

## **Lost in Translation**

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**Cover art by  
Jeff Kuipers.**

**"...builds a more credible space opera universe in 18 pages than some 300-page novels have achieved." - *The Newsletter of the Council for the Literature of the Fantastic/University of Rhode Island***

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Katy held onto Mama with one hand and clutched a chocolate ice cream cone with the other. Mama and Daddy talked and laughed and Katy smiled, feeling their laughter tickling her inside, with none of the ache she felt when they were unhappy. And around the laughter-tickle was the warm glow of love--lots and lots of love. That she could always feel.

Behind her waddled a fat little synthibear, piping, "Wait for me, Katy!", and Katy kept turning around and saying, "Hurry up, bear!", and laughing as its chubby stuffed legs churned away, though it never got any closer. Katy had won it at the fair, in a shooting gallery. Even though she hadn't hit a single hologram the woman had called her a winner and given it to her, and that had made the whole day perfect, because the one thing she had really, really wanted for her sixth birthday was a synthibear, and now she had it! And she had ridden all the rides and eaten cotton candy and popcorn and zipmud, and the stars were shining overhead and Hardluck IV's three moons were bright and full, and Katy knew she was the happiest girl in the galaxy.

But just as they left the fairground, the sky went all ripply and was suddenly full of big silvery things. Katy's father said a bad word and scooped her up and grabbed her mother's hand and started running, and Katy felt that her parents were scared and that scared her, too, and she started to cry, and behind her the synthibear kept squeaking, "Come back, Katy, come back, Katy, come back..." until she couldn't hear it any more, and that made her cry even harder.

All around people shouted and screamed and ran every which way, and a siren wailed from Government House, and Katy heard her father praying, almost sobbing, and she got so scared she couldn't even cry any more.

They ran down their own street, toward their own house, but now other things filled the sky, black, with wings, and one came right over their heads, high up, except suddenly it wasn't, it got really big really fast, and it had red glittering eyes and big white teeth and it carried something long and thin in its claws, and now they were on their porch and Katy's father shoved her through the front door so hard she tumbled over and over and hit her head and started crying again, and she scrambled up to run back to her parents, only something flashed really bright just outside the door and her parents fell down funny and *she couldn't feel their love any more--*

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Kathryn jerked upright, gasping, and slapped on the lamp, and the winged shapes crowding around her vanished into the pale blue walls of her cabin on the Geneva. Still half caught in sleep, she staggered to her feet. How could she face a Clain? How

