

Ray X X-Rayer #124

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Out For A Stroll When All Of A Sudden! By Jose Sanchez

<http://jose77sanchez.deviantart.com/gallery/>

Ufology, Ufoology, and Boredom

When I started this zine one of the main topics I covered was UFOs. There was some interesting stuff going on especially when the alien abduction stuff hit the air circulation propeller.

And there was always the late great James Moseley, editor of Saucer Smear, who had a way of stirring things up, commenting on various personalities in ufodom and the skeptical crowd. For eXample James Randi, leading skeptic, threatened legal action after Jim wrote that Randi was

gay. Jim didn't make a homophobic comment; all he was doing was stating what was obvious to him. (Later Randi revealed that he was indeed gay.)

But with Jim gone there is no one covering UFOs using a skeptical believer POV combined with a flippant sense of humor.

While there are rational researchers in ufology (as opposed to the hucksters and clowns in ufology) the topic itself is pretty much in the doldrums. It needs another new controversy like alien abductions and human-alien hybrids. The reports keep coming in, repeating the same kind of details about strange objects seen in the sky. The plethora of reports from past and present induce sleep.

A sighting is reported but nothing else happens. No solid evidence of alien visitation. Yawn.

To make it clear I'm not a skeptic. I think there are some rare cases of unearthly encounters that can't be simply explained away though skepticism. I'm a skeptical skeptic, someone who doesn't blindly believe in Ultimate Truth Through Skepticism.

One of the most puzzling cases is the Coyne Helicopter/UFO encounter.

One night in 1973 an Army Reserve crew was flying over Ohio when a point of light sped towards their helicopter. The saucer-shaped UFO stopped in mid-air. Using a green tractor beam the UFO towed the helicopter around and then released it. So far the event hasn't been explained as a hoax or by some other earthly explanation. That doesn't mean that I completely buy the story. Some future revelation could easily undo the fantastic aspects of the mystery. But the incident has stood up for decades.

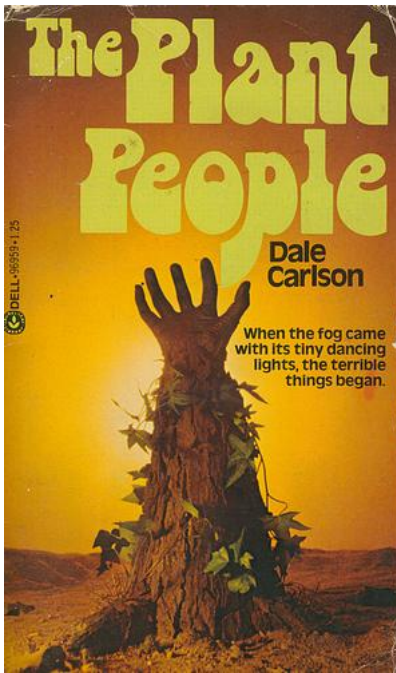
Leading skeptic Philip Klass explained the event away as nothing more than a close encounter with a green meteor. He spent pages in his book, *UFOs Explained*, detailing his theory. I wasn't impressed.

And while there are rare cases like Coyne/Mansfield there are occasional items of dubious value that turn ufology into a circus. For example the Roswell alien color slide ado from last year. Someone found a photographic slide shot decades ago purportedly showing a dead alien inside a glass display case.

The reproductive quality of copies made from the slide was lacking but there was still enough detail for investigators to digitally uncover the truth. There seemed to be a sign on the display case. Thanks to computer magic the placard could be read: "Mummified Body of Two Year Old Boy." A human, not alien, boy whose remains were on loan to a museum.

But that circus is over and ufology remains in the doldrums.

It's time for that landing on the White House lawn.



A Story Rooted In Evil

Since it appears I might have to move I've been cleaning out my cubbyhole apartment. It's amazing what keeps coming to the surface.

With a surfeit of books I've accumulated over the years I've forgotten what I took home, too many titles to track. A local bookstore used to have a free box, items it didn't want. I should've kept walking instead of stopping, stooping over, and pawing through the semi-trash.

Add to this the public library and its book sales. Each sale would wrap up with the one dollar special, all the books you could stuff into a large bag.

While I should have curtailed my book hauling I must say I've come across some interesting finds over the decades. The other day I uncovered from one pile a thin book called *The Plant People* (1979).

This work was targeted at young readers. So I won't criticize it for its simple language that even the average Plattsburgh State graduate could understand.

The publisher, Dell, released it under its Laurel-Leaf Library imprint. In case parents were worried about inappropriate material the book carries this statement: "THE LAURAL-LEAF LIBRARY brings together under a single imprint outstanding works of fiction and nonfiction particularly suitable for young adult readers, both in and out of the classroom. The series is under the editorship of Charles F. Reasoner, Professor of Elementary Education, New York University."

So there.

Storyline: A strange fog envelopes Cactus, an isolated town in Nevada. The fog rolls on, its job completed. It induces changes in most of the townspeople except for our hero, teenager Mike Ward and some of his friends.

The initial change is mental. Those affected became simple-minded, blissful in ignorance. Then there's the physical transformation. Plant-like veins start growing in a victim's skin.

Mike's younger brother is also affected. It's mentioned that the younger brother was talented with his slingshot.

What does the transformation mean? Does it lead to a final mutation?

Mike is shocked when he learns the answers. He spots a slingshot dangling from a cactus.

At this point I couldn't help but laugh. The writer, Dale Carson, was creating the right atmosphere, creepy, disturbing. She described the mysterious fog having dancing lights within it. But when it's revealed that Cactus citizens are becoming cacti -- I wonder if she also laughed at that point. I bet editor Professor Reasoner must've thought it was a hoot.

Photographer Chuck Freedman worked with Dale, providing a series of full page black-and-white photos illustrating scenes in the story. His style recreates the look of 1950s horror/sci fi movies. Printed on cheap paper my copy is yellowing from age, providing an interesting contrast to the B&W photos.

I tried Googling to learn more about the author. No luck. But I did come across a few comments from people who had read *The Plant People* when they were young. Back then their developing minds were creeped out by the story. One person said the photos were creepier than the text.

Apparently photog Chuck Freedman got the cooperation of some townspeople in a rural western area (Nevada?) to serve as models/actors in the scenes he photographed. I wonder how well that went. Maybe he was a member of the community which would make the project easier; he didn't have to win them over.

With my photographic eye I look at an image differently than the average viewer. I was intrigued in how Chuck created his special effects shots. In some photos the victims have thick dark veins growing all over their bodies. And there's a shot of a woman with facing away from the camera, her back a thorny cactus strip. Make up or darkroom magic or both? However he did it he pulled it off.

So will I drop *The Plant People* in the dumpster with the usual trash before I move? I doubt it; the book is too unusual.

MailBoX

Regarding XR #123 David Haren opined:

Hi Ray,

I'm beginning to think that it was a good idea to avoid SyFy channel except for buying the odd DVD set like Dune and Children of Dune.

I've had flying fish bounce off an outer bulkhead next to me but don't expect Sharks to adapt to flying unless the Colossus Squid starts feeding on them. That might create an evolutionary motive to grow some wings and take to the air.

I was digging in my junk movie collection and found on the second disk an epic starring Moon Unit Zappa and Ringwald which made virtually no sense. I had got the set for Trancers (Jack Deth epic) and ignored the rest. I'll continue to ignore the rest until some dark night when the stars are right for another dip in the shlock pool.

Cassandra might be up for doing an AARP magazine centerfold, but unless they think it would sell insurance I hardly expect it to happen.

For your 'they're everywhere' files I found this wonderful ad.

Keep on keepin' on,

Dave tyrbolo@comcast.net

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-- END XR #124 --