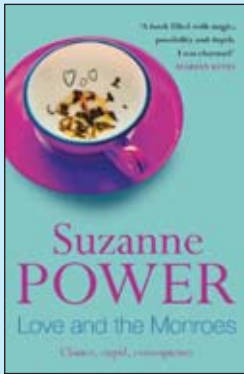


# Close encounters of a blurred mind

Matthew Edwards discusses alienation, and how to avoid it.



*How to defend yourself against alien abduction* by Anne Druffel, Piatkus Books, ISBN: 0749919418



*Love and the Monroes* by Suzanne Power, Hodder Headline Ireland, ISBN: 0340752033



**H**OW TO DEFEND YOURSELF AGAINST ALIEN ABDUCTION, by Anne Druffel, is by far the best book on the subject that I have ever read. It offers the beginner would-be non-abductee a variety of techniques to use against alien abductors, together with many artistic diagrams and fascinating case studies.

## Struggles and intuition

The first technique described is mental struggle. The opening paragraph tells us how mental struggle can be used in the presence of 'unwelcome bedroom visitors'; the technique requires 'a strong-willed person who is convinced that his or her rights are being assailed'. Reading this, parents of small children will realise that they are about to receive some useful advice. Victims are advised to concentrate on moving a finger or toe (presumably theirs, although the instructions are not entirely clear); once the finger or toe has been moved, the unwelcome bedroom intruders should retreat.

Resistance technique number two is physical struggle. This is not a very interesting technique. The chapter summary usefully reminds us, 'the intent should never be to kill or seriously injure the intruders, but to inform them that their presence is violating the witness's right to privacy'. Resistance technique number three is righteous anger. If aliens are about to abduct you, use phrases such as 'go away' or 'leave me alone'. The book does not tell us if stronger language may inadvertently lead to intergalactic diplomatic incidents of grave consequence.

Techniques four and five, protective rage and support from family members, are not without points of interest, including the case studies of Morgana and Toni. However, far more powerful are the techniques described in the subsequent chapters: intuition and metaphysical methods. In the section on intuition, we learn that our intuitive

foreknowledge of an alien abduction attempt may itself deter such an attempt. Metaphysical methods does not, surprisingly, involve discoursing to the aliens on the thinking of St Thomas Aquinas and his like, but involves merely conjuring up the vision of some protective bright white light forming a shield around the victim. 'Internal sound' can also have a similar protective effect.

## Repulsive

Technique number eight is the 'appeal to spiritual personages', and one of the case studies shows that St Michael the Archangel (left) can have a useful role to play in warding off alien abductors. The last, and most convenient, technique described involves the use of repellents. Here we learn of the various objects and substances that may deter unwelcome extra-

planetary kidnappers. Specific substances recommended are:

- ◆ Herbs, flower essences, and oils (the author advises us to 'experiment with these carefully, as the strengths needed for individual experiences have not been determined', although precisely how experiments are to be organised is unclear).
- ◆ Salt, iron bars, crucifixes, and crosses (of course, 'experiment with bar magnets to attain the polarity that works best for you').

In summary, this is an essential book – especially so for actuaries, since our rare knowledge and skills obviously make us prime targets for alien abductors. Since reading it, and practising some of the myriad techniques therein described, I have not – to my knowledge – been abducted by aliens (although I have suffered some suspicious losses of consciousness, of inexplicably long duration, during Staple Inn meetings). Try it and see.

## Love among the actuaries

On the subject of things alien, successful non-abductees may be interested in the book *Love and the Monroes*, by Suzanne Power. This seems to be an example of what I believe is called 'chick lit' (as discussed in suitably bemused tones by Alan Frost in the September 2004 issue), but it is notable in that (i) the title does not involve shopping, capital cities, or wanton acts, and (ii) the protagonist is an actuary.

On starting the book, I had been looking forward to reading some breezy descriptions of ICAs, perhaps with vigorous fornication going on as the credit risk model whirred in the background, or as the operational risk team flipped their coins; I had been looking forward to reading blood-warming descriptions of life among the guidance notes; and I had been greatly looking forward to reading scenes in which the characters would resort to *Actuary* magazine editorials as a sure cure for a broken heart. Imagine my disgust on finding that the heroine's job was that of risk manager in a bookmaking firm: what a cop-out! Not a single FSA regulation in sight, let alone any reference to this great magazine.

The heroine gives as one of the reasons for moving from her original insurance job to a job at a bookmaker, 'it got me round using the term "actuary", which is one up from pest controller and undertaker in the league table of off-putting jobs, but it's still ranked below politician, tax inspector, and traffic warden'. That may give some idea of how much research into actuaries went into this book.

Pliny (the Elder) contended that no book is so bad that it does not contain at least one item of interest. I would have liked to say, jocularly, that in the case of this book at least the words 'the end' were of interest. However, I gave up on this tripe long before that. Perhaps the book would be effective in warding off alien abductors? □