



## *Alien Secrets* by Annette Curtis Klaus

**Subjects:** Science fiction; Life on other planets—Fiction; Mystery and detective stories

**Book List:** Grade 6

**Props:** Two cats, audio file of ghost screams



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Puck was just looking around the spaceport docks. It was a restricted area but no one was around and she was curious. She turned a corner and suddenly right in front of her were two men fighting. The tall one held the bearded guy around his neck and was demanding, “Where is it Bean?” Puck could see Bean sliding a lightknife out of his waistband and flicking on the deadly laser beam. The tall man let go of Bean and stepped back quickly avoiding the blade. As he did so, he knocked Bean to the floor and kicked him viciously, dislodging the knife. In a flash he again had Bean around the neck. This time Puck could see blood dripping from the cut the tall man was making on Bean’s throat. She stumbled and the tall man looked right at her.

Puck turned and fled, hoping he hadn’t seen her very well and was too busy to bother with her. She ran as if her life depended on it and finally felt safe only when she was back in the passenger lounge surrounded by other travelers waiting to leave earth for interplanetary travel. Puck, herself, was traveling to the planet Aurora where her parents, both brilliant scientists, were doing research. She hadn’t seen them in years but she didn’t think they’d be glad to see her because she’d just been expelled from school. Her worries about the trip had so far been about facing her parents when she got to Aurora. She didn’t know, then, that she should be worrying about the trip itself, worrying for fear of her life.

Cat’s Cradle, a spaceship loaded with a cargo of freight and a few passengers, including Puck, took off without

a hint of the trouble to come. But Puck ran into trouble right away. She saw the tall man, also a passenger, talking to the captain. Was he following her? Did he know that she’d seen him murder Bean? And then there were the voices. (*Play screams*) That first night Puck heard them and so did Hush, the alien who was also one of the passengers. It sounded like wind, screams, like beings in agony. It seemed maybe like ghosts moving through the corridors, moving through the spaceship. The screams gradually faded away. (*Stop screams*) Puck had only heard the screams but Hush, had seen ghosts. He said they were ghosts of his people who had been held captive and then murdered on this very ship.

Hush was returning home after being in exile for many years, now that the war was over. All that time he had guarded the “Soo,” an ancient symbolic statue belonging to his people. And now, since he’d boarded Cat’s Cradle, the statue had been taken from him. Who had taken it? Why? It seemed an almost impossible task to find it when they couldn’t search openly. But they were determined and they got some unexpected help. (*Bring out cats*) There were two cats on board, in fact that’s why the spacecraft was called Cat’s Cradle. How could the cats help? What did they know? There wasn’t much time. They had to find the “Soo” before they landed on Aurora or it would be gone forever. (*Hold up book*) *Alien Secrets* by Annette Curtis Klaus.

