

Science fiction



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

[Your full July 13, Field s of the First Gethenian Landing Party on Earth, As an alien investigator, I happened to land in the University of Iowa campus. What I saw there and the customs and rituals I observed occurring among the students were totally different to what I was used to in my own world. After my landing, I happen to look at the most chic building that I seldom see on my planet. “ Do people over here build such grand buildings for students?” is the first thought that comes to my mind. I enter the residence halls and come across a group of students discussing their subject and one of them says, “ Why on earth do we have to study this damn subject at all? It’s so damn boring.” I wonder whether it is a custom among students to speak in slang or is it a part of university curriculum. I also saw some girls and boys sitting together on some benches sharing notes with each other. I ask myself, “ It might be so that students on Earth share their things with each other but why do they do so when they should hide things?” I cannot come up with an answer since on my planet we hide notes from each other. I see many customs in this campus which are quite surprising for me and which I am sure I will keep on thinking about till many days to come. I see some parents coming into the campus too. One of them is carrying a magazine which says, “ Parent Times”. A magazine for parents? What do parents have to do with a college magazine? And specifically written for them? Too surprising, I must say. And the parents are coming in for the family weekend! That was too hilarious! So, the parents are also involved in the university activities. “ I will take this idea to my planet”, is the first thought that comes into my mind. The most obvious custom that I observe among students is that female students are being seated in the residence hall while males are standing. Whenever a female comes, a male if seated stands up to give her

the seat. I do not understand this. Why do these people distinguish between males and females is out of my understanding. Some of them are also gathering around their teachers after the lecture is over. I wonder what they are trying to say to them. When I get closer, I hear words like, “ Sir, what if it happens the other way?” and “ Sir, can we think about other possibilities?” Wow! That impresses me. The students over here are used to thinking beyond the horizons! I like it. Their thinking is not bound to a particular perspective and they like to think about other options of a situation. For me, this is a customs over here and I am really motivated to take this passion to my land. Other customs I see here include going to the cafeteria in breaks. We, the off-worlders, do not have such break times in our land. I also observe some senior students making fools of the newcomers of the year. I like the way the youngsters react. Some are taking it as fun and some are getting embarrassed. This amuses me. In short, I see many customs and values here in this university that I would like to introduce in my land too once I happen to get back there.