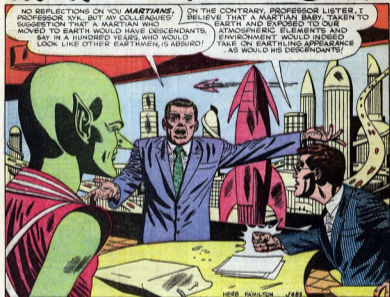


IN ALL THE WORLD ONLY ONE MAN KNEW THE STARTLING TRUTH... A SECRET HE WOULD NEVER REVEAL! BUT THAT MAN, DR. BRYAN HOSKINS, WAS FACED WITH A GRAVE DECISION WHEN SOMEONE UNEXPECTEDLY LEARNED OF THIS HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE!

He Hides Among Us



SO IT WAS DONE! A FEW DAYS LATER, THE EARTH DOCTORS DEPARTED WITH DR. HOSKINS' LEGALLY ADOPTED WARD...

PERHAPS ONE DAY THE PEOPLE OF THE PLANET EARTH WILL COME TO KNOW THAT A MARTIAN CHILD LIVES AMONG THEM, LOOKS LIKE THEM! THEY'LL SEE THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF THE UNIVERSE!

WHAT A MARVELOUS THING THAT WOULD BE!



WELL, DR. HOSKINS, DO YOU STILL THINK YOU CAN BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THIS CHILD'S APPEARANCE? EVEN CHANGE THE GREEN PIGMENTS OF ITS SKIN?

I'M SURE I CAN, PROFESSOR! I HAVE THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT IN MY LABORATORY... WE'LL SOON SEE!



IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS RETURN TO EARTH, DR. HOSKINS ARRANGED FOR THE CARE OF THE MARTIAN CHILD, EVEN HIRED A NURSEMAID, WHO WAS SWORN TO SECRECY! HIS EXPERIMENT BEGAN WITHIN A FEW DAYS...

GREEN RAYS TO NEUTRALIZE THE GREEN PIGMENT OF ITS SKIN! NONSENSE, HOSKINS!

THE GREEN RAYS COMBINE OTHER ELEMENTS, LISTER... HARMLESSLY INFUSING THE CHILD WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITIES IT LACKS, IN HUGE DOSES!



AND WHAT IF THIS EXPERIMENT DOES WORK, DR. HOSKINS? YOU'RE STUCK WITH A BEING THAT LOOKS EARTHLIKE, BUT IS ACTUALLY A MARTIAN! WILL PEOPLE MAKE THE CHILD WELCOME... ACCEPT IT?

I'LL SEE THAT WARD IS ADOPTED INTO THE BEST POSSIBLE HOME! NO ONE NEED EVER KNOW THE TRUTH, NOT EVEN THE CHILD ITSELF!



PROF LISTER WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO DR. HOSKINS' LABORATORY, AND HIS AMAZEMENT GREW AS HE NOTED THE GRADUAL CHANGE THAT CAME OVER THE YOUNGSTER IN A YEAR'S TIME...

I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED THIS IF I HADN'T SEEN IT MYSELF, HOSKINS! A MOST BEAUTIFUL CHILD! AND NOW!

ADOPTION! I'LL HATE TO PART WITH THE LITTLE TYKE, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY!



THE DOCTOR'S HEART ACHED WHEN IT CAME TIME TO PART WITH HIS YOUNG WARD...

REMEMBER, MRS. PARKER, IT'S TO REMAIN A SECRET THAT I'M THE ONE WHO GAVE THE CHILD OUT FOR ADOPTION! AND I MUST KNOW WHO THE FAMILY IS! I'LL WANT TO KEEP TRACK!

UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I'M SURE IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT FOR YOU TO HAVE THAT INFORMATION!



SOON THE MARTIAN CHILD WAS ADOPTED! DR. HOSKINS OBSERVED THE HAPPY YEARS OF GROWTH THAT FOLLOWED AND AT LAST SAW THE HANDSOME SUBJECT OF HIS EXPERIMENT GO OFF TO SCHOOL...

CHIP, ISN'T STEPHEN JUST OUT OF THIS WORLD... HE'S BROKEN THE THOUSAND-METER RECORD!

SOMETIMES I WISH HE WERE OUT OF THIS WORLD, LOUISE! THEN YOU MIGHT PAY MORE ATTENTION TO ME!



THE THREE, LOUISE WHARTON, CHIP LADBY AND STEPHEN DOWELL, CAME FROM THE SAME TOWN...DR. HOSKINS' TOWN!

YOU WERE WONDERFUL, STEPHEN!

YOU'RE PRETTY WONDERFUL YOURSELF! WHEN YOU'RE WATCHING ME, I SEEM TO BE ABLE TO DO WONDERS ON THE FIELD!



YOU'RE QUITE THE WONDER BOY, STEPHEN... EIGHT NEW WORLD'S RECORDS IN ATHLETICS! BUT I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A RUN FOR YOUR MONEY WHEN IT COMES TO LOUISE! I LOVE HER, TOO!

PLEASE, YOU TWO, DON'T START ARGUING ABOUT ME AGAIN!



LOUISE, CHIP'S GOT TO KNOW SOMETIME! WHY TRY TO HIDE OUR ENGAGEMENT?

SO, YOU'VE ALSO WON THAT RACE! WELL, YOU'RE NOT MARRIED TO HER YET... AND I DON'T GIVE UP EASILY!



THAT SUMMER, CHIP LADBY, WHO HAD BEEN BROODING OVER LOUISE'S ENGAGEMENT TO STEPHEN VISITED DR. HOSKINS' OFFICE FOR A CHECKUP...

THE DOCTOR OUGHT TO BE IN ANY MINUTE, CHIP! WANT TO GO INSIDE?

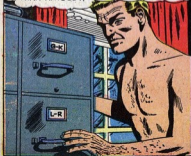
YES, I MIGHT AS WELL GET READY!



IT WAS DR. HOSKINS WHO FIRST INTRODUCED STEPHEN TO LOUISE... BEFORE THAT, I HAD THE INSIDE TRACK WITH HER ALL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL!



DOC SEEMS TO THINK STEPHEN DOWELL IS PERFECT... A GOOD STUDENT... A GREAT ATHLETE! HE DOES EVERYTHING BETTER THAN ANYBODY!



DOC WOULDN'T KEEP STEPHEN WAITING LIKE THIS... BUT I'M JUST SMALL STUFF! WELL, HE WON'T HAVE TO DIG OUT MY CARD FROM THE FILE... "MARTIAN EXPERIMENT"? WHAT'S THIS?



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE.

"MARTIAN SUBJECT SHOWS EXCELLENT ADAPTATION TO EARTH SURROUNDINGS! AT AGE OF ONE YEAR AND THREE MONTHS RAPID HUMAN EARTH-LIKE FEATURES, INCLUDING METAMORPHOSIS IN SKIN PIGMENT FROM GREEN TO WHITE!"



"...TODAY THE CHILD WAS GIVEN OUT FOR ADOPTION TO A BIRCHFIELD FAMILY WHO WILL NOT BE TOLD OF ITS DISTANT ORIGIN!" SO THAT'S IT! NO WONDER MR. STEPHEN DOWELL IS SO DIFFERENT!



GIVE ME THAT FOLDER! YOU'VE NO RIGHT... I'VE NO RIGHT TO SNOOP IN YOUR PRIVATE FILES, DR. HOSKINS, BUT I'M GLAD I DID! I USED TO THINK IT WAS MY PARENTS' FANCY, THAT STORY ABOUT YOUR TRIP INTO SPACE... BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT STEPHEN DOWELL, DID THEY?



IT EXPLAINS A LOT OF THINGS SUCH AS STEPHEN'S UNEARTHLY PROWESS AS AN ATHLETE, AND YOUR SPECIAL INTEREST IN HIM! I WONDER HOW LOUISE'S FAMILY WOULD FEEL ABOUT HER MARRYING A MARTIAN!

I DOUBT THEY'D PERMIT IT, CHIP! BUT YOU'RE RUSHING TO CONCLUSIONS!



I'VE ALWAYS TAKEN A GREAT INTEREST IN YOU, TOO, CHIP! WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF YOUR OWN BACKGROUND? DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR REAL PARENTS?

NO, I'VE ONLY KNOWN THE LABBY FROM THE TIME I WAS... HEY, NOW WAIT A MINUTE, DOC! YOU DON'T SEE ME BREAKING RECORDS IN ATHLETICS AND WINNING SCHOLASTIC AWARDS LIKE STEPHEN!



DR. HOSKINS LET THE EFFECT SINK IN BEFORE HE SPOKE AGAIN...

REMEMBER, I'VE BEEN TO MARS, CHIP, AND WHILE THEIR CIVILIZATION IS OLDER, MORE ADVANCED THAN OURS, THEY'RE NO MORE INTELLIGENT OR ATHLETIC THAN WE ARE!

THEN... I MIGHT BE A MARTIAN, TOO! DOC... PLEASE, YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP THIS QUIET! I'D BE AN OUTCAST IN BIRCHFIELD! PROMISE ME, DOC!



CHIP LABBY LEFT TOWN SUDDENLY! A WEEK LATER, DR. BRYAN HOSKINS ATTENDED A WEDDING... AND THE SECRET WAS LOCKED UP WITHIN HIM FOREVER...

POOR CHIP! HE NEVER REALLY HAD A CHANCE WITH LOUISE... SHE COULD LOVE NO MAN BUT STEPHEN! NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW... THAT LOUISE IS A MARTIAN GIRL! SHE DOES MAKE A LOVELY BRIDE!

