

Hidden Aliens

by Carole Gauntlett

My teaching assignment for the year was a second grade class in a small Wisconsin town and I was looking forward to the change from the big city bustle of the past 2 years. I was NOT pleased to learn that I was required to be part of a committee researching family dynamics. It seemed a worthy project on the whole but a bit too invasive. Since I couldn't opt out, I determined to find as much "high road" as possible and moved on.

My 23 students were eager to learn, seemed to be moving through the curriculum at a nice pace and were a good mix of temperaments. Billy Johnson though stood out. His mind was quick and creative and he was never unkind. He and I shared a love of learning, a special talent for science and in particular, outer space. Since he rode the school bus, there was extra time for us to talk after school and early in the morning.

When it came time for me to begin family assessments, I chose to keep Billy's family until last. Finally I requested a meeting presumably to discuss Billy's progress. June and Tom arrived on time and sat rigid across from me, hands folded, robotic eyes focused on a point above mine. They answered my questions succinctly with no elaboration. They were a family of three, no siblings, no pets. According to them Billy liked nothing better than watching television. Since this meeting was ostensibly a progress report, I outlined Billy's successes both socially and academically. Not a grin, not a sideways glance at each other, not a glint of pleasure or relief. I sat alone for a long time after they'd left, making decisions on my own.

The committee members met a few days later carrying sheaves of paperwork and color coded folders. I joined them with just one. Soon after the meeting was called to order, I asked for a chance to speak. I have found a human child who would be a great asset to the redevelopment of our planet. I am scheduled to return to Zeno at the end of the school year and I would like to take him with me. I read aloud through the file in my hands and it was agreed that the child was a perfect candidate to become a Zenonian. I would make his happiness mine.