

Seized

Based on "UFO" the science-fiction TV series created by
Gerry and Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill (1969-1970)
and "Due South"
created by Paul Haggis
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CHAPTER ONE

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Straker knew what was coming when his Seal Point Biddle, started to keen that strange Siamese cry. It meant his cell phone was about to ring. He picked up the unit and waited for the telltale bleeping.

"Ed. Glad I caught you. I just got a report in from Canada."

"Paul - what's up?"

"A kidnap-murder scene on Prince Edward Island. The father and son are dead, but the teenaged daughter is missing. And, the family name is Kovac."

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Paul Foster met the silver-haired SHADO General at the Charlottetown Airport less than 24 hours later.

"Do you know how many connections I had to take to get to this god damned place?"

Straker growled as he handed his kit bag to Foster.

"That'll teach you to take commercial air transport," Paul smiled, falling into step with Straker, "Right this way, I've got us a rented SUV outside in the parking lot. We'll head out to Murray Harbour North - takes about an hour or so."

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Once on the road into town, they started to discuss the case, "What kind of RCMP action is this case getting?" Straker wanted to know.

"It's being dealt with as a criminal act so far. I had our people hack into the local RCMP sites and download everything they know to date on this situation. It has to be alien intervention, but the father and son were not mutilated - somewhat of a departure for our green friends."

"They obviously had something else in mind when they invaded that house, Paul. The daughter is the child of Tina Kovac."

Paul steered the SUV down University Avenue, past the local Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's location and all the fast food outlets, "You look like you haven't slept a wink in the last 24 hours - I'll get us some coffee." He turned the rented vehicle right into the Tim Horton's drive through, "If nothing else, this stuff will jump-start your brain. Strongest java I've ever run into anywhere. Beats the hell out of that Dunkin' Donut swill they sell south of the border. Kovac swore by Tim's."

Two large double-doubles and a box of Timbits later, they were back on University Avenue, heading for the centre of Charlottetown. Both men for silent for a time, lost in their respective memories of former astronaut Tina Kovac. She'd been forcibly recruited to SHADO after her space shuttle was destroyed in an alien attack, and Straker had made the decision to send her on a mission to Prince Edward Island to help neutralize an underwater alien base. Her mission partner had been Foster himself, and she'd saved Foster's life. Dr. Jackson warned Straker that Kovac wasn't ready for such a mission, especially since her home and her family were on PEI. But, it hadn't been her old life that compromised her as an operative for SHADO. It had been what the aliens had done to her while she was a captive in that secret base. Nine months or so after the PEI mission, she bore an alien-human hybrid child, and that child's psi powers drove Kovac to escape SHADO's top security installation in England and head back to the Island. Foster and an extraction team had chased after her, but in the end, she'd opted to go with the aliens, giving her child back to the aliens.

Straker took his first sip of Tim Horton's coffee and did a double-take, "What IS this? Are you sure it's really coffee?"

Foster grinned, "I *think* it's coffee, at least it tastes like coffee, but it's got some extra kick to it that I've never been able to identify. I should take a sample back to the Omega labs and have them analyze it! Here," Paul opened the box of Timbits, "Eat some of these to line your stomach. God knows what that stuff will do to your gastrointestinal system!"

At the T-intersection of University and Grafton, Paul turned left, past the Island Legislature, the newly cleaned WWI cenotaph, the huge sandstone Coles Law Building, which now housed the PEI Archives, and Holland College. They pulled over into the merge lane for the Hillsborough Bridge, and once across it, took a right at the light at Southport and continued on through Keppoch.

It was mid-summer, and the scenery was breath-taking. There were quaint vintage homes as well as more modern style residences, farmlands, livestock and horses grazing in the fields, and everywhere, the azure blue of the ocean. All the homes had yards which yielded a profusion of colourful flowers - sunflowers, roses, and gorgeous annuals like begonias, pansies, impatiens and portulacas. No wonder Kovac had loved her province so much. It was a living garden.

"This province sees only about one murder a year, Ed, so the Mounties are really on this case hammer and tongs. The local population, if their broadcast and print media are any indication, are pretty up in arms about it, and want it solved as soon as possible. People are scared now. This kind of thing just doesn't happen here. It's a mainly rural environment. Those that live in Charlottetown often have summer homes out in the country. That's why Kovac's family was out there in the first place. Vacationing."

"The aliens had to know where to find them, Paul." Straker's voice was quiet.

Foster looked over at his commanding officer, "I know what you're thinking. That the only way the aliens could know where to find them was if they got the information out of Kovac herself. She loved her family. I can't see her telling the aliens how to kill and kidnap her own."

"You're thinking of the Kovac we knew," Straker's blue eyes were cold, "We don't know what's become of her since she went with the aliens, of even if she's still alive. I don't like to think Kovac would willingly sell out her family to the aliens, knowing what their M.O. always is, but..."

"It's a pretty ugly thought," Foster agreed.

"What to do we know about the missing kid?" Straker decided to change the topic somewhat.

"She's a teenager now, in junior high school. Attends a place called Stone Park. As far as our intelligence has been able to make out, the family continued to live at the same home they had in Stratford when Kovac went MIA and she had to be recruited into SHADO. The husband's an architect with a firm in Charlottetown, and the son was in one of the local high schools. Chess champ. Both kids were honours students, probably eventually on their way to good universities."

"How about that country home? You said they were out there vacationing?"

"Sure - school's out for the summer here in Canada. I can tell you from being there with Kovac all those years ago - it's a semi-remote spot. Off the beaten track. That's probably why the aliens chose to set up a beach-head there in the first place. In the summer season, the village is a lobster fishing location, but the tourists like it for what they can do there

- camping, swimming, boating - fun in the sun."

"You sound like a travel brochure, Paul."

"Yes, well, I'm just reciting back to you what I read on the Prince Edward Island web site. It's not all about Anne of Green Gables."

"Who?"

"A fictional heroine from a book written about a century ago - the story takes place on PEI and it's really popular with younger readers. That book is part of what drives the PEI tourism industry. Kids want to come here to 'experience' where Anne came from. But, the province is trying to stress that it's a vacation haven for other reasons in the last few years. Americans and Japanese tourists apparently love to come here because it's a much slower lifestyle, compared to the cramped asphalt jungles they're more used to. And, it's the whole ecological thing. Even Kovac mentioned the provincial government is involved with keeping the land and the waters clean, and looking into alternate forms of energy production - like wind energy. There's a massive windmill site up west of Summerside."

"So, there's really nothing here but sand, sea and...time...just the kind of place the aliens would have been interested in," Straker commented.

"We know the aliens always look for remote places in which they can work freely and under the radar. A place like Murray Harbour North is perfect for that sort of thing."

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Their trip out to Murray Harbour North took them through the small village of Montague, a pretty spot on a river, with an attractive marina and an 1950's kind of atmosphere. Straker, new to the Island, had at first been amused by the province's provincialism, and finally surprised to realize he found the scenery relaxing and enjoyable. Peaceful even.

"There's an RCMP detachment here in Montague," Paul told him, as they crossed the bridge, "But, they've sort of handed off the case to the Mounties out of Charlottetown, as I understand it."

"Who's the officer in charge?"

"Fellow named Benton Fraser. I checked him out - he's the son of an RCMP officer. Spent most of the early years of his service in remote Inuit areas. Then, about a decade ago he spent a stint in Chicago with the Canadian consulate there, and hooked up with the local police a lot. When he came back to Canada, he was posted to northern Ontario - a place named Chapleau - renowned for its hunting and fishing tourism industry. Did a stint in Rose Blanche, Newfoundland, too. He was finally posted here to PEI about three years ago."

"Any information on what's he like?"

"By the book, I guess. Likes to work alone. According to the files I could access on-line, he's a pretty tough customer."

"Just as long as he doesn't bore us with his portrayal of Dudley Do-Right."

* * *

They knew they'd arrived at the right house when they came abreast of a lane with yellow police tape across it, and signs saying "Crime Scene - Do Not Trespass!" The residence itself was a typical turn of the century Prince Edward Island rural home, the shingles painted a pale grey, with white gingerbread trim around all the visible windows and doors. A riot of colourful flowers overflowed the window boxes, and rosebushes in blossom scented the air. It looked less like the scene of an alien incursion than either SHADO man had ever seen.

Parked on the side of the road waiting for them was an RCMP car, with an officer inside. They too pulled over and parked on the shoulder of the road. When they got out, the RCMP

officer exited his vehicle and approached them, dressed in a red serge tunic and black jodhpurs. He took off his traditional Mountie Stetson as they approached. Following the officer was a large Siberian Husky dog.

"You must be Foster and Straker?" he said, offering his hand to them both, "I'm Inspector Benton Fraser - the officer in charge of this case," the handsome, square-jawed RCMP inclined his head towards the house in question, "Please follow me." he turned to the dog, "Kita, you sit by the car and be a good girl," he looked back at the SHADO men, "She's just like her father Diefenbaker was, hates to be out of the loop."

They made their way under the yellow tape, and walked down the short shrub- bordered lane to the rear of the house. There, they entered via the back door.

Inside, the house was darkened, and there were pieces of crime scene equipment still scattered about. The big kitchen floor area was marked off with the locations where the two bodies had been found. Fraser handed two sets of latex gloves to Straker and Foster, "Use these if you want to touch anything. We've had our people go over the scene and we're waiting from someone from the mainland crime lab to arrive shortly, just in case we missed anything. We've taken photos of the scene, dusted for fingerprints, used Luminol to look for blood spatter or stains, tried to lift boot prints off the floor in here, you name it."

"But you didn't find any of the usual crime scene evidence?"

Fraser looked at Straker curiously, "Not so far. Why is CSIS interested in this case? I mean, I know there appears to be a kidnapping involved, but unlike the American FBI, CSIS doesn't necessarily handle kidnap cases."

"CSIS is interested in this case because the victims are the husband and son of a former Canadian astronaut and the missing girl is her daughter."

"Really?" Fraser ruminated for a moment, "I thought the name Kovac sounded familiar to me for some reason, but I didn't connect it with *that* Kovac. Is she the one whose space shuttle was lost a few years ago?"

Foster nodded, "It just seemed strange that Kovac the astronaut dies in space, and then her family is murdered." Both Paul and Straker wanted the RCMP to think their interest in the case was coming from the angle of Kovac's association with the Canadian Space Agency and NASA. They certainly couldn't tell them the *real* story!

"We didn't take that angle with the case at all. In fact, until you mentioned the connection with the astronaut, we were at a loss to explain this case. But, who would have a reason to kill Kovac's family members and kidnap one of them?"

"That's what we're hoping to find out here."

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It took about an hour to tour the whole house, and see the other areas under investigation. The RCMP officer explained they had followed several sets of footprints down to the beach behind the residence, and that they felt the missing girl had perhaps been removed by sea. Between the footprints down to the shore out back were drag marks, indicating someone had been taken with the assailants unwillingly. They sat down at the big kitchen table and looked over the crime scene photos, pictures of the dead bodies, and discussed the situation.

"When was the case reported?" Straker asked, staring down at the pictures of Kovac's dead husband and son.

"One of the neighbours had been trying to reach them for two days. When they couldn't get an answer by phone, they came over and found the back door flapping open in the wind. They came in, discovered the bodies and used their cell phone to call it in. Our people were on

site within about 15 minutes from the detachment in Montague. I arrived about an hour later from Charlottetown."

"What was the cause of death?"

"Our examiner at the hospital hasn't been able to do the autopsy on the bodies yet. There were no signs of any kind of violence or trauma to the bodies. They were just...dead. The only thing we found was what might have been a defensive wound on the father's right hand - we bagged it for taking trace evidence at the autopsy. That, and the fact the girl was missing, was what convinced us there was obvious foul play of some sort here. There weren't even any real signs of struggle here - except for the possible defensive wound on the father's hand."

"You said you found footprints leading down to the water?"

"Yes, we did, and our CSU people tried to make plaster casts of two or three of them before the tide came in and washed them away. The casts yielded two right feet and one left foot, so that of course led us to the view that at least two people might have been involved in this crime. But the footprints did not lead down to marks that might have been made by any kind of small boat, Zodiac or other water craft."

Foster and Straker exchanged looks. They had a feeling they knew how the girl might have been removed, but they did not want to mention anything about an alien spacecraft which could hover underwater out beyond the shallows.

"Were there any signs that land vehicles could have been used by the perps?" Foster asked.

"The only car we could confirm had been in the yard was the Kovac family vehicle - a GM van. We checked for other traces of tire tracks, but found nothing."

"What about visible signs of the break in?"

"That's just it. There were no broken windows, or doors, no smashed locking devices, nothing to suggest the killers forced their way into the house. We have theorized that perhaps the family knew their assailants."

Both SHADO men thought privately that not only had the family NOT known their killers, but would have experienced a horror beyond horrors when their home was invaded by space aliens.

"If this crime is somehow connected back to the dead astronaut, what kind of enemies would she have in death who would come here to kill the rest of her family?" Fraser asked aloud, as if thinking to himself.

"There were other people lost with her on that space flight," Foster suggested quietly, supplying what he hoped would be another diversion from the truth.

"The rest of that crew were all Americans and Brits, weren't they? No other Canadians."

"That's true."

"Then, I can't see any connection there. No, whatever prompted this crime has to be something else. I'm sure it's just a coincidence that the family was connected to Kovac. Canadian astronauts who get to fly with NASA are few and far between. Those who do make it into space are highly respected. Look at Marc Garneau and Roberta Bondar," Fraser shook his head, "No, there is something else going on here, gentlemen. There is one strange piece of evidence I have yet to show you."

* * *

The RCMP officer pulled out a small vial from the pouch on the side of his thick Sam Browne belt. It looked like a clear plastic pill bottle with a yellow sealed lid. Inside was a small sample of green liquid. Straker and Foster's eyes widened as Fraser passed the vial over for

them to look at.

"We found a puddle of this material at the crime scene. Most of it was packaged to be sent to the lab, but I scooped up a bit of it for myself to examine it. The lab will be working to analyze the chemical composition. I smelled and tasted it, and it's quite unlike any liquid I've ever found at a crime site. There isn't much of a scent, but it does taste odd and it's viscous-y. Not thick like a syrup, but thinner."

Straker held up the vial of green alien breathing liquid to Fraser, "Mind if we take this for our labs in Ottawa?"

"Certainly, I'll sign it off to you. We have the rest of the liquid in town to be sent off."

"Could we have that liquid too?"

"Why, if I'm going to give you that sample?"

"Well, just in case your lab results come up inconclusive..." Straker replied. What he really wanted was to get the alien liquid away from the lab *before* they had time to do a major analysis.

"You'll have to talk to my CO if you want more. We can provide you with copies of the crime scene photos and reports on the other trace evidence we've been able to obtain."

"What about the plaster casts you took down at the beach?"

"We're going to need those to match up when we manage to find some suspects."

"The cast photos show the footprints as being smooth, without treads or marks on the bottom," Foster said.

"We thought that was odd too, but one of our people suggested there are certain types of footwear that lack under-markings. They mentioned everything from bowling shoes and curling shoes to certain brands of beach and deck shoes. Our people are going over the casts carefully to look for cracks, marks, crevices, cuts, etc. Smooth or not, there may be some sort of marks we can find to identify them by if we find the matching footwear."

Straker stood up, "We'd like to thank you for your time today and perhaps make an appointment to visit your detachment and your lab in Charlottetown tomorrow. Would that be possible?"

"Certainly. You can come to our offices tomorrow morning if you like. I'll collect all the materials I think are relevant to the case and prepare copies for you. Do you have a place to stay?"

"Yes, we're booked into a little bed and breakfast not far from here," Foster smiled.

"Must be Lady Catherine's," Fraser smiled back, "The accommodations are quite comfortable and quaint, the food is very good, and don't forget to take advantage of their nightly star-gazing. They have several telescopes on the veranda for amateur astronomers to enjoy."

"I'm sure we'll find everything just fine," Straker smiled back wanly. The last thing he wanted to do was play Carl Sagan!

* * *

Because smoking wasn't permitted at Lady Catherine's indoors, Straker had to sit out on the veranda to smoke his cigarillos. They were, as it turned out, the only guests booked in for that night, and the house was dark and quiet when the owners went to bed. Straker and Foster sat out under the stars to converse privately. There had been a swarm of mosquitoes at suppertime, but when it cooled off around ten at night, the bugs were replaced by a cool breeze off the water, making it very comfortable to sit out and take the night air.

"I don't think they've made any connections, Paul," Straker told his Omega chief,

knocking the ashes off his little cigarillo, "Except for the green liquid they found, they've got squat. And, if we can remove the other sample from their lab in town, and whatever paperwork they've got on it, we're home free. They may have those plaster casts, but they'll never have anything to match them to."

"Fraser said there were no signs of a struggle even though the bodies suffered no trauma. But, one of the victims must have managed to smash in an alien helmet, or break the connection between the helmet and their backpack supply of liquid. Is there any chance he was right and this was a coincidence? The aliens took the girl and didn't know who they had?"

"I don't believe that. I think they knew exactly who they were going after. If this was a typical alien incursion, they'd have harvested organs from all three victims, and left all three bodies behind. They did this on purpose, Paul. They wanted that girl and they took her. Her father and brother just happened to be in the way, so they eliminated them in the quickest and easiest way possible."

"So, we're still no closer to knowing what really has happened to Kovac's daughter."

"The aliens were obviously intent on getting the girl - they didn't even stop to gut her father and brother in their usual manner. It must have been a quick smash and grab operation. They normally never take someone unless they're planning to harvest their organs, and lately to take women for their breeding programs. The big question here is why did the aliens take Kovac's daughter - of what value is she to them?"

Foster squinted as he bent down to look into the business end of one of the telescopes, "I've got a theory, Ed, but it isn't a very pleasant one."

Straker took a long pull on his cigarillo and stared out into the blackness of the night sky, studded with thousands of tiny points of light, "Probably the same conclusion I've come to - but you go first."

Swinging the telescope up and around, Foster focussed it on one specific constellation in the sky. He gestured for Straker to take a peek through the aperture.

"Orion," Straker grunted in confirmation and resumed his seat and his cigarillo.

"Because the girl is Kovac's daughter, and carries some of her DNA, what if the aliens decided she might be a good choice for their breeding programs? They got Orion successfully bred on Kovac, a woman now into her forties. This girl is barely into her teens. She's going to be younger, healthier, maybe more adaptable because of her youth, and loaded with possibly hundreds of unharvested eggs, which could be as compatible for their hybrid work as Kovac's obviously were. We destroyed the aliens' breeding nursery on Mars earlier this year, we shut down the aliens' fertility clinic in New York last month, we're onto them and they know it. They could be getting desperate."

The silver-haired general sat back in his chair and exhaled smoke, "They are desperate, Paul, you're right about that. And, Alec informed me a couple hours ago by secure cell phone connection that there have been no reported UFOs trying to leave Earth's surface to escape into space. That means the UFO that took Kovac's daughter must still be here. Somewhere."

CHAPTER TWO

In the morning, Straker and Foster made the return trip to Charlottetown, fortified by a healthy country breakfast. The only stop they made on the way into town was the Tim Horton's drive-through in Montague - both had to agree that coffee was definitely addictive.

With Paul at the wheel of their rented SUV again, they returned to the Island's capital and through the downtown core area. The Charlottetown detachment of the RCMP was located on University Avenue, the city's longest drivable venue, and since they'd passed through that way the day before, they had no trouble finding it.

Once inside, Straker and Foster were able to glom onto Inspector Fraser and his CO, Superintendent Gordon Pinsent, "I hope we didn't keep you waiting," said Pinsent, politely smiling and shaking hands, "Fraser here tells me you would like to take some of our evidence samples back to the CSIS labs in Ottawa," he waved them to some seats across from his desk, "There's precious little to offer you, except some of that odd green liquid. I'm sure Fraser told you the frustrating truth - that we don't have much to go on - no fingerprints, no hairs, no fibres, and those plaster casts may never get utilized if we don't have something else to lead us to our perpetrators."

"It's an odd case," Straker agreed, "We wondered if the crime was in any way connected with the fact the victims and the missing child are the family of Tina Kovac, the astronaut."

"I asked Fraser to contact the Canadian Space Agency for more information on her and on her stint with the NASA and her training," Pinsent pushed a file folder across the table, "The CSA faxed us this stuff this morning, and the folks at NASA are supposed to provide us with more material later on today. Considering the level of respect Kovac garnered from her co-astronauts both at CSA and NASA, I can't see that she had any enemies, and this crime is definitely a nasty one. Plus, the child has been missing now for almost three days and to our knowledge, nobody has received any phone calls or messages asking for money or some sort of ransom. If the object of the crime was not the kidnapping, and not a ransom, we're theorizing the girl may have been killed as well, and her body dumped."

Fraser spoke up, "To that end, we're commencing a new search of the general area of the house and the beach property below it. Maybe the body was buried on the shore and we missed it in our initial sweep down there."

"Did Kovac have any other family on the Island?" Foster asked.

"Both her parents are dead, and her in-laws live in New Brunswick. We've contacted Mr. Kovac's parents. As soon as the autopsies are completed, we'll be turning the bodies over to them."

"Is there any chance we could see the bodies ourselves?" Straker queried, "Fraser, here, told us that there were no visible marks on them, no bullet holes, stab wounds, which is very odd."

"The bodies are being held at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital right now, waiting for the autopsies to be done. It's not that we have a backlog of bodies, it's just that we have to wait until the doctor's schedule permits. That's one of the drawbacks to working a murder case here on Prince Edward Island. But the perk is that it's very rare we have to work such a case, so it's a trade off," Pinsent looked over at Fraser, "Can you take them over for the looksee?"

* * *

The local general hospital, named after Britain's reigning monarch, was tucked away in a wooded area not far from the Hillsborough River. Foster knew the hospital because he and

Kovac and the original extermination team had been looked after there briefly when they escaped from the alien installation. Since Foster could not admit this highly classified piece of information to the RCMP officer, Fraser accompanied them and directed them to park in the space reserved for visiting RCMP officers. Located on the hospital's lower level, the morgue and cooler room were a short elevator trip away.

Fraser introduced them to Dr. Lorne Bonnell, the doctor who served as the province's coroner-autopsy man, "We have the bodies well wrapped and placed in a secure area so they can't be tampered with. We know they're evidence and have to remain strictly untouched until the autopsy," he explained, "I was planning to start on them tomorrow, but if you'd like to take a look at them, I'm sure we can arrange something for this afternoon. I'll try to clear my schedule."

"We're on a really tight time frame," Straker replied, "We're booked to fly back to Ottawa shortly. I don't suppose we could see them right now?"

Bonnell looked at Fraser, but he just nodded, "It's OK, Lorne, they're with me on this case."

The doctor led them into the cold room and to a separate section where they could see the two bodies wrapped and locked up behind a heavy wire mesh drape, "I'll just get the keys and we can move the bodies into the autopsy room."

Ten minutes later, all four men were looking down at the unwrapped faces of Kovac's husband and son. It was clear from a visual standpoint that the bodies were unmarked. Dr. Bonnell, turned them over carefully, and the only markings were the lividity stains where the blood had settled to the backs of the bodies. Otherwise, there were no signs of a struggle. The husband's right hand was bagged and tagged, as Fraser had said earlier.

Fraser explained, "I wanted the doctor to get a look at Mr. Kovac's knuckles. Our CSU people scraped under his nails for skin bits and epithelials, but there was a bloody cut on one of his knuckles - I wanted it checked for glass bits, trace evidence. I intended to sit in on this autopsy myself."

They moved from the husband's body to Kovac's son. Almost as tall as the father, he was a stripling, with Kovac's reddish hair, and her facial structure, "The son's body didn't seem to bear any trace evidence at all," Fraser told them.

Straker stood there beside the son's body. He looked down into a face that resembled Kovac's so much. He thought he would be able to cope with this, but it was all he could do to quell the rising anger he felt inside. *Goddamn aliens!* he screamed inwardly.

Finally, Paul broke the silence by saying, "We'd like to obtain a copy of your reports when the autopsies are finished," he looked over at Fraser, "I think we're done here for now."

* * *

Fraser stayed behind for a few minutes to make arrangements with Dr. Bonnell regarding the scheduling of the actual autopsies, while Foster and Straker walked back to their SUV in the parking lot.

"Are you alright, Ed?" Paul asked quietly.

"I'm fine!" Straker growled, as he got into the passenger side, "I guess I just wasn't as prepared for that as I thought I would be."

"I saw what you saw - the son looked a lot like Kovac."

"I think we're going to have to get those bodies removed."

Paul did a double-take, "Bonnell and Fraser are planning to start the autopsies tomorrow, I think we're going to be cutting it pretty close to get an extraction team in and out of the

province in that short a time frame."

"Call Al and Pete. They're the best. I want those bodies out of here. If the aliens did something unusual to kill them, I don't want the RCMP to know about it. And, if Mr. Kovac injured his hand fighting with an alien, I don't want alien glass bits, or more alien breathing liquid, to show up as trace evidence."

* * *

"Pete says he and Al are just leaving another job in Missouri, but they could fly in here by tonight," Paul informed Straker.

He nodded, "Get them in here asap. I want those bodies outta here!"

A moment later, Inspector Fraser emerged from the QEH, he got into the back seat, "You're sure you have to head back to Ottawa so soon? I could get you clearance to sit in on the autopsies tomorrow morning."

Straker smiled and looked into the rearview mirror at Fraser, "That would be fine. I'm sure we can stall our flight if our supervisor thinks we have good reason."

"I'm planning to head back out to the crime scene after lunch - we have another team scouring the shore property with metal detectors and other gear - just in case we missed something," Fraser explained, "Would you be interested in going out?"

Foster put the SUV in gear and turned out onto the roadway which would take them back into Charlottetown proper, "We certainly would!"

"Fine. How about some lunch? I know a nice little place over on Kent Street called Myron's..."

* * *

Fraser insisted they pick up his dog before they drove out to Murray Harbour North, "Kita hates for me to be away from her for too long. She's a good dog - quiet."

"Is she trained as a police dog?" Straker asked, trying to make conversation.

"No, not really, but she and her dad always liked to tag along on my cases. You'd be surprised how many cases I've broken over the years because Diefenbaker tipped me off to something I hadn't noticed with my human senses before."

After picking up the dog at Fraser's Euston Street flat, they detoured through Victoria Park on the waterfront, and crossed the city centre to the Hillsborough Bridge. Once across, Fraser suggested they take the shorter route known locally as "The Hills".

"You seem to know your way around here very well, Inspector Fraser," Foster commented as he drove their rented SUV.

"In the three years I've been here, I've had to work various cases all over the Island. It isn't a big place, and I've probably travelled the length and breadth of the province several times. I've served in a lot of different locations, and PEI is definitely unique."

"I suppose you've moved around a good bit," Straker replied.

"Everywhere from Inuvik to Chicago and a few places in between," Fraser smiled.

"What were you doing in Chicago - rather out of the way for an RCMP officer wasn't it?"

"I went there to find my father's killer. After I solved the case, I was attached to the Canadian consulate for several years. I still have friends on the Chicago Police Force. That's where Diefenbaker met Kita's mother," Fraser ruffled the dog's fur affectionately as she sat up on the seat beside him.

Once they arrived at the house, they walked in from the road and down to the beach area. Already busy with their equipment were several CSU workers. They were running scans over the sand with metal detectors and one of them was in diving gear, obviously planning to look

deeper in the waters offshore than they originally had. Another worker was using a special detector that mapped underground formations in case Kovac's daughter had been buried in the sand. Kita, Fraser's dog, was frolicking around the workers, running in and out of the lapping waves, generally doing her doggie thing. The men paid little attention to her until she came barking over to the RCMP officer, trying to get him to follow her.

"Kita, what is it?" Fraser asked. He walked with the dog until she led him into some seagrass several hundred feet away. There the grass looked flattened down and scorched.

Straker and Foster were watching the diver enter the water when they heard Fraser calling to them, "Get over here - and bring a camera willya?"

* * *

They all stared down at the wide flattened grass circle while the CSU officer rapidly clicked photos with his digital camera. Fraser had put on his plastic latex gloves and was holding up a silver necklace, "Kita found this in the grass, that's what she was barking about."

"Any chance it just got lost by one of the local swimmers?" Foster asked.

"I wondered that myself, but this area of flattened grass looks like some sort of vehicle might have been parked here, and the necklace is broken - like it might have come off in a struggle. I'll bag it and send it back to the lab," he pulled a small ziploc baggie out of his brown belt pouch to deposit the silver pieces of chain.

Fraser then turned his attention to the ground. He knelt down and looked at the flattened grass. Straker and Foster watched as the RCMP officer broke a strand of the grass off, sniffed it, eyeballed it closely, and then put a piece in his mouth to taste it, "Odd. No gasoline or other automobile fluid residues. Not even a rubber tire taste. Something metallic I think...," he pulled off several other pieces of grass and bagged them as well. He stood up and looked shore ward, "Where's Dave?" he asked.

"Dave went in about ten minutes ago," the CSU agent replied, "He should be back shortly. Said he was going to swim out to the centre of the bay."

"You can finish your sweep of the beach with the detectors, and we'll wait for Dave to come back in and get his report."

* * *

Thirty minutes passed with no return by Dave the diver. In the interim, Fraser had gone over the broken silver necklace with a small magnifying glass, without removing it from the plastic baggie.

"See this?" he poked Straker to get him to look, "There are hairs caught on the clasp. We might be able to get a DNA match on the hairs. We took toothbrushes and hairbrushes into evidence we found in the Kovac house that we might get a match from."

"Speaking of which, Dave's been gone for quite awhile," the other CSU officer said, packing up his metal detector in a protective metal case, "He said he was just going so far. By now, he could be on the other side!"

"What's on the other side?" Foster asked.

Fraser pointed across the bay and indicated the houses and other signs of habitation visible on the other shore, "That's Murray Harbour South. He wouldn't have needed to go that far. The deepest point in the bay is about halfway. That's odd...," Fraser pulled out his RCMP issue cell phone, "I better call the Coast Guard. I hope Dave's alright..."

* * *

A cursory search of the bay by a small Canadian Coast Guard ship yielded no sign of the diver. It was moving towards twilight, and Fraser had called for back-up diving equipment to

be delivered. Foster told him to order two sets of gear and he'd go down with him - there was no point in anyone else going down there alone. Straker was agitated and smoked over a dozen cigarillos in rapid succession. Both he and Foster shared a distinct foreboding about why Dave had not returned, and they were loath to let Fraser go into the water in case the UFO which had snatched Kovac's daughter was sitting down there on the bottom.

"Paul, that diver didn't just run out of air," Straker's voice was low and terse.

"You and I both know that. There's a damn good possibility that our missing UFO is down there. They don't like anyone snooping."

"What are you going to do if you find the UFO? You'll have a witness with you we don't need."

"I'm going to have to play this one by ear. If there's no UFO, there's nothing to see. If we find Dave dead, well, that's too bad, but maybe it was a real accident, and not a UFO related death. If there is a UFO down there, we'll have to deal with it on a contingency basis. Fraser may act like a country boy, but he's no fool."

"Be careful down there, Paul, don't take any unnecessary risks. Two lone men against a fully armed and crewed UFO can't do much."

"If we make it back, and there is a UFO down there, at least we can send in the co-ordinates and watch to see when it attempts to leave. Then our people can handle it ."

CHAPTER THREE

Armed with underwater flashlights to better see the bottom, Foster and Fraser walked into the water and disappeared from view. By the time they went in, the stars had begun to show themselves in the night sky. Straker sat with a thick tarpaulin wrapped around him to ward off the evening chill, and Fraser's dog, Kita, kept him company, curled up inside the tarp as well. He could see the lights across the bay from Murray Harbour South as they danced on the darkened waters and marvelled again at the beauty and simplicity of Kovac's home province. It was a view to rival any of the more exotic places Straker had been during the course of his career with SHADO.

The very idea that Kovac's daughter might be in a submerged UFO at the bottom of the bay, perhaps only several hundred feet off shore in the depths of the water, scraped at his heart. Was she still alive? For what evil purposes had the aliens taken her and killed the other members of her family? Was Kovac herself still alive? If so - where? And, would she have willingly given information to the aliens as to where her family could be found, knowing how ruthless the aliens were?

Straker could imagine the poor girl, terrified by the aliens, traumatized by the deaths of her father and her brother, dragged into a spacecraft, and subjected to God knows what kind of torture. He thought about the orders he might give for the destruction of that UFO. Could he give that order, knowing Kovac's only remaining family member was on board that ship, and he'd be sealing her fate? Or would death be the kinder fate?

His musings were interrupted as Foster and Fraser emerged from the blackened night waters, looking for all the world like a pair of shining wet ninjas.

Fraser peeled off his mask and mouth piece, "No Dave, no sign of his equipment. Nothing."

Straker looked over at Foster, who was momentarily out of Fraser's eyesight. He shook his head.

"You didn't find Dave? No trace of him?" Straker asked, feeling a sense of relief they'd seen no apparent alien evidence and at the same time wondering what the hell could have happened to the diver.

"We didn't see anything that pointed to Dave's disappearance, but there was an odd scraped out section in the seabed about midway in the bay. It looked as though something very heavy had been sitting there and had moved itself away - moved out of the bay and into the open waters," Fraser told Straker, one eyebrow raised, "It's almost the end of fishing season in this area, but I know for a fact the fishermen don't use anything that would sit on the bottom like that - or would make that kind of indentation."

"The other CSU workers went back to Charlottetown," Straker told him, "I doubt if there's anything more we can do tonight." He didn't want to continue any discussion with the RCMP officer that smacked of alien evidence.

Fraser nodded, "I wish I'd had a camera down there - I've never seen anything like that..."

"Let's book back in at Lady Catherine's and get a decent night's rest. We can start again in the morning," Foster suggested.

* * *

They got permission to leave their diving gear on the front of the Lady Catherine verandah to dry out. The B&B owners were only too glad to have three more guests to stay overnight.

Foster knew that both sets of tanks had about 30 minutes of air left in them, and he managed to get this information to Straker via a little ASL when nobody was looking. SHADO and Omega personnel used American Sign Language to communicate when verbalizing was not possible.

They all ate a late night snack, prepared for them by the B&B owners, and seemingly retired. Fraser took a small bedroom and the owners permitted Kita to remain in with him - a point which pleased Foster and Straker as they had other late night plans and didn't want to arouse the Husky's suspicions or get her barking. She'd wake the whole house up.

Conversing via ASL, the two SHADO men planned to return to the shore and do their own reconnoitering, using the dive gear - minus their RCMP friend. They wanted to be able to talk privately, and Straker wanted to view the UFO evidence on the bottom personally, plus this time they were going to take Foster's small mini-cam to get photos.

Around 1:00 am they quietly stowed the diving gear back in the vehicle, and backed the rented SUV down the driveway without much noise and with no lights. Then they silently slipped back to the Kovac house.

Once down at the shore, they stripped off in the chill night air and donned the dive gear.

"Remember, we've only got about 30 minutes of breathing time down there," Foster reminded his silver-hair commander, "We've got to get in, take our photos and get back out. The UFO wasn't down there earlier, but who knows if it might now have come back. Fraser was right about one thing, it did look as though the UFO sat down on the bottom and then skimmed along the bottom right out to sea. The markings on the bottom certainly indicate that."

"With this gear, and no headsets, we won't be able to communicate with each other," Straker said as he tested his mouthpiece, "Keep your eyes open!"

The swim was shorter than Straker expected. Using their underwater flashlights, they illuminated the UFO evidence and Foster took a quick succession of photos with the minicam. They scoured the area visually for a few minutes but still found no evidence of the missing diver. Had he accidentally stumbled on the UFO and been dragged out to sea with it? Or had something more sinister happened to him?

With only minutes to spare, Straker and Foster climbed back out of the sea and sat down on the sandy shore to rest and get changed.

"Well, I'd say our UFO has gone back out to sea," Foster said matter of factly, "If it's done that, it's going to have to eventually try to break out and leave earth orbit. Now we can contact the fleet and tell them where to start looking. I took GPS co-ordinates while we were down there. I can send them on my secure cell phone channel as soon as we get back to the B&B."

Straker bit his lip, "I guess it's out of our hands now..."

Foster looked over at his old comrade. Straker's blue eyes were gleaming darkly, Paul could just make them out in the inky night, "I know this case has been a difficult one for you, Ed. But, if the aliens really do have Kovac's daughter, wouldn't it be more merciful for her to die at our hands than to be used for whatever the aliens have planned? They won't show her any mercy - you know that."

The SHADO CO shook his head sadly, "There are times when I think I'd just like to take a good dose of the amnesia drug and forget everything..." he hugged himself convulsively as though trying to control some inner pain.

Before he could finish, a barking sound came out of the darkness, a Siberian Husky bounded out onto the shore, and a voice they knew boomed out, "Well, gentlemen, how was

your midnight swim?" Benton Fraser stepped out into view, zeroing his flashlight in on Foster and Straker's surprised faces, "I think you've got some explaining to do."

CHAPTER FOUR

"I just wanted to show Ed the depression we found in the bay....," Foster said, hoping to deflect the RCMP officer's attention.

"I was wondering when you two would make a false move," Fraser's flashlight made a larger and larger circle around the SHADO men as he walked closer, Kita at his side now, "We've known for some time you were not CSIS agents. Oh, there are a couple of *REAL* CSIS agents named Foster, but none of them match your prints or your face, my friend," he shone his light up on Foster's face for a moment, "So who are you - really?"

"If you knew we weren't CSIS agents, why didn't you get rid of us?" Straker asked, "Throw us off the investigation? Unmask us."

"And let you work below the radar so I wouldn't learn why you were so interested in this case? I think not. I follow the Eastern philosopher who once said to keep your friends close to you, your enemies even closer."

"We're not your enemies," Straker temporized.

"Perhaps not. But, I don't think justice is your true calling. Obfuscating justice is more your style. We received lots of information on astronaut Kovac from the Canadian Space Agency, but NASA has dummied up. They don't want to talk about that incident at all. Oh, they're willing to talk about the Challenger incident and the loss of the Columbia, which were open investigations, but they rejected all our requests for information on the loss of the Enterprise. Funny that. Seems to have been a situation that the public never got a straight answer for. So you work for NASA? Is that what this is all about?"

"NASA has taken too many hits over the years with the losses of their shuttles," Foster interposed, "Maybe the Enterprise was something they couldn't tell the public about - some gross negligence on their part."

"This has nothing to do with NASA, and you know it. UFOs? That depression in the bay didn't make any sense to me until I heard you speaking a moment ago. But, I must say, you don't look like Will Smith or Tommy Lee Jones," Fraser smiled, but not pleasantly.

"This case....," Straker said, "You're never going to solve it."

"Why is that?"

"Because the evidence you need is gone. The bodies from the morgue, the green liquid samples, all of it - disposed of tonight as we speak."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You cannot continue a criminal case without the bodies or the evidence," Straker smiled back, coldly, "And, since we have done nothing criminal here except help you, you can't prosecute us, either. But, take my word for it - all your evidence is gone. You no longer even have a case."

"Two people have been murdered - a third kidnapped - you don't think I have a case? And what about you two? You impersonated CSIS officers - that is an indictable offence in this country."

"You permitted us access to the crime scenes knowing we weren't really CSIS officers. What would your CO say about that?" Foster replied, "And, there is no evidence that the Kovac girl is dead - she's just...disappeared."

"You two know more about this case than you've admitted all along. I can still take you into custody right now."

"But, you're not going to. And, even if you did by some minor miracle manage to subdue

both of us at once, you're still going to have to answer for your own mistakes on this case. Mistakes that led to the loss of all the evidence and two unauthorized people walking all over the crime scene. Tsk, tsk, tsk, Fraser. You spent too many years working by yourself in remote areas - you've forgotten how to work within the chain of command," Straker chided him quietly.

"If you think you're just going to walk away from this, you're wrong. You either come with me, or you kill me."

"Fraser, let me repeat this one more time - the two dead bodies are gone, Kovac's daughter's body has not turned up, and the other evidence in the case has been removed. You have no choice *but* to close the case as unsolved. Your CO is not going to be very happy with you even if you tell him your version of the truth."

Paul pulled a small strange-looking weapon from his jacket, "I hate to tell you this, but you're coming with *us*."

* * *

The road back into Charlottetown was virtually deserted. It was an hour before sunrise, and as the light began to stain the morning skies, Straker could see magnificent colours coming into view - rich brick red fields, various shades of green from peridot to emerald, and he could inhale the fresh, dampish scent of ocean and foliage as the sun came up.

Little was said on the trip back into the city. Fraser and Kita had been placed in the front passenger area of rented SUV, with Foster driving, and Straker riding shotgun on the RCMP officer from the back seat with the odd looking weapon.

By daybreak itself, they were passing through Stratford, past the Home Hardware and it's Tim Horton's outlet, the new SuperStore mall, and the old Southport-Bunbury intersection that lead to the Hillsborough Bridge. Straker's cell phone broke the silence and he answered it. He made a few grunting noises and snapped it shut.

"We've got a rendezvous point, Paul. The *Miranda* will meet us off Fort Amherst in two hours. They're on their way from the far end of those co-ordinates you sent in. Sky Five and Sky 13 are hovering out there looking for the greenies."

Fraser spoke up for the first time in what seemed hours, "Greenies? I thought they were called extraterrestrials these days?"

"And, Fraser, here is something of a liability," Foster replied.

"Oh, we'll manage him when the time comes," Straker said, shaking out his map of Prince Edward Island on the back seat, "Now, once we get into the city, you take route..."

* * *

In the bright morning sunlight, Fort Amherst was a place of superlative beauty. The view the former British navy site commanded at the opening to the Hillsborough Harbour was incredible, and the city of Charlottetown seemed to glow with a life of its own. Church spires gleamed, the wooded areas were verdantly green, and the water seemed spattered with millions of diamond points of light. It was Sunday, so there were as yet no tourists around, and the small museum/interpretive centre would be closed for the day, meaning no staff would show up to disturb the two SHADO men and their captives.

Straker and Foster took Fraser and Kita out with them to the perfect vantage point overlooking the harbour entrance. Paul broke out a pair of mini-binoculars and scanned the horizon for a visual of the *Miranda*.

"No sign of them yet, but they'll probably be here soon enough," Paul commented. He indicated Fraser, "What are we going to do with our unexpected captives?"

"If you're going to kill me, at least do me the decency of telling me the truth," Fraser said matter of factly, "Who are you and why did you get involved in this case?"

Straker stood surveying the view of Charlottetown in the distance. His voice was slow and measured, "I haven't done this for a few years, Mr. Fraser, so you'll have to bear with me," he turned back from the sea view, "We could kill you but I'm thinking you might be a lot more valuable to us alive. On one condition. That you go to work for us."

The RCMP officer, normally stolid and unflappable, did a double-take, "Work for who?"

"You were right about one thing, we do work under the radar. We have to. And, there are times when we are forced to dispose of people like you to keep ourselves undetected. But, we also recognize that some people could be a vital piece of our organization if we give them the choice."

Foster picked up Straker's thread, "Kovac's daughter wasn't kidnapped by ordinary means or ordinary perpetrators. Even if we'd left the bodies and evidence with you, you would never have solved the case or caught the people who did it. We simply had to eliminate those factors and have the case closed to keep the public from knowing the truth."

"So you *are* with NASA!" Fraser had an "aha" expression in his eyes.

"Not exactly. We have better funding and have way less visibility - which is just how we like it. If you *are* interested in helping us to deal with the Kovac family perps, you're just the kind of fellow we like to recruit - tough, willing to work alone, and resourceful."

"Of course, I want to catch who did this! But, if I understand your inferences, the people who did this are not your run of the mill criminals...they're..."

"Aliens from another world," Foster finished for him.

Fraser stared at the two SHADO men for a moment, and then it was obvious he was piecing together a lot of things in his mind before he spoke again, "You mean ETs killed the Kovac men and kidnapped the girl? Why?"

"The why is very complicated," Straker said, "And, this case is only a tiny portion of what we're dealing with, Fraser. Although the world doesn't know it, and can never know it, we are at war. With an alien race of people who have no consideration for us except for how they can use us for their own nefarious purposes. Kovac was also a part of our war against the aliens. That's why the aliens killed her family and kidnapped her daughter. Are you up to that kind of challenge?"

"This all seems...too incredible....," Fraser muttered, looking down at Kita, who was sitting patiently at his side.

Paul was looking through his binocs again, "Ed, I'm getting a visual on the *Miranda*. She'll be here shortly."

"There it is, Mr. Fraser. You have a choice to make: you either come over to our side, or we...dispose of you," Straker told him.

"You'd really kill me?" the RCMP officer asked.

"We have other ways of keeping you quiet. Our organization has developed a *very* effective amnesia drug. It could be administered to you and it would take effect within moments. You wanted to know the truth. The truth has a price. Which is it going to be, Mr. Fraser?"

EPILOGUE

Benton Fraser stood on the bow of the *Miranda* and watched the city of Charlottetown recede into the distance - along with his former life.

"How will my disappearance be explained?" the RCMP officer asked.

"You'll officially disappear searching for Dave the diver, who's also disappeared. We don't know for certain, but we think it's entirely possible Dave came upon the UFO while it was in the bay and was taken out to sea to be eliminated. I rather doubt his body will ever be found," Straker told him, pausing to take puffs on his first cigarillo in many hours.

"And the UFO carrying the girl? What's going to happen when it tries to make a break for it, as General Foster suggested?"

Straker's expression was grim, "There's only one way to deal with that situation. The UFO has to be destroyed."

Fraser stared at the silver-haired commander, "There's no other way?"

"It won't be possible to recover the girl. Shooting down the UFO trying to take her off this planet is the kindest thing we can do for her, believe me," Straker's face tightened, with an old pain. Fraser saw it, but wisely did not pursue it.

"What happens to me now?"

"You'll start your intensive training at once. We'll transfer to an air transport in New York City and send you to Scotland to one of our best training facilities."

"What about Kita?"

"She'll get trained along with you. We have dogs and their handlers who work sniffing out buried alien materials - everything from explosives to nerve gas, to other dangerous items. The aliens are constantly trying to set up beachheads on this planet - we use any and every means to stop them. Kita will become another soldier for us. As will you."

Captain O'Brien, looking every inch the grey-bearded sea master, came out to the rail to speak with Straker. He leaned over and whispered something. Straker nodded and the captain went back to bridge.

"Trouble, sir?" Fraser asked, seeing the stormy look in Straker's blue eyes.

"Not any more. SkyDiver 13 just reported that the UFO was destroyed - ten minutes ago. It's over." Straker's voice was choked as he tossed his half-smoke cigarillo into the water with a vicious flick of his wrist, "Let's go below. I need some coffee."

THE END