

Lost in Space

Xeno Relations

(an alternate reality)

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About *Lost in Space*

This novella takes place in an alternate reality of the Xeno Relations series. *Lost in Space* went in one direction, while the final series went in another. It tells the story of gigantic Verdante children and other humans living on the Verdante home planet. In *Lost in Space*, drug abuse turns deadly. In the final three books of the series, semi-reptile humanoids created in the lab plagued Antaska instead. What all these books have in common is the mysterious bond of affection that can exist between members of the two very different species.

[Alien Pets](#) - Life gets weird when you're adopted by an alien. One million years in the future, young human Antaska and her psychic cat are adopted as pets by a gigantic alien. Traveling in outer space, she becomes telepathic in a world where that's dangerous. Then she gets into a love triangle that's even more dangerous. Her cat tries to tell Antaska what she's doing wrong, but will she listen? An all-new ending has been added to this version (10/2018).

[hypnoSnatch](#) - Is it love, or is it alien abduction? Things keep getting weirder when Antaska travels in outer space with an alien and her psychic cat. Mischievous but evil part-reptile humanoids team up with Antaska's nemesis, a genetically enhanced fitness instructor, to take revenge on her to the ends of the universe. Her unexpected alien abduction spoils their plans.

[Bonded in Space](#) - Strange things happen when a crazy alien can't get you out of his mind. Antaska wants to forget about Marroo the slave hunter, but she can't stop thinking about him. Marroo wants to forget about Antaska too. So he plans to kidnap another Earth female, experience her love, and move on. But it's not working out like he expected. Just out of space school, Earth girl Pweet can't wait to take off from Earth. But she runs into some problems. And Potat the psychic cat is miffed when another semi-humanoid cat follows Antaska home.

Chapter 1

A globe-shaped Verdante space ship dropped out of warp space into the star system of its home planet. Gigantic alien M. Hoyvil sat next to Earthling Antaska on a round sofa in one of the four space-viewing rooms located around the ship's equator. Their seats were reclined all the way back, and the tiny cat Potat lay on her back between them.

"We'll be on the home planet in a few more hours, so I should probably tell you some more about my species," M. Hoyvil said to Antaska.

"Sure," said Antaska. "I'd like to hear more about the Verdantes."

"Well, first of all, you'll notice that all the females will get off the ship on the home planet. They won't get back on when we leave on the big trip to unknown space. We don't allow our females to travel in space for safety reasons," M. Hoyvil explained. "But don't worry. We can take Earth females along because it's not dangerous for them to travel with us."

There was a lot more to it than that. The danger in space was for females who were telepathic, but M. Hoyvil didn't want to explain that for some reason. He just didn't want to think about it.

Antaska and Potat will be safe with me, no matter what, he told himself.

"Anyway," M. Hoyvil went on, "we'll be on the Verdante planet for a week. We'll stay at the residence of my primary gene contributors, Master Meepp and Mistress Bawbaw. You'll meet some of their Earthling companions while we're there."

"That sounds good," said Antaska.

"I won't be around at night," M. Hoyvil told her. "We're only there a week, and all the males are gone for a hundred years. So they have these social events whenever we're home. They're really important. I hope you won't be bored."

"No. I understand, and I won't be bored," said Antaska. "Besides, I'll have Potat with me."

Potat purred loud in between them.



A few hours later, the ship approached the Verdante planet.

M. Hoyvil pointed out the two bright stars of his planet's binary solar system to Antaska. One was yellow, one was red. The stars grew ever larger and closer. The yellow star started to look less like a twinkly dot and more like the Earth sun Antaska was used to—a bright yellow circle surrounded by glowing light.

“I should warn you that sometimes Earthlings are disturbed by their first sight of our second star, the red giant,” M. Hoyvil told Antaska as that star loomed closer. “Because humans are used to seeing a small yellow dwarf as the largest object in their sky.”

Antaska looked out at the large red sun. M. Hoyvil was right. It was impressive, and she might have been scared if he hadn't given her the warning.

“Next, you'll see the ten planets in our binary solar system come into view,” said M. Hoyvil. “That one's the home planet.”

He pointed at the planet with his large, six-fingered hand, and Antaska stared at their next destination. At first, the Verdante planet looked like a bright green gem. Then it increased in size until small mountains, oceans, and other features were visible. It looked similar to the cloud-decorated land and water masses of Earth when seen from space.

But when the space ship penetrated the planet's atmosphere and slowed to approach, it was clear that this planet was larger than Earth and much greener.

They entered the planet's gravity well. The lounge they were in was now sideways relative to the ground they were heading toward. It was like they were lying on the side of a wall. But the ship's artificial gravity kept them from falling. Antaska felt a wave of dizziness.

Then the floor of the room began a slow rotation to one side. The change was gradual and gentle, but Antaska was glad she was lying down on the couch instead of standing up while this was happening. She noticed Potat's claws digging into the fabric of her ship suit.

“It’s OK,” Antaska tried to reassure her.

“Oh, right. I forgot to warn you about that too,” said M. Hoyvil.

“I guess we’ll forgive you this time,” Antaska heard Potat say telepathically.

To distract herself from the rotating room, Antaska looked for buildings, but she couldn’t find any. She saw only green-covered lands, water bodies, and some areas of rock and sand. On their final approach, there wasn’t a single humanoid-made structure in sight. Giant trees loomed up large in the wide view seen from the transparent bubble.

“Many of our planet’s trees grow to over 500 feet tall, far past the height of Earth’s tallest redwoods,” M. Hoyvil explained.

At last, the floor stabilized parallel to the approaching ground.

“Do you want to go over to the side to look down and see where we’ll be landing?” M. Hoyvil asked. “It’s a cool view if you’re not scared of heights.”

“I’ll go,” said Potat telepathically.

M. Hoyvil picked up Potat and put her on his shoulder.

“I’ll look too,” said Antaska.

They walked to the outer edge of the room’s clear bubble. Straight down below them, a round, paved area grew larger as the ship sunk down toward its landing platform.

Of all the areas of the planet Antaska seen so far, only this area had a flat concrete surface with no plant life at all. Rising from, parked on, or landing on this surface were vast numbers of round Verdante space ships of various sizes.

A gigantic stone statue of a tree dominated the center of the enormous circle. It was even bigger than the largest living trees Antaska had seen from above.

“What’s that?” Antaska asked M. Hoyvil, pointing at the stone tree.

“That statue is a memorial,” said M. Hoyvil. “It’s for all the trees and plants that died a million years ago when my species first came to this planet. In their ignorance, they killed most of the natural life in this area. Do you want me to tell you the story? I have to warn you that many Earthlings have trouble accepting this, and sometimes I have to admit that I feel the same way.”

“Yes, I’d like to hear the story,” said Antaska.

She was curious, and Potat stopped washing her face. She sat up straight and alert on M. Hoyvil's shoulder and looked toward him.

"The trees on this planet are sentient. They don't talk to me, but the adults claim to understand them," he said. "And this is the story they tell. When the Verdantes first settled on this planet, we weren't evolved enough to understand the speech of the trees. We cut down many of them, and we built wood and concrete buildings on the land.

"After many generations of living here, some of my ancestors claimed to hear humming sounds and whispering voices in their heads. At first, everyone thought these people were crazy. No one listened to them. But as time went on, more and more people heard the sounds and voices. Finally, people of all ages could hear the humming, and the adults could hear the voices as well. They stopped denying the voices were real and started to listen.

"The voices identified themselves as the large trees that grow on this planet. They said they were long-lived sentient beings, rooted to one spot by their physical manifestation as plants. They forgave us for killing their people, but they asked us to stop. We could build our homes underground where no sentient life would be killed. Fortunately, our population was small at that time, and we hadn't killed any trees outside of this area.

"Since then, this spot has been a dead zone. It's the only place on the planet where no life grows or will ever grow. The trees let us use it as a landing port. And we built this statue from the first stones that we dug up to build our new underground homes.

"So each time we take off or return from a trip to space, we see this monument. It's supposed to remind us of the harm we can cause if we don't understand the other species we find," M. Hoyvil said as he finished speaking.

Then, without any bumps or jerks, the space ship came to a smooth stop. They had arrived.

Chapter 2

In a vacuum-powered passenger tube, Potat, Antaska, and M. Hoyvil whooshed around and down miles deep into the Verdante planet. They landed at the exit to the underground residences. Inside a pocket on M. Hoyvil's jacket, Potat shook herself vigorously to clear the aftereffects of the unaccustomed motion. The tube door opened, and she popped her tiny head out to investigate.

A brilliant burst of strange new sights, sounds, and smells bombarded the little cat. The air, cool and crisp compared to the space ship and even Earth, sharpened her senses. Only the planet's 0.8 Earth gravity, a close match to the space ship, felt familiar.

Potat's tiny eyes grew wide to take in the sight of the vast underground area. Plants, grass, trees, flowers, everything was at least three times larger than on Earth. Surrounding the huge domed space, tall trees soared hundreds of feet up to blend blurrily with what looked like a deep blue sky.

"Ah! The fresh smelly smell of the old home!" exclaimed M. Hoyvil.

He took a deep breath of circulated underground air.

"Up there is a holograph made to look like our planet's sky," he explained, pointing upward.

Imitations of the planet's two suns—the red giant and the white dwarf—shone on the twilight side of sky-like blueness dotted with drifting puffy clouds.

"But the sunlight is real—channeled down from the surface," he said. "The air is also circulated from above. This is my neighborhood's central park. The entrance to our underground home is a few miles around this path."

Verdante-sized paved walkways wandered through the miles of enormous park, gently rolling hills, and gigantic landscaped greenery.

"Beautiful! Amazing!" said Antaska in the breathless voice Potat recognized as verging on culture shock.

Must be hard to be a humanoid, thought Potat.

She leaned farther out of M. Hoyvil's pocket and widened her ears. Fascinating! The chirps and tweets of alien birds, the rustle of unknown creatures moving through the grass, the buzz of insects, the quiet hum of the air circulation system. And beneath that—oh no! Not them again! That humming sound was the same slow telepathic speech Potat had listened to on the space ship for a whole month! Unlike the two humanoids, Potat understood this very, very slow speech, and she found it most annoying.

“Ccccccccccaaaaaaaaaa....,” blasted as loud in her mind as the blare of an ancient Earth ship horn.

Many trees at once, maybe all of them, telepathically spoke the beginning of their word for cat. Their rate of expressing about one word per hour sorely tried the patience of a creature who lived at seven times the speed of an Earth human.

I thought the four trees on the space ship were bad, but they were nothing compared to this bunch, thought Potat. I guess I know what I'll be doing for the whole week we spend on this planet—having a boring conversation with the sentient plant life! I just hope when we get inside it'll cut down on the volume.

Now Potat's curious pink nose sniffed deep and breathed in sweet flowers, succulent birds and bugs, fresh grass, and ... and a blast of the foul smell of reptilian evil!

“Reyoww!” she shouted the cat war cry at the top of her lungs as M. Hoyvil and Antaska stepped out of the tube into the vermin-infested place.

“What's up, kitten?” asked Antaska. “Did the tube ride make you dizzy?”

Potat's head whipped sideways to look at the genetically designed doll-like face of her beloved first pet Antaska. Then Potat tilted her tiny round head all the way back to look up at the big green face of her newest pet M. Hoyvil. The enormous top part of his head loomed above the narrower, smaller bottom part of his face. Gigantic upward-slanting eyes crinkled down at her in concern.

“Are you OK, little one?” he asked.

“There is evil on this planet! Unmentionable in the depths of its horror! Even for a cat! Unspeakable reptilian evil!” Potat cried telepathically.

“Reyoww!” she screamed out another war cry in case any of the reptiles were nearby.

“Are you saying there are stinky lizards on this planet?” asked M. Hoyvil, who still had a limited ability to understand Potat’s telepathic speech. “You’re right, there are some reptiles here. Reptiles, bugs, and birds but no other mammals until the Verdantes came here.”

He tilted his head back up and paused to smell the air.

“Ah, yes,” he said after taking a big sniff with a nose not much larger than an Earthling adult nose but many times more powerful. “I recognize that smell. It’s the familiar reek of the native Verdante planet lizard. But it seems stronger than I remember and somehow different too. Hmm. Maybe the population increased since I’ve been away these last fifty years. Well, anyway, don’t worry. They won’t bother us. They’re just a bunch of scaredy cats.”

Potat hissed.

“Sorry, I mean they’re timid,” M. Hoyvil said.

“But don’t worry. This is the safest place in the galaxy. Completely regulated by the benevolent trees. Believe me, nothing ever happens here. In the 600 years I lived here, nothing ever happened,” he said, followed by a sigh.

One of his huge space-booted feet kicked out at nothing.

Potat looked down at the leafy green ground cover surrounding the edge of the pavement. Round leaves, larger and thicker than anything similar on Earth, rose up higher than Antaska’s knees. The leaves shook and rippled as if creatures much larger than Potat traveled unseen beneath them.

Then a gigantic blue, orange, and green butterfly fluttered past. Fascinated, Potat reached out to swipe at it with a hopeful paw.

“Easy, tiger,” said M. Hoyvil. “It’s against the rules for non-native creatures—that’s you, me, and Antaska—to harm any of the native life. The trees would kick us all off the planet for that. Not that I would really mind so much... Well, maybe. I don’t know. I guess I’d miss my shared gene group.”

The strong, unmistakable smell of bird distracted Potat from M. Hoyvil’s rambling. Clinging onto his pocket with deep dug claws, she thrust her small gray and white head

far out. The delicious bird aroma activated her natural cat instincts, and a small amount of saliva formed inside her mouth. A tiny drop leaked out of one corner, releasing microscopic feline hormones into the air.

A loud “caw, caw” sound came from the sky above.

“That sounds like those obnoxious mocking birds on Earth who torment cats by diving at them and pecking them with their sharp, pointy beaks!” said Antaska.

All three turned their heads up toward the sound. An enormous dark bird, at least three times the size of any mocking bird Potat had ever seen, flew in ominous circles in the air above them.

With no warning, the big bird ended its circular flight pattern and dove down at a sharp angle and rapid velocity. Its shiny beak was like an arrow shot at Potat’s head.

Potat froze in M. Hoyvil’s pocket. She closed her tiny eyes and prepared to meet her destiny. Thoughts raced through her head seven times faster than human thought.

There’s no escape. My only regret is that I won’t be able to watch out for my pet Antaska and my new pet M. Hoyvil. What will they do without me? They need a cat to take care of them. Sigh! Now is a not a good time for me to die! Who will protect them from the unspeakably evil reptile creatures on this planet? Well, I guess this is it.

Then the light glowing through Potat’s closed eyelids grew dark.



Instinctively, reflexively, with fast-reacting muscles developed by a month of intense exercise on the space journey here, Antaska had jumped in front of M. Hoyvil to put herself between Potat and the approaching bird. Her head and chest blocked little Potat, and she covered her own face and heart with her arms. The two artificial suns, positioned low on the artificial horizon, cast Potat in her shadow.

A fatal stab in the chest or head was a possibility. Antaska couldn’t think as fast as a cat, but her martial arts mental training kicked in. It allowed only one thought to enter

her mind—an image. With eyes closed, Antaska visualized a shiny, sharp beak going into an arm.

“Thunk,” Antaska heard loud and clear, but she felt no pain, nothing.

‘Could I be dead?’ she wondered.



With lightning speed, M. Hoyvil, also conditioned by hundreds of years of even more intense exercise, had twisted sideways around Antaska. He couldn't think as fast as Potat, but he had the ability and habit of thinking many thoughts at once.

Pesky thing! and I wonder what's for dinner? he thought, as superior vision and the machine-fast reflexes of a Verdante adolescent let him block the predatory bird with a casual lift of one long arm.

At the sound of the thunk, Potat and Antaska both opened their eyes. But with a speed too fast for human or cat eyes to see, M. Hoyvil grasped the bird's beak, pulled it out of his shoulder, and tossed it back into the air.



All Potat saw was a blur of motion and then the bird flying away in a wobbly flight pattern.

“Darn,” said M. Hoyvil. “I hope I won't get in trouble with the trees for this.”

“I didn't hurt it. It's fine,” Potat heard him say telepathically to the trees. “Anyway, it's my responsibility to protect these two, and that's that. I don't know if you can even understand me since your mental speech is so slow. So the adults say. It all sounds like humming to me. I guess I'll understand you when I'm an adult in another 300 years. No rush on that!”

M. Hoyvil turned to check on Antaska. He looked down at her and then bent his head farther down to check on Potat.

Potat felt stressed out. She burrowed down inside M. Hoyvil's pocket and made a small mewling sound. Antaska's hand gently pulled down the top of the pocket, which was about level with Antaska's eyes. Potat's two tiny gold eyes looked out at her from a small, scared face.

"Mew," said Potat, "mew, mew!"

"I'm so sorry!" M. Hoyvil said. "I've never seen a bird act like that. They're usually just harmless but annoying creatures. But don't worry. After we get inside the residence, you'll both be in the safest place in the galaxy. I'll protect Potat if anything else happens before we get there."

As he spoke, Potat noticed a humongous lizard—the size of a small Earth alligator—slithering toward them through the grass. It stopped a few feet away, poked its head out, and stuck out a wiggly forked tongue. M. Hoyvil lifted a long leg and stomped one huge foot down on the pavement near the lizard.

"Thump!" The ground trembled beneath their feet. The ground cover rippled as the lizard slithered away. M. Hoyvil lifted his bird-poked arm and held it protectively across Potat.

"See, no problem," said M. Hoyvil to Antaska.

She stared at the side of his arm, and her gray almond-shape eyes widened to almost full circles. M. Hoyvil twisted the arm around and looked at it. Potat saw a row of huge drops of golden sap-like blood dripping down from the wound at a snail's pace.

"Oh, that? It's just a scratch," said M. Hoyvil.

Antaska continued to stare fixedly at the arm as if mesmerized.

This is not good, thought Potat.

"There's something wrong with my pet Antaska," she said to M. Hoyvil in her cat telepathic voice.

"Did you say, 'My pet! My pet!'" he asked Potat. "Do you mean Antaska?"

He swung his big green head back and forth to look from one to the other.

"Antaska's in shock!" said Potat. "She's having culture shock again or something."

"What?" asked M. Hoyvil.

“My pet!” shouted Potat again, as Antaska’s eyes closed and her body started to crumple down.



M. Hoyvil swung out his uninjured arm and caught Antaska before she hit the ground.

“Meww!” yelled Potat from his pocket in the audible language of her species.

“Don’t worry, I’ve got this,” said M. Hoyvil.

He set Antaska gently on the ground. Potat dove out of his pocket and landed on Antaska’s stomach. She crouched down, twitched her white-tipped gray tail, and growled protectively.

M. Hoyvil took a small object out of another pocket—the health scanner Antaska’s human veterinarian gave him when M. Hoyvil adopted her from Earth. He pressed a button, and a beam of orange light shot out from the scanner. Starting at the top of her head, he slowly moved the light down to below her toes.

The device beeped and then spoke in a robotic voice.

“Female Earthling in good health has fainted due to emotional distress, slight dehydration, and low blood sugar. Should wake in approximately ten minutes. Provide food and beverage upon awakening. Small bruising on stomach due to recent impact. A small live creature is now located on the area of impact.”

The scanner’s orange light grew wide and circular with wavy black lines that flowed across Potat.

“Beep! Beep! Detecting! Small feline. Female. Cat!” screamed the scanner.

M. Hoyvil pressed the off button and put the device away.

“That’s right! We skipped lunch to watch the approach to the planet, and now it’s dinner time,” M. Hoyvil said.

His stomach grumbled and growled in agreement.

“There’s no time to waste!” he said.

M. Hoyvil scooped up little Potat in a huge six-fingered hand and popped her back into his pocket. Then he lifted Antaska. He took off running at top speed on the path that circled the park. The pavement rumbled under his super-fast pounding feet. The leafy ground cover rustled with the movements of many small creatures in flight. His extreme velocity created currents in the air he passed through, and the leaves of the giant telepathic trees trembled.

In no time, M. Hoyvil had covered a few miles. On the side of the dome wall, a large circle printed with an alien symbol marked the entrance to his home. But he didn't slow down to press his hand on it.

"This is an emergency. There's no time for manners," M. Hoyvil said.

He plunged feet first into the wall. The elastic wall material expanded inward and stretched around him, bulging into the residence. It took the shape of his jumping form and then peeled away to drop him onto the floor. He landed on his feet with a loud boom in a long, tall entrance hallway leading to a set of huge double doors.

"I'm home!" yelled M. Hoyvil telepathically.

"M. Hoyvil! How many times have I told you not to enter the home like a barbarian!" M. Hoyvil heard the mental shout of his primary gene contributor, Mistress Bawbaw, answering back loud and clear through the walls of the residence.



Telepathic yelling roused Antaska from some deep place. She tried to return to the comforting darkness. A woman's loud mental shout pulled her out. Antaska stirred. She opened her eyes and saw huge doors of fantastic design burst open in the distance.

"What? Where?" Antaska mumbled.

"Oh good, you're awake," said M. Hoyvil.

He placed her in a standing position on the floor.

"Pick my pet back up. She's not ready for this," Antaska heard Potat's tiny mental cat voice.

“Yes, ‘your pet, your pet,’ I know she’s your pet,” said M. Hoyvil, again showing his limited understanding of Potat’s telepathic speech.

A mixed mob of humanoids in sizes ranging from gigantic to smaller than Antaska, all shouting at once both vocally and telepathically, flowed toward the three visitors. The glow from a cavernous room filled with giant-sized furniture lit the door opening behind the surging mob.

Three of the smallest Verdantes Antaska had ever seen—almost the size of an adult Earthling, but chubby with childlike features—rushed ahead of the others. They pushed and shoved each other as they attempted to throw their arms around M. Hoyvil all at once.

M. Hoyvil threw up a protective arm over Potat, who curled up in a tiny ball deep in his pocket. The corners of his eyes lifted high, and he hugged each of the smaller Verdantes with his free arm.

The three giant children shouted and jumped excitedly around M. Hoyvil. Then the rest of the crowd of green Verdantes and various Earthlings surged closer. The shouting, both vocal and telepathic, grew louder. Then a piercing baby’s telepathic wail outdid them all.

The mental and vocal noise pounded inside Antaska’s head. In her vision, the colorful surging crowd swayed and spun. Her stomach lurched along with her sight. She shut her eyes, and the noise receded. The sounds shrunk smaller, much smaller, and Antaska knew she was about to faint.

The last thing she heard was Potat’s tiny telepathic scream: “My pet! My pet!”

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