

The Hot-Seat

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Disclaimer: I am a fan of UFO as I am of most Gerry Anderson Production. I don't own the rights to the characters, ships and locations as they are the property of TV century 21st. I only hold rights to the story itself. Enjoy.

This has to be my first UFO fic and I hope that it's a gooden too. I tried to base it like the TV show but it has been quite difficult. Any reviews would be appreciated along with suggestions that I could use to improve errors. Warning, There are the odd curse words but nothing too extreme.

The Situation

Lomax military fuel depot base had been established in 1961 by the US government. Its job was to store the most top secret and hazardous nuclear waste that had been ever produced by the military and its fellow contractors. Now, it was brutally desecrated by an unprovoked and unexpected attack by Aliens from another world. Hangars exploded violently as the heat of the flames reacted with the chemical waste, which resulted in multiple chain reactions which had spread throughout the entire base complex. The attack had been caused from the sky. Hovering above the flaming wreckage was a small, shiny, UFO. It was pulsating a green glow from its centre as it fired terrifying yellow plasma bursts at the complex below. Its terrifying metallic, whirling sound echoed through the light blue afternoon sky as it stayed in a fixed position. Although it had made a 5 minute job of destroying the base, the UFO continued to fire.

The situation had looked hopeless until another object hurtled towards the UFO from a great distance. Its speed was impressive and its engines grew louder and louder by the second. The craft revealed itself to be the infamous Sky One and its target was the stationary UFO. Without hesitation, Sky One fired a controlled missile at the UFO, destroying it completely. Although the UFO was destroyed, Sky One was too late to save the base. It was now a tough problem for SHADO and the responsibility was now in Commander Ed Straker's hands.

Chapter 1

The whole incident had happened a few days ago and it was captured on a CCTV camera which survived the devastating attack. The whole footage was a good 15 minutes long and it was used as evidence in a case which could've cost Ed Straker's career. The incident was taken to the IAC Headquarters building in New York after General James Henderson had filed his official report regarding SHADO. He believed that Straker was incompetent in stopping the UFO at the time of the attack and was determined to have him out of a job. As he stepped out of his black limo and entered the building's main entrance. He held his ID card up to security and continued his way towards the main hall where the conference was being held. The only thing that made him grunt was the fact that Straker hadn't been officially accused, but he was determined to sort that out if he could.

As he left the elevator, he saw Straker sitting patiently outside the conference hall. He was waiting to be called which meant that the conference the inquisition hadn't started yet. As he stood up to face him, Straker took a puff of his cigarette and stared directly at his superior and nemesis.

"I just knew that you would have all the false facts to throw at me?" he said as he eyed up Henderson's folder. "You really believe that this is the moment for you, hey Henderson?"

"Don't worry Straker, I won't make it too embarrassing for you." Henderson mocked. "You knew that this day would finally come? You had to slip up some day."

"You think so?" Straker replied, trying to calm his temper. "I'd like to see you try and run an underfunded SHADO yourself? Believe me, you wouldn't cope."

"Well it won't matter in a couple of hours." Henderson said using a threatening tone. "The commission will see that you'll no longer sit behind that desk ever again."

"You know that I'll put a fight!" Straker barked.

"And you know that I have the commission on my side!" Henderson barked back. "Face it, if you did stand a chance of winning then it would be by a unanimous vote."

"That's what you think Henderson," Straker said, calming himself down due to his stress issues. "But may I remind you that SHADO has come a long way since the last international incident. We can't be in every place at one time, and if wasn't for your lousy support, we would've had more air and sea craft to comb all four corners of the globe by now, But you were too tight to afford it let alone it meant putting the Earth's safety on the line."

"If that's what you want to believe Straker then by all means do so," Henderson replied calmly as he lifted an eyebrow to the furious blond Commander.

They had to keep things purely professional as they had to present their separate cases to the IAC president instead of throwing them at each other. The double doors opened and one of the board members stepped out into the hall way. Pushing his thick rimmed glasses up his nose, he turned to the two waiting gentlemen and greeted them in.

Straker and Henderson entered the vast, wooden council chamber. In front of them were the six board of directors with the president sitting in the middle of them. Next to them was a huge TV monitor that was mounted to the wall. Henderson handed his report along with Straker's and took his seat which was next to the screen. Straker took his seat which was classed as the hot seat. As he sat down, he could see that the President was reading his report and the look on his face wasn't a re-assuring one. He scrunched his lips together as he began to feel his nerves creep up on him. He knew that the President had a sinister look and feel about him which made him feel uncomfortable like a child with their headmaster. To him, the

President was his superior more than Henderson.

After a few minutes had passed, the President placed Straker's file on his desk, wide open. It was quite clear that Straker's report was going to be analysed first. The inquisition had begun.

"Now Gentlemen," the President began. "Before we start, we have viewed the footage of the UFO incident regarding the Lomax Military Fuel Depot. It was recovered from a CCTV camera which had miraculously survived the attack. The footage itself is quite disturbing. Although the staff were evacuated and unarmed, the base itself was completely destroyed resulting in billions of dollars worth of equipment damage. To add to this catastrophe, the entire complex is now dangerously radioactive and has officially been classed as a threat to the environment. Now are you aware of the consequences that now face IAC and SHADO in general?"

"I am, sir," Straker replied, keeping his nerves down. "I trust that you have fully read and understood my report on the matter?"

"Indeed I have, Commander Straker," the President answered bitterly. "And I must say that it doesn't explain the late arrival of your attack craft."

Taking a deep gulp, Straker stood up and straightened his beige formal jacket.

"Allow me to explain," he said. "It all started when a UFO sneaked passed our defences a couple days ago. SID was unable to detect it due to solar interference. Moonbase had launched the Interceptors but by the time they were airborne, the UFO had made its way into Earth's orbit. As soon as we received the first radar trace, we had predicted its course plot and realised that it was heading for the Lomax Depot. Immediately, we had the base evacuated and I had ordered all four Skydivers to search the area. It had become apparent that the UFO had crashed into the ocean and had nestled itself in a ditch on the sea bed. It had become virtually undetectable as Skydiver 2 passed right over it. The reason? It had turned out that the UFO had specifically chosen the ditch as the aliens knew that they would be hidden under a rock formation which would reflect any underwater sounding scans. That happened exactly. The UFO waited until all the sub's had left the vicinity before it took off and attacked the base. Skydiver 1 was alerted immediately after we detected the UFO leaving the ocean's surface. Sky One was launched immediately after the order came through. Unfortunately, Captain Waterman was too late."

"That's what happened?" the President asked.

"Yes sir," Straker replied, feeling relieved that his nervous explanation was over. "That was exactly how it happened."

"And do you have a possible explanation as to why Sky One was too late?" the President continued.

Straker thought the question over before he could provide the explanation.

"Well sir," He answered. "Sky One has had a serious mechanical issue regarding its thrusters. They have caused the craft to reduce its speed when it takes off from the submarine itself. Before I came here today, I ordered it to be serviced at the underwater Skydiver base in Mexico."

"And when will the results be available?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"I see. Commander Straker, you may sit down now."

"Thank you, sir."

Straker looked over at Henderson, who appeared to be snarling at his account of events.

He knew that Henderson was just trying to tease him, to make him reveal his true colours to the board so that it would get him fired from SHADO. Looking back at the President, Straker now had to wait for Henderson's account of events. He was looking forward to hearing the load of crap that his superior had come up with. Pointing his fingers upward he gave Henderson the sign as if he was ready to laugh at him. The President was oblivious to their gestures and moved on the meeting. Looking towards Henderson, he opened up the other report and began to ask Henderson his view of Straker's events. Henderson had been looking forward to this moment. It was his chance to make Straker look like a fool.

"General Henderson," the President said, addressing Straker's opponent. "Care to tell me your view of the situation?"

"With pleasure, sir," Henderson smirked smugly. "You see, I believe that Commander Ed Straker was too oblivious to notice that Sky One had faulty thrusters in the first place. It had been said that he has had many financial issues regarding his disguise as a film director when he could have spent the money wisely on maintaining his organisation. In fact it's not even his own money but the IAC's money which we originally funded to keep SHADO operational. Now another aspect of it is that he is stressed and deemed unfit to command the organisation. I mean after all, like he said himself, SHADO is underfunded and it must be tiring having to deal with a small amount of craft to intercept the vast amount in UFO's. That's why Sky One was malfunctioning and that's was why it was too late to save the depot. Straker was too blind to focus on the maintenance of his craft and look what happened. How do you expect to catch every sneaky UFO if every craft is slow or damaged to a point where it can't even fly?"

"That's a load of crap if I ever heard it!" Straker bellowed as he bolted from his chair. "You are a tight arsed bastard who wasn't willing to even lend us a ten dollar note unless it was vital! You don't know what it's like to command and underfunded organisation because you're a cowardly, pompous, stuck up rich kid who lives and breathes off of tax payers' money! You haven't been threatened by aliens, you haven't dealt with a mass UFO attack, you haven't even faced a tough decision in your pathetic career, ever!"

"Oh but I have Straker!" Henderson snapped. "And that was whether to trust you or not? Well obviously I was wrong!"

"Is that so?" Straker retaliated, his voice echoing throughout the room. "At least I didn't cower out at the proposal of building SHADO."

"That's not true and you know it!" Henderson replied furiously, knowing that his dignity was involved. "If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have been allowed to bring the matter up at all."

"Gentlemen, enough!" the President shouted, hammering his fist upon his desk. "This bickering is pointless. Obviously there is a solution to all of this, but requires more money and more mechanical supplies. Commander Straker, your attitude doesn't support your case so I suggest you think before you exchange words like that."

"Yes sir," Straker replied, returning to his seat. "Sorry sir."

"Look I can only see one way of solving this issue regarding Commander Straker's commanding abilities," the President continued. "Now it says here that when one UFO enters a successful flight path to Earth, other UFOs follow the exact same path am I correct?"

"That's correct," Straker confirmed.

"Then when another UFO is detected on the same path, I want you to be ready for it. I don't care how you do it, just be ready to stop the next UFO. If you succeed in destroying it then we'll drop this matter, but if you don't then I will have to throw the book at you. Now I'm

going to see that the IAC funds you with another five hundred thousand dollars to construct anything that you think will help, but spend it wisely. Remember Straker, you're not out of the hot seat yet, understand?"

"Perfectly sir," Straker replied as he and Henderson got up to leave the room.

It had been decided. There was a chance to prove that Straker could beat Henderson again, but he was still in the hot seat which meant that there was going to be far more pressure than ever before. Just as he was about to step into his bronze, nut shaped, car, Henderson stopped him in his tracks and said, "You know what Straker? I'm going to drop by and see this test of yours. Then that way if you slip up again, I'll have the final word."

Chapter 2

Straker returned to Harlington Straker Studios after a long evening drive from Heathrow airport. His evening flight was delayed so he had to make last minute's arrangements to travel by "Seagull X-Ray flight 11." The thought of the inquisition stuck in his mind which made difficult for him to keep his eyes on the road. He then thought about Henderson and about how much he really wanted to kill him sometimes due to his somewhat childish antics. Henderson had provoked him in the past but this time, he was pushing it. However, Straker had planned to deal with Henderson. He was still in the hot seat but he convinced himself that he could get himself out of that seat.

He pulled up outside the front entrance and made his way into the reception area, where Miss Ealand, his secretary, waited for him. Putting on a false, professional smile, Straker greeted Miss Ealand and asked her to open the doors to his office. With the flick of a switch, the bulky red doors opened and Straker entered the room. He waited for the doors to shut before he opened up his cigar box. An automated voice crackled over the speaker.

"Voice Identification?"

"Straker," he replied, speaking clearly into the microphone.

With that, he sat in his chair as the office began to descend into the ground. The studio behind him was slowly replaced with the solid image of concrete and bricks and the stars were replaced with artificial lights. The office came to a halt and the doors opened, revealing the huge underground complex which was SHADO. He stepped out and was greeted by one of his trusted officers and friend, Colonel Paul Foster.

Foster walked with the Commander towards his office via the control room. He could see that the inquisition didn't go well just by looking at the anger in Straker's icy blue eyes.

"Well how did it go?" he asked, asking the details.

"Oh the usual," Straker replied, glancing over at the young Colonel. "Henderson threw a fresh batch of false words at me like he tends to do lately."

"Why what did he say this time?" Foster asked, raising an eyebrow.

"This time he said that I was financially incompetent," Straker replied, sighing heavily. "He reckons that I wasted the money instead of using it to repair Sky One."

"How can that be possible with the amount of UFO's building up all over the place?" Foster reacted, raising the tone in his voice.

"Exactly," Straker agreed, noting Foster's reaction. "Now the IAC is giving me a chance to prove that I'm not incompetent."

"Oh? What have they allowed you to do?"

"Well, the board have lent us five hundred thousand dollars to build or upgrade our equipment. The aim is to see if we can stop another UFO from using the same flight path as the one that attacked the fuel depot. The thing that comes to mind is Sky One's thrusters."

"You mean get them repaired?"

"No, better. I'm going to have Sky One upgraded in general. Weapons, speed capacity, armour upgrades. The works. And better yet, I am placing you in charge of the operation. Paul, I want you to oversee the overhaul of Sky One."

"I'll fly out to Skydiver base in Mexico right away, sir."

"Good oh and before you leave, have Colonel Lake meet me in my office. I'll require her help as well."

"Yes sir. Where's Alec?"

"He's on duty up at Moonbase. I'll fill him in on the details once we get to work."

Foster nodded and left the control room while Straker marched into his office. He really wanted the sleep, but he couldn't afford the time. To him, time was of the essence and he needed as much of it as he was going to get. What made things more difficult was that the increase in UFOs meant that they would fly in at anytime. As he sat behind his white, stone desk, he sighed and rubbed his temples. He now had to organise the upgrade work to SHADO as well as defending the Earth at the same time. Maybe he had leave the UFO side of things to Alec up on Moonbase? He just didn't know didn't know what to do.

His desk phone rang, alerting him that Colonel Virginia Lake had arrived.

Picking up the phone, Straker closed his eyes and spoke into it.

"Thank you," he replied, slamming the phone down just as the doors opened.

Virginia Lake stepped in and waited for Straker to notice her presence in the room.

Straker looked up at her and gestured her to take a seat on the couch that was the far corner of the room.

"You wanted to see me sir?" she asked softly, noticing that Straker was exhausted.

"Oh yes, Colonel." Straker replied, acknowledging her presence. "I need you to overlook a serious operation for me. You see, I'm having SID's long range sensor dishes upgraded along with the construction of another SID."

"Another one sir?" she asked, surprised.

"That's right," Straker confirmed. "We need another satellite situated in orbit around the opposite site of the Earth. Our aim is to place it in the dark spots where SID can't detect any craft due to solar disturbance. Hopefully with sensitive and highly specific sensor equipment, SID-2 will detect UFOs where SID and Moonbase can't."

He then pulled out a blue folder from his case and handed it to Lake.

"Here are the blueprints for SID-2," he explained as Lake studied the contents of the file. "I had them drawn up on flight back to Heathrow. You should also find a list of specific equipment that is required for the satellite. I'll think you'll find that everything is in order."

"Very good sir," Lake replied as she turned to leave, but there was something was on her mind and she decided to take the chance.

"Um, Sir?" she asked. "May I ask you something?"

"Sure, Colonel," Straker replied. "What's on your mind?"

"I've been meaning to ask you. Why are you and General Henderson constantly at each other's throats?"

Surprisingly, Straker was ready to answer that question. In fact, he had been ready for a while to answer that question, only Freeman and Foster didn't ask the question.

"It happened a long time ago," he replied, lighting a cigarette. "You see, we respected each other until SHADO had been set up. I had spent my budget on the construction of the vehicles, the subs, Moonbase, Headquarters and even the studio itself, but when an Interceptor exploded on a test run due to a faulty engine piece, I approached Henderson for a loan so I get the interceptor repaired and ready for duty. On his part, he said no, fully realising that the repairs were essential. I approached the board and got that loan behind Henderson's back. When he found out about what I had done, he flipped. Although the Interceptors were fully tested and ready for duty, Henderson never trusted me again. He thought and still believes that I'm a thief in some respects and has been trying to get the board to replace me. So far, he's failed."

"Why couldn't he have fired you back then?"

"Because he saw how successful the interceptors were on his first trip to Moonbase. To hide the fact that he was wrong, he dismissed the case. Ever since then, we've been arguing over cases such as the space junk clearance program. Although I've won each round, he still desperately tries to find ways of persuading the board to remove me and it's come to a point where he even tricks me into doing the wrong thing."

"I see."

Raising his wrist, Straker looked at his watch and returned to the subject at hand.

"Anyway, I suggest that you get moving?," he continued. "We don't have a lot of time."

She didn't reply and left the room, allowing Straker to be alone. He pressed down on the keypad behind his desk and the doors closed behind her.

He now had one thing left to do and that was to inform Alec about the situation. He wondered if he would ever see his best friend as it seemed like ages since Alec had started his annual inspection tour of Moonbase. He had often hoped that he'd inspect Moonbase himself, just to get out of the office for a day or two. He preferred Moonbase as to Skydiver. There was more room to navigate his way around and the tension levels weren't as high.

Pressing down on his microphone button, Straker contacted Lt Ford, who was just outside.

"Get me Moonbase will you, Ford?" he asked, with an uneasy feeling in his mind.

"Yes sir," Ford replied as he sent the communication link to Straker's personal video transmitter.

Alec's face appeared on the small black and white screen. Straker could see that his faithful friend was as tired as he was and felt bad to have to break the news to him.

"Alec, how is the tour going?" he asked.

"It's going well," Alec replied. "You'll have my report by tomorrow afternoon."

"No, that won't be necessary," Straker replied. "I want you to stay on Moonbase and handle any UFO activity for the next five weeks."

"Five weeks?" Alec asked, frustrated. "Why?"

"Because I'm having an overhaul on all SHADO operations," Straker replied. "Colonel Foster's overseeing the upgrade of Sky One and Colonel Lake is overseeing the construction of SID-2."

"SID-2?"

"That's right. I'm having another advanced satellite built at the opposite end of the planet. It'll detect UFO's that SID and Moonbase can't."

"This is to do with the Inquisition isn't it?"

"That's correct, Alec, and I want to prove Henderson wrong again. Look, I know you were looking forward to coming home and having a few weeks leave, but I need you to do this for me, Alec. You're more experienced as Moonbase Commander than Foster is."

"I understand Ed. Good luck."

Alec's face disappeared off the screen. Straker had done all he could for now. Maybe now was a good time to catch a couple of hours' sleep. He plumped the cushions and lay down on the couch. Washing all the thoughts away, Straker eventually shut his eyes and gently drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 3

Skydiver base was heaving with technical and maintenance staff. It was the closest base to Skydiver's current position and as Straker had said more than once, time was of the essence. The base had only granted restricted access to the maintenance crews who would be supplying the equipment that would be used to upgrade Sky One. The main body of Skydiver had been successfully docked at the underwater pier a good seven hours. Sky One itself had been specially air lifted to another SHADO location and was expected to be delivered back within another seventeen hours or less. Paul Foster was placed in charge of the operation which meant that he was responsible for any disasters that could've occurred during the overhaul process.

Foster marched back and forth along the control room at Skydiver base. He focused his intentions on the arrival of the cargo crane, which was delivering Sky One by air. Straker had given him very little information to go on which made his job a difficult one. He couldn't understand why there was such a rush? After all they were given five weeks to complete the operation. Foster reckoned that he could contact Straker for further instructions, only to be kept in the dark. Looking at his wrist watch while letting out a frustrating sigh, Foster knew that he could do nothing more than just get a cup of coffee.

However, he wasn't the only one who was feeling the strain. Before he left HQ, Foster had asked for Lieutenant Anderson to assist him with the operation. Anderson had previously taken a course in engineering and had the qualifications to handle overhauls such as Sky One's. Anderson was slumped over a table in the mess hall, staring at his cup of coffee which had now turned cold. Foster entered the mess hall and sat down next to the Lieutenant, who was as equally worried.

"I know how you feel," he said. "That flight must get here soon."

"Yes but it isn't here is it?" Anderson replied, bitterly. "And another thing, Straker's sure being quiet about the matter."

"Now come on Anderson," Foster stated. "You know the Commander. He's probably got the whole situation under control."

"Yeah, I suppose so," Anderson muttered and he placed his head into his folded arms.

Just then, the radio chimed and one of the dock attendants signalled through, alerting the two men after a long silence.

"Colonel Foster, the heli-crane has arrived."

"On my way." Foster replied, signalling Anderson to stand. "Come on Lieutenant. Our job's nearly done."

The heli-crane hovered into position, as the crane which was dangling below it, had began to send the newly modified Sky One down to the main body of the sub. It didn't look any different from when it left the base which made Foster suspect that no modifications were done. Grunting, he marched his way over towards the engineer in charge and demanded an explanation.

"Where are the modifications?"

"The modifications are all internal but one," the engineer replied. "The one major development is that we were able to apply emergency landing skids. The captain can enable them should he have to make an emergency landing and Skydiver happened to not be around."

"Landing skids?" Foster replied, rubbing his chin. "Can they work in water as well?"

"Yes sir." The engineer confirmed. "In case of having making an emergency landing in

the ocean, he can activate the skids, floatation devices that inflate at the flick of a switch."

"Well that's something," Foster muttered, releasing his frown. "What are the internal modifications?"

"Just a few weaponry improvements. She can fire remote controlled missiles now along with two mounted Gatling guns. This will increase the chance of hitting a UFO. As for her thrusters, we've installed two secondary thruster units that will provide twice the maximum thrust for when she either takes off or intercepts. That's all we can do, I'm afraid. I hope Commander Straker approves of these?"

"Well it's not as if he has a choice? Thank you. I'll see to it that you'll get paid by the end of the day."

The engineer walked off to finish his job. Foster watched as the exhausted man signal for heli pilot to hold his position. Sky One was now suspended at the right level for it to dock with the main body. The main body, slowly crawled forwards from the dock, connecting it's hatchway with the newly modified plane. With the sound of a deep thud, Skydiver was re-assembled and the heli-crane left the scene. Skydiver was now ready for service again. Foster sighed and mopped the sweat off of his forehead. It was hot out there in the Mexican sun and he would do anything for one of Freeman's cold Brandy drinks.

He entered the base lounge and issued a call to Straker back at HQ. After a few seconds, Straker's face emerged on the small, squared black and white monitor screen.

"What is it, Colonel?" he grunted, sighing heavily over his microphone.

"The modifications to Sky One are complete," Foster replied, holding back his frustration. "Skydiver will be launched in approximately three hours."

"Good." Straker nodded. "Return to HQ won't you? Straker out."

Foster closed his eyes and headed for the heli-pad, where his helicopter was waiting to take him back to the mainland. He wished he was on Moonbase now more than ever.

"I bet Alec's got it lucky," he thought to himself, as he entered the helicopter and was whisked into the sky.

Chapter 4

The construction on SID-2 had taken a lot longer than expected. Even to the top scientists and builders, working in space was difficult. Not only that, they were vulnerable to attack by UFOs and the thought was never far from their minds. The overall shell of SID-2 was complete, but installing the machinery was the difficult part. With no foot plates or hand rails to support themselves with, the team were only attached by a huge, silver, cables which provided them their oxygen from the orbital lunar module.

To ferry the equipment from the module airlock to the satellite, they had constructed an automatic belt which would carry the computers across a strong, single, metal beam. Once the computers would arrive, the scientists would instantly fit and install them. The sensor dish equipment had already been activated so it was just the defence computers that needed to set up.

The scientist in charge was exhausted as he had never worked in zero gravity before and he wasn't used to the sheer change in his muscles. The fact of feeling weightless made him feel nauseous and he had no alternative but to float back into the module and continue the operation from there. He was ordered to report back to Colonel Virginia Lake every thirty minutes and once he had entered the air-lock, he was going to do just that.

He re-pressurised the cabin and removed his, bulky silver space helmet, which was now acting like a weight on his shoulders. After taking a deep breath, he switched on the radio and sent out his report to Colonel Lake.

"SID-2 construction module to Moonbase," he said, panting over the microphone. "SID-2 is nearly complete. All we need to do now is install the defence computers and power her up. Then she'll be good to go. The time is zero five hundred hours eastern time, July 17th. My team and I will return to Moonbase in another three hours."

One of the other scientists arrived at the module and entered the cabin. As he removed his helmet, inhaled the fresh cabin oxygen and reported to the first officer.

"Well the computers are installed and ready. Jefferson and Michaels are returning via the ferry belt."

"Ok then," the first scientist replied as he fastened himself in the pilot seat. "Go over to the master computer and activate SID-2 after a ten second countdown."

"Yes, sir."

Suddenly, the other two scientists had entered the module and signalled the cabin for the airlock to be re-pressurised. The doors opened and the two men stepped in, just in time for the countdown to begin. Five seconds had already passed.

"Five. . . four. . . three. . . two. . . one. . . She's powering up now."

The scientists looked out in amazement as SID-2 roared into life. Its sensor aerials sprawled out into space and its radar dishes began to rotate. After five minutes of checks, the scientists were ready to power up the satellite's voice modulator.

SID-2 was completely identical to SID except for a few features. It was a different colour as to SID and it had the one antenna attached to the hull. The main difference was that SID-2 had the computerised voice of a female, instead of a male.

As he stood by the activation computer, the second scientist commenced a voice verification test, which had ordered SID-2 to a check of all systems its end. After a few minutes, they had gotten their response.

"This is Space Intruder Detector Mark Two. Sensory equipment is functioning at a

hundred percent capacity. Defence screens are operating at maximum capacity. Main batteries are operating at a hundred percent. Orbital path; steady. Communication transmitter to Moonbase is fully operational. Will currently wait for further instruction data."

"Gentlemen, we've done it," announced the first scientist. "Set a course back to Moonbase. Colonel Lake and Commander Straker will be pleased to hear this."

The module's jet powered up and the red, metallic craft proceeded directly to Moonbase as it flew closely over the lunar surface.

So far, it looked like Straker's plan was going swimmingly, but just how long was luck going to remain on his side?

On Moonbase, the first audio link with SID-2 was received in the control room, by Lieutenant Gay Ellis. She sat monitoring the frequency as she tried to clear up the static interference which covered the audio link. After playing around with the radio dials and buttons, she was able to a clear transmission. Opening up the main speakers, SID-2's automated voice was broadcasted into the control room, stopping everyone in their tracks including an amazed Alec Freeman.

"This is Space Intruder Detector Mark Two. Audio link has been established with Moonbase. Are awaiting new instructions."

"A female SID?" Freeman joked to Ellis. "It's definitely a gender issue?"

"Indeed, sir." Ellis replied, smiling.

Suddenly, SID's cold computerised voice replaced SID-2's over the speakers. It was action stations.

"Have identified three UFO's flying in formation. Grid reference NML22. Target, Earth."

Freeman's smile had turned into a frown as he ordered the Interceptors to launch. The red alert siren whaled throughout the base as the three pilots slid down their launch tubes towards their awaiting Interceptors. Minutes later, the three Interceptors left their silos and glided across the lunar surface towards the UFO's in their standard triangular formation. The pilots had kept their eyes peeled and their fingers on the trigger buttons as they awaited a course steering from Moonbase. In the distance, the three UFO's appeared to be three blinking lights that hurtled across space like a fractured meteorite. The first pilot radioed in for his instructions as the UFO's came into view.

"Interceptor One to base. Request co-ordinates for intercept?"

Lieutenant Ellis's voice emitted over the radio.

"Control to Interceptor One. Steer to an intercept course of 2234-F."

Plotting his co-ordinates, Interceptor One broke formation and sped towards the UFO's. Once it was in visual range, the pilot fired, sending his missile towards the Alien targets. It impacted, striking the first UFO and damaging the other two. Pulling out of the course, Interceptor One returned to base, paving the way for Interceptor Two. By now, SID had new information.

"Interceptor One, detonation Positive. Now only two UFO's remaining. Speed, a hundred million miles. Co-ordinates for Interceptor Two 2212-D."

As soon as the co-ordinates were relayed, Interceptor Two veered off towards the two UFO's. Unfortunately, the missile detonation was a miss, but it had damaged the UFOs. There was now no time for Interceptor Three to make an intercept now and there was no choice but to recall the three craft to Moonbase. As for the two UFOs, they were now heading directly for the far side of the Moon where SID-2 was waiting for them.

Chapter 5

The tension back in SHADO HQ began to escalate. Straker couldn't escape the hot seat in which the IAC had put him in. Once the report came in about the UFO's, he had sent Colonel Lake to fetch General Henderson. The test had begun and the answers were difficult to find. He pancingall over the control room as he watched Keith Ford's radar scope. The two blips on the radar, which were the UFO's, began to disappear off the scope, which meant that they were now passing the dark side of the moon. The first part of the test was to wait for SID-2 to track the UFO's path.

Everything was happening the way he predicted it. If one UFO made it to Earth alright then the others would follow the same direction. Resting his arms on the back of Ford's chair, Straker studied the scope and scrunched his lips when the blips had finally disappeared. He looked at his watch and studied the time. He made out that Henderson would arrive in five minutes and He decided to greet him up in his studio office. Paul Foster had returned to control after overseeing the overhaul of Sky One and immediately took over command without asking questions. As he passed Straker, he could see that he knew what to do just by looking at the Commander's ice cold expression.

"I trust that this is all going to plan?" he asked Straker on the off chance that he'd get an answer.

"You tell me, Foster?," Straker replied as he stepped into his office elevator.

Henderson's limo pulled up outside the main entrance to Harlington Straker studios. Straker waited patiently by the main door as he watched the grumpy, sarcastic General walk up to him. Without gesturing a hand shake, Straker and Henderson glared at each other for a few seconds which seemed to slow time down.

"I'm going to look forward to your downfall, Straker," Henderson said smugly. "By the end of this charade, you'll be clearing out your desk faster before I can say the word 'fired.'"

"Step this way, General," Straker replied, ignoring the remark.

Straker led Henderson into his office followed by Lake. He closed the doors and the computer verified Henderson's voice print.

"I'd like to see with what you have done with the five hundred thousand dollars that the commission had given you." Henderson continued. "I hope you spent it wisely, otherwise you'll be in a hell of a heap of trouble."

"Well Henderson, I'd like to say that you'll be surprised?" Straker replied, displaying a smirk, which made Henderson feel uncomfortable. "You see, we've made improvements to our vehicles as well as building another satellite which will make all the difference."

Henderson stared at the Commander for a few seconds. He didn't believe him and yet, he remained speechless.

"Oh well don't sound so surprised, Henderson," Straker continued. "You didn't actually think that I would just waste that money on nothing would you?"

"I've had my suspicions."

"Well prepare to say goodbye to those suspicions."

The elevator doors opened, and the three officers stepped out into the control room. Foster had waited to pass the command back to Straker and was more than happy too.

"Has SID-2 traced the UFOs yet?" he asked the young Colonel.

"No sir," Foster replied, sounding defeated.

"Don't worry," Straker assured him. "We'll soon know."

Up in space, the UFO's began to reduce their speed. They were now passing through SID-2's sensor field which had now provided the opportunity for SHADO HQ.

"Have a positive fix on UFO's. Speed, 30 million miles and decreasing. Heading, Earth's Atmosphere. One UFO is damaged. Prediction, it will burn up in Earth Stratosphere."

"Well that helps," Straker replied, looking towards Foster. "Lieutenant Ford, get me Skydiver and have Captain Waterman intercept the UFO immediately."

"Yes sir," Ford replied.

Henderson fixed his menacing glance on Straker, trying to make him feel more uncomfortable. His attempts to provoke the commander had no effect, but he was determined to see Straker fail and he wouldn't admit defeat so easily.

"You may have gotten lucky so far, but you're not out of the hot seat yet. If Sky One fails then it's goodbye sweet command."

* * *

Below the waves, Skydiver had prepared itself for launch stations. Captain Waterman prepared to launch Sky One as the sub tilted upwards at a sixty degree angle. Fastening his helmet and fastening his brown jacket, Waterman was ready to launch. After a huge push on the controls, Sky One blasted off from the sub, crashed through the waves and hurtled into the sky. HQ had given him the grid reference in which he would spot the UFO, but it happened to be two hours away. Waterman sighed and began to initiate the new thrusters. After he flipped the switch, Sky One's thrusters began to light up. As soon as he broke the ocean's surface, Waterman headed for his target.

"Sky One to SHADO control," he reported, as he battled the G-force that had built up inside his cockpit. "Will have visual contact in approximately twenty minutes."

* * *

"How is that possible?" Henderson asked after he heard the radio message.

"Improved thruster speeds," Foster answered. "Sky One is now travelling at six times its previous maximum speed. His chances of intercepting the UFO have just increased."

"Bull!" Henderson snarled.

"He's right, Henderson," Straker added. "We spent part of the money on improving Sky One's thrusters and weapons. You're basically witnessing our success."

All Henderson could do was grunt some more as it was his way of hiding the fact that he had been defeated. Straker could see the look in his eyes and wanted to savour the victory feeling until the last moment.

* * *

Sky One was now approaching the area of intercept and so far, the generators were holding up to the immense speed. Waterman looked on to see the small Metallic shape of the UFO, which appeared from the top right hand side of his cockpit window. It was damaged, but it was still descending as it emitted a swirly pattern of thick red smoke.

"Sky One to SHADO control," Waterman reported again. "Have visual sighting on the UFO. It's badly damaged, but it's still moving. It's heading towards another military installation. Reference 1232-D. Am going to intercept."

Sky One reduced its speed and pulled into its standard attack mode. Squeezing the trigger, he fired the missile.

Pulling out of his dive, Waterman flew away so he was safe from the explosion. As he reached five hundred feet away from the UFO, he was suddenly felt a faint rocking sensation underneath him as the missile collided with the UFO.

A few seconds later, the intense light faded and Waterman studied the area, squinting his eyes. After surveying the area, he could find no wreckage of any kind from either the missile or the UFO. His target had been obliterated. Sighing with relief, he signalled back the HQ, where everyone had been waiting in silence.

"Sky One to SHADO control," he said loudly and clearly. "Target destroyed. Boy that new missile sure vaporised that UFO. There is no sign of any wreckage. Area is clear."

* * *

Everyone at HQ cheered, which never happened before. Straker wouldn't really approve of it, but in this case, he didn't give a damn as he was just relieved at the fact that he had beaten Henderson yet again. Looking over towards the now defeated General, he smiled and started off what he nicknamed "The Apology Conversation."

"I told you that I didn't waste that money," he said. "Did you honestly believe that I was financially incompetent? I mean just look at what just happened out there? Every day, men and women at SHADO put their lives on the line to save this planet from the aliens, fearing that a mass attack or even an invasion will come. Yet, we are underfunded which stops us from preventing such an opportunity. We don't take money and waste it, we use it to keep the organisation running the best we can, and that involves salaries, insurance bills, clearance programmes, vehicle maintenance, the works and you will never know what it's like because you sit up there in the lap of luxury, being shielded by our hard and sometimes un-successful efforts. So don't you dare think you can relieve me of a job that keeps us alive for another day or two!"

"This is the first time that I can say that I'm speechless, Straker," Henderson replied, which was un-expected. "Once again, I have underestimated you. I'll file this incident in my report and have you out of the hot seat as soon as I can, but you must understand where I . . ."

"No, I don't understand," Straker replied, cutting Henderson off in mid speech. "If only you realised that you were wrong that this might have never have happened."

Just like that, everything began to return to normal. The whole feeling of the room began to change as everyone returned to their calm, casual duties. It had felt like a huge weight had been lifted off of Straker's shoulders.

"But anyway, thank you." Straker continued, calmly, knowing he could relax for a few minutes. "You'll have my report by tomorrow. Colonel Foster, please escort the General to his car? Colonel Lake, step into my office won't you for a few minutes please?"

* * *

As Foster, walked the General to his car, he couldn't help but think that he could be a Commander himself one day. He had always admired Straker's command efforts and hoped that he would learn from him one day. Although he didn't care to admit it, he always stuck up for him when ever Henderson was involved in an incident.

As he opened the door for Henderson, the elderly General turned round to Foster and made a remark about Straker, infuriating the young colonel.

"Foster, I don't know how you cope with a moron such as Straker. You would do a better service if you joined the IAC."

"General Henderson!" Foster barked, gripping the car door. "As much as it must pain you to hear, I admire Commander Straker's efforts and I am grateful for the many dedicated things he's done to protect the Earth and the Moon. Sure he isn't the sociable type, but under that bitter shell of an ex-air force colonel lays a true leader, a true protector and a true friend in his own way. Good day!"

After slamming the door in a huff, Foster waved and smiled falsely as he watched the limo pull away. As he walked into Miss Ealand's office, he displayed a huge grin as she opened the doors to Straker's office elevator.

"You seem cheery all of a sudden," she said, returning the smile.

"I know Miss Ealand," Foster replied. "It looks like it's going to be a beautiful day after all."

THE END