

## The Fourth Leaf

Nobody saw the spaceship land behind the school. Nobody saw when Karl and Klyndor Vex touched hands—the world tilted—just a little—and nothing was the same.

Karl had Treacher Collins Syndrome. His classmates whispered. Some stared. Most looked away. But when Klyndor, an alien from the planet Vulcania, arrived on Earth, he didn't see Karl as strange—he saw him as brave.

It was settled; five days of seeing the world through the others' eyes.

Klyndor opened his eyes to sunlight. He blinked. The ceiling wasn't glowing. The air smelled like buttered toast. Something felt... off. His hands were small. Human hands. Not his own. His heart thudded in Karl's chest.

A door creaked open. "Good morning sweetheart!" said a cheerful woman. "Did you sleep okay?" added a man behind her. Karl's parents. Klyndor stared, then nodded slowly. "Um... yes. Very... cozy." He sat down for toast and jam. No glow-pods. No fizzy cubes. Just sticky sweetness. He chewed carefully, pretending it was normal.

At the start of school, everything felt wrong. Kids sat in rows over glowing rectangles. No one looked up. Klyndor waved. Nothing. Silence. Was Earth always this lonely?

Then, during lunch, a boy named Ethan rolled a soccer ball toward him. "Wanna play?" Klyndor blinked, then grinned. "Yes!" He didn't know the rules, but he ran, kicked, and laughed. For a moment, he forgot about Karl's sadness. He forgot about Vulcania. He was a kid, running under the sun. And that felt good.

Meanwhile, Karl woke up floating. The bed bobbed gently in midair. Outside the window, clouds drifted past like soft pillows.

Klyndor's parents glided into the room, glowing slightly. They didn't speak words—they hummed, and the sounds made Karl feel calm. Safe.

He looked in the mirror. His new face shimmered with blue light. He touched the smooth lines of his Vulcanian skin. "Whoa," he whispered.

Breakfast sparkled. The food was fizzy and changed flavours with each bite. No one stared. No one whispered. They just.. welcomed him.

At Vulcanian school, things were soft and slow. No one shouted. Everyone listened. A girl named Zari sat beside him.

"Your aura feels different," she said gently. "But it's nice."

Karl blushed. "Thanks."

He liked it here. He liked who he was here.

Back on Earth, Klyndor walked through the park. The trees were losing leaves.

Rubbish lay in the grass. Birds flew away from loud music.

Two kids sat on a bench, side by side-but they didn't speak. Their faces glowed with blue screen-light. Tap, swipe, tap.

Klyndor sat nearby. He watched them. Then he looked up. The sky was bright. The wind tickled his hair. A bird landed nearby.

He drew out Karl's notebook, nestled a quiet gift between the pages, and let his words pour onto the paper-soft as starlight, meant only for a friend.

On the last day, they met again.

Karl's heart was full-of glowing homes, humming voices, floating bed, and kind eyes.

Klyndor's heart was full too-of soccer, wind, and a girl's smile.

"Did anyone notice I was gone?" Karl asked softly.

"No," said Klyndor. "But maybe... they noticed themselves."

They shook hands once more.

The word tilted back.

Karl sat in his room. The sun peeked through the curtains. Birds chirped. On his desk, his notebook lay open. A tiny four-leaf clover was pressed between the pages.

Underneath, Klyndor had written:

"Humans live close, but many seem lonely.

They're afraid of what's different.

They forgot to look at the sky, feel the wind, or notice each other.

Their oceans are darker. Their trees are fewer.

They scroll more than they speak.

But today, a girl gave me a four-leaf clover.

She said it brings luck.

Maybe humans can change.

Some say a four-leaf clover is lucky because it's rare.  
But I think it's lucky because it dares to be different.  
So don't be afraid to be the fourth leaf, Karl.  
Earth needs more of them."

Karl smiled. He touched the clover gently.  
Outside, the wind whispered through the trees.  
He stood up, opened the window, and breathed in the world.

He wasn't just different.

He was brave.  
And maybe—just maybe—he was lucky too.