

## The Adventures of Christine and Tyler

### I. Queen of the Universe

On most days, Christine was perfectly happy being Queen of the Universe. Her workload was light, the pay was great and, most importantly, in her spare time she was able to keep an eye on, and have a little fun with, her erstwhile friends, family and associates back on planet Earth. Technically, she was subordinate to her son, Tyler, but they didn't have that much contact; and in any case, their relationship was much better than it had been in their Earth days.

Occasionally, her subjects asked her to adjudicate a controversy or settle a question, but because they were so incredibly agreeable and non-confrontational, that was very rare. She ruled a sophisticated and peaceful civilization which had amicably settled hundreds of star systems and worlds. Their science and culture were enlightened. Their worlds were as close to utopia as you could get; and as far as Christine could tell, they had only made two big mistakes in their long history.

The first mistake happened a long, long time ago. All of her subjects believed that eons ago they had done something terribly wrong. No one knew what it was, but the legend held that as a result of this unnamed and unnamable transgression, their god had abandoned them. He found them unworthy and just left. Split. He told them that some day they would venture out into the universe and find him. That would prove they were ready to have him return. He would be waiting for them somewhere.

Christine had always thought that was an interesting insight into the nature of her people. Their belief that when their god found them unworthy, he left and told them to come find him when they were ready for him to return, reflected the good natured passivity of her subjects. She realized that most folks back on Earth would have wondered why, if their god had been angry with them, he didn't kick them off the planet, or vaporize them, or drown them, or something a little more traditional and in keeping with the idea of how a god is supposed to behave. But her people had gotten a second chance. For all of their recorded history they had

kept the legend alive, cherishing the complex pictogram design that their god had promised to leave for them somewhere out in the universe as a sign that they had finally found him when they came looking for him. Someday, they knew, they would embark on the intergalactic search to find their lost god. They had worked the symbol into their art and architecture and every native knew it and worshipped it.

Eventually, they decided that it was time to seek out their god and ask him to return. They were convinced that the heroic effort of scouring the universe would prove that they were worthy. They sent teams of scouts to search for the sign that would lead them to their god.

And that was when they made their second mistake.

By an incredible coincidence, the arrival of the alien search team in Christine's neighborhood coincided with the flourishing of her son Tyler's career as a serial graffiti 'artist.' Most evenings he was out late, festooning the area with his personal logo. He spray-painted it on fences, buildings, storefronts, bus shelters and rubbish bins. Christine had warned him to knock it off before someone complained. Nick, Christine's ex and Tyler's father, had told him that if he were caught, Tyler would pay for damages out of his own pocket. And even the policeman, who once caught Tyler in the act in the wee hours of the morning, asked him not to do it again.

Tyler's school was becoming concerned. His guidance counselor called Christine to tell her that Tyler had defaced the frontispiece of the school library's copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* with a brazen, multi colored version of his logo.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Christine. "I'll replace it."

"That won't be necessary," said the counselor. "We're so delighted that Tyler likes literature. That's the important thing. We'll simply get a new one."

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your point of view, Tyler's personal logo was identical to the symbol that the aliens had been searching the cosmos for. And when they saw Tyler's handiwork arrayed all over town, it looked to them like runway beacons and landing lights directing them to their goal.

Ecstatically they messaged their home world, "Mission Accomplished," and set out making arrangements to effect the return of their god to his rightful place.

They managed to establish contact with Tyler by means of his omnipresent iPod; and Tyler, vastly amused by the entire proceedings, and delighted to have a host of powerful and anxious to please aliens at his disposal, played along. During that period Christine had been mystified by the sudden improvement in Tyler's grades. It had been just like him to get the aliens to do his homework for him.

The aliens were convinced that they had indeed found their god. Tyler's imperious nature was an important clue, especially his apparent disdain for what appeared to be the normal behavioral standards of the primitive civilization he had chosen to hide out in. Further, it was obvious that his mother worshipped him and did his bidding without hesitation. And just as the legend said, she was truly a font of great knowledge. They watched her at work and recorded hours of her discourses with her disciples. They *knew* they had found their god and his mother.

The aliens were a little frustrated by Tyler's seeming indifference to returning to their home planet. They thought that Tyler was testing them to ensure they were worthy of him, and the greatest test took place when one day Nick took Tyler on a male bonding weekend fishing trip and forbade Tyler to outfit himself with any of his usual technological life support systems such as cell phone and iPod. The aliens, unable to contact Tyler, became desperate and visited Christine while she was having a relaxing soak in the tub and enjoying a bottle of wine and an old Neil Diamond CD, as well as Tyler's extended absence.

Christine wasn't sure if it was the wine or *Holly Holy*, but at the moment the aliens intruded on her reverie, she had found herself in an exceptionally agreeable mood; and when they informed her that they wanted her and Tyler to accompany them to their home world where the two of them could be "worshipped properly," and called her "Queen of All The Galaxies" and "Empress of the Vastness of Space," among other things, she decided to take the offer.