



LETTERS from an ALIEN SCHOOLBOY



TRANSLATED
FROM ALIEN BY
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MISSION EARTH: DAY ONE SUNDAY

Measly Dwelling
Row of Identical Dwellings
Tiny 'Country' Called England
Misshapen Islands Called Britain
Insignificant Dot Called Earth
Feeble Solar System
Forty-third Galaxy from the Right
Virgo Supercluster
Wrong End of the Universe



Dear Rokbumme,

Here we are squashed inside a repulsive 'house' on the most ill-tempered, ugly planet in the Universe – Earth. The weather is grey and freezing, which is not surprising since Earth has only one sun, and that seems to be covered up most of the time with wet floating blobs called 'clouds'.

I am as cold as a *ploogle* and as cross as a bagful of *scratchflackets*.

We arrived here unsafely, nearly beheading two ancient Earthlings, which was all the pilot's fault.



Our unsafe arrival

Flyzooop crossed eighty-two galaxies on the way here without once watching where he was going. It's amazing we got here at all.

We were all trying to relax in the spacecraft's comfort zone, and make the most of our last few days as Faathings before we had to put on our Earth disguises. We were eating the remains of a toasted *flaark* we'd picked up at that fuel station just to the left of the Crab Nebula, playing pong-ping, flexing our suckers and twirling our antennae – when dozy old Flyzooop screamed,

'METEOR ATTACK! FIRE ALL MISSILES!'

Me and my sister Farteeta looped over to the vision zone and there it was – a huge blue meteor heading straight for us! Our in-flight robot, Bertiolboomflinglebuntusdyoliusfloopfloop (I'll just call him Bert from now on) went mental.

'That's not a meteor, that's Earth you *****!'* he said. 'And it's not heading for US, WE'RE heading for IT.'

Bert rolled down the central aisle, smashing up all the seating and ripping our pong-ping net to shreds. I've never seen him move so fast. He tore the controls out of Flyzooop's suckers and zapped all twelve *ABORT* buttons. Too late – one missile had already launched. We watched it zooming towards Earth.

'That's our mission finished before it's begun,' said Papa.

It turned out Flyzooop's aim is as hopeless as his piloting. The missile shot past Earth and exploded on an even more insignificant dot called Pluto.

'I don't think Pluto is inhabited,' said Papa. 'At least, not by intelligent life as we know it. But then neither is Earth.'

** Editor's note: This book may be read by younglings. Please insert the word 'nincompoop'.*

'ANTI-GRAVITY BLASTERS ON! ACTIVATE ANTI-MATTER SHIELDS! INITIATE REPULSION MAGNET! MOBILISE HOVER MODE!'

Bert was a blur of flashing lights and robot arms spinning in all directions. It was just as well we'd brought him with us, because Flyzooop was crouching in the cockpit with his suckers covering all seventeen eyeballs and moaning, 'We're going to *die!* I want my mums.'

Earth hurtled closer – a horrible sight.

'Back in the days of the Eighth and Ninth Quadratic Wars there were real pilots, who could land a burning battle cruiser even if two of their heads and most of their arms had been shot off,' said Papa. 'But this *flurfling* apology for a pilot even forgot to switch on the anti-matter shields!'

He messaged back to Faa: *Mission aborted. We are about to die. Goodbye.*

Mama and Farteeta looped about uselessly. Pluke and I helped Bert, because I am brave, as a true Faathing should be, and because Pluke is my noble pet who would lay down his life for me.

We managed to activate the Hover Mode just four metres from Earth's surface, and the hover blades missed the ancient Earthlings by 0.2 centimetres and set light to a bunch of 'trees' (unfriendly green vegetables, not a bit like the chatty *urqflurbles* in which you and I first learned to climb back home on Faa.) None of us could find the memory-blaster in time to wipe the memories of the two old Earthlings, but luckily for us, once the anti-matter shields were up, we became invisible, so it didn't matter how much they shouted and screamed about an alien attack, because no other Earthlings believed them.

So now we've transformed into our Earthling disguises and are 'settling in' to our unpleasant



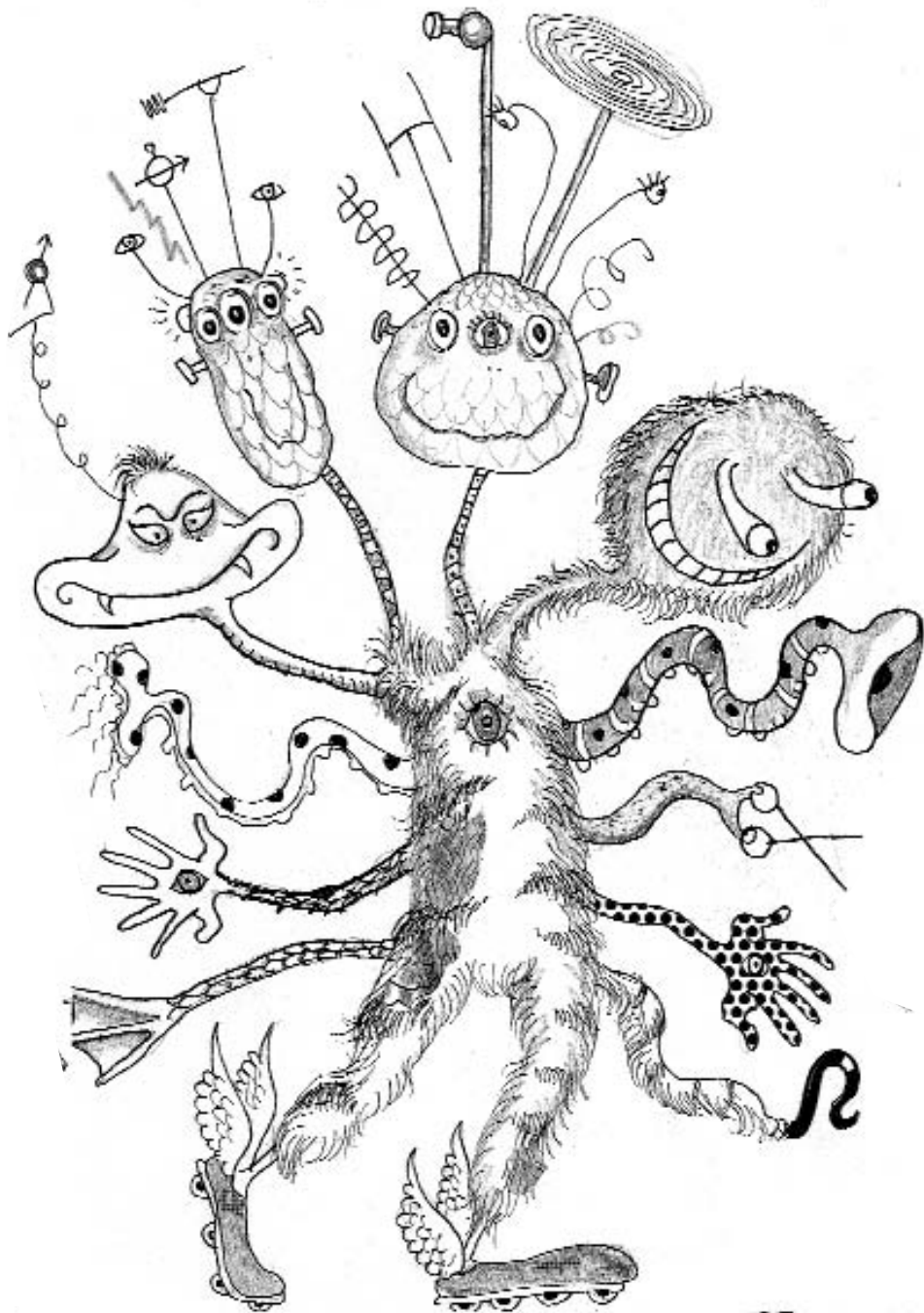
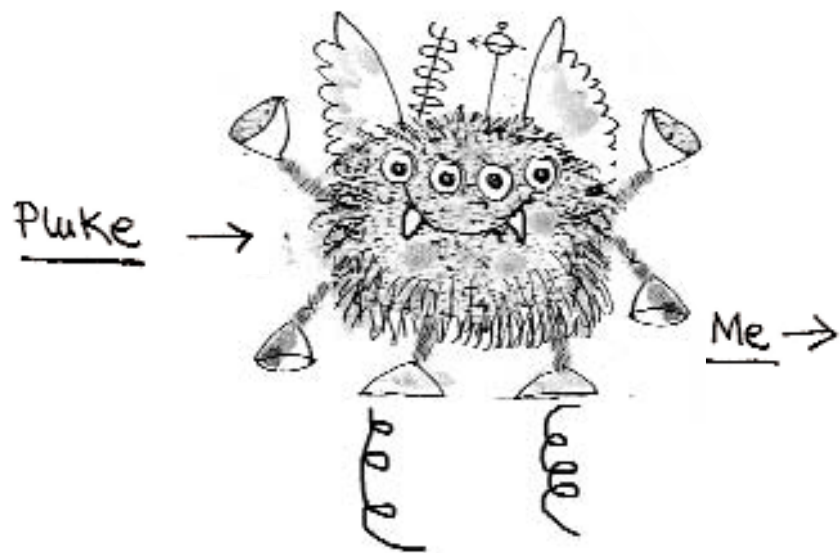
My bag was swallowed by a BLACK HOLE! It was a manhole

dwelling. All you can see from its portholes are rows of identical dwellings and grey 'streets'.

The first message from home was your mindscan of me and Pluke on Faa just before I left.

Thanks for that, although it makes my hearts ache to look at it.

See? Back on Faa, even my sad face looks happy.



Now I look like this.



So you see the awful truth – *Earthlings have only one head*. No wonder they're so stupid.

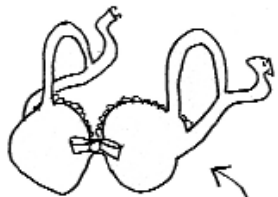
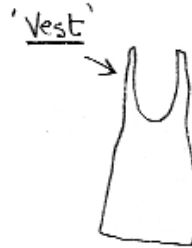
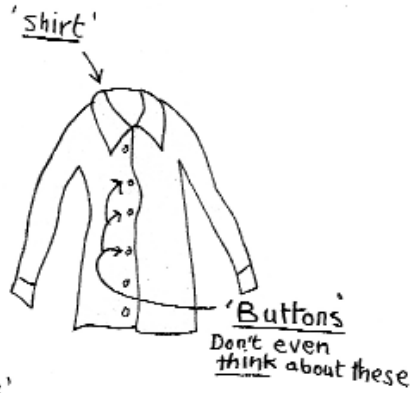
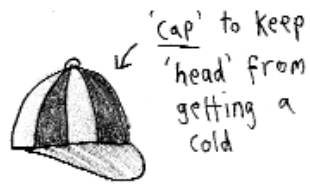
And just two eyeballs. And those face *forwards*.

Earthlings start out in life less equipped than our most primitive *fluits* but think they're the most advanced species in the Universe.

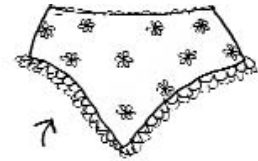
I'm supposed to be here, looking like this, for a whole Earth *month*.



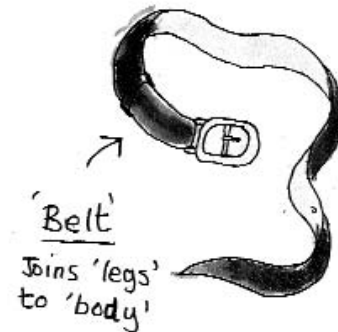
And I have to wear tubes and flaps called 'clothes'.



Chest protector ('Bra')
you have to fasten
this at the back, using
uni-jointed arms. Impossible.
Tip: Male Earthlings do
not wear these. Thank
Klong I discovered before
I had to change for PE



'Underpants'
There is only one of
these, so why don't
they call it 'an
'underpant?'
Tip: If you ever come
to Earth, Klong forbid,
make sure you do not
wear the above.
Wear these instead,
they are called
'Boxers' after
Earthling warriors.



Earthlings can't grow fur like us. A lot of other creatures on their planet can, but Earthlings look down on them as inferior.

You've no idea how awful it is here, Rokbumme. Just think – you wake up in the morning expecting everything to be the same as usual, ready to unfold your aerials, give the old heads a bit of a scratch, rub your seventeen eyeballs . . . Then you realise you've got to say goodbye to normality because you're not yourself any more, you're a freak with just one head, two eyeballs, four limbs and no aerials at all. Sounds like a nightmare, doesn't it? Only it's real life!

But that's only the beginning. Then you've got to 'get dressed'.

The instruction manuals are useless.

You should have seen me the first time I tried to put clothes on – trousers over head, on both arms, on legs upside down, you name it. I even had the



↑
Our instruction manuals for 'getting dressed' are very confusing. It took me six Earth hours to put on a sock.

underpants-over-the-head in the trousers-upside-down phase.

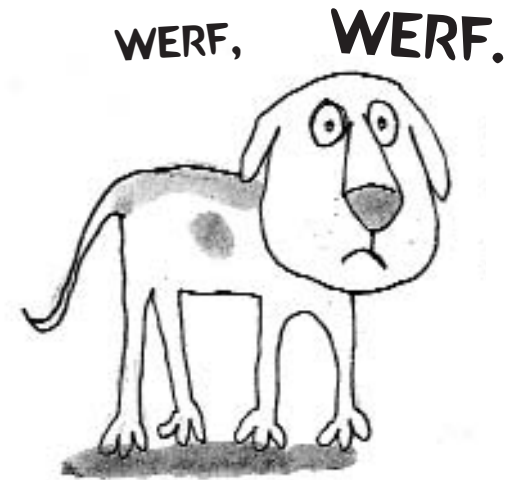
What a waste of time! You could visit the Pleiades for a game of *snaark*, stop off to

download an encyclopaedia or two at the Infinite Knowledge Base by the Timeless Labyrinths' burger bar, and even drop by Aqua Orbius 9 for a quick swim before breakfast, in the time it takes to get dressed here.

Mama and Papa have given me an Earth name – Hoover Bogey Nigel Custard Toilet Hercules Namby Pamby Harmonica Hedgehog Coldplay Bugspray CroMagnon Colander Junior. I like it, but Papa says he thinks it might be best if Earthlings just call me 'Nigel'. They did a check on all the books written about Earthlings by the cleverest humans, averaged out all the names given to the human species, and threw in a couple of other randomly selected names as wild cards. So that's what I ended up with.

Poor little Pluke has had the worst of the deal – his Earth disguise is that of a horrible smelly human pet called a 'dog'.

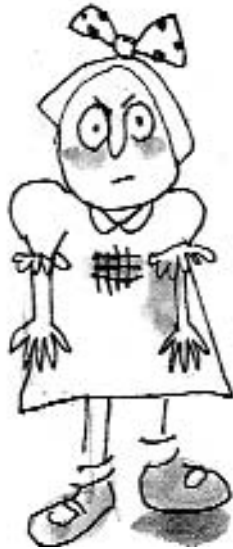
He has to run up and down with his mouth drooling spit, cough all the time when he isn't ill (they call it 'barking' here, but it's just the same) and drop waste products all over the place. The sound Pluke makes is like *oozles* mating, and it goes like this:



Pluke's Earth name is Rhubarb. I am beginning to wish I hadn't begged Papa to bring him, he looks so sad.

My annoying little sister Farteeta is furious because she has to be an Earthling toddler called Sultana Toilet Hercules Namby Pamby Harmonica Hedgehog Coldplay Bugspray Cro-Magnon Colander, but wants another name too.

**'IT'S NOT FAIR! I WANT
TO BE CALLED NIGEL!'**



Tomorrow I have to start my own special mission – going to a ‘school’ to collect Earthlings for Papa. Remember that collection of *flonkblatters* I used to have, and you used to ask why I bothered to collect such a low form of life? Well, eat your words, Rokbumme my old friend. *Flonkblatters* could stand on all their heads at once, blow stuff out of their beaks in an interesting range of colours, perform brain surgery on each other, and a quantillian other things. It isn't like that with Earthlings – they do nothing worth studying at all.

Still, all is not lost for them, because now they're about to be Improved, and that's why I have to collect them.

Papa's machine for Improving Earthlings is amazing. And Papa says it can do other top secret things that only he and the Emperor's Secretive Services know about.