

# Little Fuzzy

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Little Fuzzy, by H. Beam Piper  
NYC, Ace Books, January 1976  
174 pages, \$1.25; SBN; 441-48490. reviewed by Fred Patten, Delap&rsquo;s F&SF Review #11, February 1976, pages 20-21.

The terms &ldquo;classic&rdquo; and &ldquo;cult following&rdquo; are often overused by ad copy writers, but in the case of Little Fuzzy they are certainly deserved. The book was an immediate favorite when it appeared in a paperback edition in 1962 and wound up among the Hugo finalists for best novel of that year. Piper committed suicide in 1964, and subsequent litigation over his estate discouraged the reprinting of his works. As a result Little Fuzzy soon became extremely scarce despite its popularity. A s-f specialty bookshop near UCLA has been selling copies of the disintegrating 1962 40¢ paperback for \$10 when they can be found, and has had a long waiting list for them. Ace&rsquo;s new edition is therefore extremely good news.

The novel is a good blend of physical and cerebral action, with a number of likeable characters. The expanding human race has colonized Zarathustra, a world of broad plains and thick forests, about a generation earlier. Exploration is still being conducted at the same time a frontier society is spreading out. The planet is dominated economically by the Chartered Zarathustra Company, a monopoly analogous to the British East India Company. Jack Holloway, an old prospector, is the first to meet what he names &lsquo;fuzzies&rsquo;, friendly creatures rather like giant tailless marmosets. The find is of only academic interest until the Company learns that Holloway treats them as &lsquo;little people&rsquo; rather than as pets, and that an eminent zoologist is preparing a report on their unusually high intelligence level. The CZC charter is for a Class III uninhabited planet only &ndash; if the fuzzies are smart enough to be defined as people, the Company&rsquo;s rights to develop Zarathustra&rsquo;s resources will be voided. The Company sends in its own scientific team to &lsquo;prove&rsquo; that fuzzies are no more than clever animals, and in the resulting clash a fuzzy and one of the Company&rsquo;s men are killed.

Holloway&rsquo;s defense against a murder charge is that he was acting to prevent the murder of an intelligent Zarathustran native. The fuzzies become a cause celebre as all who wish to see the Company&rsquo;s monopoly ended rally to their support, while the Company&rsquo;s legal staff devises courtroom arguments against them, and some executives plot a more final solution to rid themselves of the cuddly danger. And Judge Pendarvis wonders how he will rule when forced to set a legal demarcation between sapience and non-sapience.

There are no real villains in this novel. All the characters are really responding to forces outside their control. Holloway is a scrappy fighter but he doesn&rsquo;t go out of his way to support Causes; he just wants to make sure his little friends don&rsquo;t get hurt. The Company is an ordinarily benevolent saurian bureaucracy, bewilderedly stirred to battle for its existence, liable to crush innocent bystanders as it thrashes about. The fuzzies, who have the approximate intelligence of human eight-year-olds, don&rsquo;t want to threaten anybody and haven&rsquo;t the least understanding of all the commotion.

The stars of the book are the fuzzies, lively and curious two-foot-tall humanoids covered in silky gold or silver fur, who act like perpetually well-behaved young children. There&rsquo;s Little Fuzzy himself, Mama Fuzzy, and the rest of their family, and eventually a whole race of fuzzies discovered in the forests. How will they react to humans? How will humans react to them? Some want to hunt them for their pelts while others want to adopt them as though they were human children. Should they be isolated from humans for their own protection? Should they be allowed the benefits of human civilization despite what culture shock might do to their society?

Piper&rsquo;s story is a clever construction, but it is light adventure rather than serious philosophy. Most of the questions raised are treated simplistically. The characters are vivid but essentially one-dimensional. Probably the most memorable is the principal heavy, Victor Grego, the Company&rsquo;s manager-in-chief, because he is the only one to undergo any development during the novel. Holloway&rsquo;s case is improved more than once by Company bureaucrats making stupid mistakes at just the right times. The key question of the fuzzies&rsquo; legal sapience is resolved by a minor *deus ex machina* rather than by any real answer.

But these quibbles barely affect Little Fuzzy&rsquo;s charm. It is zestful and humorous, with touches of drama, romance,

and pathos, all leading to an obviously happy ending. (So obviously, in fact, that Grego is the first to privately concede it &ndash; but the Company has been his whole life and he can&rsquo;t see it disintegrate without resisting.) The novel&rsquo;s popularity is proof that the fuzzies&rsquo; attraction is as irresistible to readers as it is to Holloway and his friends. This is one book that really does deserve an &ldquo;s-f classic&rdquo; hardcover edition. But since it doesn&rsquo;t have one, libraries had better buy Ace&rsquo;s new paperback in half-dozen lots. Copies will get worn out very quickly, especially in view of Ace&rsquo;s eye-catching and appealing cover.

The Fuzzy Papers, by H. Beam Piper  
 Garden City, NY, Nelson Doubleday/SF Book Club,  
 February 1977, 309 pages, \$3.50; SFBC 1188-2.  
 reviewed by Fred Patten, Delap&rsquo;s F&SF Review #30, March/April 1978, pages 24-25.

Suddenly the fuzzies have come into their own. Piper&rsquo;s two fuzzy novels were very popular when first published as Avon paperback originals in 1962 and 1964. Piper&rsquo;s death and litigation over his estate tied up rights to the books and made new editions impossible for the next decade. Ace Books recently reprinted them again as paperbacks. Now the two novels have been gathered together by the Science Fiction Book Club and given the hardcover edition they so well deserve.

An expanding humanity has colonized the frontier planet Zarathustra, with a free-enterprise society dominated by the monolithic Chartered Zarathustra Company. A prospector exploring new territory discovers the fuzzies, little hominids who have the combined charm and mischievousness of kittens and monkeys. The fuzzies are obviously smarter than most animals, and may be intelligent enough to qualify as sapient beings. Since the Company&rsquo;s charter rights are dependent upon Zarathustra being an &ldquo;uninhabited planet,&rdquo; the Company faces ruin if the fuzzies are legally declared an intelligent species.

Little Fuzzy, the first novel, is a fast-paced melodrama which blends both humor and excitement. It tells of the maneuvers in court and the battles outside the law as the fuzzies&rsquo; human friends and foes fight for or against their rights; while the fuzzies, who have the personalities of six- or eight-year-old children, go around being irresistible. The fuzzies win, of course. The second novel, titled either Fuzzy Sapiens or The Other Human Race, tells what happens as the fuzzies and humans both explore what their new relationship really means. Again, Piper goes for light melodrama. A genetic imbalance may mean the fuzzies&rsquo; extinction soon unless human science can find a cure; and a gang kidnaps fuzzies to train them for crime. (They&rsquo;re small enough to easily slip through ventilator shafts into bank vaults.) This latter leads to a dramatic shootout when the good guys finally confront these &lsquo;fagins.&rsquo; (For a lengthier analysis and critique, see the separate reviews of Little Fuzzy and Fuzzy Sapiens in DF&SFR, February and December 1976.)

Basically, the two novels are shallow but deliberately structured to be enjoyable reading for all ages and most tastes. Most of the characters are sympathetic and all are well motivated. One of the nicer touches is that Victor Grego, the lead villain in Little Fuzzy, is believably converted into a friend of the fuzzies in the second book and insists on helping out his nonplused former adversaries. There&rsquo;s courtroom drama, the lure of frontier ruggedness, a detective puzzler, some spy action, a romantic subplot between two of the supporting characters, philosophical intellectualism (what constitutes &lsquo;intelligence&rsquo;?), and all those adorable fuzzies. The novels both read like stories the author really enjoyed writing, and he communicates his enthusiasm to the reader.

Recommended for junior high libraries on up. Order several copies before it goes out of print; you&rsquo;ll have a continuing demand for this one.

A few words on the confusion about the title of the second novel. Piper was active in the s-f fan community during his lifetime, and let it be known that the sequel to his popular Little Fuzzy was to be called Fuzzy Sapiens. The original publisher arbitrarily retitled it The Other Human Race and Piper let his fans know his displeasure. Today we have two different groups of purists, one insisting that the novel&rsquo;s &lsquo;true&rsquo; title is the author&rsquo;s own, and the other insisting that it&rsquo;s what the book was originally published as. Ace&rsquo;s editors have brought it out as Fuzzy Sapiens and the Science Fiction Book Club has retained The Other Human Race. But they are the same story. To add to the confusion, it&rsquo;s known that Piper had completed a third fuzzy novel only weeks before his death, to be called Fuzzies and Other People, but the manuscript is apparently lost. And that&rsquo;s the news on the fuzzy front. If the third novel is found it&rsquo;ll probably be good news for Michael Whelan, who has painted the covers for all three

of the new reprints. A good part of their commercial success is undoubtedly due to their appealing cover scenes.

The missing Fuzzies and Other People was found in 1984. I did not write the review of Fuzzy Sapiens in the December 1976 DF&SFR. My article "The Fuzzy Story" about all the Fuzzy novels, by Piper and others, is in Anthro #14, November &ndash; December 2007.