

## CHAPTER 22    **Conversations with Aunt Elma**

Elvira answered Ali's connection right away with a tremendous sense of relief, telling her first about the communication from Paradiceo authorities that she was in the Wilderness with a boy and the authorities have not found her, and about having to hold her father back off from sending out a search party.

Ali could barely get a thought out, she was bent over laughing. *"Marta, if you are listening, do tell Donasse what a good job she was doing."*

*"Who's Marta? What's that all about?"* Elvira was totally confused.

*"I'm sorry, Elvira, you are such a good friend to Aunt Elma to be taking these communications for her."*

*"Ok so reward me; who's Marta?"*

*"Do you remember hearing about a party line when telephones first came out? Well, this is sort of like that; Marta is a good friend, and we practice telepathy together so sometimes she hears what I say. I think it was Donasse, a Council member who called you, so I was asking Marta, if she was hearing me, to tell Donasse that she did a good job."* Marta was laughing so hard she could barely hear Ali's telepath.

*"My dear, it wasn't a good job at all. It was one-way communication; we were not able to ask questions. The message told us that you had disappeared with a boy, and they had sent out search teams and couldn't find you, but there were no dangerous animals or poisonous vegetation so you would be OK. Well, you know how your father is, he was going to go find you, but your mother told him to calm down; that you would let us know if you needed help,"* Elvira responded.

*"I see what you mean, and I am so sorry to have you worry so much. I called to report that my problem is over; and I can communicate freely."* Elvira and company, of course, had a hundred questions. Ali reminded them that she would not be able to answer most of them – ever.

Elvira: *"Elma thinks that's an awfully long time."*

Ali: *"Elvira, all of you know the deal I made when I came here; do you want me to not keep my word; All of you have beaten into me as a child - if you make a promise, you must keep it. Do you want me to violate that now?"*

Elvira: *"Elma says: Unless keeping the promise will hurt someone or the promise is unreasonable."*

Ali: *"I know, and you do not, that if I break the promise, people will be hurt, and I know the promise is unreasonable, but that doesn't matter. You all are just going to have to live with unsatisfied curiosity; it's just that: curiosity, not a need to know."*

Marta, listening in of course, felt bad for Ali. *First, she has to hide, then the people who are helping her get beat up because she is hiding, now her family is browbeating her for holding to her agreement – that woman can't win for losing.*

Elvira was speaking to someone in the background: *"I'll ask her; calm down."* Then to Ali, *"The phone call from the authorities said you had a boy with you."*

Ali: *"My research assistant."*

Elvira: *"That's not nearly as exciting as we were expecting."*

Ali started laughing again; she wasn't sure if the absurdity of having to withhold the whole truth was so amusing or if laughter was stress relief, but very soon they were all laughing with her.

*Ali was finally able to say: "The important thing is how is Elma?"*

*Elvira: "She is doing better except for worrying about you so your father did not tell her about the communication from the authorities. But you said you broke some rule, and you were hiding."*

*Ali: "Well yes, I did say that, but unfortunately, I can't tell you anything about it except I am doing some research and I did not properly inform the right people about what I was doing. It's all over now, I have been exonerated and you don't need to worry about me anymore and I expect to be in more regular contact with you moving forward."*

*"Damn that culture, and their secrecy. You know how your father is when he doesn't know what's going on."*  
Elvira could be overly assertive on occasion.

*"All of you including Dad just have to trust me," Ali responded with no small amount of frustration in her voice. The last thing she needs right now is a conflict with family members. "What does the doctor say about Elma?"*

*"He says she's old."*

Ali could tell Elma was sitting at Elvira's elbow. *"Hope You're payin' him more than a bushel of tomatoes for that revelation," she said with a chuckle.*

*"It's blood pressure mostly; they just have to get the medication right," Elvira reported.*

*"Anything else? What about the depression?" Ali asked.*

*Elvira: "They don't want to medicate that until they have the blood pressure right, so the interaction of the meds doesn't cause a problem."*

*"She hasn't been in the hospital or anything like that?" Ali asked.*

*"Lord, No. She'll have none of that."*

In the background: *"I'll have none of what?"*

*"Hospital Elma, she wanted to know if you had to go to the hospital."*

In the background again: *"Hell no, none of that."*

*Elvira: "Got that Ali? None of that!"*

Ali laughed: *"Got it. Give them all my love and thank you so much Elvira for being our telepath. I'm going to sign off now."*

*Elvira: "Bye dear, you take care; love from all of us."*

*Ali: "Back atcha."*

With the stress of harassment over, and being welcomed into the enclave, Ali spent a good deal of cave time focused on the fact that she would need to figure out how she was going to get them to let Jerod leave Paradiqueo with her. She wanted to be home to have her baby, which meant leaving well ahead of time. She was sure Eleanora was right; they were not going to let him go. Her last communication with Earth gave her

an idea. *Was her father having a pipe dream that he could bring a search party to Paradiceo, an option she had not considered. The founders of the planet landed without a landing dock; how did they do it, and how can I communicate with Dad without being overheard by the Authorities, also an impossible task.* And then, she remembered a game she used to play with her Aunt Elma. They made it up after they saw a *Star Trek* episode where the people on a planet communicated by naming historical events. Her game with Elma consisted of one of them naming two events, in their life, known to both of them, events that had a similar attribute, and then the other player had to name a 3rd event that had the same attribute. The one who got the most right won; the prize was usually one of Elma's famous ginger cookies.

As Ali explored deeper into the Wilderness, she began to call home at least twice a cycle. After she hatched her plan, when Elvira asked her how she was doing, she responded: *"I must confess I am a bit homesick, and I am wondering if Elma would be willing and well enough to play a game with me, a game we made up when I was a child that we used to call the Historical Event game."*

*"Elma says she calls it Historical Event Language," Elvira replied.*

*"That's the one; I guess she remembers," Ali responded.*

*"Nothing wrong with Elma's memory," Elvira said. "She says she can't possibly be depressed playing that game with you; it will bring back many wonderful memories."*

*Ali: "Exactly what I have in mind. Now, I need to explain some rules; can you write them down?"*

*"Wait one minute." Softly in the background: "Elma where can I find a pencil and paper."*

*"Right there, in that drawer," from Elma.*

*To Ali: "Ok, shoot."*

*"Tell my dear father, he can help Elma interpret the clues, but **he must not play while I am telepathing**; he'll mess it up. That is critical. I have modified the rules a little because we will play as a family. The main rules you must follow are:*

*1. You must take notes of everything we say so that you can review them with Mom and Dad later.*

*2. You must not reveal the theme of the event; you must not even think about it until you are all together reviewing your notes. Your answers will be like pieces of a puzzle. My dear father can look at the notes from the communication later and help put together the puzzle, but he must not be present or think while we are playing. His thinking could ruin the whole game."*

*"We understand; no Zachary while we are telepathing during our game," Elvira responded. "Elma just told me she wants a bowl of soup to build up her strength so she can communicate with you directly. Oh, and Elma wants to know when we start the game."*

*Ali: "In about a week; I'm going to sign off now, stop worrying; talk to you soon."*

Zachary, Ali's father, still thinking he should stage a rescue, was meeting quietly with his family and Elvira who pointed out that while she had no solid evidence about what the Paradiceans were capable of telepathically, but she knew in general that if you want to connect with someone directly, you have to do something which is metaphorically like ringing a doorbell, something to get the attention of the person you want to communicate with. Ali does it by focusing on Elma's loom which then emits some energy, even shakes the heddles a bit on occasion. But a telepath can listen in on someone else's conversation, like that Marta was listening in on Ali."

"The point is," Elvira said, "for them to 'hear' what we are saying, they would have to be listening to or recording our every thought and word. They wouldn't 'hear' the cow moo or you farting in the toilet.

"Or out," Elma added.

"You ARE feeling better," Elvira said sarcastically, rolling her eyes and shaking her head, but they could listen in on our thoughts. I don't know if they would think we are plotting anything."

"It's a simple family game; why would they be exercising some level of espionage? Elma asked.

"Something strange is going on with Ali, and I recommend caution. I think the trick is for us to keep our conversations with and about Ali, thoughts, or voice, even and cool; no emotional outbursts, no panic attacks, just normal boring farm life."

Elma was loved for her spunky spirit but also respected for her wisdom and intuition. "Perhaps this is not all about homesickness and giving me something to get well for; I think she will try to communicate with us about something very serious. I think the game is a kind of code and we are going to have to break the code. Zackery, she is clearly worried that you could screw this up. She kept saying that you should not participate."

Zackery responded: "I don't understand why or how I would screw up her game, whatever its intent."

Ali's mother spoke up: "Well I understand!! Zack, you have no monitor on your brain, or your mouth. You are a very quick thinker so if you think of the answer to the puzzle, everyone who is reading minds will know it and you will spoil the game. Suppose Elma is right, and Ali is speaking in code and the people on that planet are listening in, and you think of how to break the code while we are telepathing; you would expose the whole thing. Your brilliant mind comes in later when the rest of us can't figure out the clue." Elma chuckled: "Exactly my dear nephew, you have been a blabber mouth and spoiler, ever since you were a child. Your wife knows you well."

Ignoring his aunt's playful insult, Zack responded: "I get it, and I think there is only one reason to use code: if they detect what she is communicating, she could be in danger. I think I should form a search party."

June, Ali's mother, was holding her head in her hands and mimicking a scream. "You should cool off and stay put until we get our instructions from Ali. Do I need to nail your feet to the floor."

Elvira: "You're right June, we need to sit tight and see what we discover next session. Are we all on the same page?" She was six inches from the Zacks nose, eyeball to eyeball. Zack nodded.

June: "Now that we have that settled, Elma how is this game played."

Elma: "You are looking at 2 events which have a common theme. Suppose I say Church bazaar, and Fireman's picnic." What's a theme at both those events?"

June: "Handmade Crafts."

Elma: "What is another event that has handmade crafts?"

Zack: "Handmade crafts at the Annual Art Show."

Elma: "Zack, this is why you are not allowed to play; you say 'Annual Art Show;' you do NOT say handmade crafts because that is the attribute, the piece of the puzzle which must not be revealed. GET IT!"

Elvira: "Elma your blood pressure; he will not be present when we are playing with Ali."

Zack: "Ok, I get it. So, how do we know that the attribute is not food trucks; they all have food trucks."

Elma: "We don't know for sure; that is why we consult with each other and write down our possible answers. When we get all the events and all our guesses about the attributes together, Ali says we will be able to tell if the puzzle fits together, so it's likely in the end that either food trucks or handmade crafts will fit."

June: "What if the theme from church bazaar is to raise money for Thanksgiving dinners for the poor; then the Annual Art Show is not right."

Elma: "Then when you say Annual Art Show, Ali would say No, and give you a new clue."

June: "This could be complicated."

Elma: "That's why we have all these great minds to work it out."

They all laughed, and Elvira said: "Meeting adjourned."

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Marta and her team continued to randomly listen in on Ali's thoughts and on every conversation with Earth. She was very comfortable with what she was hearing: a family interacting joyously and even playing games. Based on Marta's reports, the Council was quite comfortable that Ali was protecting their secrets, and confident that in time she would return to the village to have her mind evacuated and catch a shuttle to the intergalactic transport hub where she could board a ship for Earth. Donasse, was believing she had come up with the idea to leave Ali and Jerod in the Wilderness and was patting herself on the back. The question of what to do with Jerod was still more than an interval away, far enough in the distance to need no discussion.

Conversations with Ali's family took place twice a cycle (12 units/days, and once a cycle, they played the Historical Event Language game. Elvira reported that Elma was gaining weight and strength, perhaps in part due to contact with Ali. While Ali's purpose in playing the game was very serious, she kept the game light to avert curiosity on the part of the Paradiisian authorities. She hated deceiving Marta, but there was no other way. She hoped her father would figure out what she was really up to.

Her conversations with Elma and Elvira, when the game was not being played, were lighthearted and upbeat. Her parents and brothers sometimes participated through Elvira as telepath. When they asked about her timetable for coming home, she simply said it was not yet determined.

Game Session 1: Elvira connected as soon as the heddles on the loom shook. *"We are ready to go here; Elma is chomping at the bit."*

*"This week is a rehearsal only,"* Ali said.

*"OK, remember you must not give away the theme, or say what you think the event means. You must write down the event I give you. Then you give me an historical event that has the same theme or attribute, so I know you got it. Write that down also. If I think you did not get it right, I will give you another event. Do not define the theme or think about your definitions. After I am off the air, you can discuss what you think the events mean. You can share your notes with Dad. Just make sure none of that is communicated back to me or anywhere else. After we have finished one sequence of 6-8 events, the answers go together like a puzzle; Dad will help you with that."*

Elma asked; *"Do you think people there can hear what we are thinking?"*

Ali, always quick on her feet, replied: *"My dear overly trusting and curious Aunt Elma, people where you are can read your thoughts. I am hoping to perfect this game, package it as a party game, and make some money when I get home. Write that in your notes; write everything I say in your notes."*

"OK, we've got it," Elvira said.

"So, we begin," Ali said.

Ali: *"First events: My high school graduation, and college graduation."*

Elvira: *"Elma says your 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation."*

Ali: "No! Try 6<sup>th</sup> grade special end of year event."

Elvira: *"Elma says Fly up from brownie to Girl Scouts."*

"Excellent!" Ali replied. *"We will start the real game in two weeks."*

Elvira said: "Elma is worried she won't know if she is getting the attribute right; she wants to check with you, just for this sample."

"No! If you and Mom and Dad all get the same answer, or agree on the attribute, you are likely to be right; if you don't get the same answers, write down all your answers; the right answers will fit together in the end and the puzzle will make sense."

The family assembled to discuss what the common element of the two events could be. Elma mentioned her question about their thoughts being heard and that Ali said they should be careful not to reveal the game because Ali intended to sell it when she gets home.

Ali's father broke out laughing: "Ali doesn't have an entrepreneurial bone in her body; I'm convinced the thought police on Paradiieceo are monitoring all of us. That's why she must cut communications short," and turning to Ali's Mom, "You are right June, our little darling is up to something, and it's buried in this game. And now thanks to Elma's question, they think we are onto them; not good Elma."

"Oh, dear; oh dear, oh dear," Elma was well into an anxiety attack, "what if I thought the wrong thing?"

Elvira laughed out loud! "Elma, you don't know enough to think the wrong thing; Zack, Chill; they are going to monitor her, we don't know about us; that's why we can't check the clues with her, and we must be quick and brief and careful about what we think!"

They all laughed; "Ali will so love to hear these bits when she comes home," June said.

"So. what is the common element of these events? Remember this is practice, not part of the final puzzle." Elvira said.

June took over: "Ok, high school, college and 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduations were promotions, but the 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents' meeting was not; she got an award at that event and at high school and college graduations and at the ceremony to fly up from Brownie to Scout, but she did not get an award at 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation which is why that one was wrong."

Elma: "I agree."

Zack: "Me too; June, you are a genius."

Elma: "But shouldn't we brainstorm some more answers just in case."

Elvira, with great affection: "Chill, Elma. Keep your blood pressure down. She said if we agreed, we probably have the right answer. Let's try not to over think, we will just get ourselves confused."

Elma said, "humph" and went to take a nap.

Game Session 2: Elvira reported that they all agreed that they found the common element especially since the answer Ali had declared wrong did not have the element they identified in the 3 remaining events. "Excellent," Ali replied and then reviewed the rules before giving the first set of clues. *"The scout hiking trip in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and Jimmy's Junior Prom."*

Elma came back with *a 5-year-old climbing a tree.*

"Excellent," Ali said.

The family meeting the day later found Elma beside herself with worry. "She's injured."

Ali's father said: "I don't think so. She wasn't really hurt on the girl scout trip; and no one was hurt at Jimmy's Junior Prom. On the scout trip, she wandered away from the group, so we had to go pick her up; and Jimmy's ride did not show up after the prom, so we went to get him, and she was afraid to come down from the tree, so I had to climb up to get her, but she was not injured. All were rescue missions, not injuries; I'm telling you I need to go get her."

June once again trying to talk her husband off the ledge: "Zack, Chill, think: when are you going to go, how are you going to go, where are you going to pick her up? We have more puzzle pieces in the game. If she needs a ride, she will give us more instructions."

Elma, uncharacteristically calm: "She's right Zack; we don't know what's out there. Ask yourselves why she is not just coming out and saying come pick me up or why is she not following their schedule to bring her home. We're going to have play this her way, no matter how painful it is for you, Zack."

Zack: "I'm going to start looking into transportation, so I know what options are available."

June: "That's a good idea dear; it will keep you occupied and out of trouble."

Elvira: "Do not forget that we think they may be listening in, so look for a vehicle to take you to that planet you like to fish on, or something like that. We need to be careful; they may be hearing us now. So, let's talk about something else, like a party for Zack's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday."

While Zack was shopping for space shuttles, Ali was checking out the terrain of the Wilderness under the guise of picking berries or looking for flowers. She spent a lot of time deep in the Wilderness, picking when Dr. Jee came to check the health of the citizens.

Kate, her principal protector and wonderful friend, supported Ali's resistance to being examined; Kate was the only one who knew Ali was pregnant; even Jerod didn't know. Since the doctor's visits were not scheduled or announced, it was easy to explain that Ali was out exploring, nowhere to be found. In her explorations, Ali had found a plateau which would be ideal for landing, and which had a cave nearby. She started taking Jerod for an occasional campout under the stars. Next, she asked Kate if they had a GPS device that she could use to teach a couple of her students. The answer was no, but she would try to get one. Between the berry picking and the camping out and the GPS, Kate was getting suspicious, but she only thought about it in secret, and if what she was thinking was true, she would not get in the way.

Game Session 3: This time the 2 events were: St Olaf's Day and Robert's Wedding Anniversary.

Elma came back with “*Zack’s birthday.*”

“Wow! You go Aunt Elma; you nailed it.” This was a difficult one, and Ali was greatly impressed, and very pleased. Elma felt 10 years younger since she had started to play the game, and she was sharp as a tack.

The family went into their meeting, all except Elma, completely confused. Zack pointed out that St Olaf’s day is July 29, and Robert was married on June 20, Zack’s birthday. “Where is the connection?”

Elma was strutting around the room. “Don’t you all remember? Robert was convinced that Zack was born on St Olaf’s day because one year when Robert was about 5, Zack had been sick for his birthday so we postponed the birthday celebration till St. Olaf’s day so we wouldn’t have to organize yet another party.”

“Elma, that’s right,” June said,” and for the longest time Robert’s Mom thought it was so cute that she had Robert send Zack a birthday card on St. Olaf’s day – we still have the cards in a shoebox in the attic - and then Robert originally planned his wedding for St Olaf’s day but moved it so it wouldn’t conflict with Zack’s birthday, but he moved it to June 20, which is Robert’s birthday; none of us realized that Robert still thought Zack’s birthday was on St. Olaf’s day, and no one thought there was any reason why the wedding should not take place on Robert’s birthday, so no one said anything.

Zack: “I’m confused.”

June took the floor with a flourish: “Wait, it gets better – I can’t believe you don’t remember – the best man gets up to make a toast and at the end says, in his less than erudite command of the language - she mimicked the lower register of the male voice: ‘To compound the specialty of this auspicious occasion, let us raise our glasses to the day the angels sang to welcome’s Robert’s dear friend, Zack into the world.’ All the guests from Zack and Robert’s families were laughing hysterically. Robert’s bride and her family, who had not heard about the birthday confusion, thought the poor girl had married into a family of lunatics.” June bowed, while her audience were all laughing themselves silly. She added: “Elma, you are amazing. I never would have figured that out.”

“Me neither,” Zack said.

Elvira was shaking her head. “I’m impressed, old friend.”

“How could I not figure it out? I made the mistake of telling the story to Ali when she was about 4 and she thought it was the funniest thing she ever heard, and she made me tell it over and over and over again,” Elma explained and added: “I love this game; the more complicated the linked events are, the more fun it is to figure them out.”

“Well Zack, we know where you will be on your birthday this year, if you can get there,” said June.

“So, if they do suspect anything connected with those dates, they won’t be able to figure out which date to use without the backstory. Pret..ty clev..er - that kid.”

“I told ya so,” June said with a big grin on her face.

Zack: “That’s only 5 months away; I’m glad I already made contact with my friends in the Space Force to start figuring out how I’m going to acquire a space shuttle.”

“And you better do it very, very quietly, and we should stop talking about it.” June added.

Kate got Ali a GPS, from Kyra, of course, asking her to acquire it very quietly, “under the radar” and “off the books if possible.” Ali knew she was going to have to be very careful how she taught this class so no one would get suspicious. She was focused on two teenage boys who showed more promise than the others, and



a couple of younger girls. She first taught the students how to use the device. Then she had them find the Lat/Lon of various places on Paradiaceo and organized a couple of field trips where they combined using the GPS with berry picking.

She also postponed the next game session for a month, to give the kids time to do their research, which made Zack crazy until he figured out that he already had a date, and he knew what planet he was going to so he could reserve a shuttle.

Game Session 4: Ali told them that for the next two or maybe more sessions, they would need to do some research between sessions to come up with the attributes and events to tell her at the next session.

*"The clues are: A hotel in Salzburg and a museum in Madrid."*

The family meeting was quite lively. "Places in Europe – so what would that contribute to the puzzle - nothing," Elvira said.

"They are both places where we got lost. "And how did we find them?" Zack asked.

"With the GPS," June said; "so you need a GPS."

"I think you are warm," Zack said, "but in both those cases, the name of the place did not help; we needed the latitude/longitude coordinates to find them. We know so little about Paradiaceo, I don't even know what measures they use to indicate a location."

"I'll bet Ali knows," June replied.

"And so will my buddies at Space force.... I know, quietly," Zack added, sure this clue was going to give him a landing location. Ali said they would have to do research so Zack found out that Paradiaceo used the same system of coordinates that Earth does but when he checked the Lat/Lon of the two locations Ali gave them, they did not give a viable location. So, what clue to give her back. He thought about answering with "good fishing spots," but he was afraid that might tip off those listening in that they were talking about a location.

And then Elma came through again. "Do you remember the story she always told, about the place where she was lost in Africa, where she had a GPS but was lost because she did not have the proper name of the place or the Lat/Lon coordinates. Hopefully she did not tell that story all over Paradiaceo."

Elvira, who would have to give the answer, asked: "what's the place called."

Zack said: "Say it like this; there's a place in Africa, but I forgot what it's called."

Game Session 5: Ali said: *"Exactly,"* to the place in Africa. *"Now the next clue is really tricky because I do NOT want an answer at all."* The challenge was that the clue had to be so ambiguous that it would not prompt those listening in to investigate the location of the place being named. It was the longitude and latitude of the place where her father needed to land his space shuttle on Paradiaceo. If she so much as mentioned a location in Venice, the authorities might recognize coordinates that are the same as theirs.

*"The clues are: "summer of 2171 and fall of 2172."*

It was another lively family session that followed. Zack was very much in charge of this discussion. He used written notes to explain the situation in strictest confidence to ONE of his buddies at Space Force. Together, they mapped the planet from a nearby space station. It is a small planet with only a half dozen comfortable places to land. They had a record of some explorers having landed on the planet less than two centuries ago. It is listed as inhabited, but little is known about it. Zack came away with Lat/Lon for each of the six landing sites.

“Ok team, I think I will know the answer when I see it. What happened in Summer of 71?”

“Good Lord, lots of things, June said, “Do you want politics or sports, or...”

Elma interrupted. “You want a location. Ali went to Venice with her girlfriend.”

June: “Weren’t Jason and his buddy on that trip too?”

Zack was looking up the Lat/Lon for Venice. “Elma, you may be on to something. Where did they stay?”

June: “I have no clue, call Jason.”

While they were waiting for Ali’s brother, Zack was comparing the Lat/Lon for each landing site, to specific locations in Venice. One location matched, but this was critical information; he wanted verification.

Jason didn’t look like he would be a whole lot of help. He couldn’t remember the name of the place they stayed.

*“This is not the time to be useless,”* Elma said with a tiny bit of disgust in her voice. Elvira shot her a killer look.

“If I show you a map, can you recall about where it was?” Zack asked Jason.

“Maybe.” Jason looked at the Venice Map on the screen, moving it a bit to the left and then to the right, seeming to follow one street along a canal and then to come back. “I’m not certain, but I think it might be one of the hotels in that area right there. It looks different because a year or two after we stayed there, they had a horrible fire, and they pretty much rebuilt the whole thing.”

“Was the fire in the fall of 72’ maybe?” Elvira asked.

“Maybe; “I can look it up if you want; that would have been news. Zoom in; maybe the name of the Hotel is on the front, yes and a plaque that commemorates the fire in 2172 and reopening January 2174.”

Zack went up to his son and kissed him hard on the lips. *Like in a Mafia flick*, Jason thought, looking a little startled, “Can I help you with anything else?”

“No, thank you,” Zack replied, “you have been a huge help.” The Lat/Lon of a plateau on Paradiaceo matched the Lat/Lon of the rebuilt hotel in Venice. *How the hell did she figure that out? We now know where to land!*”

Elvira “Ok brilliant ones, how do we answer this one.”

“January 74.” Zack suggested.

“Perfect,” said Elvira. “That was a tough one.”

“Do you think she knows when the remodeling was finished?” Elma asked.

“Hey, hold on,” June said; “the notes say she does not want an answer.”

“You’re right,” Elvira said, “I was so excited I forgot that.”

Zack didn’t care if she knew, he had a date and landing coordinates; if he needed to rescue her, he could do it with that much information.

Game Session 6: Elma announced that they were quite certain that they were on track with the puzzle and that Jason was helping. She did say Jason helped with the summer of '71.

*"I'm glad he wants to play too,"* Ali responded, trying to mask how elated she was.

Then, Elma, thinking they had all the information they needed and that she was doing Ali a favor, said; *"We're getting tired of this game; maybe It's time to stop playing."*

*"Not quite yet"* was Ali's almost panicked response; then with as much calm as she could muster: *"You don't have all the pieces yet."*

Realizing she had committed a faux pas, Elma stammered, *"Actually, your dad is having a blast."*

Ali: *"This one is for Mom: The trip up the side of whiteface mountain and transportation home from football practice."*

June was standing by when Elvira summoned her: *"That's a no-brainer, Ride home from your Junior Prom."*

*"Way to go Mom,"* Ali replied. *"Talk to you soon; rest up Elma, we're almost done."*

At the family meeting June explained her answer: "We always ended up taking Billy home from football, and remember, we had that kid Charlie on the Whiteface trip, and at the Junior Prom, some poor girl got dumped by her date and needed a ride home."

Meanwhile, Zack was mumbling to himself, clearly agitated: "Oh, No, Oh no, no, NOT."

"Hope you are getting a 4-seater shuttle," June said with a bit of a sparkle in her eye.

"We're going to adopt an alien; how exciting," Elma said.

Elvira was shaking her head. "That's your girl."

Zack spoke: "Put it together, my dears; she was hiding out in the Wilderness with a boy. Ask yourself why she isn't coming home the way she intended when her time is up. It must be something important for her to violate her internship."

"You are going to have a son-in-law," Elvira said, positively gleeful. "That's the rule she violated and why she was in hiding; they don't want to allow the boy to leave the planet."

Elma spoke up: "You know, months ago before I got sick, I told her that her high school sweetheart, Jimmy came by asking about her. She was not thrilled to hear that. I asked her if she had a boyfriend and she said 'no,' but she also told me not to encourage Jimmy and gave some lame reason; yup, son-in-law."

June: "Oh no, not Ali; I don't think so."

Elvira: "Well Zack, what are we willing to bet."

Zack: "Do we have an event when we didn't have room in the vehicle and left someone behind so we can tell her NO?"

June: "No Zack we never left anyone behind, and we won't this time."

Zack: "Do you know how much more a 4-seater will cost?"

Elvira with a chuckle: “And we don’t know what surprises lie ahead in our next session.”

Game Session 7: *“Here is our last one” Ali said, “Do not give me a clue back; I think you will get this one easily with only one clue: It’s Mom in church 2170.”*

When the family met, June understood exactly what Ali wanted. “There must be poor people on Paradieseeo who need clothing and blankets, but she can’t tell us that.”

“Why not use the Red Cross or Good Will as a clue; you do lots of things at church?” Elma asked.

“Because.....” Zack said, “my smarter than the average bear kid knows they can easily find out what the Red Cross and Good Will do, but to look up what June does at church, they would have to figure out where we live and get membership rosters from all the churches or search news articles for June’s name. Maybe, I’m not rescuing Ali at all, maybe I’m just making a red cross drop for the planet, and picking up orphans, or just sneaking the son-in-law off the planet and then she will finish her internship. I sure hope she plans to come home with me.” He was only half joking.

June: “And we know it’s about providing for the poor because in 2170, I was in charge of a flood relief donation program. Zack, you’ll need a 4-seater to carry all the stuff there; I guess I’m going to have to lie about who the donations are for; I’m not going to like that.”

The game was over; all any of them could do was to hope the interpretations were right and that the caper would come off smoothly. Ali continued her work in the Community; and in the cave that was her home, she was plotting the final details for her escape.