

I was just a tech. I didn't think I was *that* important. Somehow, I got tasked with writing the report on the war that never should have happened – especially the way it did. I was told to make it as simple as possible and in a language that everyone could easily understand.

I didn't want to be involved – at least not as involved as I became. I had no idea that working on conspiracy theories would lead to this. If I had just kept my mouth shut and head down, I'm wondering if it would have still happened the way it did.

I'm going to be blunt, I'm not good at writing reports. It will probably end up sounding like one of those weird sci-fi stories. Don't blame me for that. I didn't want to see what I saw. I still have trouble believing that there are people on Earth that are that ignorant.

My name is Frank Rain - and this is what I know about the Tantalum Incursion. I'll start from where it began for me.

CHAPTER 1

I suppose it started in the mid-90s. I had just moved to Lexington, Kentucky. My parents were immigrants and always told people they worked for the government. And they did in one way or another. As a kid, I never paid that much attention.

I was a teenager then. And like most teenagers, I loved television. In those days, the X-files were all the rage. Watching Scully and Mulder chase down extra-terrestrials or unknown phenomenon always fascinated me. Always getting one close but almost always coming up one step short of being able to prove that something existed out there other than just us. I suppose proving there was life out there.

I always knew there was life out there. It just made more sense than an infinity of nothing. I think it was Jodie Foster in *Contact* that said, "if it is just us... seems like an awful waste of space." Or something like that anyway. I had thought that before the movie but I could never really sum it up better.

I was into all that stuff. Every extraterrestrial movie from *Star Wars* to *Star Trek* to *Star Man* and everything in-between and on both sides. All of them had at least one good point about the idea of there being something out there. I suppose that's why, when the internet came around, I got a job with the government looking for conspiracy theories about life from other planets.

My parents talked about the reports about it all the time. That was their job: collecting stories about extraterrestrial encounters. I suppose that's why I went into their field when I was old enough. We never really told anyone the specifics about it, which agency was paying us how much to search the internet and other media for "ET" encounters. We figured no one would believe us anyway. Well, no one other than the conspiracy theorists – and I suppose that's what we were: professional conspiracy theorists.

Not a bad job if you can get it.

The internet was an absolute boon to our business. Before it was gathering newspapers from around the world and then tracking down the people in the articles and then interviewing them, their neighbors, their friends, their co-workers. Long and tedious. Lots of travel. And don't get me started on the phone bills.

The internet was so much easier. Compile articles automatically. Do research online to verify the credibility of the sighting. Email instead of phone calls. Granted, a lot of the emails went unanswered, but that was okay since we had a majority, or at least enough, of the information already.

We were assigned a certain type of encounter to look for. I always assumed that there were others out there looking for other types. We didn't do cattle mutilations or abductions involving probes. We looked for genuine, up-close, sightings by aircraft and what my parents called "blinks."

It was a good a name as any. And it made sense. A "blink" would be when someone disappeared from point A and reappeared at point B, usually with a considerable amount of time between sightings. The catch with these is that the person who disappeared wouldn't have aged. We didn't really investigate until the reappearance. If they reappeared 20-years later and looked 20-years older, then it wasn't a "blink," it was a regular kidnapping or runaway or something with a definite terrestrial origin.

Let me give you an example of a "blink." I got this video from the 'net. It wasn't online long before someone took it down. I'm pretty sure it wasn't supposed to be on YouTube, what with it being an official interrogation room video. Check this out. It's from a kid they found in Kentucky a few months ago.

I'll tell you everything I know. I never did like the name. I mean, I know that's what it is, and all. Dictionary says a "shaft" is "a long, narrow hole that gives access to a mine," but that's just doesn't do this one justice. It's not just a long, narrow hole. It's dark. And not just dark but soul sucking dark. The kind of dark that scares you as a little kid.

And this did scare me as a kid.

I grew up here in Shafton, Kentucky. I'm told it's always been a mining town. Pop said that the founders wanted to call it Shafttown, but they were all so poor, they couldn't afford a "W." And most of the people here worked in the mine. Most of the people I knew, anyway. Not the kids. I'm really glad we had laws against that.

Because that shaft.

I always felt like it was a living thing. Just waiting to swallow people up. Sometimes it did. They'd always call it a "cave in" or "mining accident." I knew that it didn't make any sense. Why did some people just go in and never come back out again? No body or nothing.

Randy Cartwright always tricked and teased me about it. I guess some would say bullying me. He would tell me stories about the monsters that lived in the shaft. Some scared me more than others. He was older than me. About three years. His family was just as poor as mine. And when he was old enough, he went to work in the mines. His third day, there was one of those "accidents." They said that Randy was caught in a blast meant to make the mine bigger. It just made *him* smaller.

Even the word “mine” is wrong. It’s not mine. It’s not even theirs, the people who work in it. It belongs to the Silvers family. Most of what’s around here belongs to them. The McDonald’s. The K-Mart. The Piggly Wiggly. People around here work in the mine and bring up tons of coal. None of it they get to keep. The Silvers pay them. And then the money gets spent at the local stores where it goes right back into the Silvers’ pockets. Doesn’t seem right, does it?

It’s not a mine. It’s theirs. The Silvers.

And it’s not a shaft... it’s a demon.

That’s why I was dreading my 16th birthday. People thought I was weird because they thought I liked school. I didn’t really like school, that much. I liked that I got to go there, instead of the shaft. Becky Danvers knew how I felt. I always thought she was lucky. They didn’t let girls work in the mines. I envied her. I don’t think I wanted to *be* a girl. I just wanted to opportunity to not work in the mine – and have to travel down the shaft.

But when my 16th came around, I accepted it as much like a man as I could. I didn’t go to school. I got “permission” from the Silvers to work in their mine. They needed more coal and I was of age. I was given three coal miners outfits, a pair of gloves, and a helmet as a “present.” That’s all they gave you when you start in the mines. If you needed more, you had to buy them – from the Silvers, of course.

The pay – it’s all an illusion. Everyone in the town knew that. But no one could afford to move anywhere else. I guess it’s like slavery, just with money you get to hold for a very limited time. I guess there’s very little in the way of whipping so it’s a little better in the short run. But working in the mine, with the blackness and disease the people get from working down there, black lung, mostly, it’s the long run that will kill you.

My first day, standing in line at the entrance to the shaft, I tried to be calm. I tried to be cool. But inside, I was scared to death. I guess it showed since Mr. McTierney started teasing me. He was telling me that the shaft was just going to gobble me up. He said I had no business in the shaft. I was too young. Too green, whatever that means. He said I should take the easy way out and go into the army. Maybe go off and fight in a war because only *men* go down into the shaft and I was just a boy.

A man I had never seen before stepped between us. He wasn’t wearing a miner’s outfit. He was wearing a suit and tie. And he was clean. No one else here had a clean suit. Even my suit had scuff marks on it already, and it was new – first time wearing it. He told McTierney to back off, and, surprisingly, he did. Backed right down. After he gave McTierney a good dressing down, he left and the whistle to start the shift began. We all began to march into the shaft. Behind me, I heard someone say that I was “lucky,” and “Mr. Silver never does that.”

So, that was Mr. Silver. I’d never met any of the Silvers before. I felt good for a moment. Maybe there was something about me that was special that the Silvers saw. Maybe I wouldn’t work in the mines forever. Maybe there was a way out.

Then I saw the door to the shaft. I’d never been this close before – I was too scared. There were double doors and the right side was open to let us in. The left side was still closed.

Someone painted on the door, "Here in the cave, dark and deep, I can offer you eternal sleep." All of the sudden, I didn't feel so good anymore. I knew that something was going to go wrong. I just felt it. I started sweating. I mean sweating a lot! February be damned, and it was cold outside, but I was sweating more than ever before. I heard McTierney joke about me being white as a sheet and that maybe they could use me for light down there.

As we passed the entrance and went into the shaft, the temperature changed. It was dark, so I was expecting cold. Dark is supposed to be cold, right? But it wasn't here. Hot air rushed up to greet me. That didn't help my sweating. I felt my gloves getting damp as the sweat ran down my arms. But that wasn't the worst of it.

It wasn't completely dark. The lighting on the walls barely illumin... illumin... I can never get that word... it lit up the shaft. We kept stopping and I didn't know why. I didn't know a thing about mining. I'm supposed to "learn on the job." It never occurred to me that there were different levels in the shaft. We kept stopping because there was an elevator. We were going deeper. And the edge of this rickety looking elevator had a draft that felt like the devil's breath.

When my turn came, I got on the elevator with 15 other guys and down we went. There was some light coming up from below, wherever we were going. But the light from above faded quickly. It got real dark. That soul sucking dark. This time, despite the increasing heat, I felt *cold* sweats. Maybe they were cold before. I don't know. I just knew they were cold, now!

When we hit bottom, I heard McTierney shout everybody out. Since I was one of the first ones in, I was one of the last ones out. But I never made it out. The guy in front of me, I think it was Jason Baird, big, fat guy, stepped right through the floor of the wooden elevator. One big creak and a snap and we both went through. I think there might have been a third guy, but I'm not sure.

It felt like we fell forever. Maybe we did. It wasn't long before I lost sight of the big guy. I don't know if he hit a ledge or what. I knew that if I hit ledge or a wall, I was done for. I had to be going pretty fast. I mean, there was plenty of wind in my face, or my back, or whatever. I was tumbling! I was also wondering how deep this shaft could possibly be. It couldn't be miles deep, could it? I was doubting kilometers. (We learned those in school. It's so much easier than miles.) Then I saw this light, at the bottom, I guess. It was getting bigger so it couldn't be that I was falling back up. I tried to stop tumbling and point myself at it. Then I thought, I should probably go feet first. So, I flipped over.

Part of me wasn't expecting to survive this trip through the shaft, but I wasn't scared. I'd been scared since I got the uniform this morning, but now, I was calm. I don't know what came over me. I don't know if it was the light or what, but it felt good. The light was getting bigger, or closer, I couldn't tell since I couldn't see the sides of the shaft. Then it hit me – or I hit it. Whatever.

And I was on the lawn of the school. I don't know how I got there but there I was. I was sitting on the playground, but it was different. The slide was all rusted. So were the swings and the see-saw. I stood up and looked at the school. It looked different. Older. Then I passed out.

I don't know what hit me but I woke up in the hospital. It was fancier than I remembered it. I mean, out the window, it still looked like Shafton, but brighter somehow. More electric signs, I guess. And there was this woman sitting by the edge of my bed, she said her name was Becky Coulson, but that I knew her as Becky Danvers. That didn't make any sense. I saw Becky just the day before. I didn't know who this woman was... but I suppose she did look like she could be Becky's mom.

She kept saying she knew me a long time ago, but that didn't make any sense either. I just had this feeling I needed to get away. I took those sticky things off me and pulled out the IV and just left. Look, I know this sounds weird but when you brought me in... I'd never even seen a police car that looked like that. So, officer, please. That's all I know. Can you tell me what's going on? All I can tell you, that I know, is my name is Simon Bosko. I was born February 19th, 1960 in Shafton, Kentucky. Becky said something about it being 2023, now. I don't know what's going on anymore. Can you please tell me? Where's my mom and pop? I just want to go home.

That's his story and he's right to stick to it. Simon Bosko was interrogated for about a week before they finally told him his parents died back in 2003, and that really was Becky Danvers who was looking after him in the hospital. We checked with the records of the Silvers' mining company and there was an accident on the day he mentioned and Simon Bosko disappeared into the shaft that day and was presumed dead.

Except he blinked into today. There aren't too many blinks for me to have to worry about. Simon's is the longest I have on record. There might be more but they would have been before my time. Sightings were another story. Those happened all the time. The ones on the ground were usually simple things like a satellite collision causing a bright light and odd trajectories for what people assume are stars.

That's something that amuses me. When you look into the night sky, even in a rural setting, most of what you see in the sky these days are satellites. Oh, sure, there are millions of stars, but satellites dominate the sky more than people think. And they also collide all the time; no matter how careful their owners are.

My favorite story of those was the guy in Idaho who saw a collision, watched that part of the sky for another hour, and eventually had a satellite piece fall on one of his cows. Incinerated the poor thing. He was insistent that it was aliens come to "evaporate the world." It was really a Dish Network satellite. Or Direct TV. Or, well, one of those where there's competing companies who don't tell the other where their satellites are. So, of course, they collide.

What I was really looking for were things like this report I got from Air Traffic Control. I do apologize for the quality of the recording. It may have come from 2009, but the Cessna recordings through that kind of weather aren't the best. I'll include a transcript with this report.

Tower: Yamato 1305 three miles from Patrick (landing marker) turn right heading T four zero maintain 2,300 [inaudible] approach runway one nine.

(Yamato responds affirmatively)

Tower: Yamato 1305, Approach?

Tower: Southwest 1942, look off your right side about 5 miles, for a Dash-8, you see anything there?

Southwest 1942: Negative, Southwest 1942, we're just off the bottoms, nothing on [the traffic collision avoidance system]?

Tower: Yamato 1305, Bromo?

[static]

Tower: Southwest 1942, you have [visual flight rules] conditions there?

Southwest 1942: Negative where I am.

[static]

Tower: Yamato 1305, Bromo Tower, how do you hear?

[static]

Tower: We need some ground communication. We need to talk to someone at least 3 miles North-Northeast, OK, possibly clearance. That area right in there, Baltimore area, uh, either State police or Sheriff's dept, we need to find out if anything's on the ground. This aircraft was 3 miles out, all of a sudden, we have no response from that aircraft.

Tower: All I can tell you is that we had an aircraft over the marker, and we're not talking to him now.

Tower: Southwest 1942, you had any icing where you're at?

Southwest 1942: We picked up some on the way down, I don't think we're building up any more... JESUS!

Tower: Southwest 1942! Respond. What happened?

Southwest 1942: [breathing heavily] We have visual in Yamato 1305. It just appeared out of nowhere! We missed it but not by much. Can not confirm condition of Yamato. Repeat. Can not confirm condition of Yamato.

Yamato 1305: Bromo Tower! Bromo Tower! Yamato 1305 calling Bromo Tower!

Tower: Yamato. We read you. What happened? Are you ok? You dropped off our radar entirely. We thought we'd lost you!

Yamato 1305: Bromo Tower! [whew] That was a close one. Near collision with, what is that? Southwest 1942. Sorry Southwest. Hope you're okay.

Southwest 1942: We're fine Yamato. Where the hell did you come from?

Tower: We'd like to know that, too, Yamato.

Yamato 1305: Are you telling me that thing is not on your radars?

Tower: [pause] What thing Yamato? We're only thing we have on our scopes are you and Southwest.

Yamato 1305: I don't know what it was. I can tell you large. Can tell you it was yellow with brown markings. Origin unknown. I've never seen anything like it before. I don't... [pause] How the hell did we get up here? Tower, Southwest, verify altitude. We were coming in to land at 2,300 feet but now we're back at 15,400.

Southwest 1942: Verified. That's where we were coming out of Springfield.

Yamato 1305: Bromo Tower. We're going to try this again but it might take us a bit to get down there again. Everything seems to be okay but running diagnostics anyway. If you see anything on the radar at all, for [expletive]'s sake, please tell us. I don't want to do that again.

Tower: Roger Yamato. Will comply. Good luck and let's try this again. Thanks Southwest.

Southwest 1942: No problem tower. Good luck Yamato.

That transcript made the rounds on the internet for weeks. There were rants and speculation and cries of cover-up, especially after the official sites took it down. Some people think it was a blink event, but the plane wasn't gone long enough for me to consider that. Some think there was an extra-dimensional incursion, but that would be unlikely. Reports of those usually have some residual radiation and would show up on radar. (Just because it isn't my field doesn't mean I don't keep up on those things.) Some even believe that the Yamato flew too close to a cloaked UFO and got caught up in the illusion.

What intrigued me was the coloring Captain Mint described. The yellow and brown aren't usually associated with sightings. And because this case was so recent, just a couple weeks before the actual incidents began, it came to mind.

I think those who said they flew too close to a cloaked ship might just be right. Just one week after this one happened, the first bubble appeared in North Dakota. And it was yellow and brown.

Chapter 2

It wasn't like there was a fanfare or anything. One morning, June 23rd, 2023, if you want to be precise, Henry Ingham says he woke up and went outside to tend his crops outside Medora, North Dakota, and saw something on the side of Vampire Peak. He technically may not have been the first to see it, but he was the first to report it.

A large growth on the side of a mountain. It wasn't a natural thing like a rock slide that just looked funny. This was a biological growth. It was even breathing, or, at least, that's what it looked like. A large yellow and brown blob, roughly two-thousand feet in diameter growing on the side of a mountain. Early pictures made it look like something straight out of a sci-fi horror movie. The later pictures didn't do anything to dissuade that notion.

The mountain itself was pretty enough, jutting out of the ground like someone had stuck a giant... or if there had been a... it looked like a mountain and it was pretty. (I did warn you about my ability to do these reports.) The growth on the side of the mountain was large, yellow ball with mottled brown spots. It had a steady inhale / exhale motion which made it difficult to tell if the mottling were consistent or if it were changing patterns. It wasn't until the third day that it was decided that the pattern was, in fact, changing.

The United States military attempted to cordon off the area and deny its existence, at first. But the news media was quick to respond. This was unfortunate for the military and its accompanying scientific community. There seemed to be a force field around it and no one could really get that close.

That was a shame since it was believed to be the biggest story in North Dakota since the pipeline fiasco. Probably bigger – and I mean no offense to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. This, by all accounts, was some kind of extra-terrestrial contact.

The first day there was a media storm. What is it? Where did it come from? What do we do about it? Will it affect the environment? Did have an effect already? Can we communicate with it? If so, what do we say?

The military, of course, was quick to respond with its semi-obligatory “who cares? Let's just blow it up and get on with life” attitude. Thankfully cooler heads prevailed. Granted they were cooler heads wrapped in red tape, but at least no one started the shooting *that* quickly.

The second day brought no new discoveries, although some satellite pictures gave us a different angle on it. The media still tried to whip everyone up into a frenzy. Websites began selling “Dakota Daub” t-shirts. That seemed to be the unofficial name for it. I suppose it could have been worse but Dakota Daub was... underwhelming for such a major event.

Day three, the world seemed to calm down a little. Major news reports went from up-to-the-minute reports on the respiratory rate and the ineptness of any investigative force to get near it to “it’s still here and breathing – back to the studio.” No one could really report anything on it other than, “look! There it is.” Day four, a team of geologists reported that the mountain itself was changing in consistency. According to their instruments, the mountain, which was previously believed to be mostly granite and sandstone, now appeared to have a previously undiscovered iron core.

By the end of the first week, the infestation of media outlets had been reduced to about five trucks, each with a reporter and a camera person. Actually, I think two of them had to do their own camera work. There had been a fire in Hollywood and some so-called celebrities were now homeless... technically. They had no physical home but millions of dollars to fall back on. Most people didn’t believe that it was that big a tragedy, and they were right.

It was day eight that I received a phone call that my services were requested in Washington DC. Someone at the Pentagon had taken notice of my work and wanted me to meet with a committee to discuss what to do with the ‘Dakota Daub.’ I questioned their sincerity as my work was primarily with conspiracies. “This isn’t a conspiracy,” I argued. “It’s contact of some kind. Surely there are better people who could handle first contact than I could?”

My argument fell on deaf ears. The phone call, it seemed, was merely a courtesy. Ten minutes after I hung up and about five minutes before I could finish packing, there were agent in black suits at my door eagerly waiting to take me to the airport. On the way there, I tried to joke about which one had the standard issue MIB neuralizer. None of them laughed. That made me nervous.

I was rather unceremoniously loaded into a Cessna and flown to Washington DC. When we landed I was put in a limo with severely tinted windows. I had never been there before and wouldn’t have objected to being able to see some scenery. I wouldn’t have minded a stop at the Smithsonian, either, and joked as much, but I was told that I was already late. I looked at my watch and it had been a whopping two hours since my phone call. “If I’m late, someone should have called sooner.” No reaction. I was getting more nervous by the minute.

When the car finally stopped, I was ushered out and told my luggage would be in my room when it was time. As I was ushered out of the driver’s side of the car, I looked around to see what the Pentagon looked like from whatever perspective I would have had on it. But this wasn’t the Pentagon. Honestly, I wasn’t sure where I was apart from outside a new-looking building in the middle of nowhere.

The building was a squat, square, pre-fab one-story building with one window facing us. There was a bitter wind that hit me from behind. It was a natural wind, not a helicopter landing. But I’d never felt a wind like that before. I turned and looked over the limo’s top to see what was on the other side. I wasn’t expecting to see Vampire Peak and the Daub.

I realize now that I had made the erroneous assumption that I was going to DC because they said someone at the Pentagon noticed me. I wasn’t expecting to be in Medora, North Dakota. And I certainly wasn’t expecting the people I met inside. I’m handed an iPad with twelve icons; each icon is the face of someone in the room. One of the secret servicemen informs me that each related file gives information about the person represented. Some of them I already know – most I don’t – and the three guards, one on either side of the door and one on the far side of the room, aren’t included.

Senator Alexander Lydon is fairly easy to recognize. I hear people think he'll be running for president next time around. He's an "Independent" from California. He's sensibly dressed in a gray suit and tie. The only knock I hear on him is that he's Caucasian. He doesn't have religious ties so no special treatment for anyone there. His philosophy is enlightened, to say the least. If you want to worship, go ahead, but don't force it on anyone. "Your religious freedom ends where someone else's begins." I like this guy – although he doesn't really look happy to be cooped up in a prefab conference room in North Dakota.

Also present are Republican Senators Whitney MacGregor of South Carolina and Karl Spencer of Pennsylvania. They're both ultra-white uber-Republican conservatives. I shudder to think about what they're going to contribute.

Democrat Senators Farley Yu of Washington and Wendy Nunez of New Mexico I'm not familiar with. Senator Dorsal Ramsay of Minnesota I only know because of the ribbing he takes on television. The running gag is that it's hard to find a black Republican man in Minnesota, but they found one and voted him in.

The rest of the room was filled with people I don't know. United States Army General Noah Winchester looked so stereotypically army but also looked so much like a lifelike embodiment of the computer-generated caricature that sold insurance all those years. Doctors Yoshi Nakamura and his assistant Doctor Joann Lund were from NASA. The iPad said he's the Director of First Contact Missions. I didn't know there was such a thing but I'm he sounds great to have on this panel.

The other two, well, I'm completely lost as to why they're here. Baptist priest Nathan Smith and Catholic Archbishop John Jonas. I'm not really sure what the church has to do with this. I say "the" church. I really mean "any" church. If this country has freedom of religion, and they're bringing in the Christians, why aren't other religions represented? I guess that's one of this country's greatest but unmentioned prejudices.

Then there's me: Frank Rain, professional conspiracy theorist. I really don't understand what I'm supposed to be doing here. But I have a feeling that it is going to be really interesting. And that's why I keep a digital recorder on me at all times. I'm fairly certain I transcribed this meeting accurately, although I really was late, apparently. The meeting had started without me, but, for what it's worth, here's what I heard. The transcript follows.

Chapter 3

General Winchester stood at the head of the oblong table with the senators lining the right side, except Senator Spencer, who was, for reasons unknown to me, in the middle of the rest of us on the left side. I was seated next to Dr. Johann Lund, who was the only one to acknowledge that I had entered the room. “Gentlemen, we’ve officially decided to call it ‘Bubble Alpha,’” said the General with an unnecessary amount of emphasis. Senator Wendy Nunez and Doctor Lund bristled at the comment, obviously annoyed that the general didn’t deem their gender to be worthy of inclusion. “The ‘alpha’ designation is because there have been three other ‘bubbles’ to pop up in the past 24-hours here in Australia and in Switzerland.” He indicated to a large screen behind him which initially showed a world map but, upon the mentioning of the names, little red lights blinked in the respective countries and enlarged to show other mountains with similar bubbles.

“Let me guess, ‘beta’ and ‘gamma’?” snidely interrupted Sen. Lydon while rolling his eyes. “Typical military. What happens when we have so many of them that you run out of letters? Numbers work just as well, and you can’t run out of those.”

“Son,” spat the General, “you don’t know the first thing about military procedure, do you? This is the way we have run things for generations, now. And we’re not about to change because some entitled senator thinks he has a better idea!” His ire rose with each word.

The senator, who for some reason was sat next to the General, looked unperturbed. Actually, if anything, he looked more incredulous than before. “Did you just call me ‘son’?”

“Yes, I did. Do you have a problem with that?”

“Kinda,” smirked the senator. “I looked you up general. I know a lot about you. Including the fact that I’m older than you. So really when you call me son, it just shows your ignorance even more than whatever else it is you’re spewing out of that hole in your face. And you’re supposed to be in charge? You want to keep it up? Go ahead, pops. Show everyone just how stupid you really are!”

Have you ever had that feeling that you’ve walked into the middle of a fight that’s been going on for a while? I’ve more than got that feeling now. Looking around the room, it appears as though I’m not the only one. Senator Farley Yu, seated next to Sen. Lydon, put a light but restraining hand on Lydon’s arm and whispered something to him. Lydon seemed to settle slightly. The general seemed to recoil slightly from the tongue-lashing but regained his composure quickly. I suspect a general isn’t used to being addressed in that manner.

Doctor Lund leaned toward me and whispered, “They really do hate each other.”

“No kidding?” I returned with what I hoped was a quiet enough chuckle. “Which governmental department gets the proceeds from PPV match?” Dr. Lund responded with a stifled smile and a wink before turning back to the general, who was continuing as if nothing had happened.

Mountain has started to turn blue. We don't know why.

Priest – we need to start praying

Turned to scientists and excused ourselves

Don't believe either? No. I am very firm in my belief of God, but he has a time and a place and it isn't now.

III Called in to Pentagon - the bubble

a what do they want meeting

Moves through transporter technology? Perhaps not moving just moving out of our visual spectrum? Like a cloaking device?

Gentlemen, this is real life. What I'm hearing from you is all star trek mumbo jumbo.

General, have you looked outside. those are actual extra-terrestrials. you wanted an analysis of their technology. what terms would make you feel better? their ships have about 750-billion horse power. they can blow you up real good.

i don't care for your attitude, son.

i don't care for your ignorance, ass-clown.

don't remember exactly who said what. at the time there were too many voices going on all at once.

Sen. Alex Lydon (common sense) - for a group so vehemently opposed to homosexuality, you seem to spend a lot of time sticking your heads up each other's asses.

b what are they doing

c results of investigation into one of their mines

compounds surrounded by perimeter fencing - proactive, shoots energy bolts,

IV Nuke 'Em

a Nuking one of the mining colonies

b Near minor city

c ID4 -

just like what happened in Houston in Independence Day

what the hell are you talking about

the movie? ID4

never watch movies. fill yer head with stupid idears. not all aliens are gonna be nice like et or Darth Vader.

First off, idea doesn't have an 'r' in it. Its E T, the acronym for extra terrestrial - and Darth Vader was not a nice alien, he was the villain. That makes you, an idiot.

why do you keep calling people, son?

has extra neutrons - irradiate other neutrons on their own

nuked our own city with our people in it - impeachment immediate - president replaced with sec. of state (VP died earlier) emergency vote online - pacifist appointed

result of nuke - they're irradiating it themselves now.

IV Part of team assigned to investigate

a clone city in Canada

b Wilson recognizes Steve - other member recognizes female scientist - only members of town but hundreds of them

V Interacting with Clone City

a They're learning about us

b Insects more populous on planet but not dominant life form

depleting resources - tantalum (dental equipment as no human reaction and electronics) and indium

why? maintains cohesion of being

made of tachyons?

VI Restoring ozone layer

a can't change what you're doing but can repair damage

Repairing ozone layer - mines smell like after a thunderstorm only more intense.

b purpose of war

c purpose of religion

You need a God to tell you not to kill people? Why follow "his" rules? Use common sense rules.

VII Leaving

2 years later, it doesn't matter - depleted and they leave - repaired ozone layer in payment

Main character is undercover alien abductee who is still connected to the hive mind! If your Allah can impregnate Mary to create Jesus. Allah - God, same thing, waiting for years for you to realize that.

You are being awfully forthcoming.

Is there a reason I shouldn't be? We are viewing this as a learning experience for you.

This is just weird? So, are you possessing him?

Like an evil spirit? Hardly. I'm simply using him as a conduit. Using his brain and memories to translate into your audible language, as archaic as it is, and attempting to use his mannerisms. I do apologize if they are not quite correct as we are new to this.

Why did you destroy all the missile complexes? It's because we were making headway, wasn't it? We were hurting you! - General

No. Not really. It just seemed like a waste of resources. And, if you'll look, you'll notice that we just disabled them. No point in wasting the perfectly good material in the missiles against us. Won't do much good.

We don't understand your petty need to fight each other over land and resources and ideology. Differences between individuals is key to survival. What is the real difference between the two of you, for example? His skin is dark; yours is not. Why should that be such a big difference? None of you particularly look like each other but the skin color is a breaking point somehow? It makes no sense. Neither does the gender differences. Why does it matter, as you would put it General, what is between your legs? Both genders seem capable of great things. We have noticed that there are some among you that would prefer to be a different gender, or not recognized as a gender at all. While we do not understand this, we don't really need to. It is the right of the individual to be what it wants to be.

Fighting over land and resources makes no sense to us either. If there is a resource, share it. If you go to war over it, the resources you have get used quicker, the resources you are fighting over will likely be destroyed or damaged, and many of you will be dead. It all seems like such a waste.

Similarly, your differences with ideology. We evolved beyond the need to theology, as you know it, millennia ago, as a society. There are still some who believe, but they do not force others to believe as they do. If nothing else, we consider it rude. Regardless, some of you will see things one way because of your beliefs and some another. That does not automatically make one or the other wrong. It is merely a difference. As long as there is an understanding, take the difference, understand it, and move forward.