

MAUDE MOLD

#22

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LOCAL GHOSTS

tags: 1965, mars2, spiro_mold, sue

1 October.

The transition was winding down. Families were expected to have vacated the mancamp by close of business on 31 December, tits and all. Get your shit and hit the door. Auld acquaintances were about to be forgot.

Transit betwixt MARS2 and MARS3 was reliable and cheap. Spiro had taken to making the trip on his days off from school. The new facility was still taking its first tentative steps on shaky newborn legs, so Spiro was able to ship himself back and forth several times a week and no one much missed him in class. It was a long trip, but at least the serpents had cable.

Spiro reclined in his cushioned seat, his bald head acquiescing to the mandatory imprint of a pink doily draped over top, representing the serpent's last line of defense against human colonization. It hadn't saved the rest of the seat. He decided to inspect the CATV once again for injection attacks before finally releasing himself entirely from liability. He flipped on the switch. For all his efforts he was unable to guarantee what might come out of the screen.

Presently there appeared an external view of the serpent (a visible descendant of last year's school buses, but nobody who hadn't been there would have recognized the fact), frame rate in sync with moments of unsupported transport when it broke contact with the ground and appeared to float, glowing genially above the cooling Martian sand. Such a display inspired the feeling of being stared at, and Spiro quickly switched it off.

"Welcome, Spiro," said Sue.

Spiro recognized her voice.