

## More Facts, Set to Stun

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 16 March 2012 20:37 - Last Updated Friday, 16 March 2012 20:37

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You remember the paralyzing ray, the sound effect, the beam of light flashing across the screen toward its target and -- *bingo!* □ *Zapped!* All consciousness we had was momentarily checked out, no longer in the building, not on the planet, but caught up in Star Trek, caught and stunned, captured by the light of the ray.

This is how it's been feeling in encounters with media of any kind on this world, and with almost half of its citizens. First, the flash of light, then, the ticklish electrical sensations begin, like swarming ants on the skin, the intensity gaining strength as the beam -- its first few nanoseconds aboard -- plays havoc with the body's bio-current, then, pulses stronger, threatening to shut down the computing center, up over the eyebrows... *Then it does: blackout.*

When consciousness returns, and we come-to again, there are no swaths of space-babes bouncing our flouncing in metallic silver bikinis, ready to pounce. There are no swarthy herds of bare-chested beefcake loafing or boasting or even sun-roasting about the place. There are no stone gods to feed, no meteors to deflect from the planet, no Abraham Lincoln batting clean-up on our team.

There are however, aliens to outwit: Republican nitwits, some of them real twits. It's unlikely we'll get much more alien than these specimens in this solar system. It's difficult to know how it is no-one has outmaneuvered them so far, given the huge, shrunken-head-style, head-start this clan so readily offers. No one of their units seems very bright, so we suspect they are centrally controlled, perhaps over great distances, using primitive radio waves.

Naturally, it is difficult to ascertain the precise level of threat we are presented, as the tricorder's down, the ship's out of range, and all the communicators want to do is blare and sonically lunge at us, screaming at us in something called Beck, or Limbo, or Hannity. Thankfully, the universal translator's on the blink, too, or who knows what all that ear-blistering, hurtful screeching's about!

Meanwhile, we're already into the first commercial break, so, we looked around, seeing how many of us are wearing red shirts, know our time is limited here -- and that many of our crew members are hosed.

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Hang on -- something's coming in on an ingenious transducing-viewfogger, just whipped up from spare parts and bark, here in the bush, by an enterprising officer:

*Shell Oil had 207 oil spills last year, while its CEO earned 16-point-5 million bucks. □ Global earnings were 29 billion, equalling 3-point-2 million every hour, up 54 percent from last year. This thing must be defective, used the wrong rocks. What are they saying? What --*

*Oil?*

*And,*

*money?!*

*Oh, my stars --*

*how incredibly primitive these native tribes are!*

*Go ahead, try it again: Fukushima inspectors knew early on that most equipment would fail in an earthquake. □ And, we're still looking forward and not back, say spokespersons familiar with former Vice President Cheney's reluctance to dodge likely swarms of Canadian protesters, perhaps subpeonas, too. □ Republicans have announced they will continue they will make all health care decisions for women from this point in time going forward...*

*Oh, now, it's all static. Give it a thump and a whack: Warhol's painting of Elvis could hit 50 million at sale. □ Poverty is increasing more than before, as income gaps widen. □ The Leaning Tower of Pisa will go green for Saturday. □ Genetically-mutated foods could go on sale soon at giant, big-box stores. □ Rejected male fruit flies drink more alcohol than do their successful peer-suitors. □ Crimes by corporate America hit new, all-time highs in lows, while the middle class is driven and smashed right into the wall. Bolivian judge asked to resign after consulting coca leaves for judicial guidance. Cost of war expected to hit one trillion and more, with Iran on the horizon, forcing oil speculation higher in trading. Snow and sleet expected all summer at the Equator. □ And, don't forget, it's another new episode of "Beat The Reaper," on most of these teevee stations...*

That's enough. Turn it off. Not missing anything here, just more local mumbo-jumbo about getting "Vol" or "Vaal" back into the schools, get that whole priesthood running the whole show. Maybe this is how Darwin felt, seeing a hint or a whisp of the grand sweep of time, a twinkle of light for just a brief second, knowing he'd never see how any of the story, already in riotous motion, would turn out.

Being a member of this away-team is very challenging. We can't interfere with the superstitious

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natives of this culture, but, these Republicans -- these pre-Klingon neo-cons -- are free to shove or slap them around, or enslave whole populations of them that we're trying to save, week after week, right here in this time slot.

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*"Beat the Reaper" is a fictitious (so far) television game show, invented by The Firesign Theatre comedy troupe. A founding member, Peter Bergman, died March 9: ☐ Rest in Peace, All Hail!*