

Dedicated
to those who managed
and turned the poison inside
to a sprout of creation!



The Untouched Child

The Animal Formula

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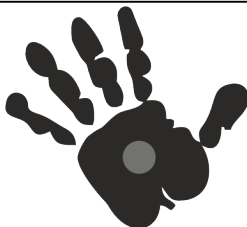
TIME TRAVELLER

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Stories of a galactic Time Traveller...



Chapter 01: Mahmalut

An Unfortunate Event ➤

A super technological spacecraft appeared in the sky of planet Druglor, near the Talos monastery. This monastery was one of the smallest and more isolated monasteries, but also one of the most important for the tribe of Telecores.

The spacecraft was mainly painted in shades of green, except for the huge, black logo of the imperial fleet - Fantastic Armadda - who proudly stood on both sides. The closer it got, the better the inhabitants of the monastery could just how gigantic it was; nearly the equivalent of a small city. Since it had only been constructed five years ago and had never before visited their planet, many of the inhabitants had no idea that this spacecraft was the galactic merchant of the empire.

On the contrary, the highest hypnotizer of Talos, Okahua Kang, leader of this monastery and head of the eleven therapeutical hypnotizers of the tribe of Telecores, well-known as 'Healotizers', was surprised. He knew exactly what this spacecraft was all about, and they had nothing to offer it. Regardless, he followed the imperial visit protocol and ordered the inhabitants to gather and line up in the main court, where morning meditation happened, to welcome them.

The monastery faced east and was built to the altitude of fifteen thousand six hundred feet; a big part of the structure was actually inside the mountain. The inhabitants all wore Eurasian teal and hung bright white beads around their necks. They were also all barefoot, and most had shaved heads, though there were a few exceptions in the form of old, wise, experienced monks. They believed knowledge entered the mind more easily without the hinderance of hair.

As there was not enough space for landing the full spacecraft in the monastery courtyard, a smaller aircraft detached from the main one and eventually landed several feet away from Okahua Kang, who stood imperiously with his hands knitted behind his back.

A door opened on the back of the aircraft, and three individuals appeared: two fully armed soldiers armed with tons of hi-tech gadgets and an average-looking, well-shaped man dressed in an emerald jellaba. He had white, shiny hair, amber eyes, and many piercings, tattoos, and pieces of jewelry.

“Welcome to monastery of Talos, Hyacinthus Palmeira, Vice Rich Takalum of the Empire,” Okahua Kang said first, bowing down a bit.

“Thank you for the warm welcome, High Hypnotizer of Talos,” the man replied with a cunning smile plastered on his face. “I am Alpha Matrix Gaphralist, second in command to the great and powerful Rich Takalum Echidna Vajiska!” he boomed proudly.

“Very well,” Okahua said casually, as the title meant nothing to him. “To what do I owe the pleasure, Alpha Gaphralist?”

“Please follow me,” the man said, and made a u-turn back to his aircraft. After no further comment came, Okahua followed him.

The two men walked all the way to a meeting chamber that resembled a strip club. Everything from the furniture to the walls was covered in fluffy fabric, a bar filled with spirits adorned the back of the chamber, and there was a small screen that depicted the galaxy in motion.

“Something to drink?” Hyacinthus asked as he pointed to a sofa.

“Alpha—”

“It’s just us,” he interrupted with a look full of greed, “you can call me by my name, the respect is mutual!”

“As you wish, Hyacinthus,” he said again casually. “A cup of tea would be enough, thank you.”

“Let me guess, from Gerkiloft valley?” Hyacinthus asked with innuendo.

Okahua narrowed his already narrowed eyes, finally realizing, more or less, what all this fuss about. No one from emperor’s court, especially Hyacinthus as the imperial economist, would ever offer something so expensive and rare to someone like him.

“You have no leaves from the valley.”

“Genius, Kang!” He clapped, but exclaimed with a small dose of jealousy, “Even without your mighty touch, you can read people’s

minds!”

“That’s why you are here? For me to impress you?”

“Of course not *only* for that.”

“I’m listening.”

“Emperor Havikoro requires some Almathata, which as you very well know, grows only in that particular valley.”

Okahua knew the effect of the extract of that particular flower, and it terrified him. They wouldn’t call it “Tormenting Water” for nothing.

“Me, on the other hand,” Hyacinthus continued, confirming Okahua’s fears, “I need a variety of products that this beautiful valley has to offer!”

“Let me read your mind once again,” Okahua said, gritting his teeth and trying to contain his anger, “Michillio, Sleldora, Kiriri—”

“Don’t bother, Kang,” he interrupted him once again. “I want everything that grows there!”

“Excuse me?!”

“There are some flowers I want for my personal use, some for the imperial scientists, and some that will be sold to wealthy and powerful families around the galaxy so we can bring a small fortune to the empire. As you would imagine, there are many people awaiting a full cargo upon my return!”

Okahua was speechless in the face of such greediness, even if such greediness couldn’t destroy him as long as he was under the emperor’s protection; and this particular emperor was undefeated.

“You must understand that—”

“Last but not least,” he interrupted him again with a gleeful smirk, “accept Almathata, the Emperor is looking for an upcoming, talented Telecore, someone that will be able to stand next to Healer Zelila Echo Ferholla and be taught by her to become the next Alpha Medical Remedist sometime in the near future! Xiao Asan-Ku is too old and already gave his notice, which means the seat will be empty soon. So, you realize how honorable that replacement could be for you... and your monastery, of course.” His words dripped with implication.

“No need to play with me, Hyacinthus,” Okahua said without fear. “We both know that you wouldn’t come straight to Talos if you weren’t looking for something specific. You would have assembled the Healotizers’ council to announce your needs. So, out with it!”

Okahua’s words brought a huge smile to Hyacinthus’ lips. Cleverness saved him from more deceitful and riddled words.

“I want to offer to *him* what he asked from so many others, but all failed to provide... someone like your son!”

Very few knew about the existence of Okahua’s son, so the fact that Hyacinthus did was a shock. “What makes you think that my son is who you’re looking for?”

“There are people around the galaxy who share all kinds of information in exchange for a couple free drinks. And trust me, the two satellites of X-Mechanica have turned into a goldmine.”

“Very well,” he said, still maintaining a leash on his anger, “I need to speak to my wife, and of course to the rest of Talos’ inhabitants. You ask for plenty of—”

“I’m not done yet!”

Even a powerful monk would lose control in the face of this farce.

“Speak up!” Okahua shouted, imagining touching Hyacinthus’ forehead, thereby bringing him to the edges of madness. But, no matter what, he could never allow that to happen, as he would compromise the safety of his tribe. The whole galaxy knew what the emperor was capable of when people tried to disrespect or stand against him and his loyal members. The power he had was beyond imagination!

“I have no intention of depriving your son pointlessly, so I also need to know if he’s capable. I don’t want to fail like the rest and that’s why I want to test him in the big ascension!”

“NO WAY!” Okahua screamed. “That would steal him away anyway! Either he will be the first of his age to achieve that, or he will die!”

“But imagine if he succeeded,” Hyacinthus countered. He had the look of a madman, not a joker.

Okahua knew he had no option. “And let me guess: if he succeeds, you want him to return with everything you and your emperor desire, correct?”

“Of course.”

“I’ll go with him, then. He can’t—”

“You can send more youngsters if you want, but no adults. Whoever manages to return will take the honorable position.”

Okahua opened his mouth ready to protest once again, but he changed his mind. No matter what he would say, Hyacinthus had an answer to lead the conversation to his side. He couldn’t afford to send more young monks into what could likely be a suicide mission. Yes,

the more monks, the better the chance of success, but he couldn't be selfish and put more people at risk just to protect his own child. The burden of their deaths would be onto his shoulders eternally.

"Anything else?" he croaked.

"Nope, I will just come back tomorrow for your answer!"

"You already know my answer."

"Then I will come back tomorrow for—"

"Don't bother," Okahua sighed in resignation. "I will take him there with our key."

"Amazing! Then I will just send a couple of troops to make sure that everything goes according to plan! I don't like cheating you know!"

The two men stared at each other, neither blinking. Okahua mentally attacked Hyacinthus and imagined forcing him into a deep, unbreakable mind prison, where he would stay for all of eternity to regret his actions...

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Two days later, Okahua Kang and his son, Kueng, along with two imperial troopers, were leaving Talos monastery for the satellite planet of Druglor-Utopia. Of course, they could use the key and open the portal in any place to shorten the journey, but Okahua wanted to have as much time as possible with his son. For two days, he prepared him, mainly psychologically, for the big ascension; he was already ready physically. He knew how to survive in low temperatures by controlling his body heat with his mind. He could also find food in the rarest of the places, under thick snow and huge boulders. But the psychological part was a different type of strength. He had to hike by himself for more than three days, through dangerous, sharp, steep areas with unknown dangers lurking in every other step.

In spite of the challenges ahead, thirteen-year-old Kueng Kang showed no fear in either his one green eye nor his one amber eye. On the contrary, he liked the idea of being the first to achieve something so unique, but not the idea to join the empire afterwards. He had memorized everything that his father said to him and carried extra items that would help him survive.

His primary goal was to arrive at Gerkiloft valley safely, collect the vegetation Hyacinthus required, and then come back. If emperor's emissary wanted more - something quite possible - Okahua could return to the valley to collect them.

When Okahua finished telling Kueng everything he could, they opened a portal to Druglor-Utopia and stepped through onto the southern foothills of the Tampagerk sierra.

That particular sierra extended lengthwise across the full planet, separating its north and south parts. In general this satellite planet was entirely covered by mountains, which were ruddy and rich in unique vegetation. There weren't many places a spacecraft could land, so the whole satellite had been declared as protected area. No tribe, even the empire, could settle there. What was growing there wasn't only unique, but also impossible to grow on any other known planet within the Alatlion galaxy!

The big ascension was the most difficult path to its summit, but also the shortest. And also the most dangerous one, in many ways. The valley stretched a thousand and six hundred feet before the peak, which then skyrocketed to twenty thousand feet. The rest of the paths started from different mountains and crossed Mount Gerkil right before the valley, so the altitude was easier to manage... but the distance was at least three times more, which meant that anyone on this path would be in extreme conditions for more than fifteen days.

"We will see each other in about ten days, yes?" Okahua nervously said to his son.

"Don't worry, Father," Young Kueng replied, and kissed his father on both cheeks before waving to the troopers; an act that surprised them. Then he started his ascent.

Physically, the first part was very easy: he enjoyed a bit of the fading warmth and the scent of the fresh vegetation. He instinctively found himself trying to memorize the beauty of it while also identifying potential sources of food and danger.

The first few hours of his route, he didn't find anything of note beyond some mushrooms, which he collected. A few more hours into his trek, he emerged into a glade, where he could see, for the first time, the two suns that bathed this satellite; Helinor and Klamanta. He enjoyed the view, drunk some water, and started again.

When the light of the suns started to fade, Kueng knew that the time had nearly come for him to find a resting spot for the night. So, he extended his gait, wanting to cover as much ground as he could before choosing the perfect place to camp.

He found one about half an hour later. Two big rocks sat very close together, and he could shelter in between them and drape his tent

overhead. The cold had already started to blanket the place, but he was ready. He placed some impromptu traps just in case before heading into his makeshift tent.

His first night at Gerkil Mountain was very quiet, even close to something normal in spite of the increasing altitude. But as he knew what was ahead of him, he let himself enjoy the calm to the fullest and feel truly free for the first time since he remembered himself. At that point, the truth was that he didn't remember much. His first memory was, like, three years ago, but again, many things inside his head were blurred. His father's explanation was that he had a traumatized childhood, which needed to be locked away until the time he will be ready to face it... and conquered it...

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The fourth day of his route, he was deep into the snowy, steep ascent, but so far he had managed without any trouble, and in a record time! He was already up to sixteen thousand feet, which meant that if he continued at this pace, he would arrive at his destination the next day. He might be barefoot, but that wasn't a problem for him. He meditated nightly before sleep to keep his concentration, and with a stable body temperature maintained through his powers, he melted the snow around his feet, so frostbite and hypothermia were never a concern. Even strong winds couldn't harm him; he felt in harmony with nature.

He steadily continued to avoid dangers, such as traps under the snow, like an experienced mountaineer. Of course he had his father's voice inside his head every step of the way, but his instinct was even stronger! It was like the mountain spoke to him through the soles of his feet, like they were connected on the same journey. But powers or not, that was probably wishful thinking since something like that couldn't happen, or at least had never happened before.

Some moments he wished he had someone alongside him to observe his achievements, but on the other hand, he knew that if someone like his father was there, he would have to follow his orders and never truly be able to test himself and find his limits.

Right as he had that realization, his first real threat arrived! A herd of mountain wolves with white fur, red eyes and hungry looks blocked his climb. While he wasn't scared, he knew he couldn't fight twelve wolves by himself; he needed to escape. He couldn't go forward, and he didn't want to risk turning his back on them and interrupting his

forward progress, so his only option was to scramble.

Very slowly, so as not to disturb the wolves, he untied the rope from his backpack and searched for his first possible grips on the rock to his right. Thankfully, this part of the hillside was clear of snow, so he could easily find the best way up without sliding around. While the wolves tried to follow him, he - exactly like his father - was considered to be one of the most exceptional climbers ever. After all, he had tamed the most dangerous mountains of the entire galaxy! So, by the time they got close, howling angrily, he was already twenty feet higher.

The highest and deadliest mountain of all exists in a beautiful, virgin planet called Hilmadera. The rays of the sun Laskun reaches this planet only a few days each year, and the temperature is always well below freezing. The name of the mountain chain is known as Desithro, 'devil' in the Atlantian Dialect, while the peak bears the name Urathnamulta, 'skyscraper', as it reaches the altitude of thirty thousand feet! Very few in the whole history of the Alatlion galaxy have managed to climb to the top without artificial support. And Kueng was one of them.

The first opportunity Kueng found, he stopped to breathe deeply and make sure the wolves had given up. They were still howling, hoping he might slip and make a mistake, but he had no intention of doing them that favor. He prepared for a long climb, making sure he had himself tightly wrapped and secured with safety locks. Mentally he erased the word *failure* from his dictionary; he knew exactly what to do, and he was totally committed to achieve it!

Even when the tiredness started to conquer his body, he felt more happy than frightened, because being tired was a sweet, charming way of showing himself how far he had come toward his goal. When he finally found a ledge wide enough for him to rest, he stopped to revive his numb muscles. He didn't need space to stretch them, he could do so with the power of his mind through meditation! But before he started that process, sat in a lotus pose, and ate some vegetables to refuel. He might have been extremely hungry, but he knew exactly the portion he needed and should have. To fill up his stomach after that much of exercise would be lethal. His system would feel the need to shut down and sleep, which would likely stall his power and leave him susceptible to the cold. He needed to regain his strength, but at the same time keep the adrenaline active.

After five hours of mediation, and when the weather conditions had softened, Kueng opened his eyes, ready to move on. The fog had retreated, he could now see the landscape, which was quite stunning. He noticed a path about a hundred feet to his left, and without a second thought, grabbed his backpack and set off for solid soil. After he made sure there was no danger around, he began his route once again.

Kueng walked the whole night under the starlight. With the emptiness of the natural elements and the occasional sound from unknown sources, the atmosphere was very gloomy and scary. Thankfully, with the first light of Klamanta sun, he arrived at his destination. He hadn't just made it, he had arrived faster than anyone could ever have imagined, even himself!

The entrance to the Gerkiloft Valley resembled a tunnel where it was only reachable by going through the mountain. It may have been out of reach of technology, but its altitude and soil filled with rare microorganisms created a unique climate that fostered the most extraordinary plants.

Young Kueng was extremely tired, but his excitement overruled his fatigue, and he didn't hesitate before entering the tunnel. With every other step, the heat rose while the light ran out. Eventually he was walking completely in the dark.

When the light begun to grow once more, he knew he was getting close to the end of the tunnel. A few seconds later, he faced the beautiful and most famous valley of the galaxy. The size of it was more than three thousand acres, and it was filled with lots of light and a surprisingly high temperature for its altitude. For that it could thank the thermal flowers, Solsar, which were scattered around the valley. They rose taller than six feet, their trunks were as thick as small trees, and their centers were totally round, orange, and reminiscent of a glowing hive. It was their yellow petals, though, that were responsible for the heat. In various spots, the rocky ceiling had holes from which the rays of the suns came through. In those spots, a Solsar rooted, absorbing and spreading the light and warmth. His father had told him all the water that the flowers needed reached them through underground tunnels that transmitted the mountain's the melting snow.

Those two phenomena had puzzled many analysts around the galaxy. They knew that nature is capable of great things, but again,

everything was so perfect, unique, and rich. How could all this be natural?

After Kueng took a moment to appreciate the full force of this place's beauty, he took off his backpack, placed it in a nook, and retrieved some empty plastic bags that emperor's emissary had provided him. He then started collecting his supplies. First up, he filled two bags with tea leaves, and another two with tobacco leaves, both the most expensive in the entire galaxy. Next he gathered Kiriri flower, purple and thin, with the shape of an arrow. Its scent could make you dizzy to the point that you could lose your sense of time for months, even years! Kueng held his breath tightly as he filled a bag before he moved onto the next item, the Orlakkao. Orlakkao is the prototype of coffee beans, the source of which all the rest of the crops have been created. It's much more bitter and strong, but it also has soothing abilities for oesophagus and stomach. The next one was Sleldora, which held the nickname "the spice of addiction." It was blood-red, irregularly shaped, and looked like it was composed of thousands of sand granules. It was also very fragile and extremely sweet. While it lacked special abilities, once you put even a small dose in your system, you must keep on providing your body with it; otherwise the lack of it can kill you. Next on the list to collect was a metal flower called Mettaleriol, which had no particular smell or ability, but looked like a piece of useless junk and tasted like mixed trash, too. Then came one of the most interesting flowers, the tiny Michillio, which has six different petals - white, sky blue, velvet red, light yellow, and deep purple and black - each with a completely different ability.

Young Kueng continued to collect various flowers, feeling both extremely lucky and proud of himself. It was very rare for someone his age to experience something like this. It was completely different to get encyclopedic knowledge than have the actual subject in front of you and be able to examine it. Especially when you reach the point of seeing ultra-rare flowers like Anemonia, Tchil, Almathata, and Quindolaa.

Anemonia is white and shiny, small like a grass, but with great essence. Its distillation result is well-known as Mnemonia or the soul nectar. Tchil is gray in color and reminiscent of a walnut, as it also has the size of one, but many have said that it looks more like a human brain. Almathata, the one that emperor really wanted, is completely

black, and its eleven petals create a pouch, inside of which sits a transparent pearl. That pearl is the source of the tormenting water creation. Finally, Quindolaa, which looks more like a leaf and less than a flower, has oval shape, with a spiraling, magical color palette of blue and yellow.

Kueng had collected every flower very carefully, as he didn't want to wound the flowers and destroy potential opportunities to grow more from them. When he paused to go over his collections, he heard a spooky, eerie sound; a sharp fluttering that he never heard before tickled his spine.

Fear slowly numbed him. He stayed still for some seconds before turning his head to find the source of that sound. Unfortunately for him, what he saw was scarier than he could have imagined! It would almost be better for him to stay still and die from something unknown than try to face this creature.

Around fifty feet away, the deadliest of all animals stood, staring at him with look even hungrier than the gaze of the wolves. The Mahmalut, half spider and half mosquito, carried one of only two known venoms in the galaxy that didn't have any antidote, and it also moved faster than most other animals.

There were very few people, strong and capable humans that could stand against this beast. His hope dwindled quickly. The fact that he arrived at the valley faster than everyone expected may actually be his death sentence!

"Easy," he said without even thinking, stretching out his right hand tentatively, as if the beast could hear him, understand him, and hopefully obey him somehow.

The Mahmalut tilted its head, looking surprised by child's move. After it blinked a couple of times, scanning him, it started walking towards him. Kueng was petrified, but he tried to hide it. Most predators could smell fear, and the Mahmalut was no exception. The fact that the animal didn't attack him straight away was a tiny drop of hope in his fear ocean.

When the beast stopped in front of him, towering over the child, it bent slightly over and begun sniffing his outstretched hand. Kueng was one step away from fainting on the spot, but for some reason, he felt compelled to touch its hairy head.

"I don't want—"

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Stories of a galactic Time Traveller...

His words were interrupted by the Mahmalut's lightning fast attack. Its sting pierced Kueng's chest, transmitting the Venubia venom into his system, an action that formalized his death. Kueng looked into the Mahmalut's hungry eyes for a split second before the beast flew away. Spitting blood, Kueng instinctively covered his wound with his hands and closed his eyes before he fell down with force...