

# MIND TRAVEL

By Philip Rainford

I awoke!

I wasn't sure where I was. The last thing I remembered was going to bed. I hadn't been drunk or under the influence of any drugs, so this was not a trip. It must be a dream... but where and what was I dreaming of?

The place looked alien. How did I end up here, outside lying on the grass? The sky was blue; the grass was green, but the sparsely leafed trees looked strange. The leaves were not green but yellow, red, and orange. They grew from deformed limbs coated in green mould that did not extend to the trunk which looked like it had been twisted like a wet rag. They were sparsely planted for as far as I could see. The distant mountains appeared purple through the haze. The sun shone brightly; I could feel its heat on my face as I lay on the ground.

I sat up to look around; nearby sat a 'person' but their face had a horse-like appearance. The ears looked human, it had kind eyes, but the nose and mouth formed part of a snout, the shape of the head further supporting that image.

Noticing I was awake, it rose from the stone bench it had been sitting on and approached. "Have no fear. You are safe," the creature whispered gently.

"Where am I?"

The creature looked puzzled. "You are here!"

"But where is... here?"

"It is where we are!"

At this point I felt frustrated. "That doesn't help. I was in my bed and now I am here. What is this place?"

"This is a place where travellers tend to go, especially when it is their first time. No one knows why this place attracts us."

"What do you mean traveller?" This creature was not making any sense. If I'd travelled here why didn't I remember the journey? Had I been kidnapped?

"Some of us have the ability to think of a place and reform reality around us, to place us there. In your sleep you have transported yourself to this planet."

Incredulous, I looked at the creature. "You want me to believe I wished myself here? To another planet! How do I go back?"

"First, you must understand how you came here. You are only here in spirit; your body still resides in your bed, on your planet."

"And how far away from my planet am I?"

Again, the creature seemed puzzled. "Your question has no meaning to me. Your planet is one thought away."

"No. It is out there somewhere," I insisted, looking upward into the sky. "How far?"

The creature did not look up. "Distance only has meaning on arrival. You travel instantly to anywhere, distance, its place in the universe is not required to get there so has no meaning."

I stopped to consider this for a moment then something else struck me. "What do you mean spirit only?" I asked feeling myself and finding I was solid. For a moment I thought we might be talking of astral travel.

"You may travel with your body or without it. Your first trip is usually spirit only." "So, you are talking astral travel? Where you leave your body and float around?"

"Not exactly.... that's simply short-range and all intelligent creatures can do that. This is different. This is instant relocation anywhere you can picture."

“What do you mean – picture?”

“If you have a memory of a location or a physical image of that location you can travel there.”

“But I’ve never been here or imagined here!” I insisted looking around. None of this made any sense.

“There is only one place in the universe that your mind can link to where it has never been before - your start point. Some believe this is the birth place of all life.”

“You mean like the garden of Eden?”

“I have no reference to answer that question,” stated the horse-faced creature.

“So, if I picture my bedroom with me sleeping in it, I’ll return there – correct?” The creature nodded. “So how do I travel with my body?”

“To bring your body, you must not only think of the place, but of you standing in it - but you must concentrate hard to achieve it.”

“Why are you here?” I suddenly asked suspicious of why this ‘person’ was apparently waiting for me.

“I am a guide. We volunteer to stand watch for travellers and help them through this experience.”

“And you speak my language? And you knew I’d be here?”

“You are not the first from your planet. I am tapping into your mind to communicate. I am here because this is one of the staging areas where people come. My name is Aurora.”

I was totally taken aback by her casual, calm approach. Aurora seemed to be very patient with me despite my hostility. She also came across as kind, so I offered her my name. “My name is Tiffany Smart. What planet do you come from?”

“We call this planet, Melco. I know your planet is Earth. Are you ready for some training?”

I nodded. “Can I go to any ‘when’ as well as any ‘where?’”

Aurora shook her head. “You can only remain in the present. There is universal time where everything exists and you are restricted to that time. Now concentrate on your home.”

I did what she said and found myself suspended in space surrounded by stars and blackness. Beneath me was the Earth but I was helpless. I tried swimming towards it, but I was afloat in space with no space suit but still breathing. How? Then I remembered... I was only a spirit. Near panic, I decided to go back and thought of the place I’d just been with Aurora. Instantly I was there. “I didn’t make it. I was suspended in space.”

Aurora smiled, amused by my mistake. I was not. “You were thinking of your home planet not your home. Concentrate on your bedroom and your body asleep in it.”

I did what she said and woke up with a start in my bed. It was then I began to wonder if it had been a dream. It must have been a dream. What I had seen was not possible. I decided to get up and make myself a cup of tea before returning to bed.

Next morning I slept in. I had to be at work at nine, I held an executive position in an advertising firm and an important client was due in at 9.30 and I had to set up the conference room. You might say I should have assistants to do that, but I always like to test the equipment before a presentation just to ensure all is in working order. It was now 8.45 and I had a thirty-minute drive to work. I was not going to have any down time to review anything. I quickly dressed, rushed to the car, threw my brief case on the passenger seat, and started the engine. It coughed into life then died; nothing I could do would reactivate it. I screamed and swore in angry frustration, buried my head in my hands and tried not to cry as my mind went to thoughts of everyone waiting for me; then deciding to take their business elsewhere. In my mind I visioned that empty room and wished I was there. When I looked up, I was there, sitting at the large mahogany conference table in the meeting room that looked out across the

city from a renovated Victorian style building and it was 9.00am exactly. I couldn't believe it. Was my dream true or had I dreamt my panic in the car.

Sue, my assistant walked in, surprised to see me. "I didn't think you were in yet?" she explained. I gave her a polite nod to confirm I heard her and began getting ready for the presentation. The rest of the day went smoothly but my 'dreams' continued to bother me. When I returned to the car park to collect my car from the usual spot – it wasn't there. Should I try it? This was ridiculous! I couldn't move myself geographically with just my mind – it was crazy. But then, what did I have to lose? I stood there in my empty parking spot, closed my eyes, and pictured myself in my driveway, standing next to my car. When I opened my eyes that's exactly where I was.

"Where did you come from?" exclaimed my neighbour who was standing nearby watering her garden. She couldn't have been more than ten feet away on the other side of a low picket fence. My sudden appearance startled her. "I didn't hear you creep up on me."

"Sorry, Melissa, my mind was elsewhere," I replied ignoring the unintentional pun. "My car wouldn't start this morning I'm going to have to call out the mechanic."

"Not going to get anyone at this hour. Let me get my husband to take a look. He's good with cars." Melissa turned off her hose and rushed inside emerging a short time later with her husband, Hank. He fixed the car, it was something simple but cars were not my thing. However, if this power of mine was real, maybe I didn't need a car anymore.

I went to work normally the next day, but I felt tempted all day to test it out again. So, at lunch time I went into the Restroom, locked myself in a cubicle and pictured the cubicle in the bathroom of my favourite café. This time I kept my eyes open and watched as the scene around me dissolved and reformed into the café cubicle. I stepped out and entered the café, I was there! It was real! It was a mediocre cafe nothing special, but the food was good, the service great and they had a lovely creamy coffee. It offered Indian style cuisine, the tables were covered with white cloths and one had to sit on cheap uncomfortable wooden chairs. The walls were decorated with photos of Indian landscapes. But I liked it!

There were only eight tables and the owner, Sam, which I'm sure was an abbreviation of some longer Indian name, greeted me. "I didn't see you arrive, Miss Tiffany."

"I snuck in quickly. Had an emergency," I replied indicating the rest room. He nodded and escorted me to a table. After lunch, I walked back to the office and found the handyman trying to open the locked cubicle in the office Ladies Room. I must remember not to lock them in future.

So... what was I going to do with this new power? I needed to discuss this with Aurora. So that night, lying in bed, I pictured the alien landscape and again watched as my bedroom dissolved around me and reformed into the alien garden. Waiting for me was Aurora. "What am I supposed to do with these powers? Is there some destiny or purpose I'm supposed to fulfil?" I asked.

Aurora shook her head. "There is nothing mystical or spiritual, it just is. What you do with it, is up to you. Let me take you to the Travel Gallery, show you some destinations. Places you can visit and enjoy the universe."

I consented and found a new place wrapping itself around me. We were in a picture gallery. The building was not grand, but it was big, no high ceilings just long corridors of pictures - pictures of other planets and strange landscapes mounted on white walls with skylight ceiling allowing natural light to enter.

"What is this place?"

"This is the Hall of Destinations. You look into the picture and see yourself there. Once you have been there you only need use your memory to return," stated Aurora.

As we wondered through the gallery one set of pictures caught my eye. It was a picture of a city, but everyone was dying. “What happened here?”

“These pictures are those dating back to the destruction of civilisation on this planet. They unleashed a weapon that wiped out all animal life, leaving only plant life. Thus creating the garden paradise we have today.”

“How did they do that?” I asked shocked at the idea of a whole planet being wiped out. At the same time, I recalled how dangerously close our own planet was to destroying itself with either nuclear weapons or pollution.

“It is not really known, and it happened tens of millions of your years ago. The plant life had to adapt to not having animal life.”

“So they lost the bees that pollinate the plants,” I remarked. Aurora was unsure of the reference but I knew I was right; something like bees had existed here. I stepped closer to one picture, fascinated, slowly it drew me in and wrapped around me... and I was there! It was like the picture I’d seen had been a movie on pause and had been restarted.

“This can’t be!” exclaimed Aurora. She had seen me fade and grabbed my hand, joining me on the journey. I looked at her puzzled. “The pictures in the gallery are in the past! They no longer exist in our time! Thus we cannot visit! But you did, you took us back through time.”

All around us, we could see people dropping dead. Not humans but humanoids, meaning they had human form but were different. They had no hair; their arms were longer with thin fingers, reminding me of Freddy Kruger’s hands without the blades. Their faces lacked noses and they had no ears. On their heads were what looked like insect antenna.

“Can... whatever is killing them... harm us?” I asked suddenly alarmed.

Aurora shook her head. “We are in spirit form not body form. We are safe,” she replied looking around with both amazement and horror. “I think we should get back!”

I agreed and tried picturing the gallery, slowly it reformed around us. We were back. “How did all these photos survive?” I asked looking around at the pictures of a past civilisation.

“Survivors, those who lived a bit longer than others, put an archive together and left it for the future. It was discovered by early travellers here, who built this memorial to them.”

“Does anyone live on this planet?”

Aurora shook her head. “No, it is forbidden. It’s a meeting place only for those of us who have the ability to travel here. A haven where we can meet others and share our experiences, take others to places we have been.”

“I guess I have something to share, I can travel through time.”

“You sure do,” replied Aurora staring at me in wonder. I decided it was time I left.

For the next few months I travelled around the world on weekends, to places I’d wanted to visit but couldn’t afford. One day, I was standing in the bank and saw the vault open in the back. Feeling a little impish I stepped outside and wished myself into the vault. It worked! I grabbed a few notes lying around and returned to the alley outside. I was a bank robber! My score \$20!

Then one day, I had a visitor. I was looking at an old photograph of Trafalgar Square in London comparing it to the real thing today. I had bought it at a nearby shop and wondered what it would be like to see the place like that again. A man approached me. He seemed like an ordinary sort of guy, dressed in a suit, a top hat and an umbrella, a typical archetype of a British aristocrat.

“Can you take me there?” he asked.

I looked at him puzzled. “But we are there; this is the same but a hundred years ago.”

“That should be no trouble for you. Aurora tells me you can travel through time.”

I was shocked! How could he know Aurora? Was he referring to someone else? Unlikely, he knew of her powers, or implied he did. “How do you know Aurora?”

“You are not the only mind traveller. Word of your talent has spread. Many don’t believe it. I’ve been asked to test you.”

“And who are you?” I asked both curious and sceptical.

“Those of us with these powers need to obey certain rules. I am a member of the Council that enforces those rules, my name is Kent. Sir William Kent.”

“And what are these rules?”

“They are very simple. You are free to act in any way you like as long as it does not prevent others from doing the same.”

“So, I could murder someone and that would be okay?”

Kent shook his head. “No, because by murdering that person you have prevented him or her from doing what they want to do.”

“What if I stole?” I asked thinking of my bank robbery.

“Then you are preventing the rightful owner from using it as they see fit.”

I suddenly felt guilty for taking that money but then I thought about it. It was only a bank and they stopped people doing what they wanted every day. No home loan, no house, no payment, lose house. “Okay I get it! So now you want me to take you back in time?”

“Yes. Take me to Trafalgar Square one hundred years ago!”

It seemed a simple enough request. I asked him to place his hand on my shoulder and I concentrated on the photo. The photo began to expand and wrap itself around us both.

“Get out of the way!” The angry voice came from behind us. I turned to see a photographer standing there. We were blocking his view, but he’d obviously just taken the photo I had in my hand.

“What date is it?” I asked.

“4th August, now can you move?”

“What year?”

The photographer stared at me as if he couldn’t believe my stupidity. “Don’t you know?”

“Please?” I begged.

“1878, now will you move!”

We both complied. Kent took me aside. “This is unbelievable!” he said looking around him at the horse drawn carriages, the smell of animals and smog, the throng of people dressed in 18th century clothing. Then it struck me, Kent was dressed for the times, but I was in a short sleeved summer dress, no hat, a handbag with ‘Hello Kitty’ logo definitely not the modest dress of a lady of those times – and I was drawing attention to myself.

“I think we should go!” I said uneasily.

Kent noticed the edge to my voice before realising my situation. “I would like to return here when we are suitably dressed if you wouldn’t mind, but for now take us back!”

I obliged and we were instantly back in modern times. “There are a group of us on Earth. I’d like you to meet. We not only use our talents for pleasure but sometimes we act to protect people.”

“Act? In what way?”

“Last week I rescued an American spy from a Middle Eastern prison. He was going to be executed, instead he just vanished.”

“Didn’t anyone ask questions?”

“He didn’t think anyone would believe his story, so he told no one. They just know he escaped with some unknown insider assistance. We also have our own covert division of

British Intelligence. They know of our powers and use them; we get paid and help make the world a better place.”

“I’m going to have to think about this.”

“Take your time. Why not join me for lunch tomorrow and we can discuss further?”

“I have to be at work tomorrow in New York.”

“No problem, I’ll meet you outside your office at 12.30.” Without further ado he walked off not waiting for any acceptance to his invitation.

Troubled, I needed to walk; I had a lot to think about. I don’t know how long I walked but I found I was out of the city and walking a suburban street. Distracted by my own thoughts I didn’t take much notice of a hysterical woman rushing out into the street screaming, “My daughter! My daughter!”

I approached the woman. “What happened?” I asked but when she saw me she cringed away.

“You? Get away from me!”

Taken aback by the aggression of her response I stepped back as a neighbour rushed out and comforted her. “My daughter, she’s fallen down the stairs! She’s not moving! I can’t wake her!” The neighbour took her inside.

I decided it was time to use my powers for good. If I could go back in time, say five minutes, I could warn her of the impending tragedy. I pictured my watch and the scene and visualised it as being five minutes earlier. The street went quiet as the new time enveloped around me. All was quiet so I stepped up the front door and rang the bell.

The woman came to the door but one look at me and she grew angry. “I told you to go away! I can look after my child without your interference!” And she shut the door.

I left stunned. This should have been the first time she’d seen me. Maybe she’d mistaken me for someone else. But then, she’d been hostile the first time I’d met her. Then I heard a scream from inside. I was too late! Maybe I needed to be earlier? So I went back another half hour.

This time the reception at the door was more cordial. “Can I help you?”

“I think I can. I believe your child is about to have an accident on the staircase.”

“How can you possibly know that?”

I hesitated. I hadn’t thought about how to answer that question. Then I had an inspiration. “I’m physic!”

The woman looked at me cynically. “I suppose you want money for saving my kid? Well bugger off! I’m not falling for that scam. I’m perfectly capable of looking after my own kids without you!” She slammed the door shut.

I wasn’t sure what to do next then an awful thought hit me. I had distracted her by ringing the doorbell and thus I’d caused the very event I was trying to prevent. It wasn’t fair. I could have saved that girl. I gave up and wished myself home.

I met Sir William the next day in the café near my work. “You came! I wondered whether you might just avoid me,” he said as I sat down.

“I nearly did. I’m not sure whether you want me to be a spy or a super-hero but I failed at the later miserably.”

He looked at me sympathetically. “What happened?”

I told him the story, he sat back looking concerned. “That could mean the past is fixed. It cannot be changed, so that girl was destined to fall down the stairs and you were meant to play that role.”

“How can you say that? I hate those arguments that God moves in mysterious ways. If it true he’s a real bastard!” I was starting to get very angry with myself and... God.

Sir William sat back and smiled. “There is a belief in the wider universe that given we know we have both a spiritual body and a physical body that death of the physical body does not lead to the death of the spirit.”

“So what happens?” I asked expecting this to develop into a religious discussion I had hated religious debates at school. I didn’t care what some prophet said thousands of years ago. It wasn’t me.

“It means that we go to another body so that our spirit grows. We plan our lives around lessons we need to learn. That mother and that girl had experiences they didn’t realise they’d pre-arranged in that between lives phase.”

I looked at him strangely. “I’m not explaining it well. Let’s leave it and discuss ‘you’. We are not looking at turning you into a 007. But you could transport agents to places they need to penetrate. You might help us obtain documents in sealed vaults or rescue people in real time from life threatening situations.”

“I’m not sure that’s me. I’d need training and what about my job? I can’t just disappear when you call.” I waved my arms around like a magician to stress my point but felt silly.

“We can employ you full time. Give up your job.”

“And who exactly would I be working for?” I asked suspiciously.

“What the media would call a ‘black ops group’, highly secret so that the world does not realise people like us exist,” explained Sir William.

I could see he was passionate about his job but what he was saying scared me more. “Why can’t you do this? Why me?”

“Because I can’t do it alone and there are not that many of us on Earth that have made themselves known to us. We need you - urgently.”

I looked at his facial expressions. “My God! You’re serious and you believe I can help this organization do something constructive to make the world better?”

His smile faded. “We try, and I suppose every little bit helps but there is still a lot wrong out there.”

“I’m going to have to think about this!” I said and walked away without having any lunch. I had even forgotten that I was going to have lunch. I felt so confused I didn’t even know where I was going. Eventually I stopped walking and entered a coffee shop and ordered coffee and donuts. Lots of donuts! Lots of comfort food!

Two days later. I received an urgent call. They needed me. The brief was just that... brief. I was shown a photo of a jail cell and told a political prisoner was being held there who was about to be executed. I was to simply travel there and bring him back. Simple? What could go wrong? I agreed, might as well put my toe in the water and save this guy from execution in a third world country for spying. Not nice but still, he was working for our side.

I examined the photo and gradually the scene wrapped itself around me and I was there. But there was no prisoner; the cell was empty just as it was in the photo. Could I have ‘time jumped’? I didn’t know when the photo had been taken. I decided to look at my watch and concentrate on the present, the scene around me changed slightly. The cell door was now closed and a sad looking man sitting on a wooden bench, the only furniture in the room, was looking at me.

“How did you get here?” he asked. I was unlikely to be a guard dressed in a light grey outfit and coloured scarf. It felt cold in the cell as I was wearing a sleeveless top.

“I’m here to rescue you!” I explained.

He looked at the locked door and smiled. “You’re joking!”

“I assure you I am not. The agency sent me.”

At that moment I heard the lock on the door being turned. The door opened and several men armed with pistols entered. They didn’t look foreign; in fact they seemed to be English. I

can't explain why I got that impression, they could have been American or Australian but something about them said – English. It was time to get out of there, but I found my head beginning to buzz, some high pitched sound that was destroying my concentration and giving me a headache. A real bad one! I don't normally get headaches. What really shocked me was what happened next!

Sir William walked in with a big smile on his face. "Now we have you! You cannot travel! We are targeting you with high frequency waves to prevent you focusing on a destination."

"But, you are like me?" I said holding my head that was now throbbing scrambling my thoughts and destroying my ability to concentrate.

"No, I'm not. You're one of the few we have captured for study." If he said any more I didn't hear, I think I passed out and anything after that was a series of images seen from a half conscious, drugged perspective. My headache was gone but my mind felt foggy, I couldn't think straight but I knew I was being prodded and probed, scanned and X-Rayed, held by a series of people I could see in a place that forever remained out of focus.

I don't know how long I was in that state but eventually I began to take in my environment. I don't know whether it was because the drug was having less effect on me or whether they had lowered the dose. Each morning I was led from my 'cell' which was more like a fully equipped hospital room. At night, I was free to move around the room, but the drug made me sluggish and drained my will to do anything. My escort was a large matron like woman, overweight with a permanent scowl on her face and rarely spoke except to yell at me for moving too slow.

The layout of the building, I slowly worked out, consisted of two towers containing a spiral staircase. Not a metal staircase found on ships, but a full staircase that wound around the tower. There were four floors, but I never worked out what was on the others. I was located on the ground floor; whether I was the only patient I couldn't tell. I never saw any others being treated like me.

As for who held me, they all wore army camouflage gear but I could never work out what military. They were definitely not African, Asian or Middle Eastern. The fact they spoke English and looked European convinced me I was being held by the English. I decided I would continue to act in my drugged state and not reveal I was regaining my senses.

Then one morning I found my door unlocked. I knew my captor; the unsmiling matron was always in the next room which I had to go through to gain access to the main building. Cautiously, I opened the door. The room appeared empty, so I entered. It was then I saw her – the Matron. She appeared dead.

She lay on her back with her eyes wide open, a large knife stuck in her chest. The shock of seeing her sent a shot of adrenalin through my system clearing my mind in an instant. I thought of getting out and getting home to safety and slowly my living-room wrapped itself around me... and I was home!

I instantly realised I couldn't stay here. It was the first place they'd look. Where could I go? If I booked into a hotel they'd have my name and I couldn't use my credit card. Then I had an idea! Getting out of my hospital gown, I dressed in some old clothes, the clothes I'd usually wear for spring cleaning. I grabbed what cash I could, about three hundred dollars I had hidden away; then wished myself into the city centre. There I found a homeless shelter and wandered in. I was still feeling woozy from the drugs and the shock, I looked pale and unwell. In other words, I fit in well with the homeless around me.

"Are you alright?" A volunteer asked me as I entered. She was a young blonde girl full of a need to help others. She appeared sympathetic, wore jeans and a yellow T-Shirt with the name of the Mission she represented.



I looked her over and replied quickly. “Yes, I just haven’t eaten,” I lied.

“Have you been taking any drugs?” she asked. I shook my head. “Alcohol?” Again, I shook my head as she continued to ask lots of questions, making me feel increasingly uncomfortable as I lied about my circumstances.

“Are you needing somewhere to stay?” I tried to look more pitiful than I really felt as I confirmed I was homeless. She led me over to a table and sat me down. She returned shortly with a bowl of hot soup and a roast lamb meal. It was a far better meal than I’d been given at the military base. After eating, I was assigned a bed. My plan - to stay here until the drugs wore off then... I realised after that I had no idea.

I quite enjoyed my stay in the hostel; I served meals, helped out with cleaning jobs, even got to assist in the kitchen. Two weeks later, I felt very reluctant to leave, for the first time in my life I was completely ‘worry free’. No rush to get to work on time - no commitments, but then...I realised I did have a commitment; I was being hunted by people afraid of my abilities. I had to get to Aurora, so that night as soon as I’d finished my duties I went to her.

She was horrified to hear my story. “Unfortunately there are many races that fear our abilities. Some try to destroy us, others to study us. The fact they knew of you tells me they have another one of us in captivity. I must report this. Go rest I’ll get back to you.”

Aurora found me later relaxing in the garden, enjoying the colourful flowers, the large moon dominating the sky and labelling the place as alien. Accompanying her was a large man dressed in black with a matching shiny helmet, much like a bike helmet. His face was completely hidden, his actual appearance disguised by the bulky uniform covering protective gear underneath.

“You have to be a soldier?” I queried.

It was Aurora who answered. “He is Team Leader of one of our Protective Units. Their job is to protect our kind from the ignorant. They are here to help you rescue our unknown friend.”

I stood up and examined the soldier before me. Under that uniform he could be any species! Only his form was humanoid. “What do you need?”

His voice was gruff and echoed within his helmet. “Tell us everything you know about the place where you were held.”

Everything on this planet seemed to be done outdoors. We were standing in a pagoda with a central table around which we all stood - the de-brief took several hours. The Team Leader known only as ‘One’ was joined by nine others dressed in identical outfits. They studied the layout now represented by a holographic skeleton of the building, just as I described it.

“When are you planning to go?” I asked when the plan was decided.

“We shall rest before you take us there,” he replied.

“Take you there? Can’t you do that yourself?”

“No. We are not like you. We lack this ability. You must take us there and return us.”

I was a little taken aback but I could see I had no choice. Next morning, they fronted with their large weapons in the pagoda. If the weapons had been metal they would have been extremely heavy, but these weapons seemed quite light. “You’re not going to kill anyone are you?” I asked nervously.

One shook his head. “These only stun. You tell us they are not heavily armed and most of the staff are unarmed, so we have no need. Shall we begin?”

We all held hands. I concentrated on the foyer at the base of one of the towers and that scene slowly wrapped itself around us. Immediately, the soldiers formed a circle around me facing outwards towards any approaching personnel. All remained quiet.

“Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten! Up the stairs and clear from this end. Five, Six! Guard our rear!” They all moved quickly, as One led his small group down the corridor leading to the other tower. As we proceeded, we checked every room. Halfway down the corridor the building branched off to the right. Following up at our rear, Five and Six had their weapons facing back, towards the stairwell at the base of the tower. “Three! Four! Five and, Six! Check the rest of the corridor and secure the other tower. The rest with me!” he ordered, his voice low. At this point we had not seen a soul.

I followed One and Two as they checked the centre branch. “I don’t like this!” I commented. “It feels wrong! This place had been alive with people. Could they have abandoned the place after I escaped?”

“It feels wrong to me also,” replied One. “Everyone return to arrival point immediately!” He waited as each responded and then we turned back.

Once more in the foyer, we re-assessed the situation. But as we did so, I felt that ear-piercing high pitch sound that had previously destroyed my ability to travel. Expecting this I put on my earphones shutting out the noise and replacing it with music from my iPhone.

Then, from all directions came armed soldiers shouting at us to put down our weapons in that aggressive manner that men with guns like to engage in to intimidate whoever they are engaging with. We just all held hands and vanished leaving a small red ball behind that One had dropped.

We all arrived back at the pagoda. “Well... that was a disaster!” I stated feeling disappointed and quite shaken by the encounter. I was not used to violent encounters involving guns.

“Not really, I left them a little surprise,” answered One. If I could have seen his face, I am sure I would have seen a smile. “We can go back now!”

Hesitantly I complied and we returned to the foyer to find everyone unconscious. “A high frequency concussion blast; it would have knocked everyone in the building unconscious,” announced One. He turned to his men. “Gather up all the bodies and secure them. Tiffany, you find Sir William!”

I nodded. “I suggest you secure them in the dormitory at the rear.” One offered no argument. I found Sir William not far from the action, halfway down the connecting corridor between the towers.

“Take him to Aurora for questioning. We will be fine here,” instructed One. Although a little anxious at leaving them with no means of escape I did what was asked of me.

Aurora seemed to know exactly what to do. She secured him with a vine, and we waited for him to regain consciousness. He woke to see Aurora’s alien face staring down at him.

“What are you?” Sir William asked in horror, for the first time in his life he felt truly terrified. Aurora simply smiled at him in a way that increased his fears rather than put them at ease. Then he saw me. “Tiffany! Where are we?”

“You are alone on an alien planet and if you want to see Earth again you will tell us how you knew of Aurora. This is Aurora by the way,” I replied, with a self-satisfied smirk, the tables had turned and I felt good but he was unmoved and my mood changed. Suddenly all my emotions that had been building over his betrayal, reached boiling point and he could see I had little sympathy for his situation.

“I can tell you nothing!” he replied defiantly.

Aurora leaned in close and held his arm. “Then I suggest you rethink. I know a place where you’ll get a lot of peace and quiet.” At the last minute she grabbed me and we found ourselves in a desert. “It is very hot here and without water you wouldn’t last more than a few hours. Even with water I’d be surprised you’d live one cycle of your planet. I think you call it

a day. We'll be back in a few hours." With that we vanished leaving him alone in the searing heat.

I must say I had found the heat, just for those few minutes, oppressive. Draining me of any energy and burning my skin. "Will he be alright?" I asked concerned when we returned to the pagoda. Aurora just smiled and went for a walk.

Back at Sir William's base, One observed the activity building outside; men with guns were busy surrounding the premises. One decided to step outside and talk to them. He stood on the front steps of the structure holding his impressive weapon but looking very relaxed and imposing.

An officer stepped forward. "Who are you people?"

"Not your concern. None of this is your concern. You will leave!" replied One.

"Can't do that! You have our people in there, we want them back."

"When we have finished negotiating with Sir William...they will be released."

"You will negotiate with us, is that clear?"

"I don't think you heard me the first time. Our business is with Sir William. I would recommend you stand down until our business is over or we'll have to neutralise you."

The officer seemed amused. "Neutralise us! I have fifty men out here armed with heavy weapons. How many have you got?" he asked not expecting an answer.

"I have ten, including myself," replied One, seeing no reason not to reveal his strength as it was irrelevant to them defending the building.

"How many hostages are you holding?"

"Didn't count them. They are irrelevant."

"Then why not release them?" pressed the officer.

"Because that would encourage you to storm the building, and someone might get hurt. We don't want anyone hurt. So, I am for the last time... instructing you to evacuate the area."

"Or what? You'll kill the hostages?"

"No, we'll neutralise your forces. Your choice! I believe we're done."

One turned and walked back inside leaving the seething officer on the steps. The officer returned to his men. "What do we do, sir?" asked his 2IC, a short man in his early forties with the inevitable military moustache, his greying hair making him look older than he was. His superior was a younger man, sandy haired, no moustache and young enough to lack caution and wisdom.

"Scan the building for heat signatures! I want to know where everyone is located! Then we go in," he ordered. The 2IC saluted and stepped back before turning and entering an operations tent erected nearby. Around them were several vehicles creating a barrier behind which soldiers stood at the ready.

Sir William was not coping. Already, he felt the exposed skin on his hands and face were being seriously burned. There was no shelter, no trees, nothing but endless desert in every direction. The heat was incredible; he'd been in deserts before, but not like this. It must have been 50 degrees Celsius or maybe even more. He knew it must be at the edge of a survivable temperature range. He had attempted to dig a hole to shelter from the heat but the sand was too hot to touch.

Aurora and I returned within fifteen minutes and found him in a bad way. All exposed skin was blistered, and he was seriously dehydrated. He also probably had a degree of heat stroke. When he saw us he pleaded. "Get me out of here!"

We complied and returned him to the garden planet I was beginning to view as my home base. He collapsed as soon as the new landscape formed around us. Aurora gave him

water. “You will be fine once we get you medical attention but first answer our questions?” pressed Aurora as he drank.

“We had a boy, Patrick Shelton, a few years ago. He came to us and offered his services. He was young, thought he could become a superhero and work for the government.”

“So, you took him in until you found out what he could do and that scared you?” suggested Aurora.

Sir William nodded. “We drugged him to contain him for study. But he became resistant to the drug and escaped. We don’t know where he went.”

I took Aurora aside something sounded off. “Wouldn’t you think after losing one of us that way, they’d monitor me more closely?”

“What are you suggesting?”

“That maybe we have an ally on the inside who we could be risking exposure if we pursue this. He doesn’t know where the boy has gone so we don’t need to know any more.”

Aurora agreed. “I have one more question.” I said to Aurora before returning to Sir William.

“If you don’t have any of our people in captivity, how did you find me?”

He hesitated then thought better as he considered his burns. “Since we discovered your kind exist, we monitor CCTV for people who appear across the world within impossible time frames if they’d travelled normally.”

“That answers that,” I turned to Aurora. “So our people are in danger at home.”

“They are in danger wherever fear and superstition exist. We cannot help that. Elsewhere our people do good things though I’m sure we have those who also do the wrong things. Shall we take him back?”

Aurora nodded. “But first we need to heal his wounds.”

One was approached by Two as he watched the gathering force outside. “They are going to assault the building. They have scanned it and discovered our locations.”

“Time we gave ourselves some breathing space,” replied One and headed towards the door. He carried his weapon slung over his shoulder, but in his hand was a grenade shaped device.

As he exited, everyone stopped to see what would happen. “Drop your weapon and raise your hands,” ordered the officer.

“I have come to give you one last warning. Back off... or suffer the consequences,” replied One.

The officer hesitated as his ear piece reported his marksman had a clear shot. He made his decision. “Take the shot and move in concussion grenades at the ready!”

The bullet struck One and bounced off his armour. He dropped the device and calmly walked back inside. Once there it exploded sending out a knockout wave and everyone collapsed.

Two guys in a monitoring truck who were unaffected watched in shock. “Who are these guys?” His companion shook his head and put out a call for additional backup.

Shortly after, Aurora, Sir William and I returned. When we arrived, Sir William was still trying to work out how his injuries had fully healed. One approached. “Are we finished here?”

Aurora nodded in the affirmative. “We have what we need. Gather your team and we’ll depart.” One turned to Two who gave the order and they all moved towards the foyer where we had arrived.

“What happens to me?” asked Sir William.

It was Aurora who replied. “You and your people are free. But you have been warned about capturing our people. We will be leaving you now.”

Sir William turned to me. “Tell me... why did you kill the Matron?”

“I didn’t. She was already dead when I awoke.” He looked at me not quite sure whether to believe me or not. One’s team was now assembled, and Sir William watched us as we just dissolve into thin air.

The assault team entered the building meeting no resistance. They moved swiftly through until they reached the barracks where everyone was being held. Sir William sat outside waiting, with the door open. The assault team dressed in black with weapons raised swept the room of hostages sitting peacefully on their beds. They relaxed and the officer approached Sir William.

“What happened here?”

“I’m not really sure but they’ve gone. You can stand down.”

“But how, we have the building surrounded?” asked the 2IC, a young man disappointed in not having the fight he expected.

“You don’t want to know,” replied Sir William who left him. Later that day, alone with his researchers he sought answers. “Listen up! I want to know how two of these subjects failed to remain subdued!”

“They must... become tolerant to the drug,” offered one scientist.

“Then why didn’t you compensate the second time around?” The scientist felt stumped. “I want blood samples tested! I want everything tested! I want to know exactly why they became drug free!” he ordered in an ever increasingly loud voice leaving everyone clear he was not going to let this go.

Back on Melco, our home base, I asked Aurora. “How do we find Patrick?”

“If they cannot find him on Earth, my guess would be he’s escaped out here. We can put out the word to our people we are looking for a human. See if we can track him down.”

“And what about me, if I go back they’ll find me.”

“That is true. You are welcome to stay here temporarily or seek an alternative home – out there.” I looked up into the sky wondering just what was out there, suddenly I found myself alone in the universe, exiled from my home and very afraid.

“I wouldn’t know where to start looking.” I replied.

“I can help,” suggested Aurora, sympathetically. She understood.

I spent the next few months wondering the universe with Aurora as my guide. I saw many wonders and many strange people. We definitely were not alone in the universe, but I had no way of knowing if any of these civilisations were within cooece of Earth. They could have been hundreds of millions of light years away. On Earth, we had no idea of the vastness and variety of the universe, much like a native who had never travelled to other lands.

Then, one day I was back on Melco watching the perpetual daylight sky. It faced the sun all year much like our moon faces Earth. The other side of the planet was in constant darkness, but a luminescent life-form had developed there. It lived among the rocks feeding off radiation that fell from space and organic matter growing in the rocky soil. I had not been there and wondered what it would be like, when someone touched my shoulder.

I turned, expecting Aurora but a young man was standing there. He was human, dressed in a flowing alien gown that glowed, much like I expected the luminescent creatures on the far side of the planet. His hair hung over his shoulders and half-way down his back, but he was clean shaven and seemed very pleased to see me.

“Patrick?” I enquired, sure that he could not be anyone else. He nodded. “You got my call!”

“I did! I didn’t know there was anyone else on Earth like me. When I heard... I came,” he replied and without further hesitation he reached out and hugged me tightly. I didn’t resist, in fact I responded enthusiastically glad to have the warmth of another human contact. I was so happy to see him. I was not going to be alone in exile.

Then without warning he pulled away. “I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have d...”

I stopped him by placing my finger on his lips. “It’s okay. I needed that. I really needed that.” We stared at each other for a moment, our emotions mixed, unsure where to go from here. Finally, I took his hand in mine. “Come.” I led him over to the nearby pagoda and sat him down. “Where have you been living?”

“I found a nice planet, not unlike home. Got myself a cabin in the country and an animal that is very like a dog; they call these animals Caltars.”

I hesitated wondering if it was too soon to ask. “How did you escape?”

He looked at me, becoming concerned. “They got you too?”

I nodded. “They know we exist and are looking for us. Watching CCTV worldwide for journeys done in impossible times.”

“Then how did you escape?”

“My tolerance to the drug increased and I travelled here.”

Patrick turned away. I was uncertain of his reaction then I realised he was thinking. He suddenly turned back. “That’s not possible. I escaped the same way, and they would have ensured you were regularly monitored to prevent your escape happening the same way.”

“I think we have someone inside who’s on our side. They must have killed the Matron. But who and why? Who would want to help us? Who had the opportunity?”

“And why would they kill the Matron unless she was in on our rescuer?” I suggested as I watched Patrick trying to think it through.

“It wasn’t the Matron she was a nasty bitch. It wouldn’t be the doctor he handed everything to the Matron who prepared the drug. It must have been the nurse who somehow managed to reduce our dose allowing us to awake.”

I grabbed Patrick’s shoulders. “If she helped us and was found out, it would be reason enough for her to kill Matron. She would have reported it. Then she’s in danger! If we can work that out so can they. We have to help her.”

“Okay... but how do we find her?”

“We follow her but first we must tell Aurora what we are doing!”

Outside in the street, the siege was under full swing, the street filled with military support. “Where are we?” asked Patrick.

“I was in that building during this siege. I looked out the window and saw this spot so I was able to bring us here at this time. When the siege is over, the nurse will be released along with the other hostages. We can follow her then.”

“But, how can we be here. If you’re inside, this is the past?”

“I can travel through time as well as space. I’ll fill you in while we wait.”

“You there!” yelled a soldier. “Move on! It’s not safe around here!” We nodded and moved away.

Later that day we watched the storming of the building and the return of the bewildered soldiers when they found no one inside. It was not long after the hostages were released.

“There she is!” pointed Patrick as one woman snuck away from the scene. We followed. Once out of sight of the soldiers we closed in. She noticed us coming and hastened her pace - she couldn’t see who we were in the dark.

“Ma’am, can we have a word?” I called out gently. She didn’t respond instead she began to run. Patrick’s mind moved him in front of her blocking her retreat.

“Stop, it’s us. We mean you no harm,” said Patrick trying to hold the struggling nurse.

Finally, she caught a glimpse of me while Patrick tried to hold her. “It’s you!” Her face paled as she relaxed. Patrick let go.

“You saved us didn’t you?” I asked. She nodded. “Why did you kill the Matron?”

Her head snapped back in horror. “I didn’t, I thought you did!”

“That’s interesting.” Patrick scratched his head wondering who else was involved.

“We’ve come to warn you! They will be on to you soon.” She pulled away from me.

“You must get away or they’ll get you!” she cried more concerned about us than herself.

“We’re fine. We’ve come to help!”

“I don’t need help! It is you that’s in danger! Get out of here... now!” She backed away. “They have their spies everywhere. If they catch us together...”

“We can take you to a safe place!” I insisted but by now she had stopped listening as she walked off without looking back.

Teresa Gray was nine years old. She awoke that morning lying in a field looking up at the sky that was oddly different. The moon looked bigger – huge in fact, bigger than she’d ever seen it before. Hearing a noise behind her she turned and screamed as she began crawling away in terror.

“It’s alright, I will not hurt you,” said Aurora calmly. Teresa relaxed a little but was still hesitant and stayed away from her.

“What are you? Where am I?”

“My name is Aurora. I’m what you’d call an alien, and you are on my planet.”

“Am I dreaming?” Aurora shook her head and took a step closer. Teresa crawled further away. “How did I get here?”

“That’s a longer story. Are you hungry?” Teresa didn’t answer; she was too busy weighing up this alien with a horse-like face. “There is a place a short distance from here,” Aurora turned to point out the building nearby. “I will be there when you’re ready to join me.” With that, Aurora walked away.

It was several hours before Teresa ventured into the building. Aurora was not to be found but the table had been set with food, food she recognised, meats, salad, fruits. Hesitantly at first she tried a small morsel and then her hunger overcame her.

Aurora joined her shortly after, taking a seat at the far end of the table, not wishing to interrupt her or make her feel intimidated. They talked about her abilities and how she could go home. She stayed a few days relaxing and learning how her powers worked. Finally, Aurora took her home and warned not to tell others of what she could do, even her parents. No one would understand.

As she had left in physical form, she found herself returning to her panicked parents who had reported her missing; an event that had put her on Sir William’s radar. Within a few days, a proud nine year old was bragging to her friends about her trip to another planet. They ridiculed her and finally, she understood Aurora’s warning. She stopped telling people, but the word was already out, a girl who claimed she could just ‘go’ to other planets by just thinking about them.

Teresa returned to Aurora regularly, usually at night. Aurora was the only person she could talk to that totally understood. Then one day, she didn’t come.

Patrick and I settled on the Earth-like planet where Patrick had made a home for himself and his ‘dog’, a hairless pink skinned animal which strongly resembled a small Earth dog. The people there were humanoid in appearance although they had a strong jaundiced colour to their skin and they had no hair anywhere on their bodies. They did not value possessions but respected hard work. Patrick told me that on his arrival the community had gathered to help the ‘human’ build his log cabin in the woods. I felt equally welcome. When Aurora came to visit we saw she was upset and worried as she told us Teresa’s story. “I went to visit her parents in spiritual form and saw their distress. The police dismissed it as simply another vanishing act of a troubled nine year old and expected her back in a few days. She didn’t return.

Sir William Kent looked through the glass into the room where Teresa lay unconscious and hooked up to monitors. The monitors were recording every possible bodily function. Beside him stood a doctor in a white coat, of Chinese descent, balding, around fifty years of age with a moon shaped face carrying a cruel expression.

“I’m afraid, Sir William, we will learn little as long as she is unconscious. We need to monitor her when she’s actively using her abilities,” reported Doctor Devlin, not a very Chinese name but he blamed that on his English father.

“You know we can’t do that, she’ll escape the moment she’s awake and we will be unable to contain her!”

“I suggest we need to gain her co-operation, release her and find an excuse to examine her medically, with her parents’ consent.”

Sir William thought about how that could be done.

Teresa appeared on her parents doorstep, drugged and confused. Her parents were unsure whether to be angry with her or relieved she was okay. Seeing she wasn’t her normal self they took her to the hospital. Tests confirmed she’d been drugged, and the police were called. This time, they took the incident seriously.

A special team were brought in to examine her, headed by Doctor Devlin and Sir William Kent. They brought their own monitoring equipment to her hospital bed and interviewed Teresa while her parents waited outside.

“How are you feeling, Teresa?” asked Sir William as the doctor set up his equipment, it was all contained in a brief case from which a number of wires were being unfurled.

Teresa nervously watched the doctor, unsure what was going to happen. “What is he doing?”

“We’re going to run some tests, they won’t hurt. I understand you were kidnapped, twice. Did you see anyone, hear anything?” Teresa shook her head, still watching the doctor. “Sometimes there are things we are not aware we noticed, a smell, a sound?”

“I was walking home from school. Someone grabbed me and placed a cloth over my mouth. After that, I only remember walking up the drive to my house. That’s it!”

Sir William stepped closer and sat on the edge of her bed. “I know you have a secret. You can travel with your mind.” Teresa’s attention shifted abruptly from the doctor to Sir William. “Have you met Aurora?”

Her face brightened and she became animated. “You know Aurora?”

Sir William smiled kindly at her. “Yes, I know her, and I know there are bad men who want to learn about your abilities. Will you help us?” She nodded eagerly. “Tell us about what you can do.”

So Teresa briefed them on her abilities as they linked her up to the monitors eager to gather data.



“What I want you to do is... leave your body and visit your parents outside in spirit form. Then, return when Doctor Devlin steps outside to talk to them. Can you do that?” Teresa nodded enthusiastically. Doctor Devlin switched on his monitors and watched.

Teresa left her body and materialised in the waiting room. Her parents were sitting in silence looking very worried. She felt sorry for them, wishing she could hug them. But in this form she was invisible to everyone except others in the same spirit form.

Back in her room the instruments were showing results. “She’s in a coma,” reported Devlin. “Her body is fully functional, but the brain is showing no conscious presence. This could prove that our essence is separate to the body - that we have a life after death.”

“Don’t get all religious on me. All it proves is she can put herself into a coma. Go out and see if she returns when you talk to her parents.”

Devlin nodded and stepped outside. Her parents stood up together, their faces anxious. Teresa watched. “How is she?” asked her father.

“She’s fine. She can’t remember anything about the kidnappers, but we are trying some techniques that may help. We won’t be much longer.” He smiled at them and returned to Teresa’s room.

On arrival he saw she was awake. “What did I say to your parents?”

Teresa smiled at him proudly as she repeated what she’d heard. “That I couldn’t remember the kidnappers and you were trying other techniques.”

Sir William took her hand. “Well done, now let’s try a physical move. For this we need you to hold the monitor and take it with you.” Teresa nodded. “Okay. See that glass window? We want you to move yourself into that room.”

Teresa nodded she understood. Devlin left the room through an adjourning door and switched on the lights. The room was empty except for a table and chair. Devlin waited while Sir William gave the nod to Teresa. She got out of bed and stood holding the monitoring equipment.

Instantly she vanished and re-appeared in the room next to Devlin. Devlin grabbed the equipment to look at the results before instructing her to return to the other room. She did so and they disconnected the equipment.

“That’s it, Teresa. You’re free to go home. But remember what Aurora said, tell no one. Those bad men are still out there.”

She nodded and began dressing as they left the room. Once home, she thought of Aurora and that night she went to tell her friend what had happened.

Aurora was surprised to see her and Teresa was surprised to see Patrick and I, the first humans she had seen off-planet. “You can tell my parents and then I don’t need to hide it from them!”

Aurora was sympathetic but said nothing, instead she asked Teresa to tell them what had happened. Sending Teresa outside to play we entered into conversation on what we’d heard. Aurora looked worried. “They’ve got smarter, realised they needed a co-operative subject, and they got one.”

“Now that they have the data, what can they do with it?” I asked.

Aurora poured herself another coffee from the pot on the table we were all seated around. “The fact is, this ability lies dormant in all of us. It’s linked to how consciousness moulds reality. Activating it is not that easy. The ability is often driven deeply into the subconscious by superstition or worse, scientific ignorance.”

“Scientific ignorance?” asked Patrick.

“Yes, it’s when scientists become blinkered by the scientific process and don’t believe anything that can’t be proved and often go in circles to prove their own theories, rather than seeking the unproven.”

“So what do we do?” I asked. “Once they have the data, they won’t stop hunting Teresa.”

Sir William, accompanied by two armed soldiers waylaid Melony in the corridors of their new operating base, having evacuated their old base after the raid.

“Come with me!” he ordered as she was escorted into an interview room where Doctor Devlin waited.

Melony sat down, feeling sure they had found her out. Patrick and Tiffany had tried to warn her she was in danger, but she felt she could bluff it out. Now she would discover if this was accurate.

“Melony! As you know Doctor Devlin and I have been conducting an investigation into how our two subjects escaped,” began Sir William as he sat down. “Our research confirms an insufficient dose of the drug was administered and they woke up. Only you and the Matron could have done that.”

Sir William waited for a reaction, but Melony remained silent and nervous.

“We have been watching you and concluded that it must have been the Matron. She underestimated the patient who woke and killed her.”

Melony concealed an inner sigh of relief. “What made you decide it wasn’t me?”

“The fact that you didn’t run; the fact that you continued your work as usual and made no unusual contacts - your track record in total! Given that fact...” he paused to gauge her reaction before continuing. He noticed she was tense but listening. “Teresa claims she was transported to another planet. We understand that no one can transport to a place they haven’t seen or been to before.”

Melony nodded in agreement. “So how did she get there if it’s true?”

Sir William decided to upgrade her clearance. “It’s true. I’ve met this Aurora and she’s alien. That means they’re among us providing escape routes for these enabled people. Using our resource for their own purposes.”

“And you suspect that that purpose is not in the interests of this planet?”

Sir William nodded in agreement as a knock on the door interrupted them. A soldier burst in. “Sir! We have spotted the two subjects approaching the little girl’s house!”

Sir William rose. “Get the team moving – now!”

Patrick, Aurora and I approached Teresa’s front door and knocked. Aurora stood back out of sight as the door was opened by her mother. “Yes?” she enquired.

“We are following up on your daughter’s abduction,” replied Patrick looking official in a dark suit, Aurora staying out of sight to the left of the doorway.

“Can I see your credentials?”

“I’m afraid we aren’t from the official organizations, we’re...” began Patrick but was stopped by a squeal from Teresa standing just behind.

“Patrick! Tiffany!” she cried and raced past her mother to hug me, before seeing Aurora. “Aurora!” I was immediately dumped, and the hug transferred to Aurora.

“My daughter obviously knows you,” commented her mother relaxing. “Come inside!” She stepped aside and then spotted Aurora. “Teresa step away! What are you?” she exclaimed grabbing Teresa.

“She’s a friend, Mum. She’s the one I told you about from the other planet!” explained Teresa.

“But that was...” her mother exclaimed.

“It was real,” said Aurora walking past her with Teresa into the living room. Her mother closed the door, after Patrick and I had followed, too stunned to do anything but obey.

“Everything your daughter has been telling you is true,” opened Aurora as she sat down. Everyone did the same, her mother still in a daze as Teresa’s father entered the room.

“Who was it?” he stopped as he saw Aurora and looked to his wife.

Teresa took his hand. “It’s okay, Dad! Aurora’s a friend!”

Patrick took over the conversation quickly telling their story. It was Aurora who concluded by saying: “We are concerned the next stage will be to kidnap her again and begin probing her brain, trying to trigger those parts they believe are linked to this ability. They do not understand it is not the physical body that has this ability. It is the spirit that draws the power from the universe around us. The brain is simply where it resides to interact with this plain of existence.”

“So what are you suggesting?” asked the father as the front door came crashing in and armed soldiers burst in.

“Hold hands!” ordered Aurora as they all dissolved in front of the soldiers’ eyes.

As the Melco landscape unfolded around them, they were still seated in their chairs. Teresa’s mother got up and grabbed her daughter. “Where are we?”

Aurora replied. “On another planet, you’re safe here.”

The mother looked incredulous. “Are you serious? Another planet?” she asked glancing around nervously. “I’m taking her back home!”

“You can’t! Those soldiers were here to take her away for experimentation!” I replied. She increased her hold on her daughter thinking she might disappear. “But why? Why would they want her?”

“Because she has the ability to move herself and others anywhere in the universe by just picturing it. You’ve just witnessed that it can happen,” replied Aurora.

“Yes but...” she looked to her husband helplessly unsure what to say or do.

Aurora watched sympathetically. She’d seen this before in other species. “We’ll leave you alone to talk. We’ll only be over here.” She left Teresa with her family and joined us at the pagoda. “What do you want to do with them?”

I replied. “I have no idea. They could come live on the planet where we live but what about all the others back on Earth?”

“If you’re concerned about them, you need to contact Melony and get her team on side.” Patrick and I agreed.

Melony was walking home in the dark – relieved. She’d been concerned her cover would be blown and her usefulness to Sir William would end and so would her ability to help those with this ability. As she passed a lane way she was grabbed, dragged away and found herself in bright sunlight. Breaking away, she stepped back to see, who were her kidnappers? “What the... YOU!” he cried surprised to see Patrick again.

“Hi Melony,” he replied quietly.

“What are you doing? Where am I?” She looked around at the alien landscape then noticing Aurora she stammered, “And what’s t-t-that?”

“You’re on Melco and I’m Aurora. We mean you no harm, we just want to talk.”

Melony held her ground then noticed Teresa and her parents in the background. “You got her,” she stated. Aurora simply nodded. “And what of me?”

Patrick stepped forward. “We know you work with an underground team, rescuing people like us. What we want is to join forces and offer places of refuge off-world.”

“How can I be sure this isn’t some alien invasion or mass kidnapping of talent - for your own purposes?”

“Is that what Sir William and his people think?” I asked, shocked.

“Yes. They also want to be able to activate this ability in their soldiers. I’m not going to be experimented on... or exploited,” she explained.

“You? Can you Mind Travel?” I asked.

She nodded “You might have compromised me by taking me. I only just got over being under suspicion for allowing you two to escape.”

“We can overcome that by returning you to the exact time and place, so any monitor would think you just fell over or stepped down the alley for a moment,” put in Patrick. She looked at us puzzled.

“I can move through time as well as space,” I stated as if it was an everyday occurrence.

She shook her head. “What are you proposing?” I held out my hand and we vanished. Our surroundings changed to our house in the woods.

“You might think this was Earth but it’s not. Patrick and I set up home here and the locals helped us build this place. There’s plenty of food, jobs to keep people interested and the ability to trip home as if it was around the corner.”

Aurora stepped forward. “I can show you another place.” She took our hands and a new world wrapped itself around our senses. It was a small town, modern looking by Earth standards with small houses of shining metal. “This was a research outpost for a humanoid race. They abandoned it years ago, but it could be adapted to human requirements and the planet is uninhabited by other sentient species.”

“What about the researchers? Won’t they want to come back and retake their territory?” asked Melony.

“They are not territorial, and I know they have no further interest in this planet. It is yours,” explained Aurora, waving her arms to take in the surrounding mountains, plant growth and beauty the place offered. “You can move all your refugees here. May I ask under what type of conditions are they living now?”

Melony lowered her head, ashamed to admit what was happening. “They live in hiding, afraid to step out in case they are detected or recognised; living in constant fear, often selling their assets to pay for their food and meagre lodgings.”

“Here they can transport what they need and rebuild lives together. No fear, no one hunting them, you can start again with your own rules.” Aurora watched her face as Melony looked around. It was a very attractive offer.

“I’d need to go back and talk to them but how come they do not have the ability to come here on their own? Why haven’t they discovered places like this?”

Aurora stepped forward, always the teacher. “Because you have to see a place and be able to picture it to go there; many people gravitate to Melco from all over the universe on their first unconscious move. We don’t know why but we suspect the planet resonates at a very peaceful frequency attracting unconscious minds. Your people must not be attuned to it, possibly because of the way Earth people mess with the vibration fields of your planet.”

“So if I wish to go home I just think of home and go there?”

We all nodded but I added. “... except I seem to be the only one who can take you back in time to that alley.” Melony nodded.

After taking her home I reconnected with Patrick and Aurora back on Melco. They were updating Teresa’s family on the various options.

When Melony returned, she did so with a number of her armed men who were dressed in black. They did not come with hostility just to check the place out. Aurora introduced them to our SWAT Team and they began to discuss defence strategies.

Within a month, a colony had started at the Research Lab. People brought family and in some cases friends who welcomed the chance to ‘stop the world and get off’.

It was now time to visit Sir William. Patrick and I moved ourselves into his office. He looked up but didn’t seem surprised. “Come to visit or are you surrendering?”

It was Patrick who fired the first round. He stood defiantly in front of the man’s desk, his hands behind his back and delivered his speech. A speech he’d worked hard on getting it right, despite it being brief. “We came to tell you that we are shutting you down. We have already removed our gifted friends to places where you will never find them, and we are shutting down your research.”

“And how to you propose to do that?” replied Sir William a smug look on his face. “I could call in security and have your arrested. You might pop off before that happens, but you’ll get no further.”

“We had something else in mind and it’s happening right now!” I replied and watched as his smile faded.

He reached for his intercom. “Security Alert!” An alarm was instantly raised. Klaxons sounded and men started running around. Lights flickered and then explosions could be heard in the distance. Sir William looked worried. “Security Report!” he shouted into his intercom.

“Sir! We have intruders. They’ve blown up the servers, all our research data is gone!” said the panicking voice over the mike.

“What about the backup?”

“Stolen! Our whole network is fried, and all offsite equipment has been compromised by a virus, a very virulent one at that!”

“See you Sir William. Or rather you should hope you don’t see us because next time we’ll be more aggressive,” warned Patrick and we both disappeared.

Just as we left Doctor Devlin rushed in. “Did you hear?” Sir William nodded. “Where are all the backup systems? The cloud protection? The invulnerable data storage equipment? Where?”

“Very cleverly hacked and destroyed,” replied Sir William.

“So what now? What about our research?”

“I suggest you start salvaging what you can from paper and memory. Then we start again.” Sir William got up and walked out. He didn’t feel angry; in fact, he admired the ingenuity of his foes. But he would not be defeated. These people had abilities they could use to disrupt society. They also had the key to an invincible army that could transport itself anywhere, strike and be gone. The biggest obstacle in any war was always logistics. The biggest vulnerability was supply lines being destroyed or blocked. Now that could be rendered irrelevant.

**THE END**

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