

# You can lock your door, but closet monsters are real

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I don't mean to scare you, but when they come, they come quietly. In fact, it may be the excessive silence that finally wakes you. More likely, a brilliant flash of light will disturb your slumber. Either way, you will sit up in bed, groggily rub your eyes, and notice that the door is ajar.

As your vision clears, several white objects will emerge from the blackness. Each of these objects will be approximately four feet tall. Adrenaline, generated by your first inklings of worry, will drag your sleepy brain to its senses. Only then, when you are fully awake, will you come to realize that you are not alone.

And there your journey will only have begun, if you are anything like the one hundred or so "experiencers" that Dr. John Mack has studied. Mack is a professor of psychiatry at Harvard's school of medicine. He's served in that capacity for more than 30 years; and somewhere along the way, he found time to write a Pulitzer-prize winning biography of Lawrence of Arabia.

Lately, his pursuits have been a bit more creepy. For the last several years, he has treated and studied people who claim to have been abducted by alien beings. These people need help, and Mack helps them. None of this would be newsworthy except for one thing: Mack is convinced that the stories he's hearing are true, and he's said so in a best-selling book titled "Abduction."

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## Wine in a box Ty Harris

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Well, the folks up at Harvard are less than thrilled. About a year ago, the dean of the medical school created an ad hoc committee to review Mack's research, and to decide whether to challenge his tenure. The resulting legal battle cost Mack over \$100,000.

Six weeks ago, Mack was finally cleared. Of course, academic freedom is none the better for it all. "In the end," concluded Mack's colleague Alan Dershowitz, "having to hire a law firm to defend your research will chill controversy." But something more than academic freedom is at issue.

You see, the people studied by Mack are not crazy. He carefully filters out

"abductees" who show any signs of mental illness. When he began his research, Mack was a skeptic, and he expected this filtering to be the end of it. As his research has progressed, he has discovered that his patients are often sane, successful, well-educated people. Most of them used to be skeptics themselves; and they stand to lose quite a bit if their stories become public.

Although Mack concerns himself only with the abductees themselves, other scientists have analyzed abduction as a complete phenomenon. Budd Hopkins, who

pioneered the credible study of abduction, will tell you more stories than you'd like to hear of abductee reports coinciding with independent physical and human verifications—burned ground or bright lights reported by neighbors and surgical scars left on abductees.

The evidence is substantial. No one who examines all of it can escape the conclusion that strange things are afoot. Scientists everywhere should be experiencing the kind of wonder that once took hold of Galileo.

Unfortunately, Harvard's capacity for wonder seems to have been dulled by the tabloids. Armed with the confidence that any question is answerable, our scientists have triumphantly pronounced alien abduction to be a non-question. They would do well instead to heed Descartes' caution, "that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the

original foundations, if I wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences."

Descartes knew he was looking for God, but Mack isn't so sure of himself. Eschewing the urge to interpret abduction as existing "literally on the purely material plane of reality," he won't yet go in for simple spaceships; and that's as it should be. The wonder here lies in our confronting something that can't be interpreted in terms of our current understanding.

Mack may never fully explain his own findings. We should welcome any thoughts he has to offer. But even if people like John Mack and Budd Hopkins leave this earth before announcing victory, they will have served you well—especially those of you who, late one night, may find yourselves leaving the earth under less favorable circumstances.

*Ty Harris is a Trinity senior.*

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