



# What's A Wallace To Do?

by James Seidler

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I've had it. I've absolute bloody had it. I think the moment when I knew for sure that I'd absolute bloody had it was when I opened up my *National Geographic* a few months ago to see "Was Darwin Wrong?" emblazoned on the cover. Darwin! As if he's the only bloody one who'd thought of it. I fired off a letter to the editors immediately, but they never responded, and so my new issues are treated to the garbage can the moment they come in, not even removed from their protective brown wrapper, all because of the same bloody nonsense that occurs whenever the subject comes up.

Excuse me. I'm sorry to get so bothered. It's just...well, let me start off by introducing myself. My name is Thomas Albert Wallace, a name that, if history is of any indication, you don't recognize in the slightest. But you should, because I am the great-great-grandson of Alfred Russell Wallace, co-founder and co-discoverer of what has been described as the "single best idea anyone [or in this case, any two persons] ever had." That idea is, of course, the theory of evolution.

And yet, I live in a flat with no stove, eating canned tuna for dinner while the Darwin's are living it up across town with their Rolls Royces and chauffeurs and diamond collars for the pack of bloody Pekingese that accompanies them anywhere. Every night I choke on how unfair it is, what a genius my great-great-grandfather was and how I have absolutely nothing to show for it financially. And then it came to me, in an advertisement in the back pages of *Current Science*.

"Make your thoughts on evolution known," it said. "Let the Kansas School Board know how you feel about their plans to remove Darwin's Theory from the curriculum."

Topeka, I thought, here I come.

"I don't believe in Charles Darwin," were the first words I heard as I walked into the conference room.

All right, I thought, these are my kind of people.

The whole trip in had been excellent. The suitcases streaming by on the baggage carousel were distinguishable by the shade of their "Darwin was wrong" stickers, and the taxi that I took into the city trailed an elevated truck whose bumper wore that bastard's name superimposed on a lizard being crushed by a great mallet. Great example of marketing that, I thought—the royalties from the crushed lizards alone probably made possible the Darwin's summer home in the Virgin Islands. A whole industry had sprung up around them, t-shirts and bumper stickers, best-sellers and action figures, and they were getting every slice of the pie. It only seemed fair that they should have to face a little competition. After all, this was America.

So as the woman went on about Charles Darwin and God's holy plan I took my seat, ignored her politely, and introduced myself as soon as the meeting was over.

"Everything you had to say was spot on," I told her. "But you do realize that you're only scraping the surface...."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Oh, darling," I told her. "The whole thing goes well beyond Darwin. It's far more entrenched than that, funded by this very government, dedicated to the ruination of the very values that you hold dear." I snuck a glance around the room, then drew her in with the wag of a finger. "You might even say it's a conspiracy," I whispered.

"A conspiracy?" she asked.

"Tell me," I asked, "have you ever heard of Alfred Russell Wallace?"

She shook her head. A familiar pang kicked at my stomach.

"That's how they want it," I said, pretending to eye the room warily. "Darwin wasn't the only one who got this ball rolling. In fact, you could say that Wallace was the real devil here—it was his paper on 'natural selection,'" I inserted the quotes with my voice, "that prompted Darwin to publish his own nonsense."

"Really?"

"I wish I could say otherwise," I told her, "but ...how rude of me! We haven't been properly introduced. My name," I said, extending my hand with a flourish, "is Tibius Bixby."

"Jan Wilkins, Southern Baptist," she answered.

"How charming. Listen Jan, I love what you're trying to do, but has the thought ever crossed your mind that you might be putting all of your eggs in one basket?"

She frowned. "I'm just trying to do Christ's work."

"And bless you for it. But, even if you discredit Darwin, wouldn't the anti-Christian elite just put forward some alternative tomorrow? No, I have to wonder if a more comprehensive approach might be more effective. Put them all in—Wallace, and Mendel, and Mayr—devote your energies to discrediting the whole bloody lot!"

"I could bring it up at the next strategy meeting."

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“God bless you if you do,” I told her, passing through the sign of the cross. “God bless you if you do.”

A fat man announced on a microphone that the meeting was coming back to order.

“I have to be taking my seat,” Jan said. “But...well, this sounds silly, but I’ve been all around Kansas and...you aren’t from around here, are you?”

“I’m English,” I told her. “Or, as I prefer to say, Anglican.”

She shook my hand. “It was a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Bixby.”

“Don’t forget, Jan. Alfred Russell Wallace.”

“I won’t,” she said.

That was twelve months ago. Yesterday in The Sun, I was happy to see a notice in the classifieds, right below the contest advertisement for the new Page 3 weathergirl, stating, “Pekingese: Free to a good family.” I immediately turned to the auto portion, hoping to find a good deal on a Rolls.

It was there, and at a considerable markdown. Natural selection indeed, I thought. Serves the bastards right.