

ZOG

Zog had some seriously bad habits. Marie could forgive the way he permanently had the middle digit of his left claw stuck up his nose, pulling forth seemingly endless quantities of blue goo – he was an Arcturan nose-feeder after all. What was less easy to overlook was his severe lack of social graces.

The problem had all started to come to light when the Nebulans had re-organised the library. The Nebulans were famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) for their skills in organising things. Six months previously, they had landed on Arc III, the Arcturan home-world, and had immediately set about absorbing everything they could find about the Arcturan culture, their artifacts, and the complex structure of the Arcturan ecology. They had delighted in unravelling the tortuous networks the Arcturans had drawn up of the multifarious connectivity of the many different forms of life found on Arcturus, but had been dismayed at the Arcturans' apparent lack of any notion of hierarchy.

After three months of diligent work, the Nebulans had presented the Arcturans (in the form of Zog), with a neatly-layered and many-branched tree showing the development of Arcturan life. Zog's reaction had not been what they expected. He had farted loudly, then sneezed enormously, spraying blue-green goo over both them and the surroundings. Zog had excused himself, and was clearly embarrassed. He methodically set to licking up the goo with his prehensile nose, flapping his huge blue elephant ears vigorously as he did so. He didn't seem to worry whether the goo was on the furniture or themselves – which was embarrassing for them, tactile stimulation not being one of their long suits.

Zog paused lengthily, studying their diagrams with considerable intensity, then farted even more loudly and pungently than before. 'So, you put the bacteria at the top, and the Zog at the bottom, and everything else someplace in-between. What does this mean?'

The Nebulans tried to explain that the first form of life on Arc III had been the bacteria, then more complicated cellular life and so on, but Zog was having none of it. Each piece of explication was met with an impossibly more intense fart until the Nebulans were helplessly flapping around in a dense warm fug of rather too intimate Zogoid pong.

'Life is connected,' said Zog, having dutifully collected up the last of the blue-green slime that was his only food. The slime was rich in bacteria cultivated through the phototropic metabolic processes innate to Zog and every other creature on the planet. He carefully inserted his third digit up his nose, observed the nourishing blue goo with respect, and gave a slight bow before inserting it into his mouth.

'You're just prejudiced,' he said.