

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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MSG. #1268-104
COMMANDER QRMAX
EXPEDITION 8703-A

field report

by . . . Roger Dee

COORDINATOR KHARTH
DEVELOPMENT CORPS
ORAZ, GALACTIC CNTR

Sire and Polity:

It gives me greatest pleasure to forward so favorable a prognosis on the possibilities of this latest planet investigated. My Crew-hundred and I have made an extensive study here for something more than the customary nine *orads* of time, and our entire unit is elated at discovering a world and culture so promising.

Complete coordinate charts and field films are enclosed for detailed analysis, but essential data may be given as follows:

We have here a typical G-3 primary with model nine-planet system, a random distribution of satellites and a scattered belt of debris presumably arising from a tenth planet exploded by unbalanced gravitational stresses. Eight of these planets are sterile or nearly so, leaving only one—the third from its primary—capable of supporting life.

This third, though offering no

These mammalian bipeds were understandably confusing—even to themselves, as the investigators soon decided.

It is interesting to speculate on how we really look to these extraterrestrials reportedly visiting these parts in flying saucers, and, to judge from some accounts, promptly beginning a series of socio-anthropological studies while among us. What do these aliens really think of us?

more in material resources of value to Orazian economy than its barren fellows, is an ideal world. Surfaced largely with water but with an idyllic distribution of five continental land masses and innumerable islands, it bears a considerable variety of flora and the most amazing fauna encountered by my Crew-hundred within a score of *decorads*.

Most remarkable of the fauna is a mammalian biped which seems to have risen to dominance within the brief span of a few thousand primary revolutions. It is this biped which has so intrigued us and which promises so much of interest to Orazian observers. Even one of your own eminence and experience, Sire, must be amazed and delighted when you have seen for yourself, as I am sure you will once Ecological Bureau has established an outpost here and a more detailed report is forwarded.

These fantastic bipeds, Sire, represent without doubt the most paradoxical species ever to fall under our observation. My Crew-hundred and I, under concealment of stasis fields rendering us unseen except to each other, have investigated them in every corner of their globe, as enclosed collations will show. Witness our initial findings:

They are of radically different sizes and colors, though invariably of the same form. They inhabit every portion of their world, through all climatic zones, each major division following its own peculiar architectural motifs and

manner of dress. Without exception they communicate orally, showing no evidence of telepathic rapport, yet in spite of so formidable a handicap they seem to disseminate considerable information among themselves.

We know this because the ether about this planet is continuously jammed with a most amazing mélange of signals, impressed upon electromagnetic wave-forms patently designed to cover as great a range as possible. But here, lest I offer a false impression of our progress, I hasten to say that we have naturally been unable to arrive at any understanding of communications so broadcast. The intrinsic gulf between telepathic and oral cultures is too great for our field linguists to bridge, though one may hope that a later and more intensive ecological study will supply a key.

There is more, Sire, far more than my Crew-hundred and I are able to describe with any real clarity. For example, this seems to us a society of individuals each pursuing his own course, yet they are at the same time compressed into graded units consisting of small social groups, looser communities and still broader geographical divisions. And if their complexity is fantastic, their methods of arriving at such complexity are unbelievable.

You will shrink from accepting this, as I shrink from detailing it, but our evidence points unmistakably to the conclusion that they habitually make war upon each

other, both individually and collectively. Preparations at this moment are under way upon several of the major land masses for such a general conflict, with concentrations of fissionable material being feverishly stockpiled. The compulsion involved is to us impossible of comprehension, though we suspect that it stems from their inadequate system of communication.

The possibilities here disturb me and my Crew-hundred as well, for the reason that such a senseless holocaust might well reach climax and result in overall ruin before an Ecological Outpost can be established to study them thoroughly.

To prevent such a catastrophe, Sire, may I suggest that my Crew-hundred and I be given permission—without overt indication of outside interference, of course—to act? A simultaneous deactivation of all fissionables on the globe should turn the trick, I am sure, and can be managed easily without detection.

But away from such grisly matters. It is the individual complexity of these bipeds, Sire, and the myriad minor puzzles of their association that so delight us. Their in-

numerable personal enterprises, in the main as enigmatic as their tastes in entertainment and propagation—the distinction here is vague, since the two overlap in a most confusing fashion—offer an apparently inexhaustible well of surprises. I am sure that you will agree, Sire, when you have had opportunity to witness their behavior at first hand.

And now, since I am in haste to know how my Crew-hundred and I must proceed, I shall terminate my report and await with eagerness your august pleasure.

Respectfully,
QRMAX
COMMANDER
EXP. 8703-A

Postscript:
May I suggest, Sire, that for a well-deserved vacation you accompany your initial Ecological Observation Crew? One so burdened with responsibility as yourself, yet so appreciative of novelty, must find the antics of these bipeds entertaining in public and hilarious in private.

Also, recalling your justly famous taste in matters epicurean, may I say that their young, oven-roasted and properly basted with *khaffra* sauce, are delicious?

