

HOW THE HELL DID I GET HERE, AND WHERE ARE MY CLOTHES?

CHAPTER 1 - Yuchtar

Ed Straker, SHADO Commander, had a frown on his face; which was a pity, really, as it was a lovely face otherwise. The frown grew deeper as he read more of the script before him. His cover as a film producer could be a drag sometimes, but he usually enjoyed reading a good script -- and this one was good: very well written. He had to admit, it was quite entertaining as well. If only it didn't read like a SHADO log book . . .

It was all there: Moonbase, Interceptors, SID, SkyDivers . . . even the HQ beneath the London film studio! Oh, the names were different, to be sure, but there HAD to be a security leak -- a MASSIVE security leak; and if/when General Henderson got wind of it, there would be Hell to pay.

He recalled a similar script he'd read a couple years before -- written by a man plagued with ESP. ESP that was enhanced by Alien control . . . He had tapped into the thoughts of Colonel Paul Foster as the Colonel lay in hospital, having been injured in the Ufoe incident that had killed the man's wife. He'd written everything down, and tried to use the script to lure Straker and Colonel Freeman to their deaths. Straker now shuddered slightly as he recalled how close death had been.

There was a gentle knock at the door and Straker said, "Yes, Paul, it's open."

The office door opened and Colonel Paul Foster poked his head in. "You wanted to see me, Commander?"

"Yes, come in, Paul."

"What's that, a new script?" Foster said as he nodded toward the thick manuscript on the desk.

"You haven't been stalked by any strange little men lately, have you?"

Foster frowned. He knew what Straker was alluding to and he didn't find it at all amusing. "That's not funny, Commander; you know I killed Croxley, and you know how much I agonized over that whole ordeal afterwards too."

"Yes, I apologise, Paul; but you'll understand when you've read a few pages of this." Straker tossed the script across the desk.

Foster picked it up and sat down to read a few pages. His jaw soon dropped and a look of total incredulity replaced the irritated frown. "What the bloody hell is this? Some kind of twisted joke?"

"We could hope, but I seriously doubt it. I want you to check out the author, find out what's what."

"Who is he?"

"The name is Jenny Papa."

"Jenny? A woman . . ."

"That's right. "

"And you want me to chat her up, get her drunk and give her the third degree over bacon and eggs in the morning, is that it?"

Straker wasn't sure he liked the other man's sarcastic tone of voice. "You have a problem with this, Colonel?"

Foster raised his voice. "Too bloody right, I have a problem with this! Why am I always the one who has to sweet talk the female suspects and then betray them afterwards?" He knew he shouldn't be speaking to the Commander in this way, but he was getting angry -- and too old to be playing gigelo for Queen and Country . . . or even Straker and Planet, for that matter . . .

"You're good at it," Straker said quietly. "Look, why are you getting so upset over this? You haven't even seen her, yet -- you might enjoy it."

"Oh! Yeah, well I've always enjoyed it before, haven't I? Oh yeah, we need a bit of info from some slick bird, so send in ol' Foster boy; he'll charm the varnish off a church pew . . ."

"What the Hell, Paul?" Straker was getting a little hot himself now. "If you don't want to do it, just say so! I'll find someone else!"

"Like who? You?"

"Oh, what? I couldn't do it? What is this anyway? Some kind of sick challenge? Look, that's fine, Colonel; I'll handle the situation myself -- you're dismissed, and don't hit your ass with the door on your way out."

Foster slammed the script down on the desk. "Fine!" he yelled as he headed for the door.

"Fine!" Straker called back as the younger man left.

As the door closed behind Foster, Straker already regretted his outburst. He didn't like to lose control, and Foster had pushed some hidden buttons Straker hated to admit existed. Fact was, he considered himself not at all adept in social situations. Since the breakup of his marriage, he had pretty much given up on any thought of a personal social life -- even giving the occasional mandatory press interview as head of Harlington-Straker Studios could be taxing . . .

Well, he shrugged to himself, how hard could it be to sound out a script writer/possible mole, anyway? It's not like he had to take her to bed or anything. He slid the script back into its envelope and placed it into his narrow briefcase.

* * *

After he rang the bell, Straker could hear Miss Papa yelling through the door and began to suspect the simple vetting exercise might not be so simple after all.

"What?!" Jenny Papa was saying. "You Anglicans are as bad as Jehova's Witnesses!" The door flew open and she continued: "I said earlier that . . . Oh, good God! I'll convert right now, where do I sign?"

"What?" It was a flimsy response, Straker knew, but he really couldn't think of anything wittier . . .

"Sorry," she said with an open grin. "I thought you were the Anglican Missionary guy who lives down the hall -- he's been trying to convert me from my Pagan ways . . . And, honey, if he looked half as fine as you, I'd have joined up on the spot. Whatever you're selling, I'll take two."

Siezing the brief opening he sensed as she stopped to take a breath, Straker hastily interjected, "I'm Ed Straker, Miss Papa."

"YOU'RE Ed Straker? Head of Harlington-Straker Studios? Wow, I've never had a producer come out in person to reject a script before; so does this mean you like it so well you didn't even wanna waste time talking it over with my agent? Pity, really, cause I have a strict moral code that forbids me from throwing myself at anyone I'm working with and man, I could drown in those eyes."

She had to breathe again. "Are you always so talkative?" "No," she answered. "Come in, Mr. Straker . . . That grin is dynamite, by the way."

Straker hadn't realized he was grinning, but he really couldn't help it; this woman certainly didn't seem to have been taken over by Aliens . . . Of course, there were no particular tell-tale signs . . .

"Fact is," she continued as she lead him into her flat, "I'm a little drunk. I know, I know -- it's early, and I'm not really a drinking person normally, but a friend brought me a jar of poteen -- ever have any?"

"No."

"Want some?"

"No, thank you."

"It's perfectly dreadful stuff, really, and I hadn't expected it to effect me the way it has, you see. So, sit down, Ed; can I get you anything? Coffee, tea, soda?"

"I wouldn't mind a cup of coffee, actually," Straker responded as he sat down at her kitchen table.

"You're American, aren't you? New England?"

"That's right; same as you, Miss Papa."

"Cool . . . call me Jenny -- Papa sounds so Popish, you know? And, how does a fair-haired Colonial boy become head of an English film studio, anyway?"

Straker sighed and glanced at the clock on the wall; this was going to take a little longer than he had anticipated, and the fact that she smelled of vanilla and had huge brown eyes really didn't help matters.

CHAPTER 1:2 - By Allen Millner (broman19@winusa.com)

As Jenny swayed into the kitchen, Straker watched her and was wondering if perhaps Paul had done him a favor by turning him down this time. Her dress was form fitting and her body moved just like tunes from his favorite song. That's why he was so distracted when Jenny offered him a cup of coffee. "Would you like sugar, or cream, Ed". Straker felt rather silly and just accepted both.

Jenny sat across from Straker and asked him, "Well what were you thinking about a minute ago, Ed?" Straker thought fast and responded with, "This script, it seems a lot like it would make a good Sci-fi show, where did you get your resources?". Jenny smiled a wicked smile at Straker and he could feel the sweat on his brow. He was surprised at how out of the social scene he really was. Once again he was caught unaware and never saw the person behind him. The last thing Straker saw was her shapely legs as he was losing consciousness.....

CHAPTER 1:3 - by Crimson Algerine (algerine@sover.net)

Straker didn't know what woke him up first--the dull throb in his head or the blinding light in his eyes.

"Ah, it seems our guest of honor has decided to join us." Straker opened his eyes just a small fraction, filtering out as much of the bright light as he could. The light was coming from in front of him. It looked like it was coming from a spotlight, the kind they use in theatre.

Beyond that, he could see very little. A figure, maybe two.

"When I threw out my line, I thought I would reel in some expendable operative, or Paul Foster at best. But to land Colonel Ed Straker himself? The Commander of SHADO? And not one operative covering him? I wish I had this luck with the bookies."

The voice was male. English. Liverpool maybe? Even after all these years in the UK, Straker still had a hard time placing English accents.

"Come, come, Commander, why so silent? Cat got your tongue? I didn't think our Ms. Papa had that much time alone with you."

"Look, I don't know what you're talking about," Straker replied. "I'm Ed Straker, but I don't know what all this Colonel talk is all about. I never made it higher than Major before I left the Air Force."

"So modest, Commander. Maybe that's what it says on your official record, but you and I know that's not the one that's kept at the UN. You and I know you really didn't retire in '74 to take over a failing movie studio. You and I know the secrets that lay under the backlot of Harlington- Straker. You and I know--"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Straker repeated. He moved his arms. Manacles. No chance to slip his bonds in this case. "I work for the UN? Secrets under the movie studio? I came here to buy Ms. Papa's script."

"Come on, Commander, surely you weren't hit on the head that hard. You can come up with something better than that. I am interested in that, though. Why did you come and not your lapdog, Foster? Been too long since you got in a bird's knickers?"

Straker tried to smile, though the pain in his head and the glare probably turned it into something more like a grimace. "I'm a movie producer. It's never a case of how long it's case of how many."

The voice laughed. "Come come, Colonel, give up the charade. It would make things so much easier if you did. All we want from you is some cooperation."

"Cooperation?"

"Yes. Cooperation. You do what we want, and we'll let you go."

"I already said I'd buy the script."

The voice laughed again. "Perhaps Harlington-Straker Studios would do better if you produced comedies, Commander. You have a great sense of humor."

Straker's patience was nearing an end. "What do you want?"

"Want? Oh, nothing much, Commander. All I want is for you to help us steal a Skydiver."

CHAPTER 2 - By Grant Wray (g.wray@ucl.ac.uk)

Just as the gates of Harlington Straker Studios had opened for Ed Straker the previous afternoon, so they swung smoothly back along well-oiled tracks to admit the sleek red sports car that waited outside. The driver pulled his arm back into the car, folding his security badge wallet at the same time and slipping it into his jacket's inside pocket. He flashed the security guard a grin from beneath the dark glasses, and as the car pulled off his jaws continued their up-down, up-down chewing, still grinning. The car drove slowly past tubs of flowers, stacks of lighting gear, and a large polystyrene hand before pulling into a parking bay marked "P. Foster - Staff Director".

"Ah, Miss Ealand, how delightful you look this fine summer day."

Paul's usual greeting to Miss Ealand was met, as always, by a smile, and a knowing look.

"You're in luck Paul. From what I heard yesterday you had a bit of a run-in with Straker. Well he's not come in yet, so you're still safe."

Paul looked slightly concerned, "Has he phoned in yet?"

"No, not yet. Last thing he said before he left yesterday afternoon was that he was going to see a ... Miss Papa."

Paul grinned again "I bet he's having a whale of a time."

The double doors to Straker's office slid smoothly open, and Foster strode confidently in. He crossed to behind the desk and pressed a button on the console. The doors slide shut again. He sat down in Straker's large leather chair, then lifted his legs onto the desk. Taking the well chewed gum from his mouth, Paul stuck it over the secret emergency call button hidden under the desk. He'd been doing it ever since he'd joined SHADO, and Straker hadn't said a thing about it yet; perhaps the great man was too great to be bothered by such a childish prank, but Foster did it anyway. Taking up the cigar box in one hand, he flipped open the lid and recited a line from "The Hunting of the Snark".

"VOICE IDENTIFICATION POSITIVE. FOSTER, PAUL"

The landscape outside began to rise, and was soon replaced by bare-faced concrete as the office-cum-lift descended into the bowels of SHADO HQ.

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The blinding light that poured into Straker's tear wetted eyes faded to a dull orange, then went out. As his vision was still faded he paid more attention to his other senses. Where could he be? He could hear a drip, drip, drip of water into a basin. There was a faint smell of antiseptic, behind the dusty smell of disuse he'd first noticed. The muted roar of traffic was another giveaway; a dull rumble felt through his feet, every three minutes or so. London? A disused operating theatre in a closed down hospital in London?

"Well that really narrows it down", he thought sarcastically.

How had he gotten here? What time was it? What day was it? One thing was for sure, his captor, the one who'd spoken, must be really pissed off at having a Liverpool accent. How he must long to have a pure BBC accent, then he would REALLY be able to play the bad guy. Straker knew he had to be very careful, this crowd were obviously a few cans short of a six-pack.

The clink of metal against metal stirred him from his musings.

"No doubt you are having difficulty seeing yet Colonel. The blindness will pass. I thought you'd like a little rest before we begin the next phase of our research venture, shall we say."

"I don't know anything about this damned Skydiver you keep on about. Is this something to do with the documentary about the Red Devils we released last year?"

Straker managed to turn his head and past the padded head restraint he caught sight of a surgical trolley. It was loaded with an array of instruments he was all too familiar with, having used them himself several times in the past to attempt "communication" with the aliens. 'So this is how the aliens must feel when SHADO gets their hands on them', he thought.

"Ah, your vision is returning, for the moment at least. I've always been fascinated by medicine, especially surgery, but they said I was 'unsuitable' as a doctor. Critics! I'm sure you understand, Colonel."

CHAPTER 3 - by Robitron (stu4052@westga.edu)

Paul Foster could imagine Straker's predicament at the moment. The commander would be trying to find a polite way to part company with Ms Papa so he could "go back and produce her wonderful ideas into a movie." And, Straker would say "I know just the part that you would be perfect for. Can you do a Russian accent?"

Paul walked past the rows of computer displays, all blinking like christmas. Doctor Jackson was rounding the corner towards him and suddenly Paul got dizzy. A bright light was burning into his field of view and he could see a horizon and a very small man walking toward him. He thought for a moment he could hear Julee Cruise singing wispily in the swirling background rush of noises. As the little man approached, Paul could see that he had a cup of tea in one hand and what looked like a remote control in the other. The little man stopped and said "You know me, but much later. n'est pas?" Paul blinked "What the hell is going on here?" He tried to turn around but something was holding him still.

"Your friend Straker needs a ride home now. He's in a building at Pinewood Studios in London."

Paul could see an image dematerialize. Commander Straker was having tea with Jenny Papa in her bed room or so he thought. Paul said, "are you sure I need to get him now?"

"Yes of Course, you fool! Cant you see what's happening?" Paul thought about this for a long moment. He remembered an appointment he had with one of the executives at Pinewood Studios today. The lights started swirling and Paul got dizzy again. It got dark and then he woke up in Dr. Jackson's arms.

Dr. Jackson let go as Paul leapt about 6 feet in the air, eyes wide open, looking around wildly. The little man was gone and all Paul could hear was the drone of the computer systems and the reels of magnetic tape spinning at their pace.

"Paul, what happened? What's the matter?"

"I don't know. I just had this crazy dream. I thought I saw commander Straker. There was this little man..."

Jackson frowned "was he a little GREEN man?"

"Of course not! He was drinking tea for God's sake!"

"I think perhaps we need to run some tests on you. You may have ingested something dangerous."

"We dont have time for that now, I get the feeling this Jenny Papa isnt acting alone."

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Straker struggled, still tied to an operating gurney. His mysterious abductor is aproacing with a large hypodermic needle.

"This is just a little something to loosen you up ducky." He inserted the needle into Straker's vein and closed the plunger. Straker could feel the room start spinning.

"Pleasant dreams my pretty."

Straker looked into the man's face for the first time. He looked vaguely familiar without the surgical mask. everything started to blur and he was out cold.

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Paul waited while two nonuniformed SHADO operatives were summoned to accompany him. He was going to have to keep a low profile in the area surrounding Pinewood Studios - too many potential witnesses if anything goes wrong. The two plainclothesmen arrive and the 3 go to the service elevator and head toward the black sedan that Bendix and Delk would follow

him in.

"You guys stay in the shadows, if you know what I mean" and he winks at them. Bendix and Delk grin knowingly and get in the car. Paul saunters over to his car and gets in. Engine on: darting ahead of Bendix and Delk in their Bullet-proof, electromagnetically shielded, atmospherically controlled suburban tank for lack of a better phrase.

Paul is thinking "If someone can communicate with me telepathically, how do I know whether they tell me the truth or not? Obviously they want me to come to this studio, one of our rivals in the "real" world. But what do they really want?" He pushes his car around the corner and up the drive to Pinewood. He stops at the gate and presses the down button for the window.

"Hi, I have an appointment with Mr. Blackwell. The name's Paul Foster." The guard looks down at a clipboard and frowns. "I have your name here sir. Do you know these people?" He gestures toward the black boxy sedan.

"These people are with me sir. We'll be meeting with Mr Blackwell today."

"Very good sir." The guard turns and flips a switch. The gate raises and Paul tips his imaginary hat at the guard as they roll past into the studio parking facility.

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Straker wakes up, realizes his hands are free and looks around. He's in a small sterile looking holding cell of some kind. He has a terrible headache but otherwise feels pretty good aside from a few sore spots.

"Are you okay?"

Straker turns around and can see Jenny Papa in a similar cell accross the hall from him. "Where are we?"

"We're on a backlot at Pinewood studios. Why are they doing this? I only sent them my script because that Blackwell man called me. He said he would like to see it first, before I offered it to Harlington-Straker. Mr. Straker, what are they going to do to us?"

"Well, you're either a pretty good actress, or I'm not the only pawn in this game."

Jenny got up and straightened her skirt. "Do you think they're going to steal my script?" Her long auburn hair was let down now, her big brown eyes looked sad.

"I don't mean to alarm you miss Papa but I'm afraid that's the least of our worries now." Straker was really wondering if she was acting or if she was sincere. He also stood up and grabbed the bars of his cell "Why did you write your script about me? Why my studio?"

"I have been a fan of your's since I saw your picture with my father, Ronald McFegan."

"Ronny McFegan is your dad? He was our first big star. He made a fortune for us. Him and that monkey. Did you change your name?"

"No, its from a previous marriage."

"Are you still married?"

"No. I'm divorced."

"I'm sorry to hear that Miss Papa."

"Call me Jenny."

"Okay, Jenny. Let's see if we can do something to get out of here."

"What can we do?"

Straker grinned and looked down at the one thing they hadn't taken from him: his wedding band. "Thanks alot Mary." He took it off and twisted the two halves of the ring until it clicked. Then he put it back on. It would now be possible for SHADO to locate him from the tiny transmitter inside. "I dont know what we'll do Jenny but don't worry. I'm sure something will

turn up."

CHAPTER 4 - by Rob Hemmings (rkh@leicester.ac.uk)

Nina looked intently at the screen, her slightly furrowed brow indicating deep concentration. From the tannoy, a loud, but cultured voice burst forth:

"This is Space Intruder Detector."

"Incoming UFO.. positive track."

Nina delayed almost imperceptibly before she looked up, apparently somewhat startled...

"Calculate trajectory" she barked. Looking down again, she checked the last empty box on the touch-panel with her forefinger - it turned violet, matching the rest.

"Vector indicates southern hemisphere - destination: Ascension Island" responded SID.

Turning her head slightly, she looks at the tracking screen, the furrows in her brow now deeper. She snapped authoritatively:

"Contact moonbase: get me Ellis.. NOW!"

* * *

"This is uncanny... it's just too..." Thought Alec. He didn't particularly like the man or his methods.. Alec stopped that train of thought as he considered the facts: The man had stated his theories, produced the evidence and then gone on to prove it. On a stage. In front of 800 people. The Public for Gods sake!

"Calculate actual deviation from projected trajectory, SID".

After a four second delay, SID responded:

"No deviation measurable: flight path is within zero decimal zero zero zero one of projection".

"Location and status of SkyDiver " Alec commanded coolly.

"SkyDiver at pre-programmed location: South Atlantic, Status:submerged - 1200 feet".

Alec frowned. It couldn't be this good, could it?

* * *

Ed had been conscious for over an hour now, he estimated. He'd checked the 'cell' thoroughly - part of his early USAF special training. He was sure of one thing. The cells appeared virtually impregnable from the outside, let alone offering him a chance to break out. The conclusion was inescapable.

Jenny Papa stirred in the cell across the narrow corridor.

"Miss Papa.. Erm Jenny.. are you OK?"

Jenny blinked twice slowly, then restored her horizon to east-west from its initial north-south, as she sat up.

"A little fuzzy but OK, I think, Mr Straker."

She managed a smile as her eyes met those of Ed.

"Ed, remember?" he said, as he found himself smiling back.

"Don't move too fast at first, Jenny, take your time." he said, then thought "that's something we seem to have plenty of at the moment".

"We need to talk, if you're up to it, Jenny - look, I'll be honest with you - I'm not one for pussyfooting about."

"I know, my father told me." replied Jenny.

Ed grimaced.

"Look, Jenny, yours is a damn good script - it's worth a couple of million from the right studio. What worries me is this: why are you more concerned with your script than your (and my, come to think of it) personal safety? - we're in deep trouble here, if you hadn't noticed.

These people are serious."

Jenny looked down, unable to hold Eds sapphire gaze.

"It's... it's.. not really my script - it belonged to my father - my REAL father.."

Jenny suddenly looked sharply at the plain wall to her left, and uttered:

"Do I want a cup of tea? Oh - ye....."

Ed grazed his knuckles on the cell door, as he automatically tried to catch her as she fell, quite forgetting about the intervening doors. As he licked the wounds, he noticed the ring on his damaged hand - it looked OK, but was it?...

CHAPTER 5 - by Yuchtar

"Mr. Foster; glad you could make it. Have any trouble finding the lot?"

Foster noticed a slight Liverpool accent. He grinned and took the offered hand. "No trouble at all, Mr. Blackwell. I have been here before."

"Ah, yes, of course. And your companions are . . . ?" "Just a couple of my staff assistants; in case I need help with the legalities, as it were."

"A lovely choice of staff, Mr. Foster," he said with a lecherous grin.

Foster narrowed his gaze. "Gender equality is all the rage these days, Mr. Blackwell, or hadn't you heard?"

"Oh, yes, well, that goes without saying, of course. As for legalities; that script was commissioned by Pinewood Studios and was not supposed to be offered to another studio before Pinewood had first bid -- it is legally our property and that's all there is to it, Mr. Foster."

Foster watched the man as he spoke. He was a large man, both tall and wide, but there was certainly nothing "jolly" about him. He had a fierceness to his eyes, and his bloated hands were constantly fidgeting. The white linen suit he wore was crumpled, almost as if he'd been sleeping in it. Foster took an instant dislike to him.

"We've already made an offer, Mr. Blackwell. If the author has signed a contract, there is very little you can do about it. You can sue the author, but by the time the litigation is over, the picture will have been made -- is it all really worth it?"

Blackwell's eyes flashed and his hands went for Foster's throat. Amanda Bendix was on him instantly, however, and had him in a headlock before he knew what was happening. The big man bellowed in rage.

Foster grinned at him and said, "Things are not always what they seem, Mr. Blackwell."

Before he could say anything more, however, Bridget Delk suddenly slumped to the ground in a lifeless looking heap next to him.

"What the?" Foster said as he looked wildly around him and Bendix followed her partner to the pavement. He took a step back and was prepared to meet Blackwell's attack head on, but never got the chance. He felt a stinging pain at the base of the neck and slapped at it. As he fell to his knees, he yanked out a small tranquilizer dart and glared at it in his hand. He looked up at Blackwell, whose smiling image was swimming in a hazy purple fog.

"Things are NOT always what they seem, are they, Colonel Foster?" Foster was fighting the effects of the drug, but a second dart put him down and left him sprawled at the big man's feet. Blackwell kicked him once, hard in the ribs; and then, as an after thought, kicked him again for good measure.

"Did I do okay, Daddy?" It was a woman's voice, but with childish inflection.

"Excellent, my dear Jenny!" Blackwell enthused as he put his chubby arm around Jenny Papa's slender shoulder. "Now let Pappa have the gun, there's a good girl."

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"My friends will be very pleased with this," Blackwell was smugly saying as he observed Colonel Paul Foster fidgeting on the medical gurney, close to regaining consciousness. "I have Straker's SkyDiver Command Codes, and very soon I'll have Foster's. That will leave only Colonel Alec Freeman and SkyDiver will be OURS!"

"Or their's . . ." said his companion, a small, squirrely looking fellow named Castor.

"Yes, well; I will soon have my revenge on the world that snubbed me, dear boy; make no

mistake . . ."

"If that wonder drug your 'friends' gave you is powerful enough to make that Papa woman think you're her long lost father, then why can't you just use it to take control of Straker or Foster or whoever and pilfer a SkyDiver pretty as you please?"

Blackwell frowned. "It'll only work with a relatively simple mind with marked psyionic capabilities. Straker and company are much too complex -- and dim for the drug to take effect."

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Back at SHADO HQ, Colonel Alec Freeman was sitting back in Straker's chair -- the 'Responsibility Seat,' he thought wryly -- with his feet propped up on the desk and a drink in his hand. Despite the fact that the incoming UFO had just been confirmed destroyed, he had a distinct frown on his face.

That UFO had been heading directly toward the SkyDiver base at Ascension Island, and just before it was destroyed, it had actually transmitted Straker's Command Codes to the nav computer of SkyDiver Three. Commander Straker hadn't been heard from since the evening before, and now Colonel Foster had gone missing as well. Something was up, but he just couldn't imagine what . . .

As he raised the glass to his lips, the office around him suddenly dissolved into a Victorian drawing room. Sitting across from him, a cup of tea in his hand, was a little man Freeman recognized. "Ronnie McFegan?" The little man raised his cup in a salute. "You're dead," Freeman said in wonder.

"Death is relative, Alec, and you're in danger."

"What?"

"Your friends are being held at the old 'Captive' lot at Pinewood and they need your help, but Jenny will try to stop you and she doesn't know, so try not to hurt her; she was always such a sensitive child . . ." The image was beginning to fade. "She doesn't know, just doesn't know; and don't go alone, Alec -- not alone; never alone . . . alone . . . alone" The echos died into nothingness as Straker's office rematerialized around him once again.

"Bloody hell," he said to himself. 'The Scotch?' he wondered. 'Stress? Total and complete mental breakdown?' As he pondered the state of his own psyche, he slowly became aware of a flashing alarm signal on the desk panel. Commander Straker's ring transmitter had just been activated! Accessing the projected wall map of the city, he spotted the flashing light that indicated the location of the transmitter. Pinewood Studios!

"Right!" he said definitively as he downed the drink in one go, slammed the glass on the desk and headed out the door. "Never alone, the man says?" he mumbled to himself. "Then never alone it is."

CHAPTER 6 - by Allen Millner (broman19@ns2.scsn.net)

Deep space, six spinning spacecraft bobbing, not going anywhere. Their equipment has picked up the destruction of one of their sister craft. Communication between the craft is of a very serious note. After twenty Earthly minutes a decision is made and three spinners set off on a course to Earth.

* * *

Paul Foster was thinking about the lovely woman that was serving him a drink. It seemed strange how he couldn't remember her name, not to mention how he had met her. As he looked around he noticed how opaque her house and trappings looked. He just decided that perhaps the alcohol was affecting him more than he thought. When he heard his name called he looked into Col Lake's eyes. Finally all of the waiting was over, Paul thought. But something seemed wrong. Why would she be asking him about security codes? Didn't she have the same knowledge as he did? Paul didn't understand at all. But he decided to play along with Col Lake and proceeded to answer her questions...

* * *

Alec was thinking about what had just happened, when someone appeared at the doorway. It was Jackson. Alec decided to get another drink.

"Alec what seems to be the problem", Jackson asked looking Freeman in the eye. Before Alec could respond, Jackson said, "Are you getting that because I walked in or is there another reason, not that you would need one would you?"

Alec looked at Jackson and thought just one shot in the chops and he would probably ask for another. Alec changed his thought and just said, "I'm busy right now, what can I do for you Dr?" Jackson said, "nothing just passing by". And turned to walk out. Alec thought should I mentioned to him of all people what just happened to me, as he took a sip of scotch. Yes. "Jackson, have a seat I have something that I would like to discuss with you." Jackson turned with his usual smirk and sat down and said, "where do you want to be at Col Freeman?" Alec Freeman thought to himself the punch in the chops may have been worth it after all.....

* * *

The Spinners have reached the edge of detectable space and then split up, each taking a different course. One directly toward Moonbase, another toward SID and the other straight towards Earth. SID picked up on the Spinners, "This is Space Intruder Detector." "Incoming UFO's... positive track." "UFO's are approaching from three different directions." Lt Ellis looked over to Nina and awaited her confirmation of what SID had just said. Nina told Lt Ellis, "UFO's confirmed in three different areas."

* * *

Nasa had a deep space probe that was in deep space and it had recorded some very unusual transmissions from somewhere in deep space. And they changed course to investigate the source.

* * *

Back on Earth Paul Foster woke up in a cell listening to a voice that couldn't be in Virginia Lake's apartment, "Paul, wake up are you alright"? It was Cmdr Straker....

CHAPTER 7 - by Grant Wray (g.wray@ucl.ac.uk)

As his feet cartwheeled to get a grip, Paul Foster's shoes slipped slightly in the thin layer of dust covering the floor of the cell, sending creeping tendrils into the still air.

"What happened, Commander? My head feels like it's been in a vise."

Straker looked past Paul's face, looking at nothing in particular.

"You banged your head a few times when they first put you in here. I tried to make a pillow for you out of my jacket, but you started to chew the collar. You may find that you've broken your tooth when you bit into the hidden transmitter's microphone, I hadn't had chance to use it before you broke it. And then you started humping my shoes. It must be some sort of drug they've given you, hallucinogenic probably, most likely the same stuff they pumped me full of. I just hope the anti-toxification pills worked."

"You mean the stuff Jackson insists we take every morning? I wouldn't rely on anything that little ferret prescribes." Foster pulled a sour face to indicate his dislike for SHADO's chief medical officer.

"Well, Jackson knows his stuff, but he can only protect us against the usual... truth drugs, alcohol, pentobarbitone, and the like. If they've used something new then, who knows what we could have revealed." Straker looked worried, the lines creasing across his brow, his blue eyes darting from side to side as if trying to escape from his head. "We've got to get out of here. It may be too late already. If only we knew what they were up to. Can you remember what you last saw, did or said?"

Paul frowned in concentration as he tried to remember. "Well, I remember Virginia Lake..."

Straker shot him a gaze, full of meaning. Foster understood. They could be being monitored, and Ms. Papa might not be asleep, it was impossible to see into all of her cell beyond the barred door.

"The fishing trip," Paul quickly improvised, "something about diving birds."

Straker's face eased slightly. "Yes, I had the same dream. That's what they're after. Did you dream about telling someone how you could command these diving birds?"

"Yes. That's right. I remember now. But that means..."

"Exactly. We've got to get word back to the studio, and soon. It would have been a damn sight easier if you hadn't..."

Foster interrupted him, "Now don't you go blaming me. I was totally out of it, they drugged me remember."

Straker couldn't stand Paul's insubordination, yet he seemed to thrive on it. One thing was for sure, Ed was glad of having Foster around the place. He steeled himself for the argument he knew from past experience was brewing.

* * *

Jackson steepled his fingers and looked over the top of his nails at Alec Freeman. "So that's all is it?"

Alec spun his whisky tumbler round and round between fingers and thumb. "It happened just as I've told you. So, what happened?" He sipped from the glass.

Jackson started hitting his fingernails against his bottom lip, a singularly annoying habit, Freeman thought.

"Well, all I can say is that you must have had some sort of neuro-resonant episode. Possibly some force or person, known or unknown, has found a way to alter their own brain

waves to resonate with certain areas of your own brain, or to create the waves electronically. Either way, you have certainly received a message from someone or something, somewhere."

"You don't think I'm crazy?" Alec said, not quite believing what he was hearing, Jackson wasn't taking a cheap shot for once.

"Well, your mind certainly could not have created such a bizarre and complicated hallucination, I am sure of that, so it must be external to you." Jackson pushed his fingertips together harder now so that the knuckles crackled liked someone breaking spaghetti.

Alec grimaced as he realised what Jackson's remark was intended to mean. The only thing between the good doctor and a slug on the jaw was the pain as Alec bit into his own lip.

"Right. I'd better get a SHADO security team together and get over to Pinewood, and Jackson; you're coming with me." Alec got up and pressed a desk button.

Jackson smiled slightly. "I'm afraid that won't be possible Colonel, I have a prior engagement, one that I cannot possibly get out of. Aren't you going to finish your drink before you go?"

* * *

"Moonbase to Interceptors. Immediate launch."

The three interceptor pilots dropped whatever they were doing and ran to the chutes. Hopping into the entrances the centre pilot looked left and right, then checking his crew were ready, signalled a drop down the long tubes and into the cockpits of the sleek interceptors stationed in their underground hangars some 200 yards behind moonbase. The moonsurface doors slid back silently in the vacuum of space, and the three ships rose on their platforms, engines already fired. With a backwash of moon dust the three interceptors slid into space gracefully and banked around in front of the domes that made up moonbase.

Nina Barry's voice echoed through space. "Interceptor one, turn to 147 mark 5 acceleration 56. Interceptors two and three, turn to 008 mark 12 acceleration 13. Firing coordinates and timing relayed to onboard computers."

Only now did Gay Ellis look up from her console towards Colonel Virginia Lake. "Colonel Lake, I have deployed the Interceptors according to plan delta."

Virginia Lake had arrived on Moonbase ten days ago to take command of a communications upgrade. She resented having to wear the silver jumpsuits, she found they chafed. Many times she had told Straker how uncomfortable they were, but he just kept saying that they were required uniform, his only concession was to make the wigs optional.

"I don't like it Gay. The Earth shouldn't be left defenseless like that. I'd get into one of the backup interceptors and go out there myself if the navigation systems could cope with plotting the course for four ships. It's being left up to SkyDiver to stop the last UFO again. How long before interceptors two and three reach firing positions?"

"Two minutes colonel."

"Please, call me Ginny, we are bunk-mates after all."

"Ok then Ginny. I just hope that the interceptors don't miss. I feel very vulnerable out here on the moon's surface, just over a foot of reinforced polycarbonate shell between us and total vacuum."

Lake shivered, "Urgh, don't. Your giving me the willies."

It was a good job that the atmosphere was so tense in the command sphere. The last time someone had said that the highly trained moonbase girls had broken down in a fit of giggles. Well, it broke the monotony.

At that moment the radio crackled into life, "NASA space probe 13 to Houston control.

We have a problem Houston."

"Let them deal with it Gay. After all, what do we women know about space-ships eh? I wonder if Straker was thinking of protecting us when he devised defense plan Delta, or if it was a purely tactical decision to assign two interceptors to deal with UFO's on course for moonbase leaving only one to defend SID?"

"Knowing Straker, it was pure tactics; profit and loss calculations. Not a thought for the human factor. If he gave two hoots about us moon-siders he'd put all three interceptors on defense of moonbase, and leave SID to defend himself. After all SID is only an inanimate lump of circuitry, plastic and metal."

"The interceptors will be in firing positions any second now Gay." said Nina.

Lake moved around to the business side of the console and pulled up a chair next to Ellis. "Let's keep our fingers crossed. There they go, whoosh, and..... BANG! Smack on target."

"Interceptor three to moonbase. Detonation confirmed. UFO destroyed. Returning to base."

Gay pushed a button on the console. "Roger Interceptor three, confirmed UFO destroyed. Interceptors two and three, cleared for return to base."

"Interceptor one to moonbase. Detonation confirmed. UFO destroyed. Returning to base."

Gay pushed the button again. "Roger Interceptor one, confirmed UFO destroyed. Interceptor one, cleared for return to base."

Colonel Lake looked Gay straight in the eye, "And now we can leave the last one to SkyDiver. I'm going back to the rec. sphere now. You get off duty soon don't you Gay? When you're relieved would you like to come back and join me for dinner? I may even pop into the galley and whip up something special for us."

Gay smiled a winning smile, "I'd love to Ginny. See you later."

* * *

Castor was alone in the control room. Blackwell had just left to go to the rendezvous with the mysterious agent known only as 'Dr. J'.

"Why all this bloody secrecy?" he thought out loud. "Bloody codenames, callsigns, mysterious rendezvous. I remember when theft was property and property was theft. None of this bloody espionage stuff. Mind you though" he leered at the monitor screen that showed Jenny Papa asleep on the bed in her cell, "the tottie's better than it ever was."

A devious grin stole across Castor's mouth. He eyed the syringe half-full of serum, and then the monitor screen. Blackwell wouldn't be back for a couple of hours yet. A plot was hatching in Castor's twisted mind. He picked up the syringe and then checked that the tape recorder monitoring Straker and Foster's cell was running, and that the prisoners were still there. Castor giggled slightly, then crossed the room out into the corridor. He opened the secret door into Jenny's cell, out-of-sight of Straker, hidden by the wall that the bunk was against. He could hear Foster and Straker arguing, they wouldn't hear him. He stuck the injector against Jenny's neck and pressed the release button. The brief hiss of compressed air went unnoticed by the quarrelling couple over the way.

"Good" he thought. Bending down till his mouth was near Jenny's ear he whispered, "Jenny, Jenny, can you hear me? This is your fiance, Doug. You thought I'd been taken away by the aliens and killed, but I escaped. Jenny, I've come back for you. Come with me now, I want you."

Jenny was sweating, "Doug", she murmured turning her head from side to side, "Doug, it's really you. Oh, how I've missed you, my love."

Castor was grinning wildly now, "Yes, Jenny, Oh, how I've missed you too. I want to hold you, to love you, now. Please."

Jenny was wriggling from side to side, "Yes Doug, please, please, I want you."

His hands scrambled madly trying to undo her buckle but his sweaty fingers couldn't get a firm grip on the white PVC belt. He snarled slightly under his breath and tried again, baring his teeth in a grimace as he got his finger under the loop and pulled. He was almost there, trying to time his pulls on the belt to the writhing of Jenny's body. He failed to notice the door he'd come through swing open again and a figure move across the shadowy room towards his exposed back.

* * *

CHAPTER 8 - by Yuchtar

Castor was so absorbed in his efforts to remove Jenny's clothing, it took him several moments to notice the red-clad arm around his throat. By the time he realized it, however, the syringe had slid home and he was losing consciousness.

Jenny watched in horror as the man she still saw as her long dead husband slumped to the floor. She looked into the green face inside the helmet and screamed as the Alien reached out toward her. Then she fainted and joined Castor on the floor.

Commander Straker and Colonel Foster heard the scream and ceased their petty argument. Straining against the bars of their cell, they could just barely make out what was going on in Jenny's.

"Aliens," they said in unison.

"And we're trapped in here like lambs for the slaughter," Foster added, an icy edge to his voice.

As they contemplated their eventual demise, they heard a sound from the opposite end of the cell block. Taking several steps back away from the bars, they turned to see another Alien walking towards them; a lifeless looking form slung over his shoulder.

"Bendix," Paul whispered.

"Where'd they find her?" Straker asked.

"She and Delk accompanied me as Security," Foster answered.

Before Straker could comment further, they heard a familiar voice with a Liverpool accent -- high pitched now in anger and frustration. "What the bloody hell do you think you're playing at?!" he was yelling. "Where's my assistant? We had a deal!"

Suddenly, there was a loud explosion and the Alien carrying Bendix staggered and fell, a large crimson stain covering the wall behind him. There followed a frenzied volley of weapons fire. Human automatic rifles and Alien laser fire combined to form a cacophony of sound, with the odours of gunpowder and blood, singed flesh and electrically charged ions engulfing the small enclosed space of the cell block.

When it was over, the silence hung like an Irish mist, and dripped off the walls in rippling patterns.

"Ed? Paul? Are you okay? Find the bloody key, dammit!" Colonel Alec Freeman feared the worst as he stood outside looking in at the motionless figures of Straker and Foster lying prone on the floor of their cell.

Slowly, Straker stirred and removed his arms from over his head. The roar of the battle was still ringing in his ears and he wasn't quite sure himself if he was still alive or not. "Alec?" he said, his own voice sounding hollow in his stunned ears.

"Ed? Are you okay?"

"I think so. Paul?"

Foster moaned. "I think one of my fractured ribs punctured a lung," he said as he spit out a mouthful of blood and passed out.

"Bendix?" Straker asked, as a fresh-faced young SHADO op he could not even recognize tried desperately to find the correct key to unlock the cell door.

"She's dead, I'm afraid. Some kind of Alien poison. Same with that sleezy character in the cell with Miss Papa."

"Jenny?"

Before Freeman could respond, Jenny's voice cut through the now bustling commotion.

"How the hell did I get here, and where are my clothes?!"

* * *

Afterwards, Straker sat in his office as Dr Jackson explained Jenny Papa's condition. Freeman watched his friend and Commander with wonder. Even worn and haggard, Straker looked completely at home behind that desk.

"She's fine, though, otherwise?" Straker asked.

"Oh, yes -- absolutely, Commander. She simply has no memory what-so-ever of the entire incident."

"And Blackwell?"

"Completely insane, I'm afraid. Does nothing all day but rock back and forth, mumbling lines from an old TV show."

"Fascinating. What about Foster? Any news on his condition?"

"He'll be fine, Commander -- back on limited duty in a couple weeks."

Straker nodded thoughtfully and then turned his attention toward Freeman. "Most of this I understand," Straker said, waving Freeman's report in the air. "But what is this business with psychic projections from dead actors? And who the devil is 'Harlan, the Great Brain'?"

"Ah, yes, well," Freeman muttered, his cheeks colouring slightly. "The former will take a good deal of explanation, and I think Dr Jackson here could handle it better than I could."

Jackson opened his mouth to speak, but Straker waved him down -- he was not in the mood for a technobabbling psychiatric lecture from the strange doctor right now. "Later, Doctor -- and the latter?"

"Well . . . Harlan is a psychic -- supposedly . . . does a weekly spot on BBC1. You've never seen it?"

"No."

"Yeah, well -- he claims to see the future, that sort of rubbish. Anyway, the other night, on his weekly programme he predicted the Alien attack on our base on Ascension Island -- down to the minutest detail. Quite impressive, really . . ."

"He _mentioned_ Aliens and SHADO?"

"Oh, no -- simply described the attack. And before you bother to order it done, let me tell you that I've already got a team checking him out. So far, he seems completely on the up and up."

Straker sighed heavily. "Alright, Alec, that's all for now. I have some studio business to attend to. Jackson, let me know what you find out about that Alien drug Blackwell used on Jenny Papa. And if the search teams don't find Bridget Delk in another six to eight hours, call off the search -- it's fairly certain the Aliens got her. I'll inform her family myself, Alec."

The intercom buzzed and Miss Ealand's voice cut thru the awkwardness of the momentary silence. "Miss Papa here to see you, Mr. Straker."

"On my way, Miss Ealand." He said into the intercom. Then, rising, he said to the two men in the room, "Duty calls, gentlemen."

Freeman grinned slightly at Straker's back as the other man walked out of his underground SHADO office and headed for his other life at the surface. The two so often intertwined, but not usually to this extent -- Freeman thought Ed Straker was handling it all quite well, all things considered.