

# The Stamp

by Terry Bisson

Everybody collects something, even if it's only stamps. Or dreams.

Orville collected stamps. His big brother, Wilbur, collected dreams.

That made it hard to know what to get Wilbur for his birthday. He would be twelve soon.

Then Orville saw the magazine: *Wonder Tales for Boys*. The perfect thing for a dreamer!

"Happy Birthday," he said.

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Wilbur loved it. It was filled with stories about submarines and flying machines. He hoped he could get his little brother, Orville, something half so nice. He would be eight in a few months.

Wilbur looked through the little ads in the back of the magazine. They were for novelties of all kinds: invisible ink; handshake buzzers; secret signal whistles.

Then he saw the ad for STAMPS FROM THE FUTURE.

"Perfect," he said to himself. He ordered them for Orville's birthday—which was in the future, after all!

They came just in time. "Happy birthday," Wilbur said.

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Orville tried to hide his disappointment. He only liked real stamps, and these were just gag fakes. Plus there were only four of them.

One stamp showed a man called Elvis. He was pouting like a girl.

Another showed a Negro with a baseball bat. Nobody ever put Negroes on stamps.

Another was of a woman without a crown. Real stamps only showed women when they were queens.

Another showed . . . .

"Hey, this is neat!" said Orville. Suddenly he was excited. "How did you do this?"

"Do what?" asked Wilbur.

Orville handed him the stamp. It showed two grown men in stiff collars with a box kite behind them.

The two men looked familiar.

Underneath them, it said: The Wright Brothers.

"This," said Orville.

"I didn't do it," said Wilbur. "I just sent for STAMPS FROM THE FUTURE. It was a novelty ad. I didn't tell them what to send."

"Maybe they're really from the future," said Orville. His voice sounded spooky.

"That's impossible," said Wilbur.

Orville shrugged. "You always told me that nothing was impossible," he said. "Maybe you and I are famous in the future."

"Don't be silly," said Wilbur. "For what?"

Then Wilbur looked at the stamp more closely.

There was a man lying flat on the box kite behind the grown-up Wilbur and Oliver. He was flying through the air.

Maybe I was right, thought Wilbur. Maybe nothing is impossible, after all.

"I can't wait to show this to my friends," said Orville.

"Not yet," said Wilbur. "Put it away for a few years. You and I have work to do."

### **About the Author:**

Hugo and Nebula award-winning writer, Terry Bisson, is the author of several novels, including *Wyrldmaker*, *Talking Man*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *Voyage to the Red Planet*, *Pirates of the Universe*, and *Dear Abbey*, as well as numerous pieces of short fiction that have appeared in publications such as *Asimov's*, *SCIFICTION*, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Socialism and Democracy*, *Southern Exposure* and *Harper's*. He lives in Oakland, California. For more information, please visit his website: <http://www.terrybisson.com>.