

## Chapter 3 – What To Do

Everyone was seated at the conference room table at the appointed time with the blackout curtains closed. The seating arrangement had changed. Mike Jenson and Lucy Smith were now side by side with Diane Hoffman taking the other chair beside Smith. Jerome McPherson and Tom LeBlanc sat next to each other on the side of the table near the windows. John Heinbaum seated himself at the opposite end of table from General Collier. If you hadn't known the General was in charge of the meeting, you might have come to the incorrect conclusion Heinbaum was the chairman of the meeting. Jim Blunt sat to the left of Collier. Whatsit was not present.

Collier began. "You each look rested. I presume you are ready to proceed. Who wants to begin?"

Heinbaum was out of the box immediately. He'd decided to wear a white lab coat thinking it would enhance his scientific aura and self-importance.

"The obvious solution is to duplicate and enhance the power source of the aliens and destroy them with it," he said matter-of-factly, his beady eyes darting to each person.

"To that end I will need full access to the alien saucer's power room and the ray pistol. Here is my list of equipment and laboratory requirements. I expect quantitative results within six months. With dedicated manufacturing facilities under my supervision, power mechanisms equal to and greater than those of the aliens will provide overwhelming defensive and offensive capabilities for the United States well within the 60 year time frame postulated by Major Blunt."

Heinbaum then sat back in his chair, a smug look of confidence in the genius of his plan glowing on his face.

Jim Blunt knew he was going to have to work with this ego maniac for a long time, and he knew that Heinbaum, for all his bluster and overbearing personality, was essential to getting any understanding at all of the alien power source. So he responded as diplomatically as he could.

"Very good ideas, Dr. Heinbaum, and your suggestions and observations will be given full consideration. Everyone here knows how valuable your contributions are going to be to the protection of

our Country." Then he pause a moment. "I want to make it clear right now that it is the entire Earth which is threatened by this menace. It is our goal to protect the entire Earth, not just the United States!"

"Okay, who wants to go next?"

"I will," replied McPherson.

"These aliens are like a marauding barbarian horde putting a castle under siege. Let's say Heiny over there comes up with an answer to their power source so we have some kind of weapon we can use for defense. If I'm the aliens, I'm not stupid. Just as soon as I realize the Earth has powerful weaponry, I'll just sit out in space far enough away that I can't get hurt. Then I'll lob fire and stones down on the castle from the safe distance until I break through all those defenses. After eliminating the dangers, I can come in and wipe out all remaining resistance."

Heinbaum was sputtering as he shouted back at McPherson. "You slack-jawed idiot! You have no concept of the theoretical power I'll be able to achieve with my understanding of the alien technology. My weapons will be able to reach out and flick away the alien attack with ease. My predictions show Earth casualties at acceptable levels and those will be concentrated outside the United States!"

"Acceptable levels of casualties!" exclaimed McPherson with derision written all over his face.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," modulated General Collier. "Calm down. We need to be constructive in our responses."

He then looked at Heinbaum and said, "So Doctor, given your theoretical assumptions about your success in unlocking the alien's power source, what is your assumption about the effective range of a weapon you would devise?"

Heinbaum had calmed down some, but the angry flush in his face was quite evident. "I would suppose that any large weapon would have a range of effectiveness reaching the orbit of the moon, say 240,000 miles, give or take."

"Give or take," grated McPherson. The flush in his face was almost a match for the color of his hair. "Our alien friends come from 30 light years away, travel all that distance in multiple spacecraft designed to take over our planet and enslave the survivors. You think they're going to just sit within range of your weapon and be destroyed. What kind of a fool are you?"

"Well Mr. Military Weapons Expert," Heinbaum replied. "What supposed wisdom do you bring to the table that will do a better job than my plan?"

"Actually, Heiny," McPherson sneered, "Having heard your summary, my plan embraces yours 'cept that mine will work and yours won't."

"You see, when you have a disadvantage in strength, as we do, you must use stealth and the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy against itself. There is no question the Chrysallamans are more technologically advanced than we are by a long shot. They have enormous amounts of power available to them with knowledge and experience of how to use it, and they have room to maneuver. We're stuck in one place like sitting ducks. We'll prepare for a siege that will bring eventual ruin and death to most of us. The Chrysallamans are confident we're like insects under their feet they can kill at will. Humans to them are like fire ants are to us. Fire ants can sting us, but we can kill them with fire, poison, or just plain stomping them. So the aliens can kill us by raining fire down on us with their ray guns, poisoning us or figuratively stomping on us by throwing asteroids at the Earth."

"The Chrysallamans know we can somewhat defend ourselves because we shot down one of their saucers and killed the crew. Our demonstration only served to alarm and annoy them. Yes those fire ants can sting. Big deal. Just bring a more powerful extermination device and destroy the annoyance. In other words, just bring a bigger hammer!"

Mike Jenson broke in. "You paint a pretty bleak picture, Lieutenant. Do you have any sunshine to brighten it up?"

"Yes I do," the Scotsman replied.

"It's my idea to move forward with Dr. Heiny's belief he can analyze, duplicate and enhance the power source of the Chrysallamans. Once that is done we'll create light to medium based defensive and offensive weapons deployed in and around likely military and civilian target areas. Finally, we will equip ground forces around the world with hand carried weaponry. We let the Chrysallamans land their major forces and wait for them to get comfortable with their takeover of the docile Earthlings. Then, in a coordinated attack, we wipe out as many of the aliens as possible and capture or destroy their equipment."

Jenson asked, "Why not just create several large installations with the power to reach out and destroy them once they're within an optimal range?"

"The problem is such a plan gives us only one big punch," McPherson responded.

"It'll simply be a sting although a big one. They'll become wary, retreat to a safe distance and adopt the strategy of the siege of Earth. They'll just sit back and destroy us from afar, out of the range of our weapons."

He continued, "We can't fight a war in space with the aliens. They're way too far ahead of us on space flight. We have to let them land on Earth. We have to convince them the fire ants are still just fire ants. The principal strategy will be guerrilla warfare. Hit and run. Live to fight another day so to speak. But there is a big downside. Human casualties will be high. An obvious response by the aliens to hit and run tactics will be to obliterate large numbers of humans in retaliation for the guerrilla tactics. This response must be prepared for and frankly ignored if we humans have any chance of saving the majority of our race."

As McPherson's words sunk in, Diane Hoffman decided it was time to present her ideas. As she spoke she looked over the top of her glasses.

"Everyone, there is a rather daunting problem with both Dr. Heinbaum's and Lt. McPherson's plans. As we have personally witnessed from our contact the other day with Whatsit, the Chrysallamans have the mental power to control our minds and with their individual force fields, added physical strength which we can't normally match. They'll undoubtedly use their mental powers to take over control of any attackers and turn them upon each other. Humans will end up killing humans, and the Chrysallamans easily win."

She could see the realization sinking in with everyone in the room.

"There is another very important asset none of you have considered."

Waiting a moment to let that statement sink in, she said, "Our people themselves. I believe humans can be prepared to fight the Chrysallamans with at least equal if not greater mental and physical abilities."

Jim Blunt broke in, and he was just a little overheated in his response. "Dr. Hoffman, I personally watched one of my soldiers get his arm torn off his body by one of the lizards. It was fast and brutal. I've worked for months to train myself not to be mentally controlled by one of the little ones. I'm here to tell you that the normal human, trained or not, is no match for these things!"

Hoffman looked at him as she pulled a stray curl of hair out of her face, "I have to defer to your experience, Major. No normal human could possibly matchup in physical or mental strength with a Chrysallaman." she replied.

"Now wait a minute there Doc," chimed in Lt. Jenson. "You said no normal human. Just exactly what do you mean?"

Peering above her glasses again like a lecturing professor, Hoffman replied. "I propose that humans be genetically altered to be mentally and physically superior to the Chrysallamans."

To say that jaws dropped, frowns formed and heads began shaking back and forth in disbelief and rejection was a gross understatement.

Heinbaum jumped first. "I'll be damned if you'll try to turn me into a giant, green lizard!"

To which Jerome McPherson replied with a glint in his eyes, "Might be an improvement!"

Even Lucy Smith chimed in with, "Dr. Hoffman, we want to defeat and study the aliens, not become one of them."

Hoffman was not put off. She pressed on. "I certainly agree with you that most if not all people would react the same way you just did . . . not accepting what they don't understand. Resisting change is an historical fact with people. Not to mention the religious objections that would certainly come up."

"However," she continued, "I don't have to remind you that the purpose of this committee is to come up with a plan to save the human race from probable extinction. Some hard choices are going to have to be made!"

Tom LeBlanc had been quiet up to now. He slowly got to his feet and walked over to a poster board on an easel in the corner of the room, picked up a pen, looked at Hoffman and said, "Ok, Doc, why don't you describe the Frankenstein you envision."

"Please don't be so dramatic, Lieutenant," she replied. "There would be no visible physical change in appearance of any kind. Let me explain."

"There are documented studies, worldwide, of humans displaying extraordinary, let's call them skills although I prefer the term 'uniques'. Strength, endurance, agility, eyesight, hearing, intelligence, and, yes, extrasensory perception or ESP."

LeBlanc quickly wrote down the skills as she listed them.

As she spoke, Hoffman could tell that McPherson and Jenson weren't going along with her train of thought. The eye rolls and sideways smirks were a giveaway. They just had a hard time giving up their military training and backgrounds she thought. Heinbaum was openly derisive, evidenced by his snorts of disgust. But Diane could tell that LeBlanc and Blunt were interested. They'd been in close contact with Whatsit and his tech and wanted something, anything, that might give soldiers an advantage in a battle. Lucy Smith was hard to read behind those thick glasses. Collier's face was non-committal, but his arms were crossed as he sat back in his chair.

Diane continued. "I'm not necessarily talking about Olympic athletes although they are very important. I'm referring to people who are unique. Let me give you some examples."

"Doc, if it's OK with everyone, I'll list your examples on the board as you go," LeBlanc said.

Hoffman nodded and looked at the group around the table. "There is a man in Germany, Hans Gutlang, who is reported to have lifted the front end of a 3-ton class half-track transport off one of his fellow soldiers where it had run over his friend on a muddy road in France. The Dalai Lama is a Tibetan spiritual leader selected in part for his ability to view and interact with the spiritual world. There is the case of James 'Skullreader' LaRene, in New Orleans, who has supposedly demonstrated abilities to communicate with the dead. Sgt. George Sanger is a Marine sniper with a measured visual acuity of 20/5. In other words, he can see at 20 feet what a normal person can only see at 5 feet. John Tripman is a blind man who has learned to see by hearing. In other words, he can visualize objects around him by listening to sound waves bouncing off the objects. I can list other unique people with very interesting powers."

"Dr. Hoffman," Heinbaum smugly replied. "We need a general response to the aliens if they return as predicted, something I have not been convinced will happen. If we assume they return and pose a danger in 60 years, I remind you, what good are these people you refer to? They're just odd people who will be dead or too old to help." He was even more pleased with himself when he saw nods from Smith, Jenson, and even McPherson.

"Dr. Heinbaum, I agree with you," Diane replied to the surprise of everyone. "But you've jumped ahead of me."

"Naturally," she continued, "I want to conduct tests on each of my selected uniques with Whatsit, our resident Chrysallaman, to see if they're able to compete with him on an equal basis mind to mind so to speak. The physical abilities will be tested separately. If the unique's abilities are sufficient in our judgment to give us some measure of defense and even offense against the Chrysallamans, then I will move forward."

Jenson was the first to reply. "Just exactly what do you mean by move forward, Doctor Hoffman?"

"Why, Lieutenant," she smiled. "I intend to find out the genetic sequence they have that gives them their uniques and give those genetic sequences to all humans!"

Collier broke in immediately. "Dr. Hoffman, no one in the Pentagon will ever approve wholesale genetic tampering with people. It just won't happen!"

"Yeah, especially when the result is this," stated Lt LeBlanc, as he pointed to a drawing he had just put on the board. It was of a man with monstrous eyes in oversized eye sockets under sharply arched eyebrows, ears shaped like a bat, and a bald head crowned with a small, rounded nub from which a few wisps of hair stuck out of it at odd angles. It was rather scary and disgusting at the same time. Chuckles flew around the room.

Hoffman was nonplussed. "People, please," she began. "There will be no outward physical appearance change to anyone. And the genetic changes won't take effect until the threat is actual. If no threat materializes then the change doesn't have to be activated. Maybe never activated."

Lucy Smith's curiosity finally got the better of her. "Let's assume for a moment you really are able to isolate genetic sequences that would give all humans uniques for strength, endurance, agility, eyesight, hearing and ESP," as she pointed to the board where LeBlanc had listed them. "How do you propose to give these uniques to everyone? I just don't think the general population is going to voluntarily submit themselves to a treatment. To even begin to get their agreement, the alien threat would have to be disclosed and that kind of disclosure would necessarily reveal how our government has been lying to everyone about UFO's. There would be mass panic and little if any cooperation!"

"Yes," Collier agreed. "The decision has already been made not to reveal this threat to the general population. We went over this in our first meeting."

Jenson broke in. "As I told you the other day, my job is understanding and persuading people. Based on everything I have learned over the past months, I have to agree with the General."

"Here's the story the government has to sell to the common people. 'The World is going to be attacked by giant green lizards in about 60 years, and they plan to kill or enslave all of us. These lizards are a lot stronger than us and can control our minds. So to protect us against this attack, all of you and your children must take a drug that will change your bodies in unknown ways but with the hope you will be able to survive the attempted takeover of Earth.' Am I leaving anything out?"

Amused looks and silence confirmed his brief summary.

But Hoffman wasn't discouraged. "It's always been quite obvious that whatever we decide to do, no word of the plan and its execution can be made public. A scientist named Crick has been secretly researching the make-up of DNA since the beginning of WWII and has established a relationship with a fellow named Watson here in the U.S. Their discoveries are being kept ultra top secret, but I have been collaborating with them through my lab at Johns Hopkins. There is more known about DNA and how it works than most academics and the public will ever suspect."

McPherson broke in, "So we agree the population won't be told. Let's assume the good Doctor Diane brews up some kind of special gunk. How do we get millions and millions of people, young and old, to voluntarily agree to be dosed with the secret sauce when they aren't told the real reason for the treatment?"

Blunt, who had been sitting silently in the back of the room observing the proceedings, cut in. "And when the genetic changes begin taking effect, people are going to notice right away. Calming the population will be a priority. The news reports will be just as Lt. Jenson said. 'The World is going to be attacked by giant green lizards in about 60 years. These lizards are a lot stronger than us and can control our minds. So to protect everyone against this attack, all of you and your children were secretly dosed with a drug that changed your bodies in unknown ways.'

"The only explanation the government can give won't be believed. People will feel betrayed and scared. They'll think the government has either poisoned them or turned them into monsters. I can only hope most people don't take up arms and kill every government employee. There'll be insurrection." he concluded.

All eyes focused on Hoffman. She sighed and said, "I never said my plan was complete. There are many facets that will have to be discussed and agreed to over many more meetings. But I can tell you with no reservation that if we concentrate only on the technical/mechanical side in our response to the Chrysallamans, we're doomed to failure."

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As everyone was leaving the meeting, Blunt walked out beside Hoffman and said, "Would you please come with me to my office?"

While his tone seemed casual, she could tell he urgently wanted to speak with her so she nodded her head and followed him. His office was several corridors away from the conference room. The mammoth

Pentagon building was a labyrinth of twists and turns, and Diane became completely lost by the time he opened a door leading to his small, windowless office.

"Please have a seat Dr. Hoffman," he began, as he perched on the corner of his desk and smiled. Diane thought his dimples were cute and if his hair was a bit longer . . .

Blunt broke into her reverie, "I just wanted you to know I agree with the basic idea of your plan, and I will make Whatsit available to you for the live testing I know you'll require."

"Thank you, Major. I'm curious to know if you've noticed any growth in your alien. I mean, you said he was a young one, and you've been with him now for what, 8 or 9 months? Is he getting bigger?"

Blunt looked thoughtful. "He has grown about 4 inches and put on around 50 lbs. Stands about 5 feet tall now. He's an omnivore. Loves raw ground beef. His favorite leafy green is spinach. His mental ability to project thoughts or pictures and control people seems to already be fully matured. It is my impression the lizards' mental powers are at full capacity by the time they're teenagers."

"The difficult thing about their mental power is that even though it does not appear to get any stronger, through practice they seem to become more precise in their control and that precision makes them appear mentally stronger."

"For example," he continued, "When I first encountered Whatsit on the crashed saucer, he appeared to only be able to influence one person's thinking at a time. However, as you saw the other day, he was capable of controlling five people around that conference table."

"Whatsit thinks it's a great game to try to best me. He has an innate need to dominate and control, and so he's constantly trying to dominate me. My problem is I can only defend myself from his mind games. I can't push back at the mental level. My only offense against him is physical. I can overpower him with my physical strength up to this point in time at least, and I can hit him with a stick. I'm afraid as he continues to grow, eventually I won't be able to physically handle him one on one."

With a curious, worried look on his face, he gazed into her eyes and said, "You claim you can change the equation, perhaps make humans equal to or possibly stronger than them. You sure got my attention!"

Peering over her glasses, Diane warned, "It's going to take some time."

She began ticking off a list with her fingers, "Finding people with unique powers, testing them, being able to measure results, determining what genetic pattern provides the uniques we need to focus on,

finding a way to introduce the genetic uniques to the general population, finding a way to trigger the genetic change, finding a way to expose the population at large to the trigger." She smiled. "I'm running out of fingers."

Blunt grinned, "Let's hope we all still have fingers when you get through with us! Where do you want to begin your quest for uniques?"

Returning his grin with a coy look, Diane replied, "I think the mysterious land of Tibet may be the place to start. Home to snow, high mountains, a few yetis and a 13-year old little boy who may just be able to speak with Whatsit mind-to-mind. The big question is do we bring the young boy to meet Whatsit or take Whatsit to meet the boy?"