5-1-1998

Band Tour to Venus

Robert Brake
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean

Part of the Fiction Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol6/iss2/41

This Story is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
Band Tour to Venus

by Robert Brake

Mary Anderson had the look of a victim—mousy hair, unflattering glasses, the fashion sense of a twelve-year-old, and a face that telegraphed gullibility. Nevertheless, she liked to hang out with Dick, Don, Beetle, Lefty, and me—hip college sophomores who swore allegiance to 1958 jazz giants like Dizy, Miles, and Thelonius, and peppered our conversations with words like man, cool, and funky.

Mary was square. She—a happy prisoner of the conventional. We—big fans of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. A gifted gang of gagsters, we saved opportunities to put people on. One windy March day in '58, Mary provided one.

Embarking on the Gold Star Band tour, we scrambled for choice front seats on the bus and prepared for the boring, flat-road trip through North Dakota. As our old bus lumbered out of West Fargo, we passed Old Man Frader's Fish Market, noticed messages on the ubiquitous billboards, and began making up songs to them—tossing hip phrases with abandon.

Bugged by our banter, Mary innocently blurted, "You guys act like you're from outer space." Glancing at the soon-to-be victim, Lefty looked upward, scanned us, smiled perversely, and nodded subtly—much like Perry Mason when he suddenly cracked the case. Lefty had a plan—to convince Mary we were all becoming victims of the diabolical plot.

Eventually we improvised a plausible scenario. Since Lefty looked Venusian, we would ask him to describe his translations of Venusian cryptograms—intricate philological theorems he had examined at the Venusian Institute of Technology in Toronto. The cryptograms revealed that a small number of human look-alikes were regularly visiting Earth.

Lefty told us how he had discovered a rare, out-of-print book called Venusian Secret Science that offered a detailed description of Venus, the Venusians, and their missions to Earth. He insisted that Venusians were not ugly, blood-curdling behemoths, but venerable, warm-blooded creatures who bore a striking resemblance to Teutonic earthingals—especially Scandinavians—so they could blend in while conducting their studies of our backward civilization.

These efficient human look-alikes were visiting North Dakota to study our agriculture so they could create a paradise of agricultural abundance. According to Lefty, Venusians were usually six feet tall, blond-haired, blue-eyed, and extremely intelligent—just like us.

Mary quickly accepted the story. Lefty warned us that Venusians liked to blend in among young, gullible earthingals and invade their minds while they slept. This was a steal from Invasion of the Body Snatchers, which Mary hadn't seen.

On the third day of the tour, each of us, wearing a white tee shirt, placed a large band-aid on the lower right side of his neck, to hide a small incision made by Venusians while we slept. The incision implanted the thought-control device necessary to vacuum our brains and make us unwitting dupes. We often dropped casual asides about the Venusians—like how they spoke perfect English, but in a sing-song fashion.

Since Venusians seldom displayed emotions—much like Mary—we spoke and behaved in a cool, detached demeanor. And occasionally we looked at Mary with deep, probing looks, sometimes staring at her as though we could see through her.

We told Mary, a clarinetist, that Venusians were intrigued with earth music and that, if she played concert B flat to tune up, they would be immediately attracted to her. During the next four days, none of us heard Mary tune up to concert B flat.

One day, we all wore gray clothing—the Venusians' favorite color, we suggested. Beetle, who always seemed confused about earthingal fashion, somehow forgot and opted to wear his usual bizarre combination of stripes and plaid.

Sometimes we asked Lefty if he'd heard from Celeste, his blond, voluptuous accordion-playing girlfriend who played "Lady of Spain" flawlessly. References to Celeste as "one of them" seemed perfect for our story line, since she often consort ed with Ross Phipps, a syco-phant who liked to hang out with us and who always had a kind of spaced-out Venusian look about him.

Four days later, we had relentlessly pulled off our put-on—so well that poor Mary was convinced we were all becoming victims of thought-controlling Venusians.