

## WHAT I DID TO BLUNT THE ALIEN INVASION

BY BARRY N. MALZBERG

1. I talked to them.

"Be reasonable," I said. "Consider the conditions here. Consider the nature of our circumstances. We are struggling toward a kind of equivocal democracy, equivocal poise, equivocal justice: Marx's alienation effect is only an intermediary stage on the road to Nirvana." And so on and so forth. A modicum of learning, a flutter of pedantry, even some scatology now and then to show the great comic vision which, ultimately, underlies the human condition. They nodded solemnly but did not make their position clear.

2. Carried the word to the President, to Congress, to the press as best I could. Not through letters to the editor, not only through the vox populi sections of the newspaper and by phone calls to the district office of our congressman, but through the great common network of our evolving democracy, the talk shows. "Alien invasion," I said. "Creatures from the far Centauris, from the proximate Centauris coming in disguise to infiltrate our customs, our cities, the interstices of our lives, disguised as fellow citizens, dogs, horses, houseplants. Against their cunning we must be unavailing, nonetheless I think you are entitled to know. The full story." Also small notices in the classified sections of the local daily, not much but all I can afford. **ALL THOSE WHO ARE OF THE ALIEN INVASION PLEASE CALL (my number) OR WRITE POST OFFICE BOX (my post office box).** I did what I could, certainly, to bring alertness to the populace. My modest funds, my lack of true credibility, all of these were very much against me; but nonetheless, within limits, I tried.

3. Discussed the issue with Susan. I made no attempt to hide my distress or my growing awareness that perhaps between the loathsome, threatening presence of the alienness and all of those circumstances which are our democratic way of life, I stood alone. "I don't know what you're trying to tell me, George," she said. "If the aliens are coming, why are you the only one who knows this? The rest of us haven't heard a word."

"I don't know," I said. "How can I possibly know?" There is, after all, only so much of an accounting one may give, and yet the woman is endlessly anding. "Perhaps the rest of the population is narcotized or drugged," I said. "Perhaps it is only for me to carry the tale." And so on and so forth. Even within the context of a difficult living situation, a situation built, I think, upon my need to reach out to Susan, to humor her, to treat her as if she were a sensible, rational woman and not the raving, neurotic pain that I know her to be... even within that context, I tried to be ultimately reasonable. "You can see why I'm somewhat preoccupied," I said. "You can understand now why you may find me somehow abstracted on various occasions. I'm trying to work out a plan to blunt the alien invasion. This takes all of my mental powers."

She laughed and laughed and it was at this point in our dialogues, usually although not exclusively, that she would begin to hurl objects at me. I do not

wish to discuss this any further. Of the true and mordant nature of our relationship, of the dark and tumbling necessity of our connection, I will inform in another context. At this time we are dealing with the public rather than the private (and hence irrelevant) consequences of our activity.

4. Remonstrated with myself. Had genuine agonies of conscience, *cris de coeur* in the deep insertion of the night. "Perhaps it is a delusion," I was driven so far by the insensible Susan as to admit. "Perhaps there are no aliens, let alone an imminent invasion; I have concocted all of this out of heavy drugs, phantasms, and the need to establish some aura of personal significance. But no, no, this cannot, possibly be; the corporeal reality of the aliens has been proven over and again, and I have no reason whatsoever to fantasize." I am of course compressing this internal monologue significantly while at the same time preserving its essence. It is of the essence which I am speaking now. "No, I have examined the issue wholly and profoundly and I know that it is only I who can sound the warning," I concluded. Would conclude these remonstrances and heaving internal monologues composed of equal parts self-revulsion and determination. "It is not internal disintegration but objective necessity. That necessity can be proven by the very conditions in which we find ourselves. The times bespeak invasion." Well, don't they? How much doubt can there be about the nature of dislocation?

5. Rendered pictures of the aliens for talk show hosts or congresspersons who might want physical evidence. Using Crayola (TM) and perspective drawing, rendered them as they had appeared in my hallway on that fateful afternoon in June of 199- when all of this began. Eight-foot aliens with thin lips and square shoulders, the aspect of soccer goalies or perhaps a new breed of astronauts, all of them with intense, winking blue eyes and highly concupiscent genitalia of the requisite kinds. Whiskers and cilia, representative balloons to display their dialogue, which came in only slightly fractured English with what seemed to be a cockney accent. "Are you serious?" Susan said, seeing a cache of these drawings one night, looking as she so often looked in places which were none of her business. "What are these things, what has happened to you?" Pointed at the representations of genitalia and with crooked forefinger made an inexplicable but wholly repellent gesture. "This is too much for me," she said. "It's one thing to have a living arrangement, strictly business and all that and another, quite another to realize that you are living with a homeboy lunatic." And further statements of a kind which cannot be paraphrased and need not be included in this otherwise true bill. The pictures, faithful reproductions of the aliens as they appeared to me on that doomed late Saturday, the cones and slants of dim summer light infiltrating the walls of this tenement, have been carefully preserved and are available at any time for inspection and further consideration.

6. Tried in the absence of any fair response from congresspersons, call-in hosts, covivant, or the corrupt, self-serving press to take the issue directly to the streets. "They are already among us," I said, "eight-foot caterpillars with purple genitalia masquerading as people and they have so clouded our minds with dangerous drugs and global corruption that we do not notice, we think it is merely part of urban decay. When several hundred thousand of them, a critical

number, have infiltrated the populace, they will have reached a kind of Heisenbergian mass and through use of the uncertainty effect will topple entropy itself. Oh, we must be alert, we must be alert, we must be aware!" I pointed out, gesturing somewhat floridly (but in a controlled and geometric fashion) in the park on that and other difficult evenings and I would like to say that I drew a crowd and some enlightened response but due to the very dreadful and imminent conditions created in part by the aliens themselves, I am afraid that I was unable to elicit the kind of response which was deserved under the circumstances. Tried then in the presence of few and the absence of many to make the situation entirely clear but, met only by welling indifference and at last the tanks and brutalities of the guardians, was able to shout no more.

7. Tried to consider all parts of the issue, all phases, and alternatives. "Perhaps I am fantasizing," I told them when they had called me in for further investigation, "but that doesn't mean that it isn't true, that they aren't here, it just means that I have no hard evidence, that I cannot produce them. Not that I am fantasizing, you understand, although I will make that stipulation for the purposes of argumentation. I have a serious mission, this is serious business, we are talking about the alienation effect," but their faces were bleak and implacable; oh, I know something of bleakness and implacability, it must truly be conceded, although it is not these qualities alone which will suffice when they come tunneling through our streets, using their massive weaponry, dismembering our civilization.

8. Seized Susan in a sexual embrace and tried to convert her to understanding through sheer will, some Reichian orgone box of the spirit, performing upon her otherwise unprintable and desperate acts which need no explication within this difficult compass. "You've got to listen," I said as she struggled. "You've got to hear me out, you have to understand that there are aliens among us, they may even as I speak have seized me just as I seize you," and the desperate cries of her resistance sped me only further on my way as I joined with her in an absolute cold infusion of knowledge, a spiraling knowledge of spiraling aliens as pointlessly she resisted the knowledge which would free her.

9. Begged the aliens, as they clutched me, as they took me away, to heed my pleas for the sake of our destiny, "Behold truly, I will not betray my race before cockcrow," I said, "not one time, not twice, not three times," and invoked what frail Scripture I knew to try to change their course, our destiny. "Comfort me with apples," I said, "and leave us time and season," but beggars, like betrayers before cockcrow, cannot oppose with reason that which is implacable and doom ridden, although I tried and tried.

10. Offered my services as administrator. "All right," I said to them, in the consultation room, being allowed as was their policy (they said) one interview in which to make my position known. "You need an intermediary, someone you can trust, someone who can speak to both sides and surely I have done that throughout. Consider Petain," I said, "consider Quisling, consider the occupied territories. Consider how truly dapper and assimilated I will look in my eight-foot disguise," and so on and so forth; there are, after all, as many species of failure, as many varieties of submission as there are of success and

it fell upon me-it has always fallen upon me, consider the condominium split with Susan-to make the best of them, "who better than me, who better deal I can. "After all," I pointed out to them the prophet of Tompkins Square and the Marxian diocese would know how to manage the true destruction, the latter exculpation of Earth? Who, O friends and brothers? Who, then?"