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FEATURE ARTICLE

Space Travel

SEPTEMBER 1958

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Front cover painting by Paul E. Wenzel, depicting a Space Pilot

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Tipsy-Turvy Planet

by

Larry Fisher

Water had a strange effect on the natives of this peanut-sized world — it made them giggle. It was driving Choate nuts — with HQ's blessing!

FROM:

John Choate, Construction
Engineer First Class Planet
37, Galaxy Four

TO:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander,
Galaxy Four Expansion Project
New York, N.Y.

July 21

1. Acknowledging receipt of your consignment of mirrors, dollar watches, combs, toothbrushes, pencils, etc., which arrived via supply carrier yesterday.

2. The above named items should aid in bargaining with Planet 37 natives. Planet 37 economy is still at the barter level. The idea of money is too sophisticated for these people as yet.

3. Smith requests one case bourbon.

4. Please request next weekly supply carrier to refill Planet 37

Unit water bottles. Local water is contaminated for humans.

5. You will be kept informed of our progress.

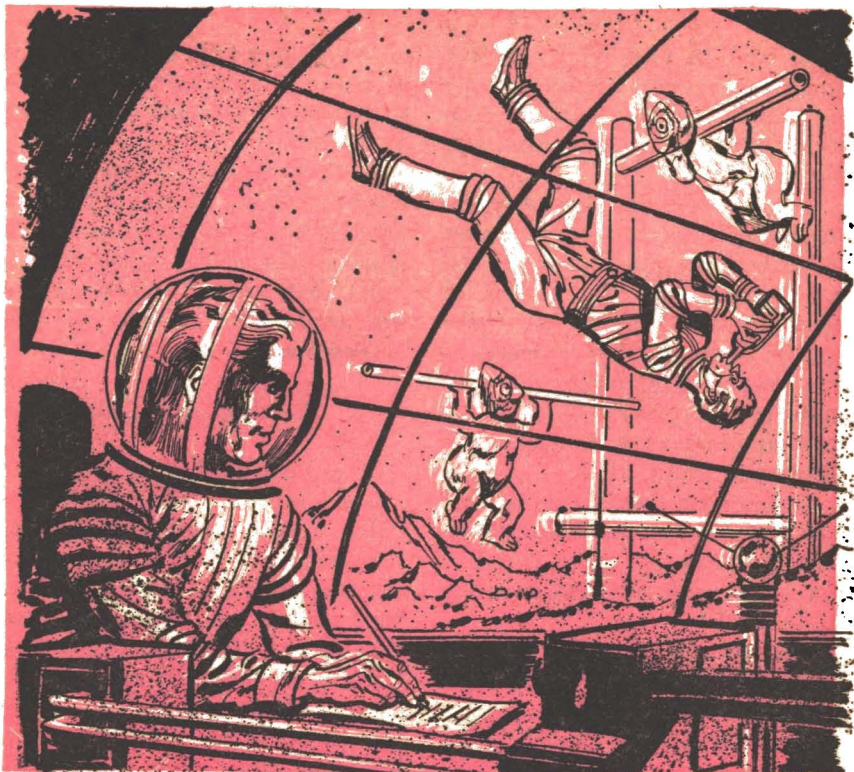
Signed,

Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.

P. S. Off the record, George, this is the damndest post you've ever dropped me onto! You must still be mad at me for that week end back at Oklahoma University, when I tied you up for a dozen dates with that fat dishwasher blonde, Mary Lou Fink. What the heck, George, can't you take a joke?

Anyway, if this is the way to get a HQ Unit Commander's desk job, I'll stick it out. But I'm not sure it's worth it.

Thirty-seven is a small planet in the first place. About one-fourth Earth gravity. Old Smith sure looks odd jumping five feet into the air like a ballet dancer. I know—he



looks odd anyway. But this is too much, really.

To make matters worse, the old boy's bourbon seems to take a stronger grip on him here than at home. He gets higher in more ways than one.

I don't really like the idea of these two-man construction outfits anyway. Local labor is too finicky. You have to spend half your time keeping the natives happy. And

in my case, I spend the other half sitting on Smith. He's a first-rate parlor psychologist for getting natives to work.

But George, that man has all the resistance of a confirmed alcoholic when it comes to booze. I tell you, something has to be done about him. I'm legally and operationally required to enter his request for that case of bourbon, but if the request goes through, I quit! I'll

come back to New York and run an air taxi before I'll spend another six months on this hunk of rock with Smith *and* an unlimited supply of hootch.

You see, George, I'm very intense about that promotion. I want to settle down and find a girl and get married and pilot a desk at Headquarters. I never have been one for hopping all over space, as you know. I'm definitely the stay-at-home type—maybe a quick run over to Mars on a Sunday afternoon, but that's all.

So you keep them happy at that end and I'll get this Visio-station built if I have to make it out of egg crates with my own two lily-white hands!

Oh—and please make sure the bottled water comes through. We're running awfully low.

Your brother in Omega Delta,
John

FROM:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project New York,
N. Y.

TO:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.
Planet 37, Galaxy Four
July 22

1. Your communique of July 21 received and contents noted.

2. You are instructed to proceed with all speed in the construction

of the Visio-station, utilizing formal or informal procedures for the recruitment of personnel from Planet 37 natives.

3. Your request for one case of bourbon denied. Reason: Tightening of shipping regulations prohibits sending nonessential materiels.

4. Next weekly supply carrier will arrive at 0900 July 24 with bottled water.

Signed,

Berelson, HQ Unit Cmdr.

P. S.

Hey, John, boy!

Good to hear from you. You're right. I still remember that bag you saddled me with for the weekend four years ago. Mary Lou Fink. That was the longest, lousiest three days of my life. Man, the Omega Delta house didn't let me forget it, either. Whenever I see one of the boys it's always: "Well Berelson, how you doing with that sensational blonde these days?"

Grrr!

But I don't hold a grudge, John. To prove it, I'm re-interpreting Shipping Regulation 109 to classify bourbon as a non-essential in this case. You can tear this note off the bottom of the page-printer and show the above message to Smith if he gets nasty about not having his Pablum. That's one heartening aspect of the Expansion Service—you can always kick the blame upstairs to HQ.

You'll also be happy to hear that Ellender is retiring next year. He's HQ Unit Commander of the Galaxy Five project.

Do your duty on Planet 37, John boy, and Ellender's job could fall right into your lap. If you play your cards right, of course.

Yours in Omega Delta,
George

FROM:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.
Planet 37, Galaxy Four

TO:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project New
York, N. Y.

Aug. 12

1. Bottled water arrived on schedule. After some experience with same, we know that this water has intoxicating effect on Planet 37 natives. We think atmospheric conditions are responsible. Please instruct.

2. Visio-station building proceeding with extreme difficulty. Intoxicated natives impossible to deal with. Please instruct.

Signed,
Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.

P. S.

Hell, George, what are you trying to do to me? I realize Mary Lou Fink was a real double-dyed dog, but after all, four years!

This is too much—water that gets the natives swizzled. Thank

goodness Smith's supply of laughing liquid is gone. It ran out day before yesterday, and he's been sober for 24 hours now.

I like him better drunk, actually. Sober he has the disposition of a starved mink. But at least maybe we'll get something done now. He's trying to come up with an idea for making the natives heave to.

It'll have to be a dilly of an idea, though. These idiots refuse to drink their own water since they tried ours. And if we don't give them any, they just disappear into the woods and we don't see skin nor scale of them. So we sort of ration out enough to keep them happy. They go around giggling all the time.

You'd better send another shipment of the stuff. And this time do something to it. I don't know what, but I'm not letting anything like this keep me away from that HQ desk job. When Ellender moves out, I move in!

Yours fraternally, in O. D.
John
P.P.S. What do you mean, Ellender's job could fall into my lap "if I play my cards right?"

FROM:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project New
York, N. Y.

TO:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.
Planet 37, Galaxy Four
Aug. 13

1. Your communique of Aug. 12 received and contents noted.

2. Repeat: Use all informal and formal techniques for the recruitment of working personnel from natives.

3. More bottled water arriving on next weekly supply carrier, due Planet 37 on Aug 15.

4. Also on weekly supply carrier due Aug. 15 will be Chemist 1st Class M. L. Fink to aid you in rectifying intoxicating water situation with natives. Please treat Chemist Fink in accordance with rank and supply with quarters befitting 1st class technician.

Signed,

Berelson, HQ, Unit Cmdr.

P. S.

John, you lucky hound, you!

What a jim dandy coincidence this is! Finding Mary Lou Fink, I mean. I ran across her name in the files the other day and decided she was just what you needed to cheer up your life out on that cold, desolate, barren, drunken meteorite. After all, you once did the same for me—four short years ago!

Hope you have a *large* room for Mary Lou.

Lovingly, in Omega Delta
George

P. P. S. The phrase "play your cards right" means be nice to me,

George. I've just been made Chief of Assignments for HQ personnel

FROM:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.
Planet 37, Galaxy Four

TO:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project and
Chief of HQ Personnel Assign-
ment New York, N. Y.

Aug 14

Sir:

1. Regret to inform you progress on Visio-station is at a standstill. Natives will not co-operate.

2. Feel presence of a chemist is not necessary and will only complicate this detail. Suggest you cancel assignment of M. L. Fink to Planet 37.

Signed,

Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.

P. S. George, I have only two words for you, gleaned from my loving study of ancient 20th century history.

Drop dead!

John

FROM:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st.
Planet 37, Galaxy Four

TO:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project and
Chief of HQ Personnel Assign-

ment New York, N.Y.

Aug 28

Sir:

1. Please excuse two-week delay in this communique.

2. Presence of Chemist 1st Class M. L. Fink is great addition to Planet 37 unit. Request indefinite extension of her tour of duty.

3. Natives co-operating fully on Visio-station. First building completed and work begun on second.

3. Request double ration of bottled water on next weekly supply carrier.

Signed,
Choate, Eng. 1st.

P. S.

George, boy, forgive me for my harsh words of Aug. 14. You are a gem, a noble soul of a man, a benefactor, a true friend and fellow Omega Deltan.

Obviously, you have not seen Mary Lou Fink in some time. Probably four years, to be more nearly accurate.

George, lad, that girl has changed! If you'll allow a moment of giddy rhapsodizing from a usually pedestrian fellow, I would like to say that she has turned herself into one of the most gorgeous women I've ever laid my tired eyes on.

Remember the fat? She's lost at least 35 pounds. What's left is all lean. Well, not *quite* all, George.

Remember that scroungy blond hair? She's not dying it now. It's

a natural chestnut brown—shiny and with the faintest suggestion of a wave in the back where it touches her shoulders. And what shoulders!

In addition, she has proved to be a miracle worker with the natives. You see, up here they don't reproduce by sex. They have another process, almost like a couple of cells growing together, or apart, or whatever cells do. Anyway, they'd never seen a woman before. They have a nice sense of color and form. Mary Lou's big blue eyes and that out-of-this-galaxy figure have knocked them. They'll do anything for her. She's very gentle and kind and good to them, and they love her.

George, I hate to say this, but when you fluffed her off four years ago, you pulled the large-sized goof of your career.

There's really only one fly in the ointment. And maybe it isn't really a fly, but a blessing in disguise.

This morning when I got up, Smith was sitting out on the front steps of the Visio-building with a bottle of water in one hand.

I went out to ask him something, and you know what he did, George?

He giggled!

Yours gratefully in O. D.

John

FROM:

Brevet Major George Berelson

HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project and
Chief of HQ Personnel Assign-
ment New York, N.Y.

Aug 28

URGENT!!!

1. You are instructed to return
Chemist 1st Class M. L. Fink to
New York immediately. She will
report to HQ Personnel office.

2. Bottled water supplies will be
reduced to normal.

3. Planet 37 Visio-station is being
discontinued. Abandon building and
proceed to Planet 40 to begin battle
hangar.

Signed,
Berelson, HQ Unit Cmdr.

P. S.

John, you are a louse! Of course,
this serves me right. I deserve it.

But that doesn't change things
for you. Ellender's still retiring—
ahead of schedule, in fact. His
papers came through yesterday.
He'll be out in three months.

Now, with the Planet 37 base
out of the way, you can step into
Ellender's position.

That is, you can if you're a good
Omega Delta and come home and
bring Mary Lou with you.

Reciprocally,
George

P.P.S. Ask Mary Lou if she re-
members that marvelous weekend
she and I spent together four years
ago.

FROM:

John Choate, Con. Eng. 1st
Planet 37, Galaxy Four

TO:

Brevet Major George Berelson
HQ Unit Commander, Galaxy
Four Expansion Project New
York, N. Y.

September 6

Sir:

1. Please be notified of resigna-
tions from Expansion Service of:

A. Smith, Engineer, 2nd Class.

B. Fink, Chemist 1st.

C. Choate, Eng. 1st.

2. Since Planet 37 is being aban-
doned, bottled water can be stop-
ped sending.

Signed,
Choate, (Ex.) Con. Eng. 1st.

P. P. s.

Boy, oh boy, George, this is It,
with a Capitle T!

Mary Lou found out whzt makes
this water so good. It's mineralized,
I think she called it. So the na-
tives use To drink 7ust plain oLd
Rain wazer, but our stufff has kicks
in it.

Also,,, no hangover.

No cirrho . . . no sciros . . .
no messed up liver, either.

We fixed upa hoMemade miinx-
eralizer, Guorge. Its in the ba6h
room) where the Visio-scope sp-
posed to been.

Oh—almost forgot—Mary Lou
and I got marriedd yesturvay. Lo-
cal nativEs ceremony—simple but

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binding. We are settling down here
on planet 37.

One final word, George; I don't
need that promotion to Ellenders
job. I got it too good here.

Yours fatunerlally in ojugu doltus

P, p.s.

Mary Lou say she don'T rme-
mmber anYone maimed Blerel-
son. 'Sory, Gaorj.

THE END

John