

The Immigrant By Alan Rosenspan

From as far back as I can remember, I never felt like I truly belonged here.

I used to think it was because I was adopted, and I never knew my real parents. I didn't even know their names. Whenever I showed any interest, my foster parents would answer me vaguely, "They live very far away." And no, it would be impossible to find them.

I was an immigrant, a refugee – but from where?

I was fortunate enough to grow up in a small town that celebrated diversity on almost every public occasion, but it never felt like home. I went to the local high school and participated in sports, drama, and the astronomy club, which was my favorite. I even built my own telescope, which I used every time the night sky was clear.

I loved history, particularly the American Revolution. Sure, I knew how terribly they treated Native Americans, and I couldn't understand how the Constitution simply skipped over the whole issue of slavery.

It didn't make sense that they declared, "all men are created equal" to be self-evident, but they just didn't include all men. Or any women, for that matter.

Still, it fascinated me that a group of people could just get together and decide their destiny... to be free, to be themselves, to be American. I envied them, people who knew their place in the world.

But as much as I admired America – I never really felt like an American. The problem was, I never felt like part of any other group as well. Even though I tried to fit in, I looked different from everyone I knew.

Whenever I read about refugees from Somalia or Syria, I felt sad, but oddly wistful. They were thousands of miles from home, but at least they knew where they came from. I knew nothing of my culture, my history or my past.

Everything changed after a visit to the Barnes & Nobles bookstore in Walpole. I went there often, scouring the science fiction section for new books and new authors. I loved reading fantastic stories about time-travel, mutants, and creatures from other worlds.

This time I stopped at the psychology section, where one book captured my imagination, and I decided to buy it.

I spent the next few hours in my bedroom, racing through each page, without understanding why. Frustrated, I threw it to the floor. It landed face-up, and I saw the title again, *Men are From Mars, Women are from Venus*.

Suddenly, *I knew*.

I glanced down at my short, spindly legs, which I realized were designed for a weaker gravitational pull. I touched my eyes, where I had grown translucent corneas, to protect them from sudden sandstorms. And I realized why I would never feel like an American.

I still didn't know my real parents, or how I arrived here, but now I knew what I was and where I was from. I was an immigrant, perhaps a refugee, or maybe just a visitor.

I went to my telescope and looked up at my home, a faint reddish spec 36 million miles away.