

## **A Fresh Start by Eleanor Lamb**

The sky was blue. But not the greyish, smoky sort of blue that I was used to. A sparkling sapphire blue- precious and rare. This is what I had had in mind when I left, this is what we'd all been promised. A new start, forgiveness for our ancestors' mistakes. Freedom.

Since the temperature of Earth had increased to levels too high for plant matter to survive, scientists- myself included- had been fighting against a time bomb for a solution to the age-old problem of climate change. Panic had really set in a few months before the breakthrough, when confidential documents had been leaked to the public, spreading terrifying truths of the enormity of our global issues. And from then, people's protests alone had been enough to convince entire teams of scientists to work day and night and to complete years of complex experiments within a matter of months. It had paid off. A few weeks of tireless hours and sleepless nights, and now I was here. Paradise.

Acres of lush green woodland stretched before me as I stepped out of the shuttle, shaking my legs back to life after the long journey to arrive on this planet. A journey that had become possible thanks to my team's discovery of wormhole 207- lying only a few degrees north of our moon. I was standing on soil millions of light years away from my childhood home, yet it had taken no more than a week from departure. I could barely fathom the distance that I had travelled- I was practically alone at the furthest reaches of travel possible to man. Yet I felt more alive than I had in years. Everything seemed so perfect- I'd barely believed the readings myself when I'd seen the oxygen levels and surface temperature of this planet- Earth's long lost twin, cast across the universe into a lifeless galaxy and freed from the torture that we'd put our own home through. It was a privilege to be one of the first settlers in this impossible utopia.

I turned my head and smiled at John, a colleague with whom I'd worked closely with for the last five years. He smiled back, neither of us able to vocalise our wonder but the tears in his eyes reflecting my every thought. I understood his tears. After growing up in crowded concrete apartment blocks, after thirty years of artificial light and smoky skies, it had never seemed possible to be amongst so much nature growing freely and living in harmony. As a girl, I'd thought that tales of such beauty must be lies- that paradise such as this was an impossible dream that would never leave the pages of my diary. Yet here we were.

Of course, our first step was research- taking samples and tests to understand this new ecosystem. Communication would be slow but people would know what we'd found. They'd be given hope again. And then they would start to move. Parents, babies, doctors, cleaners- everyone. Aside from those who refused to leave, who were adamant that Earth was the best place for them and who were convinced that this discovery was a lie. We'd given up trying to persuade them otherwise.

There was a niggling worry at the back of my mind: all of these people living together, building houses and offices, who was to say that this new planet's fate would be any different to that of Earth? I'd like to think that we'd learnt something from this disaster- I certainly had. But people are only human- and humans are greedy. I suppose that was something else we were here to do. As scientists, we'd researched sustainable living and I'd protested to no end on Earth- trying to convince the people in power to see clearly. I was not alone with my little faith in the rest of humanity. The future of the entire population of earth now lay in our hands. We had to come up with a way of life in which humans would be happy to live with nature before the rest of them arrived with their big ideas and minimal planning. It was a lot of pressure but it was up to us to convince man that he and nature could thrive in harmony.