ALIENS MADE ME DO IT!

David Macphail

Illustrated by Rory Walker



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Chapter 1

CASSIOPEIA

It's not every day an alien spaceship lands in your back garden.

For Hillman Patel, it sounded a bit like this:

CR-CR-CR-CRANK **BOOF!**

That was the sound of crushing metal and exploding glass. Dad's pride and joy, his beige 1978 Ford Anglia, had been parked in front of the garage, all ready for its final wash and wax. They were supposed to take it to the Bilgeley Car Festival the next day, except that would never happen now, because it was no longer a car, more a sort of sad metallic pancake.

But what had caused the squashing? Hillman didn't

know, because there was nothing there. Not a thing. "WHATT?!"

Then, just a few metres above the squashed car, a rectangular doorway opened out of thin air… THIN AIR! And two figures appeared, silhouetted in light.

One looked like an android from a science fiction movie. He was about seven feet tall, with an insect-like face. His skin was milky white, with a shiny steel skeleton visible underneath.

The other was human, dressed from head to toe in silver. They had a goldfish-bowl-shaped helmet, complete with antennae jutting out of the top, a swishing cape and long banana boots. The only other colour apart from the silver was a flash of green on either side.

At that precise moment, Hillman's pet rabbit, Arthur, darted out from behind the hydrangeas.

"Watch out M'Lady!" cried the android in a grating voice. "Enemy, twelve o'clock!" He raised his arm. A bolt of bright gloopy yellow shot out of the top of his wrist. To Hillman, it looked like custard. Fortunately, the android was either a poor shot or the rabbit moved out of the way at the last moment, because the yellow stuff missed, hitting Dad's hydrangeas instead.



SPLATT.

The bush was covered in some sort of icky, gooey, yellowy substance. It not only looked a bit like custard, it smelt like it too, but if it *was* custard, then it was like no custard Hillman had ever seen. The bush began to bubble and melt.

"What are you doing, you blithering imbecile!" came a woman's voice from the helmet. She was yelling at the robot. "It's just a small bundle of fur, it is not remotely threatening!"

"Oh, I don't know," replied the robot, nodding at the rabbit, which was munching on a carrot. "Look at those teeth. I mean, that could be your finger it's eating."

"Hoi!" Hillman ran over and picked the rabbit up in his arms. "That's my pet, Arthur. Leave him alone!"

"You see," said the woman in the helmet to the android. "It's just an Arthur. Now stop embarrassing me in front of the natives."

"Who are you?" Hillman called up at them. "And what are you doing here?"

The woman strutted down some invisible stairs, then stepped down onto the grass. She stood with

her legs wide apart, placed her hands on her hips and stared down at Hillman. "Now then, small human, I need YOU to take ME to your leader."

"My name's Hil—"

"SILENCE!" boomed the woman's voice.

"And actually, I'm a child…"

"No one talks back to Cassiopeia, Princess of the Galaxy." The woman jabbed herself in the chest with her thumb.

The robot cut in – "Shall I dissemble him M'Lady. For insolence." He already had his arm raised and pointing at Hillman, who was about to leg it. He wasn't sure if they were serious or not – maybe this was all part of some weird practical joke – but he wasn't going to risk being on the receiving end of another bolt of that melty, gooey custardy stuff.

"You shall do no such thing, Silver!" cried the woman. Hillman took Silver to be the robot's name.

The robot sighed and slumped his shoulders. "Oh, okay."

Cassiopeia turned back to Hillman. "Now…"

But the robot wasn't quite finished. "Well, just say the word and he's gone."

"No!"

"Fine, fine," Silver said. "It's no trouble though. Whizz, bang, whoosh."

"Look, I'm trying to get some information out of him. Fat lot of good he's going to be dead. Now be quiet and leave this to me." She turned back to Hillman. "Now then, as I said, I need YOU to take ME to your leader at once."

"Okay, first of all," said Hillman with anger surging up inside of him. "What's happened to my dad's car?"

"Car? What car? What's a car?" said Cassiopeia.

"That big heap of metal over there, that's spread across the ground doing an impression of an omelette."

"Oh, is that what you mean?" said the woman. "Look, I don't even know what an omelette is, but our ship landed on it, dummy."

"Your ship? Like, a spaceship? I have a spaceship in my garden!?"

"It has an invisibility cloak, *obviously*." She turned to Silver and rolled her eyes. "Dear oh dear, they're a backward lot on this planet."

"Let's custard-nuke the lot of them," said Silver. "Then we'll have the place to ourselves. Shall I get the missile launcher?"

"Was that really custard you fired?" asked Hillman.

"Yes!" replied the robot gleefully. "Brilliant, isn't it?"

"Urgh!" said the woman, exasperated. "Look, we don't have much time, so if you could please just take me to your leader…"

Hillman scratched his head and puffed out his cheeks. "Right, okay. Well, you better follow me." He led them to the back door and called inside. "Grandad!"

Grandad's drawn face soon emerged. His hair was straggly, and he had three days' worth of stubble growing. He'd been doing the crossword, so his eyes were red and tired, and he'd been eating a biscuit so there were crumbs down the front of his sweater. Hillman explained to Cassiopeia: "He's watching me while my dad's gone to Halfords. He'll be back soon though. And he's going to flip when he sees what you've done to our car."

But Cassiopeia wasn't listening. She barged Hillman out of the way to address his grandad, who was staring at her as if, well, as if she was a creature from another planet. "Greetings Earthling leader!" She



removed her helmet, revealing the face of a woman with silky-white, almost glowing skin and purple eyes, all fringed by shoulder-length and equally purple hair. "I am Cassiopeia, the great Galactic Princess. I'm sure you've heard of my heroic adventures. I come here seeking refuge under the convention of Zorg, and also seeking your alliance against our mutual enemy, the evil Prince Perseus."

Cassiopeia stopped, apparently to give Hillman's grandfather a chance to throw himself to his knees and kiss the hem of her cape. But Hillman's grandfather didn't do either of those things. He just looked Cassiopeia up and down, and then said: "Not today thanks." Then he pushed the door shut.

"WHHHATTT!" cried Cassiopeia.

The robot jammed his large metal foot in the door. "You insolent savage!" He turned to his mistress. "Shall I annihilate him M'Lady? And the whole neighbourhood for good measure?"

"No!" She pushed the door open again. Hillman's grandfather was still standing there. "Look, what's your name, you crusty old humanoid?"

"Rajiv," came the reply.

"Very well. Rajiv, are you empowered to negotiate on behalf of planet Earth?"

Hillman couldn't help snigger. Grandad could barely negotiate a sausage roll. He seemed to be under the impression that the two visitors were here to try and sell him double glazing, as he then came out and started pointing at the windows and slapping the window frames.

"This was only done three years ago, lass. Look, that's still good. Look at that paint, it's still good, that. That's good. Why don't you come back in another five years and we'll see."

"Five years!" said the Princess.

With that, Grandad went back inside, slamming the door. Cassiopeia stared through the window, watching as Grandad switched on *Countdown*, slumped back down on the settee and picked up his chocolate hobnob and went on eating it.

Cassiopeia's face fell. "Why? Why is it that all the other Galactic Princes and Princesses get welcoming

parties thrown for them. Whole committees of the finest people. The inhabitants turning out in all their finery. And all I get is this crusty old humanoid, and this slightly less-crusty smaller humanoid."

"Sorry," said Hillman, "but when you said 'take me to your leader' you really meant it didn't you? I thought you meant who was watching me."

"Watching you?" said the Princess.

"Well, yeah. As I tried to tell you, I'm only 11. I'm a child. I told you, my dad's gone to Halfords. He does jiu-jitsu you know."

"A child?" She blew out her cheeks, then turned to the android. "I did wonder why he was so small."

"I suspect a trap, M'Lady," replied Silver. "A cunning ploy arranged by your enemies. And anyway, I don't like his face. Can I execute him, please, oh can I?"

"NO!" Cassiopeia smothered her face with her hands. "Look, boy, you don't seem to understand…"

"Tell me the truth, is this a joke thing?" smiled Hillman. "Are there hidden cameras about? That wasn't our actual car you crushed there, was it? You

just swapped it for a fake one. Did my dad put you up to this?"

"What in the name of Capricorn are you jabbering on about?"

"Am I going to be on YouTube?"

"You what?"

"You'll be incinerated in a minute if you don't co-operate," said Silver.

The Princess was seething with frustration. "Look, human boy. I am deadly serious. I am being tracked by my mortal enemy, Prince Perseus. He could arrive at any moment, and when he does, your entire planet is likely to get vapourised, along with me, you, your grandad and your ridiculous car, and the omelette, and the Arthur, and that tube thing you mentioned. Got it?"

"Ahhh, wait," said Hillman. "I know who you want. The Mayor. He's at the Town Hall."

"The Mayor! Now that sounds more like it," said the Princess, brightening up. "Come along, Silver." She replaced her helmet, and they stomped down the garden path, out the front gate, and then up the street. Hillman stood at the gate, watching them disappear,

just beyond the sign that pointed the way to the Sewage Works.

A second later they re-appeared. The two figures stomped all the way back down the street towards him. "Which way is the Town Hall?" asked the Princess.



Chapter 2

PERSEUS

Prince Perseus, Lord of the Five Spirals, Admiral of the 1st Attack Fleet, Commander of the Order of Zarg, and more recently winner of the Alpha Centauri Award for Best-Dressed Galactic Despot, was NOT amused.

His spaceship had just crash-landed upside down in a giant cone-shaped mountain of garbage. As if that wasn't bad enough, the mountain was teetering on the point of collapse. The only reason it hadn't collapsed yet was because, according to Perseus's wrist sensors, it was being propped up by a huge sub-surface pocket of methane. To make matters EVEN worse (if that was possible), his ship's comms dish had just punctured

said methane pocket, so the entire thing was about to explode catastrophically underneath his feet.

NOPE, not amused.

Unlike Cassiopeia, Perseus was dressed completely in red, except for a few black flashes here and there. He wore an enormous bucket-shaped helmet crowned with wiry antennae, along with a long cape and thick clod-hopping boots.

Like Cassiopeia, Perseus was accompanied by an android, whose name was Bronz. He was a similar make to Silver and had the same milky-white skin and insectoid face. The difference was that Bronz's endoskeleton was a reddish copper colour, hence his name.

Perseus climbed out of his upside-down ship, balancing precariously on the wobbly surface. He removed his helmet and took a long, deep breath, sampling the air. Not the best of ideas, given that the air was thick with the stench of used nappies and rotting food. He too had purple hair and purple eyes, although the hair was cropped short.

"Euch! What a foul wasteland this planet is. Are you absolutely positive we haven't blown this one up yet?"



"Yes, Sire," replied the robot.

"I mean, it looks like it's already been blown up. Smells like it too."

"That's just how it smells, Sire," said Bronz.

"Oh, well, remind me to blow it up later. I mean, it *really* stinks. It's offensive. Literally offensive to the entire rest of the Universe. Nowhere in the Cosmos smells this bad that has not already been blown up and destroyed."

"Understood, Sire."

The ship lurched under them, and they found themselves sinking fast into the sea of rubbish. "What's the meaning of this?" growled Perseus.

"The meaning is that we're sinking, Sire," replied Bronz.

"I can see that, moron. What an outrage. The inhabitants of this planet are going to pay!"

"Quick, we must climb up to the top if we are to get out," said the robot, and he helped his master to scale the saucer's surface. Before long they were hanging from the highest point, the landing antenna, or rather, the lowest point, but it was now the highest point, being upside down. But they were *still* sinking. "It's no use, there's nothing else to do."

Perseus stared down at the gaping black hole opening up beneath him. He suddenly realised that it really did not look good. "Curses! That I am to die on this scum-hole of a planet, and all before I reach my true potential!"

The walls of the rubbish heap were about to close in, and Perseus was about to pull down his helmet visor and murmur the words of his home planet's funeral song (the title of which loosely translates as "Mama I'ma comin' home, and I'ma gonna have my tea"). A rope suddenly appeared in front of them, dropping out of nowhere.

"For Andromeda's sake, go, Sire," cried Bronz, and he pushed Perseus onto the rope, before following himself.

They jumped in the nick of time, as the ship vanished into the depths. Still, the rubbish heap was collapsing around them, and they had to climb fast. Just as they were reaching daylight there was an almighty flash of light, followed by a colossal WHUMPH.

"Aargh! My ship!"

Perseus felt himself flying upwards through the air. This was normally quite a good thing, because he loved

flying. But normally he had some sort of control, and he was in a ship, and he was powered by rockets and controlled by airbrakes. This was not controlled. He felt an awful sinking in his stomach as he began to fall, and then the ground closed in. He landed with a series of painful thuds, crumpling his helmet and tearing off his cape. At last, he came to rest on something soft – a pile of rotting cabbages.

Perseus got to his feet. Bronz's head was lodged inside a bashed-up rectangular metal box marked "washing machine". The robot was making some very strange clicking noises. "Does… not… c-c-c-compute… Does… not… c-c-c-compute."

