

THE NEW FLOWER

Once there was visitor to earth from another planet. As his spacecraft landed, he stepped out onto the earth, carrying a worn leather bag. His eyes searched the landscape until they focused on a certain spot at the far end of the horizon. Having found the spot he was seeking, he set off immediately and reached it in a few brisk strides. Arriving at his destination, he took from the pack on his back a small trowel, which he used to dig a round hole. Into this small, round hole he dropped a tiny seed. Then, with a quick motion, he covered the seed with the earth, tamped it down, and with a slight smile, made off for his spacecraft. In an instant he was whisked off into outer space.

As the days passed, the rain and sun caused the tiny seed to sprout and grow, and soon a small but beautiful plant appeared, pushing its way out of the crusty earth. After a few more days, the plant grew strong and tall with beautiful green leaves that branched out in perfect symmetry. After several weeks, a bud appeared, and then several more, and then they began to blossom, a gorgeous burst of golden color. This plant was truly a sight to attract the eye of anyone passing by.

Soon the plant discovered it was not alone. Surrounding it were other types and species of plants and foliage, but not any as attractive as this one. When compared to the new plant's beauty, the other plants were stark and ugly in appearance. So, there arose a controversy concerning the new plant, most of it centered on what the real purpose of the new plant could actually be, and what it hoped to accomplish by its beauty and the fragrance of its blossoms. One by one, the other plants refused to accept the new plant. Some suspected it had ulterior motives, some accused it of immoral behavior, but most were just made uncomfortable by its appearance. Although the new plant tried its best to reach out to the other plants, to make friends and to adapt to its new environment, the others would have nothing to do with it. One or two actually pulled off some of its leaves and tried to knock the bloom off the stem. Others just said "I don't need this plant" and turned their backs.

It wasn't long before a strange thing began to happen. The new plant started to wilt, and then to wither--its leaves lost their deep green color and looked pale and washed out. The blooms also faded, and one by one the petals fell off. After a week, the stalk collapsed, and the plant was for all practical purposes dead. "There, you see!!" said one of the older plants, "I knew its beauty was just a fake, it wasn't real, I knew it wouldn't last." The others nodded their stalks in apparent agreement.

Time passed and the new plant was almost forgotten. But a curious metamorphosis began to transpire. Out of the remains of the old plant--in fact, from the very roots-- a new and tiny plant began to emerge. This new plant was not like the other one at all. It was strange, its color a very odd shade of gray, the stalk twisted and no blossom dared appear. What was stranger still was the reaction of the other plants. For the most part, they accepted the newest plant without question. Its grotesque appearance did not cause even one raised eyebrow, but seemed to be rather expected in this small plot of ground. A stranger passing by noticed this odd section of ground, and observed how unusual it was to see such an ugly collection of plants--
all exactly alike

by Milton A. Lites