

THE ARRIVAL

THEY HAD WATCHED EARTH. THEY HAD SAT ON THEIR FUNCTIONAL WEIGHT-RESTERS BEFORE THEIR HUGE MAGNIFICATION SCREENS AND THEY'D WATCHED THE GREEN PLANET FOR COUNTLESS EONS. EACH MARTIAN NIGHT, WHEN THE SUN HAD SET BEYOND THE RED MOUNTAINS AND THE DEAD SEAS LAY BATHED IN THE FAINT LIGHT FROM THEIR TWO MOONS, THEY'D TURNED ON THEIR TELESCOPE-MACHINES AND THEY'D STUDIED GREEN EARTH. AND THEY'D WONDERED. THEY'D WONDERED IF LIFE AS THEY KNEW IT EXISTED THERE TOO AS IT DID HERE ON MARS. AND THEN, ON ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT, THEY'D SEEN IT. THEY'D SEEN THE TINY PIN-POINTS OF LIGHT DOTTING THE LAND AREAS GO OUT. THEY'D SEEN THE FIERY GLOW RUSH AROUND THE GREEN SPHERE, SWALLOWING IT UP IN ONE HORRIBLE BLAZE OF ATOMIC FURY...



AND EVERY MARTIAN NIGHT SINCE THEN, FOR A MILLENNIUM, THEY'D TURNED THEIR TELESCOPE-MACHINES TO THE NOW BLACK PLANET AND THEY'D WAITED HOPEFULLY. BUT NO LIGHTS CAME ON AGAIN. NO GREEN AREAS SPRANG UP TO PUSH THE BLACKNESS BACK...

AND THEN, IN THE MARTIAN YEAR OF 131,549, IN WHAT BY OUR MEASUREMENT OF TIME WOULD BE THE NINETY-FIFTH THOUSANDTH YEAR AFTER THE GREAT ATOMIC EXPLOSION, THEY SAW IT. A TINY NEEDLE OF BLUE FLAME STREAKING AWAY FROM BLACK EARTH... STREAKING TOWARD THEIR RED PLANET...

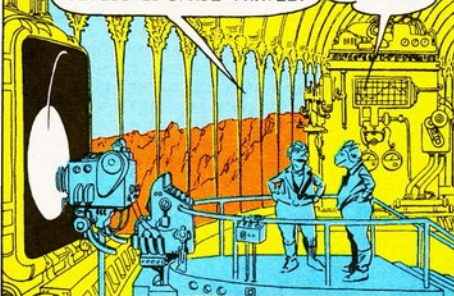


A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSORY

GROZQ MARVELED AT THE FINGER OF FLAME ON THE MAGNIFICATION SCREEN...

AND IN ALL THIS TIME, **THEY'VE DONE** WHAT WE COULD **NEVER** DO! THEY'VE DEVELOPED **SPACE-TRAVEL!**

NOW THEY ARE **COMING TO OUR PLANET!** TO **MARS!**



SPDORK WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT. THEN, WHEN HE SPOKE, HIS MARTIAN WORDS WERE FILLED WITH WONDERMENT AND AWE...

WHAT WILL THEY **LOOK** LIKE, GROZQ? THESE **EARTH CREATURES?** WILL THEY BE **DIFFERENT?**

WHO IS TO SAY THAT **LIFE** ON OTHER PLANETS MUST **EVOLVE** AS IT DID HERE ON **MARS**, SPDORK. **EVOLUTION** IS LIKE A **ROAD** WITH MANY **FORKS**. THERE ARE MANY **WAYS** TO **TURN...**



PERHAPS THEY WILL BE **GHASTLY** CREATURES, GROZQ! CREATURES THAT WILL **SICKEN** US WHEN WE **GAZE** UPON THEM!

PERHAPS! AND **IN TURN**, MY DEAR SPDORK, WE MAY VERY WELL **SICKEN** THEM!

IN ANY CASE, SPDORK! WE MUST **PREPARE** FOR THEIR **ARRIVAL!**

WHAT IF THEY COME ON A MISSION OF **WAR**, AND **NOT** OF **PEACE**, GROZQ?

WE MUST BE **PREPARED**, GROZQ!

COME! LET US NOTIFY THE **GOVERNING COUNCIL!** THEY MUST MAKE **PLANS!**



THE **BLUE STREAK** OF FLAME IN THE **MARTIAN SKY** GREW **BRIGHTER** EACH NIGHT AS IT **HURTTLED** ACROSS THE **BLACK GULF** OF SPACE THAT **SEPARATED** EARTH FROM THE **RED PLANET**. IN **TWO MONTHS**, THE **FLAME** HAD **GROWN** SO **BRIGHT** IT WAS **VISIBLE** DURING THE **MARTIAN DAY...**

THEY ARE **COMING** CLOSER, GROZQ!

THEY WILL BE **HERE**, SOON!



AND THEN, ON THE **73RD** NIGHT AFTER THE **FIRST** SIGHTING OF THE **MARS-BOUND** EARTH **SPACE-SHIP**, SOMETHING **STRANGE** HAPPENED. GROZQ HAD **TURNED** ON THE **EQUIVALENT** OF A **RADIO** TO **LISTEN** TO SOME **MUSIC**. THE **JUMBLED** GARBLE **INTERRUPTED** HIS **FAVORITE** PIECE...

BY THE **GREAT CANAL** OF ZKORL! WHAT **INTERFERENCE** IS **THIS?**

WAIT, GROZQ! LISTEN! COULD THOSE **GUTTERAL** SQUEALS BE A **LANGUAGE**... AN **ALIEN** LANGUAGE?



THE TWO MARTIANS LISTENED TO THE SQUAWKING SOUNDS THAT JAMMED THE MUSIC PROGRAM...

PERHAPS IT IS THE EARTH-CREATURES... BROADCASTING ON OUR WAVE-LENGTHS!

HURRY! GET THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR THAT WE'VE PREPARED FOR THEIR ARRIVAL!



THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR, NEWLY DEVELOPED FOR THE OCCASION, WAS ROLLED OUT OF ITS STORAGE COMPARTMENT...

THERE! IT IS ON!

TZEE...OOEE...ZZT...PTEE... MARS! HELLO, MARS! THIS IS EARTH-ROCKET 029 CALLING MARS. HELLO...



IT IS THEM! IT IS THE EARTH CREATURES! HURRY, SPORK! CALL THE GOVERNMENT TRANSMITTER! WE MUST ANSWER THEM!

HELLO MARS! THIS IS EARTH ROCKET 029 CALLING MARS! AW, IT'S NO USE, CHIEF! THEY DON'T HEAR US!



KEEP TRYING, ANYWAY! WE'VE GOT TO LET THEM KNOW WE'RE COMING ON A PEACEFUL MISSION... SOMEHOW!

OKAY! BUT I THINK IT'S A WASTE OF TIME! THEY'RE PROBABLY SOME IDIOT SAVAGE RACE!

PUT ME THROUGH TO THE GOVERNMENT TRANSMITTER! QUICKLY!

HELLO, MARS! HELLO, MARS! THIS IS EARTH ROCKET... AW, NUTS!

YES! YES! QUICKLY! SAME WAVELENGTH! YES! BUT STRENGTHEN THE SIGNAL. GIVE IT FULL POWER!

AS YOU WISH, SPORK! ALL RIGHT! GO AHEAD!



THIS IS STUPID, CHIEF! THEY DON'T...

HELLO, EARTH ROCKET 029. HELLO, EARTH ROCKET! THIS IS MARS, ANSWERING...

DO NOT SPEAK TOO FAST, SPORK! THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR...



HEY! DID YOU HEAR THAT, CHIEF? HELLO MARS. HELLO...

GREETINGS, VISITORS FROM EARTH! WE ON MARS BID YOU WELCOME! YOUR ARRIVAL IS EAGERLY AWAITED!





SAY! HOW COME YOU GUYS SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE? THINGS LIKE THIS JUST DON'T HAPPEN!

WE DO NOT SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE, EARTHLINGS. WE SPEAK OUR OWN LANGUAGE. THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR WE HAVE BUILT FOR YOUR VISIT, AUTOMATICALLY TRANSLATES OUR WORD-MEANINGS INTO YOUR WORD-MEANINGS...



AUTOMATIC TRANSLATORS? WOW! THEN YOU CHARACTERS MUST BE SCIENTIFICALLY ADVANCED!

WE HAVE OBSERVED YOUR PLANET FOR MANY, MANY EONS, MY FRIENDS! WE DEVELOPED TELESCOPES THAT WERE CAPABLE OF SEEING THE LIGHTS OF YOUR OLD CIVILIZATION!



LIGHTS? OH! YOU MEAN THE OLD PRE-ATOMIC WAR CIVILIZATION!

YES! YES! WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US! WE SAW THE EXPLOSION!



THAT WAS NINETY-FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO. IT WAS A WAR. IT ALMOST WIPED ALL LIFE OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH! BUT A FEW OF US MANAGED TO SURVIVE!

AND YOU REBUILT WHAT HAD BEEN DESTROYED!



NOT EXACTLY! CHANGED IT, YOU MIGHT SAY! DID IT OUR OWN WAY! LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT WAS...



'PRE-ATOMIC EARTH WAS POPULATED BY MANY FORMS OF ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE. IN EARTH'S HISTORY, ONE OF THESE ANIMAL FORMS EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE IT BECAME DOMINANT OVER ALL OTHERS...'

LOOK, OG! THE SABRE-TOOTHED TIGER ATTACKS!

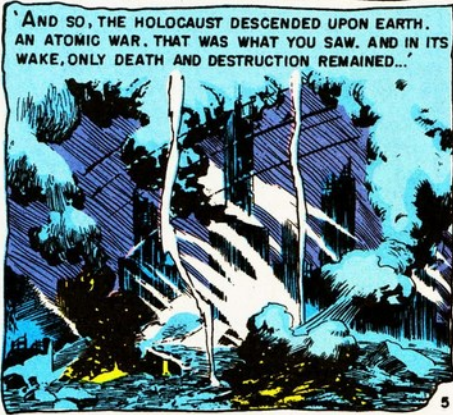
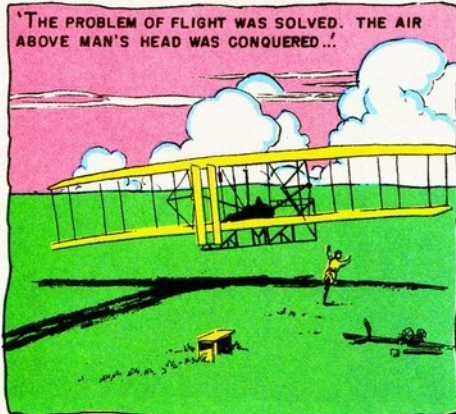
I WILL KILL IT, KOSK... WITH MY NEW SPEAR...



'WITH HIS DOMINATION, MAN BEGAN TO DEVELOP. HE REACHED INTO THE UNKNOWN AND HE LEARNED. HE STUDIED. HE BUILT...'

IT WILL BE A TOMB THAT WILL LAST FOR AGES, OH PHAROAH!

GOOD! GOOD!





PRACTICALLY ALL LIFE WAS WIPED AWAY! BUT AS I SAID BEFORE, A FEW OF US SURVIVED!

WE CAN SEE YOUR ROCKET, EARTHLING! YOU ARE GETTING CLOSE!



AND SO, IN THE FOLLOWING NINETY FIVE THOUSAND YEARS, WE STARTED ANEW... BUILT A NEW AND GREATER CIVILIZATION!

YOU WILL BE LANDING, SOON!



IT WAS EASY TO BEGIN AGAIN! WE KNEW ALL THE MISTAKES! WE KNEW ALL THE FAULTS! WE WERE DETERMINED NOT TO MAKE THEM OURSELVES!

HOW SMALL YOUR SHIP IS!



WE ARE COMING IN NOW, MARTIAN! WE WILL BE AMONG YOU SHORTLY! I WILL SIGN OFF NOW! SEE YOU...

SAFE LANDING, EARTHLING!



THE SHIP CAME OUT OF THE MARTIAN NIGHT. IT CAME ON BLUE FLAME AND WHITE HEAT. AND IT DROPPED SMOOTHLY TO THE RED SAND...

THEY ARE DOWN!

HURRY!



THE SHIP WAS SCARCELY TWENTY FEET HIGH! IT SAT AMID THE SMOKE AND THE RED DUST, AND THEN A PORT OPENED...

GREETINGS, MARTIANS!

GREETINGS, EARTHINGS!



THE GREY FORMS DROPPED TO THE MARTIAN SURFACE. THEIR WHISKERS TWITCHED AND THEIR BEADY EYES GLOWED IN FRIENDSHIP...

WELCOME! WELCOME TO MARS!

THEY WERE OF EARTH'S GREAT RACE. THEY WERE RATS! -THE END-