

Futures

Wrong number

Unwanted visitors. By Diana Juncher



ILLUSTRATION BY JACEY

I was roused from my sleep by a faint thunder-like rumbling. I rolled over and looked out the window – the night sky was clear and quiet, and covered in bright stars; not a single cloud in sight. I sighed and closed my eyes, desperate for a night of undisturbed sleep.

A strangely muted humming slithered its way into my ears and began to grow louder and louder, making the hairs down my spine stand up perfectly straight. A dark shape moved outside my window, eclipsing the stars one by one as it descended from the sky. I rolled away from the window and groaned as beams of eerie blue light pierced the glass and swept across my bedroom.

“Really!?” I yelled, my voice almost exploding with pent up annoyance. Lack of manners was apparently universal.

As if on cue, the sounds and lights abruptly stopped. Not because of my outburst, of course, but because *something* had completed its descent and landed in my backyard.

I lay still, hoping that whoever or whatever had landed would soon realize their mistake and be on their way again.

No such luck. After a few minutes of silence, there was a knock on my back door. Well, something that could pass for a knock, but was actually more a kind of scratching. I sighed and reluctantly got up to go greet the visitors, cursing under my breath the whole way out of my bedroom, through the living room, and into the kitchen where the back door was. This was the third night in a row.

“Can I help you?” I asked the two aliens standing outside. They looked kind of molluscoid. Their skin was a shiny dark green and, except for their big eyes, their tentacles were their most dominant features. They weren’t pretty, but at least they weren’t insectoids – those things creeped me out.

They responded with a wave of their upper tentacles and some gurgling sounds that came from who knows where.

“No translators?” I asked. “What backward

area of the Galaxy are you squishes from?” I grabbed my own translator, a gift from a previous visitor, and activated it.

“... neutralize this earthling and ...” I caught one of them saying before it realized what I had done and quickly shut up. I raised an eyebrow, and a very awkward silence followed.

“Can I help you?” I asked again.

“Yes, eeh, greetings, madame,” the other one said, trying its best to be polite. It even ventured a little bow.

“Sir,” I corrected.

“What?”

“Never mind.” I walked past them and into the yard. “You are looking for the Supernova Diner, yeah?”

“Y-yes, how did you know?”

I was just about to answer when I saw their spaceship. It was a classic type-C flying saucer with tripod landing gear. One of the tripod’s legs was parked smack centre in my small tomato patch, the other two were in my goldfish pond, causing the whole ship to slant slightly.

Futures

“What the hell!?” I yelled, gesturing angrily at the open landing space at the opposite end of my yard, which was coated in asphalt and had a clear, glow-in-the-dark UFO symbol painted on it. “Are you blind? Do you not know how to vertical park? Did you just get your UFO licences or something?”

My visitors stared at me in shock. When they recovered and started to apologize profusely, I quickly cut them off.

“Look,” I said while rubbing my forehead. Damn, I was tired. “It’s fine. Forget about it.” Bad drivers were apparently also universal. “You’ve got the wrong address is what’s happened.”

“The wrong address?” they asked slowly.

“Yeah, well, look around,” I said waving my arms. “This isn’t exactly a high-end space restaurant orbiting a dying star, is it?”

One of them held up a small device that looked like a tiny UFO, and a flashy hologram shot out below it like a tractor beam.

“Yeah, see, what you’ve got there is an old flyer. They misprinted one of the digits in the second coordinate,” I explained. I had seen thousands of this exact hologram before and quickly pointed out the mistake.

“See, there! It’s supposed to be a 2, not a 5.” “Oh, well ... that was ... unfortunate,” one of them said hesitantly, and the other nodded in agreement. They finally seemed to realize their mistake.

“Tell me about it,” I sighed, as they made their way back to their UFO. “I’ve been trying to get them to do something about it for years, but they pretty much just ignore me. Not worth the trouble, I guess.”

“Now that is just stupid and rude,” one of them said sympathetically, as it scraped a few squashed tomatoes off its lower tentacles and entered the cockpit.

“Maybe you could put up a sign,” the other suggested helpfully, as it joined its friend.

I considered pointing out the big sign

I had put up next to the landing pad they had so perfectly missed. On the sign I had clearly explained the situation in all of the eight official intergalactic languages; I had even included a few outer-rim dialects.

Instead, I took a deep breath and gave them a strained smile.

“Good idea, thank you!”

I watched them take off and cursed under my breath, as they nearly decapitated my flagpole.

The next day I put up a new sign right next to my back door. Not that I expected it to make much of a difference. Stupidity was definitely universal.

Diana Juncher has a PhD in astronomy, loves science fiction, and absolutely believes we are not alone. She likes to make up stories and write them down. Her only weakness is puppies.