

INVADER

an original Gerry Anderson's UFO story by Ed Straker with Amelia Rodgers © 2017

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For Shrew from our hearts

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Straker oddly doesn't follow standard Shado procedures in dealing with an alien intruder. But why?

Straker's home and grounds security system is breached along with his privacy and he oddly fails to follow standard Shado procedures that deal with an invader.

You'd think there would be a morsel of food in the flat but a search produced nothing. I was exhausted, hungry, and without hope. In all the places I'd been in before I'd been able to find some food the occupants had left behind. This place offered nothing and I was at the point where I'd decided to give up. I knew my days were numbered, it was a fact that my species accepted. What else could we do? We were normally hated and despised by the humans. So I brokenheartedly headed for the exit.

It was then I heard the sound of the key in the lock. Trapped!

I was terrified ! I ran like I had never run before. I had been a fugitive for almost my whole life so I knew what it was like to run breathlessly knowing that every step my frail legs took could be my last. This was not my world. It was their world, and many like myself had wound up discovering that grim truth the hard way. I had no alternative. I ran. I did not care about direction. I simply dashed away, an alien on the run.

I could hear continuing footsteps and I waited in sheer terror for the sound to get louder. It did. The human was close. The door opened. My heart seemed to shatter and I cursed the decision I'd made to come here in the first place. Death awaited me, extended its bony arms toward me and grasped me and I floated away in the enveloping darkness. I heard a snap and I sensed something had changed. Defiantly I opened the eyes I had squeezed shut. The human had switched on the light. Astoundingly, he hadn't seen me. I dared not move. I became aware that he was muttering to himself. A funny sound reached my sensitive ears and I tried to raise myself up to see what fate might await me.

I became aware of a not unpleasant smell filling the immaculate room. I knew humans called it caffeine. With any luck, perhaps having ingested enough of it the human would become distracted enough to allow me to flee unseen. As an alien it was my only chance to live!

He was talking more softly to himself now. He had a curious voice. Soft, but with an imperious quality. I remained hidden and my rapid heartbeat slowed as I examined him. He was pleasant to behold and no doubt was a human of distinction. I studied him further as he carried a steaming cup of liquid to a small counter, and settled on a stool to enjoy the first sip. No..he was putting something into it. Sugar! A double quantity too. Then a dollop of cream. I was half out of my mind with hunger.

"This home and grounds security system is designed to keep out all intruders. The epitome of excellence and safety is how I recall the people who designed and installed it referred to the system. Flawless, they said."

He was looking directly at me. By everything sacred and profane in his world and mine, he was speaking to me!

This then was to be my final moment in his world?

I feigned courage.

He chuckled softly.

"Flawless, yet there you sit. I think an appropriate phrase for the occasion would be 'back to the drawing board' No, it would be more accurate to say 'the computer display screen' So. How do I proceed? Let me first introduce myself properly. I'm Edward Straker. We'll forego rank for the time being. And you are?"

I unthinkingly squeaked out a terrified response and then I regretted it as his sharp blue eyes evaluated me in a single glance.

"Shy type, huh? No matter. I'm grateful for the company. Let me get us something to eat. I'm too weary to cook us a proper supper so with apologies I'll just serve dessert. I could use the comfort of empty calories. You just stay there, no don't put yourself out. Here we go. Apple pie. Not the fanciest of sweets but I find the simplest of foods have the most complex satisfaction for me. Don't worry. You're safe here for the moment. So tell me about yourself. No, I can see you were starving. Permit me to formulate a theory. I haven't seen any signs that you've been here for any length of time so probably you broke in today. I must say I'm impressed. Maybe I should recruit you into Shado. Although it would cost me a good deal to have our equipment adapted for your use. I have always believed that such excellence should be rewarded. Funny. Other than Alec, who would be appalled if he saw you, nobody has rewarded me for fourteen years of hard work. Not that I strive for such a thing now. It was different as I was making a name for myself by climbing up the career ladder. Now there's no need for such a thing. I could resign, but until I am cold and dead I intend to go on doing my duty. A job that with any luck will never be celebrated in the press because it doesn't exist. Am I boring you?"

I wanted to tell him no but he wouldn't have understood my tongue. I just cocked my head and went on chewing the piece of pie he'd made available to me. He showed me kindness. Rare in his world. I was hated and mocked and regarded as filth on his human soil .

"Good. I haven't had time for the pleasure of intelligent discourse in so long. Work has been hell lately. I almost envy you your freedom. Yeah I realize your existence isn't always fun and games. Yet the idea of being out in the fresh air, surviving with your speed, depending on mother nature and instincts and wits does have its appeal. Listen, you're free to stay as long as you like. I rarely have guests so you can sleep anywhere you fancy. Look at that, my coffee's gone cold. Oh well. I'm off to grab some sleep. Help yourself to what I left behind. I'll make us breakfast in the morning. You'll find me a competent cook, at least that skill was something positive I acquired after my divorce. It was either that or starve. I'm an early riser normally but I may have a lie in tomorrow. I need it. Good night..wait..I need to assign you a name. Let's see. How about Max? Yeah it suits you in my opinion. Decent enough American Maxwell House coffee, good name. Goodnight Max."

He was gone.

I don't know how long I waited until I made my way to the liquid he had barely touched. A string of eternities tied together as one. Eventually I did.

I understood what the fascination for caffeine was about for the first time. It was delicious. I didn't leave a drop. It was heaven on my tongue and my palate was as delicate as any human's or so I preferred to think. I ate the pie and then I left his kitchen out the door he'd departed from.

At first I didn't see him and so I sniffed the air delicately. My species had a rarified sense of smell as well as touch. It was necessary to survive. Survival was everything. I sensed he shared my belief.

There. Through that door. He was already asleep in bed. He appeared quite different from how I had first seen him. He'd been as immaculate as the compact kitchen and as carefully composed. Now appearing boyish in rest, I found him unexpectedly fragile. He was curled up, arms wrapped around himself as though seeking a comfort in sleep he could never attain in his harsh everyday world. He had mentioned a thing called divorce and that single word seemed to injure him so. There had been a fleeting but definite anguish in his remarkably large eyes. He had lost something he treasured and for some reason I felt he had made no great effort to get it back. Humans often were odd indeed.

I found his bedroom quite comfortable so I now curled comfortably at the foot of his bed although I longed to settle beside him and share his warmth. I was asleep almost at once.

It went on exactly like that. He'd been true to his word and had shared his breakfast with me, watching me devour the delicious food with a crescent of a smile on his freshly washed face. I don't quite know how many joyous days we spent together until his telephone rang and tension tightened his facial expression.

"Mind the store for me, Max. An UFO got past Moon Base defenses and my team needs me. I'll be back as soon as I can. Don't wait up for me."

When he'd left I felt alone. I too had appreciated his company. Imagine that. We were worlds apart. Society frowned in disapproval at such a friendship but there it was. I was determined to make the most of it.

Knowing how meticulous he was, I busied myself by seeking out any crumb that may have tried to invade the perfection of his sanctuary. I found few.

This human seemed to live by impossible standards. Yet he had found no fault with me. He had treated me as if though I was family. Perhaps unlike me he had none and that was the core of his loneliness.

For I knew without question he was lonely. I felt like that often.

It was a long time before he returned. When he did, he looked wretched. He seemed trapped by some catastrophic memory and I crossed his path hoping to distract him from his prison without bars.

"Hello Max. Please forgive my mood. We lost civilians and two of our people. This is why I stay in this damn job. Alec tried to talk me into staying out of it but my people need to know I'm as involved in this as they are. If I ask them to march into hell at least they know my soles are just as charred as theirs. Yeah, I know. Doesn't make the least bit of difference Ed. The old ice cold dictator Straker. The old man. Rotten son of a whore. They don't think I know what they call me behind my back. I know. There isn't a thing that goes on that I don't know about. What kind of Commander would I make if that wasn't the case, Max? I'm no damn seat warmer. Henderson saw action just as I did. But he hasn't seen the carcass of a five year old child, hollow after her life and her vital organs are stripped from her. I have. I made it my business to see such things. Henderson, he's never ever bothered. He just signs the damn checks and even then I have to struggle for every last penny. He doesn't know what's at stake. All right he does, but he doesn't miss nine holes of golf or a good cigar or a liquid lunch to do so. Listen to me ramble Max. It won't bring that tiny angel or my good men and women back if I vent. Nothing will bring them back. I need to be strong. I always need to be strong. I don't mind telling you that every man has his breaking point or so Jackson likes to lecture me. As if I didn't know it! It's a savage game he plays. That's what Alec doesn't understand."

I was grateful he was sharing everything with me. It seemed to restore his spirit. There was a sense of hunger in my friend Edward. For what I could not say but it wasn't food. I hoped I could be of help.

"Jackson deliberately pushes me against the wall. It's a means to help me let go. He knows I know it. But I don't play a game for the sake or enjoyment of the game. I play to win. There isn't much else that's important except on how you handle the inevitable losses. Today I lost. It's a bitter poison that crosses my lips, Max. But I do it. I was trained to do it. Nobody does it better than me. But just between you and me I wish for once someone did. Don't quote me, Max. If Henderson smelled blood on me he'd have my ass in the street in a minute. Not as long as I breathe, Max. I hope I breathe for a very long time. Come on, I need some coffee. Not that American crud either. You're in for a treat. Dark Italian roast. A man could easily live on it."

He smiled then, but the smile did not illuminate his eyes.

The days turned into months and the months transformed into years. I treasured his friendship and I became fatter but I also grew old and tired. One day I laid on his pillow to sleep. I did not fear that sleep, because I had known his love.

My essence floated to a strange but beautiful world in which all was without suffering, or age or loneliness or pain. Only joy intoxicated the very air one breathed in, and I was one with it. All I had once known awaited me, I was reunited with my family and their families and generations before them. I cannot with any accuracy describe it to you. I pray your end will be as mine was.

Then, one day, I met a boy there.

I knew instantly this boy was the treasure Edward had lost. I made a request and it was granted.

EPILOGUE

"Ed, if I catch you trying to go back to the office again after two days without food and hardly any sleep I swear I'll do something worthy of a court martial to you."

"Warning me about it first isn't too smart." Straker said in amusement. "Thanks for driving me home Alec. I admit I'm beat."

"You mean the great Straker can get tired? My mind can't process this earth shaking confession. I fear I can never truly look up to you now."

"Since when have you ever looked up to me, Alec?"

"Yeah you've got a point there. Besides I'm a good two inches taller than you and five times as strong. You're a shrinking violet compared to me."

"Keep that damn height and strength comparison up and your alcohol ridden corpse will be pushing up shrinking violets. Say, did I ever introduce you to Max?"

"Max who?"

"My roommate."

"Security didn't tell me you had a roommate."

"I never told security he was here that's why. I think he's a he. Oh God. Damn it! Damn it."

"Ed, is that a mouse?"

"Poor little thing finally died. I knew they don't live long, but I expected, well I don't know what I expected. Rest in peace Max."

"You had a pet and you hid it from me?"

"You mention anything to Jackson about this and I'll assign you to our Antarctica base doing janitorial duty in your underwear."

"Cute little vermin."

"No, not vermin, Alec. He was a friend. I'll miss him. Come on Alec. Help me find a box to bury him in. Burial with full military honors."

"Ed, he wasn't exactly a member of Shado." Alec grinned.

Straker didn't return the grin.

"Alec, he infiltrated my defenses for nearly a year and our so called top notch security team didn't know a thing about it. That's the equivalent of SAS in my book. The mouse that dares wins. Now he'll have a burial worthy of his deeds. Colonel Maxwell Mouse, honorary member of Shado. Died in private service to Commander Straker. Lose the grin, Alec."

"Sorry. I'll drink in his honor."

"You'd drink to a pin dropping." Straker grumbled.

"Got any handy?"

"Christ. I should have made the mouse my second in command, not you."

"I'd like to see you explain the cost of a tiny Nehru jacket to Henderson."

"Alec?"

"Yeah I know, I know. Shut up Freeman."

In the end Edward really did make me a member of his secret organization even if it wasn't official and his son told me Alec was his Dad's best friend and could make him laugh. I felt he was Edward's only friend now but I didn't correct the boy for fear of upsetting him.

I was grateful that Edward still had someone. I had asked that I be allowed to watch over Edward at nights and they let me.

Often, the man whom I now recognized as Edward Straker, Commander of the Supreme Headquarters Alien Defense Organization, would look at my former resting place on his pillow, and smile.

I had been chosen in death to guard Edward Straker, and I did it with the full excellence with which he served his world. Without flaws. Each night I meticulously groomed my fur until it shined immaculately to

mirror the pristine appearance of my commanding officer.

The only human I was proud to call my friend.

The End

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