

## Only a Dream

By C. T. Suddeth

“Papa! Papa!” yelled Little One in the morning.

“Little One, what is wrong?”

“Papa, I met some strange beings last night.”

“Little One, tell me about them.”

“Papa, they were so strange. One had skin the color of the brown mountain rocks, and the other had skin with almost no color, like the dry desert ground.”

“You know that it cannot be. Everyone in our world has a beautiful yellow-green skin color. It was only a dream.”

The next morning, Little One yelled, “Papa! Papa! I met the strange beings again last night. They were short, almost as short as me, but with arms and legs that seemed strangely plump. They tried to speak but with voices so high pitched and strange it hurt my ears. They spoke to my mind with pictures, and then I could understand them.”

“Little One, I’ll tell you again, it was only a dream. They are not of this world.”

The next morning, “Papa! Papa! I met the strange beings again. I told them they were only a dream—they said it was not so. They live on a strange world that is warm and so very wet, a blue and green world, not like our dry and red world. They live on a world that is the third planet from their star. Instead of two moons, their world has only one huge, pale moon. Papa, is this even possible?”

“Tonight, I will explain something to you. Perhaps then, Little One, you will well understand.”

That night, Papa said, “Little One, come here and look into my spyglass. I will show you something that will be interesting.”

The Little One stared into the spyglass, “A blue-green world. Just like the strange beings told me.”

“The third planet but note something else,” said Papa, as he delicately turned the spyglass.

“This world has a single but huge, pale moon, just like the strange beings told me,” Little One triumphantly announced.

“Oh Little One, I must tell you something else. Our wise ones have sent probes and explorers to that world, which is indeed warm and very wet, just like your dreams have told you, but there is no real life on that world. There are only the simplest of creatures swimming in the water that are so tiny the eye alone cannot even see them.”

“Papa, what are you telling me?”

“Little One, I am telling you that your strange beings cannot possibly live there. The water is there but no creatures big enough for any naked eyes. How I wish some of the moisture from that wet world could help our dry, dusty world.”

That next morning, Little One said, “Papa! Papa! I talked to the strange beings and told them there was no life on their watery blue-green world, like there is on my red, dry world. They laughed at me and said that there is no life on our sandy, red world. I asked them, how could this be? They said that we meet in the nighttime, but we must be from far different times. How is this possible?”

“Be calm, Little One, it is only a dream. However, tonight you will sleep in my room with me, so these dreams of strange beings will never again trouble your sleep.”

That night, Little One went to sleep, with Papa patiently, carefully watching. After Little One was fast asleep, Papa went outside to stare into the spyglass at the blue-green world with water to spare. He wondered about the strange beings that were only a dream. Wise ones had said that his red, wonderful world was slowly losing its water, so precious and dear. Where now dwelt deserts, there once stood mighty lakes. One sad day, the water would be no more, and his world would be no more. Was it also possible that the blue-green world would some day produce beings such as these strange beings that populated Little One’s dreams? Did these strange beings live in a time when their world was fertile, but his world was barren?

Perhaps then, the strange beings of Little One’s dreams knew more than Papa could ever bear to admit. Little One slumbered soundly, although Papa now feared his own nightly sleep, lest the strange beings came round to visit him in place of the Little One.

***THE END***