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Cover by **EMSH**

illustrating **THE DEEP DOWN DRAGON**

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By SHERI S. EBERHART

EXTRATERRESTRIAL  
TRILOGUE  
ON  
TERRAN  
SELF-DESTRUCTION

Three creatures sat on the sands of Mars,  
and the first, to the ancient twiddling bars  
that the second played on a twalreg flute  
sang a canal lay most convolute,  
while the third, with his horn in the sand, sat mute  
considering the stars.

At last the second stilled his fife,  
and the third twonged out (his voice was rife  
with a hint of fear) "Do you know that there,  
where the third planet spins in its veil of air,  
I'm convinced there's a spot, a jot, a hair,  
a widge, perhaps, of life."

The first began an amusement dance,  
while the second, fourth eyes crossed, askance,  
skibbed with extreme severity,  
"You ought to watch your tongues," quoth he.  
"One should not affront the Deity  
by mentioning such chance.

"For years our scientists have spent  
their time in the establishment  
of reasons why the life we know  
could not exist above, below,  
or anyplace but here! They show  
that fact self evident."

Just then their eyes were caught, aghast,  
for where the air-veiled planet passed  
a ball of fire had blossomed wide,  
and holocausts together vied  
to rip the ravened globe aside  
with nothing left at last.

Murmured the first, "You will allow,  
by every old and sacred vow,  
this proves my point and proves it well.  
Those pyrotechnics must compel  
you to recant!" The third said, "Hell,  
it doesn't matter now."

And they sat back down on the sands of Mars  
to hear the ancient, twiddling bars  
of a Martian dirge or the twalreg flute,  
in troches old and dissolute,  
while the third, with his horn in the sand, sat mute,  
considering the stars.