

## The Only Alien I Ever Met

When you look at my title, your first question might be: are you insane? In my defense, I admit to raising an eyebrow or two when I read Jim Piper's "90 Minutes in Heaven," but I gave him the benefit of the doubt. My story is no less likely than Piper's. Many of my fellow writers familiar with the fantasy and sci-fi genre talk freely about aliens, ETs, and creatures from other worlds. I have never speculated about aliens, their shapes and size, their intellect, or their desire to destroy or dominate the universe.

Therefore, when I encountered a critter, clearly not human and not like any animal I had ever seen, not even in National Geographic, I could only stare and wonder. Since I am not skilled in providing descriptions (a police officer would say I am a total loss identifying a suspect), I can say the creature had what appeared to be two eyes. I could not say it was standing since I could not tell if it was touching the earth or hovering. Other than that, I will spare the reader the details of its appearance, a *sine qua non* for sci-fi fans.

My curiosity stirred. Where did it originate? Was it intelligent? It probably had exotic powers. Might it kidnap me and perform weird experiments on me? If it gave me a test, would the test (it) include calculus (not my strong point)?

Can we communicate? Did it do Zoom meetings? Would it speak King James English and end its verbs in "-eth?"

Suspecting it didn't appreciate the significance of my gray hair, it made no tempt to flash my AARP membership card and ask for a discount. No longer the 98-pound weakling I was as a kid, I was ready to defend myself if necessary, yet I was careful to make no movement that might provoke the thing. Was it waiting for backup, or worse, doing a word search for the best recipe for preparing an entrée?

When it did not move, I wondered if it were possible it was afraid of me as I was of it? And, how did it get here? Did it arrive in a transporter, like on Star Trek? I saw no spaceship or vehicle. Time and circumstances permitting, I could check out the parking garage down the street, although I strongly doubted it came in a Ford or Chevy.

I waited for what seemed like forever but couldn't have been more than a few minutes, expecting it to make the first move. Then without warning, I suddenly knew what it was thinking. I had to believe it also knew what I was thinking. Telepathy? Perhaps. Neither of us spoke, but we communicated. *How weird*, I thought.

It turns out that his mission was not a hostile takeover of the planet. It was friendly. They had not planned to visit, but an emergency occurred. They were just passing, and he needed a restroom—fast. I pointed him to a store, but he communicated that their restrooms were for customers only. I suggested I go with him and make a purchase while he used the facilities.

"You'd do that for me?" he asked.

"Why not?" I answered.

It worked out fine. The relieved creature promised to return as soon as it has accumulated enough comp time.

"Would it be okay if I brought a friend?" it asked.