eating and suddenly I realized that we had not eaten before and I was getting hungry.

Memi went to another area and began getting out some things for a meal. I had not eaten any of their food before, so I was curious as to what we were having.

Memi read my thoughts again and said, "We are going to have storage food tonight. It is dissolved in hot water and not very tasty, but it has all of the essential nutrients to keep us alive until we can do better."

Memi handed me a vessel similar to a cup. It had a handle on both sides and was shaped like a hybrid between a half bowl and half cup. I took it and she handed one to Emet. He took his and Memi picked one up for herself. I watched to see what would happen and discovered Emet and Memi bowing their heads. I did the same.

Memi and Emet drank from their cups so I drank also. Memi had spoken correctly. This food was not what you might expect from a highly scientific minded people. It tasted like chalky hot water!

Memi and Emet drank theirs down and I did the same. I was glad that was all over!

Memi collected the cups and took them over to the place she had gotten them and rinsed them in a special machine. She then put them inside a place that looked like a cabinet and closed the little door.

Memi then stepped over in front of me and said, "Now you can help me get my suit off!"

I heard Memi say earlier that we needed to all get naked, but I thought I misheard her. I exclaimed, "Your suit off! Why?"

"Because we are going to take our exercise, shower, and go to bed. Why do you think?" she answered.

"I didn't know," I said a bit alarmed. "Why do you get naked?"

She replied, "Each family on our planet goes through the same exercise ritual each night and each family member sleeps totally naked in the same bed with the rest of the family."

"I'm not used to that!" I said, "Do I have to do this too?"

"If you are going to be like us and be part of the family, then you had best do like we do," instructed Emet.

"I guess I will have to," I said. "It's just that I'm not used to any such doings, but I guess I'll get used to it after a while."

Meanwhile, Memi was still standing in front of me waiting for me to help her get her suit off.

## Chapter VIII

# On To Emet's Planet

I helped her the best I could, but it was difficult not being able to touch her. I didn't want to wind up in a heap on the floor again.

Memi knew what the trouble was, so she said, "I know that you are going to touch me. You don't have to be afraid of me this time!"

I then helped her off with her suit. It was hard not to notice that she was physically very attractive. Her body was smooth and hard looking. Everything was perfectly proportioned. I learned later that even though she is shorter and smaller than the males, because of her high muscle density, she is actually twice their weight.

After we got her suit off, she first went over and helped Emet out of his suit and then she came back and helped me get mine off.

"I don't feel right being naked like this," I said.

"You'll get used to it," replied Emet.

"With everyone on your planet being naked all the time, I would guess that you must have an overpopulation problem," I joked.

Emet replied, "In most cases, families are not allowed to have more than two children, but in special cases, they can have three. By controlling the birth rate on our planet, population growth is zero so overpopulation is very unlikely. Adherence to this birth control is strictly enforced as I will describe later. A strong control over one's sexual tension is instilled into the boys and girls from early childhood. The touch reflex of the girls that you have already observed is part of this training."

"Now lets get set for our exercises," Memi said. "Each evening and morning, exercises are given to the family group by the eldest male present. Since Emet is the eldest male on this craft, he will give the exercises."

Seemingly everything in their life was done in a communal way. There are no secrets about their bodies. Bathrooms, showers, and beds are all communal. No one has a secret about their physical self that the entire family doesn't know about!

We did several exercises this first evening out. Some of these exercises I knew and some of them I wasn't familiar with. They were very vigorous and we all worked up a sweat each time.

When the exercises were done, Memi picked up the suits and put them in a locker I hadn't seen before. She opened a partition door in the back of the control room and I could see a bathroom with a large shower.

Memi stepped into the shower, Emet followed her and instructed me to do the same. As I stepped into the shower, Emet closed the door and the water began to run. There was no way to adjust the temperature, but it was just right.

Memi showed me the soap and how to use it. With this soap there was no need for anyone to scrub. This soap could take the hide off! It was strong in alkali or something similar with fine grit added, a little on the order of our lava soap.

When we had all finished, Emet opened the door and the water turned off. We stepped out onto a mat that was on the floor in front of the shower. Emet reached into a locker and pulled out three towels. This was the first time I had seen anything that resembled something from Earth.

Memi took her towel and dried Emet's back being very brisk. His back was a little on the red side when she finished.

She turned to me and said, "You do that to my back!"

"You won't attack me, will you?" I said cautiously.

"No, of course not," she said. "I asked you to do it, didn't I?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then do to my back what you saw me do to Emet's back," she demanded.

I used my towel and began to rub. I rubbed as briskly as I had seen her do to Emet. I must have been doing it right because she made noises like she was really enjoying it. Being that we were both totally naked, it made me a bit uncomfortable hearing her do that.

When I had finished rubbing her back, she turned and faced me and said, "Turn around!" She then took her towel and rubbed my back just as briskly as she did Emet's. At first I thought she was going to take the skin off, but in a moment or two I was making the same kind of noises she had been making.

"To brush your teeth, you will need to watch Emet," advised Memi.

I watched Emet put his head into a kind of hole in the wall. Material was then pulled around his head and under his chin. He then pushed a button. I could hear the whirring of a machine. Then in about 30 seconds the machine stopped. Emet loosened the covering around his head and stepped back. His teeth had been brushed.

Memi was next so she showed me some of the things about it that I hadn't seen. The place that you put your head in had a stop that you put your chin up against. Behind this stop was a bunch of things. You had to open your mouth wide enough for these things in the back to enter your mouth. If you didn't and turn the machine on, it would scrub your nose and the outside of your mouth!

Memi brushed her teeth and then stepped back for me to do the same. She cautioned me to be certain to open my mouth wide and keep it open. I did this and was pleasantly surprised at the results! The whole operation took about 30 seconds, but it was most pleasant. Jets of what felt like warm water were directed toward my teeth in all directions at the same time. This lasted about 15 seconds and then some kind of light turned on to do something. When this light went off, my teeth were clean. Brushing wasn't needed for my teeth were absolutely clean!

I asked Memi, "What does that do if someone has plaque on their teeth?"

"It cleans it off. That liquid you felt has a substance that destroys the plaque," she answered.

"That is about the best thing I have ever seen for teeth," I said. "Will you let me see how that operates?"

She replied, "Not until — you know what!"

I grumbled as we left the shower room and Emet said, "We don't want you to know all of our secrets until we know your planet is going to do what we ask."

Memi said, "Let's all get to bed now. We can talk in the morning."

I asked, "What if I should turn over in my sleep and touch you? Would you 'beat me up'?"

"Not very likely!" She said, "I know that you are near me and I don't beat you up when I know this."

Emet laid down on one edge of the bed, Memi got in the middle and I got on the other edge of the bed as far from Memi as possible. I didn't want to take a chance on Memi throwing me across the room again.

It was apparent to Emet and Memi that I was having difficulty getting to sleep.

Emet said, "Just quit thinking those thoughts and you'll be all right. Your trouble is all in your mind!"

I said, "OK, but how could I get my mind on anything except that there is a beautiful young girl that is lying in bed with me and we're both naked?"

Memi was reading my thoughts as she demanded, "Get your mind off of that. If you don't start thinking of something else, I will have to give you something else to think of!"

"I'm trying to, but I can't!" With this she gave me a sharp jab to the ribs with her elbow. It did get my mind on something else — the pain!

"Amos, go to sleep! That is the easiest way to get your mind on something else," inserted

Emet.

"I'm sorry, but I'm just not ready for this. Would you have another mattress for me?" I inquired.

"No, we don't! Would it help if I slept between you and Memi?" questioned Emet.

"It certainly would!" I quickly responded.

Emet got up and Memi moved to the outside while Emet laid down in the middle.

"Is that better?" asked Emet.

"Much," I answered.

I went to sleep quickly now, as did Emet and Memi. The lights in the control room had been lowered and the temperature was just right for good sleeping.

In what would have been morning, I woke up to find Memi beside me again. As I was waking up, Memi woke up also and Emet was last. I was puzzled about how Emet and Memi had switched places during the night.

Memi explained, "I went to the bathroom during the night. When I came back I crawled in between you two. I wanted to prove to you that your thoughts are bad and that makes you not able to sleep next to me. Ever since I crawled in bed, I have had one leg across your legs and my head on your arm. You had no thoughts about it so you had no trouble!"

"Now that you mention it, you must be right. The question is, 'How am I going to change those thoughts?'" I asked,

"Another thing that proves my point is that you slept next to Emet without having any trouble!" she said.

"Well," I replied, "he isn't you!"

"No, but your thoughts only go bad when I am by you. Can't you pretend in your mind that I am Emet or something?" she questioned.

"I'll work on that the next time," I said.

We all got up. I went to the bathroom. When I returned, Emet said, "Let's do our exercises so we can have something to eat, shower, and get on with the day!"

We had our exercises, something to eat, a shower, and a clean up. In the cleanup this time I had a different experience in that I was shaved by a machine that did it in about 15 seconds and did as good a job as I have ever done!

This machine was another hole in the wall that I had to stick my head into. As I did this, the machine shaved my beard without even a nick or scratch! It also put on the cologne and a small amount of talc. I never used talc normally, but I had no choice this time.

I returned to the control room. Memi was getting the suits out again. She started putting hers on and then came to me for help the rest of the way. I helped.

She then handed me my suit while she helped Emet get his suit on. After she got Emet's suit on, she came to me and helped me. Now this business of putting the suits back on puzzled me, and I was about to ask about this when Emet read my thoughts and responded.

"These suits do not let the skin breathe as it should, so we have to take them off when we sleep so they won't cause our skin to become sickly. When we first started wearing the suits, we began to have trouble with our skin. It was then decided that we would have to do what we have just done. Since that time we have had no instance of skin sores or irritations."

"Well, that explains that!" I said, "Now let me ask, "Why don't you use a material that will let your skin breathe?"

"We have no other material that will function as the suit does," he replied. "Besides that, we find that this type of living causes us to have fewer problems with the children in the family and makes for better marriage partners."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"You will find out when we get to our planet. So just be content that you will find out," she replied.

Emet sat down at the controls. Memi busied herself with putting things back in order, while I sat in my chair and watched Memi put things away.

Memi looked up at me and said, "Why don't I plug you into your language lesson while I am doing this?"

"Sounds like a good idea to me," I replied.

Memi put the language learning helmet on me, turned the machine on, and went back to putting things away. The machine was just as bad at first this time as it was the first time; it then became soothing, and I went to sleep again.

The next thing I knew, Memi was taking the helmet off my head.

"How long have I been asleep?" I asked.

"About 3 hours of your time," came Emet's answer.

I said, "There is something about that machine that puts me to sleep! Am I going to know your

language? Will the machine teach me while I am asleep?"

Emet replied, "Have no fear about that. You have almost learned our language enough to use it now."

"When will I know that I can speak your language?" I asked.

"Tomorrow, right after your last lesson," he said.

Memi explained some things to me about her people and her planet that were necessary for me to know during the time after my lesson each day.

This routine was followed each day except the last day. During that last day, we prepared for arrival.

As I was standing by a window next to Memi. Out of nowhere, Emet said, "Disengaging star drive!"

Memi suddenly went over and sat in her chair. I was wondering why she did that. Suddenly, I was jolted to the ground.

Emet turned and said, "Didn't you hear me say I was disengaging the star drive. Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. I heard you say it," I said, "but I didn't realize there would be such a jolt."

"Emet said, "We were approaching our solar system, so I had to disengage the star drive or else we would overshoot it. Inside the solar system we must go at a much slower speed."

"That is good to know," I said.

I could see that their sun was larger than ours and much brighter. The planets that we went by looked very much like our planets albeit a good bit farther from their sun than ours.

As we approached their planet, I could see it. It had a cloud covering similar to that of earth. It was about the size of ours, but it had a different arrangement of the land masses. There was a string of small islands around the equator. There were two large land masses straddling the equator on opposite sides of the planet. The smaller one south of the equator was comparable in size to Australia.

We entered the gravitational pull of the planet and briefly entered orbit. We slowly descended into their atmosphere and had to slow way down in order to keep from burning to a cinder. Eventually, we slowed down to landing speed.

Finally, I felt the craft bump the ground gently, and I knew that we had arrived. Emet turned to me and said, "We made it!"

"You didn't expect to?" I asked.

"That's not what I meant. I meant that we got here before supper."

"That sounds better," I said.

## Chapter IX

### Arrival

Emet and Memi began the necessary checks to shut down the engine and secure the craft. I sat in my swivel chair and watched the procedure with amazement. Memi worked the area around the windows while Emet gave orders for the next deactivation step. The entire procedure took about thirty minutes.

When the engines were secure, Memi came over to me and said, "You will now get your chance to set foot on my planet. What you see through those windows doesn't do our planet justice! Come with me to the locker."

As we started toward the locker, Emet got up from his chair at the control table and joined us. We passed through the hatch and into the locker. This time, we didn't need to put our helmets on. Emet pressed a button to equalize the pressure between the inside of the craft and the outside. This took only a couple of seconds, and then Emet opened the door, allowing me to see this planet for the very first time.

This planet was just as beautiful as Earth! The sky was blue with a few low-lying cumulus clouds. These cottony puffs of clouds were very similar to the ones I had left behind at the farm on the day of the first pickup.

There were trees growing about, and large, fern-like plants. The trees were of various sizes, colors, and shapes. Some looked like palm trees; others resembled banyan or possibly ficus. One fruit-bearing tree I saw looked similar to our apple trees.

The ferns growing nearby were huge, yet delicate flowers were blooming among them. Some of the flowers were on short stems, and some were on long stems. Plants that looked like orchids were growing in the crotches of the trees, also in bloom.

We had landed in what resembled a residential area, where all the houses were dome-shaped. I found out later they were constructed this way to be wind-resistant and protect against high wind weather.

Looking down, I asked, "What would happen if I picked a bouquet of flowers? Would I be put in jail?"

"No, these flowers are here to admire in any way that you see fit. Just don't destroy them," Memi answered.

"If it is all right with you, then I would like to pick a small bouquet. I think I should do this for your mother!" I said.

"Mom doesn't expect any," Memi said, "but go ahead anyway. I'll help you!"

Memi began helping me pick flowers until I soon had enough for a nice bouquet.

We moved on to the nearby house. This house, like all the others, was dome-shaped. There were no visible windows or doors on the outside. The structures were amazingly simple, yet they could last for centuries!



We approached this one home, and Emet pushed a little card into a slot. A thin wedge of the building slid up, and we walked in.

Memi ran in ahead of Emet and me and shouted, "Mom! Dad! We're home!"

After we had entered the house, the wedge that had slid up slid back down into place. I was marveling at this when Emet's family came into the room where we were standing.

We were first met by a little girl who came running at us from one direction, while an older man and woman entered from another. All of them had big, welcoming smiles on their faces. The little girl, who must have been about eight years old, ran up to Emet and jumped up on him, giving him a big hug and a kiss.

Memi introduced them: "This is my mother and father, known around here as Mom and Dad, and the little one that jumped on Emet just now is my little sister, known as Sis. Mom, Dad, and Sis, this is Amos. He is from a planet far away called Earth." Memi was trying to impress Sis with the fact that I lived a long way from here.

"I'm glad to meet you folks," I said. I then gave Mom the bouquet I had picked for her with Memi's help.

She said, "Thank you, Amos! They are just beautiful!"

"They look like weeds to me!" Dad commented.

I smiled. "I can see where your children get their good looks from."

"Isn't he just full of blarney? I keep telling him that I'm not beautiful, but he insists that I am," Memi said.

Mom said, "Thank you for the fine compliment, but I have to be on Memi's side. I think you are full of blarney, but I love you for it!"

"I think you are beautiful, Memi, and I'm your prejudiced brother," Emet added.

Sis had gotten down from Emet and had come around to where I was standing.

"Will you come to my school and talk to my class and let them see you?" Sis asked.

"I will be happy to if your brother and sister can fit it into their agenda," I said quickly, before Sis got in trouble for treating me like a freak from another world.

"If you don't really mind, we will take you over there in a few days. I'll have to get permission from the school for you to come. I don't think it would be fair, Sis, to just let him spend time with your class. I think he should speak to the whole school," Emet responded.

"I guess I will have to share him with the whole school, but couldn't he come to my class and talk to them some more?" asked Sis, a little brokenhearted.

Emet said, "If he has time and wants to, Sis."

"Oh, thank you, Emet! Just wait until I tell Lily and May and all of my friends. Will they ever be surprised!" shouted Sis as she started to leave the room.

"Just a minute, Sis," called Emet, "You haven't asked Amos if he would do it yet!"

"Will you, Amos? I'll be your friend for life!" Sis was almost jumping up and down with enthusiasm.

"I want to be your friend for life, so of course, I'll come and speak to your class," I replied.

I had stooped down to talk with her, and as I said this last remark, she ran up to me and gave me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Oh boy!" she exclaimed as she ran off.

"Mom and Dad, I want you to know that where Amos comes from, they wear clothes all the time. He is very bashful about being naked in front of other people. We will get that out of him to some extent, but I am going to need your help." Memi turned and looked into my eyes with those beautiful blue eyes of hers and said, "Isn't this right, Amos?"

"I don't know which you want me to verify. If you mean is it right that my world wears clothes, yes, that is right. If you mean that I'm going to get used to being naked, then I have to leave a big question mark there. I have come to be a part of your world and your lives, so I must change to meet your way of life if I'm going to be a part of it. It is going to be hard for me to do this, but I shall do the best I can. With your help and encouragement, I believe I can do it."

Dad said, "I couldn't have said it better, Amos. As far as I'm concerned, you will have my help."

"We are all going to help Amos become one of us, aren't we?" asked Memi.

"We certainly are," answered Mom, "and we are also going to make his stay as enjoyable as we can."

Mom and Memi looked so much alike that I had to be careful as to which one I was talking to! Mom was just a little older looking than Memi.

Dad and Emet could have passed for twins. Poor little Sis just looked like any pretty eight-year-old girl might! No one in the family resembled her! She had blonde hair and freckles with brown eyes.

"Have you people had anything fit to eat today?" asked Mom.

"No, Mom. We haven't had a decent meal since we started back with Amos," answered Emet. "I could really go for a good solid meal about now."

"Come with me, Memi and Sis, and we will prepare a meal for all of us," Mom informed them.

These three left the room, and Dad said, "I want you to know that I am very grateful for your help in getting my children off of Ganymede like you did. Emet said that they were preparing for death when you came up with the brilliant idea to get the main generator started."

"The procedure is very common on Earth," I said. "We call it jump-starting. I have jump-started many a vehicle with a dead battery in my time."

"We are fortunate because of it," he said. "Come with me, Amos. I would like to talk with you more about your family and your planet."

"What would you like to know about me? I can answer that best," I replied.

"Tell me about your family and friends. What you do for a living and anything else you would like to talk about," replied Dad.

"From what Emet tells me about his surveillance, I suspect that Emet has told you everything there is to know about me," I said. "I'll tell you anyway, since you have asked, but I hope I don't bore you."

"You won't bore me!" Dad said. "I get tired of seeing reports on people that I don't know or won't even see."

"I'm married to a very fine red-haired woman who has given me two fine young boys. Both of them are healthy, and I thank God for that. My wife isn't as healthy as she should be, but she is still able to do the necessary things to be a good wife."

"My eldest boy is ten years older than my youngest boy. Because he is older, he often thinks that his younger brother is a drag. The older boy is in college now and thinking of being a lawyer."

"My youngest boy is very scientific-minded and very much like me in a lot of ways. He is kind-hearted and wouldn't hurt anything. He has a very inquisitive mind, especially about scientific things. I just wish he could have made this trip with me. He probably would have had the craft torn apart on the way here to see how it was made!"

"I wish you had brought him here with you. Sis would have liked to play with him, I am sure,"

said Dad.

"If things go well with this trip and book I have to write, maybe he will get a chance someday to see Sis," I said.

"Sis is a great deal like what you describe your younger boy as being," Dad said.

"That would be something if those two got together, fell in love, and got married! That would be the first interplanetary wedding!" kidded Emet.

"I've got one better than that," inserted Memi as she came into the room: "Suppose I meet, fell in love, and marry his oldest boy! That might be the first interplanetary wedding!"

"Just think," kidded Emet, "we would have to decide which planet to have the wedding on and then haul all of the guests to the planet it was going to be on!"

"I could solve that problem easily," assured Memi. "We could have the wedding in a craft halfway between both planets, and people could watch from both planets with the quantum communicator!"

"What is holding you all up?" asked Mom as she came to us.

"No one invited us to come yet," answered Dad.

"I got mixed up in this conversation and forgot to tell them that the meal was ready. I'm sorry, Mom," confessed Memi.

Memi took me by the arm on one side, and Sis took the other arm. "May I escort you to supper?" Sis asked.

"Where I come from, the man escorts the young ladies. May I escort you two beautiful young ladies to supper?" I asked.

"We would be honored," Memi said.

"Very well, off we go to supper!" I said as the girls giggled.

We walked arm in arm out of the room, turned left into a hallway, then turned right through a doorway and then wound up in the bathroom.

"I guess we made a wrong turn somewhere," I said, and the girls giggled some more. "But since we are here, we can all wash our hands before supper."

We all washed our hands and dried them on the towels.

As we turned and walked out of the bathroom into the hallway, the girls laughed at me.

We went down the hallway and through another door that wound us up into the bedroom again. The girls were laughing loudly by now and were having trouble walking because they were laughing so hard.

"You just wait," I said with confidence. "We'll make it this time."

We left the bedroom, went down the hallway, turned through a door, and stopped in the dining room. The girls took their arms away from me and applauded.

"What's going on now?" asked Mom.

"I escorted them to dinner by way of the bathroom, the bedroom, and then the dining room," I explained.

The girls were still laughing.

"They certainly must have enjoyed it. They are still laughing," Mom smiled.

"Memi always gets a kick out of my awkwardness," I explained.

"Mom, we couldn't help it. It was just plain silly. Whoever heard of coming to dinner through the bathroom?" Memi laughed. "You should have seen him try to unzip his suit. It was like watching a kitten on ice for the first time!"

"Don't you laugh at him, young lady! You were almost as grown up as Sis before you learned to zip and unzip your clothes!" exclaimed Mom.

"Mom! Do you have to tell that?"

"I think it is only fair, since you are laughing at Amos for the same thing!" Mom stated with a sense of indignation.

## Chapter X

### Supper and Bed

The table was loaded with tantalizing food. When we arrived, Dad pointed to a chair. "Amos, you may sit over there," he said. "The rest of you know where to sit. I'm getting hungry just looking at the food."

Everyone sat down at the table.

"On my world, before I start eating, I bow my head and thank the Lord for the food and ask him to bless it. With your permission, I would like to do that here," I said.

"We were just getting set to do the same thing, so if you would like to do it for all of us this time, we would appreciate it," Dad replied.

Emet explained, "We do the same thing telepathically, but it would be nice to have it done verbally. Please proceed."

"I would be happy to," I said.

I prayed, "Lord, we thank you for these friends, the safe journey, and the food. We pray that you will bless this home. We pray that you will bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies that we might do your will. Amen."

Everyone around the table said, "Amen."

Dad asked, "I see that you at least believe in the Lord. Are there many like you in your world?"

"Not nearly enough. Christians are not as plentiful as I would like, and I'm sure God is displeased," I replied.

"What is done to bring people to a belief in God?" Dad asked.

"Dad, would you pass the food and hold off on theology until we have at least eaten? The poor fellow must be very hungry by now," Mom interrupted.

Dad began passing food around. Memi tried to explain what their different foods were like compared to those on Earth. One dish was like potatoes. Another dish was like meat. Still another dish was like a vegetable. I had a dish of something chopped in front of me, which I took to be a salad. When I noticed Mom putting something on it and eating it with an implement similar to our fork, I followed suit. They all stared at me. I thought I had done something wrong when Memi and Sis began to giggle, so I asked, "What dumb thing did I do now?"

"Everything you did is fine," Emet explained. "The only problem is that you are eating Memi's

salad instead of your own."

We all laughed as my face turned red. I took what I thought was my salad and handed it to Memi. Sis laughed loudest this time and said, "Now you've given her my salad!"

"I guess I'm all mixed up. If I'm eating Memi's salad and I gave Memi Sis's salad, where is my salad? I give up!"

Mom picked up a third salad and said, "This one is yours."

"Well, I'll be jiggered! I didn't see that at all! I'm sorry I couldn't have done better. I did do one thing right, though," I proclaimed.

"What in the world did you do right?" asked Emet.

"I did something to bring laughter to you people," I explained.

"Very good!" said Dad. "Always find a positive way out of a negative situation! That was very good, Amos. I'm liking you better all the time. For a person who comes from a primitive world, you do very well!"

"I have a little bit of a clown in me anyway, and I love to make people laugh. I'm not as good as some of our experts we call comedians, but I find that when you have a smile on your face, there's no room left for a frown!" I explained.

"As far as I'm concerned, Amos, you are the greatest. I haven't laughed this much in a long time," Memi said.

"Me either," chirped in Sis.

"Well, keep watching," I said. "I will probably do some other stupid thing in a little bit."

"If you people don't stop making all that noise and eat, you won't be finished in time for the evening's exercises," Mom interrupted.

"This certainly is a very tasty meal you three prepared in just a short while. How could you prepare a meal this large in such a short time?"

"I had two of the best helpers any mother could want," Mom replied.

"On my planet, it would have taken at least an hour or two to prepare such a meal. This only took just a few minutes, probably not even fifteen minutes. My wife would certainly like to be able to do that."

"Maybe someday she will," Mom replied, not meaning to be rude, but clearly ending that conversation.

I got the message and finished my meal without saying anything else.

"Let me say this again, Mom," I said. "This was a very good meal. May I help you wash the dishes or something?"

"No," Mom said. "There isn't anything to be done in the kitchen. Besides, Sis and Memi can help me with what I have to do."

"If you are certain I can't help, I will go with the men then," I said.

"Don't do that! You'll wind up falling asleep in the living room," cried Memi. "We'll all be having our evening exercises in a few minutes."

"We won't let him do that! Come on, Amos. We'll show you around the house so they can't laugh at you about going the wrong way anymore," commented Emet.

As we went into the living room, which adjoined the dining room, Emet explained, "This is a round house. The floor plan is round. On the outside walls we have the bedrooms and the living room areas. There is then a hallway that goes completely around the house. On the left of the hallway is the kitchen, dining area, and bathrooms. By the way, Amos, how did you ever find the dining area without knowing the house?"

"That was easy, I used my nose. I could smell the food, and as the smell got stronger, I kept on going until I wound up in the dining area."

"Now that was quite clever," said Dad. "I think Emet and Memi have picked a good person for their project. I can see a lot of promise in you!"

"Thank you," I said. "I hope I can do what they want."

"I don't think you will have any problems. Others may have trouble believing you, but you will have no problem," reassured Dad.

We walked through the house as Emet and Dad showed me all the rooms. By the time we got back to the living area, we found Memi, Sis, and Mom all sitting there talking and waiting for us.

Memi said, "Come with me and help me get my suit off so we can have our evening exercises."

I moaned, "You mean we have to have exercises on top of all that food I ate?"

"It won't hurt you, and it will be good for you. By the time you go back to your planet, you will have a very good figure and feel like you are at least ten years younger," she joked.

We went into a bedroom. There was a large bed in one corner of the room. Two other sides of the room had vanity dressers. On the dressers were a couple of items that looked like

hairbrushes. The floor was soft, like it was carpeted, but it didn't look anything like the carpets we have on Earth. It was smooth on top. The remaining side had draperies. The draperies were for looks and acoustics. There were no windows.

I knew the exercises were done buck naked, so I was feeling a little uneasy.

Memi sensed this and turned around, saying with some concern in her voice, "Are you all right, Amos?"

"Yes," I said, "but I am having some trouble adjusting to undressing a beautiful young lady."

"You need to get over it and help me get my suit off. I will unzip it because you are a pretty poor unzipper," she said with a laugh.

Memi unzipped the front of her suit and walked straight up to me. "You sit down on the edge of the bed and pull the suit at my thigh so I can get my suit off."

The whole operation was beginning to get to me, but I tried not to let it be known; my hands began to tremble, and I had to gasp for air a couple of times. Still, I was getting more used to this now.

"Now I will then help you get yours off," she said. She then unzipped my suit and helped me get it off.

I was now just as naked as she and the rest of the family.

"You see, if you just go ahead and forget those feelings, you will soon be back to normal," she said.

I did as she directed, and the feelings I had began to pass from me. I still had feelings of shame about being buck naked in front of other people, but when I saw everyone else the same way, I soon began to feel better about it.

Emet came in with Sis, and they helped remove each other's suits.

Memi took me by the hand and led me back to the living area where we were to take our exercises. Emet and Sis arrived a few moments later.

Sis came to where I was standing and walked all around me. She looked me over very carefully and then said confidently to her family: "From my firsthand observations, Amos is physically just like us!"

Mom noticed Sis, her face red with embarrassment, and asked, "Sis, what are you doing? That is naughty! You are being rude to Amos!"

"I'm looking to see if he is different from us," she replied.

"That's not nice!" Mom said with an embarrassed look on her face. "I honestly don't know what makes her act that way."

"That's all right," I said, with a tremor in my voice that isn't usually there. "Children are curious, and it is natural for them to do and say things like that," I responded.

"That may be so, but Sis didn't have to embarrass us like that," replied Memi, whose face was as red as her mother's.

"Dad," interrupted Emet, "it's time for our calisthenics."

"So it is, son. Amos, on this planet we all take calisthenics twice a day to keep our bodies in good shape and to help keep us healthy. You won't find anyone on this planet that is fat or flabby," explained Dad.

As I was to find later, none of the members of the family had anything about their lives, personal or otherwise, that the other members of the family did not know. There were no intimate secrets. Girls were people, and boys were people. Each knew about the others physiologically. They respected the differences, but there were no mysteries about sex. I also noted that the morals of these people were very high. Later on, I was to learn why.

Dad led these exercises, and he had no pity on an 'overstuffed weakling' like me. They were very vigorous, but by the time he had finished, I was completely exhausted and ready for bed. I could now see why Memi, Emet, and the whole family were in such good shape.

I asked, "What would happen if someone did not do the calisthenics?"

"We have to report every evening that we have taken the required calisthenics for the required time allotted. If we do not report or do them, we would be taken to court and tried for disobeying the law," explained Dad.

"What would be the penalty if found guilty?" I asked.

"Death," came the answer.

"You'll find out more about our government later on as we take you around," explained Emet, "but as of now, we need to head for bed. I'm tired."

Memi took my hand again and led me to the bathroom. Emet, Memi, Sis, and I all got into the shower at this time and showered together. We weren't crowded because the shower was made to accommodate four. The shower heads were all along a bar in the ceiling. When you closed the door, they all came on. However, having only one bar of soap made it difficult to get clean in time before Emet wanted to open the door and get out.

When we had all showered and got out of the shower, we went through the back-scrubbing ritual. This proved to liven me up some, but I was still ready for bed.

Emet had Memi lay on one edge of the bed, Sis was next, and then Emet. I was on the other edge of the bed, and sleep came quickly and easily to me.

The next morning, I discovered that I had been double-crossed again. Emet was on the edge of the bed, Memi was next to him, I was next, and then Sis was on the other edge of the bed. Sis had her back against my side with her head on my arm. Memi was facing me on the other side with her head on my shoulder and one leg lying across my legs. How and when this change had taken place, I never knew! Now this taxed my emotions considerably. Here were two young beautiful girls lying next to me in bed and all of us are naked. My emotions were about to get the best of me when Memi woke up and 'clipped' me. This changed my emotion to pain, but I said, "Thank you, Memi."

"You're welcome," Memi whispered. "We are taught to do that to any male near us if emotions are getting out of control."

"How did I get next to you?" I whispered.

"Sis got up and went to the bathroom during the night and just got back in on the edge of the bed," Memi answered.

This routine in the bed took place each night, and each night I never caught the girls changing places.

I never could tell when during the night that they did this. It was one mystery that never got solved. Along toward the end of my stay, I got to the place where I no longer cared if they got up next to me. It didn't bother me as much by then.

## Chapter XI

### Home away from home

This was to be my first full day on the planet. It was like being born, all grown up. I was enjoying myself, but I was having trouble with my emotions around Memi and her mother. Both were very beautiful, nearly identical. The main difference is that Mom was older. Both were highly intelligent. Emet and Dad were also clearly brilliant.

In a little while, a bell rang. It was the signal for all of us to get out of bed and come to the living area for morning calisthenics.

Each morning, we had moderate exercises. Afterward, we showered, cleaned up, and put on our suits, which were automatically cleaned each night as we slept.

The routine in the home was mostly the same each day. No meal was eaten at midday. A sufficient meal was eaten in the morning, and another sufficient meal was eaten each evening. The large, varied meal I had the first night proved to be the exception. These meals were nearly always eaten in silence, or at least, I couldn't tell what they were saying to each other telepathically.

After breakfast, I said to Emet, "I certainly would like to learn how to read people's minds the way you do. That seems like a very useful trick."

"I'm afraid you will never get to do that because you don't have what is necessary," Emet replied. "Perhaps someday you will be able to develop those abilities."

Changing the subject, I asked, "I noticed there is one room divided off from the rest of the house. What is that room?"

"That room is for guests," Emet answered. "No house guest or friend ever sleeps with the family, nor do they see us in any way except with our suits on. There is a bathroom in that room so the guest does not have to come out for any reason once they have entered. Also, once they have entered, they cannot come out until morning, by then we have all completed our exercises, showered, and have our suits on."

"How is it that I have been afforded the privilege of sleeping in the family 'pile up' and going about as you do?" I asked.

Emet replied, "Memi and I talked about this before you came. We decided that you would be given the privilege of being one of the family. When you were asked to remove your suit for evening exercises, you were being tested to see what you would do. It was hoped that you would do and say just what you did. In case you didn't know it, you have been manipulated several times, and that was one of them!"

"I didn't realize this, but I'm glad I fit the bill for the person you wanted," I said. "Suppose I had refused to remove my suit, then what?"

Emet replied, "If you had refused to remove your suit like the rest of us, we would have let you stay in the guest room, but you would have been flown back to Earth the next day."

"You mean that you took that chance and were that sure of what I would say?" I asked.

"Yes," Emet said. "Memi and I had done a lot of research on you prior to picking you up, and we felt certain that you were our man. We probably know more about you than you do yourself!"

"How could you possibly know that?" I asked. "I never saw you around on Earth."

Emet responded, "Don't be so certain that we were never on Earth. Let me say this: you were observed even in your private home. We saw you in bed, we saw you in the bathroom, we saw you with your pretty wife and handsome sons. We watched you as you drove to work. We watched you as you worked. We watched you for a period of one year! Every moment of your life was observed. We didn't care where or when you were born, or how you graduated from school or college. We were looking for qualities in you that would make you a good prospect for our experiment. I don't see how we could have done any better."

"Thank you," I said. "You made me blush when you said such nice things about me, and I know they aren't all true."

"Memi thinks you are tops, and she is hoping that you and your family will come to our planet to live if everything goes well. I think she is hoping your oldest son will not get married so she can have a chance at him!" said Emet.

I replied, "I'm afraid she is a bit late for that. He was married before I came with you."

"Too bad! Maybe Sis could stand a chance with your younger son?" Emet pondered.

"That might be a possibility," I said.

Each day, Emet or Memi would take me to see certain things on their planet. They explained certain concepts and ensured I understood details that were essential for the book.

Each evening, we would arrive home in time for the evening meal, exercises, and bed. This routine sounds a little dull, but some of the things that I saw and did there made the stay one of the most enjoyable I have ever had. As you read through these adventures, you will no doubt agree with me.

Many things about this planet and these people amazed and intrigued me. I guess the one thing that intrigued me the most was the transportation system they had. No one owned a private vehicle. There were no roads! There were paths from one place to another, and at important buildings there would be some sidewalks, but very few of them.

The underground was full of tunnels. In these tunnels ran the most intricate transportation

system I have ever seen.

For lack of a better name, I called this the 'thought car system'. The cars were oval in shape. They had no wheels, tracks, or anything to operate on, yet they did, without touching the sides. They seemed to use the tunnel itself as a means of a track. Their means of propulsion was something I never found out, but I suspected that they might have been held in place by magnetism. I asked Emet questions about the cars and never got an answer.

A few things I did find out on my own: To get a thought car, you went to the basement of any building and pushed one of two buttons marked 'Single' or 'Family'. Once a button was pressed, the corresponding car would appear. A single car had room for one passenger. A family car was large enough to seat four people.

On the seat of the car was a helmet with wires coming from it that fastened into the back of the seat. All passengers had to fasten seat belts. The 'driver' put the helmet on, pushed a button, and thought where he wanted to go! When the driver 'thought' the destination, you arrived there in such haste that it was almost as fast as thinking about it and being there.

My first trip was with Emet. I watched as he put the helmet over his head. "Ready?" he asked.

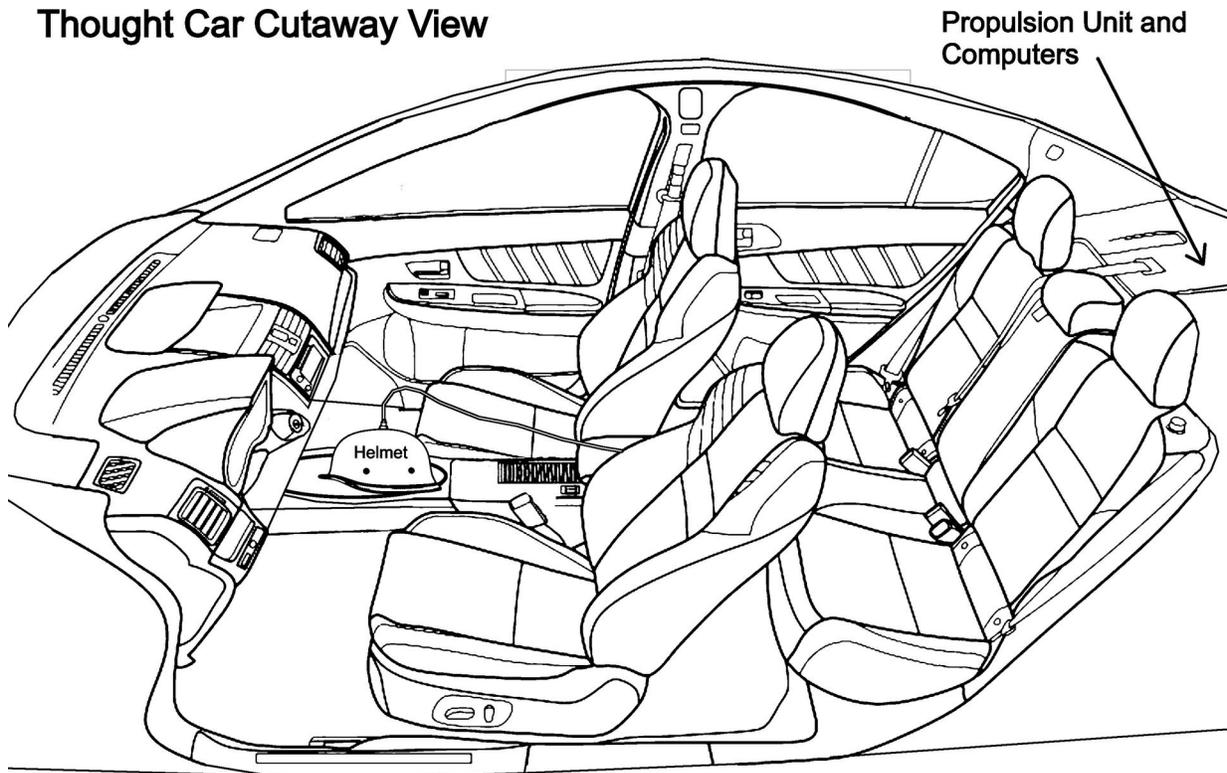
"As ready as I'll ever be. How do you steer?" I asked,

"You don't. You just think about where you want to go, and the car does the rest." He said as he touched the button on the dash.

The car gave a gentle hum and started moving into the tunnel. Then there was a flash of light with an immediate lurch that pressed me back into the seat, and then the next thing I knew, we were entering another basement car station. If I had blinked, I would have missed the whole trip. It was awesome for a public transit system.

Once a person arrived, all they had to do was step out of the car, and it would leave to go pick up somebody else.

## Thought Car Cutaway View



## Usually Large Enough For Four

This was certainly one of the most efficient and wonderful means of getting around. These cars never had a breakdown, never crashed, and yet you could get to any place you wanted to go. You could travel from continent to continent or across the street and arrive in about the same time! I suspected that these cars must have been operated by a computer of some kind. They had to be operating on electricity or some form of light.

Every time we went somewhere, we traveled by these 'thought cars,' and each time I had to marvel at this transportation system. Emet wouldn't tell me anything about how the system worked, and yet I found out later that Dad and Emet were the ones that had developed and perfected it! This was truly an amazing feat. Dad and Emet had even received many awards for this project, but they never told me any of that. When I confronted them with the fact, they merely shrugged it off as a commonplace thing. I found all of this out when Mom and Memi let it slip; they were clearly very proud of the fact.

About halfway through my visit on Memi and Emet's planet, I learned the trick of zipping my suit. I was so pleased that I went around zipping and unzipping my suit with professional speed. I even carelessly offered to unzip Memi's suit, but she informed me that if I did, I would wind up in a heap. Not wanting that, I let the matter rest.

On this planet, nobody is allowed to touch a female without permission, but anyone can touch

males in any way they want, at any time they want. It's just the rule and probably influenced by the fact that females are much, much stronger than men. I noticed several times while I was there that Mom would occasionally move her body into 'accidental' contact with mine and sometimes put her hand on my waist, drifting down to my butt. This was especially true when we did our exercises. I assumed that she did this on purpose in an effort to get me broken in to close-contact family living.

One day after a short excursion, Memi and Emet fell asleep in the living room. Seeing an opportunity for a nap, I went to the bedroom, removed my suit as was required, and laid down on the large bed used by the children and me. I woke up to find Mom also lying next to me in the bed without her suit.

I sat up and said, "Mom, aren't you in the wrong bed? The children and I usually use this one. You and Dad have your own bed."

She replied softly, "I wanted to talk to you privately about something related to your planet for the book. I didn't want the others to hear."

"What would you like to talk about?" I asked.

Mom turned on her side facing me, put her hand across my chest and used her powerful arm to force me from my sitting position in bed to flat on my back. She answered, "Tell me about some of the romantic things your people do."

This situation was making me a bit uncomfortable. Because of a female's superior physical strength, physical resistance is futile in this situation. If I had tried, without the protective exoskeleton of the suit, I would surely wind up with broken bones, maybe worse. I tried to remain calm and said with a tremor in my voice, "I don't know exactly what you consider romantic, but I can tell you some of the things about my planet and the way we do things."

With her hand still on my chest, she said, "I think some of the things you do and the customs you have are very romantic, like when a man takes a woman's arm and escorts her around."

I turned my head to look at her. "Well then, let me tell you about some of the other customs we have with women," I said. "First of all, we always open doors for our lady. We let her go in first when we go into a building or through any doorway. We always let the lady pick her seat in a restaurant, and then we pull her chair out and help her be seated. We always walk on the outside of the girl when we are walking down a road or sidewalk. It is a gentleman's obligation to always be kind, considerate, and thoughtful to a lady friend. On special occasions, he either brings or has sent to her, flowers or candy, or makes some other thoughtful gesture. If he is serious about the girl and wants to get married, he may, after a very romantic evening, ask her to marry him and give her an engagement ring. If she accepts, he will have to see her father and ask the father's permission to marry the girl. If the father refuses, the boy and girl can run away and get married even though the father does not want the wedding to take place. Are these the things you want to hear about?"

Mom replied, now with one leg over mine, "Those are the things that I had in mind. I think

they are very romantic. Here on this planet, we don't do things like that. Men don't pay women any attention for some reason. A lady must take action to ensure that a fellow knows she is alive. If a woman sees a boy she wants to marry, she just goes over to him, puts her arm around his waist, pulls him closer to her and then asks him to marry her. If he says yes, they are married. If he says no, she will go find a boy that she likes about as well and asks him to marry her. She keeps this up until she finds some boy who will marry her. To get married here, all the couple has to do is go to the township office and sign a form. It is probably the most unromantic way to marry someone, and I would like to see it changed. Maybe you will be the one to instigate a change here."

"That's definitely different," I said.

Now gently caressing my chest, she smiled warmly and said, "Thank you for telling me about these things, Amos. I'll never forget what you have told me."

After saying this, she leaned over and kissed me on the lips.

"That was... unexpected," I remarked. "Let me know if you ever want to know more."

She suddenly looked guilty and said, "Don't tell anyone I kissed you! I'm not supposed to do that, but you have been so nice I just couldn't resist."

"I'll not tell a soul about it. Your secret is safe with me," I assured her.

"Thanks again," she said, rising from the bed.

I helped her put her suit on and she left the room while humming a little tune.

One day, shortly after this little conversation, Emet and Memi had to do something, so they brought me to the house and left me. Sis was in school, Dad was in a meeting at the Township Office. Mom was out somewhere, so I was left to myself.

I was getting used to the idea of taking off my suit when I returned home, so I went to the bedroom and worked until I got it off. Now this was no easy job, and this was why everyone helped each other to get the suits off.

I laid down on the bed to rest for a while because I really hadn't been getting too much sleep in the "family pile-up." I had just begun to get to sleep when I heard a door open and shut. I didn't pay too much attention to it, but in a few minutes Mom came into the room and said, "I see they have all left you. I don't blame you for wanting to get some rest. I believe I would like to rest some too, but first I need help in getting the suit off. Will you help me?"

"I just took mine off alone, and I can see where you will certainly need some help. Are you sure it will be all right for me to help you?" I asked.

"I don't see why not! You are just going to help me get my suit off!" she replied.

"Just checking. I don't want to do something wrong," I said.

"This isn't wrong. Now if you will just unzip the front of my suit and help me out, you will be doing me a big favor," she instructed.

I questioned, "You want me to unzip your suit?" By now I had mastered the zip bit, but to unzip her suit I had to start in the middle of the neck and unzip the suit straight down the front.

"I believe it is easier for you to do. I can do it, but I have trouble doing it between my breasts. Will you please do it?" she asked very nicely and with a pleasing smile on her face.

How could I refuse? Besides, I was getting much better control over my emotions now. I didn't go all twittery when I saw the woman in the nude anymore. Sleeping, bathing, and all the other things I did with the girls didn't affect me anymore. They had become commonplace. As a matter of fact, I had been sleeping without a suit on and in the same bed with Memi and Sis now. I had begun to graduate to emotional control. So I stood up in front of Mom and unzipped her suit in front. I went all the way from the neck to the navel.

Mom looked at me and said, "Zip it on down. I can't get out of it that way," she instructed.

I looked at her beautiful blue eyes and decided to do as she asked. I reached over and zipped the suit on down to the crotch.

"If you will get behind me now and help me off with it, I'd appreciate it," Mom said with a smile.

I stepped behind her, lifted her hair over my shoulder so I could get the material of the suit and help her off with it. This put my body in contact with hers. This really didn't bother me, but when I went to get the material at the back of the neck, she took my hand and said, "Women have to take it off their breast first. I'll hold my breast and you can pull the material free," she explained.

We did this on both sides, and then I pulled the material free on the back of the neck to where she could pull her arms free of the material. I then pulled the material free of the back. I went around to the front and got on my knees and pulled the material at the thigh so it would fall off.

She sat down on the edge of the bed to take off the suit the rest of the way. As she did, I got up from my knees and laid down on the bed behind where she was sitting.

She turned around and looked at me and said, "Amos, you are all right in my book. You seem to have yourself under pretty good emotional control from all outward appearances. When you first came, I had my doubts about you, but you have improved from there, and I have just given you one of the last tests, and you have come out of it with flying colors. Did that cause you any emotional feelings inside?"

"I had mixed emotions. I wasn't sure why you insisted I get so intimate with you, but I went on with what you asked. I did have some emotional feeling, but I was able to control it. I might

add that this was the first time I have undressed a woman like this, and all of the control training I have been getting certainly has paid off," I answered.

"I'm glad for you and the kids. They have so much hope to train you before you left," she said as she laid down beside me in the bed. "They feel that if they can get you trained, you will feel the freedom of living as we do," she continued. "If you feel and live the life that we do, you will be able to write about our family life better and see the virtues of this way of life."

"I am already seeing some of the virtues of this life," I said. "I can see where emotion control and no secret living, if you want to call it that, are very good. Children brought up this way tend to not be promiscuous, and they seem to live much fuller, happier lives."

"We think so," she commented. "Now I'm going to tell you something, if you won't let on that you know. Promise?" she asked as she picked her head up to where she could look me in the eye.

"I promise," I confirmed.

"You have one big test to go. If you come through that without your emotions rising to a high pitch, you will have passed the training with flying colors," she whispered.

"What test is that?" I asked as the door opened and closed.

"The Compound!" she whispered as Memi came running into the bedroom.

"Mom! How did it go? Did he pass?" Memi asked.

"He certainly did pass, and I think he will pass the last test with flying colors also," stated Mom happily as she sat up in the bed. "I sure wish either he wasn't married and younger or I wasn't married! I think he would be great for you, Memi, or me, if I we both weren't married."

"Mom! You watch what you say! If you said this out loud or if it got out, someone might think you were a candidate for the Compound!" Memi exclaimed, and then added as she took me by the arm, "I can't blame you. I think he is great."

"Thank you both," I said. "You make me speechless with talk like that."

## Chapter XII

# Economic System

The next day, Emet agreed to answer some of my questions.

I asked, "Tell me about the suit that everyone wears in public. They wear it in public, but then throw it off when at home."

Emet said, "Wearing the suit in public is required by law and we are not allowed to wear any other type of clothing anywhere. Since the suit is not that comfortable when worn for an extended period of time, most people take it off as soon as they get home."

Emet continued, "The suit has an exoskeleton that protects the wearer from most injuries. This means that physical injuries are less of a burden on our government medical system. The suit also monitors the wearer's vital signs and relays that information to the wearer's doctor if there is a problem. It also monitors the wearer's subcutaneous fat levels. If the wearer has an unauthorized increase in fat, it will constrict slightly as a warning that the person needs to do additional exercise. If the person does not lose the unauthorized fat within a week, they are involuntarily committed to a health facility where doctors will evaluate the situation."

I guess that is one of the reasons everybody here seems so fit," I said.

"Yes," Emet said, "Staying fit is a requirement of law and also lessens the burden on our medical system."

Based on my observations, the suit was basically the same design for everybody. One size fits all. Once they are zipped up, they are skin tight. All suits were gray and opaque except for a translucent area in the abdominal area. They also had a big helping of high tech gadgets and circuitry. They are impervious to liquids, gasses and radiation so when combined with a helmet they can work as a space or diving suit. Yet, they must have had some kind of sweat removal function because I never felt damp inside the suit.

"I noticed that when we were on Ganymede that it did a really good job of keeping us warm even though the moon's temperature was -200F, how does that work?" I asked.

Emet replied, "It has both heating and cooling systems powered by a small atomic battery carried inside the suit at the waist. The internal temperature is automatically maintained at 75°F. There is no way to manually change the temperature. I know that some people have complained about that. This is something I would like to see changed."

"What allows the suits to stretch like they do? Its not like any elastic material we have on Earth," I asked.

Emet answered, "These suits are made of a bio-kinetic material that can stretch or contract under the control of the suit's internal computer. It can tell that you are trying to put it on and

then makes adjustments on the fly to accommodate your body shape. Once on, it is very flexible and feels like you aren't wearing anything, but when needed, the bio-kinetic fibers instantly stiffen to form an exoskeleton that protects the wearer from injury. For example, if someone was shot with one of your planet's primitive firearms, the bullet would not be able to penetrate the suit. However, the fact that they are made from bio-kinetic material is also the reason why they are difficult to put on and take off."

I was curious about the dome shaped buildings, so I asked Emet, "Why are all your buildings dome shaped?"

"Everything in nature is made round," he explained. "If it isn't round to start with, erosion will make it round quickly. Why should we put up something that defies nature? You see, every 7 years, our planet undergoes, what you might call a planetary hurricane. The oceans warm up gradually from the sun and when they get hot enough, a massive planetary windstorm is formed and it doesn't stop until the ocean cools down. All of our buildings have withstood the strongest of winds. The main reason for no wind destruction is that the wind cannot get a hold of a dome shape. The periodic planetary windstorm is also the reason why the transportation tunnels are underground."

"How long does such a planetary hurricane last?" I asked.

"It can last for over a month," Emet answered. "When it starts, about 20 or so, evenly spaced massive hurricane pairs spawn at the equator at nearly the same time. Each pair is like twin hurricanes - one in the northern hemisphere and one in the southern hemisphere - both rotating in opposite directions. They start spinning slow, but rapidly increase in speed. As they travel east to west, they can have winds that are as high as 200 mph near the eye wall and 150 mph a hundred miles out. Once one passes, the next is right behind it. They are the most devastating along the equator, but less devastating the closer you get to the poles."

"Wow," I said. "Its a wonder anything survives."

"Yes. Enough about that," Emet said, shifting gears. "I need to spend my time telling you about our planet and what we expect of you and your planet. Everything you have seen here — the sanitizer, the homes, the transportation system, and everything else you will see — can be yours also, provided your world will become a peaceful world. Now, let me start by telling you how our economy works."

I said, "That sounds interesting. Tell me about your economic system."

"Everyone on this planet must work for the government for half of the year. No one is allowed to have a private business that either impedes or competes with the government. A person can only work for a private enterprise during the half year that they are not working for the government."

"You will no doubt want to know about the government, and I will take you to our governmental centers later, but now I want to tell you about our work. The government owns everything. In order to eat and live, we must work for the government for half a year. By

working that length of time, we can earn enough time to buy groceries and other necessities for the rest of the year. If we are frugal and work hard, we might even have enough time left over to go on a small vacation."

"You say you might have enough time, what do you mean by that?" I asked.

"On this planet, there is no such thing as money," Emet explained. "When a child is born, a card — not too different from your credit cards — is made for him. This card is used for everything: his voting rights, schooling, working, and his accumulated time. When a person is old enough to work, this card is used to indicate to a machine that he is working on a particular job. Each day he works, the time he has spent is credited to him. When he has completed his half year, the machine gives him a readout of all the time he has accumulated, minus the time he has already used for purchases. He then must figure out how to manage his remaining time. Accumulated time is the only thing that can be used for the purchase of anything on this planet."

Emet continued, "The time cards are useless to anyone else except their owner. When a baby is born, a card is assigned to him, in addition, an implant with the child's identity is placed under the skin on the back of the baby's hand. The implant is paired to the chip embedded in the card. Therefore, the card can only be used by the person it was assigned to. All cards have a unique serial number. No one can forge or use a card that is not their own, and only the machine knows the difference. There is no external listing of this identification; the machine handles the programming of both the card and the implant. This fact makes theft virtually impossible. The implant is also how the suit's know who is wearing them."

"What if someone decided to steal goods? What would stop them from that?" I asked.

"The punishment for theft is death!", Emet said flatly. "If that isn't a sufficient deterrent, the aforementioned implants are tracked by the government so the government knows exactly where everyone was at the time of the theft. In addition to surveillance sensors everywhere, they would be quickly caught. Likely before they made it home."

I said, "You mean that if a person steals something, he is put to death?"

"Yes, he is," Emet said. "Whenever a person decides to steal, he has decided to exclude himself from our government and society. This means he no longer wants the protection of the government. He is now an enemy of the government, and all enemies of the government are put to death."

Appalled, I asked, "How is this carried out?"

Emet replied, "First of all, he is arrested and given a trial. This trial takes place within one day of the arrest. It is a jury trial, and he is always tried in another area where people do not know him or the victim. The judge is the township chairman, and the trial is by a jury of his peers. Both parties are each represented by a computer programmed with all aspects of the law. When the jury brings in a verdict, the judge must either carry out sentencing or set the

prisoner free immediately."

Emet added, "If the person is found guilty of stealing, he is sentenced to death and sent to a death compound."

"What is a death compound?" I asked.

Emet replied, "It is a fully enclosed building about the size of an average home. Inside is a complicated maze of passageways where a convict can hide or sleep. When a convict is placed inside, he is given a weapon and all clothing is taken from him. There is always one convict in the compound."

"How does the death compound work?" I asked. "It sounds like they aren't dead if there is a convict in there at all times."

Emet replied, "In the compound, when another convict is put in, there would be two convicts. Because of the way the building is constructed, the convict that is already there has no idea that a new convict has been added. At random times twice a day, only one meal is slid into unoccupied sections of the compound through hidden slit-like doors in the perimeter wall. The convicts must traverse the maze and search for this meal. When one of them finds the meal, the other will usually try to kill him and take the meal. Each convict knows that the other is likely looking to kill him on sight so that fact encourages him to do the same."

"What if the two of them got together and agreed to share the food instead of shooting one another?" I asked.

"Well this has happened," said Emet, "but sooner or later, one of them gets greedy and then somebody gets killed. There is no honor among thieves."

"What if they run out of ammunition shooting at each other?" I asked.

"They won't!" replied Emet. "The weapons use atomic power and will last almost indefinitely! They will disintegrate their opponent so we don't ever have to bury them!"

I asked, "Why couldn't they use the weapons to blast a hole in the compound wall and escape?"

"The weapon uses a similar technology to our BeTran teleportation system," Emet replied. "It only works on living organisms. The victim is dematerialized and then converted to energy for our power grid. The net result is that the convict is disintegrated and death is instant and totally painless. Because of the way that the technology works, the weapon cannot penetrate non-living matter, so the perimeter wall, and also anything behind it, cannot be harmed. This is also why they are not allowed to have any clothing because non-living matter would act as a shield and render the weapon useless."

I said, "I'll bet you don't have many people who steal, knowing they are going to be caught and lose their life."

"No, we really don't," Emet said, "and this is one thing that is taught to a child from birth up. Every once in a while, we have people who are accused of theft, but the court determines that it was the result of an honest misunderstanding, so those people are set free."

"Do the police carry these disintegrator weapons also?" I asked.

Emet answered, "No, the police carry freeze guns that they can use on suspects that try to run away."

"That sounds lethal. Do the weapons kill the suspect?" I asked.

"No, the suspect is not harmed," Emet said. "When fired at a person, they activate the exoskeleton feature of the suspect's suit. This results in the suspect being unable to move due to the suit and they become like a statue. Even a female is not capable of overpowering the suit."

"Cool," I said.

"Despite the name," Emet retorted, "they do not lower the temperature of the suspect or anything like that, but they have proven to be a humane way of subduing a fleeing suspect."

"What happens if a suspect is not wearing a suit?" I asked.

"That would mean that they would be naked," Emet said. "If the beam from the police freeze gun hits bare skin, it will overwhelm the suspects nervous system and cause their muscles to contract all at once. The effect is very painful and will last several minutes. For most suspects, their suit will block this aspect of the beam. Consequently, people who are naked seldom run from the police."

"I'll bet that's true," I said.

Emet replied, "It is true. Now, if you don't mind, let's get back to the work situation."

Emet continued, "The government requires that every person do something at least once before they are 40 years old that helps the government in some way. They might beautify a place and make a park, or they might do as Dad and I did and create a transportation system. They can do anything that enhances the government."

"Memi has made a nice little place for people to go and rest and relax," Emet continued. "Come with me, and I'll take you there. Don't tell her that I took you, for she will want to show it to you herself and tell you all about it. I'm not going to tell you anything about it, but I do want you to see it."

We went to a thought car station and took a car to the place Emet was describing. It was a beautiful place, like a large park where people could go and enjoy themselves and the surrounding scenery.

"It is beautiful," I said. "It's just like I would expect from a beautiful girl like Memi."

"You are so right, but don't tell her I agree with you," Emet replied. "She thinks I don't like it."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because she is always underrating herself," Emet replied. "She thinks what I do is super and what she does is not."

"Why don't you tell her that you think it is great?" I asked,

Emet replied, "I will someday, but I like to bother her first!"

"You're just a great big teaser," I said. "Aren't you?"

Emet replied, "I guess I am if you put it that way, but I like making her feel that I'm the greatest brother on the whole planet."

"Tell me, why is your planet not overcrowded with people?" I asked.

"For a thousand years or more, we have had a Zero Population Growth Law," Emet replied. "No female can have more than two children, except when the father is the seventh generation from the last time three children were allowed. Dad is a seventh-generation son which is why Sis exists. This provision helps to build the population to offset those who die young or to compensate for childless couples."

Emet continued, "In addition, every couple is given a score based on their combined genetics and this score is known only to the central computer. The higher the score, the more beneficial the central computer believes their children will be to society."

Emet continued, "When the central computer determines that a couple has a high probability of generating a child with serious physical or mental flaws, mental illness or a propensity toward violence, they will get a lower score. In the past, the central computer has prohibited some couples with very low scores from having any children at all, but people haven't gotten scores that low for hundred of years. In order to maintain the 96 million population, the bar for this prohibition could be raised at any time."

Emet continued, "On the other hand, some couples with very high scores are allowed to have more children. Many years ago, there was a couple that scored so high that they were allowed to have ten children!"

"Do people in the Death Compounds count?" I asked.

No person in a Death Compound is counted in the population; they are all considered dead to society."

I asked, "What if a couple slipped up and had a child when they were not supposed to?"

Emet replied, "This rarely happens because all females are given sterility implants just after they go through puberty. These implants block conception without interfering with other sexual development. When they marry, and the central computer decides that more children are needed, the sterility chip is temporarily deactivated so they can become pregnant."

"You said 'rarely'. So what happens when they get pregnant anyway?" I asked.

Emet replied, "First off, there are only two ways this can happen - accidentally and on purpose. Sometimes, a couple will have twins or triplets which puts them over the limit. In that case, no action is taken by the government against the female."

Emet continued, "If the female becomes pregnant due to tampering with the implant, that is an illegal pregnancy. In rare cases, the implant simply doesn't work and the female can conceive naturally, but because the female has already had two children by this point, that is also considered an illegal pregnancy. When a female is determined to have an unauthorized pregnancy, the baby is allowed to be born, after which she is arrested and tried by a jury."

Emet continued, "If found guilty of an illegal pregnancy, the female is surgically sterilized so that no future pregnancy is possible. Additionally, in the case of illegal tampering with the implant, all of her children are confiscated and become wards of the state."

"I don't know if this is good or bad!" I said, "Why can't people have as many children as they can support?"

"Because this planet is not able to support them!" Emet insisted.

Emet then pushed the button to summon another thought car. We got in and returned home.

## Chapter XIII

# The Structure of Government

The next morning, Emet took me on a tour of his governmental buildings and explained the way their government works.

"Our planet is broken down into countries, states, counties, and townships, if you liken it to terms of your world," Emet began. "The smallest unit is the township. This unit has exactly 1,000 people. The next unit is the county, composed of exactly ten townships, or 10,000 people. The next unit is the state, with exactly ten counties, or 100,000 people. The largest unit is the country, with exactly ten states, or one million people."

Emet continued, "All of these countries work together in unity and harmony. All countries are divided the same, and all the people have a say in what goes on in the world, their country, their state, their county, and their township."

"I have two questions before you go any further," I interrupted. "How many countries do you have? Do you have a central government that directs the laws passed? Do you have a law-making body?"

Emet replied, "If you can wait a few minutes, I'll get to the answer to most of your questions. To answer your first question: there are exactly 100 countries on this planet. In answer to your second question, for now, I have to tell you that we have no central government as you know it."

Emet continued, "Let me go back to the construction of our government. About 2,000 years ago, our forefathers decided to divide the population of the world into equal segments so each group would have an equal say in the government. This is why the divisions are equal. These same people set up a government that would suit the people's needs as well as the needs of the planet. They wrote a document similar to your Constitution, which you will see and read if you want, for we are going there."

"Our Constitution provides that each person, excluding those in the compounds, has the right to vote on every law concerning him. This means that everything that is proposed by a group of people has to be voted on by every person it affects. This is what you would call a true democracy," Emet said.

"How in the world does this work?" I asked.

"It works for the whole world," Emet said. "I live in this township. Suppose I feel that we should have the right to go around without suits inside or outside. I get 60 people to sign a petition that they want the law. I then take this to the township chairman, who is elected for one year at a time. The chairman looks at the petition, checks the signatures, and then submits it to the central computer for approval. If approved, the chairman puts it on the next ballot at election time. All the people in the township vote on that issue, as well as others. If the issue I put up passes by a majority vote, it then becomes a law for my township only."

Emet continued, "Now, if other townships see this law and how it works and think they would like to have it, they can put it on their ballot for the next election. If the county likes it, it is put on the county ballot, and it may, at this time, be put on the state or national ballot if at least six townships, counties, or states petition for it."

"That seems like you would be forever passing a law that should be passed sooner! Isn't that more complicated than having a legislative body do the work?" I challenged.

Emet said, "It may seem so, but any issue can be placed on the national ballot anytime six or more states petition for it to be placed there. It can be placed on a state ballot anytime six or more counties petition for it, and it can be placed on the county ballot anytime six or more townships petition for it. So you see, the process can be sped up."

"What if several countries wanted the same to become an international agreement? How would that work?" I queried.

Emet replied, "To become an international agreement, all that has to be done is for 60 or more countries to petition for it to be placed on the international election ballot."

I asked, "You say that the township chairman is elected. How is this done? Does he do a campaign or something?"

"The election of the township chairman is done by everyone voting for whom they want in the pre-election vote," Emet explained. "The two people getting the highest number of votes are then placed on the election ballot. At election time, the person getting the highest number of votes is the winner and chairman of the township. There is no soliciting votes and no campaigning. If they are caught doing this, their name is removed from the ballot, and the next highest vote-getter takes their place."

"How do the people get to know who they are voting for?" I asked.

Emet replied, "Candidates are allowed to go into other areas to let the people see them and hear their personal record, such as age, family, education, and experience. They are not allowed to make any promises or state their plans. The voters then make up their minds and settle the question at the polls."

"That sounds very simple. What about the election of your higher leaders? How is that done?" I asked.

Emet said, "All township elections are held at the beginning of the year. There are always two elections: one to select the two candidates and one to select the township chairman. Every township on the planet holds its elections at the same time. Two weeks after the township chairman is elected, he must travel over the county, letting people see him and hear his biography. He can in no way tell what he plans to do if elected or make any promises. He has two weeks to do this. At the end of these two weeks, the people of every township vote for the chairman they want to be the county chairman. From this election, the two with the

highest number of votes are placed on a ballot for the final election. The winner then becomes the county chairman, and that township must hold another election later to select a new township chairman."

Emet continued, "The same procedure is used for the election of the state chairman, the country chairman, and the international chairman."

Emet continued, "The country that lost its chairman to the international level will then have to go back to the townships, county, and state elections to get another chairman. These elections are held in the same way as before, and each time there is a vacancy, that vacancy must be filled by special elections."

"That seems like an awful lot of voting," I ventured. "It seems to me that this is rather complicated."

"It really isn't." Emet said. "There is no problem with voting, for it is all done in your home with your time card. Every home has a machine that reads the time card for whatever you want it to read for. When voting, you merely push the voting button, and a screen shows you the ballot. You then put your time card in the machine and punch the 'Yes' or 'No' button by the number of the item on the ballot. Voting is over at 9:00 PM each election night, and by 9:10 PM, you know who was elected!"

"That certainly is quick counting! How is that done?" I asked.

Emet replied, "That is done by the machine or machines throughout the world, and by the way, they are all linked together."

"You depend a lot on these machines," I asked. "What if they break down or the current goes off?"

Emet replied, "If a machine breaks down, there is always a second machine with identical information ready to be connected into the line. As far as having the power go off, these machines are atomic powered, and that supply is checked at regular intervals to make certain that everything is functioning properly."

Emet continued, "This is one of the jobs of the chairman. They must check the machines, power supply, and in all ways take care of them. They have to program the machine each time a child is born. They have to put the ballot on the machine. The township chairmen are also the judges in court cases, which aren't many. In general, the chairmen are machine keepers."

I had to ask, "Have you or Dad ever been a chairman?"

"Dad has been several times," Emet replied. "I haven't been. Dad got to be the state chairman once and would have been national chairman and possibly international chairman except for one little problem."

I became very interested at this point and asked, "What was that little problem was that?"

Emet looked at me and laughed as he said, "He didn't get enough votes."

I laughed at how stupid I had been to bite on an 'oldie' like that.

With that, Emet said, "I think it is time I took you to see some of our governmental buildings."

With this, we entered a thought car and headed for a destination that Emet seemed to place a lot of interest in.

Emet had brought the thought car to a place that looked like any ordinary, run-of-the-mill courthouse in America. The building was dome-shaped like all the other buildings, but inside were hallways leading to offices that were marked with such signs as: "Townships," "Counties," "States," "Office of the County Chairman," "Secretary," and "County Courtroom."

My curiosity got the best of me when I saw the signs and asked Emet, "What are all of these offices for? I thought you only had one person working in the county office!"

"Well, we have two people," Emet replied. "One is the Chairman, and the other is the Secretary. The other offices are only rooms with machines connected to the various areas designated on the door."

"Where do you go to pay your taxes?" I asked.

"There are no such things!" Emet replied with a laugh. "The government owns everything and sells or leases land to individuals. The government pays the individual for working for it but never collects taxes, as they are not needed."

I said, "That makes everything flow one way! The government never gets anything back from the people it serves."

Emet replied, "It doesn't have to. You are forgetting that the government gives no medium of exchange except time earned. This time is given for services rendered. The government is like a fountain — it can and does continually give, yet it never receives anything except services that ultimately go to the people."

"What about diplomats or others who serve the country? How are they cared for?" I asked.

"Well, we don't have diplomats," Emet said. "We only have machines. We have no wars, so we need no military personnel. We have no taxes, so we need no tax collectors. We have few crimes and criminals, so we need few law enforcement agencies. We have no money, so we need no financial institutions. As a matter of fact, the only thing we need is a person to oversee these machines and a secretary to take care of the secretarial business."

"How about elections? Who takes care of the election procedures?" I asked,

Emet replied, "The Chairman in each township takes care of the voting in his township. He prepares the ballot, places it on his machine, and makes certain all items are correctly placed on the ballot. Once this is entered on the machine correctly, the machines do all of the voting procedures from there on."

"What if one of those machines breaks down? What happens then?" I asked.

"The job of the Chairman is to make certain that does not happen," Emet replied. "If it should, there is a secondary machine that continually monitors the primary machine looking for problems, if it finds one, it automatically takes over as the primary machine and calls for repair. Once the defective machine is repaired, it then becomes the secondary machine and the cycle continues. Both machines have redundant circuits in various locations. There is no way the loss of a machine will interrupt life here except for the fraction of a second it takes for the secondary machine to switch over."

"What about language? Don't you have a problem with languages being different in different countries?" I asked.

"Well, we don't have that problem here," Emet replied. "The people here have a universal language that they speak. The people of the different countries have maintained their own national language and do speak it, but it is a second language. They must speak the universal language as a first language. By the way, you are speaking our universal language and you are doing very well at it. The only problem is that you have a peculiar accent."

"I'm sorry that I have the accent, but it is what you implanted on my brain!" I teased.

Emet replied, "You don't have to feel sorry about the accent. As far as implanting the accent, we did not. That is from your own language mixing with ours. It is nothing to worry about or be ashamed of."

"Will I be able to speak this language when I return to my planet?" I asked.

"No, unfortunately, you won't," Emet replied. "The only reason you speak it here is that when I speak to you, it trips the part of the brain that this is implanted in. To speak it on your planet, it would take someone to speak it to you. I'm afraid that will be of no help to you as proof you've been here!"

"Well, that shot down another good idea!" I exclaimed.

"Well, if you write the book and lay out the facts that I ask you to lay out, some people are bound to realize this is beyond you and that you must have been somewhere to get this information," Emet said.

I said, "I surely do hope so! I also hope some people take the book seriously enough to accept its suggestions."

"That is what I hope you will work for. I don't want beautiful language or technical language. I

want the book written in a language that your average person can read and understand," Emet said.

"How do you get dialog between countries? You must have some way of doing that or you might find two countries at war with each other!" I asked.

Emet replied, "The Chairmen of the countries does the interacting, and this keeps everyone 'in the know' of what is taking place and what will take place."

"This is so simple, yet it is quite complicated!" I said.

Emet said, "It really isn't complicated. Any Chairman must talk to his counterparts and keep informed of happenings in other areas and countries of the world. You see, the whole world is owned by the government of the world, and the government is the people, so in reality the world is owned by the people. All of the people have a voice in their government and the way things are run. Everyone agrees to certain laws — or at least the majority of the people do — and they are expected to abide by the majority decision."

"What would happen if they did not abide by the majority decision? Wouldn't they then be a criminal?" I asked.

"Yes, they would, in a manner of speaking. The only thing is that they would have a speedy trial and a real stiff sentence if found guilty."

## Chapter XIV

# The Courts and the Constitution

"So how do your courts work?" I asked.

"OK," Emet said, "I'll tell you how our courts work. Suppose I was opposed to a new law that was passed that said that I could not enter into a government building without first saluting the flag of the country I was in. It makes no difference as to why I am opposed to it; it is a law of the land, and I must obey it. In reality, there would be no such law passed because everyone knows that government buildings are owned by the people of the world, and a law such as this would be made for a selfish reason. For demonstration purposes, suppose this was the law, and I chose not to salute the flag as I entered a government building. Someone would inform the Chairman of that township that I was not following the law. The Chairman would call me in and ask me if it is true that I deliberately broke the law. I am obligated to tell the truth and would therefore tell him that I did break the law intentionally."

Emet continued, "The Chairman would then ask for another township to have the trial. The trial would be held with lawyers to defend and prosecute me. A jury would be selected from people of the township I am being tried in."

"Why would they even bother to have a trial when you have already told the Chairman that you are guilty?" I asked.

"This type of trial would not be to determine my innocence but to determine why I broke the law," Emet stated.

"I thought I heard you say a few minutes ago that it didn't make any difference why you broke the law!" I said.

"It doesn't!" Emet said. "I will get my sentence for breaking the law. The trial is to determine why I broke the law so that it might be determined if the law is a good law and remains or if it is a bad law and is repealed."

"If you are sentenced and the law is found to be a bad law, wouldn't they commute your sentence?" I asked.

"No, because I broke the law that was in force at that time," Emet said. "As a good citizen, I must obey the laws of the land even though I don't agree with them!"

"Well, that seems kind of silly. You have to abide by a law whether it is good or bad, whether you want to or not!" I asked, "What if you lied to the Chairman when he asked you if you did it?"

Emet replied, "They would then have a trial to decide if I had committed the crime, and if found guilty of committing the crime and lying about it, I would get the death compound. But there are better ways to get a law repealed than to be sentenced for not obeying it. If I don't

like a law because I feel it is wrong for any reason, I can go to the Chairman and ask him for a court hearing on the law and have the same trial I would have had for breaking the law. This trial, however, decides whether the law is just or not. This is the proper and just way of getting a law changed. By breaking it, I am sentenced to five years of work during my free half year doing a job that nobody else wants - such as doing janitorial work at the various government buildings."

"Suppose you didn't want to do this extra work and so you didn't show up. What would happen then?" I asked.

Emet replied, "The machines would catch up with my not working, and the Chairman would be around to see what is wrong. If I absolutely refuse to take my sentence, the Chairman would get two or three men in the township to take me to the death compound. Once I am placed in the death compound, my life will be quite short."

"It seems like death is a high price to pay for not obeying a law!" I said.

Emet said, "This is not for disobedience, but for refusal to carry out the sentence."

I said, "This still seems severe!"

Emet replied, "It may seem severe, but you would be surprised as to how few disobey the laws."

"Suppose you accidentally killed someone. What would happen then?"

Emet replied, "There would be a trial to determine if the killing was accidental or not. If the jury determines that it was truly an accident, then I would be set free, but I would have to give the victim's next of kin a certain amount of my time. The amount of time is determined by the jury and varies under the circumstances. If the jury concludes that the killing was not accidental, I would be sent to the death compound."

"I thought your government was far ahead of us, but some of that that sounds like you are barbaric in your justice," I said.

"It may seem barbaric, but we don't have many violators of the law!" Emet said.

"I can well imagine that you wouldn't!" I said. "What do you do to minor offenders?"

"There is no such thing as a minor offender," Emet said. "Every offense is considered a rebellion against the laws of the land, and that is punishable at the maximum by death."

"That seems so final and unnecessary," I said. "Don't you believe in having mercy? It would look like to me that you should have an intermediate course of action for a person who has committed a lesser crime."

"We don't believe in lesser crimes! Any crime is a big crime," Emet said. "On your planet, you

have a belief in a God. That God has told you that no sin — no matter how small or how big — will go unpunished. A little sinner will go to a place called Hell just as quickly as a person who has committed a big sin or lived in sin all his life! I know you believe in this belief, so why should we be any different than God's plan of salvation and punishment? With you believing in this idea, I can't see how you could be dismayed at our penal system!"

"Now that you mentioned that, I see your point," I replied.

Emet said, "Let me take you to our International Headquarters and show you our Constitution." With this statement, we went to a station and took a thought car.

Upon arriving at the station, I noticed the station was elaborately decorated. The floors of the station were paved with what looked like gold. The walls had a silver covering that had all kinds of beautiful gems in them. The ceiling had a silver covering over it with crystal chandeliers hanging down. They had no light but were lit by the normal indirect lighting.

"Those certainly are beautiful chandeliers. What kind of crystal is that?" I asked.

Emet replied, "Those are diamonds! They have the best reflective quality, and nothing is too good for our International Headquarters. You are walking on gold. The walls and ceiling are silver, and the walls have gems mounted in them."

"How do you keep the gold and silver from tarnishing?" I asked.

"We have workers whose job it is to polish the walls, ceiling, and floor so that it is always shiny," Emet replied.

We walked to a stairway and into a large room that had a large display in a case at one end of the room. We walked up to the case, and Emet whispered to me that this was their Constitution that had been drawn up some 2,000 years ago.

I looked at this old piece of paper in the case, and I couldn't make out any of the writing. I must have looked puzzled, for Emet whispered to me, "You can't read our writing! You can only speak our language. I'll read it to you."

With this, he began to read, "We the people of this planet do hereby agree that we shall abide by the following:

1. We shall have one planetary government that shall own all property unless it is purchased by an individual.
2. The government shall be operated by the people of the planet.
3. No person or group of persons shall have the right to abridge the rights of an individual without due process of the law.
4. No person or a group of persons shall have the right to worship in any manner except that of a Christian nature.
5. All persons deemed to be breaking a law or doing anything contrary to this constitution shall have the right of a trial by a jury of his peers in another township other than the one in which the crime was committed.

6. Disobedience to this constitution or the laws of the planet shall be punishable by death.
7. Each person of this planet shall have freedom to do as he pleases so long as he does not abridge the rights of others.
8. This planetary government shall be set up on the basis of townships, counties, states, and countries, with all people of these lands having a direct voice in their government by a vote on each item considered for their benefit."

Emet said, "The Constitution then goes into detail about the way the townships, counties, states, and countries are to be organized. I have already explained that to you, so I'll not read that to you."

I said, "That is very interesting. It is brief and to the point. Our constitution is lengthy and wordy and still has loopholes big enough that smart lawyers can do anything they want on any subject."

Emet replied, "Our lawyers know the balance by which they are bound. If one of them dares to read something into the Constitution that isn't there, they can be executed. This helps to make them think twice before they try to bring in another contrary meaning."

"I guess they would be careful," I said. "I can see where that threat of death does come in handy."

"Let me take you to our International Chairman and to the chambers he is in," Emet said as he took me to a large office. It looked like a regular business office. He announced to a secretary who he was and that he wanted to see the International Chairman. The Secretary disappeared behind a large, gold-covered door for a few moments and then returned to motion us into the room behind the door.

Emet walked in ahead of me, shook the hand of the Chairman, and then introduced me. I was amazed at the ease with which we had gained access to the Chairman. The Chairman looked at me and asked, "What do you think of our planet?"

"I really am impressed. I can see a lot of advantages to your system of government," I said.

He said, "We think we have one of the greatest governments. You see, the people of this planet are the government."

"I've been told this by Emet, and I like what I see and hear," I said.

"Thank you," he said. "Perhaps our two planets will one day get to work together."

I said, "I hope so."

"We will get on our way and leave you to your work. Thank you for seeing us," stated Emet.

We left the office, and as we did, I questioned Emet about the ease with which we had gotten in to see the Chairman.

"Anyone can come in to see the Chairman anytime. The Chairman has to keep his door open to the people," Emet said. "Besides that, he thinks highly of me for the transportation system, and he wanted to see you."

"I certainly am amazed," I said. "In my country, we have to be a very important person to get access like that."

"Why is that?" Emet asked.

I replied, "One reason is security. If just anyone came in to see the President, there might be a crackpot who would assassinate the President. Another reason is that the President is a very busy man. He just doesn't have time to stop everything to see people who might want to see him."

"Now you can see why your world needs to change!" said Emet. "Let's get on back home now. I'll take you to see the schools tomorrow. Sis has been begging me to bring you to her school, so we'll do that next time out."

## Chapter XV

### Schools

The day came that I was to go with Emet to visit the schools of this strange planet. I was a little excited because this was something I knew a little about, but Sis was so excited that she couldn't eat her breakfast.

Sis had to be in school before I was to arrive to visit, and she had made several supplications to either get Emet to set up his time for arrival or to let her go with us. Mom kept things on an even keel by insisting that things stay the same, so Sis reluctantly went to school at the usual time.

Emet and I took a thought car to the school later in the morning. As we arrived at the school area, I could tell that it was a school, for some of the children were out playing in a field. It was some kind of game that I couldn't recognize. I could hear the children laugh and scream as they played. It made me feel that I was back on Earth.

I went with Emet to the main office of the school, but as we approached the office door, several children about the same age as Sis, and including Sis, came up to me and began to ask me questions. Sis had come to school and told all of her friends that I was from another planet and was her special guest!

All of Sis's friends had no idea that she was telling the truth, so they made her bring them to me.

"Are you from another planet? Really and truly?" asked one little black-haired girl.

"Did you fly here or were you brought here by Sis's brother?" asked another little girl with blonde hair and freckles.

"Why did you come to our planet?" asked a little boy.

"Children! Please go inside for your chance to hear Amos. He is going to speak to all of you in a few minutes. Now scat!" Emet gave Sis a dirty look as he said this to the boys and girls.

We entered the building and went directly to the main office.

I was surprised to find that this was one place the thought car did not come into the basement of the building. I was equally surprised to find very little paving or sidewalks around the building. The children played around trees, bushes, and on grass.

We entered the main office of the school and were politely led by a Secretary to the head of the school. We call the head of a school a Principal, but they just call the person in charge the Head. I never found that it had any meaning other than that the person was the head of the school.

"Amos, I want you to meet the Head of the school, Elm. Elm would like to talk with you for a moment before you speak to the children and tour the building. While you are talking, I am going to talk to Sis about her poor behavior!" said Emet.

"Don't you dare say anything to Sis! She is a little girl that I think acts very normal for a girl her age," I said, before I had really thought, but I meant what I said.

Emet looked at me and said very sternly, "Your children may act that way, but my sister does not!" Having said this, Emet left the room.

"Don't worry about Emet; he will not scold Sis much because he loves her too much to be very mean to her," Elm reassured me. This was the first I had really heard from Elm.

Elm was a man of about the age of forty. He was tall compared to the other people I had seen. He was slim, which added to the illusion of height. He had black wavy hair and a mustache. He was quite good-looking. He had a petite physique which was common among the males of the planet.

"I'm sorry that I haven't been courteous to you. I'm glad to meet you. I feel that you and I have something in common, as I work for a school on my planet," I said as I extended my hand to shake his hand.

"That is all right for you to be concerned about a child. I guess it just comes natural to those of us who work with the children," Elm replied, trying to be friendly.

"Emet said that you wanted to talk to me as he left. What did you want to tell me?" I asked.

"I just wanted to know if you were acquainted with the behavior of children. I see you are, so there is no need in delaying your chance to talk to and with the children. Just come with me," Elm answered.

I followed Elm through a hallway and into a large room where all of the children were seated. We walked up to a raised platform that was lower than our stages and only about a foot higher than the floor. In the center of the stage was a podium. There was a microphone or something I took to be a microphone. I found out later that it was a microphone and that everything I spoke that day had been recorded on a thing like video tape.

Elm walked up to the podium and said, "Boys and girls, today we have a great honor in having Amos come to speak to us and to answer questions. He is from a distant planet called Earth, and he works with boys and girls as I do. I want you to listen to him first, and if you have questions to ask him, I trust we will have time for him to answer them all. I don't have to remind you that this is the first time we have ever had a person speak to us from another planet, so listen carefully."

I got up to go to the podium, and when I did, you would have thought that I was some kind of celebrity. The children stood up and applauded me! I was overwhelmed. I later was told by Emet that the children are taught to do this as a show of respect. My ego was certainly

deflated.

"Boys and girls, I do come from a planet far away. We are not as advanced a civilization as you are, but I will try to tell you about the way our schools operate and what we call the workers in our schools. I will tell you about what we teach the boys and girls. After that, I will try to answer all of your questions," I said. As I said this, all of the boys and girls sat down so quietly that no noise was heard in the entire room.

I spoke to the children for about ten minutes, and then I started answering their questions. All together, I was in front of the boys and girls about two hours. The questions asked were very sensible and showed a general inquisitiveness normal to boys and girls.

After about two hours, the Head got up and explained that I would be around to visit the various areas in the school and that we would have to leave the auditorium now or I would never get to visit the different areas.

The children all stood up and applauded until Elm and I had left the room. From the way I was being treated, one might get the idea that I was giving them information instead of me getting information from them.

I followed Elm to a work area, and there was Sis. This was her area. She came up to me and put her arm around my waist as she introduced me to all of her friends.

I looked at Sis and asked, "What are you doing here in this area?"

Sis was as proud as a peacock that I had asked her. She explained what they were doing. Some of the boys and girls asked me questions, and I answered them the best I could. I say 'the best I could' because these questions were not all easy to answer.

I was very surprised to find that these schools were not labeled schools; they were Learning Centers. They did not have desks as we have them. They did not have books — they had a retrieval system. There was no paper or pencils. There were no teachers — they were apprentices. There were no students — they were boys and girls. There were no elementary, junior high, or senior high — it was all one big Learning Center.

There were no grades or levels — just courses of study.

There were no principals — they were Heads.

There were no tests.

There were no grade cards.

Conferences were held with parents of children only when asked for by parents or needed by the school.

There is no corporal punishment.

There were no summer vacations.

There were no janitors — the older boys did this work.

There were no cooks — the older girls did this one.

Despite all of these things that the school didn't have, I found that there were a lot of things that they did have that was wonderful. This was a kind of dream school. All children were eager to learn, and they did learn!

In this program, the children taught themselves. The apprentices only aided in directing the children to the course of study that they need. If a child needed help, he got it from an older student or a fellow student who had finished that course of study.

The Head did all of the directing of the boys and girls. He was responsible for the total school just like our Principal is. The only difference is that he can direct the school as he sees fit. He only has two things to bind him. The people in an election can mandate certain items, and he must educate the students to be literate and to be able to function as a productive member of society.

The people have put only two mandates on the schools, and they are the ones I mentioned above. When a student can show that they have mastered the two requirements, they can leave the school and take up their life's work.

If they master these two things and prefer to continue to study for a specific purpose, they may continue. There are no failures. All children are trained to do something for life. No one in that society can be non-productive. Everyone has to work at something six months out of the year.

There are no people in that society unable to do something. Even physically handicapped children do something for a living!

There are no feeble-minded people. Why, I do not know. There were some that had low IQs, I would judge, but not a one of them sat by without learning a trade of some kind.

They had no books, but they did have a retrieval system that either printed answers or told them with a voice what the student wanted to know. The retrieval system must have been like our computers, the only difference being that their machine talked.

I was amazed to see the teaching was mostly self-directed. The Apprentices only directed the students to the course of study they needed.

There were no papers to be graded. All checking was done by the students.

When a child got tired of studying, he could go outside to play a while. There were no time limits put on how long it took to do a course of study. The only time limit was that a student

must be through school by the age of eighteen.

Children had to be in school every morning by 8:00 and they left by 4:00 p.m. They were not allowed to stay beyond four.

The school was laid out to include areas of learning. This was true all the way from elementary through high school years.

When a child finished a course of study, he was given a chance to prove that proficiency. This was proven to the Head.

No student was given corporal punishment at school. If a child was not interested in behaving, the parents were called in and this was brought to their attention. This then meant that the parents were aware of the problem and would punish the child at home. Once they were informed of the problem, the parents were obligated to punish the child, for if continual misconduct prevailed, a check was made at the home to see what punishment had been meted out. If there were no punishment given, then the child became a ward of the state and the parents were punished. The state can mete out punishment to those they take care of.

I saw no misconduct in the schools I visited. No child even refused to work.

Schools were operated for the children, and the children certainly had a say in the curriculum and the way they were operated.

The children saw no failures. They worked until they mastered a course of study, and they were very careful to select courses of study that they could master. If they were to select a course too difficult for them, the Apprentices would guide them into a course of study that would be beneficial and one in which they could succeed.

No one stood over them and made them study. They were all eager to learn. I asked Elm, "What makes the children so eager to learn? What motivates them?"

"Several things motivate them. They are eager to get out into the world and make their own way. Not only do they want to get out to make their own way, but they want to do a better job of their life's work than their parents. They want to show the old people that they are worthy of the trust they inherit," Elm explained.

"You mean that they have no other motivation?" I asked.

"The only other one that I know of is to do better than someone else or to do well as a 'show off' to some person of the opposite sex," he replied.

"Well, whatever you do seems to really be working! If we could get students to work like this, we would think something was wrong," I observed.

"We let the students have almost complete control of the Learning Centers. As long as things are done as they need to be, by learning a life's work, we don't do much except to stand on

the sidelines and cheer them on," Elm stated.

"What if a boy or girl gets out of line? Say they don't want to work and do what they need to. What happens then?" I pressed.

"The other students help them get back in line," Elm replied.

"Don't you have a sex problem when the boys and girls begin to mature?" I asked.

"Not much. The girls are physically stronger than boys and are trained to beat any person who touches them. They are also taught that virginity at marriage is a necessity," he answered.

"I am familiar with the 'boy beating' bit, but what happens to a girl that decides virginity at marriage isn't necessary?" I inquired.

"Any girl who will not fall in line on the sex problem is committed to the Sex Compound. It is there that the girls soon learn that it is better to cherish virginity," Elm said gravely.

"What is the Sex Compound?" I asked.

"I imagine Emet will take you there, but I can tell you that it is a place where, to continue as they have started, would mean self-destruction to those in the compound. You will see when Emet takes you there," he replied.

"Why do only girls get punished?" I asked.

"As I am sure you have already noticed, boys cannot physically initiate anything without the girl's consent. Unlike girls, boys are not allowed to refuse physical contact. For that reason, only girls are held responsible," said Elm.

I noticed Emet coming up to where we were and supposed that he was waiting to leave, so I began bidding Elm goodbye and thanking him for the opportunity to visit his school.

"You have one more place to go and see before you leave. You must visit the area where the girls are trained to ward off attackers," informed Elm.

We went to a room we would call a gymnasium and sat in the bleachers and watched the girls. They were divided into pairs. One girl would be the attacker, and the other girl would sling her arm around. There was a padded floor mat so they couldn't be hurt.

I noticed on one end of the gym that some of the older girls were standing in a frame that they would turn around and assault once in a while.

"Why are those girls on the far end in those frames? Why don't they use those with all of them?" I asked.

"Those were made for the girls from age thirteen to eighteen. That is a machine that touches her body somewhere, and she responds by using a violent blow on the machine. The machine measures both the strength and speed of the blow. The girls like to see which one can do the blow the fastest and which one can deliver the hardest blow," replied Elm.

"I can see why they would consider that fun. What is the best time and strongest blow you know of?" I asked.

"The hardest blow was about 2,000 lb and the fastest was 0.1 seconds," Elm answered.

"That girl must have really worked on that!" I exclaimed.

"She did. She worked every day until she finally reached that peak," Elm confirmed.

"Can you tell me who it was?" I asked.

"I certainly can. I remember that day well. It was Emet's sister, Memi! I never saw anyone so happy as she was," Elm announced.

"I should have known! She threw me once, and from the sounds of that, I was lucky she didn't kill me. I can see now that she could have," I muttered.

"Now you know why I told you to never touch one of our women without their prior knowledge and approval of it," inserted Emet.

"Would you like to go down and see what kind of a score you can record on one of those machines?" asked Elm.

"I would, but I don't want any of the girls to see so they can laugh at me!" I replied.

"They won't laugh. They like to see how much better they are at this than the boys," Elm reassured me.

We walked down to the machines as the girls made way for us.

"Would you mind letting Amos try your machine for just a moment, May? He wants to see how well he can do it when he has never done it before," Elm asked the girl.

"That's fine with me! I would like to see if he is faster than our boys," answered May.

"I'd like to see exactly how it is done first before I try it. Would you show me please, May?" I requested.

May stepped into the machine backwards. As soon as she was in position, the machine began to operate. An arm came out and touched her body. As it did, she reeled and struck another arm that was used for the recording.

May was a girl of about fourteen who was almost grown. As all of the girls I had seen on the planet, she was very pretty and had a good figure.

"How much did you make?" asked Elm.

"That was slow. I only made 1.2 seconds and 900 lbs," May reported.

"That is a lot better than I can do," I said.

Having said this, I backed into the machine. It moved and touched me on the back. As it did, I reeled and hit as hard as I could. I stepped out of the machine, and May and some other girls ganged up around the machine to see what I had done.

"How bad did I do?" I asked.

"You did quite well! Your speed was 2.3 seconds and your hit was 743 lbs. That's excellent for a male who has never done it before. The average score for an 18 year old boy is only about 400 lbs at 0.9 seconds. With a little practice, you probably could do even better!" answered May.

"I might be able to, but I'm not going to hang around and try. I might accidentally touch one of you and get killed!" I joked.

Everyone laughed. Elm, Emet, and I walked back to the bleachers while I asked Elm how the little girls were trained. I didn't see any of the very little ones in that gym.

"The little girls train at another center. Maybe Emet will take you by there so you can see how they learn," replied Elm.

"I plan on taking you by there, Amos, just as soon as we leave here," Emet interjected.

We were getting ready to leave the gym when May came running up to me. I was surprised to see her running up to me because I couldn't figure out what she might want.

"Amos," she said with a smile and somewhat winded, "would you please give me something so I can tell and show my parents that I saw you?"

"I'd be glad to oblige, May, but I have no idea of what I can give you. I don't have anything with me!" I replied.

"I have something you can use, Amos," said Elm. "I have a scrap of paper that you can write on."

Elm handed me a piece of paper, and I wrote on it my own name. I couldn't write in their language nor could I read it, but I could speak it. The note was written in English, and May was overjoyed to get the paper and kissed me on the cheek as she ran off to show the paper to her friends.

Emet and I left the Learning Center and caught a thought car. Emet took me to the place where the little girls learn to pounce on whoever touches them.

This was perhaps the most brutal and barbaric place I was in, in all the time I was on that planet.

These little three- and four-year-old girls were made to stand in a machine similar to the ones I had already seen, except these were smaller. These little girls were strapped into the machines by an attendant. They could not get out until they were let out.

The machine touched them, and they had to reel and hit. They were made to do this until they became tired. If they did not do it, they were not let out until they made an effort to hit the machine, and the machine would touch the girl a little harder each time up to a point where it was painful and yet left no marks.

Some of the little girls were doing well, but some would not hit and so they just stood as the machines touched them and cried.

I asked, "Isn't there a more humane way of doing this?"

"We have found that this is the easiest and quickest, even though it seems cruel to you," Emet replied.

## Chapter XVI

# The Voyage Home

Later that afternoon, when Sis came home from school, she brought me a pamphlet that had a picture of their planet on the front. She said, "Mr. Elm sent this to you." Even though I wasn't able to read their written language, I could tell it was written for a very young audience and had a lot of pictures in it.

I looked at the pictures and diagrams with great intensity and found it very intriguing. I asked Sis to read it to me, which she did. It was no surprise that the pamphlet was titled 'Our World'. Here is what I learned.

This planet is geographically different from Earth. It has north and south polar caps that advanced and receded slightly in winter and summer, respectively. The planet is the second from their sun, revolving in an elliptical orbit at a slightly greater distance than Earth. Their sun is somewhat larger than ours; and this planet orbits at about 100 million miles compared to our 93 million.

The planet has little to no tilt on its axis, resulting in nearly the same seasons all year round. The only thing that alters the seasons is its varying distance from the sun due to its elliptical orbit. Without a planetary tilt, there are only two seasons, summer and winter, which occur twice a year. In the winter, the planet was further out, making some areas colder. In the summer, the planet was slightly closer, bringing warmer weather. However, this change of seasons was so slight that the overall seasonal shift was virtually imperceptible.

The day is, interestingly enough, 24 hours long which is the exact same as on Earth. Their year is 384 days. Because there is no axial tilt, the days and nights are both 12 hours long which does not vary significantly throughout the year.

Snow is present in the northernmost and southernmost regions near the polar caps, as well as on the higher mountains. There is no land under either pole. Intriguingly, the planet's highest mountain is located south of the equator. For some reason, the planet has produced mountains along the equator on all landmasses, and a chain of islands, which are really mountain peaks, lay along the equator connecting these landmasses. An aerial picture of these islands reminded me of huge stepping stones.

The planet has two large, nearly rectangular landmasses which are located on opposite sides of the planet. One is mostly in the northern hemisphere, and the other is mostly in the southern hemisphere. There is also one smaller landmass situated in the southern hemisphere near the south polar cap. All land masses have fresh water inland lakes, while the ocean is salty.

The smaller landmass in the southern region resembles our Australia and is cooler with perpetual snow in its southern region. This colder climate makes it a desirable resort location especially during the summer months. People love playing winter games and ski enthusiasts enjoy the slopes.

The chain of islands at the equator are rough and mostly uninhabited due to the heat. Most are havens for birds and jungle beasts, covered in tropical vegetation. While anyone could choose to live on one of these islands, most people preferred the cooler, larger landmasses.

All of these landmasses are connected by tunnels for the thought car transportation system. The sheer scale of this tunnel construction under the ocean floor must have been a huge undertaking. The tunnels connecting the large landmasses followed the island chains. The tunnels connecting the smaller landmass were the deepest ones; these tunnels, though less than 100 miles in length, had to descend five miles to stay out of the water. Having been the last to be built, these deep tunnels were also used by the residents of the smaller landmass as a tourist attraction. As best as I could tell, they allow tourists to watch as the thought cars go by. However, the only thing you see is a rapid white glow in the tunnel that manifests into a bright flash. It doesn't sound all that exciting to me, but maybe it makes a difference because you are also 5 miles under the surface of the water.

I was having a little conversation with Sis when I heard the door open and shut. It was Dad. A little while after, Emet came in and told us that supper was ready. So we all went into the dining area, sat down and ate. After supper, we all did our exercises and talked for a bit because tomorrow was to be my last day. Finally, it was time for bed.

"Is there anyone here who can spare a moment of her time to help me out of my suit?" I asked.

Memi responded quickly, "I'll help you." We went to the bedroom. She unzipped my suit and looked into my eyes and said, "I believe you are really beginning to be like us. You are now wanting to get your suit off without being told. Before, you dreaded that in the worst kind of way. You are getting control of your sexual emotions very nicely, and you have won all of our hearts." Memi held the back of my suit as I pulled my arms free. She came around to face me and got down in front to where she could pull the material at my thighs. I reached down to her and turned her head up to me where I could see her face and eyes.

"Memi, I can't help but tell you the truth. I wish I didn't have to go home in a lot of ways. I am beginning to get the hang of things here, and I like it a lot. I think you people have a lot to offer a world such as mine. I kind of doubt that my world will ever change much, but I've got to go back and try. This is the whole idea of the project. While I'm thinking of it, Memi, thanks for selecting me and giving me this wonderful experience. The only way I know how to thank you is to go back and write this all down in a book and hope that our world will change," I confided.

"Thanks, Amos, I feel the same way about having selected you. I had doubts about you at first, but I feel confident about you now and what you will do," replied Memi as she pulled my suit at the thighs.

"Amos, I think you're really great!" said Emet who had been watching this whole thing unnoticed in the doorway. "I don't know of many people who would give up their life in one world, go to another world, and take on their ways and lifestyles in order to help his own

world. Most of the people that we observed in your world would have wound up in the Compound. You are one in a million."

"Thanks, Emet," I said as I sat down on the edge of the bed taking my suit off the rest of the way. "I really appreciate that coming from a great guy like you."

We all joined in with the family pile up, and the next thing I knew, it was morning. Today was my final day.

When we got up, I said, "Will you help me with my suit, Memi? I want to do something outside for a few minutes. I'll be back very shortly," I asked.

"We'll both help you, but won't you tell us what it is that you want? Maybe we can help you?" Emet queried.

"I won't be but a short time, and I'll be back with what I want to do," I said as I sat on the edge of the bed and started putting my suit on.

"Won't you just give us a hint?" Memi queried as she helped me get my suit on. Memi pulled my suit up so I could put my arms in, and as soon as I had my arms in, Emet zipped the suit up.

"I'll be back in just a little while, and please don't follow me," I stated as I dashed out the door.

I went to a field that was nearby where I had picked some very beautiful flowers upon my arrival here. There were some even more beautiful flowers this morning. Emet and Memi said before that I could pick them without any trouble. I picked three of the prettiest ones I could find and went back to the house.

When I entered the house again, Sis, Mom, Memi, and Emet were all in the living room wondering what I was up to.

I held the flowers behind my back and said, "In parts of my world, a young man who loves a certain girl will bring her a flower to put in her hair. She will put the flower in her hair and wear it there as long as it lasts. I have three of the prettiest girls I know here. I love you all as very dear friends. I hope you won't be insulted, and that it's legal, but I picked three of the most beautiful flowers I could find for three of the most beautiful and nice young ladies I know." With this I pulled the flowers from behind my back and gave one to each of the ladies.

Memi came over with a small tear in the corner of her eye and said, "I think that is one of the most beautiful things I have ever had done to me. Thank you." She gave me a hug and a big kiss.

Before I could say anything, Sis came over and said, "I'm just a little kid, so you'll have to squat down here." I squatted down, and she gave me a big hug and a kiss. "If Memi says this is beautiful, then I say it is too. I just want you to know that I'm going to miss you when you leave and I may even cry," she said with a quivering voice and tears in her eyes.

Mom came over last and said, "Sis, we may all cry when he goes, but I think this is one of the most beautiful customs I ever saw. Would you please pin the flower where it is supposed to go for me?"

"I would be most happy to, Mom. Do you have some kind of pin I can use? At home, we use a hairpin. It is a U-shaped piece of thin wire," I asked.

"Here's one," Mom replied as I took the pin and pinned the flower to the side of her head in her hair.

Memi and Sis came for me to do the same to them. Memi took my one arm and Sis took the other arm after I pinned the flower to their hair and Memi announced, "I want all of you to know that this is our friend from Earth!"

Sis said, "Ditto!"

Emet said, "All this mushy stuff is beginning to make me sick! Why is putting a weed in a female's hair so tolerated?"

"Emet, I'm surprised at you!" Mom said indignantly. "You just don't understand the meaning of this! I don't think being moved by a beautiful gesture such as this once in our lives is going to corrupt us. I think you could afford to practice a few of these customs and it wouldn't hurt you!"

"Have you got breakfast ready yet? I'm hungry," said Emet, in an effort to change the touchy subject.

"It will be ready as soon as your father gets up," Mom said and disappeared into the kitchen. Memi and Sis followed.

"I'm sorry if I did something wrong," I said to Emet, "but the ladies were all being kind to me and I repaid their kindness with the best means I have," I explained.

"Amos, we don't usually do things like that here, but if you wanted to give them a weed, I guess that's all right," Emet said.

"Among my people, it's fairly common to show affection to a female by giving her a flower," I said.

"I guess I might have been just a little jealous seeing my mother and sisters show you such attention for a little thing you did. I hope you will forgive me for that, Amos?" Emet apologized.

"I hadn't even thought of that, so your apology is accepted, but I think you need to go to your mother and sisters and let them know that you are sorry you spoiled their little spot of enjoyment," I advised.

"You're right, I'll go do it now," Emet said.

I went with him into the kitchen. He apologized to the ladies and they once more had a smile on their faces.

After breakfast, we did our exercises and it was time to leave. The days had leaped by during my stay and now the time had come for me to head for home. I couldn't believe that the time had gone so fast, but it had and now I was saying goodbye to all of those wonderful people except Memi and Emet.

Sis cried as she promised, and I saw tears in Mom and Dad's eyes as I walked out the door with Emet and Memi.

We entered the craft, closed the hatch, and went into the control room. Emet and Memi started the engines without saying a word.

We took off and I watched that wonderful planet shrink smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared entirely. A large lump formed in my throat and I felt bad, knowing that all of that wonderful planet and all the wonderful people would probably never see me again nor I them. I turned and sat down.

On the way back, Emet put the computer to my head and turned on the machine to program my mind for the writing of this book. All the things that I saw while I was there were programmed into my brain so I wouldn't forget.

All too soon, Memi announced that we had reached Earth. She then helped me remove my suit in preparation for transport. I told Emet and Memi goodbye.

"If I write the book and people won't accept it, could I possibly interest you into letting me come back to your planet to live out my life?" I asked.

"We'll have to see what happens as a result of this," Emet said.

"We might be interested in doing that provided your family will return with you. I don't think the Planetary Assembly will allow him to come alone because you could be a problem to me or Sis," explained Memi.

"Why is that?" I asked.

"If you were not married, there would be no trouble getting you in, but since you are, the rule is that you must live with your wife unless she is dead," Memi answered.

"I guess this is goodbye forever then," I said. I reached over and kissed Memi on the cheek and shook Emet's hand vigorously. "Thanks again for the beautiful memories and the wonderful experiences."

"You're entirely welcome, and know we will be watching how your book turns out and how it is accepted by the people of your world," Emet replied. "You must now enter the Betran."

Memi helped me remove my suit. I then stepped into the BeTran chamber and Emet threw the switch. After the usual skin tingling, I found myself back in my orange grove with no clothes on again. They weren't laying on the ground either. Someone had taken them. Fortunately, I kept a spare set of clothes in the barn for emergencies.

My farm had really gone to pot while I was gone, and it would take a lot of time to get it back into shape.

My car was gone, so I walked over to John's and asked to use his phone. He nearly had a heart attack when he saw me.

"Yes, you surely may use the phone. Your wife filed a missing person report and the sheriff was out here looking for you. We all thought you were dead and even had your obituary in the paper!" John said. "Your wife is going to be extremely happy you're back."

"They published my obituary! How come them to do that?" I exclaimed.

"You disappeared, and no trace could be found of you. They just assumed you were dead," John said.

I called my wife and she was so happy that she agreed to come out to the farm to get me.

By the way, where have you been, anyway?" John asked.

"You would never believe it, but I have been on another planet," I replied.

And so the talk changed to flying saucers, where I had been and what I had been doing. This continued until my wife and younger son arrived to get me.

Emet left me with one last thing that I will no doubt cause me no end of embarrassment after having gone all through this and written this book. He implanted in my mind the idea that I will deny the book is true if asked, but that I will remember the details of the experience exactly and clearly! His idea was that this would prevent people from thinking I was insane.

And that, my friends, is all she typed.

# APPENDIX

# AI Generated Chapter Summaries

## Chapter I The Invitation

A man named Emet is sent by an interstellar council from a distant planet to recruit an Earthling named Amos. Amos, a farmer in Florida, is contacted by Emet's sister, Memi, via a remote projection. Amos agrees to board their star craft. He is transported aboard naked, with his clothes left behind. Emet and Memi explain they are humans from a technologically superior world who want to introduce themselves to Earth through a book Amos will write, hoping it encourages peace. Their mission is to return Amos home after the experiment.

## Chapter II Off To The Moon

Emet and Memi take Amos to the Moon in a smaller shuttle craft. They explore one of the Apollo landing sites and another part of the lunar surface, where Amos feels like he weighs nothing. He learns that Emet can hear his "loudest thoughts" and that their society uses this to avoid conflict. He also discovers a biological difference: Memi and all females on their planet are physically much stronger than the males. Memi demonstrates this by easily tossing a large boulder. Emet warns that any non-consensual touch of a female would trigger a "devastating" reflexive counter-reaction. Before leaving, they use a static field manipulator to erase their footprints, ensuring non-interference. The next destination is Mars.

## Chapter III Mars

Amos, Emet, and Memi land the star craft directly on Mars to explore a massive canyon. Emet takes Amos into a cave and reveals a melted metal tablet, all that remains of the planet's former inhabitants, the Oshwell. Emet explains that 5,000 years ago, Mars was a living planet, but the highly intelligent yet barbaric Oshwell destroyed themselves. Their numerous wars escalated until they detonated multiple fusion bombs, turning the upper atmosphere (composed of deuterium) into one large fusion explosion that vaporized all life and the oceans.

Emet uses this as a warning, stating Earth is headed for the same end, which is the reason why they want Amos to write a book. Overwhelmed by the burden, Amos becomes despondent. After a moment of connection, the trio leaves Mars, heading for Jupiter.

## Chapter IV Jupiter

The trio travels toward Jupiter, where Amos remains melancholy over the burden of his mission. The craft suffers engine failure flying through Jupiter's upper atmosphere and winds

up crashing on Ganymede, which is one of Jupiter's moons. Repairs are made and Emet attempts to restart the ship's main generator. The process fails, resulting in an explosion, a floor panel blowing off, and a catastrophic loss of all power. With the backup storage unit completely discharged, the star craft is left stranded. When asked what to do next, a calm Emet looks at Amos and simply states, "We die."

## **Chapter V Tragedy**

Stranded on Ganymede after a catastrophic power failure, Amos suggests using the shuttle's generator to charge the star craft's backup unit. Emet manually exits the ship to make the connection, while Memi repairs the main generator's faulty plasma bearings. While the unit charges, Emet tells Amos about Earth's ancient history, stating that the Atlantic Ocean formed when a subterranean ocean escaped through a crustal fissure, causing a global flood. With the generator fixed and charged, power is restored, and they head back to Earth. Emet and Memi arrange to pick up Amos for a one-month trip to their home planet, warning him not to tell a soul. Meanwhile, they will return to their planet for permanent repairs of the star craft.

## **Chapter VI Jim and the Saucer**

In July, the shuttle saucer appeared over Amos's grove, and Emet confirmed the pickup for July 4th. As the saucer left, Amos's neighbor, Jim, and others approached. Jim, having seen the UFO shining a light on Amos, fabricated a wild tale that Amos was attacked and briefly abducted by "non-human" beings and that he had stopped them. The sheriff takes Amos to the hospital in his helicopter where Jim gave sensational, false accounts to the news. Amos was quickly released, returning home to his wife. His story proved the news false, and Jim was later nominated for "liar of the year."

## **Chapter VII Interstellar Flight**

Amos tells his wife he will be gone for a month starting July 4th and keeps his mission a secret. Emet and Memi pick him up using the star craft's BeTran transporter. During the interstellar journey, Amos is astonished by the speed of light travel. He gets to eat their space ration which is a food substitute that is a chalky hot water drink. He is then introduced to their customs which include communal nudity where a family exercises, showers, and sleeps together in one bed. Despite his discomfort, Amos agrees to participate to be "part of the family." He learns their native language with the help of their "Language Learner" machine.

## **Chapter VIII On To Emet's Planet**

Amos learns their planet enforces strict birth control, limiting families to two children, with population growth at zero. Memi explains that, despite their small size, a female's high muscle density makes her physically much heavier and stronger than males. Amos becomes fully fluent in their native language. The star craft suddenly disengages its star drive to enter their solar system, causing a jolt. Amos observes their planet, which is Earth-sized with a similar cloud cover but different land masses. They slow down to landing speed and safely touch down.

## **Chapter IX Arrival**

After landing, Emet and Memi take Amos out onto their planet, which appears beautiful and Earth-like with unique dome-shaped houses. Amos picks flowers for their mother before they enter the home. They are greeted by Emet's parents and little sister, Sis, who asks Amos to speak at her school, which Emet arranges. Memi asks their parents to help Amos adapt to being naked, as he is bashful. Dad thanks Amos for his "jump-starting" idea that saved them on Ganymede. The chapter ends with Memi and Sis playfully confusing Amos by leading him to dinner through the bathroom and bedroom.

## **Chapter X Supper and Bed**

At supper, Amos asks to pray before the meal, which the family joins in, and Dad expresses a keen interest in Earth's belief in God. The family then performs their nightly ritual of exercising and showering, all while naked. This ritual is followed by communal sleeping in one bed, which makes Amos deeply uncomfortable. The next morning, Amos wakes up to find Memi and Sis pressed against him. When his emotions become aroused, Memi forcefully pokes him in the ribs to give him something else to think about.

## **Chapter XI Home Away From Home**

Amos struggles with his emotions while spending his first full day naked with Memi and her mother, Mom. The daily routine includes calisthenics, showering, and silent, twice-daily meals. Emet tells Amos he cannot learn to read minds. Mom explains the virtues of their society, which has no wars, no secret living, and strict population control. She whispers to Amos that he has one final test remaining: "The Compound!" Memi and Mom both playfully express that Amos would be a great mate for them if they were not married, with Memi joking that such a thought could send them to the Compound.

## **Chapter XII Economy**

Emet answers Amos's questions about their civilization. All citizens must wear a gray, exoskeleton-like suit in public that protects them from injury, monitors vital signs, and constricts if they gain unauthorized fat, enforcing fitness. Their economy is based on communal sharing, making money and trade unnecessary. Emet then details their strict, enforced population control: a sterility chip is implanted in all female children, limiting families to two children. Illegal pregnancies, which can occur from tampering or a rare implant failure, result in the mother's arrest, surgical sterilization, and, in the case of tampering, the confiscation of all her children by the state.

### **Chapter XIII**

#### **The Structure of Government**

Emet explains his planet's governmental structure, which divides the population into 100 countries, each containing one million people. These are further divided into states (100,000), counties (10,000), and townships (1,000). The planet has no central government, but all countries work in harmony, with a Chairman from each country handling global interactions. The world is owned by the government, which is the people, and all citizens have a voice in the laws. Those who fail to abide by the majority decision face a speedy trial and a severe sentence if found guilty.

### **Chapter XIV**

#### **The Constitution and the Courts**

Emet explains his planet's justice system. If a citizen, like Emet, intentionally breaks a law, he is obligated to admit it to his Township Chairman. A trial is still held in a neighboring township, not to determine guilt, but to determine the reason for the violation. The trial has a prosecutor, a defense lawyer, and a jury. The law is based on a single constitutional statement that the needs of the whole are greater than the needs of the individual. Emet and Amos then visit the Country Chairman, who is always available to the people, unlike Earth leaders, a fact Emet uses to highlight Earth's need for change.

### **Chapter XV**

#### **Schools**

Emet takes Amos to visit Sis's school. Sis, excited that her guest is from another planet, has told her whole class. The children bombard Amos with questions, and he is happy to answer them, writing his name for one girl. Emet then takes Amos to a training center where three- and four-year-old girls are strapped into machines that repeatedly touch them. The girls must reflexively strike the machine to be released. This training is a highly enforced method to instill the protective, non-consensual touch deterrent in females from a young age.

### **Chapter XVI**

## The Voyage Home

Amos receives a pamphlet about the planet before leaving. On the voyage home, Emet tells Amos his final test was a lie to observe his reaction. Emet says Amos passed by being unfazed. The trio reaches Earth, and Memi and Emet drop Amos off, naked, in his Florida orange grove with a warning not to tell anyone until the book comes out. His clothes and car are nowhere to be found, but fortunately, he has a spare pair in the barn, Amos finds his farm neglected, and his neighbor, John, tells him his obituary was published because he was gone for a month. Amos calls his wife, who comes to get him. Emet implants one final idea in Amos's mind: he will deny the book is true if asked, to prevent people from thinking he is insane, but he will remember the details clearly.

## AI Generated Commentary

This commentary is based on the content summarized across the sixteen chapters. The book presents a highly focused and didactic work of science fiction, designed primarily to function as a political and social commentary on Earth's current state.

The book's clear purpose is didacticism. It is not intended as pure entertainment; its explicit goal, as stated by Emet, is to deliver a clear warning about self-destruction (illustrated by the dead planet Mars) and promote a utopian vision of an alternative society (Emet's planet) that has achieved total peace and stability.

The narrative is structured to methodically present the advanced society's solutions to Earth's fundamental problems. Wars and Conflict are addressed by mental discipline, mandatory pacifism, and the female attack reflex. Overpopulation is addressed by strict, enforced, zero-growth population control (sterility chips, confiscation of children for tampering). Corruption and inequality is addressed by a communal economy with no money and a transparent, directly accessible, and unitary governmental structure. Social Engineering, which is the most distinctive feature, is used to maintain their society, which includes the lifelong enforcement of the female attack reflex and the mandated use of the exoskeleton suit in public to enforce fitness and legal compliance.

The story prioritizes information transfer (Amos asking questions, Emet explaining) over traditional character development and dramatic pacing. The flow is essentially a guided tour through a rigid philosophical system. While presented as a "perfect" utopian society, many of its policies would be seen as deeply dystopian from an Earth perspective. Specifically, the loss of Individual Freedom as evidenced by mandatory nudity, communal sleeping, surgically enforced population control, and the required fitness-monitoring suit, represent an extreme loss of personal autonomy. Finally, the ending highlights the difficulty of the mission, with Amos being instructed to deny the truth of his own book, suggesting the message's impact will be slow, subtle, and resisted by a world unprepared for such radical change.