



LITTLE GREEN MEN

LITERARY COMPETITION 2018 - 1ST Prize-Prose

Works of George Athanasiou

People were disappearing in large numbers in some parts of the world. Andria Blake wanted to find out why? She was a journalist working undercover. A small recording device at the base of her left coat pocket was going to do its job again this morning. She would use it to gather all the information she needed as she had done for months. Andria was at work earlier than usual this morning. Her boss, Mr. Vanguard, a tired looking, gaunt, snow-haired old man wanted to see her first thing. She knocked apprehensively on his door. His face seemed cold and shrivelled, his little eyes darted towards the door as he steadied himself to attention seated behind his desk as she entered closing the door behind her.

Perhaps her boss was on to her... Andria's place had been broken into just last night. The intruders left quite a mess. Furniture was overturned and her clothes were strewn everywhere. Curiously nothing was taken. She reasoned they were looking for information. Andria certainly didn't want the contents of a memory stick or her voice recorder falling into the wrong hands. Whatever the case she was always a step ahead. She never left important information lying around in obvious places. She didn't want to jeopardize the assignment. Soon all media outlets would run her whole story and the world would change forever.

She was a scruffy looking petite blue-eyed young woman who always seemed to bury herself in information. Her young brain possessed a thirst for knowledge and adventure.

"Ah! There you are my dear." "Sir, you asked to see me?"

"Yes my dear. Come in and sit down. Have you seen the articles in newspapers these past few weeks?"

"No sir."

There was a myriad newspapers strewn all over Mr. Vanguard's mahogany desk. Some had been hurriedly cut out, while in others, headlines had been circled with a marker.

"There is a mole working for us, revealing our secrets." her boss continued.

One article in particular, carrying the caption "Little Green Men" caught Andria's eye. She recognized the writing style. It was her own. This was one of her stories. She was indeed a "mole" in an organization that was colluding with extraterrestrials. She had to tread carefully now. Her mission, to save the human race, had had a few close calls. She had known from the outset that this assignment wasn't going to be easy. It had taken months to infiltrate CONTACT. She was relying on her training and instincts and a few nifty gadgets to relay information to those who wanted to know. 'Find out all you can.' That was her brief. The trouble was, these little green men already had a good foothold on humanity. In exchange for their advanced science and technology they harvested the minds and bodies of homeless people, lonely people, the kinds of people that nobody missed. The few that knew what was going on turned a blind eye. Since the visitors came to Earth the genome had been

unraveled, AIDS had been cured and that was just the beginning. A few hundred thousand meaningless lives so far traded to cure thirty eight million HIV sufferers was worth it as far as Andria's boss was concerned.

"Andria, I want you to leak some information on behalf of the organization. We're going to tell people that the H.I.V cure was a joint venture between us and our extraterrestrial friends."

"What? Are you sure we're ready to go public on this?"

"The time has come my dear. We need to divert attention from all the disappearances, before people start to suspect anything. We need to give them a big story to take their attention away from those missing people."

"Missing people?"

"Otherwise known as the 'Fodder for Aliens Program' You've been working with us for some time my dear. You've been an exemplary assistant! Best I've had."

"You mean..."

Andria paused momentarily. It occurred to her that loyalty was being tested. Had her boss cottoned on to her? She reasoned that he could have arranged the break-in at her place, but quickly regained her composure convincing herself that nothing had been discovered to implicate her in the newspaper articles.

"Yes. In a few weeks we'll kill the story by calling it one giant conspiracy. By then, our alien friends will have all the specimens they need to continue their work and they'll give us what we want."

"What could possibly be worth the lives of all those people Sir?"

"You've been with us approaching twelve months now Andria. Would you trade one tenth of the world's population for the secret of immortality?"

"What!"

"That's what our little green friends want from us my dear. One tenth of the world's population for the secret of immortality, and upon our agreement they'll throw in the cure for cancer for free."

"I don't know what to say."

"The Government's agreed to sign on the dotted line two weeks from today in Geneva, ratifying the agreement."

"How will they choose who lives and who dies?"

"You need not worry. They'll take a great majority from the third world. Those people's lives would never have amounted to anything, anyway. Monuments will be put up to honour their sacrifice."

"And those that are left will become immortal?"

"No... no.... of-course not. They'll have to pay for the privilege. We're not running a charitable institution here."

At last Andria had something tangible, irrefutable. Privately she was overjoyed that her "Little Green Men" story had made it to the front page of at least one newspaper. That meant it was being taken seriously. Mr. Vanguard was taking it seriously, too. Ironically she was being asked to do what she'd always been doing since working at CONTACT - to leak information.

“Can I ask you something sir?”

“Of-course.”

“Can we trust these little green men?”

“Why of-course we can, look at what they’ve already given us in exchange for a few hundred thousand no-hopers.”

“I’ll get onto that leak straight away. Will that be all sir?”

“Just one more thing before you go Andria...”

“Yes...”

“Find me the informer. They could jeopardize the whole operation. These articles appearing sporadically in various newspapers could backfire on us. People might just start believing these stories. Our little green friends have lodged a complaint high up. They might pull out of the deal... We’re so close.... Just a few more weeks....”

Andria clutched at the recording device buried deep in her coat pocket. It was warm. Gently smiling at Mr. Vanguard, she left his office, quietly closing the door behind her. It would only be a matter of time before her boss found out, before someone at work discovered the truth, that she was in-fact the mole. It wouldn’t matter. They would be too late.

She clutched at the memory stick disguised as a gold locket hanging round her neck. She had lots of work to do. From the comfort of her own home, from her trusty computer, complete with a fake email address and a fake identity Andria passed on information to her ‘real’ bosses.

Others had picked up on the story of the ‘Little Green Men’. In a few days the shit was going to hit the fan and she was ready for the exposé. The rumblings of a conspiracy would hit the headlines. The story of what the aliens were up to would be revealed and it would go viral. ‘You Tube’, ‘Twitter’, ‘Facebook’ and everywhere else. A pre-emptive strike would hurt her employers at CONTACT. Her work would ensure that no more people would have to ‘disappear’.

But the exposé came too late for the lowly, haggard looking Mr. Vanguard as he began to gently fade away into thin air. He’d forgotten where, or who he was. He tried to yell at the top of his voice but could not make a sound. He sat in his plush leather chair unable to move a muscle. His eyes set on the world, as motionless and empty looking, as those of a mannequin, till an empty chair was all that was left. Before long, even the dent left in the seat would disappear. There would be no monuments built to honour Mr. Vanguard’s sacrifice.

