

Caribbean Mission

based on UFO (1969-70)

created by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill
and CSI: Miami created by Anthony Zwickler, Ann Donahue and Carol Mendelsohn

Chapter One

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"H, one of the few avenues of investigation on these divers' bodies we lost, was to check out laser surgery facilities in the area," Eric Delco explained to his commanding officer, Horatio Caine.

"Find anything interesting?" Caine was a soft spoken man and often inclined his head to one side when speaking with others.

"There's a number of clinics here in town that do employ actual cosmetic surgeons, but the rest appear to be spa type settings, with technicians who only do various types of laser work - you know - port wine stains, blemishes, chemical peels - that sort of thing."

"Any of the doctors working at these places thoracic specialists?"

Delco sighed, "No, just plastic surgeons - breast augmentation, rhinoplastys - the like."

"But, they're still doctors, aren't they? With a doctor's knowledge of the internal organs of the human body..."

"I ran them all, H. No previous records, no trouble - they're all squeaky clean - not even any recent malpractice suits."

"And still nothing on Allan Leslie?"

"It's like the guy never existed.. I don't know how that's possible. We did discover one thing - neither Allan Leslie or Edward Straker have ever worked for Environment Canada or held any other verifiable post within the Canadian government."

"What about CSIS - the Canadian secret service network?"

"If those two guys are Canadian spies, CSIS isn't saying."

"No, I suppose they wouldn't - especially if one of their own men went AWOL on them and staged some criminal acts. It doesn't make sense for the Canadian government to be interested in our divers - they were American citizens, who died in American territorial waters."

"Unless the divers were part of a drug ring, H."

"CSIS generally doesn't involve itself in drug investigations. They leave that to the Mounties."

"Straker said that they were Environment Canada employees - we know that wasn't true. They lied."

"And when people lie when they're covering something up or trying to divert attention, my young friend," Horatio put his dark sunglasses back on, "Let's try some other areas of research."

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Several days had passed since the *Miranda* had pulled out of American territorial waters. General Straker and Admiral Carlin departed via aircraft to return to their posts. Some of the

crew had been transferred to other postings, Allan Leslie and Ana Padilla among them. Captain O'Brien, the *Miranda's* CO, had new orders, to take her out to the Caribbean for a cruise along the small islands dotting that area of the map. There had been recent reports of possible alien activity, although the waters there were generally considered too warm for the aliens to use. They traditionally preferred much colder waters, such as the north Atlantic, or the icy lakes of northern Canada and Russia.

"If you think we're to be looking at alien underwater nests in the Caribbean, General, then the aliens must have come up with a new means of maintaining their ships in waters this warm," O'Brien was speaking with Straker over a secure line.

"I agree, Paddy, the aliens normally don't like warm waters for their ops. Our techs aren't sure if they've built new ships, or if the warmer waters are more conducive to some scheme they have going."

"You mean they may need the warmer waters for some reason."

"Right. That's why we want you to do some reconnoitring for us. You have the new co-ordinates and copies of our most recent reports out of St. Kitts and Barbados. Did Mr. Edey make it on board the *Miranda* yet?"

"Yes, we picked him up yesterday - he was air lifted in to us. He'll be working with Nancy Carroll, one of our exobiologists on board."

"Good. Get over to those co-ordinates and keep me apprised of whatever you find."

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"I just typed in 'Edward Straker' and up popped this site on the Net," Delco explained, "It's a film studio in England called Harlington-Straker."

"Could this be our guy? Any possible connection?" Horatio bent over to look at the homepage on the laptop screen.

"Hard to say. There are no actual references to just who Harlington and Straker are - no photos of either man or bio information anywhere on the site. But, the site does have tons of areas on which to click for info about their productions. They do everything from documentaries to full SFX films and dramas. TV shows too."

"But, the site appeared when you typed in 'Edward Straker' into your search engine, did it not?"

"I've tried them all - Google, Yahoo, bla bla bla. Same thing."

"Straker's voice didn't sound British. And he didn't have that east coast twang some Canadians have. In fact, if anything, I caught a hint of a Boston accent. I just didn't think much about it when he said he was with Environment Canada. If we can't get anything on Mr. Leslie, maybe we can get something on Mr. Straker. Tell you what you're going to do, Eric, you're going to check AFIS, all our internal American search options, state by state if you have to, and also the military. We need to find out who this man is and why he supported the removal of all our evidence in this case."

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"No criminal record on Edward Straker. I can't get any more information than that - his Air force records have been sealed - we can't even get them through the Freedom of Information Act, I checked," Eric Delco explained to Lt. Caine.

Caine's right eyebrow went up, "That's very interesting, Mr. Delco, very interesting indeed. The man lied to us about working for the Canadian government, and he was formerly with the USAF. And, the other possible connection is a film studio in England."

"None of this really adds up, Horatio."

"It must if you know where to connect the dots," Caine inclined his head, "I'm going to see if I can call in a few favours and get us access to Straker's military files."

"I just told you they were sealed."

"Let me see if I can pull a few strings and unseal them...," Horatio smiled gently.

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A briefing in the *Miranda's* Captain's ward room included O'Brien, exobiologist Carroll, several of the ship's divers and Arthur Edey, one of Omega's top oceanography experts.

"You should have all had time to digest the reports I sent you on your computers about possible alien activity at these co-ordinates. Most of the reports are being made by tourists who are doing scuba diving on their vacations. They're apparently seeing what have been termed as 'underwater vehicles' in action. Our people have hacked into the military computer systems of dozens of different countries in this hemisphere - none of them are testing any secret equipment in the Caribbean - if we take this information at face value, that means any sub-surface craft could be alien in origin," Captain O'Brien turned to the room's view screen and activated it, bringing up some images of standard alien ships, "We have a fairly comprehensive catalogue of all the types the aliens use in space, from their old style saucers, to the smaller, fleetier fighter ships they use to harry the Mars-bound cruisers we send from the Moon. Any of their ships used within the Earth's atmosphere have always had a 48 hour lifespan, and as a result, they regularly seek refuge in cold waters or cold geographical areas to keep this from happening. As we are all aware, alien ships cannot tolerate warm temperatures, so our mission here is to locate any possible alien craft, and determine if they are indeed utilizing a new craft which will give them more freedom. And, there is always the chance that they're not just testing new ships here, they may have more at stake - they could be organizing some sort of new gambit in these waters."

Edey put up his hand, "Captain, since we're talking warm waters here, could the aliens possibly be engaged in some sort of scientific work? We know, for instance, that they've been setting up human breeding nests all over the globe, albeit in cooler waters."

"Breeding nests or some other experimental work, anything is possible. While the issue of breeding nests does seem paramount the last few years, the aliens could have a lot more tricks up their sleeves. Whatever it is they're up to, we're in the vanguard to find out and root them out."

Dr. Carroll spoke up next, "Will we be getting any help from the military arm of SHADO?"

"Yes, we can ask for it when the time comes, but for now, our orders are to cruise the reported co-ordinates, send down divers and reconnoitre the areas, report back if we find anything the least bit suspicious. Headquarters doesn't want to put the Skydivers on alert until there's a genuine reason. And we can maintain a much lower profile if we're by ourselves. To the world at large, we're just a research vessel."

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"Captain, I'm recording some unusually cold temperatures at these co-ordinates," Nancy Carroll told O'Brien.

"How much cooler?"

"Fifty degrees Celsius, sir. Waters here should be much warmer. This is unprecedented."

"Anything on our underwater Alien-Tect scanners?"

"Not yet."

"No chance this could be caused by legitimate ocean phenomena?"

"I really doubt it - nothing natural. Even a tropical storm or hurricane brewing at sea wouldn't cause the temperatures to plummet like this."

"Let's deploy one of our ROVs and take a look," the Captain decided, "Call Mr. Edey to the bridge."

* * *

Arthur Edey looked up from his ROV instrument console and view screen, "A lot of unhealthy, even dying fish, in this area. They can't tolerate the lowered temperatures. Whatever is causing this is likely going to impact the underwater environment in a big way. None of the sea creatures can live normally or breed, and the ocean plants will be radically affected as well."

"So, besides, the environmental hazard, are we seeing anything that we can pin the blame on?" O'Brien wanted to know, "Could this be caused by something humans are doing wrong? Some sort of industrial or environmental thing?"

"Whatever is generating this loss of heat is not natural or man-made, and our chemical reads are not coming up with anything out of the ordinary as yet. Also, there is next to no industrial or manufacturing going on in this part of the world. We're obviously not ruling out alien interference," Edey turned slightly in his seat, "We know underwater alien beachheads are generally set up in much colder waters, and Dr. Carroll is correct - these temperatures are unprecedented for this locale. And, if we are registering this information, I can't see that it will remain a secret for long. Local area fishermen, coast guards, governmental bodies - they'll all know about it soon - and then it will become common knowledge, thus making it harder for us to investigate and take appropriate action if it is all alien activity."

"Keep looking. There must be some sort of alien installation around here. The faster we can find it, and put an end to it, the quicker water temperatures will return to normal levels, and we can avoid prying eyes - media or governmental."

Punching up some data on his console, Edey said, "Alien-Tect is finally starting to register something, sir, and the water temperature has spiked sharply... whatever is out there appears, from my instruments, to be lying buried in the sand - no visuals - I've got some co-ordinates... bearing one-niner-two-five."

The Captain turned to his helmsman, "Slow engines, bring us just shy of those co-ordinates," he turned back to Edey, "I think we need a quick briefing - let's get some divers down there asap."

* * *

One of the divers, George Mundle, said, "I've readied the scooters and cameras - we can go down as soon as you give the word, Captain."

"Good. I want you, Edey, Carroll and Cormier to get down there. Don't take any unnecessary chances, but try to get in as close as you can to check things out. We don't know what this is - a beachhead installation or some sort of device. Maintain contact with us all the time."

Chapter Two

Horatio Caine sat looking over the collected departures from the Miami Airport, all private airfields, the bus and train terminals, and the port of Miami, for the last month. How had Leslie and Straker gotten into Florida and then managed to get out so fast and so untraceably?

He'd exhausted his video people looking at tapes from all the different exit modes. They'd scoured aircraft and ship manifests looking for passengers who suggested any similarities to the men they were searching for.

The Lieutenant was just about to pack it in for the day when he noticed a ship on the Port Authority's list. The *Miranda* was a large vessel with an odd registry. It had apparently put in for supplies one day before Miami PD had arrested Allan Leslie for trying to steal from the evidence room. Registered in a place called Prince Edward Island, Caine wondered if it was one of those tiny Caribbean banana republics. He Googled Prince Edward Island on his laptop and sat back with a smile. So the *Miranda* was a Canadian ship! But, why didn't the ship's papers specify Canadian registry? Was this indicative of a degree of obfuscation? Why would that be necessary? Information on the *Miranda* indicated it was a research vessel. Maybe it was time to have a chat with someone at the Port Authority...

* * *

"Yeah. I remember the guy who brought me in the *Miranda's* dockin' papers. Didn't hang around long. Just said the ship was puttin' in for some supplies," the officer on that watch explained to Lt. Caine at the Miami Port Authority.

"What kind of supplies?"

"Just lemme have a look here... Geez, I dunno. There's no record of anythin'bein' delivered dockside for her. Usually we have some longshoremen loadin' stuff. I mean, nuthin' was loaded the day she arrived, and nuthin' was unloaded, either."

"Did their papers mention any passengers taken on in port?"

The officer scanned the *Miranda's* paperwork again, "Nope. No extra passengers - just crew."

Horatio showed the man a photo of Allan Leslie, "Is this the man who brought you the papers?"

"Yup. That's him. Nice guy. Friendly."

"I'll bet...," Caine replied a tad sarcastically, "Does it say there which dock the *Miranda* put into?"

"Sure. But we've had fifteen other ships in that location since the *Miranda* pulled out. She was late goin', too. I got a call from her Captain that she was gonna need a couple extra hours in port. We just worked around her and shunted some of the incomin' ships to other docksides."

"What do you mean... late?"

The officer shrugged, "Late. Y'know, she was supposed to cast off and leave at a certain hour and she didn't leave until some time later."

"Why did they leave late?"

"They didn't tell me, I didn't ask. I figured it might have somethin' to do with an AWOL crewman or somethin' - crew are always jumpin' ship here. Must be the heat that bakes their brains. Unless it has anythin' to do with port safety or security, it isn't our business."

"How much late were they?"

"Look for yourself," the officer shoved the papers across the counter to Caine.

"The *Miranda* was quite a few hours late leaving port. You didn't think to question this?" Horatio also noted that the time frame matched up perfectly with the appearance and then disappearance of Allan Leslie and Ed Straker.

"Hey, they paid in cash for the extra dock time - it wasn't cheap, either!"

"Do you still have any paperwork or receipts for their payment?"

"Uhhhh, I think I turned it over to my superior..."

"It should be in this file along with the other papers, shouldn't it?"

"Well, I don't recall seein' it after the *Miranda* left port..."

"I'll just bet..." Horatio felt a certain degree of frustration. If he was right, and the *Miranda* was the means of escape utilized by Leslie and Straker, he was up against a brick wall of stupidity on the part of the Port Authority. There had to be some other way to find the *Miranda*...

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"The satellite images of the *Miranda* leaving port are kind of... weird..." Eric Delco explained to Lt. Caine.

"Weird? How so?"

"I don't know how to describe this, H, but the *Miranda* just... disappears once she leaves Miami."

"How can a ship that size just disappear?"

"It's like she's a Stealth bomber or something. I've got the recording cued up for you..."

The view screen lit up with the satellite image of the *Miranda's* exit from the dockside, and once she was beyond the city's waters she just... winked out. Horatio replayed the tape several times. Finally he said, "What is that... how could a ship be there one minute and gone the next? Some sort of satellite or computer glitch?"

"Like I said, the closest thing I can compare it to is some sort of military gadgetry."

"But, the *Miranda* isn't a military ship, she's supposed to be a research vessel, right?"

"I can't explain it any other way. I don't think that ship is what she says she is."

Horatio shook his head, "I think I have to agree with you on this, my friend. And, I'm still waiting on a favour I called in two days ago for clearance to Ed Straker's military files. Looks like I'm going to have to make another call."

* * *

"I can't have Straker's files?" Caine asked his old New York City pal. They'd grown up together in the Big Apple; Horatio had gotten into law enforcement and his friend Sal Russo had joined the Air force; he'd made it to Brigadier General already.

"Yeah, the files exist, but they are sealed tighter than a \$5000 dollar bottle of wine, and apparently I'm not high enough on the food chain to get clearance."

"Who is? Is there any other route I can take to get access to them?"

"Not a chance. In fact, I got my own knuckles rapped pretty hard for even asking."

"What about the Freedom of Information Act?"

"Too much time would be wasted and too much money in litigation. Means nothing to the boys who handle this material. 'Sensitive' is the only thing they'd tell me. I tried to go at it from a couple of different avenues, but then I ended up with a fellow in my office from the Pentagon, and he wasn't afraid of telling me to fuck off or else I'd experience a reduction in rank!"

"Think the threat was real or just a red herring?"

"Oh... it was real..."

"Any idea what would make this man so untouchable?"

"Just an educated guess here, but guys like that are usually connected with something political - top secret - hush-hush. The last information available I could get on Straker was that he went on reserve in 1968... That was during the Cold War, Horatio. God knows what he was involved in back then."

"Thanks for that much, Sal."

"Keep in touch."

Chapter Three

The *Miranda's* divers were outfitted with special new suits. They had passed their full experiments and were now standard issue. These suits were equipped with personal cloaking devices. It was relatively new technology, having been started by a team of British and American scientists, but it had been stolen, refined and tweaked by the Research and Development Techs at the Omega Corporation's New York City facilities. Omega worked hard to acquire some of the top scientific minds in the free world. Their recruiters searched out the best and brightest university students, regularly scarfed MIT, JPL and CalTech people with promises of unlimited funding and the finest working environments. Financed partly through the black budgets of the wealthiest Western nations, Omega could boast research and development opportunities most scientists could only dream about.

As usual, those diving left from the *Miranda's* fantail, going in over backwards, taking their scooters and underwater cameras, Alien-Tect gadgets and other devices with them. The waters they were diving were still cold, so they were protected with inner thermal suits beneath their cloaked suits. Because the area surrounding the alien installation was actually warmer than the outer waters, they had to be careful.

Once the divers arrived at the exact location, the epicentre of which was expanding out into the colder waters, they began to use small collapsable shovels to carefully dig sand and silt away so they could get a better look. Edey had reported they weren't picking up any radiation levels so far, so they wanted to remain longer and keep digging until they found what was buried there.

"Captain, we've exposed what appears to be the top section of the alien device," Edey radioed back to the *Miranda*.

"Yes, I can see the images on Nancy's camera," O'Brien replied, "How big does it get?"

"From the data we've collected already, I'd say it's a fair size, sir. What you're seeing is just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. It extends much further under the sand, as much as 50 metres, according to our equipment. Definitely too big for human hands-on removal."

"Still no radiation levels recorded?"

"Nothing registering as yet. But the temperatures even ten metres away from us is remaining cold and getting colder."

"Ok, get back here asap. We need to have a look at the data, the film footage and contact headquarters. This has to go to the top brass."

* * *

The canvas of plastic surgeons and spas in the local Miami area had been fruitless, as Horatio Caine had privately known it would be, but he wanted to lift every stone. How anyone could carve up the human body to the degree they'd seen - and do it on the high seas - seemed an impossibility. The loss of their evidence and the bodies had not gone down well with Caine's supervisors and the lab had been in enough hot water already.

Caine believed Ed Straker was the key to everything that had gone wrong somehow, but the man had vanished just as surely as a Columbian drug lord in a police raid, and the military quite obviously was covering his tracks. Caine was not necessarily a conspiracy theorist but he knew Straker was as responsible for their case going down the crapper as the CIA had been involved in JFK's assassination. The whole business stank of official silence and cover-up.

With no real forensics left to rely on, they'd only been able to ID their two victims and then couldn't even surrender the bodies to the families. And, with no official explanation

forthcoming, Caine felt he'd been hung out to dry. He was aware there were those who actively worked for his downfall, but they were not involved with this case. No, the problems all seemed to point back to one man, who would have had no reason to bear Caine a grudge. Straker had behaved in a perfectly believable manner when he arrived in Miami to spring Allan Leslie. The removal of the evidence, the bodies and the disappearance of Straker and Leslie just didn't add up to police or even FBI involvement. It all seemed more sinister than that...

After his conversation with the harbour agent and the odd satellite footage of the *Miranda*, Caine's certainty of high-powered machinations grew stronger. This was no ordinary vessel. If she could simply fade into thin air, she was packing some kind of special equipment the military did not wish to discuss or have anyone pursue. But why would such a ship be utilized to remove evidence in what was a civil criminal case? Caine kept turning the military angle over in his mind; there had to be some sort of connection, but what was it?

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"Yes, sir," Captain O'Brien replied to General Straker, "We're pretty sure this installation is alien - the Alien-Tect certainly registers it on all counts, but what it is, well, we won't know until you give us permission to open it."

"What kind of dangers are we looking at to our people and to the planet if we do open it?"

"No radiation levels have been registered, so it must be 'clean' in that sense. However, since the installation is buried a substantial depth into the sea bottom, we have little or no choice but to open it and find out what it's there for, or if it's housing something potentially dangerous - something we need to have cleaned up asap."

"Why don't I send out one of our submersibles to help with this job? I'll order out the *George* and her sub, the *Cousteau*, for you - she can be there in about 24 hours or so. Do you think you can sit on this thing until then?"

"Yes, and we'll run more tests in the meantime - see if we can improve our data before they get here. I've got a salvage story all ready to give the media and the local governments in case they start getting too nosy about what we're doing out here."

"Good. Keep me posted."

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Once the *George* and the *Cousteau* arrived on-site, a briefing was set up for the required personnel on board the *Miranda*.

"Our main objective is to open that installation, find out what's inside, determine the source of the cold temperatures and neutralize it immediately," Captain O'Brien explained, "Our staff here has determined there are no problems so far with radiation, but that doesn't mean we won't encounter it when we open this baby up. So we are going to have to observe the same precautions with this as we would take with any alien nest."

JP Masson, who commanded the *Cousteau*, raised a hand, "I take it our first action will be to remove the cover from the top of the installation?"

"That's right," Arthur Edey told him, "Once we get the cover off, courtesy of the *Cousteau's* manipulator arms, we can get our first look inside and make our next decisions based on that. Although the Alien-Tect has confirmed that all the metals and alloys used to manufacture this installation are definitely of extraterrestrial make, we do not think this is a base the aliens are actively working from. We've seen no evidence of alien bodies or alien activity there. It just seems to have been placed in that location and left on its own."

"Which of course begs the questions why and what for?" Nancy Carroll added.

"Let's get started at 2100 hours - I'd like to have cover of darkness for us to begin our

work," ordered the captain.

* * *

"After all these years of neutralizing alien nests, I have to admit this was not what I expected to find," Masson commented, as he watched Edey and Carroll pulling up what they'd found inside the installation, "Any idea what's in there?"

"We're going to take it down to a secure location in our lab below decks and get it open. It looks to me like some sort of container for organic materials, but I don't want to conjecture anything at this point," Edey said.

The *Miranda* was fully equipped with a lab designed to handle not only hazardous materials, but irradiated items as well. Carroll and Edey donned special hazmat suits and entered this area with the container. Through the enormous and thick plate glass window, Captain O'Brien and Masson watched the operation as they sought to find a means to open the container safely and with care.

"I've scheduled explosives to destroy the alien installation as soon as we move off this site," Masson informed O'Brien, "It should do the job safely without causing any serious damage to the seabed. I can't say the same for the area sea creatures unfortunately, but we have to make sure the aliens can never use this location again for whatever. If the media or local island governments notice it or make any fuss, we have it disseminated that there was a tiny underwater earthquake measured in this spot."

They turned back to where Edey and Carroll had worked the cover off the container inside the hazmat lab. They were both looking inside, but were silent.

Captain O'Brien clicked the communications button, "See anything yet?"

Slowly, the pair raised their helmeted heads and looked at the glass window, "You're not going to believe this..."

Chapter Four

"Thanks for seeing me on such short notice," Horatio Caine nodded as he entered the professor's office. The two men shook hands.

"I gathered this was of some import to you, Lt. Caine," the bearded prof looked a little like a Biblical patriarch, "And I confess, I don't get too many people asking me about disappearing ships."

"I was told you were the leading expert on such things when I called the University of Florida's administration people," Caine sat down across from the professor.

Pouring fresh coffee from a carafe, the professor nodded, "True, but I've never had a police officer question me up on such subject matter. It's usually the students here or the physics geeks who get into this stuff."

Handing over a DVD, Caine said, "Here's some footage of the ship as it disappears, I thought you'd like to see what we have on it."

Slipping the DVD into a player, the prof used a remote to switch on his TV and to hit play on the disk. They watched quietly as the ship in question left Miami's port and then simply blipped out of the picture.

"This is genuine film footage?" the prof asked, sipping his coffee.

"As real as it gets - I had one of my people download it from a satellite a couple days ago. You can see why I asked to talk to you."

The prof nodded absently, his mind obviously at work already. After a few moments he said, "Lt. Caine, have you ever heard of Nicola Tesla?"

Blinking, Caine replied, "I've heard the name somewhere... some sort of scientist?"

"Perhaps inventor would be a better word for Tesla. He was a man way ahead of his time. He thought of ideas that even today would be considered the basis for a good science fiction novel. Have you ever heard of the Philadelphia Experiment?"

"No, what's that?"

Sighing, the prof laid his coffee cup down, "I hate to pass on information that is probably 95 percent rumour, with little basis in reality, but what you've just shown me strange enough to merit a comparison, at least intellectually. Nicola Tesla was so advanced in his thinking, that he believed it was possible to do some pretty weird things for real - such as making a warship invisible, or possibly even sending a warship and its people through a man-made tear in the space time continuum - to send a ship from destination to another via some sort of magnetically generated wormhole."

"I'm sorry, Professor, I didn't do very well in physics in high school."

"OK, I'll try to make it easier for you to understand. Back in World War II, the Philadelphia Experiment was supposed to be a much secrecy-shrouded program, based on Tesla's and Einstein's ideas, to make American warships and their crews either invisible to radar or even the naked eye, and/or possible to even move them as I said, from one geographical location to another. In the fall of 1943, a U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Eldridge, was allegedly made invisible and teleported from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Norfolk, Virginia. Records in the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center have been repeatedly searched, but no documents have ever been located which can confirm this, or that there was ever any interest by the Navy in attempting such an achievement. The Office of Naval Research (ONR) has stated that the use of force fields to make a ship and her crew invisible does not conform to known physical laws - a nice way of covering their asses. During

1943-1944, Einstein was a part-time consultant with the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, undertaking theoretical research on explosives and explosions, but Tesla was reputedly working for them to on a hush-hush project."

"So you're saying this whole idea was just some inventor's dream?"

"Historically, yes. A dream which has spawned a rather durable legend. Even I would have called it the stuff of science fiction and fantasy. But, your film footage has me thinking..."

"Is it possible somebody could have taken Tesla's ideas in the here and now and made them work?" Caine leaned forward in his seat, his coffee all but forgotten.

"It's... a long shot, Lieutenant. I mean, I'm a professor of physics myself and like the transporters of Star Trek TV fame, things like this are scientifically interesting but are just not feasible. And not only are they generally thought impossible, but the rumours flying around the WW II Eldridge incident is that the experiment itself was not without major flaws and failures."

"What kind of failures? Technical failures?"

"Technical failures, yes, but even worse than that. The rumours said that some of the crew on board the ship caught fire, went mad, or were embedded halfway into the decks and bulkheads of the ship itself. Others were said to be phasing in and out of this reality, and only kept there by the laying on of hands. Part of the story has Tesla warning the Navy not to continue their experiments, and certainly not to experiment with humans subjects on board."

"That sounds pretty wild, Professor."

"Well, if it really did happen, apparently the US Navy was horrified enough to cease experimenting with these ideas and what was left of the crew was supposedly subjected to brainwashing to remove any memories of this scientific debacle from their minds," the professor leaned forward in his seat, "But, you see, there is no quantifiable evidence that this ever really happened at all. ONR records puts the USS Eldridge in another location completely for that time period. The remaining crew members have always claimed the experiments were invented by someone with a great imagination and their ship as well as themselves were never subjected to any kind of strange tests."

"So what can you say about the disappearance of that ship on the film footage I just gave you?"

"Look, Nicola Tesla was brilliant - he was also weird. Crazy weird, some would have said. In addition to all his real inventions - such as alternating current and motors, the first genuine radio transmitter/receiver - 2 years before Marconi, and being the first to harness the power of falling water at Niagara Falls - he also developed usable specs for particle beams, antigravity devices and wireless power transmission. Tesla even claimed to have completed Einstein's Unified Field Theory, but never got to publish it. His ideas were so radical his family claimed the FBI seized all his research papers when he died in 1943."

"That's not an answer, Professor." Caine reminded him, "Is it possible that 60 years or so later, somebody somewhere, somehow, has managed to perfect Tesla's ideas? And if so, who is that somebody, and why would they do it?"

"If it were possible to perfect Tesla's ideas, it would be a major scientific breakthrough - but also a dangerous one. Any kind of government or organization who could marshal the kind of money and scientific minds needed would have to be incredibly wealthy, and very powerful. And also able to keep such a project in deep secrecy. Lt. Caine, if this is in any way true, what you have discovered is beyond the scope of any police department's investigation. This should be reported to the appropriate authorities."

"Who could I report this to? And would anyone believe me?" Caine countered.
"Make them believe you - I can help."

* * *

"The nearest description I can give you is that this container is a storage unit for... eggs," Arthur Edey told the others watching through the thick glass into their secured lab space.

"Eggs?" Captain O'Brien felt he'd been swept into a Monty Python routine, "What the hell do you mean... eggs?"

Edey walked over to the glass partition, but didn't remove his hazmat helmet, "Gentlemen, these eggs are organic, there is no doubt about it. And, until I'm able to do an analysis, I can't even hazard a guess on what kind of eggs they are. But, these eggs come from an alien installation, and I'm betting these eggs are not of *this* world."

O'Brien shook his head and looked back up at Edey, "How fast can you throw together a prelim report for Straker? I understand he's flying into New York so we can ship this whole thing to the Omega labs there."

Edey shrugged, "I can gather some simple information and some photos, maybe even a couple slide slices within the next hour or so - would that be ok?"

"Do it. Straker's going to want as much info on this as possible."

* * *

Settling himself into a plush seat in one of the penthouse offices of the Omega Corporation's downtown New York office and lab complex, General Straker prepared himself for the briefing on the alien find in the Caribbean. Nancy Carroll had been flown in asap with the report, and Dr. Edey had remained with the *Miranda* to continue further analysis. Paul Foster sat down beside him with his own laptop.

In deference to the non-smokers in the room, Straker had foregone his usual noxious cigarillo, and had substituted a double large black coffee to suck on instead.

"Well, Dr. Carroll, just what have we got here with this alien installation?"

The dark-haired doctor turned on a large view screen attached to her laptop, and some images came up, "Sir, as you can see. Our original find was a cache of eggs. We believe, from our preliminary testings, that these eggs are indeed of alien origin - they do not correspond with anything earthbound. Dr. Edey has sent the eggs back here to New York with me so that we can do more work in our labs. It's our plan, with your permission, to allow one egg and one egg only, to hatch in a secure unit here so we can determine what kind of creature it is. DNA extracted from the eggs by Dr. Edey have shown they are definitely oceanic in nature."

"In other words, those eggs, when and if we allow one of them to hatch, will grow into an alien sea creature," Straker said, sipping his coffee gingerly. It was hot.

"That is our theory, sir. We'd like to destroy the other remaining eggs purely from a safety standpoint. Whatever the aliens planted here would likely present some sort of hazard to our own oceans. First of all, the installation itself was drastically affecting the normal sea water temperatures in its location, causing the local flora and fauna to die. This of course would impact fishing, the ecology, and the food chain in that area. We cannot permit that to happen. Based on that oceanographers' symposium of several years ago, our own oceans are in so much danger from overfishing and pollution, that we may have a scarce 30 years before they are totally devoid of life as we know it now. Anything alien would presumably hasten that loss, especially if the alien sea creature is dangerous or toxic to our own fish and sea plants," Nancy put extra images up on the screen, "That being said, this find has given us one more piece of the puzzle about the alien world - even if it is a dying planet, they must still have oceans, and

perhaps some of their own oceanic creatures have survived."

"Do your people have any theories on why the aliens went to all this trouble to sink an installation and to fill it with eggs?"

"I was getting to that, sir," she put up some new images, "Our theory, untested as it is, is that the aliens have done this in a bid to preserve whatever creature this is by giving it a 'new home' - our home - planet earth. In other words, they have opted to 'seed' this creature here in the hopes it will not only survive, but thrive and become part of earth's natural eco-system. What they haven't considered, or perhaps they have and it is of little concern to them, the introduction of a completely new life form into earth's oceans would definitely upset the already delicate balance. It's like throwing a monkey wrench into evolution."

Straker got up from his seat and paced the length of the briefing room, hugging himself. Foster watched this action, knowing from long experience what Carroll couldn't know about their CO - he was upset in the extreme. He stopped in front of the view screen and looked over the egg images more closely. After several minutes he spoke, "Dr. Carroll, I am giving you permission to hatch one, and only one, egg in a *VERY* secure hazmat environment. I want you to be on top of this project and of course you can confer with Dr. Edey whenever necessary. I want to be in the loop asap on any changes or activities in this process," he looked over at Paul, "I need to talk to you..."

* * *

"What do you make of this, Paul?"

"I agree with Drs Edey and Carroll - hatch one egg only, find out what the hell this thing is, study it and dispose of the rest of the eggs so they can't hatch and cause us any grief."

Straker stopped mid-stride and turned to Foster, "This is the very first alien creature we've ever been able to get our hands on. I not only want to know what it is, and how it lives, but I also want to know if it could ever be of any use to us in our war with the aliens. Is it valuable to them? Why did they really put it here? Is it a sea creature they harvest in their own oceans and eat? Is it nutritiously valuable? Could humans eat it? I want you to oversee this project, Paul. I think it's vital we squeeze as much info out of this as we can."

"Ed, we don't even know if this was perhaps genetically engineered by the aliens to survive here - this may not even be its true original form."

"I know there are too many questions and not enough answers at present, Paul, but we can't overlook anything. This project is a gift in our hands and I don't want to see us miss a trick, y'hear?"

"There is another issue at hand. What of this isn't the only nest of eggs the aliens planted. What if there are more all over the planet?"

"Then we get this thing's signature and we start a full scale search. I've got Admiral Carlin on alert for just this reason - I want a fleet of our surface ships with submersibles sent out - we've got to start trying to locate other alien egg caches. We know the environmental signs to look for - now we just have to track them down."

* * *

Lieutenant Caine sat at a desk in one of the vacant interrogation cubicles thinking, drumming his fingers on the table. His recent tangles with the FBI did not instill in him a liking for or a trust in G-Men at all. In fact he tended to find that the FBI was rather uncooperative with local police departments. At least that constituted his own experience in recent years. Rather than get involved with the local FBI field office agents, he wondered if there was any other area of the FBI he could appeal to? He picked up his cell phone and punched up Sal

Russo's number again.

"Hi Sal? It's Horatio Caine. Sorry to bother you, but I was wondering, how much do you know about the FBI there in Washington?"

Caught a bit off guard by the question, Russo paused for a moment at the other end, "Well, Horatio, I don't know. I mean, I'm on speaking terms with couple of guys there. I know one of the Assistant Directors personally - guy by the name of Walter Skinner. Why do you ask?"

"I'm sitting on something that may be very important - more important than just what we local police could handle - but I don't want to pass it off to the local field office here. I don't trust those guys at all."

"So you'd rather go over their heads and talk to someone else at head office or Quantico?"

"Yes, I'd like to talk to this Skinner guy if possible. Would this compromise your relations with the FBI in any way if I did?" Caine asked, remembering that Russo got in major trouble for asking about Straker through military channels.

"I can't see any reason why you couldn't talk to him. He's been there a long time, former Marine in fact - I saw action in 'Nam with him decades ago - pretty down to earth fellow. Here, I'll give you his number..."

* * *

"Hi, we're looking for Lt. Horatio Caine," the auburn haired woman explained to Callie at the front desk of the Miami PD. She held up some ID and indicated her partner, "We're Special Agents Scully and Mulder."

"Yes I believe he's waiting for you to arrive. I'll take you down to the lab," Callie smiled, and led the way down a long glassed corridor.

Several twists and turns around the maze that served as Miami's police department building and crime lab brought the trio to yet another glassed in cubicle. Callie waved them in and said, "Horatio, these are Agents Scully and Mulder from the FBI."

Caine got up off his stool where he'd been poring over something under the microscope, peeled off his latex gloves, and shook hands with the two agents. Callie discreetly left them alone and pulled the glass door shut behind her.

"We were assigned to see you - you talked to our AD Skinner yesterday?" Scully said by way of introduction.

"That is correct, Agents. I got your AD's name from an old friend of mine in the military. Seems he was in Vietnam with your director back in the 70's."

"AD Skinner explained that you didn't feel comfortable discussing your situation with the local field agents," Agent Mulder added.

"He also told me that your division handled... cases with unusual circumstances."

"That's correct, Lieutenant," Scully told him.

Caine motioned to them to following him over to the TV set, "Then, I'd like to show you some strange film footage," he inserted a DVD disk into the slot and hit the remote, "This was downloaded from a government satellite by one of our people here."

The three watched the *Miranda* blink out of the picture as though it had never been there.

"How can you be sure this is genuine film footage of this ship?" Scully asked, always the sceptic.

"I know it's not purely kosher, but my guy hacked into a government satellite feed and got this off for me. We believe it's the real deal. And, I've shown it to a professor over at the University of Florida and he has some interesting things to say about - AD Skinner said your

division - the X-Files - deals with unexplained cases and weird phenomena. I'd say this qualifies, wouldn't you?"

"So, exactly what is it you think we can do about your disappearing ship, Lt. Caine?" Mulder asked, "Do you even know what ship it is?"

"First off, I can tell you that ship is called the *Miranda*, and it's registered in an east coast Canadian province called Prince Edward Island. When it arrived here last month, it purported to be a vessel working for a Canadian governmental body called Environment Canada. We ended up detaining one of their employees for trying to steal materials from our evidence locker, vital to the solving of a strange murder case. We interrogated him and got nowhere. Finally, one of Environment Canada's bigwigs came in and told us our guy was one of theirs, that he was on vacation, and hadn't come home when he was supposed to. While I was talking to this guy, the guy we were holding disappeared right out of our custodial unit. Then Straker disappeared too, and the *Miranda* left port almost immediately. When we tried to track her down, we ended up with little or no co-operation from the port authority plus this film footage which I've just shown you. We can't trace this ship at all, it's like she fell off the face of the earth or something - but that's impossible," Caine paused in his narrative for a moment and Mulder's facial expression changed from mild interest to total attention.

"Did I hear you say the name Straker?"

"Well, yes, that's who we were dealing with, but we haven't been able to track him down either - it's like he and the other fellow never existed..."

Mulder's fist came down into his palm and he looked at Scully, "I don't believe this!"

Scully's lips pursed and she replied, looking back at Caine, "Lieutenant, Special Agent Mulder and I and several detectives from the NYPD have been looking for this man ourselves for some years now."

"It's like he's made of Teflon, nothing sticks to him!" Mulder added, "And you think there's a chance he's involved with the weird disappearance of this ship?"

"I'd stake my career on it. I'm sure this Straker somehow managed to get Allan Leslie out of our holding unit, steal back the evidence, plus the bodies of the victims, leaving with us with absolutely no material to work this case."

"How did this whole thing get started?" Scully wanted to know.

"We had a couple bodies land on the beach here in Miami last month. Both had their thoracic organs removed. We did manage to find out they'd been part of a dive team from a ship that was engaged in underwater treasure salvage offshore. Nobody could have carved those people up with such precision unless they had surgical training. And that kind of work can't be done on a bouncing ship at sea. So the bodies had to have been cut up somewhere - we think, on land - and then disposed of at sea."

"What happened to the ship they were working from?" Mulder asked.

"Debris from it was found eventually - it had been destroyed. There were even other bodies found that corresponded to this case. But between this Leslie and Straker, they managed to pack up everything we had, including the bodies, and get them out of this building - all without getting caught. By the time we realized the *Miranda* may have been their means of departure, it was too late - the *Miranda* had not only set sail, but as you saw on the footage, disappeared into thin air. All of which we know is impossible... isn't it?"

"Where this guy Straker is concerned, nothing surprises me," Mulder started to say but Scully cut him off in mid-stream, "What Agent Mulder is trying to say here is that we've... experienced a number of cases ourselves where a man named Straker was at the centre of

everything, and we were never able to pin anything on him, or make him confess to his involvement."

"And those cases had a lot of similarities to yours - carved up bodies, murder investigations that went south because the evidence disappeared - and each one figured Ed Straker as being the impetus of stalling our work on those cases," explained Mulder.

"Who *is* this man Straker? Did you ever find out?" Caine wanted to know.

"That's just it," Scully replied, "After 5 years we're still no closer to finding out who he really is, what his role in these cases really has been, or where he hides himself from being found. This man is like a ghost - he can't be found. We've tried dozens of research and investigative avenues trying to turn up some sort of usable information on him. The most we know is that he spent time in the US Air Force, was put on reserve in 1968, and then left the country to set up a film studio in Great Britain. We tracked him to England, but even then we didn't get very far."

"A film studio? One of my guys found a Harlington-Straker film company in the UK on the Net - could this be the same Straker?"

"It's him, but that's as far as we can go, and all our contacts to the military tell us Straker's USAF files are sealed."

"I found out about that myself. How could anybody be so protected, so out of reach?"

"Whoever Straker really is, he wields an incredible power, over law enforcement, over local and federal governments, and over the military. He's a major player of some sort, and he can do whatever he wants with impunity, we've discovered, the hard way," Mulder added.

"What we can't figure out is *why* he has this power and what he's using it for," Scully finished off.

Mulder rolled his eyes at his auburn-tressed partner, "Scully, don't lie to the man. We do know what he's using the power for."

Caine looked at them both quizzically, "Is this something you can share with me?"

Mulder saw Scully rolling her eyes and shaking her head, "Sit down, Lt. Caine, we have a story to tell you."

* * *

"Let me get this straight," Lt. Caine looked at Mulder and Scully while tilting his head, "You're saying this Straker fellow is somehow involved in covering up alien abductions?"

"I know how this must sound," Scully interposed, "But, Agent Mulder and I have seen a lot of evidence to support this hypothesis over the years. The X-Files exists to investigate the unexplained, the unusual, the paranormal, and the cases that may never get solved. And many of the cases we have come in contact with do concern alien abductees, and the aftermaths of those events."

Caine lowered his head for a moment, trying to digest what Agent Scully had just explained to him, "As far as I know, the American government, no matter who is President at the time, has ever publicly stated that aliens are coming here, let alone abducting people. It's the stuff of tabloids!"

"You can imagine why no government can cop to this information," Mulder said, "The hysteria, fear and loss of authority that might come as a result of such revelations has kept the government's mouth closed for 60 years. And, they mean to close the mouths of anyone who says they have evidence of alien incursions or alien interactions with humans. We believe Ed Straker is tied into this conspiracy in some way. He may be a government agent with wide-ranging powers, or he may even be part of an international organization created to

suppress and destroy alien evidence. We have never been able to get close enough to him to get that kind of information."

Again, Caine considered Mulder's words for a moment, "So what does a man alleged to be behind the cover up of alien abductions have to do with a disappearing ship and our criminal case which now has no evidence to be worked on?"

Scully answered him, "Either the ship itself is of alien design, or the organization Ed Straker works for has the kind of technology that can shield a ship from prying eyes. Look at the Stealth technology. Something like this would be only a couple steps up."

"And my criminal investigation?"

Mulder sighed, "Dead in the water."

"I can't abandon that investigation," Caine said, lifting his head and drilling Mulder with a steely-eyed gaze, "There are families who need answers - and closure. Not only that, this lab has come under fire lately from several departments, including the local FBI office, and losing this evidence has been a black mark on our record. If we can't close this case..."

Mulder cut him off, "Scully and I are used to pissing people off, Lt. Caine. It's in the nature of working on the X-Files. You get too close to something, and certain people just don't want you nosing around. And they hit back pretty hard. Both of us have been kidnapped and abused over our tenure with the X-Files unit. But the aliens are real, they're here, they want something, and there are those who work under the radar to keep what these aliens are doing a dark secret. Our investigations have strongly suggested that the aliens want to take over this planet and use humans as some kind of slave race. Your victims with the carved out thoracic cavities are part of their organ removal program - they're a dying race - they need to take resources from this planet to keep themselves alive - that much we believe. What we have discovered is that the aliens are acting with the tacit acceptance of the American government, and maybe a lot of other governments throughout the world. Your criminal investigation is of no import to these people, and if you start picking up the wrong rocks and looking too closely at the undersides, you're going to be getting yourself in for one hell of a rough ride."

"So what do I do - just forget about the bodies, the evidence, the whole thing?"

"Whatever evidence you originally had must have been going to turn up alien intervention - why do you think Straker and that other man worked so hard to abscond with your materials? They wanted to make certain you and your forensics people wouldn't come up with something you couldn't explain - something that would suggest otherworldliness."

"This sounds a little too much like Men in Black, if you'll excuse allusion," Caine was shaking his head.

"It is very much like the concept of Men in Black in the sense that these people have the power to shut anyone up, cover anything up and remove evidence so completely, that nobody, not even a police officer, could ever tell a story of alien incursion and be believed." Mulder added.

"If I can't solve my case, what's my next move?"

"Since the alien evidence has gone out the window, let's follow up the trail on the disappearing ship - if Tesla's science has been perfected - that's a real technological breakthrough - and real science can often leave a trail..." Scully reminded him.

"The professor I spoke to told me that when Tesla died in 1943, his personal research papers were impounded by the FBI and never seen again."

"Now, that's interesting!" Mulder smiled.

"When did your friend Arthur Dales come to work for the FBI? Would he have known

anything about Tesla's papers being confiscated?" Scully asked Mulder.

"Arthur had his personal papers sent to me when he died a few years ago. I haven't had any time to look at them - so I don't know. But, it's worth it to check. And not only that, but worth it to delve into the FBI's holdings to see if anything is there."

Scully bit her lower lip in thought, "If Tesla's papers were that incendiary, do you think they got buried somewhere - maybe even turned over to another government agency?"

"I suppose that too is a possibility," Mulder considered, "But if that happened, I wonder if there would even be a paper trail about Tesla's work being taken over? We know all too well that secret documents or artifacts can be destroyed or moved about with no return address."

Caine interrupted, "So what you're saying is that even if the FBI took Tesla's papers and research, they might have ended up somewhere else anyway?"

"Let's go see your professor friend at the university. See what he can give us in terms of technical information about the reality of an invisibility cloak..." Mulder suggested.

Chapter Five

General Straker stared down at the creature in the secure tank. The hatching process had occurred very swiftly. Only seven hours after exiting its egg, the creature, something of a cross between a miniature shark and a manta ray, was active and *hungry*.

"What does it eat?" Straker asked, still eyeing the creature carefully.

"It's not fussy, it's willing to eat anything we provide, and in the seven hours since hatching, its already grown double its original size. We've offered it hake, tuna, and other things, and the creature just gobbles it all up," Nancy Carroll explained, "Notice how it never stops moving? That is very shark-like behaviour. I took scrapings off its outer skin a few hours ago for some slides - it's rich in protein and iodine - that much I can confirm."

"So you think it *is* an alien food source?"

Carroll shrugged her shoulders, "I can't see it being planted here for any other reason, sir. I mean, we humans have been aqua-farming for several decades. I suspect the aliens are doing the same. If they do succeed in coming here permanently, what better for them to have a food source available that is imported directly from their own world - a food source they can trust? The creature's flesh is not only high in protein and iodine, but a number of other vitamins and minerals. Probably very nutritious."

"But, if this thing was let loose in the thousands in our oceans..." Straker started to say.

She cut him off, "We simply cannot permit that. Just from its behaviour, I can tell this thing is very predatory. It would likely eat whatever it could get - and that would mean chaos for our own ocean ecological situation. If the amount of food it consumes is truly tied into its rate of growth, I suspect the creature will be capable of procreation shortly."

"Wouldn't it need others of its kind to reproduce?"

"That's just it - scans of the creature show there are two functions paramount in its existence - growth and reproduction - its hermaphroditic - it has both male and female reproductive organs - it could start laying its own eggs shortly."

Straker grimaced at the thought - a rampantly voracious alien creature capable of reproducing at will - "If that's the case, then it wouldn't take very long for this thing to take over our oceans!"

"Exactly, sir. That's why it is imperative we find all, and I do mean all, of the nests worldwide, wherever they could be. This creature is an ecological disaster waiting to happen."

"Did the techs ever find out why the temperatures in the water around the hatchery were so cold?"

"Yes, apparently, the lid on the hatchery has some sort of cooling mechanism that has great force. We deactivated it upon opening it, but it also had what we think might be a time-lapse sequence to release the eggs to the ocean at a specific time."

* * *

"I explained about Tesla's ideas to the Lieutenant here, because that was the first thing that came to my mind when he showed me his pirated film footage," the professor sat back in his chair, after welcoming Caine, Mulder and Scully into his office, "Tesla had some totally incredible ideas, but today's technology *might* possibly be able to work more effectively with them."

"You told Lt. Caine that the FBI confiscated Tesla's papers when he died in 1943," Mulder asked, "How did you know about that?"

Shrugging, the professor replied, "Agent Mulder, this information is all over the Internet -

there are whole sites devoted to the study of whether the Philadelphia Experiment really did happen during WWII. Some websites make the claim that the FBI made off with Tesla's research, supposedly to protect national security. It sounds plausible. You be the judge."

Caine nodded and tilted his head characteristically, "Then I suggest you two may have some work to do..."

Scully opened the office door, "We'll get started once we get back to Washington, and we'll contact you if we get anywhere with this search," she told Caine. The three of them left.

Waiting until the footfalls of Caine, Scully and Mulder finally stopped sounding on the tile floor down the hall, the professor pulled out his cell phone. He punched in a number he rarely used, but kept in his head just for times like this, "Yes, put me through to General Straker, please." there was a pause while his call was re-routed, then the familiar Bostonian tones said, "This is Straker."

"I just had a visit from a Miami-Dade police lieutenant and a pair of FBI agents called Mulder and Scully."

"Really! And what were they looking for?"

"Information. The police officer brought me pirated film footage of one of your ships - the *Miranda* - as she winked out of phase."

"How did they end up coming to you?"

"The lieutenant said he got my name through the administration office. I understand he is the one who got the FBI involved."

There was silence for a moment, then, "What did you end up telling them, Professor?"

The prof smiled as he poured himself another cup of coffee from his carafe, "I have them chasing Nicola Tesla's tail. And I think it will keep them very *busy!*"

"The usual stipend?" Straker asked.

"Yes, that would be fine - same Swiss bank account as before."

* * *

Straker looked up as Dr. Carroll came in for their final briefing, "Let's make this quick, shall we? I'm scheduled on a SHADAir flight in two hours."

"Actually I've sent a full report to your secure e-mail address and you can access it on the flight back to England. I just wanted to let you know that it's arranged for all our SIDs to start an additional search program. They'll be conducting a world-wide scan for the same underwater conditions under which we found the alien egg hatchery in the Caribbean. We should have our first locations pinpointed by the time you make it back to Jolly Olde."

The General smiled, "That's great news, Doctor. Hopefully we'll be able to locate as many as possible and start neutralizing them before the next 24 hour period is over."

Doctor Carroll hesitated before speaking but then decided to do so, "General, our time factor is of the essence here. Our theorists haven't decided whether the aliens were planning to come back to the sites to open the hatcheries, or whether the hatcheries were 'scheduled' to open at a certain point in time..."

"You're afraid some of these monsters are going to make it into the ecosystem, aren't you?"

Lowering her head, the doctor nodded, "As we've seen, they reproduce quickly, and they are *extremely* predatory. I wouldn't put it past one of them to attack a human."

Straker leaned across the briefing table, "Rest assured, we'll be doing everything possible to circumvent this from happening. If we do miss a few, we're going to have to hunt them down, individually. And pray they don't get the chance to make much impact on our already

weakened oceans."

The doctor stood up, "I'd like to stay on this project for awhile longer, and I know dr. Edey feels the same way."

"I'll make sure I issue orders pertaining to that before I leave today. Oh, Doctor," Straker called out to her as she prepared to open the briefing room door, "I do realize how serious this situation is, believe me. It's had me up at night, unable to sleep. We've had a lot of problems with the aliens, but this is a new one. And a highly dangerous one at that. Earth's oceans could be at stake here - believe that I will put the best people SHADO and Omega have to combat this and eliminate the threat."

"I know you will, sir. But I won't sleep either until and unless I know each and every one of those hatcheries has been destroyed and all the creatures dead."

"There's something else on your mind, isn't there, Doctor?"

"General, our world is standing at the precipice. We are experiencing global warming, oceanic problems, air pollution, overpopulation, droughts, strange and destructive weather patterns - in short, sir, I am afraid that we here on planet earth are shortly going to be facing the same hazards the aliens are on their own world. We could end up in the same boat as they are."

Straker's steely blue eyes bored into the doctor's, "There's once distinct difference between us and the aliens: we won't be preying on another world to keep ourselves alive."

Epilogue

"Lt. Caine, I understand you went over our heads here and contacted the FBI head office in Washington," Agent Peter Elliott glared at Horatio.

"This case I was working was special - I felt I needed specialty assistance with it."

"And you brought in Spooky Mulder and his partner?" Elliott replied incredulously.

"You have a problem with that? I didn't think, considering our current antagonisms, that you would be an appropriate selection. And Mulder and Scully come highly recommended."

"Those two are nothing but trouble - they should have been drummed out of the Bureau years ago!"

"Well, according to my sources at the Bureau, and I was able to talk to an Assistant Director in Washington, they have the Bureau's blessings to pursue their X-File cases - not matter what you might think of them."

"You dropped the ball on this one, Caine. Lost the bodies, lost the evidence, can't even find the perps who stole your evidence. You'll never solve this case."

"I wouldn't congratulate yourself on being right just yet, my friend," Caine drilled Elliott with a steely-eyed look, "Who knows? These X-Files agent might just pull off what you and your local colleagues could never manage," Caine put his sunglasses back on, "Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do."

THE END