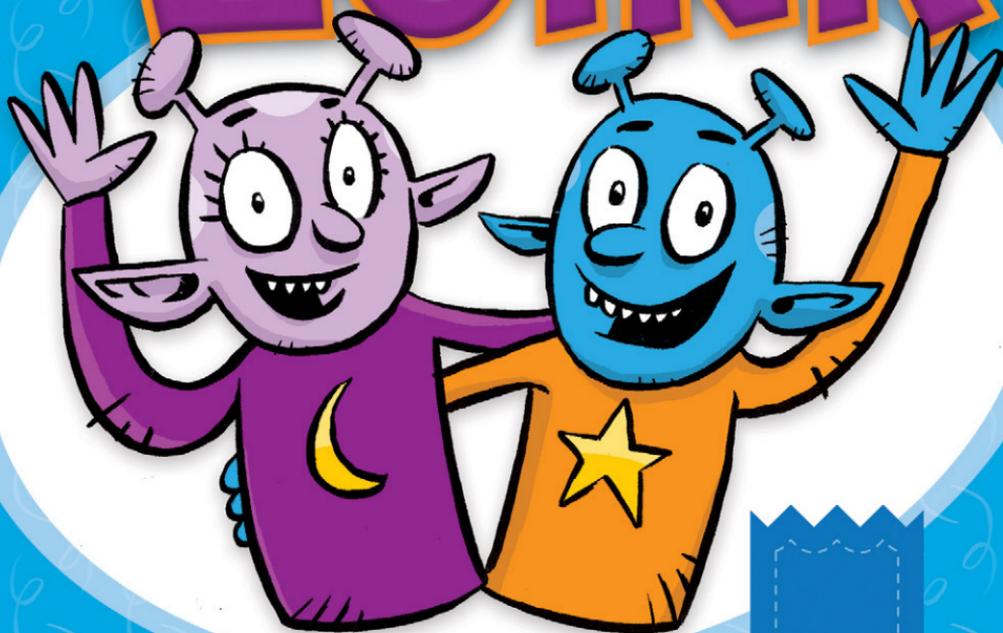


THE COSMIC ADVENTURES OF

BINKY

&

ZOINK



**BINKY & ZOINK
AT THE LIBRARY**

AS TOLD TO ALAN NOLAN



BINKY & ZOINK AT THE LIBRARY

Time Unit: XL52R, morning

Translation computer: functioning

Language: English

Transmission begins.

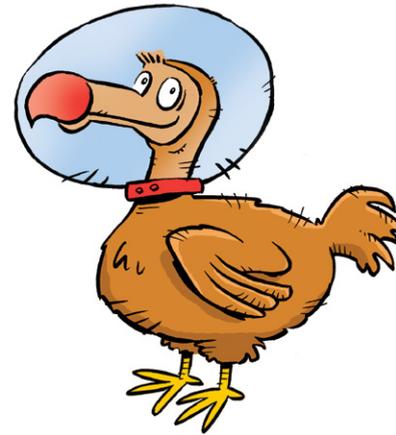
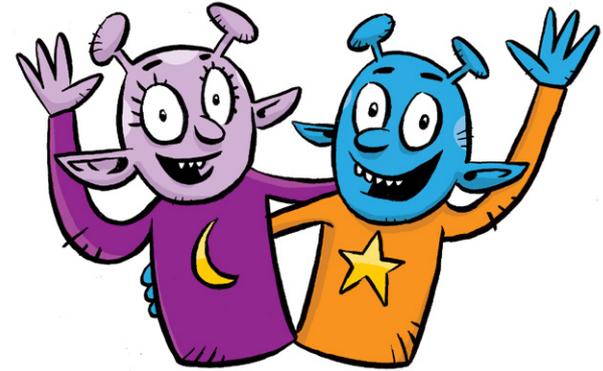
Greetings, Earth-beings!

My name is Zoink and together with my twin sister, Binky, we have travelled from our home planet of Alpha-Ba-Na-Na in the fourth quadrant of the Ava-Ka-Do system to find out more about the planet Earth.

We first spotted Earth on our intergalactic telescopes several time-units ago and have been dying to pop over and say hello! So, a great big **HELLO** from all the beings of Alpha-Ba-Na-Na to all the beings of Earth!

The dodo is a magnificent bird with a large beak and beautiful plumage that lives in great numbers on the vast purple plains of Alpha-Ba-Na-Na.

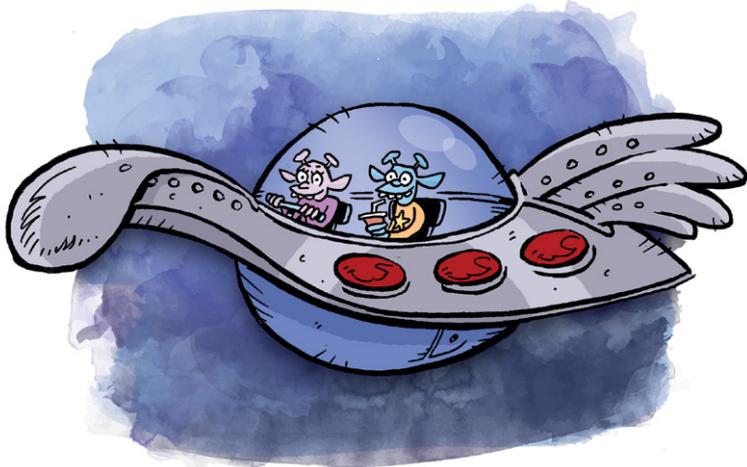
They are my favourite animal (I LOVE dodos so much I named our starship after them!) so I'm hoping to see what your dodos are like here on Earth.



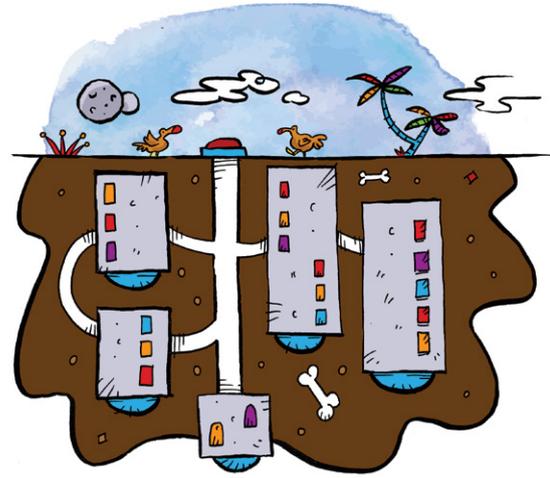
As well as being my twin sister, Binky is the co-pilot of our starship, the Millennium Dodo, and she and I arrived on your lovely planet earlier this morning. The Millennium Dodo plopped out of hyperspace right beside your star system's smallest planet of Pluto, and

we made our way past some of your other fine planets (Jupiter's a *biggy*, isn't it??), and through the asteroid belt. Just as we passed the red-coloured planet you call Mars, we had our first glimpse of the beautiful blue planet of Earth.

Binky is a big fan of blue – she’s been a little jealous of my own blue skin colour since we both were little baby Ba-Na-Nans, running around in our cyber-diapers, knee-high to a mann-go beast. However, I’ve always preferred the colour green. So as we entered the Earth’s atmosphere and skipped over the deep blue oceans, I headed the Millennium Dodo for the greenest island I could find, a country the Dodo’s long-range scanners identified as Ireland.



We landed our starship in the centre of an Earth-being settlement full of strange, tall buildings that seemed to go up and up forever – some of them were almost TWO stories tall! On Alpha-Ba-Na-Na, our buildings are all underground, so it was very curious to see structures that reached high into the sky rather than the subterranean burrow-cities that we are more used to at home.



Binky and I exited the Millennium Dodo into what looked like a market square of some kind. There were loads of Earth-beings bustling around, some tall and some small, but there was something very strange about them. I couldn’t put my tentacle-digit on what was so weird about them, but then Binky realised what it was – they weren’t multicoloured like the folks on Alpha-Ba-Na-Na! On my home planet, the people are orange and red and pink and beige and purple and green and violet and mauve – but here on Earth the beings are mostly just kind of, well, drab colours. How boring for you!

There seemed to be a market of some sort taking place in the square and the Earth beings, or ‘people’ as you call them, were walking about looking at stalls and eating all sorts of weird kinds of food. Some of the smaller ‘people’ were carrying large bags on their backs. The bags were full of blocks of paper glued together at one side.



Binky turned on her Alpha-Ba-Na-Na/Earth translation unit and asked one of the small ‘people’ what the paper in her bag was for.

“School books, of course,” came the reply, “Are you silly? I like your costume, by the way. Are you going to a fancy dress party?”

Although she didn’t know what a fancy dress party was, Binky was surprised to hear that small ‘people’ in Ireland used ‘school books’ and didn’t have lessons beamed directly into their brains like they did back on Alpha-Ba-Na-Na. How weird!

We saw some other small Earth beings, or ‘kids’ as we found out they were called playing a bizarre game with a wooden stick and a leather-bound sphere that they called ‘hurling’. This was probably because they ‘hurled’ the sphere high up in the air and whacked it

as hard as they could with the stick. I felt very sorry for the ball. We also saw some ‘kids’ play a more familiar game that they called ‘hopscotch’ which on Earth involves throwing a small rock across the floor and jumping with their leg-tentacles onto square shapes they have marked out on the ground with another stone.

On Alpha-Ba-Na-Na this game is called ‘laser jump’ and is almost exactly the same, except instead of a rock we use a small hover-powered robot, and instead of the chalk marks we use deadly laser beams. I lost several leg-tentacles to that game when I was a small Alpha-Ba-Na-Nan, but luckily they all grew back.



We noticed that the Earth ‘people’ who were eating at the stalls seemed to be giving the stall owners small pieces of paper and small circular pieces of metal in exchange for the food. I asked one small Earth person with masses of brown fur on his head what the circular metal discs were. “Money, you nitwit,” said the miniscule male Earthling, “You give the man money and he gives you a ninety-nine. Here try some!” With that, the tiny, speckley-faced Earth-dweller shoved a freezing cold white coloured substance into my mouth.

Once I got over the shock I found that this chilly foodstuff was delicious! “Ice cream,” said the young Earthling, “I love it!” And so did I! I think I’m going to like it here on Earth! But what’s with this ‘money’ stuff? We have nothing like that on Alpha-Ba-Na-Na, but it seems that if you want something here on Earth, you need to have ‘money’ to give in exchange for it. How weird!



Just then we saw a group of Earth younglings enter a large building at one side of the square. They were happy and chatty so Binky decided to investigate. We peeped in to door of the building and saw the younglings remove big papery things from the shelves. They piled up the papery ‘books’ on machines, they swiped a small plastic card, the machine said ‘PING!’ and they walked out of the building again, as bold as you like. This couldn’t be right, they took those books out of the building and they didn’t use money! Not the papery kind or the small metal disc kind either! They were STEALING!

Binky and I slithered into the building as fast as our leg-tentacles could slide us! There was an Earthling behind a desk and we reported the theft of the papery books to her. “Oh no,” she said,

“The kids can take those books out of here, as long as they have their cards with them.” Oh! The plastic cards must be another sort of money! “No, no,” said the Earth-being, “This is a public library! The children are borrowing the books – story books, books about different countries, books about space, books about history, books about boy bands, books about anything – they take them home, read them and then, when they are finished, they bring them back to us.” Binky and I were amazed – we have nothing like this at home on Alpha-Ba-Na-Na! “We also have e-books, games, audiobooks, DVDs, everything to keep people entertained – and don’t worry, there’s no money to pay as long as you bring your stuff back on time, and, best of all, there’s no charge to join!”



Needless to say, Binky and I signed up immediately, and ‘borrowed’ a big stack of books. As we brought the books back to the Millennium Dodo to read, we decided that we liked your blue Earth planet, but we LOVED your delicious white ice cream! Hmmm. Maybe one of these books is a recipe book and we can find out how to make ice cream for ourselves...



www.librariesireland.ie



© 2016 Libraries Ireland