

Alien On The Run

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1

“Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Na, na, na, na ...”

Fourteen year old Tommy’s eyes widened with anger, and he bunched his fists, as the group of boys taunted him. Just when he was about to lose control and launch himself at the nearest of the bullies, he felt a sharp tug on the sleeve of his school blazer.

“Come on, Tommy. Don’t mind them. Sure they’re only jealous because you came top of the class again. Come... come ... on. Let’s go ho ... home.”

Tommy's best friend, Paul Moran began to cough, a deep, hoarse wracking sound that shook his thin body with every explosion.

Reluctantly, Tommy turned to him. The pale, sallow...faced boy stood beside his little sister, Mary, who, though she was thirteen years old, was in the same class as the two boys. Both brother and sister had worried expressions on their faces.

The boys kept up their taunting chant. “Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Na, na, na, na na.”

Tommy gave his tormentors, especially their leader, Spud Murphy, the biggest of them, a defiant glare then swung away.

As the three friends walked down the street, Murphy, who was a head bigger than the other boys shouted, “I hope you’re not looking forward to Sports Day, next month, Ginger Bap. You’ll not see me for dust!”

“Don’t ... worry, Tommy,” whispered Paul. “You’ll beat ... him ... easily.”

Mary smiled and nodded in agreement.

They were referring to the school Sports Day, and the main race, the three thousand meters. Tommy was favorite to win. He had beaten Murphy at the training sessions the week before. The bully wasn’t happy about it. Ever since, he had given Tommy a hard time.

As they walked on, Paul’s continuous coughing grew worse. It disturbed Tommy to see how sick his best pal was. He hadn’t really noticed how thin Paul had become, until now. Black rings around his deep set eyes, made him look paler.

“Are you not getting any better, Paul?” he asked.

"Naw. My Mum's taking me to see a specialist tomorrow. I was up all last night coughing and vomiting."

"Our next...door neighbor, Mrs. Moore, said it might be his lungs, or something like that," said Mary quietly. "An – infection..." Her beautiful brown eyes widened as she looked at Tommy.

"Ach," exclaimed Paul. "Mrs. Moore's an alarmist. That's what Dad... said... said..."

They stopped for a minute to wait until Paul recovered. As Mary held her brother around his narrow shoulders, she glanced at Tommy. He couldn't help thinking, maybe Mrs. Moore is right.

Two minutes later they came to the bottom of Clifton Street where Tommy lived.

"Tommy I won't be at school tomorrow... the... specialist..." explained Paul.

"You're a lucky duck," exclaimed Tommy. He wished he didn't have to go to school. It wasn't that he didn't like school. He did, but this past while, Murphy and his cronies were getting the better of him.

"I'll be seeing you, Paul. See you, Mary."

"See you, Tommy," chorused Paul and Mary.

As Tommy headed up the street, he was unaware that Mary was looking after him. Then as he disappeared through the front door of his house she sighed heavily, turned and raced after her brother.

That evening, Tommy stood looking in the bathroom mirror. He glared at his reflection. His red hair, thick and curly, shone back at him like a fiery beacon. With a heavy sigh, he reached for his tooth brush and began to clean his teeth. When he was finished he took a mouthful of water from the tap. As he gargled loudly he glared at his hair again. With an angry splash he splattered the mirror with water. "Ahhh," he groaned aloud. "Why me? Why do I have to have red hair?"

"Thomas!" His mother called from downstairs. "Thomas!"

"Yes Mummy!" Grabbing a towel he began rubbing furiously at the mirror.

"Have you brushed your teeth yet?"

"Yes Mummy!" He quickly dried the mirror.

"Well hurry up and get to bed! It's almost eleven o'clock!"

A few seconds later the mirror was completely dried. With a final grimace at his reflection, Tommy hurried into his bedroom. Kicking off his slippers he bounced onto his bed. On his bedside table lay a pile of Marvel comics. He picked some up and began to thumb through them. Selecting an X men comic he began to read. But after a few minutes he returned it to the pile. It was no use, he couldn't concentrate. He lay back with his arms folded above his head staring at the ceiling. Ginger Bap, he thought. What a nick...name. I hate it. I hate my hair. He threw his head back harder against his hands the word, hate, hate, hate, buzzing through his tortured mind. If only I could wake up in the morning and my hair was black, or ... or gray, any color, but red. He growled, as he looked across at his favorite poster of Elvis Presley. The "King's" hair was glistening black and combed to perfection. I'd even swap my hair for a big nose like Dymrna Simpson's, he thought, or,

a turn in my eye, like wee Joe McCourt's. Anything would be better than having red hair. He tugged at the hair in front of his head. Maybe when I'm older, Mummy will allow me to dye it. He sighed then yawned. Sleep came quickly.

On a planet beyond Earth's galaxy, a creature called, Dargust worked furiously at the chair it was held captive in. Its suckered fingers elongated and using a tiny piece of metal that it had broken from a conveyor belt earlier, it began to file at one of the links that held it captive.

It took a frustrating long time, but at last he was free. Breathing from a nostril at the back of its head, the creature slipped into the corridor. The corridor, that had roughly fifty doors and was over a hundred meters long, ran almost the length of the space ship. A broad door told Dargust that the Pilot crafts would be moored there. Only using one nostril to breathe through, though he had ten, Dargust slipped as quickly and quietly as he could to the door. He hoped the door was not controlled from the inside. He had only twenty meters to go when one of the side doors opened behind him. Slowly he turned. One of the Valatians had emerged. Dargust held his breath. The giant creature, growling and cumbersome, headed down the corridor away from him. If it had been going the other way it would have seen him. He would surely have been captured again. Releasing his breath, he turned to hurry to the end of the corridor. It was then the Valatian turned. Its huge pointed ears had heard him breathe. With a roar that echoed along the corridor, it stumbled towards him. Racing as fast as his four legs could carry him, Dargust reached the door. He smacked the glowing entrance rod and the door hissed open. He was through. In the bay, he saw several Pilot crafts, most of them sat in their docks. He hoped the one that he decided to take had enough power to get him away. An alarm had already gone off alerting two guards who were working at the far end of the bay. They saw him. Roaring with anger, they raced towards him. It took Dargust three seconds to climb the stainless steel steps. Two seconds more he was sliding into the cockpit. Using his born with, electric powers, he switched on the computer pilot. Two seconds later it was roaring into life. Ahead he could see the massive steel exit door closing. He glanced behind. The three Valatians were firing at him, but he knew he was safe inside the craft. With a smooth forward motion it roared towards the closing door. In a second he was through and out into space. He pressed a suckered finger at the full speed digit. In two seconds his craft hissed into retro drive. A second later he was a thousand miles away. Dargust knew the direction his craft was heading would already have been locked on to. It would only be a matter of days before they picked it up. By then he hoped he could reach the Andromeda Galaxy.

As his craft sped towards the locked on command, Dargust thought about the Valatians, an intelligent warlike race, who used other creatures from other planets all over the universe, as slaves. Anyone unfortunate enough to be captured by them knew they had little hope of escape. When Dargust and his three companions had been captured, they had been on an experimental flight searching for minerals to take back to their laboratory. Dargust was a scientist, his three companions, one female and two males were still held captive on the Valatian ship. He sighed as he thought; will I ever see them again? If I can return home I will organize a rescue party. If I can return home. Dargust knew he was millions of light years from his home planet. He was getting further and further away from it by each second. He closed his eyes. He was tired and hungry. In a few seconds he was asleep. The pilot craft shot onwards on a direct course for Earth.

At school next day, Paul was marked absent. This gave Mary a chance to sit beside Tommy. It was a hot end of spring day and their portly teacher, Mr. Morgan, with his bulging neck held captive by his tight shirt collar, sweated profusely.

The morning passed slowly, the heat increasing in the poorly ventilated class...room, though the two windows were wide open.

At eleven o'clock, unable to bear the heat any longer, Mr. Morgan, with his handkerchief soaked in sweat, banged the top of his desk.

"Class! Take out your history books and turn to section two of, The Siege of Derry. Read the first three chapters. I'll return in a few minutes. When I do I'll be asking questions. I don't want to hear any disturbances. Right!" Giving his pupils one of his well...rehearsed glowers, he walked to the door. He turned. "I repeat, I don't want to hear any disturbances." Then he hurried to the staff room for a cool drink of water and a fresh handkerchief.

The rustling of pages and the whispers of some of the pupils echoed around the class-room.

Suddenly, "Thwack!"

Tommy jumped to his feet. He was holding the back of his neck. Black ink ran through his fingers and down his neck as he stared at the soggy piece of blotting paper. He swung around, his eyes blazing and his face red with anger. "Who did that?" he shouted.

The smirk on Spud's face answered his question.

"Who did what, Ginger Bap?" sneered the bully, rising to his feet. "Did someone dye your Ginger Bap for you? Did they, eh? Eh, Ginger Bap?"

Bending he began to bang the lid of his desk and chant, "Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Na, na, na, na na..."

Encouraged by Murphy's taunts, some of his cronies joined in. Soon the classroom resounded to the thudding jeers and banging desk lids.

Tommy stood glaring around the pupils as the noise grew louder and louder.

"Stop it! Stop it!"

The sharp squeals penetrated the din. Startled, most of the pupils stopped. Everyone now stared at Mary who was standing on top of her seat, her eyes wide and tearful.

Just then the door opened and the teacher entered. The smell of perfumed talc wafted into the room as he stared at Mary.

"What's this all about? Mary, sit down!"

Embarrassed, Mary clambered back down onto her seat. She glanced at Tommy. Her face was blazing. The teacher glared at her, but said nothing.

After school, Tommy and Mary walked home together. Neither of them mentioned Mary's outburst.

As they walked along the red...bricked wall that bordered the school football pitch, Tommy said, "I hope Paul's OK. Would you tell him I'll call over tonight?"

"Sure," said Mary, giving him a shy smile.

It was then the four bullies dropped from the wall in front of them.

"Well, hello, Ginger Bap!" exclaimed Spud. "How's it going, you little runt? I hope you're fit for the big race... the race I'm going to whip you in."

The bullies gathered around Tommy. One of them pushed Mary aside and she almost fell off the footpath. She watched, afraid for Tommy as Murphy began to push and taunt him.

"Ginger Bap! Ginger Bap! Na, na, na, na, na..."

Suddenly Tommy saw red. With a snarl, that took the bully by surprise, he swung his fist and hit him high on the cheek bone...

Later that afternoon, Tommy sat by the sink in the kitchen while his mother gently dabbed a disinfectant...soaked piece of cotton wool on the bruises on his face.

"Thomas, it's not worth fighting about," she scolded. "Sure everyone has a nickname. They used to call me, Skinny Lizzie from the bone yard. God, I was so thin in those days." Tommy's mother laughed, as she patted her layered midriff. She studied her quiet son. "Ah look, you'll get used to it. Nicknames don't mean anything. Why, I just bet if you ignore those boys they'll soon leave you alone. They'll get fed up. You'll see I'm right."

"Ach, Mummy," moaned Tommy. "It's really hard to ignore Murphy. I get really angry with him. It's my hair. I hate it. If I had any other color of hair, Murphy and his lot wouldn't bother me." He frowned. "Mummy, is there nothing you can do about the color, could you dye it?"

His mother frowned as she tried to understand her only son's predicament. His hair was red, really red, but plenty of people had red hair. "Plenty of people have red hair, Thomas, famous people. They never let it bother them. Besides, I think it's a lovely color. Your grandfather had lovely red hair ..."

"Lovely. Ahhh Mummy," snapped Tommy. "What's the point of talking to you about it? You don't understand how I feel!" Suddenly, pushing his seat back, he rose to his feet. Stalking to the kitchen door he shouted, "I hate my hair! Don't you understand? I... hate... my... hair!"

That evening he called to see Paul.

Mrs. Moran answered the door. Her eyes were red. It was obvious she had been crying.

Mary stood behind her. She looked pale.

"Is... is Paul in, Mrs. Moran?" Tommy glanced at Mary who suddenly pushed past her mother. *

An alien flees from its prison on a slave ship.
He lands on earth and changing to become a dog, he quickly makes friends with Tommy, a red-haired boy who is being bullied at School.
Meanwhile, six alien bounty hunters are sent to bring back the escaped alien, dead or alive.
Children who love sci fi will enjoy this fast-paced 22,500 word story.

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