

Strange Dreams

by James Lynn Smith

My name is Lamarg of Planet Vepos. This is the start of the strangest tale ever told. Since year 4050, humans and human-like species have spread to planets in the stellar reaches of outer space. This world on which I live is one such planet. I am a historian and archeologist. Our history is muddled and I search for evidence to clarify it. Lately I have been exploring the high bluffs of New Nargon. But my findings there confused me. Then, for several nights, I had the strangest dreams linking my thoughts over the past year. I dreamed I held diminutive children in my hand. Then some alarming power took control of my hand, causing me to squash them. I dropped the remains to the ground and a sudden wind blew them away. I awoke with a startling realization.

Our *very being* is in question. Our leaders and ancient sages deceived us. We were told that dull-witted, anthropomorphic giants were on Vepos when we arrived: That we endeavored to make peace, but they refused to cooperate and tried to destroy us. This planet was many light years from any livable alternative and it was not an option to leave. We were told about our ancient battle, and how eventually the giants were vanquished because of human technology, imagination, and intellect. We sadly entertain a great pride in this because we think we are the humans. No, humans did not survive. Their huge look-alikes survived—us.

We are stupid beyond reckoning, and yet our body mass and great number was overwhelming to the humans' type of creativity and

imagination. The small beings of the real human race were destroyed and with them the greatest gifts we could ever have known. They had actually found ways to banish war for centuries until our conflict with them. Why were we so brutal? Why so vain and blind to the symbiosis we could have attained together? We could only see them as vermin to be exterminated.

But, as a whole, our kind does not know about this past. Even though stupid, we have some imagination: We should have found our ancients' claim to be human was suspect when, despite our ideals, we can never seem to vanquish crime, war and deceit. Also the very name of this planet derived from ancient radio transmissions we received from it before we invaded.

Yes, *we* invaded. It was the *humans* that were already *here*. But no one bothered to develop an accurate record of those transmissions to teach later generations. No one told us that the numerical positions of letters in their alphabet, matched with the same positions in ours, means that our planet "Vepos" translates as "Earth."

These tiny, deteriorated bones I found in the bluff are proof. At first I thought it was the skeleton of a bird-like animal. Closer inspection confused me until my recent dreams sent the shock of recognition to my poor brain. Then, as it became clear what the case was, I felt fear. Real fear, for when you find out you are not who you think you are, an uncanny paranoia grows...and grows. You wonder what fate eventually comes to the great destroyer.

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