

First Encounter

By Robert Chin

Who ever made the rule that the first aliens will be of equal technological status? Who made the rule that they will be friendly? They may be cunningly efficient warriors, bent on the complete destruction of mankind for personal benefit. They will use every resource they can against us. And through the Internet they will be able to find out all. From manipulating our bank accounts to finding out top secret information about every government on every part of the Earth, they will be prepared for us. We only hope that we are prepared for them.

Part I

“Primus contentio”

Chapter One

They came. A million tiny objects, hovering, swerving, dancing in the vacuum of space – It moved quickly toward a steadily growing ball of blue and green, located toward the center of a nine planet solar system. They had great prospects. Their population was growing, their small space ships were not enough to carry their entire population. Some had to be taken care of. But now, they would not have to worry about such trivial things. They had been searching for over a millennium now, searching for an inhabitable planet. Yes, they had detected life forms on the ball of blue and green, but this was insignificant, mere mosquitoes thriving on a planet, easily removed. Besides, it was too good a chance to pass up. They had made the mistake once already; they were not going to pass up a planet again. The rest of this solar system had good prospects, too. After conquering Earth, they could continue and live off the numerous other planets in the solar system. Yes, Earth would make an excellent addition.

The roar of applause filled the gigantic dining hall. It was new; full of the smell of fresh cut cedar and redwood. The President of the United States gestured for silence and leaned forward over the oak podium to talk. “Ladies and gentlemen, the members from Mars, the SETI team!” A quick rush of laughter was met with an immediate and tremendous applause. The tallest, bearing a beard and moustache and a slight touch of gel in his hair, strutted forward to the podium while trying to align his name tag parallel to his suit pocket.

He smiled with an air of arrogance, “Well, certainly not from Mars. But, as a great starship captain’s first officer would say, ‘definitely not human.’” His subtle attempt at humor was insufficient to instill all but a few chuckles. Nevertheless, his voice boomed again. “The SETI team has been monitoring the sub-harmonic vibrations in the low VHF band for several months now. In English,” he paused and finally received his much deserved laughter. “That means we’ve been listening to patterns in static from radio waves. We’ve been able to trace these signals, and although they are fairly far off, they seem to be slowly approaching. That’s all we know now, but hope to know more in the near future. Thank you.”

Stepping down the steps, he joined his three other colleagues at a small table in the corner. Jessica, the team biologist, had a degree in exobiology. She was easily bored, but also easily entertained by such small trinkets as shells and such small brain twisters. She would play with these until she had figured out every single step, and then she would repeat the process until she had it memorized. Alex, on the other hand, was what people considered to be a self-centered, non-verbal computer nerd. Although he had somewhat of a sense of humor, he was mostly a boring, non verbal man obsessed with studying to increase his knowledge. Beth was trained in everything from field ops to weapons control. Graduating at the top of her class, she was known as one of the top strategic planners for the deployment of army units during combat drills held at her military college. The team’s general coolness and feeling of wellbeing was contrasted by an easily upset man named John who had a tendency to swear excessively and exaggerate events until they were as believable as Saturday morning cartoons. He was also the type

who becomes very nervous at times. Although he could hit a rat squarely between the eyes at one hundred feet, this was not the reason he was chosen for the team. He could solve many math problems off the top of his head; the types of intricately complex math problems that plague math books in a college level calculus course. The team was a special division of the SETI, or Search for ExtraTerrestrial Intelligence division. This specific division operated under the vise that they were devoted to making sure that Earth was prepared to defend itself incases where aliens invaded. In reality, the team mostly did advanced weapons research in preparation for the remote possibility of a World War III.

Sitting down at the table, Jessica greeted him with a simple “Good job.” “Too bad we couldn’t tell them the other part.” She emphasized ‘other’ as if trying to reinforce the fact that they were hiding something.

“Yeah, well we don’t want the president to know everything,” retorted John. He emphasized the word ‘everything’ in response. At that moment, a courier dressed in a black tuxedo delivered an envelope with a red seal, assuring the validity and security of the contents inside. Alex glanced at it and quickly said, “Hate to ruin a good dinner guys, but we’ve got work to do.” They all stared at him angrily, and then immediately proceeded towards the door.

In the car, Beth hastily opened up the envelope and popped in the enclosed mini-disc. A voice took over the speakers. “An hour ago, the space shuttle Victory picked up a mysterious satellite. The exact nature of this satellite is classified, and cannot be currently disclosed due to security restrictions. You are to fly to Los Angeles where you will be taken to a secured facility in the desert. You will find the tickets enclosed. See you there.”

“I know we were guaranteed two weeks off but,” she took a deep breath and then immediately followed her statement with a whisper, “...there goes our vacation.”

Los Angeles Airport
Los Angeles

They could see the heat of Los Angeles even before they landed. “*God, I hate the heat,*” John thought to himself. Upon disembarking, a man dressed in black slacks, a black shirt, black sunglasses and a tie to match snapped in a quick breath, “John, how was the flight?”

“Absolutely—,”he thought for a moment, contemplating what to say next.

“—exhilarating. I couldn’t get a single minute of sleep not knowing what you guys are hiding from us!”

“What, the CIA, hide stuff?” the CIA agent quipped, “Never!”

Being old friends, they both smiled at each other, while the rest of the group wonderingly followed. “See that jet out there?” the SETI team nodded. “Get on it. It’ll take you where you want to go.”

The plane flew them off to a remote base in the desert, as expected. They could see the shuttle *Victory* on approach. Upon arrival, they clamored out of the small plane and met a white-haired man with a distinctly visible receding hairline. “John, Alex, Beth, Jessica.” The white-haired man nodded after each name. “The artifact being held here is underground. Please follow me to the door opposite the main office.”

Wanting to know what artifact he was talking about, they immediately ran through the wooden double doors. Once inside, Beth stopped and commented, “Hmm. Standard government facility. Looks like an ER—” She was inconsiderately interrupted by the man.

“Gentlemen,” he paused briefly to consider what to say next. “And gentle-women,” he said awkwardly. “I’m sure you’re all familiar with the satellite *Voyager*. The one sent to explore the reaches of our galaxy and beyond, and carrying with it a golden record of humanity? The teams heads bobbed up and down in agreement. “Well, it came back.” He paused for a moment that seemed like an eternity. “The space shuttle *Victory* took off last week, found *Voyager* in orbit, and brought it back. We were lucky enough to get the satellite before it collided with the space station MIR. The satellite and the 24 karat gold record of humanity were all intact with one exception. Inscribed across the record were the words, ‘We know where you live.’ And, ‘Be prepared for the onslaught.’ As you would have guessed, this message triggered a priority one defense alert. We’ve ruled out practical jokes from Russia and other space-faring countries as this is the real *Voyager*. All we can do now is hope this is a peaceful onslaught and hope you can come up with a plan. As the top secret SETI-Pi advanced defense team, you are instructed to do anything you can to prepare for a hostile takeover. You will find that information, your belongings and your entire lab have been transported to our advanced weapons research lab in Texas. Good luck.”

Chapter Two

They made slight course corrections, as the calculations being made simultaneously were interfering with their navigation. Mostly though, their computers were sifting through the masses of data on the blue-green planet’s computers. They mastered English in 1.29 seconds, Spanish in 1.31, German in 1.28, Chinese in 2.21, and all the other languages in an exponentially smaller time frame. They thought about the infestations, taking up more and more of their processing time. Only the purest would survive, those that spoke the binary language. In a few milliseconds more, they had learned all about the human race and its weaknesses. The human created Internet would be their downfall. The humans were slightly more powerful than they had assumed, but even their strongest nuclear weapons would be all but futile attempts to defend themselves. Silence followed for the next few milliseconds as their collective minds processed what to do. Then, they decided. They sent out a single six word message in all languages on a wide-band subspace message: “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

The heat of Texas burned their skin, but they soon entered yet another underground government facility. The cool, air-conditioned building was a relief at first, but the coldness soon became overpowering.

A squawky man appeared in a solid white lab coat. “Welcome to Deep Star, gentlemen. All information contained herein is confidential. You agree to these terms by submitting your thumbprint on the electronic field below.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a sleek, governmental looking pad. “I heard you’re trying to fight ET’s,” he chuckled, “Good luck.” He walked away with an odd looking smile.

“So, I guess we just wander around...?” John questioned.

“Yeah, and press buttons to our heart’s delight.” Alex smiled. Almost simultaneously, a computer generated female voice boomed over the loudspeakers. “This way please—” The white lights of the room dimmed, and the walkway lit up with small streaming yellow dots on both sides. The walkway guided them to a one hundred inch view screen that resembled a flat TV display. “That’s one hell of a television screen...” John commented. A distinctly non-humanoid face slowly materialized as a computer announced to the team members in the room. “We’ve just received this message.” The speakers emitted a brief clicking noise, and then a cold, alien voice said in plain English, “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

Then the man from California appeared on the viewer and stately said, “Gentlemen, Operation SETI-Pi VI is now active.”

“Damn. Back on the job again.” John’s voice slowly echoed throughout the room without objection.

“I know they called English an international language, but...”, Alex sarcastically smiled. “...You know, I don’t think we’ll be having any communication problems.”

The team sat down at the four separate computer terminals. “I’m bringing the system online...now.” Alex typed a couple of quick commands into the keyboard. “Triangulating alien position...” The team sat back and waited for the computer to make the necessary calculations. In a little under five minutes, a computer projection of the solar system appeared on the wide screen TV. “My God.” John reclined in his chair. Beth gave a simple ‘hmp’, while Jessica and Alex just stared blindly at the screen. Alex finally broke the silence and muttered, “There must be thousands of them.” Silence followed as the computer continued to calculate and plot dots. The computer calculates arrival in two days, five hours, and 29.3 minutes. “My God. It’s an invasion.” John murmured again.

Alex quickly ordered Jessica, “Get me Washington!”

Chapter Three

They were almost there. The collective thought with a single united voice. There would be no stopping them now. The leader of the collective watched as they approached ever so slowly, his black eyes gleaming with hatred. The supreme commander sent out a direct order over the neural network, a simple, ruthless instruction. “Leave no survivors.” Their ships slowed in speed as they entered the outskirts of the terran solar system. They made a quick calculation, proving the terran computers inadequate; however this

problem was a simple one, once the annoyances had been removed, these devices could be put to good use. Two days, four hours, 29.3 minutes left. The inhabitants would be surprised as their computer systems were inaccurate; they were off by one hour. Tauntingly, they used the human's large network of inferior devices to propagate three words to every single user. "We are coming."

"Hey, did you get one of those messages, too?" John glanced in Alex's direction.

"Yep. Someone's playing with us. It'll probably turn out to be some sort of hoax or something. Either that, or the government will try to cover it up." He smiled, holding to his beliefs until he heard the evening news later that night.

"And in other news, a message was propagated to all sections of the Internet, to everyone with an e-mail address. It contained only the text, "We are coming." The message seems to bear no threat to computer users. The engineer and creator of this latest hoax still remains at large. And now, we have Andrew Isely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. 'This message does not seem to pose any threat to national safety; the message simply contains text. We will continue to investigate further into this matter...'"

"Some hoax," Beth said under her breath while running toward the computer. "We'd better watch out. These aliens are smarter than we think. They've probably looked up everything about us over the Internet."

"I bet they like the pornography..." John murmured.

"And they get free Internet access, too!" commented Alex. Beth managed to trace the message's origin to a single Russian satellite. "Well, there's our messenger. And probably a breach of national safety too."

"Well, it could be a hoax after all, I guess." John added.

"Let's find out and stop speculating!" an excited Beth yelled. She typed a simple one sentence e-mail. It read, "Who are you?" and sent it off to be stored in the onboard memory on the satellite. In a few minutes time, a reply was received. "That information is irrelevant. Prepare for eradication." The team stared at each other. "Meet us in two days, six hours, fifty-eight minutes at Salt Lake City, Utah. From there you will share all information and prepare for cessation."

"Blunt, but effective," John sarcastically joked.

"It's a message from the aliens, no doubt. The US satellites picked up the same signal and triangulated the same position. We're dead." John juttled the message forth, as if he were reading a definition from a dictionary.

A few minutes later, while the team was pondering about what to do, the General of the Armed Forces stepped in. "I would like to notify you all that the United States and all other countries bearing nuclear weapons have been put on standby alert. We'll nuke them if we have too."

The team nodded, befounded at what they were hearing.

"In addition, the satellites from the STAR WARS defense project have been reactivated. They've been orbiting for almost 20 years, and the armed forces have been itching' to test them out. As we speak, the satellites are realigning themselves to the new

projector facility. In case you don't know how the satellites work, I'll explain them briefly. First, a satellite detects an incoming missile. Then huge satellite mirrors align themselves so that we can shoot a laser beam at a satellite, and the laser ray will bounce around a couple of times until it is on a trajectory to its intended target. The laser beam is strong enough to destroy a missile, if not disable its onboard propulsion and navigation. Through this manner, any object in the vicinity of the earth can be made a target."

"Can you assure us that they will be the ones who fire first?" a worried Beth responded. He gave a quick reply. "That's the way the president wants it." He glanced down at his watch. "Fourty minutes. I hope you're ready."

413 Washington Blvd.
New York, New York

His fingers sang softly with the beat of the keyboard. The steady rhythm drummed on throughout the day. He could have stayed there forever, but when he received that one message, "We are coming," he knew it was no hoax. Tracing the path of the e-mail back to the same Russian satellite, he found an adventure within itself. He explored the entire alien network, making sure to cover all of his tracks. The voices of the collective echoed on screen with a certain eeriness. Once he found out the true intent of the aliens, he was horrified. The entire Internet had been scanned, analyzed. He knew that the only chance he and the rest of humanity had would be to devise a computer virus that would disable the alien ships. Familiarizing himself with the alien systems, he began to work day and night. Had this been a lighter time, he would have joked about himself 'trying to save the world'. Instead, he was thinking, 'How ironic it is that a machine will end up saving millions of lives, the lives of its creators.'

Chapter Four

"We have arrived, we have arrived!", the minds yelled in a great chorus. "Hurry, we must prepare." The elders informed the younger ones, reminding them of their last great defeat. They aligned themselves in a crescent-shaped U, on the same parallel as the equator. They concentrated their greatest fire-power right above the United States and let out a single torpedo. "History is written by the survivors..." they sang in chorus.

"It's a torpedo, it's a torpedo!" The man at the terminal yonder worked quickly to align the satellites in position. His job was completed not a minute too late, as the torpedo was vaporized just before impact with the land below. At that very moment, a voice yelled over the loudspeaker, "All men to arms, this is a scramble! Invasion!"

Waiting for further instructions, they were instead greeted by a silent static. The team sat motionless for a moment wondering what to do, as the power went out. John reached into his pocket pulling out a pocket flashlight. He made his way toward the supplies locker on the opposite side of the room. "Flashlights, everyone. I think we'll need these—" he was interrupted by a groaning noise and foot-shaped imprints in the metal

deck above them. "I think we'll need these, too." John proceeded to pass out the AR-33 assault rifles. "Watch out. These modified ammunition contain every single chemical you can think of and will kill anything it hits. It has everything from pesticides to Plutonium 239. Oh yeah, they're also extremely flammable. Don't get caught in a fire with them as they'll make a huge explosion. In the event that you get caught in a fire, pull down the slip on the gun and switch it to the 'disable' position, which will in turn disable all of the bullets in the cartridge. You each have ten shots."

"Let's just hurry up and get to the surface." Alex said incredulously.

"Good idea. Beth, Alex, Jessica, cover my back."

They slowly walked to the door guarding the stairs. Creeping forward, something arm grabbed Alex's arm, searching for comfort. He screamed and instantly turned around, pointing the gun directly at Beth's head. "It's ok! It's ok! It's only me!" she yelled helplessly.

"Don't do that!" a paranoid Alex exclaimed in horror. At that moment, a green goo plopped down on the floor from above. As their eyes slowly crept up to the ceiling, following the drips, they saw a greenish blob dissolving the floor above them in a perfect circle. "Hurry, form a perimeter around the hole." John quickly yelled orders, his adrenaline rushing in his muscles. "We want to get it the moment it comes down."

They stood there gaping at the goo for ten seconds as it dissolved away a two foot hole. Standing there, with their guns aimed at the hole they waited. And waited. After a minute had gone by, John took a step forward and saw two white gleaming eyes from above. Before he could raise his gun it had disappeared. Instantaneously, a voice seemingly coming from within himself said to him and the others, "You have been spared. Consider it the will of the Daemon." The words echoed in his mind for what seemed like minutes.

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"Those incompetent government bastards," he said. "It's not even funny. They ain't got a clue what to do." He chuckled to himself and reclined in his chair, flipping on his TV.

"And in other news, the highly guarded secret weapons research technology lab was destroyed yesterday in what seemed to be a terrorist attack..."

He flipped off the TV. "Terrorist attack." He let out a grunt. "That ain't no terrorist attack. They've come. The onslaught has begun." He rolled his chair up to the computer. "We'd better hurry up and finish this program?" He was talking to the computer.

Chapter Five

"Why did you not kill him? Why?"

"I have other plans," the Daemon replied. The collective thought and thought, but could not think of a logical explanation. "Do not worry," the Daemon said assuredly. "I have other plans for those four. We will soon be on our way to victory. These inferior little humans. They think of themselves as so great, so important in the universe, and so indestructible. But they themselves are the authors of their own destruction throughout history. These antithetical humans will be destroyed just as easily as they destroy each other."

As the team trekked through the dark and mysterious hallways, the rest of the journey to the top was fairly uneventful. On the surface of the desert, they saw plumes of smoke arising from most of the structures surrounding them. It smelled of gasses such as ammonia and chlorine, but there were too many to be named. They tried to look around, but the smoke around them stung at their eyes like millions of tiny wasps. They held each others hands and quickly ran toward what seemed to be a buzzing noise. They were right. There was a military helicopter sitting in front of them; the pilot dead. As they approached, they could see the pilot more clearly. "Strangled." Alex commented.

"No doubt. Cover me." Alex raised his rifle as John prepared to step in. John looked around the helicopter. Empty. His head motioned for the others to come in. "Come on. Let's get the hell outta here."

They pulled the body into the back of the helicopter, and as the pilot had already started the launch sequence, they lifted off, and not a moment too soon. A long black tentacle grabbed onto the floor directly inside the door, instantly met by a compressed explosion sound and a high pitch squeal. A small puddle of green goo stained the floor. "Yuch." Beth said in harmony with the noise.

As the helicopter rose high above the abandoned military base. "It's been totally obliterated." John yelled over the sound of the chopper. The helicopter was shaken by a force of air behind them, as the entire base erupted in flames. "My God..." Jessica said. "All those people." Acting on reflex, John said to himself, "God damn aliens." He then fired a single shot into the ever increasing height of flames. A thunderous explosion followed rocking the helicopter, indiscriminately killing not only the alien invaders on the base, but also any survivors.

John had revenge in his mind. He blamed all deaths on the aliens, even those caused by his own insignificant forethought. But the onslaught was just beginning.

High Security Military Base
Cornorary, North Dakota

"We haven't heard anything in awhile," the military general announced. "But they're still up there. We've assembled our data and pinpointed the top five possibilities of their next strike. Here's our list." He handed a computer printout to the team.

San Francisco
Dallas

New York
Washington, DC
Philadelphia

“According to our statisticians, there are two areas of possible strike. One being the lower left corner of the US, the other being the upper right. For some reason they regroup over only the US. The rest of the world seems to be untargeted.”

“So they know where our population is...I’m not sure what do to, although I have found a way to contact the aliens.” John smiled.

“Contact? You should have notified the government! We’ve started to evacuate those cities, and now you tell us there’s a peaceful way out? We have to get the...” John quickly interrupted the anxious military general.

“There’s no change of that! They want to destroy us! You evacuate those cities, and they’ll target somewhere else—”

“General, he’s right.” Beth glanced up at the conversationalists. “Right now, you have exactly one STAR WARS satellite in existence, according to the military space triangulation instruments. All of them are visible and operational when looking at the STAR WARS satellite display.”

“My...” his voice went silent. Then he yelled with an excessively paranoid voice, “We must destroy them! We have to destroy them, those alien bastards! Go back to your home—”

John took over the conversation. “You’re damn right. But first we need your help.”

Chapter 6

“Those pathetic little people. They think they can stop us. Futile.” Their computers further analyzed the humans thought patterns, devising further strategies. The Daemon sent out a single message to the collective. “Reform.” The millions of units formed into an arc, concentrating their power over San Francisco. Now that the laser beam reflector devices had been virtually eliminated, there would be no stopping them now. They began their pre-fire phase as their weapons slowly began to charge up. One unit assumed the focus position and began to receive the collective energy sent by the other units. The focus unit gradually started to heat up and turn red, orange, yellow, all the way through the spectrum, as it began to progressively become more visible to the inhabitant on the planet below...

High Security Military Base
Coronary, South Dakota

“I’ve got it pinpointed. Right ascension fifteen degrees, thirty-two minutes; declination fifty-six degrees, nineteen minutes; azimuth forty-five degrees fourth-four minutes.” The survey team sent the coordinates in to the military base in North Dakota.

“We’ve got something on our scopes. It seems to be getting brighter, with one million candelas¹ per minute. Our tracking devices report a hole appearing at those coordinates with an aperture of approximately fifteen feet.”

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He hurriedly completed his program, realizing something was wrong. “There! He explained. This’ll show those government bastards something!” He pressed enter and uploaded the program up into the onboard memory of Russian spy satellite #2850.

Indeed, they had something on their scopes. A warp in time-space appeared around the focus ship, a long, demented tube stretching out for a distance of over five hundred miles away from Earth. Blue beams of energy surrounded the tube, winding, curving with joy, to be sucked in on the far end of the tube. The focus ship turned a bright-white color and started the final count down. “Ten...Nine...Eight” The Daemon would be happy. The demented blue tube continued to reach out further and further, sucking in particles from the Solar System. What was once space garbage, debris left by satellites, long since abandoned – was sucked in, converted into a pure reddish-white energy form the length of the tube, as the tube itself continued to lengthen. “...seven...six...”

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“Damn, I’m too late.” He was receiving a signal. “...five...four...” “O my God, it’s a countdown, countdowns are bad!” He panicked. “Shit, shit!” He then hysterically repeated his Hail Mary’s. “three...two...”

High Security Military Base
Cornorary, North Dakota

“...one...”

“We should have acted earlier! We’re all too late.”

“Nuke them, nuke them now! We’re not too late; nuke them! Hurry!”

“...one...”

“Hurry, launch the missiles, every single one of them!”

“...one...”

“...one...”

They stared at each other.

“...one...”

“...one...”

¹ a measurement of light

There must be some problem, the collective thought. This was not possible, not a good thing at all.

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“...one...”

“...one...”

“YEESSSSS!!!” He yelled with the confidence of a tyrannical king.

“...one...”

“...one...”

Then the counting stopped as suddenly as it had begun. “Go to hell, you bastards!” he yelled up to the sky.

This was not good. They thought, “What to do? What to do?” They had never anticipated this possibility! They started the emergency evacuation procedure, but it had never been implemented before. Their groups of ships illuminated the night sky with the light of day, as they all became as white hot as the focus unit. Then, the pull of gravity of their increasing mass pulled them inward, toward the fiery red tube. They were being sucked inside, as each ship entered the event horizon, it disappeared. As the last one vanished, it let a single cry of pain, a sharp, high pitched whine, which was immediately silenced. The moment the last ship entered the event horizon, the tube inverted itself then disappeared in a four-pointed star of light.

And then they were gone, almost as quickly as they had come. Months passed, and the few that knew about the invasion and the masses that were affected by the large scale evacuations began to forget about them. They were gone, gone from our solar system, gone from our universe. Their entire race destroyed as easily as ours would have been. Or so we thought.