

Margaret Smith

“Since it is seldom clear whether intellectual activity denotes a superior mode of being or a vital deficiency, opinion swings between considering intellect a privilege and seeing it as a handicap.”

-Barzun

Thank Bethwik¹ that school is over for the year. Nothing bores you more than sitting around in physics class, learning about the “mysteries” of the atom. I mean, the exact photo-ecstatic principle behind electro-magnetism indicates the exact structure of the atom to within a degree of probability. Quantum mechanics then illustrates that the physical structure of an atom is rendered mostly indefinable except at specific points within the time stream. But all the teacher wants to talk about are neutrons, protons, and electrons. You learned all these things when you were four.

If it were just that you had to rehash old material before going on to new concepts, it would be at least somewhat bearable. But that’s not the case. In fact, most of the scientists on Earth know less about the sciences than the average high-schooler back home on Thwark. So you’re stuck here, re-learning all of the concepts you needed to know to pass your fourth grade general exam. To add insult to injury, you can’t even let on about how remedial these subjects are to you. When you and your family first arrived upon this planet, you made no effort to hide your disdain for your classes, and you astounded your teachers with your knowledge. You felt great about being able to show supposed figures of authority exactly how much more intelligent you were than they. But your father was furious. His reason for bringing everyone to Earth in the first place (which meant having to spend three weeks learning English and undergoing cosmetic surgery to make you look human) was to infiltrate Earth’s research labs and politics. He was supposed to be a spy for the Thwarkian Empire determining whether Earth was worth the effort of trying to ally with, or whether it should simply be destroyed. And here you were, blowing his cover by showing off. You were grounded for three months, and every day your mother would come to your room and help you practice acting docile and unintelligent, like most Earth women.

So now your life is pretty much a humiliation. You have worked hard to build up a reputation as an airhead, completely misinterpreting and misunderstanding everything that goes on around you. Most people think that if they shone a flashlight in your ear, light would come out the other one. Your father is proud of you for this. You despise it. You want nothing more than to be yourself, to show everyone what you’re really like.

Besides, it’s so hard to meet guys when you’re playing the space cadet. Oh, sure, lots of guys come up to you and ask you out. But they only want to go up to Lover’s

¹ Beth’.wik, *n.* Thwarkian God of the Sun and prime deity in the original Thwarkian pantheon. Known for protecting the great warriors of the Thwarkian race. When used in this context, it is the relative equivalent of the English, “Thank God.”

Lane and fool around for a while, which isn't really what you're looking for. You want someone who will care about you, who will let you do what you want to do and stand by you as you do it, someone you can be yourself around. But no one wants to get involved with an airhead. I mean, nothing would bore you more than having to sit around listening to someone who couldn't use a sentence with polysyllabic words. Why should human guys be any different? And even worse, what would happen if you showed yourself as so intelligent to someone who expected you to be so dumb? All of the guys you think could handle you as you are, are turned off by how you pretend to be. Except one.

Mark Sturvin. He's always been kind of quiet and shy, but you've noticed that the closer you stand to him, the quieter and shyer he gets. Finally, last week, he finally broke the ice and asked you if you'd like to go with him to the sock hop. You immediately said yes. After all, he's kind of cute and kind of smart. And you think he could handle it if you showed how smart you were. You think. Actually, maybe you just hope that. You're not sure. Maybe he'd be scared off by that and would never talk to you again, and everyone would give you weird looks because of things he said about you. Kriverbs², it's hard being here on Earth.

Although, you have to admit that if you had never come to Earth, you'd never have heard of rock and roll. Back on Thwark, the Supreme Leader has declared all music other than those of the great Thwarkian classical composers to be heretical and unclean, so you grew up listening to the "greats" like Spengler³ and Ferdwitz⁴, whose music was droning, long, and without any sort of backbeat.

You heard rock and roll for the first time in Pop's Malt Shop. You were sitting there after class one afternoon, trying to do your homework for English class (okay, okay, so the incredible intelligence doesn't really mean much when faced with literature, we've all got our handicaps), when someone dropped a dime into the jukebox and Bill Haley and The Comets started playing. It was like a revelation to you. You could feel the music moving through you, the drums pounding out the beat in your heart, your body swaying in time to the rhythm. And then people got up and started to dance. And you joined them, and you were free, beautifully and wonderfully free, letting yourself be taken in by the music, letting yourself go and simply dance in whatever way you wanted to the beat that shook your body and your soul, joined by a dozen other kids, all united by the simple power of rock and roll. It was breathtaking.

Needless to say, your father does not approve of any of this. Being a trained musician in the Militarism school⁵, he despises rock and roll with a passion. You

² Kri.verbs', *n.* Feces.

³ Carpathian Spengler (16236-16353), founder of the Atonal school of classical Thwarkian music. He was the first musician to use a five-tone system based upon the fourth sharps within the minor chord layout, which many musicians have cited as the main influence for the following twelve centuries.

⁴ Verdarian Ferdwitz (18234-18411), composer for the Thwarkian Alliance Military from 18311-18411, and considered the most typical of the Militarism school of composers.

⁵ Militarism school: Type of music standardized by Verdarian Ferdwitz, usually set to a strong, unrelenting martial beat which emphasizes the stiffness and strength of the music.

remember how furious he was when he found an Elvis record hidden under your bed. He grounded you for two weeks, and insisted that you listen to Ferdwitez albums every day in your room. And if he even thought that you were going to go out with some Earthling boy, he'd be all over you regarding the innate superiority of the Thwarkian Race and how no mere Earthling could ever offer you what a true Thwarkian male could.

But you think they can. In fact, you think they can offer you more than any Thwarkian boy could. Earthlings are so free. So free with ideas, free with their music, free with themselves. Thwark is a wonderful place, but it's so full of rules and strict punishments for those who do not follow. Here, you can do what you want when you want to. There are rules, but there's a wonderful, melodic anarchy surrounding every part of life here.

You really hope Dad doesn't have to destroy Earth. If he did, there would be no Chuck Berry, no Buddy Holly, no Elvis, no rock and roll. You'd better make sure Dad isn't about to do something that you're going to regret for the rest of your life.

Stock quote: "Oh. Like, wow."

Mannerisms: Margaret does a really good job of pretending to be an utter bimbo. Inside, she's full of ideas and theory and knows more than probably most of the scientist put together. Admittedly, she knows very little about Earth history or culture, and some of her bimboity probably comes from that as well.

People You Know:

J.D. Koln: He runs a gang called The Killers who pull pranks all over town. He's obviously responding to a deprived and abusive childhood, letting out his anger in the form of jokes on people he blames for his own inadequacies. And he's really cute in that leather jacket.

Robert Sherman: A member of The Killers. Given his middle-class background, he's obviously in a rebellious stage of his life and acting out the standard teenage immortality fixation.

Nick Kerensky: One of the biggest kids in school, and a member of The Killers. He's acting out the stereotype of the dumb jock, which obviously hides a deep personal pain that he wishes to keep secret. He is probably more intelligent than he acts, but childhood abuse regarding his size probably caused him to adopt the standard "big oaf" personality in order to shield himself from criticism.

James Daniels: Captain of the football team, class president, and valedictorian. He's started up his own gang, The Good Guys, to counteract the shenanigans of The Killers. A classic over-achiever who comes from an unstable home life, thus causing him to seek approval from others through his own achievements, not realizing that the rebellious phase of teenage life probably is causing his peers to resent him.

Timmy Carroll: School science "geek." He's actually very intelligent, and rational to the point of ignoring most of the "style" of today's teenagers, thus earning him enmity amongst those who resent his intelligence, and causing them to attack him based upon his

lack of adoption of the latest clothing types. You tend to stay away from him, because if he found out about how intelligent you are, you would devalue the only thing of importance he feels he has- his own intelligence.

Tony Turrelli: Class clown. He's of above average intelligence (for humans), but focuses his intelligence upon making plays on words and jokes rather than focusing it upon a scientific subject. His use of jokes indicates someone lacking in self-esteem who feels it necessary to laugh at the world in order to keep from thinking about how scary it is.

Mark Sturvin: The richest kid in class. He asked you out to tonight's dance. You really hope you've found someone who can accept you for who you really are.

Mary Jenkins: J.D.'s girlfriend. You think he abuses her somewhat, and it is obvious from her mannerisms that she comes from an abusive and solitary childhood, and expects nothing but abuse from those around her. She isn't a bad person, but you don't think it is your job to break the circle of violence for her; without her willing to be out of that circle, all you would do would be to move her on to a new abusive relationship.

Theresa Kerensky: Nick's younger sister. She normally acts like quite the tomboy, but she has evinced a great interest recently in going up with boys to Lover's Lane. It confuses you; it's not the way she normally acts.

Catherine Thomas: She keeps to herself mostly, but her solitude is one of choice by someone who feels herself superior to those around her. From talking to her occasionally, you feel she has some meglomaniacal tendencies, and refuses to associate with most of those her own age unless she can use them to her advantage.

Laura Fetner: Probably the only well-adjusted student in all of Edwood High. She's the class cheerleader, and sometimes she acts like the person you pretend to be. This scares you.

Wendy Mitchell: School reporter. She's obviously rebelling against the anti-female social hierarchy by attempting to succeed in an industry usually given to anti-female biases. Be *very* careful around her; anything you say could end up in the school paper.

Harold Smith: Your father. He's an expert spy for the Thwarkian empire. You wish he just understood you more.

Bess Smith: Your mother. She used to be one of the premier Space Marine commanders until she had to come with you and Dad to infiltrate this planet. She sometimes resents having to give up a job she loved in order to help your father with his career, and sometimes you stayed up at nights listening to them argue. Still, she is devoted to your father and to you, although she'll always take your father's side in arguments.

Adele Sigelski: Principal of Edwood High. She's extremely strict, which reminds you far too much of Thwarkian Schools. Some of the students call her Principal "Siegheil"ski. You have no idea what that means.

Goals:

1. Deal with this entire date thing. Find out about Mark, and try to figure out whether he could deal with it if you told him the real truth about yourself. In addition, try to find out exactly what's involved in going out on a date. You've never been on one before, and you really don't want to scare Mark away simply because you did something that wasn't considered right by Earth standards. Maybe you should talk to one of the other girls and try to get advice.

2. Stay out of trouble. The last thing you need is for Dad to ground you, especially if it keeps you from going to the dance. Make sure Dad doesn't know about your date with Mark, and try to pretend to be the good Thwarkian girl who hates rock and roll.

3. Keep tabs on Dad. If he does decide to destroy the planet, you'll have to find some way to stop him. You don't know what or how, but you'll have to do something to keep rock and roll alive. Not to mention cute guys like Mark.