

First Contact

by Ed Higgins

All through their descent sequence K'var had nervous premonitions. The minute they stepped off the ship he instinctively knew they had chosen the wrong planet this time. Not to say the little blue planet with its cloud-vested, white swirling atmosphere hadn't seemed initially inviting.

Captain L'nao, whom he felt was always too eager to whelp her seed anywhere in the cosmos, had made the decision with her usual irritating haste. Alright, so she had gestated to past term once again. And "The grass was green enough," she'd snapped at his expressed concern.

Yet she insistently wanted to drop this one directly into nutrient soil, watch the epicotyl lengthen, smile proudly at the upward thrusting plumule, then fuss over stipule and first foliage. New mothers forever puzzled K'var.

They could still have held this additional off-spring in one of the ship's remaining half-dozen gestopods until they investigated the planet's on-site suitability. Or, if need be, until they reached another of the planets in this system's bio-class. Green grass wasn't everything.

But now they found themselves face-to-face with a quite curious, quite large, and possibly dangerous, quadra-pedal life form.

A stenching blast of chloro-stained breath brought the alien's mystifying first words to them.

Moooooooooooo.

