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THE NEW TOM SWIFT INVENTION SERIES

Tom Swift: Galactic Ambassador

By Victor Appleton II

Tom's space friends let him know that they are being "recalled" by their masters in a neighboring solar system. They have failed to penetrate the mysterious forces that prevent them from being able to visit the Earth.

With so much to be learned from them, Tom and Damon Swift embark on a highly-focused program to find some way to let their friends visit. They must find the answer within 50 days, the deadline imposed for the return of the space friends. The solution is a self-contained environment replicating their own, but housed in a giant blimp.

The mysterious MIGs make a reappearance trying to destroy Tom's plans and the environment blimp. Tom must devise a method of protecting the blimp from any Earth-type weapons.

This book is dedicated to people who deal in diplomacy. It can't be an easy life dealing with people who are totally immersed in cultures that are as foreign to us as night is to day. Unless, that is, diplomacy is exactly like the movie, "Romanoff and Juliet." In that case, it is a hilarious set of misunderstandings and intrigues and romance. Actually, it sounds kind of nice. That, plus endless banquets filled with caviar and roasted squab.

Tom Swift: Galactic Ambassador

FOREWORD

Name me any other person who began communicating, regularly, with being from another part of our galaxy, and all at just barely eighteen years of age. Other than, that is, Tom Swift.

Go ahead. Ponder that. I can wait.

If you find yourself stuck for an answer, you might as well give up. The answer is "nobody!" From that fateful first contact when a mysterious missile streaked through the skies over Shopton, New York, and buried itself in the grounds of Swift Enterprises, Tom and his dad have learned how to communicate with their space friend.

They have learned about the some of the plant and animal life from these outer space beings. They have discovered cures for diseases that threatened to wipe out these people whom they have never actually met.

All this thanks to the wonders of mathematics.

But, what they have not been able to accomplish is to get their friends to help them understand enough about a number of issues all concerning an inability to land on or to survive on the Earth.

Imagine, if you will, coming from a remote island where you have never seen any other people, being given a telegrapher's key and not much else. Then, imagine trying to figure out how to communicate with the outside world.

Could you do it? Could any of us?

Good thing that Tom doesn't see the impossible; he sees the challenge.

Victor Appleton II

CHAPTER 1

A STARTLING MESSAGE

TOM SWIFT, teenage inventor and scientist, raced through the gates at Swift Enterprises the four-mile square experimental and engineering facility located on the outskirts of Shopton, New York. He was in such a hurry that he didn't even drive the extra quarter mile to his private entrance; he called ahead to the gate and drove through after a quick flash of his ID.

He drove directly to the building housing the communications center leaping out of his car the instant he pulled into a parking space.

Running into the building he was met by the Swift's communications chief, George Dilling.

"It sounded ultra important, George," he managed to get out.

"Skipper," the tall radioman replied. "This is something I don't think we ever expected. It from our space friends. I've been around their symbols long enough to recognize some of them. This message starts out with the words 'urgent' and 'departure'. The computer is working on digesting the rest but seems to be skipping a lot of the symbols. They must be new to us."

"Dad will be here in a few minutes, George. Let's go take a look at the message. Maybe I can decipher some more of it before he gets here."

The two strode into the secured room housing the powerful transmission equipment as well as the oscilloscope and the computer that was used to be encode outgoing messages as well as decoding anything they received. Red light were flashing all over the computer console indicating that it was using all of the

available computing power and should not be interrupted.

Tom pushed one button and a printout of the message symbols along with the meager translation came out of the printer next to the computer. He picked it up and scanned the results.

"You're right, George. More than half of these symbols are new to me. But, I think that a few of those are just variations of known symbols. I think I can pick out the gist of the message by making a few guesses, but I guess we'd better wait for dad to get here first."

Within minutes the radio room door buzzed and opened. Tom's father, darker haired than Tom but with the same athletic build, entered the room. "What have we got, George?"

"Damon. It's one of those brain teaser messages. I wouldn't have called you two at home this late in the night except that it begins with the word 'urgent'."

Tom's father walked over to the desk where Tom was now seated pouring over the message. He had already scribbled one or more possible words under about 30% of the symbols. He looked up saying, "This looks really bad, dad. If my rushed translation is anywhere close, it looks like our space friends are abandoning their outpost near Mars and leaving our solar system!"

"That would be a terrible blow to science here on Earth. We have so much to learn from them. Let me have a copy of the message, George, and I'll do a tandem translation with Tom." He was soon pouring over a page of the mysterious symbols.

The space friends, as Tom and his father called them, had first made their presence known when they sent a missile across space to crash into a remote area of Swift Enterprises months earlier. Once dug up, the undamaged missile was covered with a series of symbols, many of them indicating an origin in high

mathematics which both Swifts agreed was a universal language.

Later they had sent samples of their planet's plant life for the men to study and then sent a disc-shaped craft filled with sick and dying animals. Tom and a group of scientists had been able to determine the cause of the mystery illness that had suddenly plagued their friend's home planet and were able to offer a cure.

The space friends had also moved a small planetoid, now called Nestría, into orbit between the Earth and its moon.

Tom and Damon Swift worked in silence for almost a half hour and then began comparing notes. After Tom wrote down a combined message on a separate piece of paper, they sat back studying it.

"This is terrible news, dad," Tom moaned.

"What does it say, Tom," asked George.

Basically, it comes down like this. 'Urgent. Departure created by -- some unknown symbol here -- directing/forcing/making in reduction of two lunar cycles.' I guess that means less than 56 days. Anyway, it continues, 'Impossible to resistance/opposite action. Failure of...' I think this one might mean their mission, dad. What do you think?"

"Put that in there and continue," he directed.

"Okay. 'Failure of our mission proof negative Earth intersection...'"

"Tom," Dilling broke in, "what does that mean in English?"

"I believe it means that their failure to complete their mission, probably to be able to visit our planet, is the reason they are being compelled or ordered to depart. The rest of the message is so full of unknown symbols that it is going to take dad and me several days working along with the computer to deci-

pher."

He was interrupted by a signal from the computer. On its screen was the message,

**'TRANSLATION OF KNOWN AND SIMILAR
SYMBOLS INCOMPLETE. REQUIRE ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION INPUT. PARTIAL TRANSLATION
SENT TO PRINTER'**

George retrieved the printout. He set it between the other two and they all compared it to what Tom and Damon Swift had come up with.

"Practically the same, Tom," the older inventor stated.

"We need to send them an acknowledgement along with some sort of clarifying questions. Want me to do that, Dad?"

"Let's do it together. George. Pull up a chair and give your input, too."

The three men spent the next ten minutes devising the outgoing message. Once satisfied the two older men left Tom to create the message in the mathematical symbol language. They retired to the coffee room next door and made a fresh pot. "Going to be a long night, it looks like," the radioman remarked.

"If I know Tom, he won't stop until he had it right. Luckily, I think we have all of the symbols necessary to create that message. He may only need to design one or two."

An hour later Tom came wandering into the coffee room and plopped down on the comfortable sofa along one wall. His father rose and poured Tom a mug of coffee, adding two spoons of honey and a large portion of milk to it; the only way Tom ever drank coffee. His preferred hot beverages were cocoa and spiced cider, neither an option at the time.

"Thanks, dad," he said accepting the steaming mug. "He

handed his father a sheet of paper. "Does this look like I have it right? I wasn't too sure about this symbol," he pointed at something that looked like a tulip rising from a star, "or this one."

Mr. Swift looked over the page silently reciting its content as he deciphered the symbols from memory."

"If you mean 'we want to contact your masters' by the first new symbol and 'working day and night' by the other, then I think you have it."

"Good. That's the general idea behind those symbols. Really combinations of existing ones."

They returned to the radio room and Tom beamed the message out using the Enterprise's high-power transmitter.

"It's going to take over a half hour for the message to get there and any immediate response..." he broke off as a signal indicated an incoming message.

More symbols began forming on the screen. Tom wrote them down as fast as they appeared. Within two minutes they stopped.

"They can't be as far away as Mars to have responded this fast," Tom exclaimed. The others agreed, but his father added:

"Or, this could be a follow-up to their previous message that was sent before we beamed out."

Tom looked over the sheet he had filled. He sat down and began writing the translation. In just a couple minutes he had it.

"Dad! This is an answer to our questions. We asked them to verify the timetable and this message repeats the 'two lunar cycles' but adds an indication that it is three days less than that. And where we asked if there was some way for us to intercede on their behalf, they answer with 'disappointment' and 'impossible' and that symbol they once used which we believe is their

dissatisfaction with the orders of their masters."

"Let's send another quick message telling them we want to try to do something to get them down here, safely, before they are forced to depart. I only hope we can follow through on that."

Tom created the message using all known symbols. Only a few minutes before it was transmitted, a single symbol appeared on the screen. Tom and his dad recognized it immediately and both spoke the translation at the same time. "Hope!"

The two Swifts bade George a good night and drove home in Mr. Swift's large sedan.

Moments after leaving the main gate Damon Swift noticed a set of dim headlights following them at a distance of several hundred yards. Not wanting to worry Tom he decided to try to shake any potential tail. He steered around a corner several blocks ahead and increased his speed.

"What's up, Dad," Tom inquired recognizing that this wasn't a direct route back to their home.

"Just seeing if the car behind us is following us or just happens to be out here past midnight."

He looked in the rear-view mirror and Tom turned around in his seat to watch behind them. "Oops!" Tom said seeing the headlights turn the same corner. By this time Mr. Swift had managed to gain another hundred yards of lead over the other vehicle. He sped up even more down the tree-lined straight street.

The other car began to fall behind. He quickly slowed down using only the hand break so as to not turn on the brake lights, and sped around another corner. He pulled the sedan into the first driveway they came to and shut the motor off. He and Tom ducked down.

Presently they saw the headlight beams swing around the corner but the mystery car accelerated and sped off down the street. Tom used his cell phone and called the Shopton Police. The night sergeant promised to have a couple patrol cars head for the area immediately.

He suggested that the Swifts remain in their car in the driveway. After giving the policeman the home's address they agreed to remain put.

While they waited, Tom and his father discussed many of the issues they would be facing in trying to get their space friends down onto the Earth. Tom reminded his father that he had discovered evidence in the lower Mexican peninsula of a visit by being from outer space hundreds of years before Cortez had ransacked the area.

They were just speaking about how their friends had so far been unable or unwilling to provide them with any information about their environmental requirements or even what they looked like, when a set of headlights swept past their car.

Both men froze when the beams returned and focused directly at their car. "Do you have your i-gun in the car," Tom asked. This electronic interrupter weapon was the only type of gun ever carried by Swift employees, unless they were exploring a dangerous area. It had long been a Swift policy that science and destructive weaponry did not mix.

"No. I took it out last week. I needed to replace the solar battery but forgot to put it back," he whispered.

At that moment, they heard a car door close behind their car.

Suddenly, red and blue lights began flashing behind and to the right and left of their car. A loud speaker blared, "Hold it right there! Hands up! Get down on your knees, now!"

Tom risked raising his head to look out the rear window. He

could see three uniformed officers standing by their cars, guns pointed at a figure standing just behind their own car. The figure got down on his knees, hands still raised in the air.

Tom could see one of the officers approach the figure and then snap on handcuffs.

He opened the car door and stepped out. "Boy, am I glad to see you guys," he exclaimed. His father joined him in thanking the officers for their prompt response.

"Only too happy to protect and serve, sir. Especially for your two. I wouldn't have a job with the Shopton Police if it weren't for the money you Swift folks bring into the local economy.

The other officers had already hustled their prisoner into the rear seat of one of the police cruisers, so Tom didn't ask to see him. He did ask, "would you ask your Chief if our security chief and I could come in to question your prisoner?"

The officer agreed saying that processing would take the next three hours or so, but that any interrogation would need to wait until after 8:00 am when a lawyer or public defender could be contacted. Tom suggested a 9:00 meeting.

One officer moved the mystery stalker's car out onto the street while another went up to the porch to speak with the confused homeowner and his wife. Climbing back into their sedan, the Swifts headed for home.

The next morning Tom contacted Harlan Ames, Enterprises head of security and close family friend, at home telling him about the adventure the previous night. He promised to meet Tom at the Shopton Police Department headquarters a few minutes before the appointed hour.

Tom and his father had agreed on their drive home to not worry Tom's mother or his seventeen year old sister, Sandy. When Tom walked into the kitchen, his dark-haired and still

beautiful mother, Anne Swift, and his vivacious sister greeted him.

"Yo, Tomonomo," Sandy said giving him a peck on the cheek. "What's up? We heard you and dad leave last night, and he just told us about the space beings messages. You can do something, can't you?"

"I sure hope we can. I really want to have the opportunity to meet our friends face-to-face, if that is at all possible. Not to mention lost chances at moving our knowledge of science ahead with their assistance. We just have to find a way," he declared.

After a quick breakfast of sausage and cheese grits, one of Tom's favorites, he left for Enterprises with his father. The older man dropped Tom off at the main gate while he headed for meeting with a supplier in a neighboring community.

Tom hopped into his car and was soon motoring on his way to he Police Department. He arrived about five minutes to 9:00 and just behind the car of Harlan Ames. They got out and shook hands.

"Good morning, Tom," the security chief greeted him.

"Hi, Harlan. Now we get to see who was following dad and me."

They walked into the gray stone-faced building. The desk sergeant directed them to the Police Chief's office.

"Hi, Tom. Hi, Harlan," he greeted them. After exchanging some pleasantries, he suggested they head to the interrogation room.

"I think you are in for a real surprise," he said, mysteriously.

Moments later the prisoner was brought into the room. Both Tom and his father gasped when the mystery driver proved to

be an attractive red-haired woman, about 25 years old, fuming with hatred.

"You Swifts think you're so important and so precious." She stood up. "Well, I'm here to tell you, you're both dead men!"