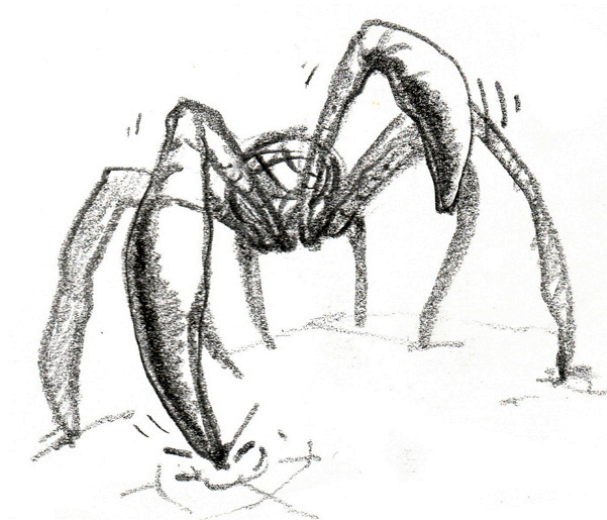


Bugaboo Zoo

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"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination."

Albert Einstein

We swim in an endless sea of Imagination. Our creative energies are the frenetic bubbles speeding their way to the ocean's surface, exploding into sparkling sprays of light and water; they are the moody slumberers in the quiet recesses of the abyss. Whatever its true nature is, the power of our imagination surges like a relentless tide onto every shore of the cosmos.

Many light years away, in deep space where no human has even dreamed of venturing, the waves of our imagination have lapped upon a gigantic planet's surface and tickled something into life... Life that none of us could have imagined and yet, incredibly, it has flourished and crash-landed into our very midst! What are they called? Bugaboos!

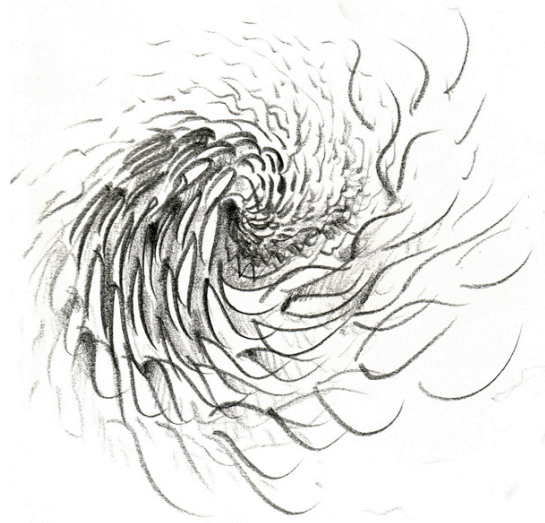
Bugaboos are an alien life form created by our imagination. For them, the waves of imagination washing over their homeworld is as real and vital as sound waves and gamma rays are to us... unseen but everywhere at once, all the time. In fact, bugaboos are more finely tuned to these imagination waves than any other life form in the universe (though this, of course, cannot be independently confirmed).

No one, including myself, knows exactly what a bugaboo looks like on its home planet of *Chrysalithon*. However, they could be most closely associated with what we here on earth know to be arthropods: invertebrae animals with an exoskeleton, a segmented body, and jointed appendages... creatures such as insects, arachnids, myriapods and crustaceans. Unlike our puny specimens, however, Bugaboos are monstrously huge!

Bugaboos do not move around like you or I ... the best way I can describe it is that they *flit*. Sometimes, they seem to be in two places at once, flickering in and out of our field of view. I've come to call this strange movement of theirs "*flickerflit*", since it seems to describe both the jumping and the on/off, on/off nature of their physical form. In quantum mechanics, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle describes how the position and momentum of an atomic particle cannot be determined simultaneously. It jitters, it can never sit still, and bugaboos seem to exhibit similar tendencies...

You can well imagine how difficult it might be to catch a creature that seems to be in two places at once, flickering in and out of view. As it turns out, their brilliantly colored exoskeletons also afford a modicum of protection from would-be predators. Picture, for a moment, thousands of bugaboos *flickerflitting* together, their iridescent chitin shells reflecting and parceling light into millions of scintillating points that it would make a school of silvery sardines look boring by comparison. Now multiply that gang of bugaboos by a thousand, and then another thousand, and soon you'll have trillions and trillions of them swarming over the surface of their home planet... except that we would never call this a Blue Planet like ours. We might call it the Mother Pearl, because the

reflections caused by sunlight on countless swarming bugaboo shells creates a pearlescent sheen over their entire planet when seen from space. Their world is so large, and so bright from the reflected light of their triple suns, that were it seen in our evening sky it might be mistaken as a second and far more radiant moon.



Trillions of bugaboos... You must be asking yourself, “Why are there so many of them? What do they eat? Are they dangerous? etc, etc...” Bugaboos, remember, thrive on imagination. I do not know exactly how they process it biologically, that part remains a mystery, but let’s just say for now that they *love* imagination and cannot stop eating it! We produce such a flood of it that even bugaboos, in all their supposedly countless numbers, cannot possibly gobble it all up. In actuality, most of it escapes their hungry grasp and makes its way into every nook and cranny of the universe. This, they say, is a threat to all other extraterrestrial races because while our imaginary excesses are the bugaboos’ treasure, for many other alien species it is just junk. Imagination waves are considered a widespread and dangerous pollutant in many areas (to those species that can detect it) and thus far their only options in dealing with it has been to deflect, capture, or destroy it. This has given rise to an entirely new sinister form of interstellar piracy, which I must describe in detail after you understand a little more about bugaboo interspecies variation:

First, no two bugaboos are alike; in this, at least, they resemble us. Second, bugaboos are not, technically, a “countless” population since human imagination itself is not unlimited (yet) and most of it escapes into the nether reaches of space anyway. Third, although each bugaboo is unique, they can be roughly classified into two major adult types: “*Burners*” and “*Batteries*”. All bugaboos fall loosely into one of these two groups, with varying shades of intensity.

Burners are unmatched when it comes to the consumption of imagination. Their ravenous appetites take them far and wide in search of the tastiest morsels. Extroverted, impatient, fast moving... these bugaboos exhibit almost no fear and are even more chaotic than the already very chaotic bugaboos.

Batteries are especially adept at capturing and storing imagination. They are more mild mannered and cautious than their burner cousins but equally as nomadic in their quest for the ripest grazing grounds. Though rare, mass migrations of batteries travelling through deep space have been seen, their glittering shells visible from hundreds of thousands of miles away. They tend to move slower than their burner counterparts, but that's not due to laziness; if threatened or excited, they can *flickerflit* just as swiftly as the best of them. All they are concerned with is storing much more imagination than they burn off and consuming it during leaner times. They also grow to tremendous sizes, often exceeding their Burner counterparts in terms of sheer mass.

Burners and Batteries, as it turns out, are equally responsible for bugaboo procreation since the ultimate result of their mating rituals are large translucent, amber-colored eggs made of a substance called *chrysamber*. These are the seed for future bugaboos... when hit with a particularly good wave of imagination, this substance undergoes a form of germination and becomes an actual bugaboo... In fact, you can see a tiny bugaboo body taking shape inside its clear golden shell! Bugaboo eggs will remain in this state until they absorb enough imagination, at which point the tiny bugaboo nymph inside shatters its chrysamber home with a tremendous shake and begins its new life. My bugaboo friends tell me that they experienced a dramatic baby boom period during the last few Earth centuries, which they attribute to the Renaissance period in Europe or perhaps the Age of Discovery...



These newborn bugaboo nymphs are neither batteries or burners and spend their days flickerflitting in huge schooling groups through the vast turquoise seas covering their homeworld, consuming all the imagination they can possibly fit into their tiny bodies. After a period of time, they enter a process of metamorphosis. This is how it happens: a

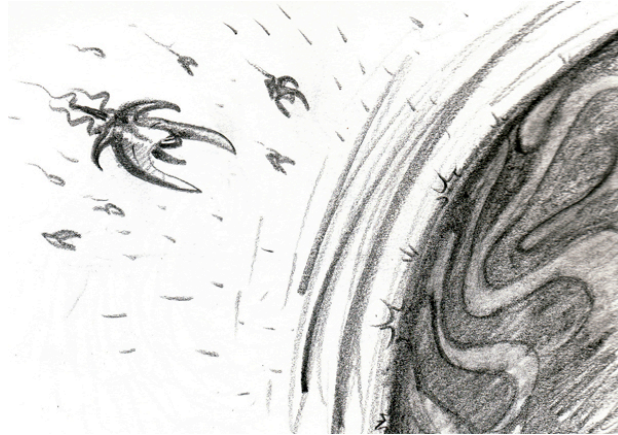
bugaboo nymph will find a protected area deep within the ocean and through successive chrysamber secretions, will slowly envelop itself within a new chrysalis, or egg made of chrysamber. The metamorphosis is startlingly similar to how caterpillars here on earth transform themselves into butterflies. After an unspecified amount of time, which can last anywhere from a few days to hundreds of years, the nymphs awaken from this cocoon-like state and break out of their shells as fully formed adult burners or batteries.

There are many degrees of intensity between the two interspecies variants, the burners and the batteries. The “hottest” burners venture far out into the universe, driven on by their insatiable appetites. For far too many of these intrepid voyagers, however, the journey is full of obstacles or downright dangerous. Unscrupulous privateers catch and enslave bugaboos all the time with their vast interplanetary trawling nets, tossing out all the useless detritus found floating through space: dried meteor bits, rusty spaceship fragments, the odd lifeform or two. Bugaboos, however, are keepers... especially batteries! Many alien cultures will pay a great amount of money to have a few bugaboo battery slaves around the house, chewing up great quantities of unwanted imagination flooding their airspace. Burners, usually too hyperactive and unreliable to be kept as pollutant-eating slaves, are often sold to wealthy clients as exotic pets. Slave or pet, a bugaboo in the hands of another alien is a miserable life indeed, since they treasure their personal independence and free-spirited ways above all other things. And because bugaboos never age, meeting death only by violent means or suicide, the slave masters rub their disgusting claws together in glee, having just made an investment that will last for generations upon generations. Sadly enough, bugaboos usually outlast their masters, their masters’ grandchildren, the grandchildren’s grandchildren, and so on... finally forgotten by a now-disappeared family tree. So they tend to wander off until captured again or perhaps, if they’re lucky, they’ll stumble across a lush grazing area in space where imagination is found in abundance.

So why are they here? What brought the bugaboos to earth, and why now?

Bugaboos have existed since the first dreams of humankind. Hundreds of thousands of years later, our recent population explosion has come with an exponential increase in technological advances, individual freedoms and personal creativity. Everyone outside of our solar system has been hit with a virtual tsunami of imagination waves, arriving more frequently and with far more intensity than ever before. Though it might seem like a boon to bugaboos, since they need imagination to survive, the end result has actually been mixed. The influx of more, stronger imagination has definitely resulted in more bugaboo births and a higher rate of positive metamorphs, but it has also caused chaos in other alien systems who need to solve their “imagination pollution” problem.

The upshot is that privateers are profiting more than ever before by raiding and kidnapping bugaboo migrations wherever they find them. More ominously, my bugaboo friends have said that for the first time in their long history, their homeworld was discovered by a predatory alien rover and a small scale invasion ensued, with the raiders killing and kidnapping with impunity. Bugaboos were caught completely flat-footed, never having been equipped to deal with this sort of threat, so the damage was very great.



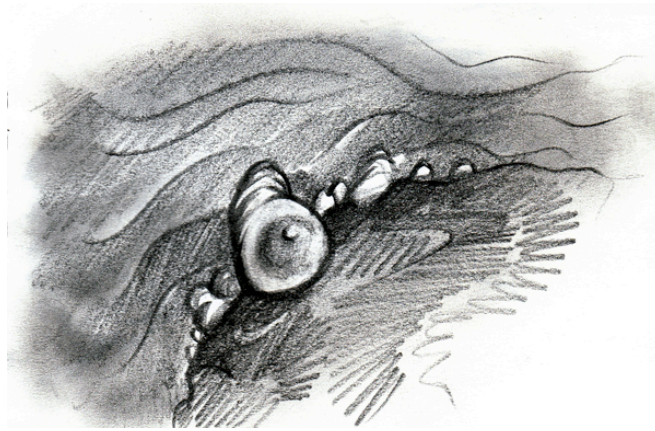
Not very long after that, a much larger invasion force returned and carried off huge numbers of hapless bugaboos in their transport ships, no doubt being sent to intergalactic slave auctions and sold as imagination collectors for thankless masters.

At this point, you may be asking yourself why the bugaboos can't adequately defend themselves. Why would an alien as large as a mansion, sporting wicked claws and moving quick as lightning, be unable able to defend its own home? The answer is as ironic as it is tragic and is yet another reminder that there is an Achilles' heel in every ecosystem. As it turns out, bugaboos are simply incapable of creative, original thought. They have been so dependent on us for their livelihood and for their conception of the world that they have been simultaneously blinded to their own unique strengths and personalities.

Imagine what *our* world might be like if we had no myths, no stories, no way of creating new perspectives or insights into a life defined only by our most basic physical functions? There would be only waking up every morning, going about our daily business, and then sleeping again. Repeated each day for as long as we lived, without any sense of what might be possible outside of these routine behaviors. A bugaboo might live forever, but through some odd twist of fate, they are denied the imaginative powers that would make that life so much richer and meaningful.

Until now, at least. Perhaps it was the shock of alien invasion or the unprecedented power and quantity of our own creative energies flowing into their consciousness. Perhaps it was the confluence of these twin events. Perhaps we will never know why they changed, but change they did, and very dramatically.

I said before that bugaboos will undergo a metamorphosis only once during their lifetimes, when they pass from nymphs to adults. That is no longer true. For the first time that any bugaboo can remember, the survivors of that horrible alien invasion underwent a mass metamorphosis of a planetary scale. Some manner of ancient, instinctual genetic alarm bell was ringing for all to hear, prompting every single bugaboo dove down to the deepest, darkest chasms of their oceanic world where, after enclosing themselves in a new chrysalis shell, they slept.

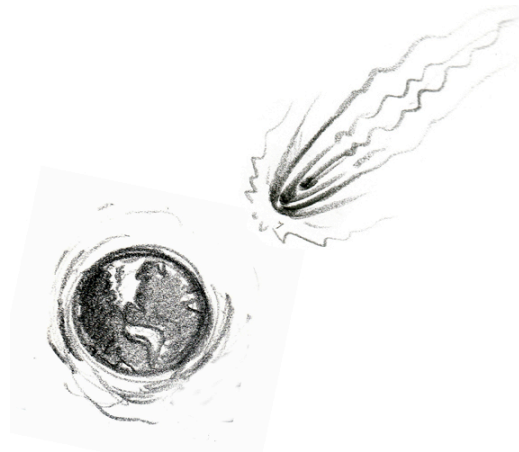


No one knows how long this sleep lasted. The first few to awaken from their deep slumber recall only a fantastic succession of strange new sensations and voices, the lancing pain of lightning-like strikes over their bodies causing some to gaze at themselves in awe, as if they'd never before noticed the extraordinarily long claws or the dazzling emerald or lavender hues of their eyes before. It was not until the moment that the first few of them broke the surface of the water in a geyser of sunlight and color did they realize that they had awoken and knew everything had changed; Bugaboos had just experienced their first dream. Their minds were gradually becoming conscious of seeing things not only as they appeared but *how they might be*. A new generation was awakening, inquisitive as toddlers and yet retaining the memory and experience of ancient immortals... an unusual and potent combination.

A momentous decision was reached amongst the newly awakened bugaboos and communicated via their unique method of wave vibrations to each of their kin. They would follow the imagination wave patterns back to Earth and learn the art of creativity from humans themselves! Only then would the bugaboo race be able to discover the full

potential of their native talents and develop the ability to evolve and defend themselves. Although they knew that a voyage from their homeworld to ours was countless light years in distance and full of unforeseeable dangers, the bugaboos were unanimous in their resolve to make the attempt. They correctly believed that to live without the wondrous stories and inventions that define a thriving society was not, in fact, truly living at all.

Bugaboos, as it turns out, are remarkably well equipped for long space voyages. Their extremely durable, polychromatic exoskeletons function like biological spacesuits. In addition, all bugaboos are endowed with a unique form of bioluminescence ... it's very easy to spot one another when they glow and pulse like fireflies. Finally, their hypersensitive awareness of imagination waves is good for something other than eating them... they can actually use these frequencies as vehicles for their own form of telepathy and thus maintain lines of communication many light years in distance. It's very similar to radio waves, except that imagination travels much faster than sound and we cannot understand a single "word" of the bugaboo language. If anything, it sounds like dolphins chirping to one another underwater...



The moment of the bugaboos' arrival on Earth was both a tragic and wondrous event. A particularly massive bugaboo who'd sheltered several of his smaller kin inside his hulking body did not survive the fiery, uncontrolled descent into our atmosphere and the explosive impact upon striking the ground. Those who survived mourned their brother and were both relieved and grateful for the conclusion of an epic journey that had lasted well over a century, in human terms of time. Spreading out to survey the area, it became quickly apparent to them that none of us (humans) could see their true form, so that is how I was "recruited" to invent earthly avatars for them. They decided that an artist- someone who spends all their waking hours creating forms out of the formlessness of imagination- would be the ideal one to conjure them into the "real"

world. Like myself, they are fascinated by bamboo and other natural materials. Bugaboos are especially delighted with the variety and beauty of insects and other arthropods found on earth and these tend to serve as the models of inspiration for their own avatars. What better way of celebrating the passion and inventiveness of life than by choosing to mimic a group making up more than 80% of all living animal species? I can't help but agree. The more that I research and learn about both the bugaboos and insects, and their uncanny resemblance to one another, the more awed I become by the sheer magnificence of worlds both under our feet and far above our heads...

Our friends, the newly arrived bugaboos, are here to share their knowledge of the cosmos and try to understand what it means to be an explorer of the creative self. As the ambassadors for their species, they are also hoping to observe and teach us about ourselves. All too often, we are blind to our own remarkable nature, as they themselves understood after their Great Metamorphosis.

And who knows? Perhaps someday an effort will be made to answer the greatest riddle of them all: Why do humans and bugaboos share such a symbiotic bond in the power of the imagination? With your help, we can answer that as we combine our creativity energies to bring the next generation of bugaboos to life!

