

PLANET X91

ALIEN AMONGST US

Book 10

CHAPTER ONE

ABOVE THE commotion and the shouts from the colonists who took to dancing on the grassland after hearing the news of the destruction of the invisible creature, Nick Benhill peeled himself away and casually strolled towards his tent.

Inside, away from probing eyes, he unzipped the rear flap in the thin waterproof material. Stepping over to the middle of the only bed he squatted and pulled out a silver suitcase from under the bed. Unlocking the case, he opened the lid. A quick glance at the tent's front flap, a few seconds to listen for any approaching footsteps and he focused on the twelve-round jet black baseball-size objects in their individual compartments inside the case. Snatching up a hand size rectangular shaped box he tapped a command on the front glass panel then replaced the unit back into the suitcase. He waited for a small green light to begin flashing before again giving the area around his tent a thorough study. When he felt positive not one human was looking his way, Nick Benhill pushed the enter button at the bottom right-hand side of the pad. The balls started vibrating in their individual containers before floating up out of the foam lined case. For a few seconds, they hovered two feet above the grassland. In a blink of an eye, they'd pushed their way through the small gap in the wall of the tent and shot skywards faster than a bullet. The AON particle trail each ball left behind quickly dispersed in the sea breeze. Studying the sky, Nick spied the last two seconds of a white trail as the six balls sped towards orbit.

Satisfied all six bombs were at the height of fifty-three thousand feet and will spread out around the USS Lock he pushed the suitcase back under the bed. Portraying a smirk, he strolled out of the tent.

Nick Benhill walked directly at the Piper spaceship. Folding his arms, he shouldered his way amongst a group of four.

"Morning Nick," chirped Florian, acknowledging his presence.

"What's so good about it?" he grumbled.

"We won. The invisible creature has gone."

"Yes, I suppose congratulations are in order."

"Thanks," replied Josh.

"Seeing how the sun is up, I'm here to see if you, Florian, might like to go for a walk into the forest?"

"Not really," she replied. "I'm still feeling a bit tired."

"Then I'll go alone."

"It's not a wise idea," she yawned.

"Why not?" questioned Nick.

"The forest isn't safe to go exploring on your own."

"Which brings me to the next point; I want to express my disappointment in being encased in a force field. I feel like a prisoner on this planet."

"It's for our protection," advised Major Reltso.

"There's nothing on the island which looks too threatening. I want to be able to go exploring whenever I want. To get through the force field, I'll have to ask permission from one of these three so-called leaders of the colony; which brings me around to why I came over. I resent having to be lorded over by three teenagers. I demand we elect a council to vote on the affairs of the colony."

"He has a point," blurted Major Reltso.

Josh, Florian, and Clay glared at Nick.

"What's your answer?"

"Perhaps he's right," hinted Josh. "Maybe we ought to involve the whole colony. We should have a diplomatic voting system in place so we can all choose who should be the leader."

"I think a council of at least six people is a good amount," said Clay.

"I'll organize to have the word spread around," advised Nick.

“While you’re at it, have each person write down what he thinks is a good idea so when the council is elected they can immediately begin to assess the ideas and vote on which order they are brought to fruition,” stated Josh.

“And how many people he or she thinks should be on the council,” instructed Florian.

“I will.”

They watched Nick march off towards the shuttle crafts. When he saw someone close by he changed direction. The first person he stopped Nick pointed towards the Piper, relaying what they planned. When he’d finished talking, Nick again marched towards the closest shuttle. When he reached the hatch, he stepped inside the vessel.

“He’s a bit over the top,” snorted Clay.

Flashing a glance at Florian, Josh didn’t want to commit to making her feel any more agitated.

“Yes, he is,” whispered Florian.

“I’d have to agree,” echoed Josh.

“I still think he’s an alien,” blurted Florian.

“If he is we still need our proof,” whispered Josh.

“Either way, we have to extend the force field out to the tree line and get it up and running,” advised Major Reltso.

“The sooner, the better,” said Clay. “We need to start planting crops. At present, the Piper has an abundance of food, however, with the imminent arrival of the remaining colonists, the food will quickly disappear.”

“The shuttles will be stocked, full of provisions,” announced Florian. “The food reserves should keep us going till the first crops begin to be harvested.”

“Three meals a day multiplied by five hundred colonists is a lot of food,” warned Clay.

“We should move the fence and quick,” gasped Major Reltso.

He marched off towards the large wooden crates stacked one on top of the other near the nose of the closest shuttle.

Florian could hear him yelling at several men to stop erecting tents and help expand the force field.

“He’s one military man I don’t want to upset,” chuckled Clay. “I’ll go join in on the fun.”

Spying Nick stepping out of the shuttle carrying a silver suitcase towards a tent Florian began to walk off.

“Where are you going?” questioned Josh.

“I want to have a close look at the suitcase.”

“Be careful. We don’t want Nick to feel like we might be onto him.”

“I’ll be the perfect actor,” announced Florian.

She walked briskly across the grassland to his tent. In an attempt to make her presence known she changed direction slightly so she could talk to a few teenage girls giggling in a small group close to Nick’s tent.

“Morning,” called Florian. “I’m looking for Nick Benhill.”

“I think he’s in the next tent,” replied one of the girls. “Say, are you the girl who crashed on this planet?”

“Yes.”

The girl pushed her hand out. “I’m Mara.”

“Florian Fawkes,” she replied.

Pointing to the other two girls, Mara introduced them. “This is Opaline and Katrina. She likes being called Kat for short.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” said Opaline.

“Same here,” added Kat. “There’s a rumor flowing around the colony you needed to fight an alien.”

“The rumor is true.”

“Tell us how you won,” whispered Mara.

“It’s a long story,” jeered Florian.

“What’s it like helping to fly an alien spaceship into space?”

“Who told you something like that?”

“Nick,” gossiped Mara.

“Is it true you went through time?” questioned Opaline.

“Yes. If you’ll excuse me it’s urgent I find Nick.”

Mara grabbed Florian by the arm preventing her from leaving. Glancing over her shoulder, Florian glared at the girl.

“Be warned, when it’s time to vote on the number of people who will be on the council to govern this colony I’m not going to vote for you. I’ll be voting for myself.”

“This is a diplomatic colony. Everyone has the right to vote for anyone they would like to see on the council,” jeered Florian.

She pulled away from her grip and marched off to the tent.

“Nick, are you in there?”

“Come in.”

Florian swatted the tent flap to one side and stepped in. The heat inside the tent hit her in the face. Folding her arms, she glared at the boy.

“What are you doing? I thought you’d be helping to erect the force field with the other men?”

“I have some other work to do,” replied Nick.

“Like what?”

“Help the girls put up their tent. Studying the sky, I reckon it might rain in a few hours.”

Dropping her arms to her sides, Florian glanced around the interior of the tent.

“There’s not much to see,” advised Nick.

“There shouldn’t be.” Seeing two suitcases under the bed, Florian slapped him on the shoulder. “Carry on. You’re doing a great job.”

“Will I see you soon?” Nick asked.

“I sure hope so. Maybe we could have lunch while sitting on top of the alien spaceship?”

“It sounds nice, blurted Nick. “I’ll be there.”

Florian walked out. Pulling on the flap, she closed the front of the tent and marched to where Josh appeared to be busy opening a wooden crate.

“Follow me,” announced Florian.

Josh walked next to her as they marched off behind the Piper. Out of sight of everyone and behind a sand-dune Florian squared herself to Josh.

“What’s up?”

“I went to talk to Nick. The suitcase he carried out of the shuttle he’d pushed under the bed.”

“Which means?”

“I think we need to take a look at what is inside the case.”

“Why?”

“It’s a hard case. We were issued with soft cases.”

“Yes, they were all black,” added Josh.

“The case Nick carried happened to be silver. There are now two identical cases under his bed.”

“It’ll be worth investigating,” whispered Josh. “We’ll have to wait for Nick to leave the area so I can go and investigate.”