

## Chapter 5

### **Learning to live**

#### **on another planet**

It seemed that Thao was also very popular here and she found herself answering numerous questions - always with her natural, broad smile. Before long, however, several of our hosts were required to resume their duties and we took this as our cue to leave. My mask was put on again and we left these people, as well as those in the larger room, amidst many gestures of friendship and goodwill.

We rejoined our vehicle and immediately accelerated away in the direction of a forest, which could be seen in the distance. We flew at a height of approximately five or six metres and at a speed I would have estimated to be 70 or 80 kilometres per hour. The air was warm and fragrant and I again felt euphoric, in a way I had never experienced on Earth.

We arrived at the edge of the forest and I remember having been greatly impressed by the size of the largest trees. They looked to rise about 200 metres into the sky.

'The tallest is 240 of your metres, Michel.' Thao explained without me having to ask, 'and between 20 and 30 metres in diameter at the base.

'Some of these are 8000 of our years old. Our year consists of 333 days of 26 *karses*. A *karse* is a period of 55 *lorse*,

a lorse comprising 70

*kasios*,

and a kasio being almost equivalent to one of your seconds. (Now there's a sum for you...)

Would you like to go to your 'apartment' or to have a look at the forest first?'

'Let's visit the forest first, Thao.'

The vehicle greatly reduced its speed and we were able to glide between, or indeed, stop and observe more closely, the trees at heights that ranged from almost ground level to 10 metres above the ground.

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Thao was able to guide our 'flying platform' with amazing precision and expertise. Our vehicle, and Thao's manner of driving it, put me in mind of a flying carpet, which was taking me on a magical tour of this magnificent forest floor.

Thao leaned towards me and removed my mask. The undergrowth was luminous and softly golden but I found it quite tolerable.

'It is a good time to begin accustoming yourself to the light and colour, Michel. Look!'

Following her gaze, I spotted, very high among the branches, three butterflies, vividly coloured and of enormous size.

These lepidoptera, which must have had one metre wingspans, fluttered high in the foliage, but we were lucky to see them fly closer and closer to us, on wings of blue, green and orange. It is as clear to me as if it were yesterday. They brushed against us with their wings that were strangely fringed, to create the most beautiful and breathtaking effect. One of them came to rest on a leaf just a few metres from us and I was able to admire its body, ringed with silver and gold, and its jade-green antennae. Its proboscis was golden and the tops of its wings were green with streaks of bright blue alternated with dark orange diamond shapes. The under-sides were dark blue, but luminous, as though they had been illuminated from above by a projector.

For the duration of time this giant insect remained on the leaf, it seemed to emit a soft whistling sound and I was quite surprised by this. I had certainly not heard a lepidopteran on Earth make any sound at all. Of course, we were no longer on Earth but on Thiaoouba, and this was only the beginning of a long series of surprises for me.

On the forest floor, grew an incredible variety of plants, each one stranger than the next. They covered the ground completely, but I noticed very few bushes among them. I imagine the forest's giants prevented them from developing.

In size, these plants varied from a ground-covering moss-like plant, to one the size of a large rose bush. One kind, with leaves as thick as a hand in various shapes - sometimes heart-shaped or circular, sometimes very long and thin - was of a colour tending much more towards blue than to green.

Flowers of every shape and colour, even of the purest black, entwined each other. From our altitude of several metres, the effect was absolutely glorious.

We rose till we were up among the highest branches and I put my mask back on according to Thao's direction. We emerged from the canopy and moved slowly, just above the foliage of those enormous trees.

Above the forest the light was, once again, incredibly intense and I had the impression of travelling through a landscape of pure crystal.

Marvellous birds were perched on the tops of the taller trees, watching us pass, without fear. Their colours, varied and rich, were a veritable feast for my eyes in spite of the subduing effect of my mask. Here were varieties of macaw, with blue, yellow, pink and red plumage; and, among them a type of bird of paradise strutted amidst a cloud of what appeared to be hummingbirds.

These hummingbirds were of a brilliant red colour flecked with gold. The red, pink and orange tail feathers of the birds of paradise, would have measured 250 centimetres in length and their wingspans almost two metres.

When these 'jewels' took flight, the underside of their wings revealed a very soft, misty pink, with just a touch of bright blue on the tips - so unexpected, especially as the tops of their wings were of an orange-yellow colour. Their heads wore plumes of impressive size, each feather being a different colour: yellow, green, orange, black, blue, red, white, cream....

I feel frustrated that my attempts to describe the colours I saw on Thiaoouba are so inadequate - I feel I need a whole new lexicon, as my language fails me. I had the constant impression that the colours came from *within* the objects I looked at, and the colour was *more* than I had known it to be. On earth, we know perhaps 15 shades of red; here there must have been over a hundred...

It wasn't only the colours that claimed my attention. The sounds that I had heard since we began to fly over the forest inspired me to seek an explanation from Thao. It was almost a background music, very light and soft, similar to a flute which continually played the same air but at a distance.

As we moved on, the music seemed to change, only to return to the original tune.

'Is that music I hear?'

'It is vibrations emitted by the thousands of insects which, when combined with the vibrations of the colours reflected by solar rays on to certain plants, such as the *Xinox*, for example, produce the very musical results that you hear. We, ourselves, only hear it if we particularly attune to it, for it comprises an integral part of our life and our environment. It is restful, isn't it?'

'Absolutely.'

'According to the experts, if these vibrations were to cease, we would experience considerable eye trouble. This will perhaps seem odd at first, since these vibrations appear to be perceptible to the ear rather than the eye. However, experts are experts, Michel, and, in any case, it is of little concern to us, for they also say that the chance of their ceasing is as remote as the chance of our sun extinguishing itself tomorrow.'

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Thao turned our vehicle and in a few moments, we had left the forest tops and were flying over a plain, across which flowed a jade-green river.

We descended to an altitude of about three metres and followed its course. Now we were able to follow the movements of strange fish - fish that resembled platypuses more than fish, as I knew them to be. The water was pure, like crystal, and at this altitude we could distinguish everything down to the smallest pebble.

Looking up, I saw we were approaching the ocean. Palm trees resembling coconut palms waved their majestic fronds at impressive heights, on the edge of a beach of golden sands. The blue of the ocean contrasted pleasantly with the bright red of rocks encrusted in small hills, which overlooked a section of its beach.

A hundred or so people basked on the sand or swam, entirely naked, in the transparent

waters of the ocean.

I felt a little dazed, not only because of the new and wondrous things I was constantly discovering, but also because of the perpetual sensation of lightness, due to the change in gravity. This sensation was my reminder of *Earth* - what a strange word, and how difficult it was to visualise Earth now!

The auditory and visual vibrations were also affecting my nervous system enormously. Usually a highly strung person, I was feeling completely relaxed - as if I had plunged into a warm bath, allowing myself to float in the bubbles while soft music played.

No, even more relaxed than that - so relaxed I felt like crying.

We proceeded, quite rapidly, across the waters of the immense bay, flying about 12 metres above the waves. On the horizon, I could distinguish several dots - some larger than others, and I realised these were islands; no doubt those I had seen prior to our landing on Thiaoouba.

As we headed for the smallest island, I looked below and saw that we were being followed by numerous fish, amusing themselves by criss- crossing the shadow our vehicle projected on the water.

'Are they sharks?' I asked.

'No, they're Dajiks - the brothers of your dolphin. You see? They are as fond of playing as your dolphins are.'

'Look!' I interrupted Thao. 'Look!'

Thao looked to where I was pointing and began laughing - I was astonished to see a group of people approaching us, seemingly without the aid of a vehicle.

They were about two metres above the water, in a vertical position, and not only floating in the air, but moving quite rapidly towards us.

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Soon our paths crossed and grand gestures of friendship were exchanged. At the same instant, a wave of well-being flowed through me lasting several seconds. It was the same sensation Latoli had produced and I recognised it as a sign of greeting from these 'flying people'.

'How do they do that? Is it levitation?'

'No, they have a Tara<sup>1</sup> on their waists and a Litiolac<sup>2</sup> in their hands. These produce certain vibrations that neutralise the cold magnetic force of the planet, allowing neutralisation of the gravitational force. Even a weight of millions of tonnes compares with that of feathers. Then, by other vibrations resembling those of ultra-sound, they can steer themselves precisely to wherever they choose, as they are doing now. On this planet, everyone wanting to travel some distance uses this method.'

'Then why are we using this vehicle?' I asked, for I would have loved to experiment with such equipment, which, by the way, was absolutely noiseless.

'Michel, you are impatient. I have brought you by this means because you are not capable of flying with a Litiolac. Without practice, you could hurt yourself. Later, perhaps, if there is time, I will teach you how to use it. Look, we are nearly there.'

Indeed, we were fast approaching an island and could clearly see a golden beach where several people basked in the sun. Almost immediately, we were flying beneath palm fronds along a wide path, bordered with two rows of flowering and very fragrant bushes. The area was alive with the sound and colour of insects, butterflies and birds.

The vehicle proceeded slowly at ground level and, after a final bend in the path, we arrived before a 'little egg', nestled among small trees and flowering vines. It seemed that every building on this planet had the shape of an egg, most often lying on their 'sides' but occasionally upright, as I have said, with the pointed end upwards. The 'shells' were off-white in colour and had no windows or doors.

This particular egg lay on its side, apparently half buried in the ground. It was about 30 metres long and 20 metres in diameter - quite small in comparison with those I'd seen so far.

Thao stopped the vehicle in front of a bright light centred on the wall of the egg. Leaving the platform, we entered the habitation. As we did so, I felt a light pressure, with no more force than the weight of an eiderdown. I remembered experiencing the same sensation earlier, when we passed

through the wall of the space centre.

Having neither doors nor windows on these buildings is extraordinary in itself, but once inside, it was stranger still. As I have mentioned before, the overall impression was of still being outside.

1) The Tara is an apparatus worn like a belt when you wish to fly.

2) The Litolac works in concert with the Tara to fly, but is held in the hand.

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The startling beauty of colour was everywhere; the greenery; the branches of the trees dissecting the blue-mauve sky above; the butterflies; the flowers... I recall a bird that came to rest right in the middle of the 'roof, so that we could see the bottom of its feet. It was as though it had miraculously stopped in mid-air - the effect was quite extraordinary.

The only contrast with the outside was provided by the floor that was covered in a type of carpet on which were arranged comfortable looking seats and large pedestal tables. All of these furnishings were, of course, on a large scale - appropriate to these 'large-scale' people.

'Thao,' I asked, 'how are your walls transparent and yet we can't see in from the outside? And how can we pass through your walls as we did?'

'First of all, Michel, let's take off this mask of yours. I will regulate the internal light so that it will be bearable for you.'

Thao approached an object on the floor and touched it. When I removed my mask, I found the light to be no less tolerable than with it on, although the shiny quality was restored.

'You see, Michel, this habitation exists because of a magnetic field that is quite special. We have copied the forces of nature and the creations of nature to our own ends. Let me explain. Every body - human, animal or mineral - possesses a field around itself. The human body, for example, is surrounded both by an Aura and by an etheric force (field)<sup>1</sup> of oval shape. You know that, don't you?'

I nodded.

'The latter comprises, in part, electricity and, to a greater extent, vibrations that we call *Ariaco stinaki*.

'These vibrations occur continuously for your protection while you are alive, and they are not to be confused with the vibrations of the Aura. With our habitations, we have copied nature in creating a field of mineral electro-etheric vibrations around a nucleus.' Thao indicated an 'egg', the size of an ostrich egg, located in the middle of the room between two seats. 'Will you push this seat please, Michel?'

I looked at Thao, surprised by her request, considering the size of the seat and the fact that she had never before asked anything of me. I tried to oblige, but with some difficulty for the seat was indeed heavy; however I succeeded in moving it about 50 centimetres.

'Very good,' she said. 'Now you will pass me the egg.'

I smiled. In comparison, this would be a simple task. I could lift it with one hand and without any effort; but in order not to drop it, I took it in two hands and... fell to my knees! I had not expected it to be so heavy and had overbalanced. I stood up and tried again, this time with all my strength... nothing happened.

1) Editor's comment

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Thao touched my shoulder. 'Watch,' she said. Turning towards the seat I had found so difficult to move, she placed one hand under it and raised it above her head. Still with one hand, she set it down again, apparently with no effort. Next, she took the egg in both hands and pushed and

pulled with all her might till the veins swelled in her neck. Still the egg didn't move a tenth of a millimetre.

'It is welded to the floor,' I suggested.

'No, Michel, it is *the* Centre and *cannot* move. It is the nucleus I spoke of earlier. We have created a field around it, so strong that the wind and the rain can't penetrate this field. As for the sun's rays, we can regulate the extent to which they penetrate. The birds too, which come to rest above, are not heavy enough to pass through the field and, if by chance a heavier bird does land, he will start to sink. This produces such a frightening sensation for the bird that he will fly away immediately without having come to any harm.'

'It's so ingenious,' I said, 'but what is the significance of the light at the entrance? Couldn't we pass through the walls anywhere we chose?'

'Indeed, we could. It's just that from the outside, it's not possible to see the interior and so you can't know that you won't hit a piece of furniture on the other side. The best place to enter is always indicated by an external light. Come, let me show you around.'

I followed her and discovered, behind a richly decorated partition, a truly magnificent setting. There was a miniature swimming pool that seemed to be of green porphyry and, nearby, a matching basin over which a porphyry swan was bending, its beak open... the effect was beautiful.

Thao held her hand under the swan's beak and immediately the water began to flow over her hand and into the basin. She withdrew it and the flow ceased. She indicated that I should try. The basin was about 150 centimetres above the floor so that I had to lift my arm quite high but I managed and the water spurted out again.

'How clever!' I explained. 'Do you have water which is drinkable on this island, or have you had to sink bores?'

Again Thao's face lit with her smile of amusement. It was quite familiar to me, appearing each time I said something that, to her, seemed 'quaint'.

'No, Michel, we don't procure our water as you do on Earth. Under this magnificent stone bird, is an apparatus which draws air from outside and transforms it into drinking water as required.'

'That's wonderful!'

'We are merely exploiting a natural law.'

'And what if you want hot water?'

'Electro-vibratory force. For warm water, you put your foot here, and for boiling water, you put it there.'

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'Cells positioned on the side, control the functioning of the apparatus... but these are only material details and of no great significance. 'This here,' said Thao, following the direction of my gaze, 'is the relaxation area. You can stretch out there.' She pointed to a thick mat that was on the floor, a little further down towards the base of the 'egg'.

I lay down and immediately felt as though I were floating at ground level. Although she continued to speak, I could no longer hear Thao's voice. She had disappeared behind a misty curtain, so that I had the impression of being enveloped in a thick fog of cotton wool. At the same time, musical vibrations could be heard, and the total effect was marvellously relaxing.

I stood up again and after several seconds, Thao's voice was audible again, growing louder as the 'fog' lifted and disappeared completely.

'What do you think of that, Michel?'

'It really is the height of comfort!' I replied enthusiastically. 'But there is one thing I haven't yet seen and that is the kitchen - and you know how important the kitchen is to the French!'

'This way,' she said, smiling again and taking several steps in another direction. 'Do you see this transparent drawer? Inside you have various compartments. From left to right: fish, shellfish, eggs, cheese, dairy products, vegetables and fruits, and here in the last, we have what you call 'manna', which is our bread.'

'Either you are teasing me or you are making fun of me. All I see in your drawer is red, green, blue, brown and blends of these colours...'

'What you see are concentrates of the various foods - fish, vegetables etc, of the best quality prepared by excellent cooks using various special methods. When you taste it, you will find all this food excellent and very nourishing.'

Thao then uttered several words in her own language and, in a few moments, I had before me on a tray, selected items of food arranged in a manner pleasing to the eye. When I tasted it, my palate was agreeably surprised. It was indeed, excellent, although very different from anything I had ever eaten before in my life. The manna I had already tasted in the spaceship. I ate some of it again and found it a good accompaniment to the dishes presented.

'You tell me that, on Earth, this bread is known as 'manna'. How is it that it exists on Earth at all?'

'It is a product we always carry on our intergalactic spacecraft. It is very practical, being easily compressed and highly nourishing. In fact, it's a complete food. It comes from wheat and oats and you could live on it alone for months.'

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Just then, our attention was drawn by the approach of some people, flying at ground level beneath the branches of the trees. They set down at the entrance to the 'egg', unfastened their Taras and placed them on a block of marble, no doubt there for the purpose. One after the other, they entered and I recognised with pleasure, Biastra and Latoli and the rest of the crew from the spacecraft.

They had changed from their space uniforms into long Arabian-style robes of shimmering colours. (Later, I was to understand why the colour of each robe was so flattering to the individual who wore it.) For the moment, it was difficult to believe these were the same people I had known and spoken with on the spacecraft, they were so completely transformed.

Latoli approached me, a radiant smile lighting up her face. Placing her hand on my shoulder she said, telepathically, 'You seem somewhat stunned, my dear. Are our habitations not to your liking?'

She 'read' my affirmative and admiring response and was delighted by it. Turning back to the others, she relayed my response, and comments flew thick and fast, everyone talking at once. They had all sat down, looking much more at home in their seats than I felt in mine. I felt as odd as a duckling among chickens in that my size corresponded with nothing that had been built on their scale.

Thao went to the 'kitchen' and filled a tray with things to eat. Then, at a word from her, all hands were held out in the direction of the tray, which rose slowly in the air.

It moved around the room, stopping before each guest, without her having to touch it. Finally,

it stopped in front of me and, with great caution, lest it fall (which vastly amused everyone) I took a glass of hydromel. The tray departed of its own accord, returning to its place of origin, and all hands were lowered.

'How is that done?' I asked Thao. My question was understood telepathically by everyone and there was a general burst of laughter.

'By what you would call 'levitation', Michel. We can, as readily, lift ourselves in the air, but that serves no great purpose other than our own amusement.' Having said that, Thao, who was sitting cross-legged, began to rise above her seat and floated about the room, finally coming to rest in mid-air. I stared at her, but soon realised I was the only one fascinated by her accomplishment. Indeed, I must have looked idiotic, for all eyes were fixed on me. Evidently, Thao's behaviour was perfectly normal to my friends but they were more interested in the astonished expression on my face.

Thao descended slowly on to her seat.

'That demonstrates one of the many sciences you have lost on Earth, Michel - apart from a few individuals who are still capable of doing it.

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'There was a time when it was practised by many, along with many other skills.'

We passed the time pleasantly that afternoon, my new friends and I, communicating telepathically in a light-hearted way, until the sun was low in the sky.

Then Thao explained, 'Michel, this 'doko', as we call our habitations on this planet, will be your home during your brief stay on Thiaoouba. We'll be leaving you now for the night, to let you

sleep. If you wish to bathe, you know how to arrange it and you can sleep on the relaxation bed. But try to be organised within the next half-hour, as there is no lighting in this habitation. We are able to see as well by night, as by day, and have no need of it.'

'Is this building secure? Am I safe here?' I asked worriedly.

Again Thao smiled. 'On this planet, you could sleep on the ground in the middle of town and you would be safer than in a building with armed guards, dogs and alarms on Earth.

'Here, we have only very evolved beings and certainly, none resembling the criminals you have on Earth. In our eyes, they must be likened to the worst of savage beasts. On that note, good night.'

Thao about-turned and passed through the 'wall' of the doko to rejoin her friends. They must have brought a 'Litiolac' for her because she flew off with the group.

I prepared then, to spend my first night on Thiaoouba.