



# Trekachaw

**B.R. FLORES**

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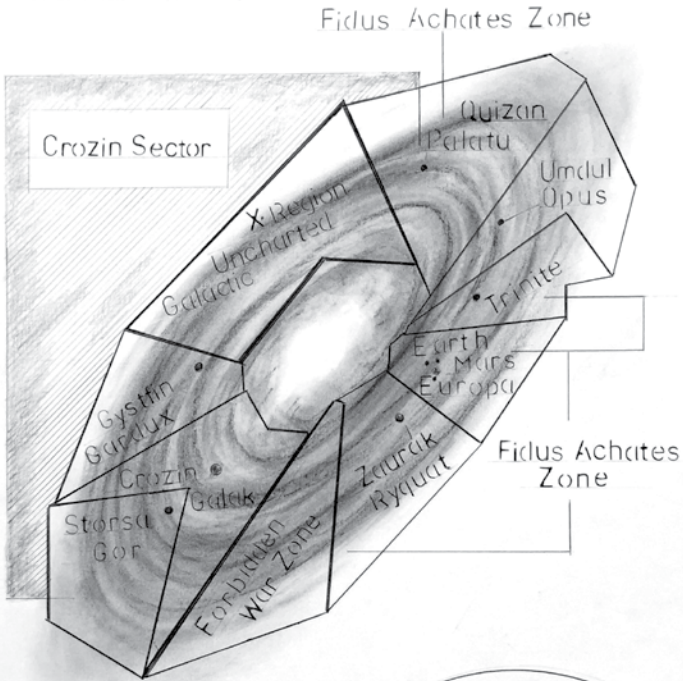
I dedicate this book to my caring, loving,  
and supportive husband, Steve.  
You encouraged me from the beginning  
and never tired of listening to my ideas.

# prologue

Jupiter nearly ripped Azha into particles as he passed through her massive red cyclone. Narrowly escaping death, he flew to one of her moons and discovered shelter in a cave deep beneath the icy crust of Europa. The cave glowed orange with a warm, soothing atmosphere that provided him a sense of well-being and a hideout. Azha was grateful he had eluded the grotesque Gystfin, knowing that had he not, his fate would have been an agonizing death. This powerful Beast was relentless in his quest to fulfill his revenge by destroying those who betrayed him, and to prove his worthiness amongst the alien's intent on the conquest of Earth and those who protect her. For now, Azha waited far from the war, not knowing if all was lost. As the days passed, hints of color in his stripes became brighter across his chest and legs. This was a good sign, giving Azha hope that soon he could leave the cave and continue his journey home...

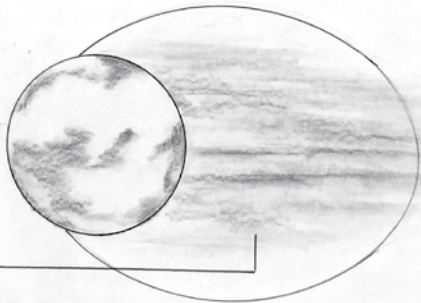
As Azha recovered his strength, on a planet light years away, a meeting was taking place, a meeting that, had they known about it, would have astounded the warriors on both sides of the battle. For while blood was being shed, lives lost, and conflict raged, a cabal had formed. Worlds would suffer by the cabals' rapacious betrayal of those who entrusted them with power that was pivotal in the war.

MILKYWAY GALAXY



Kowok  
Kiki

BERENICES  
GALAXY



one

# PRO TEMPORE EARTH

Call it destiny, good fortune, or perhaps bad luck.  
Whatever you call it, the fate of this ordinary man was the beginning.

**LIFE** has a way of throwing us curve balls, of changing things up when we least expect it, and of challenging all our best-laid plans. But in his wildest dreams, he would not – could not – have predicted what was in store for him.

Cole had inherited his father's tall, muscular physique and his mother's olive skin and thick, brown hair. He was strikingly handsome, charismatic, and impossible to ignore. During his years at the University, Cole rightfully earned his reputation as a player. That is, until he laid eyes on the stunning brunette that was to become his wife. To everyone's surprise, once the two became a couple, Cole distanced himself from his old girlfriends and frat boy lifestyle. Soon after graduation he took an oath to protect and serve with his brothers in blue at the local police department.

A year later, Cole was fresh off probation and on top of the world. His wedding was in two short days, and tonight was his last

graveyard shift. During briefing, all eyes and harmless groom jokes were exhausted on the rookie. Sergeant Swartwood conveyed his congratulations, then reminded patrol to cover Cole's beat if a late call was dispatched to keep the groom out of hot water. But problems were highly unlikely as his beat covered an area of the county inhabited only by an occasional farmer.

Like most July nights, the air was hot and humid making him sweaty and uncomfortable. Cole was already regretting not taking the night off. Having five hours left until the end of his shift, he needed to think of something to keep himself awake. Checking out the musty, old, abandoned winery was as good a diversion as any.

For generations, the local teenagers had hung out there, especially during school break. Heading south, Cole drove to a junction where he turned onto a remote dirt road. For miles, he followed the path of the headlights leading him far away from the sleeping city. Rolling to a stop, he blacked-out the headlights and parked his cruiser in front of the winery, listening for any sounds. During the past couple of weeks, patrol had arrested groups of underage kids drinking alcohol and smoking dope. By now he would have heard them and seen glimpses of shadows as they scattered into the trees. Cole searched the forest with the floodlight, finding the perimeter surprisingly quiet. He aimed the spotlight towards the main entrance and noticed the door was slightly ajar. It wasn't that way last week, or perhaps he hadn't noticed. Most likely, kids had broken into the winery out of curiosity or to hide from the police. Either way, he'd check it out. Besides, it had been at least a decade since he'd explored the winding hallways and mysterious dusty dungeons. Sipping the last drop of warm coffee, Cole crunched up the cup and tossed it on the passenger-side floorboard. At least he could get out and stretch his legs. He grabbed his flashlight from

the charger and stepped out softly, careful not to make any noise from the dry brush beneath his feet.

Not a sound was heard in the still of the night; even the crickets were asleep. Keeping an eye out for any threats, Cole quietly closed the car door. The moonlight lit the rocky path leading to the entrance where spider-web curtains blocked his way. Evidently, the door had not been left ajar; it was merely shadows of the night playing tricks on him. Pulling on the rusty handle did not budge it. Cole propped his foot on the side of the doorframe and pulled harder. This time, the creaky hinges gave way a few inches. He peeked through the crack and couldn't see anything but pitch black. Shining his flashlight through didn't do much. Satisfied that no one could have broken into the building from that door, Cole wondered if continuing was worth his curiosity. Another hot coffee sounded good, but he'd already had four cups and was wired. Checking out the winery gave him something to do until the end of shift.

Cole was familiar with the maze of winding hallways and low rock ceilings as well as the concealed, narrow, stone staircase that led to isolated, underground cellars where barrels had been stored for decades. As an adventurous youth, he'd spent many hot, summer days inside the winery with his buddies. Drawn in by those childhood memories, Cole yanked the door open enough to squeeze his body through, then searched the area with his flashlight to get his bearings. From there he continued onward into the passages where, most likely, his radio would not transmit.

The last time he'd snuck into the winery was on Frank's fifteenth birthday. They constructed a booby-trap over the doorway of the last cellar beneath the winery to catch anyone who dared invade the secret hideout they called C.F. Dungeon. Remarkably, nothing had changed in all those years. Every room crammed with



rickety furniture and smelly wine barrels was the same. Before calling it a night, Cole wanted to find their secret dungeon to see if anyone had tripped the booby-trap. Checking his watch and realizing he had less than an hour before daylight, he picked up the pace. Cole navigated the narrow winding hallways leading to the concealed stone staircase.

There it was. He hesitated at the top to shine his flashlight down the stairwell. At best, he could see the first three steps into the abyss. As a boy the ceiling seemed much higher and the stairs not as steep. He reached above to touch the cold rocks with this hand. It couldn't have been more than six feet. Cole shined his light down the stairwell and tested the first step, then another, and another. The ceiling gradually dropped, forcing him to duck his head lower and lower until he reached the bottom. Pausing on the last step, Cole had second thoughts about going any further. Checking his watch again, he saw it was almost the end of shift. Another couple of minutes wouldn't matter, he was so close.

Directly ahead was a large stone chamber that felt eerily different than he'd remembered. Something felt wrong, perhaps a hunch or a sixth sense telling him to turn around. He told himself not to be such a wimp but couldn't stop the feeling in the pit of his stomach. This was ridiculous. Scary monsters who go bump in the night were concocted to frighten little boys, not a police officer. Even so, he remained perfectly still until the feeling passed. Placing one foot in front of the other, Cole moved forward through the chamber into the musty hallway leading to the last cellar room.

A faint light was glowing from the cracks of the partially opened door. Cole attempted to radio dispatch, giving his location, but his portable did not transmit. Someone had found their secret dungeon and was hiding inside, and Cole intended to find out whom.

*"Police Department, come out with your hands up."*

He waited for a response... nothing but a flickering light.

*"Police department, I know you're in there. Come out with your hands up."*

Someone was moving around and had dimmed their light from white to yellow. Cold sweat dripped from Cole's forehead as he removed his gun from its holster and stepped behind the door, using it for cover.

*"Police department, show yourself."*

He pushed the heavy door half-way open with his foot. The creak of hinges echoed off the walls, drowning out the pounding of his heart. Cole peeked inside and saw no one, yet the cellar was lit with a soft, yellow glow. He lowered his gun and shuffled sideways until he was in the center of the room. The cellar flashed into a silver light then dulled to a greyish-blue. Cole switched off his flashlight and placed it on top of a dusty wine barrel, and re-holstered his gun. A calm, hypnotic wave swept over his body and his mind was filled with visions of sparkling, silver oceans and a horizon on fire. Terrified and transfixed, he forced himself to relax, fearing any movement could interfere with his vivid hallucination. He was at peace, floating above the silver ocean in an unfamiliar world. The blue light dimmed to a dark grey and the visions began to fade. His legs felt numb and heavy, so heavy they were impossible to move.

A jolt awoke Cole from his trance into a grim reality of excruciating pain. He was burning up inside and jerking violently out of control. Something was tearing him apart, separating his very soul from his flesh.

*"Stop! Help! Down here!"* screamed Cole. But no one could hear his screams beneath the old winery. Defeated and wrenched with nausea, Cole stopped struggling and surrendered himself.

He watched his hands and arms vanish before his eyes, leaving a silver hue in their place.

SEEING THROUGH BLURRY EYES, Cole focused on the outline of the rock ceiling. His head was spinning, and his body ached when he moved. Cole closed his eyes wondering if it was morning yet and how he'd ended up on the floor. Whatever happened was over, and he was in no shape to do anything about it. Right now, he needed to move and get the hell out of there. Rolling over onto his side to stand up was easier said than done. It hurt like hell. He decided to lay flat on his back until his head quit spinning. Besides, the cool dirt felt good against his skin. Cole looked down. *Shit I'm naked, why am I naked? Someone must have undressed me and stolen my uniform? What sick bastard would do that? Damn, what else did they do to me?*

Cole concentrated on trying to remember anything after he'd parked his cruiser, but his mind was blank. He must have been drugged, but how? He needed to shake it off and call for help. Where was his portable radio?

Sluggishly, he rolled his head to the side and stopped. His brain hurt so badly he felt like it was going to explode. But turning his head had been worth it. The flashlight was still on top of the wine barrel. Slowly, he turned his head in the opposite direction. From there, he could see the open doorway and beyond into the dark hallway. Cole closed his eyes to brush the loose dirt off his face. Squinting, he thought he saw something and rubbed his eyes to focus on whatever it was. *What the hell?* A huge, deformed hand with long fingers was in front of his face. Cole ducked and slapped

the hand away. *Shit that hurt.* He'd slapped his own hand? This was crazy. His mind had to be playing tricks on him. Maybe he was in a coma and all this was nothing more than a bad dream. At least that made sense. Odds were, he'd been injured and was recovering in a safe hospital bed somewhere hallucinating on morphine. That had to be it. Sooner or later he'd wake up and this would all go away. Cole raised his head and cringed. A huge reptilian thing was sprawled out on top of him. Mustering all his strength to get away, he wobbled to his feet, then collapsed onto his back. Cole stared up at the ceiling and screamed for help. A bellowing roar came out of his mouth. It was petrifying. Terrified to move, he lay perfectly still while searching the cellar with his eyes. He spotted a pile of rumpled clothes on the ground, just out of reach. Moving as little as possible, he stretched out and grabbed the nearest piece. At first, he didn't recognize his own police shirt. It was scorched and torn, with most of the buttons and his badge missing. He reached out and grabbed another blue rag that could've been his slacks, or what was left of them. The waist band was riddled with small burn holes and the legs were shredded. His cellphone had been blown apart and was in several pieces on the floor. Mentally and physically exhausted, Cole gave himself permission to rest for a few minutes. Instead, he drifted into a restless slumber.

Falling, falling, the devil was chasing him to suck out his soul... The world was spinning, and Gystfins were waiting to take his head.

He sat up just before smashing onto jagged rocks. Awakening from that nightmare did not change the nightmare he was in. Perhaps now he was strong enough to escape the cellar. Completely convinced that he was either crazy or dead, Cole decided to make the best of an awful situation. His throbbing head and most of his body aches were almost gone. What worried him was the voice

in his head that was getting louder and the strange thoughts he couldn't control.

Whatever Cole had turned into to was quite amazing when he wasn't scared shitless of it. The new body must have been seven feet long, and it was extremely muscular. Twisting from side to side, Cole admired the beautiful orange stripes that ran in the same direction where his ribs had been. They were luminescent and perfect, as if painted on meticulously. The same stripes continued down the torso, the length of the legs and across the top of his feet. *What the hell? This thing doesn't have a dick?* Cole groped every inch of himself searching for a penis. Nothing. There was nothing but smooth surfaces with no openings. *That's impossible, how am I supposed to take a leak or shit? I gotta be on drugs, this is insane.*

Now Cole was positive he had died, and this was his punishment for being such an asshole to so many people. Such a joker, thinking he was being funny. This was hell and he was paying for all his bad jokes, wrongdoings, and rude thoughts. Screw hell, he'd put an end to this right here, right now. All he had to do was find his gun and kill whatever this was. Cole crawled on his hands and knees over to the wine barrel and grabbed the rim to help pull himself up. There it was, wedged between the rock wall and a rickety old crate. Every step to salvation was worth the pain. Resting his back against the wall he slid down next to his gun. The voice inside his head was begging him to stop. Cole picked up the gun and held it in his hand. There was the voice in his head again. Maybe it was his subconscious telling him to stay alive. He looked down at his legs and closed his eyes. He was a demon. Cole placed the muzzle against his temple and squeezed the trigger. His head flinched but the damn gun didn't fire. Shit, he tried to rack-it, but the slide wouldn't budge. Holding it close to his face in the dark, Cole could

see the barrel and slide were warped, as if melted. Enraged he smashed the gun against the rock wall, shattering it into pieces, and screamed at the voice in his head to shut-up. Cole felt the surge of his orange stripes flash into a blinding purple. Scared to move, he sat still until they faded back to orange. He felt a wave of relief, glad the gun hadn't fired. What he wanted more than anything was to go home. He'd be missed at the end of shift. All he had to do was wait.

And wait he did, long hours turned into insufferable days. Where were his brothers in blue? Why hadn't they searched the winery? If he waited to be rescued, he'd rot in this ghastly dungeon. Cole told himself to face the facts. His perfect life was over, and he was on his own. Fed up, he grabbed his uniform slacks. But why bother, he had nothing to hide. Amusement over his absurd predicament changed the stripes on his body from orange to green. Cole was beginning to understand that his emotions influenced the color of his stripes. It was time to leave the cellar and face the world. He was starving but not hungry for food. Something else was necessary to keep him alive. Maybe he should listen to that nagging voice inside his head telling him to find a Target or Targus? Checking his six, the only thing useful was his flashlight. With that in hand, he headed for the door, stark-naked.

Walking down the narrow staircase was bad enough in his Human body; now it was going to be a real challenge. Even before he took the first step, Cole smacked his head on the stone ceiling, scraping his forehead. Dazed, he stumbled backwards, then shook it off. This time he crawled up the narrow staircase on all fours. At the top he peeked around the corner into a pitch-black hallway. It was a good thing he'd brought the flashlight. But the shaft seemed much smaller in his hand, and the toggle was difficult to flip. After

flipping it on and off several times, Cole banged the head between his hands trying to fix the problem. *And still no light.* Okay, if he shook it hard enough, maybe the stupid thing would work. Cole shook the flashlight so vigorously back and forth that he accidentally hit it against the rock-wall, sending it flying out of his hand. He heard the flashlight hit the ground followed by a, 'clunk roll-roll-roll clunk roll- roll- roll clunk', over and over as it slowly rolled down each step of the steep staircase. Eventually and annoyingly, it came to rest on the dirt floor far below.

*Shit.* Irritated by the difficulty of crawling up the staircase and the loss of his flashlight, Cole's temper flared. The area lit up bright purple, revealing every corner and crevice along the rocky hallway. Indeed, this new body had its perks. When he calmed himself, his stripes changed to orange then faded away into the dark. Cole concentrated, willing his stripes to intensify again, and he began to glow brighter and brighter, lighting up the winding hallway leading to the main entrance. Excited to be finally free of the winery, Cole pushed on the door just enough to peek out. Opening the door a tad more, he checked the gravel road where he'd parked the patrol car. His cruiser was gone, and no one was in sight. That same nagging voice in his head was warning him not to step outside. This was nuts. Going back into the winery was not an option, and somehow, he knew the sun would satisfy his hunger. Cole brushed off his fears and pushed the door wide open into the glorious sunshine. A blanket of warmth covered his weak body, rejuvenating his strength. He stretched out his arms and slowly turned in a circle, absorbing the sun's life force. Outside the winery his stripes were a stunning green that boldly stood out against his luminous tan skin. Cole surrendered his fears and mistrust to the voice inside his head. An instant sense of wellbeing

and self-awareness gave him the direction he was searching for. From now on, he would embrace the mutation as a gift, not a curse. No longer in control, he felt himself fly onto the clay roof of the old winery to explore Earth through reborn eyes. Tiny details were vivid, and his head was filled with amazing sounds. Songs from colorful birds perched high above in a majestic oak tree were soothing, although listening to them was creating a rift between the voice promising salvation and the need to preserve his Human soul. Before he could protest, the voice took control of his body and he stretched out on the rooftop. Distracted, he began to fantasize about all the possibilities as he soaked up the sun's rays. He could have stayed there forever, but he owed his family an explanation. Cole stepped off the roof, landing softly on the ground to begin the trek towards his Human home. Once again, the voice warned him of dangers and to use caution as he neared populated areas. Wishing he could skip the whole confession, he questioned why and how he was going to explain any of it to a Human. Off to one side of the wooded trail, an inviting boulder with a flat ridge beckoned him. This felt like home. He'd stretch-out and soak up more sunlight until night fell.

THE SUN HAD SET, THE MOON was full, and it was time to fulfill his commitment. Navigating the streets in the moonlight was easy, avoiding Humans was tricky. Nothing had changed, yet he felt different about everything. Ginger had been the love of his life, but he did not feel that way now. Regardless, she deserved to know why he was not coming home.

Cole was confused. While part of him realized – and



accepted – that his life was to be different now, he stood in his backyard feeling homesick. How could he so easily give this life away? He wished the voice in his head would let him think and stop telling him what to do. Faint odors of an outdoor grill with sizzling ribs brought back precious memories. He imagined kicking back on a lounge chair, sipping a cold beer, while Ginger prepared the fixings. Watching her set the table with plates and glasses always relaxed him after a long day.

Resisting the nagging voice in his head, Cole fought off a disturbing sadness as he spied on Ginger and his mother through the kitchen window. A couple of steps closer would suffice to eavesdrop. It worked. His keen ears picked up every word. Ginger and his mom were in a heated argument over whether he was dead or missing. Cole crouched beneath the window trying to guess how many days he had been in the winery. Two, maybe three days tops? Listening to them bicker with one another gave him the justification to leave without an explanation. Somewhere out there was home, not here and not Earth.

The yard grew brighter and brighter. His emotions were out of control. Ginger and his mom stopped arguing mid-sentence and shuffled closer to the window. They leaned forward to peer out into the mysterious glowing backyard and screamed, horrified by the creature crouched beneath the window. Cole sprung-up, stepped-back, and covered his ears to muffle their shrieks. This was his moment of clarity. All he could think of was fleeing this exasperating planet plagued by irrational Humans. Instinctively his body transformed into pure energy and streaked across the sky until he unconsciously willed himself to stop. Weightless and free, he floated far above the magnificent blue orb, Earth in all her glory. Finding peace in space, Cole was confident that he no

longer required air, gravity, or his weak, Human-half. Somewhere hidden within this spectacular universe was home. He closed his eyes trying to remember where his planet was concealed amongst the infinite galaxies and their stars. Distracting him were useless cryptic images of Earth and ages forever gone. These memories were blocking his instincts to navigate home and were consuming energy he could no longer afford to waste. If he were to survive, the voice in his head was his only chance. Floating in space gave him time to reflect and ponder his limited options. Leaving Earth and traveling deep into the cosmos with no clear direction was unavoidable, even if it meant his demise. The next star on his journey was many light years away, but active planets could provide an alternative energy. Mars was an excellent place to begin. She was convenient and uninhabited. In less than a blink of an eye he found himself floating above the small red planet and looking back at Earth. Considering why he cared to look back was dangerous. Adding to his confusion was the knowledge that Mars had once been a fertile planet, one that tragically died many years ago. How he knew didn't matter. What did matter was the knowledge that beneath his feet a cold iron-core guarded tragic stories of a distant holocaust. He felt profound sorrow. Taking a moment to appreciate her beauty, Cole marveled at the rocky terrain with sheer, red stained cliffs shadowed by the distant sun. Nonetheless, she was no longer capable of providing an energy source. Her atmosphere was thin and arid except for random patches of frozen water. Gazing up at the glittering stars made Cole feel even more lost. Where was his planet and where to begin? One tiny star cried out to him. Cole turned into energy and sped past Neptune, leaving Earth's solar system into the Orion Belt.

On and on he traveled into the void. Time and space became

irrelevant and impossible to decipher. Cole had underestimated the distance and was growing weak and afraid. Returning to Earth was no longer an option; he'd gone too far. Without an energy source he would eventually vanish into oblivion. To conserve strength, he became dormant, sailing on the waves of black matter for the long trek. What was once a brilliant light streaking across the Milky Way Galaxy dimmed to an insignificant glow in an endless prison of night.

# FORLORN EARTH

**FRANK** grew impatient, angrier, and more discouraged the longer the case dragged on. His only salvation was to comfort Cole's grieving family and protect them from the media invasion. The mysterious missing Police Officer story and Cole's photograph had been broadcast on every news channel across the nation. Adding to the madness, an endless stream of reporters had bombarded the small city. After weeks of searching day and night with zero leads, the Police Department declared Cole officially missing. The media moved on to current breaking news, and the assisting agencies were sent home. Cole's case was considered cold and officially closed pending further evidence. Frank was positive that his friend had succumbed to a heinous murder. Someday his bones would surface, ending the mystery and providing closure for his suffering family.

Soon after Cole's disappearance, Frank and Judy learned of Ginger's pregnancy. Together with Cole's mother they supported her during the funeral and with the birth of Cole's baby boy. People moved on, along with any hope of finding Cole. But Ginger never gave up. In her heart she believed the strange creature

in the backyard was somehow connected to Cole's disappearance. Cole's mom, Beverly, feared the authorities would simply dismiss their preposterous monster encounter. No doubt, most of their friends would consider them temporarily insane from grief, or worse, they'd be accused of fabricating a crazy story for attention. Eventually Beverly refused to discuss the incident even with Ginger.

As the months passed, Cole's mother grew bitter and withdrew from everyone and everything. Day after day, she spent most of her time sitting at the kitchen table staring out the window at nothing. When the day was over, Ginger would tuck the old woman into bed and kiss her forehead goodnight. In the morning, Beverly would wait for Ginger to awaken before she'd get out of bed. Her old eyes were always sad and swollen from crying the night before. Each day she'd shuffle out of her bedroom and find herself sitting at the table to begin the vicious cycle all over again.

FOR GINGER, COLE'S DISAPPEARANCE SEEMED like yesterday. Everyone had a suggestion about how she should move on with her life, and they weren't shy about expressing them. Friends were unanimous that Beverly should be moved to a care facility, adding that it was not only for her sake, but for Ginger's too. Apparently, this would allow Ginger the freedom to date. As far as Ginger was concerned, everyone should mind their own business. Getting into a romantic relationship was not practical with a young child, and she wasn't ready. Nonetheless, Frank's wife, Judy, had other plans, and she was not taking *no* for an answer. She'd arranged a dinner for the three of them and a blind date for Ginger at a restaurant

downtown. Frank begrudgingly agreed, believing the date was more for his wife than for Ginger.

The man Judy had chosen for Ginger was her new boss. Andrew was an accomplished bio-engineer and professor who had recently accepted a position at the local government research facility. Supposedly, he was in the final stages of closing escrow on one of the most prestigious homes in the area.

Full of trepidation, Ginger slowly prepared to meet Andrew. The commitment was not going away, no matter how much she dragged her feet. Feeling sick to her stomach as she traveled to the restaurant, she continued to drive. No more excuses. Although, with any luck all the parking spaces would be full. She knew she was being childish wanting any excuse to turn around and go home. There were plenty of empty spaces. Sitting in the parking lot wasn't going to change anything either, except make her late. She might as well go in, if nothing else, give it a shot.

# three

## IN ABSENTIA

“One must evolve to endure”

**A** light blinked, then another and another. Was it possible in this cold relentless void he felt warmth? Cole rotated in space to absorb the magnificent Targus Sun. Against all odds, he'd found his minuscule solar system hidden amongst billions of stars. . .

What an incredible journey. All the same, he was grateful that it was almost over. Cole yearned to feel Palatu's breeze and vibrant atmosphere against his body. For a hundred and thirty-five years she had been his life force and sanctuary. Through it all, visions of sparkling, silver oceans had kept him sane. Home. He could see Palatu in the distance. From this moment on, he swore to himself never to leave her again.

Cole forgave himself for taking the Human's soul the moment he morphed into body form above Palatu. Silver oceans sparkled, and the warm, red, volcanic ground felt good between his toes. A deep absorption of carbon dioxide and vapor penetrated his brilliant skin, making him feel whole again. In all his grandeur, Cole's regal

silhouette appeared divine against the kaleidoscope sky. Wanting to revel in being home for as long as he could, Cole laid on the ground to look up at the Targus Sun through the forest's canopy of yellow leaves. Earth and his Human life were nothing more than fading memories of a dream; however, though it drew him in, his life on Palatu was fragmented and confusing at best.

Falling asleep wasn't what he'd planned, but apparently his body needed rest. Upon awakening, he felt stronger, mentally sharper, and fully energized. It was time to face his past, regardless of what that meant. Cole strolled towards his village enjoying the warm breeze and colorful tropical trees. The jagged volcanic cliffs beyond the forest were covered in aqua flowers with bright red leaves. In the distance, layers of volcanic mountains were erupting, sending showers of magma fireworks into the sky.

While part of him was at home and at peace, his Human-half buried deep within his soul was screaming to be heard. This part of him was of the Earth, and it wanted to go home.