



sylvia vetta

alien invasion?

The carved heads brought good luck to whoever found them – but who had put them there...?

Jayne Peachey knew the exact moment when her life was transformed: 8.00am, September 5, 2014. After locking her front door, she turned, saw the gargoyle head and let out an involuntary scream.

Embarrassed, she clapped her hand over her mouth, her car keys fell, and Ted Perkins from number nine picked them up. Forest Side was usually quiet, apart from doors closing and engines starting, and he had been startled into an unnatural pace by his neighbour's scream.

Jayne pointed to the carving that had appeared on her doorstep.

"I'm so sorry, Mr Perkins. That thing scared me."

Ted picked up the stone head. Pointing to some scratches on the side, he said, "There's some kind of inscription on it."

Ted brought it closer to his glasses to



She began to cry. Ted put his arm around her. He had wanted to do that since the first day he saw her.

Fiona Gold, owner of The Foresters' Arms, told the reporter from The Yorkshire Post, "I opened my door and there he was – sat on my patio."

Twenty-one-year-old Jeremy Mogford was a cub reporter. That

looked just like the stone carving.

Geoffrey liked the photograph and used the piece. Under the picture of the sculpture was a quote from Fiona: "He turned up on Monday between 1.30am and 7.30am and now has pride of place in the bar. We would love to find out who left it so we can thank them."

This proved a lucky break for the young reporter. A few weeks later, leaning proprietarily on the bar of The Foresters' Arms, Jeremy announced, "Drinks all round, to toast Alfred." He pointed his glass to the sculpture, now painted in leafy colours to match the décor. "I want to show my thanks to yon green man for fast forwarding my career."

Then, turning to his fellow drinkers, he said, "Instead of reporting the under elevens football league, I've been assigned to gargoyle investigation. Eight more have appeared – and wherever they appear, they bring good luck."

Fiona winked at him.

The final person to experience that good fortune was a young antiques dealer called Willow Turner. His shop,

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She saw the **gargoyle** head and let out an involuntary **scream**

decipher the letters. His quizzical grin echoed the expression on the carving. Jayne smiled at the resemblance and it occurred to her that Ted could be behind the mysterious gift.

"I think it says 'paradox' – and look, there's another word here... Twinkle?"

Jayne allowed herself to relax.

"Do you think that's its name, Ted? Thanks so much for coming to help me. Why on earth did I react like that to something as innocent as this?"

morning Geoffrey Black, his editor, looked at his eager face and said, "This one is definitely for you."

Geoffrey thought junior members of staff should learn by experience. The stone carving appearing in the pub garden was obviously a publicity stunt. Would his new recruit be fooled?

Fiona led Jeremy into the lounge bar. She handed him a pint and then let out an involuntary giggle – with his open mouth and untidy hair, Jeremy

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Inspired, was in walking distance of the Minster but his taste wasn't for the average tourist. Nor were his price tags. He would either have to change what he sold and be unhappy but solvent, or continue with his passion and go under.

On November 11, he opened the shop door to find a stone carving staring at him. It looked as if it had been chiselled off a Hindu temple. He put it in the shop window but attached a *Not for Sale* sticker.

Before long, several people were eyeing it. They came in to browse.

A tall bespectacled man with a rolled-up newspaper asked, "Where did you get it? Are you by any chance the mystery monster head maker?"

"Why don't you ring The Post? It could be good publicity for you," suggested a lady in her fifties dressed in a hippy kaftan from the seventies.

A man picked up an elegant but heavy Whitefriars lamp base and said, "My wife likes those Scandinavian colours and we need a bedside lamp. I'll take it."

It was like that all day. Willow's luck seemed to have turned and it was a good suggestion to let the newspaper know.

Jeremy Mogford was sceptical, but good came from the feature. A reader glimpsed a dining suite in the background of the picture and it was exactly what she had been looking for. Willow's business blossomed as satisfied customers spread the word, so he kept the lucky carving in the window.

A postgraduate student from Mumbai was walking by when her attention was drawn to it. Was it a Katakali mask? She opened the door and went inside.

Willow was particularly charming. Of



course it had nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that Amita was drop-dead gorgeous. Her gaze revealed the longest eyelashes he had ever seen. As she leaned forward, she flicked her flowing black hair away from her eyes with a graceful gesture.

"I adore that strange mask in your

saucers and should be confiscated because they might contain alien life or secret transmitters. But their lucky new owners refused to part with them.

Meanwhile two off-duty colleagues settled down for a chat, now on their way home in their inter-galactic transporter.

"So, what did you like about Planet 3?" asked Blue.

It was always his first question after a mission – you could set your time piece by it, thought Redd, but he didn't mind as Blue was a valued workmate and friend.

After a pause he replied, "I liked the green parts of the planet... the trees, the flowers, the scenery. What did you like?"

"I liked the ordinary folk, leading their lives. Although it must be hard for them, with time only going forwards on their planet. I couldn't cope with that."

"You won't have to," said Redd, "we won't be going there again – we would only get contaminated."

"Yeah," said Blue, "pity we couldn't

Each **statue** was made lovingly – they have really good **vibrations**

window. Please tell me about him."

So he did. Willow also told her about himself too, and soon she was telling him about herself.

In Forest Side, Jayne and Ted were discussing moving in together.

At The Foresters' Arms, Fiona kissed Jeremy, saying, "I wouldn't be surprised if it was you who made them. It would explain your meteoric rise from cub reporter to local celebrity, living with the hottest woman in Yorkshire!"

"You know what I think?" said Jeremy. "It was that antiques dealer. I Googled him. He has an art degree. His was the last sighting and his carving wasn't as gothic as the others. Maybe the trail was intended to end at his door?"

That wasn't quite the end of the story, however. Conspiracy theories had taken hold of the local media. UFO watchers said the sculptures came from flying

bring those art samples with us – each one was made by an artist who put their heart and soul into the job. They had really good vibrations."

"I know, but our Customs department are so strict. It was fun collecting them."

"It made a change from rock samples," said Redd. "Oh well, at least they didn't just dump them – they let us distribute them at our last docking point. They won't be wasted. Perhaps they'll do more good on their own planet."

They poured themselves another drink, sat back and contemplated arriving home in their own galaxy.

THE AUTHOR SAYS...

"Holding an antique object can connect a person to another time and chance encounters can change lives. In *Alien Invasion* I have enjoyed playing with those ideas."

Sylvia Vetta is appearing at the Stratford Literary Festival on April 26 to talk about her novel *Brushstrokes In Time* (Claret Press, £7.99), a literary love story inspired by the Star Arts

movement in 1970s China, and about *Castaways*, her collection of inspirational true life stories. Visit www.sylviavetta.co.uk

