

# ECHS Fiction Magazine

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*Stories from ECHS students*

Volume 1 Number 1

April 20, 1987

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P R E M I E R E I S S U E

## Martian Twist

by Kevin Gong

Frank Luzer was as depressed as science fiction writers get. He had submitted over 15 of his short stories to more than a dozen different publishers. None of them would accept his works. He would get notices like "You have interesting plots and nice description, but we are sorry to inform you that we have a surplus of your types of stories."

The first thought that came to Frank's mind was to change his name. He rejected that idea on the basis that it was ridiculous to blame his name. He said to himself (by now, he was in such sad shape that he talked to himself out loud) "I can do it. Tomorrow morning, I'll find a publisher who appreciates quality. Yes, by God. I'll make it. There'll be no stopping Frank Luzer."

That night, Frank had a dream. In it, he wrote a story that was so original that the first publisher he called jumped on it. In it, he wrote a story from the alien point of view.

In the morning, Frank woke with renewed vigor. After drinking a glass of fermented orange juice, he waded through the pile of bills and junk mail in his living room to reach the typewriter in his study. "Now, what was I going to do today?" He suddenly remembered the dream he had had the night before. Conveniently placed in the typewriter before him was an empty sheet of paper. He began to type:

THE ALIENS

"Hmm. Let's see; something original, eh? Something wild. Well, we'll show 'em!"

And this is what he wrote:

Slrblap knew he was crazy. Who else but a madman would volunteer for what was basically permanent exile? He looked over at his wife, Crszal. Her four elegant arms danced over the ship's control panels. She turned and spoke in the songish voice of the Zactoneer language "We're jumping back into normal space soon; you should strap in, dear."

Slrblap wearily complied. The Zactoneer ship trembled as it tore out of hyperspace into normal space-time. Crszal said "We'll be in the Terran system in 1.4 cycles. You can get up now."

Slrblap mumbled to himself "Whose idea was it to volunteer, anyway?"

"It was yours, dear. You thought it would be a good way to serve our people and the Earth's people. Establishing an observation outpost isn't so bad."

"Maybe so. But this long trip is going to give me hyper-lag. We must have been in hyperspace for 500 cycles. And I don't see how we're going to set up an outpost without being observed!"

"Leave that to me." Crszal was patient with her husband. She knew he would be cheerful after getting over the long trip.

"Come here, Lrpya." Crszal hugged the small furry creature. Symzh, the other Dyslrct, stayed asleep on the floor.

Slrblap complained "Why are we bringing those stupid animals? What good are they?"

"They'll keep us company. We may not see other Zactoneers for a long time. Anyway, I like them."

The mysterious image of Mars soon devoured the front viewscreen. As a radar absorption field surrounded the ship, Earth was totally oblivious to the Zactoneers' presence. The people of Zacton had known of Earth's intelligence for over 10,000 cycles (about 30 years). However, most Zactoneers had agreed on non-interference. They had feared the shock of meeting a higher intelligence would be too much for the Terran people. Now they were setting up an observation post to be ready to greet the Earthmen when they were ready.

"We're landing, Slrblap, so strap in again."

The Martian dust danced around as the Zactoneer ship fell out of the sky. The anti-grav generators kicked in and the ship landed softly behind a small hill.

Slrblap let out a sigh of relief as he unstrapped himself. Grabbing his gas mask, he jumped into the hatchway before his wife could say a word. Outside, the Zactoneer stretched his four slender arms. It was all psychological, he knew. The ship had had plenty of room, but a ship is no comparison to the vastness of an empty, unexplored world.

Crszal stepped through the hatchway as Slrblap looked up towards the sky. "Now what do we do?"

he said.

Crszal laughed as only a Zactoneer can laugh. It is interesting to note that by a curious Zactonian genetic trait, emotions travel directly from the mouth of Zactonians into the minds of all nearby life forms. This is true for all Zactonian life. All that can be said of a Zactoneer laugh is that if an Earthman had heard Crszal's laugh, he would have turned red with humiliation on the spot. That's exactly what Sirblap did as Crszal explained her laughter. "Now you have to use your arm strength to justify your lack of intelligence."

"Very funny," said Sirblap as Lrpya leapt into Crszal's arms.

Crszal's mood changed quickly, however, when she spotted something falling through the atmosphere. Lrpya leapt out of her arms as a crude space ship landed roughly on the Martian surface, just beyond the hill and out of the Zactoneers' view.

Crszal began to shake nervously. Could the Terrans have spotted them? No. Their detection devices were too primitive to penetrate the Zacton shields. Still...

Sirblap and Crszal leaned on the hill to look at the Earthmen coming out of the Terran ship. The Earthmen didn't seem to notice the Zactoneers.

Crszal's two hearts leapt several beats as she looked around and cried "Where's Lrpya?!" Her worst fears were confirmed as Lrpya could be found at the legs of the Terran astronauts.

The young Zactoneer pilot said to herself: calm down; think about this logically. If the humans discovered Lrpya was the only Dyslrct on the planet, what would they do? Would they search for more aliens? Crszal quickly concluded that the Earthmen couldn't find her and would leave it as a Martian mystery.

Then, with sudden horror, she thought "What if Lrpya comes back to me??? the Earthmen would surely follow and would find us...here." She looked around desperately and suddenly noticed Sirblap was gone.

Sirblap, meanwhile, had decided there was only one solution. He wondered, however, if Crszal would ever forgive him. So he slipped quietly back to the ship...

Crszal found Sirblap sitting on the hatchway steps, smiling.

"I solved our little problem," he said with a grin.

"How?"

"Well, you didn't want Lrpya coming back, right? Well, you were so worried that you failed to see the brutally obvious answer."

"So what did you do!?"

"I don't know if you're going to like it."

"Tell me!"

"Well, I came back here and found Symzh sleeping. So I induced him (Zactoneer mind induction works only when the subject is tired and the Zactoneer has contact with it) to find Lrpya, and..."

Crszal waited

"...laugh at the Earthmen."

Frank Luzer breathed deeply, a satisfied look set into his face. This is going to do it. Nobody can turn **this** down. Well, they did. The first publisher he sent it to said "It's original, but we don't feel our readers will be able to identify with it. Try redoing it from the human point of view."

"Aaggh!" yelled Frank.

As he stomped toward his bed, a red and gold envelope in the pile of junk mail caught his eye. Half-expecting a notice threatening to turn off his electricity, he opened the envelope.

Inside the envelope was a letter simply stating:

FRUSTRATED WITH YOUR PUBLISHERS?

WE CAN HELP!

WE'RE ZI-FI BOOKS. LOOK US UP IN THE YELLOW PAGES.

Frank Luzer was definitely on the verge of total depression. "If this doesn't work, I **am** going to change my name."

Surprisingly, it worked.

Zi-Fi Books returned his story with the note:

WE ARE HAPPY TO INFORM YOU THAT

WE HAVE DECIDED TO PUBLISH YOUR STORY.

THE FINAL EDITION WILL BE SENT TO YOU FOR APPROVAL.

Frank couldn't have been more overjoyed. After looking at the fine print at the bottom of the note, however, he fainted. It said:

Zi-Fi Books

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