



Point of View

by

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The burly officer pulled out a huge, dirty cloth and mopped his head. For three tedious years he'd been forced to waste his genius on thieves, drunkards, maniacs -- and now this!

He grasped his message tablet, half-growling, and saying, "Now, let's get this straight lady. You say your pool is in your back yard and you were there, resting. . . ."

"Yes," the wizzend old female interrupted. "I'd just stepped into the relaxo-pool, and, just as I was getting settled -- it's one of those manual pools, you know -- I heard this weird noise. Of course, it might have been my imagination since I require an aid to hearing, you know, and. . . ."

"Lady, please! Spare me. I just want bare facts." Accidentally tipping over the food bowl this lady had insisted he have. He cursed to himself, and thought, *Surely, if this old female doesn't finish her story, I'll miss my appointment.*

"Well, as I was saying," she continued quite unperturbed, "there was this horrible noise. I sensed an odd shaped boat or something like a boat coming down in our own private yard! Well, you can imagine how flustered I was, after all. . . ."

Lady, nothing could fluster you.

". . . it's not everyday an alien ship -- I think it looked sort of upside down, like a kind of saucer -- lands in your own private yard."

"Go on!" the officer sputtered, thinking, *Another flying saucer nut!*

"Then a hole opened on the side of the craft. Two simply awful things came out. They looked at me and I looked at them. We just stared at one another until finally I climbed out of my relaxo-pool to go under cover.

"The creatures made some kind of motion with their hands -- well, they weren't exactly hands -- but they made that kind of motion and they caught something from their facial orifice with it. Before I could get under cover, they climbed back in that funny looking thing and left."

"Got it," said the officer. Turning quickly to his communicator, he said, "Main office?" As soon as the reply came, he snapped out with, "Send over one of the identification boys. Oh yes, also tell him to bring our latest model mind sketcher. Thanks!"

Then, to quiet the wizzened old lady, he said, "A mind sketcher is a new device the experimental department invented. It takes the impulses from your memory cells, translates them into digital signals, and sketches out an image which you've seen.

When the operator arrived, the officer attached the mind sketcher and instructed the lady to "Just relax and think of what you saw."

Vague shapes began to appear on the revolving drum of laser lights. Grotsque shapes. Any one of them might have come from the imagination of a mad cartoonist.

"Is this the shape you saw?" the expert asked, but doubtfully.

"Yes."

The sketcher made instant 3-D holographs and they were handed to the chief investigator. Each shape showed thick, bony appendages -- four of them -- and an odd box-shaped body from which the appendages dangled. Right below the fur topping of the horrible shapes was a rounded ball on which all sorts of queer shapes were scattered. One picture showed two of the appendages catching something from an open orifice found in the rounded ball.

One look at these photographs was enough to convince any sane officer that the lady was surely hallucinating.



The officer in charge called the sketcher operator to his desk where some little privacy was available. He asked, "Do you think she actually saw monsters like these?"

The operator shook his head slowly, "I'm afraid it just isn't possible. Maybe you'd better call the hallucination ward." Then, without waiting for additional orders -- apparently the operator had gotten sick from looking at the pictures -- he left.

The desk officer, made of sterner stuff, looked accusingly at his backlogged memos. Here it was, nearly quitting time. He'd missed his appointment, and all because of some nut! He should have ignored her, not humored her. "Oh well," he sighed. Then he began signing modularized transcripts -- quadruplicates, of course.

"Charlie retched once again and felt better.

"Say, Charlie. What do you think of your discovery now?" taunted Charlie's buddy, Frank.

Charlie smiled, saying, "I thought for sure I'd found a perfect vacation planet. I was figuring on ten percent commission through the tourist trade. Then we landed, expecting nothing unusual. This great big furry creature, nearly indescribable in shape, rose out of that blue pool. What a monster!

"I'm used to the furry creatures of Aldebran and the felines of Alpha-Centauri. Infact, I thought I could stand anything. but, my body had different ideas. It started me vomiting and wouldn't quit 'till we got out of there." Charlie shivered with the haunting memory.

Frank laughed and laughed, more with a sense of relieved tension than of any real humor. "I agree. That tight, scaly skin next to the fur was alright. I could stand even the hairless portion of the body with the fleshy folds hanging down. But the jelly-like head, and the mass of long, stringy appendages was just too much. More like the traditional, mythological head of snakes, instead of hair. Do you suppose it was intelligent? If so, I wonder what it thought of us?

Charlie shrugged. "I'm glad its over. What say we turn our craft around and make for Earth? I could use a decent vacation myself.

