

5000 years

by Dorothee Lang

She had been warned. On first glance, this species seemed like another average task: anthropoid, medium-brained, clueless about any realm beyond the third dimension.

She observed them from the camp her ancestors had put up on Mars aeons ago, when the first earthlings had reached the level of rudimentary writing. That had been 5000 years ago.

By now, the earthlings were roaming the stage of basic technology. Fascinated by mechanics and speed, they had managed to burn 67 percent of their planet's resources, and were still eager to go faster. Every now and then, they built giant telescopes, then ended up frustrated as neither aliens nor antimatter could be found, despite all their hopes and their piles of astrophysical equations.

Parallel to observing them, she read through the reports of those who had gone on ground missions before her. Many hadn't returned. Some had turned to humans, some had died as martyrs, some still were there, trying to prevent the worst.

Weirdlings, she had named them secretly. Now, while preparing for her own ground mission, she had to confess that she was both appalled and fascinated by them, by their overly occupation with dialects, frontiers, and hair lengths; their hopeless love for the nature they slowly killed; their longing to travel the world and the universe, to find peace, and recreate paradise, somehow.

"Don't fall for them," her commander reminded her again before she was beamed down.

