

President Walter Harriman glides around the International Gala for Underprivileged Children like it was his first dinner at the White House. Talking with guests, sipping champagne, hugging small children are just a few of the feats he does before even walking halfway across the dance floor. He shakes hands with the Sheik Annad from Saudi Arabia, receives a kiss from the president of Africa, and then ends with a vigorous handshake with Francois LeGrand, the current President of France.

“Glad you could come, Francois. Please excuse me. Just want to get some finger food.” Harriman states.

“Wonderful evening, Walter.” Francois LeGrand states in French. Walter walks over to table covered in an immaculate white sheet. He takes a small plate, grabs a serving spoon, and heaps cold pasta salad into his dish. He looks up when a trio of television monitors on the wall come alive with the evening international news.

“On the international front tonight, December 15th 2057, the “cold war” of the 1960’s continues to make a comeback as Russian President Krochenko refuses to back down after the U.S. imposed severe embargoes and trade sanctions on Russian-made goods two months ago. The strict sanctions were put in place against

Russia by President Harriman after Krochenko ordered two Soviet Alpha-class battle frigates to violate international waters and moor just ten miles off the California coastline. The frigates have not engaged the U.S. military directly, but many believe that the frigates are collecting data on U.S. military activity and aircraft tests in the Mojave Desert. Several low-flying drones which are believed to have been launched from the deck of one of the frigates have been seen buzzing top secret airfields in the Mojave. Near the Alaskan coastline, two Tupolev-160 bombers have been sighted by U.S. Air Force F-35's. All of this began several days ago when Russia, in an internationally illegal military endeavor, invaded Afghanistan and ousted the current regime," the newscaster blares excitably.

President Harriman now begins to take a few slices of roast beef as he strains to see the wall mounted monitors.

"Demands by the U.N. for President Krochenko to withdraw have fallen on deaf ears within the walls of the Kremlin. In a press release, the Russian government claims that Afghanistan was sponsoring terrorist activity against Russia, and Russian agents claim to have evidence that Afghanistan was developing a long-range missile capable of delivering a nuclear payload to Moscow. In a bold move against Russian, President Harriman has rushed 5,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan and put all branches of the military on high alert." the newscaster adds.

“Well well Mr. President. You’ve become the first U.S. president in history to ruin Christmas for the civilized world.” a voice states over the telecast.

President Harriman turns to see the British Prime Minister, Harold Willingham.

“Harold, so glad you could make it. I didn’t think I had any fans your side of the Atlantic.” President Harriman jokes.

“It’s a beautiful fundraiser, Mr. President. I think the English people will be impressed.” PM Twillingham replies.

“Well, thank you. You know I’ve been so busy my first two years in office I haven’t had time for philanthropy. Never was my strong point. This situation with the Russians has taken all of my time. But, I’m making amends, Harry. This year’s going to be different. I’m going to be a regular Ebenezer Scrooge on Christmas morning.” President Harriman jokes in an attempt to lighten the mood of the situation. A young woman in her early twenties, Press Secretary Mary Hopkins, rushes up to the President struggling to hold several folders stuffed with papers.

“Mr. President, we think it would be appropriate for you to take a few minutes to address the media regarding tonight’s newscast. We’ll try to keep it short,” Mary insists.

“Just this way to the press room.” Mary adds while she leads Harriman down a narrow corridor, and into a brightly lit, fluorescent bathed room with a podium at

the front. An eagle with arrows clutched in its talons adorns the background curtain.

Before Harriman emerges from behind the curtain to take center stage, a Secret Service agent walks up to him. He holds up what appears to be a plastic card about four inches by four inches with a white slip of paper sealed inside the translucent plastic.

“This is the password for OMNI. Don’t lose it, Mr. President. Remember...this card stays with you at all times,” the agent insists.

He hands Harriman the card. Harriman glances at it, then slips it into his jacket lapel pocket.

“All this technology. Password for everything. I can’t even remember them all,” The President complains.

Harriman places down the dinner plate just before he walks out in front of the TV cameras.

“I didn’t even get to finish my dinner,” he gripes to his Press Secretary as he takes the stage.

Just as President Harriman walks up to the podium, reporters and journalists throw up their hands, clamoring for the President’s attention.

“One at a time. Please.” Mary insists over the raucous shouting of one hundred media people all yelling out questions at the same time.

President Harriman points his forefinger at an exhausted looking reporter in the rear of the room.

“CNN. You start us off,” Harriman demands.

“Sarah O’ Rourke Chief Reporter for International Affairs, Mr. President. Don’t you think your rhetoric against the Russians has been too strong and carried this scenario to the brink of war. There are unconfirmed rumors coming out of the White House that the country is at a Defcon-3 level and you won’t tell the people this for fear of a panic.”

“I won’t confirm or deny those rumors, Ms. O’ Rourke,” the President fires back. “I want a peaceful resolution to this matter as much as anyone else, but the Afghani’s have not been involved in any terrorist activity for many decades now, and I will not tolerate a larger nation simply overtaking a smaller, defenseless one for no apparent reason. I don’t want this to come to a war, but I will not rule out the possibility of military action against Russian forces – and that includes thermonuclear response as well. Next question,” The President states.

Once again hundreds of hands are thrust into the air, dozens of reporters are shouting Mr. President followed by their question, and smartphones are held up to capture video.

“AP.” The President picks after reviewing the journalists.

“Mr. President I am John Chen of Associated Press. The Pentagon released a brief this week that the Space Defense Division had successfully placed in orbit the Orbital Missile Defense Initiative. Can you tell us more about this piece of equipment and how can it protect us should the Russians decide to go nuclear,” John Li Chen concludes as he sits back down.

“I think I will relay this question to Jim Halligan, my Department of Defense Chief...”

President Harriman states, visibly trying to retain his patience with the media onslaught.

“Mr. Halligan, if you please.” President Harriman states as he moves away from the podium microphone and Jim Halligan leaps up on stage.

“Thank you, Mr. President. The Orbital Missile Near-Earth-End Initiative or OMNI as well call it is still highly confidential, Mr. Chen. All I can say is that the Space Defense Division of the Armed Forces in cooperation with NASA placed

the first OMNI in orbit last week. “Halligan reports as if reading from a government manual.

“Please look at the screen,” Halligan adds as he maneuvers a mouse on the podium.

The first PowerPoint slide shows the insignia of the U.S. Space Force --an Eagle flying in outer space with a star field and a full moon behind him. Jim Halligan clicks the mouse, and the next slide appears. It is video recording of a rocket launch taking place at night. The rocket pictured is about two hundred feet high with a barrel-shaped nosecone. Technical data regarding the launch scrolls rapidly up the right side of the slide.

“This was recorded six days ago at Vandenberg Air Force Base. The technology is NASA’s, but the payload is defense department. This is what was inside,” Halligan teases.

Halligan again clicks the mouse and the launch video is replaced by a slide of computer generated animation showing the rocket accelerating into space, then one section falls away followed by a second stage. Finally, after a few minutes, the final stage falls away leaving just the nosecone. The nosecone splits open and a satellite slowly slides out and moves into Earth orbit. The satellite is slender at the

bottom, but bulbous out in the center with the body of the craft surrounded by antennas and solar panels.

“It’s not the most polished looking design we ever made, but we were pressed to get it into space as soon as possible. Inside the torso of the satellite are twenty missiles which can be tipped with either conventional warheads or hydrogen bombs,” Halligan states coldly.

The next slide shows the middle cavity of the satellite opening revealing the twenty dart-shaped missiles packed inside. The missiles, stored in racks, move out past the confines of the satellite’s frame.

“What makes OMNI different from any other missile system is that the President and the President alone can authorize a launch of either one missile, all twenty, or any number in between. If the President authorizes a full attack, OMNI can deliver all twenty missiles in a matter of seconds,” Halligan adds, removes his glasses, and waits for the pandemonium to ensue.

Hugh O’ Reilly, a reporter from the BBC, leaps up in the front row.

“Why that’s positively absurd! Who dreamed up such a nightmarish weapon? The President of the U.S will literally have his finger on the proverbial button,” Hugh O’ Reilly demands.

“OMNI was designed in case radical factions had taken over the U.S. government and the President could no longer trust his own Cabinet. It’s a solution for a near Earth end scenario, thus the acronym,” Halligan quickly interjects.

“If you recall two years ago, a presidential order to fire an anti-missile missile at an unauthorized North Korean test launch was disobeyed by a silo worker in Kentucky. Not only didn’t the silo staff member fail to carry out the launch, he attempted to change the missile’s trajectory which would have sent it right into downtown Dallas. The staff member then locked himself inside the silo control room and committed suicide before the Army could capture him. It was later learned that the silo employee was actually a North Korean operative who had obtained the position with false paperwork,” Halligan states ominously.

“And is President Harriman competent in operating this satellite?” Shannon Keates from the New York Times inquires.

“Not to be overly critical of your IT experience, Mr. President, but I think the last keyboard you mastered had Olivetti written on it,” Kay Matsumoto of International Asian News jokes.

There are slight chuckles from the journalists.

“I want you all to know that President Harriman has – “

President Harriman gently places his hand on Halligan's arm and moves him away from the podium.

"Thank you, Jim. I'll take it from here"

"Yes Mr. President." Halligan states dejectedly as he steps away from the microphone, and stands behind the President.

"I've been training with experts from the Defense Department and the Space Force division for a month now. I'll know what to do and how to do it should that time ever come," The President reassures.

"Maybe you could use it against your opponents in Congress," states Dev Singh from World India Broadcasting.

There are chuckles in the audience.

"Cut it out or I end the press conference right now, understood?" Mary shoots back.

"This is the most preposterous idea in the history of civilized man," shouts out Julien Treveux of France News Channel 4.

"I am going to see that the U.N. hears about this, Mr. President and you will be facing impeachment," Treveux concludes.

“Are you insane? Launch nuclear missiles yourself?” Shannon Mallei of Los Angeles News KTTV states harshly.

“Do you want to be the first human responsible to bring Armageddon upon the Earth? Only the Almighty has that power! What do you think you are...a God of some sort?” Father Dennis Franklin of Christian Science Network demands.

“This press conference is over. I want all media personnel to leave the building at once,” states President Harriman.

President Harriman storms off the podium with Mary running behind him.

“Please Mr. President. It’s important that you speak to them about this,” Mary pleads.

President Harriman pushes aside the curtain at the back of the press room and storms back to the ballroom where the gala is still in progress.

“I knew this OMNI crap was a bad idea. They’re ridiculing me! I want the whole program cancelled Monday morning. Do you understand, Mary? I want the satellite removed from orbit and I never want to hear about this again,” President Harriman demands.

“I don’t want this stupid password card or whatever the hell it is”!

Harriman reaches into his sports jacket's side pocket, removes the OMNI pass card, and flings the card across the room.

The card lands on a waiter's cart just about to be pushed out to the ballroom. It knocks over a few glasses of wine before it lands in an ice bucket.

Mary pushes the curtain aside, charges back into the pressroom, and pulls the podium microphone down to speak into it.

"This press conference is over. I want all media personnel to leave the building at once. If I see any individual hanging around, I'll revoke their press credentials," Mary shouts.

"Yeah. Sure. Leave President Harriman alone so he can pick his next target," taunts one of the reporters as security hurries him out of the press room.

As the press depart, Mary retrieves the OMNI pass card from the ice bucket just as one of the waiters whisks the tray into the dining room.

"I wish I could have worked under President Reagan," she mumbles to herself as she places the pass card in her jacket.

President Harriman glides an ACE comb through his thinning hair as he approaches the ballroom. Secret service personnel, wary of the crowd after the incident in the pressroom, fan out ahead of him. Harriman smiles uncomfortably as

he greets people walking in. The scene between Harriman and the media plays out on monitors mounted around the ballroom.

“Not exactly a collection of your greatest hits, Mr. President,” jokes one of the diplomats at the party.

Ignoring the comment, Harriman dials a number on his smart phone as he walks across the White House ballroom.

“Bradley, this is Harriman. Listen, I want this OMNI program terminated and I want it done right away,” demands the President.

Bradley’s nervous, strained voice can be heard over the phone’s tiny speaker.

“Mr. President, we’ve just implemented the system. You have to give this time an— “

“Are you watching the monitors?’ Harriman cuts in.

No response from Bradley.

“Answer me. Did you see what’s playing on the monitors?”

Silence.

“Yes...yes I did. I saw the whole thing. I’m watching WNN Evening News.

But, Mr. President, frankly, the White House press team anticipated all of that crap from the media,” Bradley adds.

“They’re making me look like Dr. Strangelove. I want the whole OMNI program discontinued immediately,” Harriman demands.

“We can’t do that, Mr. President. OMNI was a joint project of the Air Force, NASA, and the Space Defense Force. We need the unanimous votes of all three branches to make any changes,” Bradley stresses, nervousness growing in his voice.

“Then I want a meeting schedules for 8:00 am Monday morning to discuss it. Got that.”

“Yes... understood Mr. President,” Bradley concedes reluctantly.

Mary O’ Connell rushes up Harriman.

“Mr. President your dinner is getting cold. And the President of Canada is waiting for you. Why don’t you sit down?” Mary begs.

“Oh, all right. Where am I sitting?” Harriman answers somewhat annoyed while he puts his cell phone away,

“They won’t make a fool out of me.” Harriman grumbles to himself while Mary leads him to a table on the far end of the ballroom right near the bandstand.

Secret service agents quickly scour the table, chairs, silverware, and surrounding area before Harriman finally sits down. He shakes hands with the

President of Canada and his wife while a waiter deposits a plate with a filet mignon on it before Harriman.

“So glad you could come, Alain,” Harriman states as he begins eating.

“Thank you, Mr. President. Sorry we could not meet you in better times. Very sad this situation with the Soviets,” President Alain replies somberly.

“It’s unfortunate timing I agree. But, I believe that the Soviets will come around on this one. I really do,” Harriman reassures.

As they confer, a White House agent raises the volume on one of surrounding TV monitors.

“President Harriman remains adamant in his position against Russia in the Afghanistan conflict. Soviet President Ilyan Kravchenko has stated that Russia will not alter its stance in the Afghani region until all U.S. forces have been moved over the border and all flyovers have ceased. Currently, the U.S. is in a stalemate with the Russians and the Defense Department has raised the country to a Defcon 3 level.”

Somewhere over Afghanistan, a trio of Soviet-built Mikoyan MIG-29 fighter jets patrol a stormy nighttime sky. The middle MIG is equipped only with reconnaissance equipment in a steel torpedo-like cylinder bolted to the underside while the two remaining MIG fly “shotgun” alongside it.

“This storm is getting worse by the minute. I think we should pack it in,” states the middle pilot.

“Yes. Agreed,” responds the pilot on the middle craft’s port side.

Several bolts of lightning illuminate the sky as the Migs begin to turn away from the incoming clouds back towards their base.

The reconnaissance MIG pilot is beginning to make some adjustments he views with his heads-up display when he notices something odd occurring to his cockpit equipment. All of the screens and dials seem to be slowing down. The center pilot, Vladimir Kossovitch, glances at his altimeter which has crawled nearly to a complete stop even though he can see visually his altitude is climbing. The cockpit is bathed in an eerie orange glow.

“Falcon 1 are you experiencing instrument failure? All of my systems look like...I don’t know...like they’re slowing down.” states Kossovitch, panic growing in his voice.

“That’s a positive, Falcon 0. All of my systems are malfunctioning as well. Switching to manual override” states Falcon 1 piloted by Viktor Raskin.

“Same here. Could it be atmospheric?” adds Falcon 2 under the control of Val Barenko.

“Could very well be...with this storm. We’d better radio base. What the heck is that light? Visibility is at zero!” Kossovitch states as he opens up a channel to home base.

“Mother base this is Falcon 0. Designation MG-29449 on Recon. We are experiencing highly unusual...I repeat...highly unusual technical problems. We request permission to terminate mission and turn back immediately. Do you comply?” Kossovitch states as he lowers the sun visor on his helmet.

Kossovitch receives a burst of static as a reply. Kossovitch opens up the com channel again.

“Mother base this is MG-29449 on recon mission do you --“

Suddenly, the orange glow becomes a blast of light obscuring everything. Just a few kilometers in front of the three MIG squadron, a rift appears to open and continues to expand like a tear in the sky. The tear opens wider revealing what appears to be a starfield beyond it.

The three MIGs slow to a complete stop and remain frozen in mid-flight.

“What in God’s name is happening?” Kossovitch states breathlessly.

“My God ---there are stars on the other side!” Raskin states.

“Mother base this Falcon 0. Request immediate assistance!” Kossovitch shouts into the microphone.

In an instant there is a brilliant flash of pure white light. Each jet is elongated like the metal was turned into silly putty and pulled through the rift. Then the back end of the plane snaps forward into the rift like an overstretched rubber band. The rift closes and the clouds begin to dissipate

Lead pilot Kossovitch tries to control his breathing while he deals with the shock of the recon patrol’s current situation. Each jet is tumbling helplessly in the vacuum of deep space.

Possibly millions of miles ahead, Kossovitch can see what appears to be a supernova in another galaxy swirling in front of them. Kossovitch throws a switch several times on his console in attempt to restart his stalled engines, but without oxygen the engines start up then sputter to a stop.

“What ---how in hell did we get here ?!” Barenko states frightened.

“This can’t be! It must be a trick by the Afghanis. I’m ejecting! Raskin exclaims in panic.

“No, no, don’t! We’re in a vacuum! Kossovitch shouts into his helmet mike.

Barenko pulls the ejection chair lever, the canopy blows off, and he is ejected into space. The force of the ejection seat charges shoots him into space like a rocket and the chair with him strapped to it tumbles wildly. In a few seconds, he is gone from sight. The pilotless MIG-29 spins end over end in the opposite direction from where Barkeno was catapulted and then begins to break apart.

“Why Mr. President I didn’t realize you were such a good dancer states Prime Minister Korda from South Africa.

“I wasn’t for many years till my wife forced me to take dancing lessons,” replies President Harriman.

“I’m still working on my Latin dances. I’m think I’m getting too old to do them,” adds Harriman,

“You must miss her terribly. Especially now with what’s going on,” inquires the Prime Minister.

Before Harriman can reply, he notices a breaking news flash spreading out across the multiple large screen TV’s in the gala ballroom. First there is an ad for artificial Christmas trees and then a newscaster speaking rapidly while photos and technical schematics of a MIG-29 are displayed in a split screen. Across the bottom of the screen in bold, red type are the words: **SOVIET PLANES BELIEVED TO BE DOWNED BY US FIGHTER JETS OVER AFGHANI**

AIRSPACE. ALL THREE PILOTS UNACCOUNTED FOR. RUSSIAN PRESIDENT THREATENS IMMEDIATE RETALIATION.

Upon reading the words, Harriman breaks away from dancing with the Prime Minister and walks zombie-like towards the TV's.

“Mr. President what is the problem. Is it something I said or ---“Prime Minister Korda trails off when she sees the TV 's.

“Somebody turn this up,” Harriman states.

“Turn this up now!” Harriman demands.

The sound suddenly blares on.

“---proximately 11:42 PM Eastern Standard Time three MIG-29's on a reconnaissance mission over what had previously been agreed was neutral airspace over Afghanistan vanished off of Soviet radar scopes. Although not confirmed, news agencies from the Kremlin have stated that U.S. F-18's launched from an aircraft carrier downed the planes after a brief dogfight,” the news reporter states hurriedly.

“What's the meaning of this?” Harriman demands.

Mary rushes out to the President in the middle of the dance floor.

“Mr. President I'm very sorry, but I think we should call it a night. I'll have the

White House staff show everyone out,” Mary whispers to Harriman.

“Yes, you’re quite right, Mary.”

“Why don’t you make an announcement, Mr. President?” Mary adds.

Harriman walks up to the stage and plugs in a handheld microphone.

“I’m very sorry everyone, but given the latest developments I think we should pack it in.”

Moans of disappointment rise from the crowd.

“Believe me when I say I wish things were different. Don’t worry...everything will be all right. We’ll do this again and finish the evening as soon as I can possibly reschedule. Thank you so much for your generosity tonight. I know it’s difficult to reach deep into your during the Christmas season, but I guarantee who’ve made hundreds of needy children very happy. My staff members and members of the Secret Service will show you out. Please leave calmly and orderly. Mary has a gift bag for each one of you so be sure to grab one on your way out. Thanks again for a lovely night,” Harriman states somewhat morosely.

People begin filing towards the two exits. Many reach up to Harriman standing on the stage to shake his hand. Mary rushes up to Harriman.

“It’s Krochenko, Mr. President. He wants to speak to you.” Mary whispers as the remainder of the gala attendee’s hurry past them.

“Mr. President, I think we should take the call in the Room,” Hannigan states in a concerned tone.

“Yes, by all means,” Harriman agrees.

Harriman, escorted by a dozen Secret Service agents, five Washington, D.C. police officers, three White House security guards, and two Army sharpshooters, dashes out of the ballroom into a narrow elevator. Mary and Hannigan squeeze into the elevator. The elevator is guarded by an additional detail of heavily armed Secret Service agents. With a hiss of compressed air, the doors shut and the lift descends deep underground.

With another hiss of air, the doors spring open in the Presidential Bunker. Secret Service Agents emerge first followed by the White House Guards. President Harriman digs giddily through the gala gift bag like a child on Christmas morning as he walks down the long, heavily reinforced corridor leading to the communications room in the Bunker.

“There’s some really nice things in here, Mary,” Harriman states, ignoring the armed detail surrounding him.

“Yes, my assistant Susan is very good at finding these things.”

Harriman looks puzzled as he glances at the items, then removes a small silver and black plastic box.

“What the heck is this?” Harriman inquires.

“It’s a transistor radio that tunes only to a station playing Christmas music. Makes a great stocking stuffer,” Mary states.

“If I live through this, I’ll be sure to get all the staff one,” Harriman quips.

Without thinking, Harriman stuffs the radio into his jacket pocket and hands the gift bag over to Mary.

As if walking forever, the corridor ends with a set of heavy steel doors. With a whoosh of compressed air, the doors spring open from the center revealing an enormous wooden conference table surrounded by banks of personal computers and monitors. President Harriman sits down by the phone.

“President Krochenko on secure line 1, Mr. President”, an aide calls out.

“Mr. President, I heard in from all of our airborne birds. No one was involved in shooting down those MIGS. If somebody took them out, it wasn’t us,” White House aide John Davis interjects.

“You may want to mention this. Just received from the NWS. There was a bad storm in the vicinity of the MIGs around the time they vanished off scopes.”

Davis hands Harriman a sheet of paper.

“Thank you, Davis.”

Harriman pushes a button on the phone’s console.

“President Krochenko to what do I owe this honor. I was just in the middle of a fundraising gala when you rang,” Harriman states.

“Yes, I saw the reports concerning the MIGs. But I can assure you we had nothing to do with their downing,” Harriman shoots back.

“I’m looking at a bulletin from the NWS that shows that there was volatile weather in that region just around the time of their vanishing. They may have gone off course in the storm or experienced mechanical problems. Have your Kremlin staff checked air bases in that vicinity?”

Harriman continues, attempting to keep Krochenko calm.

An aide walks up Harriman and hands him a glossy photo.

“Just ran this off from our satellite. The Russians are moving truck- based missiles from one launch area to another.” the aide whispers.

Harriman studies the photo intently.

“From the looks of the terrain, I’d say they were somewhere in Siberia and they’re being trucked to a silo outside of Moscow,” the aide quickly concludes.

“Well there’s no need to get testy about it, President Krochenko, one of my aides has just shown me satellite photos of ICBMS’s being trucked cross country as of just a few minutes ago. Why are you doing this?” Harriman inquires.

“It is our business, President Krochenko. Anything involving nuclear weaponry in not just the U.S. business, but the world’s business,” Harriman states.

There is the sound of a line disconnecting.

“Line’s dead, Mr. President,” the audio technician states as he removes headphones.

Harriman hangs up the receiver.

“Just as well. I’ve said enough. Holden, raise us to Defcon-4. Let the media know as well,” Harriman commands.

“But Mr. President it’ll create a panic,” Davis adds.

“It’ll show Krochenko we’re not fooling around,” Harriman shoots back.

“We’ve got the opportunity Mr. President...why don’t we take that convoy out”, Davis inquires.

“No, we’ll do nothing of the sort. Krochenko could be baiting us into drawing first blood. Those could be dummy missiles they’re moving around. “Harriman concludes.

“Do we have launch confirmation at all?” Harriman demands.

There is a brief silence.

“No Mr. President. No confirmation of launch,” Davis replies.

“As I thought. Gentleman and ladies, I believe this to be a bluff by our friend, Krochenko. Most likely the MIGs were lost in the storm and Krochenko is trying to use this to his advantage. I think that – I think we should wait and see what –“ Harriman trails off.

Harriman stumbles slightly and holds onto a chair back.

Mary rushes up to him.

“Mr. President are you okay,” Mary inquires.

A number of White house aides and several Secret Service agents hold Harriman under each arm.

“I’m fine. Just a bit dizzy, that’s all”, Harriman insists.

“Here Mr. President.”

An aide thrusts a bottled water in his hand.

“Did you take your pressure pills?” Mary inquires.

“Come to think of it I’ve forgotten”, Harriman admits.

Mary snaps up her I-phone from the console.

“I need a med team to the Room ASAP. It’s President Harriman,” Mary shouts.

“Mary I’m okay.”

“Mr. President, you’ve been up since 5 this morning. I want you to get some rest. This has been an extremely stressful day”, Mary states angrily.

“There’s nothing go on right now, Mr. President. We’ll let you know immediately if anything changes”, Davis states calmly.

Upon hearing that, Harriman appears to calm down for the first time since the crisis began. He exhales his breath, stands up, pockets his phone, and walks out of the control bunker with Mary. Just then, two medical team members rush into the control room.

“We’ll meet you in the President’s private quarters,” Mary states as she walks with Harriman down the corridor.

President Harriman sits on a couch in his private room while a med doctor studies the blood pressure gauge. The room is small and claustrophobic compared to his bedroom in the White House, but lavishly furnished. A large King size bed with two oak end tables on each side. A matching dresser with mirror adorns the opposite wall. The top of the dresser is crammed with photographs taken with dignitaries as well as medallions and certificates from foreign officials.

Off to the right there is a small desk with two laptops hooked up to a server as well as several different tablets and a bank of landline phones, walkie talkies and a briefcase satellite phone. There are a number of cell phones plugged in for charging. On a separate desk there is a full-size personal computer with a several binders of papers next to it. The side of the PC's CPU reads: OMNI Main Console. Warning: **For Presidential Use Only.**

In front of the bed, a Presidential seal is embroidered into the carpet. Harriman's pet dog, Scruffy, is sleeping directly in the middle of the rug.

The med team doctor peels off the blood pressure machine armband.

“Well his pressure is slightly elevated. But I think he'll be okay,” the Doctor concludes.

“He neglected to take his pressure medication this morning. It’s been a very crazy day for him. First, we had the gala and then this situation with the Russians. It’s a wonder his pressure isn’t sky high,” Mary states concerned.

“I don’t recommend he take anything right now. Start his meds again first thing in the morning.”

The med team physician scribbles something on his iPad.

“I’m going to prescribe a mild sedative just so you can sleep tonight, President Harriman.”

“Thank you, but I can assure I don’t need it,” Harriman quickly shoots back.

“It’s very mild. I’ll leave now and let you rest.”

“You know if you need anything Mr. President --“Mary trails off.

“I’ll be fine. I’ll sleep like a baby, wake up early tomorrow morning, and everything will look different,” Harriman adds cheerily.

“Everything is all quiet on the Western front Mr. President,” Davis adds.

“You’ll alert me the minute anything changes,” Harriman demands.

“Yes,” Davis replies.

“What about the Defcon level?” Harriman asks as all the personnel begin to file out of his private apartment.

“Being raised as well speak,” Davis responds with confidence.

“And the media?” Harriman asks.

“A press release is just going out to the major news services,” Davis states as he stares intently into his I phone.

“Now we let Krochenko sweat for a while,” Harriman states.

“I hope so, Mr. President. He certainly has got us running for the underarm deodorant,” Davis quips as he exits.

Harriman laughs slightly as he walks Davis out.

Davis turns to Harriman before he leaves.

“Sorry you have to stay the night here, President Harriman, but the NSA thought it was best given the situation,” Davis adds quickly.

“Well, as long as they have a good rare roast beef sandwich with gravy in the kitchen, I’ll be happy to stay,” Harriman states.

“I’ll call you first thing in the morning,” Davis states.

Davis exits the room and Mary is the last one to leave.

“Goodnight Mr. President,” Mary states as she leaves.

“Oh wait. I almost forgot.” Mary reaches into her handbag and takes out the key code device that Harriman hurled across the room earlier in the evening.

“I found it in an ice bucket on its way out to one of the Senators. Lucky for you it doesn’t appear to be damaged,” Mary replies as she hands the device to Harriman.

“I know you don’t like it, Mr. President, but the device has to stay with you at all times,” Mary demands.

“I’ll keep it with me, but first thing Monday morning I’m introducing legislation to eliminate the system. It’s just too controversial,” Harriman states as he stares at the device.

“Better not get rid of it too soon, President Harriman. With the way things are going, it’s a powerful asset. Good night, Mr. President.”

After Mary leaves, all of the Secret Service agents and other law enforcement individuals depart. Harriman locks the door. He looks again at the OMNI code key device and slips it into his lapel pocket.

“I’m not even sure how to use the damn thing,” Harriman mutters

Harriman walks into the kitchen, pours some dog food into a metal bowl, and places it on the white tile floor.

Scruffy leaps off of the Presidential rug, scampers across the tile, and begins to eat.

Harriman exits the kitchen, walks over to the bureau, and picks up one of the framed photos on the top shelf. The picture shows a younger Harriman with a woman with thick, but short blond hair. They are both sitting in a row boat holding fishing poles.

“I miss you more and more everyday Elizabeth. I wish you were here. I could really use your guidance. I still live by the adage you taught me. Do your best in the sunshine and then put up your biggest umbrella and let it rain on you all it wants,” Harriman recounts to himself.

“Well, I did just that Liz and it sure as hell is raining on me now,” Harriman adds and then laughs.

He puts the picture back and then lies down in his bed. Next to him in the bed are piles of computer printouts, satellite and aerial photos, memos, and a laptop computer. Harriman examines the vial of sedative the doctor prescribed but then puts the vial back down on the night table without opening it. He lowers the volume on the various television sets and monitors stationed around his room, but

leaves the news channels on. Slowly he drifts to sleep while the television news continues to show file footage of MIG-29's with the words splashed beneath them: Did President Harriman cause WW III?

The digital alarm clock on a night table reads: 3:35 AM. Harriman is asleep while Scruffy sleeps at the foot of the bed. All around him monitors and flat panel TV's continue to run 24-hour news about the deepening situation between Russian and the United States. One TV news show's graphics read: Harriman raises level to Defcon -4. What is the world in for?

Approximately three hours have passes since Harriman fell asleep. The unused sedative bottle sits on the table near the clock.

It starts almost imperceptible to the human senses. A kind of electronic blip that causes a brief disturbance on the TV screens, then fades. Suddenly, a low hum begins to develop in Harriman's bedroom which grows steadily louder. The scenes playing out on the video screens appear to slow down and the voices of the newscasters sound like an old movie played too slowly in a projector. At the foot of the bed, Scruffy wakes up and begins growling as an eerie amber colored luminosity that bathes the entire bedroom.

President Harriman stirs in the bed, but does not wake up. What began as a low hum grows in volume. Scruffy sits up and begins barking as the amber light grows

in intensity. A bank of monitors near the President's bed show a view from outside the President's bedroom. Several secret service agents are positioned by the President's bedroom door, seemingly oblivious to what is going on inside.

The amber glow begins to pulsate and moves closer to the President's bed. Directly in the center of the light, a tear emerges and a control room is visible through the rip. Three figures quickly step from the control room through the opening and the rift quickly reseals. The figures appear human in shape but no details can be discerned on their face and bodies. The light bathes them to such a degree that almost nothing else is visible.

Scruffy's bark awakens Harriman.

"What is it Scruffy? Why all the racket I fed you before didn't –"

Harriman is stunned when he sees the three figures just inches from the end of his bed. Harriman thrust himself off the side of the bed falling to the floor and struggling to punch a code into a keypad on a safe. The lock beeps followed by a loud click. Harriman turns a lever and reaches in.

"Your weapon will be useless against us. You may attempt to use it. It will not harm us".

Harriman stops in his tracks, an icy coldness coursing through his body. The creature's voice is cold and disembodied.

Harriman leaves the gun in the safe and stands up. He reaches for one of the phones.

“There’s no use attempting to contact anyone. They can’t hear or see you.”

Harriman glances down at Scruffy who is barking in a slow motion with no sound. Harriman walks up to a bank of flat panel screens showing Secret Service agents in different parts of the White House. The agents are talking, eating dinner, and going about their business without any knowledge of the invaders in Harriman’s bedroom.

“You are wondering why they don’t know we are here...and how everything to them appears perfectly normal,” the glowing figure states.

“I was,” Harriman states.

“I won’t tell you my race’s name, but other civilizations call us The Interdimensionals because of our unique ability to travel between dimensional planes. Your fellow humans are seeing images of you from several minutes before we arrived here,” the visitor explains.

“What the hell are you and what do you want with me?” Harriman demands.

“You may refer to me as One. Let it be known that we have travelled a great distance to help you,” One declares.

“To help *me*?” Harriman balks.

“Help me to do what?” Harriman blurts out, shaking with fright.

“We have been observing you for some time now. Your enemy is going to defeat you. Of this there is no question,” One states coldly.

Harriman begins to relax slightly, seeing that the three beings before him have not attempted to harm him. He gets up from the bed and moves closer to them. He has to cover his eyes to protect them from the glare.

Another one of the beings moves forward and begins to speak. This one appears to be the intellectual of the group.

“How do you know this?” Harriman inquires.

“We have fought thousands of wars in hundreds of star systems! We were strategist and generals while you were still coming out of the primordial ooze,” the second alien states coldly.

“We have excellent defenses. I have complete confidence in my military,” Harriman fires back.

“Yes, on many of the planets we’ve saved their military leaders thought the same thing. But when the battle ended and the smoke cleared it became painfully clear that they were mistaken,” the second alien states.

“You see we have come as military advisors of a sort,” One continues.

One extends his arm and numerous images that resemble video game vector graphics appear in mid-air a few feet in front of Harriman. Harriman is stunned as the hologram plays out.

“See for yourself, Earth man.”

The hologram shows numerous mobile launchers spread out across Russia even in Siberia. The hologram morphs into a new image of a fleet of submarines launching Polaris-type missiles.

“Your defenses can intercept most of them, but will not be able to destroy all of them,” One states coldly as Harriman watches the images.

The hologram morphs into a new image of a desert terrain.

“This looks like Iraq,” Harriman notes as the image rotates and new white lines appear and connect to existing lines.

When the image comes into crisp focus, Harriman can see it depicts hundreds of mobile SCUD type truck-based launchers.

“My God...Iraq has all of that. They are not supposed to have any military capability.”

Abruptly, the images vanish.

“And all it takes is a handful of these warheads to get through and that would be the end,” the second interdimensional adds.

“To put it simply, we can defeat your nemesis...but it will come at a price,” One states.

“You mean you came all the way here to help me...help Earth, but you want something in return for doing so,” Harriman concludes as he backs away from the three figures.

“Yes,” One replies.

“What could you possibly need from us?” Harriman demands.

One’s image shimmers and changes color. He moves close to Harriman while the other two Interdimensionals remain where they were.

“We need humans,” One states plainly.

Harriman is aghast.

“You want...people...from Earth. For what reason”?

“Our planet has been ravaged by a war that lasted a millennium of your Earth years. Our cities are decimated and our race nearly extinct from the genocide that our adversaries brought upon us. We have the know how to rebuild, but lack the workforce to carry it out,” One states.

The Interdimensionals

“How many people would be needed? How could they survive on your world?”

Harriman asks.

“About 500,000 we have determined. We could provide the proper equipment for them to breathe our atmosphere. We are familiar with human physiology. Much of the work would involve physical labor, but the climate on our world is...agreeable, shall we say. Once the work is finished, they will be returned unharmed to Earth,”

One replies.

“How long would they be gone from their families...their friends? Harriman states as he sits down on the edge of his bed, the full weight of the situation weighing on him.

“It is difficult to say at this stage,” the second Interdimensional replies.

“Safe it to say it could take several Earth lunar years, but would not exceed a human’s lifespan,” the second Interdimensional adds.

“How will I decide who will go?” Harriman inquires.

“You need not be concerned. We will pick the humans we want. You must not tell anyone...not even your closest advisors about this until the time comes for us to transport the humans to our planet.”

“When will that be?” Harriman asked worriedly.

On the 25th Earth day of the current time period,” One states coldly.

“The 25th day?” That’s...well that’s Christmas day,” Harriman states.

“This day hold some special significance for your race?” One shoots back.

“Yes, it does. The 25th day of December is Christmas Day,” Harriman states, smiling a bit.

“And what does that signify?” One asks somewhat concerned.

“It celebrates the birth of Christ.”

“Who or what is a Christ,” the intellectual interdimensional suddenly cuts in.

“Christ was the Son of God. Our God, I should say. He was born a man so that he could absolve the world of its sins,” Harriman states.

Harriman could not be certain, but he could swear that One turned and smiled at the other interdimensional.

“Well then. We have picked a fitting day. Perhaps this Christ will absolve you of your sins as well.”

“Only on this day, after we have departed Earth’s orbit with our human crew will you tell the world what you have witnessed,” concludes One.

“I need some time to think about this,” Harriman concedes.

What is there to think about...it is a simple equation. A half a million lives to save billions,” the second interdimensional interjects.

“Our time is short as is yours. Your enemy is about to strike,” One warns.

Harriman begins to sweat profusely and a dizziness comes over him.

“You say that the Russians are planning to attack us. You say you will thwart the attack in exchange for these people you require. I have your word on this,”

Harriman demands.

“Yes,” One states.

“You saw what we showed to you. We did not invent those images. They are projections of the things to come,” the second being adds.

Harriman thinks for a moment. He cannot believe what he is going to say.

“Okay...you have it. But you must promise me these people will not be harmed in any way and returned to Earth after their work is completed,” Harriman demands.

“You have our word,” One replies.

One walks closer to Harriman. Harriman is forced to turn away to prevent blindness from their bodily glow.

“Remember...you are not to tell anyone what you have witnessed nor learned. When the conflict begins...whenever that is...we will know and we will know what to do. Is this understood, Earth man? One states ominously.

“Y-yes. I understand completely,” Harriman replies.

With One standing directly in front of him now and the second interdimensional off to the side, Harriman has, for the first time, an unobstructed view of the third being. The whole time of this bizarre conversation the third interdimensional has not spoken a solitary word. Harriman notices the being appears to look on him with pity. He wanted to say something to the third being, but felt a strange sensation that was telling him not to.

“We will contact you again when necessary,” One concludes.

Suddenly, the blinding kaleidoscope of lights is gone.

The buzzing sound that deafened Harriman has vanished replaced by the sounds of his televisions tuned to various 24-hour news channels.

Scruffy is still barking even though Harriman heard none of it for the time the beings were present.

“My God...what have I done?” Harriman mutters to himself.

Harriman is almost afraid to open his eyes when his digital alarm clock begins beeping at 5:45 AM. The first things he sees are the televisions still playing the story about the missing MIG squadron. He struggles to remember what happened during the night...those things he saw...was it all a dream? A terrible nightmare? He was never prone to nightmares, but it seemed so real. He gets out of the bed and realizes he didn't change into his pajamas. He knows it still dark out, but the Presidential Bunker has not windows.

He reaches over to his night table and flips off the alarm clock. The meal he started eating hours ago is still on his desk and Scruffy is consuming what remains.

“Scruffy get down from there!” Harriman shouts.

Scruffy leaps down from the desk and runs to sleep on his bed.

“I would've given him some dinner if I...if I didn't black out.” Harriman thinks back.

Harriman's smartphone rings.

“Wish I had a better wake-up call for you, Mr. President,” Davis states apologetically.

“That's okay. What's the news?”

“Come into the Situation Room. I'll give you a heads up,” Davis states.

As Harriman enters the Situation Room, he is greeted by personnel running back and forth with computer printouts and high-altitude satellite photos. Alarms and klaxons begin blaring followed by all the lights dimming in the room. A few amber lights automatically click on over some of the workstations.

“What the devil is happening?” Harriman asks.

Davis rushes up to him after glancing at an open laptop screen. Sweat is running down his face.

“We’ve got launch confirmation, Mr. President!” Davis can barely speak.

Hatcher Stevens, Davis assistant, swivels around in his chair to face Harriman and Davis.

“We have three ICBM’S in play,” Stevens announces.

“Where were they launched from?” Harriman asks attempting to remain calm.

Stevens flips wildly through some satellite photos.

“All three were launched from mobile truck-based SCUD launchers located somewhere in Iraqi territory.” Stevens states.

Davis looks at Harriman.

“The disarmament pact clearly stated they weren’t allowed to have any nuclear capability.”

Harriman interjects.

Harriman frowns to himself as he has already seen these SCUD launchers in the holographic imagery the Interdimensionals showed him.

Are you sure they're nukes?" Davis adds.

"Telemetry states that they are. From the info, I'd say they're two SCUD-D's each carrying four nuclear warheads. "Stevens concludes as he points to a blow-up of the satellite photograph.

"They're not top of the line equipment. I mean they wouldn't be my missile of choice, but eight warheads coming down in three major U.S. cities." Stevens voice ends ominously.

Davis rushes over to a nearby console where a female operator is seated.

"Karen, what's the status on the Patriot batteries?"

"Com says batteries are hot. Awaiting Presidential order," Karen Huffman shoots back.

Harriman appears confused.

"Your launch password, Mr. President." Davis adds.

A technician rushes away from a terminal and approaches Davis.

“We’ve got warhead separation!”

Two-hundred miles over the continental United States the two SCUDS begin to slow as the solid rocket which propelled them from Earth begin to lose strength. Suddenly, all four engines cease. The long, slender olive drab colored projectiles glide smoothly for several more miles until they are over the middle of the United States. Explosive bolts detonate around the nosecones almost in unison and the two nosecones move at a snail’s pace away from the solid fuel bottom.

After a few seconds, preprogrammed commands run through the tiny computerized brain of each nosecone and the cones open up like rose petals on a Spring morning. Inside each are four smaller cone shaped devices. The devices edge out until they are free of the nosecone. Eight of these cones began to drift away from the SCUD nosecones and slowly descend. In a few moments, they break the upper atmosphere and are lost in the cloud banks.

A minutes later the warheads emerge from the cumulus clouds and begin their reentry to the surface. As their descent speed climbs, the warheads begin

to glow from the friction against the Earth's upper sky. Suddenly, a few feet in front of each missile, a small opening appears with an alien system of worlds visible on the other side. The warheads go into the opening and vanish.

In another solar system dominated by multiple suns and hundreds of asteroids orbiting a small moon, the SCUD warheads continue their descent until they explode on the surface of one of the spinning chunks of rock.

"Damn I know I have the password somewhere," Harriman states as he digs through his wallet and pocket.

"Maybe you used your mother's maiden name," Davis states as he sweats profusely.

"Allstar-II detects eight warheads in all. Reentering now," A tech calls out.

"Try Elizabeth. That was my wife's name," Harriman states.

The tech types the name in and the exhales.

"Presidential approval accepted. Patriot defense grid coming online."

"Mr. President please watch this bank of monitors to your left," Davis states relieved.

Harriman watches as the monitors show CCTV footage of Patriot launchers

firing their missiles. Another screen shows a computerized representation of the Patriot's trajectory with yellow arrows and the descent of the eight SCUD warheads depicted as bright red lines.

"First Patriots should be intercepting them just about...now," Davis calls out after checking a nearby laptop.

Suddenly, all of the red lines vanish.

"What the hell just happened?" Davis demands as he types furiously at his console.

"We've lost them," a tech shouts.

"What..wait..where...how many?" Davis asks.

"All of them. They've vanished off scopes," a tech replies.

"That can't be. What could've caused that?" Assistant Commander Reynolds asks.

"Could be mechanical failure. The SCUD's never did have a good record. Maybe the heat reflective coating was probably bad on the warheads and they burned up during reentry. But all eight warheads. I can't believe even the Soviets could screw up that badly," Davis quips.

Reynolds picks up a satellite phone.

“Get me a link to central. I want to know which countries had satellites in the vicinity of the SCUDS. I need it pronto,” Reynolds barks into the phone.

Davis turn to President Harriman.

“Well, it looks like we caught a break Mr. President if you could call it that. It won’t take long for the Iraqis to see that the warheads were duds,” Davis states.

“I just got a call from SATCOM. They show no retaliatory actions by Iraq right now. I don’t think they know themselves what happened.” Reynolds informs.

“I’m going to go back to my room and thank god a few dozen times,” Harriman states as he leaves the command center.

“With any luck maybe, we’ll be able to leave this bunker soon,” Davis adds as he shows Harriman out.

About three hours later, Harriman is laying on his bed lost in thought. Scruffy is eating out of his bowl in the kitchen. On the monitors, the various global newscasts now forgot about the lost MIG squadron and were concentrating on the failed Iraqi SCUD attack. Harriman picks up one of the remotes and raises the volume.

“.... Leaders across the globe are blaming President Harriman and accusing him of provoking this attack on the U.S,” CNN reports.

Another channel, 24 – 7 News, states: “Scientists are baffled as to what happened to the Iraqi warheads as they approached the United States. Some military officials who chose to speak off-the-record to 24/7 News say that the Pentagon has classified footage from a North Korea spy satellite showing exactly what happened. Pentagon officials would neither confirm or deny the existence of the footage,” the reporter rambles on.

Confused, Harriman picks one of the banks of phones on his desk and pushes an extension.

“What are they talking about? What footage?”

“Apparently, we’ve got a leak in the Press Room. Media’s got it all wrong, Mr. President. It’s not from North Korea. It’s from Japan and it’s not from a spy satellite. The footage was taken by a Japanese telecommunications satellite that belongs to Nippon TV Network,” Davis states.

“How long will it take to acquire it?” Harriman inquires with desperation in his voice.

“Not long. I’ve got someone on it, Mr. President,” Davis quickly states.

“Keep me informed.” Harriman hangs up the phone.

Just then, Harriman notices the lights in the room begin to dim. He quickly stands up and feels a queasy feeling like everything is slowing down. He stares at the digital clock radio on his night stand and notices that the two dots between the hour and minutes take more than sixty seconds to blink sixty times.

Once again, as before, the images on the TV monitors began to slow down. A loud buzzing sound fills the room and Harriman covers his ears with his hands as the sound becomes overwhelming.

That strange, orange glow illuminates the bedroom. Suddenly, a disturbance appears like a tear in a piece of paper.

Harriman covers his eyes as the light begins to burn his retinas. He struggles to look into the light and can barely see what appear to be some sort of a conference room with a number of the Interdimensional beings seated at what appears to be a rectangular table and some are standing. All of them are staring at him through the rift. The leader, known to President Harriman only as One, steps through the tear. Quickly, the separation seals itself.

“You saw what we did,” One states coldly.

“Yes. I witnessed it first hand in the war room,” Harriman states calmly.

“So, then you see that I speak truth to you. Loan us the humans and we will continue to defend this planet. Choose not to abide and my shipmates and I will leave your star system forever, but then you will be on your own. The choice is yours.”

One approaches Harriman until he is practically on top of him. Harriman averts his eyes from the blinding glow.

“We will return on your so-called Christmas Day to take the beings we choose. Are you sure you and your fellow Earth dwellers are prepared for us?”

“Yes,” Harriman states.

There is a short pause. Neither Harriman nor One speak.

“A vague feeling tells me that you are lying, but no matter, The truth will be revealed soon enough,” One states chillingly.

Before One vanished, a thought shoots like a bullet through Harriman’s mind. If he did want to reveal these creatures to someone else and share this experience, he would need to be able to contact the Interdimensionals before they

could open communications with him. Before they returned on the 25th. He was taking a chance in asking this, but it was worth a shot.

That strange feeling was coming over him again. Everything in the room was slowing down. The interdimensional rift was opening and One was preparing to depart.

“Wait!” Harriman blurts out.

“Suppose I need to...suppose I have to speak to you. You always contact me, but what do I do if I need to contact you first?” Harriman blurts out attempting to sound innocently scared.

One begins to move towards the open portal, then stops.

A glowing orange hand smooth like a vinyl glove and similar to a human hand, but with six digits extends towards Harriman with a reach far beyond that of a homosapien's arm. The hand opens revealing a quartz-like blue colored stone.

“Grasp this stone in your palm when you must speak with me,” One states simply.

Harriman slowly takes the stone from One's palm. The stone is not very large, but feels denser than its size.

Without another minute's delay, One steps into the open portal leading back to the command ship. Through the opening, Harriman could see various other Interdimensionals peering at him as if they were studying a monkey caged in some intergalactic zoo.

They appeared to all be basically the same in shape and body structure. Some seem to be taller and thinner than One, but they all moved in the same manner. The dazzling light aura around each creature made it impossible for the human eye to discern details. Vaguely, Harriman could make out some features of the command ships interior; he saw what appeared to be controls, but with no buttons or computer screens of any sort. He spotted one Interdimensional touching the liquid-like panels with his palms.

One steps through and in a split second the opening closes behind him.

Exhausted from the experience, Harriman places the stone in his pocket, collapses on the bed, and falls asleep.

Myr-ra enters Jir-ra private chamber. Jir-ra is staring into a screen made of liquid light. The device is displaying images of Earth.

“Is it important, Myr-ra?” Jir-ra asks without glancing up from the images

“Yes. We believe that an orbiting Earth-made device...crude as it may be... may have photographed one of our portals,” Myr-ra states.

“Shall I have it...absorbed?” Myr-ra adds.

“Yes. We don’t want to arouse their suspicion before time.”

The Japanese communication satellite rotates a tiny antenna towards the Pacific Ocean, preparing to transmit its data load for the day. Suddenly, a portal appears and the satellite is pulled in. The portal folds closed.

Still attempting to transmit text and photos to its base in Tokyo, the media satellite tumbles end over end towards a new planet being created in another star system millions of light years from where it was a second ago.

Five hours later Harriman begins to groggily come to. One of the TV screen bolted to the wall above him is broadcasting a new report from U.K. News Hour. The female reporter speaks rapidly as video showing Russia troops and mobile missile launchers plays on the TV monitors.

“This is Dawn Livingston speaking to you from the news center here at

Gray Studios in the heart of London. U.S. spy satellites and drones continue to transmit back images of continued and frenzied Russian troop and missile battery relocation. After the failed ICBM attack on the United States which took place two days ago, Russian forces are preparing to launch a second strike.”

“President Harriman has not been seen in public for nearly forty-eight hours and continues to work from the Presidential bunker according to sources close to the White House Press team.”

Mary O’Connor, the President’s Press Secretary, has commented that the President is well aware of all developments.” The U.K. reporter goes off.

He was sure that he was awake when One departed, but he hears that odd buzzing sound again. He feels queasy and the room seems to spin. The various news feed screens all go to white noise. One is returning, but why? Could it be they figured out that Harriman had lied to them? That he had no intention of allowing them to kidnap thousands of humans to work on their home world. What would the Interdimensionals do to him? What form of torture, imprisonment, or death did they have in store for him?

The Interdimensionals

Harriman rubs his eyes at the blinding light as he sees the blur of a figure step through the gap.

“I guess you know that I am not going to allow you to take humans to your home world. I’m sorry, but the American people will not be removed from their own soil for a reason such as this.”

Harriman swallows as his mouth goes dry from the tension.

“If someone must die, then kill me and spare them,” Harriman pleads.

For a few seconds, nothing happens.

“You’ve done well. I have to admit, it is more than I expected from you,” a female voice replies back.

Harriman slowly opens his eyes which were squeezed tightly shut.

The illumination is so strong that his eyes begin to tear. Harriman quickly recognizes the creature as the Interdimensional which accompanied One on his initial visit to him.

“You were here the first time they came,” Harriman states calmly.

“You are observant,” the female visitor replies curtly.

“Why are you here?” Harriman demands, “Where is One?”

“The one you refer to as One is called Jirr-ra. His associate is called Myr-ra.

I am called by my people Kirr-ra. In our language, my name translates as hope deliverer.” The being states coldly and without emotion.

Harriman attempts to speak, but he cannot utter a word.

“You must have many questions. Suffice it to say that Jirr-ra has lied to you. The part he told you about taking people from Earth to our home world is true, but he is not planning on just removing a select few.”

Harriman waits to hear the answer.

“He intends to take all human life from this world. Billions will be transported to our home. He has no intention of returning them,” Kirr-ra explains in that same antiseptic manner.

“I knew it!” Harriman speaks through clenched teeth.

“Our planet was once peaceful, Earth unit. We wanted nothing more than to live in harmony with the universe. We built no weapons, we started no conflicts. Jirr-ra was our leader and we followed him valiantly,” Kirr-ra explains.

“But then our world was visited by another race. These creatures which we called Warzak’s claim to have been peace loving beings and promised Jirr-ra that they wanted nothing more than to coexist on our home planet with us.”

“The Warzak’s claimed that their planet, a small moon orbiting a larger body, had been devastated by eons of unrest with another race living on a neighboring satellite.”

Kirr-ra pauses as if remembering some past hurt.

“My mate, Jirr-ra, was a naïve man –loving, but innocent in the evil ways of the universe. He invited the Warzak’s to our world and shared with them the secret of interdimensional travel.”

There is another pause as Kirr-ra recalls the bitter past.

“The Warzak’s quickly mastered interdimensionality and used the technique against us. Most of our best leaders and warriors were transported off the planet onto the Warzak’s barren moon home world and enslaved or simply murdered. Tens of thousands of Warzak shock troops invaded our world and gutted the planet in a matter of days.”

“Jirr-ra saved us, though. He organized what remained of our meager forces and used our interdimensional powers to send the Warzak’s into deep space where they

perished in the airless environment. However, the war left Jirr-ra angry so now he searches the universe for warring planets, intervenes in their conflict, then transports the war weary beings to our planet. They are put to work in endless labor restoring our ravaged world until they die or are killed by Myr-ra's soldiers. Jir-ra is obsessed with exacting this vengeance on the known solar systems until he feels that our planet has been restored to its original grandeur. He has become very much like the Warzak beings he so detested." Kirr-ra's tone changes, becoming ominous.

"You have wrought this history on yourself Earth being. Your people and their culture of war have written their own epitaph."

Kirr-ra extends her hand,

"There is something I want you to see Earth unit. Hold my hand and walk with me. Make haste for our time is short."

Harriman glances at his laptop and sees the webcam is still not picking up the Interdimensionals image. He has an idea. He quickly grabs the mouse and changes the webcam's frame rate from 18 frames per second down to 5. He pulls down the

print menu and clicks the command to send hard copy prints to his LaserJet printer.

Without a word, he walks zombie-like towards the being known as Kirr-ra.

Kirr-ra tightens her grip on his hand and the two of them are suddenly surrounded by an energy bubble that glows a blinding yellow. In an instant, a tear opens in time and space which Kirr-ra leads Harriman into and the two vanish from Harriman's residence.

The webcam continues photographing and all that can be heard are Harriman's various TV screens.

Harriman closes his eyes tightly as he is enveloped in white light. He can feel his physical body moving through something, but when he opens his eyes he can see nothing, but white all around him as a faint humming fills his ears.

Suddenly, the light subsides and it does not take Harriman long to figure out where he is. He recognizes the strange control panels that he glimpsed through the portal when One and his assistant visited him. Interdimensional beings walk about staring out through large glass windows.

"I'm on their ship," Harriman mutters.

“Yes,” Kirr-ra replies.

“But how? They can’t see us?” Harriman asks in a panic.

“Not while you are in the protective bubble I have set about us, Kirr-ra replies.

Kirr-ra glances around the mothership’s bridge.

“You must find a way to destroy this ship!” Kirr-ra demands.

“It is the only way you can save your world now.” Kirr-ra adds.

Harriman seems awash in confusion.

“Destroy it How ? In order to do that, I would have to tell my associates of its existence. They would never believe me. They would impeach me and put me away in a sanitarium.” Harriman cries.

“You must find a way! Hurry! We cannot remain in the sphere much longer!”

Harriman reaches into his shirt pocket and finds a small pencil and Post-It notes left over from the philanthropy dinner he hosted at the White House. He recalls he was using it to put names on the table settings.

Without pausing another moment, he walks closer to one of the panoramic viewing windows along the command center of the ship. The window is huge,

giving Harriman an unimpeded view of the Earth below. Quickly, he sketches some of the constellations visible near the ship's orbit. He hurriedly draws a crude diagram of the ship in position to the sun, moon, and Earth as well as star patterns. It's a last-ditch effort, but it's Harriman's and humanity's only hope.

Kirr-ra walks closer to him.

"We must leave now." Kirr-ra replies coldly.

Harriman stuffs the Post-Its in his pocket.

"I'm ready."

"I wish you well, Earth being." Kirr-ra replies almost with a sense of sadness.

"But if I do find a way to destroy this ship...what...what will happen to you? You'll be killed along with the rest of them." Harriman replies with concern.

"Your care touches me, Earth unit, but I will manage an escape." Kirr-ra states.

Kirr-ra moves even closer to Harriman. The Interdimensional being on board the ship continues to go about their business of navigating the mammoth cruiser oblivious to the two interlopers.

"There is one thing you must remember. This ship only remains camouflaged

when Jirr-ra and the others are not travelling through dimensions. In order to target the ship, you must force Jirr-ra to leave the ship. Then, the ship will exit its stealth mode. The only way to do that is to summon him. He will have to bring the ship out of its hidden veil in order to travel interdimensionally.” Kirr-ra informs.

Before Harriman can respond or ask another question, the portal splits open and in a blinding flash of white light, he is back in his private room in the underground bunker at the White House.

A desktop phone buzzes.

“Yes.” Harriman answers.

“Security officer Malley, Mr. President. Everything alright in there. I thought I heard some noise,” Officer Malley inquires.

“Everthing’s all right,” Harriman responds.

“Scruffy knocked over his din-din,” Harriman adds.

“No problem, Mr. President. Have a pooch myself.” Malley states.

Harriman hangs up the phone and examines the photos sitting atop the printer. He

examines them. The photos show Kirr-ra, but none of them are clear. In one, Harriman appears to be standing next to an extremely bright lamp, but no details can be discerned.

Harriman places the photos in a folder and stores them in a wall safe.

He then takes the Post-It from his pocket and stares at the scribbled sketch he made onboard the Interdimensionals ship.

“So it wasn’t a dream,” Harriman states.

With the Post-It in hand, he rushes over to his desk and shuffles through a number of heavy hardcover books on his shelves. He slides out one black book which has printed on the spine: STARCHARTS & CONSTELLATIONS UPDATED 2/2/2032.

Harriman flips wildly through the glossy pages until he comes to a page that reads: CONSTELLATIONS: NAVIAGTION & COORDINATES.

He holds the sketch of the stars next to the charts in the book until he determines where approximately the ship is in orbit above Earth. He hurriedly scribbles down a set of coordinates on another Post-It.

“God I hope this is right,” Harriman pleads.

Harriman picks up a handset from his desk.

“This is the President. I want a secure line to Jack Armstrong, the Director of the Department of Defense. Authorization code Alpha Beta Zeta Epsilon Theta. This is a Code Red Emergency so ---“

Harriman stops in mid-sentence.

He remembers what Jirr-ra had said. He was not to tell another living soul about this deal he had made with the Interdimensionals. What they might do to the human race if they found out what was going to do would be anybody’s guess.

Solemnly and reluctantly, Harriman reverts to a slower speech.

“Uh that’s a negative on that. Uh-Code Red is cancelled. Thank you.”

Harriman closes the phone call.

Harriman gets up and paces his bedroom.

The phone buzzes.

“Yes”. Harriman answers.

“Mr. President this is Shaun Foley. Just wanted to inform you that the Russians

have begun to withdraw their forces from Siberia and Ukraine. Looks like they owned up to the fact that their MIGS crashed somehow and we had nothing to do with it. In about two hours, we are going to drop the DEFCON level.”

“Fine.Fine. Any word from communications on that Japanese satellite that they thought may have photographed the MIGs in flight ?” Harriman asks.

“The Japanese TV station said they are still trying to download the file. I’ll alert you if anything changes,” Foley states.

“Ok. Thanks for the update,” Harriman concludes.

Harriman starts to pace again.

He wracks his brain. How? How could I target that ship? How could I without anyone knowing?

And the answer becomes apparent. It was right in front of him all the time.

Sweating profusely and now breathing heavy, Harriman rushes over to the OMNI terminal on a separate workstation from his own. Harriman pulls the plastic vinyl dustcover off the monitor, reaches down and switches on the CPU, and sits down apprehensively in front.

The screen comes on and Harriman quickly clicks on the icon on the desktop that states: INITIATE LAUNCH.

Outside, all of the doors leading to Harriman's underground bunker automatically lock.

The security officers rush over to the door. One office tries the keycode pad.

“The keycode doesn't work. I thought our codes opened all the locks.”

“Better call Davis. Let him know Harriman's locked in.”

The icon based screen switches to basic green characters in a text based command screen.

A robovoice booms over the PC's speakers.

“Welcome to OMNI. Please enter your username and password combination in order to proceed,” the emotionless voice states.

Harriman is immediately baffled.

“Username and password –where the hell is the--?”

Then like he was hit with a thunderbolt, Harriman remembers.

The other night at the fundraiser when he was angry about the press reaction to his speech about OMNI, he threw the password card away after Mary handed it to him.

What was it she said ?

Harriman thinks.

“Keep this with you at all times,” she said prophetically.

“Damn! I threw it away ” Harriman curses to himself.

Harriman jumps out of the OMNI control chair and begins rummaging through his clothes closet. He rifles through the pockets of several pairs of trousers and sports jackets. As he looks through them, he tosses them on the floor.

“Where did I put that pass card?” Harriman states in state of confusion.

The OMNI workstation repeats coldly.

“Awaiting username and password combination. If no username/password combination is keyed in, OMNI will cease operations for 24 hours.”

Myr-ra stares out through one of the enormous viewing windows on the master ship’s command deck –the very same window Harriman looked out just

moments before.

“It is time to return to the Earthling’s leader,” Myr-ra reminds Jir-ra.

“It is of no matter. There is nothing to discuss with him. I told him we would give him till...what did he say...Christmas day...but I intend to begin the invasion today. Whether he decides or not, we will immediately begin taking humans from the planet,” Jir-ra states,

“What is Christmas Day? Some form of worship day for them,” Myr-ra asks.

“I believe so,”

“I was going to wait, but I fear these Earth creatures could discover our intent. That device you discovered which may have photographed one of our portals gave me great concern.”

“Have Myr-ra prepare our troops. In a few minutes Earth time, thousands of portals will open all across their planet and our people will enter through and take all the humans we can,” Jir-ra continues.

Jir-ra looks out at Earth below his master ship.

“It’s a beautiful planet, don’t you agree Myr-ra It will make a fine addition to

my collection. And billions of hands to assist us in rebuilding our own world,” Jir-ra states.

“Yes. One day very soon Orrla will be the crown jewel of the universe it once was. Thanks to you,” Myr-ra replies lost in thought.

“I am going to my chambers to meditate. Have the invasion force readied.”

“Yes Jir-ra.”

Harriman grabs a blue sports jacket from his closet.

“This is one the one I was wearing the night of the gala,” Harriman whispers to himself/

He reaches into the lapel pocket and finds the pass card Mary returned to him.

Carefully, he slides the white card out from its cardboard sleeve.

“Omni username POTUS...password...Elizabeth.”

In his utter rage after the press conference, Harriman was oblivious to the fact that Mary assigned his deceased ex-wife’s name as his password.

Harriman switches to his reading eyeglasses, then begins to carefully type in the username and password one key at a time.

OMNI is silent for a few seconds which seem like an eternity to Harriman.

“Username and password accepted,” OMNI replies.

Harriman wipes the perspiration from his brow and nearly collapses in the chair in front of the OMNI terminal.

“What is it you wish to do, President Harriman?” OMNI inquires.

Harriman is breathing heavy and can hardly speak from the tension.

“There is a ship...an alien ship in Earth orbit. I wish to destroy it.”

“Request understood. Please stand by. Switching to targeting systems.”

Almost immediately, a large monitor on the wall above the terminal powers on with a split screen. The left screen shows a video image of the OMNI satellite in orbit above North America while the right side shows outer space.

“Do you wish to use thermonuclear warheads or conventional ?”

“Conventional.” Harriman states barely at a whisper as he catches his breath.

“OMNI can launch up to 25 missiles at one time with an auto reload of ten more. Do you wish all 25 missiles to be launched at one target in succession ”

“Yes. All twenty-five.”

“Please enter target coordinates.” OMNI coolly responds.

Harriman strains to read his hurried scribbling on the Post-It note containing the coordinates he calibrated from looking at the star charts.

There is a short pause.

“Coordinates invalid. No physical target at this intersection,” OMNI responds.

Harriman begins to panic. Thinking he has misread the star charts he starts to go back to the books on his shelf then pauses.

“What did Kirr-ra say?” Harriman recalls like trying to remember a dream.

“The master ship is in stealth mode. The only way to see it with the naked eye is you must summon Jirr-ra to appear before you. The ship must exit stealth mode for him to travel through the dimensional portal.”

Then, Harriman remembers the crystal shard Jirr-ra gave him.

He grasps the shard in his palm and thinks that he must speak with him

urgently.

On board the master ship, Myrr-ra is preparing for the invasion Jir-ra has been planning. Before him on a view screen is a sprawling map of the Earth. Red glowing points mark where openings will appear for the attack. Suddenly, another light on his control console winks on and off.

He quickly leaves the console and moves down the corridor till he is at Jir-ra's private quarters.

"Yes Myr-ra. What is it it " Jir-ra asks while deep in meditative thought.

"I apologize for interrupting you, but the Earth leader you initiated contact with now wishes to speak to *you*," Myr-ra states with confidence.

"Perhaps he wishes to capitulate," Myrr-ra adds.

"That would be wonderful. We can start taking humans on board the ship immediately and then we have earned their trust we will take them all."

Jir-ra states.

A portal opens and Jir-ra step through.

Almost simultaneously, another exit portal splits open in Harriman's

underground bunker. Jirr-ra steps through.

Harriman can see Myr-ra watching through the entry portal in Jir-ra's meditation chamber. If Harriman did not know better, he's thought the ruthless military assistant to Jir-ra was beaming.

"You summoned me Earth being," Jir-ra states.

As the exit opening seals shut, Harriman does not answer Jir-ra, but instead looks up at the screen showing the OMNI satellite's view of the area of space that matched the coordinates Harriman keyed in.

First, there is nothing but the solitary vastness of the cosmos with just the Moon visible.

Then, in an eye blink, the huge master ship shimmers into view with its stealth covering lifted.

Despite his situation, Harriman is almost breathless at the site of the vessel. Enormous, staggering in its length it resembles a city like New York or Los Angeles floating like a citadel in orbit.

Harriman recatches his breath.

Jir-ra follows Harriman's line of sight and sees his ship on the screen. He also sees the split image showing the OMNI satellite with its missile bay doors wide open.

“WHY YOU FOOL ! Jir-ra screams.

Harriman poises his finger over the ENTER key.

“And the rockets red glare,” he whispers ominously.

Harriman jabs down the ENTER button. On the wall mounted screen, OMNI begins firing its twenty-five rockets. In a matter of seconds, all twenty-five have left their support arms inside the satellite and are quickly accelerating towards the interdimensional ship.

“All missiles launched, President Harriman.:

“Ten seconds till first projectile impact,” OMNI states.

“YOU INSOLENT HUMAN! YOU CREATURE BORN FROM
PRIMORDIAL OOZE! HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR STEALTH
CAPABILITY AND HOW ---“

Jir-ra stops in mid thought.

“KIR-RA!” He screams out in utter rage.

Jir-ra opens up a travel vortex and moves the tunnel around Harriman’s room towards him. The spinning funnel sucks in everything from the room: clothing, furniture, phones spark as they are yanked from their wall sockets, TV screens explode as they are pulled from their wall mounts and sucked into the void. Fluorescent tubes are sucked from their fixtures, explode into a shower of white sparks and then disappear into the open void. A desk chair flies across the bunker, strikes Harriman in the back, knocking him to the floor, and then is sucked into the open dimensional portal.

“I’LL DESTROY BOTH OF YOU!” Jir-ra rants maniacally.

Jir-ra sends a mental message to Myr-ra.

“Quickly, restore the stealth mode. The human has launched some kind of devices at the ship! Hurry!”

Instantly, the ship vanishes from the screens again.

Noticing the ship’s disappearance. Harriman taunts Jir-ra.

“It’s too late.” Harriman whispers weak from the onslaught Jir-ra has launched

against him.

A portal opens and Jir-ra steps into it.

“I’ll deal with you later human slime,” Jir-ra spits out as he returns to his ship.

A young technician at NORAD stares at a printout he just pulled from a nearby printer. He looks at the paper, then his monitor, then back at the paper in disbelief.

He picks up a phone and punches in a 3 digit extension.

“Yeah this is O’Neill. Could you take a look at something ?” The tech states concerned.

“I’m in the middle of something with DOD. What is it ?” The manager replies.

“Well, at 0700 hours the radar picked up something...something rather large I should add at around 200 miles out.”

“Could be the ISS ? Did you check with NASA?”

“Can’t be unless the ISS changed its position within the last few hours.”

“Anything else on it.”

“Yeah...at 0700 hours and five minutes it vanished off all our screens.”

Outside of the bunker's main door, Harriman's chief assistant, Davis, rushes in.

"What's the hell is happening?" He yells.

"President Harriman's locked himself in. None of my codes will open the door," the security chief states exasperatedly.

David inspects the door lock.

"That's because Harriman's activated OMNI," he concludes.

"OMNI? What does that have to do with the door locks? The security chief replies annoyed.

"It's a special defense system...only the President can operate it. It's designed to be used only by him in case terrorist factions have overtaken the government and the military can't be relied upon to launch an attack," Davis explains.

An Army private rushes up Davis and the security chief.

"Got a cutting crew on the way," he states calmly.

"Cancel them," Davis states. "That door lock is impenetrable and it won't release until OMNI has destroyed its intended target."

Jir-ra studies a screen showing the progress of OMNI's missiles.

"They are getting closer, Jir-ra," Myr-ra states.

"We thought that because of their diminutive size they couldn't contain much propellant and would run out of energy," Myr-ra adds knowing he has disappointed his commander.

Jir-ra ponders the situation for a moment.

"This ship is not equipped to engage any enemy, not even theirs. I don't wish to fight them. Open a portal and get us home, immediately!" Jir-ra screams.

"We've already started, but your trip just now to the surface drained the reserves of our trans dimensional power. We have to wait till –"

Jir-ra cuts Myr-ra off.

"I KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS YOU USELES FOOL! KIR-RA TOLD THEM ABOUT OUR STEALTHING WEAKNESS!"

Myr-ra stands shocked. The rest of the crew looks up from their liquid screens.

"Kir-ra How can that be ?" Myr-ra states disbelievingly.

"She must have gone to the surface without our knowledge," Jir-ra adds.

“Why would she do that ” Myr-ra replies.

“I intend to find out,” Jir-ra states.

“But what of the missiles?” Myr-ra cries out.

A portal rips open, Jir-ra steps in, and emerges in Kir-ra’s private chamber.

“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! Jir-ra shouts.

“WHY DID YOU DO THIS?! He adds.

“Because I want the universe to be the way it once was. Our world was a civilized domain...we were a loving race. You’ve distorted us and turn us into slavers and conquerors,” Kir-ra replies calmly.

Jir-ra starts to move closer to her, the illumination around him warping from amber to a blood red.

But, just as he gets close to her, Kir-ra opens a portal and steps through, vanishing in an instant.

Suddenly, the ship shudders violently.

Enraged, Jir-ra portals back to the command level.

“One missile has struck our aft section,” Myr-ra reports.

“The portal is opening now!” Another member of the crew shouts out.

“Take us home, Myr-ra. We will have to depart in defeat, but we shall return to this world and make them pay!” Jir-ra forewarns.

Outside the ship, a massive portal tears open in space, Another galaxy containing Orrla, its moon, and sun are visible. The master ship rapidly moves into the orifice. Just as the craft enters the opening, OMNI’S mosquito like missile tailgate the enormous craft just before the tear reseals itself.

“We are through, but the Earth weapons have followed us here!” Myr-ra states excitedly.

Before Myr-ra can utter another word, two more missile strike the metal outer skin of the ship. It rocks back and forth, then stabilizes.

“The damage their causing to the hull is minimal, but if enough of them strikes us or hit our propulsion ---Myr-ra trails off.

“Can we absorb some of them into portals?” Jir-ra asks.

Myr-ra is silent.

“Well, can we ?

“It will take some time for the energy buildup,” Myr-ra finally states.

“Let’s try!” Jir-ra replies as he stares out the viewport at the sun rising over the horizon of Orrla’s biggest metropolis.

Harriman is in such pain he cannot move and writhes on the carpeted floor of the bunker. Blood oozes from a gash on his forehead where he was struck by some the flying debris as a result of Jir-ra’s tirade.

One of the OMNI linked monitors switches to a vector line schematic of the Interdimensional master ship; the wireframe replica rotates 360 degrees.

“Based on my analysis of the target’s size and mass, conventional warheads are not causing sufficient damage. Request user authorization to switch warheads to thermonuclear tipped.”

There is a pause.

“N-No OMNI. Wh-what about radiation?”

“Target craft is no longer in Earth orbit. Target currently at position and orbit in unknown solar system. Zero danger of fallout drifting to Earth’s surface.”

OMNI adds.

Harriman hears OMNI, but only moans in pain as a response.

“User reply is not decipherable,” OMNI shoots back.

Harriman attempts to speak, but cannot.

“President unable to make decision. OMNI initiating emergency override. Converting next inbound missile to 5 megaton warhead. ETA till impact and detonation....6 seconds.”

“Jir-ra...portals opening.” Myr-ra happily yells out.

Jir-ra seems pleased as he sees several small tears opening in the reddish sky of his home world of Orrla. The openings quickly swallow up several of the dart-like missiles.

Jir-ra would have almost celebrated the tiny victory if it wasn't for one missile coming towards the ship on a completely different trajectory than the rest.

With the missile racing across Orrla's sky so rapidly Jir-ra couldn't be sure, but it appeared as if two tiny robotic appendages mounted to the sides of the rocket unscrewed the nose cone and replaced it with a somewhat larger one.

The missile does not strike the ship, but rather follows very closely alongside.

So close Jir-ra could read something imprinted on its fuselage.

“ Proudly made...in the U.S.A.” Jir-ra verbalizes the words aloud.

Then, the missile detonates.

The force of the explosion is so great that it tears the mastership in half at the its midsection.

Jir-ra and the others on the command level are vaporized by the atomic wave before they can form escape portals.

The two sections of the crippled ship slowly spiral down through the heavily polluted atmosphere of Orrla. Interdimensionals are sucked out of the breached areas of the ship. Some create portals that appear in the Orrla sky, but they are unable to get to as they tumble towards the surface.

“The targeted craft has been severely damaged and is about to crash. Would you like to see?” OMNI inquires of Harriman.

Harrimann can barely get out the word.

“Y-y-yes. Show me.” Harriman utters just above a whisper.

“Initiating on-board camera.”

Harriman struggles in pain to turn his gaze towards the wall mounted screens linked to OMNI. One monitor switches to what appears to be a view from the front of one of the remaining missiles.

Harriman can see the two halves of the ship plummeting to the ground. As the missile gets closer in proximity to the torn apart ship, Harriman can make out details of the planet’s surface.

Just like Kir-ra had told him, the planet was a burned out hulk. Even from several hundred feet up, Harriman could see the land was scorched from bomb blasts and littered with craters most likely as a result of the war with the Warzaks.

Harriman can see beings moving about on the ground; at first, they are blurred, but when OMNI sharpens the image, Harriman gasps.

Thousands upon thousands of what appear to be humanoid-like beings from another star system who made the fatal error of trusting Jir-ra all chained together being led down into a what appears to be a pit of molten lava. Further down the cavern, some are already working carving out the volcanic rock and digging what

appear to be foundations for future structures. Interdimensionals stand guard every few feet as they toil.

This is what Jir-ra had in mind for the human race. Enslaving humanity to rebuild his shattered home world.

The front half of the enormous ship plows into a cluster of what appear to be cement-like structures. The structures collapse into a cloud of billowing gray smoke right before what remains of the ship detonates into a massive fireball.

The back half of the ship continues to spin downward trailing black smoke and flames until it plummets into Orrla's turbulent ocean and sinks without a trace. Several strange, unearthly sea creatures speed away from the sinking wreckage.

The image from the missile abruptly changes to white noise as the missile, with no programmed target remaining, self-destructs.

"Targeted craft has been obliterated." OMNI informs matter-of-factly.

Harriman seems to smile a bit and then passes out.

"OMNI shutting down." The targeting computer states.

All of the wall mounted screens, the desktop monitor and the CPU all

cease.

The bunker's door locks open with a resounding snap. David, Mary, along with Secret Service agents, police, and military commanders push open the door which is blocked by debris.

“My God....Mr. President...Mr. President...help me get him up.” Davis Demands.

“Quick call a med team!” A Secret Service orders.

“Somebody get some water!” Davis shouts.

General Gerrit Shawney looks around the bunker. He is aghast at what he sees. Huge chunks of the cement block wall, designed to withstand a nuclear bomb, torn out like and turned to powder.

The toilet bowl and sink pulled out with water gushing out into the room.

A fire burning in the bunker's kitchen where the stove was yanked out.

Sparks still falling from the ceiling where all the light fixtures have been pulled out.

“Good God man...what...what the hell happened in here?!” The General finally

blurts out.

Davis leans close to the President. Mary hands Davis a damp towel and Davis wipes the blood from his head wound.

“Who did this, Mr. President ? Who? Was it terrorists ?” Davis inquires.

A number of TV reporters burst through the door, push the security people aside, and shove microphones in front of Harriman.

“What happened here, Mr. President? Was it a terrorist faction ?” The reporter shouts.

“Y-yes. Terror—terror —,” Harriman replies just to placate the media. He is too weak to finish.

Davis stands up waving his arm.

“Security get these media people out of here. There are no press people permitted in the Presidential bunker.”

The White House med team rushed in and begins to place Harriman on a stretcher,

“T-talk to DOD...the Japanese s-ss-sat—it will show wh-what h-happened,”

Harriman’s voice trails off as he is lifted by five medics onto the stretcher.

“I will Mr. President. You just recover. We’ll get to the bottom of this.” Davis assures him.

General Shawney observes.

“If it was terrorists, how in hell did they get in here ? And what in God’s name did he shoot at with OMNI ?” The General states perplexed.

Davis is baffled as he watches the med team as they carry Harriman out of the bunker to a waiting ambulance. He wants to tell the General his thoughts, but cannot think of what to say.

High above these events, orbiting the Earth at 200 miles up, the OMNI satellite reloads the twenty-five spent missiles. The tiny projectiles are moved up from the inner cavity of the satellite and locked into position. Satisfied that everything is as it once was and its mission is completed, OMNI closes its front doors, obscuring the missile battery from view.

“Good evening. This is Roger Tomlinson at Australia Action News. It has been two weeks since the mysterious terrorist attack at the Presidential bunker that left President Harriman severely injured and still the White House has put

forth no clear explanation of what exactly transpired that day nor how such an attack could have happened. “

“The pressing question still remains: Just how did a terrorist faction infiltrate the White House during a high alert and nearly assassinate the President while he was secure in the underground bunker surrounded by guards. Also, there have been unconfirmed reports that President Harriman fired at an unknown target using the newly created OMNI defense system. Just what was targeted is a complete mystery at this point. We go now to correspondent Jeff Hauser outside the Bethesda Naval Hospital where Harriman is recuperating.”

“Thank you, Roger. Yes, President Harriman told his staffers when they found him wounded on the floor in the Presidential bunker living quarters that it was a terrorist faction, but has never specified any further details.

We do know that he told a staffer to obtain photos from a Japanese TV satellite that he believed contained some evidence that the missing MIG squadron was not weather or mechanical failure related. A DOD spokesperson just came out to tell us that that satellite has inexplicably vanished from

their scopes.”

“Thank you, Jeff. In other unrelated news, NORAD issued a press release today that a few days before Christmas eve a large object showed up on NORAD radar seemingly in Earth orbit. A NORAD representative went on to say that the object subsequently vanished from screens several seconds later. NORAD’s media relations department has asked that the public stop flooding their office with calls and emails asking if it was Santa Claus.”

“In other news, inflation has climbed again this week according to a report issued by the Consumer Price Commission...”

Somewhere in deep space, what remains of the three MIGS tumbles towards a new star. The debris is followed by tables, chairs, and papers from the Presidential bunker. A series of photos printed on Harriman’s printer hover for a few minutes in the vacuum. The photos his webcam took of Kir-ra are almost impossible to discern. Photos of Elizabeth, his late wife, drift about as well. Several undetonated missiles from OMNI spin head-over-heels. The Japanese communications satellite rotates wildly out-of-control still attempting to make contact with its Tokyo owners. Dead Interdimensionals who entered their travel portals too late float about.

All of these float about a few seconds, then are pulled into the new star's orbit and are gone from view.

Kir-ra finds herself on a hilltop looking out over a completely alien landscape. A red sun rises in the distance while two moons with multicolored rings are visible in the sky. In her haste to escape from Jir-ra's rage, she neglected to plot her course or her exit point. She looks around with no idea where in the universe she is.

She notices a flock of what appear to be birds, but look more like bats when they fly overhead. She walks to the edge of the hill and looks down on a meadow that could almost been from the mid- West United States. Through the white aura surrounding her, she sees what resemble cows, but are reptilian in nature grazing on an odd looking grass-like plant. Other than these few creatures which seem passive enough, she sees no other life.

She could open a transit portal to another part of the planet or even another System, but without the master ships energy stores to draw from, she will have to wait until she has stored up enough power to make another opening.

No matter.

She has all the time in the world now.

THE END

