

HOME RUN



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Illustration by Brett Gowlett

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Chapter 1



Becto couldn't believe his luck. To be chosen from amongst all of the other young Jorkans to come to Earth and do some field studies was awesome. All of his mates had wanted to come too, but the selection had been by names pulled out of a Jorkan top hat, and Becto's name had been picked. This was the opportunity of a lifetime. Some Jorkans never got to see any other planets, and yet here he was actually on one.

The mother ship had landed on Earth under the cover of darkness just over three hours ago and had parked in a deep cave so that no humans would see it. It was vital that no humans saw the ship or any of the Jorkans. The Jorkans were a very private race. They didn't want any human spaceships going out into space and discovering Planet Jorka. They wanted to be left alone. Sure, here they were spying on Planet Earth, but they weren't going to intrude on the lives of any human beings. They weren't here to study humans. They were here to study human crops and farming, and to collect samples of seeds because food was getting scarce on Jorka, and the Jorkans badly needed more. So, it was an agricultural visit: collect samples and return to Jorka under the cover of darkness.



“The entire mission can only last a maximum of twenty-four hours because we cannot risk being spotted,” Commander Shaboo had told all of his young Jorkan recruits on the way down to Earth. “It will be an in-and-out job. We have just enough fuel to make it down to Earth and make it back home. As you know, fuel is in short supply back home.”

“But won’t the humans spot a bunch of weird-looking aliens wandering around their fields collecting bits of their crops?” Becto had asked.

“That’s where these come in,” replied Shaboo. He handed round outfits for the Jorkans to try on. They were amazing. Once you put one on, you looked exactly like a young human – there was no sign of your glowing amber skin, your three Jorkan ears or your extended Jorkan nose. Plus, there was a special voice box that enabled you to talk like a human, should you need to do so. The young Jorkans had lots of fun with their outfits, speaking human to each other and excitedly talking about what Earth might look like.

As soon as sunlight had broken, Commander Shaboo said it was time to set out from the mother ship and start the collecting process. He’d chosen a particularly remote part of Earth so that there would be very few humans around: just great big farms with massive fields, full of crops that were perfect for sample snaffling.

The young Jorkans had fanned out over a wide area with their collecting sacks, and Becto was now in a field by himself with no other Jorkan in sight. It was a gorgeous summer day, and Becto felt comfortable inside his human skin suit. His mates back home had been so envious when they had discovered that they’d missed out on the trip and that he’d secured a place. He couldn’t wait to tell them about his adventures.



Becto was collecting samples of something called “wheat”. It was dry and yellow. He sniffed it and took a bite of a grain. Eurrghh! It tasted disgusting. Maybe you had to cook it first.

After the wheat, he’d been told to move to a field of something called “fruit”. This was red, green and purple, and came in various shapes and sizes. It looked disgusting, but he was going to carefully pick individual pieces, label each one and then carefully pop them into his sack.

The wheat fields stretched out for miles ahead of him. He was just popping another few grains of wheat into his collecting pouch when he caught his arm on a sharp stalk and felt a rip. A length of his human skin suit ripped off, revealing his glowing amber Jorkan skin below.

He snorted in anger. This wasn’t good. Commander Shaboo had said they mustn’t be spotted by any humans under any circumstances. Oh well, there was nothing he could do about it now; as he was only wearing a human t-shirt, he couldn’t cover it. He’d just have to hope that no one passed by and spotted it, which was a problem because at that very second, he heard someone say, “Well, hello there. You must be new to these parts.”