# Lisa

## EMIGRATES TO ANOTHER PLANET

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# Part I

*The long way to happiness*



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CHAPTER 1

# Destination Unknown



The spacecraft whizzed through the space towards its destiny. Outside the few windows there was nothing but black, dark emptiness. Lisa stood at a window looking out, trying to see anything out there, but it was completely empty. “I wonder what has gotten into myself”, she thought. “This must be the dumbest thing I ever done”. She looked over to the bed in the small cabin. Liënam was still asleep, and her heart began to beat a little faster. She cuddled down next to him again

and he muttered something in knimbonian and put his arm around her. Lisa didn't understand what he said, even though she already knew his language a bit.

She thought back on Earth and how they met. She still could not understand how she could fall so much in love with an alien. His green hair and green skin stood in strong contrast to her long blonde hair and white face. When he turned in his sleep he tickled her face with his antennae and Lisa could not help but giggle a bit. Not that she had never seen anyone with antennas before, her best friend on Earth was Añeđliká who was born on Knimbo as Liënam was. Quite special to have Añeđliká as BFF, as she had become a superstar on Earth by now. Her rock concerts gathered like 10,000 fans every time, and Lisa had been in her background choir whenever Añeđliká stood on the stage. It was also Añeđliká who invited all the musicians and crew members to that restaurant where Lisa met Liënam and fell in love. She sighed deeply with happiness and played with Liënam's antennas, even though she knew he was ticklish there.

– *Good morning, darling*, she said in knimbonian when he awoke with a startle and looked at her.

– *Good morning yourself*, he replied, smiling at her.

They stood up and got dressed and Lisa brought breakfast for both of them from the dining room as she had made a habit of doing since they left Earth to go back to Knimbo. Then they sat down and ate breakfast together at the little table in the cabin while they looked at each other in love.

– *Do you know how long it's until we get there*? Lisa asked. *I'm getting tired of this sardine can that the calls a spaceship!*

Her knimbonian was still very poor, but Liënam could not speak English, so she had no choice. Besides, it was appropriate that she learned the language of her new home planet. Fortunately, as Lisa's best friend also was from Knimbo she had learned a lot knimbonian from her.

– *Well, we've been on the way for three and a half months, so it should not be that much time left. I can ask commander Laranjo when I go on my shift today.*

Lisa smiled at him and thanked. It would be so nice to finally arrive. Although it was exciting to travel through space at first, it soon became tedious. She was not part of the crew as Liënam was, so she had practically nothing to do all day.

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The planet Knimbo looked really exotic. That's at least what Lisa thought when she looked out of the windows when they finally landed. Everything seemed so high-tech. After a couple of hours they finally were allowed to go out from the spaceship after Liënam shortly had informed the secretary of Draëk V. Frensco that Lisa accompanied him to Knimbo. Draëk was the director of the Space Board and therefore the highest commander of Knimbo. Then Lisa went with him to his home. There were so many things here that was weird, so Lisa was unsure what she would do. Liënam showed how everything worked and helped her to get comfortable. He took her to some nearby shops to buy some clothes for her that would fit better on this planet and at the same time he bought some groceries to fill the fridge. That night Lisa felt quite exhausted by all new things and fell asleep instantly.

Next morning she went up before Liënam to cook breakfast for them. She found the raw materials for the breakfast they used to eat at the spaceship and decided to cook the same dish. But she didn't get the stove to work, so in the end Liënam came and showed her what all the buttons meant. Then he was forced to go back to the space centre to work. It was always a lot to be done after a spaceflight. It felt bad leaving her alone at home, but he had no choice. All day at work, his thoughts wandered back to her, and he saw in his mind how she gently tiptoed around the apartment or just sat on the couch because she didn't know what she would do. If only this day could come to an end soon!

Finally on the way home Liënam was thinking about whether he should pass some restaurant on the way home to buy some takeaway food for her, because she probably hadn't eaten all day. But he was so eager to get home, and worried about her that he went straight home anyway. He opened the door with trembling fingers, feeling certain that Lisa would be completely miserable and bored. But when

he entered the apartment he right away felt the smell of cooked food. Lisa met him at the door and gave him a kiss.

– *Hello honey. Are you hungry? I've fixed some food for us, it's almost ready.*

– *But how in the world did you managed to do that?*

– *I found a purse with money in, and went shopping at the grocery store around the corner. I hope it was OK to spend it.*

– *Sure, that's fine. You can use all the money in the purse if you wish. You will certainly need to buy things. But how could you find the right things at the grocery store? Did you understand what was written on all packages?*

– *Partly I understood, but then I got some problems. But there was a woman who worked there that was very helpful.*

Liënam sat astonished at the pre-set table. Lisa put the food on his plate, and it smelled really wonderful. He tasted it, but felt almost a little disappointed that Lisa apparently managed both to shop and cook without his help. She seemed so helpless with her slender body, and waist length hair. But she made really good food! While Lisa cleared the table and did the dishes Liënam talked a little about what happened at work.

– *I got a message from Director Draëk that both you and I should come to his office to morrow morning.*

– *What's it about?*

– *I don't know. Guess it has something to do with that you came back with me. It feels a little nervous, I think.*

Lisa smiled at him. She had been infected a little bit from Añeđliká's toughness and lack of respect for authority, so she was not particularly worried.

– *It's certainly no problem, you'll see,* she replied.

So the next day both of then went to Liënam's job. There was a kind of subway that went almost all the way, and Lisa studied with interest everything she saw. Once there, they presented themselves to Juno Fring, the secretary of Draëk. She asked them to sit down and wait for a while. Liënam could not sit still, but squirmed back and forth on the chair. Lisa relaxed in her chair and flipped the pages of a magazine that was lying there.

– *Director Draëk will see you now,* Juno said at last.

They went in and sat down in front of the director who sat behind a huge, impressive desk.

– *Thanks to both of you that could come here,* he began.

He looked at Lisa and wondered how much knimbonian she understood.

– *I can handle it pretty good, at least if you speak slowly and clearly.*

– *I will try do do that. The reason I asked you to come here, is because I received an official letter from the United Nation's Official Spokesperson of Interplanetary Questions on Planet Earth.*

Lisa smiled a little at the pompous title. She knew very well that the official spokesperson was her best friend, Añeđliká. She was not just a rock star on Earth, and also had diplomatic training as well as she was simultaneous interpreting between knimbonian and English when needed.

– *In this letter the Earth is requesting that we must ensure that you, Miss Green, is safe and sound and that you get an orderly life here on Knimbo.*

Liënam first looked surprised. Then he remembered that his girlfriend actually was named Elisabeth Green, even if he never heard her be called anything other than Lisa.

– *I feel pretty sure I don't need a babysitter, but can handle myself here,* she replied a little sour.

– *You don't need to have any concerns, Director,* Liënam quickly responded, a little bothered by Lisa's disrespectful attitude. *I will maintain the necessary monitoring. It's, after all, for my sake that she emigrated here.*

– *I await nothing less than that. It would be totally unacceptable and irresponsible of you to fail to meet her needs.*

Lisa looked a little iffy on them both. Why do they have to use such complicated words? She could barely understand what they were talking about although she understood most of the words.

– *Miss Green*, Draëk started.

– *Call me Lisa, for God's sake. Everyone else does!*

– *Alright. Miss Lisa, I want you to know that you can always turn to me if you experience any problems. We have received a request from the Earth to take care of you if necessary. It may mean, for example if your relation with Liënam doesn't work out for some reason, you are allowed stay here. You also have an ongoing promise from us to go with any space mission back to Earth.*

Lisa looked at him. Why he treated her like a child? But she bit her tongue not to snap back at him and responded politely mostly to not make Liënam embarrassed.

– *I thank you for your concern. If the unexpected happens and I can't take care of myself, then I promise to contact you.*

– *That's fine. Thank you for coming here. And Liënam, you know what is expected of you, right?*

– *Of course, Director Draëk.*

They walked out of the room and Liënam became worried about what Lisa would do now. She could not stay here at the centre all day, but Liënam had to start working and could not follow her home.

– *Don't worry, honey. I'll find my way back home. See you at home!*

He looked anxiously after her when she walked out the door. And he just promised to take care of her! What if she got lost or could not handle the subway. With heavy steps, he went on to the spaceship where he would help with unloading and cleaning.

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CHAPTER 2

# On Her Own



Lisa walked out to the street and took a deep breath. It smelled really different here on the streets at Knimbo then on the streets of Earth. Not as much exhaust gas, some sort more sweet taste. She didn't like it more than the stench of exhaust fumes at home, and would rather have lived in the country side. But now she was here in the huge capital city of Knimbville and had to try to get home to Liënam's apartment. She easily found her way to the subway station and bought a ticket in the same way as she had seen Liënam do before. On board she found a map of

the stations above the door. She studied it to find where she would get off. After she had found the right station, she began to think a bit. It seemed like if she went five – six stations further it was some sort of hub where several subway lines met. "There it must be some sort of downtown, perhaps with a lot of shops", she thought.

So instead of jumping off at the correct station, she went on to the hub. She had guessed absolutely right that there were lots of shops there. She walked around all day going to the shops. She didn't buy that much, but did find a dress that she just could not resist. Liënam had said that she could use the money, and the dress was exceptionally cheap. After many hours in the city, she went back to the subway and headed back to be able to cook dinner before Liënam got home.

Lisa proudly showed off her nice dress when Liënam got home. He said nothing about it to her great disappointment. At the dinner table he finally said something.

– *The dress is nice, but where did you get it? There are no such shops around here?*

– *No, I went downtown by the subway on the way home. I looked around all day. It was great fun!*

She told him about everything she had done but Liënam could not share her joy. Instead, he became irritated.

– *I don't think it's safe for you to walk around the town by yourself. I promised Director Draëk to take care of you and make sure nothing happens to you.*

– *Well, I've been walking around in The Bronx in New York, and it's really rough. Here everyone seems to be much nicer, so I find it hard to believe that it would be somewhat dangerous. Do you want me to call Draëk and say you don't need to watch over me all the time? You do know that it certainly is my best friend Añeďliká who wrote the letter to him anyway?*

– *Oh no, you cannot keep on calling him, he's a top manager at my job. Can't you just stay at home while I'm at work? I can accompany you wherever you want when I'm not working.*

Lisa's face darkened.

– *I'll see,* she replied a little sour.

The next few days Lisa didn't leave the apartment. She thought it was beginning to feel like a prison. At the weekend when Liënam had time off they went around in the shops downtown together. Liënam didn't complain, but it was clear in his body language that he was bored, so Lisa said they could go home, even though she was not satisfied at all.

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The weeks slowly past by, and Lisa felt more and more that it was as if she was treated like a child. She was not allowed to go out by herself, except to the convenience store around the corner, and every week she had to meet Draëk to present herself to show that she was well. One day, she decided that enough was enough, and decided that it was time to become a bit of a rebel too, like Añeđliká. So she went downtown again and looked around. It was so nice to get out by herself again! She found a hairdresser and thought that she wanted to fix her hair. It was pretty hard to take care of it by herself, as it went all the way down to her hips by now.

– *Hello, I would like to get a little tougher style. What do you suggest?*

– *Of course I can do that. Your hair is so incredibly beautiful already, so I definitely think you should not cut it short. Maybe just level it up a bit and then dye it?*

– *What colour were you thinking about? Green like everyone else?*

– *No, I think you with your pink face should have a brighter colour. What would you say if I dyed your hair light blue?*

– *Light blue? That's pretty weird. But I like the idea. Go ahead!*

So after an hour, she took the subway back home with bright blue hair. Now Liënam would see that she wanted to be independent! They were still so much in love that he would surely accept that she made her own decisions sometimes. And

then he would surely realise that she wanted to take care of herself sometimes, now that she has shown that she could do it with no problems.

When Liënam came home the table was laid as usual for supper. She had cooked his favourite dish, a knimbonian specialty. He sniffed in the air as he came in and was happy that his girlfriend had learned how to cook food that he liked. He came into the kitchen when Lisa was about to take the food out of the oven to put it on the table. He froze when he saw her hair.

– *What on Knimbo happened to your hair?*

– *I just felt for something new, so I went to a barber and had it dyed. Do you like it?*

– *It's terrible*, he replied. *Why did you dye it blue!?! And most of all, how can you even think of doing it without asking me first?*

– *Surely this is my hair, and I think it's neat. I already looks so odd here on Knimbo, so it can't matter that much. In addition, the colour will disappear in a few months.*

– *It's actually me that are supposed to look at it every day! And by the way, there is no hairdresser nearby, are it? Have you been downtown again, alone? I thought we talked about this!*

Liënam was so upset that he didn't even taste the food she made so much effort to do, but he went into his study room and closed the door hard. Lisa cried quietly in the kitchen when she threw the food in the trash. She still cared about him, but this just didn't work! She pondered what she would do. When it was time to go to bed, Lisa knocked on the door of the room and went inside.

– *Honey, we need to talk*, she said quietly.

Liënam hugged her and apologised that he had raised his voice against her.

– *But you must understand that I love you so much that I don't want something bad to happen to you. I just shows that I care about you. Actually I like your new hair colour, it suits you. Given that you already look so different, your hair colour isn't so important. But you should ask first. And you should not travel so far to get to a hairdresser unaccompanied, it can be dangerous.*

*– I love you too, honey. But you must understand that I'm an independent woman who wants to make my own decisions at times, and be able to go around freely.*

*– Sure, you've said it. But I believe in traditional relationships, that's the way we have always done it here at Knimbo. I don't think I can manage to live in another relationship.*

*– What is meant by "traditional relationship" here on Knimbo? Don't forget that I'm not from here, so I cannot know that.*

*– No, of course. Well, the man of the house is the one who earns the money, so it's his responsibility to provide security in the family. To make sure to buy everything needed, food, clothing, furniture, and pay all the bills. The woman in the house is taking care of the home, cooks, cleans, washes and takes care of the children. That's how we've always done here, and it works great. The women enjoy being able to take it easy and not worry about all of life's difficulties, but lives safely at home while the man takes all the risk out there and protects his woman. That is how we must live, for that is how it will work for us.*

*– But I don't think it will work for me. I don't mind that you believe that, there are many even on Earth who think much the same thing. But I've been on my own since I was fifteen years old when my mother became ill and died, and I'm used to it. It's too late for me to change myself, so I just have to get some freedom, or I will suffocate. Can't we meet in the middle, for example, that I promise to take care of the home, but you will allow me to do what I want to do while you are at work?*

*– I love you, Lisa, with all my heart. But I can't change who I'm, and I'm a man. I must be allowed to be a man, and you must be a woman. What would others think of me if I let you run around alone on the streets?*

Lisa went quiet and pondered on what he had said. That was typical that he had be so handsome, and that she'd be so much in love with him! But living with him seemed impossible, it would only end in disaster and constant quarrels.

*– Maybe, after all, is better if I move out and find my own life*, she said quietly. *I love you too, Liënam, and don't want to leave you. But I could not stand to live in a relationship that is choking me. Isn't it better if we go separate ways before our love turns into hate?*

Liënam looked at her without understanding what she said, even though he understood the words. After being silent for a long moment, he said:

– *Maybe. But then we have to contact Draëk so he can find somewhere you can stay until there is a spaceship that travels back to Earth. Can't we talk about this tomorrow? It's getting pretty late.*

That night for the first time Liënam slept on the couch. Lisa cried herself to sleep that night in bed. In the morning, she went up and cooked breakfast as usual. Still, she had already decided what she must do. When Liënam stood in the door to go to work so she hugged him long and hard, and kissed him intensely. He was happy and felt that the crisis was over. They said good buy to each other and he went to work. Lisa cleaned the whole house, then she sat down in the study room and wrote a long letter to him. When she was done, she packed her clothes in her back pack, went out, locked the door and poked the key in the mailbox. With heavy steps she went out on the street.

She would never come back. Although she had no idea where she was going.



CHAPTER 3

# Homeless



Lisa wandered a bit randomly away without really knowing where she was going. All she knew was that she must leave. So she finally went down to the train station she had seen before, and slipped aboard a train when the train crew looked the other way. Then she managed to stay hidden on the train for one hour. Then the train ran into a pretty small village that Lisa thought seemed nice. So she jumped off the train and started to explore what the village had to offer. It was not very big, only about a dozen streets, a hotel, a café and some smaller shops. It felt just

right for her, because she disliked big cities. First of all, she must find somewhere to sleep. She remembered that Añeďliká said that she slept on park benches when she had just run away from her father, so it was probably good enough for her too. She couldn't find any park, but just outside the village was a small forrest where there was a footpath with benches. That would be excellent!

When the evening came, she had managed to get pretty hungry and began to get second thoughts on her sudden breakup. She should probably had planned it a bit better. She hadn't even take some food with her. And she hadn't wanted to take any money either, it was not Liënam's fault she went off. She went to the grove and lay down on one of the benches to sleep. It was not particularly comfortable. How had Añeďliká managed it like this? When morning finally came, she was not just hungry but stiff and cold too. "This isn't good enough", she thought. "I have to find somewhere else to sleep. But first I got to get something in my stomach".

She went into the village again and started looking for food. In a dumpster behind the café was a lot of sandwiches and other cold cuts which they had thrown away the night before. It was not so fresh, but it filled her stomach anyhow. She returned to the forest, where it was a stream running with really good water in which she satisfied her thirst. She followed the creek to see where it led, and came to a forest pond with flat calm water. She looked around to see that she was alone, then she undressed and jumped into the water and swam around. She began to feel much better! Now they just have to arrange for the night before it was too late.

In a dense shrubbery, she found a rather large empty space. By pulling up some shrubs, cleaning the entire surface from the rocks and collect leaves and something that looked like moss, she created a soft and comfortable bed. She twisted together bushes above as a roof so the whole thing was almost like a small hut. It took all morning and almost all afternoon. But now she began to get hungry again, so she went down to the lake with a stick she had sharpened. After an hour of hunting, she had managed to catch a big fish. She made a fire by rubbing sticks together in a pile of dry leaves and cooked the fish over the open fire.

She could not help but think about what Añeďliká told to her about her early days as a refuge on Earth. She had certainly not managed to fix a bed and caught

food when she tried to live by nature! Her rescue had been that she found a lonely farm where she could stay. But Lisa managed herself just fine with what the nature could offer. In the evening she went and lay down in her bush hut and slept well all night. She was certainly not bothered by all the sounds from nature, but just thought they gave her peace.

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Liënam sat at a table in his workroom at his job at the space centre. He had his head on the table and slept when one of his colleagues came in and woke him up.

– *Are you sitting here sleeping again! Lucky for you it was not your boss that found you! Why are you always so tired nowadays, don't you sleep at night?*

Liënam let out a deep sigh and swallowed a few times.

– *I have not slept a wink since Lisa left me. I'm walking around all night looking for her. But it's like she's swallowed by the ground. When I finally get home so I turn myself back and forth in bet of concern for her for the rest of the night.*

– *What do you say? Have Lisa left you! And you don't even know where she is? Does the director know about that?*

– *No, I have not dared to tell anyone. I 'm hoping to find her instead. Promise me that you will not say anything to him!*

– *Sorry, I can't promise. It would be professional misconduct. Sorry, Liënam.*

It took only an hour until Liënam was called to the director Draëk's office. He went there with shaking legs and knocked. The secretary let him. Draëk stared at the trembling Liënam.

– *What I have been told? Is it true that Miss Green is no longer with you, and that you don't even know where she is?!?*

– *That unfortunately true, Director. When I came home from work one day she was just gone.*

– *But then you have to look for her, damn it!*

– *That's what I do. Every night I have been looking in parks, at bus and railway stations, in the alleys, hospitals, everywhere. I walk and walk all night, but I can't find her. It's like she disappeared into thin air.*

Liënam could not hold back his tears, but did his best to hide them. Draëk mellowed a bit in tone when he saw it.

– *But what has happened? Why did she leave?*

– *We argued a little. Well, it was more like a calm discussion. She said she had a hard time accepting to live traditionally. I thought we had sorted out the situation the next morning, but apparently not. She just left this letter.*

Liënam took out a crumpled paper from his pocket. It was obvious that he had read it several times. It said:

*"Hi, honey!*

*After carefully thinking over our situation I have decided to leave you. It's not that I don't love you, I really do. I leave you because I realised that we will never be able to have a harmonious life together, our views about how our relationship should be differs too much. So if I would stay and feel uncomfortable then it would just end with that we are arguing more and more until our love has turned to hate. I really don't want to end up there, instead I want to be able to look back on our time together with joy and happiness.*

*Don't think I dislike you because you want a submissive woman by your side. That's what you think is right and I respect you for it. I respect you even more because you stand up for your opinion and not pretend anything else. The problem isn't you nor your opinion, but the problem is that I can't accept it. You have not done anything wrong to me, and I hold no grudge against you. I'm very sorry that I caused you this, and I take on the full responsibility for this failure.*

*You don't have to worry about me or look for me. I'm almost thirty years old, and I have lived alone since I was a child, so I can take care of myself. Please show this letter to Draëk so he also understands that I don't need, or want any babysitter who looks after me. You must understand that I'm much stronger than I look.*

*Hope that you understand and that you can forgive me.*

*Good-bye forever.*

*Your Lisa"*

Draëk returned the paper to Liënam, who folded it and put it back into his pocket again. He was surprised over how excellent knimbonian it was written in. It took him a while before he managed to pull himself together again. The letter had been really unexpected, especially what Lisa had written.

– ***This really change don't anything in substance***, he finally said. ***You were responsible for her, and that you still are. But I also understand that it was just as unexpected for you as it was for me. Keep me posted on the progress on finding her again.***

– ***I promise to do so, Director Draëk.***

Liënam returned to work while Draëk thought about what he would do. He picked up the phone and called Treïstán Croëlño, who was Añeđliká's father and one of the richest men on the planet. He informed him of what had happened, and Treïstán was of course upset and worried too. Perhaps he would try to use his influence and money to do something.

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Lisa had it pretty good in her forrest, she enjoyed herself everyday. Sometimes she caught a fish, but she had discovered that almost every night the owners of the café throw completely good food in the trash behind it. So when they closed at 10 o'clock at night she normally was waiting there in the shadows. When the owner came out with all the leftover food from the day she went there and picked it up as soon as he went back inside again. That and the water from the stream plus the occasional fish was enough for her to survive. But it felt a bit awkward to look for food in a garbage can. Daytimes she walked around in the forrest and just enjoyed the singing of the birds and all other wildlife. She often swam in the lake too, but was a little worried that someone might see her. It was not that big of a forest this one.

Although she was quite pleased with her free life, she after all began getting tired of living so primitively. But at the same time, she wanted to hide from public eyes. Mostly because she didn't want Liënam or Draëk to find her as she felt it would cause her a lot of trouble. Partly also because she after all was the only E.K. (Extra-Knimbonian) and attracted attention wherever she went. It was a bit tiring having everyone staring at her when she walked around in the village. She was wondering how Añeđliká learned to put up with it. She was an alien on the planet Earth, so it was basically the same thing.

One evening when she was checking through in the garbage behind the café to find leftover foods, the owner suddenly came out from the back door again with silent steps. She didn't notice him until he was standing right next to her. She jumped up and began to apologise for her rummaging in his garbage can.

– *No need to apologise*, he answered. *I was just a little curious as to why the food so mysteriously disappeared from the trash every night.*

– *It's not like I'm stealing from you, you've thrown away the food, right?*

– *Take it easy, you have not done anything illegal. I just feel pity for you because you have to collect food in other's waste. My name Anrendo, by the way. Who are you actually, and don't you have anywhere to go?*

– *I'm just a lonely tramp who are walking around.*

– *Are you interested in a job?*

– *Well, it would not be totally wrong at least.*

– *Actually, me and my wife Adale owns this café, and it 's hardly give us enough, so we can't really afford to hire someone. But we are also getting old and would need some help. What do you say about cleaning the floors and tables every evening after closing time if you get food here for free?*

Lisa thought about the offer a bit. It didn't sound too bad.

– *What kind of food would you offer me then?*

– Like I said, we only have enough profit so we can handle ourselves. But surely you would be able to choose any of the today's specials for lunch, and the evening would be one of your duties is to throw away any leftover food from the counters into the garbage back here, and doing that, you can of course keep all the food you want to eat yourself . Unfortunately we can't offer you any breakfast, because we don't open until lunch.

So it became. Lisa came to the café for lunch every day and got a hot meal, and then she came when it closed at ten o'clock at night and cleaned the café premises and took away all the leftover dishes and sandwiches that she could eat. So now she had one problem less as she was able to fill her stomach every day. But she still had no money, and her clothes were getting worn out. And the hair became more and more tangled, because she could not buy any shampoo or soap. But generally she was feeling pretty good. It was wonderful just to sit in the forrest all day and enjoy that nobody in the entire universe demanded anything of her.

Little did she know that Treïstán worried so much about her that he exhorted to an extreme effort to find her.



CHAPTER 4

# Found Again



Lisa's life had become much better since she started working at the café and got free food. But at the same time she began to get tired of that her life always had to be so miserable. As long as she could remember, she had to fight for her survival. She seriously started to get tired of it. Anrendo and Adale who owned the café didn't see much of her as she chose to keep to herself, but they could still see that she was not happy. Adale tried a few times to pierce her armour, but she just kept her distance. She didn't even tell them her name. It was pretty clear that she was

not from Knimbo, which made her even more mysterious. The newspapers hadn't written a single line of her, as neither she nor Liënam had wanted it. She came and went as a sort of mystical being from the forests, often with remnants of branches or leaves in her long hair.

One evening Anrendo and Adale had the TV on while waiting for customers. In a commercial break a strange spot caught their attention and they viewed it with sheer amazement. It was a distinguished man in proper costume that looked straight into the camera.

"*Good afternoon. My name is Treïstán Croëlño and I want to send out a request. I'm searching for you, Lisa. You've met me, I'm Añeđliká's father. Lisa, please, if you see this, call me. The telephone number is on the screen. I beg you, Lisa, please contact me so I will know that you are still alive. If you, for some reason, want to keep in the hiding, I'll promise that I'm not going to search for you, or disclose anything of what you tell me to anyone else. The only thing I want to know is that you are alive and have a decent life. How you choose to live your life, it your decision. I also beg everyone else who sees this spot, please look for this woman.* "

He held up a picture that clearly was their mysterious cleaner, even if the hair in the picture was blond instead of blue. Still, it was no doubt that it was her that Treïstán was looking for.

"*If you have seen this woman, who probably has blue hair now, please don't rat on her, don't contact me. I repeat, don't contact me. Instead, I urge you to look her up and give her my phone number and tell her that I really want her to call me. So please Lisa! Call me! Call me so I can sleep at night again! I promise you will not regret it!* "

It was clear that Treïstán was touched. He looked as if he could hardly keep from crying. Anrendo and Adale looked at each other.

– *That is clearly the woman who cleans for us*, Adale said.

– *We have to call him and tell him about her*, Anrendo said. *That man's Treïstán. He is the like the richest man in the entire Knimbville.*

– *We cannot, he said clearly that we should not call him. Moreover, we can't betray her confidence when she is so kind. We'll talk to her when she arrives tonight. But record that spot so we can show it to her!*

Shortly after 10 pm Lisa arrived as usual to clean up. She got the cloth, mop and bucket and started cleaning the floor and tables. Suddenly Adale came out to the room. Lisa was not used to that. Adale had an unusually serious face when she studied Lisa closely, as if she had never seen her before.

– *Have I done anything wrong?* she wondered.

– *No, not at all. Lisa is your name, right?*

Lisa was horrified. How could she got to know that?

– *Maybe, why do you ask?*

– *We saw a kind of an ad on TV earlier today. It must be you who he is searching for.*

– *Who?* Lisa asked with concern in her voice.

– *Mr Treïstán. Come up to our living room and watch yourself. We recorded it for you.*

Lisa followed up the stairs to the apartment where the café owners stayed. Adale showed the spot with Treïstán to Lisa. She sat silent afterwards until Adale broke the silence.

– *Surly it's you that he's talking about?*

– *It probably is. You have not called to him?!?*

– *Of course not. We could never find in us to let you down like that. But I really think you should call him. He seems genuinely concerned about you. This ad isn't very cheap exactly.*

– *I don't want to. If they only could understand that I just want to live my own life.*

– *But it cannot hurt to call him anyway to see what he wants? You can use our phone if you want, it's an unlisted number so he will not be able to see who is calling or where you are calling from.*

Lisa continued to protest, but Adale was stubborn. In the end, she took the phone that Adale held out and dialled the number. Before she pressed the last number she looked firmly at Adale. She understood and left the room.

– *Hello, this is Treïstán Croëlño.*

– *Hello Treïstán, this is Lisa. A friend had seen on TV that you wanted me to call.*

He took a deep breath and then let out the air with a loud sound. She was alive! She rang! Finally!

– *Lisa, thank god you called! I've been so worried about you. Also Liënam and Draëk are very concerned. Poor Liënam is walking around the streets every night looking for you. How are you and how do you feel?*

– *I wrote the letter to him that he should not worry! Stupid man! I get along just fine on my own and don't need anyone to take care of me!*

– *That may be true. I'm sincerely sorry that I called you out on TV. Please don't hang up, though can hear that you are annoyed at me. But I was really worried when I didn't know if you were alive or dead. You are, after all, my daughter's best friend. I would never forgive myself if I hadn't done everything in my power to find out how you feel. I swear that I will not reveal anything of what you tell me to anyone else, including to Liënam or Draëk, unless you agree to it. Maybe to Añeđliká, because it's my daughter. Can't you tell me what happened? Please, I beg you!*

Lisa relented a little. It was perhaps a bit cruel to just leave like that and not get in touch with anyone. And it was something desperate in his voice.

– *I feel perfectly fine. No need to worry about be, I'm used to take care of myself since my mom died of cancer when I was fifteen. I've built myself a sort of hut in a forest, I'm catching fish that I eat and wash myself in the lake. I also get food at this café after I cleaned it up every evening.*

– *The doesn't sound as a particularly good life, anyhow.*

– *No, maybe it's not. But it's still much better than my life was on Earth for the past year. You can tell Draëk that I don't want to go back to my life on Earth, as it's even worse than here.*

– *How can someone's life be worse than having to live like a homeless?*

– *We were very poor when I was a child. Then when my mom got cancer we used all our money to try to cure her. But she died anyway and I could not pay the rent myself, so I was living on the street. I had just turned sixteen when I became homeless for the first time. Añeďliká found me on the street and asked if I wanted to be her backup singers on stage. So I did, and she paid me so much that I could get a pretty good life from it. Since then she is also my best friend and we did everything together, even picking up guys together in bars. Oops, maybe I should not have said that!*

– *I promise not to tell her that you said it*, he laughed. *But it sounds like you had a good life at all on Earth.*

Lisa had never been so talkative before, but now it was as if the cup had run over her with despair, and she could not stop talking. Not even with Añeďliká she had talked about her life this way.

– *Maybe, but the she fell in love, got married and got children. Don't misunderstand me, I don't begrudge her at all to be happy, and she didn't forget me either. But we didn't hung out as much for obvious reasons. Then she went to visit Knimbo for a whole year. After like six months all my money was gone, I was homeless again and forced to live on the street and search for food in garbage cans. It even happened that I sometimes fought with other homeless people for the food. Can you imagine being so desperate to fight over food from garbage cans!*

– *It sounds truly awful.*

– *Yeah, and then Añeďliká came back and throw a concert again so I got a little money. Then I started to realise that I was totally dependent on her, and it feels really rotten to have to rely on one's best friend. So when I met Liënam and fell in love, so it was an easy*

*decision to go with him here. I often falls madly in love like that, but it usually doesn't last very long. This time, I decided that it would try harder, and I did my best to to please him. I actually thought I could be happy with him.*

*– But what happened then? Was he mean to you?*

*– No, he was nice. But I realised that I can't accept being trapped like that, but I need freedom too. But he was unable to handle that, so I felt I must leave. It was perhaps not the smartest decision, but I stand by it and still think it was the best under the circumstances. So I snuck on board a train, and now I have found a kind of simple home here and survive. It's good enough for now and I really enjoy the freedom of the forest. But you tell him nothing of this. Or to Draëk!*

*– I've already promised that. But what do I tell them, then?*

*– You can tell them that I have a better life now than I had on Earth. That's all they need to know. And if you bump into Liënam you can say to him that I'm not mad at him, or accuse him in any way. It just didn't work.*

Treïstán thought the whole story sounded sad, and also that Lisa probably was not as happy as she was trying to imply. She sounded so dismayed in her voice. If he only could find a way to help her, but without that she considered it as help, because she would certainly not accept that. Suddenly he got an idea.

*– Lisa, I wonder if you could do me a big favour? In about three weeks, I'm hosting a charity event. I've been doing it every year for many years now, before just as a guest but nowadays as the host. When Añeđliká was here, she was the last artist who performed, and she drew in a lot of money to the charity. It's my dream since then to have her on stage again, but it's impossible. But you know all her songs. Can't you dress up like her and sing a few of her songs? It would make wonders for the gala, and you would make me very happy!*

*– Should I wear a pink wig and play her songs? Are you completely mad, I really don't want to do that. It' totally out of the question!*

– *Can't you at least consider it and get back to me at the end of the week? I would appreciate it very much.*

– *Maybe*, Lisa said quietly, almost resignedly.

Treïstán didn't like her tone. It was as if she was so depressed that she didn't want anything anymore. He started to get worried again when he remembered what Añeďliká told him a few years ago.

– *Please Lisa, can you at least promise me one thing? If you someday feel you can't cope anymore, and maybe are climbing up on a roof and gets dark thoughts about jumping, call me instead.*

– *What do you just say?!?*

– *You may not know it, but Añeďliká stood on a roof once and had decided to jump. But then she came to think of her friends, Fiona, Frank and Jennifer, so she didn't jump. Instead, she called Fiona and then all three together helped her to get in a better mood, and you know the result.*

– *I actually had no idea about it. She never told me that.*

– *Don't tell her I said it. But please promise me that if you come in the same situation, just call me first. I may be a poor substitute for your best friend, but we have at least the same blood.*

– *I can't promise I'll call, but I will try to think about doing that if I ever get so dark thoughts.*

– *And please, call me back at the end of the week and tell me if you accept to attend at the show for me. I would make so happy.*

– *I'll have to see*, she replied.

They said goodbye and Treïstán sighed deeply with relief. It was not the best news, but it was better than not knowing at all. He just hoped that she would come to the gala. Not for his sake but for her own. She needed something new in her

life, and something that meant something, so she could regain her spirit and her wishes to live.

Lisa went down and finished the cleaning without saying anything to Adale or Anrendo. But she was thinking about gala and pondered.

Perhaps anyhow ...



CHAPTER 5

# Going Up



Lisa cleaned the café floors while she kept thinking about what Treïstán had said. She was pretty mad at him because he interfered in her life, but maybe it was not such a bad idea anyway, to appear at his gala. Maybe she could do what Añeđliká had done and get a music career on an alien planet. Anrendo came into the room and looked at her.

*– Lisa, me and Adale have talked a lot about how hard you seem to have it. Now I just happen to know the owner of the hotel in this village, and could put in a good word for you there.*

*– I'm grateful, but I don't want any charity.*

*– It's not about that. I actually know that he is desperately looking for a cleaning woman at the hotel right now, and I just thinking about recommending you. It's not that I'm lying, we have seen with our own eyes that you are good and orderly when you clean here. What do you say? You would be better off, and my friend at the hotel would have one problem less. Right now the rest of the staff have to clean all the rooms, and they start talking about resigning in protest.*

Lisa thought for a bit. She had cleaned hotels before. Maybe it was time to take hold of her life and not just trying to survive? And Anrendo just meant well.

*– When you say it like that, maybe it would be better if I was earning some money. My hair is getting more and more tangled and ragged, as I can't afford to care for it. So my hair and I say yes thanks.*

So the next day she went to the hotel in the afternoon and requested to talk to the manager. The hotel manager, Kalengo, came out and asked her to come inside the office. Apparently Anrendo already managed to talk to him.

*– So you want the job as a hotel cleaner here? I have heard that you are good at cleaning. Is that true?*

*– I have cleaned hotel before, so I know how it works. And how hard can it be?*

*– The most important thing is that you will be here punctually every day and do what you should. You must clean the rooms and also in the lobby. The staff parts the rest of the staff are taking care of themselves. The rooms that are rented out are cleaned daily, more rigorously when a guest leaves it and then sometimes dusting on any room that has been empty for a long time. You start work at ten in the morning and ends when you are done. My previous cleaners rarely worked beyond 2 pm, except in extreme cases. Unfortunately, you have to work seven days a week, but if you want to get off one or two*

*days it would be possible to arrange. It's important that you tell it in advance. I also expect you to tell at least one week in advance if you want to quit, and to hear from you if you are sick and can't work.*

– *Alright, and the salary then? I'll not work for free, right?*

Kalengo smiled a little. Maybe she was not as helpless as she looked.

– *I'll pay you 800 per month in arrears.*

– *I heard a rumour that you are pretty desperate for a maid. Give me 1000 and we have an agreement.*

Now Kalengo didn't smile anymore. It was the first time anyone had demanded a higher salary than he offered. He looked intently at Lisa, but she just met his gaze steadily but calm.

– *Okay, you can get 900, but no more.*

Lisa pretended to think about it, as if it were doubtful.

– *Alright with 900, then. I wonder how much it would cost to rent a room here? Is there an staff room or something?*

– *There's a vacant room that we don't rent out. It's very small, just a bed and a small table. No toilet, but if you work here, you can use any bathroom in a room that is free. I want 300 per month for it, and it will then be deducted from your salary.*

– *It's a little sour, but my hair requires me to take care of it better, so I accept to both the job and the room.*

– *Well, you can start tomorrow at ten.*

– *Sure, I will. You will have the employment contract ready by then? With working hours, notice period, salary, that I may use the bathrooms and everything else you said.*

Kalengo smiled again and nodded. This woman was not easily ripped off!

Lisa started at the hotel the following day and moved into the small room. It was really small, but still bigger than her so-called hut in the forrest. And the bed was so much more comfortable! Not to mention getting to go on a real toilet and bath in a real bathtub! When she was finished with the day's work she went up to a vacant room and took a long, warm, nice bath. She washed off all ingrained dirt and gave her hair the shampooing that it so desperately needed.

~ ~ ~

She continued to clean up at the café in the evenings, so she continued to get food to eat. The first salary was not supposed to come until the end of the month. She had become a little more talkative now, and didn't forget to thank them for helping her get the job at the hotel. At the same time she was thinking about what Treïstán had said. If she would perform at the gala that he wanted to, her life would not be the same again. Never ever. But would it be better or worse? Could it get much worse anyway? Maybe she could use the gala into her favour?

After five days of pondering, she asked Adale if she could borrow the phone again to call Treïstán. She didn't like having to ask, but she could not afford to buy her own phone yet. Adale didn't mind, she was just glad that Lisa seemed to be in a better mood now.

– *Hello, Treïstán, it's Lisa again.*

– *No, but hello there, Lisa. How are you?*

– *Well, I'm standing here on the roof of the tallest building and thinking about to jump down. I promised to call you then, remember?*

– *No, Lisa, don't do it! Please ...*

– *Hey, I'm just kidding. You wanted to know if I want to perform at the gala. I have decided to accept under certain conditions.*

– *Ouch, you really scared me there! So you will come, it was nice to hear. Can't we meet somewhere, like tomorrow morning? You decide where, as I suppose you don't want me to know where you are living.*

Lisa thought for a bit. Could she trust him? Well, if she should perform at the gala it would not matter anymore.

*– We can meet at the Café A & A in the village of Soranjo. But it must be after three o'clock, because I work until two.*

*– What, you got a job? That was pleasant news! See you tomorrow at three o'clock then. Is it in Soranjo you work as well? Wait, you don't need to respond.*

Treïstán let his chauffeur drive him to the café the next day. It took more than an hour to get there. He walked in and looked for Lisa but didn't see her. Adale stood behind the counter and recognised him.

*– Mr Croëlño, I guess. Lisa is waiting for you in the office. Right this way, sir.*

He found Lisa in the office where she sat waiting already. He walked up to her and held out both hands, palms upward in a knimbonian greeting. She grabbed his hands from the top, but then pulled him towards her and gave him a hug instead.

*– Oops, that was unexpected. You can't imagine how nice it's to see you again. It must be six years since we met on Earth, isn't it?*

*– It could probably be true. But can we talk about the gala now?*

*– Yeah, yeah. You said on the phone that you had certain requirements?*

*– Yep. My idea is to use the awards as a way to promote myself as an artist. I just want to get a chance to sing my own songs at the gala, so Knimbo get to see ME, and not a copy of Añeđliká. The purpose is to get a kick-start to a kind of music career, and you must understand that I intend to exploit you ruthlessly to achieve it.*

Treïstán looked at her with mixed feelings. He liked her energy and enthusiasm, but not that of being exploited.

*– Well, we will not allow anyone to advertise on the gala. It's about poor children, not about artists who want to boost themselves.*

*– I don't mean explicit advertising, only implicit. I just sing a couple of my own songs with my own style. It will make it easier on me to, for example, go to a record company to try to record an album.*

*– But my requirement is that you must play Añeđliká's songs, and pretend you are her. We are going to create advertising that suggests that she will perform, so that we will get a lot of viewers. The more viewers, the more money for the kids. Another requirement is that you have to hold some sort of speech to the audience that they should donate, almost all artists should do it. You can either get a speech written for you, or you can speak from your heart.*

*– You have your demands, I have mine. Now it's just about getting them together. What do you say, for example, if I come in as Añeđliká, do a couple of her songs with her hard rock, then you explain who I really am for the audience. Then I make my speech written by myself, and finally I sing three of my own songs.*

*– Then you would play a total of five songs in all, it sounds a bit much.*

*– I can also decide not to come at all. You must understand that I don't have a dime, and that my job is lousy payed. I will be forced to get in debt just to show up at the gala. Then I don't get paid there, I assume, so I will be considerably poorer after the gala than before. I need to get some advantage, otherwise I' not coming.* Take it or leave it!

Treïstán had no problem understanding her English, he was pretty good at English himself. He studied Lisa's face as if he'd never seen it before.

*– I love your energy and spirit. You're like a completely different person now than you was on the phone just a few days ago.* Alright my friend, you've got it! *But no advertising, thanks. You do your songs and you deliver a speech and get people to donate millions. But you come in as Añeđliká, looks like her and sounds like her. Can you handle it?*

*– I can do that for sure. I only see two problems. I'll find the musicians who played for her, but am not sure that they have instruments that sound like her. She brought her own instruments with her for them. Then I'm not green in my face and have no antennae like she has.*

*– The last thing can be solved with fake antennae and green lights. The musicians I can try to get hold of and ask, but I think they already tried to play music that sounds like Añeďliká's on their own.*

*– Don't bother. I have a some phone numbers. I'll find them. Though I hope they do it for free, because I can't afford to pay them.*

*– Tell me if you don't get hold of them. And if they want to be paid, send them to me and I'll take care of it.*

He handed over a small cell phone to her.

*– I need to be able to contact you, so take this phone. It's an old phone that I no longer use, but it works for talking. I've added some numbers in it, that you may need.*

She hesitated but accepted it. Actually, she didn't want to get anything from him, but realised his need to be able to get hold of her.

*– If you give the phone number to anyone else, I will throw the phone in the lake, just so you know.*

*– I will not do that. Here you have a few hundred dollars, too, by the way. You'll get some expenses to perform at the gala, and this might help with that.*

Lisa looked at the money and pushed them back across the table.

*– Thanks, but no thanks. I don't want to start receiving money from anyone, especially from you. Not that I dislike you, quite the opposite. But I don't want to end up in a bad spiral again where I'm dependent on others. I'll fix the economy in some way.*

*– Not even if we call it a loan?*

*– I don't want to get into debt either.*

*– All right, I understand. By the way, Draëk has demanded to meet me tomorrow. I have tried to duck him for a whole week now, but I guess I have to see him. What do you allow me to say to him?*

– *You can tell him that you met me if you want, and that I have a job. But not what it is or where I live. And absolutely no phone number. If he asks if I want to go home to Earth, then you know what to answer.*

– *Sure, I will say that he should reserve a place on the next spaceship.*

Lisa pushed him in the side for fun and laughed. It sounded like music to his ears. It was wonderful to hear her laugh again despite all her problems. He returned home with much lighter steps than he had throughout the past week. But he was still very worried about her, because nothing really had changed for her in practice.

Lisa was making some plans for the gala that she didn't want to reveal to Treïstán, as she was sure he would not like them.



CHAPTER 6

# The Gala



Liënam walked with hesitant steps towards Draëk's office this morning. He didn't know why he had been called, but assumed it had to do with Lisa. Still, he hadn't been able to find her, or to get enough sleep as he still searched around in the streets every night. When he finally sat down in front of Draëk he was told that they were waiting for Treïstán. The minutes seemed like hours while he waited. At last Treïstán came and the meeting could begin.

– *Thank you for coming in both of you, especially thanks to you, Mr Croëlño, for taking your time for this meeting. The purpose of this meeting is that I want to be updated if any of you have got any new information relating to Miss Green's wellbeing. First, I ask you, Liënam.*

Liënam sighed deeply. The eyes were hollow and all his appearance should be enough answer.

– *No, I've been looking every day and every night without finding her. I'm sorry to say, but I have begun to suspect that she've killed herself. How is it otherwise possible that no newspaper written a single line about her?*

– *We can only hope that you are wrong.*

He began to feel sick in his stomach. What if it was true that Lisa was dead! How would be able to explain it to Earth? He sighed and let go of Liënam's eyes to his relief.

– *Mr Croëlño, you have not heard anything about her, I guess?*

– *I met her yesterday in her new hometown, and we talked for a few hours.*

Liënam almost fell off the chair and Draëk let out air so it sounded like a steam engine which emits steam. He fired off questions like a machine gun.

– *What in the world? Where is she, then? Is she okay? And how can she survive on her own? How did you find her? Why has she not been heard from?*

– *Did she say anything about me? Liënam asked.*

Treïstán raised both his hands to get a word in.

– *What happened is that I got her to contact me. She's alive, have arranged employment, shelter, and is happy in the simple life she lives. Although she has told me a lot more than this, she was very specific in that I would not retell more about her life for you, or for anyone else for that matter. I would like to tell you more, but have to respect her wishes for privacy.*

*– I hope you explained that she without any restrictions may go back to Earth with the first available space ship, and that she are allowed to stay here until departure. It's a space ship leaving in about one week. It's no problem to get her on it.*

*– She knows about that, and asked me to tell you that she is grateful for the offer, but she declines it. Her life here on Knimbo is after all better than her life was on Earth, she explained. And that's the last thing she wants me to explain to you, unfortunately. I have given your phone number to her, in case she would change her mind.*

Both of them took turns trying to squeeze more information from him, but he was like a clam. He didn't betray her trust. They had to be content with the little he had said. On the way out of the building Treïstán took hold of Liënam's arm and stopped him. Liënam looked a little anxiously at him.

*– Lisa asked me to say in confidence to you that she is in no way dislike you, but that she thought it just didn't work. She actually seems to still have some feelings for you, as she asked me to tell you that you should not worry about her.*

*– Thank you, sir. And thank you for finding her. I will certainly sleep a lot better now that I know that she is alive and can survive. But I still will miss her!*

~ ~ ~

Lisa began preparing to perform at the gala. She had the telephone numbers of the musicians that Añeđliká used at her concerts here. She called their leader, Mionk, from the mobile phone and received the green light from them. They didn't want to get paid, because it was the charity gala. They already had the instruments, as they have already tried to play Añeđliká's rock music, but really to no big successes. They had built the instruments themselves. Lisa also managed to get a hundred in advance of her first salary, so that she could afford to go to the group's rehearsal place to practice the songs they would perform. She was fond of the instruments they normally play on. She had never seen its like.

Meanwhile Treïstán made everything ready for the gala. He had presented some subtle hints that his daughter would appear, without saying it straight out. The result had been that it was sold out to the last place for the first time, and that

prognoses read that there would be a record number of viewers of television viewers across the planet.

So when the day came for the gala Lisa was there, ready to perform. She would go on stage the last artist of the day. Treïstán looked at her carefully to see if she had stage fright, but Lisa seemed to be the calm personalised. She had been on stage many times before, but this time she was the main act. When it was little more than half an hour left of the gala it was her turn. Treïstán went on stage to introduce her.

– *Ladies and gentlemen. This gala is coming to an end, but we have one more artist left to offer. There is a girl whose most visible external attributes is her unusual hair and hair colour.*

The crowd started chanting "Angelica" which was Añeđliká's stage name.

– *She has come from far away to appear here tonight, yes all the way from the planet Earth.*

Now, the audience started to cheer already, sure who would perform.

– *Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce ...*

Suddenly the whole stage exploded in pyrotechnic fountains, the rock music began booming from the group that discreetly had entered the stage and as pure magic Lisa appeared on the stage i a flame of fire. She had a pink wig with attached antennas so that she is at a distance looked like Añeđliká. Lighting techniques were carefully instructed to have a greenish light that pulsed so that no one could get a real view of the stage. Krenvla from the music group had built an electric guitar, which Lisa had low-slung on the her just like Añeđliká used to have. Lisa scooped out one of Angelica's most famous songs on Knimbo, with a tempo and energy that was knocking the air out of the crowd. After the first song the drummer just slammed in the next song in an even harder pace. The crowd lifted in ecstasy, and Treïstán was totally amazed. It was as if Añeđliká was back! He had never imagined that Lisa could rock so hard on her own. Krenvla's guitar almost caught on fire from Lisa's solos. For Treïstán it was apparent that it was not

Añeđliká, because the voice was different. But the audience didn't seem to notice anything.

After the two songs he walked back onto the stage again.

– *Ladies and gentlemen. Let me try again to present her, hopefully without being interrupted this time*!

A single spotlight now followed Treïstán so that the rest of the stage, including Lisa, was in total darkness.

– *It gives me an extraordinary pleasure to introduce to you, straight from the planet Earth, my daughter Añeđliká's best friend LISA!*

Lisa tore off her wig and went back into the spotlight next to him. The crowd gasped.

– *Thank you so much, you are wonderful audience. Just as wonderful as Añeđliká told me that she thought you were when she was here last year. And speaking of her, then maybe I should also make a phone call, like she did.*

Lisa picked up her phone from her pocket and dialled a number. She held the phone near the microphone so everyone could hear the conversation.

– *Hello, this is director Riëvan Crijano.*

The crowd gasped, Treïstán as well. What was she doing!?! Riëvan was one of Knimbo's richest men. He owned the planet's biggest music arena that seats 36,000 people, who were in the country Grimja, a large island empire pretty far out in the sea and he had launched many world artists on Knimbo. Now Lisa just called him like it was nothing, just like Añeđliká had done a year ago!

– *Hello Riëvan. My name is Lisa and I'm best friend with Añeđliká. Do you remember her?*

– *How could I ever forget her?*

– *Well, she called to you from this stage one year ago and invited you to join her father's ten percent club with rich people who give at least 10% of their profit to charity each year. But rumour says that you never joined. Can you explain why?*

– *It's true that I have not joined. But that doesn't mean that I have not given charitable contributions. It's just that I don't think one should make money on charity, so I have decided to give anonymous contributions instead. Maybe I should rethink that decision. But a small amount, I can surely give directly tonight. Look at the monitor that displays the total for tonight's gifts.*

Lisa turned and looked up at the monitor. The amount suddenly went from just over six million to just over seven million.

– *How about that, it seemed like you gave a entire million to the gala!*

– *That's correct*, he replied.

– *Many thanks for your contribution, Riëvan. Have a great evening!*

The audience broke out in spontaneous applause, impressed by the high amount that Lisa managed to pull in. Treïstán moved forward because he thought she was ready. But she hadn't even started yet.

– *One million, think about that huh*, Lisa said. *That's so little! Well, not as a contribution from a single person, but so pitifully low compared to what all of you together could provide. Let's make a mathematical calculation. How many in this room can't afford to put a fiver on charity this evening up with one hand! None at all? Now maybe you think that a fiver is ridiculously small amount to give, it can at most give a couple of sandwiches downtown. Not enough to satisfy one single hungry child! But how many are looking at the gala this evening?*

She looked towards Treïstán with a question mark in her face. He held up seven fingers.

– *Seven million? Okay, it would become... 35 million if everyone watching this would give just a fifth. So now it's time for a little exercise. Pick up the phone I know that you all have in your pocket and hold it in your left hand. Or right hand, if it feels better. Yes, it*

*applies to you also in the green sofa that matches your hair colour there in front of the TV at home. And you, and you, all who are watching, take up any phone, landline or mobile. Or if you have one of those TV remote controls with built-in phone, take that. Then you all think of a number! It shall be the amount of money that you can easily spare tonight. Maybe it's five for most of you, maybe ten for some. Maybe you are rich and a hundred is a small amount? Are you all thinking on your number now? Then just call the number on the monitor. You at home can find the number there.*

Lisa pointed down to the left, where the phone number of the gala was on the TV screen.

– *Dial the phone number. Type in your own number and press the wacky key at the bottom right. I press a fifth. Done. Some of you might get a bizitone.*

She pronounced the word wrong deliberately to seek out a few laughs.

– *It's when it sounds toot-toot-toot instead. Then you call you just back after a while. Now we are all watch the monitor, and I hope the control room can show the contribution board on the TV screen. What does it say? It's just spinning, is it broken? Well, the first digit's two. Was not it just seven? Wait there is an additional digit too. Now it became three. Ladies and gentlemen, we just passed thirty million total!*

The crowd roared and applauded violently.

– *And now, while you have your phone up so you write a set a reminder every month on payday that you shall give the same amount. Then we suddenly pulled in over 200 million a year, and without feeling any pain in your wallets. That's how charity is done!*

The audience was beside themselves of appreciation. Treïstán tried desperately to get back the attention, and at last he succeeded.

– *Thank you, Lisa. How many of you would like Lisa to sing a couple of her own songs now? OK, go ahead Lisa, the stage is yours, this time as yourself instead!*

The musicians had stayed on the stage, but they had changed the instruments to their usual. It was old, classical instruments resembling a Swedish keyed fiddle and old flutes. They started with the intro to the first song, and Lisa started

singing. The text was about mysterious beings who lived in the forests. The music was an exotic blend of traditional instruments mixed with modern drums and rhythm. And Lisa's voice showed a fantastic range. She put the high notes so that Treïstán thought windowpanes would crack. But she could also sign surprisingly low bass tones considering her tender body. Yes, Lisa could really sing. And there was nothing wrong with the arrangement either, it was just as rhythmically but melodically as she wanted it to be. After two songs, she asked the crowd, who screamed with delight:

– *Wanna hear another one? Alright, here it comes.*

Now, she sang about a mysterious wanderer who lived in the forests and lived by nature. Treïstán realised she was singing about herself during the first period in Soranjo. When the song was finished, he went up to finish the gala. But the crowd would not let Lisa leave, but continued to howl and scream her name.

"Lisa, Lisa, Lisa"

Treïstán tried three times to say something, but were drowned out by the audience. Then he got instructions from the control room to let Lisa sing a fourth song, even though the program time was almost over. He said it to Lisa, and finally got out a few words into the microphone.

– *Thank you all for tonight! Thanks for all the contributions! Now, Lisa please finish of this gala! See you all soon.*

So Lisa could sing yet another song as the end texts rolled on the TV screen. When the program ran out of time so she was toned out, without the final signature which they used to have. Afterwords she felt exhausted back stage and Treïstán congratulated her for a very successful performance.

But Treïstán was also concerned about what problem Lisa had caused to herself.



CHAPTER 7

# New Friends



When Lisa left the arena she was, to her surprise, approached by a woman that appeared to be with her parents. The woman addressed her by her name.

– *Excuse me, Miss Lisa, but I wonder if I may be so rude that I ask a question?*

– *Yes, of course. What is it?*

*– So you don't know me, but I've heard a lot about you through a common friend of ours, namely Liënam. My name is Vislim. You've been his girlfriend, but it's not anymore, right?*

*– That's right, but I'm not sure I want to discuss my personal life with a total stranger.*

*– I understand that, but it's my personal life it's all about really. Liënam seems to be interested in me, but I'm not sure if I can trust him. He had you before, but dumped you or he let you go. What I want to know is why he broke up with such a catch as you are. I mean, if he didn't think that you was good enough, as awesome as you are, how on earth will I have a chance on him?*

Lisa looked surprised at Vislim. Had Liënam already begun to court someone else? This woman seemed both insecure and a little confused, but apparently she was sincerely worried. So Lisa decided to help her.

*– What do you think is the role of the women in a marriage?* Lisa asked.

*– The same as everyone else thinks, I guess.*

*– Well, I'm not "everyone else", I come from another planet!*

*– Yes, of course, sorry. Well, when I get married, I will take care of my husband, and he will allow me to don't have to work to make money. I will be able to just go home and fix things in the house instead, while he earns for all our spendings. Isn't that every woman's dream?*

*– Not my dream anyway. I could not bear to sit at home all day. I want to go out by myself and look around in the shops or maybe walk around the park and feed the birds.*

*– Not without your husband though! It's he who should take care of you!*

*– I wish you good luck with Liënam. It feels as if he is just the right guy for you. Stop worrying and let him take care of you, he's good at that. He didn't dump me, I dumped him because I preferred the freedom to walk around on my own and take care of myself. Much like in my third song this evening.*

Vislim thanked her profusely and walked away.

– *That was a quite unexpected in more then one way*, she said to Treïstán.

He offered to take her home, and Lisa realised it was quite late so it would be nice to get a ride. So Treïstán let his chauffeur drive Lisa home all the way to Soranjo, because he wanted to talk to her a bit about her performance at the gala. First and foremost, he had some bad conscience. She had drawn perhaps 25 million to the gala with her speech, but herself, she hadn't a penny to live on. How fair was that really? But he knew she didn't want help. But mostly he was concerned that she telephoned to Riëvan during live broadcast.

– *I wonder if it was so smart to yourself that you called Riëvan back there on stage. It was absolutely a boost for the show, but now you might have lost all your chances to get to perform at his arena on Grimja. It would have been a huge thing for you if you would perform there, both economically and in terms of celebrity.*

– *I know that, that's why I called him. I wanted to be assured that he looked at the gala, and heard me and my songs directly. Maybe he would like what he heard so he wants to have me in his arena.*

– *It's true, but he certainly didn't like being attacked like that on the air. He is probably raging at you for it, and will never call you.*

– *I don't want him to be that. That's why I called him the day before yesterday to warn that I was going to call him from the gala.*

– *What!?!*

– *We had a long discussion about charity, brand and image. Finally I got him to realise that he can strengthen his image and thus make money if he would donate money. So yesterday his press spokesman called me up and we discussed how we would plan the call so that Riëvan could maximise his image boost.*

Treïstán became completely furious. His face got a purple colour and his eyes was flaming. She had broken all the rules, and she knew it! No one was supposed

to get free advertising of the gala, especially those who already had money. And she know that very well!

– *You little, sneaky, calculating bitch*, he shouted at her. *How dare you use me and my gala like that, and without even asking me?*

– *I already know that you would say no, if I asked. But have you already forgotten that I said that I intend to exploit you ruthlessly to achieve my goals?*

Treïstán did his very best to continue to look angry, but failed. He was too full of admiration for her incredible nerve. Instead, he began to laugh at it all.

– *In a way, you got more nerve than my daughter, and she's really cocky. Now just hope that you succeed in your goal. The gala was certainly a great success thanks to you. Both for yourself, for myself and for all poor children. So it's hard to be mad at you.*

– *I'm just a mysterious creature from the forrest. You can never know what mysterious creatures do, right? By the way, it might turn up someone who wants to get hold of me. It's absolutely fine with me if you leave out my phone number if you think it's a person who can help me to get ahead.*

– *Sure I will, probably it will not be too many callers.*

Treïstán dropped Lisa of at the hotel, thanked her for her participating, and then was driven home again. He was pretty tired from the eventful evening, and of the long journey to and from Soranjo, but was still very pleased with the how the evening had turned out. Most pleased he was that Lisa had such energy and willingness to live, that he now felt that he didn't have to worry about her at all anymore. Economically, she would surely find a solution by herself.

~ ~ ~

A week later, Lisa was sitting in the café eating her free lunch as usual. Suddenly there came a bunch of tough motorcycle bikers in through the door. It was obvious that the leader of them were waisted, and he picking fights with everyone around. Lisa sat in a corner trying to ignore them. But when the thug threw a table towards one of the guests so that the table broke into pieces she could not

keep quiet any longer. She looked towards Anrendo and Adale and saw that they seemed terrified and dared not intervene either. So Lisa went to the bad boy, stared at him and told him to calm down.

– *Are you looking for a fight?* he said.

– *I don't want any trouble, but I think you should stop destroying the interior. It's so unnecessary.*

He slapped Lisa in her face. She immediately responded with the same medicine, but with the back of her hand. She had a ring on a finger that scraped up a wound on his cheek. He felt his cheek and realised that it started to bleed.

– *Your f-ing bitch*, he shouted.

Then he swung his big fist right into Lisa's face, throwing her backwards and she landed very hard on the floor with aching chin and neck. Now she was really angry, so she stood up, walked up to him again, grabbed his leather jacket from the front and stared intently at him. Then she swept his legs so that he hit the floor with a huge bang. The she stomped with her feet right onto his face as he lay down, but stopped an inch from his nose to show that she could easily had crushed his face if she wanted. But he didn't care about it but just saw red, stood up furiously and swung at her again once, twice, three times. But he only hit the air when Lisa ducked and was sidestepping. Then she was so furious that she grabbed his arm and threw him over her head and let him land on the floor head first with a nasty crunching sound.

The others in the gang was completely paralysed when they saw their leader land and kept laying there, completely out of if with the neck at an unnatural angle. Lisa took a step toward them, but they backed away. Then she grabbed the leg of the loser and began pulling him toward the exit. One of the others took courage and went in front of her.

– *Wait a minute. I apologise for my friend's behaviour. Can't we be allowed to help him out? I think he needs to go to a hospital.*

*– Sure, go ahead. Just make sure that this peace of shit gets out from these premises immediately, I'll be satisfied.*

Two of the gang helped their leader to stand up. Then they held him between them while he was helped out, because he could not walk by himself. Lisa just went quietly back to her table and continued eating. The café owners and the others just stared at her without being able to take in what she had done. The man had been about as tall as she, but certainly at least twice as heavy. And certainly three times as strong. Still, she had treated him like a feather. Who was this mysterious woman?

In the evening, Lisa returned as usual to clean. Then suddenly the gang showed up again from the shadows. The leader looked pretty pitiful with multiple patches on the face, splint on one antenna and a rigid cervical collar. Anrendo and Adale stood in the doorway and was worried about Lisa again. But she just stopped and stared at them with a steady gaze.

*– Have you come back to get more whipping, huh?*

The leader walked up to her and shook his head. He grimaced in pain and squirmed against his neck.

*– I'm a man, and no one will come and tell you otherwise. And a real man should never hit a woman! Never ever! However, a real man have to stand for the wrongs he has done. So I want to apologise for that I hit you, it was the booze in me speaking.*

*– Sure, you are excused. I apologised for throwing your so violently to the floor. But you just made me so angry.*

*– I deserved to get thrown to the floor. The doctor said I was lucky that was not completely paralysed in the process. I guarantee you that I will never drink so much so I don't know what I'm doing any more. It's not worth it. But how on earth did you do that, you don't look very strong?*

*– It was judo, an ancient martial art from my home planet where you use your opponent's weight and strength against him. I happen to have a black belt in it, and it's the highest rating.*

– *Then I will probably be grateful that I'm still alive. I live here in the village, and if someone gives you any trouble, then he will have to deal with me, I promise! Just call for Brago, and I will be there!*

He walked up to Anrendo who took a step backward.

– *What is the value of the table I destroyed?*

Anrendo told him what it cost and without another word, Brago took up a roll of bills and gave him enough money to replace the destroyed table. Lisa smiled and gave him a hug to his great surprise. Then they disappeared on their motorcycles. Lisa went in and started cleaning.

When Brago arrived home, he found a paper with her phone number in his pocket. He was surprised and wondered why. He understood that she must have slipped the note into his pocket when she hugged him. A few days later he called her and asked if she wanted to meet face to face. It was what she had hoped for, so before he knew it she sat on the prayer stool at the back of his motorcycle while he headed to a larger lake a few miles away. This was the first woman who was not the least bit afraid of him, even though he looked so tough and dangerous. Never before had a woman accepted to go with him like this, without bringing along some bodyguard. He picked up a basket of food which he had bought and it was a really enjoyable picnic. To his utter surprise, she undressed completely after the food and jumped into the lake to swim.

– *Come down in the water you too, your chicken*, she screamed at him. *Or dare you not show yourself?*

Then he undressed also, and came down into the lake. They splashed and joked as small children playing in the water. All his toughness ran away, and it turned out he was really nice when he didn't have to act tough in front of his friends. Eventually they went up out of the water and he sat looking at her body secretly. Damn it what good-looking she was, all pale and skinny as she was. She looked back at him, gave him a kiss and pulled him down over herself.

If Liënam could get a new one, so could she too. And Brago didn't seem to want to dominate her, despite his tough exterior.



CHAPTER 8

# Talk show



Lisa woke up the next morning and wondered where she was. She was not in her room at the hotel. She looked around and saw Brago lying next to her in the forest glade beside the lake. Then she heard it again, that annoying sound that had awakened her. It was her cell phone ringing. At first she thought of throwing it in the lake. Who was it that rang this early? She looked at the clock on the phone and discovered that it was already nine in the morning. How could it already be

that late! She remembered the night before and well, most of the night. Brago had certainly kept her busy. The phone rang a third time. She replied, a little sour.

– *Hey, what is it?*

– *Good morning, my name is Tresco Frinja, producer of a talk show led by Samir. Is it Miss Lisa I talk to?*

– *That's correct, I guess.*

– *I wonder if you would like to be our guest this Saturday. You've probably seen The Samir Show sometime.*

– *Well, I never watch TV.*

She thought about what she would answer. A talk show could make her a little bit more well known, and it would increase her chances of getting into a music career. That must be why Treïstán gave them her phone number.

– *I'd like to pop up, where and when?*

– *We will send an invitation text message to your phone with all the details, will that be satisfactory?*

– *Completely OK.*

Now she began to get in a rush. She was supposed to start work at ten and was far from home. She chased up Brago and made him drive her back to the hotel. He also promised to take her to the talk show on Saturday on his motorcycle. Lisa almost felt that he had been too complaisant. She didn't want to have a slave who did everything she said, just as she didn't want to be slave to someone else. But maybe he's just fallen in love with her and wanted to please her. She stopped. "Hey, I'm not falling in love again? When will I ever learn? "

~ ~ ~

The program host Samir sat at a desk next to the chair where Lisa sat.

– *Welcome to the show, Lisa. I would like to start by talking a little about Liënam. It it true that he went to Earth, where you are born, seduced you, took your virginity and then when you were completely helpless here on Knimbo he dumped you so you were forced to live as a homeless in a deserted forest?*

Lisa was shocked by what he had said. He attacked directly without any small talk. And not with any kind words, exactly. What she didn't know, because she had never seen his show, is that he loved to provoke people and make them quarrel or maybe even fight in front of the cameras. But Lisa was not easy to provoke with her gentle mind.

– *Well, you've got some facts wrong for you, but it's also somehow true.*

– *Why don't we take in Liënam here, so we'll see what he has to say?*

Samir looked at Lisa's shocked face and thought that now everything will explode when she is forced to confront her worst enemy. "This will become good TV, this", he thought. Liënam came into the studio and was startled when he saw that Lisa was already there. He apparently hadn't known what to expect either. But the explosion that Samir was waiting for was nowhere to be found. Instead, Lisa stood up and gave Liënam a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

– *Well hello, Liënam. It was not yesterday we met.*

– *Alright, Liënam. Can you defend what you've done?* Samir provoked.

Liënam looked a bit desperate and stuttered something inaudible, so Lisa decided to save him.

– *Well, maybe you got the story roughly right, but most of it's wrong. First of all, he didn't take my virginity.*

– *You don't think we should believe that you never became intimate on the spaceship, together in the same bed in four entire months?*

– *Oh no, a lot of things happened in that bed, indeed. My Liënam here this is a good lover, you see girls.*

She patted him a little bit on his lap.

– *But my virginity went out of the window many, many years ago. And he didn't dump me either, we were pretty well agreed that we didn't fit together, right sweetheart?*

Liënam realised that she told the truth earlier when she said she was not angry or hated him. She even took him in defence.

– *Yes, that's right. We liked each other, but out daily life simply didn't work, so Lisa decided to move out.*

– *To a shitty shack out in the forrest because she had no money!*

– *You make it sound so bad to live in the forest. I love the forrest, and enjoyed every day that I was allowed to live there. I'm a bit of a creature of the nature myself, haven't you heard? The time that I lived in that forrest are the happiest time of my life. I could just walk around all day with no demands and just listen to the birds. But over to something more important, how is life with you nowadays, Liënam?*

– *Well it'r actually quite good, I keep on working at the space centre, and my boss has stopped barking at me for your sake. I have even slowly begun courting another girl. What about you?*

– *Oh yes, I'm also working and also try to play as often as I can. Did you see me on the charity gala, by the way?*

– *No, but my girlfriend saw you. She said that you were incredibly good.*

Samir started to look a little disturbed out. This was nothing like he planned. They would argue with each other, not chit-chatting.

– *Is she here by the way, should not we bring her out, too?* said Lisa.

– *She's waiting behind the scene.*

– *Bring in another chair! Come in here Vislim*, Lisa shouted.

Liënam was surprised that Lisa know Vislim's name, but it was not closed to how surprised Samir was. This was supposed to become even a bigger shock to

Lisa. The idea was you that they would throw themselves at each other's throats and trying to claw the eyes out of each other. Vislim came in and sat down.

– *We have met before, after the gala*, Lisa explained. *How are you two now, Vislim, isn't Liënam a perfect match of a man for you?*

– *Yes, he is, we are so happy together.*

– *I'm so happy for you, and of course for you, Liënam. It's so nice to hear that you got over me already.*

Samir started to feel really sick in his stomach. Not only they wasn't screaming at all at each other, but they sat here and exchanged comments like best friends instead. The worst thing was that it seemed that Lisa was taking over the show completely, and he was completely forgotten. He made an attempt to regain the initiative.

– *But Lisa, isn't it hard now when you don't have a man in your life who can take care of you?*

– *I neither need nor want any man who takes care of me. But it's wrong that I have no man in my life. Brago, can also please come down here, so we are complete? Bring in another chair!*

Samir could not believe his eyes when a big, tough man in leather jacket came down from the audience and sat on the stage with the others. He definitely looked like a fighter, especially with his plastered wounds. Samir looked nervously at the guards.

– *This is Brago Azendja. Maybe our relationship is not so serious yet, but we are hanging out anyway. Right, honey?*

– *Yes, we hang out now and then. I have learned the hard way that you shouldn't challenge Lisa because she is tougher and stronger than most men.*

– *You really want to tell it, Brago?* asked Lisa. *You don't have to.*

– *Why not? You see, I picked a fight with her at a café when I was drunk and crazy. The result you see here.*

He pointed to his neck collar and other injuries.

– *But actually, she is wonderful. You just have to be man enough to realise that she needs to be held with very loose reins if you get it. Mentally, she's much stronger than me, but physically I'm stronger than her, so it becomes a sort of balance of terror.*

– *Terror Balance*, Lisa giggled. *You make it sound as if there is a war between us.*

– *Maybe not, but certainly there have been wild between us, right?*

Samir started to give up. This show started degenerate more and more. In a desperate attempt to find any conflict he hang on.

– *So you have been fighting with each other more than once?*

– *I would not call it that. We tumble around in bed mostly*, Lisa giggled.

– *And I would not call the first time for a fight either, I got into her face, she threw me over her head straight down to the floor so my friends had to drive me to the hospital.*

– *Maybe I should be grateful that you dumped me*, Liënam said with a laugh. *Otherwise, maybe I also would have ended up in the hospital every other week.*

Everyone laughed except Samir who began to long for the program to end so that his humiliation would end.

– *Are there no more guests we can invite?* Lisa asked. *I think I saw a friend from my hometown over there.*

– *No, you got enough people in already*, Samir protested. *After all, I'm the host of the show.*

– *Are you sure?* she replied. *You are not hosting very much!*

Lisa stood up and walked over to the Samir's desk and sat on it with her back to Samir, so he could not even see the guests anymore.

– *Well Liënam. How does it feel in your new relationship? Is Vislim everything you dreamed of, or is she a bitch like me?*

– *I think it feels good. Although I will never forget you, everything is so harmonious between us. Not true, honey?*

– *Everything is wonderful*, Vislim replied. *I would like to thank you, Lisa, for your good advice regarding Liënam. We really fit together.*

Samir sought support from the control room to change the camera angle or anything that he might regain some form of control over the show. But everyone in the control room was choking with laughter and was not helpful at all. Lisa continued to lead the program until Samir finally in the last few minutes went out to the floor. He used to always finish the program with some sort of wisdom. So he stood up and walked over to a camera.

– *So think of what you have seen in this show, that the first impression isn't always the correct one. The one that seems week may in fact be stronger than yourself while the hardest thug may be a soft inside. Thank you for today, and take care of yourselves!*

The final signature was played and the control room explained that they were out of the transmission. Samir rushed furiously into the control room and complained while Lisa and the others left the studio in cheerful conversation.

– *This episode was a disaster! What shall we do?*

– *I thought it was one of the best episode ever*, Tresco said. *When Lisa sat down onto the table and took over the whole show was priceless. Just great.*

– *But how does it make me look as the host? She made a fool out of me totally. I don't know if I can do any more shows after this.*

– *What are you talking about? Your final line was right on target. It made it look like everything was planned. Just take it easy, it will be different next time.*

Lisa chatted happily with both Liënam and Vislim outside the studio. He felt that he now could really go ahead and intensify his relationship with Vislim

without having to feel guilty for Lisa's sake. Then, when Lisa took on a leather suit and motorcycle helmet, sat up behind Brago on the motorcycle who span down the street, he realised that Lisa was never meant for him. She was just too tough.

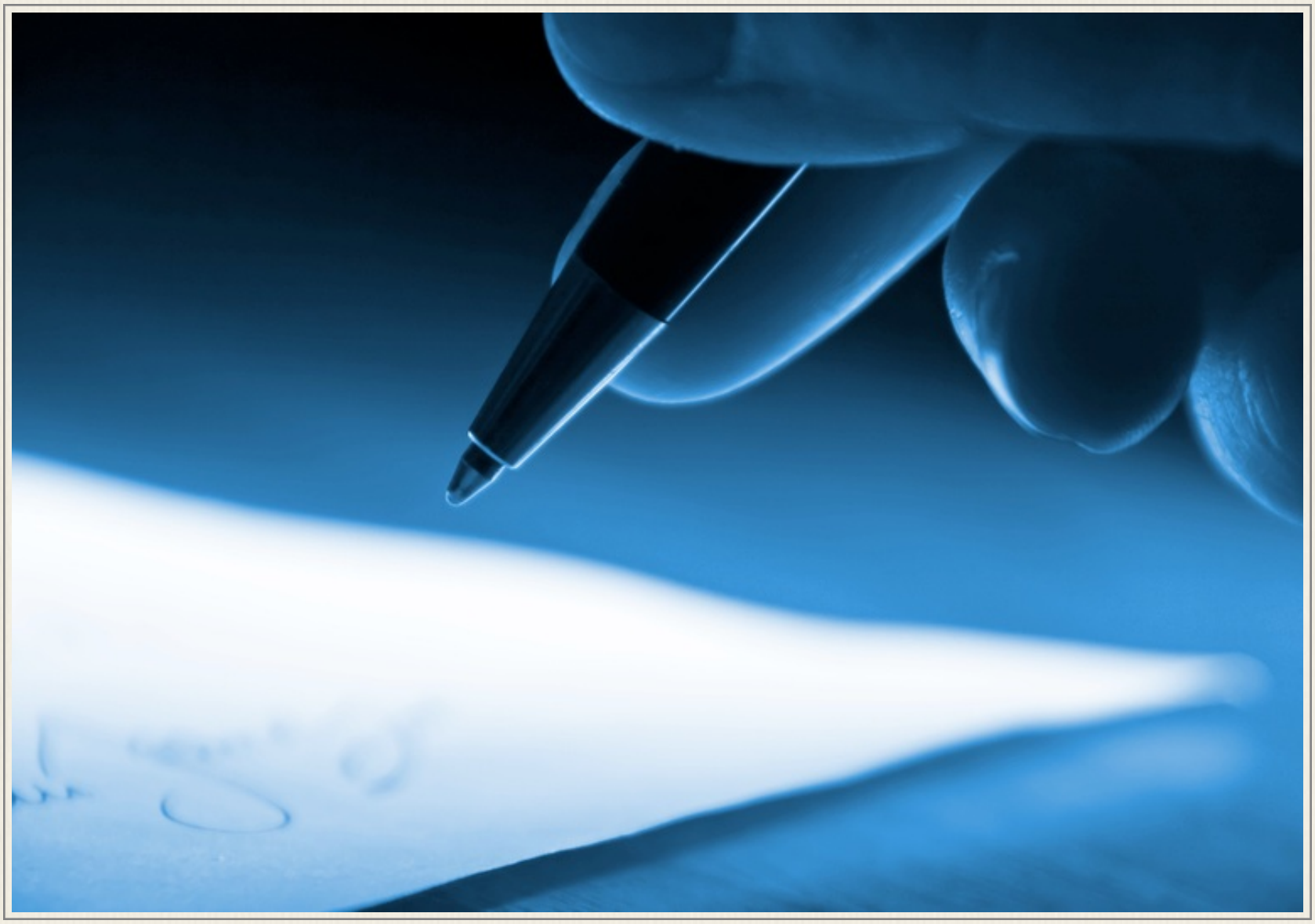
On an island in the sea Riëvan turned off his TV. This was the second time he had seen Lisa on TV.

"Maybe I should call her", he thought.



CHAPTER 9

# The Contract



Life began to feel more and more difficult for Lisa. It was still pretty much uphill. After the gala and talk show her whole advance on her salary was gone, and she had even borrowed some money of Anrendo even though she promised herself to never be dependent on anyone anymore. The cleaning job at the hotel would give some money eventually, but hardly enough to make a comfortable life. In addition, she hated the hotel cleaning service, for some guests were so filthy that it was disgusting to have to clean up after them. Food scraps, spilled coffee, not to mention

how the toilet might look sometimes. She was also treated as inferior by Kalengo and the other staff. And although Brago was a breath of fresh air in her life, she definitely didn't feel like become too deeply pulled down into a relationship so soon. Sure, she had plans for a music career, but to do that she needed to have an initial capital. To ask Treïstán for help was unthinkable, she felt. She was getting more and more depressed and started thinking about to permanently move to the forest where she and Brago had enjoyed the picnic. But she still hesitated as the forests here on Knimbo was not large enough to be able to hide in and there was not enough food to survive in them either.

She was sitting at "her" forest stream and brooded over her misery. Not even the singing birds could cheer her up. Suddenly the phone rang. She jumped, because it was certainly not often that someone called. She guessed that it was Brago who wanted to hang out a bit, but she was not really in the mood for it right now so she answered a little peevishly.

– *Hey, Lisa here.*

– *Hi, this is director Riëvan Crijano, I hope that you remember me.*

– *Of course I remember you. We were talking on the phone at the gala.*

– *That is correct. Well, I guess you know that I own a arena on Grimja where I let various artists perform every Saturday. It's often a large crowd there, at least 20, 000. I want you to perform there on the 23rd, that's in little more than a month. A assume that you want it?*

Lisa's heart almost stopped and span up to turbo speed. Now it happened what she didn't even dared to hope for!

– *It would be an honour to perform at your famous arena, so of course I accept it with pleasure.*

– *Good, good. However, I want it to be especially clear that you don't under no circumstances are allowed perform Añeđliká's songs, as you began at the gala. You must play your own songs, and nothing else. Is that clear?*

Lisa began to understand why Añeđliká disliked Riëvan. He was rather pompous and self-righteous. But Lisa realised she could not afford to offend him, she didn't have the same capital that Añeđliká had.

– *Of course, sir. I will only sing songs I have written myself and with my own style, if that's what you want. I have only two problems I have to solve.*

– *There would not be any problems, you can just come here and play and sing. It's all here, arena, stage, lighting, sound and all the technology you could wish for.*

– *First I must get hold of musicians who can play with me. I can't guarantee that they are available that day. I find it hard to believe that they decline, but if the worst happens it may be possible to change the date?*

– *I don't think there's an artist in all Knimbo will not reschedule everything they have planned to perform at Grimja's arena. But surely it would be possible to find another day at worst.*

– *The second problem is a bit more difficult. You said that you guarantee 20,000 in the audience. Is it a financial guarantee as well? What if I come there and it's only a few hundred people in the audience and I don't earn a penny?*

– *There will be enough people, but I can of course never give any guarantees, I don't control the future. What are you getting at?*

– *Well, last time I counted the money in my purse so it was a total of two bucks. Since I have already borrowed money then my next tiny salary will disappear instantly. I don't even have money for the ticket to Grimja, much less to buy instruments, costumes and such. And if I could find somewhere to borrow money from, and then I comes back from Grimja without having earned a penny then my life will in practice be over. I will be indebted to the max and with no ability to repay the loans. I guess everyone that normally perform at your arena already have money in the bank, so it's not a big deal if an event fails, but for me it would be a disaster.*

– *Alright, now I understand your problem, and you are right that no one else I asked to perform had the same situation. Let me offer you this. I guarantee that you will get at*

*least 5,000 paying visitors and thus I guarantee you one million gross even if it will come less people, or if it's canceled for some unforeseen reason. But you must be on place in good time, ready to perform and you must implement an approved show, otherwise you get nothing. You can also get 10% in advance so you can purchase what you need. Would that be sufficient?*

*– That sounds great, thank you so much. I suppose you want me to sign a contract, and that this condition will be in the contract?*

*– Of course. What email address do you have so I can send the contract?*

*– I can't afford a computer, so I have don't have any email address. You can send it to Hotel Soranjo in Soranjo and I will get it.*

*– Then we're agreed? I send the contract through normal mail, you sign and return the paper and when I receive it, I pay the advance to your bank account. You have a bank account, I hope?*

*– No, but I can fix that.*

*– You takes care of musicians, instruments, and we takes care of the rest. You just need to ensure that you are here. Then see you in the arena on the 23rd.*

Lisa let out a big sigh of relief. One million! That much she had never seen before. Life would start smiling at her now! She called the musicians that she played with at the gala, and of course they was happy to assist. When she asked how much they want to be paid, then Mionk said that they would do it for 200 000 since it was on Grimja.

When she got the contract she called to Treïstán and said she needed help. He was sitting in a meeting and could not talk but promised to come to Soranjo the same evening. He was really worried again for her, for she had never asked for help before. There must be something serious that had happened! He just hoped that he could reach her in time before she did something desperate!

They met at the café and Lisa looked very worried. Now I Treïstán got really worried that something serious had happened.

– *Actually, I'm very glad you called me and asked for help. Is that something serious that has happened? What is it you need my help for?*

– *I received this paper that I'm expected to sign. It's written with such strange words that I only understand half of it. What I'm wondering is if I should sign or not. What's the worst thing that can happen if everything goes wrong and I have sent the paper?*

Treïstán took the paper and began to read. When he got a bit so he raised his eyebrows and looked at Lisa. This was incredible! He read to the end, and put the paper down.

– *Why do you look so worried? This is of course great news, you will perform at Grimja! Could it be better?*

– *That part doesn't bother me, of course. What I'm wondering is what happens if I buy a lot of instruments on credit, then buy airplane ticket and hotels on Grimja, get there and the concert is canceled due to insufficient ticket sales, or hurricane or so. I will still have to pay 200 000 to the musicians, although there will be no concert. I'm going to be poor for the rest of my life! So, if I sign it and everything goes to hell, then what?*

– *Let me first make a calculation of your expenses.*

He took out his miniature computer that he always had with him, and began to enter numbers.

– *Let's see, the musicians wanted 200 000, right? Not more? Sounds like a friend's price. You need instruments, clothing, makeup, plane ticket, hotel, food.*

He put everything into the computer, a little on the high side to be safe. Then he read carefully the economic conditions of the contract. He analysed and pondered. This was what he was expert in, he worked with this kind of things every day. Lisa had really come to the right person.

– *So here's the situation*, he said at last. *You must ensure that you and the musicians are at the arena at lunchtime on the 23rd, and be sure to stay there until the show is supposed to start. Then unless Riëvan say that it's cancelled you have to go onto the stage to sing and play. That will be no more difficult than at the gala, you just*

*have to do it for at least an hour and a half. You also need to get the musicians to accept payment in arrears, that is when you receive payment from Riëvan. If you succeed in all that you have, in the worst case, around a quarter million net.*

– *You mean that I will earn a quarter of a million?*

– *In the worst case. More likely, you will receive four million, or if you manage to fill the arena at least seven million. And that's after all your expenses are paid already. If I were you, I would sign it! That's my advice as a businessman. Just make sure to practice an entire show, and don't become sick.*

– *Sick? What happens then?*

– *No, wait, by the way, there is a clause if you become ill, you will need to do the concert for another time. You just need a doctor's certificate that you can't stand on a stage. Everything seems pretty safe. You will even get 100 000 in advance.*

Lisa sighed deeply with relief. She thanked Treïstán effusive as if it was he who wrote the contract. She signed it and put in into a mail box.

~ ~ ~

Lisa made a phone call to Mionk who was the leader of the band that played with Añeđliká and also played with her at the gala and asked if they could come to Soranjo next day and discuss the concert. Actually Mionk wanted her to come to Knimbville instead, but she explained that she could not afford it yet. So then he and the other band members came the following day and they met at the café, which almost began to feel as her own office. Lisa handed over a handwritten contract and asked them to read it and sign it. Treïstán had helped her with the wording before he went home. Mionk looked at the line with the payment.

– *Why it's says here that we will get 400,000? I thought we agreed on half of that amount on the phone before.*

– *You are so talented, so I want you to get paid what you're worth. But you've probably also seen the next sentence, the fee will be cut into half if fewer paying visitors than 10,000 comes? It's to protect me so I don't get a shortage.*

*– Doesn't Riëvan boast about that it's never less than 20 000 paying spectators every time?*

*– Yes, but he isn't prepared to promise anything. How long do you need to practice before you can play the music? I'm planning to have about 30 songs.*

*– With complete musical notes we can probably get it working pretty quickly.*

*– I have no notes, but can sing the songs for you. Some of them I have already written back on Earth so I just need to translate them, but most I have to write first.*

*– What! Don't you have the songs ready yet? And it's only four weeks away! Have you completely lost it?*

*– I have all the songs in my head, just need to get them out. Within a few days I get a cash advance, then I can buy instruments and laptop so I can get you all the material that you will need.*

*– May I instead suggest that you move to a hotel in Knimbville next week, so we can write down the notes together and help you to arrange the songs at the same time? Then we train them for ourselves for a couple of weeks and then you comes back and we trains together the last week before we go over to Grimja. What about that?*

So it became. Once Lisa got her advance from Riëvan then she moved to a cheap hotel in Knimbville and began the work to put everything together for the show. Kalengo had reluctantly given her time off from the hotel. It was a lot of work and many long days, but she thought the songs came out really good. She took the opportunity to buy everything she needed for the show when she was in Knimbville, because it was much more shops there. She even took the courage to visit Liënam once. It turned out that Vislim already moved in with him more or less, and she seemed to enjoy being forced to stay within the four walls of the apartment while Liënam worked.

After four weeks Lisa felt pumped up enough to make her first real show ever. Sure, she had performed on her own before, but only in small clubs with at best a few hundred in the audience. This would be something completely different!

Now Knimbo would really get to find out what she's made of! That is, unless she totally flipped out on stage when it became serious.



CHAPTER 10

# Grimja



Juno Fring went into Draëk's office with an envelope in her hand.

– *This letter came to you a few days ago while you were on a business trip,* she said. *There are two tickets to a concert at Grimja.*

– *That's strange. Do you happen to know who will perform?*

– *The artist calls herself "Lisa" for short. Yes, that's right, it's "our" Lisa. I looked at her trailer ad online and it's definitely her. But you know what, she is completely naked in the video! I have never seen such a thing before!*

Draëk didn't believe her, so he clicked himself into the site to watch the video. It started in a rather dark forest with a small lake. A speaker voice talked about mysterious beings who lived in the forests on the planet Earth. Then Lisa came walking up from the lake like magic to an evocative, exotic music that still rocked quite heavy. It was true that she was completely naked, or at least so it seemed. Her long, light blue hair was draped around strategic parts of her body. Draëk didn't recognise what kind of instruments that were played, but decided on the spot to go and watch the concert with his wife.

~ ~ ~

It turned out that the tickets that Draëk had gotten was VIP tickets to a small booth that held ten seats on a balcony on the second floor. When he came into the boot, he noticed that Liënam and Vislim was already sitting there. He greeted them shortly but quite friendly anyway. They had also got tickets sent home to them, same as the third couple that sat in the booth. After a while also Treïstán came inside with a female acquaintance. He recognised the third couple as being Anrendo and Adale from the café i Soranjo and he greeted them heartfelt. It started to get quite obvious who had sent the tickets.

Lisa was about to put on makeup and do her hair when Riëvan found her.

– *I would like to discuss my presentation of you when you enter the stage and get a list of the musicians' names so I can read them*, he said.

Lisa stared at him and said in a firm voice.

– *I don't enter stages, I make an entrance.*

Riëvan shuddered and began to rove with his eyes. That sounded all too familiar to him!

– *I'm just kidding. Did you get Añeđliká-chills now?* Lisa smiled.

– *What do you mean? Oh, oh well, yes, maybe. She was pretty annoying.*

– *I can believe that. She's a Rebel. But don't worry, I will not be a pain in your ass like her. But I would love to present my musicians myself. I'm full of admiration for them and would like to get it in my presentation of them.*

– *That's acceptable, it's you who is the artist for the evening, as long as you present them at the beginning of the concert and not towards the end. But what do you mean that you make an entrance?*

– *I've been training several times together with your lighting technicians and got it the way I want it. I will come in from the middle moving forward. So if you just go to the side immediately after your presentation it will work just fine.*

Riëvan was confused how Lisa could come in from the middle, but still felt satisfied and went away. It seemed that Lisa was not at all like Añeđliká. He went and talked to the opening act too. Meanwhile, Lisa was working hard to get everything ready just as she wanted it. Brago was also behind the stage and helped with the final details.

– *Don't you want to go to your place, you'll see the show much better from there. You can come backstage afterwards with the others.*

– *You are probably right*, he replied. *Good luck then, baby*.

He gave her a kiss and went into the balcony booth where Lisa had placed all her guests. Draëk, Treïstán and the other was a little worried when they saw him with his studded jacket, untamed hair and broken nose. But he just smiled, nodded at them and sat down at his place.

~ ~ ~

Exactly at 8 pm the opening act left the stage and Riëvan came back to present Lisa.

– *Ladies and gentlemen. Today's main attraction is something quite out of the ordinary. She comes from a place far, far away. Yes, all the way from the deep forests on planet Earth. Now, maybe someone believes that it's Angelica who is back, but not all. I must*

*admit that I don't particularly like Angelica's music, but the music we will hear tonight I think is exceptionally good, in every possible way. It sounds not at all rumbustious, but very enjoyable, the lyrics are amazing and the instruments they use are a delicious mix of ancient, classical knimbonian instruments and modern, hard rock instruments. The singer who is behind all this also has a voice that is absolutely incredible. This will be a really good concert!*

Lisa had sneaked into the stage already, by going behind some black drapes that she herself had hung at the back of the stage. Now she waited behind it in the middle of the stage. She felt almost embarrassed by Riëvan's flattering words. Her legs was shaking with nervousness. This amount of people she had never played in front of before, not even with Añeđliká, and never even close to this when she was the main act. But now there was no turning back. It was time!

– *Ladies and gentlemen, here she is, this mysterious creature from another world to seduce you all. LISA!*

He went to the side and noticed a smoke machine had created a carpet of smoke. Lisa stepped forward from the curtain and a light shone on her from behind so that the only thing that was not dark on her was her bright blue hair. She slided across the stage as if she moved out of pure magic with a blue glow around her whole body from her long hair. She sang a capella some sort of siren call that mysterious beings allegedly was using to attract children. Her vocal range was really impressed and the crowd was almost as if hypnotised. When she slid up to the edge of the stage, then Krenvla walked in from one side played something like a key fiddle while Surpenja came in from the other side played a kind of flute. The first song was also about mystical beings from the dark woods. Right after the song they just slid over into the next, but now Lisa fell in with a sort of electronic miniature drums that she bought and Linkrola and Mionk also fell in after a while with keyboards and drums. It was an incredibly powerful sound mat with both old and new instruments and Lisa's singing. The second song ended in a mighty crescendo that left the audience breathless and then cheering and clapping hands.

– *Thank you, hello to you all. It's wonderful to be here. Lisa is my name, the forest is my habitat. And behind me is Knimbo's most talented musicians. It's an honour to stand*

*here in front of them! Mionk plays the drums that he built himself! Benga has built a classic bass guitar of Earth model! Svedjaneko got a Jew's harp from Earth and choirs too! Linkrola plays an ultra-modern knimbonian keyboard! Surpenja is blowing into an old, classic knimbonian bingral flute! Finally Krenvla plays on ... well, what is that really?*

– *There is a asokenjivna, Krenvla replied.*

– *... a replica of a centuries-old Asok-something. Hit it, Krenvla!*

Krenvla started playing and the rest joined in. Also Lisa rocked the roof off with her drums, that resembled bongos, though electronic. The light pulsed in phase her drums, and the whole arena started to swing. Riëvan became more and more convinced that Lisa never would be able to finish the whole show as she both drummed, danced and sang with an intensity that penetrated every corner of the room. The audience followed her dance moves and the cheers between songs was earsplitting. Lisa had planned to do a lot of chatter between the songs, but she gave up. She forgot all that she had planned to talk about and couldn't make herself heard anyhow, so instead she kept on rocking almost without any pause. She got lost several times, but managed to save the situation. The music was not like nothing else, it was not hard rock like Añeđliká played, but also not the electronic music that was played on Knimbo nor classical knimbonian music but a kind of magical mix of everything.

When Lisa had played for almost two hours she just said "Thank you" and left the stage. But the crowd went wild and screamed until she came back. This time she came with Krenvla's homemade electric guitar hanging low on her hip. She scooped out one of Añeđliká's most famous songs, but but a more melodic style. The crowd recognised the song and roared so Riëvan thought the roof would lift. Lisa kept playing the electric guitar for a few more songs before she finally thanked for herself again.

But it still was not enough for the audience, so she was forced to go in once again. This time she tried to get the crowd to calm down by singing some soft love ballads with just guitar and flute. Finally she asked the whole group back on stage again and they all bowed down to the audience together.

The audience finally left the arena with a loud murmur while Treïstán, Draëk and the others made their way backstage to congratulate Lisa. Also Brago accompanied them to Draëk's great fear. He wondered who this thug was, and why he kept following them. Lisa herself was completely exhausted from the show. She hadn't imagined that it would be so hard. She had just sung a little. Well, and drummed and danced too, of course. "I have to start training before next time" she thought as she gave Brago a kiss on the mouth to the other guests' amazement.

Then she introduced everyone to each other and asked if they wanted to go to a restaurant the next day together with all the musicians. She was going to treat them, and of course all thanked for the invitation. Lisa was amused to see how they tried to get along for her sake. The supreme commander of the planet and the richest man in Knimbville along with a motorcycle biker and a couple of cafe owners.

Riëvan came up to the crowd and congratulated Lisa too for well executed concert. It had become been even better than he had thought.

*– The only left for me is to pay out your remuneration. Should I use the same bank account that you received the advance on?*

*– There will be excellent. By the way, how many was it in the audience?*

*– Well, it was not completely sold, but almost. That was well over 32,000 today. Your advertising video was really strong, even if it was on the edge of what I wanted to allow. I suspect there were some who thought it would be a different kind of show than just music.*

*– Well you know that sex always sells*, Lisa laughed. *But it isn't what you reveals that make it interesting, but what you hides.*

*– However, I'm a little angry at you*, Riëvan said but with a little smile. *You promised not to play Angelica's songs, but you did it anyway. Though they sounded much better in your version.*

– *I always keeps my promises. That was actually my own songs that I wrote for her. There are not many people know that I actually have written a lot of her songs. But the knimbonian texts are actually hers.*

Lisa took Brago's arm and left the arena with her mismatched friends. Now she felt that nothing could stop her anymore.



CHAPTER 11

# A New Home



A week later, Lisa checked her bank account. Although she knew it would be a lot of money, but it was still a bit of a shock that she now had over six million. The first thing she did with her money was to buy a car and get a driver's license. The car looked like a pretty big pickup, but here on Knimbo cars had no stinky exhaust. They used fuel cells just let out clean water. And the cars drove almost by themselves, so the driver's license was easy to get. She and Brago went on many excursions in her new car. Although a car was not as tough for him as his motor-

cycle, Lisa's car was still pretty big, tough and strong so it was good enough for him. He just thought it looked a little funny out with such a small woman driving such a large car.

One day she was driving alone on the countryside when she saw a sign on a dirt road with the text "For Sale" written by hand. Out of curiosity, she swung in and came to a small farmhouse. It was just a rather large main building and then a combined house and tool shed plus a large barn. The couple who owned the farm looked old and frangible. But when Lisa showed her interest in buying the farm then the old man woke to life. With surprisingly young steps he showed her around.

– *But what does sech a beautiful woomin like you want wif a farm like this?* he asked in a leisurely, creaky voice.

– *I'm planning to live here*, she replied. *Cities are too noisy. Maybe I get some riding horses and some small animals too. But I probably will not grow any crops except maybe something to feed the animals with. Are there much land included?*

– *Wal, it's not particularly trimenjus, it's too small t'be profitable.*

The old woman pushed him in his side and made a face.

– *What, one sh'd be honest, don't yo' think?*

– *Take it easy, I 'm not planning to be a farmer, anyhow. I'm a music artist and guess I earns enough money on that. My only problem is that I have to be out of town quite a lot, and that's not possible if I have animals on the farm.*

– *Yo' kin ax Gnarly over there. He takes care of mah animal fo' me when I not cope.*

So Lisa went and talked to "Gnarly" and he said he properly could help with the animals at times. He asked if she was going to use all arable land, for it was a part that bordered to his that he has been interested in for many years. But the state didn't agree that he bought it, because that would make the farm too small, and he could not afford to buy the whole farm. Lisa said that if he just took care

of the animals she got then he could grow anything at all fields except two smaller parts that she was going to use herself.

He thought it was an excellent suggestion. He talked a lot about the farm and the farming couple. Their children had moved to Knimbville and didn't want to take over after them. But he asked Lisa to not bargain on the price of the farm, the couple would need money for the rest of their lives. He went on talking about all the benefits of living in the country, especially here. It was obvious that "Gnarly" was as talkative as the peasant couple were tight-lipped.

Before Lisa knew it, she had bought the farm for two million from the farmers and the couple was very happy to be able to move into a retirement home in the village now that they had enough money. The farmer was just a little concerned that Lisa would destroy the farm. Lisa promised that although she would modernise it, she would still let it be just as small and cozy as it was, because she loved it as it was.

She gave the couple ample time to move out, and while she was waiting for it she contacted several record labels. The reputation from her concert at Grimja had spread so she played them off against each other and got a really good contract for one album with an option for two more. It didn't take long time to record the first with the help of her musicians from Grimja, and then she began to plan for a tour before the album release. The record company helped her to book arenas while she booked the band. It turned out that she has become more famous than she thought, because there was almost no gig that had fewer than 10,000 in the audience. Lisa became more and more confident, and towards the end of the tour she was safe as a rock, and seemed to have no stage fright at all, but joked with the audience all the time. All concerts were over two hours long and she held about the same show and the same entrance as on Grimja.

When she finally came back from the tour the peasant couple had moved out from the farm, and she began to renovate it. The album quickly sold half a million copies and she was played daily in many radio stations. Suddenly, she had more money than she had ever seen before, so money was not a issue during the renova-

tion. She let the outside look like before, while the inside was state of the art, easy to clean and high-tech.

When she finally was satisfied with the farm she asked Brago if he wanted to go and look at something. She hadn't told him anything about the farm as she wanted it to be a surprise. Their relationship had become deeper and deeper, and Lisa thought that maybe he was the man in her life. He was big and strong, yet tender in some funny way. Moreover, he accepted unconditionally that she was an independent individual, and in many ways was even stronger than he was.

Lisa turned onto the gravel road and Brago looked amused at her. Had she found some new lake to swim in? He was surprised when they arrived at the farm and Lisa stopped in front of the house.

– *What are we doing here, do you know the people who live here?* he asked.

– *Yep, and so do you.*

She picked up a couple of keys from her pocket, unlocked the door and went inside. Brago went in and was amazed over that the so visibly old house were so modern indoors.

– *What do you think?* she asked.

– *It's beautiful, but you haven't said why we are here.*

– *This is where I live now. Isn't it cool?*

She showed him around the house and he was impressed by what he saw. Then she took out some drinks and snacks and sat they sat at the table.

– *Well?*

– *Incredible! I love it! So rustic yet modern.*

– *So you could imagine living here?*

– *Without a shadow of a doubt*, he replied.

She watched him a little bit inquiring and smiled a roguish smile.

– *So what do you say if we would take our relationship to the next level? Don't you want to move in with me? We don't have to get married yet, unless you want it.*

– *It came so suddenly, I have to think about it. OK, now I've been thinking and the answer is Yes!*

He took her in his arms and kissed her. He pictured himself using his muscles working on the farm while Lisa sang and earned the money. It was not particularly traditional knimbonian, no not at all traditional, but it suited him fine. He had always been an odd character anyway.

– *Have you ever ridden?* Lisa suddenly. asked

– *Do you mean on a horse? No, never. Don't tell me ...*

– *Come on*, she said.

She took him out to the stable, which also had become revamped and modernised. Inside were two horses munching hay. He almost became scared when she saddled both horses and took them out on the yard. Then she swung herself up on one of them and looked challenging at him. Well, it can't be harder than riding a motorcycle he thought and sat up. Then they rode around the surroundings for several hours. Lisa seemed to be so comfortable in the saddle, so Brago endured it, although he was both uncomfortable and a little scared. When they returned to the farm Lisa showed him how to dry off, groom and scrape the hoofs and Brago helped as best as he was able.

– *This was an odd experience, my whole body aches*, he said. *But it was also very fun. I can easily get used to live on this farm. Make small repairs on the house, fix the machines, take care of the animals, dig in the soil and all that. Considerably more meaningful than biking around on the motorcycle picking fights.*

– *You would not feel depressed by the fact that I'm earning all the money? I don't think we can live on the farm, it's too small for that.*

*– You know where I work, I drudge at a mechanic garage. How much fun is that? Here I can continue fiddle about with my bike or the tractor and all the other machines here. But I will not sell my bike!*

*– There is plenty of space for that here. So you don't mind being a kind of a farmer then?*

*– Nope. And even if we can't live off the farm, so it will still provide some revenue, and I'm a part of if. So, no. I'm over thirty now, it's time to settle down. And I can't think of any better way than to do it with you, here on the farm. You know that I also like country life, I have never lived in a big city anyway.*

The next day Brago and Lisa went home to Brago's apartment in Soranjo. None of them felt well there really, because most people had the practice to stare at them without saying anything. He loaded up all his things in Lisa's pickup, took his motorcycle and drove with her to the farm and moved in. She hadn't anything against that they shared the bedroom, so that night she fell asleep on his strong shoulders.

Imagine what a difference from just a few months ago! She had struggled all her life, but now suddenly she had everything!

✯ ✯ ✯

# Lisa

## EMIGRATES TO ANOTHER PLANET

# Part II

*It's no place like another place*



by *Ola Montán*

CHAPTER 12

# Homesick



Añeďliká lived in a luxury duplex apartment in Jacksonville, United States with her husband Chris and their daughter Nina. She had just heard that a spaceship from her home planet Knimbo had landed again. She hoped that there would be any letter from her father, Treïstán, again. The last time a spacecraft had landed one year ago, she got very sad news about her best friend Lisa. It was obvious that the relationship with Liënam has crashed and Lisa was depressed and lived alone in a forest, without any money and without any hope. Maybe it had become better

for her now? Or had she not made it? Añeďliká know that herself would have died out in the woods if she had tried to live there. The thought was terrifying.

– I really hope that the commander of the ship has a video message from my father this time, she told Chris. I'm worried sick about what had happened to Lisa.

– Have not you heard from them yet? The crew of a spaceship know they have to contact the UN when they land, and you are the United Nation's Official Spokesperson of Interplanetary Questions, so they should call you.

– The commander has rung but she said nothing about any letter. I will meet them tomorrow in the UN building in New York. I really hope there's something for me.

Suddenly they heard a noise from the elevator that stopped. The elevator went straight into her apartment, but there was a concierge at the entrance that must have let the guest in without asking her. How could he do that, he had never done it before? Añeďliká and Chris hurried to the elevator. Imagine their surprise when a tough guy with riveted leather jacket and unkempt hair stepped out of the elevator. He looked really dangerous. Then they saw the woman who was just behind him.

– Lisa, Añeďliká screamed. Is it really you?

– No it isn't, it's my blue-haired look-alike from Knimbo.

Añeďliká hugged Lisa long and hard. Then she also greeted Brago, which Lisa introduced as her boyfriend.

– *Nice to meet you*, Añeďliká said in knimbonian.

– *The same for me*, he replied in the same language. *I'm sorry I have not been able to learn English, but I'm lousy at languages.*

– *It doesn't matter*, Chris said in knimbonian. *In this family, we are all bilingual.*

– *You look great, Lisa. How do you really feel? I was told by my father that you had it pretty miserable and lived out in the woods.*

Añeďliká shuddered when she remembered how it was when she tried to live in the forest when she just come to Earth for the first time. It was hardly she had survived.

– *It was wonderful to live in the forest for a while. You know that I'm a child of nature. It was mostly my hair that became mad at me and forced me into the village. I kind of lives in Soranjo now, if you know where that is.*

Añeďliká realised that Lisa didn't want to talk about her life on Knimbo. At least not yet. They had known each other for over ten years, so she knew she had to wait Lisa out, otherwise she would just clam up totally. Instead, it was Brago who got to tell a little about himself. Chris was not very good at knimbonian, but still managed to keep up quite well in the conversation. They soon realised that Brago was not as tough as he looked. Añeďliká asked if they had somewhere to stay, and Lisa said they planned to stay in some hotel, so it was no problem. Añeďliká was thinking about how Lisa got hold of enough money to stay in hotels, but knew better than to question her. So after talking for several hours, Lisa and Brago left to check in to a nearby hotel.

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The meeting room in the UN building felt too familiar for Añeďliká. She had had too many long, boring meetings there. The commander of the spaceship that had landed the day before was named Vanya Grvano, the only female commander in Knimbo's space fleet. Añeďliká had met her earlier when she followed with her space expedition back to Knimbo for a visit. Vanya was really sociable, not nearly as stiff as most crew members.

– You probably know already that your friend Lisa joined us here?

Vanya was proud that she spoke such good English, so she took every opportunity to practice it.

– Of course I do, I've already met her.

– Did she mention that she managed to collect over 20 million at your father's charity gala?

– No, I have not heard that, are you serious?

– What did you just say, one of the other participants said. How could she raise so much money?

– She sang a few songs, then she held such an incredible speech that she basically got everyone who looked at the gala to donate. The total amount ended at over thirty million.

– I'm sitting in the committee for the charity gala next Saturday. Do you think she wants to come there?

– You'll have to ask her, Añeđliká cut in. She lives at Cranbury Inn and Suites in Jacksonville. Call the hotel and ask for Elizabeth Green.

Meanwhile Lisa and Brago socialised with Chris and his daughter Nina. Chris asked why they actually come to Earth both of them. He talked knimbonian to Brago would understand too.

– *I wanted to meet you and Añeđliká again, and Nina course. But above all, I want to make up with my demons*, Lisa replied.

– *What do you mean by demons?*

– *I have so many bad memories from Earth, and so much suffering, so I felt I needed to come back here again to get some good experiences here too. Above all, I felt that I must talk out with Añeđliká. I just need to gather some courage to do it first. Brago didn't really want to go here, but he followed anyway.*

– *Well, I like it on Knimbo and isn't keen on changes. But Lisa had already decided herself, and I'm so in love with her that I didn't want to be without her for such a long time. Then it's, after all, interesting to see her home planet.*

– *Draëk almost flipped out when I just walked into his office and announced that I wanted to go home to Earth.*

Lisa smiled at the memory of that conversation.

– *He always wanted me to go back here so I could get a better life, but I have always refused to even talk about it, or even to meet him. Then suddenly, I want to get here. Oh, my God what he glared at me. I then stated that I intend to return to Knimbo again. Then his happy smile disappeared in a flash.*

– *Didn't he protest about it then*, Chris asked.

– *Well, he can't force me to stay on Earth. And he had listened to me on the radio almost every day on his way to work, so he knew that I now can take care of myself.*

– *On the radio?*

– *Yes, the hits from my latest album.*

Chris looked at Lisa. Apparently it was much as she hadn't said about her new life. She was like a clam, but Chris also hoped that she would open up soon. Lisa suggested that they should go to the Jacksonville Zoo, but Chris would rather go to a football game with Brago. So Lisa instead went with Nina to the zoo and they had a really nice day together. It was just this kind of good memories that Lisa wanted to get on Earth, to wipe out all the awful things that happened to her before.

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In the evening, the phone rang in the hotel room. It was Tom who Vanya and Añeďliká had met earlier that day.

– Good evening, my name is Tom. Is it Miss Green that I'm talking to?

– It's me, but for God's sake, call me Lisa as everyone else does.

– Of course, Miss Lisa. Well, I'm in charge of a charity event which takes place annually, and next occasion is on Saturday next week. First I would like to ask if it's true that you alone managed to raise over 20 million at a gala on Knimbo.

– Well, it's hard to say for sure. Before I went up on stage about six million had been collected and when I walked off, it was just over thirty. But it's not possible to say that it was because of me.

– That's what I would call qualified bullshit. Contributions will not come in like that. It must be mostly thanks to you. So now I wonder if you would like to participate in this coming gala, if you get $100,000?

Lisa gasped. What was it that happened on the first day here on Earth? "Añeđliká" she thought. Then she thought of it for a few seconds.

– The answer is absolutely not. I will not perform on your gala under those conditions!

– Why not, it's for a good cause? This year's theme is homeless, mostly alcoholics and drug addicts. Isn't it worth supporting?

– Of course it's worth supporting, but not for 100,000. I'm not coming unless I'm doing it for free, that's it. Then I want to be the last artist of the night, if that's OK with you.

– Oh, ah alright. Thanks so very much for accepting. But we always wants to have Angelica as the last performer, she is our great poster name, but maybe you can discuss the details with her. I can give you her phone number if you want.

– It's okay, I think I get a hold of her.

– Are you sure, she has an unlisted number? Sure, let me know if there is a problem. We will contact you early next week to discuss the details. Thanks and bye for now.

~ ~ ~

Lisa brought it up with Añeđliká the next day.

– Is it you who suggested that I should perform at "your" gala next week, she asked accusingly.

– No, I promise, I'm innocent. It was Vanya who babbled in the UN while everyone listened. But I admit that I told him which hotel you stay at. It's almost my duty to do that as the Official Spokesperson. You are, after all, a visitor from another planet.

– Tom said that you must be the last artist, but I can go in before you. What would you say if we do something together?

– Why not? You're supposed to sing first, and you are the one who will speak. But you know almost all of my songs, so why don't we end with one of my songs that we sing together?

– That'll be perfect. I thought that my second song will be my old song "Shall I help you". You usually are the one singing it, but I intend to sing it in my own way.

– Oh my God, are you crazy? Do you really think you can handle it? You know how sensitive you are to that text.

– I know, but I've decided that it's time.

Añeďliká looked at Lisa. This would go to hell! But who was she trying to decide about Lisa? If she could just get her to open up and speak out!

CHAPTER 13

# Gala Together



On the day of the charity gala Añeďliká and Lisa started early with the preparations. Lisa had found two siblings that was musicians playing traditional instruments that had practiced with her to play the two songs. Añeďliká watched her discreetly and was surprised that Lisa didn't seem a least bit nervous. It was she who was nervous about what was to come, and how Lisa would hold up on stage. She had never been at the centre of a performance in front of so many people before as far Añeďliká knew.

– Ladies and gentlemen. This gala is approaching its end. But we have a few artists left to perform. The next person has an extremely fancy hair, has recently came here from a completely different planet.

The crowd began to cheer in the belief that it was Añeđliká's turn.

– Welcome on stage.... LISA!

First on the stage was Jon Anderson playing the Swedish keyed fiddle, closely followed by Sophia Anderson on a transverse flute who also played as she walked. They stopped at the middle of the stage with a distance between each other. Suddenly there was a huge puff of smoke between them and from this Lisa stepped out like magic. She went up to her knimbonian drums and began to mark the beat before she finally began to sing. Almost imperceptibly all members of Añeđliká's band entered the stage behind Lisa and fell in with guitar, drums, bass and keyboards on the second verse. The crowd began to sway to the rhythmic music and the band increased the temperature until the song ended in a crescendo.

– Thank you. Thank you very much. It's so nice to be back on Earth again even if it's only for a few months. My next song is something that I wrote for close to a decade ago but have never sung myself, at least not on stage. It's pretty emotional for me, so I'm not sure I'll make it through the whole song. But I have to at least try it!

She began singing with just flute and her drums. The text was about a girl who has been orphaned, got into bad company, become homeless and then with torn clothes sat in a subway station with a syringe in her hand. Then a woman with green hair past her on the way to the train and it was from that woman's perspective that the song was sung. Everyone in the audience began to sing along, because it was one of Añeđliká's most famous songs, but in her version was the electric guitar, drums and a heavy hard rock sound. But Lisa sang the much more melodic, gentle and almost whispering. She seemed touched by the text, on the verge of tears. When she got to the third verse it all burst it for her and she began to cry as she sang. Tears ran down her cheeks and her voice trembled. The crowd had stopped singing along, moved to silence by Lisa's emotional outburst. In an inter-

lude before the third verse chorus she stopped beating on the drums and tried to wipe her tears off with her sleeve blouse. She cried out to the side:

– Añeďliká come and help me, I can't take it anymore!

To everyone's surprise Añeďliká came onto the stage from the side with the guitar on her hip and began to play and sing the last chorus while she rocked with the guitar in her usual manner. The rest of the band entered now into the song and the it ended with her typical, heavy hard rock sound. For once the audience didn't scream when Añeďliká stopped singing, but was strangely silent when they saw that Lisa hugged her and shook with sobs on her shoulder.

– Give me a minute, Lisa said sobbing.

She made an effort to collect herself, and wiped her face with a handkerchief as Añeďliká pulled up.

– Damn it, that was obviously too emotional for me anyway, Lisa said after a while. If you didn't understand it already, this song about myself when I was sixteen. And the woman who walked past me in the subway was Añeďliká. I was not able to sing it myself back then either, so I asked Añeďliká be my voice. You certainly realise considering that I stand here today that she didn't actually pass me there in the subway, but she stayed and helped me. It's ten years ago, and she has never stopped helping me ever since.

She hugged Añeďliká again and got a oooooh from the audience.

– This is precisely what this gala is all about! When you see a homeless girl with a syringe in her hand in the subway you will probably hurry to pass her and think that it's just a junkie whore who isn't worthy to be helped. But inside that junkie whore is perhaps a Lisa. A girl who silently is screaming for help without getting any. Añeďliká realised that and stopped. But maybe it's not so smart to stay each time, maybe not even to give money that just will be used on alcohol or drugs. But when I had the most difficult as there were NGO's that gave me food and shelter that gave me warmth. This gala supports these organisations, so the money you give this evening will not be used for drugs or alcohol, but to give real help to those who have it real hard.

There were several in the audience who also had tears in their eyes, moved by the intense and personal words. They understood that this was for real, and not just a story!

– You might think that these shelters are funded by the state or by wealthy people. But that's not true. It's you who can give them the big money, and that without even noticing it in your wallet. Let's do an experiment! Pick up the phone and hold it in your hand. It applies to you too at home on the sofa! Put down the beer can and chip bag and get that phone. All of you that are watching this program! Move it!

Everyone in the audience was holding their phones, and the TV cameras played over the forest of phones.

– Now think of a number, a number that is the sum of money you can spare tonight without you bothering about it. For most it may only be just five dollar, and that's perfectly OK. Others may be able to spare ten or more. So dial the phone number on the screen there, type in your number and press square. I you can't get through, try again. Tomorrow the newspapers will for sure be full with news of the crazy women from Knimbo that sank all telephone exchanges in the country! That's it, done. Now we are all watch the monitor.

The figures had become mad, like on Knimbo. Lisa had managed again to quintuple the collection amount. The audience applauded, but was interrupted by Lisa.

– This makes me think of Christmas. Do you remember how excited you gets when you pack up that gift from a friend or loved one, and smile as if you could not buy it yourself the next day? Now imagine sitting on the other side of the couch when you see your loved one unwrap the gift that you so carefully packed. Remember the joy you feel when you see that happy smile! What feels the strongest? To get or to give?

She paused. Everyone realised what she meant.

– I think I can promise that those who are helped by the money from this gala will not be the least bit happy. I always felt embarrassed like a dog when I got free

food and was not at all happy, just grateful that I didn't have to go hungry and cold. But isn't it extremely gratifying to have given something that actually saves another persons life? Isn't that true, Añeđliká?

– Nothing could be more true. That's why I never stopped helping you since I met you in that subway, even though you really didn't want my help. Giving is much more fun than getting, that's what life is all about.

Now, the crowd broke into cheers and applause.

– What do you think. Añeđliká, shall will rock the roof of this house now?!

The crowd shouted in agreement and Lisa took the guitar from Jamie in the band and hit it hard when she and Añeđliká throw out a duet with one of Añeđliká's own songs, and the audience got to see that Lisa could not only sing sentimental but also rock. Añeđliká amazed not only that Lisa could play guitar that well, but also that she scooped out the guitar solos that she had never seen before. She didn't know that Lisa also could be so wild on stage!

The gala ended with the two girls started singing "We are the world." More and more of the gala's other artists came in, sang their own verses and eventually the whole stage full of performers who sang along. Lisa stood in front of the stage and got the audience to sing along too.

It was a worthy conclusion to the charity gala, which came to collect more money than any gala ever done before.

~ ~ ~

– It was absolutely incredible, what you did yesterday, Lisa.

Añeđliká was full of admiration as they sat and talked the next morning. Chris and Brago had gone away together for a match. They'd really found common interests, despite their different backgrounds.

– What do you mean, Añeđliká? she asked. I did just like the same thing as at your father's gala.

– I mean how you completely left out yourself like that, about your past life. You knew you would start crying on stage, and yet you did it!

– It was for a good cause. I meant all that stuff that I said about you too. You saved me for sure, and I have you to thank for that I'm alive today. If you have not stopped me that day I'm fore sure had died of a deliberate overdose before that day was over.

– By the way, I've wondered a lot about why you left Earth and went with Liënam to Knimbo. And don't say that you did it out of love, because I know you. Your boyfriends come and go like others changes clothes.

– I actually followed him to Knimbo to get away from you!

Añeďliká looked at her with a shocked expression.

– What do you mean? I thought I was your best friend?!?

– That you are, and you will always remain. You have helped me ever since the day we met, first and foremost by just being someone that cares. You always called me to ask if we should go out together to the movies, or pick up guys or whatever. It's also because of you that I had food to eat and a roof over my head, you always wanted me on your concerts, and you paid the very high salery to me every time I sang with you.

– I didn't payed you more than the others, I payed all of you what you were worth.

– Maybe, but still, it was what kept me afloat. When you went to Knimbo for a year then everything fell apart. After six months, my money was out, I was evicted and forced to live on the street again. Soon, I was fighting with other homeless people at the trashcans behind restaurants for food scraps. I tried to start a music career, but it just didn't want to lift off. I played in clubs, and it sure was fun but it cost almost more than it gave. The salary to the band, clothes and other things costed me so much that I didn't earn a buck, so I gave up music.

– I didn't think you would get it so hard when I left you for Knimbo. Had I known it, I'd never gone. What about other jobs then? You are so resourceful, really.

– Cleaning dirty hotel room? Sure, how fun is that? Then you came back again, and pulled me up on stage so I got some money again. It was then I realised that I'm completely dependent on you for survival, and I hated myself for that. It was as if I was not worth anything without you, and couldn't take case of me on my own. Can you imagine how it feels to be so dependent on ones best friend? And what would happen the day you put down your guitar for good, what would happen to me then? With our friendship? Then I met Liënam, fell in love and saw a way out of it all.

– Gosh, I didn't have a clue that you felt that way.

– How could you imagine that? What would happen if I told you, what would you do? Help me even more? No thanks!

– So why did it become different on Knimbo then?

– Well, I actually thought of a life with Liënam, and I really tried. I served him, made sure the food was on the table when he came home, kept his apartment tidy, did the laundry, washed the dishes and did everything he wanted. But he wanted a "traditional knimbonian relationship". I guess you understand what is meant by that.

– The word I think of then is "women's slave." Not quite your style, I get it.

– Alright, he was kind and so, and asked for nothing. Bug he was being so overprotective and didn't want me to walk around by myself without him as a bodyguard. When I tried to go shopping for clothes with him, he became bored after three shops. But I was never allowed to walk around downtown on my own. And playing music was completely out of the question, what if I would start making more money than he was!

– What was it that was the straw that made you leave him?

– It was when I dyed my hair blue, he totally flipped out.

– He didn't like your blue hair? I think it suits you.

– That wasn't the problem, he thought I looked so extreme and odd already that it didn't matter that it was blue. He even said that it was pretty neat. But it

was the fact that I dyed it without asking permission, and went out alone without him is what he couldn't accept. So I had a long discussion with him that I wanted a little more freedom while he was at work, but he didn't listen to that ear. So the next day I wrote a long farewell letter to him and pulled out.

– Yes, my father told me that actually. He said that you lived out in the forrest?

– I built a kind of bed in a couple if bushes, was fishing in the lake and kept me away from Draëk, who just wanted to send me home to Earth to escape responsibility for me. A couple that owned a café gave me all the leftover food if I was cleaning the premises after closing time. It was not very good life, but still better than fighting at the garbage cans on Earth. Then your father came and gave me a huge kick in my ass!

– Not literally, I hope, Añeđliká laughed.

– No, of course not. First, he spent a lot of money and time to just find me. He showed that he genuinely cared about what happened to me. There must be something that runs in the family, I guess. At the same time he respected one hundred percent that I didn't want any help. When he asked me to perform at his gala, I of course understood that he asked me mostly because he wanted to help me after all. I declined of course. I felt that I had enough help from the Croëlño family.

– But didn't you appeared at the gala anyway? Vanya told you that you did it.

– Sure, I changed my mind and realised that I could use your father in order to achieve benefits for myself. Oh my God, what he got pissed at me when he found out afterwards. I've never been yelled at so much.

– My father yelled at you? What did you actually do?

– Well you see, I also phoned to Riëvan during the live broadcast, just like you. I wanted him to see and hear me, so that he might ask me to perform at Grimja. It was just that I had been talking to him in advance, and discussed the call with his press officer. Then I just followed the decided dialogue when I called Riëvan from the stage.

– Jesus, what a coup! You gave that swank free advertising! No wonder my father got angry at you. Bug how did it go?

– Well, your father forgave me and I played on Grimja a month and a half later. I made a challenging advertising video and attracted over 32,000 people. Not as much as you did, but more than enough to make me stinking rich. Then I used the money to buy a small farm I could live on and got the record companies fighting each others to sign a contract with me. Then I went out on a tour with my own band, and got invitations to various talk shows on television. And more money than I can spend in a lifetime.

– How nice for you that it went so well!

– So now I can finally sit here and talk to my best friend in the whole universe without feeling uneasy because I use her. Even if my music career crashes tomorrow, so I can manage myself anyway. I can just stay on my farm if I have to, and the money I already have in the bank is sufficient enough for a good, simple life even if I don't earn a dime more in my life.

– But you still will not stop playing music, right?

– It's a blast to be on stage. It was fun to sing with you back in the days, but a thousand times more fun to be in the spotlight myself. As long as I have an audience that likes me then I will continue to play, that's for sure.

– That's exactly how I feel too, Añeďliká nodded.



CHAPTER 14

# Background of Lisa



Añeďliká found it hard to stop thinking about how difficult Lisa had got it here on Earth just because Añeďliká had decided to play music on her home planet, and thus left Lisa alone on Earth for more than a year. That evening she sat and thought back to how it was when she first met Lisa and what happened then.

It was almost exactly ten years ago, and Añeďliká was 23 years old, but already becoming known as a rock star. She had just had her very first concert which was

at Madison Square Garden and she had stayed in New York a few days. One evening on the way to her hotel, she was going to take the subway and there in a corner, she saw a girl sitting on the dirty floor with a full syringe in her hand. The girl looked at her with wide open eyes. She certainly hadn't seen an alien before, so she stared at Añeďliká's green skin, green hair and antennas. This happened before she dyed her hair pink. Añeďliká looked back and wondered why she felt so touched. The girl had extremely long hair, torn clothes and was dirty and had a sort of despair painted all over her face.

Añeďliká passed the girl but then stopped and looked over her shoulder. The girl was still staring at her so Añeďliká turned back and asked how she was feeling. To her despair the girl burst into tears and sobbed so loud that it echoed in the tunnel. Añeďliká sat down beside her without caring about that her expensive dress was destroyed and put her arms around the girl. She hugged back so hard that it almost hurt. When the sobs began to subside Añeďliká took the syringe away from her, broke it and threw it in the trash. Then she took the girl's hand and she followed without a word. She guessed that the girl was hungry, so she went to the restaurant in the hotel where she was staying.

– Are you hungry?

The girl still said nothing, but nodded slightly. Añeďliká ordered food for them both and the girl began to eat as if she had never seen food before.

– What is your name and how old are you, Añeďliká asked.

– Lisa, 16, the girl said while chewing.

It was the first words she had gotten out from her.

– Where are your parents then, Lisa?

Lisa shrugged and pointed to the sky. Añeďliká tried to get her to tell her more, but Lisa was like a clam. She obediently went with Añeďliká's up to her hotel room, and sat on the edge of the bed that Añeďliká showed that she could sleep in. Only then Lisa said her first full sentence.

– Why could not you just let me kill myself in the subway, so that all the terrible things would stop?

Añeđliká looked shocked at her and remembered the times she wanted to kill herself, but didn't. She felt that she had to get Lisa on second thoughts so she sat on the bed and told her a little about her own life, about all the troubles she had when she came to Earth as alien but that everything became okay in the end and that suicide was never a solution . But she found herself talking to deaf ears, because Lisa had already fallen asleep on the bed.

When Añeđliká woke up in the morning she suddenly remembered Lisa, and saw that she was not anymore in bed beside her. She became frighten from what Lisa had said the night before. Then she heard the water run from the toilet room and became even more frightened. Don say that Lisa would drown herself here in her hotel room!? She hurried into the bathroom that Lisa fortunately hadn't locked and found her in the bathtub washing her long hair. Añeđliká sighed with relief.

– I'm allowed to take a bath, right?

– Sure, of course you are. When you are done, we can go down and have breakfast and then we go to my home in Jacksonville. Do you want to follow me there?

Lisa didn't answer but when Añeđliká took the train home to Jacksonville then Lisa went with her and moved in with her. She still hadn't found out that much of her, just that she was homeless after her mother had died and just left hospital bills as heritage. And that Lisa had stolen the syringe she had in her hand from a junkie. It was filled with heroin and she had decided to inject herself with it to avoid having to live any longer. So when Añeđliká went out on her first tour across the country she didn't dare to leave Lisa alone, but decided that she had to take her on the tour.

~ ~ ~

Añeđliká called her job, explained what happened and asked be allowed to work from home so she didn't have to leave Lisa alone too much. It was okay, so

she stayed at home most of the time, except when she went out to shoot a promotional video for her tour and dye her hair. Lisa got really surprised when Añeďliká came home from the hair salon with pink hair. Lisa was still very quiet but at least seemed a bit happier now. She borrowed a guitar from Añeďliká and sat and sang to herself in the apartment. Añeďliká heard that Lisa had a fantastic voice, and wondered if she wanted to be a background singer on her concerts along with Sandra and Lisa went along with it in her quiet way. So then she began practicing the songs that Añeďliká would sing. Lisa also got a pair of bongo drums that she used to mark the pace of Añeďliká's songs. It sounded really good, both of them felt.

But she continued to sing her mysterious songs that Añeďliká had never heard before. The texts were so personal that she realised that Lisa has written them herself so finally she asked if Lisa wanted to sing one of her songs on stage.

– Never, I can't sing by myself on stage.

– But if I sing and you sing along in the background, then?

– OK then.

Añeďliká smiled a little to herself. She had some plans for Lisa that she probably would not like, but that would still help her.

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Lisa was really nervous backstage in Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena just before the first concert would begin, but Añeďliká smiled at her and hugged her.

– It will go well. Everyone will look at me and not at you.

Lisa just shook her head. Then she looked on when Añeďliká made a huge entrance in smoke and roaring guitars. While she was rocking hard, Sandra and Lisa unnoticed went on the stage. Soon, Lisa stood next to Sandra and sang along in the chorus and filled in just as Añeďliká had wanted it. Sandra had a couple of instruments as well, a triangle and some watches while Lisa was using her drums. She was was impressed by the energy from Añeďliká when she just poured on for

two full hours without any break before she calmed down with some quieter songs. After a few ballads she pointed to Lisa at her dismay.

– The next song is written by my good friend Lisa standing in the choir over there. It's about her love of the forest and nature. Sing with me now, Lisa!

Añeđliká began singing "The forest is my friend," which was Lisa's favourite song, and Lisa sang along as they had trained. The crowd swayed to and lit their lighters and it was really emotional. Lisa was so caught up in the song that she didn't notice that Añeđliká stopped singing after the first two lines, so it was just Lisa's voice that was heard. It was not until the last chorus she discovered that the whole stage was darkened except for a single spotlight that shone on her. Añeđliká was gone, Sandra as well. She was shocked but she still managed to finish the song, and when it was over, so the whole crowd cheered and screamed.

– Lisa! Lisa! Lisa!

Añeđliká saw that Lisa was so overwhelmed from the response from the audience that her legs barely carried her, so she took over again and sang a few ballads, and then she simply said "thank you" and everyone left the stage.

– Why, you low-life! Your arrant bandit! I hate you! I told you I didn't want to sing by myself, your, your ...

Lisa almost didn't get any air. Añeđliká had never seen her scream and show so much emotion before. Añeđliká liked that Lisa finally showed some energy and self esteem, and smiled a little defensive and answered.

– But you was great. Didn't it feel good when the audience cheered for you?

– Of course, but still. Yours, Your ... Damn it, I can't find the right words.

– "Thank you" maybe?

– Not at all! Are you stupid or what? It was mean! But still, it was pretty fun anyway, so okay then. Thank you.

Lisa hugged Añeđliká and realised that she actually had become her best friend in the world. Not one that just say it, but one who is really trying to help. And whether you ask for it or not, or even want any help.

The concert was actually not finished yet, but Añeďliká went back in and kept on for a whole hour more. Lisa dared to go back onto the stage as well and began to enjoy the attention from the audience for the first time in her life.

The following day they all entered the tour bus to ride to the next stop. Lisa sat in a corner at the back of the bus without saying a word with her eyes closed. Añeďliká could see that she often wiped her eyes and thought about going back to her to make her a little happier. But she could not figure out what she then would say, so she sat there pondering by herself. The whole atmosphere in the bus was very gloomy, and the other musicians just had whispering conversations or were listening to music in their headphones. After a few hours Lisa began to play and sing her songs, but so quiet that it almost could not be heard.

In the evening they arrived at the hotel where they should sleep over before the last short distance the following day. Añeďliká wanted to let loose a little, so she asked Lisa if it was okay for her to wait at the hotel while Añeďliká went to a club, and Lisa at least didn't say no. But at the time she came back to the hotel room she found out that Lisa had disappeared. It was already very late, but Añeďliká was looking through the hotel bar, hobby room and all the other parts without finding her. She even went around to the backyard to see if Lisa gone up on the roof and then jumped down. She even called around to the hospitals. But finally she had to go to bed, sick of worries for what happened to Lisa. She felt convinced that something bad had happened, and could hardly sleep.

In the morning at breakfast she asked the other musicians if they knew where Lisa was, but no one had seen her in the evening or in the morning. She became more and more worried when Jamie pointed toward the door.

– There she is!

Sure, it was Lisa who came down with something that actually seemed to be a happy smile. She picked up breakfast and sat down at the table as if nothing had happened. She looked at Añeďliká which looked really angry and waited for her to explode and scream at her. But Añeďliká said nothing, just finish eating and then without a word went up to the room with Lisa to pack.

A little later, in the tour bus, Lisa sat as usual at the back and Añeďliká in the front. Lisa played the guitar and sang as before so quiet that it almost was not heard. She wiped her eyes now and then, but still sang on. Suddenly Añeďliká stood up and went back to Lisa and sat down beside her. Lisa sensed what was about to happen and put away the guitar.

– Lisa, I know I'm not your mother. You don't have to ask me for permission to do something, or explain yourself to me when you've done something. But you are my best friend and I was actually very worried about you last night. I was looking around in all the alleys around the hotel to see if you have done something desperate and rang all the hospitals. You don't need to explain anything, but I just want you to know that I care about you and could not sleep all night.

– I didn't think about that, I just slept in another room for the night. I thought you would not like it, so I didn't ask.

– It would have been easy for you to just call to my room and say where you were. I'm not the right person to judge you if you do something wrong, but I just want to know what you are doing well and are safe.

Lisa looked down and felt uneasy. Of course, Añeďliká was right that it was not nice what Lisa had done. She had every reason to be mad at her, so Lisa just waiting the well deserved reprimands. Añeďliká thought that although Lisa had done wrong, then Añeďliká had done very stupid things too, so she was hardly the right person to criticise. After a long silence, she finally said to Lisa:

– Was he handsome?

– Who?

– Asch, you know. You don't believe that you can convince me that you slept alone in another room, or in together with another girl? So, was he handsome?

– He was kind of cute, actually. I had no plans for anything, I just went down the bar to find something to drink, because I was so thirsty and the water in the room tastes so bad. I got this guy to buy me a few drinks.

– You don't mean booze, I hope?

– No, he's only seventeen, so it was pure fruit drinks. They was delicious! I was a bit suspicious, so I went over to the bartender and asked if there was alcohol in the drinks, but he said no.

– And then he asked you to come up with him to his room as a thanks for them?

– No, it was actually my idea. He looked at me all the time secretly and seemed interested, but he didn't dare to say anything. So I came up with a little white lie, that I was homeless and asked if I could sleep in his room for a night. It's not completely wrong, because I don't actually have my own home.

– You are so foxy! What happened in the room then?

– Nothing, he was still too shy. But after a little persuasion then ...

Lisa giggled a little. Añeďliká felt after all, a big relief, because Lisa had for the first time come out of her shell and started talking. Furthermore, she had taken some initiative, maybe not the best one, but anyway. They sat for hours and talked about everything. Añeďliká told about the guys that she had been with and Lisa about her and the tension between them began to loosen more and more.

At the lunch stop all sat at the same table eating. Jamie from the band turned to Lisa while they waited for the food.

– You Lisa, I have one thing I would like to ask you. You have a habit of sitting in the back of the bus, playing and singing all the time.

Añeďliká pushed Jamie in his side to get him to understand that he would not complain about Lisa now that she finally began to open up a bit. He ignored it and continued.

– Even though you sing very quiet it's still heard in the entire bus.

– I'm sorry, but I need to sing to feel better. Maybe I can try sing a little quieter.

– Hey, we're all musicians and love music. The problem is that you sing so quietly as we can't hear you. Can't you sing and play louder, so we can all enjoy your singing? It would be so much nicer in the bus. I don't want to ask Añeďliká to sing in the bus, for her music would blast our eardrums.

All laughed, even Lisa. The other musicians agreed so when they got on the bus again, Lisa took the guitar and played and sang so everyone could hear. Jamie took his guitar and tried to keep up and Sandra started humming too. The atmosphere in the bus had gone from depressed to really joyful, and Lisa began to think that life although was pretty good to live.

At the concert in the evening Lisa's repeated her solo with her own song, but now she was on to the whole thing and thought it was great to sing a song in front of such a large audience, as Añeđliká had almost always over 10, 000 at each concert.

Añeđliká got fond of many of the songs that Lisa sang in the bus, but could not persuade her to sing more songs at the concerts. Instead, Añeđliká got Lisa's permission to sing her songs but with his own heavy metal style. Lisa had quite a few songs that she made herself, and wrote new all the time. It was that way that Añeđliká got many of her most popular songs and managed to get so much material that she could keep her marathon concerts over four hours.

When the tour was over Añeđliká paid the salary to all who have been involved, including to Lisa. She got an apartment and did quite well on her own. And even if the only time she stood on the stage was when Añeđliká performed she had enough money to live a decent life. But she never agreed to sing any solo again at her concerts.

~ ~ ~

Añeđliká woke up from her memories when Nina called her from the nursery. She went in to Nina to read a bedtime story.

"I wonder if I can persuade Lisa to sing with me again?" She thought as she read to Nina.

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CHAPTER 15

# Concert with Añeđliká



Lisa looked a little sour on Añeđliká who just suggested that they would do a concert together at Madison Square Garden where Añeđliká had a concert booked.

– What do you mean that you want me to sing at your concert? Do you want to go back to the time when I was in your choir, or what? I thought I just explained that I didn't want my old life back.

– No, it was not what I meant. What I want is that we do a concert together. A "Lisa & Añeđliká" concert, where we kind of take turns on singing. It would be so fun for me if I got to be in your choir for a change! Or that we sing duets to my or your songs. What do you say? It would be crazy to do that, and you know I love crazy!

– I know you're crazy, and some of it has probably also rubbed off on me too. But anyway, I don't think so ...

– Please, Lisa. Open yourself up for me. We always could talk, just tell me what you think, and why you don't want it. You know that I will not get angry at you.

– We have always talked, yes, but never really about important things, like life and feelings and such. Just about boys and music and everyday's little thing.

– That's true, you've always been a bit mysterious and secretive. Almost as if you are one of those magical beings as you claim. But have we not known each other long enough now to actually be able to talk about everything? You opened yourself wide open yesterday, and you have never made me so happy before.

– Maybe. Well, alright then. There would of course be great to sing with you on stage again, but I plan on trying to break myself into the music scene also here on Earth. And then I would not like to be known as an Añeđliká copy, and I certainly don't want to stand on a stage, singing my music and then see the whole crowd go after the second song because they thought I'd play your heavy metal. On the other hand, a concert with you could kick start my career here on Earth. But then of course I don't want to have more help from you, enough it's enough. So the thing isn't that I don't want to play with you, it's that I don't know what I want.

– Forget the fact that I will help you by playing together with me. You said before that you are already stinking rich. You don't need my help anymore, and I think that's super. The thing is that I want to be on stage with my best friend and play and sing with her, with you that is.

– Let me think about it for a while. Okay, now I've been thinking, let's do it! If my music career here on Earth go down the drains, then I just go back home to Knimbo and continues my career there.

– It's so nice to hear you say "home to Knimbo". That's actually my home planet. Well, now let us plan for our joint concert!

– But I have one absolute term! You don't pay me a dime for it. I'm in because you are my best friend, and because I think it's fun.

– Sure, sure if that is how you want it.

~ ~ ~

The same evening, Añeďliká had got a babysitter for Nina, and then they all went out to a club to enjoy themselves. It was nice and really good entertainment with a famous disc jockey, so they danced together. That is, until a gang of three thugs came through the door. They immediately got sight on Brago who danced with Lisa and decided to pick a quarrel with him, mostly because he looked tough and also apparently was an alien.

– Who do you think you are? Do you think you can hang out with that bitch just because you are from another planet?

Lisa responded faster than Brago, who didn't understand what they said anyhow, and got into his face.

– Who are you calling a bitch?

– You, of course. Dump your ridiculous alien and come and be with a real man instead!

– Would that be you then, snorted Lisa. Big in words, small in the pants.

The Muscle Man snapped and tried to slap Lisa, but she ducked. He looked at Brago and waited for him to react when his girlfriend was attacked. But he didn't move a muscle. Añeďliká and Chris had become really scared, none of them had been involved in fights before. Añeďliká looked at Lisa and said:

– Come on Lisa, let's go instead.

– Not until this loser has apologised because he called me a bitch!

– Who are you calling a loser!

– I just see one, and he is standing right in front of me.

The Loser gave Lisa a hard push, making her stagger backwards. But she immediately pushed him back and he fell backwards. He got angry when his buddies laughed and walked over to her.

– Don't even think about pushing me again! You will regret it, believe me!

Añeďliká looked at Brago and waited for him to intervene. His scars and broken nose testified that he had been in fights before. But he just smiled and sat down at a table and watched. Muscle Man tried to push Lisa again, but then she grabbed his arm and threw him in an arc over her head. Brago grimaced at the memory but noticed that Lisa hold on to his sleeve so he landed on his side instead of on his neck. It certainly still was quite painful, but he quickly came to his feet and rushed towards Lisa again, but just crashed forwards into the floor when she tripped him. He hit his nose that begun to bleed. It seemed broken too.

– Are you just going to stand there, he hissed to his buddies. Hold her so I can beat her up!

His two buddies grabbed Lisa's arms from behind and held her tight. But now Brago reacted, stood up and knocked one of them down with just one heavy punch. Lisa threw the other in the air making him land on top of the first with a nasty sound. Broken Nose stood up and rushed towards Lisa with swinging fists only to find himself airborne again. This time Lisa didn't let off his arm when he landed and twisted the wrist so it crunched inside it.

– You broke my wrist, he cried pitifully.

– Be thankful that it's only your wrist. The last thug that jumped me, got his neck broken by me.

His bruised comrades came to their feet and Lisa took a step toward them. Both turned and ran out of the club. Lisa grabbed the other hand of Broken Wrist

and helped him to his feet. He looked at her in surprise and then quickly followed his comrades out.

Añeďliká and Chris stared at Lisa and Brago with long faces. Chris asked Brago:

– *Why did't you intervene? You showed us that you have stones in your fists. If I had gotten into the fight, I surely would have been hurt badly.*

– *I know Lisa, she don't needs any help unless they come in packs. That thug, who's neck she broke before, is in fact me.*

– *I sense an interesting story here*, Añeďliká laughed.

So Brago told them about the first time he met Lisa and presented it so it seemed like Lisa was two feet long with lots of muscle. Añeďliká and Chris laughed heartily at the history Brago told.

– *But how did he become your boyfriend then?* Añeďliká asked.

– *Well, it was not because he was very good-looking with cervical collar and bandages around the antenna*, Lisa said sarcastically. *He was waiting for me later the same night and apologise to me for what he had done, even though he had a lot of pain from his injuries. He showed his soft side, and it was the one I fell for. And still fall for every day.*

~ ~ ~

The next day Lisa snuck away early without telling Brago what she planned. When she came back she found him in the hobby room at the hotel and just said that he would come, for she had a surprise. Outside the hotel was a big motorcycle, and Lisa walked up to it and put the keys in the ignition.

– *I rented this for today*, she said smiling.

– *But you know I'm not capable of running Earthly motorcycles. They are so, so primitive.*

– *I know that. Just jump up!*

She put on a helmet, gave him another one, and then she sat up on the motorcycle. He looked at her in surprise, but then he sat up behind her. She took off down the street and out of town. He felt that she drive surprisingly well, though she took it pretty easy. When they came to a forest she drove into it on a narrow dirt road and then stopped at a small waterfall. This time it was she who was packing up a picnic in the forrest, and he enjoyed it to the fullest. Both of getting to ride a motorcycle again, and also getting to sit beside this lovely woman all alone inside a forest eating chicken and sandwiches. This, he would certainly be able to get used to!

They stayed in the forrest all day and on the way home Lisa let him try to drive a little. He felt quite unsteady, but thought that if he really tried, he could learn it. Slowly he began to reevaluate what he had said before, that he would never be willing to move permanently to Earth.

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Madison Square Garden was filled to the last seat. The crowd murmured of anticipation but also out of curiosity. The text read "Lisa & Añeđliká" on all the posters outside and next to the stage, and not "Angelica," which was written on the ticket. Exactly on time it started to roar like a spaceship from the speakers, and a voice said: "She comes from a galaxy far, far away! Now she has landed here, on this planet! The mysterious creature from the deep forests".

The crowd began to roar, for all thought Añeđliká would enter. Suddenly, the scene exploded with gigantic fountains of pyrotechnics, and all the monitors around the stage flashed the name of "LISA" in large letters and out of this chaos Lisa steps out with her bright blue hair shimmering around almost her entire body. She had an electric guitar on her hip and rocked off one of the many songs that she had written for Añeđliká and the audience responded with an even louder roar. Lisa was far from her usual mild person but I rocked on like a wild animal with Añeđliká's band.

Right after the first song the drummer "Thunder" tapped in the next song. It was one of Añeđliká most famous songs, but to everyone's surprise, it was Lisa who sang it, and in addition she sang it in Knimbonian rather than in English.

The audience was surprised that she actually know Añeđliká's language. Halfway through the song also Añeđliká came onto the stage and sang a duet with Lisa in her own language as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

– Hello everyone, Añeđliká then said to the audience. It feels great to be back on this stage again, it's over ten years since last time. Even more incredible is that for the first time I have Lisa with me here. She has never been in this particular arena before, although she always stood on stage with me ever since. Go ahead, Lisa, show them what you got!

Lisa thanked her and started beating on her knimbonian drums. Jon and Sofia came in from the side playing the keyed fiddle and flute while Lisa sang the song that has been on top of the hit lists on Knimbo when she left the planet, but with a translated text. Her melodic pop, incredible vocal range and unusual instruments made the audience turn on. Añeđliká had taken a few steps backwards and performed as a background singer to the song.

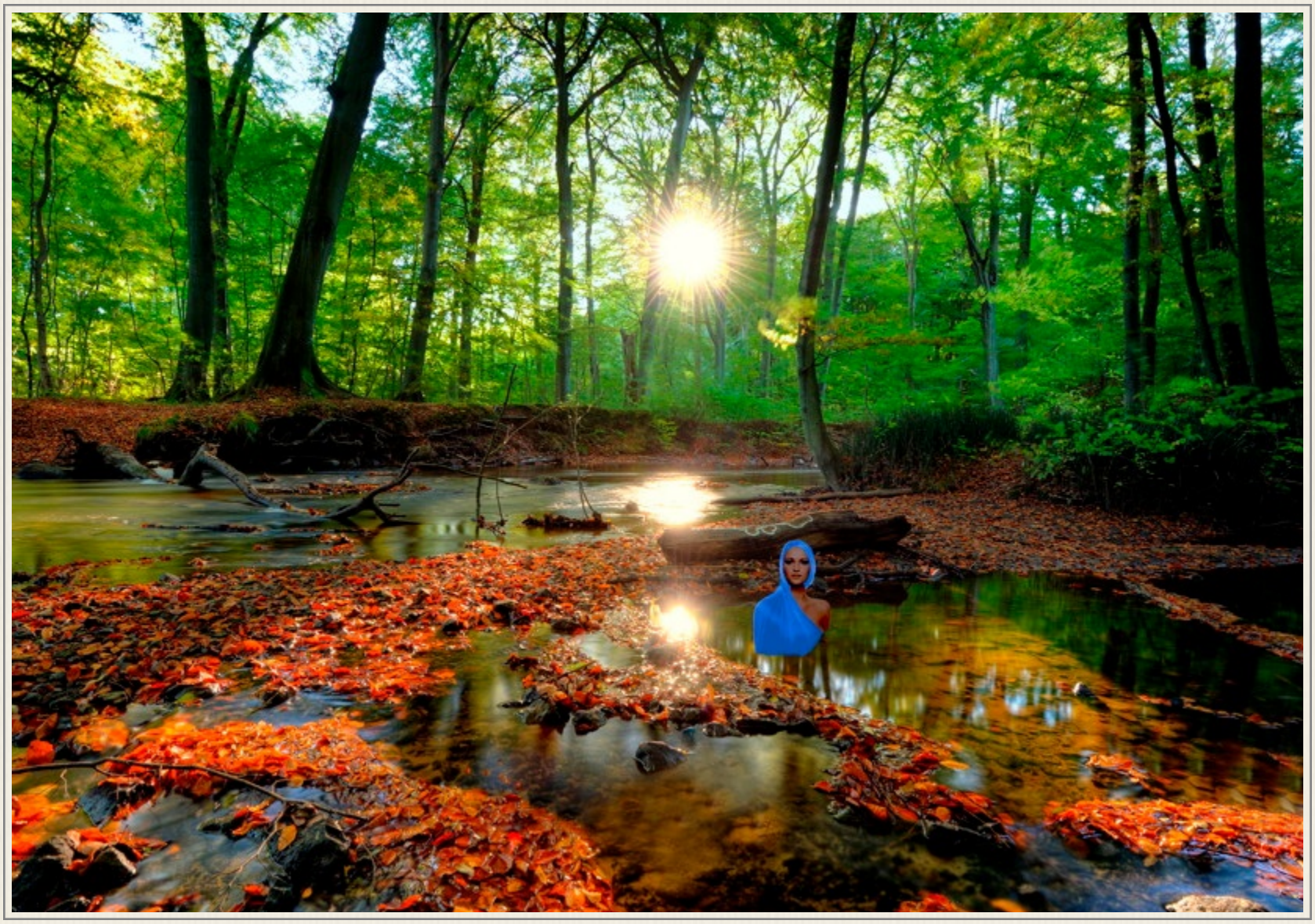
Then the concert continued alternating between Añeđliká's and Lisa's songs. Sometimes they helped each other as a background singer, but mostly they sang them as a duet. Añeđliká had really been working hard to learn to sign Lisa's songs in her own way, while Lisa already was familiar with most of Añeđliká's songs. Together, they were so tuned together as only best friends can be. The crowd floated in an euphoria. Añeđliká didn't regret a second that she asked Lisa to be part of this, because it was so amazing to stand side by side a confident Lisa, who really seemed to finally have found herself.

Añeđliká planned to ask Lisa for another favour after the concert. She knew Lisa planned for her own concerts, and Añeđliká wanted to join in. She just hoped that Lisa would not be angry or refuse!

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CHAPTER 16

# Concerts on Earth



Lisa began vigorously to prepare for a few concerts here on Earth. She had decided to devote a sizeable portion of her fortune on making really good shows as she wanted to prove to herself that she could actually be popular on her own also on Earth. She bought advertising time on TV and advertised in newspapers. The band was a mix of the musicians who Añeďliká used to have and siblings Jon and Sophia Anderson from the gala and Deborah Lewis who played the pan flute. She had to spend a lot of time to train arrangement with them, and book arenas and

anything else that needed to be done. She realised that the time was very limited, so she finally asked Añeđliká for help. She wondered if she could rent Añeđliká's stage equipment and tour bus, so it would be a little less to do.

– Of course you can borrow my stuff, you don't have to pay me anything. It would be silly of you to buy everything and then dump it when you go back to Knimbo.

– It would feel better if I payed you rent.

– Sure, if you absolutely want to. I wonder just another small thing. Actually, I would ask for a small favour. Or a great favour. A pretty big favour, actually. It's totally okay if you say no, but you would make me very happy if you went along with it. Though you don't have to go along with it.

Lisa was almost a little worried. Añeđliká didn't usually hesitate like that, so it must be somewhat sensitive what she wanted.

– Stop dilly-dally like that, just get it out!

– Well, I would like to accompany you on your mini tour, and be on stage with you. I would think it would be so super to actually be a part of your great happiness. For I'm totally sure that you will achieve success.

– In one way I would love to be on stage with you. But I don't want people to come to listen to "Angelica", or believe that it's you who are going to sing. Perhaps they are disappointed if you don't deliver your songs, or that I'm not playing your style, then they all forget that it's "Lisa" who is on stage.

– Of course, I don't want that to happen. But I don't want to stand next to you as we did at my concert, I want to be your background singer.

– You? Background singer? Is it not beneath your dignity?

– Not if it's behind you. I would feel it as an honour to sign behind you. I put on my black wig and put make up in my green face as I did my first time on Earth, before I wanted to show that I was an alien. No one will see that it's me, because all eyes will be on you. You're so hot! The guys will not be able to take their eyes off of you!

Lisa thought for a bit.

– Well, well. If my career on Earth goes bad, it doesn't matter too much. I guess I'm kind owe you this. And surely it would be fun to share this moment with you, I agree on that.

So all of a sudden Añeđliká became involved in all the preparations. Now she had to learn all of Lisa's songs, and they had to go through how she should sing. Lisa felt it would be weird if she had just one in the choir, so she asked Sandra Perez, who had been singing with Lisa before, if she wanted to perform too. Añeđliká and Sandra were then rigorously instructed how they should sing. Lisa thought it felt strange to tell Añeđliká how she could sing, but Añeđliká thought it was only appropriate that Lisa was the one deciding. It felt really good with the reversed roles!

Now it had became a lot of people who would be on stage at the same time! She had to carefully plan where everyone should stand to fit everyone in. Finally, she sought up an advertising agency to finish her television commercials. She already had most of the materials, she just needed someone who could cut it all together.

Añeđliká had no idea how Lisa's TV commercial looked like until she saw it with Chris. They sat in the living room and watched a movie on TV, when an advertisement in one of the breaks captured their interest. They had never seen anything like it before and were astonished at the boldness of the clip. It started with the stage that she had used in the commercial from Grimja where she comes out of the water in the forrest completely naked with her hair wrapped around her body. A deep announcer voice said: *"In the dark forests of the planet Knimbo mystical creatures are living"*. Lisa insidious music played in the background, and suddenly she dissolved into thin air. *"Now, one of these creatures left the forests to explore other worlds"*. The video showed a part of a corridor of a spaceship Añeđliká knew very well. Lisa materialised in the hallway and walked toward an alien Añeđliká saw that it was Vanya. When Vanya turned around Lisa disappeared again. *"The creature is now here on Earth"*. Picture of Lisa as she walked out of the spaceship and then dissolved again. *"She's at an arena near you, and will enchant you with her magical attraction"*.

Picture of Lisa from behind outside the entrance to an arena, still naked with the shimmering, light blue hair that hid her nobler parts. Lisa looked back over her shoulder and waved seductively with one finger. *"You can't resist her, buy your ticket now, otherwise you are lost"*. Finally there was a text with the times, places and where to buy tickets.

Añeďliká exhaled loudly and looked at Chris, who was unable to take his eyes off Lisa for a second.

– Wake up, Chris! Get a hold of yourself! That's my best friend that you are staring at!

– Aww, she is *hot*! If this doesn't get at least the guys to buy a ticket, so I don't know what would do it!

– Lisa is clearly no longer the shy, sad girl she was when we met, but a woman with plenty of confidence. But I had never imagined that she would create something this sexy. I don't even know if I dare to stand on the same stage as her anymore!

Añeďliká found it hard to digest that it was actually her friend and protégé, the innocent little Lisa that she had seen in the commercial.

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But when the first concert was about to start, Añeďliká was there backstage anyhow, ready to go. She looked exactly like the first time she came to Jacksonville, with made up face, black wig that both hid her hair and hid her antennas that was fixed along the sides with the help of a headband. Lisa didn't seem the least bit nervous, but was to Añeďliká's great relief fully clothed. To her great surprise Lisa went,onto the stage behind a curtain that hung at the back before it was time.

Exactly on time a smoking machine started filling the entire floor of the stage with smoke. Then Lisa began singing her siren call song while she glided out from behind the curtain up to the edge of the stage, just as she had done on Knimbo. Añeďliká felt a small twinge of envy when she heard Lisa's voice. She was at least an octave higher than Añeďliká, and performed a three-lined C as the best opera singer. The audience was enchanted, and nearly paralysed. The siren call song was

just half a minute long, but it was enough to get everyone's attention. Then Sophia and Deborah walked in from each side, playing their various flutes. Lisa joined in to this first song where she really showed that she could not only put the high notes, but also was able get as far down in the base as Añeđliká could. The audience applauded enthusiastically when the song was over.

– Thank you! I'm very happy to be here! Lisa is my name, the forest is my habitat. Welcome to my enchanting world!

Then she began to rhythmically beat on her three small drums, that was the only instrument she brought from Knimbo. The rest of the band had come in secretly protected by the darkness, and cued in. Also Sandra and Añeđliká now came onto the stage. Añeđliká could not help but look at all staring young guys who stood at the front looking at Lisa. No, there was no risk that they would recognise Añeđliká, or even look in her direction!

The show continued and Lisa had made it a little rockier than on Knimbo, as she had both electrical guitarists and a very good drummer behind her. Almost all the time she also played her own drums while she danced to the beat. Her drums didn't sound like any instrument from Earth, but had the typical electronic character that was common on Knimbo.

Añeđliká thought for once the same as Riëvan thought that there was no possible chance that Lisa could endure the whole show. It was planned to be as long as three hours. But Lisa had learned her lesson from Grimja and was training her fitness every day in the parks in Jacksonville, so she was strong as an ox. Instead, the audience began to wear out after a couple of hours, but still no one wanted to leave when Lisa said "Thank you" and left the stage after two and a half hours. After letting the audience scream for her for more than five minutes, then Lisa finally came back.

– Thank you so very much, you guys are incredible! I'll run a couple of more songs for you!

It became more than a few songs, Lisa stood and rocked away for more than an hour. The crowd was quite lyrical when she finally began to introduce the band.

– It's absolutely wonderful to stand before you and sing. But we must not forget the rest who have made this a magical night! Jamie "the Panther" on electric guitar ... Jeff "The Man" on the keyboard ... Mark "the Thunder" on drums ... David plays the base ... in such unusual instruments as a Swedish key fiddle, we have Jon Anderson ... the beauty playing the transverse flute is Sophia Anderson ... the magical sounds of the pan flute was delivered by Deborah Lewis ... and last, but not least, the two that made me sound so good tonight, my background choir with Sandra Perez ... and Añeđliká Donson ...

All bowed to the crowd when they were introduced, and Añeđliká also swept off her wig and headband when bowing. The crowd roared when see realised that Añeđliká had been in the choir. Lisa pulled off a soft ballad that concluded the show and then left the stage accompanied by the cheers from the audience.

– Lisa, that was absolutely magical, Añeđliká said backstage. You are incredibly talented. If only I had half your singing voice, I would be happy.

– You've got other abilities, no one can rock an arena like you.

– I'm not sure about that. You were rocking very hard on my concert on Madison Square Garden before. Speaking of rocking, is there any one in the audience who have left yet? Are they not still yelling for you?

– Yes, they do actually. What on earth shall I do? Well, I guess that I just have to go on stage and commit suicide instead. Just stay here, I need to manage this by myself!

Lisa returned in, with Jamie's guitar on her hip. Añeđliká was getting scared. Suicide? What did Lisa have in mind?

– Thank you so very much. I'll have to do one very last song then. This song is so sensitive for me, so I don't know if I can manage to get through it. But I'll give it a try, anyway.

Añeđliká froze. "She will not...?" But it was true, Lisa sang "Shall I help you" with guitar and her drums as the only instrument. She had programmed the knimbonian drums in advance, so she just needed to start them with one touch. This time, the audience sang all the way to the end, and even though Lisa's voice broke

down a few times, this time she managed to sign all way to the end. With tears in her eyes, she could not say anything to the audience afterwards, just wave good-bye. The crowd had finally had enough and started to leave.

Behind the stage Añeđliká hugged her long and congratulated her. There was no doubt that Lisa not only got a name for herself here on Earth as well, but also made up with her demons once and for all. She had never seen Lisa so happy and confident before.

The phone rang while they were sitting in the tour bus on the way home. It was Añeđliká's phone and it was Vanja who rang to inform her that she was finished with her mission on Earth and planned to go home. Añeđliká's asked her to wait a while, while she was locating Lisa and Brago, so they could follow them back. Lisa heard her name and asked what it was about.

– It was Vanya. She wants to go back to Knimbo already.

– Oh, no. I have one more concert to play at the Verizon Center in Washington DC. You have to convince her to stay a bit longer. Wait a minute, can't you offer her and the whole crew free tickets to my concert? Then she would get a reason to stay. I think she's a bit of a "Lisa" fan.

– Good idea, I will do that. So you intend to return to Knimbo? I can't persuade you to stay here? For this time, I hope that you are not leaving to get away from me?

– No, I'm not. I want to return because I like my farm, but even more because Brago are not willing to move here. I'm not burning so hot for him that I usually do with my crushes, it's more a slow, smouldering ember. It feels as if it will be longer, as it burns more slowly, if you understand. Maybe we will get married, if he dares to propose to me someday.

– But if you break up, or if he changes his mind, will you move back?

– Who knows? It's possible, now that I found peace also on this planet.

Vanya and the rest of the crew was happy for the free tickets, and waited. But after she held the concert, it didn't take many days before they took off with Lisa and Brago on board.

But when Lisa returned to Soranjo they felt in the air that something had changed. And not for the better.



CHAPTER 17

# Back Home



Lisa was happier than ever when she returned to her beloved farm outside Soranjo. At last she had made up with her dark past, and for ever put it behind her. And the relationship with Brago was getting better too, it felt like everything was going her way now. But when she went into town to shop, it was as if the people there could no longer meet her eyes. Not that she had been very close to any of them before, except with Anrendo and Adale of course, but now it seemed as if

they all intentionally avoided her, instead of just ignoring her or staring at her. It was not nice to walk around the village anymore and she felt quit unwelcome.

After a few days Vresko Kapadam, chairman of the town council, came out to her farm and knocked on the door. Lisa was surprised but asked him in to come into the salon.

*– Well you see, it's about the tax. Everyone who lives in Soranjo have to pay taxes, otherwise you can't stay there. It's a law since many years. According to our records, you have not paid any tax yet.*

*– No, that's true. No one has told me about it. How much tax do I owe to the city?*

*– Since you bought this farm so it has become quite a lot. Your tax debt is currently 123,850. It must be paid within a week, otherwise I'm unfortunately forced ask you to leave the city.*

*– So how do I pay?*

*– The easiest way is for you to go into the tax portal via a computer and do a direct transfer from your bank account. But that's if you have that much money in your account, and surely you don't?*

Lisa took out her computer and in front of Vresko's eyes, she went into the portal and transferred the entire amount to the tax account just like that. To her surprise, he was neither happy nor grateful, he seemed almost disappointed when he left.

When Vresko came back to the town hall he was stopped by a middle-aged man named Maixno Klavreno.

*– Well, have you notified that thing that it has to pay taxes?*

*– Of course, Mr Klavreno. The only problem is that she apparently had so much money in the bank, as she paid the entire amount immediately.*

*– So you can't chase her out of town then?*

– *No, that's impossible. She has as much right to be here as anyone.*

– *Don't forget who you're talking to. I'm Maixno, and I is the richest in town. If I take my money and go away then Soranjo loses most of its tax revenue!*

– *I'm aware of it, but I have to follow the law as well. And the law says I can't do anything about it.*

Maixno muttered annoyed and walked away.

~ ~ ~

After a week, Anrendo come out to her farm. He had never done before, so she was a bit surprised.

– *Hello Anrendo, why do I owe the honour?*

– *Hello Lisa. I would love to say that I came here just because I like you and want to meet you, but unfortunately I'm bringing some bad news.*

– *Oops, it doesn't sound good. Come in and tell me!*

They sat down in the living room. Anrendo looked around and was impressed by what Lisa had accomplished.

– *So, what it's all about is that the city government have called to a public cabinet meeting tomorrow in City Hall.*

– *What is that?*

– *You see, it's about that anyone can request a public cabinet meeting in a particular issue, and if he or she gets enough signatures in favour, then the city leaders have to arrange the public cabinet meeting in the town hall. There, the entire leadership will join and anyone in the city can be present. The issue in question is presented by those who sent it in, then everyone who wants to are allowed to speak about it and in the end the city management will make a decision about it. Normally they follow the majority of those who come to the meeting, but they don't have to. But if they want to win the next election they better do it.*

– *Alright, and what's tomorrow's meeting about, then?*

– *It's about whether you should be allowed to remain in the city or not. There are some who think that you should be chased out of town.*

– *What?!? Why the hell can someone want that?*

– *I have no idea, I think you are a great asset for us. But that's what the public cabinet meeting will be about, and I wanted you to know that. You also allowed to come there and talk, if you want. No one can stop you as you live here.*

– *Thank's a lot for telling me this. I have to think about what to do with that public cabinet meeting.*

But there was nothing to think about, really. So when the meeting started the next day, Lisa slipped in unnoticed and sat at the back of the hall. Vresko hit a club into the table.

– *Please get to order! Today's meeting is call by a request from Maixno that citizen Lisa would not be allowed to live within village limits. Welcome up here to speak for your case now!*

Maixno walked up to the podium and gave a long speech on all the reasons that Lisa didn't fit into the society. It was thinks like that she was not born here, she didn't use her farm as a farm and a lot of strange things she had done. When he was finished, everyone was invited to speak and various people talked about why Lisa would not be allowed to stay.

– *Hey, she's damn extra knimbonian being. Who knows what devilish things that she is doing out there on the farm?*

– *She sits on the farm of Josher. Who knows what she's done to him?*

– *He is certainly captivated by her, and sitting naked in a creek in the forrest. You know of course that she is a magical creature from the forrest?*

Lisa found it hard to keep from laughing. Where had they found all this nonsense? But she also realised that it was all seriousness and decided to do something

about it, so she raised her hand that she wanted to speak. First it was some others who got the word, and all of those who spoke felt about the same thing. In the end, the chairman pointed at her and gave her permission to speak.

– *Can I go up to the podium?* she asked.

– *You're welcome, the word's free.*

Lisa walked up to the podium. Everyone in the room had become dead silent when they saw who she was. Some became peony red with shame and no one dared to meet her eyes.

– *Hello, everyone. My name is Elisabeth Green, for the case that you didn't know it. I thought I'd answer some of the questions. Now let's see what questions came up. The first question was "what devilish things is she doing out there on the farm". Well, I just works a bit in my garden, take care of my chickens and ride sometimes on my horses. Then of course I'm primarily a musician, so it happens that I sing and write music too. The next question was, "Who knows what she's done with Josher". Last I heard from him and his wife as they sat down at the elderly home. If you don't believe me, then you may well ask himself, for he is sitting over there.*

Lisa pointed with her finger and Josher who cheerfully waved back.

– *Finally, I think someone said I was a mysterious creature from the forrest. Sure, certainly you really believe that yourself? It's just my image to draw people to my concerts. So now we are getting down to the main question of what to do with that awful alien monster Lisa. The best thing is probably for you to grab some pitchforks and torches, and then go out to the farm tonight and chase her away once and for all and burn down the farm. Are there more suggestions?*

Some was giggling of the absurdity of the proposal, especially as it came from her. Nobody dared to suggest something now that Lisa was present except for Maixno.

– *I think that Lisa should be banned from this place. It's my suggestion!*

Now Anrendo came with another proposal.

*– I happen to know that her farm is the only one that has a barn that is large enough and also almost empty, so I suggest we force her to permit her barn to be used for a barn dance next Saturday. I can form a party committee that takes care of the planning and ensures that it will be done.*

*– Alright, then we have two proposals to vote on. In my opinion, both proposals as absurd and maybe not even legal. But first, everyone that votes for Anrendo's proposal, forcing Miss Green to hold a barn dance next Saturday, raise your hands!*

Lisa was the first who raised her hand in acceptance directly followed by Anrendo and Adale. When the others saw that Lisa herself raised her hand then they followed her example. In the end, almost all the hands was in the air.

*– And who approves the second proposal, to banish Miss Green?*

Only a handful raised their hands. Vresko looked over to the others in city government who nodded. Then he announced.

*– Then it's decided to have a barn dance at Miss Green's farm on Saturday next week, and that Anrendo is responsible for the party committee.*

The hall was cleared quickly, but it was still not many people who dared to meet Lisa's eyes. She sighed and went home again.

~ ~ ~

The barn dance became really successful, Lisa thought. She had indeed put in a lot of effort so that everything would be perfect. Her home was wide open for anyone who wanted to go in and look around, although it was said that "they could go in and use the toilet if necessary". Lisa saw several who was sneaking around in all the rooms checking them out. She found a few in her music studio, but when they began to stammer that they were looking for the toilet she just demonstrated how everything worked. Inside the barn Lisa was serving snacks, cakes and cold cuts. When it was time to dance the atmosphere went high and all the girls stood by the sides and was invited to dance by the boys, one after another. Everyone except Lisa, for there was not even one that asked her. Brago had decided to stay away because he knew he was not so popular in the village, so he

thought he would only make it worse if he was there. After the dance then everyone went home again. Some thanked Lisa for her help, but most people just left.

Several days passed and Lisa and Brago kept to themselves at the farm. But Lisa had begun to feel more and more uncomfortable by the whole thing, and felt that she must try to do something about it. So she went to the village to try to talk to Maixno. Since she didn't know where he lived she went to the café. Adale sat down at her table to talk a little. Lisa asked where Maixno lived, but while they were still talking, Maixno himself came into the locale and ordered a drink and a cake from Adale, pretending that he didn't see Lisa. Adale went to pick up the order and Lisa followed her over to the counter, paid and took the plate and cup. She walked down to Maixno's table, put his order on the table in front of him and sat down across the table of him.

– *It's on me*, she said.

Maixno looked angrily at her without touching the cake or cup.

– *I was just wondering one thing*, Lisa said with a soft voice. *What do you have against me? Have I hurt you in any way? For in that case, I apologise.*

– *You're a f-ing alien*, he mumbled.

– *But how can that be so bad that I'm a stranger here? Let's say that we get to know each other, then we won't be strangers anymore, right? I have nothing against you, I love everyone in this village.*

– *Just dislikes aliens.*

Maixno got up and went with angry step without touching his order. Lisa looked at Adale and went back with the plate and cup to her.

– *It was a good try, but I don't think it helps. He's always been like that.*

– *I can put up with that he doesn't like me, but it feels as if the whole village is against me now. The barn dance was a good idea, but it doesn't seem to have changed anything.*

– *He's pretty influential here, unfortunately. But there are only a few who really dislike you, I think you should just ignore them.*

Lisa went home again, even more sad than before. Brago hadn't even wanted to follow her into the village, he was feeling even worse than Lisa about it, even though he was used to not be popular. Lisa said after collecting herself for a while.

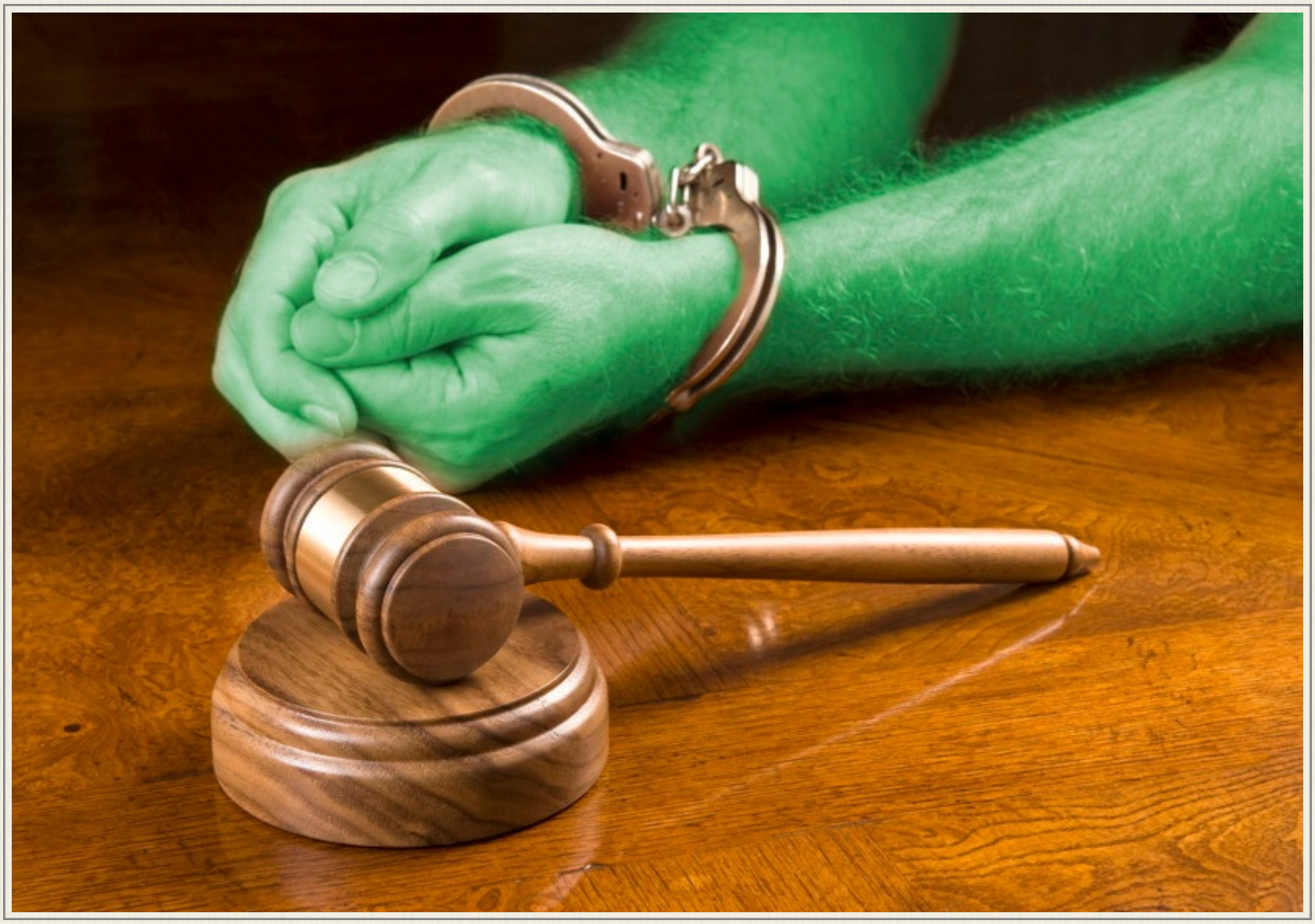
– *I think we have to move away from here. This will never work.*

Brago looked sad but nodded in agreement.

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CHAPTER 18

# Lisa Strikes Back



A few days later, Lisa's neighbour "Gnarly" came over and wanted to talk. He had always been nice to Lisa so she invited him for a cup of coffee and asked him if there was something special he wanted.

– *Well, it's about this farm. You know that I've wanted t'buy the farm for some time, even before you bought it, but I have not got inough money to make it. But now it's a some fellers from the village who collected a lot of money, and they would give them to*

*me if I buy the farm. It's not that I have anything against you, but if you are moving out anyhow, I'm prepared t'bail out the farm from you.*

– *Is it Maixno and his followers who collected the money?*

– *Yeah, I figure it is. But money is money, right?*

– *I have no plans to sell the farm, but if I change my mind, I promise to consider your offer*, Lisa replied as calmly as she could.

"Gnarly" thanked her and went back to his place. Brago had listened and came into the room.

– *I don't want to move away any more than you, but can we really stay here? Even he seems to be against us. You know I don't like changes, but as long as I'm with you I feel that I can handle everything. Wherever you decide to move, I'm by your side, even if it's the Earth you're moving to!*

Lisa was touched. It was not often that Brago spoke so deep and emotional. She hugged him and said:

– *Do you mean you would accompany me to the Earth? Seriously?*

– *I mean it. The Earth isn't that bad. Chris showed me many funny things, and as long as I'm with you I can manage everything. You are strong for both of us!*

– *But I don't want to just give up, put my tail between my legs and run off just because some idiot doesn't like me. I have to fight for what I believe in, otherwise I will regret it for the rest of my life.*

– *You can count on me if you want to fight! Shall we visit Maixno right away and beat him up?*

– *I didn't mean literally*, Lisa laughed. *He will hardly change his opinion if we two will send him to the hospital. Let me think about it, I'll figure out something.*

A few days later she had still not come up with anything, so she decided to ask for advice. Brago was not the right person to ask, so she got into her car and drove

all the way to Treïstán's house in Knimbville. The guard let her in and Treïstán met her at the door and followed her into the living room.

– *I must say I'm really surprised to see you here. If I may guess it's not a courtesy call?*

– *No, I've actually come to, I need your advice on what I should do. I don't want to just lie down flat on my back, but I have to fight for it.*

She told him about what happened in Soranjo with Maixno, the public cabinet meeting and what happened after that. Treïstán listened to everything and became more and more enraged when he heard what happened.

– *I don't want you to do anything about it yourself, I just want to have any kind of advice on what to do.*

– *What Maixno is doing isn't just stupid, it's illegal too. We have very strict laws against racism here on Knimbo, and if it would come out that he wants to chase you because you come from the Earth, he will certainly have to sit in jail for many long years. My advice is simply that you'll contact the police! Seriously!*

Lisa thanked him and left and pondered a bit on what he had said. The police in Soranjo was probably payed off by Maixno anyhow, and even if not, it would still be his word against her word. The anger bubbled in her, and she felt more and more that she wanted to fight back. She sat a long time in her car and got more and more raged. Then she remembered another person that she could take advantage of, that probably would not dare to say no. She steered the car towards the Space Center's premises.

~ ~ ~

The next day Lisa knocked on the door of Maixno's house and asked to talk to him. He got angry but Lisa begged so finally he said that she got five minutes on the porch.

– *I still can't understand why you don't like me. Is it because I'm from another planet or something?*

– *I don't like strangers, especially strangers from other planets. That's what I said before!*

– *So really it's because I'm a different race that is the problem?*

– *You can bet your ass it is. I will never allow any white guys like you to stay in my city. Or any yellow guys from overseas either for that matter.*

– *But why, really? Has anyone been mean to you?*

– *It's because all other races are inferior. It's just our race who has brains enough for intelligent thoughts, can't you get it, or is your brain too damn useless? You just proves what I have always said that our race is the only ...*

He stopped when a man came around the corner with angry steps. Where had he seen him before?

– *Now I've heard enough! This is the most obvious violation against knimbonian law and all sacred that we have on our planet.*

– *Meet my good friend, Director Draëk Frensco, supreme command of Knimbo*, Lisa smiled at Maixno.

Maixno went completely pale when he realised that he had talked too much.

– *Well, I didn't mean that, really. It was just a little joke. Don't you like jokes?*

– *I see nothing funny in a racist like you. You are under arrest, and I promise you that I will personally make sure that you will spend most of the rest of your life behind bars!*

A police officer from the Space Board also arrived and handcuffed Maixno, and began to lead him away. Draëk let his eyes sweep around the crowd that had gathered around them when Maixno had started yelling at Lisa.

– *Is there anyone else who believes that Miss Green shouldn't be allowed to stay here because she is from another planet?*

All Maixno's supporters made themselves as small as possible and looked away. Then the police officer and Draëk removed Maixno to a complete silence. Lisa

looked at the crowd with contempt over her face, sat in her car and drove off without a word.

When Lisa came back to the farm she told Brago what she had done. He looked at her as if he just had seen her for the first time.

– *You actually dragged the supreme commander over this planet here and got him to arrest Maixno? What is this kind of woman are you, anyway?*

– *The kind you don't pick a fight with, I promise you.*

– *No, I believe that for sure. Luckily for me, I'm on your side!*

Lisa laughed and agreed.

~ ~ ~

The next few weeks they stayed on the farm most of the time. The atmosphere in the village hadn't exactly gotten better. Even if no one was openly against her anymore, they still stared hard at her when they saw her. Lisa knew that she could not continue living in Soranjo anymore, so one evening she took up the sensitive issue with Brago.

– *Did you mean what you said that you will follow me anywhere, including back to Earth?*

– *I've thought about that. Actually quite a lot. I don't really want to abandon this neighbourhood, but we just can't live here anymore, in my opinion. And if I have to move somewhere else, it feels as if the Earth is the best option.*

– *Honestly?*

– *Honestly. To settle down in another city here on Knimbo just seems silly. On Earth, I'm the one that is different, and for me being different is good. That's why I like you so much. You're different from everyone both on the outside and on the inside. On your planet I will for sure not be a dozen figure.*

– *I'm also not a dozen figure, not even on my own planet.*

– *Yeah, that's right. So then we fit together there, right? And although I feel terrified of breaking up from Knimbo and move to another planet, so I feel I can handle it if I'm with you. By the way ...*

Brago became silent and looked at Lisa. His eyes began to wander back and forth, and it was obvious that he wanted to say something more. Lisa smiled at him and waited. She knew it didn't work to rush him on when he was like this.

– *Well, Lisa. I'm lousy at saying what I feel. No, wait, I have to get this out. It's certainly the wrong time, wrong place and the wrong word. I want to ... Like you see, what I want is ... Asch, you deserve better than this. But, Lisa, that is ... Don't you think we should get married?*

– *What did you just say?!? Are you proposing to me!!*

– *Well, yes. I stink at this stuff, but I meant what I said. I really want to be with you forever. What do you say?*

List could not answer. The tears came into her eyes and she just hugged Brago hard. She tried to answer, but could not make any words. Finally, she just kissed him.

– *I guess that means "yes"?*

– *Yes. Yes. Yes. I want to marry you. I've been in love so many times in my life, but I've never felt like this for anyone else. We're both odd characters on ourself, and we are so different from each other, but we still fits so well together.*

– *So what about that we get married and then scram away to Earth?*

– *Is it OK with you so if we go to Earth first and then get married?*

– *Fits me even better. I want Chris to be my best man, and I'm guessing you want Añeđliká as your maid of honour.*

– *You got that right. By the way, will you get angry if I say that I already talked to Draëk that I want to go with the next spacecraft to Earth along with you?*

— *I can't get mad at you. Besides, it's your indomitable will that I fell for from the beginning. And I've already told you before that I'm ready to go with you if you move to Earth.*

Just at that time the doorbell rang. It was Anrendo with bad news again.



CHAPTER 19

# Moving Out




Lisa received Anrendo and asked him to come inside. He looked troubled. When Lisa thought about it was long since she actually seen him look happy.

– *They have called for a public cabinet meeting tomorrow again, and one more time it's you who are in the centre. The question is how the city should "handle" you. Again. I don't know more than that, because no one wants to tell me anything else, probably because I was on your side last time.*

*– What do they mean by "handle"? I don't need to be "handled".*

*– I know that. I don't understand it either. Both I and Adale is about to give up. If only we could get any buyer of our café, we would leave this place.*

*– Are you serious?*

*– Yes, I am. It's not just about you, but there are many other things too. You may not know, but your boyfriend Brago has also been treated badly because he was not born here in the village. That's probably why he was so provoking, especially when he was drunk. And the café has never been so profitable, that you already know, probably because we were not born here in the village either.*

Lisa thought for a moment while Anrendo talked further about Brago and other strangers who had been treated poorly. She could not resist the urge to kill two birds with one stone.

*– You know what, Anrendo? I buy your café from you. Is one million enough or is it worth more?*

*– What! Why do you want my café? Are you planning on running it? I really don't think you could get more guests than we succeeded to get.*

*– No, I thought about nailing it shut with thick boards and let it stand as a monument to their narrow-mindedness. I want them to feel guilty every time they see it. But that's only if you agree to it, I won't do it if you or Adale don't like it.*

*– I think it sounds like a really good idea. Just pass the café about an hour before the meeting tomorrow, then I have asked Adale what she wants and we can close the deal if we both want it.*

The rest of the day Lisa and Brago spent on drawing various signs. They had decided what they should do. There was no turning back. Tomorrow the residents would get their fishes hot!

~ ~ ~

When the public cabinet meeting started, Lisa sat at the back again. This time, is was the hotel director Kalengo who spoke.

– *I have asked for this public cabinet meeting because we have to discuss how we should deal with Lisa. We know all that Maixno been accused of racist crimes, and sentenced to be imprisoned for thirty years. It's quite in order, for he, like all of us have behaved very badly towards you, Lisa. Yes, I have seen that you are sitting in the back. My opinion is that we from now on have to treat you with the respect and kindness that you deserve. You have become one of the most successful and most nobel citizens of our great community, and personally, I'm happy that you got your first job at my hotel. You are worthy of all our esteem. Someone who has a different opinion?*

Everyone began to speak in the mouth of each other on how nice and beautiful Lisa was, and that they would treat her well. It was not a little praise they pour over her for what she had done, and for the barn dance which she hosted. Lisa had somewhat contemptuously over her face as she walked up to the podium and addressed the congregation.

– *It's amazing what fear can do to people. Just a few days ago, no one even wanted to look at me, and now I'm suddenly the most popular person in town. Sure, it was a shock to you all when you realised what friends I have? It's not just Draëk, the supreme commander of the planet, but also Treïstán Croëlño, richest man in Knimbville not to mention my friend Riëvan Crijano from Grimja. Yes, I know them all and would not hesitate a second to use them to crush this damn village.*

Everyone began to squirm and felt uneasy.

– *So now that you all realise this, then you want to be my friend! Pathetic! What was wrong with the Lisa who was forced to live in the forest and eat food from garbage cans? Was she not worth enough to be your friend? And how is it with the musician Lisa who bought a farm, have millions in the bank but still was treated like dirt in the street? It was just Anrendo and Adale who showed some compassion then, and now you want me to like you?!?*

– *But please Lisa*, Kalengo said. *No one here have ever done you any harm. Right?*

– *It's not about what you have done, it's about what you have not done. When Maixno began his crusade against me, where were you? Who stood on my side? And when it was barn dance on my farm, who wanted to dance with me or even talk to me? Well, I will answer you all. None. None at all. I was not even worth that for you!*

Everyone looked down at the floor realising that she was telling the truth. The silence in the room was deafening and most of the villagers started to feel nauseous.

– *This sudden concern for my well-being has come too late. Much too late to even be believable. But don't worry, I'm leaving tomorrow. I would not stay one second longer than necessary together with scumbags like you!*

She paused and stared long and hard at the people, who all fidgeted and didn't know what to say. Until "Gnarly" could not keep quiet.

– *Does it mean that yer selling the farm then? You know I'm not hunting you off, but my offer stands if you are movin' out from here.*

– *I don't want the racist money from Maixno. I have put up signs around my farm with "No trespassing" and instructed the local police that they had better make sure that the signs are followed, otherwise Draëk will take their badge from them. And you can forget to grow anything on my land from now on. My farm will stand closed and abandoned as a reminder to all of what assholes you are! Just like the café!*

– *What do you mean by "the café"?*

– *I bought it from Anrendo and Adale, for they have also grown tired of you. We leave this shitty village together tomorrow! So I don't give a shit of what you decide at this meeting! Goodbye!*

Then Lisa went with firm, crusty steps out of the room. Vresko realised there was no reason anymore to make any decisions, so he closed the meeting. When everyone came out on the street so they looked toward the café. It had come up a new sign over the entrance that read "Lisa's Café." But the door was nailed shut

with thick boards criss-cross with the text “Closed for Good” on. Some wiped a tear when they saw the sad building.

The following day Lisa and Brago demonstratively drove through the village and stopped in front of the café. Anrendo and Adale came out the back door which Brago then nailed shut and they loaded all their baggage in Lisa’s pickup and sat beside her. Brago sat up on his motorcycle beside the car. He threw one last contemptuous glance at the gathered crowd and pulled away with spinning rear wheel, closely followed by Lisa who also pulled off with her tuned engine. After them came the van with all of Lisa’s things. The dust they tore up got everyone on the street to cough. Then it was completely silent. No one said anything, they just looked after the group. Some looked over at the café and sighed deeply.

~ ~ ~

When the group came to Knimbville, Lisa dropped the café pair off at some relatives who owned a small guest house. They suggested that they would invest the money they received for the café in the guest house, and become partners. The proposal was received with open arms, and Anrendo and Adale could finally relax. They would certainly not miss Soranjo nor the people there. With their age, they could start taking it easy.

Lisa and Brago installed themselves at a hotel in Knimbville. The contents of the van she let to be loaded into a container which she placed at the space centre to eventually get loaded onto the spaceship when it was time. Lisa then walked straight into the office of Draëk without hesitation in spite of Brago’s desperate protests.

– *We have decided to move back to Earth, both of us. We wonder if we can follow the next spaceship there?*

Draëk had long ago realised that he couldn’t change Lisa’s cocky attitude and just responded with a regret intonation.

– *A ship already left last week, so it’ll probably take one year until the next opportunity to go to Earth.*

*– But, what in the world! When I talked to you last time, it would not depart until about a month?*

*– We changed plans because everything was ready. I could not know that you wanted to come along. I'm truly sorry.*

Lisa and Brago returned to the hotel and thought about what they would do now.

*– We will just have to find something to do for now. I think I've got enough money to stay in this hotel.*

*– Yes, I guess we'll have to do it, although I don't like it.*

Brago didn't like this hasten change. Maybe it was a little too hastily to leave Soranjo like that. But he couldn't suggest that they would return there.

But he continued to ponder on the idea of returning to Soranjo.

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CHAPTER 20

# Back in Hot Air



Lisa began playing in clubs in Knimbville mostly to have something to do. Brago mostly stayed at the hotel and felt uncomfortably. He also had difficulty sleeping at night because of his bad memories. After a few months, he finally plucked up courage and explained to Lisa how he felt, even though it was hard for him to talk about feelings.

– *Lisa, I feel I must return to Soranjo soon. I can't take this anymore.*

– *What is it you can't manage, honey?*

– *My demons.*

– *Oops, I didn't know you also had demons chasing you. What's it all about?*

– *Well, I've lived most of my life in Soranjo. And even though I was not born there or been popular there to everyone, so it's still where my roots are. Now it feels like I have been pulled up with my roots, and the nightmares rides me every night with bad memories of how we left town. Now everyone will hate me, and you, and I'm not sure I can live with those memories. I feel I must return, even if only until the spaceship returns, and try to become a little popular. That is what my demons are all about.*

Lisa looked at him with surprise. It was the first time he had talked so long and deeply about what he felt, and also with such conviction. She felt convinced that this must mean a lot to him.

– *You let me return to Earth before so I would come to terms with my past, so I guess I owe you this. In addition, I also feel a little guilty about what I did. It feels like I was exaggerating when I hit back, much like when I threw you on the head. Sure, let's go back and see if we can reconcile ourselves with the people there.*

Lisa had great doubts about that they could do it, but for Brago's sake and her own, they would at least try. But first there was one other thing she realised that she had to do first, though she disliked it.

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It was not a lot of persons in the courtroom. Lisa sat at the back on a visitor's chair along with a few others. Maixno sat on a bench and pleaded with the judge that he would get his punishment reduced. Thirty years was an overly harsh punishment, he felt. That's why he had appealed and sat here and fought for his freedom.

But Draëk Frensco also sat there, and he took the floor and spoke at length about what scum he considered Maixno was. He had attacked a poor, helpless young woman who in despair came to him to appeal for help. Maixno became

more and more depressed and felt that he was going to lose. Draëk demanded even he would get life sentence instead of thirty years, Maixno almost started to regret that he appealed. It seemed to get worse rather than better.

When Draëk was ready then Lisa raised her hand and asked to speak. The judge protested that not just anyone could talk, so Lisa explained who she was and then was allowed to come down and take the oath.

Maixno looked at her with hateful eyes and felt if possible, even more desperate. It was that creature that got him in this situation, and now she was also here! He assumed it was to enjoy his defeat and further worsen his situation. He began to tremble and feel sick of pure, black hate! The hate cut like a burning knife into him and he had to bite his tongue to not stand up and yell at her, as he realised that it would make things even worse, if possible. Lisa was allowed by the judge to speak.

– *Thank you, Judge. So it's me who is that poor, helpless, young woman the director spoke about. However I don't feel so poor or helpless as he described. Nor do I feel so terribly offended that the director was implying. Sure, I believe that Mr. Klavreno has behaved in an inappropriate manner towards me and should be punished for it, but hardly so bad that it should be punished by thirty years unconditional. His sentence also affects his family in an unfair way, because they have not done anything wrong against me.*

Neither Draëk nor Maixno believed their ears. This was totally unexpected!

– *That is why I appeal to this court to turn his punishment from prison to one for parole, and at the same time lowering it to ten years or less. If he during his parol time returns to his racist behaviour then it's possible to withdraw his probation and turn it into prison again. In that way it will not affected his family, and he gets a chance to show in practice that he have understood that his conduct was wrong.*

The judge looked thoughtful after her statement, but Maixno's face was hard to describe. He was not sure if he should be grateful or if he still hated her. Lisa went on to explain how his innocent family suffered and reduced what Maixno had done to her.

The judge then thanked Lisa and said that he would announce his decision in about a week.

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The next day Lisa and Brago packed the car with the most important things and drove back to Soranjo. When they arrived, they drove straight to the farm without stopping in the village. Lisa stopped the car on the yard and stepped out without being able to believe her eyes. Of the house was just a pile of burnt boards left, and the same was true for the stable and barn. She went around among the leftovers without being able to bring in that nothing was left. The tears began to flow over her cheeks. Brago also came out of the car and Lisa put her arms around him and began to cry uncontrollably. Brago had something hard over his face and shook with rage and despair. But when Lisa eventually calmed down a bit, he said anyway:

– *Actually, I would like to take an ax and go into town and tear the place down house by house, but you know that nothing is going to get better from it, right?*

– *I understand that as well. I find it hard to believe that everyone in the town has done this. It's surely one or two of Maximo's sidekicks. But now we have nowhere to stay either*, she sobbed.

– *Doesn't you forget that you own the café in town, and that there is a second floor apartment where? I saw when we passed that it's still standing after all. We can move in there for now. I understand if you just want to just leave after you burned down the city hall, but I really are not ready to give up yet.*

– *You're right, let's go into town. But first I will talk with the police there, and don't try to stop me!*

A couple of policemen sat and was doing paperwork when Lisa kicked open the door with a bang and demanded to talk to the police chief. Her face was harsh and left no room for protests. Soon, she sat on the police chief's room and demanded to know if they knew who burned down her farm.

*– We are of course aware of the crime, and we classify it as arson. The investigation is still open, but I'm sorry to inform you that we have very little to go on. The arson took place in the middle of the night and there are no witnesses and the fire department have destroyed any traces trying to save the houses.*

*– Have you really tried to find out who did it? You already know that it's one of Maixno's ragtag kind of friends. Ask them!*

*– I've taken them in one by one and interrogated them, but nobody wants to admit to the offence or point out someone else. I can only hope that sooner or later someone will slip their mouth. But one thing is for sure, it was not Maixno who made it, because he is in prison in Knimbville.*

*– I know that. Keep me posted on what happens. I demand that you turn every stone, even though I'm alien from another planet!*

*– I promise you. We already know who it's that smashed the windows of your café.*

*– What, has someone worked on that too! It must be the same person!*

*– It's Maixno's fifteen year old son, Lembaxio who broke the windows. But since he is not of legal age, he can't be punished with imprisonment. But you can claim damages from his parents if you want, and I'm convinced that in this case you will get paid what it costs to replace the windows. But when it comes to the farm, has an alibi for the night, and not just from his mother.*

Lisa thought for a moment.

*– No, I let it be. It sounds more like a youth prank. He has only done what his father would like him to do.*

The police chief asked her to sign a paper that she waived the right to compensation. Lisa signed it, and he put the paper in a folder which he then stamped with "case closed" and archived the folder. Lisa went out again and drove to the café where Brago was ripping the boards from the doors with his bare hands. They went in and sighed at all the broken glass on the floor. Then they installed

themselves in the apartment upstairs. Anrendo and Adale hadn't brought some furniture, so it was just to move in.

Lisa realised that they have to eat something, so she went down to the store to buy groceries. The shopkeeper was unexpectedly heartily towards her and welcomed her back. "It was strange", she thought. "I thought I just had enemies here." On the way back she saw a poster that seemed to be all over the city. It said:

**Welcome the stranger.**

**This village needs new influences and entrepreneurs. So invite strangers to come here from other towns and cities and ask them to settle down here in Soranjo.**

**It can only become good out from it.**

It was much more on the poster but Lisa was interrupted in the reading by a voice behind her back.

– *It's me who have started this campaign, and I stand by it one hundred percent.*

She turned around and saw that it was chairman of the town council, Vresko, who spoke. He continued.

– *Now that Maixno doesn't live here anymore, we need new, fresh blood. I remember very well what you said in front of the whole village the last time you were here. Your words did really hurt me, especially because every single one was telling the truth. I simply had to try to do something about it, if I want to call myself the leader of this city. It will obviously take a long time to change the attitude overall, but even after one single month, I think a lot has already been improved.*

– *It sounds really fine if it's true. I didn't come back here make any trouble, but to reconcile. And also to liberate the village from the fear that I'm afraid that I sowed.*

*– I guarantee you that I'm not afraid of you, because I believe that I have not done anything wrong. Well, except that I was too passive. This campaign, I run because I believe in it. And if I lose the next election because of it, that will be fine with me, because I don't want to be the leader of a bunch of racists. But I'm convinced that I'm not.*

Lisa went thoughtfully back to the café and fixed the food. Maybe this town was on the right track anyway. She told Brago, who was about to sweep away all the broken glass, what she read on the poster and what Vresko had said. Brago got something eagerly in his voice.

*– You know what we should do, honey? We should open this café and try to make it a meeting place for everyone in Soranjo! If we succeed in this, then it will crush all my demons.*

*– Is that really what you want? Becoming a café owner and serve, wipe the tables and be friendly to all guests, even those you dislike?*

*– You know that I'm not much for talking, but it's probably just that I need to become whole again.*

Lisa nodded, and so it was decided. Now they would both try to run a café in a town that hated them. It would be a worthy challenge!

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CHAPTER 21

# The Café




The villagers watched with increasing amazement how Lisa and Brago worked almost day and night inside Lisa's café. Trucks came with interiors and the outside was painted and the windows were replaced. But they had put up sheets inside covering the windows so nobody could see what really happened inside. Brago was unusually much out on the street and was doing repairs and painting of the wall, and did his best to talk with everyone who passed. It was pretty difficult at first, but

after a few days most people began to realise that he was not so tough and mean as they had thought he was, so he started to get some friends.

Finally, Lisa was happy with how the café had become, so she drew a poster which she posted all over the city.




The locals flocked around the posters and was surprised that the café would open again, and even more that Lisa and Brago was the ones who opened it. But what was most surprising what that everything apparently was free on opening day. They passed the café but the sheets of was still there, so I could not see into the café. Lisa had again become the topic of conversation for the day in the village.

Lisa was thinking about what she would do with Maixno's family, especially his son Lembaxio. She decided to go there and rang the doorbell. It was Maixno's wife who opened the door. She pursed her lips when she saw who was at the door. It was obvious that Lisa was not welcome here, but she asked anyway as calmly and politely as she could to talk to her son about what he had done with the café.

She realised that she had no choice, otherwise Lisa just come back with the police, so she called for Lembaxio. They sat opposite each other on the porch. He looked a little worried but also defiant.

– *Hi, Lembaxio, it's me who is Lisa. I guess that you know that it is my café that you've vandalised. First I just want you to know that I have said to the police that I will not go forward with it, but I let bygones be bygones.*

Lembaxio looked a little surprised at her, looked down and mumbled an almost inaudible "thank you".

– *The only thing I want from you is that you explain why you did it.*

– *Well, I ... It was just kind of ...*

– *Don't be afraid, I will not hurt you. Just tell me the truth!*

– *You've been so mean to Father, so I wanted revenge, I guess.*

– *I guess you know your father was mean to me at first, and that it was not actually me that got him into prison. It was Draëk, the director of the Space Board. But why don't you like me, really? Is it because I'm of a different race and not from here?*

– *Father has said that other races are not as good as ours.*

Lisa was leaning towards Lembaxio while she talked. She suddenly noticed that his eyes didn't meet her's, but was slightly lower. When she looked down, she realised that he looked down into her cleavage. And since she never used a bra, it was obvious what had caught his interest. At first she was a little annoyed by his gazing, but then she decided to use it instead. So she put a finger to the neckline and pulled her blouse out a little more.

– *Do you think they are fine?*

Lembaxio blushed and stammered something incomprehensible and began to wander with his eyes.

*– So if you get hot from looking at a girl of my race, so you must surely realise that there really isn't any difference between different races? We may have different colour and looks, with we are all the same anyway. Don't you agree?*

Lembaxio just nodded and tried to tear his eyes away from her cleavage to look her in her eyes instead.

*– Well, yes, maybe. Actually, it's probably just Father who thinks that all other races are inferior. Mother don't believe it, nor my friends. So I'm really sorry that I smashed your café, honestly. I will pay for the windows as soon as I get enough money.*

*– You don't have to pay anything. I want you to know that I'm not mad at you and that you are also welcome to my café at the opening on Thursday. I will have delicious ice cream, and everything is free on that day.*

She hugged Lembaxio to emphasise her word, and he squeezed back. Almost a little too affectionately, she thought.

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On Thursday a dozen persons was gathered outside the café just before 11 o'clock. Just on time Lisa and Brago pulled down the sheets from the windows and opened the door to the street. The people went inside and was amazed at how nice it had become. The chairs were much more comfortable, and there were small booths where you could sit privately and Lisa had built a kind of bar counter with high chairs for those who wanted to talk and socialise. Soon, all put their orders and Brago carried out everything. He had really nice clothes on so he almost was not recognisable. And even more surprising was that he joked and chatted with everyone while he took orders and served. Lisa was busy trying to fix all the food and put up cakes, drinks and everything that was ordered.

It took just a few hours before the rumour spread about that everything actually was totally free at the café, so more and more people poured through the doors. Soon it was completely full and the noise level when everyone talked to each other increased. It was a really nice atmosphere when Maixno's wife and son

walked through the door. As of magic it became quiet and she wrinkled her eyes, irritated by the attention. She walked up to the counter where Lisa was standing.

– *My son, Lembaxio, claims that we also were welcome here. I just wanted to check if it was true, and then he said that you promised him ice cream.*

– *Everyone is welcome to my café. What can I offer you?*

They said what they wanted, got their orders and the guests began to talk again. It was obvious that Lisa didn't let her hate against Maixno pour out on his family. Lembaxio could not let his eyes away from Lisa, although he tried to do it on the sly. When his mother wanted to go so he asked if he could stay, so she let him sit there. It became a lot of ice cream, and even more staring, before he finally left.

The next day, it turned out that the people of Soranjo not only wanted to come to Lisa's café because it was free, but they continued to come there. To Lisa's joy it was even more guests than it had been when Anrendo and Adale ran it. Both the decor and the menu was certainly improved, but it was nevertheless the inhabitants changing attitude towards strangers, especially against her, which was the biggest change. She was able to chat way everyone that was there, and she hadn't been able to do that before.

One afternoon she sat and talked with one of the villagers at the counter when it suddenly became dead silent in the room. Several of the guests gasped. Lisa looked towards the entrance and saw that Maixno himself just had come into the room. He scowled when he resolutely walked towards the counter where Lisa was standing. The person that Lisa had talked to took his cup and sat frightened down at a table, and another of the guests went off to fetch the chief of police. For now, everything would explode for sure!

But Lisa just smiled mildly at Maixno and put a cup of coffee and his favourite cake in front of him.

– *You had no chance to be here on opening day, when everything was free, so this is complimentary.*

Maixno stared at her but then he sat down on a bar stool. He spoke in such a low voice that only Lisa could hear him. It was not at all like him.

– *I don't know what the hell you're doing, really! You know I hate you and you hate me, but you are helping me to get parole. Don't think that it will make me like you, but I'm at least man enough to say thanks. Thank you for helping me against that scumbag Draëk who wanted me to get lifetime.*

– *Your'e welcome. I don't like you either, but I still want do say that I'm sorry for over-reacting. I should not have been complaining to Draëk, it was uncalled for.*

Maixno started to drink the coffee and eat the cake. The other guests and the newly arrived chief of police let out sighs of relief.

– *There is another thing too. My son is running down here to the café all the time. I don't really like it. I think he's in love with you, and that's inappropriate. First, I would not like to have some half-breed as grandchildren, but most of all that you for heaven's sake is old enough to be his mother.*

– *I'm not that old*, she smiled. *But I agree that I'm too old for him. I guarantee you that I'm not in any way encourage him, on the contrary. Nobody would be happier than me if he finds a girl of his own age.*

Maixno mumbled a thank you again, finished his coffee and cake and left. The chief of police stopped him on the way out and asked how he got out of prison. Maixno showed his papers about the parole, and then he went home.

Lisa started to think about what Maixno said about Lembaxio. Maybe she could try to find a date for him?



CHAPTER 22

# In Love



Lisa remembered a girl who had visited the café several times, and seemed to be a little fond of Lembaxio. Lisa thought she was called Klirna. The next day Lembaxio was sitting at the counter as usual eating ice cream and watching Lisa when Klirna entered. She ordered a lemonade and cake at a table, but Lisa put her order on the counter next to Lembaxio and gave her a sign to sit there instead.

The youngsters sat quietly next to each other for several minutes. Finally, Lisa went up to them and asked Lembaxio if she had heard that Klirna just moved into the village because her parents bought a house and opened a shop there. Klirna told Lisa about her parents and business and then she explained that Lembaxio's father also was a businessman and Lembaxio began to tell them about his father's job. Lisa pointed to a vacant booth and suggested that they would sit there instead, and soon they had an intimate conversation in the booth. Lisa smiled and hoped that Lembaxio would forget his feelings for herself now.

The next few weeks, it seemed as if her plan had worked, as Klirna and Lembaxio hung on the café almost every night and stayed for several hours. Maixno was getting more and more irritated, because he believed that Lembaxio still was in love with Lisa. One day he called to Lembaxio while they sat in the café and said he must come home immediately. They stood up but Lembaxio went with Klirna home first. As they stood outside her door, so he took her hand and tried to kiss her. But she protested and said that her parents were very strict with that.

Lembaxio nodded that he understood and then he knocked at the door himself to her dismay. When Klirna's dad opened Lembaxio greeted him respectfully.

– *Sir, my name is Lembaxio, I'm the son of Maixno and have a question for you if I may be so bold.*

– *Just go ahead, my son*, he replied.

– *I have become interested in your daughter and I'm asking for your permission to court her. Of course, with honest intentions.*

Klirna's heart almost stopped and she became read in her face. Her father looked at her and understood that the feelings was mutual. And of course he knew who Maixno was, and realised that this boy was not just anyone.

– *Of course you have my blessings. I wish you all the best.*

Lembaxio floated home on small clouds of happiness. But when he came home his father met him at the door with an angry face. He scolded him and told him that he was not allowed to visit the café anymore, because he was too young for

Lisa. Lembaxio got no chance to explain himself, but was ordered to go to his room and stay there. Once there, he phoned to Klirna and asked if she could come over for a moment. Klirna was unsure why but came over anyway. Soon she was standing outside and threw pebbles at his window. He went down passing right in front of his parents, who was arguing about his alleged relationship with Lisa, and opened the door for Klirna. He took her by the hand and to her dismay led her to his parents.

– *Father and Mother. May I introduce Klirna to you. This is my girlfriend, and it's her that I meet at the café every day.*

His mother put her hands in front of her face with delight, but then looked at her husband. Klirna's family was, after all, also strangers in the village, even if they were the same race. Maixno looked firm at him.

– *How can you call her your girlfriend if you have not got her parents' permission to court her?*

– *I asked them before I got home today, and they already gave me their blessings. And now I ask you. Although I will court her regardless of what you think, I still would be happy if you also can give us your blessings.*

– *In that case, it doesn't matter what I think.*

Maixno grim face broke into a sort of smile, and he stretched out his arms towards Klirna.

– *Welcome to our family. I'm proud to ...*

His eyes wandered out into the street when he saw a person walking past in the shadows in an attempt to get past unnoticed.

– *Excuse me for the interruption. You have of course also our blessing. Just make sure to behave honourably.*

Klirna smiled happily at Lembaxio and he finally got his first kiss while Maixno hurried out into the street after the person he had seen. He caught up with him in an alley and confronted him. Maixno casted out a lot of hard words to the man

that finally dared nothing else than telling Maixno what he wanted to know. Nor did he dare to protest when they started walking towards the café together.

Maixno went up to Lisa with a firm grip on his friend's arm and asked to speak to her in private. They all three went into the office.

– *This is my friend Nextor. I know he has something to say to you, if he knows what's best for him!*

Lisa looked surprised at Maixno and then turned her mild eyes towards Nextor.

– *Yes, well, it's like this ... I ... aah ...*

His eyes flickered towards Maixno who pushed him in the side and looked angry. Lisa smiled kindly at Nextor and encouraged him to say what was in his heart.

– *Well, you see, it was I who burned down your farm. I'm sorry and want to apologise ...*

He flinched and got really scared. The mild Lisa was not so mild anymore. She slammed her fist on the table so that the papers flew away. Her eyes was blazing and her fists were clenched so they were totally white, while her face turned dark red.

– *What the hell are you saying!*

She raise up from chair that fell with a bang and rushed around the table towards him with furious face. Nextor was terrified and tried to hide behind Maixno. Brago came running, afraid that Lisa had attacked Maixno and was about to kill him.

– *Do you know what that farm meant to me? I will kill you, damn it! I'll get a knife and cut you into small pieces and feed you to the birds, your motherfucking, lowlife excuse for a scumbag ...*

Brago saw how Nextor tried to escape by Lisa cower behind the desk, trembling with fear. Maixno had become totally pale in his face and had backed against a wall and didn't dare to intervene.

– *Calm down, Lisa! Don't do anything you will regret later. Especially not now, when everything is starting to become so good for us!*

Brago took the courage to stand in front of Lisa. When she tried to punch him, he wrapped his arms around her. She shook with rage but slowly calmed down in his arms. Then she pointed to Nextor with a trembling finger.

– *Get out! Get the fuck out of my café before I make myself miserable! Tomorrow I'm going to the police, and if you have not turned yourself in until then, there will be no corner on this planet where you can hide from me.*

Nextor stood up and ran out of the café and didn't stop running until he reached the police station. A prison seemed to be a safer place for him right now. Maixno wiped sweat from his forehead. He had never been so scared before, especially as he knew what she had done to Brago before. Lisa breathed deeply a few times and then turned to Maixno.

– *Thank you for helping me find this lowlife. I hope that you yourself have been involved.*

– *It's me completely foreign to even think of doing such a thing. I know it's my son who destroyed your windows here, and I guarantee that if I had been here when he did it, he would punished very hard, even though I hated you more than anything back then. One just don't do things like that.*

Lisa nodded at Maixno, and he was relieved to get out from there on shaky legs.

~ ~ ~

The weeks turned into months, and more than half a year went by. Lisa and Brago had become popular by most people in Soranjo. Finally one day Draëk rang and announced that it was a month until the next spacecraft would travel to Earth, and asked if they still wanted come along. Lisa replied "yes" and now they began to plan to leave Knimbo for good. Lisa created signs with "For Sale" at the café and put ads in newspapers in Knimbville. Locals started to get worried that

something was wrong, and everyone wondered why she sold her café, but Lisa just said that she "was done here" when someone asked.

One day, Lisa found out that it was announced another public cabinet meeting, and this time the topic was "How do we deal with Lisa and other strangers". Lisa sighed and said to Brago.

– *Not again!*

The city Hall was full when Vresko hit the mallet into the table and declared the meeting open. He nodded to the shopkeeper who was the one who wanted to have this meeting and asked him to convey his matter.

– *Well, I have asked for this meeting because we must decide how to deal with Lisa. But actually it's just a scam, I just wanted to be able to collect all of you here in the city hall and make sure that you also were here, Lisa. Me and everyone else would very much like to hear you explain, Lisa, why are you are selling the café and leaving the village. I really hope that none has treated you badly, because in that case, I will banish that person from my shop, I guarantee you that! Lisa, I beg you, can't come up he to the podium and tell us?*

Lisa looked at him in surprise, but then smiled and came forward.

– *Actually, the question is wrong. The question isn't why I'm leaving, but why I came back here. Last time I was here, I was treated badly, and I was furious and pulled away in anger and left so much bad blood behind me here. The memories of Soranjo then chased me and Brago in the nights. So finally we decided to come back here to make up with our demons. We simply wanted to show that we are not rancourous, but have forgiven you and at the same time ask you to forgive us, and above all forgive me. I overreacted big time and tried to crush you and Maixno, and I apologise for that. Now it feels like we're all friends here, so I can safely continue with my plans, namely to return to my home on Earth and settle down there. So I don't leave Soranjo, but I return home, because me and Brago wants it. This time I will not leave any bad memories here, instead I love all of you.*

Now Maixno asked to speak and walked to the front. The others held their breath and was worried that now he would start talking badly about Lisa again

and she would get angry again and everything had then been in vain. Vresko tried to get Maixno to sit down again with hand signals, but he ignored it.

– *So, you all know that I don't like that creature.*

He pointed at Lisa with his thumb.

– *I did everything to chase it out of the village and almost managed to turn you all against it, but it declared war and put me in jail for thirty years. Thirty years! If I should live that long! And when I appealed and begged in court to get a shorter sentence then that bastard Draëk sat there and wanted me to get lifetime instead. Then this creature stand up and asks to speak. I've never hated anything so intense in my life. It permeated every cell in my body and I wanted nothing more than that this creature from another planet would die a painful death. And what happens?*

The locale had now become really frightened, as Maixno sounded really hateful. All were just waiting for the explosion from Lisa.

– *That thing demands to the judge that I should get a shorter sentence, and also get suspended sentence so that I can return here! She charms the judge so much that he listens to her and ignores Draëk completely. And when I come here and find out that my own son has smashed her café, what happens then? She finds a girlfriend for him that is absolutely perfect, and from a good family, and now they are deeply in love. Do you get what she has done?!? I hate her more than anything and I'm sure she hated me. Yet she makes the finest things for me and my family that anyone can do. How the hell am I supposed to hate her now? It's absolutely impossible!*

Maixno turned directly towards Lisa.

– *Why? Why in the world did you treat me so nicely, Lisa, after the way I've treated you? It isn't logical!*

Lisa smiled her gentle smile.

– *Partially, I had a guilty conscience. I overreacted and caused much more damage to you and your family than what I wanted. Then it's a fact that if you meet hatred with hatred then the hatred will grow until it swallows you whole. But if you meet hatred with*

*love, maybe hatred will not disappear, but it's at least weakened. I don't want to call you my best friend, but I don't consider you my enemy either.*

*– You're not my friend either, I hope you understand that. But you have done more good for this village in a few years, then I managed to do in my lifetime. I beg you, Lisa. Don't close the café! Stay here in Soranjo! We need you!*

There was a murmur through the room. It was actually Maixno who spoke. Lisa was really touched, because it came from him.

*– I'm not closing the café, I'm selling it. But not to just anyone, but I'm looking for someone who is ready to take over it and run it in the same spirit. And the farm, I have already sold for a low price to "Gnarly" because there are no houses there anymore. My biggest problem is that I don't really enjoy being a café owner. I'm a musician and that's what I live and breath for. But it can't be combined to run a café and to go on tours and play concerts. That's why I'm selling. Not that I'm unhappy here, nor because I want to close down the café.*

Now, most people nodded in understanding. But one of the youths came up with one more thing to ask her.

*– I wonder one thing, if I may take the liberty? You see, I listen to your music and dig it. But I've never seen you sing in real life. The tickets to your concerts are so expensive, but above all, they have been so far away. Would not you be willing to sing a few songs here in Soranjo before you go?*

Vresko caught the issue quickly, and saw an opportunity to take some sort of decision.

*– I suggest that this general cabinet meeting decides that Lisa will get to use city hall for free to hold a simple concert for locals. That is if you agree to do it, Lisa. We can certainly serve you with the equipment and personnel that you need, for free, and also account for ticket sales.*

Lisa didn't think long, but agreed to hold a concert in Soranjo a week and a half later. She pulled down the massive applause and it was also the decision of

the City Council. On the way out, there were many who wanted to shake her hand.

However, it took only a few days until Vresko sought out Lisa because it had come up a problem that could make it impossible to hold the concert as planned.



CHAPTER 23

# Consert in Soranjo



Vresko was very worried when he went to see Lisa in her café.

– *There have been really a lot who got tickets to your concert. Probably mostly because you let them be free for all who live here. But we forgot that the city hall only holds around five hundred. However, we have distributed over one thousand tickets already. How do we do now?*

– *Are there really that many that lives here in Soranjo?*

– *Oh yes, it isn't that small village. It lives just over two thousand here.*

– *So you're saying that half the population has got a ticket already?*

– *Yes, and it will probably be even more wanting to have one. Maybe the whole village.*

– *We must move the concert to the sports field. It's outdoors, but the weather's good, so it will probably work just fine, right?*

– *Sure, but how will everyone be able to hear and see you? There's no stage there and no sound system. It will not be much of a concert.*

– *Let me solve that problem.*

Vresko felt doubtful, but Lisa sounded so cocksure that he had to trust her. He then allowed even more tickets to be given out, and in the end almost the whole village got a ticket. But he wondered how she would solve it. Would she sing from the platform of her car, or what?

The day of the concert the villagers became surprised when a bus and a large truck came driving down the main street and stopped in front of the café. Lisa came out, greeted then and jumped into the bus. Many people from the village went with them to the sports field to satisfy their curiosity. They got to see Lisa who walked around with a man who was measuring using a kind of laser instrument. They moved around until Lisa was pleased with the arrangement. Then the man stuck small flags onto the ground and went back to the bus and shouted something into it.

Suddenly the field exploded with activity when five stagehands came out from the bus and started carrying material. They said "no thanks" to the people who had come to help, and said that it was more safe if they would do it themselves. First they laid out protective panels on the ground, then mounted the a metal frame to finally put stage floor. Then they built upwards and finally a ceiling that was almost thirty feet above the stage floor. Then they started to mount lights, amplifiers and speakers, and also built a platform in the middle of the arena for the sound and light technicians.

When Vresko saw all the lights and amplifiers, he explained to Lisa that he didn't think they could deliver enough power to run everything, but Lisa explained that they had their own generator which was powerful enough to generate power for everything.

After just a few hours the stage was ready including all technique and instruments. All who come in vain to help were impressed by how they have been able to build such a gigantic stage in such short time, and also surprised at how big and magnificent the whole design was. Suddenly, the sound engineer said "sound check" and although all the musicians were far out of earshot, still everyone gathered directly on the stage. First Lisa sang a capella, then each instrument was tested one at a time, while the sound technician fiddled on his buttons. Finally, they run an entire song, the one that was at the top on the charts when it was new, while the sound was refined. After that the light technician took over and adjusted the stage lights. Vresko didn't understand how they could be so well coordinated, until then he discovered that everyone had an earpiece where they received instructions from the technology platform where sound technician, lighting technician and stage manager stood. He realised that this was a well-oiled machine, and not just a simple girl who sang for an audience.

Finally Lisa asked Vresko to appoint some guards who could watch over the field while her whole gang went down to her café to unwind and get some snacks before the show. Brago had waited there and kept the café up and running by himself while they were preparing for the concert. He happily greeted all musicians whom he had met previously and soon everyone was talking to each other. Brago was really talkative, and far from the quiet thug he was known to be. Mionk took Lisa to the side and asked her what happened between her and Brago.

– *It's actually great. He has proposed to me, and we plan to get married in a few months when we got back to Earth.*

– *Wow, I didn't think that would happen. But I have noticed that he is much more harmonious and relaxed now. Last time I met him I felt like he felt compelled to act tough all the time, but now he even talks about his feelings.*

– *It's amazing what a woman's love can do, isn't it?*

Mionk nodded in agreement. Lisa went out to the kitchen to fix supper for everyone.

~ ~ ~

The sports field was absolutely packed with people. It had never been so many people there before. The rest of the village seemed almost deserted and the café had a note with the text "Closed for the rest of the day." Not that anyone wanted to visit it anyway. Everyone in the audience was excited and discussed how the show would be. No one would have imagined that it would be such a big stage, so much speakers and other technologies. Yes, there were even giant monitors high in the air on both sides of the stage so that everyone could see her.

Just on the time Lisa went alone onto the stage and looked out over the audience. She didn't seem the least bit nervous.

– *Hi, nice to see you all here. Lisa is my name, the forest is my habitat. Well, that's what I always say, but you know that I live over the café.*

She began beating on her drums and Krenvla and Surpenja came in from the sides of their instruments, asokenjivna and bingral flute. When she started singing everyone in the village was surprised of her vocal range and powerful voice. Almost no one in the village had suspected that she was so good at singing. The rest of the group came in and joined in with keyboards, bass and drums and Lisa entertained young and old alike with her blend of classical, knimbonian music and earthly rhythms. After an hour and a half of melodic, catchy music she decided it was time to turn up the temperature. It had become dark so the stage was lit up by the stage lights instead.

– *How many young people are there in the audience?*

All young people shouted back.

– *I can't hear you! How many young people are there in the audience?*

Now all the youngsters howled and whistled so it the ear of their parents was trembling.

– *You wanna get some heaby, earthly rock 'n roll?!*

– *Yeeees!*

– *Then I have to ask all the old-timers to cover your ears, for now it will get loud! Protect your ears to your babies too!*

Lisa picked up the electric guitar that she bought last time she was on Earth and pulled off a guitar solo that almost turned it on fire. Krenvla had also switched his instrument to his self-built guitar and the whole scene changed. There were stroboscopic lights, smoke machine and pyrotechnic fountains. The parents looked shocked at their youth that became totally ecstatic and screamed and danced to the beat. It were so contagious that even the elderly began to rock too. Vresko saw to his surprise how Josher also was dancing, so old and decrepit that he was. She continued pouring out non-stop for a full hour. Then she simply said "Thank you" and walked off stage.

The elders began to leave, but all the young people recognised the style so they stayed and screamed her name with one voice. Their parents tried in vain to get them to leave but after a few minutes, Lisa came back onto the stage. As usual, she continued for a full hour, though in a slower pace. Finally, she presented all the musicians and also took out all the stagehands as they also got the audience's cheers.

It had become almost midnight when the last of the crowd finally left the field. To the surprise of many the stage workers began immediately to dismantle the stage. It took just over an hour to pack up everything in the truck and bus again. Soon there was no trace of the concert at the sports field.

~ ~ ~

Early the next day the doorbell rang at the café and Lisa became a bit annoyed because it had become quite late the day before. Outside a man in a suit was standing and asked if he could come in and discuss business with the Café Presid-

ent. Lisa smiled and invited him to the office. "Café President – it was new one," she thought. The man told her that he lived in Knimbville and was interested in buying the café, because his wife didn't want to stay in the city because of health problems. He had seen the ad in a Knimbville's Journal and wondered how much Lisa wanted for it. She explained that it was more important that the buyer was interested in running the café on in the same style than that she would earn money. The man assured that it was his intention to keep it running.

– *I bought it for a million and has invested about half a million in it, so that's about what I want for it.*

– *Interesting, I own a small restaurant in Knimbville and I've got a bid on it for three million. Then I will have capital of improving the establishment.*

He looked around while Lisa phoned Vresko and asked him to come just in case.

– *I see that there is an apartment upstairs, but it's too small for us and our children. Probably I make it into a banquet hall, perhaps combined with a real restaurant. But I would very much like to build an outdoor seating area in front of the café. Do you think the city leaders would go along with it?*

– *He's standing behind you*, Lisa smiled.

– *My name is Vresko, chairman of the City Council. I see no problem with building an outdoor dining area, as long as it fits into the surrounding area.*

It didn't take many days until Lisa wrote on the purchase contract and began packing her things. They started to be in a hurry if they would not miss also this chance to go with a spaceship to Earth. On the departure day there was a huge crowd in the street to say goodbye. Lisa hugged everyone she knew and thanked them. Klirna hugged her extra hearty and thanked her for everything. Even Lembaxio got a hug, though he looked a little iffy on Klirna and his father. Finally, she stretched out her arms towards Maixno too. He hesitated at first, but then took a step forward and also received her hug and wished her luck. This time, it was certainly not a bad mood when she left the village. Brago had never felt so good

either, all his demons were crushed and he was now eager to continue his life as a married man on Earth with Lisa.

~ ~ ~

Treïstán had also become very busy. He had no idea what plans Lisa had while he closed down and sold all of his businesses and institutions. Even his big mansion was for sale, and he had a lot of speculators. When there was a knock on the door, he was not at all surprised. The guard at the gate had asked to leave early because he had received a new offer, so Treïstán let the gate stand open nowadays. He went to the door, expecting another prospective buyer of the house, but it was Lisa and Brago who came to visit. He welcomed them warmly and invited them into the salon. Lisa remembered that he didn't know what happened to Maximo so she told him what she had done with him and Draëk, and he was astonished at her cockiness and laughed happily.

*– There he got what was coming to him! But what will you do now? Will you still stay in Soranjo, although they treated you badly?*

*– Well, we actually returned there to reconcile us with the whole town. And we actually managed to do that. Even Maixno was almost friends with me when we finally left Soranjo yesterday.*

*– You mean for good?*

*– Yep. I have thought carefully about all the bad memories I have now got here on Knimbo and compared them with all the bad memories from Earth. Then I have also compared all the good memories of both planets. It's actually here on Knimbo that I finally sharped up and made something of my life. Well, actually, it a fact that everything good that has happened in my life is directly or indirectly because of Knimbo.*

*– But still, are you are leaving?*

*– Someone had burned down my farm in Soranjo, so I still have to start over somewhere else. So when we thought about where we would move then Earth and Knimbo weighed completely even. There is none of the planets that are better than the other,*

*they are equally good and equally bad. But on Earth there is still the straw that was tipping the balance to its favour, namely my best friend. And there is also Brago's best friend.*

*– You mean, of course, my daughter and her husband? Quite amazingly, I've been thinking about the same thing, you know. I soon sold everything I own and converted it into gold. Then I go on next spacecraft to Earth, probably the same as you go on then. I'm getting old and tired and think I have collected enough money for a lifetime, so I retire. And then I thought that the Earth seemed a better place, for there I have my child and my grandchild.*

Lisa and Brago looked at him in disbelief, but then he got a hug from Lisa. Treïstán stretched out his arms towards Brago too but he just shook his hands in respect. Brago didn't want to get a hug from another man.

Imagine what Añeďliká would be doubly surprised soon!

CHAPTER 24

# Back for Good



The elevator tinged at the home of Añeďliká, Chris and Nina.

– What's up now, Chris said. Who has the concierge allowed up without question this time? It must just be your father who is back on a surprise visit.

– No, he's not coming back, Añeďliká said. It's Lisa who repented and returned. I bet a fiver on it!

– Deal, Chris responded.

Nina had already run off to check who it was at the elevator. Soon, she shouted back.

– It's Grandpa! Grandpa is here again!

– Pay up, it was me who won, Chris said, it's your father.

– No, it's me that won, said Añeđliká when she saw a long, blue hair.

Treïstán, Lisa and Brago came into the room together. Nina held Treïstán in one hand and Lisa in the other and glowed with happiness. She know them both very well and was very fond of them both.

– I warned you after all that I might come back when I retired. Now I'm here for good, so you might as well get used to it!

His English was still remarkably good, and he loved to show it.

– But did you really need two babysitters to find your way here?

– We will stay here for good all three, Lisa laughed. And you know what, you are both invited to a wedding.

Añeđliká looked at Brago and said in knimbonian.

– *Have you finally proposed to her, Brago? It was about time!*

– You very welcome our wedding, he replied.

– Ah, you've started to learn English.

– Must learn English now. Will stay here.

Añeđliká beamed with joy. Not only are her best friend had come to stay, and indeed her only true friend. Now her father had also come to Earth to stay permanently. And Lisa even had plans to settle down, and that with a man from her own home planet! Then Añeđliká remembered that she was the United Nation's Official Spokesperson of Interplanetary Questions on Planet Earth and therefore had some official duties as well.

– Wait a moment! Then the two of you guys need to get a green card! Your temporary interplanetary visiting tourist visa doesn't apply. I can contact the Immigration Board, I know someone there that can help.

~ ~ ~

Ashley looked at the computer screen to find out who she would interview today. First up were the two whose names she could not pronounce. She tried to figure out which country they could come from on the way to the waiting room. And she thought she still knew the last name of the first one.

– Mr Treistan Croelo, she tried.

A distinguished man with grey hair and green antennae stood up and came towards her.

– It's probably me, I guess.

Ashley looked at him. Suddenly it occurred to her she where she had seen his name before, especially as Añeđliká sat beside him. For it was Ashley who had dealt with Añeđliká's application many years ago.

– Do you want to join in as well? Ashley asked her.

– I think my father can handle it without a babysitter, Añeđliká smiled.

Treïstán followed Ashley into the interview room.

– Alright, I have read your application, Mr Croelo, and I have some additional questions. I hope you understand English more or less? To begin with, what is the purpose of your application for residence?

– If you'll excuse me, my last name is pronounced Croëlño, but you are welcome to call me Treïstán like everyone else. We are not so formal on Knimbo. The purpose of my request for a permanent state of residence on this planet is that I after a long and industrious life, have decided to retire. And then I prefer to spend the remainder of my days with my daughter and granddaughter as you probably are aware of are already residing here on Earth.

Ashley was awed by his excellent English. He not only had an impressive vocabulary, but also an almost flawless pronunciation.

– You hope that you understand that your daughter is too old for you to be able to get a permission with her as a reference. You write that you are financially independent, and therefore should be approved. Do you realise that our definition of financial independence is to have to have a capital of at least $100,000 per year, preferably double of that, if you want to be sure to get your request for the permit approved?

– Let me do a quick calculation, I'm good at that. It's not likely that I will be more than 100 years, it means 30 years by 200,000. Since I plan to get myself a large house here, I have already begun to explore the market. There are houses for around ten to twenty million. With a staff of four servants who receive an annual salary of, let's say, 100,000 for thirty years, it becomes ... approximately ... 38 millions or less, right?

Ashley threw down the numbers on a paper and typed them on a calculator. Certainly he had counted correctly, and it had gone quickly too. While she had counted Treïstán produced some papers from his briefcase and put in front of her.

– Here is a filing receipt for the gold that I have provided for sale at a wholesaler. As you can see the preliminary valuation is approximately 70 million, so it should surely give me some margin. I have also made a letter for you to show to the gold wholesaler, so that you yourself can verify my information. You see, I'm or was a pretty important businessman on Knimbo.

Ashley realised that this was not a simple application – again. She thought for a moment and decided that she learned enough, thanked him and explained that she would get back to him when she processed the application. She followed him out and then asked Brago to come inside. This time however, Añeđliká followed him in to her surprise.

– So, I've read your request Mr. Azendja but must ask you some additional questions. You write that your reference here in the U.S. is a certain Miss Green. What is your relationship to her and where is she?

Brago looked uncertainly at Añeđliká and asked for help.

– You have to excuse me, Ashley, but his English isn't very good, she said.

– It's actually really lousy, Brago said. But I learn. Is it OK if Añeđliká translate for me? And please, call me Brago as others do.

– It would be better with a licensed interpreter, but I don't think there is anyone in your language.

– There is actually one, Añeđliká said. Me. I'm a licensed interpreter between English and knimbonian at the United Nations, because I'm their official spokesperson. That ought to suffice here too, right?

She translated Ashley's question to Brago, who answered in knimbonian while Añeđliká simultaneously interpreted as fast as he talked to Ashley's surprise.

– *I plan to marry Lisa shortly, and she remains in the waiting room out there because she was unsure if she would come inside or not. She was born in this country and is a citizen here.*

– That sounds good, but your application will not be approved until you are really are married to her. If it's OK for you then I will let your request for residence rest for a month. Within this month, you must submit a copy of your marriage license, and then I can process the application. What do you think?

Ashley was surprised again over the speed that her sentences were translated. It was quite simultaneously while she talked.

– That will be good, Brago replied himself.

– Then I thank you for today, but want to emphasise that I have to get the supplement within a month, otherwise there is a great risk that you will be denied. But while you're here, I want to also talk with Miss Green. Can you send her in?

When Lisa came in, she had some questions about how she know Brago, and if she thought that she could support them both.

– I'm a musician, and am confident that I can handle it. Then I believe Brago will get a job for himself as soon as he gets and can.

– But as a musician has been very unpredictable income, Ashley protested. It doesn't sound promising.

– I have saved some money that probably will be enough for starters.

Lisa sent a account statement over the table.

– Do you have almost five million in your account? Is this really true? Is everyone from Knimbo multimillionaires?

– Hardly, Lisa laughed. Feel free to check it out yourself. I've done a few successful tours both on Knimbo and here. You know, I have had over a hundred thousand fans at concerts in total. You may remember the recent charity gala?

– Oh, yes. That's where I've seen you, I knew I seen you before somewhere. You really pulled out a lot of money there.

Ashley was satisfied with this. On the way home Brago explained to Lisa that they have to get married within a month. It suited her well.

– *What do you say if we would go and get married on stage like Añeďliká and Chris did?*

– *I don't know, rather not. If that is what you really want to, but ideally I would like to have a small and simple wedding with just your closest friends. I myself have no friends here besides Chris.*

– *It don't have to be a lot of guests. Perhaps a cozy wedding in a forest somewhere, or at worst in a park?*

– *That sounds really good. Do you take care of the details?*

– *Of course I will.*

~ ~ ~

Lisa wondered where they would have their wedding, and also where they would stay later. They can't stay in hotels all the time. To be able to move more freely, she bought an old pickup truck and drove around the country along with Brago. She wanted to find a small farm here on Earth as well, but it was hard to

find. Either they were too large and expensive, or they were not for sale. One day Añeďliká called and wanted to meet Lisa, so she drove there. There she met Fiona and Frank, the couple who received Añeďliká on their farm when she just come to Earth.

– Lisa, I was told that you are looking for a small farm to settle down on, Frank said. Is that true?

– That's true. But there are not so many who seem to sell around here.

– You probably don't know it, but me and Fiona have wanted to sell for a while. Laura, our daughter, doesn't want to take over the farm and ourselves, we are beginning to get old. You would do us a favour if you bought it from us.

– Actually, your yard a little too big, you've got a lot of land. I don't think I can afford it, unfortunately.

– You get a good price, because you are Añeďliká's BFF. Only three million, and that includes all the machines too.

Lisa thought for a bit. She had been several times at their farm together with Añeďliká and had fallen in love with the farm and its surroundings. But if she had to pay three million for it, and then renovate it the way she wanted it to be then her bank account would soon become empty. But the temptation was too great, so she accepted it. She would just have to start singing for real here on Earth. But first she must plan for her wedding, and now she knew exactly where it would be held, namely on the farm.

The day of the wedding the sun was shining from a clear sky. Fiona had a little pleasance that she had cared for tenderly beside the house. Lisa had decorated and tidied the garden and created a natural portal of trees and flowers at the entrance. She glided through that portal, dressed in her white wedding dress to the tune of a knimbonian wedding march. Añeďliká came after her as her maid of honour and then Nina was walking with flowers in her hair. Brago gasped as he stood at the front and waited next to Chris. He felt right then that Lisa was the most beautiful women he had ever seen, and despite of his nervousness, he was sure it was just right to marry her.

It was only about twenty guests that were invited, of course including Treïstán, Fiona, Frank and Laura. The wedding was just as romantic as Lisa wanted it but at the same time as simple as Brago wanted. After the ceremony, Lisa offered everyone food from a caterer. But she also had prepared a knimbonian specialty and put on the table. Lisa shone like the sun of joy, and spread her happiness to the whole party so that even Brago looked happy. Lisa told Añeđliká that she was planning a tour from coast to coast.

– No, that sounds really nice! I assume that you don't want any help from me?

– You got that right. I've already found a record label to will publish my first album so that I get a little fame. Well, they don't know that they will publish my music yet, but I have nevertheless booked an appointment with them. Then I'm training hard so I can endure all the concerts.

– You will need lots of stamina, that I learned the hard way. You know what I'm planning? New York Marathon! Imagine how cool it would be to run it! Are you also up for it?

– Not likely. It's you who loves to do crazy things.

The following day Brago sent their marriage license to the Migration Board. Then it was not long until Brago and Treïstán got their green cards.

On Brago's birthday, Lisa bought him a motorcycle. He was delighted and soon learned to drive it. Lisa was satisfied with her pickup as Brago tuned and improved so that it was really nice. When they went into the village closest to the farm, they always felt welcome there. Everyone there was already used to aliens, because Añeđliká lived there and then had been in the village many times when she came to visit Fiona and Frank.

Lisa and Brago arranged their shared home on the farm. But Lisa often lay awake at night. The money would not last very long with the life they lived. About time to do something about it!



# Lisa

## EMIGRATES TO ANOTHER PLANET

# Part III

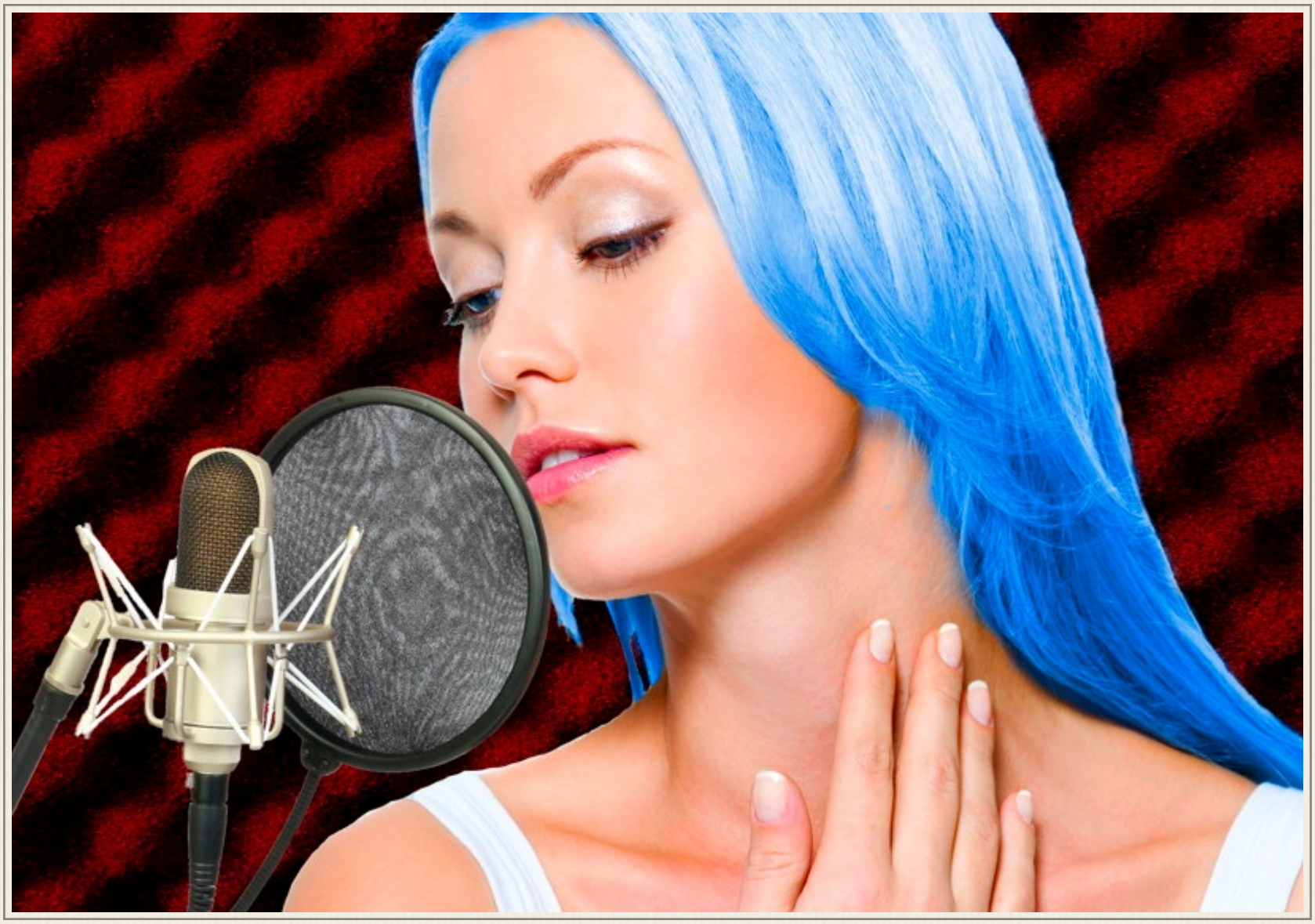
*Faces her biggest challenges*



by *Ola Montán*

CHAPTER 25

# Fixing Life on Earth



It crackled from the intercom at the front desk next to the waiting room.

– The director will see you now, the receptionist said.

Lisa stepped into the office room and sat down in the guest chair.

– I'm planning a tour this summer, and I'd love to get my first album published before that, so I'm heard on the radio and are a little known. This makes it easier to draw people to the concerts. Do you think it's possible?

The director smiled a little patronising.

– I like your enthusiasm, I really do. Moreover, it's an absolutely essential asset if you want to become something in the music industry. Even so, I would like to give you some words of advice. Even the best artists are struggling at first, often many years before they break trough. Then you need a whole lot of stage experience before nailing a good show on stage. You probably think that it's enough to just being able to play and sing and everything will work out at concerts, but it takes a lot of shows before you stop being nervous and making mistakes.

– You're right, I might book a gig at Madison Square Garden first, so I get a little warmed up.

The director looked at her with disbelief.

– Did you not hear what I just said?

– I understood every word, sweetheart. The first time I stood on the stage was twelve years ago when I was sixteen. Since then I have done a hundred, no wait, maybe 150 shows. It was rarely less than 10,000 in the audience on each show.

– What!?! How come I never heard of you then?

– Well, it was "Angelica" which was the name of the posters, I was in her choir. But then I played in a charity concert too.

– Oh, yeah, that's where I've seen you!

– I mean on the planet Knimbo. It was there that I for the first time was the main act. Then I was fortunate enough to be playing on Grimja. With my aggressive commercial I attracted almost 33,000 fans at the concert.

– Three thousand? It was not bad for a first concert.

– No, I said thirty-three thousand. Five digits! The concert I thought went really bad, I didn't hold it all together but was so nervous so I made lots of mistakes. But then I went out on tour on Knimbo and drew around 10,000 per show, still with my name on the posters. The show went better and better, and when I played a few concerts here on Earth as it worked pretty well. So don't sit there and say that I need more experience on stage!

– Excuse me then, I didn't know that. Did you say the planet Knimbo, by the way? Have you really lived on that planet?

– Yep, I've lived there for almost three years, but now I'm back. Feel free to use it in your advertising. Type "extraterrestrial good music" and so.

He began to realise that it was not a newcomer he had in front of him, but she had a lot of experience already. The demo that she sent earlier had also sounded really good and was unusually exotic. He pushed the contract across the table and asked her to sign. She didn't hesitate for one second before signing.

– By the way, do you want to record an album with my husband too while you're on the run?

– What makes you think I want to sign him just because you got a contract?

– Well, he's an alien. That should give him some credit, right?

– Ask him to submit a demo, then we'll see.

Soon she was busy in training with the musicians for her album. She had asked Jon and Sophia Anderson if they wanted to play with her, but on the asokenjivna and bingral flute that Lisa had brought from Knimbo. They had accepted with enthusiasm over the challenge of playing new and exotic instruments.

~ ~ ~

It was packed at the starting line. Lisa began to have a nasty feeling that this was a big mistake. But Añeďliká had been so stubborn that they would both run in the New York Marathon, so here they stood together. Although she used to go jogging for five miles every day, recently nearly ten. Everything to have sufficient stamina to cope with her long concerts. But this race was something else! How could she have been persuaded to do this? But when she saw some TV teams approach, she thought that this could give free publicity. She and Añeďliká got a microphone in front of them and got some questions about how they thought it would go for them in the race.

– I guess I'm going to end up somewhere in the middle of the field in the best case, Añeďliká said. But Lisa is younger and in top shape, she can be dangerous!

– Come on, Añeďliká! The only thing I hope for is that I can endure all the way and not collapse halfway. I'll be happy even if I come last!

The television crew wished them good luck and soon the race started. Lisa and Añeďliká ran side by side and both thought they was running at a comfortable pace. From the cheering of the audience they realised that they were pretty close to the front anyway. Towards the end an officer shouted that it was only around 50 people in front of them, and there were several tens of thousands that have started. When it was just a few miles left Lisa thought she still felt quite fresh. Añeďliká breathed quite heavily beside her, but Lisa speeded up a little, and Añeďliká hung on. They ran past more and more runners and were soon able to spot the leading group up front. Lisa's winners instinct got her to run faster and faster while Añeďliká lost more and more on Lisa.

When she came into the park where the finish line was, she had only five runners ahead of her. The TV teams became more and more excited, and several TV cameras had begun to follow Lisa while she advanced more and more. When it was a few hundred meters to go, she put in a spurt and caught up with the first runner. They ran side by side towards the finish line, and Lisa's eyes blackened. With a final effort, she broke the finish line a few feet before the other guy. Then she just collapsed down to the ground. Brago was standing at the finish line and saw her come in and got really scared. There was blood coming from Lisa's mouth, and when she collapsed she didn't even try to break the fall, but fell heavily to the ground. Brago ran up to Lisa and tried to talk to her, but she was completely unresponsive. When Añeďliká crossed the finish line, she saw how Brago was kneeling next to Lisa and also rushed over there.

– *Lisa, how are you*? she gasped anxiously in their own language.

– *Honey, say something*, Brago sobbed the same language. *Anything*.

– *Air, I get no air*, Lisa gasped.

– Medic! Añeďliká screamed. We need oxygen here! Hurry, hurry.

Several officers came running along with paramedics. Other athletes got there also as well as several TV crews with their cameras. Lisa just laid there and was

coughing blood and got oxygen from a tube. A medic checked her pulse and other vitals. It felt like an eternity for Brago and Añeďliká before she finally sat up and smiled at them.

– *Did I win?*

Brago sighed deeply and helped her up to the crowd's cheers.

– *I don't know how you did it, but you actually won.*

The TV teams were queuing up to interview Lisa after her win. When she finally got to stand on the podium, she was completely exhausted by all the attention. The next few days were all the newspapers and TV channels filled with news about the singer who returned from Knimbo to win a marathon. Lisa had pain throughout her entire body from the effort, but she was exalted that she has already become a little famous. Now, it would probably be no problem filling arenas on her tour.

~ ~ ~

Lisa took it easy for a few months until she felt completely recovered. She recorded her album at the record company and took Brago there. She managed to persuade them to sign a contract with him too and he began writing songs with Lisa's help. Then Lisa began to seriously plan for her tour. There would not be so many stops she thought, but it had to be good. So she took her car and drove all the way to the West Coast and was looking for good places to hold her concerts. She stayed a few days in each city she decided on to find a local but still popular band that wanted to be an opening act for her. She signed contracts for both the arenas and the bands one at a time. Eventually she came to Jacksonville where she was going to finish her tour. The arena was already booked since some time, but she hadn't found an opening act yet.

She went to one of the largest night clubs to see if they had a good band that was playing there. At the door she saw a familiar face on one of the bouncers. She was startled and stopped.

*– Hello Brago, honey. What are you doing here in guard uniform? Don't tell me you got a job here as a bouncer!*

*– Sure I have. You know that I applied for a job, and a few days ago, I got to work here. This is my first day. What do you think?*

*– Wonderful that you got something to do too. I know you're fit as a guard, no one dares to pick a quarrel with you. Let me come in now, I'll check out the band.*

*– You have to show some ID, he said in a serious voice. You look way too young to get in here.*

*– That was this year's best compliment. I love you.*

She kissed Brago and went inside. Unfortunately she didn't like the band that was playing very much, so Lisa left rather quickly and kept on searching. She didn't find what she was looking for so she drove back to her farm. Brago was working all night so she had to go to bed alone. The next morning she went back to Jacksonville while he still slept to talk to her record company to hear if they knew of any groups.

She was forced to park her car pretty far away, and had to walk a few blocks. She walked across the main street at a crosswalk when she got the green light. She heard someone scream, a car engine, and then nothing.



CHAPTER 26

# The Accident



The phone rang at Añeďliká's apartment.

– Hey, this is Inspector Tyler. Is it mrs Añeďliká Donson I'm talking to?

– Yes, that's right, Añeďliká replied, wondering why the police called her.

– You're some sort of spokesperson for aliens, and we are trying to find the phone number of a male alien who probably lives somewhere near Jacksonville.

Do you know who that can be and do you in that case have a phone number to him?

– It must be Brago Azendja you mean. What is this all about? Is he in some kind of problem?

– Unfortunately I can't reveal the details, it's personal and sensitive.

Añeđliká became really worried, but gave him the number to Brago. Inspector dialled the number and Brago answered.

– This is Inspector Tyler from JSO. Is it correct that you have a relationship with Elisabeth Green?

– Yes, that's correct. But her name is Elisabeth Azendja now, and my wife.

– Then I have come to the right person. We found your picture in her wallet together with her driver's license. Unfortunately I have some bad news. Your wife is right now at the Jackson Memorial Hospital after being hit by a car on a cross-walk.

Brago became cold from fear.

– Is it serious?

– I have not talked to any doctor myself, but has been asked to contact you and tell you to come to the hospital immediately. It usually means that it's serious, perhaps fatal. I'm really sorry for that.

Brago ran out in panic and pulled out his motorcycle. Before he had time to drive away, the phone rang again. It was Añeđliká who wondered what the police wanted him and he told her with unsteady voice what he had been told. Then he drove off to Jacksonville at a speed that would not at all been appreciated by Inspector Tyler. Añeđliká asked Chris to drive her there too, but Brago arrived long before her even though she lived in the city. He rushed into the reception and almost scared the life out of the receptionist when he yelled to her.

– Lisa! Elisabeth Azendja! Where is she? How is she? My wife!

The receptionist realised that Brago was not dangerous, despite he looked awful with his wrenched face, but he was just a heartbroken husband. She checked in the computer, confirmed that she was in the hospital and asked him to sit down while she called someone who knew more. But Brago could not sit down but was wandering back and forth until a nurse came in and spoke to him.

– Mr Azendja, I guess? Come here, if you please!

Brago accompanied her to the emergency waiting room and finally sat down in a sofa when she firmly insisted on it. The nurse sat down beside him.

– Your wife, Elisabeth, came to us with life-threatening injuries. Apparently she was hit by a drunk driver who both ran a red light and also drove very much over the speed limit. She has lost large amounts of blood and also got massive internal bleeding. She has now received blood transfusion and the doctors have managed to stop the bleeding. Her condition right now is still serious, but stable. She is still on the operating table, so it's too early to give any clear indication yet. But I guarantee you that she gets the best possible care right now.

Brago calmed down a bit now that he knew Lisa in any case was alive. At the same time it felt as if she left something out.

– Thank you. Excuse me for shouting before. But what is it that you don't want to say? Will she not make it?

– She seems to be physically strong even though she is looks fragile so she probably have pretty high chances of survival. But ...

She paused for a few seconds.

– Her spine took the full force of the blast and appears to be broken. There are big risk that she will not be able to walk again. I'm sorry.

Brago cursed heavily on knimbonian. The nurse took his arm and tried to relieve the message.

– There are very many people who can do it just fine and have a very rich life, even if they are forced to sit in a wheelchair. And we don't know yet if it will be that bad for your wife.

– And the lunatic that hit her? Do you know where he is?

– As I heard it, he vacated the scene, but the police have already found him thanks to witnesses at the scene and arrested him. So he would probably be in the police station right now.

– It's lucky for him!

The face of Brago got the nurse to feel sorry for the driver if Brago would ever get hold of him alone. She explained that it would still take several hours before Lisa would come out of the operating room and he could see her so she asked Brago to take care of the paperwork at the front desk while waiting. He struggled with the forms when Añeďliká finally came into the waiting room. She was informed about the situation and then helped with the papers. After a few hours that felt like days, a doctor finally came out and explained that Lisa was out of surgery and had been moved to a room where they could visit her. He said that she was stable, but that she probably would not wake up for several days because of a head injury she received when she landed on the asphalt.

Lisa looked very pale as she lay there with a bunch of wires that went to a number of instruments beside her bed. Brago put his arm gently around her and wept silently while Añeďliká pretended that she didn't notice it. Then he sat down in the visitor's chair and explained that he would sit there until she woke up. Añeďliká stayed until late evening but must then go home to her family. Brago promised to call as soon as something changed.

The night nurse came into the room to check on Lisa during late night. Brago was still sitting in the chair and almost scared the life out of her when he moved a bit. She informed the day shift in the morning and she went in to talk to him.

– Mr Azendja, I understand that you're worried, but you have to think a little about yourself too. You have not even eaten all day yesterday, right? Just go and get some breakfast, we will contact you as soon as her condition changes.

– Call me Brago, please. I thank you for your concern, but I'm not leaving this room until she wakes up!

– You know it could take several weeks?

– I'm staying!

The nurse sighed and left. Meanwhile Brago realised that he had to get food somehow. The words from the nurse had made his stomach ace. So finally he went out into the corridor and saw a cleaning lady. He walked up to her and asked her if she would be willing to fetch food for him a couple of times a day if she got 100 dollars a day. The maid was surprised by how generous he was, and went straight away to get breakfast in the hospital restaurant.

The days passed and Lisa showed no signs of waking up, but her condition didn't get worse either. The staff had finally become accustomed to this alien who always sat by her side like a faithful dog. One evening it finally happened what Brago had been hoping for. Lisa moved in the bed, even if it was just a little bit. She groaned and opened her eyes. Brago took her hand and looked anxiously at her while pressing the alarm button as he had been instructed. Soon both nurses and doctors came into the room. Lisa said nothing, but looked around in confusion. Brago was talking to her in knimbonian.

– *Honey, you are in the hospital. You got hit by a car.*

He was worried that Lisa's brain had also been damaged by the trauma to the head as she was not speaking. The doctors examined her and then nodded encouragingly at Brago.

– *Has ... Has it already become evening?* she finally said.

– *It has already become Sunday, you've been here for a whole week.*

Lisa looked confused at him and then at the doctor.

– One whole week! Have I slept for a week?

– You have been sedated and then unconscious. When you came in, you had very severe injuries, but we believe that the worst is over now.

– But why can't I feel my legs?

The doctor looked at Brago, whose face froze. The doctor knew that he had to tell her the truth.

– Your spine has been broken by the collision, and there are some risk that you will not be able to walk again. But you have much to be thankful for anyway, you are alive and your brain doesn't seem to have been damaged. Your back we can worry about later.

Lisa swore in knimbonian, and it was probably lucky it was just Brago that understood.

– It's best for you if you rest now. You will soon feel better. We will give you some pain killers, so you don't have to be in pain.

– I'm a rehabilitated drug addict, so you should probably take it easy with the tablets.

Lisa could not keep her eyes open, so she fell asleep again. The doctors explained to Brago she was out of danger now, but that she would continue to be tired and needed to rest. She would also need a lot of support to get at peace with the idea of maybe having to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. Brago felt worried that he would not be able to be strong for Lisa, because she had always been the stronger mentally. But he realised that he had to do it for her. He called to Añeďliká and told her the good and bad news.

When the nurse came in the next morning she found both Brago and Añeďliká beside the bed chatting with Lisa. She didn't understand a word of what they were talking about, she had never heard a language like that before. She looked at Añeďliká and Brago and realised that it was their language, an alien language. She was surprised that Lisa seemed to handle that language without any problem.

– How are you today, mrs Azendja?

– I'm alive, apparently I will be grateful for that. Though I don't feel so grateful, it just hurts all over. But please call me Lisa. Everyone else does.

– The pains will pass, and your spine we'll examine in a couple of weeks. Then we know more about how severe your back injury is. Most patients with back injuries are actually able walk again without major problems after rehabilitation and some training.

Lisa thanked the nurse for her words of encouragement. She showed off a happy exterior in order not to make it worse for Brago than it already was. She knew that he could not cope with emotional crises particularly good.

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The next week a spine specialist came and began investigating Lisa's back injury. She didn't have too much pain now, and felt quite optimistic. There were various x-rays, MRI, and a lot of pressing and squeezing. The examination took all week but finally all the results had come back and the specialist came to Lisa's room where Brago as usual sat in his chair.

– Mr. and Mrs. Azendja. I've been evaluating how severe your back injury is. The good news is that the nerves appear to have survived which is a condition that you should be able to regain some mobility in your legs. The bad news is that unfortunately the backbone has been severely damaged. Right now, you can't be operated, but we can perform a new examination within six months to a year so see if a surgery can be done then. Until that time, you will become dependent on a wheelchair. I'm truly sorry.

– How big are my chances of being able to walk again after surgery?

– It's hard to say for sure. Maybe around 10-20% after a successful operation. There is also a risk that an operation will aggravate the paralysis. But we can't know for sure until the earliest in half a year.

Brago looked anxiously at Lisa's face, which had become completely expressionless.

– Thanks for the information, doctor. I really appreciate your honesty.

The doctor was relieved leaving the room. Apparently the patient had taken the news well and had not freaked out as he unfortunately was too accustomed to. Lisa didn't say much but Brago talked the more. He explained that he could rebuild the house and get a wheelchair so she would do well, even if she could not move her legs. There was no problem at all, he explained. Lisa kept a straight face and continued to smile and nodded at Brago not to make him sad. It lasted for an hour. Then everything bursted for her.

The phone rang at the home of Añeđliká. It was Brago but she had never heard him so upset before. He was crying uncontrollably and could hardly speak but managed to explain what the doctor had said.

*– And now Lisa is just crying and crying. I'm trying to comfort but just starts to cry myself. She says she doesn't want to live anymore. Help me, I can't take this anymore!*

*– I'll be there right away, just hold on!*

Añeđliká rushed out of the apartment, full of concern for Lisa. This must be the worst thing that ever happened to her! Out on the street, she suddenly thought of something and ran back to the apartment to retrieve something. Soon, she landed by cab at the hospital and rushed into Lisa's room.

*– Hi Lisa! I heard that you don't have to run any more marathons. Isn't that nice?*

Añeđliká managed to almost get a smile from her face with reddened eyes.

*– I run rather thousand marathon than this! I will never be able to walk again! How can you be so mean that you joke about it?*

*– I understand that you feel sad right now, so I brought this for you.*

She handed over the guitar that she had brought with her to Lisa. Brago thought that now she had become completely crazy, playing and singing must be the last thing that Lisa felt like doing now. Lisa took the guitar with a surprised face. She looked at it for a while without really knowing how she would react. Would she be angry at Añeđliká or just keep crying? She hit the strings a little distracted mostly like a reflex, and began to sing one of her songs. As she sang, she suddenly understood why she got a guitar.

*– Brago, I love you more than anyone else, and you've really done everything you can to comfort me and support me. But it's still Añeđliká who knows me best. Even better than I know myself sometimes. I've always sung when I'm depressed, so this is exactly what I need right now. Thank you very much, Añeđliká!*

Lisa finished the song while playing the guitar. Brago looked at her with growing surprise.

– *Does it feel a little better now?* Añeďliká asked when Lisa finished singing.

*– No, it doesn't. It feels much better, because you know what? I just realised that I can play and sing as well as before even if I have to sit in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. Suddenly it feels as if a wheelchair isn't the worst thing that can happen to me!*

Lisa continued playing and singing so loud that it could be heard throughout the entire corridor and began to feel increasingly happier when she scattered her thoughts from her paralysis. A nurse came into the room with an angry gaze. She expected to find someone who had brought a music player, and played at a high volume. When she saw that it was Lisa herself who sang, she got a slightly confused face.

– Hey, there is no prohibition for patients to sing, right? Añeďliká said.

– That would be hard to believe, I've heard a lot of noise from other patients here. There are those who scream and those who laughs high and all kind of things, Lisa smiled.

The nurse didn't know what to say, so she left. Lisa continued to sing and the days quickly passed by. The guitar worked for her as a pacifier works for a baby so Brago gave her the guitar whenever she was sad. It worked. After a few weeks, she got to sit in a wheelchair for the first time and Brago rolled her out of the break room where all those that could come there used to eat. Lisa of course had brought her guitar and soon she sat and played for everyone. All was clapping hands and seemed to appreciate her music. Lisa started to become more and more convinced that the wheelchair would only be a minor obstacle for her. She had started to smile and laugh again and said to Brago:

*– Did you notice that all clapped for me in the break room? Even the old guys. Almost like a concert, even if it was just a few.*

– *Speaking of which*, Brago said. *I just came to think of your first album is coming out in less than a month, and then you have your tour planned. I guess you have to cancel the entire tour now.*

*– No way! I shall be on those stages and sing if you have to rolling me in there in a hospital bed. Though I'll probably need change a little bit on the show in order to withstand it.*

She asked her doctor, Dr. Sanders, if it would be possible for her to perform her tour. Sanders said that although the back injury probably not be exacerbated, but that it was way too early for her to leave the hospital already. And to hold a concert was completely out of the question, her body was not sufficiently restored to make it. She was guaranteed to collapse if she tried.

Even so, she continued nonetheless to plan for the tour. She just had to endure it, or else she didn't know what she would do.



CHAPTER 27

# Handicap Conserts



The buzz in the crowd was almost deafening. It was completely packed at the Staples Center in Los Angeles with the huge amount who had come because they liked her new album and also heard and read so much about her. Her previous concerts hadn't been forgotten, nor that she was Añeďliká's background singer. But most of all, because it was written a lot about that she won the New York Marathon and then suffer an accident. Most of them hadn't even thought that the concert would take place because of that.

The local band was on the stage first, and really got the crowd going. Most knew about them, so they cheered long and hard once they left the stage. Lisa's musicians walked onto the stage while band thanked for the applause. Mark began to beat rhythmically on the drums while Jamie played a very long intro. The whole stage then began to be filled with smoke while a dark announcer voice was heard from the speaker system to the musicians rhythmic introduction.

**"Now she's here. She has landed. Not even fatal injuries can stop her. Straight from the dark corridors of Jacksonville's hospital. Raise the roof for … LISA "**

Lisa had managed to make her way into the center of the stage in cover of the smoke. The crowd was clapping to the beat and shouted her name. Suddenly a fan started to blew the smoke away from her and everyone could see her sitting in a wheelchair. There was a murmur from the crowd. Lisa started singing a song that she had written at the hospital that life can knock you down, but you have to stand up and fight back. She played on her guitar while the musicians did their best to keep up with her despite that they had not rehearsed the song one single time, they had just had heard it in the tour bus while on the road. The next song was also improvised as it was also written in the hospital. The song was about how grateful she was for everything she had.

– Hi there, everyone! Lisa is my name, the forest is my habitat! Though the last few months it has been mostly a boring hospital room. The songs I have just sung, I have actually written from the hospital bed. Now you may think I'm lying when I say that I have so much to be thankful for. I'm sitting here in a damn wheelchair, and will probably do it for the rest of my life. Doesn't it f-ing suck?!?

The crowd screamed and whistled in response.

– But do you know what is the first thing I remember after the accident? That's when I woke up and my whole body hurt, but it felt like I was on a summer meadow among lots of flowers because it smelled so wonderful. I wondered if I was dead and ended up in my own heaven in my beloved forest. I opened my eyes and the first thing I saw was my husband Brago who had been sitting by my side night and day since the accident without giving up hope. Then I looked around me and

saw a sea of flowers. They covered every square inch from floor to ceiling of the room! They were from all of you, my fans and best friends. Can you imagine what consolation all this love from all of you gave to me? I really want to thank everyone who sent flowers and cards to me at the hospital, I appreciate every single one. Many thousand thanks, you are my strength!

The crowd screamed again and Lisa continued with her more known songs, though not yet from her first album. After an hour, she began to feel really tired and was breathing heavily.

– I'm starting to feel tired now. I've been tired pretty much since the accident. Tired, angry and mean. But there is one person who stood by my side every single day, no matter how angry and mean I was and it's my beloved husband, Brago. Can't you come onto the stage, Brago?

To everyone's surprise, Brago came onto the stage and gave Lisa a kiss. He looked really tough and dangerous with his studded leather clothes and unpolished appearance.

– This is my baby. He isn't as tough as he looks, but a real tender man on the inside. This is a song I have written to you, Brago!

Lisa turned her wheelchair so she faced him, instead of the audience and started singing a flaming love song to him. To everyone's shock Brago sang the second verse and then they sang the chorus together. It was a really subtle and melodic duet where Lisa's high notes got mixed with Brago's deep, strive voice. The audience was beside themselves when they finished the song.

– My heart wants me to stay here on the stage and sing for you all night! But unfortunately my body can't keep up anymore, I'm totally exhausted now. So I will leave you for a while to rest backstage, but I will be back before the night is over, I promise! I leave you here with Brago, who soon will release his first album, which is really good too. See you soon!

– Thank you, darling! And for those who believe her when she says that I'm not so tough, let's meet in the alley behind the arena after the show and I will show you that I'm not to be taken easy!

The audience laughed and Brago started singing his own songs. The music was quite similar to the one that knimbonian rock band played, with heavy, rhythmic bass especially from synth and electric drums but also from bass guitar. The audience responded with hand-clapping and foot-stomping so that the whole stadium started to vibrate in pace with the music. Lisa had laid down on a couch and rested. After a little more than half an hour she rolled back into the stage a little unnoticed and helped Brago in his last song. Then they hugged and Brago walked off the stage.

– That sounded really good, right? You could buy his album too. But it doesn't sound like me. Sofia, Deborah and Jon, can you come back on the stage again?

They came in playing the on their respective instruments bingral flute, pan flute and asokenjivna. Now Lisa sang all the songs from the album to the crowd's delight. After nearly an hour, she concluded the concert and was helped out by Jon. She asked to be driven to the hotel directly, for she began to feel completely exhausted. The crowd tried to call her back, but to no luck. When they finally came out from the arena they saw an ambulance standing outside and that Lisa were rolled into it on a stretcher. She had thought that they would call for a taxi and not an ambulance and apologised to the paramedics. They drove her to the hotel anyway and rolled the stretcher to her room and helped her over to the bed. It didn't take long before she fell asleep with a smile on her face and feather-light heart. Her life was not over by a long-shoot! With some more rest and then some exercise, it would be no problem for her to sing in the future.

They was staying in Los Angeles for a few days and Lisa stayed in bed in the hotel the whole time. She had realised that the doctor probably was right that she was not strong enough yet. The newspapers on the west coast were full of articles about her, how she didn't give up but played from her wheelchair. One morning her phone rang.

– Good morning. Is it the manager of the music artist Lisa that I speak with?

– It's me, Lisa replied.

– I'm the producer of "The Stevie Show" and would be very happy if Lisa would like to come as a surprise guest to the show tomorrow night. We will

provide the transport to the studio from the city where she is currently located, and back again. What do you say?

– I say that Lisa simply isn't strong enough to travel right now. But she would had loved to show up if it only would have been possible.

– But can't you ask Lisa, anyway?

– I just did, it's me that is Lisa. I'm my own manager. But if you can come up with a solution where I don't have to leave the bed in my hotel room then I'm up for it. Doctor's orders, you see.

The producer pondered for a moment and then suggested a solution that simultaneously would mean that they joked with the talk show host, Steve, and Lisa thought it was funny and said "yes".

~ ~ ~

– Now tonight's show is coming to an end. We have, however, one guest left to present. There is a singer who greatly impressed me. Welcome – LISA!

Steve talked from behind his desk in the TV studio. A technician came in with a Barbie doll with long hair that had been coloured blue. He put down the doll on the couch and went out again.

– It this some kind of joke? Where is Lisa?

– I'm sitting right here already! Can't you see me?

The camera zoomed in on the doll so it seemed as if the voice came from if. Steve was confused and didn't know what was happening. Was it his staff that was playing a prank at him again?

– Behind you! Hey! Here I'm!

He turned around and saw Lisa in the TV monitor behind him. She was laying down on her bed in the hotel room. The audience laughed heartily.

– I didn't want you to feel alone in the studio, so I sent my stand-in. Unfortunately I'm not strong enough to travel right now, this tour is about as much as my mangled up body can cope with right now.

Steve collected himself. He was used to that his crew made fun of him all the time.

– I've heard about your accident and that you are sitting in a wheelchair. But I didn't know it was that serious. Can you tell me more about it?

– Well, right now I'm more laying down in a bed then sitting in a wheelchair. But when I get out of the hospital I will probably confined to a wheelchair for the rest of my life.

Lisa told him about the accident, the hospital and her tour she was just running. Steve was greatly impressed by her bravery and strong will. He asked all sorts of questions about her music, how she won in a marathon and her connection to the planet Knimbo. Lisa was relieved when the show was finally over so she could rest. At the same time, she was fully aware of that all publicity was good for her right now.

The tour continued in the same style, and even though she was exhausted after every show, she was happier than ever before. But she lecture them a bit little because they called for an ambulance the first evening, so instead she went with taxi together with Brago to the hotel after the show. After three weeks they finally rolled into Jacksonville for the tour's final show. Lisa was concerned that she hadn't found any local band there who could be her opening act. That was what she was looking for when she was hit by that drunk driver. But Brago said with a roguish smile that he had fixed a band. Lisa wondered how he had managed to do it, he had almost always been in the hospital with her.

As usual, Lisa stayed at the hotel until it was time for the show. When she was wheeled into the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena for the show, Añeďliká came up to her and gave her a hug and congratulated her for becoming so famous. All newspapers had written about her from coast to coast and she had been on the news in most major TV stations across the country.

– Thank you, Añeďliká. But what are you doing here? You don't think that I still need your help? Or is it just to congratulate me?

– Oh no, I'm not here just to congratulate you. It's me that is your opening act. Didn't Brago tell you?

– Are you crazy? Should I have a superstar as opening act? Would it not be more appropriate with the opposite?

– I love crazy, you know that. Listen to the crowd! It's your name they are screaming and not mine. Well, it's probably almost time for me to go in there to warm them up for you.

Lisa looked at her with disbelief over her face. It was obviously true, nonetheless!

– Hello everyone! Glad to be here in my old hometown of Jacksonville! It's not my turn yet, I just want to introduce today's opening act. I have rolled all the way from the West Coast to over here to the East Coast with various opening act in each city. Always someone with local connections. Here in Jacksonville, there is after all an artist that is quite well-known, isn't it? I have always stood on the stage when she sings, so it feels unreal that she's the warming up band to me. She comes from the same planet as my husband and my best friend. So lifting the ceiling for .... Añeďliká!

The crowd roared while Añeďliká stood as frozen to the ground. What was Lisa doing? She knew very well that she didn't want to be introduced! She did it just to tease her, for sure! Finally, she still went onto the stage.

– Ever since the first time I stood on the stage at Madison Square Garden, I have sworn to never, ever let anyone introduce me before I walk onto the stage. I even explained to the richest man on Knimbo, who demanded to introduce me, that if he did so I would leave the arena and leave him alone to deal with 36,000 crazy fans. Yet I came in despite of Lisa's introduction. I guess she is the only one in the entire universe who I would allow to introduce me on stage, because she is my best friend yesterday, today and forever!

She hugged Lisa, who then left the stage.

– Today she is the main attraction, so I've decided to only perform her songs. It's not everyone who knows she has written many of the songs I sing, even if I myself wrote most of them.

Añeďliká played the intro to the first song on her guitar and then rocked the entire place for half an hour in her usual murderous pace. The crowd screamed from delight and thought it was way too short when Añeďliká thanked for herself after half an hour.

– Now I leave you for today, but instead the star of the evening will come in. This is a woman I will always be jealous of. She is so much more skilled than I in singing and playing. I sound like an old scratchy radio in comparison. In addition, her songs are much better in both text, music and instrumentation. She is married to a man from my home planet and is the only inhabitant of the Earth that have ever lived on another planet and who speaks my language fluently. Not to mention that she defeats the world's elite in the marathon! And even though there are almost no forests on Knimbo, she still found enough trees to create a home there, way out of the reach of the civilisation. Finally when she comes back and gets crushed by a drunk driver, she don't even lets that stop her, but performs from a wheelchair instead.

Lisa became desperate when Añeďliká started talking. She sabotaged's her entrance like that! It was certainly a revenge for what Lisa had done. She called the stage manager and said that she would change from her normal acoustic start to the "siren call entrance" but from the side. He was completely puzzled so Lisa had to explain it at turbo speed. Then she told Jon and Sofia who understood what she meant right away. Añeďliká noticed that it started to come some smoke into the stage floor.

– It's starting to feel cold in here, she said. Could it be some mysterious creature entering the stage? If so, give a special warm welcome to Knimbo's by far most exotic and mysterious artist .... LISA!

The lights went out and it went completely dark. Then she heard Lisa singing her siren call song from the side where a single spotlight lit up. She rolled slowly into the center of the stage in her wheelchair with such high notes that they were

all amazed. Then Jon and Sofia began to play and came into the spotlight as well. This was how Lisa began her final concert of the tour in true mystical spirit. She enchanted the audience and even Añeďliká was greatly impressed with the confidence and stage experience she showed, despite her disability. She was surprised also that Brago got half an hour in the middle of the show. Lisa seemed completely exhausted after the second hour, but despite of that allowed herself to be called in again to sing the songs she wrote in the hospital.

Lisa had obviously no need for any help from Añeďliká anymore, she could take care of herself very well on her own. Añeďliká felt as proud and happy as if she had been Lisa's mom and not just a friend.



CHAPTER 28

# Rehabilitation



Dr. Sanders was told that Lisa had returned to her hospital room and became furious. He rushed there to scold her. A colleague phoned the hospital manager who also rushed to the room.

When he arrived, Sanders stood and shouted at Lisa because she had left the hospital even though he specifically said that she should not do it.

– What the hell were you thinking? Do you have some sort of death wish or something? It's possible that you at any time would have collapsed and thereby destroy all the work I put down. You could end up dying in the process, don't you get that, your lunatic?

– Calm down, Sanders, the hospital manager said. Miss Green here is a important patient and must be treated accordingly.

– Who are you to come here and call me "Miss"? In fact, I'm happily married and don't need you as my cheerleader!

– I'm Director Walters, hospital manager.

– Then you should have better sense than to come in and interrupt two adults that are having a serious conversation! Please, proceed, Dr. Sanders. You just called me a lunatic, what were you going to say next?

Sanders came to his senses a little. He could not help but be a little amused by that Lisa had snapped of the manager like that.

– I just wanted to say that you were very thoughtless and didn't reflect on the possible consequences of your actions when you deviated from the hospital.

– It may seem so, but I actually thought a lot of my different options. I'm a musician and that is my only income. Any musician knows that to make money you have to go out on a tour when you released a record, otherwise people will not buy it. It was particularly important this time because it's my first album. To postpone the tour until I was strong enough, could have been fatal to my beginning career and totally ruin my chances of making money. Money that I need to be able to pay the bills to this hospital and thus your pay check. So I was forced to take the risk anyway. And since music works like medicine for me then I actually feel a lot better now than I did before I left.

– Wow, I didn't think that far. But where did you get the strength to manage it? That should have been impossible.

– I was laying down across all the seats at the back of the tour bus on the road and rested in a hotel room or backstage all the time, except the hour I sat on the stage in a wheelchair, singing. You don't think I'm completely stupid, or what?

– No, you certainly are not. I apologise for that I screamed at you.

– You had reason to yell at me, so it's okay. From now on, I promise to do everything you say. But you have to understand that I want to get out of the hospital as soon as possible and go home again. But not until you consider that I'm strong enough.

~ ~ ~

So then the days went into weeks and the weeks into months. Lisa had convinced Brago that he didn't have to stay at the hospital, so he kept himself busy on the farm instead and visited just a few hours each day. He also continued his job as a bouncer at evenings and nights and also got the opportunity to record his first album with the record company.

Finally Lisa was released from the hospital. She was given strict instructions to take it easy and not try to stress her back nor her legs to not aggravate the injury. Maybe she would eventually be able to have surgery to regain movement in her legs, but only if she took it gently.

– Thank you so much for everything! I'm sorry I was such a pain in the ass as a patient. I was singing and playing so it echoed in the hallway, running away to go on tour, having a scary alien living in my room and everything else.

– Don't worry about it, the nurse replied. You have spread so much happiness even though you have been so badly injured. It has instilled hope in all other patients. By the way, I hope you have someone waiting for you outside, because this chair is the hospital's property.

– It's taken care of, Brago is waiting outside to drive me home.

Lisa was rolled out in a wheelchair, and even Dr. Sanders came out to say goodbye. Outside Brago was standing, waiting for her. Lisa thanked again for everything and Brago lifted her from the chair and placed her on a big motorcycle.

She put on a helmet and grabbed hold of Brago from behind when he sat down in front of her. She waved cheerfully as they pulled away while the staff stood and looked long after her.

– So much for the poor, helpless Lisa that ended up in a wheelchair.

– Helpless? Poor? She will managed it without the slightest trouble, believe me!

Lisa sat behind Brago and just enjoyed the freedom of not only be out of the hospital, but also being able to sit here with the wind that tore at her clothes and her long hair blowing out as a tail after the motorcycle.

– I hope it's OK that I didn't call for a cab for you.

– This is perfect. I told you all that everything that I have done before and you show that I'm still capable of doing is making my life so much better. You can drive faster as well. I'm not scared and want to come home as soon as possible.

Soon they landed at the farm. In front of the house a wheelchair was standing and waiting. Brago lifted her over to the chair and then went and parked the motorcycle. Lisa tried to roll around a bit.

– This wheelchair is much easier than in ones at the hospital. It's so easy to roll around in it in comparison.

– I went to a shop and asked for the best wheelchair for one who wants to be independent, and they recommended this. Come on, let's go inside.

Brago went before her into the house. Lisa was a little surprised that he didn't offer himself to push her, but realised immediately that it was deliberate. There was a new ramp that he had built up to the front door so she had no problem entering the house.

– I need to take a leak, can you help me?

– You won't need any help, just check for yourself.

She rolled into the toilet and saw all the handles and support Brago screwed to the walls. There was no problem at all for her to do her business. She also noticed a high chair that stood in the shower and realised she probably even could take a

shower without help too. Brago had been really busy at home! She found him in the living room that was refurnished so that the wheelchair easily could fit in front of the TV.

– What do you say about fixing a cup of coffee for us? he said after watching TV for a while. You make much better coffee than I and I have bought a cake to celebrate that you are home again.

Lisa wondered what had gotten into him, but still rolled into the kitchen which had a brand new raised floor which placed all benches and stove in just the right height for her.

– The floor is just laying loose on top of the old one, so if you don't need the wheelchair in the future, then I can just lift it out again.

– But how did you come up with all this?

– I have spent a whole week in your wheelchair and done everything from it to get to understand myself how you would have it. Then, when I found something that is hard to do, I got up and fixed the problem and then sat down in the chair again.

– You have really seriously been living in this chair even though you don't actually needs it?

– Yep. Tied my legs to not be tempted to use them.

– I love you! You are the best there is!

Lisa hugged him long and realised that even if he was lousy at talking about feelings, and completely useless to comfort her when she was sad, he was still her best support through his practical ways to deal with situations and solve problems. All her concern about how her life from a wheelchair would be started to fade away. She cooked coffee and set the table, and then they sat there for a long time talking. Finally Lisa decided to try to cook some food as well so she began rummaging through the pantry and fridge.

– What have you actually been eating, Brago? There's almost no food here!

– Well, I have mostly nuking readymade food or gobbled preserves. I didn't really have the patience to cook, especially with you in the hospital.

– We must go down into the village and do some shopping big time. But how do we get everything home then?

– It's simple, we take your pickup. Just come with me.

Lisa went with him out to the machine building and wondered if Brago had learned to drive her car too. But Brago opened the passenger side and sat down. Lisa was surprised but nevertheless opened the driver's side and pulled herself inside. Brago pointed at a button that opened the door behind her and a winch that could drag the wheelchair in behind her. She started the engine but realised that she could not manage the accelerator and brake pedals. What was he thinking about?

– You have the gas and the brake there. The automatic gearbox does the rest.

Brago pointed to some new levers on the steering wheel. Lisa put the gear into "drive" and pushed the gas level a little so that the pickup drove out of the garage. She looked at Brago with amazement over her face.

– You have fixed the accessibility of my car too?

– Of course. I know how much you love to drive around. I've just fixed a gas and brake at the wheel as well, but the standard pedals are still there.

Lisa drove down to the village. It felt quite unaccustomed to not use pedals but it was easier to learn than she first thought. Many people looked at her as she drove into the village, as they hadn't seen her familiar pickup in many months. She stopped in front of the store and Laura came up to the car with a wide smile when she saw Lisa.

– Hi there, Lisa. We didn't meet yesterday! It was horrible to hear about your accident, but it's so good to see you restored again. You could leave the hospital at last?

– Yes, I was released today. But Brago have not cooked any food while I was lying there, so the fridge was completely empty. I need to stock up almost everything.

She pushed the button that opened the side door, got the wheelchair out and pulled herself over to it. Then she rolled up towards the pavement. Laura looked terrified at her.

– Are you sitting in a wheelchair now? How awful for you!

– Well, I'll get used to it eventually. Life isn't over yet, far from it. No, don't touch the chair, I have to learn to take care of myself.

She managed to get up onto the sidewalk and then cross the threshold into the store. There were many people who came up to her and offered assistance at the shelves, and she found out that there were some advantages to sit in a wheelchair anyway. Finally Brago and a clerk helped her to stow all grocery bags in the car. When she got home and had packed everything into the cabinets she felt completely exhausted and wanted to rest in her bed for a few hours. There was no issue that the bedroom was upstairs, as Brago had built a small lift for her.

Lisa soon realised that she had become completely untrained from just laying down for so many months. So now she began to train intensely. Mostly her stamina by driving around the wheelchair on forest paths, but also much arm strength with dumbbells and bench press. Brago was really worried that she would overstrain herself, but she was careful not to use her back, but only her arms and upper body. He was no less anxious when she started doing tricks with the wheelchair, balancing on the rear wheels, climb up and down stairs and roll around in the terrain in the woods outside the paths. But she used a helmet and arm and leg pads as she was working out, so she didn't hurt herself all the times she fell off the wheelchair. Her persistence was impressive and she became stronger and more skilled, because she had decided to not hope that an operation could make it possible for her to walk again. She didn't want to be disappointed again if it would turn out that the wheelchair would be lifelong.

~ ~ ~

Now she was there again, at the starting line. This time it was her own idea to line up for the New York Marathon. Aňeďliká stood next to her and had a hard time accepting that Lisa would be in a marathon again, this time from a wheel-

chair. She had decided long ago to try again herself, but Lisa?!? Just a few months ago she was in hospital and now she will attend a marathon?

– You don't have to keep pace with me, Lisa said. Just run your race, and I'll see you in the goal eventually.

But after the starting gun went off, they still was side by side for almost the entire race. Añeđliká pushed her self pretty hard, and remained in the leading group all the time, and Lisa just hung on. When they came into the park where the goal was then Añeđliká wanted to speed up to come first. Her legs started to feel like spaghetti but she still fought herself right up to the first place. To her surprise, Lisa then came rolling past her with fairly good speed and Añeđliká hung on. When there were only a few hundred meters left Añeđliká looked over her shoulder and saw that there was a considerable distance to the third runner. Then she let of the pace and let Lisa cross the finish line as the clear number one.

Añeđliká hugged Lisa who pulled her down into the wheelchair. Añeđliká laughed and sat there and rested for a few minutes. The scoreboard showed Lisa in first place and Añeđliká in second place. But suddenly it changed. Instead of Lisa's time it came up "DQ" and Añeđliká was put up in the first place. The crowd in the park booed and shouted when they saw it. Soon they were surrounded by TV cameras and reporters.

– Lisa, you have just been disqualified even though you won the entire competition. Not only that, you won even if you are handicapped! How does it feel, and are you planning to appeal?

– I already knew before the start that I would be disqualified, so no I'm not disappointed. It's against the rules to use wheels in a running race.

– But anyway, don't you think that rule seems unfair?

– Not at all. I won last year when I trained hard for several years and intensively for two months. Still, I collapsed at the finish line. This year I have been training for a few months, and before that has been bound in bed for over six months and lost all my fitness. Still, I would had been able to run another mile

today. So there's no doubt that I had an advantage from the wheelchair and not a disadvantage. Obviously I'd should be disqualified.

– Añeđliká, how does it feel to win this year?

– It feels wonderful. Last year I came in at 38th place which gave me a taste for more. I decided then that I would win this year and have put the whole year on it. I've even hired a professional trainer to give me tips.

– Yet it was close that you came as number two. It was clear that you reduced speed at the end. Was it because you wanted your best friend Lisa to win? Is your friendship more important than your dream to win?

– I also knew that Lisa would be disqualified, so she was never a threat to my dream. But I slowed down because I was exhausted and didn't want to collapse like Lisa did last year. I knew I had a gap behind me.

– But had you been able to win over her if you really tried?

– That we will never know. What I know is that it then would had become a really tough fight. Lisa is the most stubborn person I know. Last time it was me who drove her to be here, and it almost killed her. But this time, I'm innocent, this was entirely her idea.

– No, it wasn't at all. It's your fault that I lined up again.

– That's not true! Aren't you lying now?

– Don't you remember what you said to me the first time in the hospital when I was so sad because I just found out that I would end up in a wheelchair? You said I would not have to run a marathon again. So I have to prove to you that I still can!

– You're right, I indeed said that. But I didn't mean it as a challenge. You're amazing, Lisa! When you decide something, you let nothing stop you. That's exactly what I just said.

At the award ceremony Añeđliká saw how Lisa asked the officials something. When it was time for Añeđliká to get her gold medal, it was Lisa who hung it

around her neck. Añeďliká asked Lisa to come up on the podium and soon they stood together and posed for photographers.

Lisa had truly found her peace in the wheelchair.



CHAPTER 29

# Consoler



Monica came home from the hospital with tears in her eyes. Her husband Robert tried to comfort her but was just as sad himself.

– What are we going to do with Debra? she sobbed. This is the second time she tried to kill herself! This is our daughter, we must do something!

– First, we must look through her room and look for everything she can hurt herself with. We also need to get her to talk to a shrink. It might help.

– She refuses to do that. I have already tried. Oh, how I tried.

They entered into Debra's room and searched it from floor to ceiling to find things she could hurt herself with. Robert found a disc with a singer on the cover that had very long, blue hair.

– Do you know who this is? he asked.

– That's a new singer that Debra has started to listen to. She seems to like her music, she plays it all the time.

– I saw her in a newspaper the other day. She won the New York Marathon but was disqualified because she was in a wheelchair. Do you understand? A wheelchair! Just like Debra.

Monica began to think about a desperate plan to save her daughter. She sat down and wrote a letter. She didn't know where she was going to send it, but hoped that it would get there anyway.

~ ~ ~

Lisa received a mysterious letter. It was addressed to "The singer Lisa with blue hair" and it had actually arrived. It said:

*"Dear Lisa.*

*You don't know me and I don't know you. I know I have no right to ask you about anything, or even to send this letter. But I'm a desperate mother of a fourteen year old daughter and don't know what to do with her. I beg you to at least read this letter. If you then gets angry and throws it away because what I write isn't your concern, then I will understand and I promise not to be disappointed at you.*

*My daughter's name is Debra and she were damaged so severely in a fall a few months ago that she had been paralysed in her legs. She most likely have to sit in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Right now she is so depressed that she had already tried to commit suicide twice. I have done everything I can think of to try to comfort her and make her believe in her future again, but I don't seem to get through to her.*

*Now I have seen that you seem to be her idol, because she always listens to your music. You have apparently also suffered an accident and uses a wheelchair. Now I wonder if you could help*

*me to help Debra. Perhaps if you were to write a letter to her, you would get through to her because you're her idol, and also has the same problem she has. If you don't want to write to her, maybe you can give me some advice on what to say to her as consolation.*

*That said, I understand completely if you ignore this letter. You must get lots of letters from all sorts of crazy people that asks you of all kind of things. But if you find in your heart that you want to help me then you'll find my address and telephone number below.*

*Monica, mother of Debra"*

Lisa read the letter twice and got tears in her eyes. Brago came into the room and saw that she was sad and became uneasy. What kind of disaster had happened now? Lisa said nothing, just handed over the letter. He read it slowly and understood most of it. He looked at Lisa, who blew her nose and wiped her eyes.

– You will write to her, right?

Brago was now speaking english instead. Lisa shook her head.

– No? But ... Wait, you are going to go there, right?

– Sure it's stupid to drive there and talk to her? I should just ignore the letter, right? It's like she writes not my concern.

Brago looked at her. My thoughts went back and forth and he became more and more confused on what to say. Then suddenly he realised what Lisa really wanted.

– Yes, it would be stupid to go there. It only costs a lot of money and will take several days, maybe a week. And you have so little money and time. Or wait, that's not true, is it? You have lots of money and all the time in the world. But I don't want you to go because I will be afraid that you can't manage it by yourself. But you've always wanted to be independent. But it's stupid to do it anyway.

– Thank you for your understanding, love. I'll leave tomorrow.

– I've already understood that. Promise me to take care of yourself, take it easy on the road and call me every time you take a break so I know you are fine. For I will be worried about you anyway.

– I promise!

It took her two full days to drive there. She stayed at a motel along the road the first night and then took in at a hotel when she arrived. She thought a lot about how she would handle Debra.

Monica was about to cook and hoped that Debra would eat a little. She had no appetite either nowadays. Monica was happy that she was home from the hospital, but at the same time terrified that she would do something desperate if she was left alone. She sighed heavily and jumped when the doorbell rang. She went and opened the door. Outside it was a young woman with long, blue hair, sitting in a wheelchair. Monica gasped in surprise.

– Hi there, it's me who is Lisa. Are you by any chance Monica, mother of Debra?

– Oh my God, have you come here yourself? I never thought you would do that!

– Your letter touched me so deeply. Can I have a word with Debra?

– Of course. Wait here.

She went into her daughter's room and Lisa heard how she told Debra that she had a visitor, but that Debra didn't want to come. Monica drove her out in the wheelchair although Debra protested loudly. Lisa made a face when she saw it.

– Hi, Debra. Nice to meet you! I'm Lisa, I heard that you are one of my fans?

Debra was too shocked to say anything, she just gazed without believing her eyes. It was actually her idol, on her porch and in a wheelchair!

– How about you and I take a little ride just you and me? It's OK for your parents, I hope?

She looked at Monica and Robert who nodded.

– I'd love to go with you if I may, Debra said eagerly. But how?

– We can handle that, just come here.

Monica grabbed the handles of the wheelchair of Debra but Lisa stopped her with a hand signal.

– I'm sure that Debra can drive her own wheelchair. Come on, Debra! Let's go now!

Lisa rolled down the ramp and into the street. After some hesitation, Debra followed her down the ramp and over to the pickup that was standing there. Lisa opened the door and helped her inside, and then lifted her wheelchair into the car behind her. And as if it were the most natural then she wheeled around the car, pulled herself and her wheelchair inside the car and drove away. Monica and Robert watched in amazement when she drove away. She had done it all without anyone's help!

– So where do you want to go, Debra? Tell me any place you like a lot but that you have not visited in a long time.

– I want to eat at McDonalds downtown. But I have not been there since ... well ...

– You mean since you ended up in a wheelchair. We'll fix that!

She followed Debra's directions and soon found the restaurant. She parked in the handicap box and slid out. She took out Debra's wheelchair but let her pull herself out of the car and into the wheelchair. There was an outdoor platform outside the restaurant had a high edge which seemed impossible to pass. Lisa wolf whistled and called for someone to help Debra up. Two of the staff came out and lifted her up. Then they turned back to help Lisa too, but to their and Debra's surprise, she had already got up on her own. Lisa rolled in and started ordering food for them both. Soon, they sat and ate, and it was obvious that Debra enjoyed the food.

– Your mother wrote a letter to me that you are a bit depressed. It seems that you think that because of the wheelchair you can't do things yourself anymore. Is that so?

– Well yes, no one understands me! The wheelchair is like hell! I can't do any of the things I did before anymore. Nobody understands me! Not even mom!

– But I do understand you. You have to believe in me because I also sit in the same boat. But you know what, you are wrong. Let me tell you how I got here. Yesterday morning I woke up and got into the wheelchair by myself, because I didn't want to wake my husband who was sleeping. I went to the bathroom and I showered myself. Then I fixed my own breakfast, put myself in my car and drove here. Myself. You can also take care of yourself if you just want.

– But everything is so difficult. I can't do it! Can't you get it!

– You don't need to explain to me that it's hard. I already know that. Everything takes so much longer time to do when I do it myself. It's not easy, I'm not saying that either. But it's possible, believe me. You just need some tools, grab bars and such. And a lot of guts!

– But mom don't understand. She doesn't get it at all!

– Your mother loves you, why else would she write to me? But do you think she's the only mom who doesn't get it? Hey, you're fourteen years old! No mother understands how a teenager thinks.

Debra started laughing. It sounded like music to Lisa's ears.

~ ~ ~

Monica and Robert started to get worried as the hours went by. Could they really trust this Lisa? But she finally returned in the late afternoon with Debra, who seemed like a completely different person. She was bubbling over about everything they had done during the day.

– First we were at McDonalds, and Lisa forced the staff to lift me up! Then she called the manager and demanded that they would build a ramp, and he promised to do it until next time. After that we went to the zoo. Did you know that the lions

have children? They are really cute. And you can go in with the lambs and pet them! We just have to go there again, please?

Debra thanked Lisa exuberant, said goodbye and then rolled into her room again. Monica walked with Lisa to the car, full of questions.

– What did you say to her anyway? She's a totally changed child! What shall I do so that she will continue to be this happy?

– The first thing you must do is to stop raping her.

– WHAT! What did you just say? I've never done that! Did she claim that?

– I *saw* you do it. Well, not literally. When I came here she didn't want get out from her room so you grabbed her wheelchair and drove her out against her wishes. If she didn't sit in a wheelchair, would you have dragged her out by force? Would you?

– Of course not.

– That's exactly what you did today. You violated her and used her wheelchair as a weapon against her. How will she learn to be happy with her life in a wheelchair, if you use it against her every day?

– I have not thought about it like that before. But it's true after all. It's horrible, what I have done! What should I do instead?

– You must get her to do things herself. Inspire her to explore all possibilities of her wheelchair. Because every thing she did before that she finds out that she can still do will make her happier. It worked for me, anyway. I don't need help with everyday routines anymore. Make sure she can take care of herself. It's a parent's job, to prepare their children to be independent, not to take care of them for their whole life.

– Yes that's of course right.

– Stop thinking of her as disabled, think of her as any normal teenager, and treat her accordingly.

Monica was in shock when Lisa got into her car and drove away. Somehow, it was her own fault that Debra felt so bad that she tried to kill herself. How could she not had understood that! But now that would change for ever, that was quite clear.

~ ~ ~

Lisa was on the stage again. But this time, she was pretty nervous though. This was the first time she should not sing, but to give a speech in front a hall full of wheelchair users. Would she really be up for this?

– Hi everyone, Lisa is my name, the forest is my habitat. Yes, I actually live on a farm near the forest and still loves long walks in it. But today, I'm supposed to tell you what it's like to sit in a wheelchair. You apparently have all recently got one and are feeling depressed over it. So Jacob over there, which apparently is the head of this rehab centre, wants me to explain to you that it isn't at all difficult to live with a wheelchair. Life goes on without major problems after you got used to it. But I'm not going to sit here and lie to you! This wheelchair is my worst enemy and has made my life a living hell! That's how it is!

Jacob startled at her words! What was she doing, this was contrary to what she was supposed to do?

– Life has been really hard on me, you know. I don't know how many times I have been knocked to the ground. Recently, it was a drunk driver who knocked me on a pedestrian crossing and left me on my back in a hospital bed, paralysed from the waist down. But I've been beaten to the ground before, like that time in a café in Soranjo when a thug with lots of muscles began to pick fights with everyone and destroying the interior. When I kindly asked him to calm down, he knocked me with his fist right in my head. Bang, there I was laying flat on the floor with a sore chin of the punch and pain in my neck from the hard floor.

Jacob began to wonder if he would interrupt her, this just got worse and worse it seemed.

– So this village, Soranjo, is located on the planet Knimbo. Yes, it's true, I have lived on that planet for a few years. Do you know why I went there? Well, I was so

in love with an alien who was so incredibly handsome and sexy, so I followed him there. But he turned out to be a male chauvinist so I gave up and left him. I had to build a hut in a forest and live off fish I got up. All I had was a backpack with a few changes of clothes and not one dime in my pockets. I was as much an alien that it's possible to be, I didn't even know the language that well. Can you get further down in life? What do you think?

All hummed in agreement.

– I was totally depressed and rolled me in the bitterness over my destiny. The bitterness grew into a black, bottomless sea that I was on the verge of drowning in. But then I got a couple of true friends who gave me a kick in my butt so I took hold of my life. I used everything I had, feminine cunningness, my singing voice, a lot of guts and even took advantage of that I had a decent body. Three months later I had earned my first million, converted to U.S. dollars.

A murmur went through the crowd that was glued to her lips.

– I namely managed to get myself a gig at the arena on Grimja where I pulled in nearly 33 000 people who listened to me. Since then I have earned several millions from records and tours.

Lisa paused and drank some water.

– Can you imagine that when I was a child, I had decided to commit suicide? I guess it's several of you who thought of the idea to commit suicide, maybe some of you have already tried. Guess **they** have been trying to convince you that it's stupid. I'm taking about **they** who don't use a wheelchair. What do **they** know how it feels? Nothing, they understand nothing! But I understand. When I was sixteen, I sat at a metro station in NY with a needle in my hand. I was looking for a vein to stick it in to kill my self. Life was over, I had no future. Kaput. Finito.

It had become so quiet in the room so one could hear the heavy breathing of the audience and Jacob's silent groaning.

– What would have happened if I hadn't been stopped on time? I had never been here before you! Never gone to another planet! Never been in love! Never experienced all those sees of excited fans from the stage! Never been able to buy

my beloved farm! Think about it, next time you want to kill yourself. There is *always* a future, and *that* you want to experience, *believe* me! I *know*!

Lisa emphasised each word she said as she pointed onto her spellbound audience.

– Anyone wondering what I did when I was knocked down at the café by that muscle-fuelled thug? I stood up immediately and threw him down to the floor with a judo move so he broke his neck. He has never picked a quarrel with anyone since then, I know that with certainty because I married him later and love him above everything else. He even moved here to Earth for me.

Lisa let the audience mutter for a while.

– And when I got knocked down by the drunken driver and ended up in this chair, what do you think I did then? I stood up and fought back, of course. This wheelchair is my enemy, and will always be that. So I declared war against it and defeated it. Defeated my enemy! My enemy at the café, I got married to and love him. My enemy The Wheelchair has become my best tool to take care of myself. Never let yourself be defeated by your enemies, fight for your life instead and start living again!

Now, a thunder of applauses broke out and Jacob puffed out some air.

– I guess that **they** say to you all the time that you *can*. You *can* take care of yourselves. You *can* have a good life. You *can*. But **they** don't get it! "Can you? Can you make it?" It's the wrong question, so just ignore when **they** keeps talking about it! The question you must ask yourself is "Do I *want*?". "What do I *want* to do?" Once you know that, just do it. If you *want*, you *can*. Believe me, I know. I live that life every day. So start thinking about what you *want* now and then make sure to do it. Thanks for listening!

The applause almost tore down the roof, as if she was on one of her concerts. Jacob came up to her and thanked her.

– Thank you, Lisa. Now I understand that I belong to **them**. Does anyone have any questions for her?

– I have a question. You've said "defeat your enemy" and "if you want you can". It sounds really good, but is so fuzzy and I don't understand what to do in practice.

– Well, I'm an artist. I am fuzzy. But, sure, something concrete. Say "Don't touch my wheelchair". I see that **they** are standing around the walls, waiting to take you back to your rooms. Refuse the help, beat them on their fingers if they touch your wheelchair! Because even if the centre here own the wheelchair, then it's *yours* when you sit in it. You *want* life to be like before, right? So you *can* get around by yourself in the wheelchair with the help of your arms. Just do it! Never let anyone touch your wheelchair!

Murmur in the room was almost deafening when all start commenting her words between them.

– Moreover. If you come into a situation where it simply can't make it by yourself, then you can ask for help and allow someone to touch your wheelchair. But if it's a situation that you regularly end up in, demand change! Is it at home, apply for grants for disabled facilities, if it's somewhere else, contact the top manager and demand that the place should be handicap adapted. By law, they must do it, otherwise you can sue them for a million in damages. You will win. Don't sit and wait for someone to help you, it's only *you* who can help yourself. Like for example this stage, there are two steps to come up here. On a disability centre!?! Unacceptable. Completely unacceptable! I talked to Jacob and he has promised to fix a ramp immediately. And until then ...

Lisa rolled over to the steps, aimed and rolled down. There was a murmur from the crowd.

– It's that easy. And then up again. Then maybe you drive straight ahead, pulls back and lifts the front wheels first.

Lisa got the front wheels on the first stage but then, when she tried to continue she tipped backwards and fell out of her wheelchair. The crowd got frightened and a member of staff rushed forward to help and reached for her wheelchair to lift it up.

– DON'T TOUCH MY WHEELCHAIR! My God, have you been asleep? Have not heard a word of what I just said? Did I asked for help, or what?

He jumped up and flinched backwards. Lisa rolled on the floor to the chair, raised it up and pulled herself up. Then she rolled back to the stairs up to the stage, but this time she climbed backwards instead.

– That was what I wanted to show. You climb stairs backwards. If it's just one step you can do it forwards, is it more, you will just fall down. Don't be scared, to fall is just part of the training. Was this concrete enough for you?

The crowd clapped and cheered over her tricks. But a girl in the back snorted and said an ugly word. Lisa noticed it and asked her if she had a question too. The girl replied in a sour voice:

– Hi, it is easy for you to sit there and brag. But for me it doesn't matter, the only thing I want is to die anyway, and it will happen as soon as these guards make a single mistake. That's the only thing that I long for.

Lisa got a knot in her stomach and tried to find something to say, but the girl just turned her back. Jacob quickly interrupted so that no one else would get the same thoughts.

– Then I thank you, Lisa, for coming here. It was very inspiring to hear from someone who is handicapped how it is to live with their disability.

– You still don't get it, it's obvious. I'm not handicapped! Why do you think that? I'm paralysed, but not handicapped, because I manage very well on my own.

– You're probably right there too. Give her a round of applause, she's worth it!

– He thinks I'm done, Lisa said with a foxy expression and pointed at him with her thumb. He has not listened to what I said. I told you, I was first and foremost an artist. You didn't think I'm going to leave without singing a few songs? Would you like to hear me sing?

All shouted in approval, so Lisa started singing. She had her guitar with her so she took it and enchanted the audience with her songs that life was worth living and that you must fight against your shadows. When at last she was finished, she

received a resounding applause. Then the helpers came forward to help everyone back, but to Lisa's delight most of them said "don't touch my wheelchair" and left their helper behind with crestfallen faces.

Lisa hurried down from the stage and rolled up to the girl who had talked last and asked to talk to her a little.

– Why? My life is already over. Worry about those who want to live instead!

– I care about you, for real. Believe me! Here, take my phone number. Call me when you feel sad and you will see that you will soon feel better. You may call at any time of day, I promise!

The girl snorted again but took the note and then let herself to be rolled away. Jacob came up to Lisa to explain.

– That's Ashley. Unfortunately, I would say that she is a completely hopeless case. All psychologists and doctors here say that it is all about when she kills herself and not if. Try not to get emotionally involved with Ashley, one can not save everyone, sadly.

Except for the incident with Ashley, Lisa was very pleased with how things had gone at the rehabilitation centre. She had come up with the idea to sell lecture to people in wheelchairs after her conversation with Debra. She was still in touch with Debra to check that everything went well for her. Debra had got over her depression and had even gone to the school prom to dance. The guys had been standing in line to dance with her, because they lifted her up out of the chair and then could hold her very close as they danced. She had never had so much fun before, she said. Ashley turned out to be much more difficult to help. She started calling in the nights and cry, but thanks to Lisa's persistency she managed to get Ashley to feel good in the end, and it felt really good to be able to help those who had it really hard.

But one day, Debra called to Lisa. She had never done before.



CHAPTER 30

# School Sports



The coach and the captain of the school basketball team went to Debra and asked to talk to her. She was surprised but went with them to a break room. The coach, who was called Mark White, appealed to her.

– It's like this, Debra, that year's school tournament will be basketball. We want you to be a part of the basketball team, because we believe that the school have a chance to win the whole tournament if you would join it. What do you say?

– You must be crazy? Besides that I'm two years younger than everyone else in the team, I'm a girl and also I'm sitting in a wheelchair.

– Well, I've seen you play already, before you ended up in a wheelchair. You can hit the basket from twenty feet without effort, and closer to home, you never miss. Moreover, it's wheelchair basketball that we shall play. You will be awesome, because I've seen how fast and smooth you are in a wheelchair. With you on the team we can't lose!

– Please join the team, the team captain Gary Powell said, who was the school's best player. We really need you. All other teams have taken in a pro player in their team, for it's allowed to have any one person from outside the school. But with your wheelchair skills we can neutralise their pro.

Debra was really surprised and at the same time very happy. They really wanted to have her, and her disability had suddenly become an advantage. She thought for a bit and came to think of another person who was even better than she was in a wheelchair. They was actually allowed to have one outside player.

– It's a deal, I'm in. But how about we ask Lisa to join too? You know the singer who also won the New York Marathon in a wheelchair. She is more cruel than I in that wheelchair!

– I've heard of her, but why would she accept? She will only laugh at us. You may call her yourself, because I won't do it.

– Sure, Debra replied.

She picked up her phone, dialled a number and put the phone on the speaker.

– Hello, this is Lisa.

– This is Debra, hello yourself. I would like to ask you a question.

– What's it all about, Lisa said with concern in her voice. It isn't anything serious I hope? I can drive up to you if you feel bad again!

– Oh no, it's nothing of the sort. It's the school's basketball team that wants me on the team at the school tournament. That's really fun! It actually is wheelchair

basketball. What would you say about joining in to strengthen us? It will be great fun, I'm sure! Please say yes!

The coach and the captain looked at Debra with surprise pasted all over their faces. She seemed to know Lisa, but she was a superstar! Lisa thought for a bit, and actually she really had no plans for herself for the next few months. It also felt challenging to try something new from the wheelchair.

– That sounds really fun, I'm in. But I hope the coach can accept that I never played basketball before. I don't even know if I can hit the basket.

– It's all fine, said the coach. We need people who can ride a wheelchair. If you aren't good enough on the court, you can certainly do some good to train us in handling the wheelchair. You are so welcome on the team.

So it became. Lisa went to Debra's city and moved into a hotel. Then they started practicing together. Lisa became a real asset because she showed several ways to handle the wheelchair that the others had not dreamt of. And Debra turned out to be really good, she was quick to roll, skilled in manoeuvring and she hit the basket almost every time she took the shot. Lisa was even better with the wheelchair, but could not get the ball in the basket. Both of them thought this was among the most fun they've ever done.

A week later, the team captain Gary had something to say during a briefing. He stood up in front of everyone and called for silence. All stopped talking and looked at him.

– We need to choose a team captain for the team as well, Gary said.

– But that's you already, Gary, said Mark. You've always been the team captain since you are the team's top player.

– That's just it. I don't think I'm the best player in this team. I think Lisa or Debra should be captain of the wheelchair basketball team.

– In that case it must be Debra, Lisa said. I stink at hitting the target.

– You got a point, Mark said. All in favour to appoint Debra as captain in place of Gary, raise your hand!

All raised their hands. Debra could not believe her eyes. She was moved to tears by the honour of being team captain. The whole team lifted her out of the chair and hoisted her into the air.

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The sports hall was full with students who wanted to watch the first match of the tournament. All from Debra's school had to go to the neighbouring town to be in the other school's sports hall. Lisa had let the team use her pickup truck to transport wheelchairs, team shirts and other materials. The other team's captain was a pro player named Jackson. He played in the NBA and taunted the opposing team, and especially because they had two girls in their team. He said something derogatory that women should stay in front of the stove and shouldn't believe they could play basketball. Lisa whispered to Debra not to care, they'd probably find out soon! Debra replied nervously, after all, a little psyched out of the comments. She knew that it was extremely important for the principal of her school that they won. She had been in a long, serious talk with him in his office the day before. Moreover, the whole team would get a big reward if they actually won. So she felt a big pressure not to fail.

Soon the starting whistle blew. The referee tossed the ball between Debra and Jackson. Debra had no chance, but Jackson took it away. He took off towards his opponent's basket but Debra caught up and went around him and then she simply took the ball from him while he was fighting with his wheelchair. Then she set off toward the basket. None of the others managed to catch up with her so she had plenty of time to put the first ball in the basket. Jackson came rolling way too late with a long face.

The game continued in similarly way. Lisa and Debra rolled circles around the others and ruled the entire first period. Debra did nearly all points and in half time the score was 52-40 to the visiting team. Mark pulled up the tactics for the second and final period during the break.

– This is really good. We have a big lead halfway into the match, and that's against last year's basketball champion who are also reinforced with Jackson. The only thing I have to complain about is that it's a boring match both for the audi-

ence and for you. It's Debra and Lisa, who does all the job because you are far superior in wheelchairs. Can't we get some more players in the game?

– I'm guessing the opponents right now trying to figure out how to stop Lisa and me. What do you say about that me and Lisa attracts the defence and then the rest rolls with the ball? You all scream that you should pass one of us, but nobody does it but passes someone else.

– Good idea, said Lisa. And as Plan B in case they see through our tactics is that Debra and I circle the opponents and block them from attacking or returning home.

– That sounds good, let's do it, Mark said. At the same time Lisa and Debra will try to hold tight backwards so that we don't get too many points against us. Now let's go out and win this!

In the second period, it appeared that they had guessed right. The opponents was all on to Lisa and Debra who pretended to be prepared to get the ball. With three to four people busy the rest of Debra's team rolled up in the middle and continued to score. At the same time the opponents never got any real chance to get close to the basket, as they always became blocked.

Soon it was as Lisa guessed, that they let off the marks and backed and managed to hold tight backwards. Lisa screamed "Plan B" and turned the game back again, by simply standing in the way of the opponents when they tried to play. Debra's teammates got to run around almost all alone under the basket and continued scoring. Their opponents became increasingly frustrated by not being able to ride their wheelchairs and became more and more aggressive. They were constantly blocked by especially Lisa because she was so much faster than they were.

Finally Jackson became raged and ran at full speed right into the side of her wheelchair, even though none of them had the ball. Lisa rolled over several times on the floor while her wheelchair fell and slid off in a different direction. Gary stood up and walked angrily to Jackson who also stood up. The referee blew the whistle and soon everyone stood up and argued while the referees tried to intervene. Everyone's wheelchairs ended up in a big pile and it was really messy. Then, the referee noted that Lisa was still laying down on the floor without even trying to

stand up, cursing in a foreign language. He blew the whistle again and made signs that Jackson was cast out of the match as he hurried to Lisa.

– Are you injured? he asked.

– You're damn right I am, she replied. I can't walk, don't you get it!

– Are you hurting anywhere?

– Just in my pride.

– Try to stand up in any case.

He and a linesman started to pull her arms to get her up. She looked at them with disbelief when they obviously failed to get her legs to carry her.

– What the heck are you doing? Just give me my wheelchair please.

The judge got her wheelchair and raised it up. She dragged herself into position and pulled herself up into in by her arms. The referee gave her the ball and said that she had received four penalties for foul and unsportsmanlike behaviour. She asked if she must throw herself because she knew she would miss all the throws. When she learned that she could give away the penalty throws to a teammate, she threw the ball to Debra. She rolled to the penalty line and took aim.

– It's allowed to stand up when you throw penalties, the referee said.

– Well, that's good to know.

She threw the first ball and hit the ring.

– Why are you sitting down, then? You have a better chance if standing up.

– I can't stand up.

Debra took aim again when the opposing team's coach shouted "Protest, protest". The referee signed to him to come up together with Mark.

– What is the problem?

– Hey, isn't it obvious? The opponents have at least two disabled players in their team, those two girls. They have an unfair advantage of being used to drive a wheelchair.

– Are you serious? You protest that the opponents have two disabled players in a wheelchair basketball match? The idea is actually that all should be disabled, it's the very purpose. Protest rejected! Please, throw the ball now.

Debra landed the rest of the shots. Then the rest of the match were just a painful trip for the opponents, even though Lisa and Debra become tired and almost stopped playing so that their teammates had to do all the attacking and scoring. The game ended 122-86 and Debra was honoured as a hero at school. Jackson's desire that the whole game would be forgotten was in vain as one by one of Debra's schoolmates had filmed the entire match and put it out on the Internet.

The tournament continued in similar style. No team came close to defeating them, although some matches were tough. When the tournament was over, they stood as the winner, and the principal let the whole team go to Disney World over the weekend as a reward. Debra amused herself royally there, and discovered that almost all of the attractions were available even though she was sitting in a wheelchair.

Lisa returned home instead and felt even more satisfied with her live. Not only this had been really fun, it was enjoyable thanks to the wheelchair, not in spite of it.



CHAPTER 31

# Epilogue



Lisa's popularity grew to matchless heights. Newspapers across the country loved to write about her. Not just because she played her exotic music, but also because she won two marathons, one in a wheelchair. The fact that she was married to an alien and was the only inhabitant of the Earth who actually had lived on another planet just made her even more interesting to write about. Her album was sold in large quantities. This together with the incomes from the tour meant that Lisa could sleep well again.

Brago also began to make money. He kept working as a bouncer and his music career also continued, and although he never became as popular as Lisa, he was still quite well-known and earned a lot of his own money as well. Lisa helped him to plan and book his own tour, which drew quite a large crowd of fans.

Lisa bought a couple of horses for themselves to ride around on their land. The fact that she was sitting in a wheelchair, she didn't see as an obstacle. She also continued to sing from her wheelchair. She performed in nightclubs and bars, and continued to record albums and go out on tours. Now and then she gave her inspiring lectures on various disability homes. She didn't asked too much for it, as it was mostly because she thought it was nice to inspire others who were suffering. The money just flowed in increasing numbers.

She kept in contact with Debra and Ashley and was happy that they had overcame their depressions and was truly happy now. Lisa also joined a club in Jacksonville playing wheelchair basketball, and the club managed to win a gold medal in a national league, partly thanks to Lisa.

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Añeđliká continued to be popular, but started to take it more easy when her daughter got older. She had earned so much money that she didn't have to work anymore, but still continued her regular job as a software developer. Unlike Lisa, she had acquired a solid education.

Her father, Treïstán, had found his dream house in a suburb of Jacksonville. It was a small mansion with a low wall around the giant garden. He hired a cook who was simultaneously a housekeeper, and a combined butler and chauffeur. Both of them became fond of the aged knimbonian as he was always kind to them. The pay was generous and Treïstán could finally relax and indulge in being a full-time grandfather.

Far away on Knimbo Anrendo and Adale was living at their and their relatives' guest house and helped when it was needed. But most of the time they just took it easy and made saw their investment in the guest house be fruitful.

Residents of Soranjo had finally realised that strangers was not a bad thing, but could contribute to many good things. Even Maixno had begun to reassess his views on races, as he proudly led up his son in the church when he married his Klirna.

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Lisa finally got an offer for a surgery with a 50% probability that she would be able to move her legs again. But to the doctor's amazement, she turned it down, mostly because there was a risk that the injury would get worse. As she put it herself:

– I don't think the advantage of being able to walk again outweighs the risk of becoming worse.

The doctor found it hard to understand that someone that was paralysed could turn down an ever so slight chance to walk again.

But Lisa was not like others. She would always remain a mysterious creature who had learned to find happiness where others only saw problems.

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# Important persons

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|---|---|
| Elisabeth “Lisa” Green | Main character of the book. |
| Liënam Krevna | Lisa’s first boyfriend |
| Brago Azendja | Lisa’s second boyfriend |
| Añeđliká Croëlño Donson | Lisa’s BFF, born on Knimbo but living on Earth. |
| Christoffer (Chris) Donson | Añeđliká’s husband and biggest fan. |
| Treïstán Croëlño | Añeđliká’s father and business man on Knimbo. |
| Anrendo och Adale | Café owner in Soranjo and Lisa’s friends. |
| Draëk V. Frensco | Director of the Space Board on Knimbo. |
| Juno Fring | Secretary of Draëk. |
| Riëvan Crijano | Media mogul in Grimja on Knimbo. |
| Maixno Klavreno | Richest man in Soranjo |