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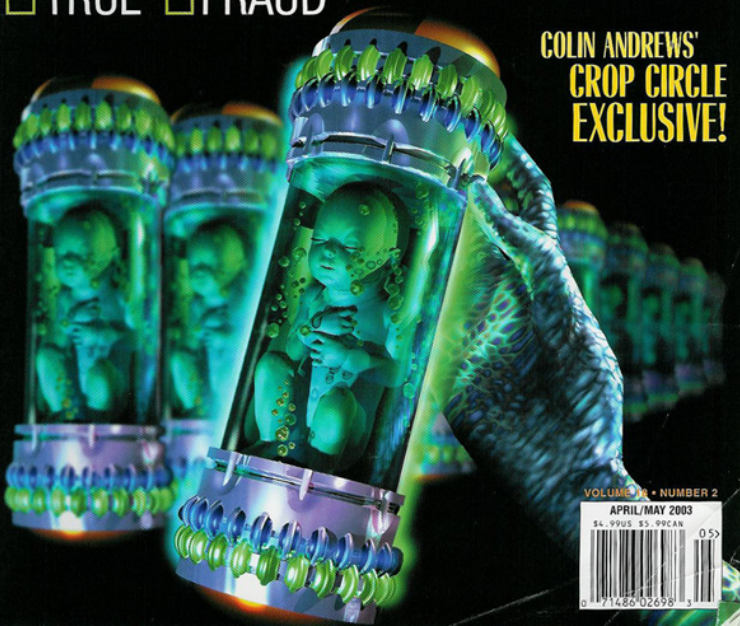
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ENCOUNTERS

My Favorite Martian

By Margaret Wendt

As a youngster, the daughter of an award-winning TV producer calmly announced her alien-hood.

I am a mother of three, in my 53rd year of life, with a secret. You see, my youngest daughter is an alien. Yes, that's right, my youngest daughter has now convinced me that she is indeed an alien.

On Oct. 21, 1979 I gave birth to a baby girl that was then and continues to be different. Her first sentence went something like this, "You are not my mommy and Tom is not my daddy." I just thought she was being as difficult in sound as she had been in silence.

One Sunday afternoon, she came down from her room where she stayed by herself most of the time talking to God knows whom, and announced that she was an alien. Tom and I looked at each other and asked her, "What did you say?" She stood straight and tall, looked us right in the eye and repeated it again. "I am an alien." We laughed and told her to stop the silly conversation, then asked her to go out to play with her brother. She stood her ground, and announced it again. At that point I'd had enough. I really didn't know what an alien was. I know about Martians, but aliens? How could a two-year-old make such a bizarre announcement to her parents?

I said, "All right, Ash, where is this coming from?"

I assumed one of her older sister's friends had put her up to it. I was wrong. Martians and aliens were not a subject that was ever discussed in our home.

No particular reason, it was just something we never gave any thought to. At this time, the book *Alien* had not been published yet, and the rag magazines had not started documenting abduc-

tions yet. Life as we knew it was about to change.

Tom and I were confused, and decided to ignore it. We hoped it would go away. We knew our daughter was the brightest kid in town, but she was also the most difficult one, too. We were sure she would outgrow it.

She did not. It became worse. She started screaming in the middle of the night, saying that her alien family was in her room, putting needles in her eye. She was being punished for being with us. At that point, Tom and I were shocked and worried that we had a very sick child on our hands. We dealt with it in the most loving and uneducated way. After all,



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what did we know about needles in eyes and tubes probing little girls during the night? We slept with her, we had her see doctors, and every one said she was fine and had a great imagination.

Her behavior continued for years, and soon the whole family was involved with the nightly terrors and the stories that went with them.

As Ashley grew older, she became more secure in her alien world, and we became more accepting of it.

If you were to see her, you would see the model 4.0 student and the sweet daughter she has become. When I see her, I feel the distance, the uneasy feeling she has with this world and the pain that she feels because she is an outsider. I guess she is what Ruth Montgomery would call a "walk-in."

As a journalist, I'm always and only concerned with the facts. I can never be sure that I'm getting the whole truth when I interview another person, but I'm always sure that I walked out with more than anyone wanted me to know. The facts about Ashley are these: She is not going to give up anything. She is smarter than I am, and she makes her very prestigious father (a scientist) look like a neophyte when it comes to the world of the unknown.

Ashley sees herself as an outsider. Her friends all look like they don't belong in this world. As a mother, that makes me sad. No, actually, it breaks my heart. Every mother wants her daughter to be like the other great, beautiful girls. Instead, she chooses to be with brilliant, weird girls. I used to think she did it because it made her different and rebellious. *That's not the case.* She doesn't see her friends as weird, and would be furious, sad and disappointed with me as a human being if she knew I thought that about them. But what's new? She's often disappointed with her whole family when it comes to the way we treat the planet, the people and ourselves.

Ashley says that they (her friends) seem to be the only ones who understand her, and she them. They're all extremely bright, and secure with the solar system. They know astrology and astronomy, and relate to the pain of God knows what. They snub the conventional, and

act like being intellectuals with IQs of 158 and up is a normal thing.

The lack of patience Ashley has is unbelievable. She sleeps differently, eats differently and thinks differently than anyone else we know. She's secure in her alien being. She doesn't want to talk too much about it but never denies it. If I bring it up in mixed company she becomes uncomfortable but watches the face of the newcomer. Her eyes go straight into them as if she can see what they're thinking. If she's not happy with the reaction, they'll never have a second chance to talk to her. She wipes them right out of her space, and reminds me to be discreet. I apologize, and we forget about it.

Ashley's father understands her better than I do. They really "get" each other. Maybe it's because as a scientist he knows that exploring the unknown is a very delicate situation. I, on the other hand, just go straight for the information. I can't help it. Ashley and I get along in intervals.

I know she's my favorite Martian, but I also know she has a family she acknowledges as her real life force. I'm the entity which gave her birth in this dimension, but I'm not the woman whom she feels knows her very essence. I'm the intruder, the journalist, the person that wants her to be human and not an alien.

She will always defend the alien, and yet she picks and chooses whom she talks to about it. Maybe it's the rules of the ship, or maybe it's her fear of us. Whatever it is, it's real and I have learned to respect and admire another way of life.

This favorite Martian of mine has taught me tolerance and compassion for a world and a group of people not a part of in my own reality. But in hers, I belong in the equation.

*Margaret Wendt has been an award-winning television producer, writer and reporter for over 25 years. She has created and executive produced over two-dozen series and specials for both network and cable television networks including, among others, CBS, ABC and UPN. Most recently, Margaret and her production company, Margaret Wendt Prods., executive-produced the CBS and Universal Studios special, "Home For The Holidays." **UFO***



Ashley Wendt