

Martian Invaders Meet Mom!

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First published in issue 33 of The Leading Edge, October 1996

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Preeminent Intelligence Master (PIM) Gleebzort grimaced condescendingly, then ruffled his breathing fringes in a conciliatory manner. Briefing Destructive Invasion Masters (DIMs) always brought out the worst in him. His students could be counted on to have consumed at least part of the preparatory material that he had scrupulously regurgitated. However, DIMs thought they knew just about everything, and what they didn't know they could find out in a ten minute briefing.

DIM Spacklewit continued his fragrant diatribe. "I still don't understand why we need more data. We could just invade now."

To the DIMs in the room his recommendation smelled pleasant.

To Gleebzort and his professorial colleagues it stank. The Immense Deeply Inspired Omnipotent Tzar (IDIOT) Mumblefarg was, as always, unreadable. His breathing fringes floated freely about him, revealing nothing about what he was thinking. He was the one Gleebzort had to convince.

Gleebzort patiently repeated his arguments. "They possess only a primitive form of long distance communications. They have not yet developed the technology to transmit smells and tastes. It is only recently that they have developed the technology to transmit sounds and sights. Due to that, all intelligence gathered on the earthlings is subject to varying interpretations. Therefore, sending Advanced Robotic Scouts to reconnoiter could save Martian lives."

The last was a not-so-subtle reminder of the debacle incurred during the Battle of Saturnian Rings with the Uranians.

"I do not think sending robots to scout out earth will make any difference in the outcome." DIM Spacklewit declared authoritatively. "They think they are the only intelligent beings in the universe. Therefore we have the element of surprise."

IDIOT Mumblefarg put on his contemplative look. "The element of surprise is important. But I wish to hear more about these robots, since they will not negate our surprise advantage."

Gleebzort focused his thoughts so that his breathing fringes would not stand out with triumph. He motioned for his colleague,

Blunthorn, to bring in the robots. "We have created two robots.

They look exactly like humans. We made them to pass for tall males of their species. We did this in order to take advantage of their ridiculous prejudice which favors taller individuals and males over females."

Blunthorn returned leading two human looking androids. All eyes turned to look up at them.

Gleebzort's feet visibly swelled with pride. "We have even programmed them to respond to simple earth names, Ricky and Fred.

The robots are programmed to infiltrate their institutions of higher learning, known as Universities, Colleges and Trade Schools. There, information is given freely to all." Gleebzort couldn't prevent his breathing fringes from shuddering over that absurdity. "Once they have information on the defensive and offensive capabilities they will return. Then we can properly plan a foolproof strategy for taking over earth."

Gleebzort again motioned to his colleague. This time however, Blunthorn grasped each of the androids at the base of their necks with his upper appendages.

"Return to the lab and shut down," he said as he applied pressure with his phalanges. The androids turned and left.

Gleebzort waited a moment to be sure he had everyone's attention. "You have just seen an example of the manual reset on the robots. They are also equipped with an automatic reset that would be triggered in the event of their discovery or in case of

severe damage." He paused dramatically. "We are superior to humans in every way. We will subjugate them. However, the information these robots will obtain for us will make our victory quicker and easier. My colleagues and I recommend that more information be obtained before we launch against earth."

IDIOT Mumblefarg closed in on himself for a few moments. The rest in the room remained in respectful silence. Finally the great IDIOT Mumblefarg made his inspired decision. "We will send the robots to gather information. After we have stripped them of the information we need, we will invade Earth."

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Tim Brown, ten years old, absently dribbled sugary milk from his overladen cereal spoon onto the table. He was pretending to eat breakfast, very close to what Mom had told him to do. He and his younger brother, Zac, were actually watching Mondo Man beat the cartoon bad guys on TV.

"When this is over you have to leave for school." Mom said as she passed through the room carrying their baby sister Sally, Sally's clothes and several toys. She said that every day at this time. Tim and Zac began scooping purposefully for a moment. Then drifted back to occasionally getting the cereal to their mouths.

Chad and Shawn Jackson sat on the family room couch. They were just as raptly following the adventures of Mondo Man. They, however, had been fed by their mother before she dropped them off

for the day. They came for before and after school care, and Mom charged four dollars extra on days she had to feed them breakfast.

There were howls of protest when Mom stopped in front of the TV while she dropped the toys in the toy box next to it. Then the commercials came on. As if by magic all the boys jumped up from their seats and began to move excitedly around the family room.

"Get your shoes on. Find your backpacks," Mom announced to no one in particular, while she tried to dress three year old Sally. "Stop Sally. You have to wear a shirt." After a few moments Mom glanced up at the others. "Do you need anything for school today?" No answer was forthcoming from the now immobile boys, the show was back on the TV.

Mom sighed. She let go of Sally without putting socks on her. She'd catch her later, when she had to put the clothes back on her. Sally was in her nudist stage.

Mom threw Sally's pajamas to the top of the stairs, rounded up the boys coats, hats, gloves, and backpacks and deposited them at the front door. She checked the refrigerator to see if she'd posted any notes or reminders that needed attention today. Nothing immediate. Then the show was over.

"Get your coats on. Put your shoes on. Do you have everything you will need for school?" Mom turned off the TV. Then she started herding the boys towards the front door.

Boys were heading in all directions through the house.

"I can't find my shoes!" Zac screamed from the top of the stairs.

Mom didn't even look up from where she was tying Shawn's shoes. "Look in the bathroom, on the floor." She had to be specific, otherwise they might look only in the sink.

In a few moments the boys were lined up by the front door, in order of age (Tim, Chad, Zac, then Shawn). Shawn hated always being last. But he was the youngest, and there were three of them, only one of him. So he hated it in silence.

Mom checked for coats to be zipped up, hats on heads securely, gloves near hands, and backpacks on backs. She looked in each backpack as they passed through the front door, to make sure they had their school work and lunch tickets.

She heard Dr. Terwilliger pull up into the driveway and start unloading the twins.

"Hi boys," Dr. Terwilliger said as she lifted Troy (twin one) out of the car.

"Good morn-ing, Doc-ter Ter-will-i-ger." The boys singsonged, in unison, with much practice. They also hurried away from what they referred to as the terrible tornado twins.

Dr. Terwilliger ignored them. She deposited Troy with Mom.

"After I bring in Teresa, I'll check Sally's ears."

"Thanks, Tina," Mom said as she took Troy. There were benefits to watching a pediatrician's kids. She had to remind

herself of all of them in order to keep sitting with the twins.

The house and all the people and things connected with it faded as the boys marched single file down the street. At a prearranged spot, far enough so that Mom wouldn't hear them, they all broke into song.

"Hi, Ho. Hi, Ho! It's off to school we go. The teacher farts, the laughing starts. Hi, Ho! Hi, Ho, Hi, Ho, Hi, Ho. Hi, Ho! It's off to school we go. We'll tear it down and burn the ground! Hi, Ho! Hi, Ho, Hi..."

They rounded the corner and stopped. Two boys were standing by the hedge in front of them. They were as tall as Chad, dressed funny, and acted weird.

"You are going to an institution of higher learning?" The first one asked.

"Yeah," said Tim, "we're going to school." Zac nudged Shawn, while Chad smirked.

The two new boys looked at each other. "We would go to school." The first one said.

"Must be foreign," Chad said, giving the others a meaningful look.

"Yes," said the second one, "we are from far away and need to learn much." Neither of them moved a muscle except their mouths.

Zac rolled his eyes. "Obviously, if you actually want to go to school."

Tim took charge. "Come on guys, cut'em some slack. They're new here. You can fall in with the rest of us. We go by age. I'm Tim and I'm 10, Chad is 9, Zac will be 8 next week, and Shawn is 7."

The first one looked thoughtful for a second. "I am Ricky. This is Fred. We are," pause, "eight and a half."

Tim motioned them back behind him. "In between Chad and Zac."

They continued to school, singing their song. Ricky and Fred joined in on the "Hi Ho"s, but just listened to the rest. They were filing away the information about bodily functions and destruction for later consideration. It was obvious that these four were learning battle techniques.

At the school Tim, Chad, Zac and Shawn dropped their backpacks around a signpost, Ricky and Fred had none. They went to the playground as a group.

Shawn piped up first, "Let's play Mondo Man, I'll be Mondo Man."

"No!" The other three shouted in unison.

Ricky looked around. "What is this?"

Tim answered in his most superior tones. "This is the playground."

"What is the playground for?" Fred asked.

"Oh," said Tim airily, "we play and do stuff. Usually we play Mondo Man or attack of the space bugs. Sometimes we'll just

swing and goof off."

Ricky looked thoughtful. "You practice here, to fight against space invaders?"

"Oh yeah," Zac said rolling his eyes sarcastically. "If the Martians ever invade we'll be ready for them."

"There are no Martians." Fred seemed strangely sure of it.

"Right," said Tim. He swung his fist at his brother, who ducked. He turned back to the new boys. "What would you like to do?"

Ricky and Fred exchanged glances. "Let's do space invaders."

This seemed to be OK with everyone. The only problem was deciding who would be on what side. Finally it was decided that Tim, Chad, and Zac would be on the defending side. Ricky, Fred, and Shawn would be the invaders.

Fred sneaked a furtive look at Ricky, before asking, "What will you use to defend yourselves?"

The three defenders all began to talk at once listing their weapons. "Ray guns, lasers, blasters, light swords, phasers, blaster torpedos, death satellites, flying dreadnoughts, fighter planes." They paused a moment. "And that Star Wars stuff they've been developing," added Tim.

Ricky and Fred looked impressed, they opened a new memory category for earth on warfare between planets.

Shawn was trying to figure out if the game's rules would

allow him to switch sides midway through the game. The defenders of earth never lost.

Ricky interrupted Shawn's train of thought with a question. "What is the Star Wars stuff?"

"You know, The Force." Shawn really wasn't paying attention.

Ricky and Fred were even more impressed.

Tim jumped up onto the monkey bars, shouting, "I, Captain Timothy Brown, with my brave men will defend the earth from the ferocious, evil invaders led by..." He looked at Ricky. "Hey, who is your leader?"

Ricky and Fred exchanged glances, yet again. Fred replied, "Mumblefarg."

The four boys started laughing. Tim fell off the monkey bars, he was laughing so hard. When they could finally catch their breath, Chad stuck his rear end out and swung it back and forth chanting "Rumble Fart! Rumble Fart!" The other boys immediately joined him.

Ricky and Fred were mystified. The boys were stopped by the first bell.

The boys collected their bags and began heading for the school doors.

"One of you should be leader," Tim said, trying to be nice. "You'll never win with a leader named..." He couldn't say it, he'd started laughing again. "Nobody would take someone named

that seriously."

As they entered the door, Mrs Block stopped them. "Who are these two young men? Are you new here?"

Ricky smiled programmed charming smile number two as he spoke. "Yes, Ma'am. We are from far away. This is our first day here."

"Why such polite young gentlemen. How nice. Maybe you'll rub off on these boys," Mrs. Block said. She gave the other four a meaningful stare.

They rewarded her with artificial smiles. Tim, spokesman as always, said, "We found them on the way here. And made sure they got here OK."

"Thank you, boys. That was very nice of you. Now go to class." When they hesitated she shooed them off. "Go on, NOW."

After they mumbled goodbye and started off down the hall, she turned to Ricky and Fred. "Go to the office. They'll get you sorted out. Have a nice first day, boys." She waved cheerily to them as they headed in the direction she pointed.

When they were sure that she was no longer looking Ricky and Fred took off down the hall. They turned at the first corner they reached. Ricky grabbed the first child to walk around the corner, a scrawny girl with glasses. "Where is the library?"

She pulled her arm out of his grip and glared at him for a moment.

"Please," he said.

Answering curtly, she said, "Upstairs. Right above us."

"Thank you," he said. Then the two began looking for the stairs. In less than two minutes they were opening the door to the library.

It was still dark in the library. Because no students would be coming until an hour after school started the librarian kept the lights off and worked in her office. That didn't bother them, the emergency lights provided enough light for their enhanced optics. They noticed the light coming from under the door of the librarian's office. Giving it a wide berth, they split up and walked through the quiet stacks, looking for the information they needed. After a few moments they met at the opposite end of the room. A few moments consultation was all they needed, then they began recording the contents of the books in their memory banks.

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As school let out the librarian found Ricky and Fred still engrossed in their reading. "Boys, you should have gone back to your room with your class. School ended ten minutes ago. I hope you haven't missed your bus."

Ricky looked up at her. "We did not ride a bus, we walked," he said.

The librarian looked relieved. She leaned over and pulled The Black Stallion and a copy of Boys Life from the boys hands. "You better run back to your class and collect your things and go

home. You can come back tomorrow and check these books out."

"You mean we can come back tomorrow?" Fred asked.

"As long as it's okay with your teacher," the librarian replied as she reshelved the books she had taken from Ricky and Fred. She then patted them affectionately on the shoulder as she led them to the door.

When they were alone outside the library Ricky said, "Let us return to the practice battlefield and study their techniques." Fred nodded agreement. The boys began retracing their steps to the playground.

As they exited the building they were greeted with a sight that almost caused their automatic self defence systems to engage. All across the field the earthlings were engaged in various degrees of physical activity. In separate groups of different sizes or alone the earthlings were in a constant state of motion. Fred suddenly realized that this was a practice battle. He and Ricky stood on the steps and recorded all that they could see. After a few minutes Fred commented to Ricky, "While I can see some of the individual group strategies, I can not understand how each group fits into the whole battle."

Ricky did not turn his eyes from the playground. "I agree. It is obvious that this simulation is on more levels than we can comprehend. Keep recording so our masters will have enough data to evaluate.

Fred returned his stare to the playground.

Just then Tim spotted them. He shouted to Ricky and Fred, "Hey you guys! We're getting ready to go home. You wanna come?"

Ricky and Fred shrugged their shoulders as they had seen done countless times that day and followed Tim. They found Zac, Chad, and Shawn on the other side of the school. Tim quickly formed them up into ranks and started off in a high step march. As they marched, Ricky and Fred recorded the boys songs of burning down the school and killing their teachers. The information they were gathering from these four was most valuable.

The singing stopped at the same point along the walk that it started that morning. Tim turned to walk backward so he could face the others and talk. "When we get home, let me go in first. I'll talk to Mom and get her to let us invite you over. Then we can play some more." He saw Ricky and Fred shrug and nod.

Mom was carrying a basket of laundry down the stairs when Tim walked in the door. She spoke up quick, before he could. "Don't say a word. The twins are finally asleep."

"Please, Mom," he whispered. "We met these two new kids, Ricky and Fred, on the way to school. Can they come over and play?"

"If it's all right with their mother, OK. But, you have to play in the backyard. And be quiet, if the twins wake up because you make too much noise, they'll have to go home."

Tim looked delighted and ran outside, leaving Mom to wonder

if he'd heard anything she'd said past OK. She heard the boys come tromping in, scoop up the fruit and graham crackers she'd left out for their snack, and the back door slam.

She moved the laundry around, then carried the clean clothes to the family room to fold. She could see the boys outside, grouped by the swing set, in some kind of conference.

Sally streaked naked through the room. Mom dropped everything and chased after her. She cornered Sally in Sally's room and was forcibly dressing her when she heard the boys come inside.

Mom thought nothing of it. She finished dressing Sally, checked on the still sleeping twins and went downstairs.

She found the boys huddled around the TV, apparently putting a tape in the VCR. She began folding the clothes again.

She was keeping her eye on them, however. Sally was trying to move through the crowded boys to make her way to the front. Mom wouldn't tolerate the boys hurting Sally.

"No," Zac said. He began gently pushing Sally back.

Sally howled. "I'm going to tell."

"Sally," Mom said, dropping everything to come over. "The boys will have the video going in a minute. Don't push them."

"Noooooo!" Sally screamed. "They're taking it apart."

"WHAT?" Mom grabbed Zac by the shoulders, lifting him out of her way. She didn't have to move the other three, they ran for the other side of the room. She discovered two boys she

didn't know huddled over the open VCR box, with a few pieces in their hands. She screamed at them. "What are you doing?"

"We are making a blaster," Ricky said calmly.

"Not in my house you don't," Mom said. "Give me all of that." She reached for the pieces and tools. She collected up the VCR box, pieces and tools, unplugged the VCR and carried it to the dining room table. "You boys go outside and stay outside. This will never happen again, do you understand?"

Tim, Chad, Zac and Shawn nodded their heads. Ricky and Fred did also, after a moment. Then they all went outside.

Mom turned on a TV show for Sally. Then she finished folding the clothes. Then she sat at the table with the VCR.

She looked at the pieces for a moment. She was glad to find that it was not as bad as she had originally thought. She was able to begin putting it back together.

Tim came inside. He looked humble and saintly. He quietly whispered, "Mom, can we play in our bedroom?"

"Fine. But be quiet. Don't wake the twins," Mom said. She paid no attention as they walked quietly past. She slid the top back onto the VCR and put the screws back in. Then she took it over to the TV stand and set it up again.

She planned on testing it after she put the clothes away. As she carried the basket of clean clothes upstairs, she could hear the boys talking.

"I don't know." Tim was talking. "I think you need special

equipment for a laser beam. I'm not sure we could find that in the radio."

Mom burst into their bedroom. She threw the laundry basket on the bunkbeds and hurried over to the dresser, where the boys were huddled. Where the boys' radio had sat.

She grabbed up what remained of the radio. Shaking with rage, she whispered fiercely, "What in the world are you doing?"

"Nothing."

She couldn't tell who had said that, but she knew further inquiries would reveal that person was totally uninvolved with what was happening inches from them, in their room, with their stuff. In fact, no one present would admit to having anything to do with whatever-it-was that was going on.

"Go outside." She managed to yell without raising her voice above a whisper. "Stay outside. Play nicely. Or ELSE."

The boys quietly slunk outside.

What could have gotten into them, Mom wondered as she put away the clothes. They were always loud, somewhat obnoxious, inclined to making messes. But so far they had never been destructive. It had to be those two new boys.

She debated sending the new boys home as she came downstairs. They were all playing nicely in the backyard when she checked. Well, maybe their mother let them take things apart to see how they worked and they were just showing the others. Who knew why boys did anything?

Sally's program had ended. Sally's clothes were draped on the chair. Sally was nowhere in sight.

Mom decided to let it go for the moment. She turned off the TV and whipped up a quick casserole for dinner. As she was putting it in the oven, Sally ran through, heading upstairs. Mom set the timer, snatched up the clothes and followed her.

During the battle the twins woke up. Mom carried them downstairs and barricaded them in the family room with Sally.

Mom looked outside to see how the boys were getting along. They were nowhere in sight.

She stepped outside. The thin, cold air brought sounds of the boys in the detached garage. She couldn't make out what was being said, but precedent was enough to make her dash for the garage.

Inside the boys were huddled around the front of her minivan. The hood was up and there was the clink of tools.

She hurried forward to find the carburetor exposed. One of the new boys held a screwdriver over the vulnerable insides of her car. "That's it."

She grabbed the two nearest boys, Shawn and Zac, by the back of the neck and propelled them toward the door. "I've had enough." Tim and Chad ran past before she could catch hold of them. All four paused in the doorway, to watch Mom kill the new guys.

She grabbed Ricky and Fred, by the backs of their necks, and

escorted them away from the car toward the door. "We don't do that here." In her anger she squeezed their necks. What she really wanted to do was throttle them, but she restrained herself. She did however allow herself to yell in their ears. "Now, go destroy your own home!"

She gave them one last push towards the door, but it had no effect. She stepped away from them as they turned towards her.

They looked the same as ever, calm and assured. However they suddenly locked arms and lifted off.

Mom ducked away from the debris falling from the hole in the garage roof. As the dust settled the boys cautiously stepped into the garage.

They ended up as a group staring up at the hole in the roof.

"Awesome," said Shawn.

"Whoa," said Zac.

"No way," said Chad.

"Incredible," said Tim.

Mom was quiet for a moment more. Then she spoke up. "Who were those boys?"

"Dunno, we met them on the way to school," Tim said, not taking his eyes away from the hole.

"What were you playing?" Mom was strangely calm now.

They were quiet for a moment.

Shawn broke the silence. "We were playing space attackers."

The boys all looked at each other. Suddenly, confession

sounded good for the soul. "We were trying to make blasters. Yeah and laser rays. And we were going to fight off the invaders."

Mom looked at them. They looked at her for something. Then they all looked back at the hole.

A few more moments staring at the hole confirmed that it was definitely staying and Ricky and Fred weren't coming back.

Just then Sally came running in. "The twins are loose, the twins are loose."

For once Mom didn't react.

Finally Mom sighed. "Come on. Lets go inside." They all headed for the house, slowly.

"Uh, Mom," Tim said, "what are you going to tell Dad?"

Mom looked at him surprised. "The truth, of course."

"No way, Mom. Trust me on this one. He's not going to believe you. No matter what you tell him."

"Timothy, we always tell the truth. No matter what," Mom said as she held the door open and automatically ticked them off as they went in.

After the kids were all inside, Mom looked back doubtfully at the garage.

A scream and a crash came from inside and Mom hurried in.

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The smell of smoke and dust crept into the conference room through the slightly-off doors.

"But, what happened?" DIM Spacklewit demanded.

Gleebzort, bandaged and still smoldering, coughed gently and tried again. "We are recovering what we can from the robots data banks. The exact events are still not clear. What is clear is that in less than one of their days they were able to detect, capture and reprogram our robots. It seems that we severely underestimated their capabilities. They apparently have weapons we were unaware, of with capabilities beyond ours." He was stopped by the pain in his midsection.

IDIOT Mumblefarg asked, "you were able to retrieve some information from their data banks? This was not a useless attempt?"

Gleebzort could not look at his ruler without the image of the robots intruding on his thoughts. When he had tried to stop them by invoking the name of their inestimable leader they had responded with human laughter, which he understood to indicate derision. The robots had stuck their rear ends out at a strange angle and chanted "Rumble Fart, Rumble Fart," for a few moments.

The robots had also indicated that with such a leader there could be no success.

Blunthorn waved his remaining breathing fringes as an underling should and answered in place of Gleebzort. "We can retrieve some information. Much is garbled and it will take much time to sort it."

DIM Spacklewit perfumed the air with thoughtfulness. "Do

you know which of their top scientists reprogrammed the robots. We must keep a watch on such people."

Gleebzort pulled himself together. "They were reprogrammed by one person. A leader we had not considered to be much of a threat. A person named Mom."

"One, just one?" DIM Spacklewit was incredulous.

Finally IDIOT Mumblefarg answered hopefully. "Then we go to where this Mom has no power, no control. We can start from there and surround Mom, cut off Mom's base of power and win."

Blunthorn added a negative fragrance. "We have checked our databanks. Mom has power all over the earth. Apparently Mom goes by different names in different places: Mom, Mother, Mama, Ma, Mommy, Mima, Marmee, and others. We are trying to discover the basis of Mom's power, but have not yet found it."

IDIOT Mumblefarg was not about to have his perfumes negated by a simple underling. "Mom cannot last forever. All creatures die eventually. When Mom is dead and gone we will invade earth."

The End