

Joan de Burgunya (?)

The Virgin, young Jesus and young Saint John

THE UNKNOWN PLANET

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Each night, before going to sleep, a boy's mother read him the same story, which always began the same way:

Once upon a time there was a very nice boy... whose hair was curly like yours..., whose eyes were the same as yours... and with rosy cheeks like yours. One day, this lovely boy was playing with his budgerigar... when suddenly he saw a bright light coming from the sky. At first, the child thought that it was just the sun ... but as the light got nearer, he was able to make out someone who started shouting:

"Attention, attention. I am the captain of the ship. Quick, boy, get on board! We're leaving right away."

And he began the countdown: "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, lift off."

The boy said goodbye to the budgerigar, put on his special fancy dress for space travel, and hurried on board the spacecraft. Just a few seconds into the voyage, the boy heard:

Ding, dong, ding. "This is the captain of the ship speaking. I hope you have had a good voyage. We have now reached our destination... Welcome to the

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On that planet everything was different.

To begin with, the airport workers helped him off the ship down some ropes and onto a magic carpet. The carpet was used to go down to the ground and it was piloted by some flying tourist guides who welcomed him, saying: "Good morning visitor."

And they handed him a catalogue with the recommended places of interest for the visit to the city.

And the boy did this.

He went to the city and he visited the buildings, he walked the streets, until he came to a market where what most surprised him was that instead of money they paid with flowers.

"That'll be two orchids and a carnation," said the shopkeeper to a lady.

And nearby, another lady who was embroidering the street with liquorice and toffee thread was just repeating in German:

"Ich bin ein mensch. Ich bin ein mensch," which means: "I am a man."

On that strange planet people travelled around on a donkey or a horse, but the funniest thing was that they fed these animals with tiger nut milk, chocolate milkshakes or crisps.

Besides cats and dogs, people had monkeys and sheep as pets. A monkey was singing a song in French, *Frère Jacques*.

And the dog was saying to it: "I've always been jealous of your beautiful voice."

He came to a riverbank where some men were fishing without using rods or fishing tackle. One of them warned him: "You're bound to like this planet. It's wonderful. But whatever you do, don't go near the north lake: men, who hate children, come from there. And they kill them."

Upon imagining this, the boy felt like going home to see his mother, who protected him from bad men like these.

His mother continued reading the story:

But this beautiful boy, whose hair was curly like yours, whose eyes were just like yours and whose cheeks were rosy like yours, didn't know how to get out.

The boy began to walk and walk. He crossed rivers. He saw other wonderful cities. And finally he ended up in a cave in the mountains. He was exhausted.

When he had given up and thought that he would never see his mother again, he thought he heard some familiar voices that were speaking in Italian:

"Vieni, Marco Polo, che oggi te invito io un viaggio su la terra."

It was the flying tourist guides!

The boy ran over to where they were, got on the magic carpet and with the help of the airport workers got on board the ship.

Ding, dong, ding. "This is the captain of the ship speaking. We are leaving in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, lift off."

And thus, in a few seconds, this lovely boy got back home.

He arrived just when his brother was asking their mother:

"Mum, how does the story end?"

And the mother read the last page in the book, which said, "And that is the end of the story."

And now boys and girls, it's time to go to sleep.