



Male/Female Relations

By
Michael McCollum



One night approximately twenty years ago, my wife and I were watching a television program in the living room while our three-year-old daughter played with a toy near the picture window. At one point in the program I was struck by something and proceeded to make a quick editorial comment involving a vulgar hand gesture. The gesture consisted of making a circle with the thumb and forefinger of my right hand, into which I inserted the forefinger of my left hand in a quick back-and-forth motion. The gesture continued for no more than three seconds, and was only begun after I made sure that our daughter was looking the other way. To my utter amazement, I had no sooner dropped my hands than our little girl turned around, and asked, "Daddy, what does this mean?" She then proceeded to copy the gesture perfectly. From that experience, I learned a lesson that every parent will recognize. Children, it seems, have 180-degree peripheral vision!

When that same daughter was a teenager, she remarked that she never realized when how much adult humor is devoted to the subject of sex. Moreover, while I hadn't thought about it in years, I suddenly realized she was right. In fact, the proportion of adult jokes that have sex as their basis approaches 100%.

This, of course, is a natural consequence of belonging to a species consisting of two sexes. Much of our first decade of life is devoted to pretending we hate members of the opposite sex, while the next couple of decades are devoted to first pursuing, and then learning to live with them. It takes some of us longer than it takes others to figure it out. I have been married to the same woman for 33 years, and I am still mystified at times by the female psyche. I have learned, however, that when she says, "nothing is wrong," then *something* is very definitely *wrong*.

My wife, on the other hand, has men figured out to perfection. She refers to us as *borks* (patterned after *Star Trek's* automatons, the Borg). Men, she figures, all think with one mind, have the same attitudes and habits, speak a common language consisting of grunts and shrugs, and are fascinated by mechanical gadgets. This, to her way of thinking, is why men like sports, cars, computers, and have an addiction to remote controls for televisions. In fact, she referred to my favorite television remote control, which was fashioned after a *Star Trek* hand phaser, as my *bork stick*.

Since writers are required to chronicle the human condition, we must naturally deal with this dichotomy among human beings; this left brain/right brain variation in the way the two sexes look at things. The best writers learn to distill the essence of these differences so accurately that their characterizations ring true to life. The worst writers

stumble over the differences, misapply them, and leave the readers confused as to who it is that is doing the talking. However, there is no getting around the fact that every writer must deal with the sexual dichotomy to which the human race is heir. In fact, we must not only deal with it, we must celebrate it.

Or, as the French put it so succinctly, *Vive la Difference!*

Are There Really Differences between the Way Men and Women Think?

To ask the question seems both unnecessary and trite. However, during the feminist revolution of the last few decades, there have actually been people who have asserted that there is little or no differences between the way men and women think. I suspect this assertion is more the result of the sound bite mentality of the modern media than an accurate reflection of the true feelings of the proponents. Certainly, there should be no married men or women on this planet who are not acutely aware of the difference in outlook of the sexes. Nor, I suspect, is anyone not raised by monks or nuns of the opinion that men and women think the same.

Nor is this merely a widely held bit of folk wisdom. Scientists have weighed in with recent brain research that proves male and female brains are distinctly different in the way they operate. We discussed this briefly in this series when we reviewed techniques for writing dialogue. The subject is important enough to bear repeating.

For nearly all of human history, women cared for the babies and gathered food in the forest while the men went out and hunted. This division of labor has produced a difference in the brain functions of the two sexes over thousands of generations. Women's brains have a high degree of information interchange between the two cerebral hemispheres. Thus, female brains are general-purpose instruments that are optimized to exchange information with others. That is why women are generally excellent communicators.

Men, on the other hand, have specialized brains, with relatively little inter-hemispherical communication. The male brain has been optimized for a single function — and no, it isn't so that we can think about sex (although the subject is much on our minds). Evolution has optimized the male brain for the sole purpose of performing parabolic trajectory analysis in real time.

Huh?

Consider the problem a hunter faces when he is stalking an animal with a bow and arrow. First, he must visualize the animal's position in three-dimensional space and relate it to his own position. If the animal is running away, he needs to observe the animal's velocity vector and predict its course and speed for the next several seconds. Finally, he needs to visualize the trajectory his arrow will follow en route to the kill, and then adjust the elevation and azimuth of the bow accordingly. Finally, he must consider the effects of wind and weather on the flight of the arrow. Only when he has course, speed, direction, launch force, and weather clearly in mind can a hunter let fly with his arrow. If he is practiced with his weapon, more often than not he can make the kill. If you think about the complexities involved in hunting, it is small wonder that the male brain has little room in it for anything else!

As always, before I am accused of being a sexist, it is important to note that when discussing generic characteristics of human beings, we are actually discussing

probabilities. That is, *on average*, males can visualize in three dimensions better than females; and *on average*, females can communicate better than males. The best visualizer among females is better than the average male and the best communicator among males is better than the average female. However, the rule holds sufficiently for the bulk of the population that it is a useful method for categorizing the differences between the sexes.

This difference in outlook between men and women is not a cultural phenomenon. It is an evolutionary adaptation caused by the traditional division of labor in early human society. In other words, it is a difference that is built into our genetic blueprints. This is why you see little boys and girls behaving differently on the playground during school recess. As soon as the bell rings, the boys come spilling out of the classroom in a disorganized mob, buzzing around with their arms held out as they simulate airplane noises with their mouths. The girls, however, leave the classroom quietly and with dignity, go find a tree to sit under in a group, and ... well, gossip isn't too strong a word. There is another difference between pre-adolescent males and females. Ten and eleven year old boys tend to play games of dominance ("My father can beat up your father.") while girls of the same age practice getting their way by using their wits and their wiles. Fathers are especially subject to such influences.

These differences in the sexes permeate all human societies, although we sometimes pretend that they don't. That men and women react differently is evidenced by the term "chick flick;" by hundreds of comedians of both sexes who make their living pointing out these differences; and by the overwhelmingly male audiences at tractor pulls, wrestling, and other examples of what some people might refer to as the "less refined arts." One of the most popular books of recent years, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, chronicles the differences at length.

But what of us writers? Isn't it our job to break down these old stereotypical roles and celebrate the sexes by inventing new and interesting relationships in our writing? If we are sufficiently skilled, can't we essentially interchange the traditional male and female roles in our books, thereby demonstrating our skill at manipulating the language while also striking a blow for equality?

Yes we can, if that is what we want to do. However, because most of the differences between men and women are built into our genetic codes (I refer to the mental differences, not the obvious physical ones), a writer who chooses to ignore the traditional roles of the sexes in literature is walking on dangerous ground. If you don't believe this, consider a recent (and expensive) experiment that Hollywood attempted on this very subject.

I refer to one of the biggest movie bombs of the last few years, Rennie Harlin's 1995 pirate epic, *Cutthroat Island*. In this movie, Geena Davis, one of my favorite actresses, plays the daughter of a pirate captain who takes over command of his ship after he dies. Her role is essentially the same one that Errol Flynn played in *Captain Blood*. Her costar is Mathew Modine, who plays the supporting role that Maureen O'Hara had in so many Errol Flynn movies. Essentially, Geena does all of the swashbuckling and Matthew is a male "damsel in distress." This reversal of roles undoubtedly sounded original and exciting to Harlin when he read the script, but the result on the screen falls far short of his intentions. In fact, most people who saw the movie think that the concept is silly. Some of the blame goes to a plot that is inconsistent and unbelievable, but much

of it has to do with the negative reaction of the audience to the sexual role reversal. (Another possibility for why the movie was made is that Harlin was trying to promote a little domestic tranquility. Geena Davis was his wife at the time.)

Tradition in literature has it that men are the “savers” and women are the “savees.” This is not to say that women can’t be strong characters, only that if they are, the male characters must be equally strong. The problem with blurring the gender roles in fiction is that there is a very fine line between high adventure and unintended comedy. That is because the human sexual drive seems somehow connected with our sense of humor. This is evidenced by the fact that both sexes can break down into fits of giggling at any time during the mating ritual, that the vast majority of popular jokes tend to be “dirty,” and that it is difficult for a person to both laugh and feel horny at the same time.

The point of all this for writers isn’t that you can’t go against the historical male/female stereotypes. In fact, if you are to be successful, you must avoid stereotypes of all kinds. However, as in much of writing, it is important to know how the traditional ways got to be “traditional” before we set about changing them. So, let us look at the male/female relationship as it has been portrayed traditionally in literature.

The Double Standard

For about three decades now, radical feminists have complained that our male dominated society maintains a double standard where women are concerned. For instance, a man who is sexually active is known as a “ladies man,” a “womanizer,” or a “bon vivant.” A woman who is sexually active is known as a “round heels,” a “slut,” or a “bad girl.” A man who is assertive and strong willed is defined as “courageous,” “no nonsense,” or a “go getter.” A woman who does the same thing is “pushy,” “bossy,” or a “bitch.”

This inherent bias in our language and culture indicates that there is a very different standard for the behaviors of males and females. Whether you think this is good and natural, or bad and exploitative, depends largely on how you feel about feminism. However, even those who believe that “A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do!” find it difficult to argue with the fact that the double standard exists. The evidence is all around us.

(Don’t believe it? Then ask yourself the following question: “What is the male equivalent term for the female pejorative ‘bitch?’” Can’t think of it, can you? I was recently browsing through a gift shop and noticed a display of humorous signs. One of them said, “I used to think that I was acting like a slut, when I suddenly realized that I was acting like a man!”)

As writers, we must at least pay lip service to the cultural norms when writing about men and women. Our heroes must be imbued with typically male virtues while our heroines must exhibit the standard female virtues. Otherwise, your writing tends to descend into androgyny and confusion.

What are the male virtues? They are typically the virtue of warriors. A hero should be strong, stoic, courageous, loyal, and kind. He must defend the weak and oppose the tyrannical. He must be respectful of women. He must walk with his head held high and while not seeking conflict, must never walk away when conflict confronts him. He must protect the weak, and be willing to lay down his life for his wife, children,

or country. He must stand his ground when the smart thing would be to turn tail and run. He must help lift the women and children into the lifeboats, then stand aside as the boats pull away, leaving him aboard the sinking ship. Above all, he must never use his greater strength and power to dominate a woman (except in certain scenes in novels known colloquially as *bodice rippers*, which we will discuss in more detail next month).

What are the male vices? Cowardice is the prime vice, followed by cruelty, selfishness, and disloyalty. Men who do not stand strong against adversity are known as “wimps,” which like “bitch” is a pejorative term that can only truly be applied to one sex. There was a lot of talk about the sensitivity of “the nineties man.” Yet, despite numerous articles and commentaries on how a modern man should act, the cultural ideal for maleness runs much closer to Arnold Schwarzenegger than Alan Alda.

What then are the female virtues? A heroine needs to be beautiful, confident, independent, and supportive of her man. She must protect her children at all cost, even unto death. And she must be chaste. That last does not mean that we must return to the days when every heroine was a virgin who fainted at the first “damn” or blushed bright red at the slightest off color remark. Modern heroines have a lusty side to them, just as women have had a lusty side throughout history. After all, how could men have sinned so enthusiastically down through history if they didn’t have women willing to sin along with them? Nevertheless, while heroes can hop from bed to bed as they move from chapter to chapter, heroines should save themselves for that one true love who will come riding to them on a white horse and make them his own. In many novels, it is the state of the heroine’s chastity that is the engine that drives the plot forward.

Before all of my women readers light the fires to start heating the boiling oil, consider the evidence for what may seem at first to be an outrageous assertion. Many stories and television shows revolve around the courting ritual. The hero meets the heroine, falls madly in love with her, and then spends the entire book or episode chasing after her. The heroine flees, but never so quickly as to lose her pursuer, until in the end, they kiss ... or fall into bed together ... or get married. What we are talking about is developing a sexual tension between the characters. What drags the readers into the story is the question of “will they or won’t they, and if they will, when?” This is the most basic of all plots: Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, and boy wins girl back.

If the heroine meets the hero, shakes hands with him, and the next moment goes to bed with him, then the sexual tension is gone. Your readers won’t have time to savor that delicious anticipation, to wonder when they will catch a glimpse of milky white breast and rugged bronze chest. In fact, if your hero and heroine are too sexually active, you risk boring your readers. There are, after all, only so many ways to rub mucous membranes together!

An example that amply illustrates the importance of maintaining a sexual tension between the characters was one of my favorite TV programs: *Lois and Clark*. For those outside the United States, *Lois and Clark* is about a uniquely American couple: Superman and Lois Lane, who (as the program promos put it) are the world’s only two-person love triangle. Clark loves Lois and Lois loves Superman. Superman first appeared in comic books in 1938, and for the last sixty seven years, he has pursued Lois Lane, and been pursued by her. For virtually all of that time, their love has been unconsummated. *Lois and Clark* was merely the latest in a long line of Superman television programs and

movies, and had the distinction of being the one that gave Lois Lane equal billing with Superman.

I liked the program because the writing was clever, the slant on the story fresh, and the characters were likeable. But mostly I liked it because Terri Hatcher played Lois Lane. In other words, the reason I watched *Lois and Clark* was Lois, not Clark. The program ran for three or four seasons and so long as Superman and Lois Lane were engaged in their perennial mating dance, the program did well in the ratings. At the end of the next-to-last season, Clark got up his courage and asked Lois to marry him and Lois finally saw past the glasses to realize that Clark Kent and Superman were the same person. It was a moment that some of us had been waiting for all of our lives. It was delicious!

Then in the final season, they got married (after way too many cute writer tricks to drag it out) and happily took up married life. The ratings wilted, the program limped to a terribly unsatisfying final episode, and then it went into reruns.

So what happened? Quite simply, after six decades of pursuing Lois Lane, Superman finally caught her and the rest of us lost interest. Nor is this the only example of this happening. In virtually all series television where a program is built around the mating dance between hero and heroine, the one thing you can count on is a ratings bonanza for the wedding episode, and a cancellation notice shortly thereafter. Readers and viewers are interested in the chase, not the aftermath.

So, if you want people to follow your heroine to the end of your story, make her chaste. Even if she is the proverbial prostitute with the heart of gold, she must reserve herself (mentally, if not physically) for her one true love. For if she is too quick to give her heart, you may find that you have no story to tell.

Male/Female Conventions in Writing

Modern feminism has performed one service to the English language for which every writer should be eternally grateful. Before the days in the 1960s when Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinam raised all of our consciences, there was no honorific for a female person that you could use without knowing her marital status. I refer to the problem that every professional writer and letter writer in the English-speaking world faced when he or she had to write the words “Dear ____ Smith.” If Smith was a female, was she Miss Smith or Mrs. Smith? Often there was no way of knowing, but if you guessed wrong, the consequences could be significant.

To combat this problem, the feminists popularized a new word for addressing females. That word was “Ms.” Now it isn’t necessary to know whether a woman is married, just as it has never been necessary to know whether a man is married. We can now write “Ms. Smith” as easily as we write “Mr. Smith” and not spend minutes worried that we have made a social error.

After performing this service, the forces of feminism then overreached by starting what I refer to as the gender war.

Before the 1960s, the unquestioned tradition in writing was that when you were speaking of people in general, or of a group of people, or of any person whose sex was undetermined, you used male references. Humanity was known as “mankind,” or “the race of man,” or simply, “Man.” The underlying understanding of this convention was

that half of the overarching category “Man” was female, the other half male. Any individual human being whose sex was undetermined was referred to as “he.” In other words, in the event that the sex of the subject of a sentence was unclear, the language defaulted to the male pronoun.

This drove the feminists crazy!

Some of the more rabid proponents insisted that the whole thing was a scheme to demean women and keep them subordinate to men *ad infinitum*. The only problem with this theory was that it would have been inconceivable to those who started the tradition that women would ever *not* be subordinate to men. In fact, referring to all humanity as “Man” got its start in the Middle Ages when women were considered property only slightly more valuable than cattle. “He” began to be used as a generalized pronoun for the simple reason that the people of the time couldn’t conceive of it being any other way. It wasn’t a nefarious plot. It was just the way they thought.

I first became aware of the he/she controversy shortly after becoming a writer in the early 1970s. At the time, there was a search on for a neuter generalized pronoun that could be substituted for “he.” The suggested pronoun was “heesh.” It would be used in sentences like; “The shopper dropped the packages on the floor as heesh sat on the bench in the mall.” By combining “he” and “she,” the proponents hoped to remove the male bias from the language. All they really did, however, was convince me of how far some people will go in support of their political dogma.

This silliness died the death it richly deserved. Actually, English has a perfectly good neuter pronoun, “it.” The problem is that most people object to being referred to as “it,” even though we use the pronoun to describe babies before they are born, and for a short period thereafter. The reason for this is that until recently, no one knew the sex of their babies until after they were born, and that for a short time after birth, the sex of a child seems its least important aspect.

The attempt to foist a strange pronoun on an unsuspecting public wasn’t the last of the he/she wars, however. When feminists determined that it wasn’t going to fly, an alternate scheme was devised. This scheme maintains that in order to be fair, we should alternate the pronouns in sentences or paragraphs. This results in the female half of the human race being given equal billing with the male half in sentences like, “The taxpayer should be careful to add up *his* deductions... When filing, the taxpayer must sign *her* return.”

The alternating pronoun approach is often used in publications to this day. As a writer, however, I don’t recommend it. You may disagree. The reason why you shouldn’t use alternating generalized pronouns is that they confuse the reader. Every time a reader encounters a new pronoun, they subconsciously check to see who is being referred to. If the person who is the subject of a sentence is male in one sentence or paragraph and then female in the next, the reader must stop and make the mental transformation before proceeding. Do this too often and you will give them fatigue of the brain.

For the record, the traditional way to use male and female pronouns is to substitute the proper pronoun for any character whose sex is known, but to use the male pronoun for anyone whose sex is indeterminate. The exception to this rule is when you are speaking of an entire profession that is predominately one sex. The rule then is to apply the generalized pronoun that applies to the majority of practitioners. In other

words, when referring to a generalized doctor you use the male pronoun (“A doctor in Arizona must complete *his* medical board examination before starting practice.”). When referring to a generalized nurse, you use the female pronoun (“A nurse must submit *her* time card to *her* supervisor before ending *her* shift.) Engineers are invariably “he,” although the profession is gaining far more female practitioners than was the case when I graduated (thank God!), and elementary school teachers are always “she.”

The he/she wars continue to this day. I work with a few women who tend to correct my speech whenever I fail to make the proper obeisance to gender diversity. They don’t do this as much since they became aware that it irritates me greatly. Not that I care if they choose to insert the phrase “he or she” into their own speech when a plain “he” will do. It is, after all, a free country, and getting to be a much freer world. The only problem is that every time they try to make me more sensitive, I have this overpowering urge to ask, “Pardon me, but exactly which amendment to the constitution is it that gives you the right to tell me how to talk?” Since asking the question would not be politically correct, I stifle the urge. It is the stifling that irritates me, not the helpful suggestion.

Character References

Another outgrowth of feminist philosophy has been the movement to change the way in which we refer to characters in our writing. The traditional method has been to refer to women by their first names and to men by their last names, as in the sentence, “Jane watched the animals at play while Smith worked to patch the hole in the side of the boat.”

As in the case of the generic male pronoun, some feminists declared that this technique is merely another attempt to subjugate women. They recommend that the writer refer to characters of both sexes by their last names, transforming our example sentence to “Jameson watched the animals at play while Smith worked to patch the hole in the side of the boat.”

As a writer in the first years of the twenty first century, you have the right to follow whichever convention you choose. Personally, I like the older one. Using female first names and male last names provides the writer with a handy aid to help keep the readers oriented. Since “Jane” is a female first name, every time Jane is referred to, her identity is authenticated in the reader’s mind. The same is true for Smith, and when both characters appear in the same sentence (as they do in our sample), the reader can easily separate the female character from the male. In the second sentence, the reader must work to remember that “Jameson” is “Jane Jameson” and that “Smith” is “George Smith.” The mental gymnastics required to keep the two characters straight are greater than with the “Jane” and “Smith” sentence. Of course, this handy scheme for helping the readers keep the characters straight doesn’t work very well if your characters have ambiguous names like Marion, Chris, Kim, or Pat.

In choosing the convention to use, which is more important to you? Your ideology or making it easier for the readers to read whatever it is that you have written?

Conclusion

Here we are at the end of an article about sex and we haven't even talked about *sex* yet. That is a whole subject in itself. For there comes a time in every writer's life when he or she must face up to the problem of writing a sex scene. How much of the physical act do you recount, how explicit are your descriptions, and how much do you concentrate on the emotional side of one of the most meaningful acts between human beings? We will take up all of these weighty questions next month.

As for the gender wars, no one yet knows how they will turn out. Perhaps those who wish to modify the language to remove its masculine bias will succeed. They have made considerable inroads to date by having the Bible and Roget's Thesaurus rewritten in "non-sexist" verbiage. Personally, I'm flexible on the subject. When the innovators finally come up with a new neuter pronoun that is generally accepted, I will use it. In the meantime, however, I will stay with the traditional usage. I will do so because the traditional ways in which writers deal with gender work. In the meantime, I will watch the war with interest and continue to go about my business celebrating the fact that we humans come in two very interesting varieties. I don't know what the world would be like if men and women truly did think alike, but I don't think it would be nearly as enjoyable.

Next month, we discuss the weighty business of arousing the readers' prurient interest. Or as Harold Robbins used to say, "It's not pornography. It's a book about twelve people who are deeply in love with one another...!"

The End

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Three hundred years after humanity made its deal with the Life Probe to search out the secret of faster-than-light travel, the descendants of the original expedition return to Earth in a starship. They find a world that has forgotten the ancient contract. No matter. The colonists have overcome far greater obstacles in their single-minded drive to redeem a promise made before any of them were born...

3. Antares Dawn - US\$5.00

When the super giant star Antares exploded in 2512, the human colony on Alta found their pathway to the stars gone, isolating them from the rest of human space for more than a century. Then one day, a powerful warship materialized in the system without warning. Alarmed by the sudden appearance of such a behemoth, the commanders of the Altan Space Navy dispatched one of their most powerful ships to investigate. What ASNS Discovery finds when they finally catch the intruder is a battered hulk manned by a dead crew.

That is disturbing news for the Altans. For the dead battleship could easily have defeated the whole of the Altan navy. If it could find Alta, then so could whomever it was that beat it. Something must be done...

4. Antares Passage - US\$5.00

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.00

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

6. Thunderstrike! - US\$6.00

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$5.00

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$5.00

Starhopper was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$6.00

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.00

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

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The Astrogator's Handbook has been very popular on Sci Fi – Arizona. The handbook has star maps that show science fiction writers where the stars are located in space rather than where they are located in Earth's sky. Because of the popularity, we are expanding the handbook to show nine times as much space and more than ten times as many stars. The expanded handbook includes the positions of 3500 stars as viewed from Polaris on 63 maps. This handbook is a useful resource for every science fiction writer and will appeal to anyone with an interest in astronomy.