

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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spacenet

by . . . Robert Andrea

When he reached the porch he saw that the Bug-Eyed Monster sitting on the rocking chair was a woman.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

My name was Joe Lightyear. I was a Detective Sergeant for the Space Coppers. The story I'm about to tell really happened. Only the names have been changed to protect innocent Bug-Eyed-Monsters.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

It all started a few aeons back, in the twenty-first century. I was sitting in my office eating an atom and cheese sandwich when I was interrupted by the familiar ring of the visaphone. I picked up the receiver. "Sergeant Lightyear speaking."

"Lightyear, this is Captain Twilight. One of those Bug-Eyed-Monsters on Venus is acting up again. Get out there and see what you can do."

"Yes, sir. I'll do what I can."

I hung up, put on my spacesuit, and walked down the hall. When I came to room 212, I opened the door. My partner, Fred Yeahyeah, was sitting at his desk. His name wasn't really "Yeahyeah." We just called him that.

"Let's go, Fred," I said. "We've got a job to do."

"Yeahyeahyeah," he answered.

We walked outside, climbed into

Robert Andrea is the pseudonym of a young American, living and working in Japan—not Walt Sheldon, we hasten to add. The writer, who seems to share our very personal reactions to it, has chosen to tell an unusual story in the tempo and style associated with a well-known program.

our spaceship, and blasted off for Venus.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

But we landed on Mars. I could not understand it. Something had gone wrong.

Fred and I were standing next to our spaceship, trying to figure it out, when a kid walked up to us.

"What's your name, little girl?" I asked, trying to draw her out. She answered immediately. My training was paying off.

"Marzy Canal," she said.

I thought I had the kid tabbed, so I continued the questioning. "What do you know about Bug-Eyed-Monsters?"

"Only what I read in the magazines," she replied.

"Don't try to be smart, kid," I said. "It doesn't pay to be smart." I knew the kid was trying to be smart. I decided to let her go, at least for the time being. "All right, kid. You can go now."

When the kid had left, I turned to Fred. "That kid was trying to be smart," I confided to him.

"Yeahyeahyeah," he answered.

Fred was a smart cop.

We climbed back into our spaceship and blasted off for Venus.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

This time we made it.

I decided to go right to the Bug-Eyed-Monster neighborhood. Fred and I hopped in our portable patrol car and drove toward Flyswatter Avenue.

When we got there, we found a lot of Bug-Eyed-Monsters sitting on

their front porches, crying. I pulled up to the curb and stopped the car.

"You wait here, Fred."

"Yeahyeahyeah."

I opened the door, got out of the car, and walked up the pathway leading to one of the homes. When I reached the front porch, I saw that the Bug-Eyed-Monster sitting on the rocking chair was a woman. She was crying like the rest of them.

"What is it, ma'am?" I said.

"Why are you crying?"

"Oh, that Georgie Bug-Eyed-Monster," she sobbed. "He's disgracing the neighborhood!"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm just trying to get the facts. What's he doing?"

"He's. . . He's. . . Oh, it's—sob—too horrible to talk about!"

"Yes, ma'am. I only want the facts. Just where is Georgie now?"

"I don't—sob—know where he is. None of us do. If only we did, we could make him stop. Please believe me. We don't want Georgie to continue to. . . Oh, it's—sob—just *too* horrible!!!"

She broke off crying again. I could see that the woman was too emotionally upset to be of further use; so I turned around and went back to the patrol car.

"Fred," I said, "I've got a hunch, just a hunch. Sometimes a hunch pays off and sometimes it doesn't. I'm going back to the spaceship. Keep an eye on things around here until I get back."

"Yeahyeahyeah," Fred murmured.

I drove off, leaving Fred behind.

When I arrived at the spaceship, I got in and blasted off for Alpha Centauri.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

When I got there, I saw an old Bug-Eyed-Monster sitting on a patch of hydrogen gas. I knew my hunch was going to pay off.

I walked up to him and said, "Are you Georgie's father?"

"Yes," he answered, "but how did you find me?"

"Everyone knows a Bug-Eyed-Monster is the only creature that can survive the terrific heat of Alpha Centauri," I explained, "but you forgot one thing . . ."

"What's that?"

"So can a Space-Copper!"

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

When he recovered from the shock, I asked him where his son was.

"I guess there's no use trying to hide it any longer. . . . He's in apartment 32 of the Bug-Eyed-Monster Hotel on Venus."

"Thank you, sir. You won't regret this."

I went back to my spaceship and blasted off for Venus. After I landed on the planet, I made my way to the spot where I had left Fred. He was still there, waiting for me.

"Let's go, Fred."

"Yeahyeahyeah," he said enthusiastically. Fred was always glad to wind up a tough case.

We hopped in the patrol car and drove to the hotel, a few blocks left of Flyswatter Avenue. When we

arrived at the hotel, we ran through the lobby and took the elevator to the third floor. We got out and walked to apartment 32. I moved fast because I knew there was nothing to fear.

"All right, Fred. Blast open the door!"

"Yeahyeahyeah."

Fred pulled out his atomic pistol and pointed it at the door. A fraction of a second after he pulled the trigger, the lock disappeared.

I pushed the door open. There, sitting on the bed, was Georgie Bug-Eyed-Monster. "All right, son," I said, "the game's up. I'm taking you in on a section six-nineteen—trying to be friendly with humans."

I turned to Fred. "All right, put the tentaclecuffs on him," I ordered.

"Nonono."

I looked at Fred. I couldn't believe my ears! He still had the atomic pistol in his hand. He raised his arm and fired at me!

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

Here I am, living on Flyswatter Avenue. I heard the Space-Coppers finally picked up Fred the other day. It's about time. He's being held on a section twenty-four—turning a human into a Bug-Eyed-Monster. They got Georgie too, a couple of weeks ago.

Being a Bug-Eyed-Monster isn't too bad. I really enjoy scaring people! I can't understand that Georgie. . . . Why would anyone want to be a *friendly* Bug-Eyed-Monster?