

Extraterrestrial Bingo

by John Olson

Let me tell you about extraterrestrial bingo: it's loud. They put the speakers over my head. And the microphone keeps moving. Most of the organisms here are old. And from another planet. I see a lot of tentacles. A lot of auras and bugeyes. Everyone seems to know the rules. Which proves what the physicists say: bingo is pervasive and uniform throughout the universe.

We've always known that, though, haven't we? The light follows the sun over the horizon and we call that glow twilight. Because it's sad. Though sometimes glorious. It's all a matter of perspective. Right? It's at twilight that we come together, the time when borders dissolve. We've always suspected that, always intuited that nugget of cognition: that the mysterious energy holding the universe together is a spirit of fun. The universe expands because it's laughing.

I'm a caller. I take the numbered balls one by one out of a cradle at random and call the number. Idlaviv from the planet eobo shouts "bingo!" Idlaviv wins a margarita, which s/he (there's no specific gender or pronoun for Idlaviv, who resembles a squid with dreadlocks) sucks from a glass with a long, flexible proboscis.

None of the stakes here are big. None of these extraterrestrials need money. They don't have money. They don't understand money. They only have Being. I relate to them completely. And I'm good at what I do. I never understood money either. I know you once needed money. Before they arrived. The extraterrestrials. Though we don't call them extraterrestrials anymore. We call them Beings. We are all beings. My head's been turned around, let me tell you.

I wasn't always a caller. I worked the fracking rigs in North Dakota. And before that I had a small farm. Couldn't make the farm work. Too much corporate control. I couldn't make decisions for myself. I was told what seeds to plant. What pesticides to use. All of it toxic and price-controlled, of course. Well, the pests are all gone now. And so is my farm.

The money on Wall Street sucked up everything. It was based on a future that didn't exist. Trillions of dollars, pulled out of the air. And when that house of cards crashed, money was worthless. Everything the money stood for had turned out to be empty. This was mainly debt. Debt servicing debt. Until it became so overwhelmingly obvious that the whole setup was an hallucination. Did I say it crashed? That's inaccurate. It couldn't crash, because there was nothing to crash. The entire scheme was a fiction, and fictions don't crash. Fictions are a wine that turn a light on in the mind or delude a population into believing wealth is capital. Which is a capital swindle. And cannot endure. And the next thing you see out your window is a whole lot of hungry people.

That's when the first ships began to arrive. And then more and more. Planet Earth became an amusement park, an Orlando of the Cosmos, a Disneyland of the Void. A Vegas for Interstellar Beings. Most of whom, it turns out, love bingo. Poker? Forget it. How do you read faces when some of these organisms don't have faces? Monopoly? Yuk. They hate it. It's a game for the criminally insane. Nope. They like bingo. Bingo reigns supreme.

Our town isn't big. It's just a little grid of streets and houses in Nevada whose small population once mined silver and gold. I like my job. Though it's not really a job. I get paid in pomegranates and shiny, extraterrestrial doodads that put funny colors on the walls and emanate vibrational waves that fill you with lightness and euphoria.

My wife and I live modestly. I have a house and a toolshed. Which I don't actually own. Owning anything has already become an obsolete concept. There's just a tacit agreement with the entire community that everyone's needs should be fulfilled without obligation or condition. A house and privacy are considered needs. This recognition of intrinsic value in all organic and yes — even inorganic matter - promotes harmony. Are there contradictions, inconsistencies, disparities at play in this community? Yes. Many. But as our crazy, sometimes turbulent tournaments show, there is a core phenomenon holding it altogether, and that core phenomenon is bingo.

My calling as a caller is just that, a summons to the richness of spirit that permeates all things. It's something I do to make these Beings happy. And they are happy. They somehow managed to accomplish what only a few on Planet Earth had been able to do: find wealth in Being. Sounds corny, I know, but there you have it: bingo!

