

THE ALIEN'S  
SURVIVAL  
MANUAL

AN OUTSIDER'S GUIDE TO  
SCIENCE FICTION

SERENA GRAY

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to any creature — of any time and any species — who has ever found him or herself on the Earth, gazing up at the sky at three in the morning, and wondering how to get off.

*'Anywhere you wander,  
Anywhere you berth,  
Anywhere you find yourself,  
There's no place like Earth.'*

Old tellurian song

*'Bet you don't have anything like this where you  
come from'*

Old tellurian saying

*'Uh oh'*

Normal reaction of the first-time visitor

## Galet Galeta, from the Third Moon of Borzone

I'd been to the cinema and then to dinner with some human friends. It was quite late after the meal, and so I offered Kelly Acker, with whom I had spent most of the evening discussing Schroedinger, a ride home. Kelly accepted. When we got to her block of flats, I suggested that I accompany her to her door. 'It's all right,' said Kelly, 'I'll be fine on my own. I do have a Black Belt in karate, you know.'

'No, no,' I protested, not quite sure what her choice in clothing had to do with it. 'I'll see you safely in.'

We got to the front door of Kelly's building. Kelly opened her bag. I smiled at her. She smiled at me. She reached in for the keys.

After a few seconds she said to me, 'Galet, you wouldn't mind just holding a couple of things for me, would you? I can't seem to find my keys.'

'Of course not,' I said. I held out my hand. Into my hand she placed two small packets of tissues, half a packet of biscuits, a comb, a brush, a torch and three address books.

'That's better,' smiled Kelly. 'I think I feel them.'

But she didn't feel her keys. She felt two small jars of marmalade, a pair of scissors, a miniature spanner, and a spring coil. 'Hold these,' ordered Kelly.

'Are you sure they're not in your pocket?' I asked her.

'Of course not,' said Kelly. 'I *always* put them in my bag. In the change compartment, usually.'

'And they're not in the change compartment?' I persisted.

Kelly shook her head. 'I've got a needle and thread and some beads in there tonight,' she informed me. 'I guess that's why I couldn't fit the keys in as well.'

I might have asked her to go into a little more detail on the needle, thread and beads, but at that moment she brought a light bulb socket, several packets of artificial sweetener and a fork from her bag.

'Let me look,' I said. 'Perhaps it needs a fresh eye.'

Kelly handed me her bag. 'Suit yourself,' she said shortly.

I put the mound of things I was holding onto the floor and peered into the depths of Kelly's bag. Surprisingly enough, it didn't look as though anything had been removed from it. I took a deep breath and stuck in my hand. I pulled out a small container of orange juice and several batteries.

Kelly pounced on me eagerly. 'You're a genius!' she cried. 'I *knew* I had those batteries somewhere!'

I brought out a plastic cup, a jar of instant coffee, a pair of bikini bottoms, a scarf, two wallets, and a bar of chocolate.

Kelly snatched the bottoms away from me.

'My God,' she laughed, 'I've been looking for those since last June!'

'Ouch!' I screamed as something bit my finger.

'What on Earth is this?'

Kelly laughed. 'It's a mousetrap, of course. What did you think it was?'

I looked down. 'Is there a mouse in there, too?'

Kelly laughed again. 'Of course not,' she said. 'What a silly idea.'

I removed a small stuffed squirrel, a pair of sweat socks, two pairs of tights, a make-up bag, another make-up bag, a shower cap and a paperback copy of *War and Peace*.

Kelly leaned against the wall. 'You must be able to see them now,' she said.

I gave the bag a shake and looked in. 'You're right!' I cried, the joy of relief causing me to shout. 'I see them! I see them!' I pulled out a set of at least fifteen keys.

'That's not them,' said Kelly.

I froze in mid triumphant shake. 'You what?'

'Those aren't them,' she repeated.

'Whose are they, then?'

Kelly shrugged. 'Damned if I know,' she smiled. 'I've had them for years.'

'That does it,' I said. 'I'm dumping everything onto the floor.' I dumped. Gloves, a journal, a doorknob, several letters and post cards, photographs, news clippings, aspirin, plasters, cassettes, used tissues, Happy Birthday napkins, several crisp wrappers, a hat and a broken picture frame all tumbled to the ground. No keys.

'Now that's funny,' said Kelly. 'I was sure they were in there.'

'No you weren't,' I said, a little snappily. 'You were sure they weren't in the change compartment.'

This look came over Kelly's face. She reached

into the change compartment. 'Well, what do you know?' she smiled, holding up the keys. 'They were in there all the time.'