**A Tiny ET Tale**

**Jawafra**

At the edge of town it had been there as far back as anyone could remember. All those living in that tri-county area knew not a late spring to early autumn day when the clackety-clack and whirlybird-awes from over the chain link fence didn’t fill the air. Many times in their young lives they squeezed their fathers’ hands pleading for one more ticket to ride, one more pull of cotton candy, one last toss of the ball for that soft stuffed animal or sparkling faux zircon ring. They traded parent hands for the sweaty palms of first infatuation, then a proposal at the top of the roller coaster for a lifetime ride, then their own children, grandchildren and on. Some even said that the ghosts’ teeth rattled under their tilted tombstones when all those rides just two stone throws away came alive each year. Both alive and dead, they were amused.

Yet no one really knew who ran that fun which filled their lives. They all assumed it was a family, or two as the arched sign over the entry read: Smithz and Jonez Welcome You! They always paid their taxes right on time, but no one—-not a single teenager or jobless bum had ever worked there, not for a second. It seemed a bit strange for the concession staff, ride technicians, admissions attendants, game attendants, and even the janitorial workers were covered in costumes of animals from the woods, wild beasts of the jungle, desert dangers and arctic wonders. It was a wonderful gag and no one thought of it much. Except for one young lad who was often left to sit in corners for a time-out or write “I will cause no more trouble” a hundred times at the small desk next to the School Director’s office. Travis Turner knew there was something very suspect there, one con-artist knows when he’s being conned.

It was two days before closing when the autumn wind was spitting red wrinkled leaves and the thin jackets of late summer were being replaced by thicker flannel coats. He had a plan, as everyone should. The evening hour had come early as it always does when the Earth tilts one side away from the sun and he waited on three stacked crates for the concession owl to waddle out to empty the trash. The corner was perfect, where shadows were only interrupted once every minute by the flash of light from the Whirlygig in its spin. There it was in front of him, that fake feathered form lifting the sacks into the large metal cans. He wrapped his hands around its neck and pulled hard to rip off the head of that costume. There was a large \*POP\* \*FIZZ\* \*BANG\* and the head that was underneath turned round to look at him. The eyes were five times the size they should be, black as basalt and reflecting the light of the just come out stars. Its head was a long extended pale green pear, its hands reached up to its long thick neck. It gasped, it coughed, it began to spit up green blood.

“Please, please don’t tell—-we crashed here long ago—-it was the only way we knew how to survive…” And then it crumpled next to the two bags of garbage left on the ground.

Travis Turner saw that inside that costume’s head there were blinking lights and buttons and a light haze hung around the opening. The thought came, they can’t breathe our air. Their costumes are spacesuits and their no-entry trailers must be where they could live unsuited. Though he was a troublemaker, he still had a heart. He had never wanted to kill anything, not even the smallest ant. He carefully put the helmet back on that alien. Threw the two garbage bags into the dumpster, a way at least he felt he could show he was sorry. He kept his mouth shut for the rest of his years, took his sweetheart, his children and their children to that park. He spent as much as he could when they were there, he knew illegal aliens needed the work and the money. Then he died and his skull’s teeth clattered away each season from late spring to early autumn, until one night when a bright light appeared in the sky and descended on that park. Everything went black and stayed very dark. The next morning there was nothing there, but on his tombstone had been laser-etched the words: Thank you!

They must have always known about him, before they finally were found and went home and the rest of them could rest in peace, not every alien race wanted to steal their Earth from them.