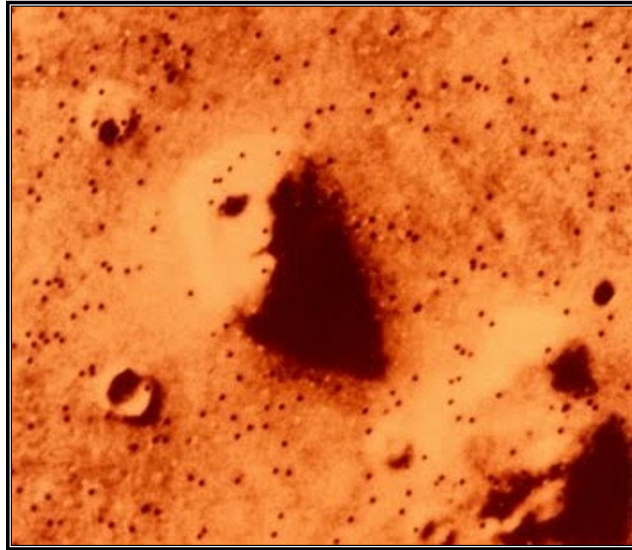


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

March 6-12, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 20



WOULD YOU CAST YOUR VOTE FOR THE FACE ON MARS?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

ELECTIONEERING is over, but the complete results of California's Super Tuesday aren't in yet.

If you're game, take a post-election break and read this digest-sized science-fiction story that wrote me during the Clinton presidency in 1995. It may help you decide how to vote in November 2020's presidential election.

The Face On Mars

Before the planet Mars lost its sea, water shimmered golden in the sunlight, the people stood tall like statues, and their eyes were green as jade. Flanked by pyramids, one face remained after the planet turned barren and dry and this figure appeared to be scanning the universe like a father seeking a family.

The Venusians, a compact race, discovered the face on Mars during a routine surveillance mission when their scanners picked up what appeared to be a high rock ledge that, in shadows of the sun, resembled Venusian features: two eyes, a nose and an expressionless mouth.

The chief pilot of a cruise patrol craft said, "Surely, it cannot be a construct. Mars is dead as rock. How could anyone have sculpted such a massive face from dry rock?"

The co-pilot said, "I believe there was a race. Long ago..."

"Where did such marvelous beings go?"

"That's the mystery."

"It does appear to be non-natural in construction. The eyes...I hesitate to look at them--"

“Why?”

“Because that super-head down there looks just like you.”

The glass-like bubble ship in which the two patrolmen were circling the dead planet shuddered. The chief said, “I do wonder if, in our cells, there's the strain of another race we haven't yet begun to understand...”

“Let's cut the deep space talk. Let's head back to the command post and grab a burger.”

“With fries. Curly fries. Lots of salt.”

Even though Mars had no atmosphere, its magnetic field was powerful and the space capsule traveled on full thruster power to escape being pulled down to the dry dust filled with rivulets and canyons where powerful torrents of water had once flowed.

The face watched the Venusians go without blinking.

Halfway across the galaxy, a rain of meteors struck the invisible membrane which separated the planet Venus's stratosphere from deep space, lighting the night sky with an aurora of crimson red sparks shimmying surface-ward.

Buzzers blasted throughout the space station where the chief pilot was wiping salt from his chin. Sirens screamed an alert as a Venusian broadcaster's face appeared. No sound came over the triangular-shaped transmission box, but the co-pilot knew how to read lips.

“What's he saying?” the pilot asked. “Something about Venus popping like a balloon?”

“The planet's air...” the co-pilot read. “It's escaping through tears in the protective membrane...”

The onscreen announcer gasped, his green eyes bulged, then fell like two marbles from their sockets.

“We'd better stay here, Joe,” the co-pilot said.

“No. Maybe someone down there can be saved. I'm superior officer, and that's an order!”

Except for vapor rising from the muddy surface, Venus looked as barren as Mars.

“My God of the Universe!” The pilot wiped his eyes as he headed the craft toward the surface. “It's all gone! The cities. The vegetation. The Venusians...”

“We're surrounded by methane...”

“Venus lost her atmosphere. It's out there...traveling through space as a frozen comet with a tail. . .” He gulped and whispered. “Like sperm in a nuptial rite!”

“And all the living things are trapped and frozen like seeds in it.”

The last Venusians' oxygen supply lasted five hours. They perished with their green eyes open and staring sightless into space.

The Venusian comet settled into a trajectory that orbited wide and swept in a broad oval around the sun, and then it penetrated a rocky space orb and entered its fiery core...and the seeds of life regenerated and an atmosphere formed, with an embryonic membrane as clear and invisible to the eyes of the simple creatures that swam in its bag of waters as the atmosphere on Venus had been.

But they saw not, for the Light of Universal Intelligence had not yet penetrated their smaller forms.

In time, green things sprouted roots and grew into umbrellas to shade the future superior race.

And the new Venusians crawled from steaming waters and began to breathe air.

In the distance, the faded green eyes of the Face on Mars stared unblinkingly across the abyss.

As life evolved, the superior beings who stood around six feet tall mastered the art of flying like birds, and harnessed electricity and magnetic fields of their home planet, which was named Earth.

And in the year 2025, following their overheated planet's loss of air through the ozone layer ripped apart by materials being sent into space, an expedition of colonists was sent to Mars to explore establishing an artificial atmosphere where a few humans could be saved.

The co-pilot of the first landing craft to reach the surface said, "Everyone at NASA has wondered for more than 50 years: Is the face on Mars natural or unnatural?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, it looks a lot like the Sphinx in Egypt. Bigger, of course, but Mars is a hell of a lot bigger than Earth."

"So you think a race of giants lived on Mars?"

"How else can you explain the pyramids? Their builders came to Earth from Mars and built smaller reproductions of landmarks on their home planet."

The ship cruised past a hunk of rock no NASA probes had previously spotted. The pilot nearly jumped out of his space suit. "Am I nuts... but isn't that..."

"Golden arches!"

"What's a McDonald's doing frozen in deep space?"

"I don't know, but it's out of business."

As the spaceships landed, the faded green eyes of the face that was watching the activity blinked, and the shadow of a mouth opened, and dust fell out. And Abraham said to the people, "Give me a drink, children. I nearly died of thirst waiting for you to come home."

Global Warming Isn't A Hoax

Global warming isn't a hoax. Bear that in mind when you vote for the next president in November, lest facts be ignored until it's too late to reverse this possibility: the national housing crisis could be solved because everyone on our planet is not only homeless, we're dead.

Meanwhile, Doris Beckman advises that COVIA will make a home-sharing presentation to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors on Tues., March 10, 10:30 a.m. Details from 831-601-4584, goldenconnections1@gmail.com.

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("The Face on Mars" first appeared in *Hodge Podge Literary Journal*, June 1995.)

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