

Small World

Chapter 3: The Day Ferrina Stood Still

A mostly yellow furred female Ferren with a white tail end and abdomen with a portable microphone in her paws was standing before what appeared to be a camera of some kind mounted onto a four legged stand, with another large, dome shaped building in view directly behind her. After taking a moment to clear her throat, the murine creature began speaking into her microphone, "This is Diana Wiklen of DMD News reporting live from just outside the Triple-P research center. Just moments ago, the team of researchers in the facility discovered a transmission of human origin within our own solar system. Not much yet is known about this strange message, other than that it appears to be coming from a space bearing vessel of some sort on a direct course for Ferrina. Are these humans coming to our planet on friendly terms, or is it an invasion force sent to enslave the Ferren race? Stay tuned for more updates on this story."

Meanwhile, at the Dos Mosina District Parliament Center...

"What exactly do you think these humans' intentions are, Mr. Thomason?" an authoritative, maturely spoken golden-tan furred female Ferren asked, as she marched quickly down a well furbished corridor alongside the director of the Triple-P research team. "Is it possible they could be hostile?"

"We can't rule out anything at this time, Prime Minister Jane," Thomason replied, "But so far all we can discern from the transmission we received is that they seem to have an objective 'target' of some kind, and that their vessel will reach Ferrina orbit in less than two hours. I'm having my top researchers try to uncover more information from the data as we speak."

Meanwhile, back inside the Triple-P research facility...

As the research team continued to study the data on their display screens, scouring for any useful information they could find, something on David's monitor suddenly caught the famous grey furred scientist's attention. After meticulously zooming in on the image he had uncovered, and staring closely at it for a moment, David gasped in alarm, "My stars..."

A short time later, back in the Dos Mosina Parliament Center...

Upon entering a large room, with an office desk set up in front of a dark blue curtain backdrop on one end, and a large quantity of production equipment manned by half a dozen workers on the other, Prime Minister Jones let out a weary sigh, and muttered under her breath, "I hate public speeches..."

Just then, a familiar grey furred, glasses wearing Ferren suddenly ran up to the Prime Minister, stopping just centimeters before barreling her over. Recognizing the newcomer, Thomason, who was still standing by the Prime Minister's side, barked crossly, "Doctor Gray? I thought I told you to remain in the research facility! How did you even get in here, anyway? This building is supposed to be authorized personnel only!"

"There's no time... to explain... Director..." David responded urgently, panting for breath from exhaustion, "The Prime Minister needs to see this immediately...!" At that moment, the scientist then handed the political leader a thick sheet of paper with an image printed out on it.

After intently looking over the picture for a moment, to see what looked like a large, dark grey craft consisting of a long narrow shaft with large a pinwheel-like structure mounted to the shaft's center on a starry backdrop, Jane inquired, "What is the significance of this image, Doctor Gray? Where did you get it from?"

"This is an image of the alien vessel taken by one of our long range orbital space imagers," David began, "But the significant part about it is what's written on the side of its hull..." Pointing to a spot on the side of the craft in the photo, David continued, "This is military coding, Prime Minister. Whatever these humans are coming here for, I think it's more than just a friendly 'hello'."

After a brief moment of tense silence, another staff member of the Parliament Center suddenly ran up to Prime Minister Jane, and reported "Ma'am, the vessel has entered Ferrina orbit."

A few minutes later, Prime Minister Jane was sitting at the desk in the Parliament Center recording studio, as the camera crew made the proper preparations. On the signal from one of the crew members, Jane began, "Greetings, my fellow citizens. This is your Prime Minister, Hanna Jane, addressing a most troubling matter in this most special of occasions. As many of you already are aware, an alien spacecraft, of which we can only assume is of Earth origin, is now in orbit above our planet. We've learned from long range imaging devices that the vessel is roughly four hundred meters long, and two hundred fifty meters in diameter at the center. Some intelligence reports also suggest

that the craft and its crew may be... military in function. As we never thought to prepare for the possibility of an interstellar military strike on our world, I would strongly advise all of you to stay in your homes until further notice. And may good fortune be with us all."

As soon as Hanna was given the signal from one of the camera operators that the broadcast was over, and she stood up from the desk in the production set, yet another staff member quickly approached her, and informed, "Madam Prime Minister, a smaller craft has just departed from the alien mother ship. It appears to be a... shuttle of some sort."

"Where is it headed?" Hanna asked.

"Right here, ma'am. The Dos Mosina Parliament Center," the staff member replied.

"They must be looking for a representative to speak to," Hanna concluded, "Open the front security doors to the building. I'm going out there."

Holding out a paw onto the Prime Minister's shoulder, Thomason objected "Ma'am, you can't. We still have no idea what their intentions are. There's no telling what they might do to you. Now of all times, the Ferren race needs the most a strong leader to pull them through this event."

"I'll go," David suddenly declared, attracting the attention of everyone in the room.

"David, think about this..." Thomason cautioned concernedly. "Your career... your loved ones..."

"I already have thought about it, Director," the scientist insisted adamantly, "My granduncle was the one who intercepted the first transmission from their planet. I've studied their languages and culture for almost my entire life. I understand their ways better than anyone else here. I must be the one to go. It's only logical."

Letting out a small sigh, Thomason asked rhetorically, "...I guess there's no talking you out of this, is there?" After receiving an affirming head shake from David, the director of the PPP research team sighed once more, and commanded to the other staff members, "Open the security doors."

A short time later, David cautiously and timidly stepped out of the front entrance of the Parliament Center. As soon as he was completely outside, the scientist suddenly

heard the doors close and relock behind him. After a long moment of tense silence, David soon saw what appeared to be an all-black, short winged aircraft with rocket propulsion engines of some sort at the back that were emitting a blue glow gradually descending from sky towards him. Upon seeing the craft gently touch down several meters in front of him, and what looked like a boarding ramp descend from its rear, allowing three tall, bipedal figures to exit out into the city streets around them, Doctor Gray gulped nervously, a drop of sweat running down his furry face. As the three figures quickly surrounded him, David noticed them to be over one and a half times his height, clad in all black military gear, including masks hiding their faces with what looked like a cylindrical air filter protruding from the lower part of each one, and each carrying a metallic device consisting of a long, narrow, hollow barrel connected to two not quite perpendicular handles.

After another brief, tense pause, David cleared his throat, and began stammering nervously in the Earth English language, "...Greetings. My name is... Doctor David Gray. I speak for Ferren kind." After another brief pause, with no kind of response from the aliens, the scientist continued, "We have been... monitoring your media transmissions for a long time. We have used them to learn much about your languages and culture. It would be an honour to us if... you could teach us even more... about your world... We... welcome you to our planet... and hope that our races can coexist peacefully."

After another long moment of tense silence, David saw one of the figures take aim with their weapon at him, and only had enough time to let out a short gasp of alarm, before his vision quickly and abruptly faded out to black.