

Another Planet

Bang! All the lights on the console exploded, creating sparks like a supernova.

The cockpit became silent and dark.

“What did you do?” asked Iron Man.

“I pressed that yellow button,” confessed Hogarth miserably, “the one the mayor told us not to.”

It had been a week since the mayor of Little Hangleton had sent the Iron Man and Hogarth into space on a rocket to fight the Space Beast. The Iron Man and Hogarth had successfully battled this other worldly creature and were on their way back home. Unfortunately, Hogarth had now pressed the one button the mayor had warned them not to.

“You fool! The Mayor told you not to do that. Now what are we going to do?” Bawled Iron Man furiously.

“I don’t know,” sobbed Hogarth. “Nothing’s working anymore. How are we going to get home?”

“We can’t go home. Not without the fuel and definitely not now you’ve broken the engine!” Iron Man spat.

“What’s that?” interrupted Hogarth, peering out of the cockpit window. “I’ve never seen a BLUE planet before.

“What are you on about now? There are no blue planets!” replied Iron Man, exasperated.

He looked out at the small revolving sphere with just one single small moon slowly orbiting it and gasped, “Where are we? This isn’t our Solar system! You must have made us travel through time as well as space!”

The landing module bumped heavily. The little boy and his giant metal companion, quickly jumped out of the landing module onto the grassy surface of the unknown planet and looked around them. What was this place? Why was it so eye catching? Curling around thick spiraling branches were constricting vines, which braced and creaked. Dangling down from the layer of moss, vast, bold leaves flickered like church candle flames in breeze. Sweet-scented pollen drifted through the archways created by the curving branches which created halos of light above and below. Behind them, the rocket quietly imploded, leaving not a trace. They were stranded! They looked at each other and shrugged, knowing any attempt at saving the vessel was futile.

Then, Iron Man noticed a large structure built upon a tree with some transparent areas and decided to take a closer look. This strange building was made from a silver birch tree. Like a snake shedding its skin, the silver, crumbling bark was flaking from the trunk. The tree was so old that the overgrown roots spread for miles under the ground, like a spider’s web encompassing the earth. The Iron Man assisted Hogarth in his attempts to climb the tree and get a closer look. Hogarth wiggled his fingers through a small opening and pushed it until there was a big enough gap for his small, thin body to fit through. It was still a tight fit, but he found that by wiggling, he could slip through more easily. Inside, they found branches and twigs that had been manipulated to form a grand staircase with a vast amount of ornately decorated rooms.

While Iron Man was busy wandering through each one, Hogarth busied himself exploring the first room. Suddenly, he noticed a portal hanging on the wall. He shivered with excitement, without a word, he stepped up onto a small green structure and slipped through the portal and back home, leaving his friend behind. When Iron Man realised what Hogarth had done, he smashed the wall of the portal, making the small hole much larger. He leapt up and through the portal, wondering how Hogarth was going to explain to the mayor that although they had successfully defeated the space monster they had also destroyed the only rocket the small village of Little Hangleton could ever hope to afford.

When he arrived, Iron Man was astonished to witness Hogarth being congratulated by the Mayor. "What a brave young boy you are, Hogarth. You've made the entire village and I so proud!"

So even though it was he, Iron Man, who had done all the hard work and defeated the Space Beast, it was Hogarth who was being rewarded. Iron Man could not believe it! He sulked off to the scrap-metal yard to comfort himself with a tasty pile of metal vowing never to help young Hogarth again.

Alien Landing

The sun slipped behind the distant hills, painting the mountains red and black. Shadows lengthened, deepening the darkness. Wind whispered through the grass as if praying. Warily, Tom and Jez picked up their fishing gear. It was late and they knew that they would be in trouble. But holidays only came once a year and they were just a mile from the cottage where they were staying. "Come on," mumbled Jez, picking up his rod and turning to go.

At that moment, the boys froze. From somewhere overhead they heard a low whirring sound. Half a mile away a glowing light appeared. It streaked towards the forest and then hovered, casting streaks of brilliant light down into the dark trees. The boys turned to stare at each other. They were both thinking the same thing.... aliens! Tugging them deeper and deeper into the forest, the strange lights shone down like silvery ropes. Without warning, there was a rush of roaring wind that tore at the trees. Then the lights began to flicker in a mesmerising pattern.

Half stumbling, Tom and Jez staggered through the thicket, drawn towards the light. As they drew closer, they could see that it was an enormous spaceship. Crouching behind a bush, hearts thumping, they waited and watched. The ship was larger than a bus and circular. It hovered just above the ground. Lights shimmered and a door opened. Out of the dark interior, a shadow began to move...

It was twenty-four hours later that Tom woke with a start, though at that point he didn't realise how much time had passed. He was cold and at first couldn't remember where he was or what had happened. Beside him, Jez lay curled up. Fast asleep with his thumb stuck in his mouth. Tom stared around him. They were still in the forest and the bushes and grass had been flattened down. Trees were scorched. Of course, the spaceship!

No one believed them and what was worse they couldn't remember what had happened after the ship's door had opened. The doctor said that it was amnesia brought on by shock. They both knew that the space ship had landed and an alien had begun to appear but after that, the next 24 hours was a complete blank. In the end, the police went away muttering about time wasters - and left them to get on with the rest of their holiday.

It was only when he went to bed that night that Tom found it. In his pocket there was a jet-black pebble. It was shiny and comforting to hold. He rubbed the smooth surface and as he did so, it began to warm and then it glowed. Weirdly, Jez had also found a stone in his pocket. A present perhaps – a present from another world. But what were the stones for? Tom wasn't too sure if he wanted to know....