

# **Jimmy Crikey's Adventures in Parallel Worlds**

## **Chapter 1**

**W**hy was Jimmy racing across the desert? What had brought him from his home in Roombelow to Earth's upper world? As Jimmy sped over the dunes, a cloud of red sand rose behind him. His natural speed had left his pursuers far behind. What was he fleeing from? Who were his pursuers?

It seemed that Jimmy's endurance was inexhaustible. But although Jimmy possessed some remarkable skills, he was not a superman. The pursuers, for that is what they were, were slowly receding, lost to his sight. But Jimmy did not dare to slacken his pace. At the request of the witches, he had reached out to these strange creatures with an offer of help. They had pointedly refused to respond or open discussion. They had reacted, with anger and they turned their rage on Jimmy. They had incorrectly identified him as a threat.

The truth was, as Jimmy now knew, they were the threat. A deadly threat to all living things on Earth, be it plant, insect or animal. The invaders considered humans and other mammals as food, and this race of strange beings needed protein to survive. Witch Floella was the first to detect the alien activity because it consumed anything that grew or lived on or in the Earth. She had tried to reason with them, but the force ignored her pleadings and attacked. Floella reported back to Witch Matilda, who, in turn, asked Jimmy if he would attempt to communicate with the strange creatures.

Jimmy Crikey's real name was Jimmy McGellan, and although he had chosen to live on Earth, his home planet of Attalia lay many light-years away. Jimmy was an orphan whose parents had been ambassadors from the starworld of Attalia. They had fallen ill while exploring Earth and left their son in the care of Aunt Ethel, in the village

of Esh, on the edge of a great forest in the north of England.

Gemma, the little lady he found at the bottom of the well, had become Jimmy's very best friend and he had restored her to her lost family in the cave world of Lithania. Gemma's youngest niece Jade was Jimmy's greatest admirer and was in training to become a fully-fledged witch, ready to join the four who already guarded Earth. Matilda was the chief witch; Ira was the guardian of the skies, Ellwin watched over the water worlds, and Floella was mistress of the earth.

Lord Oron, the ancient Weatherman who patrolled the skies in his Weathercloud, was a fifth, less powerful wizard. Primarily he controlled the weather in the underground world of Roombelow. Many lifetimes ago, he was known as Lord Oron when he was an influential member of the circle of witches who guarded Earth. In recent times he needed the assistance of pixie Freddie to help control the weather because he had a habit of falling asleep at inopportune moments, which could cause all sorts of problems. Freddie lived in the backup weather control room hidden in clouds, high above the cliffs surrounding Lithania.

Those were the people Jimmy considered as his Earthly family when he had discovered he had no family members left on his home planet of Attalia. On Attalia, Jimmy was an orphan, but in Roombelow, Jimmy felt as though he belonged.

Life in Roombelow had settled into a comfortable existence for Jimmy. He no longer attended school as he was much more advanced than even his teachers. If he needed an answer to a difficult question, he could always turn to his portable computer XRU, the navigator of his starship SR2.

Jimmy's body was growing to fit his oversized feet. To explain: Jimmy had

always fit into his red Attalian boots. All Attalian children were born with large feet, almost fully grown, and those feet fit into their red Attalian boots from a very early age. The remarkable thing was that their feet never grew any further. Instead, the rest of their bodies grew until they were full adult-sized, and those same Attalian boots were still a perfect fit.

The importance of the boots was that they endowed Attalians with the ability to cover long distances at incredible speeds. All Attalians had pointed ears that allowed their acute hearing to detect a feather falling to the ground one thousand meters away.

These were attributes that were coming in especially useful at that moment. Jimmy's pursuers were left far behind him and tiring. Jimmy knew they must have some sort of transport available to them. How else could they have arrived at such a remote location, in the middle of nowhere? In truth, it was not the middle of nowhere. It was the middle of the Sahara Desert.

Floella was Matilda's witch sister responsible for everything to do with the ground, the earth, the rocks and sands and everything in it. She had detected the disturbance the alien creatures created when consuming the few sources of carbohydrates and protein available in the desert. The Sahara was not all made of sand. Much of it consisted of red stone rocks, which would eventually erode into sand. There were islands of widely scattered oases surrounded by palms and fig trees. A few steps away from almost every oasis and the sands were bare of plant life. The creatures were not fussy. If there was protein in any animal form and carbohydrates from any plant life, they consumed it. When the creatures finished eating anything edible in their path, vast areas remained devoid of plant or animal life.

Jimmy tried to talk to the aliens, to discover where they had come from and

their intentions on Earth. He had hardly got within hailing distance when, without provocation, they attacked him en masse. Hundreds of purple coloured, worm-like life forms launched towards him, and rows of clicking mandibles at the pointed ends reached out to grab him. They were worm-like creatures that varied greatly in size and length. It seemed that when threatened, several Wormz could join together and become a single, purple, giant worm with teeth. Rows of teeth gnashed towards him with the sharpest of saw-shaped edges. Their eyes were multifaceted like those of a fly, but, fortunately, they did not themselves fly. They either wriggled overland or disappeared beneath the surface where it seemed they could move even faster than they could move overland.

Jimmy had flown there in SR2, his starship, which usually he kept hidden in the forest close to his Aunt Ethel's cottage. He was reluctant to use SR2 regularly because he did not want the people of Earth to see the star ship, which might lead them to discover that they had an alien living among them.

Jimmy wore his one-piece, silver Attalian suit, which provided excellent physical protection and incorporated a built-in two-way link with XRU. He called for XRU to bring SR close enough that he could climb aboard. Once seated at the control console, he asked XRU to plot a course back to the clearing in the forest next to Aunt Ethel's house in Esh Village. Unerringly XRU took control and carried out Jimmy's instructions.

During the return trip, he asked XRU, "Do you know what these creatures are, XRU?"

"Negative, Commander," XRU chirped. "I do not know anything about this snake or worm-like race."

“That is unusual, XRU. Zaru told me that you were updated with their most up-to-date knowledge base when they made you into a portable self-powered unit. Surely the Attalians had some knowledge of these monsters?”

“Commander, at the time my memory banks were updated, no one on Attalia has ever had any dealings with such a strange life form. The universe is infinite. No one can know everything or visit everywhere.”

“I guess we’ll just have to work it out for ourselves. So far, all we know is that the Wormz are determined to clear Earth of anything they can absorb as food for their energy with no regard for Earth’s existing flora and fauna. There is no indication of where they came from nor what their intentions are. They are not interested in discussion, and we haven’t found out if they even have a language. Let’s hope the witches have some ideas because I don’t know what to try next.”

SR2 landed in the forest clearing, and after a brief ‘hello’ to Aunt Ethel, he continued the rest of the short journey to Matilda’s house on the hill overlooking Roombelow.

The full council of witches with Lord Oron and apprentice Jade were silent, gathered around Matilda’s kitchen table. They looked to Jimmy to provide some answers, but none were forthcoming.

“What’s next, Matilda?” Jimmy asked.

“This is unheard of,” Matilda responded. “Our magic is useless against the creatures, and your wonderful black box is silent for a change.” Matilda was very wary about Jimmy’s portable computer. XRU came from a technology she did not understand, yet it offered sound advice. In her mind, if she couldn’t understand it, it

wasn't to be trusted. XRU remained silent.

The air in Matilda's kitchen buzzed with energy that was going nowhere, except round and round. They had tried magic spell after spell, but nothing seemed to touch the Wormz

"If they are so intent on consuming protein, why choose to land in a desert where there is so little plant and animal life?" Floella asked of no one in particular.

"Further south and they could be in the jungles around the Congo river. There's a much richer ecosystem there," Matilda added.

Lord Oron added his observation. "There was a brief moment when the desert bloomed and blossomed. A few months ago, the Ropians from Mars tried to steal my Weather cloud to make rain on Mars. They lost control and the Cloud created a deluge over the Sahara Desert. We were too busy trying to recapture the Cloud to notice the effect all that water had on the desert sands. Millions of seeds were lying dormant in the dry conditions, but as soon as the rain fell on them, they woke up and grew."

"That would explain why they were attracted to the Sahara in the first instant," Jimmy agreed. "They would not know that without a continuous water supply, the flora would simply die away and would not replenish itself."

"That may explain why they initially chose the Sahara, but we are no nearer to knowing where they have come from, nor why they chose Earth," Floella pointed out.

XRU could restrain himself no longer. "Perhaps the creatures do not come from this universe," he chattered. "If the Attalian intelligence systems have never come across this life form before, and even Lord Oron's memories have no recollections of such creatures, perhaps that is because they come from a parallel universe."

“What on earth is your box talking about, Jimmy? Whatever is a parallel word, and where is it if it exists?” Matilda poured scorn onto XRU’s suggestion.

“It is a strange idea, Matilda, but it is a distinct possibility,” Jimmy responded. “If that is the case, their parallel world could exist in the same geometry of coordinates as this world.”

An incredulous Lord Oron asked, “Do you mean their world occupies the same space as this world?”

“That’s the theory,” Jimmy confirmed XRU’s hypothesis.

“What nonsense is this?” Matilda was aghast at the possibility. Wise as the witches were, they could not contemplate such an outlandish possibility.

The Weatherman summed up the feelings of the witches. “We don’t care where they are from. We just want to be rid of them.” He crossed his arms over his chest emphatically. His red velvet robe was embellished with ancient symbols of weather systems. The characters gleamed and sparkled according to Lord Oron’s mood.

Floella, in her everchanging earth brown and green floating gown, voiced their concern, “We must be careful, Matilda. It would be cruel to spring these demons onto any other unexpected life forms. The Wormz might eradicate them.”

“If we do nothing,” Ira added, “it could be Earth’s population that is eradicated.”

“It doesn’t seem that we have an answer to the threat they pose,” Elwin wailed as her wispy blue gown billowed around her.

Only Jade, the very junior witch-in-training, had any confidence that the problem could be solved. “There’s always an answer. It’s just that we haven’t found it yet. Could

it be, Uncle Jimmy, that we need the help of your people in Attalia?”

There was a sullen silence around Matilda’s table. No one in the witches’ circle wanted to admit defeat. They considered themselves collectively as the guardians of the planet Earth. They had used Jimmy’s skills to overcome dangers that they had failed to halt in the recent past. Acting together, they had won the battle when the Zyrons threatened the Sky Islands. And they would never have recovered Lord Oron’s Cloud from the Ropians without Jimmy’s starship technology, but they were reluctant to admit they might need his help again. They were too proud to ask.

Such considerations did not influence Jimmy. If he could offer a possible solution, he would lay it on the table for all of them to consider. The problem was that Jimmy had never had any experience of parallel worlds. In his mind, they were just a theoretical possibility, very much like the puzzle of Schrodinger’s cat: the cat that could be alive and dead at the same time in the same place, according to quantum physics.

Jimmy tried to defuse the situation around the kitchen table, the witch’s coven. “I appreciate that time is of the essence. At least, for the time being, the Wormz are restricted to a desert where they cannot damage the ecosystem of Earth. This threat requires a lot more thought. Let’s sleep on the problem, and perhaps overnight, one of us might come up with an alternative plan.”

Jade was having none of that. “We cannot put off our decision, Jimmy. Each day that passes allows the Wormz to get closer to important vegetation that supports the lives of millions of people and many more insects and animals.”

Lord Oron spoke. “It has taken the youngest of us to grasp this prickly nettle. We have no answer to the threat of the alien Wormz. Jimmy must seek the advice of



the Attalians who have a much more advanced civilisation than ours.”

The witches looked at each other for a moment, and eventually, they agreed. “We need you to seek the help of your people, Jimmy,” Matilda reluctantly asked, outright. “Will you travel back to Attalia to search for an answer?”

“We will,” announced XRU.

Jimmy smiled. “It is agreed, then. We will set off at nightfall to hide SR from any prying eyes.”

“Who will travel with you?” asked Jade, hopefully.

Matilda’s black robes carried magical symbols which flashed with a brilliance that reflected her many moods. She jumped in to dash Jade’s hopes of a ride through the heavens. “You are currently in training, Jade. You must concentrate your mind on learning the craft of becoming a witch. You have learned so much in such a short period, but you will never become one of us if you keep skipping your lessons.”

“Oh! Matilda, I would never want to miss your tuition. I know how important it is to qualify for the coven, but surely no one else can accompany Jimmy on such a journey so far away from your domains. You are needed here to guard your realms from the intruders. At least I don’t have any responsibilities to follow until I’m fully qualified.”

Jimmy voiced his concerns. “Jade, the journey to Attalia is long. There are dangers associated with using worm holes to travel through the star worlds. They are so unpredictable.”

At which point, XRU could no longer refrain from commenting, “Excuse me,

Commander, but I have never lost a starship during space portal hops. Ever, except when we were attacked and outnumbered by Ock forces. And Ocks are now trapped in another time zone, so they pose no further threat.”

“See, Uncle Jimmy. So, there are no threats from Ocks,” Jade jumped back into the conversation. “There’s nothing to stop me coming with you, Uncle Jimmy.”

Jade had turned up the charm offensive as high as she could.

“Jade, I cannot take you on an interstellar space trip without the permission of your parents, and we don’t have time to visit them in Lithania to ask their approval. I must take off in SR as soon as it is dark. Sorry, Jade. Not this time.”

Jimmy had made his decision. When dusk arrived, he would set off for Attalia after first letting Mr McDonald and Amanda know where he was going.

## Chapter 2

**T**he last of the day light was fading as Jimmy, with his portable computer XRU slung over his shoulder, made his way through the forest at the edge of Esh Village. He had taken a brief opportunity to update Aunt Ethel about his recent escapades. She did not bat an eyelid. Standing in front of her was her alien step-son growing up, and Jimmy had won his independence by making good choices in life. He moved the vegetation aside that hid starship SR from casual passer-byes and lowered the steps that gave access to the control cabin. The forest was almost pitch black, except for the light streaming from the control room. Jimmy could hear the night-time animals moving around, but he wasn't worried about hurting them. When SR took off, it would first rise vertically into the sky in almost total silence. XRU slotted into the control panel and took control, following Jimmy's commands.

In the blink of an eye, they left the Sun and the planets far behind. SR2 left the Solar System and headed for the centre of the Milky Way, of which the Solar System was a part. XRU knew that a wormhole lay at the edge of Andromeda, and wormholes were the shortcuts that existed throughout the universe, but it required fantastic navigational accuracy to use them. It was not unknown for starships to be misaligned when they entered a wormhole, and the wrong angle of entry meant an

unknown exit point destination.

XRU had made the transition several times on previous journeys. Jimmy trusted the computer's capabilities to negotiate the worm hole en route for Attalia.

Previously Jimmy had hardly noticed the passage through the time entity, simply coming out of the wormhole in another part of the universe. But this was an unusual passage. Midway through the jump, SR was spun wildly through the vacuous interior of the wormhole. Fortunately, Jimmy was held in place in the Commander's seat, but he heard an unexpected passenger's bumps, shouts, and screams behind him.

There was nothing Jimmy nor XRU could do to stabilise the madly tumbling starship. Nor could Jimmy go the aid of the green-clad body tumbling around uncontrollably in the aft sleeping quarters. But the cries and bumping declined in intensity until all was silent,

"Exit ahead, Commander," chirped XRU.

"Where are we, XRU?"

"Impossible to determine until we reach a stable position. Then I can take our bearings."

Jimmy had no option but to sit tight until SR passed through the horizon of the time-space continuum. SR's flight immediately levelled out. The shouting in the aft sect had stopped, and suddenly starlight illuminated the darkness that had swallowed them. They were out of the wormhole, and while XRU attempted to plot their location, Jimmy unbuckled from his harness and cautiously advanced into the relaxation area.

What Jimmy saw, huddled in a disheveled heap on the floor of the cabin, was the tiny crumpled form of a Diamite wearing the typical green garb of the little people from Lithania. Jimmy lifted the battered body of Jade and laid her on the lower bunk bed. She was out for the count, knocked unconscious by the battering her tiny body had taken as SR was tossed around in the wormhole. There was little he could do except to apply three plasters where Jade's skin was bleeding. He encircled her bruised head in an iced cloth and returned to his duty as Commander of SR2.

"Have you plotted our position, XRU?"

"Negative, Commander. There are no recognisable star formations within view."

"That a bit worrying. What could have happened to change the position of a wormhole."

"Wormholes are not stable structures, but it needs a solid kick to rotate them away from their original position. I have only ever known of one force strong enough to affect a wormhole in your part of the universe, and it was you and Zaru who set it off when you cut the Orks off from Attalia. Something formidable has to have occurred in this part of our universe.

"But I am sure I would have detected traces of such a strong force, even on Earth."

"Perhaps the Wormz in the Sahara have something to do with this," Jimmy conjectured. "We can't work out where they are from. Might they have come through this portal and somehow upset the equilibrium?"

"They would have to have used something powerful to swing a wormhole,"

XRU said. "But then, they are Wormz, and we have never come across them before.  
You may be right, Commander."

"None of which helps us in our current dilemma. We are lost in an unknown  
part of the universe."