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**Napa author introduces alien clones from outer space in a hilarious new children's book series**

Thursday, September 12, 2002

By JANE DAYE  
Register Correspondent

"Mucka mucka pinky power!"

"Alien Clones from Outer Space" is landing this week at your local bookstore.

This refreshing and humorous children's book series warrants being greeted with welcoming hearts. Written by Napa resident, Hillary Homzie, 36, "Two Heads Are Better Than One" is the first book in the series, geared toward 6- to 10-year-olds.

"It is an introduction and features the primary characters, Barton and Nancy Jamison -- two little kids who discover that they have alien clones, right there in Pine Bluff. Beta and Gamma, from the planet Ungapotch, in the Zorillion Galaxy," said Homzie.

"The kids use the clones to get out of chores or responsibilities -- or to do things better, like play baseball. It works for both the kids and the clones, since the clones are on a mission to learn about Earth life. So, it is perfect. The clones are eager to take out the garbage, make their beds, do their homework, clean their rooms, and even to clean the bathtub!

"However, the clones innocently make chaos out of everything. Everyone thinks the kids did all of these things, but it was actually the clones." Homzie continued.

In addition to the comedy of errors that ensues between the kids and their clones, the kids have a nemesis lurking in the background. Otto, a 9-year-old is the next-door neighbor who witnesses strange and unusual events, but is never able to prove it.

Otto's efforts to expose the clones are especially thwarted, since these clones have a special ability to "suck out selected memory cells -- a Brain Slurpie," thereby rendering Otto, although continuously suspicious, harmless.

Not to fear, earthlings.

"These are warm and fuzzy aliens. These are Mork from Ork or "Third Rock from the Sun" aliens -- these are not threatening," Homzie explained.

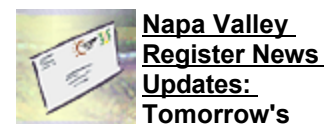
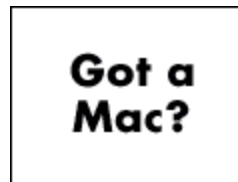
Zaptopkaka and tweedlewarp

Newly minted words are used throughout the series, like "zaptopkaka" (wow) and "tweedlewarp" (oh, shoot). So, just where does Homzie get these intergalactic words?

"I am the kind of mom at soccer practice who pretends I'm an alien or something," she said.

As she describes her characters and her books, Homzie occasionally becomes one of them, changing her voice and her mannerisms. She flips into the character of a little kid talking on walkie talkie, first making the crackling sound of radio static.

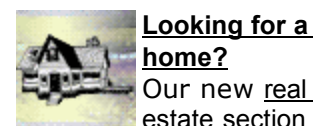
"I never stopped being a little kid. I am in a mindset with silly words. As I write, I want the characters to have alien glue or alien shrinking powder, so I want it to have an alien word to correspond. I just run them through my head until it sounds silly but reasonable--that it could actually be that thing," she said.



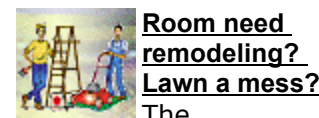
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Homzie added, "I will often get on the phone and call Steven Arvanites, my New York City theatrical partner, and run alien words by him. He will brainstorm with me -- or even my editor, Julia Richardson, may have an idea for a new word."

Wiley in the woozie

Once these new, fantastical words are written, a person with an equally imaginative mind, has to envision what a Ungapotchian pet actually looks like. Matt Phillips, of White, Ga., was contacted by Homzie's publisher, Simon & Schuster to illustrate her series.

"Phillips' drawings were cartoony and he has such great humor in his drawing. He is phenomenal and was able to bring out the humor, in the "Alien Clones" stories," said Richardson.

This series created some new challenges for Phillips. "For instance, I had to draw a Woozie, an alien dog," he said. "For some reason, I am the illustrator that draws goofy monsters and aliens. When I was reading the story, the woozie came out right away. I have a four pound Chihuahua, he was my inspiration. Now I say, there is a little bit of Wiley in the woozie."

Homzie said that she will never forget the night she received the life-changing call from her publishing house. "I was sitting on my bed, watching a bad TV show, when I got a call from an editor at Simon & Schuster. He said, 'I am laughing out loud as I'm reading.' Then he asked me, 'Are you interested in doing a series for us? We are looking for a fresh voice.' This was definitely a very exciting moment." Ironically, the book that Homzie had submitted, "Binnie," has never been published.

Julia Richardson is Homzie's editor at Simon & Schuster and said that she has read each of Homzie's books at least six times. "These books are so fun and cute. They are just delightful to read. They are funny and they make me laugh -- and in this day and age, it is a nice thing to see. I have high hopes for these books."

Homzie's books are being offered for distribution internationally, and if they are a success, Richardson said, "I would like to continue the series. There are plenty of new adventures that the Alien Clones can go through."

Screenplays and plays

Homzie has performed in various theater and comedy productions, and currently writes screenplays, with her partner, Arvanites. "They range from children's comedy to romantic comedies. Steven and I met in a sketch comedy group -- so that's our background. He is a comedic performer as well."

They recently had a successful reading in New York of one of their screenplays with some fairly famous TV actors. "It has been optioned, but nothing much has happened," said Homzie. Arvanites has recently pitched a couple of their screenplays to a production company on the lot of a major Hollywood Studio.

And, if all of this is not exciting enough for Homzie, she has just received a letter notifying her that she is a finalist for The Heideman Award from the Actors Theatre of Louisville, a prestigious, national writing competition. "Amongst playwrights, this is the most famous short play contest," said Homzie.

She had submitted a play, "The Juice of It," for consideration. "It is about four characters, in line to see the play, 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream.'"

The twist? "Subtitles, from the actual play, are running beneath the characters, as they are waiting in line. "What fools these mortals be....," Homzie begins.

When asked what her future holds, Homzie said, "If I could clone myself, I would like to take ceramics, pottery and yoga classes, which reminds me of a bumper sticker I once saw "A woman can do everything but not all at once -- so, for now, I will just keep on writing.

"We've even been talking to a couple of major production companies who are interested in the books becoming an animated television show," she said.

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Who's the protagonist?

Homzie lives in Napa with her husband, Matt Eisenberg, an attorney with Dickinson, Peatman & Fogarty. They have two boys, Jonah, 5, and Ari, 2. Her sons have grown up knowing that their mother is a writer, so there is not much ado at home with the advent of this new series.

Living with a scribe, however, has definitely had its effect. One day, Homzie says, when he was 4, Jonah turned to her and said, "Mom, who is the protagonist in our family?"

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On the Internet: [www.homzie.com](http://www.homzie.com)

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The launch party for Homzie's chapter book series, "Alien Clones From Outer Space" will be held at Copperfield's Books, 1303 First St., Napa, on Friday, Sept. 13 at 7 p.m.

In addition to Copperfield's, Homzie's books are available at Bookends; Learning Fair; Walden Books in Napa; Calistoga Bookstore and Main Street Books in St. Helena.

Book One: "Two Heads are Better Than One" ... out now

Book Two: "Who Let the Dogs Out" ... November, 2002

Book Three: "The Baby-sitters Wore Diapers" ... April, 2003

Book Four: "Food Fight" ... June, 2003



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