

# Invasion of the Space Bubbles

Once upon a time, a long time ago in the distant future, an army of large, amorphous globules descended onto Earth from the deepest recesses of outer space.

Though the globules had no faces – or any distinguishing features of any sort, really – the inhabitants of Earth immediately assumed their intentions to be hostile. Perhaps this was due to the speed and purpose with which the aliens came hurtling down from the clouds to the towns and cities below.

Military brigades were deployed at once to dispatch these “Space Bubbles,” as everyone soon began to call them. And indeed the faceless alien globules looked very much like large bubbles. However, they proved impossible to destroy by conventional military weapons. Bullets passed through them as if they weren’t there. And fire and poisonous gases just slid off them without causing any damage at all.

Some scientists theorized that the Space Bubbles were filled with a substance whose density and other properties were not found on Earth – something between a gel and a gas, perhaps. Other scientists suggested that the Space Bubbles were more like giant cells filled with cytoplasm.

It didn’t take long for the world governments to call off the military attacks. Despite the apparent aggression with which the Space Bubbles moved, they didn’t actually cause any damage or destruction. Nor did they attack anyone. Or even try to establish any kind of communication with the people of Earth. After further observation, it appeared they were looking for something. It didn’t take long before they found it.

The first incident occurred near Charlotte, North Carolina. People eventually got tired of watching the Space Bubbles float overhead, as they never seemed to do anything. In time, everyone returned to their daily routines – aware of the bubbles while still going about their business.

On a playground at Dabney Alex Behavioral School one sunny Tuesday afternoon, an 11 year old boy named Eugene, wearing a Cam Newton jersey and annoying a group of girls, suddenly lifted off the ground and started to float away. Classmates screamed and yelled and pointed. Teachers came running. As they all looked up, they could see that a Space Bubble had enveloped Eugene and was now carrying him off. The teachers with cooler heads soon stopped staring and called for help while ushering the rest of the students back into the building before any other abductions could occur.

News of the Space Bubble attack spread everywhere, instantly. While local authorities interviewed Eugene's classmates, trying to understand what might have triggered his kidnapping, similar incidents started to occur across the country. In each case, the Space Bubbles attacked swiftly and without warning, and in each case they carried their victim up into the sky to . . . No one knew where. There never had been, and there still was not, any sign of a spaceship. The Space Bubbles did not eat. They did not sleep. They just were there. Hovering. Omnipresent. Indestructible.

And still the Space Bubbles attempted no communication with the people of Earth. Nor did they respond to any attempts to communicate with them. People feared they would never see their missing loved ones again.

As the number of abductions increased and investigations into them continued in earnest, a few patterns started to emerge. As far as was known, all abductions had occurred in the U.S. And only boys between the ages of 10 and 14 had been taken. Various theories were posited about why this particular demographic was being targeted, but no theory applied wholly to all kidnappings. The whole situation was very perplexing.

Worse still, attempts to protect preadolescent boys proved futile. The first abductions all occurred outdoors, in the open, but the Space Bubbles became adept at entering even well fortified buildings and carrying off their young victims. They did this not by squeezing themselves through cracks or other small openings, but by disappearing and then reappearing inside the building. Younger people on Twitter compared it to wizards and witches disappearing in the *Harry Potter* books, while older Internet people asserted that it was more similar to the transporter mode of travel in *Star Trek*.

And indeed, this is how the Space Bubbles escaped with their victims from inside even windowless buildings. They would materialize suddenly, envelop an unfortunate and unsuspecting boy, and then dissolve – boy and bubble together – just as suddenly, only to reappear outside the building as they then floated up and away into the sky and beyond.

One theory about the abductions originated among peers of the victims and first gained notoriety among grown-ups as a source of absurd humor. But, despite how outrageous the idea sounded – and the corresponding degree to which it was ridiculed – the theory slowly, gradually gained credibility as more and more eyewitness accounts corroborated it.

The theory was this: The Space Bubbles were abducting young boys who *dabbed*.

And indeed, in all but a couple cases, multiple witnesses claimed with certainty that each unfortunate boy had dabbed enthusiastically shortly before being carried away by a Space Bubble.

And so, the dabbing idea advanced from crazy suggestion to plausible theory to widely accepted truth. And once accepted, the idea flummoxed nearly everyone. (Many parents and middle school teachers secretly felt a degree of sympathy for the motivations of the Space Bubbles.)

It was difficult to determine if the Space Bubbles were specifically targeting boys aged 10–14 or if they would kidnap anyone of any age, race, or gender who dared to dab. For in fact, even before the Space Bubbles arrived, it was only boys aged 10–14 who would be caught dead dabbing.

In any event, this news, however confounding, was mostly received across Earth with a tremendous sense of relief. The thinking went that if Space Bubbles were provoked into kidnapping only by the action of dabbing, that everyone could just stop dabbing altogether. In time, people hoped, the Space Bubbles would lose interest and return to wherever they came from. And if the only freedom people gave up was the freedom to dab, well . . . Let's just say some people (i.e. nearly everyone) on Earth considered that a "win-win."

But not everyone agreed. There were a few dissenters who resisted. Who resolved to fight. To fight for their right to dab.

The resistance was started by a 12 year old boy named Lee O'Neil. For Lee believed, with every fiber of his young being, that a world without dabbing would be a dark world indeed.

Lee was a passionate drummer. And it was through his drumming that he resolved to lead a revolution. He felt that if only he played his drums for truth, dabbing between each beat of the snare and every crash of the cymbal, that he could lead an army of rebels who, inspired by the truth and purity of his drum-playing, would rise up and destroy the Space Bubbles, or at least send them fleeing back to the bowels of space from whence they came, thereby preserving for all humankind across all time the freedom to dab. Because that is the only world in which Lee wished to live.

Lee's first act of rebellion was to play his drums in a public place. He chose the town green partly because it was in the center of town but mostly because it was close enough to ride his bike. He couldn't ask his parents to drive him because they would never approve of such a dangerous undertaking. Even more, they would never approve of dabbing in public, Space Bubbles or no Space Bubbles.

Lee fashioned a makeshift trailer that he could use to tow his drum kit with his bike. He also brought his iPod and a tripod so that he could record his dabbing-and-drum-playing session and post it to YouTube so that many more fellow revolutionaries could be inspired outside of just his small New England town.

And dab and drum he did, as he had never dabbled and drummed before. As if in a trance. As if his life depended on it. Pausing only occasionally to stare into the camera and shout, "Dab with me! Dab now! Dab forever!"

A growing crowd gathered around Lee and his drums as he played and dabbled and played. Many people pleaded with him to stop, whether from fear of the Space Bubbles, from a strong feeling of discomfort at witnessing so much dabbing all at once, or a mixture of the two. Other people filmed him with their own phones and cameras. Everyone expected Lee to be carried away at any moment by a Space Bubble.

But Lee did not float away in a Space Bubble. Several bubbles did speed towards him. And if faceless bubbles can look angry, they did. But each bubble stopped several yards short and appeared unable to advance further. Whether it was the drumming or the combination of drumming with dabbing, Lee's performance seemed to rattle and to weaken the Space Bubbles. Slowly, they retreated.

Finally, exhausted, Lee stopped. He glanced upward. No Space Bubbles in sight. He pumped his fists in triumph, again looking directly into the camera. A few younger people cheered. Most people just quietly wandered off. After catching his breath, Lee quickly packed up his iPod and drums and headed home, all the while scanning the sky for signs of angry bubbles.

He jumped off his bike as he pulled into the garage at home, leaving the drum kit strapped to the makeshift trailer. He dashed inside and immediately started to upload the video of his performance to YouTube. To his astonishment, he noticed as he opened the YouTube app that a video of him drumming in the center of town already appeared in the "Trending" section of the app's main screen. After watching the video, he was astonished once again to see the comments section updating in real time with mostly enthusiastic support for his act of defiance. Some commenters cheered him on, while others promised to carry out similar acts of musical rebellion.

As soon as his own video had finished uploading, the counter starting recording hundreds and then thousands of views, and the comments section filled up with a few eye rolls but mostly sympathetic support. And again, dozens of commenters promising to carry out public "concerts" of their own. Lee stayed up much of the night in this way, watching new videos as they were posted, reading through the comments and posting his own. A small online community started to form that night, and with it a revolution. Or at least a hashtag: #d4d (Drum 4 Dabbing).

The following days and weeks did see many solo public performances full of impassioned dabbing. Most of these were not successful. While many performers stuck to playing drums, many more chose other instruments. It turns out that the Space Bubbles were not bothered in the least by guitars or harmonicas or trumpets or keyboards or kazoos, no matter how accomplished the musician. Every single one of the non-drumming performers was abducted.

But even those who stuck to percussion instruments of some sort were not guaranteed success. A not insignificant number of dabbing percussionists were not, in fact, actually percussionists. Many had never played drums at all. In their enthusiasm, they scrounged up whatever drum-like instruments they could procure – some just used pots and pans – and proceeded to make a lot of noise in between dabs. Noise-making and dabbing did not prove to be an effective Space Bubble deterrent. Rather, the more accomplished the drum playing, the further it drove the Space Bubbles away.

There were only so many 10–14 year old boys in the country who were adequate drummers and who felt passionately about dabbing. (Although, on the other hand, the two did seem to go hand-in-hand.) Since Lee started the #d4d movement, and because he was actually a pretty good drummer, he naturally became the movement's leader and figurehead.

Before long, Lee and his cohorts grew dissatisfied with solitary acts of rebellion. They wanted to do something bigger. And so a grand plan began to form.

Instead of individual drumming performances, all #d4d devotees would gather together in one place and drum their drums and dab their dabs at the same time in one massive drumming-and-dabbing act of unified public defiance that would drive the Space Bubbles from Earth forever and leave Lee and his fellows free to dab in peace. (Well, in relative peace. They would still have to contend with the protests of their parents and their siblings and all their other relatives and their neighbors and their teachers and their coaches and their religious leaders and local law enforcement and everyone else of discerning taste and anyone concerned about humankind's ability to endure and thrive.)

The group agreed that they should meet where this all started: in Charlotte, as close to the Dabney Alex Behavioral School as they could manage without attracting unwanted attention from local officials. Space Bubbles were enough to confront.

And so, on a humid June afternoon in Charlotte, North Carolina, on a flat abandoned lot between an old cemetery and the Dabney Alex school, 2,112 drummer boys – all between the ages of 10 and 14 – congregated with their drum kits and their collective desire to dab.

And dab and drum they did. With all the righteous fury they could command. And thus commenced one large, discordant act of rebellion. The key word being "discordant." For the drummers had never rehearsed together, and, naturally, were at varying levels of drumming ability. They had agreed to start their concert by playing Rage Against the Machine's *Killing in the Name\**, and this did seem to stun and fluster the Space Bubbles, who collectively retreated. The boys cheered and played on.

\* Originally the boys chose *Tom Sawyer* as their opening song. But it turns out none of them were actually able to play it.

Song by song they drummed and dabbed through their setlist, hopeful that their plan was working. That they were driving the Space Bubbles from the face of the earth forever. They had agreed on 20 songs, with the big finale being AC/DC's *Thunderstruck* followed by Led Zeppelin's *When the Levee Breaks*.

But as the boys approached those final two songs, the Space Bubbles were far from banished. They had retreated but remained visible in the distance. Perhaps this is because that, while many of the boys were accomplished percussionists, many others were not. They wanted so badly to be part of the movement, to fight for dabbing, that they thought being around better drummers would hide their own poor playing.

No matter though. Lee rallied the troops as they started the last two songs, leading them in a collective shout of the #d4d motto: "Dab now! Dab forever!"

These were the two songs that the boys knew best, and they played with an exhausted, frantic energy. And the Space Bubbles did retreat farther away.

As the echo of the last bass drum faded, every boy paused and looked to the sky. A feeling of hopeful anticipation hung in the air. The Space Bubbles were not gone entirely, but only the largest of the bubbles could be seen faintly up among the clouds.

For endless seconds this quiet standoff continued.

And then . . . It seemed as though the last of the Space Bubbles might have faded from view. Could it be? Each boy shaded his eyes and looked again, hopeful.

And then each adolescent heart sank as the largest collection of Space Bubbles they had ever seen emerged from the clouds, led by the largest single Space Bubble any of them had ever seen. (A Boss Space Bubble, if you will.)

Following the Boss Bubble, the Space Bubbles hurtled towards the dabbing drummers. The boys, so surprisingly organized up to now, were thrown into chaos. Some yelled out in fear. Some started drumming again. Some just looked around, confused. And a few fled from the field, leaving their drums behind. A group of Space Bubbles broke ranks to chase down those who ran.

Lee tried to rally everyone. Many joined him in another "Dab Now! Dab Forever!" chant. He tried to get everyone to play the setlist over again from the beginning. But some boys started playing

other songs. Even those who correctly started with *Killing in the Name* could not manage to play in unison. The boys were too panicked to play in time, at the same speed.

The disorder and discord made the boys easier targets for the Space Bubbles.

Now fully riled up, the Space Bubbles systematically set about picking off the dabbers one by one. They started with the easiest targets: those who had stopped drumming and those who played so poorly that they did not deter the attackers. And as more and more boys were abducted, many others fled (in each case, futilely).

In this way, the ranks of the precocious percussionists dwindled until only a handful of the most accomplished and committed drummers remained, still led by Lee. This smaller group was able, finally, to regroup and to begin playing the full setlist again. And with a renewed energy brought on by desperation, they drummed and dabbled ferociously and succeeded, briefly, in turning back the Space Bubbles once more.

But the Space Bubbles had time on their side. And their ranks now far outnumbered the dabbling drummers. They were content to hover menacingly, ready to strike as soon as a drummer tired.

And that is exactly what they did until, finally, only Lee remained.

To this point, the Boss Space Bubble had hung back, allowing his soldier Space Bubbles to do their single-minded work. But now all those other Space Bubbles retreated slightly, and the Boss Bubble slowly advanced, stopping to hover directly in front of Lee and his drum kit.

Perhaps, if Lee has stopped dabbling just then and just drummed his drumming free of dabs, he might have avoided capture. Perhaps.

But dabbling, even more than drums, was Lee's one true passion, what he was put on earth to do. He couldn't stop dabbling now any more than he could stop breathing. And so he dabbled and drummed wildly away, attempting, as his last stand, to play *Tom Sawyer*.

So strong were his convictions and so intense his concentration that he did not even notice as the Boss Bubble slowly descended, enveloped him and his whole drum kit, and then rose just as slowly.

And so it was in this way that the first *#d4d* drummer became the last *#d4d* drummer, carried away by the giantest Space Bubble, drum kit and all, drumming and dabbling with reckless, oblivious abandon as he drifted up up up...

And as boy and bubble faded from view, the curious invasion of the Space Bubbles ended as abruptly as it began.

While no one questioned the motivations of the Space Bubbles – those were patently understandable – many did wonder where they went. What became of Lee and all those young dabbers? Where were they taken? Were they to be imprisoned forever? Would they be treated okay? Would they ever get to return to Earth? Would they ever get to see their families again?

Or maybe, could everyone have misunderstood the Space Bubbles? Is it possible they actually *liked* dabbing so much and were so distraught at not being able to dab themselves – having no arms and all – that they required a retinue of young dabbers to dwell among them so they could all have one giant dabbing party up there in Space Bubble land?

For now, we must set those questions aside. Perhaps the fate of Lee and the dabbers will be told in another tale at a later time.

For now, let's return to Earth in the present. After the Space Bubbles departed, no one anywhere ever dabbled again. And middle school teachers everywhere lived happily ever after.

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THE END