

The Atomic Terrestrial

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Written by Lee Homer



Colonel Alec Freeman had just finished his shift at Moonbase control. It had been a long, slow, gruelling two weeks and what did he get for it, no UFO sightings, two comet sightings and multiple malfunctions to S.I.D. In-fact, once he got the call from Ed Straker, that he was needed at SHADO control, he rushed towards the awaiting Lunar Module as fast as he could, but unfortunately he wasn't able to even step foot inside the Module, when Lieutenant Gay Ellis sounded the alarm of a UFO sighting. The alarm caused Freeman to sigh and he made his way back to the command centre. He just caught a glimpse of the Interceptor pilots, sliding through their launch tubes before entering the small, compact command room. Ellis was gathering the co-ordinates from S.I.D and then relayed them to the Interceptor pilots.

"Interceptors, proceed to co-ordinates 745221."

"Roger control," three voices replied.

"Where's this UFO heading, Gay?" asked Freeman.

"It's heading towards the eastern hemisphere," Ellis replied. "Its speed is Sol Decimal 8."

"Better get Commander Straker on the line, Lieutenant."

"Yes sir."

The Interceptors took off one at a time, from their launch pads and began to intercept the UFO. S.I.D continued to transmit the UFO's trajectory every two minutes. Soon it had become clear of where the UFO was heading.

S.I.D's monotone, computerised voice, echoed over the Moonbase speakers.

"UFO trajectory, 35428-B. Heading, South California."

"Why is it heading there?" Freeman muttered to himself. "Lieutenant, relay new co-ordinates to the Interceptors."

"Interceptors one, two and three. Proceed to new co-ordinates, 35428-B."

The interceptors change course and then instantly, Interceptor one had visual contact with the UFO. The pilot closed in and fired. The missile detonation missed the UFO by inches, causing it to shake and jerk off course, slightly. It was then Interceptor Two's turn to make a hit. The interceptor closed in before firing. This time, the detonation hit the UFO but didn't destroy it completely. Red smoke, emitted from the damaged UFO as it began to burn up in the Earth's atmosphere. In the control room, Freeman got onto the line to update Straker.

Straker's face appeared on the screen. He looked angry and impatient so Freeman had to report quickly to avoid getting his head snapped off.

"The UFO has been hit, but it's not destroyed. It's heading for California."

"Damn!" Straker bellowed. "Ok Alec. I need you back here as soon as possible. In the meantime, I'll alert Skydiver and put Captain Carlin in the picture."

"Very good. On my way back."

Alec picked up his suitcase and swiftly returned to the Lunar Module. He didn't like the feeling he had at the back of his mind. Where was this UFO heading?

Meanwhile, at SHADO control, Commander Ed Straker, paraded up and down the room

behind his radio staff, which was making them all nervous. Lieutenant Anderson was the radio operator as it was his first shift back at SHADO for the last three months. He had returned from medical leave after the incident with the underwater dome that Skydiver had spotted during a deep sea investigation into the underwater UFO attack. He had been subjected to a large dose of truth serum after he was accused of treason by Straker and Colonel Paul Foster. Three months later, he was able to forget about the whole incident after a dozen sessions of Doctor Jackson's Hypnos-therapy appointments. He was then ordered to return to duty by Straker himself.

"Lt Anderson, get me Skydiver at once." Straker demanded.

"Yes sir." Anderson replied. "SHADO control to Skydiver, SHADO control to Skydiver. You are ordered to proceed to grid reference 23445 In California."

In Skydiver, Captain Peter Carlin, received his orders.

"Launch Stations!" he signalled, before making his way towards his entry chute to Sky One. Carlin put on his crash helmet and strapped himself in as Skydiver tilted upwards, towards the ocean surface. He then engaged the thrusters released the docking clamps. Sky One detached from the main body, crashed through the waves and hurtled into the sky. Carlin quickly levelled up and began to request for more details on his orders.

"Sky One to SHADO control, request details on what I'm meant to be looking for?"

"A UFO has entered Earth's atmosphere. It is badly damaged by the Interceptors and it is on a course towards California. The exact location is unknown." Straker explained bitterly. "Your orders are to survey and Intercept at the first visual sign."

"Roger that control. Over and out."

Paul Foster entered the control room, as Straker switched of the microphone. The expression on his face told Foster that the situation didn't look good at all. Foster sighed before studying the radar panel. The blip on the screen displayed Sky One's position.

"Where did this one go?" he asked.

"California." Straker replied. "One of the Interceptors's clipped it badly. We should be getting a visual sighting in just a few minutes."

"What are the chances of it hitting any of the towns or cities in the area?"

"Paul, there are hundreds of individual towns, and small suburban cities. A chance of a collision would be a thousand to one."

"Well let's just hope that it lands in the woods. About, here."

"Hmm. That's a big area of landmass." Straker wondered. "It could land there, but we don't know if there are any industrial sites or missile complexes in that area."

"I'll do a computer scan of that area now." Paul said.

* * *

Sky One had now entered Californian airspace in a matter of minutes. Carlin spotted the damaged UFO and was able to tail it because of the trail of red smoke it was emitting. As tried to get in close for a possible intercept, Carlin lost his vision as he was in the trail of thick, red smoke.

"Sky One to SHADO control." He reported. "I have the UFO in my sights. I'm unable to intercept but I can tail it. Visibility is zero due to the smoke it's spewing out at me. The UFO appears to be descending rapidly."

"Ok captain." Straker replied, now even angrier than before. "Follow it down and get a fix on its position as soon as it hits the ground."

He then cut the communication's channel and muttered to himself quietly. "I can't believe

he can't intercept."

Foster returned to Straker, presenting the computer's results in his hand. He showed the results to Straker.

"It's just as well that he didn't intercept," he explained. "The computer says that there are over two hundred atomic research centres in the area alone."

"And the UFO is heading towards one of those centres." Straker replied, worryingly. "Now the chances of it missing one of those centres are slim."

Carlin's voice echoed over the radio.

"Sky One to SHADO control. The UFO has landed. I repeat, The UFO has landed."

The UFO hit the ground with a huge bang which made the ground shake. It then skidded, digging up the dirt as it travelled. Seconds later, it came to a grinding halt and was stopped by a broken tree.

"What is its exact location captain?" Straker demanded.

"Grid reference D568J - 0," answered Carlin. "It's three miles west of one of the atomic research centres."

Straker glanced at Foster, who immediately rushed over to the computer to input the co-ordinates. Straker ordered Carlin to return to Skydiver at once. His job had been completed and it was now time for the SHADO ground forces to take charge of the situation. Foster was able to give Straker of the atomic research centre in the area.

"The UFO is positioned three miles west of the McKinley Atomic Research Centre."

"Get the transporter out there at once. I want the SHADO Mobiles out in those woods."

"Right away sir." Foster replied.

"Oh and inform Colonel Freeman, once he arrives will you? I want him here. You will attend to the ground search."

"Sure ok."

Straker went into his office, sat behind his desk and reached for a cigar. He lit the cigar and began to take puffs. He wasn't looking forward to telling the one man he hated the most. General Henderson.

* * *

All was very, very quiet at the McKinley Atomic Research Centre. It was dark, there was not a breeze in the air. Just the sound of a mysterious explosion that echoed from the west. Still there was no sign of debris, no nothing. So the staff ignored the sound and returned to their normal, nightly duties. The whole centre was a complex of atomic waste domes, storage warehouses, security checkpoints, helipads and science labs. In the centre of it all was a small tower block referred to as central control. There, the senior staff would control and monitor the complex through their advanced computers and surveillance camera's. At the far, west end of the complex, two lone security guards were patrolling their section of the area. It was their job to patrol the old, disused waste domes that were too expensive to scrap. It was dark and vision was poor. It was very quiet as the whole area was kept away from the rest of the complex. The guards had just reached their security checkpoint box when suddenly, one guard quickly panned his torch round to the area behind him. The light revealed nothing but shadows and empty buildings.

"You alright Jenkins?" asked the other guard.

"Yes I'm fine." The jittery guard replied. "I just thought I heard someone move back there amongst the domes and I could've sworn I saw a shadow move."

The other guard looked at the same spot.

"There's no one there. It's just your imagination. I have to admit, although we've been patrolling this area for ten years now, this place still gives me creeps."

"Yeah and out of all the other guards, we have to be the ones to patrol this part. Man I can't wait to retire."

Just as he said that, both men heard the sound again. It sounded like footsteps that were echoing behind them. The guards both looked at each other and realised that the footsteps were getting louder and louder, so they both drew their guns and aimed them at the direction of the sound. Suddenly, the sound stopped and all fell silent. This made the guards nervous.

"Show yourself!?" one yelled.

Seconds later, a huge, bright blast of gun fire appeared from the shadows and pinned down the guards. Bullet shells clanked off of the wet, concrete ground. The guards were dead in an instant. Suddenly, a figure loomed over the dead bodies. The figure appeared humanoid and was wearing a bright red, thick padded space suit with matching coloured gloves and boots. The face was completely submerged in green liquid, which was placed within a shiny, silver helmet. The hidden CCTV cameras took pictures of the figure and relayed them back to the control centre. The pictures revealed the figure wasn't a man but an Alien.

"My god!" the controller screamed in horror. "What is that!?"

"I don't know." Answered the other controller. "But we have an intruder."

* * *

Alec Freeman's car had arrived at Harlington Straker studio's not long after he had landed in the Lunar carrier. SHADO control was hidden underneath the studio so it wasn't detected by the authorities or investigators. Freeman entered Straker's studio office where Straker's secretary, Miss Ealand was waiting for him.

"Colonel Freeman." She said. "Commander Straker is waiting for you now."

"Ok Miss Ealand. Let me go through." Freeman replied with a smile.

He entered the office to find Straker standing by his desk with his briefcase. It appeared as if he was leaving for something.

"I was briefed on the way down. Did we find the UFO?" he asked.

"Yes." Straker replied. "Foster's taking care of it. Right now, you and I are going to pay a little visit to General Henderson."

"Oh boy." Freeman muttered to himself. "Here we go again. Round ten."

Straker gave Freeman a sarcastic look. The two men headed for Straker's gold saloon car and both men left the studios for the International Space Committee building.

The car travelled along on a narrow lane in the woods. It was quiet and there wasn't another car in sight.

"What are you going to propose to Henderson this time?" Freeman asked.

"Actually, he wanted to see me Alec." Straker replied. "I bet I know why."

"You know what he'll say right?"

"Oh I do, and I know exactly what to say to him."

* * *

General James Henderson was furious when he received a report that concerned Straker. He grunted and sat behind his desk, as Straker and Freeman entered his office. Straker decided to say the first word as it was going to be his argument in the first place.

"What is it this time Henderson? I'm a very busy man!"

"We're all busy men Straker!" Henderson growled back. "Take a look at this. I received these photos this morning!"

Henderson passed a small folder to Straker. The folder contained photos of the Alien that was spotted at the McKinley Atomic Research Centre the night before.

"Care to tell me what that is!?" Henderson continued.

"Yes it's an Alien." Straker replied sarcastically. "Or haven't you seen one before?"

"I know what an Alien looks like!" Henderson cried. "But I demand to know how it got there!"

"I don't know!" Straker yelled. "All I know is that we were tracking a UFO that crashed landed near the McKinley Atomic Research Centre. Colonel Foster is leading the search for the UFO and its occupants."

"You know what this means Straker!?"

"Yes I know what it means!" Straker barked.

"Then you realise now that once the press get their hands on the photos, the world will now and will erupt in mass panic. You will be out of a job, I'll never hear the last of it and the world will rot in anarchy!"

"Aren't you over reacting!?" Straker replied. "You do realise that the press haven't got the photos and will probably never will."

"How do you that!?"

"Because the Government will cover it up and so will we."

Henderson sat behind his desk and slammed his on the table. Straker looked over to Freeman, who sat calmly in his chair. Henderson kept his eyes fixed on Straker and said.

"You know I would fire you by now."

"Yeah, well you can't because you don't have the authority," Straker replied in smugness.

"Just you wait until I report this to the board," Henderson threatened. "Then we'll see who has the last word."

"The board already know," Straker replied. "I told them of the situation before I even came here. They agree with me that they will cover up the story and burn the evidence."

"What do you think of all of this Colonel!?" Henderson asked for a second opinion.

"Keep me out of this," Freeman replied. "But remember, you've underestimated Commander Straker many times. I suggest you trust him again."

Straker smiled at Freeman but knew that Henderson wasn't going to accept his opinion. Henderson stood up and looked out of his window. He pondered the thought that Straker could be right and then asked the question in his head. What would he do? He then turned to Straker and calmly told him his answer.

"Ok Straker. I'll drop this incident, assuming that you are correct like have been in the past, but I warn you, if I do see a photo of that Alien in tomorrow's paper, then I'll finish your career. I'll finish SHADO."

"Fine, Henderson." Straker agreed, although he knew that Henderson was one of those people who could dish words but couldn't take them.

"I still can't believe that you tell the board before me." Henderson continued. "You're bluffing."

"Am I?" Straker replied, before leaving the room with Freeman.

The doors shut behind them and Henderson reached for his phone. He wanted to know what Straker really told the board.

* * *

The SHADO transporter jet touched down at the nearest airfield in California. Foster didn't hesitate to unload the SHADO mobiles as he was anxious to spot the UFO. The jet's

service ramp touched the ground and one by one, four SHADO mobiles made their way onto the airfield, in single file. The control mobile was the last to leave as it was only going to sit on the airfield. The other three mobiles proceeded into the wood, towards the McKinley Atomic Research Centre. SHADO mobile 1 was the first to close in on the UFO's position.

"SHADO mobile 1 to SHADO mobile control." The driver reported. "We have a visual sighting, about three miles ahead. Request instructions?"

"SHADO mobile 1, proceed with caution." Foster instructed. "Draw your cannon and keep a lock-on, and fire at any sign of hostility."

"Yes sir."

SHADO mobile 1 slowly crept along the woods with its weapons drawn. The driver was nervous because he had never seen a UFO up close like this before. He then stopped the mobile and waited to see if the UFO would react to their presence. Minutes passed and there was still no sign of hostility.

"There's no sign of any activity here." He reported. "It's just sitting here, there's now sign of life around."

"Then why hasn't the UFO exploded?" Foster asked himself. "It's been sitting there far too long now?"

"Your guess is as good as mine sir." The driver replied.

Foster instructed the other mobiles to proceed towards the Atomic Research Centre and ordered SHADO mobile 1 to join them. At just the precise moment, Commander Straker signalled over the radio.

"Condition red." He said. "An Alien has been spotted within the complex of the McKinley Research Centre. All mobiles are to proceed to the centre and all personnel are to be fully armed."

"Is there any other information that you can give us on the situation?" Foster asked.

"Yes. The Alien has already killed two security guards. It's hostile alright."

"Right, I have the mobiles heading there at once."

"You head there too, Paul. I want you to lead the search over there. Alec and I are already up to our necks in problems with General Henderson."

"I'll ask about that later. Should I get Sky One over here as well?"

"That's up to you Colonel. I just want that Alien found. Straker out."

Foster sighed and told the driver to take them over to the centre. On the way, he radioed Captain Carlin to launch Sky One. He needed an aerial sweep of the area.

* * *

Straker and Freeman had returned to SHADO Headquarters after an hour of driving and insults from General Henderson. Straker paraded through the control room and entered his office. Freeman followed him closely and went over to the drinks machine. He poured a glass of whiskey and handed a glass to Straker.

"I think you'll need this." He said.

"Thank you." Straker replied, who was sitting behind his desk, rubbing his forehead.

"So what did you really tell the board?"

"I didn't tell them anything, Alec. I just wanted Henderson shut up and to listen to me for a change."

"Well it worked, I can tell you that."

"Did it? All Henderson's got to do now is confirm with the board about what I said and once he realises that it was a false claim, I'm a dead man."

"So what are we going to do? We can't just go and make the claim now. Henderson might be there already?"

"There's only one thing I can do now, Alec. Go to the board myself and confront Henderson in front of the Commissioner's face."

"Are you sure that is the wise decision? Ed that must be the most insane idea that I have ever heard come from you."

"Do you have a better idea then!?"

"Yeah! It's called telling the truth!"

Straker knocked back his drink and slammed the shot glass on the table.

"You do realise that telling the truth could mean the end for SHADO!? I can't go around telling the Commissioner that I lied just to keep Henderson's mouth shut. He trusts SHADO, he trusts me, you, Foster, Lake, everyone! We can't afford to lose his trust."

"You're right. We can't let this happen."

"We? Oh no Alec, this is my problem and I'm the one to deal with it."

"Oh no you're not. You might need a second claim to back yours up and you know fully well that Henderson will throw everything he's got at you just to bring you down and this organisation. It's always been about money to him hasn't it?"

"He isn't going to get a single penny out of me. However you're right Alec. Two against one, the odds are better."

"Right, then. Let's get down there."

"Not so fast, Alec. I need to make an appointment. The Commissioner is a very busy man. He's probably trying to get rid of Henderson right now. "

Suddenly, Lieutenant Anderson's voice crackled over the radio.

"Sir, I have Colonel Foster on the line or you."

"Put him through here Lieutenant."

Foster's face appeared on Straker's small view screen.

"Report Colonel," ordered Straker.

"We've arrived at the Atomic Research Centre," Foster reported. "I have the guards split up into three groups of four and they're combing all sections of the complex."

"Good Colonel. Report anything you have to Lieutenant Anderson immediately. Colonel Freeman and I are off to the Space board."

"Good luck then."

"Thanks. Oh by the way Foster, I want you to make the kill if you have to."

"Very good sir." Foster replied and his face vanished of the screen.

Straker picked up his red telephone and Miss Ealand picked was on the other end of the phone.

"Miss Ealand." Straker asked. "I would like you to book an appointment with the Commissioner of the International Space Board for me today?"

"I'll have one made right away sir," Miss Ealand replied, before putting the phone down.

Straker looked at Freeman and reached for his third cigar. He offered one to Freeman who accepted the offer. Straker made smoke rings from his cigar and then decided that to look through the moonbase reports that he had received earlier. Freeman returned to the drinks machine and poured another glass of Whiskey.

"I suppose you better have a speech prepared." He said.

"Why?" Straker asked. "I know exactly what to say."

* * *

The three SHADO mobiles had blocked off the main gates to the McKinley Atomic Research, so there were better chances that the Alien wouldn't escape. Foster thought to himself that the Alien's plan wasn't to escape, but to destroy the complex. Perhaps the Aliens knew that the destruction of the centre would result in a nuclear explosion that would wipe out the whole of California, or maybe the Alien's wanted to use the centre's atomic domes for energy to make their UFO's invincible? He just didn't know. He sat up in the control room, waiting for a report from either of the teams. It had been hours and the sun had begun to rise over the complex. This helped the search parties because the visibility would be better.

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Unknown to Foster, one search party were covering the old atomic waste domes. The same place where the two security guards were killed. The area around them became desolate and quiet. There wasn't a sound in sight. The place was just as spooky in the day as it was at night. One of the guards decided to report their position to Foster.

"Team - A to Colonel Foster," he reported. "Search negative, we are now area C by the abandoned waste domes. There's nothing here to report."

"Ok Team - A." Foster replied over the radio. "Proceed to area's D and E and report back to me, every 10 minutes."

* * *

Just as Foster switched off the radio, the team were under attack from sudden gun fire. The team took cover behind the domes. The leader, signalled his men to take the positions to the side of him before aiming his gun at the direction of the gun fire. Suddenly, another wave of bullets was hurtled at the team, hitting one of them in the process. One of the men pulled out his binoculars and looked around. He immediately spotted the Alien, who was hiding behind old pipelines.

"I've spotted him," he whispered to the leader. "He's over there, directly 10 kilometres ahead of us. He's got a good vantage point."

"Ok split up," the leader ordered. "We'll surround him."

The team quietly tried to surround the unsuspecting Alien, but the Alien had other plans. He turned on the guards and fired, killing two more in the process. The team leader fired again and punctured the Alien's visor. Green liquid spewed out of the Alien's helmet as it fell to the ground without making a sound. The team moved over towards the dead Alien and immediately reported to Foster.

"We've found the Alien, but I'm afraid he's dead."

"What!?" Foster bellowed. "I was ordered to kill him myself."

Suddenly, a distinctive, swirling sound, echoed in the air. The sound grew louder and louder within each passing second.

"Oh no." Foster moaned. "All teams report back immediately!"

All teams looked up in horror to see the UFO appear above the trees and over their heads. Foster realised that the UFO was heading straight for them at a fast speed. It was typical that Sky One had left only an hour before, but it was too late for Foster to call them again.

"Take Cover!" he yelled over the microphone.

The three teams dived to the ground as the UFO fired a yellowish burst of energy at the teams. Instead, the burst hit the old waste domes, destroying them in an instant. Luckily the domes were empty otherwise there would've been a nuclear explosion. The UFO fired another two bursts of yellowish energy. This time they damaged the control building. The building rocked and the ceiling started to cave in.

"Evacuate the area at once!" Foster yelled, as the centre staff followed by him rushed out of the building.

As Foster left the building, he noticed that the UFO had stopped its attack. Instead it veered off and began to head up towards the earth's atmosphere. All three teams re - appeared from the old part of the complex, their uniforms covered in dust and rubble.

"Where did it go sir?" the badly shaken leader asked.

"I don't know." Foster replied. "But we better alert Moonbase."

* * *

Foster radioed Moonbase and Lieutenant Ellis answered the call. Foster explained the situation and ordered Moonbase to scan for it via S.I.D and a radiation screen.

"I don't understand sir?" Lieutenant Ellis asked in confusion.

"The UFO is emitting a high level of radiation from the centre. It might be easy to track it from the radiation signatures that it is emitting."

"Understood."

Lieutenant Ellis made the scan and instantly detected the UFO. It was emitting a high level of radiation which made it vulnerable to Moonbase's scanners.

"I've got it," she yelled. "Bearing 7, 4, 5, reference D at speed sol decimal 8."

"What's it heading?" asked Foster.

The calculations came through the computer from S.I.D

"Oh no." Ellis cried, as she studied the results. "It's heading is a direct collision course with Moonbase!"

Fellow officer, Joan Harrington didn't like the situation. She realised the potential danger.

"If that UFO hits the base with that amount of radiation," she stated. "The we'll all go up in a big bang."

Ellis agreed. "Moonbase and half the moon will be destroyed."

To Be Continued