

## Why Martians are Attracted to Big-Breasted Women

by Mike Resnick

H. Rider Haggard knew. He tried to warn us.

So did Edmund Hamilton and Henry Kuttner and Jack Williamson.

You think not?

Then try this on for size: "Her hair was golden and flowing, her cheeks prominent, her eyes a brilliant blue, her firm alabaster breasts high and proud."

That was Kuttner. And now here's Kuttner as Lewis Padgett, one of his many pseudonyms: "Her firm alabaster bosom quivered in fright."

Knowing what we know about them now, it's hard to see how a Martian could resist. (And not a lot of them did. Resist, I mean.)

Then there was the old Lensman himself, E. E. "Doc" Smith. He wasn't much for describing his women once he got beyond their hair color and weaponry, but he managed this one: "She placed her hand to her full, ripe alabaster breasts."

You know how many copies of that wound up on the Red Planet? (Just in case you ever wondered why the pulps that carried Doc's old stories are so rare and so expensive, now you've got your answer.)

Take a look at the magazines back when Ed Hamilton and Jack Williamson were destroying and saving the galaxy every other week. Be honest now: did you ever see a description of ivory skin, or golden skin, or supple Nubian skin?

Come on, admit it. You never did. Not even once.

Because they were in on it, and they were trying to let us in on it too. That's why it was never gold or red or brown, but always alabaster.

(Edgar Rice Burroughs never caught on. That's why his Martian women are all red or green.)

Anyway, after a while a few science fiction writers went off to Hollywood: Bob Bloch, Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, even Ted Sturgeon for awhile. And they must have passed the word. That's why neither Audrey nor Katherine Hepburn were ever cast in a science fiction film. It wouldn't have been realistic. The Martians would have known in a New York minute.

I don't know when it started. It had to be after Einstein came up with his theory in 1905, we know that much. They listened in on our radio transmissions, but they couldn't distinguish the subtleties of accent and pronunciation. They messed around with "new clear physics" for years before they decided there was nothing clear about it at all. Part of the problem was a lack of fission. (Reason it out, and remember their weakness: you can't go fishin' when all the canals have dried up.)

So they created a whole new science, and began building a powerful war machine. They didn't have any plutonium, and there wasn't even any wood or coal to burn, but faced with the necessity of finding a new energy source, they made an amazing breakthrough. To this day our scientists don't know how they managed it, or what the governing principle is, but they were soon able to power a spaceship capable of delivering a major bomb to any of Earth's cities by releasing the energy within just three pounds of -- you guessed it -- alabaster.

All the governments of Earth (and this was long before there was a United Nations, or even its earlier incarnation, the League of Nations; in fact, those concepts probably came from this unified action) agreed to clamp a cone of silence on all this, fearing a worldwide panic if news of a potential alien invasion got out.

And there might well have been a successful invasion if it hadn't been for the science fiction writers. That mentally, morally and emotionally superior group of humans had no trouble extrapolating the existence of the Martians, and they soon realized that while the Martians were centuries away from unlocking the secrets of the atom, they had already unlocked the secret of alabaster.

A few of the early ones tried to publish essays or make speeches, warning of the danger. They were never seen or heard from again. (Just in case you ever wondered what happened to Sybly White and Keith Winton, who vanished from the pages of the magazines shortly after their much-heralded debuts.)

The remaining science fiction writers were more careful not to alert the government or the Martians. They didn't address the issue directly. They made no speeches. They wrote no essays. They caused no panics.

Instead, they started putting these subtle hints into their stories, convinced that the readers of science fiction -- the second most superior minds on the planet, after only the writers themselves -- would quickly catch on to what they were doing.

In the early years, every single one of those alabaster-breasted women was a Martian. Never an Arcturian or a Neptunian. Check it out; you'll see how clever they were.

There was only one problem: Martians are tremendously self-centered and egomaniacal. When they weren't working with their dwindling supply of alabaster or making little Martians, they spent all their time looking at themselves in mirrors and reading about themselves in science fiction stories that turncoat humans smuggled out to them.

Once the writers realized that the Martians had access to their stories, they split into two camps. Isaac Asimov and his followers believed in the ultimate goodness and rationality of all beings, and felt that the Martians did not pose a serious threat. (And you'll notice that, in all his fiction, he never once used the word "alabaster".) But Robert A. Heinlein convinced his followers that it was foolish to trust a race that was already constructing interplanetary alabaster-powered dreadnaughts. He felt it was essential to keep preparing the readers without warning the Martians, so in September of 1948 he issued an edict that every science fiction writer from that day until the present has honored: we would continue to prepare our readers, but we would mislead the enemy by never again allowing the words "alabaster" and "Martian" to appear in the same story.

(John Campbell never believed in the Martians, let alone the Martian threat. As a result, he rejected any story containing the code words. That was when Heinlein left him for other markets. And, in fact, the Martians themselves stopped reading Astounding long before it changed its name to Analog, doubtless one of the reasons that it had to raise its cover price so often during the following decade.)

But it was too late. Mars was running short of alabaster to fire the engines of war (and of peace, for that matter; Martian winters can get pretty cold), and suddenly twenty million Martians were absolutely convinced that all human women had enormous reserves of alabaster built into their chests.

(That's when they began collecting copies of Playboy and Rogue and Nugget and all the other girlie magazines. Since they had a limited amount of space in their ships, they began creating a database of the women with the biggest breasts, so that when they finally invaded us and kidnapped our females they would abduct only the most energy-efficient ones.)

Then came the Tragedy of 1966. Some science fiction writer -- I won't honor him by repeating his name -- sold the secret to Hollywood, and shortly thereafter the theaters of America were flooded with prints of Mars Wants Women. (No, I'm not kidding. Check your Maltin or Ebert Movie Guides. 1966. Mars Wants Women.)

To this day I don't know whose side he was on. Was he trying to warn us, or was he trying to show the Martians how easy it is to kidnap Earth women with alabaster breasts?

It was when Variety announced that a sequel was in the works that the science fiction community realized it had no choice. Using the cover of the recently-formed Science Fiction Writers of America, we worked silently but quickly, and by the end of 1966 not a single person associated with the film was left alive. (Don't scoff. You haven't seen any of them on screen since then, have you?)

Fortunately, the film was such a bomb that no Martian ever saw it. That gave us time to keep spreading the word before the eventual invasion. (And we needed the time, because the Science Fiction Writers of America were so busy hosting drunken revelries to hide our true purpose that we hardly ever got around to the real business of devising new means of disseminating the information.)

Because we knew the Martians were avidly reading the magazines, and later the books, we became more subtle than ever. When Robert Silverberg described a woman with "pendulous alabaster globes", he was forcing the Martians to consider whether they wanted women with pendulous breasts, or the old ripe pouting ones of the Kuttner era. It is estimated that the ensuing debate among the Martian scientists delayed the invasion by at least two decades.

Then Barry Malzberg applied his devilish genius to the problem, and in a single story described "alabaster breasts", "alabaster boobs", and "alabaster tits". Now the Martians were thoroughly confused, and it would take them additional years to determine whether or not there was a meaningful difference in the terms.

Maybe the most bizarre description of all was by Judith Tarr, in a story I commissioned for an anthology I was editing. In describing a room, she mentioned that it was illuminated by alabaster globes. (I am told on excellent authority that 57 Martian scientists committed suicide upon reading this totally contradictory use of the term. The Martians have many good qualities, but adjusting to new concepts isn't one of them.)

So that's where things stand. Each new generation of writers finds new ways to alert humans and simultaneously thwart the Martians.

Now if we can just keep the Dolly Parton videos out of their hands...

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