

Stop Press

by Mike Resnick

November 10, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Dear Sir:

Allow me to introduce myself. I represent the twelfth generation of free-lance writer in my family, dating back to the fabled Mike Resnick of the late 20th century. I have long been an admirer of your fearless yet entertaining no-holds-barred brand of journalism, and I think I have finally come up with a story so unique, so bizarre, so positively _outré_ that it will prove the beginning of a long and happy relationship between us.

Would you be interested in an interview, with holographs, of Boris Korchev, the three-headed shortstop of the Ganymede Geldings? I could let you have an exclusive for 5,000 credits.

Cordially yours,

Melvin Resnick

666 Glory Road

Heinlein City

Ganymede

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November 15, 2331

Dear Mr. Resnick:

Thank you for your interest in our newspaper, but I suspect you've been out of touch with it for some time now, or you would know that we ran a feature last June on the New York Yankees' Fourteen-Headed Infield, including an exclusive interview with Wilbur "Ten-Eyes" Plitkin.

If you come across any truly unique features in the future, please keep us in mind.

Yours,

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

PS -- I can find no historical reference to a 20th Century writer named Mike Resnick. In point of fact, the major literary figure of the 1990s was my own ancestor, the still-beloved Esther Friesner.

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November 19, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Dear Editor Friesner:

I'm sorry my last proposal didn't suit your needs, but I've come up with one that you're absolutely going to love. What would you say to exclusive coverage of the recently-concluded experiment at the Genetic Engineering Clinic here on Mars Base, where an eight-legged horse just gave birth to an elephant with five trunks? (The sire was a Patagonian woodmouse.)

I could let you have this for 3,500 credits.

Looking forward to working with you, I am

Hopefully yours,

Melvin Resnick

17 Tars Tarkas Blvd.

New Barsoom

Mars Base

PS: _Esther_ Friesner, you said? Never heard of her. I'll have to check my library's data banks.

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November 29, 2331

Dear Mr. Resnick:

Five-trunked elephants are a drug on the market. I refer you to our issue of August 23. If you will turn to Page 38, you'll find a story about the breeding of a five-trunked elephant with Rosie and Posie Plootz, a pair of tightrope-walking Siamese twins from Duluth, Minnesota. It was barely filler material back in August; it's certainly of no interest to us today.

I urge you to study our journal more carefully before wasting your time tracking down stories that are too mundane to appeal to our sophisticated readership.

Best wishes,

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

PS: Surely you jest. Esther Friesner was one of the Literary Greats. I'm proud to have her blood flowing in my veins.

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December 8, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Dear Mr. Friesner:

All right. This time I've got a story for you that you _can't_ turn down!

I have uncovered, at great physical and financial cost to myself, one of the more bizarre scandals in the history of the entire human race. Even at this late date I can hardly believe the evidence I have amassed, but there is no question that when you run this article, governments will fall and you and I will almost certainly share a Jacqueline Suzanne Memorial Prize for our journalistic efforts.

What would you say if I were to tell you that Solar President Meacham _is_ having an affair with Tprxt, his insectoid Neptunian maid?_

I have it all here -- eyewitness accounts, signed statements, and some of the most explosive holographs ever taken. I'm a little short of cash at the moment, but a good-faith advance of 2,500 credits will assure you the exclusive rights to the story, until we can negotiate a final price.

My first loyalty is to you, but I can only hold this offer open for 48 hours. If I have not heard from you by then, I will have to submit it to _The Interplanetary Inquirer_.

Excitedly yours,

Melvin Resnick

AAA Ace Outpost

Sheckleyville

Venus

PS: Spelled F-R-I-E-S-N-E-R, the same as yours?

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December 14, 2331

Dear Mr. Resnick:

What is so newsworthy about President Meacham having an affair with a Neptunian? My own wife is an egg-laying seven-limbed Mercurian _porble_, and I take extreme umbrage at your pedestrian notion that there is something unsavory about interspecies romance.

More to the point, President Meacham has already admitted to youthful indiscretions with a Tritonian sea-slug and a Callistan _muuda-muuda_, and in fact was once married to an ammonia-breathing trisexual marsupial native of Alpha Centauri III when he served as our ambassador to that troubled world.

This is tame stuff, Mr. Resnick. Perhaps you might be better off considering the science fiction market;

journalism is a very difficult discipline, second perhaps only to the contemporary romance novel, and not everyone is fit for it.

Yours,

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

PS: Yes, the spelling is the same. I urge you to read _Hooray for Hellywood_ and _Gnome Man's Land_ ; they practically define the Serious Literary Novel, circa the late 20th Century.

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December 22, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Dear Sam:

I may call you Sam, mayn't I? I feel as if I know you by this point in our correspondence, and despite your refusal to accept any of my previous proposals, I intuit that a certain bond of friendship and mutual professional respect has developed between us.

I'll be perfectly honest with you, Sam. I've suffered some financial reverses of late, and my wife is expecting our first child, and while I would never want this to influence you, I just want you to know that if you can see your way clear to purchasing the following, you will have an eternally grateful friend.

Not that the story _needs_ any special consideration. The instant I stumbled across it, I knew that it was tailor-made for _The Interplanetary Tattler_. (Get ready now; here it comes!)

How would you like an exclusive interview with Lt. Hemloch Willoughby, the pilot who, when marooned without food for seventeen days in the Sirius system, survived by eating his own genitals? What pathos! What human interest! What a triumph of the indomitable human spirit!

2000 credits takes it away. (For an extra 500, I can arrange an interview with his wife. Well, his ex-wife.)

Please reply soonest.

Expectantly yours,

Melvin Resnick

206 Lensman Street

Kinnison Village

Titan

PS: Late 20th Century, you say? I wonder if she ever met Mike Resnick? Probably not; he was much too busy turning out classic after classic.

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December 29, 2331

Dear Mr. Resnick:

Oh, Lord, not another Marooned Pilot Eats Own Genitals story! Maybe the Biloxi Times or the Fort Wayne Journal might be interested, if you catch them on a slow day, but we specialize in the unusual.

I admire your persistence, but you've missed the boat again. I can only suggest that you read the slogan on our masthead -- "Home of the Unique, The Bizarre, and the Deeply Warped" -- and commit it to memory.

Yours,

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

PS: I doubt that they ever met. She had class.

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January 6, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Friesner:

How can you keep doing this me? The wolves are at the door. I am reduced to renting a ship from Hertz (my own has been repossessed), Solar Bell is threatening to shut off my subspace radio transmitter, my wife is about to bring our first child into the world, and you keep rejecting stories that any editor would be thrilled to run.

I'm giving you one last chance, and then I'm going to start giving The Interplanetary Inquirer first look at all my material. I mean it, Friesner; I am a desperate man.

All right -- here it is, and if I say so myself, it is the most explosive story I've unearthed thus far.

I can prove that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was actually a woman, a nightclub stripteaser named Lola Puloza who was once billed as "The Hottest Mexican Export Since the Tamale". She fled to the United States in drag to escape from her gangster boyfriend, became Robert F. Kennedy's lover (the affair with Marilyn Monroe was just a ruse to hide the real truth), and was in fact assassinated not by Lee Harvey Oswald but rather by Salvatore Diego Gomez, her estranged Bolivian husband whom she had not seen in 23 years.

I can supply dates, signed testimony, even a never-before-seen videotape of Puloza putting on her JFK make-up prior to escorting Jacqueline to a state dinner. (Yes, the story of Kennedy's womanizing was another ruse, so that "JFK" would never find "himself" alone in a bedroom with Jackie.)

This is the story of the century; the day after you publish it, they'll have to rewrite the history books.

Please remit 500 credits by return mail.

Desperately yours,

Melvin Resnick

Ringworld Hotel

7th Ring

Saturn

* * * *

January 11, 2331

Dear Mr. Resnick:

History books were made to be rewritten. They rewrote them in 2328, when we proved that JFK was really Elvis Presley in disguise, and again eight months ago when we broke the story that the second and third shots in Dallas were actually self-administered because Elvis was depressed over the sales of his latest record.

As for your revelation, I'm afraid that you have somehow been misinformed. Our resident psychic, Mme. Shwartz, just had her weekly conversation with Elvis' ghost, who denies ever having been a Mexican stripteaser, and certainly not one called Lola Puloza.

Yours,

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

PS: I of course read The Interplanetary Inquirer every day, and I have yet to see your byline appear there. I'm afraid that your threats carry no more punch than your stories.

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January 29, 2331

Sam Friesner, Editor

The Interplanetary Tattler

10 Asimov Avenue Luna

Dear Scumbag:

Screw you and your lousy rag!

All I can say is that this is despicable treatment to give a struggling writer, just because his ancestor aced yours out of a couple of Hugo Awards more than three centuries ago.

Disgustedly yours,

Melvin Resnick

c/o The Malzberg Memorial Home

For The Terminally Morose

17 Herovit Road

Ridgefield Park, New Jersey

PS: My wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy. In the charity ward. No thanks to you. If I have any say about it, he's not going to beat his head against a stone wall trying to be a writer. As soon as he's old enough I'm sending him to plumbing school, so he can work at a profession where people appreciate his efforts.

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Interoffice Memo From: Sam Friesner To: Press Room

Stop press. Remake Page 1. Two-inch block letters, as follows:

MOTHER GIVES BIRTH TO NORMAL BABY!!!!

Memo to self: Cut Resnick a check for 5,000 credits, and offer him another 10,000 if he can supply a holograph in time to make the early edition.

-The End-