

# One Flew Outta the Cuckoo's Nest

by Pamela McCaughey

Based on UFO (1969-70)

Created Gerry & Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill  
and Trailer Park Boys

Created by Mike Clattenburg and Barrie Dunn (2000-2006)

***Because Tom dared me...***

*Disclaimer: vulgar language, discussions about and use of illegal drugs*

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## Chapter One - October 25th

"Holy fuck, Julian, there's somebody out there in our dope patch," Ricky exclaimed furiously as he poked his head in the driver's side window of his broken down car, "I hear somethin' rustlin' around...I bet it's that fuckin' Cyrus tryin' ta cash in on our hard work!"

"We can't go out unarmed, lemme get my gun ready," Julian put down his glass of liquor and rummaged in his leather jacket for a full gun clip. He snapped the clip into the weapon and nodded to Ricky, "Let's get 'em!"

Bubbles, still sitting in the back of Ricky's car, took a long drag on his joint, "Man, the shit's gonna hit the fan now!"

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The two men took off through their weed patch, trying to move quietly, but somewhat disjointed because of all the booze and marijuana they'd ingested that evening. They crouched in the narrow path inside their cash crop field, searching in the darkness for any sign of the intruder.

Almost everyone in the trailer park knew they had a grow ops in progress, but most of the residents were ignoring the fact. Ricky and Julian, with numerous convictions for everything from using unauthorized firearms to peddling drugs, were graduates of what park supervisor Leahey derisively referred to as 'Con College', and it wasn't worth the effort to report them to the local law enforcement. Besides, the two friends, along with their buddy Bubbles, were like the guy in the old 'L'il Abner' cartoon - they existed under a perpetual black cloud of bad luck and misfortune. In fact, their constant misadventures would have been pretty funny if it wasn't for the fact Ricky had a child to support and his inability to provide for her financially was impaired by his poor judgment and criminal activities.

But, tonight, Ricky and Julian were ready to confront whoever was in their weed patch - nobody else was going to profit from their efforts to grow the best dope on the street!

A rustling among the marijuana leaves riveted Julian's attention - he squeezed off two shots and was rewarded with hearing a body drop amongst the tall plants.

"Hah! Let's see who we got!" Julian and Ricky turned on their flashlights and aimed it along the ground. Red fabric came into view and then something shiny and silver...

"Man, how much weed did I smoke today? Do you see what I think I'm seein'?" Ricky turned the prone body over. A wound in the intruder's shoulder was leaking green liquid. The man looked up at them through his helmet visor, but the inside looked dark and murky, distorting his facial features...

Julian shone his own light directly into the visor to get a better look at his face, "Hey buddy, what's all this about? It's still a few days til Halloween!"

The intruder reached up with a silver gloved hand, as if in supplication, and then he went limp, his eyes closing.

"Julian, ya killed him!"

"Couldn't have! He's only bleedin' from one place - if ya can call that green stuff blood. You can't die from a shoulder wound. Help me, willya? We can take him back to my place and fix him up..."

"Yeah, first thing we gotta do is get that fuckin' helmet off his head...creeps me out, man!"

\* \* \*

Bubbles looked down as Julian and Ricky deposited the man in the red suit on the bed.

"This was the guy after your weed?"

"Dunno for sure. The plants looked fine. Buddy here ended up takin' a bullet," Julian replied, pouring himself a stiff drink.

Ricky lit up a cigarette, "Yeah, we can't call the cops on him cause then they'd find our weed."

"What kinda get-up is he in?" Bubbles asked, leaning over to tap the visor on the silver helmet. A pair of eyes inside popped open and Bubbles startled backwards.

"He's awake!" Julian's glass dropped and he cursed the loss of good booze as he and Ricky both held the red suited intruder down on the bed, "Quick, we gotta tie him down!"

"What's that green stuff coming outta his clothes?" Bubbles made a face.

"Who cares right now! Just get some fuckin' rope, willya?"

It took about ten minutes before the three men successfully secured their 'guest' to the bed. He struggled with them but was in obvious discomfort from his shoulder wound.

Julian sighed as he mopped up the whiskey on the floor and collected the broken shards of glass, "We gotta keep him here for awhile, I guess. Suppose he's one of Cyrus' boys? He doesn't take it lightly if one a' his boys gets roughed up!"

"Nah, they're not inta wearin' crazy costumes. This guy wasn't even packin'. Didn't see any guns with him," Ricky observed.

"So what the fuck was he doin' out in our weed patch tonight?"

"Maybe he's whacked out on somethin'?"

"That might explain his behaviour, but not that goofy get-up," Julian took the proffered cigarette Ricky held out to him and ignited it with a Bic lighter. He blew a long stream of smoke, "We got him tied up for now - I don't think he's goin' anywhere soon."

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Bubbles was awake early. He couldn't stop thinking about the weird guy in the red suit. Where had he come from? Why was he roaming around in the weed patch? Could they get the silver helmet off him and get some answers?

And what would they do with him? Ricky was right - if they called the cops - they'd just get busted for growing the dope. It wasn't worth the risk. Julian had shot him - did he need a doctor? How would they ever pull off getting a doctor or a medic to the trailer park without raising suspicions with Leahey?

He got up and dressed. Maybe their 'guest' would be hungry? Bubbles made some toast, slathered it liberally with peanut butter, grabbed a can of Coke, and headed for Julian's trailer.

\* \* \*

Ricky and Julian had passed out playing a drinking game hours earlier. They'd sat up almost all night, playing and watching their captive, and smoking dope. Fiddling with his helmet only released a slow seepage of the same green liquid which had come out of his wound. Julian re-sealed the helmet saying, "Fuck, Ricky, I don't want that green shit all over my bedroom floor!"

The door opened, startling Julian and Ricky awake, "Fuck, Bubs, ya coulda warned us ya were comin' over, man! We're antsy enough as it is!" Ricky dug a crumpled cigarette package out of his back pocket and grimaced on discovering it was now empty, "Julian, ya gotta extra smoke?"

"I brought buddy here some toast and PB," Bubbles handed over the plate. Ricky grabbed for a slice and Bubbles slapped his hand sharply, "Hey, this is for him!"

"Don't think he's gonna be able to eat much, " Julian replied, "We tried to get the helmet offa him and this green shit started to come out all over the place - I don't know what it is - for all it know it could even be some sorta toxic shit!"

"Did it smell toxic?"

"Fuck, no - I'm not gonna get any closer to it!"

"So whatt're we gonna do about buddy? We gotta get him a doctor for that bullet in his shoulder."

"Can't take him to the hospital. Too many questions we either can't or don't wanna answer," Julian said.

"Ya can't just leave him like that! He needs help!" Bubbles was getting upset.

"What if we could get the bullet outta him ourselves? How hard can it be? He's still passed out and I've seen it done on TV hundreds of times!" Ricky interrupted.

"You're not a doctor!" Bubbles reminded him.

"Yeah? Well, I'm as good as this guy is gonna get right now!"

\* \* \*

"What's in that area?" Lew Waterman cradled his phone between his ear and his shoulder as he called up a map of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia on his laptop, "Anything vital?"

"Nah, just a trailer park, some open ground, a small lake and swampy forest area. Nuthin' too serious," Al Leslie told him.

"Can your team handle it yourselves?"

"Prob'ly. We figure the UFO's down in the lake. We'll just camp out on top of it until it lifts off and we can have one of the Skydivers track it down for the kill."

"Any remediation necessary?"

"Doesn't look like there's gonna be any environmental concerns. Pete and Claude are up there right now goin' over the location with sensors, radiation detectors, the works - so far nothin' to worry about."

"No chance you'll run into trouble with the locals?"

Al chewed his thumb ruminatively, "The lake's a good three kilometers from the trailer park - can't see anybody goin' up there. Can't swim in the lake and it's surrounded by swamp. Just wet ground and mosquitoes."

"Ok, then, go to it and keep me posted. I'll pass your report along up the food chain."

Snapping his secure Omega issue cellphone closed, Leslie decided to pick up some fast food to take back to the team. He drove a little further on to the trailer park entrance. A convenience store sign flashed on and off - he could pick up some drinks and sandwiches and bug spray there cheap...

\* \* \*

Al Leslie had placed a dozen sandwiches and plastic bottles of soda on the counter.

"That'll be twenty five sixty eight," the clerk informed him.

Leslie pulled out some cash to pay when Bubbles burst into the convenience store shouting, "Ya gotta sell me some rubbing alcohol and some gauze bandages!"

"Somebody get hurt?" asked the clerk.

"Well...last night Julian shot some guy in a red suit in his weed patch and now they gotta take the bullet outta his shoulder!"

The clerk came out from behind the counter, his attention now diverted by Bubbles and his story, "I got some hydrogen peroxide here and some big Elastoplast bandages..."

"Hurry up willya? The guy's fightin' with us and we can't take his helmet off..." Bubbles followed the clerk down the aisle, gesticulating wildly.

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Despite the seriousness of the situation, Al Leslie had to laugh to himself. Every now and then an alien would manage to crawl under the radar enough to interact with the locals. In this case, an alien had obviously escaped from his craft in the lake and somehow made his way to the trailer park, where a pair of inept dope growers had shot and captured him. And to top it all off, they obviously did not even realize what he was - they just thought he was there to steal their weed!

After making a quick call to Little and Gallant, who were still on-site at the lake watching for the alien ship to leave, Leslie offered his skills to Bubbles and his friends - he could do 'surgery' on their injured captive in the red suit. Bubbles didn't ask any questions when Leslie bogusly told him he'd been a medic with the Canadian army in Desert Storm back in the 1990s.

"Where's your buddy?" Leslie asked, carrying the bag with the medical supplies from the convenience store.

"Over at Julian's trailer - I'll take ya over!"

They walked over two small intersections before Bubbles led Al to a nondescript trailer which looked like it was 40 years out of CSA (Canadian Standards) date, "In here!" Bubbles told him.

"Fuck, Bubs! We told ya not to bring any anybody!" Ricky yelled.

"He's not the cops - he was a medic in the army or somethin' - says he can take the bullet out of buddy's shoulder!"

Julian ushered Leslie into the bedroom. There, tied to the four legs of the bed, was a terrified but weakened alien. Green oxygenated liquid was splattered on the flooring and it was obvious from the cutting on the alien's red pressure suit that the two men had tried to clear a path to the wound so they could work on him.

Al knelt down beside the alien, "Gimme the scissors - we gotta work fast - I wanna a pair of tweezers - sanitize the ends in a flame, willya?"

Ricky went to the bathroom and returned with the tweezers while Julian handed over the scissors and Bubbles opened the bottle of hydrogen peroxide.

"OK, Bubbles, when I say NOW, ya gotta pour some hydrogen peroxide right on where the bullet hole is," Al instructed him, "Where are those tweezers? I need 'em like yesterday!"

"Fuckin' hell, buddy, hold your horses! I gotta light a match or somethin'..." Ricky bitched back. He patted himself down for a book of matches, but Julian handed him a Bic disposable lighter. He flicked on the flame and held the pointy ends of the tweezers in it for several seconds.

Al held out his hand impatiently as Ricky passed over the tweezers, "NOW, Bubbles, put on the hydrogen peroxide!"

The alien squirmed as the hydrogen peroxide reached his skin and Al applied the tweezers with expert skill. He dropped the bullet into a tissue held for him by Julian and stanching the wound with a big wad of Kleenex, "Ya gotta jar o' honey here? Get it!" he told Julian, who handed over the bullet package. Al stashed it in his pocket.

Julian returned a moment later with a squeeze bottle, "Is this kinda honey ok?"

"It'll do for now," taking the proffered honey, Al carefully removed the Kleenex and squeezed a liberal layer of honey over the open wound. *Funny*, he thought, *I expected there to be more blood...*

"Gimme that bandage....," Ricky handed it to Al, who then pulled off the sticky back and applied it directly over the honey soaked bullet hole, "There, that oughta hold until I can get him to a real doctor."

"So what happens now?" Julian asked, visibly relieved that the worst was over, "Are you gonna call the cops on us?"

Al grinned, "I the way I heard it, he was stealin' from your weed growin' operation!"

Ricky lit a cigarette, "Look, man, we don't want any trouble. Can't we all just forget about it? He's gonna be alright, isn't he?"

"Ok for now but he needs better than I can do, " Al explained, "Why doncha let me take him with me? I can drop him off at the first clinic I see and he'll get looked after."

"What if he talks? Tells the cops we shot him?"

Al looked down into the faceplate of the alien's helmet, "You're not gonna talk to the cops, are ya?"

The alien peered up at his captors and shook his head, causing what was left of his green liquid to slosh around in his helmet.

"There, see? He won't be givin' you anymore trouble, " Al grinned again.

Julian held out his hand to shake with Al, "Man, you are really savin' our asses here!"

"Aw, don't worry about it, I gotcha covered."

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By the time Ricky, Julian and Bubbles helped Al load the fellow in the goofy red suit into the Omega issue SUV, the sun had gone down.

"Nice lookin' wheels, man," Ricky laid a hand on the SUV's hood.

"Where ya takin' him?" Bubbles asked.

"Somewhere he's just gonna be fuckin' lovin' it!" Al waved goodbye and drove off into the darkness with his prize.

"Well, I guess that's over," Julian sighed.

"Yeah, I was wonderin' what we were gonna do with that guy," Ricky lit another cigarette and took a long drag.

"Just lucky for us that medic fella showed up," Bubbles mused.

"Who was he anyway?" Julian asked.

"Well, he never did give me his name..."

## Chapter Two

Al Leslie walked quickly beside the alien as his gurney was transferred from the chopper to the roof of the Omega Corporation building in NYC. The techs were rushing him downstairs and inside the facility to a state of the art sterile medical ops suite. General Ed Straker was enroute to New York - this was a momentous occasion.

No SHADO or Omega personnel had managed to capture a live alien in years. If they could keep him alive, despite his wound and Leslie's impromptu surgery, the chances of interrogating him would increase.

Leslie was waiting for Straker when he arrived to have a look at their 'guest' Straker shook Leslie's hand, "Good work, Al. Lew Waterman told me how you ended up handling this case. Quick thinking on your part!"

They stood together looking through the suite's observation window while white hazmat clothed techs worked on the alien.

Al chuckled, "Just lucky to be in the right place at the right time, I guess."

"Dr. Raychaudhuri says you used honey to disinfect the alien's bullet wound - what made you do that?"

"Old survival trick from the ancient Egyptians - we field personnel usually keep honey in our kits - if ya get hurt, you spread it on - if you're hungry, you eat it!"

Straker smiled, "Mitali says the alien should be stabilized enough soon so that I can have an up close and personal conversation with him."

"Looks like they managed to get his helmet off."

"Yes, they removed it, aerated his throat with a canula and put a trachea tube in his throat to put green green liquid directly into his lungs. Unlike the other alien we captured in the past, this one doesn't appear to be rapid aging."

"It'll be a miracle if he survives any length of time - the aliens can't take alot of abuse."

"It's a bloody miracle you got him here alive at all! I wonder how he ended up wandering so far away from his ship..." Straker mused.

Leslie shrugged, "I got a call from Pete Little 'bout an hour ago - he and Claude Gallant watched the UFO come up outta the lake after dark - they sent the GPS co-ordinates to Sky Five and they destroyed the ship before it got into space."

Straker turned back to the window and watched the alien's heart monitor as it registered regular beeps, "This alien just missed the last flight home."

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Dr. Mitali Raychaudhuri sat down to update General Straker on the alien's condition.

"Right now, he's surprisingly stable. His aging process is very slow compared to the records I received on the last live alien we captured. This alien appears also to be healthier and younger than we expected to find him. He's had a shock, but we're treating him with what we hope are the appropriate drugs."

"And the shoulder wound?"

"Healing nicely - no infection - may not even be much of a scar left over."

"His breathing?"

"That's the big ticket item - I don't know if he can be successfully weaned off the green liquid. We manufactured more, based on analysis of what was in his helmet and backpack unit, but there were some alien components we couldn't duplicate. If he can survive on that, we may attempt to take him to the next level - breathing our air like we do."

Straker's expression was grim as he nodded and got up to pace the room, "Mitali, I don't

have to tell you how important it is to keep this alien alive."

"We're doing our best, sir, to keep him stable and comfortable. He's been receiving the necessary fluids, electrolytes and other items by IV, needed to replace his own lost through his injury and trauma. My staff is well aware of the importance of this situation. We've also been conducting blood tests and other exams since he arrived. The tests show no indication that he is carrying any form of communicable disease or anything toxic to human life. Tomorrow we will do MRIs and catscans on him - I should have a fuller report ready for your perusal later this week."

"When can I see him myself?"

\* \* \*

Once before, Ed Straker had stood in scrubs and mask at the bed of a live alien. Back then, it had all gone terribly wrong. The alien had aged right before his eyes - turning from a young man into a wizened shell. He could still hear the sound of the alien's agonized death cry.

It had not crossed his mind until years later that the alien must have died in terror - he would have known his aging was impossible to halt - and he was trillions of light years from his home planet and his own kind. Straker's anger and his dedication to stopping the aliens had closed his mind to any sympathy for the race of people so bent on using his own species for spare parts.

Now he was once again looking down at a living representative of that alien species. Wounded, but recovering nicely, according to Dr. Raychaudhuri, the alien was lying mute - as much from bewilderment as because he was still only able to breathe with the green liquid being pumped into his lungs.

Intravenous tubes ran in and out of both arms, and several different monitors recorded his brain, heart and lung functions. He was evidently on a catheter, judging by the pale green liquid in the collection bag.

The alien looked up at Straker, silver irises reminding the General eerily of Tina Kovac's hybrid son, Orion. There was a keen intelligence in those uncanny eyes, but no fear. There was something else...was it...curiosity?

Dr. Raychaudhuri's most recent report had included the promised MRI and catscan readings. Straker was not surprised when a small organ was detected at the base of the alien's brain - located at the juncture of the brain and the spinal column. They'd seen the small organ while doing autopsies on dead aliens, but they'd never had the chance to see one in a living alien. Kovac's son had a similar organ and so in fact did Straker's mutant alien kittens. One hypothesis was that this organ, unlike the human appendix, was not an evolutionary vestige no longer of use, but that its use was vital to alien communication. It may have been the root of what Omega's theorists considered the alien ability to speak telepathically.

Straker was also reminded of the final conversation he'd had with his dying father. He'd mentioned telepathic communications by the aliens captured at Roswell in 1947. Was that why the aliens always appeared so smug and uncommunicative?

While Straker had seen evidence of both telepathy and telekinesis by his hybrid Siamese kittens, the hybrid baby Orion had not been in their custody long enough to determine conclusively that he too could speak to the minds of others. Kovac's actions in returning herself and the child to the aliens seemed to confirm she was under some sort of mind control, but Dr. Jackson also likened the possibility to the Psychobombs they'd coped with in the 1980s.

Over the decades, Straker had formed some theories of his own about the aliens - why

they chose earth to ravage its people and steal its natural resources, why they had such contempt for humans. The General interpreted their contempt as an indication of their own feelings of superiority. They were far more technologically advanced, and their means of interpersonal communications far more sophisticated. No doubt they considered themselves more highly evolved than the humans they preyed on. Much like the way in which humans utilized domesticated animals for food - humans didn't put too much concern into the lives and fears of the cows they slaughtered for beef.

But, their so called evolution had left the aliens sterile, dying, their own planet likely in ecological ruins. And although they could not as yet breathe safely in Earth's atmosphere without their green liquid, the alarming evidence of their hybrid program told Straker that it was only a matter of time before they succeeded in breeding hundreds of Orions who could.

All these thoughts raced through Straker's mind as he faced the first live alien he'd seen in over two decades. Taking a deep breath, Straker addressed the alien, "Is it true your people can converse telepathically?"

The alien hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Can you hear my voice as well as understand my thoughts?"

Again, the alien nodded. He watched Straker carefully as he paced the room.

"Tell me why your people come here."

A slow smile spread on the alien's face. Did their smiles mean the same thing as a human smile? Straker questioned in his mind.

<You know> Straker heard the words, or the idea of the words, in his head.

"Why choose our world? Surely any other with sentient life would have done?"

<Only your world>

"Is your planet far away?"

<To you, yes>

The alien's cryptic answers were likely meant to frustrate. Straker tried another tack, "We have drugs to help you be...more co-operative."

<I will tell you nothing of importance>

"Not even to save your own life?"

<I will not live long here>

"You'll live as long as we want you to!" Straker had raised his voice and he paused for a moment, fighting to regain control. There was so much he needed from this alien and the alien was just playing with him.

"Is your world in the Orion constellation?"

The alien remained mute for the moment, watching the General.

"Your people have been coming her for hundreds of years, haven't they? You've been interfering with our development, using us, exploiting us, molding us to your own purposes!"

<A most...suggestable species...>

The alien's comment confirmed for Straker one of the many reasons they'd chosen Earth. It wasn't just Earth's great natural resources, or the physiological similarities between their bodies and humans - it was the very fact that the human race was immature - easily manipulated - and even more so hundreds of years in the past when human culture and civilization were in their infancy. Straker thought back to what he knew about alien intervention in ancient Egypt, in Mezo-America, and possibly in other places around the globe. The aliens had succeeded in using human kind's own fears and beliefs against them for a very long time.



"You're a young man...are your people able to reproduce again?" Straker asked.

Tilting his head to one side, the alien smiled again, < *We will be successful despite your efforts to the contrary* >

"We've already been busy stamping out your nests and your breeding sites. As soon as you set them up, we find them and clean them out. You and your kind are like vermin to us. And we humans crush vermin whenever we find them." Straker leaned over to look the alien eye to eye.

Unfazed, the silver eyes stared up into Straker's cold blue ones, < *Your people have been of great use to us. But, you are the ones who will be crushed if you continue to refuse your destiny*>

The verbal fencing was not delivering the results Straker wanted. He was not certain how much of his thoughts were apparent to the telepathic abilities of the alien. And, the alien would never be forthcoming on just how much he could interpret. He remembered that his father had said about the Roswell aliens - they were trapped on Earth and at the mercy of a hostile American government, but they seemed oblivious to that fact - they had acted as though they were in the position of power. Was it arrogance or something more?

Most Omega and SHADO theorists had decided the aliens did not utilize much emotion. They seemed too purposeful and unafraid. Reports from nest raids detailed their willingness to commit suicide to avoid capture and possible interrogation. Why would they be so eager to die when they had been coming to Earth for hundreds of years, stealing human body parts and natural resources, if they didn't need them to keep living? For what other reasons could they be coming here?

"We'll talk later, when you're in a better mood..." Straker said quietly, and pulling off his mask, he stepped out of the room.

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"Mitali, I need you to pull records. I want as much data on the aliens' breeding program as you can scrape up," the General told Dr. Raychaudhuri, "And pull up the autopsy reports on that hybrid baby we lost the other year - you know the one - and all the info on Orion, and Tina Kovac - DNA work-ups, physiological comparisons - the lot."

"Is there some specific conclusion you're looking for, sir?"

"I'm not sure yet. But if there is, that information might be the key."

"How did your interrogation with the alien go?"

"Stalemate. All we did was cross swords. And he definitely used telepathy to communicate with me - your techs are poring over the digital recordings of the session right now."

"Did he show any signs of the same abilities your cats have?"

"No telekinesis - unless he's just holding back. But I really do think if the aliens could manipulate material things with their minds - they'd have done it long before now. Think of the edge it would have given them! As it is, we know they are quite able to manipulate *human minds* with their telepathic powers."

Straker pulled off the rest of his scrubs and pitched them into the laundry bin, "I need this stuff asap. I'll be in my quarters."

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"Paul, I want all the material on your mission in Egypt and our mission in Mexico the other year. I need them cross referenced with actual historical information - how long will that take?" Straker told General Foster.

"Thirty minutes or less, " Paul explained, "I can have the info sent to your personal e-mail site."

"No, bring me the hard copies - I want something I can hold in my hands. Get Lew Waterman and Al Leslie up here too - I want to set up a think session. I need input from you all on this."

"What's up, Ed?"

"I have a theory I want to bandy about - but I need to bounce it off those of you who've had up close and personal experiences with what looks like alien intervention in ancient human cultures. The aliens want our body parts and our natural resources, but there's some other reason they chose us ...and I want to try and figure out what it might be before I interrogate our little green friend again."

\* \* \*

"I realize the hour is late and I'm asking alot of you here, but I need to get as much insight as I can before I tackle interrogating the alien again, " General Straker looked around at everyone at the briefing room table, "Al, you looked at the recordings of my first session with our green friend, any comments?"

As usual, when put on the spot, Al Leslie was chewing his thumb, but he flipped on his laptop, and brought up the video of Straker and the alien, "Nothin' really concrete from this - we couldn't record the alien's telepathic communications with you on any account. As for the alien's body language or facial expressions, well, who knows if theirs mean the same as ours?"

"I thought of that, too," Straker nodded, "The alien smiled several times but I don't know if we can gauge their cultural cues as similar to our own."

Foster brought up some images on his own laptop, as well as handing over a stack of printed papers in a mylar folder to the General, "Ed, I copied as much as I could on our experiences in Egypt, Mexico, a couple other assignments. We've debated the possibility of the fact the aliens have been coming here, perhaps for hundreds of years. And, that they more than likely influenced many of our planet's most seminal ancient cultures - but I'm not sure what else you're thinking here."

"It was something the alien said to me - it keeps repeating itself in my head - he said *'Your people have been of great use to us. But, you are the ones who will be crushed if you continue to refuse your destiny'* - our destiny? What destiny? A shared destiny? Is that what the alien meant?"

Lew Waterman shifted in his chair, "If you mean a shared destiny, General, are you positing the idea that our race is connected to theirs in some way?"

"It would make perfect sense, wouldn't it? The theory has been around for a long time that humans didn't just appear on this planet via some unproven evolutionary path - what if our race - the human race - is either some sort of offshoot of the aliens? - an original experiment in colonization that didn't work perfectly for them - or even that we humans are the result of an ancient breeding program - and they are trying now to re-breed the two races back again?"

The others at the briefing table sat back in shock. They'd all read such books as Erich von Daniken's "Chariots of the Gods" and other tomes decrying the possibility that humans were not descended from apes - as per Darwin - but descended from a superior alien race. Most readers didn't know whether to grant any credence to such ideas or not.

Straker leaned forward, flipped through one of the files and located a page he wanted, "Look at what Beatrice Millar said when she was under alien influence - *'We were gods! We came down from the stars and saved the Egyptians! We gave them life! We taught them*

*everything! Everything they were. Everything they became. Their culture, their religion, their art - everything. For thousands of years we guided them! And, they turned against us. We asked so little in return - and then they refused to give us what we wanted - what we needed!"*

Mitali Raychaudhuri sighed, "I guess this means the evidence was there in front of us all this time and we didn't see it for what it was."

"No," Foster replied, "We just didn't *want* to see it. I was there the day we interrogated Beatrice Millar. Even my mind didn't want to accept that the aliens had that much stock in cultivating us for their own ends. I just thought that we were unlucky enough to be the best physiological match they could find..."

"This is what I have to hit the alien with - they *need* us - but they have enormous contempt for us - the alien controlling Beatrice Millar said the ancient Egyptians saw them as gods - it's pretty hard for a god to have much sympathy for anything or anyone as much lower on the scale of intellect and technology as they see us," Straker crystalized the point they were all sitting there digesting in their minds.

Al Leslie spoke up, "OK, let me throw this at ya - if the aliens have bin involved in human development for - let's suppose - thousands of years - that means they know stuff about us and how we evolved, that we don't know - yet. They probably figure this gives them the edge. So how do we use this information *against* them?"

"That's precisely why we have to sit here tonight and hammer this out," Straker said, "I want to be ready for that bastard in my next interrogation."

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The last time Straker had wanted answers from an alien, he'd utilized a truth serum which might have contributed to the alien's death. He would not be so careless this time. No matter how much he wanted answers, he knew he would have to tread lightly and use good old fashioned psychology to psych out this alien - but would the alien respond to any of his ploys - or just fence with him mentally again?

"I want to posit something to you - something I think you and I both know but haven't acknowledged yet - that we're brothers under the skin," Straker told the alien, as he seated himself across from his bed.

The alien's silver-irised eyes batted quickly - had Straker made a point?

< *Why would you consider this idea?* >

"Because I think you know what I'm talking about. Our two races - different - and yet quite similar. How did it come about? Were we seeded from your people and then we evolved differently here because our world is different - or did your people ruin your own world so badly that even our world is now toxic to you?"

< *As I have stated before, your people are very simplistic.* >

"Simplistic how? Simplistic in our techno-development? Or simplistic in our physical development? Are we what your people once were? Is your destruction of your own world what we have to look forward to at some point in our future?"

< *What makes you think my world has been destroyed?* >

"We know what you're doing here, and why, my friend. We also know that what you take from our world is indicative of a people whose own world can no longer provide those necessities of life. Before we know it, you'll find a way to steal our water and our air, too. Your people are nothing but inter-galactic thieves - surviving off our world like invasive parasites!"

The alien shrugged his shoulders, < *All those who are superior take what they need - do you not perform the same tasks here on your world?* >

"It isn't necessary for us to leave our world to take from others! We wouldn't even do it if we could!"

< *Then you have just confirmed my theory of your people's weakness - only the strong take what they need, when they need it. All others are weak and ineffectual.*

"I take it your people know nothing of honor, of decency. Your people are merely desperate - and desperate people are weakened by their own desperation - they become slaves to it."

< *Before long, it is your people who will become slaves to mine - just as you once were - long ago. The more things change, the more they remain the same - that much I know of human philosophy.* >

"And why would you know anything of what humans believe or think? We understand your contempt for us. A contempt born of your need for us and what our world has to offer yours. It is that contempt which will be your people's undoing."

Smiling slowly, the alien shifted his position and leaned towards Straker, < *I believe one of your own once said 'I have seen the enemy and it is us'* >

"How long have your people been coming here?"

< *From time immemorial in your own terms. But for my people, it is only since yesterday.* >

"You know we mean to stop you. To find you. What system are your people coming from? What if we can parlay our own technology to go out there and find your world?"

The alien smiled again, < *Your people will never journey to my world. It is too far and you do not have the technology. We will be masters of this world long before your people move high enough up the evolutionary scale to make such a voyage. And by then, it will no longer be necessary.* >

"We have reason to believe your people may be coming from the constellation of Orion - is that true?"

< *I do not know the names by which you call star systems. What is Orion?* >

Straker lifted the lid on the laptop he'd had placed on the alien's bedside table, and pulled up a visual of the Orion system, as seen through the Hubble Telescope, "This is your star system, isn't it?"

The alien did not answer. He simply looked at the laptop screen, expressionless. Straker watched closely as the alien traced several of the stars in the visual with a fingertip. His hand faltered and began to shake...then his whole body seemed seized by tremours...

Straker called for Dr. Raychaudhuri and the medical team...

\* \* \*

"I'm sorry, General, we couldn't save him," Dr. Raychaudhuri laid a sympathetic hand on Straker's shoulder.

Straker nodded slowly. He continued to stare through the window into the sterile room, watching the medical technicians unhook all the machinery from the alien's now lifeless body, "I want the post mortem ASAP."

\* \* \*

"The aging process was not as much a factor in the alien's death as other problems which became cumulative," Mitali explained, seated at a boardroom table with the General.

"What happened? He seemed fine..."

Pausing to change the autopsy photos on her laptop, Mitali said, "Believe it or not, we discovered he may have died from organ rejection."

"Organ rejection? I thought the aliens had conquered that issue ages ago? Did he have a lot of transplanted organs?"

"You're looking at photos of the alien's pancreas, and the stained slides from our tissue analysis. The pancreas is either a transplant from a human donor, or possibly even a cloned organ - we're still investigating that. The alien must have run out of anti-rejection serum when his own green liquid was finished. We were aware that our own green liquid was lacking some of the alien components which we could not duplicate. Obviously, one of them must have been the anti-rejection drug. We're analyzing our last remaining sample culled from his helmet."

"So the pancreas was his only transplant?"

"Yes...but...we did separate DNA tests on both the alien and on his transplanted pancreas, post mortem. General...the DNA from the transplant matched...Tina Kovac..."

Straker pushed himself out of his chair and went to stand by the window. He hugged himself convulsively, and Dr. Raychaudhuri could see his shoulders shaking.

"General, I know what this information means to you - but I couldn't hold it back - you wanted complete disclosure. Apprehending a live alien for the first time in two decades has been a momentous event for our research."

During his interrogation sessions with the alien, Straker deliberately avoided the subject of Kovac - had he felt the alien probably had no knowledge of her? Or had ignorance of her final end been easier to live with?

Now he was faced with incontrovertible evidence that Kovac was indeed dead. Only death could have separated her from such a vital organ. Kovac, who had borne the first known viable alien-human hybrid child, had given Orion and herself back to the aliens. And in the end, she was no more than spare parts to them. The aliens had used her thoroughly - used her womb, her eggs, killed her entire family, and finally, had used her whole body up.

The anger and grief had taken Straker by surprise. He had not realized how desperately he'd hoped for Kovac's survival - no matter how unlikely it had seemed. That the capture of their first live alien in over twenty years should yield this evidence was stunning. Unbeknownst to them, this alien had held the key to Straker's soul.

There was no one to turn to. Alec was dead of cancer. Paul Foster had just left for an assignment in Asia. Straker had never been close to Peter Carlin or Lew Waterman, as much as he respected their dedication and their work. And even if Jackson had still been with SHADO, he would never have confided anything of this importance to him, that wily bastard.

Silent tears flowed as he caught sight of his own reflection in the window. Who was that desperate old man staring back at him? What happened to the young and vital USAF officer who'd once been married, a father - lost it all - and poured his life force into fighting the world's greatest evil?

He didn't feel vital. He felt old, used up, his family long gone, his best friend just ashes spread outside a London pub. Finally, he made his way back to the table and sat down. Mitali had left him discreetly to give him some privacy. Now he would always be alone.

## **Epilogue - October 31st**

Ricky and Julian sat back, each enjoying their own joint. Bubbles finished rolling his and lit it off the end of Julian's. They were quietly contemplating the street value of their latest crop of weed when Julian broke the silence.

"Well, boys," he exhaled, "I'd say we got some good shit here," he examined his joint, "Should be worth a few bucks."

"Can't retire on it, though," Bubbles reminded him.

"Nah, but mebbe we could buy some good investments - y'know - use our money more wisely," Julian replied.

"I don't like banks - mortgages, loans and shit like that!" Ricky said.

"Investments are different. They actually make money for you."

Bubbles inhaled again, "This is the only investment I wanna make. And we came fuckin' close to losin' it, buddy. That goofball in the red suit just about blew it for us!"

"Yeah, he was a weird dude, eh? Didn't talk, didn't eat, didn't even take a fuckin' piss, for fuck's sake," Ricky recalled, "Geez, he was so outta it all - you'd think he was from outer space or somethin'."

"We got ridda him though - thanks to that Desert Storm guy showin' up," Julian held up his glass of rye whisky, "Here's to buddy, whoever he was, he saved our asses!"

Bubbles picked up the phone receiver, "Anyone wanna order in some pizza? I got the munchies now..."

The End