SUIT UP. STEP UP.
IT'S TIME TO BECOME A HERO!

MARV

AND THE

ALIEN INVASION

WRITTEN BY
ALEX FALASE-KOYA

PICTURES BY
PAULA BOWLES

Oxford University Press
Evaluation Copy

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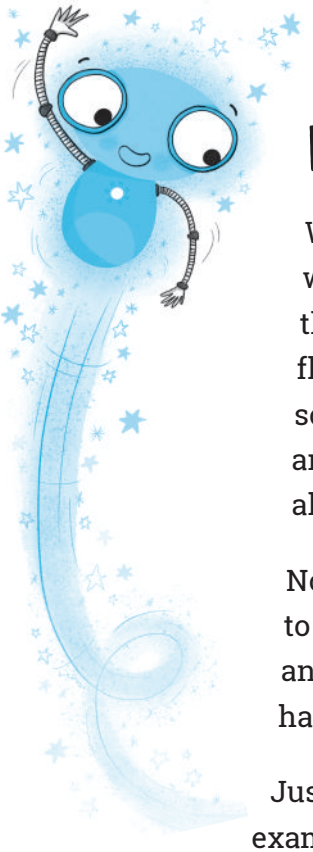


DEAR READER,

When I was growing up, I really wanted to be an astronaut. I thought it would be so cool to fly through space, having all sorts of amazing adventures, and maybe even meet some aliens too.

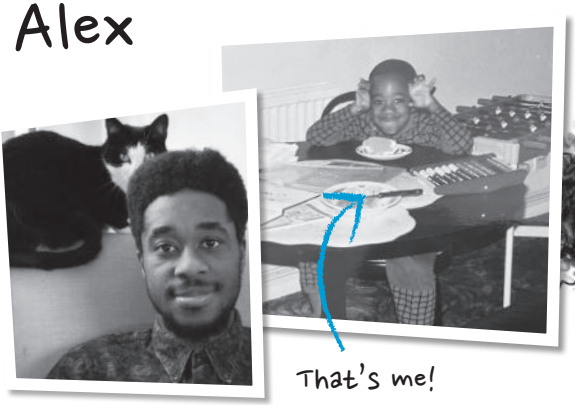
Now, I know that you don't have to go all the way into space for an amazing adventure—you can have one right here on Earth.

Just go to your local library for example. Books are full of all kinds of adventures. The people we know are all filled with stories of adventure too—why don't you ask someone about their greatest adventure? Maybe there's someone sitting next to you right now with an amazing story to tell?

My cats are sitting next to me as I write this. I did ask if they had any adventures to tell me about, but they just meowed back. Maybe they are thinking about space adventures too.

I think it would still be cool to go up to space and meet some aliens, but right now I'm happy to settle for reading books with aliens in them. After all, my cats wouldn't like it if I left them alone for too long.

Alex



For my cats Akira and Simone – A.F-K

For SUPER YOU, the completely marvellous reader – P.B

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CHAPTER 1

Marvin was standing outside the school gates after lunch, with his classmates staring up at the school bus. It was a shiny silver colour and Marvin imagined it transforming into a spaceship—shiny steel wings extending out of the sides of the bus and fiery rocket boosters pushing out of the back of it. A school bus doubling up as a spaceship would be so cool!

'Hey, Marvin,' Grandad said, waving a hand in front of his face and bringing him back to reality. 'Are you sure you've packed your PJs?'

‘Yep, I’m sure! I’m all set for our Space Centre school trip, and I can’t wait.’ Marvin grinned at his grandad. ‘I have been on school trips before, you know, Grandad.’

‘Yeah, but you’re staying over this time. I won’t see you until tomorrow!’

Grandad was right; this was the first time Marvin had been on a school trip overnight. His class were having a sleepover inside the Space Centre—it was going to be so cool!

‘Did you remember your notebook and pen?’ Grandad said. ‘I put them by your bedside table.’

‘Pixel reminded me, and I packed it last night,’ Marvin said. ‘You and Pixel are both very organized.’

‘That’s probably because we spent all those years working as a team, right Pixel?’

A quiet beep came in reply from Marvin’s backpack. Grandad lowered his sunglasses and gave a wink.

Pixel was Marvin's robotic sidekick, and his friend. She'd also been his Grandad's sidekick way back when Grandad was a superhero.

The doors of the school bus swung open with a whoosh.

'All right, class it's time to go,' Marvin's teacher called from the front of the bus.

Grandad swept Marvin up into a big hug.

'I can't wait to hear all about it tomorrow,' Grandad said. Then he leant down, so he was talking at Marvin's bag. 'And I hope you enjoy the Space Centre too, Pixel,' he whispered.

A small robotic arm snaked its way out of the top of Marvin's bag, gave a quick wave, and then disappeared back into the backpack.

Pixel went everywhere with Marvin. After all, what's a superhero without a trusty sidekick? Marvin had packed his super-suit too of course, just in case. A superhero is never really off duty, even on a school trip.

Marvin gave his grandad a wave, then walked up the steps and onto the bus.

His friends, Joe and Eva, gave him a double high-five as he settled down next to them at the back of the bus.

'Are you ready for the Space Centre?' Marvin grinned.

'Yeah!' Eva punched the air. 'I've been waiting all week for this.'

'I've been waiting my whole life for this!' Joe yelled.

Marvin and Eva looked at Joe as the bus turned out onto the main road.

‘Your whole life?’ Eva asked.

‘Yeah, Joe, I don’t think you knew about the Space Centre when you were a baby,’ Marvin added.

‘No, but when I was a baby my favourite toy was a spaceship.’ Joe gave a confident nod.

‘Bleep!’

‘Ahem,’ said Marvin, trying to cover up the sound of Pixel bleeping in his bag. ‘I think I dropped my pen.’

As Joe and Eva continued to chat to each other Marvin bent down and opened the top of his backpack. A shiny, silvery robot with round eyes stared up at him.

‘Are we nearly there yet?’ Pixel whispered to Marvin.

‘I don’t think it will be long. The Space Centre isn’t too far from school,’ Marvin whispered back.

‘I can’t wait to go exploring when we get there.’ Pixel vibrated with excitement.

‘Me neither!’ Marvin nodded. Then he carefully closed his backpack and sat up again.

‘Did you find it?’ Eva asked.

‘Find what?’ Marvin raised his eyebrows.

‘I thought you were looking for your pen,’ Eva said.

Marvin’s eyes widened. He’d forgotten about his excuse to talk to Pixel!

‘Oh, yes, I found it,’ Marvin started slowly, trying to think about what he was going to say next. ‘And then I put it back in my backpack. Yes, that’s exactly what I did.’ Marvin looked at his friends. Would they believe him?

‘Great,’ Eva shrugged, and Marvin breathed a sigh of relief.

He’d love to tell Eva and Joe about Pixel and about him being a superhero, but the thing about being a superhero,

with a secret identity was that your secret identity had to remain secret.

A wave of cheers suddenly went through the bus.

'We're here!' Joe yelped.

Marvin turned to look out of the window.

The Space Centre was a tall, stony building and had a large picture of a rocket above the entrance with the words 'Space Centre' at the very top of it.

Marvin felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up with excitement as the bus pulled up outside the entrance.

Their teacher, Ms Davis, stood up at the front of the bus and called them off row by row.

Their tour guide was waiting for them inside the reception. She was dressed like an astronaut, apart from the helmet. Her hair was in space buns.

'Hello kids, are you ready to experience SPACE?' The tour guide jumped up and down with an excitement that was infectious. The entire class, Marvin included, started jumping and cheering as well.

‘So, I’m Jessie, your tour guide today,’ she said, holding her hands up for quiet. ‘First things first, let’s drop your bags off in the canteen where you’ll be sleeping later. Follow me!

‘You can leave your bags here,’ Jessie said as they entered the canteen. ‘And then we’ll take a look at the planet room, some of our other exhibits, and finally the rocket room! Then later we’ll come

back here and before you all go to bed, we have a bit of a surprise.'

Marvin was excited but sad at the same time. The day sounded amazing,

but he hadn't realized he would have to leave his bag (and Pixel) behind. He knew how excited she was to come on the tour. Marvin slowly trudged over to a corner of the room and put his backpack on the ground, crouching next to it. 'Sorry, Pixel,' he whispered. 'We have to leave our bags in the canteen while we go on the tour. Maybe we can have a look around together once everyone else is asleep?'

'OK,' Pixel whispered back in a very small voice.

Marvin stood up but found it hard to turn around and leave.

'Come on, Marvin, you don't want to get left behind,' Joe said, pulling at

his friend's arm. Marvin gave one last look at his backpack and then turned to join Joe.

They had just caught up with the others as they filed into a wide, circular room.

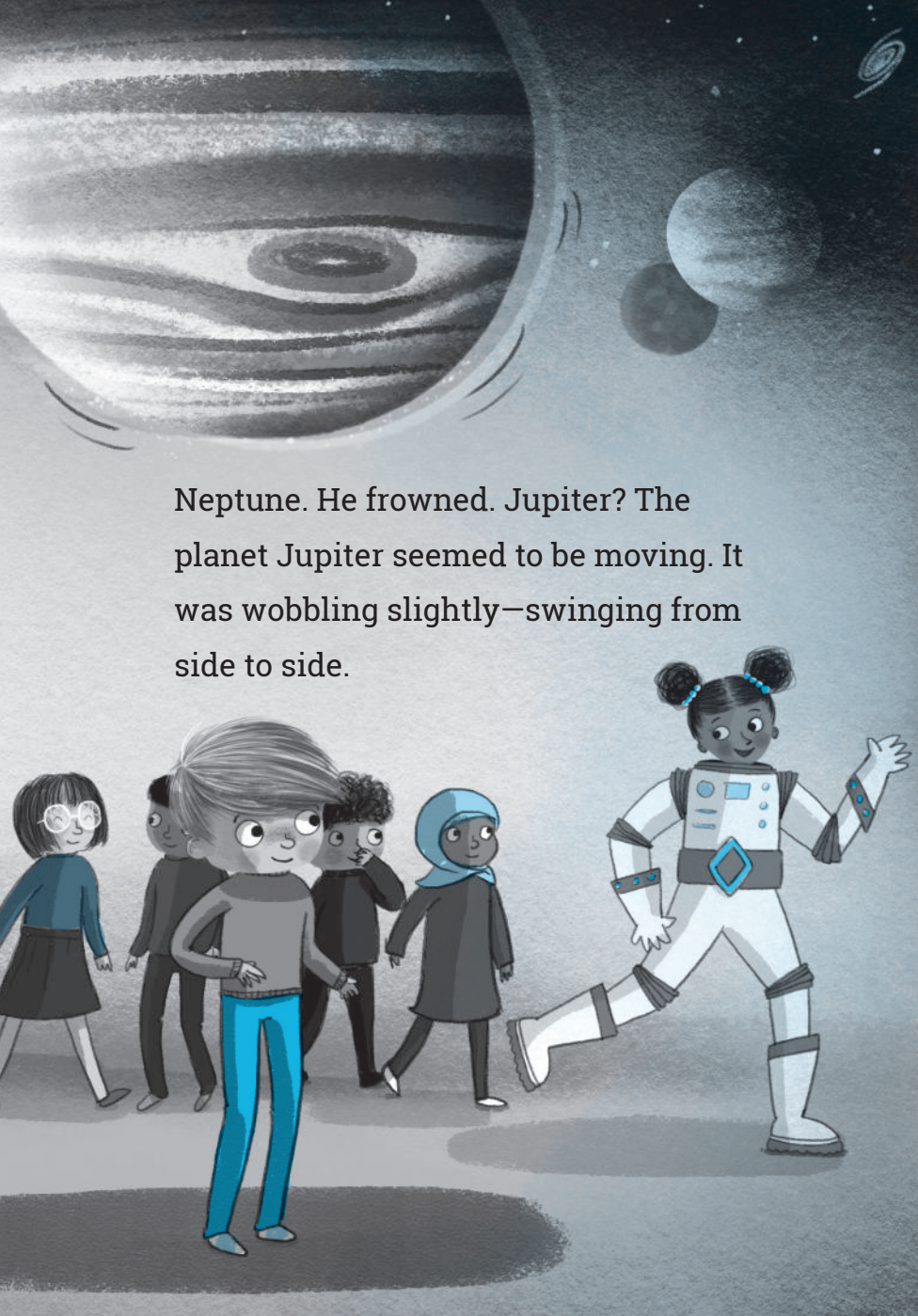
'This is the planet room!' Jessie said as she walked into the centre. 'Behold the universe!'

'Woooah,' Marvin, Joe, and Eva all said in unison.

A magnificent display of all the planets in the solar system hung from the high ceiling. The room was huge, and even the smallest planet was about the size of Marvin! The lights dimmed, and then a spotlight appeared on each of the planets, while a starry light show played across the ceiling. The planets really looked like they were flying in space!

Marvin had seen pictures of the planets before, but never in 3D like this. It really did feel like being in space.

A soundtrack of heavy drums and sweeping violins blared from the speakers around them. Marvin glanced from planet to planet. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and



Neptune. He frowned. Jupiter? The planet Jupiter seemed to be moving. It was wobbling slightly—swinging from side to side.

Then Marvin heard a high-pitched cackle. It sounded like it was coming from the ceiling but when he looked up, no one was there.

Marvin frowned. Maybe he had imagined it?

SNAP!

Marvin looked up to see Jupiter falling from its fixing in the ceiling. And it was hurtling towards Joe's head.

'Joe—watch out!'