

My Teacher is an Alien

Charlie Dawson had always believed that every mystery had a logical explanation. If someone claimed they had seen a ghost, he would patiently explain that it was probably a trick of the light. If a friend insisted they had heard footsteps echoing through an empty attic, Charlie would suggest creaking floorboards or loose roof tiles. Even when his younger sister became convinced that monsters lived beneath her bed, Charlie would calmly remind her that dust and forgotten socks were far more likely occupants. Facts, he believed, were dependable. Facts made sense. That was why he found it impossible to explain Mr Orion.

Mr Orion arrived at Westbrook Academy halfway through the autumn term to replace their retiring form tutor, and although nobody expected him to be quite like Mr Collins, everyone agreed that there was something unusually peculiar about him. On his very first morning, he stood silently at the front of the classroom, smiling politely while the class waited for him to begin. He carefully scanned the room before consulting a small leather notebook and announcing, "There are... thirty-one of you." A ripple of laughter spread across the classroom as Mia raised her hand and corrected him. "Actually, sir, there are only thirty." Mr Orion blinked slowly, frowned at his notebook and quietly crossed out the number. "Interesting," he murmured. "Earth mathematics continues to surprise me." Everyone laughed again, assuming it was simply an odd joke, but Charlie couldn't help wondering why the comment had sounded so strangely genuine.

Over the following weeks, the little oddities continued to accumulate. Mr Orion never drank tea or coffee in the staff room, choosing instead to sip a shimmering silver liquid from a polished metal flask that no one had ever seen before. During assemblies, Charlie noticed that he never blinked—not once—even through the longest speeches. Ordinary objects fascinated him in ways that seemed completely unnatural. One afternoon he spent nearly ten minutes turning a stapler over in his hands, whispering, "Remarkable engineering," as though he had discovered an ancient treasure. Another day, he stood by the classroom window watching a pigeon peck at the playground for several minutes before quietly observing, "It appears entirely comfortable with gravity." Charlie stared at him in disbelief. Who talked like that?

Being naturally curious, Charlie decided to keep a notebook of his observations. At the top of the page he wrote **Evidence File**, followed by a growing collection of suspicious details: *Doesn't understand football. Calls mobile phones "portable communication rectangles."* *Thanked the classroom radiator for maintaining suitable human operating temperatures.* *Wears exactly the same grey suit every day. Doesn't seem to understand sarcasm.* Individually, none of the clues meant very much, and Charlie knew that they could probably all be explained away. Together, however, they formed a pattern that was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Everything changed one Thursday afternoon when Charlie stayed behind after school to finish his science project. The corridors had fallen unusually quiet, and the distant sounds of cleaners echoed through the nearly empty building. As he walked past the staff room, he heard Mr Orion speaking to someone inside. "I still don't understand why humans queue

voluntarily," he was saying in a thoughtful voice. Another teacher laughed and replied, "You'll get used to it." Curious, Charlie glanced through the small window in the door, expecting to see several teachers chatting over cups of coffee. Instead, the room was completely empty. Every chair stood vacant, yet Mr Orion's voice continued as though he were holding a perfectly ordinary conversation. Charlie felt a shiver crawl down his spine as his heartbeat quickened. For the first time, his theory no longer seemed ridiculous.

That evening he shared his suspicions with his two best friends, Zara and Dev. Zara rolled her eyes almost immediately. "You've been watching too many science-fiction films," she sighed. Dev, however, leaned back thoughtfully before replying, "It's probably impossible... but it would be brilliant if it were true." Before long, the three friends had agreed to investigate. Not because they genuinely believed Charlie's theory, but because the mystery promised to be far more exciting than spending another evening completing homework.

Their chance arrived during the school's annual Parents' Evening. While teachers met families across the building, Charlie, Zara and Dev quietly slipped into Mr Orion's empty classroom. At first glance, everything appeared perfectly ordinary. There were neatly stacked exercise books, whiteboard pens, a timetable pinned to the wall and piles of marked assessments waiting to be collected. It seemed they had been mistaken. Then Zara opened the bottom drawer of Mr Orion's desk.

Inside lay a perfectly smooth silver sphere about the size of an apple. As Charlie reached towards it, the sphere suddenly unfolded with a series of delicate clicks, revealing tiny glowing lights that pulsed gently around its surface. Before any of them could react, a calm mechanical voice filled the room.

"Exploration Log 4,728."

The children froze where they stood.

"Planet Earth remains highly unpredictable. Humans communicate using over six thousand languages yet frequently struggle to understand one another. Despite their disagreements, they consistently demonstrate remarkable kindness during moments of difficulty. This behaviour remains scientifically fascinating."

The recording paused before continuing.

"Educational environments provide particularly valuable observations. Young humans display extraordinary curiosity, resilience and imagination when encouraged by trusted adults."

With one final soft chime, the silver sphere folded itself neatly closed.

For several seconds, none of the children spoke. Then the classroom door opened.

Mr Orion stood quietly in the doorway, holding a stack of exercise books under one arm. His expression showed neither anger nor surprise. Instead, he smiled warmly and said, "I was beginning to wonder when someone would discover that."

Charlie swallowed hard before finding the courage to speak.

"You're... an alien."

Mr Orion nodded politely.

"Technically speaking, yes."

Dev fainted.

Once everyone had recovered, Mr Orion explained that he belonged to an interstellar organisation devoted to studying intelligent civilisations throughout the galaxy. Earth was simply his latest assignment. Contrary to Charlie's dramatic expectations, there were no secret invasion plans, no hidden spacecraft beneath the school and certainly no intentions of conquering humanity. His role was simply to observe, learn and report. Much to Charlie's amazement, one entire report focused on playground games, another analysed why children insisted on saying they were "fine" when they clearly were not, while several pages explored the extraordinary patience shown by teachers every single day.

Charlie couldn't help laughing.

"So all this time," he said, "I thought you were planning to take over the world."

Mr Orion smiled kindly.

"My dear Charlie," he replied, "if your species can survive examinations, school reports, group projects and school dinners, I suspect you're already much tougher than any invading civilisation."

Life gradually returned to normal, although Charlie noticed things he had previously overlooked. Mr Orion still drank his mysterious silver liquid and still admired everyday objects with endless fascination, but he also celebrated every student's success, listened carefully whenever someone was struggling and treated every child with genuine respect. Charlie slowly realised that the most unusual thing about his teacher was not that he had travelled millions of miles across the galaxy. It was that, despite not being human himself, he seemed to understand humanity better than many people did.

At the end of the school year, Mr Orion quietly disappeared as unexpectedly as he had arrived. No farewell assembly was held, no announcement was made and before long a new form tutor stood at the front of the classroom as though nothing had happened. Only Charlie found a small silver note tucked carefully inside his science exercise book. It contained a single sentence.

"The universe is unimaginably vast, Charlie, but curiosity will always carry you further than fear."

As Charlie slipped the note safely into his pocket, he realised that although facts were still important, they did not always tell the whole story. Sometimes the greatest discoveries began not with answers, but with the courage to ask impossible questions.