

The Amazing Vacation of Bark the Bomber

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In this political satire,an alien from a distant planet comes to Earth for a vacation and becomes stranded here when his space craft is damaged and confiscated. When he is told that only the President of the United States can return his ship to him,and that that wasn't likely,he decides that he has to become president. On his home world everyone is exactly equal, so as president he attempts to make the United States like that, with unintended consequences.

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Barklingomania was born on a distant planet in our galaxy that its inhabitants called Exengopia. Â Â Theirs was an ancient civilization, hundreds of thousands of years older than that of Earthâ s.Â After much effort and many failures, they had finally achieved their long sought goal of making everyone equal in every way. With genetic engineering they had been able to make all of the inhabitants look the same.Â That had happened many centuries before his birth. The people of his planet had machines and robots to do everything for them, so all they had to do was live their effortless lives, that is to say, they were bored to death most of the time.Â With a life span of three hundred and fifty Earth years, that meant a lot of boredom.

Space travel had been achieved thousands of years before his birth, and he thought no more of flying to a distant planet on a vacation to see the strange inhabitant than we do of flying to Greece. Â One extremely boring day Bark, as he later came to be called, was watching video transmissions from random planets when he stumbled upon one from Earth. â What quaint people,â he thought, â some of them even look almost like us.â Â The year was 1936, Earth time. An odd looking person in strange clothing was making loud noises and shaking his hands violently. There were many others watching him. There were strange symbols everywhere. It looked interesting. He summoned his robotic computer and had it scan the transmission and translate it for him. Someone called Hitler was making the loud angry sounds. He had the computer tell him what anger was, and he was shocked. These were very primitive people. How interesting. He set his video device to automatically record any future transmissions from that source.

He eventually became aware of things called depressions, politics, and war. What strange concepts they were. These people were similar to him, and he felt their pain. He felt a desire to help them. He had many, many feelings, but no reason or logic. Those things were the responsibilities of the computers.Â He learned from one of them that he could reach that strange planet in his private space craft in about eight of its years. It seemed like an interesting vacation, so he had his computer program the craft and prepare it for the journey. Since he would sleep until its arrival at Earth, he had the video transmissions recorded on his vessel. He arranged for the on board computer to teach him some of the languages spoken there while he slept, so that he could communicate with its inhabitants.

As his ship approached Earth he awoke and began to review the recordings. He was amazed at what had happened in so short a time. The inhabitants were actually killing each other! He felt that he had to help these unfortunate creatures, but didnâ t know how to do it. He would have to ask them what he could do for them. A place called Germany was often mentioned in the videos, and he remembered that the first transmission he saw had emanated from there. He decided to go there to find out how he could be of assistance. He had the computer access one of the maps on the recording and set a course for it. As his ship hovered above the country in preparation for landing he became aware of strange objects striking it. He was too low for meteorites, so he couldnâ t imagine what they might be. Then some primitive flying machines appeared and started showering the ship with small projectiles of some sort. It was most baffling, and somewhat annoying. He had never before received a reception like this in all of his travels. His computer automatically took his ship up and out of the atmosphere and gave him a damage report. He was shocked to learn that the craft was no longer suitable for space travel, although it could still navigate in the low gravity of Earth. He would have to set down somewhere and try to have it repaired, but he didnâ t know where to go. Â The computer suggested the United States, it being the second most mentioned place in the videos. He told the computer to scan the place for random projectiles in the air and land in an area that was free of them. The ship landed in

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Roswell, New Mexico.

The first inhabitant he encountered took one look at him and his space craft and went off yelling about something called Martians. It was apparent that that person would not be able to help him repair his ship. He decided to take a look at the damage it had endured. There were small holes everywhere that would have to be plugged with dark matter before he could travel at sufficient speed to return home. He wondered where they stored the substance on this planet, as most planets he visited always maintained an adequate supply for visitors.

In a little while he became aware of loud noises and much substance being thrown up into the air near him. When the air cleared he saw that he was being surrounded by strange looking machines. People came out of them pointing various devices at him. What a strange planet this was. "Hello", he said, recalling that English was the language spoken here. "Can you supply me with some dark matter?"

"Who are you?" a loud mechanical voice asked.

"I am Barklingomania from the planet Exengopia, come to visit you on vacation."

"Place your hands over your head and step away from the vehicle!"

What a strange custom, Bark thought. He had never encountered a greeting like that before. This could be a very interesting vacation. He did what was asked of him and waited to see what other strange customs these people had. One of them approached him and began touching him all over. "How friendly they are", he thought.

"No concealed weapons on him sir, the person shouted.

"No observable weapons on the ship," someone else said.

What are weapons, Bark wondered. He searched his memory and came to a definition of them. Why would they think that I would take those on vacation, he wondered. He then realized that they were what people were pointing at him. How rude.

Someone wearing clothing similar to what he remembered the person called Hitler wore approached him, and started talking to him. "Who sent you and what is your mission?" he asked. Bark didn't understand what was happening. Had the computer taught him the wrong language while he slept? The words sounded correct, but the meaning escaped him. How could anyone send him, and what did the word mission have to do with the word vacation? "I came in my spacecraft for a visit" he replied.

"Space craft?"

"I know it's only a small two passenger one, not suitable for inter-galaxy travel, but it suits my purposes. Unfortunately it acquired some holes as I was hovering over what you call Germany."

The General looked at the Sergeant that had inspected the space ship. "There are shrapnel and large caliber bullet holes all over it," he said. "I don't know how it could have remained airborne, or how it could even fly without wings or propellers."

"Well", the general thought, "if the Germans are shooting at him he can't be all bad." He told Bark that he could put his hands down. He seemed friendly enough, quite innocent in fact. Almost naive. He could be very helpful. "Come with me and we'll get something to eat and have a little chat," he

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said. "Do you mind if I just call you Bark?"

"How strange he is," Barklingomania thought, "why does he want to call me what they call the outside of a tree? Is it because I am also brown? He must be very simple minded. I wonder what sort of chemical compounds they consume on this planet."

The General escorted him to the officer's dining room where he ordered a large dinner for both of them. Bark looked at the steak, baked potatoes and salad and wondered what they were. When he saw the General put a piece of steak in his mouth and swallow it, he became horrified. "If you don't mind, I have some of the food I'm used to with me, which I think would be more adaptable to my metabolism." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small container of pills. He placed one in his mouth and swallowed it. "That was good", he said, "I haven't eaten for eight of your years." The General looked at him with a blank expression on his face. "Tell me what you know about us please," he said.

Bark explained about seeing the video transmissions and deciding that Earth would be an interesting place to visit. He said that he had always been interested in the cultures of foreign planets.

"Do you know that there's a war going on?"

"Do you mean that you are fighting among yourselves? I had no idea that people still did that"

"These Germans are very bad people, look what they did to your ship."

"Are they the ones that put the holes in it?"

"Yes, they were trying to kill you."

"Kill me! That's not allowed! I'm entitled to three hundred and fifty years, like everyone else. Why would they want to kill me?"

"Like I said, they're very bad people. Would you like to help us defeat them?"

"Does that mean that they would stop trying to kill me?"

"Yes, that's exactly right."

"Then I suppose that it would be proper for me to assist you. What should I do?"

"Tell me about your ship, what are its capabilities?"

"It's just the usual gravity warping configuration, Inter-galaxy range."

"What I mean is, what can it do here on Earth?"

"Do? It can go up or down, left or right, or stay in place. It could circle the planet in one thousandth of one of its revolutions."

The General started writing on a napkin. "That's less than two minutes!" he said in amazement.

"Eighty six point four seconds, to be exact." Bark responded with pride.

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â Can it carry bombs?â

Bark wasnâ t sure what bombs were. He was aware that they were some kind of explosive, but didnâ t know what purpose they served or why it mattered if his ship could carry them or not. â I suppose so, I have a lift capacity of 25 earth gravities.â

â If you would drop some bombs on Germany for us it would help us to end the war.â

â I would be happy to help end the war for you, it is a terrible thing. After I do this, will you assist me in obtaining some dark matter so that I can repair my ship?â

The General had no idea what dark matter was, but agreed immediately. In the following year Bark the bomber, as he came to be known by a small group of military leaders, flew hundreds of missions over Germany, dropping bombs whose purpose completely escaped him. Then one day he was told that the war was over and his services were no longer required.

â I think Iâ ll be returning home then,â he told the General, â could I please have some dark matter?â

â Um, Iâ m afraid there is some problem with that. Iâ ve made some inquiries with our top scientist, and they donâ t know what it is.â

â But how can that be, itâ s 85 % of everything that exists! How can you possibly get along without it? Itâ s everywhere!

â Then you should be able to make some of it yourself.â

â Me, make things?â Donâ t be absurd! Machines make things, not people. The machine required to make dark matter is as large as one of your tall buildings, and has a special computer to do the job.â

â I see. Well, I guess youâ ll just have to extend your visit with us until we can figure out how to make some of the stuff.â

Bark was not happy. He had helped them, now they were refusing to help him. He decided that he would find someplace else to live. â I will be leaving you then,â he said.

â You can leave, but your ship stays here,â The General replied.

â You canâ t do that, itâ s against all civilized behavior!â

â Weâ ll pay you for it, one million dollars.â

Bark was aware what dollars were, but did not know what they were used for, money being a foreign concept to him. Having no choice, he accepted the money.â The general explained to him that he would need some identification papers in order to â get aroundâ . Bark had no idea what he was talking about. The CIA created a history for him that included a birth certificate and a United States passport. He was now Bark Bomber, natural born American citizen. The general told him that Africa was called the dark continent, so that might be a good place to look for dark matter. It sounded reasonable to Bark, so he decided to go there. He did not find any.â In the following years he wandered from country to country in search of dark matter, trying to understand the strange inhabitants of this strange planet.

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The general brought in the countries best aeronautical engineers to try to figure out how the space ship flew and reproduce it. One day in July of 1947 they were ready for a test flight. Unfortunately, they misunderstood how the controls worked, and it went straight up and then came straight down in a crash that severely damaged it.

When Bark read about the incident, which was widely reported in the newspapers, he returned to Roswell to try to reclaim his ship and repair it. He was told that only the president of the United States could give him authority to do that, and it wasn't going to happen. He still had more than two hundred years to live, and now they would have to be lived on this backward planet. It was obvious that the only thing to do was to become president so he could get to his ship and fix it. While he was at it he would try to make this planet as much like Exengopia as possible, otherwise it would be an unbearable place to live.

His travels through Africa and other third world countries left him puzzled. For some reason everyone did not live equally well on this planet. That was something he would have to fix before he left. He didn't know how he would do it, but assumed that it wouldn't be too difficult because these were a very primitive people. He would learn their ways and then gently lead them into a better way of life. He enrolled in a college and studied their history, politics and religious beliefs. He also learned a little bit about money. He sensed that somehow money was the answer to the problem, but it was still a foreign concept to him.

During his studies he placed his emphasis on presidential elections. He learned that most of the previous presidents had come from large cities in large states. It had something to do with what were called electoral votes. Most of his professors seemed to think like he did, that everyone should live equally well. That was encouraging. One of them who thought that Bark had the makings of a great politician told him about something he called social justice. Yes, Bark thought, that's exactly right. The professor told him about a preacher in Chicago that could tell him all about it, and introduce him to others that could help him politically. He arranged an introduction to the preacher for him.

After graduating Bark moved to Chicago, where he joined the preacher's church and learned how the white people had been taking advantage of the black people (that's when he learned that he was a black person) for so long. The preacher introduced him to some of his friends that happened to live in his neighborhood. He was delighted to learn that some of them had also been bombers in their youth. It felt good to have so much in common with his friends.

His new friends helped him get started on his political career. They taught him how to create his political base. You have to let the people know that they are entitled to live better because they are Americans, they told him. He asked them why the rest of the people in the world weren't also entitled to live better, and they told him you have to do it one country at a time. He didn't understand why, but decided to go along with them. They sent him door to door in poor neighborhoods, handing out flyers that told people how to get free government services. He organized protests demanding more of everything from the government. The name Bark Bomber became well known on the South side of Chicago. A lot of people wondered, What kind of name is Bark anyhow? But it was a name you couldn't forget.

In time he was elected to the United States Senate, which bored him. This thing called democracy was such a waste of time, just a lot of people yelling at each other and doing nothing. All because an old piece of paper called the constitution said it had to be done that way. He couldn't wait to become president and change all that. In the meantime he hardly bothered to show up or vote for anything. These are simple people, he thought, one day I'll see an opportunity to become president and take it. It will be easy, because they are so trusting and believe everything that I say.

In just a couple of years something called an economic crisis happened. At first he thought that this meant that the planet Earth was doomed to destruction, but then he learned that it was only about money, nothing

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serious. Why these people were so concerned about little pieces of paper baffled him, since there seemed to be so much paper everywhere. His friends in Chicago told him that this was his chance to become president and make everyone equal. All he had to do was to tell them that he would fix the economy. He had no idea about how to do this, but they assured him that that didn't matter. They would tell him what to do. So he ran for president and made speeches telling the people how he was going to make them all equally wealthy. He would simply take the money from the people who had too much and give it to the people who didn't have enough. He wondered why someone hadn't thought of this simple solution before.

The majority of people loved this idea and voted for him in large numbers. He was elected with a large majority of the votes. He immediately started spending billions, then trillions of dollars the way his advisors told him to. They assured him that this would fix the economy and make everyone happy. Unfortunately, it didn't. A lot of people were something they called un-employed. He didn't know what that meant, since he had never been employed himself. When his advisors explained to him that it meant that people weren't working, he asked them what work was. They just looked at him with blank expressions on their faces.

At first he didn't like being president because his advisors were always telling him what to do and where to go. When he asked to see his spaceship in Roswell he was told there never had been a space ship, only weather balloons. That's when he began to not trust his advisors. He decided not to listen to them, and do whatever he wanted to do and go where ever he liked. He could live the same as he had on his home world. He had his own aircraft, and even though it wasn't anywhere near as good as his space ship, it was adequate to travel around this planet. Also, there was something they called games that were a pleasant way to pass the time. Anything was better than being stuck in that huge white building all of the time, with everyone wanting something from him and all those papers to sign.

The following years were therefore pleasant for him. He spent a trillion dollars the country didn't have each year and most people thought he was doing a wonderful job. There were still a lot of people what they called unemployed, but since they were getting paid for not working they weren't mad at him. He promised millions of them free healthcare and became even more popular, except with the people that had to pay to give the other people their free health care. He realized that being president wasn't so difficult, all you had to do was give people free things and they were happy.

The only thing he didn't like about being president was having to think about wars. It was such an inconceivable notion to him. Fortunately he had generals that could deal with it. He just signed some papers and then they did whatever was necessary. He didn't really have to get involved. He just said he would end them at a certain time and left it to the generals to figure out how to do it. He did everything he could to avoid wars, because he couldn't think of anything important enough to get involved in one. He went around the world apologizing for all the wars the country had been involved in.

The People were so happy about all the free stuff they were getting that they elected him to a second term. He had run for re-election because he had come to the conclusion that he was going to be stuck on Earth for the rest of his life so he might as well try to make it as much like his home planet as possible. There were many limitations, of course. They were too backward to have the ability to alter their genetic makeup to make everyone look the same, that is, like him. But he could set an example and they could try to imitate him. Of course he knew much better than they did what was good for them, so he would impose his knowledge on them even if they resisted. It would be difficult because of their ridiculous institutions like congress and the Supreme Court, but he was smart enough to get around them.

By the end of his second term he had managed to redistribute a large portion of the wealth of the country from those whom he thought had too much to those whom did not have enough. This had made him very popular with most of the citizens. He believed this to be a good thing, because now many more people didn't have to work. The un-employment rate was 9.2%. At first the people with too much money had been angry with

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him for taking some of it, but they soon realized that they would get it all back with interest, so they stopped complaining. The factories and businesses never re-hired their laid off employees, so their productivity increased dramatically as their labor cost decreased. Since the un-employed people had almost as much buying power as when they had been working, demand remained constant. The stock markets rose to new heights. Everyone was pleased with the president.

It took many years for the long term effects of his policies to be felt. The forty hour work week became a thing of the past for most working people, and they had to hold two or more jobs to survive. The exceptions were low level salaried managers, who weren't paid by the hour. They found themselves work sixty or more hours a week for the same amount of pay they had previously received for working forty hours. The overwhelming majority of jobs were in the service industry, and service became deplorable. In restaurants, stores and markets one employee was now expected to serve the same amount of customers previously served by two. You had to schedule doctors and dentists appointments half a year in advance. Because of his policies women were now earning more money than men so they had little incentive to marry. Marriage rates fell, causing an increase in the number of children born out of marriage, which led to higher poverty and crime rates. But all of this was in the future, and did not affect the president's popularity.

Since Bark could not run for re-election again, he supported a woman whom he knew would continue his policies. She told the people that she would not only continue them, she would expand them. She won easily. Bark retired to a life of games and parties. One day while looking for his golf ball in thick group of trees, he met someone that looked exactly like him.

“Hello, Barklingomania,” the person said.

Bark was so happy to see someone from his home world that he gave him a hug. “You've come to rescue me!” he said with joy. “How did you find me?”

“As you know, we occasionally receive video transmissions from this planet. Lately you've been in most of them giving speeches. I'm one of the executive 100 that governs our planet, and I have to tell you that we are not too happy about what you have been doing here.”

“But I've been helping them become better people. You have no idea of how backward they are. They work and use something called money, and some people are actually thought to be better than others. They kill each other in what they call wars. All I tried to do was make it a little bit more like our planet.”

“That can never be accomplished until they develop the ability to make everyone look the same. Until then, they are doomed to quarrel among themselves. In any case it is none of our business. Come with me, I have an inter-galactic craft hidden in the woods. You will be home soon.”

Former President Bark the Bomber left Earth and was never heard from again. Like most former presidents, he was soon forgotten.

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