

## Close Encounters of the Turd Kind

*I was once accused of being abducted by aliens.*

This may not be the wisest way to begin a book. Skeptics, myself included, might consider this “starting off on the wrong foot.” But the accusation is true, and it makes for an interesting story.

My well-meaning friend had had a couple of beers before she presented her postulation. “Why else would anyone write a book like the *Humanure Handbook*?” she asked.

She theorized that somehow, I was sucked up into an alien space ship, without my knowledge, where the aliens inserted a chip somewhere in my body, then dropped me back down to Earth with my mission safely encoded inside the chip.

“*Uranus!*” she blurted out, laughing.

“What?”

“*Uranus!* That’s where they’re from!” Then she started laughing like a hopeless inmate at an insane asylum.

I later decided to have some fun with my friend’s theory when I was asked to speak about humanure at a national conference. I titled my talk, “*Close Encounters of the Turd Kind*,” a title that caused some consternation among the conference organizers, some of whom didn’t want the word “turd” in their conference brochure. I prevailed, however, and ended up in front of a crowd one sunny afternoon in Northern California. The place was filled to capacity, standing room only, with a number of people standing in the back behind the seating area.

I started my talk with my friend’s theory about my abduction, and I was intentionally serious about it. The audience clearly wasn’t sure what to make of me. Anyone who talks about UFOs, aliens, or abductions is immediately suspect in the eyes of many people, including a lot of the people at this conference.

“Let’s assume my friend’s theory is correct,” I stated. “Let’s assume an advanced civilization with an intelligence level we can’t begin to

fathom, capable of traveling light years across solar systems or galaxies, sucked me up one night into their space ship and sent me back down to Earth with a chip embedded in my ass. What was the mission I was being programmed to do? What did they want me to communicate to the people of Earth?”

There was a lady in the front row squirming in her seat, frowning, squinting at me with skepticism. I stood on the floor in front of her with a microphone in my hand.

I stretched my free hand out in front of me with my fingers extended and slowly swept it across the crowd. “Any ideas? Anyone? What do you think the aliens want me to say? What is the message they want me to deliver? What information do they want me to convey to you humans?”

No one responded. You could hear a pin drop.

“Well, I know what they wanted me to tell you.” I hesitated a moment for dramatic effect.

“They wanted me to tell you about the *Invisible Beings*. Who here has *seen* the *Invisible Beings*?” At this point my sweeping outstretched hand turned into a pointed finger as I slowly swept it across the crowd. “Anyone? Anyone at all? Who has seen them, the *Invisible Beings*?”

Of course, the question was ridiculous, you can’t see something that’s invisible. Nobody is going to say they saw an invisible anything. That would make them look as nutty as I was looking at that moment. The front row lady’s eyes were now wide open, and her jaw was hanging down to her neck. Flies could have flown in and out of her mouth; it was open that far. It had apparently dawned on her that I was a raving lunatic standing right in front of them. I was one of those people who believed in aliens and invisible people. Shock was written all over her face. The rest of the audience wasn’t far behind.

“*Who here has seen the invisible beings!?*” I asked again, louder, even more seriously, starting to sound impatient, pointing to the crowd with my arm outstretched before me, moving my finger from person to person, making everyone nervous, while people fidgeted in their seats. “The aliens want me to tell you about the invisible beings! Has any-

body here seen them?” Nobody moved. Nobody said a word. The audience froze. I stood motionless and silent in front of them, pointing.

Then a hand slowly rose up, way in the back of the crowd. A young lady was standing there.

“YOU!” I yelled, pointing straight to her. “Where did *you* see the invisible beings!?”

“In a microscope?” she squeaked, barely audible.

“What, I can’t hear you. . . .”

“IN A MICROSCOPE!”

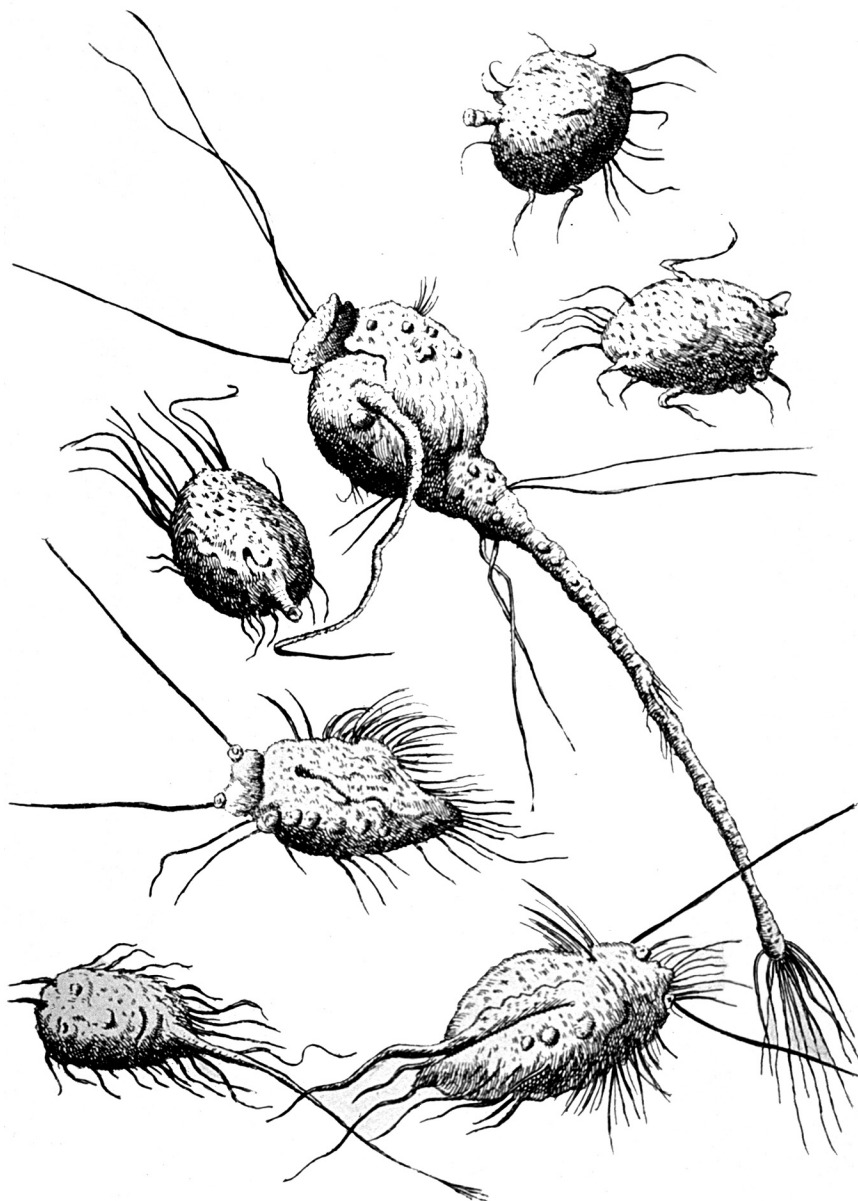
“BINGO!”

My talk then segued directly into a discussion about microscopic organisms, beings so tiny as to be invisible to the human eye without magnification. But not before I lectured the crowd about making judgments based on ignorance. Granted, my alien angle was “over the top” and was included simply for effect, but the mention of invisible beings was perfectly rational, factual, and necessary to my discourse. I told them that people have been historically condemned, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death for conveying information that was factual, but misunderstood. People who could cure diseases using herbs and natural procedures a couple of centuries ago, for example, were labeled witches and executed by the church. Galileo is perhaps one of the most well-known scientists persecuted for presenting factual but misunderstood scientific information. The idea that the Earth revolved around the sun contradicted the teachings of the church at that time, so Galileo was branded a heretic and was forced to spend the last decade of his life under house arrest.

Just because we don’t understand what someone is saying doesn’t mean it’s wrong. It’s important to keep an open mind and hear a person out before jumping to conclusions.

That’s what I told them. Then I talked about the invisible beings.

# DRAWINGS OF MICROBES 1750



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