

# Siamese Conspiracy

by Pamela McCaughey (2006)

Based on UFO (1969-70)  
Created by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill  
A sequel to *Siamese Secrets...*

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## Chapter One

General Ed Straker looked up as the sliding doors to his office swished open. A cadre of SHADO security men stood there, clad in their traditional white and navy blue uniforms.

"Can I help you, gentlemen?" He asked, tapping the ashes off his cigarillo.

The tallest of the group advanced towards the desk, "Stand up, sir."

"I beg your pardon?" Straker was bemused by the command.

"Orders from Dr. Jackson. We have to take you into custody."

"On what grounds?" Straker's bemusement was turning into anger at this intrusion.

"That you are no longer fit to command, sir."

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Even while Straker was being placed under arrest and confined, forces in his favour were at work. Miss Ealand's successor, Brenda McQuinn, made a secure call to Paul Foster in New York City.

"I don't understand, General Foster, how can Jackson do such a thing?" she was understandably upset.

Foster was equally upset but controlled his temper. Twenty years ago Jackson had tried to have him court martialled, and he knew the cruel tactics Jackson could evidence when he was in full attack mode. Over time, Jackson had taken on a number of top ranking SHADO and Omega people, claiming to have no purpose but the 'protection' of the sister organizations. Bust Foster knew Jackson followed his own agendas. Why the late General Henderson had insisted on endowing a wily character like Jackson with the power he did, had never made any sense. Brilliant, yes, but Jackson was not someone to be completely trusted. And now it appeared as though he was staging some sort of 'palace coup' by forcibly removing and confining Straker. What were his intentions? Did he hope to take Straker's position as Supreme Commander?

"I'll be on the next flight," Paul told her, "Get Alec Freeman to meet me."

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Alec Freeman was pacing the SHADO airfield terminal nervously. Why had he ever given up smoking? He could sure use a cigarette now. His emotions alternated between anger and fear. He couldn't believe it. In the enduing hours between Brenda McQuinn informing Paul Foster and Paul's arrival, Jackson had called for a tribunal to determine Straker's capacity to continue as commander. It was a nasty *deja vu* of the court martial he'd tried on Paul. It hadn't worked them - Alec hoped it wouldn't fly now. Of all the people to go after, Jackson had to choose Straker. Freeman had to grudgingly admire Jackson's nerve or stupidity in doing so.

Paul Foster entered and saw the relief on Alec's face. "This all has to be trumped up," he

told him.

Alec nodded, "My car's parked outside," they continued out of the terminal, "Jackson's got guts, I'll give him that much."

"Have you been able to see Ed?"

"No. Jackson says Ed needs to be 'protected' for his own good. It's all bullshit, Paul."

Foster threw his bag into the backseat and Alec gunned the red Infiniti out onto the highway, "Where do they have him?"

"Right now he's in the old SHADO brig, but Jackson's making noises about having him transferred to the Salisbury psychiatric facility. Ed knows the people there fairly well. Some of them helped him out when he wanted his cats tested a few months ago. Jackson has hinted that Straker isn't his only target. He says anyone connected with this cat business is also liable for a court martial - improper usage of SHADO resources and all that shit."

"Why should he get involved in that issue? I read the top secret reports Ed forwarded to me - Jackson himself let the experiment to have Cleo impregnated with alien DNA - stolen illegally by Jackson for that purpose as I recall."

"That's just it, Paul. I think this is a ruse to regain custody of Cleo and her kittens, and enact revenge on those who helped Straker. Ed shut Jackson out, closed down his access to SHADO experimental facilities and made sure he was definitely out of the info loop on anything else directly related to the cats. Jackson sees them as pawns to be used to further his own agenda. Ed sees them as innocent pets, not lab animals to be used and abused."

"I suppose it doesn't hurt that Cleo is Ed's last link to a certain Canadian astronaut."

"We won't go there," Alec admonished him, "But, Jackson has never dared so much before, so to take on such an enormous risk, there has to be a big payoff in sight."

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Straker paced the confines of his small cell. The SHADO facilities underneath the Harlington-Straker studios contained an original brig area, built in the 1960's. It was cold and uncomfortable, but Straker knew Jackson had him placed there on purpose. Jackson was first and foremost a psychiatrist, and he must have been hoping the dank surroundings would demoralize Straker.

Nothing of the sort. Straker was angry, but controlled. He had been unable to contact anyone, but he knew Brenda McQuinn would likely have alerted Foster and Freeman, His major concern was not for his own safety, however. He was more worried about Cleo and her kittens. Without his personal protection - would Jackson stoop so low as to take them into his custody?

The danger to Cleo's furry progeny was very real. Not only had Jackson caused her cloned kittens to be bred partly from stolen alien DNA, but Jackson desperately wanted access to the files on all their testing at the Salisbury facility. And, he wanted the kittens back for the cruelest of all examinations - clinical autopsies. He didn't see them as anything but expendable. To Straker, they were his last tenuous connection to Tina Kovac.

Jackson's activities of late had been suspicious enough that Straker had put a trusted computer hacker on his trail. Marc Masson had been reporting whatever he learned about Jackson directly and confidentially to Straker, but it was a dangerous game. Had Masson been caught out and was Jackson retaliating now?

In an odd way, Straker didn't blame Jackson so much for this mess as he did the now deceased General Henderson. Too many times he'd cursed the old bastard posthumously. Back in the late 1960's, Henderson was in line to become supreme commander of SHADO and

Omega, but the severe injuries he received in an alien-induced car accident meant the job went to his immediate subordinate - Straker. While Henderson publicly rubber stamped the Astrophysical Commission's appointment of Straker, he was privately dismayed to be passed over, and his envy caused no end of pesky problems for the fledgling organizations - everything from trying to control funding allocations to staffing choices.

In the latter area, Henderson insisted on positioning certain individuals in key jobs, Straker felt this was done to 'watchdog' him. Doug Jackson, whose name Straker was sure was some kind of pseudonym, was an obvious plant. Henderson held his leash, but his task was to nip at Straker's heels whenever possible. Jackson enjoyed his position as Henderson's chosen rat, and used it regularly to endanger the work of others who were rising high in the power grid. Paul Foster had been an early victim in Jackson's game of career assassination, and it had almost cost Paul his very life! Afterwards, Henderson refused to remove Jackson, calling him a 'necessary evil' to offset Straker's growing power within the Astrophysical Commission, as Henderson's influence was well on the wane.

If Jackson's private agenda really was to create a second Orion, why? It was quite clear why the aliens were desperately engaged in a breeding program. They wanted to utilize the hybrids as a fifth column element in their eventual take over of planet earth. The more quickly they could be successful in large numbers, as they had been with Orion singularly, the sooner their plan of worldwide domination could be put into effect. All that was apparent.

No matter how misguided Jackson had been in the past, Straker had believed one thing for certain: that Jackson was loyal to the defence of the planet. Now, Straker feared Jackson's possible interest in copying the aliens' breeding program meant he'd gone over to the aliens. Why else would he be so desperate to use Cleo's kittens as experimental animals if it wasn't with a larger, more grandiose scheme in mind?

So much had hinged on Masson locating information to lead him to Jackson's secret lab facilities and the technicians he'd convinced to work with him. Jackson had hid his activities well.

With Straker safely tucked away incognito, Jackson would have ample opportunity to take Cleo's kittens into his own custody - just as Straker feared. He also wondered if Jackson was in the process of replacing him as supreme commander - had Jackson been plotting all these years to overthrow Straker to take the "responsibility seat"?

Straker repressed a shudder at the thought of Jackson as supreme commander. He had little interest in command itself - it was the freedom associated with the position Straker felt Jackson sought.

As supreme commander of both SHADO and Omega, Jackson could call upon almost limitless scientific and military resources to achieve his own ends. If copying the aliens' breeding program was truly his aim - what would this mean for the two sister organizations and why did he want so desperately to do it? Would Paul and Alec be able to get to the bottom of this?

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Alec and Paul, meanwhile, were preparing to walk into the dragon's lair. They paid an unannounced visit to Jackson's suite of offices in the lower levels of the SHADO facility beneath Harlington-Straker studios. As it turned out, he wasn't there. An ominous thing. If he wasn't there, at the centre of his personal spider's web, where was he and what was he doing?

The two men had decided before to bring with them the same kind of 'heat' Jackson had employed against Straker. They'd brought their own squad of SHADO security officers. From

what they'd been able to find out, it was only a small cadre of officers who'd fallen in with Jackson, and not the whole security network.

"We're sealing off this group of offices as of this moment," Paul informed Sandra Parsons, who was arguing the point with him, "And, I think we'll be taking you and Dr. Jackson's staff here into custody." Tit for tat, Paul thought privately!

The security officers marched twelve operatives, including Sandra Parsons, off to a brig facility off the premises, where it would be harder for Jackson to locate them.

Alec and Paul waited for Marc Masson to arrive. He'd contacted Alec on the QT after Straker's 'arrest'. They didn't want any of Jackson's staffers to see him and blow his cover.

When he got there, Paul and Alec had plenty of work for him, "Masson, we need every single computer in this complex taken apart. Download every megabyte of information and find out what systems they could be connected to. Plus, collect up all the tapes from Jackson's CCTV monitors and DVD recording devices - we know he likes to have all kinds of incriminating photos and video. Exercise all the overtime you need on this project. And, if you run into any opposition, call us asap. We'll back you every step of the way."

After seeing Masson settle down to his work and ordering him in some food and drink, Paul and Alec headed out. Their next act would be to get Straker released from the brig.

\* \* \*

"Where has he been transferred to?" Alec demanded angrily. He was in no mood for bullshit.

The security officer on duty at the brig replied, "I wasn't told, sir."

"Well, maybe a little time in a secure facility might jog your memory," Alec motioned in three security operatives, "You can take this fellow to the same place as Jackson's other stooges," he turned back to the obviously alarmed brig guard, "That's right, young man, Dr. Jackson is no longer in charge of this little palace coup. The cavalry, to quote the Americans, has just come over the hill."

Two other navy blue suited security guards began to unhook the CCTV system and the computer terminals, "Take these things up to Marc Masson in Jackson's office complex," he told them after the brig guard had been removed, "He'll want to go over them," Alec flipped his cell open and punched a secure code, "Paul? He's not here. They've moved him. Have the Salisbury facility checked."

\* \* \*

## Chapter Two

Doug Jackson, if that was really his name, sat back in the Salisbury facility manager's office chair. He had managed a great many tasks in the last 48 hours - General Henderson would have been proud of him.

He had Straker securely hidden away. And, he'd come here to the Salisbury facility to round up all those who'd assisted Straker in his private research on Cleo's kittens. Even now, his own cadre of security officers were combing through the facility's computers to find the data collected and the names of those collaborators. For that was what they were, in Jackson's eyes.

Seething from being denied access to the kittens (they were, after all, HIS creations!), and shut out of SHADO's science facilities by Straker, Jackson had waited to take his revenge. He'd contacted the Astrophysical Commission personally to announce Straker's inability to continue as supreme commander. He'd told them Straker was mentally unstable, possibly suffering from the onset of early Alzheimers' and had to be removed for the safety and benefit of everyone connected with SHADO and Omega.

Jackson also invoked the name of General Henderson in the hopes he might score a few valuable points with the older Astrophysical members - all of whom were direct liaisons with the various national government heads who were responsible for secretly funding SHADO and Omega from their black budgets. And there was a certain member on the Commission's top slate of officers who had as much interest in Jackson's projects as he himself did.

Of course, Jackson neglected to mention his own reasons for having Straker 'deposed', and his own crimes, such as stealing the alien DNA he used in the cloning of Cleo's kittens, or his illegal monitoring of Straker's top secret personal file codes. There were dozens of small and larger infractions of SHADO's code of conduct and ethics Jackson had flouted, and he managed to find a good number of insecure minions on the low end of SHADO's food chain to help him. It was amazing how easily people could be intimidated by a few well placed threats.

Sandra Parsons, for instance had been swayed into becoming his creature because he caught her trying to steal computer software to sell to a British computer company. The sale didn't end up taking place, but Sandra should have been reported nonetheless - her proposed actions would have been treasonous. The end result, according to SHADO's own law code, for such a dangerous breach of security would have been court martial and execution. Jackson chose to hold the information over her head and utilize her for his own purposes. He considered all his 'creatures' expendable, and if Sandra Parsons dared to speak any truths about his actions, he could retaliate by reporting her as well. Her self-interest in remaining alive would secure her silence.

One of his subsidiary targets in this power struggle was the staff of the Salisbury facility. The facility functioned openly as a mental hospital, but it hid a darker secret - most of its patients were alien abductees who were debriefed and then given massive doses of the amnesia drug to erase any memory of their encounters. Jackson had interrogated all the top staffers there personally in the last three hours and although not one of them had said anything incriminating, he even used drugs on them and got nothing except an obvious declaration of loyalty to Straker - he'd break them all eventually!

In addition to whatever data that must exist on their testing of Straker's felines, there was also the issue of invading Straker's ultra secure condo to remove the kittens. Jackson smiled - he believed the loss of said kittens would break Straker and he took a malicious pleasure from the idea of dispatching those pampered experimental animals so he could find out what made

them 'tick'. He'd sent a group of security guards of his own staff to accomplish the task - they would round up the kittens in containers and remove them to the same facility where he had incarcerated Straker. He might even let Straker view the autopsies as a 'courtesy'.

Jackson had several agendas, and in order for him to be able to act with impunity, he had to oust Straker from his post as supreme commander and extract as much of SHADO and Omega's resources as he could muster for his next big experiment...

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"They're not answerin' any of our calls," Al Leslie told Paul Foster, "We've bin sittin' on the facility here for a couple hours now. Nobody in or out. We tried to hack into their computer system and got thrown out - the response was that their system was on a diagnostic loop. That's not possible - unless the system has been completely shut down for repairs. I checked with Repair Central - they were out here 6 months ago - gave the place a fine bill of health. There's also two vehicles parked out back - they don't belong to any of the staff. Ran their plates - they're rented SUVs."

Paul frowned, "Jackson may be in there. That would be the only reason I could see for such a shut down of all their computer systems. Have you had any luck tripping the code for the facility's main entrances?"

"We're still workin' on it. The computers' bein' down are playin' hell with that plan. If we could scan the decoders over the doors themselves we'd be in real fast - then we could storm the place, flood it with knock out gas and find out who all is in there."

"OK, move up under cover of darkness. Get the doors open, use the gas and get Straker out if he's there. If you find Jackson, put that bastard under arrest and get him back to the facility where we are holding his staff. Keep me posted on this operation."

\* \* \*

In their immediate concern for Straker's safety, they had let it slip their minds that Jackson would have some secondary targets. Foster arrived at Straker's secure condo building. The structure was home to many top-ranking SHADO personnel, and as such was a well protected place. Unmarked SHADO security officers covered the building day and night, electronic devices monitored everything from fire prevention, entrance code violations, temperature changes, air conditioning and heating, elevator maintenance, the laundry rooms and the gymnasium and pool areas. In short, it wasn't an easy building to compromise.

Foster showed his special ID card to the outside monitor screen, which scanned his retinal and fingerprints before admitting him.

"General Paul Foster," he announced to the SHADO security guard at the desk, "I'm here to check on General Straker's condo. He's out of town."

The guard looked at him oddly, "That's strange. I had a similar request from a pair of guards about half an hour ago."

"Did you let them in?" Paul felt like he'd been sucker punched suddenly.

"Well, yes, they had orders from Dr. Jackson and all the pertinent ID."

"Did they come back out this entrance carrying anything?"

"Just a couple of bags - said the General needed extra clothes..."

Pounding his fist on the counter top, Paul cursed, "Did you scan the bags?"

"No need to. I saw them enter the General's condo on CCTV and come out again shortly."

"What about the video in his condo? You didn't see anything amiss?"

"General Straker had his CCTV turned off several months ago - said he wanted some privacy."

Paul shook his head angrily, "Get me up there!"

Another guard took Paul up the elevator to Straker's condo. Once the door was opened, Paul could see some sort of activity had taken place. Furniture was overturned, Straker's treadmill was knocked over on its side, and Cleo was sitting in the the midst of it all mewing mournfully, her bright blue eyes wide with fear.

Foster moved to pick her up but she fled from him under the bed in Straker's room.

"What could have happened here?" asked the guard, surveying the things in disarray.

"Check the other rooms," Paul directed him, "Find the kittens!"

A thorough 15 minute search yielded no cats but Cleo, still crouched in a fur-fluffed ball, hissing at Paul's attempts to coax her out from her safe haven. He filled a cat food bowl and took in some water for her, leaving them on the floor beside the bed where she could see and smell them.

He got back out to his car and slumped into the driver's seat, "Alec? I was too late. The kittens are gone. Jackson must have them."

\* \* \*

Alec Freeman sat nervously in the front office of the Astrophysical Commission. He'd gone over alot of heads to demand a meeting with the most powerful members of the Commission to have Jackson's actions countermanded, the tribunal stopped and to refute the charges Jackson had made against Straker's fitness to continue at his post as supreme commander. He would have to be at his charming best. Not for the first time did he wish he hadn't quit smoking!

"The members will see you now," a young attache told him. The doors to the briefing room slid open and Alec entered.

Ranged around the long table were men and women of several different races - Alec knew they were the Astrophysical Commission's movers and shakers. They wielded a power even greater that that of Straker's as supreme commander - for they instructed their own governments what funding to allocate and how much. These people dealt with the dispensations of literally billions of dollars, pounds, Euros, rupees, yen, pesos, rubles, et al to finance the giant sprawling organizations which were known secretly as SHADO and Omega.

Alec remained standing until one of the members nodded to him to be seated.

"You are here to speak on behalf of General Straker?" the member from India asked.

"I'm not only here to speak for General Straker. I'm also here to level a set of counter charges against Dr. Douglas Jackson, if that really is his name, of course."

"Serious charges?" the Russian member spoke up.

"Serious enough. How about insubordination, unlawful confinement on several counts, illegal usage of rare medical materials, break, enter and theft of personal properties, concealment of criminal acts for the purpose of staff manipulation...must I go on?" Alec had removed several DVDs from his briefcase and placed them on the table, "It's all here, ladies and gentlemen."

"You can prove this?" queried the member from China.

"Beyond a shadow, if you'll excuse the pun, of any doubt. As for the trumped up charges that General Straker is unstable or suffering any kind of mental malady, I can definitely assure you this is not the case."

"Dr. Jackson approached us only a few days ago with counter proof that General Straker was determined by him to be in the early stages of dementia - claiming his pet cats could communicate telepathically or some such rot," the member from Nigeria explained.

"I'm afraid the good doctor has been having you on. But, I think you'll find our proof far more compelling. Please view these DVDs. I'll wait outside. We can speak again once you've had a chance to examine them."

\* \* \*

The oily evil smile Douglas Jackson had been famous for within SHADO and Omega was much in evidence as he walked from cage to cage, looking intently at Cleo-catra's furry children, "And, you say they actually hurled furniture at you?" he asked incredulously of the guard with him.

"It was like something from an Exorcist movie," the guard explained, "We weren't sure if one or all of them were doing it. Finally, we had to use gas to subdue them. We also noticed they weren't declawed," he displayed a gauze wrapped hand.

Jackson nodded, "Felines, even small ones, can pull off many amazing feats of physical courage. That's why I selected them for my experiment. Cats are cunning, resourceful and have a powerful will to live. Most cloned experimental animals die either in vitro or shortly after birth. These cats look as though they are in very good health indeed."

As they passed by the last cage, Jackson and the guard stood before the smallest of the kittens, a five pound blue point Siamese female. Kiya eyed the pair with a baleful look, her ears flattened against her head. Jackson felt a prickling sensation run up his spine and then experienced being lifted off the floor! The guard grabbed Jackson and pulled him back down. Jackson had hovered for a moment at least a foot off the ground!

"This is unbelievable!" Jackson exclaimed, "Telekinesis on such a level! No wonder Straker didn't want me to know this!" he leaned into the cage and smiled his Grinch-like grin at the kitten, "You'll be our first test subject!"

\* \* \*

General Straker's new accommodations were a vast improvement over the cell he'd occupied in the old brig. He'd been supplied with bedding, some sealed beverages and non-perishable food items. His transfer had been completed with a blindfold over his head, so he had no idea where he'd been taken. Although he attempted to listen for ambient sounds on the route - such as church bells, train whistles, aircraft overhead, the noise of the vehicle had successfully drowned them out.

Straker laid on the bunk provided for him. With nothing to distract his musings, he had plenty of time to think - and worry. The cell was probably rigged with CCTV, so he quelled the desire to pace its length as a means of using up some of his nervous energy. He'd done some Tai Chi movements earlier in an effort to calm himself. He was feeling mostly anger and a recurring mental fantasy helped him envision doing something really awful to Jackson...when he got out of his cell...

\* \* \*

Alec had been called back into the briefing room after almost three hours. It had been agonizing, for Alec knew the information on those DVDs were totally damning of Jackson's crimes against Straker and the two sister organizations.

How long would it take them to make a decision? Hadn't he provided them with ample proof? Or were there secret Jackson supporters in the group who kept debating the issue? Jackson had been the author of many internecine little skirmishes inside SHADO and Omega for years, but he'd never dared so much before. What made him so confident that he would strike out against Straker in this way after all this time?

The departure of the member from Russia surprised him. Without even acknowledging

Alec's presence in the waiting room, he left in silence. What did his exit mean?

Much of the information on the DVDs had been discovered by operative Marc Masson, who's culled Jackson's computer systems, his personal files and his coded notations. He struck the motherlode regarding the cloning of Cleo's kittens and the concealment of Sandra Parsons' attempted software sale, and with it unravelled details about his ethical infractions - almost too numerous to count.

After 40 years of suspecting the worst - they now had the proof and could hang him with his own rope. But two pieces of information eluded them - where had Jackson imprisoned Straker and where were the kittens?

By the time Alec got his call back into the briefing room, he was determined to argue for a number of vital actions, and he hoped the Astrophysical Commission would back him up.

"Seeet down, Generale Freeman," the member from Mexico gestured to the 'hot seat'.

"We've viewed your DVDs. Very interesting," the member from the United States indicated his colleagues, "Your proof has engendered quite a debate."

"I saw the member for Russia leave awhile ago," Alec told them.

"Yes, he was not in agreement with our final decision," admitted the member from Germany.

"You are certain of the veracity of this material? There can be no room for error or miscalculation."

"I'd stake my career and my life on it," Alec said emphatically.

"Then, we hereby authorize you to find and arrest Dr. Jackson, reinstate General Straker to his posting as supreme commander, and weed out these misfits who have thrown in their lot with the wrong man. Since we are not generally involved in judicial matters, we will leave the court martials and disposition of these people to the discretion of the organizational lawyers, under SHADO's jurisdiction. There will be no tribunal for General Straker. This attempted insurrection against the lawfully designated command structure of SHADO must be crushed completely. No loose ends," the member for Canada looked at Alec meaningfully.

Alec rose from his seat, "Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, I thank you for your decision and I will see to it personally that this unfortunate business is brought to a speedy conclusion," he saluted them and exited, exhaling a sigh of relief. Now all they had to do was find Jackson and the rest would fall into place!

\* \* \*

"The good folks at the Astrophysical Commission saw the rights of things," Alec explained to Paul, "Our job is to get Jackson and all his cronies and put things back the way they were."

Paul shook his head, "How did Jackson ever push it this far?"

"Masson sent me an e-mail a bit ago. Seems there's a pile of highly coded notations of Jackson's in Cyrillic - the Russian alphabet. He sent the lot to the cipher department for decoding. It could be the reason the Astrophysical member for Russia left the meeting."

"Covering his arse, you mean?" Paul commented sarcastically, "Getting out before the other members realized how far into this he was?"

"Could be. It's certainly explain why the Commission's top brass would give any credence to Jackson's lies about Ed's mental capacities."

"But why the Russians? The Cold War has been over now for years. What could they possibly gain by ousting Straker and putting Jackson in his place? For all we know, Jackson doesn't even have a real military background."

"I've always suspected he must have been KGB before Henderson reeled him in. Henderson was a shadowy figure himself - I never trusted the man - its never been possible to get much information on him - aside from his dealings with the Soviets, trying to get them online with the creation of SHADO and Omega back in the 60's."

Paul nodded, "By the way, Al and the boys liberated the Salisbury facility. They nabbed ten of Jackson's thugs. Apparently Jackson was there, interrogating the staff and left his crew to go through all their files and videotape, etc. Bonnie Davidson told me Jackson was looking for materials relating to Straker's kittens. I could have saved him the effort - Bonnie had all that data rerouted to me in NYC - I buried them in the research files morgue at Omega."

"So that still leaves us with no idea where Jackson, Straker or the kittens are."

### Chapter Three

Pete Little flipped open his secure cell phone and punched in the code for Paul Foster, "General, I think I just got some useful information from an interrogation. Sandra Parsons cracked under the drugs and told me Jackson's secret lab was down on the London waterfront. She didn't have an exact location - but it's a start."

"Good. Let's get on this asap. Any chance that's where Jackson is holding General Straker?"

"She didn't know for sure, but she confirmed Jackson would likely take Straker's kittens there - that lab was Jackson's original site for all his private experimental work."

"Right. Get Al Leslie and your extraction team working on finding the lab - get Ana Padilla to finish the interrogations. We've got to get the kittens back before Jackson kills them. And if we can find him, we can find Straker."

\* \* \*

The city of London was an ancient, massive, sprawling metropolis. Located on the river Thames, it had been a site of constant inhabitation since before the days of the Roman Empire. And, its huge waterfront area was a tangle of wharves, warehouses, abandoned buildings and modern business complexes. Finding Jackson's secret lab in that mess would be akin to looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. How he'd been funded and assisted to conceal his activities was a mystery, and Freeman ordered SHADO's financial department to investigate thoroughly to determine whether monies earmarked for the sister organizations had been siphoned off to pay for Jackson's private interests.

Both Paul and Alec feared the reach and depth of the internal conspiracy. How long had it all been going on, how much money had it cost and who had become involved with Jackson? Worst of all, why would people sworn to protect their own planet from a lethal alien incursion compromise the efforts of the twin organizations to pursue the private agenda of one man? It shook Foster and Freeman to the core to realize there were people whose dedication was suspect, and would they be able to uncover every one of the conspirators? The very sanctity of SHADO and Omega's mission might have been seriously compromised. Was Jackson in league with the aliens, or was he merely following the dictates of someone else who wanted SHADO and Omega's resources utilized for some other purpose? Any such conspiracy was a momentous blow to everything men like Straker, Foster and Freeman had spent their lives working for.

Al Leslie, Pete Little and their team canvassed the waterfront area in every way possible. They had scanning choppers in the air, their sent unmarked vehicles all over, and small ships travelled up and down the Thames with scanning equipment. It was a frustrating search and they knew they were up against the clock...

\* \* \*

Straker was lying on his cot meditating. It wasn't easy to contain his feelings and he knew he had to remain calm.

When the door to his sealed room opened, he found himself face to face with the man responsible for all his troubles.

Accompanied by a brace of guards, Jackson entered, his perennially oily smile evident, "Sit down, General, and let's have a chat."

"There's nothing I have to say to you," Straker replied stiffly.

"Oh, I'm here with an invitation for you. I now have in my custody a quartet of felines whose fate may interest you."

Straker's eyes grew colder, "Leave them alone, Jackson. They're nothing to you. There's no reason to bother with them."

"On the contrary, General. They've proven themselves quite worthy of investigation. But then you already knew that, didn't you?"

"They're just pet cats. My pet cats."

"They are MY creations - and they've become even more than I could have hoped for in this experiment. They are what Orion probably was, but of course his loss meant we were prevented from fully studying him. Your emotional attachment to his mother blinded you to the reality of what he was - a perfect blending of the best of human and alien DNA. And your foolish attachment to those glorified lab animals will soon come to an end as well."

"If you think that, then you have to admit they're worth more to you alive than dead."

"Oh, there are four of them - I can dissect a couple," Jackson's smile grew even more Grinch-like.

Fighting down an almost overwhelming urge to strike that smile off Jackson's face, Straker said, "Dissection is unnecessary with all the medical resources available - X-Rays, MRIs..."

Jackson cut him off, "They're only cats, General. They're quite expendable to me - merely a means to an end. What I learn from them may assist me in my further experimental work. And with you declared unfit by the Astrophysical Commission, and my accession to your post, all the combined resources of SHADO and Omega will be available to me to continue my work."

"I don't think you've taken into account that others within the organizations will do everything they can to stop you."

"Are you referring to Paul Foster and Alec Freeman? Well, of course, they'll have to be dealt with. But as long as I have you and the kittens securely hidden - their hands are tied."

"Don't bet on it, Jackson."

"Their loyalty to you will be their undoing. As long as they think I can eliminate you, they'll be forced to step back and let my plans proceed."

"Who's behind all this? You had to have help," Straker's voice was hard, "Did you go over to the aliens?"

Jackson smiled again, "My dear General, did it ever occur to you that the aliens are not the only ones interested in creating powerful hybrids? Hybrids who can pass for humans but can marshal superhuman abilities? Think what could be done with an army of hybrids - who could read the thoughts of others, utilize telekinesis, sense all kinds of things normal humans cannot? Why, an army of such creatures could control the destinies of nations - take over this planet."

"Is that why you're doing this? Our world is under attack from a technologically superior alien race - desperate for survival - and all you can think of is politics?"

"Not just politics. If this planet was politically united, we would stand as an even greater threat to the aliens. We could present a united front in a way we have hitherto been unable. All these democratic countries who have to ratify funding, keeping SHADO and Omega secret - what a waste of resources! The whole world needs to know about the alien threat so it can concentrate solely on eliminating the danger. Petty politics would be melted if there was one world government."

"Are you saying you want to be some sort of world leader?" Straker asked incredulously.

"Not me, no. Someone more able to handle that responsibility. But, someone could take

control with a cadre of hybrids dedicated to the job. All we need are sufficient amounts of alien DNA. And, our best source for extraction and replication are those kittens of yours."

Straker shook his head. It never occurred to him in all these years that Jackson's involvement in SHADO and Omega would come down to this - a plan to utilize alien cloning technology to foster a take over of their own world. It was more grandiose and frightening than anything he could imagine.

"Such schemes as you're describing would be impossible without outside assistance. Who are you working with?" Straker demanded.

Jackson shrugged, "You won't be able to tell anyone - you and your pets will be meeting the same fate shortly. Let's just say the Russian government has been of great service to me and my cause."

Straker's eyes widened. He'd suspected Jackson was of Slavic descent, "You were KGB, weren't you?"

"Before General Henderson recruited me, yes. I've managed to maintain certain political connections, even though Mother Russia now likes to parade herself before the rest of the world as a democracy. There are those who long for a return to the days when things were simpler and the Soviet Union was a power to be reckoned with."

"You're a Marxist?"

"I'm a realist. Only a world united as a single political entity can repulse the aliens. We've been fighting them for over 30 years, General, and we are nowhere close to eliminating them as a threat. That's because SHADO and Omega have wasted far too much resources on concealment. This war has to be out in the open so every man and woman can contribute to the defence of our planet - under the control of a properly centralized government which will make certain no effort is spared."

"This is utter madness, Jackson."

"Is it? Once the world government is secure, we can use the hybrids to help us ferret out any alien hybrids - that's their aim - to breed hybrids as a fifth column invasion force to effect their own takeover. Except they haven't realized we can utilise their technology to strengthen ourselves against them."

"Look, as far as we know, the only successful hybrid birth for the aliens has been Orion. We've been systematically destroying their baby labs here on earth and on Mars - you're aware of that fact. If the aliens have had trouble meeting success in this area - what makes you think you can manage where they've already failed?"

"Because we already have what we need - we don't have to steal DNA or kidnap available wombs - like the aliens have. I can replicate alien DNA extracted from Cleo's kittens and I have a group of women willing to act as test mothers."

Straker was appalled, "You're crazy. You can't pull this off. No other country will stand for a take over - the United Nations..."

"...will fall into line when the alien menace has been explained to them," Jackson finished smugly, "You underestimate the scale of our organization within SHADO, Omega and the rest of the world. So you see, your life and the lives of four lab animals pale in comparison to our grand plan," Jackson looked to his guards, "Bring him. I'm going to enjoy his anguish at seeing those felines dispatched."

\* \* \*

Jackson's lab facilities were shiny and new, well stocked and obviously extravagantly funded. Straker was taken into a small observation area. He saw four cages - with four little

Siamese faces looking out at him. He swallowed back his grief and rage. How could he save them? It didn't look like he could save himself and even if Foster and Freeman found Jackson's secret lab - it might already be too late for all of them.

The kittens were silent as lab-coated technicians wearing heavy gloves opened a cage and removed Kiki first. Her dark blue eyes searched out those of Straker and he stumbled abruptly as the strength of Kiki's psychic barrage hit him. The guards held him up, and he tried to maintain a neutral expression on his face.

*You are here...great danger...death breathes around us...this man is evil...he wishes to kill us...*

Jackson put out a bare hand to Kiki and was rewarded with a hiss and a slashing. Her paw had made contact with his hand so quickly it could barely be seen - except for the evidential flow of blood from the three long scratches she had inflicted on him.

Coolly, Jackson asked a technician for a small clean towel. He wrapped his hand up securely, "I see we still have plenty of feline fighting spirit," he commented with a Grinch-like smile. He looked over at Straker, "You knew all about this. You and your friends at the Salisbury facility discovered just what these cats could do. Superhuman speed and strength, telekinetic abilities, god knows what else. Didn't you realize how important they were to science? To the war against the aliens?"

"I had no idea why you'd created them. I should have had you court-martialled when I found out what you'd done."

"Ah, but you're weak, General. That's why you're so unfit to command. You're squeamish - you sacrificed Orion and his mother to the aliens - but you don't want to sacrifice four simple-minded animals to further human interests."

"I didn't sacrifice Kovac and Orion - she made that decision on her own!"

"You could have had Kovac eliminated once she'd given birth - her usefulness was over."

"She was the child's mother!" Straker reminded him.

"An unnecessary person once the child was born. We had the key to the aliens' souls with Orion - we could have had the upper hand - forced them to bargain."

"You can't bargain with the aliens, Jackson! They won't even communicate with us! In over 30 years of war, not once have they deigned to make any kind of conciliatory contact or respond to us civilly."

Straker became aware of a low frequency murmur as he and Jackson traded Jabs. The sound was beginning to get louder and louder, increasing in strength and power. Jackson and the technicians also noticed, "What is that sound?" Jackson demanded to know.

\* \* \*

High in the sky over the London waterfront, Al Leslie and Pete Little were startled to hear a penetrating sound over the whirling of their chopper rotors.

"What the hell is that?" Leslie asked over his headset.

Little pulled his own headset off to listen, "I don't know, " he fiddled with some on board scanning equipment, "It seems to be coming from a spot down there below us - circle back!"

It took a moment for the equipment to triangulate the location from which the sound was emanating, "Radio HQ, Al. This should be reported - it's coming from a warehouse right down there..."

\* \* \*

Freeman answered his cell, "This is SHADO Control - we have Allan Leslie on the line for you."

Alec waited for Al's voice, "General Freeman, we gotta situation up here - can you send in a ground crew to investigate somethin' for us?"

\* \* \*

Straker felt compelled to cover his ears. The keening sound was not electronic or mechanical in nature, as Jackson's techs discovered. It had grown into a higher, more piercing frequency and soon even Jackson and the techs were wincing in pain and trying to figure out where it was coming from. Finally, the sound was so unbearable that they all began to drop to the floor, unconscious...the last thing Straker saw was Kiki closing her big blue slanted Siamese eyes...

\* \* \*

The giant transport truck opened its back bay doors - seven unmarked SHADO mobiles drove out and surrounded the warehouse specified by the coordinates Al Leslie had supplied. The horrible keening sound had finally ceased. Armed security guards stormed the building, Al and Pete had picked up Foster and Freeman and now the four of them were exiting the chopper, which had landed on the warehouse roof.

"Everyone in here is out cold, "Darrin Poulton's voice came over the headset system, "The high frequency noise must have been coming from inside this building, judging by the grimaces on all the faces. Looks like some sort of lab complex in here..."

Another voice interrupted, "We found General Straker and Jackson! And the cats! They're all here!"

\* \* \*

## Epilogue

Straker experimentally opened one eye, then the other. He was in his own bed in his condo. And on the bed with him were five felines - Cleo, Kiki, Biddle, Misha and Kla. Was he dreaming?

"Good. You're awake," Dr. Bonnie Davidson stood up from her seat, "Are you hungry? Thirsty?"

"What I'd like is some information," Straker reached out to pet Cleo. She closed her eyes and purred contentedly and loudly.

"I don't have all the details, General, but there's two friends of yours here who've been waiting to see you."

Foster and Freeman came in, looking relieved and anxious at the same time, "I'll leave you gentlemen to have a chat." and she left the room.

"How are you feeling?" Paul asked.

"My ears are still ringing," Straker replied, "I have to admit, I didn't have much hope of ever seeing you two again."

"You can credit Cleo's kittens with saving the day," Alec smiled, he reached out a hand to Cleo only to have her growl at him, "Still immune to the Freeman charm are we?" he laughed.

Foster grinned, "Dr. Davidson said the kittens had to be the source of the noise. Seems the four of them corporately started some sort of psychic white noise that affected humans and even the local electrical field. They knocked out power for over a mile wide radius in the warehouse area!"

Straker watched as Kiki moved up from her position on the bed to lie on his lap. Her eyes closed in appreciation as he smoothed her fur with his hand, "It seems my pets can do far more than any of the testing proved. I guess they're not the simpleminded animals Jackson thought them to be."

"In other news, The SHADO judiciary has scheduled court martials for 175 operatives. Sandra Parsons and some of the others started naming names in Jackson's conspiracy group. I don't think the court will have any choice but to find them all guilty and order executions," Freeman said.

Paul added, "According to Marc Masson's research, Jackson was getting private funding for years from the Soviet government in return for intelligence reports on SHADO and Omega's activities and the course of the war against the aliens."

"Masson discovered it was the Russian member on the Astrophysical Commission who pushed the council's decision to give Jackson the go ahead to replace you and effect the 'palace coup'. There are a lot of long faces on the council these days," Freeman finished.

"The last thing I wanted for SHADO and Omega was an internal witch-hunt," Straker shook his head, "We have enough to do without tracking down a group of conspirators."

"At this point we have to examine everyone's loyalty," Freeman replied, "The Astrophysical Commission ordered a complete investigation. Anyone who comes up suspect is going to be in danger of their lives. There's no choice but execution in most cases. Jackson recruited the kind of people whose loyalty was for sale. And, yet they were initially recruited by our own because of their spotless records, their talents, and their seeming dedication to our work. Everyone is so thoroughly researched before we take them on. It's frightening to think our people in charge of recruitment could admit those capable of passing our stringent requirements and still be subverted."

"What about Jackson himself?" Straker wanted to know.

"We opted to incarcerate him in the old brig, just as he'd done with you. He's under 24 hour guard and total maximum security. No interaction with anyone else. The judiciary will have to assign legal council for him, but so far nobody wants the job!"

"It's pretty hard to defend a traitor. Look at what happened to the Rosenbergs in the 1950's," Straker was referring to the American couple who sold the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviets and were executed for their activities. "I'm still in shock that this whole conspiracy existed in the first place."

"Jackson's had his tentacles reaching into every department of SHADO and Omega - we don't even know for certain the whole extent of his conspiracy network yet. It's going to take time and resources to uncover them all," Paul agreed.

"Jackson's aims were much more grandiose than just controlling SHADO and Omega. He and his backers were planning to take over the world - using human-alien hybrids to form an invincible army - such a plot would have taken decades to effect. He admitted he was former KGB and his backers were Russian. This whole conspiracy plot must have been hatched years ago."

Freeman punched Foster in the shoulder and chuckled, "I told you Jackson had to be KGB, didn't I?"

"If world domination was Jackson's goal - why did he join SHADO to fight the aliens?" asked Paul.

"He believed one centralized world government would be stronger in waging the war - he was a Marxist at heart - even after Russia threw off the yoke of Communism."

"Do you think General Henderson knew any of this?"

"I don't know. He was an American, like me, I can't believe he'd put Jackson into the organizations without some sort of surety that his KGB days were over. I do think he approved of Jackson's ruthlessness, of not the man's politics."

"Henderson never seemed happy with his desk job - even if it did give him more influence for a time," Freeman observed.

"Once SHADO and Omega were up and running, Henderson saw his own influence wane. Jackson was his conduit to all that was going on internally. The two of them used each other for their own ends," Straker confirmed.

"What will happen now with Cleo's kittens? More testing?" Paul inquired.

"I'm sure Dr. Davidson and the good folks at the Salisbury facility would like to explore the new abilities Kiki and her siblings obviously have, but I think they've all been traumatized enough. Whatever genetic makeup they have, they just want to be kittens."

Biddle began to yip - within a few seconds, Alec's cell went off, "Yeah? OK, Al, we'll be right over there," he snapped his phone shut, "Time to interrogate some more conspirators," the two men prepared to leave.

"We'll keep you in the loop," Paul promised.

Straker nodded and watched them exit. Dr. Davidson was already headed back to Salisbury. The cats were still sprawled in various stages of catnap on the bed with him. Kiki opened her eyes and looked up. He could sense her message, moving from her mind to his, *You will protect us?*

"Yes, Kiki, I think you're all going to be safe now. No more Jackson, no more tests."

Kiki smiled as only cats can, and curled up, her little head resting on Straker's chest. Straker petted her gently and she purred. Whatever the kittens were, they most definitely were not simpleminded animals. There was no doubt in Straker's mind now that they were fully

reasoning, sentient life forms. They might look like Siamese cats, but their alien DNA had given them an extra dimension that could not be ignored. That Jackson had never recognized or acknowledged their sentience had brought about his own downfall.

Biddle yipped again briefly before Straker's cell went off. He flipped it open, "Straker here. Oh, yes, Member Patel - yes, I'm quite well now. Jackson? Yes, most unfortunate..."

The End