

AMI “CHILD OF THE STARS”



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*Dedicated to the "children"
of all ages
and of all places
on this round, beautiful "Nation,"
those future builders and heirs
of a new Earth
without divisions between peoples.*

It's not easy to write a book when you're not a writer. It's even harder if you're still a kid. But I have to do it because a friend from the stars asked me to. His name is Ami.

I'm going to describe the experiences that I was lucky enough to have with him.

He explained to me that in worlds as advanced as his, "adult" or "grown-up" means "person who has lost contact with the wonder of life," and that there are "grown-ups" who are fifteen and "children" who are one hundred...

He also warned me that the "adults" were not going to take advantage of this information because it's easier for them to believe in the horrible, even if it's false, than in the marvelous, even if it's true.

So that I wouldn't have any problems he recommended that I say that it is all a fantasy, a story made up for children.

So I'm going to say it right here: This is a story...

WARNING

(Directed to "adults" only)

Do not continue reading this; you're not going to like it;
sorry, but what follows is
marvelous.

“. . . and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks:
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more"
(Isaiah 2:4)

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CHAPTER 1

FIRST ENCOUNTER

It all started one afternoon last summer in a small, quiet town on the California coast, where my grandma and I go for vacation almost every year.

Last summer we rented a small wooden house. It had several pine trees and a lot of shrubs in the backyard and a front yard full of flowers. It was on the outskirts of town, near the ocean, on a path that led towards the beach.

My grandma likes to go on vacation at the end of summer when there aren't as many people. She says that it's quieter and cheaper then.

It was beginning to get dark. I was alone on some high rocks near the isolated beach, just watching the ocean. Suddenly, I saw a red light in the sky above me. I thought that it was a sparkler or one of those rockets that people shoot off on the 4th of July.

It came down, changing colors and giving off sparks. When it was lower I could see that it wasn't a sparkler or a rocket because as it grew larger it began to look like a small airplane, or something even bigger...

Without making a sound, it fell into the ocean about 150 feet from the beach, right in front of me.

I thought that I'd witnessed an air disaster and looked up at the sky to see if anyone had parachuted out of the plane. No one had. Now nothing disturbed the silence and tranquillity on the beach.

I was really afraid and wanted to run off to tell someone, but I waited a little longer to see if I could make out anything more. As I started to leave, something white appeared floating in the ocean at the point where the plane, or whatever it was, had fallen. Someone was swimming towards the rocks. I supposed that it was the pilot, that he had survived the accident. Intending to help him, I waited for him to get closer. He was swimming so well I knew that he had not been badly hurt.

As he approached I realized that he was a child. He swam to the rocks and before beginning to climb out he looked at me with a friendly smile.

I thought that he must be happy that he had saved himself. He didn't seem to be upset about the situation and this calmed me down a little. When he had climbed to the top of the rocks, he shook the water out of his hair and gave me a happy wink, as if we shared a secret. Then I definitely felt better.

After coming over to sit down near me on a protruding rock, he sighed with resignation and started looking at the stars that were just beginning to appear in the sky.

He seemed to be about my age, a little younger and a little shorter. He wore a white suit fitted close to his body; it must have been made of some waterproof material because now it wasn't even wet. On his feet were a pair of white boots with thick soles, and on his chest, a gold-colored emblem of a heart with wings. Some instruments that looked like portable radios hung from each side of his belt, which was the same gold color. In the center it had a very pretty, large, shiny buckle.

I sat near him. We spent a few moments in silence.

Since he wasn't talking, I asked him what had happened.

"Forced landing," he answered, laughing.

He was nice. He had a strange accent and big, kind eyes.

I supposed that he had come from some other country in the airplane.

Since he was only a child, I thought that the pilot would have to be a grown-up.

"What happened to the pilot?" I asked.

"Nothing. Here he is, sitting next to you."

"Oh!" That surprised me. This kid was a champ! At my age he was already flying airplanes! I imagined that his parents must be very rich.

Night was falling and I was getting cold. He noticed this because he asked, "Are you cold?"

"Yes."

"The temperature is just right," he told me, smiling.

Then I felt that it wasn't really cold, after all. "That's true," I answered.

After a little while I asked him what he was going to do.

"Fulfill the mission," he replied without taking his eyes off the sky.

I thought that he must be an important kid, not just an ordinary schoolkid on vacation, like me. He had a mission, maybe a secret one... But, on the other hand, he was just a kid... I didn't dare ask him about his mission. Everything about him upset me.

"Won't your parents get mad when they find out that you wrecked the plane?"

"But it's not wrecked!" he replied laughing, leaving me even more confused.

"Wasn't it lost? Wasn't it completely destroyed?"

"No."

"How can it be taken out of the water to be repaired? Or can't it?"

"Oh, yes, it can be taken out of the water." He was observing me affectionately and added, "What's your name?"

"James, but people call me 'Jim' or 'Jimmy,'" I said, but something was beginning to bother me. He didn't answer my questions completely and he kept changing the subject. He was acting all mysterious...

He noticed that he was bothering me and thought that was funny. "Don't get mad, Jim. Don't be angry... How old are you?"

"Ten... well, almost. What about you?"

He laughed softly. His laugh reminded me of a baby being tickled.

I supposed that he was going to gloat because he could fly a plane and I couldn't. I didn't like that. But, still, he was nice, agreeable. I couldn't get really mad at him.

"I'm older than you think," he remarked with a smile.

Reaching for his belt, he pulled off one of the instruments that seemed to be radios. It was a calculator. He turned it on and some glowing symbols appeared that I had never seen before. He made some calculations and, seeing the results, he began to laugh even harder and said, "No, no... If I told you, you wouldn't believe me..."

Night had come and a beautiful full moon appeared, illuminating the ocean and the entire beach.

I was liking that strange kid's riddles less and less. That *kid*, or whatever he was.

I examined his face carefully. He couldn't be more than eight years old. But he hinted that he was much older and he was an airplane pilot... Could he be a dwarf?

"Some people believe in extraterrestrials," he remarked almost distractedly.

Even though this observation seemed strange to me, something told me that this was the solution to the mystery.

I thought for a long time before opening my mouth. He was watching me, his eyes full of light. The night's stars seemed to be reflected in his pupils. He looked too beautiful to be a normal person.

I remembered his burning airplane falling into the ocean, and, according to him, it wasn't wrecked... There was something very strange about that. It was weird how he'd appeared right in front of me. His calculator with the funny symbols was weird, too. So were his accent and his clothing. Besides, he was a kid, ***and we kids don't fly airplanes...***

"Are you an extraterrestrial?" I asked him, a little afraid.

"And if I were... Would that scare you?"

It was at that moment that I knew for certain that he had come from another world. I was a little frightened but he seemed to be looking at me with kindness.

"Are you bad?" I asked timidly.

He laughed, amused. "Maybe you're worse than I am..."

“Why?”

“Because you’re an earthling.”

I understood what he was trying to say. He was saying that we earthlings aren’t very good. This bothered me a little, but I preferred to ignore his comment for the moment. I decided to proceed with caution. He was a strange guy.

“Are you really an extraterrestrial?”

“Don’t be afraid.” Smiling, he comforted me and pointed to the stars while telling me, “This Universe is full of life... Millions and millions of planets are inhabited... There are lots of good people up there...”

His words had a strange effect on me. When he said those things, I could almost “see” those millions of worlds inhabited by good people.

I wasn’t afraid anymore. I decided not to be surprised by the fact that he was a being from another planet and just to accept it, especially because he seemed friendly and harmless.

“Why do you say that we earthlings are bad?” I asked.

He kept looking overhead. “How beautiful the night sky looks from Earth... This atmosphere gives it a brilliance...a color...”

I began to feel annoyed again. Once more he wasn’t answering my questions and, besides, I didn’t like him thinking that I was bad because I’m not. Just the opposite. In those days I wanted to be an explorer when I grew up and to hunt down criminals in my spare time...

“Do you see that group of stars there? The ones in the Taurus Constellation?”

“Oh, yes, of course. I always like to look at them because they’re so pretty.”

“Well, they’re called the “Pleiades” and they’re home to a marvelous civilization...”

“We aren’t all bad here...”

“Look at that star... It was like that a million years ago... Now it doesn’t exist anymore...”

“Like I said before, we aren’t all bad here. Why did you say that we’re all bad? Huh?”

“I didn’t say that,” he responded, still looking at the sky. His eyes were sparkling. “It’s a miracle,” he remarked.

“YES, YOU DID SAY THAT!”

Because I raised my voice, I was able to shake him out of his daydreams. He was just like my cousin when she was thinking about her favorite rock singer. She was crazy about him.

He looked at me attentively. But he didn’t seem mad at me.

“I meant to say that some earthlings are often less good than the inhabitants of other worlds out in space.”

“You see? You’re saying that we’re the worst people in the Universe.”

He started laughing again and patted me on the head. “That’s not what I meant either, Jim.”

I liked that even less. I pulled away. It bothers me when people treat me like I’m stupid. After all, I’m one of the best students in my class and, besides, I was almost **ten years old**... “If this planet is so bad, then what are you doing here?”

“Have you noticed how the moon is reflected in the ocean?” He kept ignoring me and changing the subject.

“Did you come here just to tell me to pay attention to the moon’s reflection?”

“Maybe... Have you noticed that we’re floating in the Universe?”

When he said that I thought I finally knew the truth: the kid was crazy. Of course! He thought he was an extraterrestrial. That’s why he was making such absurd statements.

I wanted to go home. I felt awful because I’d believed his fantastic stories.

Or maybe he’d been pulling my leg... An extraterrestrial! And I had believed him! I felt ashamed and mad at him and at myself. I felt like giving him a good sock in the nose.

“Why? Is my nose really ugly?”

I stopped cold. I felt afraid. Was he reading my mind?

I looked at him and he was smiling triumphantly. But I refused to surrender. I preferred to think it happened just by chance, that it was just a coincidence that what he said had anything to do with what I was thinking. I didn't let on that I was surprised. Even though it might be true, I had to verify it. Maybe he really was a being from another world, an extraterrestrial who could read minds... Or maybe I really was sitting there with a crazy person...

I decided to test him.

"What am I thinking now?" I asked, and I began to picture a birthday cake.

"Haven't you had enough proof already?" he asked.

I wasn't going to give an inch. "What proof?"

He stretched his legs and supported his elbows on a rock. "Look, Jim, there is another type of reality, other, more subtle worlds, with subtle doors for subtle sorts of intelligence..."

"What does 'subtle' mean?"

"How many candles?" he asked, smiling.

I felt like someone had hit me in the stomach. I felt like crying; I felt stupid and slow. I asked him to forgive me for having doubted his word, but that hadn't bothered him. He paid no attention to me and began to laugh.

I decided never to doubt him again.

CHAPTER 2

FLYING JIM

"Come stay at my house," I suggested because it was already getting late.

"Let's not involve adults in our friendship," he said, smiling and wrinkling up his nose.

"But I have to go."

"Your grandma is sleeping soundly. She's not going to miss you if we talk for a while."

Once again he surprised me and made me admire him. How did he know about my grandma?... Then I remembered that he was an extraterrestrial being... and that he could read my mind...

"That's not all, Jim," he said, after picking up on what I was thinking. "From my ship I saw that she was just about to fall asleep." Then he exclaimed enthusiastically, "Let's take a walk on the beach!" He jumped to his feet, ran to the edge of the very high rock and... jumped off!

I thought that he was going to kill himself! Frantic, I ran over to look down into the abyss. I couldn't believe my eyes! He was descending slowly, gliding like a seagull, his arms extended in the air. But then I immediately remembered that I shouldn't be too surprised at anything done by that happy, extraordinary child from the stars.

I carefully got down from the rock as best I could and joined him on the beach.

"How do you do it?" I asked, referring to his incredible glide.

"By feeling like a bird," he responded and began to run happily along the surf.

I thought that I would like to act like him, but I couldn't feel that free and happy.

"Yes, you can!"

Once more he had read my mind. He came over to encourage me and exclaimed enthusiastically, "Let's run and jump like birds!"

He took me by the hand and I felt a surge of energy pass into my body. We began to run on the beach.

"Now... let's jump!"

He was able to jump much higher than I and pulled me up after him. He seemed to hang suspended in the air for a few moments before his feet hit the sand again. We continued running and every now and then we jumped.

"We're birds; we're birds," he cried, encouraging me, making me feel giddy.

Little by little I stopped thinking the usual way; I was changing into a different person. Encouraged by the extraterrestrial child, I was deciding to be as light as a feather, little by little accepting the idea of being a bird.

"Now... up!"

Marveling, I could tell that we were beginning to stay in the air for a few seconds. Gently we descended and continued running, only to rise up in the air again. Each time we were doing it better. That surprised me...

"Don't be surprised... you can do it... Now!"

With each try it got easier. Illuminated by the moon and starlight, we ran and jumped along the edge of the waves like a slow-motion scene in a movie.

It seemed like another way to live, another world.

"For the love of flight!" he encouraged me. A little later he let go of my hand.

"You can do it! Yes, you can!" He kept inspiring me as he ran beside me.

"Now!"

Slowly, we leapt up, staying in the air for a few seconds and then beginning to fall very gently with our arms extended, as if we were gliding.

"Bravo! Bravo!" he congratulated me.

I don't know how long we were playing that night. For me it was like a dream.

When I felt tired I threw myself on the sand, breathing hard and laughing happily. It had been fabulous, an unforgettable experience.

I didn't say anything out loud, but inside my head I was thanking my strange little friend for having allowed me to do things that I had thought impossible.

At that time I didn't know just how many surprises that marvelous night had prepared for me...

The lights of a larger beach resort sparkled on the other side of the bay. Delighted, my friend contemplated the shifting reflections on the dark water. He was deliriously happy, stretched out in the sand, which was bathed in bright moonlight. Looking at the full moon, he laughed, "How wonderful! It doesn't fall! This planet of yours is really beautiful!"

I had never thought about it, but now that he was saying this... Yes, I thought, it was beautiful to have stars, the ocean, the beach and a beautiful moon suspended there, and, what's more, it wasn't falling...

"Isn't your planet beautiful?" I asked.

He sighed deeply while looking at a point in the sky to our right. "Oh, yes, it's beautiful, too, but all of us know that, and we take care of it..."

I remembered that he had insinuated that we earthlings are not very good. I thought that I understood one of the reasons: we don't value our planet or take care of it; they do take care of theirs.

"What's your name?"

He thought my question was funny. "I can't tell you."

"Why not? Is it a secret?"

"Go on! It's just that the sounds don't exist in English."

"What sounds?"

"The sounds in my name."

That surprised me. I had thought that his language was English too, and that he just had a different accent. But then I remembered that even here on Earth there are hundreds or even thousands of different languages and dialects. In the rest of the Universe there would have to be millions more.

"How did you learn to speak English, then?"

"I don't speak it or even understand it...unless I have this," he replied, while he took an apparatus from his belt. "This is an 'interpreter.' This little box explores your brain at the speed of light and transmits what you

want to say to me; and when I'm going to say something, it makes me move my lips and tongue like you would do... well... almost like you. Nothing is perfect..."

He put away the "interpreter" and began to contemplate the sea, pulling his knees up to his chest as he sat on the sand.

"Is that how you know what I'm thinking?"

"Of course. Although I'm also making progress with my telepathy."

"What should I call you, then?" I asked him.

"You can call me 'Ahmishim-shimahhh', which is my language means 'friend,' because that's what I am, a friend of everyone."

"Ha, ha!" I laughed really hard when I heard those strange sounds. "I'll just call you 'Ami.' It's shorter and it sounds like a name. Do you like it?"

He looked at me happily and then exclaimed, "That's perfect, Jim!" And he gave me a hug.

At that moment I felt that I had formed a new, very special friendship.

And so it was to be...

"What's the name of your planet?"

"Whoa! The same problem. There're no equivalent sounds, but it's over there." Smiling, he pointed towards the stars.

While Ami was observing the sky, I started thinking about all the space invaders films that I'd seen on television and at the movies. "When are you going to invade us?" I asked him.

He thought my question was funny. "Why do you think that we're going to invade Earth?"

"I don't know... in the movies the extraterrestrials always try to invade Earth... Are you one of those?"

This time he laughed so loud that it was contagious and I started laughing, too.

Then I tried to justify what I had said. "It's just that on TV..."

"Of course, the television! Let's see one of those space invader films!" he exclaimed while extracting another apparatus from his belt hoop. He pressed a button and the screen lit up. It was a small color television with an amazingly sharp, clear picture. Ami changed channels rapidly.

What was surprising was that, even though there weren't very many stations in that area, a whole bunch of them appeared on the screen: movies, live programs, news shows, commercials. The shows were in all different languages spoken by people of different nationalities.

How could he get so many stations without subscribing to a cable company?

"The films about space invaders are really ridiculous," said Ami, amused.

"How many channels can you get there?"

"All of them that are transmitting at this moment on your planet..."

"All of them!"

"Naturally. This apparatus receives the signals picked up by our own satellites, which are invisible to you people, of course. Here's one from Australia. Look!"

On the screen appeared some creatures with octopus heads and multiple, bulging eyes crisscrossed with little red veins. They fired off green rays at a crowd of terrified human beings. My friend seemed to be having a good time watching this film.

"What a laugh! Don't you think it's funny, Jim?"

"No. Why?"

"Because these monsters exist only in the monstrous imaginations of the people who invent these films..."

I wasn't convinced. I had spent too many years seeing all kinds of scary, evil space invaders. That idea couldn't be wiped out in one fell swoop.

"But if here on Earth there are iguanas, crocodiles, octopuses... Why couldn't really ugly creatures exist in other worlds?"

"Oh, that. Yes, of course they exist. But they don't construct ray guns. They're the same as here; they're animals. They aren't intelligent."

"But maybe there are worlds where evil intelligent beings live..."

"Evil intelligent beings! That's like saying, 'bad good people,' or 'skinny fat people,' or 'ugly pretty people.'" Ami was laughing his head off.

I just couldn't understand. What about the crazy, evil scientists who invent weapons of mass destruction, the ones that all the cartoon superheroes on TV fight against?

Ami could read my mind and explained, "They're not intelligent. They're crazy."

"Well, then it's possible for a world to exist that's full of crazy scientists who could destroy us..."

"Other than those of the Earth...impossible."

"Why?"

"Because crazy people destroy their own civilizations before reaching the scientific level necessary to abandon their own planets and invade other worlds."

I didn't completely believe him. I thought that it was possible that some planets could exist that were inhabited by crazy people who weren't all that crazy... I mean, people who are intelligent, cold, scientific, efficient, and, at the same time, cruel and evil...

He, of course, knew what I was thinking and to him it was really funny.

"And where are all those intelligent monsters who are so cold and so evil? How come they've never invaded and destroyed any earthly civilization?" he asked me, with an innocent look on his face.

I thought for a while before answering but couldn't find any examples of extraterrestrial evil in our history, except for those modern stories of alien abductions and "*X-Files*"...

"C'mon, it's all book- and film-selling fantasies that you believe in spite of a complete lack of proof.... Cosmic paranoia!" he added, laughing.

I thought he was right, but, anyway, I wasn't all that certain of the "innocence" of all the inhabitants of outer space. There were probably good ones, like Ami, and bad ones, too, just like on Earth.

He tried to reassure me. "Believe me, Jim, in the Universe there are 'filters' which keep out the undesirables. Up there is not completely equal to down here. When the civilizations of the Universe reach a certain level of development, there are no more horrors and the people are not as bad."

"Are you completely sure that there is no civilization that's scientifically advanced, but cruel?"

"All I can tell you is that it's much easier to develop the technology necessary to build bombs than it is to build intergalactic spaceships. If a civilization without wisdom or kindness reaches a high level of scientific knowledge, sooner or later it will use that knowledge against itself. That will happen way before it would be able to travel to other worlds... Luckily for us..."

"But they could survive on some planet, by chance..."

He said that the Universe is the reflection of a perfect, superior order and that nothing happens by chance, because everything is interconnected. And he also explained to me that when the scientific level of a world exceeds its level of love by too much, that world self-destructs.

"Level of love?"

I could easily understand what a planet's scientific level is, but the idea of "level of love" was hard for me to grasp.

"The love that the human beings on a planet radiate can be measured by our instruments," he said.

"Really?"

"Sure, because love is an energy, a force, a vibration; and if a world's level of love is low, there is unhappiness, hate, violence, division and war. And if, at the same time, there is a high level of the capacity for destruction... Do you understand what I'm saying, Jim?"

"Not really. What are you trying to tell me?"

"I **have** to tell you a lot of things, but let's go slowly. Let's continue talking about your doubts."

He knew that I continued having doubts about the intelligent, evil monsters.

“Too many movies!” Ami exclaimed and then added, “The monsters that we imagine are within ourselves. As long as we don’t let go of them, we won’t deserve to reach the heights of the Universe, full of marvels that are there, waiting for us to elevate our eyes so that they can reveal themselves...”

“Sometimes it’s hard for me to understand you, Ami.”

“The evil beings are neither intelligent nor beautiful.”

“But... What about those beautiful, bad women in the movies?”

“Either they’re not beautiful or they’re not bad.”

“I’ve seen some that are bad, but at the same time they look real good...”

“Maybe they look good to you on the outside. But what about on the inside?... For us, true beauty has to be joined with intelligence and love. If it’s not, we don’t consider it genuine beauty.”

I didn’t much agree with his way of seeing things, but I didn’t say anything.

“Do other bad people exist in the Universe, other than those on Earth?”

“Well, in the first place, we don’t divide people into ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Some are more advanced; some, less. That’s all.”

“All right. Then, do beings who have advanced as little as those here exist anywhere else?”

“Of course. And many who are much less advanced, as well. Worlds exist where you couldn’t survive for half an hour. A million years ago there was a real inferno right here on Earth... And there are worlds inhabited by real monsters.”

“You see? You see?” I exclaimed triumphantly. “I was right! You just admitted it yourself! Those were the monsters I was talking about...”

“But don’t worry. They are ‘below’ you, not ‘above’ you. They inhabit worlds much more backwards than this one. Their coarse minds keep them from even discovering the wheel. They’ll never arrive here at this rate...”

That was comforting to hear.

“Then, we earthlings aren’t the worse inhabitants of the Universe, after all...”

“No, but you’re one of the silliest ones in the galaxy.”

We laughed like good friends.

CHAPTER 3 DON’T WORRY

“Know what? ‘Real close’ to here on one of the planets of Sirius there are some violet-colored beaches. They’re incredible! If you could only see a twilight with those two gigantic suns...”

“Do you travel at the speed of light?”

He thought my question was funny.

“If I traveled that *slow* I would have been an old man by the time I got here.”

“What speed do you travel then?”

“We don’t usually *travel*; it’s more like we *situate* ourselves.”

“What?”

“We *situate* ourselves by simply appearing at the place we want to go.”

“Instantaneously?”

“Well, we do have to wait a while. The instruments on board have to carry out complex calculations, but from one side of a galaxy to the other would take...” He picked up the calculator hanging on his belt and punched in some numbers. “According to your measurements of time... hmmm... an hour and a half. And from one galaxy to another would take several hours.”

"Wow! How do you do it?"

"Can you explain to a baby why two and two make four?"

"No," I replied. "I don't even know the answer to that myself."

"Well, I can't explain things about the space-time contraction and curvature, either. And there's no need to... Check out how those little birds glide over the sand. They look like they're skating. How wonderful!"

Ami was watching some birds running across the beach in a group. They were pecking at some food that the waves had deposited on the sand. I suddenly realized that it was late.

"I have to go," I said. "My grandma..."

"She's still asleep."

"But I'm worried."

"Worried? How silly!"

"Why?"

"Don't live your life imagining problems that haven't yet arisen and aren't going to. Enjoy the present. You have to live life to the fullest, always seeking happiness instead of worrying. When a real problem arises, then put your time to good use figuring out how to **solve** it, instead of **worrying** when everything is just cool, like now."

"I think you're right, but..."

"Do you think it would be worthwhile for us to stand here worrying that a gigantic wave might come along and wash us away? It would be silly not to enjoy this moment, this beautiful night... Look at those birds running along without a worry in the world... Why should we waste this moment thinking about something that doesn't exist?"

"But my grandma *does* exist."

"Yes, she does. And she's not having any problems... Doesn't this moment exist for you?"

"But I'm worried."

"Oh, earthling, earthling. Fine. Let's see your grandma."

He picked up his television set and began to push the buttons. A picture of the road leading to my house appeared. Images of the trees and rocks along the path passed across the screen. Everything was in color and all lit up as if it were daytime. We passed through the wall of the house and there was my grandma. She was sleeping deeply in her bed. You could even hear her breathing.

That was one amazing device!

"She's sleeping like a little angel," commented Ami with a laugh.

"Is that a movie?" I asked.

"No. This is 'live and direct'. . . Let's go into the dining room."

The image passed through the bedroom wall and the dining room appeared. There was the table and the tablecloth with the big checks, and at the place where I usually sat my grandma had left the plate with my dinner, covered by a second plate turned upside down.

"That looks like a UFO!" he joked. "Let's see what you have for dinner." He adjusted something on the TV set and the plate on top became as transparent as glass. A piece of beefsteak, some French fries and a tomato salad appeared.

"Yuck!" Ami exclaimed with disgust. "How can you people eat cadavers?"

"Cadavers?"

"Cow cadavers... Dead cow. A piece of dead cow..."

The way he was talking about it made me feel disgusted, too.

"How does this TV set work? Where's the camera?" I asked him, very intrigued.

"It doesn't need a camera. This gadget focuses, selects, filters, amplifies and projects... Simple, isn't it?"

He seemed to be making fun of me.

"How come it looks like daytime when it's really night?"

"There are other 'lights' that your eye can't see. This apparatus picks them up."

"How complicated!"

"Not at all. I built this rattletrap myself."

"Yourself!?"

"It's really out of date but I love it. It's a souvenir, a homework assignment from primary school..."

"You guys are a bunch of geniuses!"

"Not at all. Do you know how to multiply?"

"Of course," I replied.

"Then you're a genius... to someone who doesn't. It's all a question of degree. A flashlight is a miracle to an aborigine living in the rain forest."

"You're right. Do you think that someday here on Earth we'll be able to have inventions like yours?"

For the first time he looked serious. Gazing at me with what seemed to be sadness, he said, "I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know? You know everything!"

"Not everything. No one can see the future... luckily."

"Why did you say 'luckily'?"

"Just imagine. Life would have no meaning if we could see into the future. Would you like to know the final score of the game you're watching before it ends?"

"No. That makes me mad. That's no fun at all," I replied.

"Do you like to hear a joke that you already know?"

"I hate that, too. That's boring."

"Would you like to know what you're going to get for your birthday ahead of time?"

"That's the worst of all. The surprise is completely spoiled."

I liked his way of teaching, the way he offered clear examples.

"Life would lose all meaning if the future were known ahead of time. You can only figure the possibilities."

"What do you mean?"

"For example, you can figure the Earth's possibilities or probabilities of saving itself..."

"Saving itself? Saving itself from what?"

"From what? Haven't you ever heard about the contamination, the wars, the bombs?"

"Oh, yes! Are you trying to tell me that we're in danger here, too, like in the bad guys' worlds?"

"The possibilities are here. The relationship between science and love on your planet is very skewed toward the science side. Millions of civilizations like this one have self-destructed for this very reason. Your planet is at a critical point in its evolution. These are delicate moments, dangerous times.

He was scaring me. I had never thought seriously about the possibility of a third world war or another catastrophe like that. I thought hard for a long time. Suddenly I had a marvelous idea, one that could solve all the world's problems.

"You guys could do something!"

"Like what?"

"I don't know... Arrive in a thousand spaceships and tell the presidents not to make war... Something like that."

Ami smiled. "If we did something like that, in the first place, there would be thousands of heart attacks, caused by all those movies about space invaders that portray us as if we were evil demons. And we're not inhumane, you know. We couldn't bring about something like that. In the second place, if, for example, we were to say to them, 'Transform your weapons into work tools,' they would think that it was an extraterrestrial disarmament plan to make them weak, a trick so that we could dominate the planet. Third, let's suppose that they were able to understand that we're harmless; they still wouldn't give up their weapons."

“Why not?”

“Because they would still be afraid of the other countries. Who’s going to be the first to disarm?”

“But they have to trust...”

“The ‘children’ trust; the ‘adults’ don’t... Especially those who lead nations. And they’re right because some people have the desire to dominate everything that they can...”

I was feeling real uneasy. I kept trying to think of a solution to prevent the war and save humanity... After I’d thought for a long time, the only thing that occurred to me was that the extraterrestrials could take power on Earth by force, destroy our weapons and oblige us to live in peace. That’s all. A few frightened old ladies having heart attacks would be nothing compared to what would be saved. I told him this.

When he had stopped laughing, he assured me that I couldn’t stop thinking like an earthling.

“Why?”

“‘By force,’ ‘destroy,’ ‘oblige.’ This is all earthling talk. To us it’s prehistoric. Human liberty is something sacred, both ours and that of others. Because of this, ‘oblige’ does not exist in our worlds. Each person is valuable and respected. ‘By force’ and ‘destroy’ is violence, a word that comes from ‘violate,’ and our spirit is completely opposed to this. And finally, we can’t and don’t want to cause anyone’s death, even if you think that ‘a few heart attacks’ aren’t important...”

“Then your people don’t make war?” I hadn’t even finished saying this before I felt stupid for asking.

He looked at me affectionately and putting his hand on my shoulder, said, “We don’t make war because we love God.”

His answer really surprised me. I believed in God... a little, but I had been taught to feel more fear than affection for Him. Besides, lately was I beginning to have doubts. I was starting to think that only religious people believed in God, them and people who aren’t very cultured, because I have an uncle who is a nuclear physicist in the university and he says that “intelligence killed God.”

“Your uncle is foolish,” Ami asserted after perceiving my thoughts.

“I don’t think so. He’s considered one of the most intelligent men in the country.”

“He’s foolish,” Ami insisted. “Can an apple kill the apple tree? Can a wave kill the ocean?...”

“I thought that...”

“You were wrong. God exists.”

I started thinking about God, a little repentant that I had doubted his existence.

“Listen! Take off that white beard and tunic!” Ami was laughing because he had seen my mental images.

“Then... He doesn’t have a beard? God shaves?”

My space friend was delighted by my confusion. “That’s an Earth-style god,” he commented.

“Why?”

“Come on, let’s go for a walk.”

We began walking on the path that led to town. He put his arm across my shoulder; at that moment I felt that he was the brother I never had.

Some nocturnal birds squawked in the distance. Ami appeared to be delighted by those sounds. He breathed in the sea air and said, “God doesn’t have a human appearance.” His face was shining in the night while he talked about the Creator. “He doesn’t have any form at all. He’s not a person like you or I. He’s an infinite Being, pure creative intelligence... pure love...”

“Ah!” I exclaimed. The way he had said this was so beautiful that it moved me.

“That’s why the Universe is lovely and good... It’s marvelous.”

I thought about the inhabitants of the primitive worlds that he had mentioned and also about the bad people on this planet. “What about all the bad people?”

“They’ll be good people some day...”

“It would have been better for them to have been born good from the very start. That way there’d be no evil anywhere.”

“If you don’t know evil, how are you going to be able to enjoy goodness? How would you be able to appreciate it?” asked Ami.

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

“Don’t you think it’s beautiful that you’re able to see?”

“I don’t know. I never thought about it... I guess so.”

“If you had been born blind and suddenly could see, then your sense of sight would seem marvelous to you...”

“Oh, yes!”

“It’s the same with those who have lived difficult, violent existences. When they overcome their difficulties and attain a life that’s more humane, they appreciate it more than anyone... It’s a little boring to be an angel for eternity... But, on the other hand, it’s beautiful to advance, to overcome adversity, to learn. If it were never night, we couldn’t enjoy the dawn...”

We were walking along the pathway that was illuminated by moonlight and bordered by trees. We passed my house. I went inside quietly to look for a sweater. On the table I saw my plate, covered and waiting for me. I felt powerful because, even without removing the second plate on top of it, I already knew what was on it. But then I started to have doubts, and I peeked under the top plate to make sure. Yes, it looked exactly as it had on my friend’s little TV set, but I still wasn’t hungry.

I returned to Ami’s side and we continued walking and talking. We still hadn’t reached the first streets in town and couldn’t see the street lights yet. He was contemplating everything while he was talking.

“Do you know what you’re doing?” he asked me unexpectedly.

“No... what?”

“You’re walking. You can walk...”

“Oh, yes. Of course... And what’s so surprising about that?”

“There are those who have been invalids and, after months or even years of rehabilitation exercises, they are able to walk again. For them the ability to walk is really extraordinary, and they’re thankful for it. They enjoy it. You, on the other hand, walk around all the time without paying it the least bit of attention, without thinking that you’re doing anything special...”

“You’re right, Ami. You’re telling me so many new things...”

CHAPTER 4 THE POLICE!

We came to the first street with street lights. It must have been about eleven at night.

For me just walking around town so late at night was an adventure, but I felt protected by Ami.

While we were strolling around, he paused to look at the moon through the leaves on the trees. At times he told me that we should listen to the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the night crickets, the distant murmur of the waves. He stopped to breathe in the aroma of the pines, the tree bark, the soil. Often he halted in his tracks to admire a house that looked pretty to him, or a street or a street corner.

“Look how pretty those street lights are... Pretty enough to paint... Check out how the light falls on that vine... And those roofs outlined against the stars... Life is there for you to enjoy fully, Jim. Try to pay attention to all that life offers you... The marvels are there to be found every moment... Try to feel, perceive, instead of thinking. The most profound sense of life is found beyond thinking... You know what, Jim? Life is a fairy tale come true... It’s a beautiful gift that God has given you...because He loves you.”

His words made me see everything from a new point of view. It seemed incredible to me that this was the normal, everyday world that I'd never paid much attention to... Without even having noticed it before, I realized now that I lived in a place that looked like paradise...

We arrived at the town square.

Some teenagers were standing at the door of a disco; others were talking in the middle of the square. The place was very peaceful, especially now that the summer season was coming to an end. No one paid any attention to us, despite the strange outfit Ami was wearing. Maybe they just assumed that it was only a kid's costume...

I imagined what would happen if people knew what kind of kid was passing through town. They'd surround us; newspaper reporters and the people from the TV news would show up...

"No, thanks!" said Ami, reading my mind. "I don't want to become a martyr..."

I didn't understand what he meant.

"First off, they'd take me prisoner for having entered the country 'illegally.' Then they'd think that I'm a spy and they'd torture me to obtain information... After having squeezed me like a lemon, with methods that aren't very loving...the doctors would want to take a look inside my little body... No, thanks!" Ami was laughing as he mentioned all these horrible possibilities.

We sat down together on a park bench away from all the people. I thought that the extraterrestrials should show themselves little by little so that everyone would become accustomed to them and then, one day, come out in the open.

"We're doing something like that, but showing ourselves openly... I already gave you three reasons why that's not advisable. Now I'm going to give you one more reason, the principal one: the laws forbid it."

"What laws?"

"The universal laws. In your world there are laws, right? In the evolved worlds there are also general norms that everyone must respect. One of these tells us not to interfere in the evolutionary development of the non-evolved worlds."

"Non-evolved?"

"We call worlds 'non-evolved' when they don't live in accord with the Fundamental Law of the Universe."

"What does all that mean?"

"All the worlds whose inhabitants live in accord with that Law no longer are divided by frontiers, have a single government and share everything they have in brotherhood, peace and harmony. That's what it means to live in accord with the Fundamental Law of the Universe. That's what an evolved world is like."

"I don't understand very well. What is this foundation law... Of what?"

"You see? You've never heard of it," he was making fun of me. "You're not evolved."

"But I'm just a kid... I think that the adults must have heard of it, the scientists, the presidents of countries..."

Ami laughed loudly. "Adults? Scientists? Presidents? Not likely!"

"They're the leaders of countries and they've never heard of this important law?"

"Well, that's how it goes in your world. That's why there's so little happiness in it."

"But what's this law?"

"I'll tell you about it later."

"Really?" I was all enthused, thinking that I would know something that almost no one else did.

"If you behave yourself," he joked.

I started thinking hard about this prohibition against intervening in non-evolved planets.

"Then you're violating this rule!" I exclaimed with surprise.

"Bravo! You didn't miss that detail."

"Of course not. First you said that intervening is forbidden. And yet here you are talking to me... This is intervening... Or isn't it?"

“What I’m doing is not intervening in the evolutionary development of the Earth. Showing ourselves openly, communicating in a massive form, that would be intervening. And do you know why it’s forbidden to intervene?”

“You already gave me three or four reasons, Ami.”

“But I still haven’t told you the most important one: if we did it, apart from the disasters I already told you about, the most frightening catastrophes in the history of this world would take place...”

He was scaring me. “What catastrophes, Ami?”

“If they heard about the economic, scientific, social and religious systems that we use, the people of Earth would want to imitate us. Everyone would see us as an example to follow and they would all lose respect for their leaders and for the organizational systems they use. Then all the powers in this world would crumble, endangering your civilization’s stability. Some people would turn aggressive when they saw that they were losing their privileges... It would be complete chaos. We, ourselves, would finally have to take over to try to put everything back in order.”

Hearing this made me enthusiastic. “That would be great! You guys would fix up everything in our world.”

“Which would be a trap, like one student taking another student’s exams for him. Would you like for another student to turn in your exams for you?”

“No, because I’d miss the satisfaction of succeeding on my own.”

“And if we’d arrange everything here, then the entire population of Earth would miss the legitimate satisfaction of having overcome its problems by its own methods. Don’t you think so?”

“Hmmm... You’re right. I hadn’t thought about that.”

“That’s why we can’t intervene any further than what’s permitted. My contact with you here is part of an ‘aid plan.’”

“Please explain that better.”

“This ‘aid plan’ is a sort of ‘medicine’ that we have to administer in small doses, slowly, subtly...very subtly...”

“But what’s the medicine?”

“Information.”

“Information? What information?”

“Well, our spaceships have been flying around here for eons, but it was only after the first atomic bomb that we allowed you to see us. This was done so that you would have evidence that you’re not the only intelligent beings in the Universe and so that you would suspect that we were observing your warlike discoveries.”

“And why do you do that?”

“Because we want you people to understand that atomic energy is something very delicate, something that could even affect other nearby worlds. All that is information, Jim. Then we increased the frequency of the sightings; this is more information. Later we’re going to permit ourselves to be filmed. At the same time we’re establishing little contacts with some people, like my contact with you. And we also send ‘messages’ by telepathy. These ‘messages’ are in the air, like radio waves. They’re sent to everybody; but some people have ‘antennas’ able to pick them up; others don’t. All this is information. It helps.”

“And later you guys are going to appear in front of everybody?”

“When people live as God commanded; if they pass the ‘exam.’ It can’t be before then.”

“How terrible that you can’t intervene to prevent the destruction,” I said, feeling a little sad.

Ami smiled and looked toward the stars. “Our respect for the liberty of others is based upon love. This is why we must allow people to attain the destiny that they deserve. Evolution is a very delicate matter and we can’t intervene in it. We can only ‘suggest’ things very subtly through ‘special’ persons like you...”

“Like me? What’s special about me?”

“Maybe I’ll tell you later. For the moment you only need to know that you have a certain ‘condition’ which is not necessarily a ‘quality’... I have to go soon, Jim. Would you like to see me again?”

“Of course. I’ve really come to admire you in this short time.”

“I’ve come to admire you, too. But if you want me to return, you have to write a book about everything that you’ve experienced with me. That’s why I’ve come here. It’s also part of the ‘aid plan’...”

“Me? Write a book? But I don’t know how to write books!”

“Write it as if it were a story, a fantasy. If you don’t, everyone will think you’re crazy or a liar. Besides, you have to write it for the ‘kids.’”

That was when he explained the idea that I wrote about at the beginning of this book, the idea that there are “grown-ups” who are fifteen years old and “kids” who are one hundred.

Writing a literary work by myself sounded like an impossible task, but he was aware of this. “Ask for help from that cousin of yours who likes to write, the one who works at the bank. You can tell the story and he can write it down.”

Ami seemed to know more about me than I did myself.

“This book will also be information. More than this we’re not permitted to do. And now I’ll give you another reason why. Aren’t you glad that there is not the slightest possibility that an advanced, but evil, civilization could invade the Earth?”

“Yes, of course.”

“You see? This is because we never have helped any evil civilizations... And just imagine what would happen if you folks on Earth didn’t overcome your violence and egotism and yet we still helped you to survive. Right away you would use your new scientific knowledge to try to dominate, exploit and conquer other civilizations in space...and the evolved Universe is a place of peace and love, of fellowship, of cooperation. Besides, there’s another type of very powerful energy. Compared with this energy, atomic energy is like a match compared with the Sun... We can’t run the risk that a violent world might come into possession of this energy and endanger the peace of our evolved worlds, let alone produce a cosmic catastrophe...”

“I’m real anxious, Ami.”

“Because of the danger of cosmic catastrophes, Jim?”

“No, because I think it’s too late...”

“Too late to save humanity?”

“No, too late for me to still be awake.”

Ami was laughing his head off. “Chill, Jim. We’re going to see your grandma.”

He took the small television from his belt hoop and my grandma appeared on the screen sleeping with her mouth open. “She’s really enjoying herself,” he joked.

“I’m tired. I want to go to sleep, too.”

“Fine, let’s go.”

We were walking back to my house when a police car drove by. When they saw two children alone at that time of night, the policemen stopped the car, got out and came over to us. I was really afraid.

“What are you two doing around here so late?”

“Walking...enjoying life,” Ami answered very calmly. “What about you guys? Are you working? Hunting down criminals?” And, as usual, he laughed.

When I saw how Ami was acting in front of the police, I was even more afraid than I’d been before. But they thought my friend was funny and laughed along with him. I tried to laugh, too, but I was so nervous I couldn’t.

“Where’d you find that outfit?”

“On my planet,” he replied nonchalantly.

“Oh, then you must be a Martian.”

“Not a Martian, but I am an extraterrestrial.”

Ami had answered happily, as if he didn’t have a worry in the world. I, on the other hand, was even more uncomfortable.

“So where’s your UFO?” asked one of them, watching Ami with a certain paternal expression on his face. The policemen thought they were just playing a kids’ game. But Ami was simply telling the truth.

“I parked it at the beach, under the water. Didn’t I, Jim?”

And now he was getting me mixed up in this mess! I didn’t know what to do. I tried to smile and could only make a stupid face. I didn’t dare tell the truth.

“Don’t you have a ray gun?” The men in uniform were enjoying the conversation. So was Ami, but I was feeling more and more confused and worried.

“I don’t need one. We don’t attack anyone. We’re good.”

“What if a bad guy came at you with a gun like this?” The policeman showed him the gun, while pretending to be threatening.

“If someone tried to attack me, I’d paralyze him with my mental force.”

“Let’s see it! Paralyze us.”

“I’d love to. You asked for it. The effect on you will last for ten minutes.”

The three of them laughed hard. Suddenly Ami got very quiet and looked at them intently. In a strange, loud, deep, authoritarian voice he ordered, **“You will remain immobile for ten minutes. You cannot, you cannot move... Starting NOW!”**

And they stayed frozen there, with smiles on their faces, right where they’d been standing.

“See, Jim? In worlds that aren’t very evolved all you need to do is tell the truth as if it were a game or a fantasy,” he explained to me as he touched the nose of one policemen and then gently pulled the mustache of the other. Both of them stood there petrified. The smiles on their faces were beginning to look tragic to me.

Everything that Ami was doing made me even more afraid.

“Let’s run away! Let’s get away from here! They might wake up,” I told him, trying not to talk too loud.

“Don’t worry. We still have a lot of time before the ten minutes are up,” he said, and, just to have a little fun, he switched their caps, turning the bill to the back...

I only wanted to be far away.

“Let’s go! Let’s get out of here, Ami!”

“You’re worrying again, instead of enjoying the moment... Fine, let’s go,” he said, resigned. He approached the smiling policemen and, with the same voice he had used before, he ordered, **“When you wake up, you will have forever forgotten these two boys.”**

When we reached the first corner, we turned toward the beach and left the policemen far behind.

I felt much better. “How did you do that?”

“Hypnosis. Anyone can do it.”

“I’ve heard that not everyone can be hypnotized. That could have happened with one of them.”

“Everybody can be hypnotized,” said Ami. “And what’s more, almost everybody is hypnotized...”

“What do you mean? I’m not hypnotized! I’m awake!”

Ami laughed a lot at this. “Do you remember when we were coming down the path?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Everything there looked different to you. Everything looked beautiful, right?”

“Oh, yes... It seems like I was hypnotized there... Maybe you hypnotized me!”

“You were awake! Now you’re asleep, believing that everything is ugly and dangerous. You’re hypnotized. You’re not listening to the ocean; you’re not paying attention to the aromas of the night; you’re not conscious of your ability to walk or to see; you’re not enjoying your breathing. You’re hypnotized, and, even worse, you’re hypnotized negatively.”

“Negatively?”

“There are ugly ideas that don’t have a basis in reality. They’re dreams, fantasies, unjustified fears. They’re deliriums, craziness, and because they aren’t good ideas, they’re not even craziness that’s fun. They’re nightmares.”

“Like what ideas, Ami?”

He stopped in his tracks, looked toward the ocean and said, “Like the ideas of the people who believe in war, who believe that killing other human beings can be ‘glorious.’ That’s hypnosis and it’s hypnosis of the nightmare variety...”

“Now that I think about it...I think you're right, Ami.”

“They assume that anyone who doesn't share their hypnosis is their enemy. Others think that what they wear makes them worth more. And some people live frightened by life, fearing that they're going to lose their health, their job, their mate; they think that both the world and outer space are populated by enemies and they go through life armed, with deadbolts and chains on their doors, guard dogs and insurance policies. All that is 'nightmare-type hypnosis.' All of them are hypnotized, asleep.”

“And can't they ever wake up?”

“Every time someone breaks out of his mental nightmares and begins to feel that life is beautiful or that any moment whatsoever can be marvelous, 'just because it is,' then he's beginning to wake up. A person who's awake knows that life is a paradise, an extraordinary opportunity to be enjoyed, even though there may be difficult moments.”

Then I remembered something really sad: when I found myself all alone in the world... Luckily my grandma took charge of me and gave me all her affection; but I would have preferred to be a child with a normal family.

Ami continued explaining, “A person who's awake also values the problems and adversities in his life because he knows that the difficulties are tests to make him grow as a person, and he doesn't forget that the bitter moments are very few, compared with the beautiful moments. This is why he enjoys his life from moment to moment.”

“I've never seen many people like that, Ami...”

“It's just that in a world that's not very evolved there aren't many people who are so awake. The majority are sleeping, snoring, dreaming.... To think that some people kill themselves... Do you see how awful that is? They kill themselves, Jim!”

“Seen like that, the way you're describing it, you're right...”

I was still frightened when I thought about our encounter with the police moments before. “Why didn't your jokes bother those policemen?”

“Because they appealed to their good side, to their childlike side.”

“But they're police!”

He looked at me as if I had just said something really dumb. “Everyone has a childlike side, Jim. Almost no one is so foolish that he can't leave aside his worries for a second,” he said laughing. “If you want, let's go to a jail and look for the worse criminal...”

“No! Thanks a lot!”

“The majority of the people on this planet are asleep, that's for sure. But in spite of this more people are good than bad.”

“Really?...”

“Of course. People have more love than hate in their hearts.”

“They don't really seem to...”

“That's because everybody believes they're correct when they think what they think or do what they do. Some are mistaken, but this isn't evil. It's errors, dreams, hypnosis. It's true that when they're dreaming they become serious and even dangerous at times, but if you see their good side, in general they will repay good with good. If you see only their bad side, they'll repay evil with evil.”

“Then, if people are not so bad, why is there more unhappiness in this world than happiness?”

“Because you have very ancient ways of seeing life, ways that arose when there was too much division and distrust among you, when everyone lived terrified of each other. But now that's changed. Humanity has evolved over time. Different peoples know each other better now. People have more elevated aspirations, objectives and hopes. Nevertheless, the same old ideas, distrust, fear and prejudices are in place.”

I didn't understand his explanations very well until much later.

CHAPTER 5 ALIEN ABDUCTION!

"We're back at your house. Are you going to go sleep?"

"Yes. I'm really exhausted. I can hardly keep my eyes open. What about you? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going back to the spaceship. I'll take a spin around the stars..."

"Really?... How cool!"

"I wanted to invite you, but if you're *so tired*..."

Faced with the extraordinary possibility of taking a ride on a 'flying saucer,' I wasn't at all tired anymore. I felt rested and full of energy.

"Not anymore!... Seriously, would you take me for a ride in your UFO?"

"Of course. But what about your grandma?"

I immediately thought of a way that I could leave so that she wouldn't miss me. "I'll eat dinner and leave the empty plate on the table. Then I'll put my pillow under the blankets so that if my grandma gets up, she'll think I'm in bed asleep. I'll take off these clothes I'm wearing, leave them there, and put on others. I'll do it all carefully and quietly."

"A little white lie," he said, "because it's essential that you come with me so that you can write that book. We'll be back before she wakes up. Have no fear."

Once I was in the house everything went exactly according to plan, but when I tried to eat the meat, the word "cadaver" kept ringing in my ears and made me feel sick. I couldn't even take a bite of it.

A few minutes later we were walking toward the beach.

"How will I get into your spaceship?"

"I'll swim over to it and then I'll bring the vehicle towards the beach."

"Won't you be cold?"

"No. This suit is much more resistant to heat and cold than you can imagine. Well, I'm going to look for the spaceship. Wait for me here, and when I appear, don't be afraid."

"Oh, no. Now I'm not afraid of extraterrestrials." I thought his unnecessary warning was funny...

The moon had gone behind some very gloomy clouds. Now it was really dark everywhere.

Ami approached the gentle waves, dove into the water and disappeared from sight into the darkness.

The minutes were passing and for the first time since Ami had appeared, I had time to myself. I began thinking...

Ami?...

An extraterrestrial!...

Was it true or had it only been a dream?

I waited for a long time, more uneasy each minute, until fear really began get the better of me.

I was absolutely alone there, on a terribly isolated beach...

I was going to confront nothing less than an extraterrestrial spaceship...

My imagination began to make me see strange shadows moving between the rocks, on the sand, coming out of the water... And I was starting to have doubts about everything.

What if Ami were some sort of evil being disguised as a child?... ..

Talking about kindness just to win me over?... ..

No, it couldn't be! Or, could it?... ..

Kidnapped by an extraterrestrial spaceship?... ..

Just then a terrifying spectacle appeared before my eyes: under the water a greenish-yellow radiance began to rise slowly; then a gyrating dome, with multicolored lights, emerged from the waves...

It was true! I was actually going to see a spaceship from another world!

Then the body of the space vehicle appeared. It was egg-shaped, with illuminated windows. It emitted greenish-silver colored light.

It was a frightening sight. I felt really terrified. It was one thing to talk with a kid...a kid?...who looked like a good person...could he have been wearing a mask?...and quite another thing to be alone on a beach in the dark of night and see a spaceship from another world appear... A UFO that was coming to look for you, to carry you far away...

I forgot the "kid" and all that he had told me. In front of me was a frightening piece of machinery. Who knows where it was coming from? From some gloomy corner of outer space? What if it was full of cruel, monstrous aliens that were coming to abduct me?

It looked much bigger than the object I had seen fall into the ocean hours before.

It began to approach me, floating about ten feet above the water. It didn't make any noise. The silence was horrible. And the spaceship was coming closer, ever closer.

I was wishing that I could go back in time. That I had never seen any object fall from space. That I had never known any extraterrestrial. And that I was sleeping peacefully like my grandma, safe and sound in my own little bed.

That was a nightmare. Paralyzed by fear, I couldn't even run away. And I couldn't stop looking at that luminous monster that was coming to carry me off...maybe to a space zoo...

When it was hovering, immense, gigantic, right over my head, I thought it was all over for me. I even thought that that sinister bulk was going to squash me like a bug.

A yellow light appeared in the belly of the monster, then a reflector blinded me and I thought that I was dead. I entrusted my soul to God and decided to turn myself over to his Almighty Will...

I could feel that they were pulling me up, that I was in a sort of elevator, but my feet weren't resting on anything. I was expecting to see those creatures with octopus heads and blood-shot eyes...

Suddenly my feet hit a soft surface and I found myself in a luminous, pleasing place with carpets and tapestry-covered walls.

The star child was smiling in front of me, his large, kind eyes shining.

His gaze calmed me down, brought me back to reality, to that beautiful reality that he had taught me to recognize.

He put a hand on my shoulder.

"Calm down, calm down. There's nothing bad here."

When I was able to speak, I smiled and said, "I was really afraid."

"I could tell. You turned green!" he said, laughing.

"I thought that...well...I thought terrible things."

"It's your overactive imagination. An imagination that's out of control can kill you with fear; it's able to invent a demon where there's only a good friend. But reality is uncomplicated and beautiful. It's quite simple..."

"Then...am I on a UFO?"

"A UFO is an unidentified flying object. This, on the other hand, is completely identified. It's a spaceship. But go ahead and call it a UFO if you want. And you can call me a 'Martian.'"

That broke the tension and we both laughed.

"Come on. Come see the command center," he invited me.

We went through a tiny, arched doorway into another room, which had a ceiling as low as the one in the room we'd just left. Before me I saw a semicircular room surrounded by large, curved windows. In the center were three reclining chairs in front of a some controls and several screens almost leaning against the floor. Everything from the size of the chairs to the height of the ceiling made it look like a room for kids! I could touch the ceiling when I raised my arm. There was no way an adult could fit in that room...

"This is unbelievable!" I exclaimed. I went over to the windows while Ami made himself comfortable in the center chair in front of the controls. Through the windows I could see the seaside lights twinkling in the distance.

I felt a slight vibration in the floor and the lights disappeared. Now I could see only stars...

"Hey! What did you do with the town?"

"Look below you," Ami answered.

I almost passed out. We were thousands of feet above the bay. All the seaside towns were spread out below us and I could see mine way down there. We had flown miles into the air in an instant and I hadn't even felt like we were moving!

"Cool! Super cool!"

My enthusiasm was growing but soon the height was making me dizzy. "Ami..."

"What do you want?"

"Uh, can't we fall?"

"Well, if a person who tells lies should come on board, then these delicate mechanisms could fail..."

"Let's go down then! Let's go down!" I said almost shouting, but his loud laughter told me that he was joking and I felt better.

"Can they see us from below?" I asked.

"When this light is on," he pointed to an oval red light above the command board, "it means that we're visible. When it's off, like it is now, we're invisible."

"Invisible?"

"Just like this guy sitting next to me," he remarked, pointing to an empty seat beside him. I was alarmed, but he started laughing, and then I knew it was another of his jokes.

"What did you do so that they couldn't see us?"

"If a bicycle wheel is turning rapidly, you can't see the spokes. We just make the molecules of this spaceship move rapidly..."

"That's amazing, but I'd like for them to see us from below."

"I can't do that. The visibility or invisibility of our spaceships, when they are in non-evolved worlds, is decided in accord with the 'aid plan.' It all depends upon a 'super-computer' located in the center of this galaxy..."

"I don't understand very well."

"This spaceship is connected to the 'super-computer' that decides when we can be seen and when we can't."

"And how does that computer know when...?"

"That computer knows everything... Do you want us to go somewhere special?"

"To my house in Phoenix, Arizona! I'd like to see it from the air...but it's hundreds of miles away..."

"Let's go!" Ami moved the controls and said, "Now!"

I was getting ready to enjoy the trip by looking out the window... But we had already arrived!... Hundreds of miles in a fraction of a second!

I was fascinated. "What a fast way to travel!"

"I already told you that in general we don't 'travel,' we 'situate ourselves'... It's a space-time thing but we can also 'travel.'"

I gazed at the illuminated, wide avenues of Phoenix. The city looked marvelous at night from the air. I located my neighborhood and asked him to take us there. "But," I said, "'traveling' *slowly* please. I want to enjoy the trip."

The control board light was off. No one could see us.

We advanced smoothly and silently between the stars in the sky and the lights in the city.

My house appeared below. It was really an extraordinary experience to see it from overhead.

"Do you want to see if everything is all right inside?"

"How?"

"Let's look here."

On the big screen in front of him appeared an overhead view of the street. It was the same system that we had used to see my grandma sleeping, but with a big difference: here the image was three dimensional, with depth. It looked as if you could stick your hand through the screen and touch everything. I tried to do that, but an invisible glass stopped me.

Ami thought that was funny. "Everyone does that," he commented.

"Everyone? Who's this everyone?"

"Don't think that you're the first of the non-evolved to go for a ride in an extraterrestrial spaceship..."

"I thought that I was," I said, somewhat disilluminated.

"Well, you're wrong. But, just so that your ego won't suffer, I'll tell you that not very many people have had the opportunity that you're having now."

"Then I'm happy, Ami."

The image on the screen passed through the roof of my house and then surveyed the rooms from corner to corner. Everything was in order.

"Why doesn't your portable television show everything in 3-D, like this one?"

"I already told you. It's an out-of-date system."

"If it's so out of date, why don't you give it to me?"

He didn't expect this question. "What? I can't, Jim. We're not allowed to leave samples of superior technology in these worlds. You already know that this technology wouldn't be put to good use."

Immediately I understood: that kind of apparatus would be used for spying.

"And you could say 'good-bye' to the privacy for the poor citizens of planet Earth," he asserted.

I asked him to take us on a spin around the city.

We passed over my school. I saw the playground, the sports field, my classroom.

I imagined telling my classmates later about my adventure: "I saw the school from a spaceship!" I'd be so proud to say that.

"And right away you'd be taken off to the crazy house," he commented, laughing happily when he picked up on what I had been thinking.

Then I imagined how everyone at school would make fun of me and maybe do things even worse. "I think you're right... I'd better keep my mouth shut."

"That would be wiser, Jim. Better that you tell the true story only in the book I told you about. Only there, and as if it were a fantasy. Is that a promise?"

"I promise, Ami."

We continued to fly over Phoenix.

"Too bad it's not daytime," I said.

"Why?"

"I would have liked to travel in your spaceship by day, too...to see cities and landscapes by sunlight..."

As usual, Ami was laughing at me. "Do you want it to be daytime?" he asked me.

"I don't think that your powers would let you move the Sun...or would they?"

"When it comes to moving the Sun, no. But moving us, yes."

He adjusted the controls and we began to move tremendously fast. We passed over the desert and then several cities appeared below. From the high altitude we'd reached, they looked like spots of illumination. Then we crossed the Rocky Mountains. Immediately afterwards I could make out an enormous ocean bathed in moonlight. It was the Atlantic Ocean! At the horizon up ahead, the sky was growing light. We arrived over some land and, what's more amazing, the Sun began to rise rapidly!

To me that was something incredible. Ami had moved the Sun!

In a few moments it was daytime.

"How come you said that you couldn't move it?"

He was enjoying this proof of my ignorance. "The Sun hasn't moved. We're the ones who moved rapidly."

Immediately I realized my mistake. But it was justifiable. You should see what it's like to contemplate the Sun rising above the horizon at an impressive speed...

"Where are we?"

"Africa."

"Africa! But just a minute ago we were in America!"

"Well, you wanted to travel by day in this spaceship. So we came to a place where it's daytime. 'If the mountain can't go to Mohammed, Mohammed can go to the mountain'... What African country would you like to visit?"

"Ummm. India."

His laughter told me that my sense of geography wasn't very good...

"Let's go to Asia, then. To India... Which city in India would you like to go to?"

I wasn't going to make the same mistake twice. "It doesn't matter to me. You choose."

"How about Bombay?"

"Yes. That would be fantastic, Ami."

With great speed and at an amazing altitude we passed high over the African continent.

Later, in when I was back at my house, I used a world atlas to reconstruct that trip.

We arrived at the Indian Ocean, crossing it while the Sun climbed higher and higher at a dizzying pace. In a few moments we were flying through the sky over India.

The spaceship braked suddenly and remained motionless.

"Why didn't we hit the windshield with that sudden stop?" I asked, surprised.

"Easy. It's a matter of annulling the inertia..."

"Oh, how simple..."

CHAPTER 6

A QUESTION OF MEASURES

Our spaceship descended over the city until reaching an altitude of about 300 feet. We then began our tour of the skies over Bombay.

I had never seen very many TV shows about India; so I felt like I was watching a movie or even dreaming. Thousands and thousands of people, tunics and turbans of a variety of colors, cows in the streets, houses and buildings very different from those in America, many street vendors. But what attracted my attention most was the huge number of people. It wasn't like in Phoenix, even though my city's quite large. Not even when

everyone there is getting off work downtown do you see immense crowds of people like we saw in Bombay. People were everywhere. For me, that was really another world.

No one saw us. The indicator light was turned off.

Suddenly I returned to "reality."

"My grandma!"

"What about her?"

"Now it's daytime! She'll be up and worried that I'm not there... Let's go back!"

For Ami I was a constant source of amusement. "Jim, she's sleeping soundly...as usual. usual. On the other side of the world it's only a little after midnight. Here it's around two in the afternoon."

"Yesterday or today?" I asked, confused by all these time changes.

"Tomorrow!" he replied, dying laughing.

"Seriously, Ami, I'm not happy."

"Don't let it disturb you. We still have a lot of time. What time does she get up?"

"I don't know. I thought that she was always awake. Well, at least that's what she says, that at night she can't sleep at all." We both laughed.

"Then she still has several hours of 'not being able to sleep' left... We have all this time ahead of us, plus we can *streeeeetch* time..."

"Anyway, I'm still worried... Why can't we go see?"

"What do you want to see?"

"Maybe she woke up..."

"Better that we check from right here so that you'll agree with me," he said. Then he muttered under his breath, "Some earthlings make life so difficult," as he smiled.

He adjusted the controls on a screen and there was the west coast of the USA, as seen from high above it. Then the screen showed a nose-dive towards the earth at a fantastic speed. Soon I was able to make out the bay, the seaside, the house on the beach, the roof and my grandma. It was incredible. We seemed to be right there. She was still sleeping with her mouth half open, in the same position as earlier.

"You can't say that she has trouble sleeping, can you?" observed Ami mischievously. Then he added, "We'll do something else so that you can rest easy."

He picked up a sort of microphone and motioned for me to keep quiet. He pressed a button and said, "Pssst!" My grandma heard that, woke up, got out of bed and went into the dining room. We could hear her footsteps and her breathing. She saw the leftovers of my dinner on the table, cleaned up everything and left the plates in the kitchen. Then she headed for my bedroom, opened the door and turned on the light. She looked toward my bed. We could see everything perfectly. It looked as if I were really asleep in my bed. But something was missing. I wasn't sure what it was, but Ami knew. He took the microphone and began to breathe into it. My grandma listened to this breathing and thought that it was me asleep there. She turned off the light, closed the door and headed for her bedroom.

"Happy now?"

"Yeah. Now I am...but I can hardly believe it! It's night for her there and day for us here..."

"You people are too conditioned by distance and by time..."

"I don't understand."

"What would you think about leaving on a trip today and returning yesterday?..."

"You're trying to drive me crazy. Couldn't we go visit China?"

"Of course. What city would you like to see?"

This time I wasn't going to make a fool of myself. "Tokyo," I answered confidently and proudly.

"Then let's go to Tokyo...a city in *Japan*," he said, trying not to laugh.

We traveled over the length of India towards the northeast. When we arrived at the Himalayas, the spaceship halted.

“We have orders,” said Ami. Strange symbols appeared on the screen. “We’re going to leave some evidence. The ‘super-computer’ tells us that we have to be seen by someone somewhere.”

“What fun! Who and where?”

“I don’t know. We’re going to be guided. We’re arriving...”

We had used the instantaneous transfer system. Hovering in the air at an altitude of about 150 feet, we were above a forest. The light on the control panel indicated that we were visible. There were pine trees all over the landscape outside the windows.

“This is east Australia,” commented Ami, recognizing the place.

The Sun began to go down behind the hills nearby.

Our spaceship moved across the sky, drawing an immense triangle with its path and changing colors all the while.

“Why are we doing this?”

“To make an impression. We have to attract the attention of our friend down there.”

Ami was watching a man on the screen. I looked out the window to see if I could spot him below and found him between the trees. He was wearing a red hunting jacket, carrying a shotgun and looking very startled. He pointed his gun at us.

Frightened, I crouched to avoid a possible shotgun blast.

Ami found my uneasiness amusing. “Don’t be afraid. This ‘UFO’ is bulletproof...and it’s a-lot-of-other-things-proof, too...”

We ascended to a higher altitude, emitting multicolored flashing lights the whole time.

“It’s important that this man never forget this encounter.”

I thought that he would never forget the sight of us flying through the air and that it hadn’t been necessary to scare him so much. I told Ami this.

“You’re wrong. Thousands of people have seen our spaceships pass by, but afterwards they don’t remember seeing them. If at the moment that they see us they are very worried about their own nightmares, they barely pay any attention to us. Then they forget all about the experience. We have kept very impressive statistics on this phenomenon.”

“Why does that man have to see us?”

“I don’t know exactly. Maybe his testimony will be important to some other interesting, special person. Or maybe he’s that interesting, special person himself. I’m going to focus the ‘senso-meter’ on him.”

The man appeared on another of the screens, but he looked almost transparent. A very beautiful golden light shone in the center of his chest.

“What’s that light?”

“It’s the effect of the force of love on his soul. It’s also his level of evolution. It’s 750 measures.”

“And what does that mean?”

“That he’s interesting.”

“Why is he interesting?”

“Because his evolutionary level is very high for an earthling who spends time hunting... Surely very soon he’s going to stop enjoying himself by destroying little animals... I think that this sighting will help him.”

“Evolutionary level?”

“His grade of proximity to the beast or to the ‘angel.’”

Ami focused the screen on a koala bear. It also looked transparent but the light on its chest shone much less brightly than the man’s.

“Two hundred measures,” Ami announced. Then he focused on a fish. The light was very faint.

“Fifty measures.”

“What about you, Ami? How many measures do you have?”

“Seven hundred sixty measures,” he replied.

“Only ten more than the hunter!” I was surprised by the slight difference between an earthling and him.

“That’s right. Our levels are similar.”

“But I thought that you must be much more evolved than the earthlings...”

“On Earth there are some people with 800 measures, Jim.”

“More than you!”

“Of course. I have the advantage of knowing certain things that they ignore, but here on Earth there are people who are very valuable: teachers, artists, nurses, firefighters...”

“Firefighters?!”

“Don’t you think it’s noble to risk your life for others?”

“You’re right, but my uncle, the nuclear physicist, must also be very valuable...”

“Famous, maybe. What does your uncle, the physicist, do?”

“He’s developing a new weapon, an ultrasound ray.”

“Hmmm... If he’s not able to understand that human intelligence is a reflection of divine intelligence, if his shortsightedness makes him arrogant and disrespectful to God, and, besides, if he dedicates the talent he received to the manufacture of arms,...then I don’t believe that his level is very high. What do you think?”

“What? But he’s a wise man!” I protested.

“Once again you’re confusing things. Your uncle has a great deal of information at his disposal and is good at seeing relationships between data, but this doesn’t necessarily mean that he’s an intelligent person, much less a wise one. A computer can have an impressive data bank and undertake incredible operations, but that doesn’t make it intelligent. Do you think a man is intelligent if he’s digging a grave that he himself is in danger of falling into?”

“No, but...”

“Weapons turn against those who support them.”

This statement didn’t seem very obvious to me, but I decided to believe Ami. Who was I to doubt his word? Nevertheless, I was confused... My uncle was my hero...such an intelligent man...

“He has a good computer in his head, but that’s all. What we have here is a problem of terms: on Earth people are called intelligent or wise when they are good at using only one of their brains. But we have two...”

“What?! Two brains?!”

“Well, it would be better to say two ‘comprehension centers.’ One in the head; that’s the ‘computer,’ the only one that you people know. It processes information related to the things of this world. The other is in the chest. It’s not visible because it’s not material. But it exists. It has to do with the profound things of life, with the eternal, universal truths, like wisdom and love. The balance between the two centers creates the light that you saw in the man’s chest on the screen.”

“That’s very interesting, Ami.”

“For us, the person who is intelligent or wise is the one who has both centers in harmony. This means that intelligence must serve the heart. But the majority of people who are ‘intelligent’ think that the reverse is true. They do cold cerebral calculations and they can’t see what’s really important.”

Since it was easier for me to understand Ami when he gave me examples, I asked for one.

He said, “OK, a hired assassin could think, ‘They pay me well for each person I wipe out...so I want lots of work!’”

I started laughing because Ami was making faces like a crazy person while he was saying that.

“People like that only see the superficial, the money. But they don’t see what’s profound, the suffering that they cause. They have a lack of balance between their head center and their heart center.”

“Now I understand better. And what about those whose heart center is better developed than their head center?” I asked.

“They’re the exact opposite. You would call them ‘good foolish people.’ They can’t understand very well what sort of world they’re living in. That makes it easy for the others, the ‘bad intelligent people,’ to make them do harm while they think that they’re doing good. And that doesn’t work, either. Theirs is a rudimentary, unconscious sort of kindness, like a good doggy that wags its tail and licks the hands of anybody who should come around...”

“Is that bad?”

“Sometimes those good, imprudent little doggies wind up destroyed by other ‘top dogs’ that aren’t so good... The affection of someone who doesn’t reason clearly cannot become true love.”

“And what’s needed to convert it into true love?”

“Sentiments must be illuminated by intelligence to convert into true love, and intelligence must be illuminated by sentiments to convert into wisdom.”

I understood that he was right. I remembered all the bad news on television and saw that in all the cases when human beings made other people suffer or killed them, there had been a lack of balance.

“Then sentiments and love are not the same thing?”

“Not always, Jim. But you people confuse the two and sometimes call ‘love’ sentiments that have not passed through intelligence, like the affection of a dog for her puppies or of a fanatic for his faction. True love is something else. It always needs the presence of light, of mental clarity.”

“I understand, Ami.”

“The evolutionary level is also the love-wisdom level. In other words, it’s the product of intelligence plus affect. This is why intellectual development must harmonize with emotional development. This is the only way that a truly intelligent or wise person can be produced; this is the only way that the interior light can grow.”

“What about me, Ami? How many measures to I have?”

“I can’t tell you that.”

“Why not?”

“Because if your level is high, you’ll become vain.”

“Ohhhh. I understand...”

“But if it’s low...you’re going to feel **verrry** bad...”

“Oh.”

“Unhealthy pride extinguishes the interior light...”

“I don’t understand... I thought that pride was good...”

“Satisfaction in bettering yourself or do a good service to others is healthy pride, but the kind of pride that makes us look down on others is unhealthy. We have to attempt to be humble. God is so humble that, in spite of having created everything for us, he doesn’t let us see him, only his Creation... Look, we’re leaving now.”

We had instantaneously returned to the Himalayas.

CHAPTER 7

SIGHTINGS

We were advancing towards a distant ocean and in seconds we were flying over it. We crossed it and then some islands appeared below. We were above Japan and descended in the sky over the city of Tokyo.

I thought that we were going to see houses with pointy roofs, but what we saw most of all were skyscrapers, modern avenues, parks, automobiles.

“We’re being seen,” said Ami gesturing towards the illuminated light on the control panel.

People in the street were beginning to mill about, pointing above their heads to our location. Once again the multicolored exterior lights went on. Our altitude was fairly high. We only stayed there for about two minutes.

“Another sighting,” said Ami, observing the signals that appeared on the screen. “We’re going to be transferred again.”

Daylight was slowly fading. Only the stars remained twinkling outside the windows.

Below there wasn't much to be seen. A small city in the far distance, a few lights, a road with a single car on it.

I went over to the screen in front of Ami. The entire panorama appeared on it, perfectly illuminated. What hadn't been visible at first sight, because of the darkness, was very clear on the monitor. It was as bright as day, and I could see that the automobile was green in color and that there was a couple in it.

We were at an altitude of about 60 feet and, according to the control panel, we were visible.

I decided that from then on I would take advantage of this screen. Its image was clearer than reality itself.

When the vehicle had arrived a short distance from us, the driver stopped it and parked alongside the road. Its occupants got out and began to gesture and shout, looking at us with their faces contorted.

"What are they saying?" I asked.

"They're asking for communication, contact. They're a pair of UFO students. Although in their case, their interest is a little extreme. We could say that they're something like 'extraterrestrial worshippers.'"

"Communicate with them, then," I said to him, concerned about the way they were acting.

Then they knelt and began to pray, looking up towards the spaceship.

"I can't. I have to obey the strict orders of the 'aid plan.' Communication isn't established whenever anyone may happen to desire it. Only when it's decided from 'above'...unless someone knows how to make the request as it should be done... Besides, this couple consider us gods."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Only God must be considered as God. Worshipping any of the creatures of the Universe as if they were God is confusing the fruit with the tree..."

"And that's serious?"

"It's not very serious for someone who doesn't know much about these things. But it would be very serious if we attempted to usurp God's place in the misplaced religiosity of those persons. If they were to consider us as brothers and sisters who are more advanced, that would be another matter."

I thought that Ami should show this couple that they were wrong. He knew what I was thinking and said, "Jim, we can't go around correcting the errors of the inhabitants of all the non-evolved worlds in the Universe, especially when they already have scriptures and religions that are there to clarify many things. What those two people are doing is nothing compared with other mistakes that are being made in these worlds. And we can't intervene there either, even though horrible things are happening. At this very moment many people are being killed and tortured on many planets, including this one."

"And you guys can't do anything?"

"No, Jim. We can't."

I found this a good time to bring up something that had always bothered me. "Sometimes I think that God isn't so good, Ami... How can he permit these things to happen?"

He stood up and, looking through the windows towards the sky, said, "It's all a matter of evolutionary levels, Jim. Just as different people have different evolutionary levels, so do planets. This world of yours is not very evolved, but there are others that are even less advanced. Millions of years ago the struggle for survival was very cruel here on the Earth: everything was aggressive, poisonous. Everything had claws and fangs. But those creatures were adapted to that environment and to them life didn't seem especially cruel. They didn't see any problem in tearing other creatures to pieces..."

"And God invented such a 'loving' system?"

"I've already told you that we can only appreciate the light when we've known the shadows, and I've explained to you that those beings don't have your sensibility. Because of that you don't live in a world like theirs; nor do they live in a world like this one."

"Hmmm." Ami wasn't succeeding in convincing me of God's kindness.

"But today, because a more advanced level of evolution has been achieved in this world, there's a little more love and wisdom. For just this reason life is not as hard as it was before, but it still can't be said that this is an evolved world. Much brutality still exists here. At this very moment fish are eating each other alive under the sea. But because their consciousness is so tiny, they're hardly aware of it."

“Anyway, that’s really cruel...”

“Maybe it seems cruel to you, but it doesn’t to the fish. And you’re not living on the bottom of the sea. But there are other creatures who have greater consciousness and still do frightening things right here in this world. And they don’t do them just to eat...”

Ami adjusted some controls, and scenes of war appeared on a screen. From some tanks soldiers were launching rockets against some buildings, destroying them and everyone who lived in them.

“This is happening right now in a country on Earth, but we can’t do any more than what we’re doing. In the evolution of each planet, country, or person, we must not intervene any further than what’s permitted.”

Images of collective executions by firing squad appeared on the screen.

“Could you turn off that television? I feel awful when I see anything that cruel.”

“It’s terrible, Jim, but since no one disappears forever, since souls who love each other find each other again, everything is a learning experience. In my other lives, before this one, I was a beast and I died when I was destroyed by other beasts. Later I was a human being, but one with a low evolutionary level. I killed and was killed. I was cruel and received cruelty in return. I’ve passed through many existences. That’s how, little by little, I’ve learned to live a life that’s more gentle and benign. Now my life is better, but I can’t go against the evolutionary system that God has created. That couple is violating a universal law when they compare us with someone as great and majestic as God. They’re taking their sentiments of veneration and love away from the Creator and directing them towards us. The soldiers that we saw are also violating a universal law. The one that says, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ This is much more serious, and still we can’t intervene. But don’t think that those who are suffering are doing it because of the ‘cruelty of God.’ No, that’s not what’s happening. The Universal Intelligence takes charge of seeing that each one receives what he or she deserves. Perhaps those who are hit by a bomb today were brutal to others in an earlier life, or maybe it was in this one. Just like those soldiers. They also must suffer just as they’ve caused others to suffer, so that they’ll know what it feels like and understand that it’s not good to cause this kind of pain. Therefore, little by little they’ll learn to act guided by love. Then they themselves will receive happiness and not pain.”

The couple had gone under the spaceship, but we could see them in a monitor. They raised their arms towards us as if they wanted us to bring them aboard.

“Couldn’t you explain all those things to that couple by speaking through a microphone?”

“A person or a world can receive our help only after reaching a certain evolutionary level. Without this it would be a violation of the general system of evolution. But that couple hasn’t yet arrived at that level. Neither has humanity on Earth...”

I have to admit that I didn’t understand what Ami was talking about very well. But when I thought about it later, it became clearer to me. That happened a long time after he’d left. Only then could I talk to my cousin about this so that he could write it all down more or less as I had heard it.

The couple continued to direct their prayers toward our spaceship, but we were getting tired of watching them.

“The Cosmic Intelligence is giving them the present of a very prolonged sighting,” said Ami.

“Why is that?”

“Only the Cosmic Intelligence can answer that question. Well, let’s look at something that’s more fun...”

Ami tuned in Japanese television while we waiting for the “super-computer” to take us out of there. With his usual good humor he watched a news program. A reporter with a microphone in his hand was interviewing people on the street. A woman was talking and gesturing towards the sky. I didn’t understand anything she was saying, but I could tell that she was talking about her encounter with a ‘UFO,’... ours. Other people also gave their versions of the phenomenon.

“What are they saying?” I asked.

“That they saw a ‘UFO’... There are so many crazy people around,” he remarked with a smile.

Then a man wearing glasses and a necktie appeared on the screen. He was drawing diagrams on a blackboard while he gave explanations. The drawings represented the solar system, the Earth and the other planets. He talked for a long time. I assumed that he was a Japanese scientist who specialized in astronomy.

Ami seemed to understand that language because he appeared to find the program very entertaining. Maybe he was using the 'interpreter.'"

"What's he saying?" I asked again.

"That considering all the evidence, it's been 'scientifically proven' that there is no intelligent life in the galaxy, except for that on Earth... He also says that the people who saw the supposed 'UFO' suffered a collective hallucination and he recommends that they all visit a psychiatrist..."

"Seriously?" I asked.

"Seriously," he responded, laughing.

The scientist continued talking.

"What's he saying now?"

"That maybe a civilization 'as advanced' as this one could exist, but only one for every two thousand galaxies, according to his calculations."

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"That when he finds out that in this galaxy alone there are millions of civilizations, and that, compared to them, this world is prehistoric, the poor guy's going to go crazy. Even more crazy than he is now..."

We both laughed for a long time. For me it was very funny to listen to a scientist saying that UFOs didn't exist...and there I was, listening to him from a UFO!

We stayed there for a few more minutes until the red light went out, indicating that we were invisible again.

"We're free."

"Then, can we continue our trip?" I asked.

"Of course. Where would you like to go now?"

Ummm. Let's go to... Hawaii!"

"It's night there... Look." We had already arrived.

A light on the spaceship illuminated a row of palm trees along the beach.

"Is this Hawaii?"

"Certainly."

"We got here so fast!"

"You think that was fast? Wait... Look out the window now."

We were over a very strange desert. It was night. The sky was very dark, almost black, except for the bluish moonlight.

"Where are we? Back in Arizona? The Sahara Desert?"

"This is the moon."

"The moon?"

"The moon."

I looked up, towards what I had thought was the moon. "Then that must be..."

"That's the Earth."

"The Earth!"

"The Earth. That's where your grandma is fast asleep..."

I was fascinated. It really was the Earth. It was a clear blue color. It seemed incredible to me that something so small could contain so many things that were so large. Like mountains, oceans, continents.

Without knowing why, I began to see images stored in my memory. I remembered a brook from my childhood, a wall covered with moss, some bees in a garden, some horses grazing in the country on a summer afternoon... All of those things were there, on that small blue globe that was floating among the stars...

Suddenly I saw the Sun, a distant star but much brighter than it looked from Earth.

“Why does it look so small?”

“Because the moon doesn’t have an atmosphere that acts like a magnifying glass. That’s why from Earth everything looks bigger than from here. But if it weren’t for the special glass on this spaceship, that small Sun would harm you, for precisely the same reason: Because here there’s no atmosphere like the one on Earth, which has a ‘filter’ so that the harmful rays of the Sun won’t damage life on your planet.”

“Is that ‘filter’ the ozone layer, that layer that’s disappearing because of the contamination of our air?”

“That’s right, Jim. That’s one of the outcomes of a high level of technology and a low level of wisdom and kindness: the laws of Universal Life always end up being violated. “This is what happens when the ‘intelligent people’ consider earning money the most important thing in life without bothering to think of the consequences in their own lives and even in the lives of their children. Do they seem very intelligent to you, Jim?”

To me this way of thinking had always seemed normal and good, but now that Ami was showing me the other side of the matter, I wasn’t so sure.

“Noooo! They’re stupid!” I said, really upset.

Ami started to laugh.

I didn’t like the way the surface of the moon looked. It seemed prettier from Earth. It was desolate, gloomy.

“Can’t we go somewhere that’s prettier?”

“Inhabited?” asked Ami.

“Of course! But not by monsters!”

“Then we’ll have to go far away.”

He moved the controls, the spaceship vibrated gently, the stars lengthened into luminous lines. Then outside the windows appeared a luminous white mist, twinkling with lights.

“What’s happening?” I asked, a little frightened.

“We’re getting situated...”

“Where are we getting situated?”

“On a very distant planet. We’ll have to wait a few minutes. For now we’re going to listen to some music.”

He pressed a button on the control board. Some gentle, strange sounds filled the enclosure. My friend closed his eyes and prepared to listen with enjoyment.

The noises were very odd. Soon a very low, sustained vibration began to rock the command room. Then another very high note cut off suddenly; the silence lasted a few seconds. After that, high and low notes rapidly followed one after another. Once again the lowest note got sharper little by little, while some sort of roars and some little bells marked the rhythm, which kept changing.

Ami appeared enraptured. I supposed that he knew that “melody” very well because with his lips and gentle hand movements he anticipated what he was going to hear.

I hated to interrupt him, but I didn’t like that “music” one bit.

“Ami,” I called out to him. He didn’t answer. He was concentrating hard on that music that sounded like static on the radio.

“Ami,” I said louder.

“Oh! Sorry!... What is it?”

“Excuse me, but I don’t like this.”

“Oh, of course. That’s normal. To enjoy this music you need a prior ‘initiation’... I’ll look for something that will sound more familiar to you.”

He punched another button on the control panel. A melody with a happy beat began to play and I liked it immediately. The lead instrument sounded like the smokestack on an old-fashioned steam locomotive going at top speed.

“How wonderful!... What’s that instrument that sounds like a train?”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Ami, pretending to be horrified. “You’ve just insulted the most privileged throat on my planet, confusing this beautiful voice...with the noise made by a train!”

"I'm sorry. Please...I didn't know... But that's really good puffing!" I said, trying to pull up my sock.

"Blasphemy! Heretic!" He pretended that he was going to pull my hair. "How can you say that the glory of my world...puffs!"

We broke into a gale of laughter.

That music made you feel like dancing.

"That's what it's for," said Ami. "Let's dance!"

He jumped up from his chair and began to dance happily while clapping his hands.

"Dance! Dance!" he encouraged me. "Let yourself go. You want to dance, but that part of you that isn't really you won't let you do it... Learn to conquer the freedom to be yourself. Free yourself..."

I put aside my usual timidity and enthusiastically threw myself into dancing.

"Bravo!" he congratulated me.

We danced for a long time. I felt really happy. It was like when we were running and jumping on the beach.

Ami could make me express things that my timidity had really blocked off.

Then, the music stopped.

"A little something relaxing now," he said, going over to the control board. He pressed another button and classical music began to play. It seemed familiar to me.

"Listen, that's Earth music."

"Of course. Bach. It's fabulous. Don't you like it?"

"I think...I do. Do you like it, too?"

"Naturally. If I didn't, I wouldn't have it here on the spaceship."

"I thought that everything about us seemed 'non-evolved' to extraterrestrials..."

"You're wrong." He punched another button on the control panel.

*"...Imagine there's no countries.
It isn't hard to do..."*

"But that's John Lennon... The Beatles!"

I was very surprised because I had begun to think that there was nothing good on Earth for extraterrestrials.

"Jim, when music is good, it's universally good. Collections of good Earth music exist in several galaxies, just like the music from any other world or epoch. The same thing happens with all the arts. We keep films and recordings of everything good that's created on your planet... Good art is the language of love, and love is a universal presence."

*"Imagine all the people
Living life in peace..."*

Ami, with his eyes closed, seemed to be enjoying each note.

When John Lennon finished singing, we had finally arrived at another inhabited world.

SECOND PART

CHAPTER 8 OPHIR!

The white mist dispersed.

A vibrant celestial atmosphere appeared to float all around us, instead of overhead in the sky, like on my planet. I felt submerged in radiant, bluish, almost phosphorescent air that didn't impair visibility.

From the windows I saw meadows bathed in soft orange.

Little by little, we began to descend into a marvelous, autumnal landscape.

"Look at the Sun," Ami told me.

An enormous reddish disk stood out overhead, watched over by the thin atmosphere of that world. The atmosphere formed several concentric circles around that huge Sun. It appeared at least fifty times larger than ours.

"It's four hundred times as large," he explained.

"It doesn't look as if it were that enormous..."

"Because it's very far away."

"What world is this?"

"This is the planet Ophir... Its inhabitants have an earthly origin..."

"What?!" That statement surprised me tremendously.

"So many things are unknown in your world, Jim. Once upon a time on a continent on Earth, thousands of years ago, there existed a civilization similar to yours. Humanity's scientific level in that civilization had much surpassed their level of love; therefore, they were 'intelligent,' instead of wise, full of power but insensitive to the wisdom of the heart. Then what had to happen, happened..."

"Did they self-destruct?"

"Yes. The only survivors were some individuals who were warned of what was going to happen and fled to other continents. But they were much affected by the consequences of that war. They had to start over completely, almost from the beginning. You are the product of all this. You are the descendant of those who survived."

"That's incredible. I thought that everything began like in the history books, from point zero, the caves, the troglodytes... And what about the people of Ophir, how did they arrive on this planet?"

"We brought them here. A little before the disaster we rescued all those who had seven hundred measures or more, but very few were saved because the evolutionary average of human beings at that time was one hundred measures less than today. Earth has evolved. This time there are many more people at that level."

"And if there were a disaster on Earth, would you rescue some people again?"

"Everyone who had over seven hundred measures."

That made me very happy and I took it to mean that I would be among those rescued. "Really?... How great! And where are you going to take us?"

"I said only those who exceeded seven hundred measures..."

"Oh, yeah... What about me, Ami, do I have seven hundred measures?"

"I told you that I can't answer that."

"How can you find out who has seven hundred measures or more?"

"All those who work disinterestedly for the good of all, motivated only by love, have above seven hundred measures."

"You said that everyone tried to do good..."

“When I said ‘all’ I didn’t mean only their own family, their own club, their own political party or faction. And when I say, ‘good,’ I’m referring to what does not go contrary to the Fundamental Law of the Universe...”

“There’s that famous law again. Can you explain it to me now?”

“Not yet. Have patience.”

“But why is it so important?”

“Because if you don’t know this Law, you won’t know the difference between good and evil. Many people kill thinking that they’re doing good. They ignore the universal laws. Others torture, plant bombs, create arms, destroy nature, cause those weaker than themselves to suffer. They do all this while thinking that they’re doing something good. But they’re all doing a great evil without realizing it because they don’t know the Fundamental Law of the Universe... Nevertheless, they will have to pay for offending that superior law.”

“Will God be angry and punish them?”

Ami began to laugh. “God neither punishes nor rewards, but everything that we do comes back to us. If we do good, we receive good in return. If we do evil, we can’t expect to receive anything nice in return.”

“And this never fails, Ami?”

“Never, Jim. That depends on the Fundamental Law of the Universe.”

“I never imagined that such an important law even existed...”

“Well, it exists, and it’s more important that you think. If only the people on your planet would know it and put it into practice, your world would turn into a veritable paradise...”

“When are you going to tell me about it?”

“For the moment just contemplate the world of Ophir. It has much to teach you because here everyone lives according to that Law.”

I sat down on a chair next to him to observe that beautiful planet on the screen. I was impatient to see its inhabitants.

We were cruising slowly at an altitude of about nine hundred feet. I could see many flying vehicles similar to ours; as they got closer I confirmed that they varied in shape and size.

“Since there are many types of airplanes on Earth, you can imagine that there are also many kinds of spaceships here,” Ami commented, reading my mind.

I didn’t see any great mountain ranges or deserts on that planet. Everything was carpeted with multicolored vegetation, with several areas of distinct shades of green, brown and orange.

There were many hills, lagoons, rivers and lakes with very luminous sky-blue water.

All that nature looked something like paradise.

I began to distinguish some buildings that formed circles around a principal structure. There were many pyramids, some built like stairsteps, others smooth, with triangular or square bases. But what was abundant were semi-spherical houses of several light colors, with white predominating.

Then the inhabitants of that world began to appear. From the height of the spaceship I saw them traveling on roads and playing in rivers and lagoons. They looked like humans, at least from a distance. They all wore white tunics. Only some details on the tunics, like the fringe on the borders or the belts, were other colors.

There were no cities to be seen.

“There are none in Ophir or in any other evolved world. Cities are a prehistoric way of living together,” Ami said.

“Why?”

“Because they have so many defects. One of them is that too many people living in the same place produces an imbalance that has an effect both on them and on the planet.”

“On the planet?”

“The planets are living beings, with greater or lesser evolution. Only life produces life. Everything is interdependent. Everything is interrelated. What happens to the Earth affects the persons who inhabit it, and vice versa.”

“Why do too many people in the same place produce an imbalance?”

“Because they’re not happy all stacked up together, and the Earth perceives this. People need space, trees, flowers, fresh air...”

“Even the more evolved people?” I asked, confused, because Ami was insinuating that advanced societies live in “farm-style” settings, and I had thought that it was going to be just the opposite: artificial cities in orbit, immense fortress-buildings, subterranean metropolises, plastic everywhere, just like in the movies...

“The more evolved people more than anyone,” he responded.

“I thought that it was the other way around, that only savages lived in nature...”

“If people on Earth didn’t have it backwards, they wouldn’t be in danger of destroying themselves all over again...”

“What about these people on Ophir: Didn’t they want to return to Earth?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“They had left the nest. Grown-ups don’t return to the cradle. It’s too small for them...”

As we approached some white, very modern-looking buildings that weren’t very tall, we began to descend.

“On an evolved planet this is what most resembles a city. It’s a center of organization, aid, goods distribution, and cultural presentations. People come here occasionally to look for what they need, or to attend some artistic, spiritual, or scientific event. But no one lives here.”

He stopped the spaceship at an altitude of about 15 feet and exclaimed enthusiastically, “Now you’re going to meet your ancestors from thousands of years ago!”

“Are we going to leave the spaceship?”

“Not in your dreams!”

“Why not?”

“Because the viruses you’re carrying could kill everyone in this world.”

“So why don’t they hurt you?”

“Because I’ve been vaccinated. But before I return to my planet I have to undergo a purification treatment.”

Many people were walking around. When one of them passed near the windows of our spaceship, something frightening dawned on me: **they were gigantic!**

“Ami, these aren’t earthlings. They’re monsters!”

“Why?” he joked. “Because they’re barely twice as tall as the people in your world?”

“Twice as tall!”

“A little more, a little less. But they don’t feel that they’re especially large...”

“But you say that they come from Earth, and there people are only half as tall...”

“I told you that the survivors on Earth were affected by radiation and by planetary imbalance. That altered their growth patterns. But at the rate they’re going, in hundreds of years they’ll reach their natural height... If they survive, that is.”

No one paid us the slightest bit of attention. They were slender, tanned people with slim hips and good posture. Some of them wore belts like Ami’s.

They all looked really calm, relaxed and friendly. Their large, luminous, almond-shaped eyes reflected a profound spirituality and extended towards the sides of their heads. Not like Asians. Like people in Egyptian paintings.

“The ancient Egyptians, Mayans, Incas, Greeks and Celts, among other peoples, share a common genealogy with the people you see here,” Ami explained to me. “These peoples arose from the remains of the Atlantis culture. These friends here are direct descendants of the people of Atlantis...”

“Atlantis! The lost continent!” I exclaimed. “I thought that it was only a fable...”

“Many of your world’s fables are more real than that somber reality they’re living in...”

In general the people were not walking alone. They were usually walking in groups. As they talked, they touched each other a lot. They were walking arm in arm, or with their arms around each others’ shoulders. Some walked hand in hand. Whenever they met or said good-bye, there were great displays of affection. They were very happy and definitely not worried about a thing.

“Just as I told you, they aren’t worried. God willing, you will learn to be like them.”

“Why are they so happy?”

I asked this question because on Earth people in the streets look so serious. Here it was completely different. They all looked as if they were at a party.

“Because they’re alive... Is that such a small thing to you?”

“And they don’t have any problems?”

“They have challenges, not problems. Here everything is fine.”

“My uncle told me that life only has meaning when there are problems to solve and that a person with no problems would shoot himself.”

“Your uncle was talking about problems for his intellect. As it happens, he has activity in only one of the two centers that I mentioned to you. Your uncle is simply ‘intellectual activity on two legs.’ The intellect is a computer that can’t stop functioning, at least as long as the other center, the emotional one, is undeveloped. Sometimes the intellect can’t find any problems to solve, no puzzles, and at the same time the emotional center can’t make the connection with real life. That person could go crazy and think about shooting himself.”

I felt that he was talking about me because I’m always thinking, too. “What’s that connection with real life like? What more is there, besides thinking?”

“Perceiving, enjoying what you see, listening to the sounds, touching, breathing consciously, smelling, tasting, feeling, observing life with new, fresh, innocent eyes. Are you happy right now?”

“I don’t know...”

“If you’d only stop thinking for a moment, you’d be very happy. Just imagine: you’re in a spaceship, in a world light-years away from Earth; you’re contemplating an evolved planet, inhabited by people from ancient Atlantis... You’re really a privileged earthling. How many people would love to change places with you? Instead of thinking such nonsense, look around, take advantage of this moment...”

I felt that Ami was right but I still had one doubt and I expressed it, “Then thinking isn’t good for anything?”

“A typical earthling conclusion!” he laughed. “If it’s not the best, then it must be the worst. If it’s not white, it simply has to be black. If it’s not perfect, it’s demonic. If it’s not God, it’s the Devil... Mental extremism!” He made himself more comfortable in the chair. “Of course thinking is good for something. Without thinking, you would be like a vegetable. But thinking isn’t the maximum human possibility. You enjoyed the second piece of music, right?”

“Yes, because I liked it.”

“You see? Liking is a form of loving. Without love there is no enjoyment. We’re seeking to love everything, to live in love. So we enjoy ourselves more. You didn’t like the moon. I did. I enjoy myself more and I’m happier than you are.”

“Then love is the maximum human possibility.”

“Now you have it, Jim.”

“And do they know this on Earth?”

“Did you know it? Did they teach you that in school?”

“No.”

“They’re only on the intellect, ideas, reason, thinking, rationality. That’s why those who think a lot are called wise... But they forget the wisdom of the heart.”

“But how come something so simple escaped them?”

“Because they’re using only one of the two ‘centers of comprehension,’ but reasoning can’t experience love. Some people think that sentiments are something ‘primitive’ and that they should be replaced by ‘intelligence,’

by cold logic. Then they develop theories that justify war, terror, cruelty and the destruction of nature. Now your humanity is in danger because of these oh-so-'intelligent' thoughts and these oh-so-'brilliant' theories..."

"You were right when you said that on Earth we think backwards about everything..."

"Then, just observe the world of Ophir for a while. Here things are more 'frontwards.'"

The lack of sleep, all the day's emotions and Ami's new teachings had me worn out. Outside the windows I could see gigantic people, stylized buildings, immense children, flying and earthbound vehicles, but I was so tired that I was losing interest in everything.

"Do you know how old that man is?" Ami asked, referring to a man who was near the spaceship.

He seemed to be about sixty. He had white hair but he didn't look elderly. He looked young. "About sixty?"

"He's about five hundred years old..."

I felt dizzy, exhausted. My head was about to explode.

"Know what, Ami? I'm tired. I need to rest, sleep, go home. I don't want to know anything more right now. I feel sick. I don't want to see anything more..."

"Information indigestion," Ami joked. "Come on, Jim, lie down here."

He took me over to one of the reclining chairs, lowered it and transformed it into a soft divan. I made myself comfortable on it, he put something behind my head and I fell asleep instantly. I let myself go and slept soundly for several hours...

CHAPTER 9

THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW

I awoke fresh and rested, full of energy, feeling like new.

My friend, who was adjusting some controls, winked at me. "Feeling better now?"

"Yes. Fantastic... My grandmother! How many hours did I sleep?"

"Fifteen seconds," he replied.

"What?" I got up to look through the windows. We hadn't moved. Neither had the people I had seen before. The man with the white hair was still there, not far from our spaceship. Nothing had changed.

"How did you do it?"

"You needed to sleep to 'recharge your batteries.' We have 'battery chargers' which in fifteen seconds can produce the same effect on you as eight hours of sleep."

"How amazing! Then you people never lie down to sleep?"

"'Never' is an exaggeration. Once in a while we have to sleep because we receive an extra 'recharging' by sleeping. But we don't have to sleep for very long. We don't 'discharge' as much as you people do."

"Go on! The 'evolved' really know how to enjoy life! They live over five hundred years! They almost don't sleep!"

"Now you've got it!"

"So that man is five centuries old... Isn't he tired of living so long?"

"Do you want to ask him yourself? Come with me."

We sat down in front of a screen. My friend picked up the microphone and entered some commands on the control panel keyboard.

The man's face appeared on the screen. Ami spoke to him in a very strange language, using some sounds like "shhhh" which were almost inaudible. I immediately associated them with the music that sounded like a

steam engine on an old-fashioned train. The man listened to the sounds and approached the spaceship. Then he smiled at us, looking at us through the screen as if he could see us!

"Hello, Jim," he said clearly to me.

I understood that an "interpreter" was turned on, since the movements of his lips didn't match the sounds that I was hearing.

"H-hello," I answered nervously.

"Do you know what? We're almost related. My ancestors also came from a civilization on Earth."

"Oh." I couldn't think of anything more interesting to say...

"That civilization was destroyed by the lack of love..."

"Oh..."

"How old are you, Jim?"

"T...I mean, nine... What about you?"

"I'm some five hundred years old in Earth years."

"And...don't you get bored?"

"Bored. Get bored..." He looked as if he didn't understand.

"When the intellect looks for activity and doesn't find it," Ami explained to him.

"Oh, of course. I'd forgotten... No, I don't get bored. Why should I get bored?"

"After living so long, for example."

Just then a very beautiful young woman approached him. She greeted the man tenderly. He hugged her and kissed her several times. Smiling at each other, they talked,. They seemed to love each other a lot.

She left and he continued talking with me.

"Happiness is the natural state of the human being and when thought is at the service of love, boredom does not exist," he said, smiling.

It seemed to me that he was in love with that beautiful woman and I asked him, "Are you in love?"

He sighed deeply and said, "I'm totally in love."

"With that lady who was just there with you?"

He smiled knowingly and said, "With life, with people, with the Universe, with this state of existing...with love."

Another woman came towards him, even more beautiful than the first. They hugged, kissed each other on the cheeks, looked intensely into each other's eyes, talked, laughed, and then said good-bye to each other.

I thought that this man must be some kind of playboy from outer space ...

"Have you ever gone to visit the Earth?"

"Oh, yes. I've been there several times, but it's very sad..."

"Why?"

"The last time I was there people were killing each other. Hunger, millions of dead, cities destroyed, prison camps... It's sad."

I felt really bad, as if I were a caveman in that world.

"Carry a message from me to your planet," said the man with a kind smile.

"Of course. What is it?"

"Love, union and peace."

"I'll put it in a book that I'm going to write," I told him.

We said good-bye so we could go visit other places in the world of Ophir.

"Does that man have two wives?" I asked Ami while we were flying.

"Of course not. He only has one," he replied.

“But...he kissed both of them...”

“And where’s the harm in some kisses on the cheek and some wholesome hugs? They all love each other, but neither of those women is his wife.”

“And what if his real wife should catch him?”

Ami laughed at me. “Jealousy does not exist in the evolved worlds.”

I thought I understood. “Oh, complete freedom... Then everyone can have a lot of partners,” I said maliciously.

His expression was transparent when he replied, “No. No one wants more than one, the one that’s meant to be, the beloved.”

That matter was not at all clear to me. “Ami, he said that he was in love with all people, with everything...”

“So?”

“You spoke of ‘the beloved,’ as if there were only one...”

“Oh, I see that you’re using logic, the brain, to try to understand an affair of the heart...but I understand you. You’re asking about the difference between universal and personal love, aren’t you?”

“Universal love?”

“That man expressed his universal love. In other words, his love towards everyone and everything. But we also have our personal loves towards ourselves, towards our partner, our parents, brothers and sisters, children, friends, cats, dogs, plants, parrots, turtles or hippopotamuses...”

“Or towards our grandmother...”

He smiled and said, “You’re right, but someone who has only personal loves doesn’t have a good evolutionary level.”

“Of course. That person is an egotist. On the other hand, someone who only has universal love would be a champion...”

“You’re wrong. Someone like that doesn’t really love anyone.”

“What do you mean? You’re saying that someone who loves everyone doesn’t love anyone...”

“It’s just the opposite, Jim. I’m saying that someone who doesn’t love anyone in particular cannot love everyone.”

“Why not?”

He turned towards me with his pure gaze and said, “Only when you have learned to know, to take care of, to make yourself responsible for, and to love your nearby trees, only then can you love the forests...”

I didn’t understand. I kept quiet, preferring to contemplate the panorama on the screen.

We were passing above farm fields where machines were working. Every so often a building complex appeared that was similar to the one we had visited before. We also saw semi-spherical houses and pyramids scattered here and there. There were no large unpopulated areas to be seen. I could make out roads bordered with flowers, trees, and stone decorations; brooks; little bridges; waterfalls.

That entire world looked like an immense Japanese-style garden.

The people traveled on foot, in groups or in couples. I didn’t see any freeways, only small paths. Minuscule vehicles that looked like golf carts transported some people.

“I don’t see any cars, trucks, or trains...”

“There’s no need for them. All transportation is by air.”

“That’s why there are so many ‘UFOs’ around. How can they avoid colliding?”

“We’re connected to the ‘super-computer’ that can monitor the controls of each airship.”

Ami adjusted some controls of the spaceship. “Let’s try to collide with those rocks. Don’t be afraid...”

The spaceship accelerated to a tremendous speed, hurling itself towards the rocks. Before we could collide with them, we swerved and continued flying horizontally at an altitude of several feet. Ami had not touched the controls to avoid the disaster.

"Collisions are impossible. The 'computer' doesn't allow them."

"How marvelous!" I exclaimed with relief.

A little later I wanted to find out which country in that world was the most important. "How many countries are there in Ophir?"

"None. Ophir is an evolved world."

"There aren't any countries?"

"Of course not... Or maybe there's only one: Ophir."

"And who's the President?"

"There's no President."

"Who's in command, then?"

"Command...command. No, no one's in command."

"But, who organizes everything?"

"That's something else entirely. Everything's already organized here, but when something unforeseen arises, those who are the wisest meet with the specialists in the matter and make decisions. Everything is planned and the machines do almost all the heavy work."

"What do people do, then?"

"Live, work, study, enjoy themselves, serve. In that sense we devote part of our time towards helping the non-evolved worlds, always within the limits of the 'aid plan,' of course. I've already told you something about what we do, but sometimes we also lend a hand in the birth of religions that lead towards love..."

"How does that work?"

"How do you think that 'manna' fell from Heaven onto the desert during the time of Moses?"

"You?"

"Us."

"Go on! I thought that God had sent it..."

"Well... He sent us... It's almost the same thing. But we also do other things to help you folks. Our scientists collaborate in biological, geological and other types of projects; what's more, we participate in the rescue of the best people when worlds self-destruct. It was really sad when Atlantis sunk into the ocean..."

"Because of the bombs?" I asked.

"And also because of the hate, the suffering, the fear... The Earth couldn't stand that negative radiation from human beings, much less the effects of the powerful arms that they had. The entire continent sunk into the sea, and now if you folks don't change, if the atomic explosions, the injustice and the unhappiness continue, the Earth once again wouldn't be able to stand it and it's possible that something similar will happen..."

"I never would have thought such a thing!"

"That's why we're constantly observing you people. The entire Universe is one unity, a living organism. We can't ignore the scientific discoveries made in any evolved world. I told you that certain energy in the wrong hands can alter the balance of the galaxy... And that includes our own worlds. Everything has repercussions on everything else. That's why we're working so that you people better yourselves. We're working a little for the benefit of you folks, a little for ourselves and also for the rest of the Universe."

"I don't see wire fences anywhere. How do they know who owns each piece of property?"

"Here everything belongs to everyone..."

I thought about that for a long time. "Then no one is interested in making progress?"

"I don't think I understand you very well, Jim."

"Progressing. You know, getting ahead, becoming more than the rest of the crowd."

“Are you talking about having a greater level of evolution, more measures? There are spiritual exercise for that, and helping others with no interest for yourself is something that greatly advances evolution.”

“I’m not talking about evolution or measures, Ami.”

“What are you talking about, then?”

“Having more than other people.”

“Having more what, Jim?”

“More money.”

“Money doesn’t exist here.”

“Then how do people buy things?”

“They don’t. If someone needs something, he or she goes and takes it...”

“No matter what it is?”

“Whatever you need,” said Ami.

“Anything?” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

“If someone needs something and it’s available, why not?”

“Even a little cart like those we see?”

“Or a spaceship.” Ami was talking as if he were telling me the most natural thing in the world.

“Everyone can have a spaceship?”

“Everyone can *use* a spaceship,” Ami corrected me.

“Is this spaceship yours?”

“I’m using it. And so are you.”

“I’m asking if it’s *yours*.”

“Well, let’s see... ‘Yours’ indicates possession, ownership... I’ve already told you that everything belongs to everybody, to whomever needs it while he or she is occupying it, just like a park bench on your planet.”

“What if I were to take a spaceship like this one and I wanted to leave it in my backyard when I wasn’t using it? Could I do that?”

“How long would you go without using it?”

“Let’s say...three days,” I replied.

“Then it would be better for you to leave it in a place designated for parking these spaceships, the ‘spaceport.’ Then someone else could use it while you’re not. Later, when you return, you could take that one or any other one that’s available.”

“But what if I wanted *that one*?”

“And why would you want *that one*? There’s a surplus of everything here, including spaceships. Besides, they’re all more or less the same.”

“Just suppose that I feel affection for it, like you and your ‘out-of-date’ television...”

“This ‘television,’ as you call it, is a little souvenir. No one needs it because it’s outdated. When I don’t want to keep it anymore, I’ll give it up so that those who work with this kind of instrument can decide if they’ll take it apart, modify it, or throw it in the garbage. Or I can keep it all my life. It’s not something that’s useful to the public. But if you wanted to keep that same spaceship, that would be a very strange whim because you didn’t build it, and, besides, as I told you, there’s spaceship surplus. But if you insist upon always using the same spaceship, you’ll have to wait for it to arrive, for it to be available.”

“But what if I wanted to always use that same spaceship, if I wanted it to be for me and no one else?”

“Why don’t you want anyone else to use it?” asked Ami.

“Let’s suppose that I don’t like other people using *my* things...”

“But, why not? No one has contagious diseases here...”

“I don’t know why. But just imagine that I like for my things to be *mine* and no one else’s.”

“That would be unhealthy possessiveness, egotism.”

"It's not egotism."

"What is it, then? Generosity? A spirit of cooperation?" Ami was laughing.

"So I have to share my toothbrush with everybody?"

"Mental extremism again... You don't have to share either your toothbrush or your other personal items. There are millions of them here, a surplus. No one is enslaved to them... But not to want to share a spaceship! Besides, in the 'spaceport' it's overhauled by the machines in charge of doing that. It's repaired when necessary. You don't have to do that yourself."

"That sounds good, but I imagine that it's a little like going to boarding school: everything mandatory; everyone watched."

"You're wrong. Here everyone enjoys the fullest, most complete liberty."

"But aren't there any rules, laws?"

"Yes, there are, but all of them are based upon the Fundamental Law of the Universe and benefit people."

"Are you going to tell me about that blessed law now?"

"Later. Have patience," he smiled.

"What if I violate some rule?"

"You'd suffer."

"Would I be punished, put in jail?"

"No. Punishment and jails don't exist here. But if you do something wrong, you suffer. You punish yourself."

"Myself? I don't understand, Ami."

"Would you slap your grandmother?"

"No! Of course not! What a thing to say!"

"Imagine that you had slapped her... What would happen to you?"

"I would feel terrible. I'd feel really sorry. I couldn't stand it!"

"That's what it's like to punish yourself... You don't need for other people to punish you or put you in jail. There are things that no one does, but not because those things are against the law. You wouldn't hurt your grandmother. You wouldn't physically injure her. You wouldn't take her small personal possessions away from her. On the contrary, you try to help her and protect her."

"Yes, because I love her."

"Here we all love one another."

There are times when *understanding* something produces the interior equivalent of a flash of light in us.

Ami's explanations had finally gotten through to me. I was suddenly able to understand what he had been trying to tell me. That world was not like mine. It wasn't a place of competition, fear and distrust of others, rivalries, egotism. No, it wasn't like that. Humanity in that world was a big family in which everyone loved each other reciprocally. So they shared everything, always seeking happiness for each and every one of them. Now it seemed very simple to me.

"And all the evolved worlds in the Universe are organized like this," Ami explained to me, happy that I had grasped the idea.

"Then, love is the basis of organization."

"Yes, Jim. That's the Fundamental Law of the Universe..."

"What?"

"Love," said Ami.

"Love?"

"Love."

"I thought that it would be something more complicated..."

“It’s easy, simple and natural. Nevertheless, for some people it’s not so easy to experience or express. That’s what evolution’s for. Evolution means approaching love, approaching the love-wisdom that I mentioned to you before.”

That phrase produced another flash of light for me.

“Evolution means approaching love.’ Of course!” I exclaimed.

“The most evolved beings experience and express more love. The measure of a being’s greatness or smallness is determined only by the measure of his or her love...”

“That seems very logical to me now, Ami. Why is it so hard for us to love?”

“Because we have a barrier inside ourselves that impedes, or puts the brakes on, our best feelings.”

“What barrier?”

“The ego. A false idea about ourselves. A false ‘me.’ The bigger the ego, the more it isolates and anesthetizes us, making us feel more important than everyone else. The ego makes us believe that we are justified in scorning, damaging, dominating, and using other people. Even justified in having other peoples’ lives at our disposal. Since the ego is a barrier to love, it impedes us from feeling compassion, tenderness, affection, fondness...love. The ego makes us unconscious to life around us.”

“The ego is an evil demon,” I said, a little angry.

Ami laughed and continued his explanation, “The ego was conceived as protection for creatures who have to live in environments that aren’t very evolved, in worlds where the law is ‘every man for himself.’ In those places the ego helps survival. But when a planet needs to begin another stage of evolution so as not to destroy itself, like your planet, where the collective is beginning to have more importance than the personal, then there’s no longer any justification for an excessive ego. The ego is transformed into an obstacle to the evolution of the person and of all his world. Mark my words: **Egoists** are interested only in themselves and no one else.”

“You’re right!”

Egotists talk only about themselves. **Egocentrics** think that the Universe revolves around them. Human evolution consists in diminishing the ego so that love and wisdom can grow.”

“Then, what you’re saying is that we earthlings have a lot of ego...”

“That depends upon each person’s evolutionary level. The greater the evolution, the less ego, and vice versa. Let’s continue our travels, Jim.”

CHAPTER 10

INTERPLANETARY FELLOWSHIP

A small, pretty stadium or amphitheater stood in a hollow in the meadow. There many very strange beings were giving a performance for the public.

At first I thought that those specimens were wearing disguises, but soon I understood that wasn’t the case. There were some who were gigantic, even bigger than the people of Ophir; others were shorter, almost dwarves. Some of them looked very similar to us, but others were very different. They had beautiful, strange gazes; large eyes; tiny mouths and noses that were sometimes mere dimples; faces that were olive colored, rosy, black, very white, yellow, etc.

“I suppose that all these beings come from other worlds...”

“What a brilliant deduction! How did you figure that out?!” Ami joked, because my observation was silly. Then he continued, “Each group is demonstrating dances from its planet.”

There were five performers from each world. Holding hands and forming a happy circle, they danced to the sound of a beautiful melody. A golden balloon was gently falling; when it descended near someone, that person batted it upwards again. While it was falling, the person who had hit it and the four other members of his or her group danced in a harmonious formation to the center of the circle and began a second dance to the rhythm of a new song, which joined the previous one without discord. While this was happening, the rest of the circle continued the general dance, following the rhythm of the first melody. When the balloon reached another group, its members danced to the center of the circle and those of the previous group returned to their place.

The main circle was turning slowly. Each time a group finished its act, the spectators applauded very enthusiastically and respectfully.

Besides the Ophirians watching, there were also spectators from other worlds. Flags decorated the sides of the amphitheater. Many spaceships of various types were parked outside, in a site that had been set aside for them. Others, like ours, remained suspended in the air.

"Who's winning?" I asked.

"Who's winning what?"

"This looks like a competition to me. Isn't it?"

"Competition?"

"Aren't they looking for the group that does it the best?"

"No."

"Why are they doing it then?"

"To show what they feel, to present a beautiful performance, to expand the ties of friendship, to teach, to have a good time, to enjoy themselves."

"What about the group that does it better than all the rest? Doesn't it win some sort of prize?"

"No one's comparing anything. They're learning and having a good time."

"On Earth the best are given prizes..."

"And with that system, those who come in last are humiliated and the winners' egos grow," Ami said, smiling.

"It's hard, but you have to be tough if you want to win."

"To win, once again to be more than others are. Competition, selfishness, division."

"Is competition bad?"

"You must compete against yourself, better yourself, and not compete against your brothers and sisters. Those things do not exist in fraternal, evolved worlds because competition carries the seeds of division, war and destruction."

"I don't think it's so bad... I'm talking about healthy competition, sports..."

"But with caveman criteria... Wars have started over a soccer game... People sometimes even kill each other in stadiums on Earth... What you're seeing here is healthy, sporting, and artistic."

"It looks like a kids' game on my planet."

"Yes. Children's circle games. They represent union, fellowship."

"What does the symbol on your chest mean?"

"It represents elevated, limitless love, a love that transcends borders."

"Something like the Universal Love that we were talking about a while ago?"

"That's it exactly!" he exclaimed, very happy. "That's the sort of love that's closest to God's love."

"What about personal love?"

"That's the point of departure towards Universal Love."

We continued watching the performance while Ami explained, "Each movement that they make has a meaning. It forms part of a language."

"How pretty! I'd like for my grandma to see this... By the way, what time is it on Earth?"

"Your grandma has four hours of 'insomnia' left."

"Can we see her from here, too?"

"Yes."

"Even though we're in another world?"

"Of course. We can do it by means of the network of satellites that we have in orbit on Earth. Wait."

He adjusted the controls on a screen and my planet appeared, seen from a great height. Then we saw my grandma sleeping.

“How marvelous! Can we see the entire Universe?”

“Don’t fly so high! It seems to me that you don’t know how large the Universe is.”

“You’re right. I don’t,” I confessed.

“We know about some millions of galaxies, the closest ones. The others we see from a distance. And any further than that...well, we don’t know what’s out there. But this screen is a lot of fun. Millions of galaxies are enough, aren’t they?” We both laughed.

“What’s more,” he continued, “we can tune in the past of any world and any person and see what was happening at any moment of its history...”

“The past! How can you do that?”

“It’s easy. Everything that happens in the Universe, everything that each of Creation’s creatures has done at any given moment, is ‘recorded’ forever.”

I swallowed hard. “Everything?”

“EVERYTHING! And in many different ways. I’ll show you one of them. That golden balloon that’s floating there receives its light from the Sun. The light bounces off the balloon and reaches your eyes. Other rays go off into space. They travel through space eternally. If we capture that light at any point of its trajectory and amplify it, we will be seeing the balloon as it was in the past.”

“Incredible!”

“Later I can show you Napoleon, Julius Caesar, Jesus, Lincoln, Buddha, Plato, Mohammed, Moses...in action!”

“Really?”

“And even you a few years ago...”

I remembered some bad things I’d done that I’d rather forget... “**Welllll**, That’s not really necessary, Ami...”

He laughed at me. “Childish pranks aren’t evil, Jim. Don’t blame yourself too much. Don’t worry. Pay attention to this world. I want you to know a little more about Ophir.”

We began to ascend behind that amphitheater. A shining, rapid spaceship passed very close to us, signaling us with its lights. Our spaceship did the same, while Ami smiled mischievously.

“Who’s that? A friend of yours?”

“That was some happy, amusing people who came from a world that I visited a long time ago.”

“What do those signals with the lights mean?”

“A greeting, friendship. They were nice to me and we were nice to them.”

“How do you know that?”

“Didn’t you feel it?”

“I don’t think so...”

“That’s because you’re not observing yourself. If you paid as much attention to yourself as you do to what’s going on around you, you’d discover a lot... Didn’t you feel a certain ‘happy energy’ when that spaceship approached us?”

“I don’t know... I don’t think so... I was thinking that we might collide...”

“You were worried, as usual,” laughed Ami. “Look at that spaceship there. It’s from my world. See how it’s identical to this one?”

“That’s right. I’d like to visit your planet.”

“I’ll take you there on some other trip. Today we don’t have time.”

“Promise?”

“If you write the book, I promise.”

“And can we travel to the past, too?”

"To the past, too."

"And also to the beaches of Sirius?"

"There, too," laughed the space child. "You have a good memory. And also to the planet that we're preparing as a shelter for those we'll rescue in case Earth is destroyed."

"Do you mean that destruction is inevitable?"

"That depends upon what you folks do to begin to live in harmony with love."

"And to form one single country, the Earth, right?"

"It's not easy, but that's the way it has to be. Loving your own people is very good, but exaggerated regionalisms are a sign of shortsightedness. Excessive attachment to one place doesn't leave room to love other places, and the Universe is very large. It gives shelter to many forms of life and intelligence, and everything was born of the same God. That's why we must think and love 'on a large scale,' not like those people who think that the neighbors on their street are better than those on all the rest of the streets in the world..."

"You're right. We should live without borders. Let only the atmosphere be our border!" I exclaimed enthusiastically.

"Not even that. The Universe is free; love is liberty. We don't need to ask anyone's permission to come to this world or to any other one that we want to visit."

"Do you mean that any of you can come to this world without asking for authorization?"

"Or go to any other world in the Universe..."

"And the people here don't get mad?"

"Why should that bother them?" Ami was delighted by our dialogue.

"I don't know. It's hard for me to accept so many wonderful ideas."

"I'm going to try to explain it to you, Jim. The evolved worlds form a universal fellowship. We're all brothers and sisters, friends. We're all free to come and go, as long as we don't harm anyone. There are no secrets among us. There are no wars between the galaxies and no violence. Violence is a characteristic of primitive worlds and the creatures that inhabit them. Violent beings create violent, unjust, mercilessly competitive, inhumane societies where there is little fellowship. But there is no competition among us; no one wants to be more than his brother. The only thing that we all want is to be better each day and enjoy life wholesomely. But since we love, our greatest happiness comes from serving, helping, cooperating with everyone else. We all have a clear conscience; we love our Creator and thank Him for giving us our existence and permitting us to enjoy it. This is why we try to live in accord with his laws."

"Then you people know a lot..."

"Not so much, Jim. It's just that we put the commandments of Love into practice and that's why life is very simple for us, even though we have many scientific advances. If humanity on Earth is successful in surviving, if it is successful in overcoming its selfishness and distrust, we will make ourselves present to help the people of Earth, so that they will integrate into the cosmic fellowship and receive scientific and spiritual knowledge which is going to make life as truly marvelous for them as it is for us. If they are able to do this, life will no longer be a difficult competition for survival, and everyone will begin to achieve happiness."

"What you're saying is really beautiful, Ami."

"Because it's the truth and the truth is beautiful. When you return to your world, write that book, so that it will be one more voice, another grain of sand."

"When they read it, people will put aside their arms to live in peace," I said, very convinced.

Ami began to laugh at me again, patting me on the head, but this time it didn't bother me because now I didn't consider him a kid like me; now I thought he was someone better than me.

"How innocent you are! Don't you see that people live as if they were enemies? They're terribly asleep; they think that everything is dangerous and ugly. But the truths of the Universe aren't ugly; they're beautiful. Do you think a field of flowers is ugly?"

"No, it's beautiful," I replied.

"If those who lead armies were the creators of the flowers, they'd put bullets in place of the petals and inhumane, rigid laws in place of the stems..."

"Then...no one will believe what my book's going to say?"

“The ‘children’ and those who can still look at the world with the eyes of a child will believe you; but the ‘adults’ think that only horrible things are true. They think darkness is light and vice versa.”

“Their loss,” I said, a little troubled.

“But ‘children,’ no matter of what age, intuitively know that the superior truths are beautiful and peaceful. They will contribute to spreading our message, which will arrive through you. It’s part of a process. We do our part by offering our help, by serving. Now all of you will have to make an effort to better yourselves.”

“What if no one pays attention and they destroy the world?”

“We’ll have to do the same thing that we did thousands of years ago.”

“Rescue those who have a good level,” I said.

“That’s right, Jim.”

“And do I have seven hundred measures?” Once again I tried to find out.

“I told you that those who do something for the good of all have a good level. And those who are able to do something but don’t do anything—those who are indifferent or believe that they benefit from the injustices—are the people who lack love and don’t have a good level.”

“Then, as soon as I get home, I’m going to sit down to write,” I said, a little frightened.

Ami laughed at me.

CHAPTER 11 UNDER THE WATER

We approached an immense sky-blue lake. Sail and motorboats skimmed over the surface; on the banks people were having a good time playing in the water and on the beach.

I really felt like diving into that refreshing crystalline world.

“But you can’t do that.”

“Because of my germs.”

“Correct.”

There was a dock where the people were freely taking any of the aquatic vehicles: luxurious yachts; small rowboats, pedal boats or motorboats. There were also some beautiful transparent spheres of various sizes, and all sorts of marine bicycles and motorcycles.

“Then anyone can take anything here...”

“Of course.”

“I think that most people will choose the luxurious yachts.”

“You’re wrong. Many people like to row. Others like to play with a little boat, experience the sensation of getting close to the water, get some physical exercise...”

“Why are there so many fun things to do? Is today Sunday?”

“Here it’s ‘Sunday’ every day,” Ami laughed.

Some people were taking diving equipment and jumping into the water.

“What are they doing under the water? Underwater hunting?”

My question surprised Ami; then he seemed to understand. “‘Hunting’...you mean, chasing some weaker creature to kill it... No, here no one does anything like that. Love reigns here, Jim.”

“Of course. I should have imagined that... Then what are they doing under the water?”

“Exploring, moving around, enjoying life... Do you want to go to the bottom of the lake?”

“But you said that I couldn’t leave the spaceship...”

Ami didn't say anything as he smiled, set off for the lake, and submerged our spaceship.

It was very beautiful to see that underwater world appear. Many people and vehicles were in motion below the surface of the waters. Most people were using those transparent spheres.

A boy wearing diving goggles, flippers on his feet, and a little oxygen tank passed near us. When he saw us, he swam over to our spaceship and pressed his nose against the glass of one of the windows, making a silly face.

Ami laughed. I thought that if I'd been diving off a beach in my world, I wouldn't have approached an underwater "UFO" so confidently...

At the bottom of lake appeared an enormous transparent cupola with multicolored lights. Inside that big bubble was a sort of restaurant. I could see little tables, an orchestra, singers and a dance floor where some people were dancing to the beat of a happy song. Others clapped their hands while they watched from their tables, which were covered with dishes of ice cream, food and drinks.

"You don't have to pay there either?"

"You don't have to pay anywhere, Jim."

"This is better than going to Heaven!"

"Well, we are 'up in the sky,' aren't we?"

Little by little it was becoming more clear to me that it must be marvelous to live in a world like that one.

"You have to earn that," said Ami.

Slowly we continued moving forward at the bottom of that lake, which was full of strange fish and plants. Some pyramids appeared, towering over the algae and coral.

"What's that? Is it Atlantis?" I asked, astonished.

"They're underwater life investigation centers, Jim."

"Are there any sharks around here?"

"No sharks, snakes, spiders or wild animals. Nothing aggressive or poisonous. This is an evolved planet. That's why it no longer has crude species, far removed from love, like those. They're in the worlds that deserve them..."

"What do 'evolved' fish eat?"

"The same thing that cows and horses eat on your planet: vegetables. In worlds like this one no one kills in order to live. No animal eats another one."

"That's why you don't eat meat..."

"What are you trying to say?"

I hadn't wanted to say anything offensive, but Ami was laughing.

"Of course we don't eat cadavers... How awful! How cruel it is to kill those little chickens, pigs and cows... Don't you think so?"

When I heard him say this, it seemed cruel to me, too. I decided to stop eating meat.

"Speaking of food..." I said, feeling that my stomach was empty.

"Are you hungry?"

"Very. Isn't there some extraterrestrial food around here?"

"Of course. Look for it back there." He pointed to a cupboard behind the command chairs. I lifted a roll-up top and discovered a small pantry full of jars marked with strange symbols. They were made of a material that looked like wood.

"Bring the widest one."

I didn't know how to open it. It seemed to be hermetically sealed.

Ami laughed at my confusion. "Press the blue spot," he said.

As I did that, the top opened easily, uncovering some amber-colored, almost transparent fruit that looked like walnuts.

"What are those things?"

"Eat one."

I picked one up. It was soft, like a sponge. I tested it with the tip of my tongue. It had a very sweet taste.

"Eat, man, eat. It's not poison." Ami was watching everything I was doing. "Pass me one."

I offered him the package, he took one of the fruits, popped it in his mouth and ate it with obvious delight. I bit mine a little and tasted it carefully. It tasted like peanuts, walnuts or hazelnuts. The flavor was very delicate. I liked it. I was getting more confident. The second mouthful seemed exquisite.

"They're delicious!"

"Don't eat more than three or five of them. They have too much protein."

"What are they?"

"It's a kind of honey," laughed Ami. "From something sort of like bees." Now he was laughing even more.

"I like it. Can I take some to my grandma?"

"Of course. But leave the package here. And only take them to your grandma. Don't show them to anyone else. The two of you eat them all. Don't keep any of them. Promise?"

"I promise. Mmmm... They're delicious."

"Not as delicious as some Earth fruit that I really like."

"Which fruit is that?"

"They're called apricots."

"You like them?"

"Of course. They're much appreciated on my planet. We've tried to adapt them to our soil but we still haven't been able to duplicate that flavor. 'UFOs' frequently appear in apricot orchards." Ami's laughter sounded like a baby's.

"You steal them?" I asked, very surprised.

"Steal? What does that mean?" He pretended not to know.

"Take something that belongs to someone else."

"Oh, 'attachment to the material world' and 'belongs to' again. All right, then, we can't avoid the 'bad habits' of our worlds," he was laughing again, "and we 'steal' five or ten apricots..."

I thought he was funny but I still didn't like something. Stealing is stealing, whether it's a piece of fruit or a million dollars. I told him that.

"On Earth why don't you let someone who needs something just take it, without paying?" Ami asked me mischievously, because he knew very well how absurd his question was.

"Are you crazy? No one would bother to work if they weren't going to be paid anything..."

"Then you people have no love. Just selfishness... You can't give anything if you're not going to receive something in return." He continued laughing at us, the earthlings, but he had a special humorous, non-judgmental way of saying rough things.

I imagined that I was the owner of a big apricot orchard. People came and took my fruit without paying anything. Next, along came a "wise guy" who took advantage of me by bringing a truck and carrying off all my fruit. I tried to protest but he drove off in his loaded vehicle, making fun of me by saying, "Why does it bother you that I'm carting off all the fruit? Isn't there any love in you? You're just selfish. You won't share. Ha, ha, ha."

Ami saw all my mental "movie" and said, "Sheeesh. What distrust! In an evolved society no one 'takes advantage' of anyone. Whatever would that poor man do with his truckload of fruit?"

"Sell the fruit, of course."

"Nothing is sold. There's no money here..."

I laughed at my own lack of intelligence. I'd forgotten that money doesn't exist in an evolved world. Of course. Why would he want so much fruit?

"Fine. But why should I work for nothing?"

"If there's love in you, you're going to be happy to be able to help everyone else. And that way you'll have the right to receive help from others. You can go to your neighbor's and take what you need from his field. From the dairy you take milk; from the bakery, bread; and so on. And if instead of doing it all in an isolated, unorganized manner, society were to organize and transport the products to distribution centers; and if instead of you working, the machines were to do it..."

"No one would do anything!"

"There would always be something to do: supervise the machines, create new, more perfect ones, help those who need us, investigate life and the Universe, perfect our world, and perfect ourselves, and also enjoy our free time."

"But there's always someone who wants to take advantage of the situation and not do anything, the 'wise guy,'" I asserted, remembering the man with the truck.

"That person whom you call a 'wise guy' has a low level of evolution, a lot of selfishness and very little love. Really, he **thinks** he's smart, shrewd, intelligent, but he's very stupid; with that level he can't enter the evolved worlds. In those worlds it's considered a privilege to work more, to be able to serve more. Here many people are having a good time but the majority are working in other places, in laboratories, universities, in all those pyramids. Some are on service missions in non-evolved planets, others are studying in more advanced worlds so they can return and work here. Life is meant to be happy, to be enjoyed, but the maximum happiness is obtained by serving others..."

"Then these people...are lazy?"

Ami's laugh told me that once again I was wrong.

"No, that's not it. Even though our work is very useful, we have to rest from it from time to time. We have to go out in the fresh air to play, to get exercise, to rest our brains and to think about other things, just like recess at school."

"So how many hours a day do people work here?"

"Each person determines his or her own study and work schedule, depending upon what he or she feels is the best..."

That made my mouth fall open in surprise. "But, that's wonderful!"

He appeared to anticipate what I was about to think and said, "And no one here wants to waste time. We enjoy ourselves in places like this only for the amount of time necessary, but we find it even more enjoyable to dedicate ourselves to our studies or our jobs. That's why we can sometimes work entire days, as I'm doing right now."

"You...working? What work are you doing? It looks to me like we're taking a spin through the universe."

Just listening to me made Ami laugh. "I'm something like a teacher or a messenger. It's almost the same thing."

It didn't seem like the same thing to me.

Just then I saw two teenagers forcing open the window of an underwater pyramid, intending to go in and steal something.

Ami knew what I was thinking and laughed. "They're cleaning the windows! You always have crime on your mind."

"What are the police like here?"

"Police? What for?"

"To take care of things, prevent bad people from..."

"What bad people?"

"Aren't there any bad people here?"

"Well, no one is perfect, but with seven hundred measures, with essential information and motivation, and within a system of appropriate social organization, everyone stops harming his or her fellow man. Now no one needs to be 'bad,' and that's why there's no need for police."

“That’s incredible!”

“It’s only natural, Jim. When love is allowed to flow, a benign civilization springs up naturally, in accord with universal harmony. What *is* incredible and unnatural is what’s happening on Earth, where people kill each other and make each other suffer and don’t live together like brothers and sisters... Too much ego...”

“You’re right, Ami. Now that I think about it, it seems impossible to me that someday we’ll be living on Earth the way that you guys live. For us killing is almost commonplace, and in some places if you don’t want to go to war to kill, they kill you, or they put you in prison. In movies we see thousands of crimes and other cruelties, even in animated cartoons for kids. That’s why we children play at killing each other... We’re bad...”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself, Jim. It’s not your fault if the movies and television of your world serve to distort people’s thinking, instead of serving to make them grow as human beings and to help create a better world...”

“That’s just it. We lack love. Me, too. There are people I don’t like.”

I thought about a classmate of mine who’s always serious. Whenever you’re playing or enthusiastic about something, just one look from this guy and there goes all your fun out the window. I also thought about another kid in my class who thinks he’s a saint. He says that the angels appear to him and that he’ll go to Heaven and the rest of us, to hell; he’s always condemning us because we’re up to mischief or playing jokes... No, I definitely don’t like him.

“I don’t find all the people in my world, or in any world, extremely nice either. But just because someone doesn’t seem so nice to me doesn’t mean that I’m going to stop feeling any kind of affection for that person. Or that I could harm him or her in any way,” he explained, looking at me with a smile.

“I wouldn’t do anything to harm either of those wet blankets, either...but don’t ask me to live with either one of them...”

“In worlds like this one or mine, inhabited by people with around one thousand measures, there are souls that are not very attracted to each other, but they don’t reject each other either. Here there is no friction; everyone behaves him or herself. And the majority of them behave themselves especially well, but not everyone here has arrived at the point at which you can’t help but love everyone. We must try to achieve that beautiful step, but for the time being that can’t be demanded of either you people or of us.”

“Then we earthlings don’t have to be perfect?”

Now my little space friend was really laughing at me, but he quickly turned serious and explained, “In non-evolved societies mental extremism and myths are very typical, Jim.”

“Can you explain that better?”

“We all know that we must improve ourselves, so that one day we can definitely meet God; that is perfection. One must pass through many lives to attain that. But there are those who don’t understand the matter and believe that during earthly life they must arrive that high, must achieve perfection itself, to be like God. And that destroys their desire to improve themselves, as if someone were to tell you that you have to swim to another continent...”

“Ooof! I’d be tired before even I got started...”

“Of course. That’s why it would be good not to set such impossible goals. It’s better to think about improving ourselves little by little, up to the point that we’re capable of. But improving yourself also has something to do with improving our world.

More and more I was beginning to understand that, according to Ami, to get close to God it is very important to help the world and to help other people. And before I had thought that it was all about praying and not doing bad things.

“What if someone goes up a mountain to look for God?”

Ami made himself more comfortable before answering, “That’s very good when everything’s fine, but when others need your help...”

“Don’t my prayers help them?”

“If a guy is drowning in a river and you decide to pray on the riverbank instead of rescuing him, will God be pleased with you?” he asked me.

“I don’t know...maybe my prayers would please him...”

“And maybe he put you there precisely to save his life.”

“I hadn’t thought of that...”

“What is the Fundamental Law of the Universe?”

“Love.”

“Which of your attitudes shows more love: praying while that guy drowns, or trying to save his life?”

“I don’t know... If I’m loving God by praying...”

“You don’t understand... Let’s look at it another way, then. If you have two children and one is drowning in a river and the other dedicates himself to adoring your portrait and does nothing to save his brother, do you think that this is the correct attitude?”

“No. Of course not. I would rather a thousand times over that he save my other child... But maybe God isn’t like me.”

“Maybe you think that God is worse than you, right? Perhaps you imagine Him to be vain, interested only in being adored, indifferent to what happens to his other children... If you, who are imperfect, wouldn’t act like that, how could He, who is perfect, be worse than you?”

“I hadn’t looked at it that way...”

“God prefers a non-believer who helps his brothers, over a very religious person with a heart that’s dried up, someone useless for his world, interested only in his own ‘salvation,’ ‘evolution’ or ‘perfection.’”

“I didn’t know that, Ami. Why do you know so much about God?”

“It’s very simple, Jim: God is love...”

“So?”

“Whoever experiences love...experiences God. Don’t you think so?”

No, I didn’t think so. I thought that Ami was making it too easy to meet God. Feeling love is being with God? Hmmmm. That sounds suspicious... Even the worse people have felt love sometime...

He was aware of my thoughts. “It’s precisely for that reason: even the worse people know Him,” he said.

“And if they know Him, why don’t they know as much as you or behave themselves the way you do?”

“Because they can’t or don’t want to stay in love as much time as I do. From the heart, God is easily understood and known, but outside of love, all this knowledge is forgotten... That’s why they, poor things, make so many mistakes...”

“Why did you call them ‘poor things’?”

“Out of compassion, of course. You should remember that offenses against love are paid off with a lot of pain...”

“Oh... That’s right. I’d forgotten that...but if it’s deserved...by bad people,” I said with unconscious cruelty.

He seemed to be bothered by this and took me by the arm, saying compassionately, “We all make mistakes, Jim.”

“That’s true. But some people take the cake.”

“So much the worse for them. We should feel sorry for them. Not only do they have to live sad lives—because life becomes very disagreeable when one acts against love—but they also will later have to suffer the pain that they themselves have been earning with their offenses against love...the poor things...”

I looked at him respectfully. I felt that he was a true saint, even though he’d said that he wasn’t.

“What’s your religion, Ami?”

He looked at me with surprise. “Religion...a word that comes from *“religare,”* link up again, reunite, unite yourself with God, in other words, with love. I’m not dis-united; I **live** united to God, Jim, because my heart is always in love.”

The way he said this was so beautiful and pleasing that it made me feel love, too.

“You’re right, Ami. That’s the best belief.”

“Which one, Jim?”

“Well, the one that says that love is the fundamental Universe of the law...”

“The Fundamental Law of the Universe, but that’s not a belief, it’s a Law, a universal Principle proven scientifically and spiritually, because science and spirituality are the same for us. They’ll be the same for you people, too, when earthly science discovers the tremendous energy called love.”

“I thought that that was a...”

“A superstition?” Ami asked, laughing.

“Something like that... A good intention, maybe.”

“You’re wrong again. We’re going to see some very special people...”

CHAPTER 12

NEW TIMES

We left the water and, traveling rapidly, headed for the surface of the planet Ophir. In a few minutes we had arrived near some buildings. We hovered in the air and...what I saw almost made me faint: several people...**were fly-ing!**

Some vertical and others horizontal, they were suspended high in the air with their arms spread open. All of them had their eyes closed and their faces radiated great sweetness, happiness and concentration. They glided in immense circles like eagles.

Ami turned on the 'senso-meter' and focused on one of them.

“Let’s see what his level of evolution is.”

The man looked very transparent. The light from his chest was a marvelous spectacle, exceeding the limits of his body and sending out a sphere of light that surrounded and extended far beyond him.

“They are experiencing the most powerful force of the Universe, the force of love,” Ami explained to me.

“How can they fly?” I asked, fascinated.

“Love elevates them...”

“Oh.”

“It’s something like what we did on the beach, but they’re the champs in the matter...”

“They must have an incredible number of measures.”

“These people have around one thousand measures, but they’re concentrating and they’re able to exceed two thousand. These are spiritual exercises they’re practicing. When they finish the exercises, they return to their usual level.”

“This must be the most advanced world in the whole Universe!” I exclaimed.

Ami laughed at me. “You’re wrong. This civilization is fairly common and ordinary. There are planets inhabited by persons who have around one thousand five hundred measures. And still others where people have two thousand, three thousand, four thousand, etc. But for the moment you and I can’t go to the other worlds that are even more elevated. They’re inhabited by beings who exceed ten thousand measures, the solar beings. They’re almost pure love...”

“Solar beings?”

“Of course. The inhabitants of the suns...”

“I never would have imagined that...”

“Naturally. No one can look higher than the step above the one he’s on...”

“And they don’t get burned?”

Ami laughed. “No, they don’t get burned. Their bodies are composed of radiant energy, not solid material. Let’s go see that group that’s over there.”

In the distance about fifty people were sitting in a circle on the meadow. At first glance, they appeared to shine, like those who were flying. Sitting with their legs crossed and their backs straight, they were meditating or praying.

“What are they doing?”

“They’re sending something like telepathic messages to less evolved worlds in the galaxy. But these messages can’t be received only with the mind alone. You also have to use the ‘center of comprehension’ in the heart.”

“You already told me about that. What do the messages say?”

“Try to pay attention to your heart. Calm down your thoughts and maybe you’ll receive them. We’re very near the source of emission... No, not like that. Relax your body, close your eyes, and stay alert.”

I did what he said. At first I didn’t feel anything, except a special emotion that I’d been feeling since we approached the place. But then I was invaded by some “ideas-sentiments,”

*"All that is not sustained by Love
Will be destroyed
Forgotten in time
Repudiated..."*

A sort of inner clarity came over me. Then my mind gave words to those sensations. It was something very strange and beautiful.

*"And all that which in Love is sustained
Friendship or partner
Family or group
Government or nation
Individual soul or humanity
Will be firm and secure
Must prosper and be fruitful
And will not know destruction..."*

I could almost “see” the Being who was saying that. It seemed to me that it was not those persons who were talking; for me, it was God talking.

*"That is my Pact
That is my Promise and my Law."*

“Did you pick it up, Jim?” Ami asked me.

I opened my eyes. “Oh, yes... What does all this mean?”

“Those messages come from the Intimate, from God. These friends that you see here receive them and retransmit them to less evolved worlds, like yours. There other persons pick them up. Those messages can be used to help create a new world.”

“A new world... When I remember how things are on Earth I don’t think it will be easy to achieve that any time soon, Ami.”

“You’re right, but don’t see it as so difficult, Jim. The times are changing rapidly. Conditions are arising to produce an evolutionary leap on your planet.”

“What are you talking about, Ami?” I asked, very interested.

“I’m talking about something that can put an end to millenniums of barbarity and pain, about something that can make your world enter a new age where love reigns...definitely...”

“Is something so marvelous really possible, Ami?”

“Yes, because your planet is beginning to receive very subtle cosmic and geological energy, vibrations that are more and more elevated, luminous radiation that benefits the growth of love in all beings. This began some time ago and is already producing great changes in millions of people. A little more and you folks will be prepared to make that evolutionary leap and live as people do here on Ophir. But for now it’s not possible.”

“Why not, Ami?”

“As I told you, your planet continues to be guided by old ideas that are not adapting to the new times. This makes people suffer. It’s like wearing shoes that are too tight. But beings were born to be happy, Jim. They were not born to suffer. That’s why they instinctively, or consciously, seek a better world. Haven’t you noticed that lately on Earth everyone has been talking a lot about love?”

“Yes, Ami. That’s true. It’s talked about a lot...even though it’s not practiced very much...”

“But every day more and more people try to elevate their level and live with more love. Your world is changing rapidly, the change is going on day by day. So, just like the big dinosaurs, who couldn’t stand the increase of elevated vibrations and disappeared, very soon those internal monsters that oppose the reign of love will disappear from people’s hearts.”

“Really? Very soon?”

“Have faith and hope, Jim. The Universe is conspiring in favor of love these days.”

At great speed we left that place, which was impregnated with such beautiful spiritual vibrations.

“How many hours have we been in this spaceship, Ami?”

“About six.”

“How strange! I feel as though we had been here much longer. It seems like such a long time since I got into the spaceship on the beach.”

“I told you that time *streeeeetches*... Let’s go to the ‘movies.’ Look down there.”

We had arrived in the nocturnal area of the planet Ophir, but everything was well lit by a multitude of artificial light sources in the meadows and the buildings.

I observed something like an outdoor movie theater with many spectators. The screen was a crystal plate. On it you could see the play of colored images, forms and shapes to the beat of gentle music.

In front of the screen there was a special seat, one that stood out from the rest. There sat a woman with something on her head that looked like a helmet. She remained there with her eyes closed, concentrating very hard.

“What’s this all about, Ami?”

“Whatever she imagines appears on the screen... It’s a ‘movie theater’ that doesn’t need either cameras or projectors.”

“But that’s just too wonderful!” I exclaimed.

“Technology,” said Ami. “Simple technology.”

The woman finished her presentation and a man took her place while the audience applauded. Another sort of music began to play. On the screen some stylized birds appeared which flew to the beat of the melody over places made of crystal and of gigantic precious stones. That was very beautiful. It looked like an animated film.

We remained silently contemplating that extraterrestrial wonder for a long time.

Next came a boy who presented the story of love between him and a girl from another world. It took place on diverse, strange planets. The images, less precise than the ones in the previous spectacles, sometimes vanished completely. I asked what was causing that.

“He’s a child. He doesn’t have an adult’s power of concentration yet, but he does it very well for his age.”

“Are they also imagining the music?”

“Not both the images and the music at the same time, not in this world. But there are other worlds where people can achieve such feats. Nevertheless, here in Ophir concert halls exist where the artist simply imagines the music and the audience listens to it... Would you like to go to an amusement park?”

“Of course!”

We arrived in a fantasy world with every sort of entertainment: gigantic roller coasters; places where people could levitate and do pirouettes in the air while they were dying laughing; imitations of fabulous places and fantastic creatures.

“The greater the evolution, the more one is like a child,” Ami explained to me. “In these worlds we have many places like this. An advanced soul is the soul of a child. We need play, fantasy, creation... It’s because we have the tendency to try to imitate God...”

“Does God play, Ami?”

“That’s what God does the most, Ami. On another trip I’ll show you how the galaxies move in the cosmos. It’s a beautiful dance... There’s no game, fantasy or creation greater than the Universe, whose Creator is Love...”

“We were talking about God, Ami, not love.”

“Love is God... In our languages we have a single word to refer to the Creator, to the Divinity, to God. This word is ‘Love’...and we write it with a capital letter. You people will do the same some day.”

“I’m realizing more and more how important love is.”

“And you still don’t know very much... Let’s go. We’ve finished our visit to Ophir, this world that lives as you people could start living tomorrow if you really had the intention to grow as human beings, and as humanity. We would teach you all the rest.”

“Where are we going now?”

“To a world that neither you nor I can attain yet. We can only visit it briefly with a noble intention, like this one. No one there has less than two thousand measures. It will take us a few minutes to get situated in that place. I’m going to use that time to tell you some more things.”

Ami adjusted the controls. The spaceship vibrated gently. The stars appeared to stretch out and on the other side of the windows appeared the mist that indicated we were going towards a distant world.

CHAPTER 13

A BLUE PRINCESS

“You said that there are people you find difficult to love, right Jim?”

“Yes.”

“Is it bad not to love?”

“Of course,” I replied.

“Why?”

“Because you said that love is the principal fundamental...and all that.”

“Forget what I told you. Let’s suppose that I’m fooling you, or that I’m mistaken. Imagine a Universe without love.”

I began to imagine worlds where no one loved anyone. Everyone was cold and egocentric because without love there’s no brake on the ego, as Ami had said. Everyone struggled against everyone else and they all destroyed each other... I remembered the energy that he had mentioned, that energy which was capable of producing a cosmic catastrophe. I imagined a guy who was very powerful but who was an unfeeling fanatic or who had an ego that was out of control to the point that his own destruction didn’t matter to him. I imagined him pushing “the button” just for vengeance... Galaxies were exploding in a chain reaction!

“If there were no love, the Universe wouldn’t exist anymore,” I deduced.

“Then could we say that love builds and the lack of love destroys?”

“I think so.”

“Who created the Universe?”

“God.”

“If love builds and God ‘built’ the Universe, is there love in God?”

"Of course!" There appeared to me the image of a shining, marvelous being who created galaxies, worlds, stars.

"Try to leave off the beard again," Ami laughed.

It was true. One again I had imagined Him with a beard and a human face, but now He was in the middle of the Universe instead of in the clouds.

"Then we can say that God has much love..."

"Of course," I said.

"Well, then, why did God create the Universe?"

I thought for a long time and couldn't think of the answer. Then I protested, "Don't you think I'm too young to answer that question?"

Ami paid no attention to what I said. "Why are you going to take those 'walnuts' to your grandmother?"

"So that she can taste them... She's going to like them."

"Do you want her to like them?"

"Of course."

"Why?"

"So that she likes them...so that she'll be happy."

"Why do you want her to be happy?"

"Because I love her."

I surprised myself by confirming that another of the characteristics of love is the desire for the happiness of those we love.

"Why do you want her to like the 'walnuts'? Is it so that she'll be happy?"

"Yes. That's why."

"Why did God create people, worlds, landscapes, flavors, colors, aromas?"

"So that we'll be happy!" I exclaimed, pleased that I had understood something that I'd been missing.

"Very good... Then, does God love us?"

"Of course. He loves us a lot... He created an entire Universe for us."

"Then, if He loves, we would have to love as well, wouldn't we?"

"Yes, if God loves..."

"Perfect. Is there anything superior to love?"

"You said that it was the most important thing..."

"And I also said for you to forget everything I said," he smiled. "Some people say that intelligence is superior to love. What are you going to do when you give these 'walnuts' to your grandmother?"

"I'm going to see if I can surprise her with them."

"And you're going to use your intellect for that, aren't you?"

"Of course. I'm going to think about what I can do to make her more happy."

"Then your intellect serves your love. Or is it the other way around?"

"I don't understand."

"What is the origin of your desire for your grandmother to be happy? Is it your love or your thought?"

"Oh! It's my love. Everything is born from that."

"Everything is born from that.' You're very right because Creation springs from divine Love... First you love, and after that you use your intelligence to make your grandmother happy. Is that true?"

"You're right. I put my intellect to the service of my love. Love is first."

"What is above love, then?"

"Nothing?" I asked.

"Nothing," he replied. He turned toward me with a luminous look in his eyes. "And if we saw that God has much love, then what is He?"

"I don't know."

"If there's something greater than love, God should be that, right?"

"Oh, I think so."

"And what is greater than love?"

"I don't know..."

"What did we say that there was above love?"

"We said that there wasn't anything."

"Then, what is God?" he asked again.

"Oh! 'God is love.' You've said that several times... but I thought that God was a person with much love..."

"No, God is not a person with much love. God is love itself; love is God."

"I don't think I understand, Ami."

"I told you that love is a force, a vibration, an energy with effects that can be measured with the appropriate instruments, the 'senso-meter,' for example."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Light is also an energy or vibration."

"Is it?"

"Yes, and Xrays, infra-red and ultraviolet rays and also thoughts. They're all vibrations of the same 'thing' at different frequencies. The higher the frequency, the finer the material or the energy. A rock and a thought are the same 'thing' vibrating at different frequencies..."

"What is this 'thing' you keep talking about?"

"Love."

"Really?"

"Really... Everything is love. Everything is God..."

"Then God created the Universe with pure love?"

"God 'created' is one way of saying it. The truth is that God 'transformed' into the Universe, into rock, into you and into me, into star and cloud..."

"Then...am I God?"

Ami smiled kindly and said, "A drop of sea water cannot say that it's the sea, even though it's composed the same. You are made of the same substance as God. You are love, but vibrating at a frequency that's not very high. Evolution consists of the elevation of our frequency of vibration. That allows us little by little to recognize and regain our true identity: love."

"Elevation of our frequency?"

"Hate is a very low vibration. Love is a very high vibration."

"Oh..."

"Point to yourself."

"I don't understand what you mean, Ami."

"When you say, 'Me,' where do you point? At what part of your body? Point to yourself saying, 'Me.'"

I pointed to the center of my chest, saying, "Me."

"Why didn't you point to the tip of your nose, for example? Or your forehead? Or your throat?"

I thought it was funny to imagine myself pointing to any place other than my chest. "I don't know why I pointed to myself there," I said, laughing.

“Because that’s where you really are. You are love and you have your dwelling place in your heart. You head is a kind of ‘periscope,’ like in a submarine. It serves you so that you,” he pointed at my chest, “can perceive the exterior. It’s a ‘periscope’ with a ‘computer’ in its interior, your brain. With it you understand how the things of the world are and you organize your body’s functions. Your extremities serve you to take you from one place to another and manipulate objects, but you are here.” Once again he touched a point in the center of my chest. “You are love. Whatever act that you perform against love, then, is an act against yourself and against God, who is love. That’s also why the Fundamental Law of the Universe is love. That’s also why love is always the maximum human possibility, and, lastly, that’s why the Name of God is Love. Spirituality, therefore, consists of experiencing and giving love. That is the way I understand and practice the things of God, Jim.”

“That makes everything much clearer to me, Ami. Thanks.”

A rosy color appeared in the windows.

“We’ve arrived, Jim. Look out the win...”

The interior of the spaceship was bathed by the soft color of that rosy sky, closer to light lilac. I felt full of reverent spirituality.

My brain stopped working the usual way, but it’s hard for me to explain how my consciousness was changing. I began to feel that I wasn’t really myself, that I wasn’t the “me” that I am now. I stopped considering myself an earth child. Suddenly I had converted into much more than that, as if, ever since I was born, I had forgotten my true identity, as if I had been dreaming that I was a boy called Jim, and as if suddenly I had recovered my memory.

I felt that somehow I had already lived what I was living then, that neither that world nor that moment were unknown to me.

Ami and the spaceship disappeared. I was alone, arriving from a great distance for a meeting that had been expected for a long time.

I floated down from the rosy, shining clouds. There was no sun there; everything was too soft.

An idyllic landscape appeared. Some birds that looked like swans glided across a rosy lagoon. Maybe they were white but that lilac sky tinted everything. Around the lake were grasses and reeds in different shades of green, orange and rosy yellow.

In the distance I could see the surrounding rolling hills covered with foliage and with flowers that looked like small, brilliant gems of diverse colors and tones. Various shades of pink and lilac also tinted the clouds.

I didn’t know if I was inside that landscape or if the landscape was inside me. Or maybe we formed a single unit. But what surprises me most of all when I think about it today—although it didn’t attract the attention of my other mind at the time—is that the foliage...sang!

The grasses and flowers rocked back and forth while sounding musical notes to the rhythm of their movements. Others rocked in a different direction, emitting notes that were distinct from the first set.

Those creatures had consciousness!

The reeds, grasses and flowers sang and rocked back and forth around me and in the nearby hills. Together they produced the most marvelous concert that I’ve ever heard: the concert of life in a superior world.

Floating, I passed over the bank of the waters. I didn’t need to move my legs to advance forward. A pair of swans with several young looked at me politely and respectfully from behind their blue masks. They greeted me by elegantly dipping their long necks. I returned the greeting with an affectionate, slight bow. The parents told the young swans to greet me, as well. I think they communicated by a mental order or by a slight movement. The young obeyed, also bending their necks, although they didn’t do it as elegantly and harmoniously as their parents had done. For a moment they lost their balance, but then they regained it and shook their little tails nervously, continuing their advance across the lagoon with an infantile arrogance that made me feel tenderness towards them. I responded to them affectionately, feigning great pomp.

I continued moving forward, floating towards the meeting place. I had had a date for all eternity: I was going to meet “her”.

In the distance appeared a sort of pagoda or pergola floating near the bank of the lagoon. It had a Japanese-style roof, fastened with thin reeds. Intertwining rosy leaves and blue flowers climbed up the reeds and formed the walls of the pagoda. Upon the polished wooden floor there were cushions with wide, colored fringe. Small adornments, like bronze or gold incense burners and cages for some colored insects that looked like crickets, hung from the ceiling.

“She” was seated serenely upon the cushions. I felt close to her, immensely close. Nevertheless, it would be the first time that we were going to meet...

We did not look each other in the eyes. We wanted to prolong the next few moments. There was no need to hurry... We had been already been waiting for so many millenniums...

I bowed and she responded subtly, with a slight movement of her head. I entered and we communicated, but not with words. Words would have been too vulgar, too out of harmony with that world and with that meeting which was so desired. Our language was an artistic ritual of slight, almost imperceptible movements of arms, hands and fingers, accompanied by a sort of sentiment that we were projecting by vibrations.

Later Ami explained to me that when spoken language is insufficient to express what we feel, we need other forms of communication. Then we resort to art.

The moment arrived to look at that unknown face. She was a beautiful woman with Asian features and light blue skin. Silky black hair with a center part. She had a mole in the center of her broad forehead.

I felt much love for her and she for me.

The culminating moment had arrived. I reached my hands out to hers and...and everything disappeared.

I was next to Ami in the spaceship.

The shining, white mist indicated that we were leaving that world.

“...dow...”

“Oh,

now

you’re back,”

said Ami.

I discovered that all that had happened in a fraction of a second, between the “win” and the “dow” of the word “window” that Ami had said just as the rosy color appeared outside the glass.

I felt anguished, like someone who woke up from a beautiful dream to a gloomy reality...

Or was it just the opposite? Couldn’t this be a bad dream and the other be reality?

“I want to return!” I shouted.

Ami had cruelly separated me from “her,” ripping me away. How could he do that to me?

I still hadn’t recovered my usual mind. The other “me” was superimposed over my normal identity. On one side I was Jim, a nine-year-old boy; but on the other side I was a being... Why couldn’t I remember it now?

“There’ll be time,” Ami calmed me, gently. “You’re going to return...but not yet.”

I calmed down. I knew that was true, that I would return. I remember that sensation of “not rushing things” and I felt tranquil.

Little by little I was returning to normal, but I never would be the same again. I was Jim but only momentarily; on the other side I was much more than Jim. I had just discovered a dimension of myself that is beyond external appearance and beyond time.

“What world was I in?”

“In a world beyond time and space...in another dimension.”

“I was there but I wasn’t the same...I was ‘another’...”

“You saw your future, what you will be when you complete your evolution to a certain limit...two thousand measures, more or less.”

“When will that be?”

“Several lives from now...”

“How is possible to see the future?”

“It’s all written. God’s ‘novel’ is already written. You just skipped ahead some pages. That’s all. It was necessary. It’s a little stimulus so that you will definitely renounce the idea that everything ends when you stop breathing and so that you’ll write about it and others will find out.”

“Who was that woman? I feel that we love each other, even now.”

“God will put her by your side many times. Sometimes you will recognize her, sometimes you won’t. It depends upon the ‘center of comprehension’ in your chest. Each soul has a single complement, another ‘half.’”

“She had blue skin!”

“So did you. Only you didn’t look in a mirror,” Ami was laughing at me again.

“Is my skin blue now?” I looked at my hands uneasily.

“Of course not. Neither is hers now.”

“Where is she right now?”

“Thereabouts...thereabouts,” he said mischievously, with a mysterious air.

“Take me to her! I want to see her!”

“And how are you going to recognize her?”

“She has a Japanese face...even though I don’t remember her features... She has a mole on her forehead.”

“I’m telling you that she doesn’t look like that now, just as you don’t look like you did in that vision,” laughed Ami. Right now she’s an ordinary, average girl.”

“You know her. Do you know who she is?”

“Maybe...but don’t be in a hurry, Jim. Remember that patience is the **science of peace**, of interior peace. You shouldn’t want to open a surprise present before it’s time. Life will be guiding you... God is behind each happening...”

“How will I recognize her?”

“Not only with your mind or calculation, not with preconceived ideas or with fantasies. Only with your heart working in perfect harmony with your intelligence. In other words, with your love-wisdom.”

“But, how?”

“Always observe yourself, especially when you meet someone who interests you, but don’t confuse the internal with the external. Don’t confuse your mind’s ideas or your desires or your fantasies with what you feel in your heart and with what your intelligence shows you... We don’t have much time left. Your grandmother is going to wake up. We must go back.”

“When will you return?”

“Write the book. Then I’ll return.”

“Should I put the ‘little Japanese girl’ in it?”

“Put everything. But don’t forget to say that it’s a story.”

CHAPTER 14

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, AMI!

The blue atmosphere of my planet appeared.

We were above the sea approaching the coastline. The sun was beginning to show above the horizon, and it extended its golden rays between the silvery clouds. The blue sky; the shining sea; the mountains of California in the distance.

“My planet is beautiful, in spite of everything...”

"I told you so. It's marvelous and yet you people don't pay attention to it. Not only do you not pay attention, but you're destroying it and yourselves as well. If you folks understand that love is the most important thing in life and organize yourselves the way you should, you'll succeed in surviving. First you must consider all human beings on the planet as part of the same family, and then you must live just as families do anywhere: everyone must participate fairly in all efforts and in all benefits; everyone must be protected, loved and sheltered."

"And you told me that this must not be done through force, right?"

"Of course not. It must arise in a spontaneous way from the increasing of the level of love and of wisdom on Earth. It should be something highly simple, because it is natural, but when it is not guided by love, the intellect is put at the service of the ego and tangles things up to divide instead of unite and to benefit itself egotistically. On the other hand, when there is love, everything is diaphanous, transparent. And love is increasing in this world. That's why you should be very optimistic."

"I'm sleepy again..."

"Come here. I'll give you a new 'charge,' but tonight you have to sleep."

I lay down on a reclining chair. Once again Ami put the charger at the base of my head and I slept.

I woke up full of energy and happy to be alive.

"Why don't you stay with me for a few days, Ami? We could go to the beach."

"I'd like to do that," he said, patting me on the head, "but I have a lot of things to do. Many ignore the importance of love, and not only on Earth."

"You really serve a lot..."

"Thanks to Love. You should serve, too. Help to spread wisdom. Work for peace and union. Better yourself. Discard violence from your life forever."

"I'll do that... even though there are some people who deserve a good sock in the nose."

Ami laughed. "You're right, but they're socking themselves in the nose..."

"What do you mean?"

"People pay dearly for offenses against love. If they sow thorns, they can't harvest flowers. I already told you that we reap what we sow. Remember the suffering that's seen in so many places. There are those who suffer accidents, the losses of loved ones, 'bad luck,' so many things... That's the harvest of those who offend love, the Love God."

The little coastal town appeared. Ami stopped the spaceship a few yards over the beach.

We were invisible.

He accompanied me towards the exit, behind the command center.

We hugged. I was really sad and so was he.

The yellow lights went on and dazzled me.

"Remember that love is the road towards happiness," he said to me while I could feel myself descending.

I landed on the beach. Nothing was visible overhead but I knew that Ami was watching me. Maybe, like me, he had tears running down his cheeks.

I didn't want to leave yet. With a branch I drew a winged heart on the sand on the beach, so that he would know that I had listened to his message. Immediately after that something drew a circle around the heart.

I heard Ami's voice: "That is the Earth."

I walked off toward my house.

Everything looked pretty to me. I breathed in the aroma of the sea, caressed the sand, the trees, the flowers.

Until then I had never noticed how beautiful the pathway was. Even the rocks seemed to be vibrating.

Before entering my house I looked towards the sky in the direction of the sea. Nothing there. I felt a little troubled in my chest but I felt better thinking that soon I would see my grandmother.

When I arrived, she was still sleeping...

I arranged everything in my bedroom to look as if I were just getting up and went into the bathroom to take a shower. When I came out, my grandmother was standing there.

“How did you sleep, sweetheart?”

“Very well, Grandma. How about you?”

“Terrible, Jim... As usual. I didn’t sleep a wink all night.”

I couldn’t keep from throwing my arms around her.

“Grandma, I have a surprise for you. I’ll give it to you during breakfast.”

She made breakfast and served it.

I had placed the “walnuts” on a plate covered by one of the “elegant” napkins that we have for when visitors come. Five or six pieces of fruit were left.

“Try this, Grandma,” I said, offering her the plate.

“What are they, sweetheart?” she asked, finding their appearance strange.

“They’re extraterrestrial walnuts. Try them. They’re good.”

“The things you say, child. Let’s see. Mmmmm. How delicious! What is it?”

“I already told you. Extraterrestrial walnuts. Don’t eat more than three. They have too much protein.”

She didn’t pay attention to what I said and ate them all...

“Grandma, do you know what the Fundamental Law of the Universe is?”

I was radiant. I was going to teach her a majestic lesson...

“Of course, child,” she asked.

I got ready to correct her error. “What is it?”

“Love, of course, Jim,” she responded effortlessly.

It drove me crazy. How could she have know that? “But how did you know?” I exclaimed in disbelief.

“I don’t know... It’s what I feel in my heart.”

“Then, many other people must feel it, too,” I said a little disillusioned because I had found out that “the great novelty” that Ami had taught me was not such a “novelty” after all.

“Of course. I suppose that they do, Jim.”

“Then...why is there evil and war, Grandma?”

“Because not everyone feels it or wants to feel it.”

I went off into town. When I reached the town square, I froze. Coming towards me were the two policemen from the night before! They passed right by me, ignoring me. Suddenly they looked up. Other people were doing the same thing.

There, high above, a silvery, shiny object rocked back and forth, its lights changing colors—reds, blues, yellows, greens. The policemen were using their portable radios to communicate with the station house.

I was delighted and amused. I knew that Ami was watching me on the screen and happily waved to him.

An older man with a cane arrived, looking very upset about the uproar.

“A UFO! A UFO!” all the children cried happily.

The older man looked up and then looked down again with displeasure. “Ignorant, superstitious people! That’s a weather balloon, a helicopter, a plane. UFOs! How ignorant!” And with his cane he haughtily walked down the street, turning his back on the portentous spectacle that had appeared in the sky on that morning.

In my ear I heard the voice of Ami, the child from the stars: "Good-bye, Jim. Until we meet again."

"Good-bye, Ami," I replied emotionally.

The "UFO" disappeared.

The next day's newspapers didn't mention the occurrence.

It's just that these "collective hallucinations" have lost their novelty. They're not "news" anymore. Every day the number of ignorant, superstitious people increases.

On the beach of that California seaside resort there's a winged heart engraved on a rock, the same rock where I met Ami.

No one knows how it was made. It looks as if the rock melted to form that sign.

Anyone who goes there can see it. But it's hard to climb that high rock, especially for adults. A child is more agile and, above all, much lighter.

THE END

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