

Martian Short Stories Three
The Book of Strange Spatial Aphorisms
and Alien Hyperbole of Man's Constant
State of Happiness and Sorrow

by Cliff Rhodes

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Preface:

This book entails short stories of human, artificial intelligence, or even skeptical alien character and vague memories, not entirely true but not that far-fetched. They might have happened in a dream or on some dark night when all reason seemed to be in a fog. Someone might have remembered them, or they might not have even happened yet, or never will at all. Some stories might deal with spatial disorientation, about which there is no real authentication but may leave the viewer feeling that they could have been there once in real life, or simply dreamed it, as if an experience of strange *déjà vu* has just appeared and then passed them by. Can you be in two places at one time? We'll see. How do you know that just because you dreamed something, that it wasn't actually happening to someone else? Strange dimensions of space and time might not be relative in one world and completely valid in another.

1. The Alien Abduction

The continuous lethargy of memory purging left Annaleah somewhat dazed and slow to complete her spatial tasks, but she only commented to herself that it was abusive. Not wanting her alien abductors to recognize resistance in her personality, she tried to only think demure thoughts for her tormentors. She still retained some vague memory functions, even the ability to recognize that they were not only messing with her mind, but also doing something horrendous to her body. The constant hum of machinery was all around her, almost throbbing with a pulse that she could feel, all throughout her supine body. She felt like she could hear and feel her own heartbeat and its syncopated rhythm that at times seemed to keep beat with the machines. Strangely, the two separate monotonous beats were off and on at different times. Were the aliens keeping time, aligning the machinery pulses with her own heart beat? They often walked in on the analysis and production phases of her memory actuation, making minute adjustments to the instrumentation that was connected to her brain, and sometimes the thin gray shapes even probed her body with various medical devices.

She tried to relax and cooperate, not wanting to present a divisive problem to her captors that would immediately cause her to be projected deeper into some kind of comatose psychosis that would be difficult to claw her way out of again. Often times, Annaleah would fade in and out of consciousness, even visibly making eye contact with the alien life forms that were mostly not hostile with their touching and soft groping exploration procedures. It made her feel as if they were empathetic and spiritually aware, but at the same time had feelings of gratification with their humiliating experiments. By the expressions on their faces, which she managed to randomly glimpse, they seemed to achieve some sort of bizarre pleasure out of her exposure and willingness to cooperate with them. It was still torment, no matter how her mind tried to explain away the obsessiveness of her captors, the experiment that was being performed on her own body. Hours and hours went by, and they weren't getting anywhere with the mental blocks that her own mind was throwing up against her tormentors, as if it was a thing that remained alive of its own volition. No matter how many suggestive triggers they used on her, she still remained somehow deeply in control of her own mind, not permitting her alien abductors success at breaking her will.

In an adjacent cell that was surrounded by the same metallic equipment, another human subject was lying on a similar stainless steel table, hooked up to mechanical and electrical medical equipment. His mind was still holding on through all the mental probes and an infusion of different narcotic drugs and molecular wave propagation. The enumerable occasions of mental bombardment reached borderline catatonic separation of minimal normal reasoning ability. He prayed and prayed for God to either end his life or provide some means of escape. It seemed as though there was little else but meager hope, until he contacted the young girl that was in the next chamber. He didn't know who she was or where she was located exactly. All he knew was that he had made a supernatural contact; a mental bridge had been crossed, and hope was not just alive but mentally and physically a tangible thing that could be envisioned and touched, like a soft warm blanket on a freezing cold winter night. He even knew her name that flowed across his own lips like a taste of honey and a smell that seemed delicious.

Annaleah, that was the name she told to him, and he gave her his name as well. He was Marco Madison. What a beautiful name she had, Annaleah Arlington. The two of them became great friends, within the time space of only minutes, as if the whole of both lifetimes had quickly flashed across each of their minds. It was a supernatural episode, brought on by extreme duress and the torment of mental cruelty by the alien beings. By conducting their bizarre experiments, the alien creatures had unleashed a mental capacity and phenomenon that had only existed in fairy tales and science fiction fantasy storybooks read to children. It became a real drama of increased mental capacity that flowed across a bridge that had been formed out of thin air and penetrated walls and overcame extreme brain washing by alien creatures. The phenomenon had triumphed in its establishment. Now, all that was left to do was implement a physical reality that could lead to their escape and rescue, or at least an opening of an area of safety and security.

Annaleah began to envision her chance for escape. One of the gray beings left the room, after monitoring her brain waves and authorized the injection of food into the tube that had been placed in her mouth. The warm liquid began to flow down the tube from the overhead machine that unfolded from the ceiling. Just before the liquid sustenance slowly descended within the clear plastic tube, the alien left the room and Annaleah was alone. For some reason, she imagined that the food also had a drug that would make her sleep.

So, she thought to refuse the tasteful rewarding mixture and let it spill out of her mouth, coughing up and regurgitating it in spasms. That caused the tube to be ejected out, and she managed to spit the tube and the liquid out of her mouth at the same time, before swallowing any of the thick gray liquid. When they returned, she would be electronically admonished with charges intended for punishment, the tube reinstated, and the flow of food and medicine begun anew. This time she had a chance to figure out a way of escape, before being drugged again into a deep state of unconsciousness. Annaleah looked around herself with a clear mind and decided to try and rock the enclosure in which she was encased. It was a clear plastic looking bubble of some sort that moved slightly when she exerted a rocking motion with her body. If it fell over, she might even be able to break out of the restraints, if parts of the clear plastic case could be moved or even broken by dashing it against the floor. She was quiet at first, gathering her strength, since it had been days, possibly weeks that she had been in this situation, either on the table or laying down on a soft plastic-like foam bedding material. Three times a day, she was re-positioned in the bedding area of the table, to be fed and experimented on, but still always enclosed in the bubble canopied enclosure. She was locked in the soft bedding material, which retracted into the sides of the enclosure and only the metal table remained, and it would elevate to the top of the domed capsule, where they had easy access to all her body, held in restraints. It was at this time that she felt most liable to find a way to escape.

The aliens couldn't be very far away. They might enter again into her cubicle at any time. She actually did not know if she was being held in a separate room or at a place where many others were all in a row, separated by only partitions. Annaleah knew that her body was weak with the constant condition in which she was being maintained in a reclining position. She was feeling a weakness and an atrophy of her muscles. She often dreamed about returning to her previous form of physical conditioning, after running for miles and miles along the secluded country roads, where she had lived. It was precisely on one of her daily jogging routines that she had been taken by force. The memories were vague and obscure, but Annaleah did remember some of the things that had happened.

Early in the morning, almost at the break of day, she often started on her run, going along the paved road that bordered the lake, where she lived and continuing on for miles into the country. Completely alone except for only a few cows for company, she was in a secluded

area that was enclosed on both sides of the road with barbed wire fences that was uninterrupted and broken by the occasional entry into random private properties. No one missed her for several days when it happened. There was no family of support to call and check on her. Annaleah was such a private and independent individual that almost nobody would miss her, living in a secluded area, where there was often very little traffic. She had no real friends, other than her classmates in school and that met only twice a week. Annaleah was a part-time student at a local community college, taking Art and some of the basic core requirements for graduation.

Sometimes aliens would take away all her memories with their constant drugs and electrical brainwave scans. They tested her brain activity and would increase their medication if they found her too active. On occasions, Annaleah could reduce the amount of drug therapy by regurgitating her liquid food that flowed at periodic times into the tube, but that did not always work. This time, she felt it was exactly the right time to try and break away or at least break the mold that she was enclosed in. Maybe it would open up if it fell to the floor, and she could crawl out of it. Now was the time. With all her feeble strength that she could muster, Annaleah began a rocking motion that gradually increased in its momentum with repetition. The legs of the supporting apparatus began to eclipse the floor, where they were held down by light gravity. Wherever the aliens were keeping her captive, it had a definite gravity field. It was seemingly apparent to her that she was not in outer space, or there would have been no gravity to manipulate with her rocking motion. She increased her minute application of force, every time the enclosure rotated back to regain its equilibrium, forcing it to continue in its arc to widen the rotation about its main center of mass. Eventually, she achieved an even greater disturbance in its balance, and soon it began to tip over at its fulcrum, leaving one last instance of exertion from her weak muscles that had already atrophied from inactivity.

It suddenly tipped up and over, and she felt herself falling a short distance, landing with a crash on the hard tile floor. It was a shock, but Annaleah was almost gleeful in her achievement, hoping against all odds that she was not being closely observed. The top of the plastic enclosure fell open, and she was physically thrown out of the plastic bubble onto the cold stone of a ceramic-like floor. Pulling and squirming to get her legs and feet out of the canopy, she finally freed herself and began to move and crawl. She couldn't actually stand up immediately, but she tried several times until finally her legs

began to hold her weight, even though her physical condition left her trembling. Success brought more work, and she began to perspire at the attempt to regain her equilibrium and balance upon standing. The aliens did not come immediately running back into her room, and looking around gave her a better view of exactly where she was being held, as she was now able to focus her vision far ahead. Looking over the short partitions that separated her from the others, she saw into the distance, rows and rows of similar cubicles that housed many more captives. They were indeed formed into some kind of circular structure, because the horizon stretched and turned up in the distance, as though everything was on an incline in both directions, looking like they were in some kind of tubular shape that apparently was spinning in outer space to achieve centripetal gravity.

In a few minutes, she was able to regain some of her strength and moved out of her small cubicle through an opening into the next one, where she found a male captive, still enclosed in his apparatus, with the canopy intact. She moved in closer and opened up the cover, pulling at the entangled web of tubes and wires to free him from his alien oppressors. She noticed that he also had refused the food coming down from the tube, and thick gray ooze covered his mouth and pooled around his neck.

Suddenly his eyes opened, and he seemed to recognize the beautiful earthly shape of a woman that was pulling at him, trying to get him to move up and out of the enclosure. Marco Madison felt the touch of Annaleah's hand, gently coaxing him to wake up from the daze and perpetual torment of the drugged state of stupor and catatonia that the aliens had left him in.

"I think I know you, or at least I have dreamed about you. Is your name Annaleah? I'm sure I know you from somewhere deep within my mind," Marco said, trying to form the words upon his lips that felt like jelly.

"Yes, that's my name, Annaleah Arlington. I know you also, from the deepest part of my mental struggle. I found you and talked to you in my dreams, which were almost like a fantasy that has now become a reality. We have to move away from our cubicles and find some place where we can hide, away from the beings who brought us here. They will eventually look at their monitors and come to check on us to see what happened," she said, trying to rub his arms and legs to get the circulation going and reduce the muscle atrophy.

"I'm so weak and I can barely keep my eyes open. The last

thing I remember is running way out on the highway, next to my house in the country. It was so sudden that I had no time to react,” said Marco.

“The same thing happened to me. My morning jog turned into a nightmare. They came and just picked me up, pulling me into the sky on some kind of strange wire or transport gravity beam. I remember that I couldn’t move or I would have jumped off the thing, and believe me I tried but my muscles wouldn’t respond, as if the electrical signal was not going from the brain to the nerves that send the signal to the muscles. It was almost like being totally incapacitated. We’ve got to get moving though, right now, and get some feeling back into the arms and legs. I’m sure they will not stay very long away from their monitors. I set up a rocking motion and made my enclosure crash to the floor and the top came open. It must have hit at just the right angle to dislodge the locking mechanism and make it fall open. It appears that yours was a little hard to open though. Let’s get you up and over the top of this thing. Let me have your arms. Maybe, I can pull you and the thing will tilt up and over like mine did. They have a light gravity on this spaceship. I think we are in outer space, because the building is like a tube that goes up and around. There is no horizon, just more cubicles like the one we are in now, and they stretch as far as the eye can see, rolling up and up,” said Annaleah.

She pulled and strained with the little strength she had, and the incubation unit tilted over naturally, as if it was hinged to fold that way, and the hydraulic mechanism let Marco down to the tile floor with a thud, a little less than the crashing effect of the rocking motion she had instigated with her own unit. He struggled free of the bordering lip of the plastic unit until he managed to crawl out with the help of Annaleah Arlington.

“I’m out and free. Now, just help me to my feet and I’ll see if I can walk a bit. My muscles don’t actually cooperate very well, but I think they might work in a few minutes. We won’t have long before they come back to look at the instrumentation. Two units going down at the same time will surely bring a response.”

“We better hurry and try to hide somewhere, until they can start a coordinated search. We need to be in a different part of the ship when that starts and that means we have to get out of this open area of multiple cubicles. It will take some time to search this area, since it is all open and we could be in any of these accessible places,” said Annaleah with an urgency in her feeble voice.

“Let’s try to get a door open to the cargo area, where they might keep other transport ships. There has got to be a way back to Earth. They must have something that goes back down to pick up more like us, more humans,” said Marco, finally getting to his feet and moving along the nearest wall, holding on to Annaleah.

As she held him up, she brushed up against his body with hers. It was beautifully provocative, and suddenly he became aware of her closeness, sending his neurons firing in different parts of his own body. He reacted instantly to her closeness, since neither of them were clothed, and he felt ashamed of being excited but there was no way to hide it from her.

“As soon as we can, we’ll get some clothes on, Marco. It’s no good for either one of us right now. If you’re curious about me, I can tell you that I’m feeling the same physical reaction that you are. It will be better that we ignore those feelings for now,” said Annaleah, as they helped each other move more into the next cubicle and on to the next in a maze of alien architecture. Finally, they discovered and moved into an opening that automatically closed after they entered, leading down into another level. It was a cargo transport area, built to accommodate the cubicles with stacks of enclosures that would be moved up into the cubicles for the use of their human subjects. Beyond its border was another open area that was used as a launching bay. Through the glass enclosure they could see movement of other aliens, moving in and out of another space shuttle transport.

Annaleah had the great idea to conceal themselves within one of the next drop ships that would be going back to Earth to pick up other humans. They could be very quick and quiet, before any of the other aliens were alerted, and stowaway on board the closest one.

“You see that closest transport that the aliens are loading up with cargo capsules? Those look like a human could fit easily inside one of those pods they’re carrying. Maybe that is the way they bring us back here, encased in those black capsules. Lets get closer, and just before they close the door, we’ll move inside. I’m not staying here another minute. I want to go back to Earth.”

“OK, Annaleah. As soon as they load the last black pod and move to the other side, we’ll go in before they go to get the others.”

They positioned themselves closer and closer, so that at the last minute they would be able to enter quickly, before being discovered. When the two aliens loaded up the last pod of the stack, they moved around the ship, and Annaleah grabbed the hand of Marco and as

quickly as possible in their weakened condition, they both moved inside to the back of the transport ship. Hiding far back into the boxes and pod modules, the two waited until the doors closed. Everything was automated, except for the one pilot who would operate the traction device to personally capture and bring up the humans from the planet below. Alarms were going off in the incubation section of the compartments within the huge mother ship, where thousands of humans were being analyzed and programmed. All over the ship a hunt was underway, but the cargo bay doors were already open and the drop ship was ejected into the upper atmosphere of the planet, quickly penetrating through the cloud layers.

Far below, there were people, carrying on with their daily lives, cultivating gardens and scurrying about their daily chores of trying to find food and sustenance. The drop ship had entered the atmosphere and was carrying out grid patterns of search for humans on the planet below. The pilot was oblivious of the two humans that had stowed away in the back of the ship. He was gliding barely above the surface of a small lake now, waiting for the right opportunity to bring up more humans into the transport ship. For some reason, the pilot had wanted to get closer to observe the lush plant growth and scenic beauty of the planet below. He had been on the space ship for years and had never been close enough to appreciate the real beauty of a natural garden with real plants not grown in contained hydroponic gardens of a food fabrication unit in the space ship. Momentarily, he hovered his ship just above the water, completely hidden by the use of a cloaking device that mirrored the surrounding environment, as if a complex array of mirrors had replaced the outline and shape of his ship with that of trees and blue water from below, alternating with sparse clouds and blue sky above.

From the back of the ship, Marco had secretively come from behind, and with one well placed strike from a large heavy metal tool he had found among the cargo, he hit the pilot in the head, causing him to fall into unconsciousness. The cargo door was already open, in preparation for the taking of other humans in the vicinity. Marco and Annaleah both jumped from the short height of the ship into the water below, splashing into the cold clear vivid blue lake. They swam as fast as they could and quickly entered the forest, getting as far away as possible from the drop ship, hoping that the pilot would not wake up soon and pursue them into the wooded area.

“I had to take the chance and knock him out, or we would have been discovered. I don’t think he even knew what hit him.”

“You did good, Marco. Now let’s see if we can get to a nearby town or village and I’ll call the police to tell them the alien is right above the lake. I don’t know if they’ll believe me or not, but I have to try. Meanwhile, maybe we can find someone to give us some clothing and food to eat. There has to be a town around here somewhere.”

They walked on through the forest, following a pathway they had discovered, right after leaving the water. It went on for about a mile and the trail emerged at the edge of an overhang that looked out on a scenic view, which they had never imagined would appear. Up in the distance, they looked down upon a village of structures that they had never seen before. From a great height perched high upon a hill, they observed below a strange sight of architecture that wound around and around, almost like some bizarre carnival had been placed upon the horizon, complete with spirals and an unlimited array of new and dizzying constructions.

“Look Annaleah at all those cows in that big field below.”

“Those are definitely not cows, Marco. I used to jog down a country road by pastures full of cows on my morning runs, and I’m not sure of what they are, but they’re certainly not cows. I’ve never seen buildings like that before either, full of spirals and globes. Marco, did you notice the big purple and yellow plants that we passed on the way here, along that trail?. Beautiful weren’t they?”

“Yes, Annaleah. They were something strange that I’ve never seen before in all my entire life.”

“I guess you probably know by now, that we’re not on Earth.”

“Yeah, Annaleah. I know. I know. But at least we’re free now. Will you marry me, Annaleah?”

“Yes, Marco. I’ll marry you.”

“I’ve always dreamed of something happening like this, and now here we are, just the two of us Annaleah, you and me together. This new world is strange and fantastic. It’s beautiful, just like you.”

“I never did. I never dreamed that this would ever happen to me, but I guess we’re stuck here together now, for better or for worse. Don’t touch me! You shouldn’t have hit the pilot so hard. We could have taken his ship and gone back to Earth. Now we’re stuck here on this Godforsaken planet, probably far away in another galaxy.”

2. The Alien Introduction

The vast panorama of an alien landscape stretched before the two of them, and they both had resigned themselves to working at trying to survive in the alien environment of a new planet. Both Annaleah and Marco had decided that it was better than being experimented on inside the confined space of a plastic coffin.

“OK, Marco, lets try to work out a plan to survive on this alien planet. We also need to put as much distance between us and the high lake that we landed in. The alien spaceship can’t be that far away, and he probably has very advanced equipment that will enable him to locate us very soon. We have to be able to blend in, if we are to make it in this strange place. I don’t think it will be anything like what we came from on Earth.”

“Yes, you’re right Annaleah. I’m sorry if I couldn’t have made some better choice, than to just run up and hit the pilot on the head. It was the only thing I could really think of at the time. I know I hit him very hard, but I was afraid of having to go back to the incubator, that plastic pod or whatever it was. They were almost trying to erase my entire memory and my brain. If it wasn’t for you, I would never have escaped. I owe you my life. Please forgive me, but even if we had thrown the pilot out, we wouldn’t have known how to fly the spaceship. We might have been killed in a crash. It was just lucky that he got us so close to the water that we could survive the jump.”

“Yeah, yeah, Marco. I know. We should thank God that we actually got away. Now, to be able to survive a meeting with the people of this new world. Let’s try and get to some habitable place and quietly find something to wear that looks like we came from the local populace. There has to be a little village around here somewhere. First, lets get down off this high plateau and visit a dwelling near the city. I’m willing to bet there are some houses nearby on the way.”

They meticulously managed to pick their way down off the mountain, with a waterfall from the lake nearby that made the way slippery and the going rough, but finally they arrived to the base of the overhanging cliff. Not far off was a curious looking dwelling that looked as though it had been abandoned. Cautiously the two naked humans entered an alien house and they were both amused at its contents. It was almost completely barren, except for a few old uniforms that the crew had left hanging in a receptacle. The occupants must have been away from their duty post or had been

called away for some other work project. The house seemed as if it was being used as a station along the way, a type of government building, designed for maintenance or observation. There were also charts and maps made of a dried fabric that seemed flexible, but it was not paper. They examined the maps and charts and it seemed likely that this house had been an office at one time, which had now been abandoned for some reason, leaving only a few items not important enough to be moved.

“Look, now at least we are clothed and maybe presentable to the public with these jumpsuits on. Take a look at these charts and see if we can use them to find our way around here. It looks like we are indeed near the city, and it seems to be quite extensive and takes up a lot of space on the map. This looks like the lake we just came from, and there are something like checkpoints along the way to the city, by the look of these charts. This place is designated with a star and what looks like a part of a circle around it, maybe some government emblem. The jumpsuits also have the same emblem attached to the front in something like a patch. I hope we are not mistakenly arrested for trying to pose as government officials. At least we’re not naked, which could be far worse. Marco, look around and see if you can find anything that would be useful to take with us. Maybe we should approach the city to find some food and safe water to drink.”

“Yes, Annaleah, I’ve already found a small iron tool, like a chisel that I’m taking with me. Can’t be too careful in this strange environment. There may be wild animals out there or people who could attack us. We have to be prepared to defend ourselves.”

“OK, but we don’t want to seem too aggressive though. We need help from anyone. I’m already hungry and thirsty. It’s been a while since my last meal through that tube and I’m getting weaker. We won’t last long without food and water. I don’t think we can walk a long distance, not even much further in this weakened condition. They kept us like that for a reason, and that was to keep us incapacitated for a lengthy duration, while they broke into our minds.”

They began to walk along a pathway that was almost completely enclosed on both sides by lush vegetation, with plants that had broad colorful leaves and tubular stems with wide foliage. Not long after leaving, they came across a paved highway with a lone black vehicle approaching in the distance. It had four wheels as similar Earth vehicles and a boxy appearance like most cars. The engine was extremely quite, and they would have missed it entirely, if Marco had not been so observant.

“Here comes someone now in a car or at least a moving vehicle. Do you want to see if he will give us a ride into the town?”

“No, Marco, let’s wait to see what we can find along the way. I don’t know, I’m extremely tired and might faint any moment. I’m not sure. What if he sounds an alarm or calls the police? Maybe it doesn’t even matter at this point. I’m too weak to care that much.”

By that time, the vehicle had already passed them by, but then slowed down and went into reverse, stopping just in front of them, as they hid along the roadway, among the vegetation with the extremely large leaves. The driver could not have possibly seen them, but yet he still knew of their presence. They both received a mental message, asking if the driver could be of any service to them.

“I’ve noticed that you are destitute and without proper food and water. If you wish, I will bring you to a convenience station and clinic, where you will be properly attended to.” Astounded, they both acclaimed mentally, that they would indeed be appreciative of any aid and comfort that could be given, since they were a great distance from home. It was as though no words were needed, but yet communication was almost instantaneous through some mental wavelength. The driver exited the vehicle and approached the overgrowth of vegetation along the way and beckoned them with one hand to follow him to the vehicle. They both left the growth of vegetation they had been hiding in and approached the vehicle, where upon the driver opened the rear door for them to enter into it. He was dressed in a similar jumpsuit as they were, with the government logo on the front.

“Thanks, we’re very glad you stopped for us. Can you take us to somewhere to obtain food and water?” asked Annaleah verbally, and the alien responded in some language not understandable, but the mental translation was quite clearly easily comprehended.

“Of course, I’ll drive you to a health station, where you can be properly taken care of. I understand you are fugitives from one of the alien spacecraft that constantly circle this area, waiting to capture some of our people to hold them prisoner. You are not alone, but I attest through your mental wavelengths that you are far from your original home. We have a technology that maybe you are unfamiliar with. You see, if you are within a specified range, the Sensatron Resonator will pick up your brainwave signals and translate through the nerve endings a viable translation that most humans can readily understand. With the lower animals it is a good deal less accurate. All government vehicles have one, and there are also personal devices

that are smaller and can be carried at all times. You would be wise to purchase one, at your earliest convenience. I know you can't understand my verbal skills and spoken language, but our advanced technology has made it virtually unnecessary to communicate that way, unless you actually want to automatically enunciate. Most people do anyway, and it's really not a bother, unless they are verbally very loud and obnoxious."

The alien seemed to be almost human in appearance and very congenial, with a little less skin color, almost translucent, as if he constantly had stayed out of the sun on purpose, since maybe it was a little too close to the planet for comfort. The blood vessels were very apparent at close observation, as if the skin could be looked right through and all details were noticeable. Annaleah found him quite charming and handsome, with almost a hypnotizing affect to his eyes. She found out very quickly through mental communication that he had no hair for a reason, to prevent infectious diseases, he indicated. They were indeed underground a lot of the time, to protect their skin, and the spirals they used in architecture were simply extensions from deep underground foundations that gave light and air to the chambers beneath the surface.

"So, is there no way that we might be able to get back to Earth anytime soon? I know we might be a long way away, but I'd really like to get back home," said Annaleah, wishing against all odds to be able to return to her formally boring life back on Earth.

"I'm afraid not dear Earth human. You see, it would actually take years for a return voyage. We don't have the ability to fund such an undertaking for the present. Besides, our government does not interfere in any of the intergalactic visitations, simply because nobody wants to leave our beautiful world and travel to some place that could be inhospitable to our species. What you fail to realize is that even if you returned to your world, the people you actually knew would all be dead by now, and your environment could have changed dramatically in the time lapse it took for your journey to come here. Approaching light speed has the disadvantage of leaving relatives and friends far behind that you will never see upon your return trip home."

"So, at best you think we would be better off just to stay here, even if we had the ability and occasion to return to Earth?"

"Yes, that is my recommendation and you will be able to find viable employment, make friends, and generally lead a very happy life here on our humble planet. We have adequate natural resources, an abundant food supply, and a quite powerful government that keeps the

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