# The Beer Cans on Mars

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*No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us.*

Isn't how it began? That *War of the Worlds* book? It was luck of the draw, really. If I had this same luck in Vegas, I would never have to work again! What money, you bring into Vegas stays in Vegas. My dad used to tell me a joke. I think he got it from a book by a guy named Robert Orben. Anyway, the joke is something like, Vegas is the only place you can drive into with a ten thousand dollar car and leave on a one-hundred thousand dollar bus. But I'm getting off the subject. Maybe I should start from the beginning.

There I was, searching the Internet for something to do. That Internet is a pretty neat contrivance, don't you think? I used to think so. Then I found that web site where you could enter your name to go on a DVD for the Mars lander. That's the closest I'll ever come to getting to Mars. So, what the heck. I put my name in the data base. And I was on my way to Mars.

The funny thing is that I forgot all about it. That is until I saw the landing on the news. March 25, 2008 is a day that would change my life. I didn't think that as I watched the

cheering crew at the Mission Control center. Little did they reflect, I'm sure, how they were about to ruin my life. I searched the web site for a list of names that were included in the mission and couldn't find one. Supposedly, there was a DVD attached that had all these names. I guessed that it was just some publicity stunt and there was no such animal. I harkened back to the Stardust mission where I put my name in that microchip of the Dawn spacecraft. I didn't think anything of it after that.

Here it is, four-years later. I was sitting at home with the warm summer breeze wafting through my open window. Who am I kidding. It was hot and I had the window open. The sheets on my bed were wet with perspiration. The curtains fluttered as I was in the twilight between consciousness and slumber. I thought how wonderful it was that a breeze was finally kicking up to cool down the room. I began to realize that there was movement in my room that could not be accounted for by the rustling of curtains. Someone was staring at me.

I reached over to find that it was not a someone, but a something. Two somethings, more precisely. Two odd creatures stood staring at me with their bulbous eyes. They had some sort of odd-shaped blue caps on their head. They wore blue jump suits with a weird insignia on them. Those in the know would describe them as Grays. They were, in fact, gray and had smooth skin devoid of hair. They were taller than E.T. and had four arms, which I do not recall anyone reporting.

"If you're looking for Marv, he lives—"

That is about all that I had time to say before four sets of hands grabbed me tightly and lifted me from the bed. Fortunately, I don't sleep in the nude or there could have been an embarrassing moment. There was a bright light and the next thing I knew is that I was being dragged down a hall way. They stopped in front of some sort of open compartment and tossed me inside.

"Hey, wait a minute! Just what is going on!" I complained as I headed for the opening.

I was stopped short when a series of bars slammed down in

front of me. I realized that I must be in some sort of intergalactic paddy-wagon.
I do not know how long we traveled. I felt strange, though, as if time stood still. I don't know all of the science behind traveling at the speed-of-light or warping or whatever. Perhaps I was in some sort of stasis field. Whatever the case, I can say one thing. Alien's sure can cook. Now I know what they did with all that mutilated cattle. The vegetables were not the same as on good old Earth. But they were delicious. I know what you are thinking. Why would I eat some alien plant. My feeling, though, was that the aliens would not go through all this trouble to pick me up if they were going to poison me. After all the experiments that they conducted on all those people, they must know what would be dangerous for us to eat.
It was when I was expecting my eighth meal that they came and pulled me out into the hall. They dragged me out of the ship and into some sort of space station. There were all manner of critters walking about, including some humanoid figures. It did not ease the nervous feeling I had as I was led down the corridor.
They took me into a chamber with benches set in a semi-circle facing a bench. There were a few aliens sitting on the benches facing an octopus seated at the bench. A humanoid creature fiddled with some sort of box next to the bench. I began to get the feeling that I was in a courtroom and the humanoid was the court recorder.
The octopus emitted some weird screeching noise and then I heard a voice. Actually, I "heard" the voice in my head. It asked…
"Do you understand me?"
"Yes," I replied. "Now what is this all about?"
The octopus held up a circular, glass object. "It is about this. Do you recognize this?"
"No," I replied truthfully.
"This was found on an object on the planet that you call 'Mars'."
"What do you call it?"

“We call it *Aldiningora*.”
“What does that mean?”
“It means ‘*the planet called Mars by Earth*’. But that is not important. What is important is that your Earth is littering planets in your solar system that do not belong to you with metallic devices. What you do with the environment on your own planet is of no concern to us. You have to live there. However, when you spread these devices to other places, then we have a problem. I understand there is even one that has traveled beyond your solar system.”
I began to realize what the creature was referring to.
“Those are probes designed to search for other life forms. We have a right to search for other life. As for our environment, we are recycling and trying to do other things to correct the damage on our environment.”
“Recycling?”
“Yeah. For example, we put our aluminum cans—you know, old beer cans, coke cans and such—in containers and companies melt them down and reuse them. Some of them might have even been used in those spacecraft you found.
“And by the way, there were supposed to be over a hundred thousand names on that disc. You’re saying that mine is the only one you found? Those are government projects that you are referring to. I don’t even have a job, much less be able to launch those spacecraft on my own.”
“Your name was the only one that we could decipher from this primitive device.”
“Well, how did you track me down, anyway?”
“We *Googled* you, of course.”
Well, now I had a nasty email to send when I returned to Earth. If I ever returned to Earth. I had no idea what alien justice would bring. And to think that I worried so much about that ridiculous U.N. world court.
“Do you have anything to add in your defense?” the creature finally asked.
“Well, yeah. As I said, I did not launch those probes. The United States government did. And several of our other

governments launched space craft, as well. I didn't pay for them, they did.
"Secondly, it seems to me that you are interfering with our right to explore space. Don't you watch Star Trek? You're not supposed to interfere with our development."
The court recorder spoke for the first time.
"Actually, I believe that the concept is Star Trek is that once a planet shows that it is capable of interstellar travel, the outside worlds are supposed to invite you into the league of planets and teach you peaceful exploration."
"Oh, shut up. I'm talking," I interrupted. That's all I needed was an alien Trekkie. "Anyway, the point is that I had little to do with launching any probes. I thought it would just be a kick to put my name in a space craft traveling to another planet, you know? Now, if you don't mind, I want to go home!"
My countenance abruptly changed when I realized that I could not tell if my words had any affect on the octopus.
"Please," I pleaded.
"You will now be remanded to custody while we review your case and make our decision," I heard.
The four armed aliens dragged me out into the hall. On the way, I wondered what the octopus meant by we. Did the other creatures in the court room advise it somehow? Was there some camera feeding the court room drama to alien households for them to vote on his guilt or innocence? Was this some kind of galactic Judge Judy? Why didn't I have a lawyer present? Didn't these creatures study the Constitution? That last one didn't matter, I guess. The people of the U.S. have been allowing the politicians to destroy the Constitution over the years, so I couldn't expect aliens to take it seriously.
Surprisingly, the deliberation did not seem to take long. In fact, the doors to the court chamber only slide shut, then opened again for my return. That was scary. I stepped into the chamber when I heard that voice again.
"Stop. That is as far as you need to go. We have determined that your only involvement in this crime is that you, like many others in your culture, are interested in knowing if

there are other life forms. I do not know how many times we have to fly over Washington, Moscow, Mexico City and even Phoenix to make that point. Be that as it may, we order you to return home with the following message."

So they brought me home. The whole trip took just over thirty days and the most disappointing thing is that none of my friends even noticed my absence—*Thank you very much*! The point of this writing, however, is just to send you a message. You can choose to believe it or not. And if you are envisioning *Gort* standing over my shoulder, so am I. The message is this.

"We (the alien races describer heretofore) care little about your petty squabbles and what you do to your own environment. However, if you persist in your present course of spreading your garbage throughout the galaxy, we have the power to reduce your Earth into a burned out cinder. Quit dumping your beer cans on Mars."

For my own part, I might just add that you remember those immortal words. *Klaatu barata nikto*! They might come in handy someday.