

Alien Clown

by
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A Sci-fi short story

I did everything I could to avoid becoming an alien invader, short of degrading myself by begging. Somehow my subconscious mind did not agree. You know how stubborn the subconscious can be. It has a will of its own. So, I found myself begging anyway. "Please, Captain. Please don't send me down there. Is there no other way?"

"Stupid question," the captain said. The captain did not actually utter those words, but his eyes communicated the thought. He gets this peculiar expression when he considers a question beyond his dignity to merit a reply. I was going to ask if he really thought of me as expendable but decided against it because I feared it might not change his expression.

We exploratory scouts are not really invaders, just explorers. The invader designation is usually how an alien culture perceives us whenever we accidentally blow our cover during an investigation. That normally results in planet-wide panic and, more often than not, the death of the investigator.

We try to prevent that by learning what we can about them before introducing ourselves. This requires wearing disguises and infiltrating the alien society for a while before blowing our cover.

Actually, we don't have enough of a crew to be a threat to a village. But you know how it is. You may recall what happened in the year 2870 on Earth when we discovered the Targellians from the Orion Belt were checking us out. They had no more evil intentions than we would today, and we have been good friends ever since.

It's a natural reaction, I suppose. Sort of like finding somebody wandering around your living room in the middle of the night. You assume he must be up to no good until you find out he is a harmless drunk who got lost.

Actually, the last time I was an alien invader, it worked out okay. Well, sort of. It took me about two and a half weeks of sneaking around, disguised like a fat rodent, picking up enough native conversations on my translator box to decipher their language.

The reactions of the rodent-like aliens we were investigating that time were not exactly what I expected. When I accidentally ripped open my disguise

suit on a tree branch, I knew my cover was blown. Some of the observers indeed showed surprise, but not all. I prepared myself mentally for death.

One walked up to me and said something. I figured he was going to plead for mercy or the like. The translator box spoke. "If you don't move that miserable excuse for a spaceship off our sewer line, we're going to shove the contents down your throat."

Now that was disconcerting. I assumed the disguise suit was pretty good. Apparently it wasn't. This point was made clear by the next sentence out of the translator box. "And take off that stupid suit. You are a disgrace to galactic intelligence."

So how was I to know they were three times smarter than us? Worse, it was not first contact after all. Our Targellian friends had been there years before. We don't know what they said about us, but apparently it was not that flattering.

So, my reluctance to descend out of orbit and investigate yet another alien culture was not merely fear. I was fully willing to accept the risks. Well, not exactly fully. It was the captain who was more full than I.

What I mean is, I really don't mind being viewed as a dangerous alien invader. It's kind of cool. What I can't stand is being treated as a buffoon.

I have asked the captain twice to tell my fellow crew members to stop calling me "the clown," just because of that one weird incident. But all I get is that peculiar expression in his eyes.

The End