

Sex Cantaloupes from OS (Outer Space)

Part I



There they were: labia, one on either side.

BY ROBERT LONG FOREMAN

Everyone thought we were going to die. Someone actually said on the news that we were probably going to die.

He meant the whole human race. He was on NBC. He said, "This is the end. I mean, I'm pretty sure it is."

He was sweating. People never sweat on the news. I switched to a cable station where no one was sweating.

They were showing more footage, there, of what I'd been watching for hours on NBC: the enormous vessels, or whatever they were, that had fallen from the sky. They were made of metal, no one knew what kind. Maybe an unknown alloy? Maybe steel. No one knew where they came from, either — or, if anyone knew, they weren't saying in the newsrooms on basic cable.

The metal structures had landed in the night, in every city of substantial size, in every country on Earth. They'd screamed through the atmosphere and smacked against the surface. Some crushed buildings. Others crushed traffic. Most of them crushed something. In Paris, the Eiffel Tower got crushed, which everyone there took to mean something.

Each of the metal things was a cylinder with writing on the side. No two cylinders had the same writing, and no one on Earth could identify the language it was written in, all curlicues and broken lines, like a lost lovechild of Cyrillic and Japanese.

The cylinders didn't embed far into the Earth's crust. They stuck out just so. Some landed upright, others on their sides. Each was the size of several buildings. They landed at eight p.m. Central time, and I stayed up through the night to watch them. I drank a lot of coffee and called my mother, to tell her I loved her. I was sure this was it.

She disagreed. She's fairly religious. She didn't think this was it.

She didn't tell me she loved me. She told me to go to bed.

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At six o'clock in the morning, the cylinders began to move. All over the world, in the hundreds of cities where they'd landed, the foreign bodies shifted in unison. The live feed switched from New York to Paris to Rome, the cylinders crushing more buildings and cars to situate themselves so they pointed upright. It took one hour. They were slow. But eventually, all their tops faced the sky.

I watched this happen on MSNBC. I opened a beer and drank it fast, because the coffee had made me tense and the world was ending. When it was gone, I opened another.

Under normal circumstances, Greta would have asked what the hell I was doing, drinking so early in the morning. It's not something I ever do. This morning was different.

I was downing the last of my second Bell's Oberon, which seemed like the right beer to drink in the morning, of the three in our fridge, because it's not that different from orange juice, when the top blew off of every cylinder at the same time. It was loud, like a gun going off — a really big gun. I heard it on TV, and I heard it out the window — yes, even we in St. Louis got a cylinder. It was over by the Arch.

I watched on TV as foreign objects came pouring out. They sprayed over every city center on the planet, like a thousand volcanic eruptions. They showed it happening in New York, Moscow, and Tokyo. Greta looked out the window and said they were spreading across the sky.

Whatever it was that came out of the cylinders, it wasn't liquid. It was lots of little objects. "They must be spores," I said.

"Spores?" said Greta.

She had not stayed up all night to watch the news. She'd gone to bed. That's the difference between me and her: when the shit goes down, I stay up and she doesn't.

"What would you call them?" I said.

"I don't know. I don't know what they are. What makes you think they're spores? What do you even mean by that?"

I watched the spores spill out of the Beijing cylinder on CNN. They weren't flying out of it, now, but spilling over the sides, rushing like they couldn't reach the open air fast enough. The camera panned to show them rolling across the ground. They propelled themselves far and fast.

I said, "I guess spores seem like the worst possible thing. Are you going to work?"

"Of course I'm going to work."

"Why?"

"Because it's *my job*."

"Not anymore. The world's over."

Greta looked hard at the TV.

“If the world’s over,” she said, “they’re going to need nurses. Is there coffee left?”

There was coffee left. She poured some in a travel mug and walked out the door.

Would I ever see her again?

Probably not.

A newsman said the armed forces were keeping everyone at bay, to protect them from whatever had come out of the cylinders. I fell asleep on the couch.

~

I didn’t mean to sleep as long as I did. I guess I was tired. Bell’s Oberon helped. When I woke up, I peed a lot, and came back to the couch to see what had happened. Eight hours had passed. Greta would be home from her shift soon.

In the MSNBC newsroom, a scientist sat behind a desk covered with a plastic sheet. On the sheet was the loveliest cantaloupe I’d ever seen: pale-brown and thick. It was perfectly round. It was supple. It was, in a word, voluptuous.

No. It wasn’t a cantaloupe. It was one of the things. It had come out of a cylinder. That was why it was there. For a second, I’d thought maybe the scientist was just hungry for cantaloupe.

It wasn’t a spore after all. It was round and fleshy, like a baby’s fontanelle.

It had one orifice. The TV scientist showed it to the anchors. The orifice was like an intriguing pocket.

“It almost looks like a — like a vagina,” said one anchor.

“That’s exactly what it looks like,” said another anchor.

Both anchors were men.

The scientist stroked one of the labia, like he couldn't help himself.

"Dr. Rodd," said the first anchor, perhaps to get Dr. Rodd to stop groping the fleshy cantaloupe. "What is this object? Why did it come out of the cylinder?"

"I don't know," said Dr. Rodd. "I haven't gotten it alone so I could study it. In private."

"But you have a team, don't you?" asked the second anchor. "Other researchers?"

"Of course I do," said Dr. Rodd. "But this specimen and I would like to spend time together. One-on-one. Just for a little while. Yes."

I heard the door open. Greta was home. I hadn't made our early dinner — I'd slept when I should have been making our early dinner — and I knew she would be hungry. She hardly eats at work.

She came in wearing bloody scrubs, the bloodiest I'd seen her come home in. She was holding one of the cantaloupes.

This one wasn't brown, it was perfectly white. It was smaller than the one I'd seen on TV. It was a runt cantaloupe, not like the husky boys we see at the supermarket.

"Why is that one white?" I said. "What's with the blood?"

Greta looked like she'd seen a ghost, or witnessed three murders. One ghost = three murders.

"A man was killed," she said.

"And that's where the blood's from? Why are you freaked out?"

"Did you hear what I *said*?"

"Yeah. A guy was killed. That happens, like, twice a week where you work."

Greta works in the emergency room.

"He was killed in front of me, Duane. Jesus Christ."

“Why do you have that? Is it one of the things?”

Greta looked at the TV, at the image it showed us of a vast field somewhere in Russia that was littered with the cantaloupes.

“That’s what it’s like out there,” she said. “They’re everywhere.”

“Really?”

I went and looked out the window. I saw our regular street. No cantaloupes.

“I don’t see any,” I said.

“Well, okay,” she said. “It’s not exactly like that. But there are a lot of them. I saw, like, ten on my way home.”

“Where?”

“On the side of the road. One got run over by a car.”

“What was inside?”

“I didn’t get a close look. There was blood. Red blood.”

“Let me see that,” I said, and held out my hands.

“No,” Greta said. She pulled it to her chest like something precious.

“Why not?”

“Duane,” she said, “we don’t know what it is. It could be dangerous.”

“Then why did you bring it inside?”

She looked at it. “I don’t know.”

“Bring it over here.” I meant to the kitchen table.

“Why?”

“So we can look at it together. Why do you think?”

“Duane, this isn’t right. The guy who killed the other guy? It was over one of these.”

She set it on the kitchen table. She told me what had happened. The man came in with stab wounds. He had driven himself to the emergency room, pouring blood from the punctures in his back. He staggered in, begging for help. He held one of the cantaloupes in his arm.

But the man who’d stabbed him also had a car. He followed his victim all the way to the hospital. He still had the knife. He ran into the ER screaming.

The first guy didn’t even get to fill out insurance forms before the second one plunged the knife in him a dozen more times and ran away with the cantaloupe.

“All that, for one of these?” I said. “Didn’t you say there were tons of them?”

“There are. He must have seen them.”

“Then why didn’t he settle for another one?”

“He must have been drawn to that one in particular. They must have some hidden power. They make people want just one of them, more than anything. Enough to want to kill someone over it. Duane. What are you doing?”

“I’m looking for the orifice.”

I found it. There they were: labia, one on either side.

“It’s like they said on the news,” I said. “It has a vagina.”

“That’s not a vagina,” Greta said.

“On the news they said it was.”

“It doesn’t look anything like a vagina. And anyway you mean ‘vulva.’ What are you doing?”

“What?”

I pulled my hand back. I’d been stroking the labia like TV’s Dr. Rodd.

“Duane,” she said, and stepped forward.

I stepped back. I rolled the cantaloupe across the table with me.

Someone knocked at the door. Greta gave me a look and went to answer it.

It was Steve, from next door. He walked right in.

“Have you been watching the news?” he said.

“I have,” I said.

“You have!”

“That’s right.”

“Me, too. Can you believe this? Have you seen those things?”

“Yeah,” I said. “We’ve got one right here.”

He tensed. “My god, you brought it inside. What’s it like?”

“It’s vaginal,” I said.

“It is *not*,” said Greta. “It’s got some kind of opening, though. I think they might have bones.”

“*Bones*,” said Steve, and covered his mouth. “Can I hold it?”

“No,” I said. “Get your own. There are tons of them out there.”

Greta looked at me.

“What’s gotten into him?” Steve asked her.

She shrugged. “He’s been up a long time.” She didn’t know I’d slept all day.

“They’re saying on the news,” said Steve, “they must be from outer space. An alien civilization!”

“That’s ridiculous,” said Greta. “An alien invasion?”

“Not an invasion,” said Steve. “A greeting. They’re saying these might be a gift. Like a welcome present.”

“Welcome to what?”

“To the universe! It was this guy on Fox. He said ours is still a young civilization, that this might be, like, a welcome to the neighborhood gesture, from a much older race.”

They paused. Greta must have looked at me. She cried out, “Duane! What the fuck are you doing?”

I was standing by the table, across the room from them, pants around my ankles. I was absolutely, no-holds-barred plowing that sweet space cantaloupe. In and out I went, throbbing all the way. My new, round friend took all five-and-a-half inches of me like it was nothing, like it was built for one thing and one thing only: my penis.

“Duane!” cried Greta. “My god, stop!”

I don’t know what happened, exactly. Something about the way Greta yelled at me made me come right then and there.

I said, “Oh, no! Oh, no! Please!”

That’s the kind of thing I say when I orgasm. I was fine.

I was better than fine. I pulled myself out of the cantaloupe and sat in the chair. Steve watched me with jealous eyes.

I shook my head at him. “No,” I said. “Steve. No. You fucking get your own.”

“Did you ejaculate in that thing?” said Greta, white as a sheet.

I nodded. I was out of breath.

She ran to the sink and threw up in it.

“It’s fine,” I said. “My god, I can see why they said these things are gifts.”

“What do you mean?” said Steve.

I laughed. I felt drunk. “I don’t think I can explain it.”

He looked torn. He said, “I’m sorry, guys. I have to go.”

As he walked out the door, Greta came and reached for the cantaloupe. I put one hand on it and glared.

“I can’t believe you did that,” she said. “What is *wrong* with you?”

“What’s wrong with *you*? Who throws up in the *sink*?”

“I have to get out of here.”

I nodded. I said, “Maybe that’s for the best.”

A tear ran down her face. She walked out the door and slammed it behind her.

I didn’t pull my pants up. I left them on the floor, removed my shirt and socks, and took the cantaloupe upstairs.

~

For the next few days, I carried my new best friend everywhere — to the kitchen, to the bathroom, and to the TV room, where I continued to watch the news. I didn’t leave the house.

Women anchors said the foreign objects were a menace, a blight, the worst thing that ever happened to planet Earth. Nearly all of the men in the world, they said, had been instantly addicted. Even the male anchors were indisposed, leaving women to run the news.

The women couldn't say on TV what their male colleagues were doing, but everyone knew what they were doing. They were under the sway of the pods. They worked their will on us. We breathed their spores.

That's right: spores.

I had thought, when I first saw them, that the pods were spores. I was wrong. The spores were *in* the pods. Each pod exhaled them from the pores on its surface, and sent them into my lungs and my mind. They made me want to give the pod all my semen.

We had to have the pods. The spores told us so, and we listened. We would do anything to get one — murder a friend, jeopardize a marriage. It didn't matter. Because they weren't just any pods, they were fuckpods.

Their appeal was linked, somehow, to testosterone. Women with high testosterone were drawn to fuckpods; men with low testosterone were immune, though some still fucked a fuckpod anyway, probably to see what it was like.

Some men went so far as to name their fuckpods.

Mine was Quarterbuns MacTompkinson. I would lie in bed beside it and listen to what they said about it on TV, watching Quarterbuns for a sign of what was on its mind.

Did it *have* a mind? I didn't know.

I didn't know, at least, until sometime on day two when the women anchors of CNN brought a fuckpod into the studio and dissected it on the air.

I couldn't believe they were doing this brutal thing. I could hardly watch! But I watched.

The biologist had to cut through many layers of hard flesh. "It's as if this creature is covered by a callous, all over," she said. "It's like calloused skin."

"Is it a living creature?" asked an anchor.

“It appears to be,” said the biologist.

Eventually, she stopped slicing through each layer, one by one, with a scalpel, and opted instead to saw it in half with a power tool. They didn’t say whether the thing was dead when they did it, which meant they may have been flat-out murdering a fuckpod on live television. Blood sprayed in all directions and pooled on the plastic sheet they’d put under it.

Would they ever do that with a dog or a cat? Of course not. And people don’t even fuck those.

Right? Not usually.

Greta had been correct about bones: fuckpods had them. The saw cut through several layers of ribs that ran along the thing’s outer layer.

“Clearly,” said the biologist, “these rib layers are meant to protect what’s inside.”

She pointed to a heart that pumped blood through the creature via capillaries. There was a little pouch that looked like a lung, and then a bigger pouch.

“This must be where semen is collected,” she said.

“How much does it hold?” asked an anchor.

“My team and I will have to run tests, to see exactly how much. But it looks to me like it can carry several cups. It’s a brilliantly designed organism.”

“I’m sorry,” said an anchor, “did you say, ‘designed?’”

“Oh, yes,” said the scientist, still wearing goggles, her white lab coat flecked with the creature’s blood. “There’s no doubt in my mind this creature was genetically engineered. It could be *based* on an alien species, but there’s not a set of circumstances I can dream of that would result in an animal like this evolving naturally. It has no digestive tract. It has no means of intaking and processing food. It doesn’t *eat* semen, it *stores* it.”

“Stores it for what? What is this all about? Do you have any theories?”

The scientist shook her head. “It seems as likely as anything that this is an attack. A way to warp the social fabric of all Earth’s people, to distract a whole half of the population, as the first step in an invasion. Which means the next step must be coming soon.

“Or maybe it’s a prank, or something. I really have no fucking clue.”

~

Greta spent all this time back at the hospital, working almost nonstop, taking short breaks to sleep an hour or two at a time.

People were pouring into the ER. They were getting shot and stabbed over the fuckpods. Men were killing women who came between them and their pods. People did awful things to each other.

Teenage boys abandoned their schoolwork. They had parties where they played video games and fucked their pods.

I don’t know if they invited girls to their parties. I don’t know what the girls did.

Most girls and women, from what I understand, did nothing with the pods. The pods activated desire by way of testosterone, and most of the women and girls had low testosterone. The pods didn’t animate their lust and fury. Their lives weren’t destroyed.

I read somewhere that certain women did respond to the fuckpods, but the article didn’t say what they did with them.

I’m sure they thought of something. Women are resourceful.

I know what the men did.

I heard about one teenager who defied his parents and ran off with a fuckpod, into the woods. He was found dead, days later, in a ditch, his dick lodged in the cantaloupe. He couldn’t even stop himself, to go and get a drink of water. He had no self-control.

Many other young studs didn’t fare much better. They didn’t die, but they fucked themselves to exhaustion and severe dehydration. They had plenty of stamina and little to no

good judgment. They were like teenage boys in showers, jacking off with shampoo for the first time, learning what a bad idea that was. Only, with the fuckpods, the stakes were much higher.

They wore themselves out so badly, they had to be treated at the hospital, which had to get by on a skeleton crew.

None of the men reported to work. No male doctors, nurses, or interns.

It was like that across all industries and services—men were out of commission. They weren't showing up to post offices, police stations, food courts, or the Supreme Court. They were in thrall to the creatures that had come to us from outer space. The US Congress was paralyzed, and the president was lying low.

There was too much work at the hospital for Greta to step away, and it wasn't as if she didn't know where I was and what I was doing. I was doing what 95 percent of men were doing, all over the world.

Not Steve, though. Oh, no, not Perfect Neighbor Steve. He and his wife and some other Jesus freaks banded together to save men from the pods.

I don't know what made Steve immune to pods. Low testosterone, probably. Impotency, maybe — I've read that while impotent men felt desire for the pods, since they couldn't act on that desire they could pull themselves together. They could be reasoned with.

Most of us could not be reasoned with. The men Steve and his friends tried to save did not want to be saved.

One of them broke both of Steve's wife's arms. I think her name's Rachel.

~

My mother, too, was determined to save someone from a fuckpod. My dad was dead already, so she came for me.

She went to Greta, retrieved her from the hospital, and brought her home. When I looked out the front window and saw them coming, I knew why they were there. I ran naked to the bedroom.

I clutched the fuckpod under my arm like it was a football. Like I was Larry fucking Csonka.

I shoved Greta's bureau in front of the door and pressed my body against it.

In a minute, Mom and Greta were outside the bedroom door, demanding to be let in, banging and trying to shove the door open. But I'm stronger than they are. I held them back.

When they gave up, I reinforced the barricade. I pushed the bed against the bureau and piled objects in the way. I went another round with the fuckpod before they tried again to reach me.

I came again, and hard, crying out, "Please! Oh, Christ! No! Oh, *no!*"

They resumed banging at the door. I pressed my body against the barricade and left the fuckpod on the carpeted floor.

Mom was whacking the door with something heavy.

Shit!

She'd gone to the basement and brought my sledgehammer upstairs. I bought it at Lowe's and never used it. Now she was using it to break down the door.

All she managed to do was make a hole. She and Greta could see me through it.

Greta was crying. She said, "Duane, please. Will you *listen* to us?"

I said, "Listen to what? You haven't said anything."

"Open this door," shouted Mom. "Let us in. This is insane! It's sick!"

"There is nothing sick about the human body," I said. "There is nothing wrong with sex."

"I never said there was!"

"Oh, yeah? Then why did you always make me feel so ashamed when you caught me masturbating?"

“Jesus Christ, Duane. This isn’t *about* that. You were twelve!”

“I was *exploring* myself. For crying out *loud*, Mom!”

“Duane!” cried Greta. “Open the *fucking* door!”

Now Greta had the sledgehammer. I heard it bang against the wall. I heard the wall crack.

She was going to break our wall!

I knew what she would do if she did that. She would smash Quarterbuns, like Gallagher sledge-o-maticking a watermelon.

I had to get it out of there. I had to escape with it, and save it from Greta’s wrath.

Wait. Where was it?

It wasn’t on the carpet, where I’d left it.

The window was broken.

What?

Robert Long Foreman’s first collection of short fiction, *I AM HERE TO MAKE FRIENDS*, is available for pre-order from Sundress Publications. His novel, *WEIRD PIG*, comes out later in 2020 from SEMO Press. He has won a Pushcart prize, and you can read more at www.robertlongforeman.com.

