

Siamese Secrets

by Pamela McCaughey (2005)

based on "UFO" (1969-70) created by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson & Reg Hill

Chapter One

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"Yes, yes, I know it's feeding time!" General Straker looked down at the four kittens winding around his ankles in the kitchen of his new deluxe condo, "Just give me a second here. Your mama gets Fancy Feast and you four get Iams Kitten Chow!" He resumed plunking food in Cleo's dish. Just as he reached out for one of the kitten dishes, it moved away from his hand. He reached out for it again. The dish moved again, several inches. He blinked in consternation. Straker watched the dish as it slid closer and closer to the counter's edge. Finally, it dropped off onto the floor.

SHADO's 60-ish something commander in chief bent over to retrieve the fallen plastic kitten dish. As if pulled along by some invisible string, the dish moved across the floor. Straker chased it, while the cats looked on at his antics. Frustrated, he put his foot on the dish to keep it from moving any further. He stooped again and this time managed to pick it up. Taking it back to the counter, he poured kitten chow in and proceeded to fill the other bowl.

Before he could set the dishes on the floor, they suddenly floated off the counter and settled, without spilling the contents, onto the cushion tile. All four kittens attacked the food eagerly, while their proud mama Cleo looked on. Straker put Cleo's food down and she too began eating. Frowning now, Straker was definitely having a hard time justifying what he just seen as real.

The kittens were a mixture. Two males and two females made up Cleo's litter, and of them, Biddle and Misha were Seal Points like their mother. Kla and Kiya were Blue Point Siamese. Cloning did not necessarily mean the offspring would be perfectly identical.

SHADO's top veterinarian, Dr. Imma Zama, had warned Straker that his feline family, partially cloned as they were with alien DNA, might be anything but typical kittens. He'd asked her personally to become their vet and to observe and research the clones and their mother. In this, Straker took the job completely away from Dr. Douglas Jackson, who had utilized the alien DNA removed from the star-child, Orion, to clone the kittens. Straker had good reason to believe Jackson had done this unauthorized experiment to further his own scientific private agenda. It was Jackson who opted to steal Cleo from Straker's home, and impregnate her with four kittens cloned from joint feline and alien DNA, to determine if his theory about Orion being genetically preprogrammed to send out psychic signals to the aliens, was correct. Because the aliens were able to retrieve Orion, and his mother, a former NASA astronaut recruited by SHADO, Jackson hypothesized that some sort of psychic power unknown to humans was at work in the case.

Jackson learned through international scientific intelligence channels that cats made very good cloning subjects. He was also well aware of the Siamese cat SHADO had encountered in the 1980's which seemed to exert unexplained psychic powers over humans, and that cat was believed to be an alien-directed plant. For all these reasons, Jackson decided to test his own

ideas. But, instead of approaching Straker directly, he operated under the radar, stealing Cleo for his secret cloning project, and placing Straker's life in danger when Cleo's unborn kittens began "broadcasting" psychic signals to the aliens. The aliens thought they were homing in on another human-alien baby - like Orion - but what they really found was Straker and one very confused, frightened and pregnant Siamese.

There were other good reasons, according to Jackson, for why he attempted this project without permission - when taxed by a very angry Straker. SHADO's C in C had been personally involved with the astronaut who'd given birth to the star-baby, and was notoriously private about anything concerning that situation. If he'd known what Jackson wanted to do, he most certainly would have refused. When the astronaut and her baby disappeared, Straker took her Siamese cat as his pet, and doted on her. Jackson knew the general would never surrender his prize kitty as a test subject for a cloning experiment. Animals carrying clones often died, or the clones themselves died. It was a scientific dice toss.

For year, Straker had tolerated Jackson in the SHADO organization because although his motives were questionable at times, his results never were. Shrewd, brilliant and edgy, Jackson was not a man Straker liked or trusted at times, but he couldn't refute his genius or his ability to produce. A man with an unknown past, Jackson had been championed by the long-dead General Henderson, and Straker had opted to keep Jackson only because of his worth to the organization.

Now, Straker was faced with not one anomaly, but four. He picked up his cell phone and hit the speed-dial for Dr. Zama.

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"It was the weirdest thing," Straker told Dr. Zama.

"Are you absolutely certain one of the kittens did it?"

"Who else? I was alone here, except for them. It was feeding time. They were getting anxious. I know what I saw."

A frown furrowed Dr. Zama's brow. She fingered one tiny corn row braid like a worry bead, "There's no real way to test the kittens for psi ability."

"So Jackson told me a few months ago, but he also said Cleo had elevated electrical activity in her brain before the kittens were born and that was why I was getting messages from her."

"Even if the kittens are telekinetic, we won't know if one of them can do it, or they all can. And, Cleo hasn't shown any signs of such capacities. I rather doubt she will now. She was merely the 'container' for the kittens. It's they who have the alien DNA.

"That's another reason why I think the kittens did it. Cleo is content to sit back and let me feed the kittens first. She's a good mama."

"Was there ever any evidence that the star-baby could move things mentally?"

"Not that I know of. If Orion had telekinetic abilities, Kovac made sure we never found out. She was avoiding any psi testing Jackson suggested to her - he was suspicious enough to think her stallings were on purpose. The good Doctor was and is of the opinion that Orion was able to dominate his mother psychically, pushing her to make her escape from our secure haven for her, and return to Canada, where the aliens were waiting."

"General, in all our years' experience with the aliens, there have been no SHADO or Omega documented cases of them exhibiting telekinetic abilities. If they could do such things, then we'd know by now. Being telekinetic would make them even more dangerous than they already are."

Straker paused before replying, "Doctor, what if I told you that I've heard from an impeccable source that the aliens were using some form of mental telepathy as far back as 1947?"

Dr. Zama raised an eyebrow, "Telepathy and telekinesis are two different abilities, although related. Evidence of one is not necessarily evidence of the other."

"But, it's not impossible, right?"

"No, nothing is impossible, I suppose."

"I can depend on your usual discretion in this, can I?" Dr. Zama knew Straker meant she wouldn't be sharing any of her information with Jackson.

"Of course, General. But, please keep me informed. If the kittens are truly able to exercise such psi abilities, they will need to be studied."

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Straker was puffing away on his exercise bike, a towel wrapped around his neck. He had one more kilometre to go before his daily allotment was done. The only sound in the condo was the rapid spinning of the bike's front wheel. Then, another sound started.

Biddle, one of the male Seal Points kittens, began to cry. At first, he did a few small preliminary yips. Then, he progressed to the typical guttural Siamese howl. He cried as though he was in pain. Straker got off the bike and picked Biddle up, but he struggled free of the General's hands, and leaped up to a bookcase, continuing to caterwaul.

The cell phone rang, and Biddle cried again. When Straker picked it up and punched the on-line button, Biddle fell silent at last.

"Ed, I've got some prelim architectural drawings for the Mars Base facility. Tom Keith, the architect, needs you to sign off before the next phase of construction can go forward. Can I drop them off to you this morning?" Alec Freeman's cheerful voice came over the receiver.

"Uh, yes, certainly, Alec. Bring them right over," Straker flipped the cell phone lid shut and stared up at the now silent Siamese kitten, "Biddle, am I crazy or did you know that phone was going to ring?"

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Having signed off on the Mars Base drawings, and seen Alec out, Straker opted to jump in the shower before heading over to SHADO HQS. These days he liked to go to the office at odd times and odd hours, It amused him to keep the personnel on their toes that way.

The kittens were curled up in a mass fur ball in their basket with their mother, asleep. Straker smiled down at their bodies entwined about each other and Cleo. Kittens were the height of innocence! He headed down the hall to the bathroom. Then, something hit the back of his head.

Straker looked down at the floor. A fur mouse was lying at his feet. It must have been the projectile which struck him. He looked down at the cats. Kiya was sitting up regarding him with her large slanted blue eyes - almost as though she were smiling. The others were still dozing away. Could Kiya have "fired" that mouse at the back of his head? Was she being playful with him?

Picking the mouse up, Straker walked to the cat basket. He dropped the mouse in beside Kiya and moved a few feet away. The mouse soared through the air and struck him in the chest this time. Kiya got out of the basket and stood looking at him intently - he could almost hear her saying "Let's play!"

Straker tossed the mouse at Kiya's blue-grey feet. She looked up at him, lifted a delicately coloured paw, and he ducked as the fur mouse sailed over his shoulder into the hallway...

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"I tell you, she fired that mouse right at me every time!" Straker told his dinner companion sotto voce.

"Come on, Ed, that's crazy," Alec temporized.

"You would wouldn't be pooh-poohing me if you'd been there. She and I played "Mousie" for a good ten minutes before she got bored, and every time, she didn't even lay a paw on that toy. It just sailed through the air at me!" Straker helped himself to more curry. As usual, Alec was having one of the few non-spicy dishes the Indian restaurant served, "I wasn't crazy about Cleo's psychic ability, was I?"

Freeman shook his head. In all his years at Straker's side in the war against the aliens he'd seen some pretty strange things. How much weirder was a telekinetic kitten? "And, you think the other one knew I was on the phone?"

"I don't know if Biddle knew specifically that it was you, but he sure knew that phone was going to ring. He didn't stop howling until I answered the cell."

"Well, even if all these things are true, what are the ramifications?"

"I'm not sure. Dr. Zama and I discussed the possibility that the aliens may have more psi powers at their disposal than we've ever known."

"If the aliens could move things about telekinetically, we'd have found out long ago."

"That's what Dr. Zama said, too. But, what if psi powers are something latent in the aliens, which can only be expressed when their DNA is merged with human or feline DNA from this planet? What if that's part of why they're doing breeding experiments here - they're trying to breed a hybrid which carries high levels of psi ability? Think of the break through that would mean for both sides, but especially for them."

"I don't know, Ed - sounds sorta Frankenstein-ish to me."

"I can bet the aliens never read Mary Shelley's book, but they're supposed to be more scientifically advanced than we are. We really don't know why they're doing the breeding experiments, do we? Some of our scientists have hypothesized that the aliens are trying to change their own evolutionary process - to take themselves back from the brink of extinction - by utilizing our DNA in combination with their own. But, we have no proof one way or the other of their real motives."

Freeman nodded, "They'd do anything they could to survive. But, maybe this isn't a survival tactic. Maybe it's just alien science at work. Human scientists do a lot of experimentation that hasn't a thing to do with human survival."

"True, but we humans aren't on the ropes yet as a species. Even if you're right, what they're doing could still impact us dramatically. I think we're seeing in the kittens the psi behaviour we couldn't measure in Orion. We lost him before we could be sure of his mental abilities. Kittens mature at faster rate than human babies, so that's why their psi abilities are showing so soon. Jackson always believed Kovac purposefully kept him from testing Orion for psi. She knew something we didn't, and wanted to keep it that way," Straker pointed his fork at Freeman, "Imagine this for a moment - imagine we still had Orion. Imagine we could take more samples of his living DNA. Imagine we decided to attempt some human cloning of our own, using his samples. What would that mean for the human race?"

"You mean Orion was meant to be some sort of super-hybrid?"

"If he had psi powers he would be. He'd have all the strength of the human body, and all the mental acuity of the aliens. He'd be far better than either one of us."

"You're scaring me, Ed."

"The aliens are too fragile physically to survive for long in our atmosphere. They age and die within a fairly short span of time, depending on how compromised their own immune systems become, and how weak their organs are. We know that much after all these years. But, if the aliens could build a humanoid with our recuperative stamina, partially native to this world, and with their intelligence or psi abilities, that would be something to fear. There'd be no stopping someone who looked like us, acted like us, lived like us, and could correctly ascertain our every move against them through telepathy. They'd be the perfect fifth columnists. And, if they were developed by the aliens, guess where their loyalties would lie."

Alec sat back in his chair, his appetite suddenly gone. All this because of some weird kittens. He waved to the waiter for the bill, "This one's on me," he told Straker.

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Dr. Mitali Raychaudhuri was one of SHADO and Omega's top exobiologists. After years of study and clinical practice, she knew the aliens' physiology like the back of one of her perfectly manicured hands. She was also discreet, professional and highly innovative in her theories. Straker decided to enlist her assistance, as he had many times before.

Straker called for a private meeting with himself, Dr. Zama and Dr. Raychaudhuri at his condo, "So, Doctor, that's where we stand at the moment. Any ideas on this?"

"I'm certainly not a veterinary expert, General. As far as the aliens having latent psi powers, anything is possible. We have no real proof that they do. I've dissected numerous alien brains. They look much like human brains, but there is a small organ at the back of the alien brain where it meets the spinal column. We've never been able to determine its use. We thought perhaps it was like the appendix in humans. An organ which once served a use, but did no longer. Studies on Orion prove that he too had the same organ at the base of his brain. But, it's how the alien brains work, while living, that is the key. It stands to reason that if the aliens had any direct, usable psi abilities, they'd have employed them long before now. It would have given them an almost insurmountable edge against us, In fact, I'd say it would tip the balance considerably in their favour. Our scientific community still takes a dim view of such things and has for the most part consigned psi to the paranormal - not to be taken seriously. And, certainly not a subject to waste research monies on."

"What about the remote viewing and psychic spying the American military was doing against the former Soviet Union years ago?" Dr. Zama asked.

"That only came about when intelligence leaks told the Americans their Russian counterparts were taking psychic abilities seriously enough to spend cold hard rubles on its development. Up until that point, at least militarily, the very idea was laughable. Measuring psi is not an exact science. That's why most scientists scoff at it. If it can't be quantified, it doesn't exist. Ultimately, Dr. Jackson is the person you should be speaking to on the subject of psi, General."

"I'm asking you."

Dr. Raychaudhuri shrugged, "I'm an exobiologist. I study the physical aspects of alien bodies. I have no experience with psi. But, I'm not saying psi doesn't exist. I'm just saying if the aliens have it, in any quantity, if your kittens have it - it's not something I know how to deal with, or test for."

"Would you be willing to review all of SHADO's alien autopsy documents, and brain wave patterns we've archived, in case we've missed something all these years? After all, it's hard to identify something you don't know exists." Straker said.

"I can put together a report for you, but I can't promise I'll find anything out of the

ordinary. Give me at least ten days to search the files and provide a concise report."

"One last thing, Doctor. I'd appreciate it if you'd undertake this report as privately as possible. I can provide you with the necessary security clearances. I don't want Jackson involved in this at all."

Chapter Two

Dr. Raychaudhuri sat down across from Straker and handed him a newly burned CD report, "Well, I've gone back to the 1980's in our alien autopsy and brain wave documents. I've also taken the liberty of comparing them to human brain wave patterns under known alien influence. There is some exaggerated electrical activity in the human brains alright. The down side is that most of the humans under alien mental influence have died. Their brains just couldn't take the overload. I've dissected dead alien brains many times, and I've looked at both SHADO and Omega pathology reports from all over the world. Nothing new there. I also read up on the files you provided for me on the star-child, Orion. If the small organ at the base of his brain, and other alien brains has anything to do with psi, so far there's no definable proof of it."

"Would you be willing to make an educated guess?" Straker asked.

"No, General. I cannot quantify what I cannot find."

"Do you think the cloned kittens could have something extra to their brains? Are they in danger of dying too?"

"We could try putting them through MRIs and, if you'll excuse the pun, CAT scans. They'll have to be sedated of course. And, if you really want to keep this business private, I think we should use a facility which Dr. Jackson wouldn't pay much attention to."

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Dr. Bonnie Davidson sat down in General Straker's proffered easy chair. She had her ever-present laptop, and had just finished a play session with Cleo and her brood.

"You must like cats, Dr. Davidson," Straker smiled at her.

"Grew up with a houseful of pets. You've got quite the family there," she indicated the five felines.

"They're great company for an old fellow like me. Did you have time to read those files I sent you?"

"Yes, I did," Davidson looked down at the cats again, "It's a pretty bizarre story. I've only dealt with the human victims of alien incursions."

"That's why I felt it was necessary to ask for your involvement in this project. You're as close to being a resident expert in this as we can get here. This is a private matter, and that means I'm asking you not to forward any information to Dr. Douglas Jackson. I don't want to go public within the organization about any of this until we have more solid information." As Dr. Davidson nodded, Straker asked, "What can you tell me about psi abilities in animals? Specifically, cats?"

Davidson settled back in her chair and pulled up some material on her laptop, "There hasn't been much serious testing, and no real documentation that has made any headlines. Advocates of animal psychics point to cats and their amazing homing abilities, finding owners who have moved over long distances, cats who warn their households of coming earthquakes and other natural disasters. Apparently some German psychiatrist at Geissen University has collected over 800 examples of pets, a high proportion of them cats, who warn their owners of 'impending doom'. The best any researcher will cop to is that cats in particular seem to have some special ability to sense danger before it happens. Cats have been proven to have superior hearing and the ability to distinguish certain tectonic and electrical activity, but that really doesn't fall into the category of psi. Even for humans, paranormal experiences are believed by some researchers to be simply the result of neurons firing in an unusual pattern in the temporal

lobes."

"How do you stand on this subject?"

"I have to be open-minded. The alien victims I see suffer from mental as well as physical trauma. Every day I deal with victims of alien abduction, and their bizarre medical experiments or worse. But, I don't know the first thing about animals and their mental processes. And, while I don't necessarily discount psi abilities in people, I know I've not come across one bona fide case in my practice for it - apart from alien mental control. As for animals having psi, well, there's just not even enough proof people can have it."

"I have two other researchers working on this project - Dr. Imma Zama, and Dr. Mitali Raychaudhuri. Would you be prepared to continue researching on this with them?"

Davidson shrugged, "I admit I'm intrigued by this business, but I don't feel qualified."

"You can help us immensely, Doctor. More than you know. And the first thing you can do is provide private testing facilities to us at your installation down in Salisbury."

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Straker arrived at 3:45 am promptly at Dr. Davidson's Salisbury installation. Placed well out in a rural area, the installation covered as a mental hospital, but in reality, it was a top security SHADO-Omega location for alien abduction victims. Doctors Zama and Raychaudhuri met him there.

"You have to remember, General, that feline brains are far less sophisticated than those of humans," Dr. Davidson reminded Straker, as Dr. Zama lightly sedated the kittens and got them ready for the MRI and other tests.

"It's their brain structure I'm interested in right now," he replied, "Figuring out how they actually work is a problem for later."

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Doctors Zama and Raychaudhuri arrived at Straker's condo some hours later, in separate vehicles. Both looked exhausted from being up so many hours working, and gratefully accepted their CO's offer of freshly perked coffee. The three settled down and started their briefing.

Mitali opened up her laptop and displayed some scanned copies of the images taken with the MRI earlier in the morning, "The tests have proven that there is indeed a small organ at the base of each of the kittens' brains."

"And, this structure is not a normal feature?" Straker asked, eagerly, taking a swig of his coffee and staring at Mitali's computer screen.

Imma brought up some schematics on her own laptop, "This is what the normal cat brain looks like, General. As you can see," she indicated various areas on the diagram, "It consists of three main sections - the fore brain, mid brain and hind brain," she used her mouse, "If we view the cat brain from above, the visible surface is dominated by two structures - the cerebellum of the hind brain and the cerebral cortex of the fore brain. This...extra structure is situated at the apex of the limbic system and the base of the cerebellum, where they join the spinal cord. This area of the brain has been determined to be the area connected with pleasure, pain avoidance, and emotional states in cats."

Mitali took up the thread, "These structures in the kittens' brains are situated in almost the same area as the extra structure was on the star-child's brain. We also know alien brains have a similar structure - usage unknown - and placed in the same spot."

"So does this mean the alien DNA accounts for the extra structure being attached to both Orion's and the kittens' brains?" Straker sat back in his seat.

"It would appear so," Mitali replied, "But, with only 5 hybrid subjects examined - the kittens and Orion - we don't have a very scientific basis for any theories."

"But, every alien brain we've ever recovered for autopsy has had this structure, right?"

Mitali nodded, "Bear in mind we have only 39 brains stored here for research. There are an additional 25 in the Omega labs in New York, and a couple dozen in various SHADO labs around the world. We are seeing only a minute representation of the alien population. If I may hypothesize further, General, those structures may not necessarily be connected with psi abilities, but with some other function of the alien brain - one we are not yet aware of."

Straker looked anxiously at Dr. Zama, "But, this structure is not normal for the rest of the cat population on this planet?"

"Genetically speaking, while most mammals do share a lot of body structures in common, they do not necessarily function identically, or are they necessarily compatible, as attempts to transplant monkey and pig hearts into human recipients have shown. There is also an enormous world of difference between the sophistication of a human brain and a cat brain. We can hypothesize that the structure is obviously the fruit of the alien DNA, but why it should genetically choose to form on both human and feline brains in the same location is beyond my scope, sir," she shrugged, "I'm a vet, not a neurosurgeon."

Straker put down his coffee cup, left his chair and paced the length of the room, "I know that the aliens used telepathy to communicate with humans as far back as 1947. They are capable of that much psi ability."

Mitali looked up at him, "Well, General, if you have some records or documentation we could review..."

"I'm sorry, there is no documentation I can show you. However, I got this information from such a highly placed source I cannot doubt it's veracity."

Dr. Zama rolled her eyes, "If the aliens could communicate in this way, why haven't they continued to use telepathy to communicate with us in the intervening years?"

The General stared down at her, his big blue eyes bleak and cold, "I don't know, Doctor. Do you make a point of trying to bark or meow at every dog and cat you care for? Do research scientists bother trying to communicate with their lab animals - or even care about the suffering and trauma they're putting them through?"

Chastened, Imma replied, "Point taken, General. But if they can communicate with us, why don't they?"

Straker stood and folded his arms across his chest, almost as though he was hugging himself. He paused before speaking again, "Ladies, I've been involved in this battle for more years than I like to remember. Over time, we've come up against everything new the aliens could throw at us. Sometimes we win, sometimes they win. But, it seems as though the truth is they have no desire to communicate with us. They don't deem it necessary. I've often wondered why our two races couldn't have reached some sort of detente - you know - a cease fire - long enough to amicably discuss what it is they want here and how we could help them find more peaceful and less deadly solutions to their problems. A co-existence instead of war. They're a dying race. They've poisoned their own planet. They're coming here to take what they need to survive. And, apparently, they don't think communicating with us will make their job any easier. There's only one reason for that mind set."

The two doctors waited for Straker to continue, "Think of our own response to the lesser forms of life we share this planet with. We've hunted some species to the brink of extinction, and some we've completely destroyed. We hunt some of them for nothing more than sport. We

eat and wear some of them and we use some for scientific research. Not matter how vital it may seem to us - it's still their lives we're squandering. They have as much desire to live as we do. What right do we have to abuse them?" Straker paced a few feet away and looked back at his officers, "We do it because we believe we have the right. We consider them less than ourselves - we consider them less intelligent, less valuable, easily replaced. We can even breed them for any purpose we want. There's always more where they came from. There's an arrogance in our thinking that is mirrored in the way the aliens think of us. To the aliens, we are no more than experimental subjects, fodder for organ transplants, and now breeding stock. Do you talk to a cow before it's slaughtered to provide roasts for your dinner table? No. And, neither, in a manner of speaking, do the aliens think they need to speak to us."

"So why do they want to create hybrid alien-humans?"

"That's the point exactly. If they think so little of us, why are we suddenly so important to them as breeding material? Unless they've discovered something recently which makes us vital to some sort of special research of benefit to the aliens. They're always looking for an edge. An alien-human hybrid could, hypothetically, perhaps be engineered to breathe in this atmosphere like us, look enough like us to pass as a fifth column force, or conform to any other number of advantages the aliens could use in this war. If they had the firepower to simply come down here and invade us, don't you think they'd have done it by now? They don't have the necessary hardware or manpower for such an option, even if they do have the technology. That's why they've had to do things as they have for the last 40 years or more. At this point in time, they can't stage a full-scale invasion of planet Earth. Even to do so would be counter to their purposes - they destroyed their own world - to wage that kind of war against us would be to effect the same kind of devastation here. Which they can't afford to do. They need us - but they don't have any respect for us as a species."

"We have no proof their breeding experiments have anything to do with developing psi powers," Mitali said, breaking the awkward silence after Straker's soliloquy, "Or anything else."

"But, we know that both Orion and the kittens were able to send some sort of telepathic signals that brought alien ships in from space in an attempt to retrieve them. They were lucky to get Orion, and they were confused to find Cleo pregnant with hybrid kittens. If they were so eager to get Orion back, or to follow up on any further hybrids available, that has to mean they were looking for a return on some risky experimentation they were engaged in. Those psi powers in themselves point to alien interest. We didn't have Orion long enough to know if he was a 'new and improved' humanoid," Straker looked down at the cat basket where Cleo and her progeny lay asleep in a cat heap," But, we do have some subjects here we can safely test without injury..."

Dr. Raychaudhuri was thoughtful, "What if there's an even more sinister aspect to this cloning and/or breeding program? Imma mentioned doctors trying to utilize monkey and pig hearts in human transplant patients. What if the main objective of the aliens is to breed a hybrid which will provide better stronger bodies with organs for transplant? Sort of an easily accessed 'spare parts' scenario?"

Straker's eyes were colder still, "Like I said, the aliens will stop at nothing to use us for their own twisted purposes."

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Dr Raychaudhuri sat back from her own laptop. She'd surreptitiously downloaded some highly classified information files again from the SHADO mainframe. General Straker had

given her his special access code with which to accomplish her tasks. He wanted her to read the entire story of Orion and his mother, without having to go through other channels to get them. Meaning Dr. Jackson. Mitali was just packing her computer into her briefcase to go home when a familiar voice spoke behind her.

"A moment of your time, Doctor," it wasn't a request. Mitali recognized the oily tones of Doug Jackson, SHADO's top medical chief and Straker's bete noir.

"I'm rather in a hurry, Dr. Jackson," Mitali replied brusquely, knowing it was always better to appear unaffected by Jackson's reputation and manner.

"Oh, you have time for me, certainly."

"What can I do for you, Doctor?" she asked sitting her briefcase down on her desk, one hand on her hip as if pressed for time.

"You can tell me what files you've been downloading," he smiled that smarmy, insincere smile of his - he reminded Mitali of a nasty schoolboy who was just about to pluck the wings off a fly.

"I'm working on a research project and I require certain materials."

"Those materials are classified, Doctor," he emphasized the word Doctor, "And, clearance has to be vetted through me."

"Obviously, not always," Mitali met his stare coolly.

"You are using someone else's access codes. Codes which normally would be unavailable to you."

Mitali realized his inference. He was accusing her of stealing access codes. Hopefully that meant he was too diverted by that idea to decide her main aim had been the data itself. Or was that just a gambit on his part to distract her from his real purpose? Jackson's mind was so convoluted that one never knew what he was really after.

"And, do you spend your valuable time checking server access reports? I thought you had better things to do, Doctor?" Mitali mimicked his emphasis on the word 'Doctor'- she hated this verbal fencing, but with Jackson it was necessary to keep him off balance.

"I have my eyes and ears, without having to do the checking myself," Jackson said, eyeing her briefcase, "What are you planning to do with that material?"

"As I said before, I have research to do."

"I was not made aware of any research an exobiologist would be doing with those specific data files."

"Are you always consulted on these matters?"

"As a matter of fact - yes."

"Well, Doctor, this time you weren't. We'll make sure not to leave you out of the loop next time. Now, if you'll excuse me..." she picked up her briefcase and started to walk by him.

Jackson's hand shot out and gripped her upper arm hard, "You would do well to remember your place, Doctor," his facial expression was almost pleasant, although the tone was menacing, "Who gave you those access codes?"

Mitali looked down at Jackson's hand squeezing her flesh, "I think you would do well to remember we're all supposed to be on the same side here. My own security clearance is quite high."

"Who gave you the codes? Or did you just manage to help yourself?" Jackson increased the pressure on Mitali's arm.

"I think we both know that would be impossible. As you pointed out, I'm an exobiologist, not a computer hacker," Mitali refused to be intimidated. She shook Jackson's hand off with a

violent shrug of her arm, and started to walk away again.

"It won't take me long to find out the truth, Mitali," Jackson said behind her, using her first name now instead of her title.

"I'm glad to hear your own workload is so light that you can waste your precious time on useless missions. Good evening," and she entered the elevator, watching the double doors coming together, blocking Jackson's view of her. She leaned her head against the console as the elevator whooshed up the floors - how long would it take before Jackson traced her research back to Straker himself - and who had alerted Jackson to her access?

* * *

"There have been several downloads over the last few days of classified files," the technician indicated a list to Jackson, who was looking over her shoulder, "And they weren't accessed through the mainframe. They were accessed with the use of a laptop computer from a location outside the network. That's a no-no."

"And, the private access code used?"

"This one," the tech replied. Jackson looked at the numbers and symbols, Codes that small were reserved for people at the very highest levels of SHADO and Omega.

"How did this person get the code?" Jackson asked.

"There's no indication the system was hacked in any way. The system is virtually hack-proof, in fact. It looks like they merely utilized the code to get access. They've returned three times to get data from this area of classified information."

"Print out the file codes. I want to know what they're looking at," Jackson's mind was running at top speed. He knew several of those data codes by heart - why would Dr. Raychaudhuri be looking at files about Tina Kovac and the star-child?

* * *

"I'm sorry to say, sir, that Jackson may prove to be a problem after all," Mitali explained her close encounter of the Jackson kind to General Straker, "I managed to put him off, of course, but I know that will just intensify his curiosity."

"You used my access code?"

"Yes, although I don't know if Jackson had identified the code as being yours. He seems to think I hacked into the system and just appropriated any high level code I could find."

"I can reroute any further searched you need through Paul Foster in New York. I shouldn't have told you to use my code more than once. Maybe that's what tipped him off."

"General, you and I both know Jackson's job doesn't include monitoring server and file usage. I don't think he's up on all that on his own. He must have a mole down in that department who reports to him."

"Hmmm. I have a few moles of my own," Straker mused aloud, "I think we can trace it back to Jackson and put some pressure on his mole. Leave this matter with me. In the meantime, what did you get from reading the latest batch of files?"

"Kovac's original tests showed no aptitude for psi. I think her impregnation was random, as were the other Canadian women the aliens had confined in their base of Prince Edward Island. If the aliens were looking for women with psi, they certainly did not indicate anything to do with it."

"The aliens are too smart to just take pot luck, Doctor," Straker was pacing the floor, "They've got to be looking for something specific in the women they've been taking for breeding purposes."

"I don't know how much choice they are able to make in the matter, sir, after all, much of

their snatch and grab technique is aimed at getting as many people in as short a time as possible."

"That may have been true in the past, but they're up to something special now, and I think the requirements of their research is pushing them to be more selective in who they take for this breeding business. What's so special about Canadian women?"

"I don't think it's Canadian women per se, General. But, it may well be a physiological item which makes them stand out. Perhaps the aliens are looking for female humans with a healthy ability to procreate. Women with no physical complications, perhaps even women who have given birth several times before. Women who can be easily impregnated and easily carry to term."

"Kovac told me she had two children before she was taken on by NASA for their program. Do we know anything about the other women who were in the same alien installation as Kovac?"

Raychaudhuri shook her head, "No, sir. The base had to be destroyed and so was everyone inside. I know a few bodies were collected for autopsy - they were sent to the Omega labs in NYC as it was closer. But, they were mostly alien bodies."

Straker's expression changed and he looked at Mitali as though he'd suddenly had an idea, "Why is it in all these years, that we've never found an alien female body? We've had our share of male aliens, but never any females."

Mitali suddenly followed his train of thought, "Unless the reason we've never seen female aliens is because they are in such short supply that they can't be spared to come here and risk capture or death..."

"If the aliens need human females for breeding, does that mean their own females are no longer able to procreate? Have they somehow managed to sterilize themselves?" Straker's voice became edgy.

"There are a number of drugs, diseases and environmental conditions which can render humans here on Earth incapable of reproduction. Remember that drug expectant mothers took and it made their children unable to have their own children?"

"I thought Thalidomide created birth defects?"

"No, no. There was another drug which caused infertility. And, we all know certain diseases and environmental problems can cause sterility in both men and women. It doesn't take a great leap of intelligence to suppose that something similar may have happened to the aliens."

"I've had updates from our theorists for years. They've been more interested in the medical business behind the aliens' taking humans for organ replacement. And, some of them have actually theorized the aliens were trying to change their own evolutionary progress through organ transplants and organ cloning."

"But, the business of breeding humans to aliens is new to us. It may have just become a priority for the aliens themselves."

The General nodded, "Yes, I'd say we've overlooked some things in our race to get a grip on the main alien activities. We're going to have to put a lot more thought into this aspect of the breeding business."

Chapter Three

One of the perks Straker enjoyed as SHADO's commander was the opportunity to follow the careers of many promising young officers. Many of them, upon recruitment, like Paul Foster, had exceeded Straker's hopes. Colonel Marc Masson, a one time computer whiz, turned space pilot, had been reassigned to Earth from a tenure on Moon Base. He was being groomed for the Mars Base project, and was undergoing new training to upgrade both his computer and piloting skills.

When he'd told Dr. Raychaudhuri he'd had a mole of his own, Straker thought of Masson. The nephew of J.P. Masson, who had been assigned years ago to the oceanography division, Masson had come to SHADO from a lucrative career in computer program development. His first assignment with SHADO had been on the 'help desk' for other SHADO personnel, but Straker liked him and his gung-ho attitude so much he pushed him into more serious assignments. When the young man expressed an interest in creating new on-board computer systems for the Interceptors on Moon Base, Straker didn't hesitate to sign his new orders. Working with the Interceptors spurred Masson's own interest in flying the very machines he was writing programs for. Once his time as a computer expert there elapsed, he applied to train as a pilot, again with Straker's compliance.

Now fully experienced as a space pilot, and with several years of action under his belt, he was a younger version of Paul Foster, and perfect for the Mars Base project. Straker recognized the ambition and eagerness, tinged with Masson's youth. He also privately enjoyed Masson's occasional fencing with some of his commanding officers, and the fact he didn't take anything at face value. If he differed with his superiors, he admitted it, and more than once acted on his own to save a situation. It was that factor, that rogue element, along with his considerable computer skills, that convinced Straker to use him as his "mole".

"I'll get right to the point, Masson," Straker told his junior officer, "I have a private research program on the go and I need your computer skills. This extra assignment won't interfere with your current training for Mars Base. In fact, I expect you'll be able to do my research and cover it up while you're working on your own studies."

Masson nodded and Straker continued, "We have a small problem with our server monitoring department. One of the technicians there is passing vital information on to another division. Information that should not be leaving the department. To be quite frank," Straker said, "I'm concerned about a security leak should that information end up in the wrong hands. Your job is to find the specific technician and report him or her to me, and find out who is on the receiving end of the data flow. Nothing more."

"Is there a bigger picture to all this?" Masson asked, sensing Straker wasn't being completely straight with him.

"Yes. One of my researchers has been using my access code to get into classified data for me, and someone is tracing her downloads and passing that information along. I want that stopped," Straker didn't want to tell Masson that he knew Jackson was getting the information, just in case there was something else afoot in the server department that needed to be uncovered, "One last thing, Masson, I'll need you to reroute some file downloads using an access code I'm going to give you, and send them to a specific destination via the New York system," he handed Masson a small slip of paper, "And, just for fun, when you are investigating the server system, use my personal access code at least once."

Masson took the note, memorized the codes and the end user IDs and crumpled the paper

before giving it back to the silver-haired general, "Consider it done," he said.

It occurred to Straker that the server tech was likely just a pawn for Jackson. He was probably either offering the tech money, a reference for a promotion, or perhaps covering up something the tech would just as soon nobody knew about. That was Jackson - he always managed to find out some unpleasant bit of info about somebody and then he'd hold it over their heads. For a price.

Sending Masson into the system was not just a search mission. It was also a failsafe. Masson might uncover valuable information that Straker could use to nail Jackson.

* * *

Straker handed Dr. Zama a cup of coffee and watched her open her laptop, "We did find an unusually high amount of electrical activity happening in the kittens' brains, General. Although if that is an indicator of psi, it's all we have to go on."

"Jackson said Cleo's brain had high electrical activity too while she was carrying the kittens."

"Have you seen any evidence that Cleo is being psychically controlled by her kittens in the way we've theorized Kovac was being controlled by the star-child?"

The General shook his head, "I don't speak Siamese, so I haven't heard or seen any overt activity of that sort."

"I hate to say this, but I think we're going to have to transfer Cleo and her family to a secure place where they can be monitored and examined."

"I don't want them to end up as lab animals!"

"It doesn't have to be that way, sir. Dr. Davidson's installation is a very safe place. We can set up a habitat for them there, complete with cat toys, window shelves, you name it. You can visit every day if you like."

Straker swallowed, "I'd rather not have to go that route, Doctor, but I know what you're saying is right. Let me think about it for a day or two at least."

* * *

Colonel Masson had carefully completed General Straker's request to reroute the access codes for the researcher. It hadn't been a major operation. He knew he didn't have the entire story, though. Straker had only given him one small piece of the pie. Security leaks were dangerous. SHADO and Omega personnel were rigorously tested before recruitment for their dedication and their honesty. Why would anyone leak information to another department and what would they stand to gain by doing so?

He had little problem getting inside the server system with the codes Straker had provided him. Locating the trace on the downloads was fairly easy, but in combing the records, Masson didn't find any evidence that the downloads were being transferred elsewhere through the system. Was it a verbal transference of information? Was one of the server techs discussing this with someone in person, rather than sending an e-mail or some other electronic communication? Or were they printing off the data and handing over a hard copy?

Hacking into the SHADO and Omega systems was only possible for Masson because he'd written so many portions of the firewalls that he knew how to breach them. He also knew how to slip in unnoticed. But, he decided that getting their attention might draw them out of the shadows, and so he used an entry code that looked as though the hacker had gone in through the server system itself. That might raise some interest...

* * *

Several hours later, Masson was attending to some business in the server department. The

Mars Base project was going to need their own server systems, and he was studying SHADO's current system in order to create one more tailored to Mars' needs. One of the operatives came to him with a concerned look on her face.

"Colonel, I don't know how this happened, but it looks like we've been hacked - from inside! Twice!"

Masson made a face, "That's not possible with our series of firewalls."

"One of the entry codes used was from right here in the server department. And, the other code is the same one used two days ago to download top security files."

"Maybe it's just someone using a server department entry code," Masson temporized.

"Well, it's pretty strange because someone else got into the system two days ago and downloaded some top security files from the on-line library using one of those codes. It wasn't a hack, but it was not from one of our terminals. It was from a personal laptop computer. Those files are not supposed to be accessed that way because of the security issue."

"Did they use one of this department's entry codes?"

"No. They used a very high level security code - Dr. Jackson was quite upset about it."

Without missing a beat, Masson replied, "Dr. Jackson? Why would he be interested in server security and hackers? What was so special about the code used?"

"Well...he's one of the few ranking officers who can give permission for those files to be accessed. I thought he should know they'd accessed without him Okaying it. The code used for the downloads was pretty high up the food chain."

"Do you know what the files contained?"

The tech shook her head, "He didn't tell me. I just know that they're designated to the highest level of security in the system."

"Did you find out who's laptop accessed the secure documents?"

"I did manage to provide that information to Dr. Jackson. He felt it was important to warn this person what they were doing was wrong. He was concerned about security leaks."

"Who was the person involved?"

"Dr. Mitali Raychaudhuri - she works in exobiology."

"I see. So, what did today's hacker go after?"

"I can't tell. There doesn't seem to be any evidence of downloading files. Whoever it was, went through the firewalls - it would have to be someone with a great deal of internal knowledge about our system in order to do that."

Masson feigned consternation. He knew he'd covered his tracks too well to get caught, but he thought it might be interesting to follow up this Dr. Jackson angle, "Could it be Dr. Jackson himself? Maybe he's testing the system because of what happened the other day."

"Oh, no, Dr. Jackson wouldn't hack into our system. He wouldn't need to. He can gain access to anything he wants. I just talked to him for clarification on that last one."

"Did he ask for any paperwork?"

"Well, I said I'd e-mail him if anything else happened, but he said not to, just to call him."

* * *

Straker looked up as Cleo's kitten, Biddle, started keening. The Seal Point Siamese continued to cry loudly until Straker picked up his secured cell phone, and sure enough, it rang a few moments later.

"General, I have some interesting information for you..."

* * *

"The technician in question is Sandra Parsons. She works in the server department, and

was brought in about five years ago."

"Did you follow up on her?" Straker said, sitting down across from Masson.

"I checked through her work files. Nothing major. But, there's something strange...it looks like something was excised from her file, and I can't tell what. The file is too fragmented to get back what was originally taken out. I'm surprised nobody checked this before."

"What level of computer expertise would be needed to remove data from a personnel file?" Straker asked Masson.

"I don't think Sandra herself could do it. It would have to be someone with more specialization. Personnel files are the purview of the security arm. That's sort of a side issue, anyway. The real issue is that when I made a point of hacking into the system, using what I know, Sandra not only noticed it, but reported it immediately to me, and told me just two days ago she'd informed Dr. Jackson about an irregularity. It's SOP to report any such activity, ferret out the source, and put a stop to it."

Straker raised an eyebrow, but otherwise kept his expression neutral, "Why would she contact Jackson? The server department is rather out of his purview, isn't it?"

"That's what I thought. Sandra said she told him about someone downloading top security files, without his permission. Files which are at the very top of the security chain. He was somewhat perturbed about this and asked her to keep him posted if any other irregularities of this type occurred."

"Is there any paper or e-mail trail on this?"

"Sandra said Jackson told her not to e-mail him - just to call him if it happened again. I'd say he's concerned about his involvement in this enough to want to avoid a chain of connection. Is there any chance Jackson is the security leak you were looking for?"

Straker kept his expression neutral as he said, "Masson, it's true that there are files in our system which are off limits to all but a handful of personnel. You know that. Top level personnel. And, yes, some of those files, especially medical files, require Jackson's permission to access. That's because he's our very senior medical person, since Dr. Schroeder passed away years ago. But, I can over-ride that permission myself."

"I can't see Dr. Jackson being a genuine security leak, sir. He's not well-liked, but he is respected and he is, as you said, a very senior officer of SHADO. I'd think he'd be unimpeachable. What could he gain from leaking any secure documents? I don't see him breaching SHADO security and exposing us and our operations to the rest of the world. And, why would he care if you were accessing files you had a right to?"

"I suspect it's not just the fact those files were accessed without his permission, it's what's in those files that he's worried about."

Masson was beginning to feel like a ping-pong ball - back and forth between what Jackson might be hiding and what Straker wanted. He knew with a surety that there had to be more to this whole matter than Straker was letting on. Finally, he said, "Look, I've found out who's interested in the access of those files. I'm sure Sandra was just doing her job. She thought Jackson should be apprised of the downloads done without his express permission, and he wanted to know if it continued to happen. Is this about those medical files which have been downloaded? Unless you think Jackson has gone over to the aliens, or has decided to sell SHADO's secrets, I can't see this as anything more than a small problem."

"Before we go that far, there is one more little bit of work I'd like you to check into for me."

"Of course, sir."

"I'd like you to research Dr. Jackson's personal research files. Look anywhere in the system you think he'd hide them. And, if there are any files you cannot get into, let me know. In fact, I want to know about whatever you can find that has his name, his access codes, or any other passwords you can think of that would be connected to Jackson."

* * *

Straker had purposely refused to give Masson any more information. He'd found a definite link to Jackson in the server department, and that was all Straker really needed from his officer. He didn't have enough proof of anything to get the security arm involved and frankly, it rankled him that Jackson was using other staffers to do his dirty work for him. The fact that something had been excised from Sandra Parsons' personnel file made him think Jackson had covered something up for her in return for her assistance. What was he trying to conceal or prevent others from seeing? What had really alarmed him? Straker was sure this went well beyond a concern for SOPs.

SHADO's CO suspected Jackson had likely done his work on Cleo and her cloned kittens in a secure outside lab. Were there any files on record of that work extent in the system? Jackson's research and experimentation data was obviously secreted somewhere, and there was probably more information extent than Straker had ever seen - even when Jackson had given him some files on Cleo's kittens. Straker wondered if Masson would be able to uncover anything worth using. Getting his paws on Jackson's research data would be the best evidence against the doctor. It would be proof positive Jackson had undertaken the whole cloning exercise without permission from Straker and the other upper level officers of SHADO to utilize the alien DNA removed from Orion - DNA doubly precious because Orion was now lost to them. But, why?

What did Straker want to do with any evidence gathered against Jackson? Did he really want to get rid of the Doctor, or just chastise him? Was there any chance the aliens had gotten to Jackson somehow? Was that why he'd risked so much to experiment with Cleo and her kittens? And, besides the obvious interest the aliens had shown in trying to get back what they thought was a human-alien hybrid, what else could have been learned from this experimentation? It still brought Straker around to two considerations: 1) what were the aliens up to with hybrid breeding and 2) why did Jackson think his cloning experiment was so important? An oddity, yes, a waste of alien DNA, of course, - but beyond the evidence - what else?

Straker also had a personal ulterior motive. If cloning Cleo's kittens had gotten the attention of the aliens so dramatically several months ago, what else could Jackson be up to? He himself had said he felt his experiment proved they could manipulate the aliens, who were desperate to get back any of their breeding experiments. Was he planning something else? Were the cloned kittens just a prelude to some sort of further experimentation?

Chapter Four

Masson knew getting into any files connected with Jackson, without him knowing, was going to be difficult. If Jackson was so protective of his own files and access codes, did that mean he really did have something to hide?

The first thing Masson decided to do was learn more about Jackson. He accessed personnel files using Straker's own access code, in the hopes it would divert attention away from what he was really doing, and who was doing it. Jackson had as high a profile within SHADO as Straker himself, or Alec Freeman, or Paul Foster. But, Jackson was one of those fellows who preferred to work below the radar, and he was not only not liked, but he had a reputation for doing his own thing, regardless of SOPs.

Jackson entered SHADO service in 1970, brought in by General Henderson. His name may have been Douglas Jackson, and he may have gone by the title of Doctor, but his real background, ethnicity and education were not documented anywhere Masson looked. He was a shadow-y figure! Old reports Masson was able to access proved Jackson didn't care how much he was disliked, and he seemed to enjoy rattling Straker's cage in particular, although Masson found documentation of a star chamber court martial, led by Jackson, that almost sent Paul Foster to the firing squad. To Masson, this seemed incredible that anyone could impeach Foster's reputation for being a straight arrow and totally devoted to SHADO and its sister organization, Omega.

Other reports, some going back into the early 70's, detailed Straker's attempts to remove Jackson, particularly after the good Doctor had gotten a little overzealous in eliminating people he considered security problems. In fact, what shocked Masson, was that Jackson had his grasping fingers in many pies. Too many. He was supposed to be a psychiatrist and interrogations expert, and yet, he involved himself in cases and situations that should have been nominally out of his purview. What was Jackson's real purpose within SHADO?

There was no doubt Masson was on the trail of a very wily and dangerous man. If Jackson caught on to what Masson was doing, he might just decide Masson himself was expendable. According to the files, it wouldn't be the first time someone who managed to piss Jackson off just...disappeared. What kind of power did he hold within SHADO that he could marshal that kind of action and not get caught? Did Jackson have the power to get rid of Straker if he'd wanted to? And, if he had that power, why hadn't he done it at some point all these years? Or was he in that process currently and Straker was looking to nail him in a preemptive strike? Masson would have to tread very carefully indeed...

* * *

It hadn't been an easy decision to make, but Straker decided that he would take Cleo and her family to Dr. Davidson's private facility for further testing and observation. He told both Dr. Davidson and Dr. Zama that he would give them a week with his felines, and after that, they were to come home again. He opted to pack up the cats and take them down to Salisbury himself, and they all hoped by going to that facility they might escape the eyes and ears of Dr. Jackson, who had a very vested interest in learning more about the alien-cloned kittens.

One of the first things the doctors learned was that the cats were NOT happy that their human (Straker) had not stayed with them. It took at least 48 hours to convince them that other humans were not necessarily dangerous or to be feared. Based on some of Straker's own observations about the kittens' possible telekinetic abilities, the doctors provided play items for the felines in the hopes they would get a replay of the actions Straker had reported.

Dr. Davidson arrived to do the night shift with the cats. She was up front about not being a "morning person" and told Dr. Zama she'd rather take the evening hours and wee smas.

"Anything interesting I should know about, Imma?" Dr. Davidson came in with her bottle of ice water, her laptop and some special cat treats.

"Well, they played today as a group, but it was the standard chasing, wrestling, skirmishing you'd see in most cat families. Nothing special."

"We don't have a lot of time left. The General will be back in four days to collect his cats and we still haven't seen one shred of proof these cats have telekinetic abilities."

Dr. Zama yawned, "I know. I think we're chasing our tails on this one," she got up and stretched, "They're definitely physiologically 'different' than other cats, but so far they aren't giving us much proof to go on that they're also mentally different."

"Well, you can go and get some rest now - I'll sit up with them."

* * *

The cats slept in a fur heap in their basket for several hours. Dr. Davidson reviewed reports on her laptop to pass the time, and nibbled some chocolate bars she'd brought with her. It was her only addiction.

A small noise caught her attention and she looked up. Kiya had jumped on the desk where she was working. Long-bodied, sleek of fur, and blue of eyes, Kiya always looked as though she had a big naughty grin on her little face. Of all the kittens, she was also the one who looked the most "unearthly" with her weird slanted eyes and batwing ears. She walked around Bonnie's laptop and sat staring at the screen. She reached out and pressed the mouse control and the screen went hazy. When the picture reassembled, there was a photo of Straker on the screen. How the hell had she done that? Bonnie wasn't looking at any reports with photos, and none of them pertained to Straker. Kiya looked up at her with a quizzical expression, and she "felt" rather than heard the words, "Where is daddy?"

Bonnie checked her watch. It was almost 3:00 am. As though she were speaking to a child, Bonnie said aloud, "Daddy will be back to get you in four days."

Kiya actually appeared to nod. Then she did something else inexplicable. Instead of leaping off the table like most cats, she flew through the air a distance of about twenty feet, landed on the floor, and started to play with a toy mouse. She paw-handled the mouse for a minute or so, and then when she realized Bonnie was watching her, she stepped back from the toy. The fur mouse lifted itself from the hardwood floor surface and sailed up onto the table beside Dr. Davidson's laptop. Bonnie got up from her seat and picked up several cat toys, "What else can you do?" she asked, approaching Kiya.

* * *

By seven thirty, Dr. Davidson had enough videotape to astonish any of the world's leading feline experts. The breakthrough with Kiya in the wee hours of the morning had led to an amazing experience with all four kittens.

Never had Dr. Davidson seen such radical proof of telekinesis in any creatures before. By sunrise, the kittens had floated themselves and their toys through the air, they'd leaped to amazing heights and bounced themselves off the ceilings, and they'd played off each other in such a way that one could have made the observation that they were evidently communicating somehow.

At eight o'clock, Bonnie fed the whole family a prodigious amount of Fancy Feast and Iams Kitten Chow, and they retired back to their big basket to curl up with Cleo and go back to sleep. Cleo had sat through the whole length of her kittens' activity, the proud mama, as if to

say, "Look what my children can do!"

Once the cats were asleep, Bonnie rewound the videotape. When Dr. Zama came to spell her off later that morning, she'd have something vital to show her!

* * *

General Straker sat back in his chair. He'd just finished watching the videotape Dr. Davidson had made of his kittens. It was impossible to accept, and yet, there it was, in living colour. Cleo's progeny were able to do things no normal cat - or human - could do.

"This is...like nothing I've ever seen before," the silver-haired commander told Doctors Davidson and Zama, "If my cats can really do the things I've seen on this film, then we have to accept that their...unusual abilities must be the result of their alien DNA."

"That's basically the conclusion we've both come to, viewing this evidence," Dr. Davidson replied, "We looked it over several times before we called you to make sure we were able to document all the various actions and events. And, although I have to admit I know nothing about the paranormal, I'd say the kittens were utilizing both telepathy, in what appears to be some sort of non-verbal communications with each other, and also telekinesis. There's no other explanation!"

"As bizarre as this all seems," Dr Zama added, "We think the kittens are just learning about what they can do, and last night was some sort of...epiphany for them. You experienced some things with them, but the videotape clearly depicts some very advanced psi abilities - far more so than you yourself reported happened with them at home."

"So what do we do now?" Straker shook his head, "I told you before I don't want them to end up as lab animals."

Dr. Zama looked at him earnestly, "We have three more days, by your schedule, before you take them home again. Give us that time to do as much documentation and testing as we can. We'll put together a full report for you, and the next move will be up to you."

Dr. Davidson's cell went off and she answered it. Her expression as the person on the other end spoke changed. She snapped her cell shut, "General, I don't know how they know, but Dr. Raychaudhuri is with the kittens right now, and she says they "told" her they know you're in the building..."

* * *

When Straker entered the room, the kittens immediately bee-lined it for him. He ended up with four Siamese entwining themselves happily around his ankles. They purred and yipped and Kiya launched herself up onto his shoulder where she rubbed her face joyfully on his. None of this was lost on the three doctors, who were furiously engaged in making notes and turning on their videotape machines. In the meantime, Cleo was sitting to one side, apparently proud of her little brood.

The General spent over an hour with his feline family, enjoying their attention, and getting a personal experience of their psi abilities. They frolicked and sent their toys spiralling up into the air, leaping fantastic heights to retrieve them, and always bringing them back to Straker so he could throw them again for an elaborate game of "fetch". Kla and Kiya, the two Blue Point females, were especially attentive to Straker, but Biddle and Misha played with him too. The females wanted to be petted and to have their chins scratched, their tails slapped.

Towards the end of the play session, Kiya sat down on Straker's lap and looked up at him earnestly. her blue eyes riveted his, and he felt the question move from her mind to his, "Are we going home with you now?"

"Just three more days," Straker told her, "And, when I come back, we'll all go home for

good."

Kiya seemed to accept his answer and she turned to the others and appeared to be telling them, mentally, what he had said.

"I have to go now, but I'll be back," he told Kiya, putting her back on the floor with her siblings, "I promise."

* * *

"I actually felt her 'speaking' to my mind," Straker told the good doctors, "It wasn't words of course, but it was more like...an impression of the question. I knew what she was asking."

"You're willing to leave them with us for the last three days?" Dr. Davidson queried, knowing how attached Straker obviously was to his felines.

"Three days - and I'm coming down that day to collect them. Whatever research you plan on doing with them has to be done during that time frame. After that, everything is at my discretion."

Chapter Five

When Straker returned to pick up his feline family, he first had a secret briefing with Doctors Zama, Raychaudhuri and Davidson. He told them that he did not want their notes, their computer discs or their videotapes of the cats placed anywhere Dr. Jackson could gain access to them. In short, they had to create a secret archive.

"What do you propose, General?" Dr. Raychaudhuri asked.

"I'd like one of you to take the entire archive of material to Omega HQ in New York City - asap. Once the material goes to Paul Foster, I know I can trust him to keep it appropriately buried. No offence ladies, but even if Jackson forced one of you to speak about this project, there'd still be no proof to back up your comments. I want it out of the country."

Dr. Zama nodded, "I can get on a SHADO transport to NYC tonight if you wish."

"That's fine," Straker agreed, "I'll arrange a secret security clearance for you and contact Foster before you arrive. There's just one more thing - I need some feedback on this. Any ideas? Theories? If my cats can do such things with alien DNA, what could an alien-human child do?"

All three doctors sat back in their seats quietly for a moment. All of them had entertained their own thoughts on the matter, but cats and humans were two separate species and what one did, the other might or might not.

"Well? Somebody - talk to me," Straker's voice was taut.

Raychaudhuri decided to go first, "Feline progeny mature at a much faster rate than humans. Your cats are doing these things and they aren't even a full year old. At their stage in life, a human child would be first entering school. We didn't get time to study Orion. But, if the chain of events with your cats held true for alien-human hybrids, one could venture the theory that such children would not show such enormous physical or telekinetic abilities until they were six or seven years of age. We suspect Orion had telepathic abilities while an infant. The same has been true for your cats."

Dr. Zama spoke next, "According to what we noted and videotaped, your cats are capable of leaps and jumps not even ordinary cats can make. Extrapolate such physical feats to alien-human children and you would be dealing with youngsters who could perform incredible movements. The same would be true of their telekinetic abilities. All your cats wish to manipulate are food dishes and their toys. Who knows what an alien-human child would want to manipulate with such abilities. Or how susceptible he/she might be to suggestion from a non-human source."

"Do you think there is any chance my cats will expand their abilities in the future?"

"It's quite possible, General. They are still virtually kittens. As they mature, they may increase in ability and they may become more...able to communicate with you or with others. Something like that is going to be difficult to control."

"So what impact does any of this information have on other possible alien-human offspring, like Orion?"

"Orion is still a small child. Depending on the amount of alien DNA he inherited, he could be at or beyond the same skill stage as your cats. But, we're just theorizing here."

"Yes, I know, but these theories, true or not, are disquieting. Any theories on why the aliens are going to so much trouble to create hybrids like Orion?"

Dr. Davidson shrugged, "So far, Orion is the only successful hybrid we know of. The aliens were desperate enough to get him back that they used him to get his mother to escape

our custody and make herself vulnerable to being abducted by them again. Obviously, if the hybrids solve the problem of the aliens' current inability to breathe and work in our Terran atmosphere, they could conceivably be willing to breed a whole...army of hybrids. Hybrids who would look like us and act like us enough to fool us."

"A fifth column element," Dr. Zama agreed.

Straker got up from his seat. The four cats were already in their individual carriers, and the doctors were going to assist him in loading them into his car for the trip back to his condo, "Dr. Zama, I'd like a personal report from you when you return from NYC. Thank you for co-operating on this project."

* * *

To be continued...