

ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE FIFTH KIND



STAR MATTERS

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PART ONE
CAMBRIDGESHIRE, ENGLAND,
PRESENT DAY

ONE

A heavy mist hung over the old farmhouse near Lakenheath rented by the Griffiths family of San Antonio, Texas. It was the hour after midnight; a time for witching, a time for dire plots to be enacted. The family had enjoyed the adventure of the relocation to the Cambridgeshire countryside from Texas and had fallen in love with the solidly built brick farmhouse, with its grey slate roof, at the end of a short lane. The farm was surrounded by rambling outbuildings leading on to wide lawns with herbaceous borders and tall trees in copses beyond. They were close to the local village with its pub and post office, indeed the whole of England seemed to be a village to the Griffiths family after the wide open spaces around San Antonio. Their new home was almost magical, secluded and full of gentle wildlife like a children's story, delighting the young American family. Don and his wife Belinda were sleeping under two quilts in the main bedroom against the chill of the East Anglian fall season and the quaint lack of double glazing. The preschool twins, Ethan and Madison, were in single beds in the same room down the hall, similarly covered in downy duvets. Don was on assignment to the local airbase from the US Air Force Intelligence base east of San Antonio. Ethan and Madison were born after in vitro fertilisation procedures. Both these factors, allied to their locality, made the Griffiths family an irresistible target for a particular kind of abduction.

Several slim dark figures lurked round the front door to the farm, barely visible in the gloom of night. It was difficult to distinguish separate arms, legs and bodies as they all wore matt hazmat suits and domed helmets with large teardrop-shaped eye covers lending their heads a disquieting locust appearance. They were introducing their hypnotic nerve gas into the house via the convenient aperture of the letter box cut in the door. A small tool placed against the door lock made the screws on the inner side revolve

anticlockwise until they fell out on the mat and the door could be effortlessly swung inwards. The intruders swarmed into the house protected from the nerve gas by filters in their helmets. Their squat delta-wing craft, also stealthy in dark matt material, waited on the long lawn at the rear of the farm buildings.

Don Griffiths opened his eyes groggily into a waking nightmare. His consciousness swam as he witnessed dark stick-men figures around his bed in a low grey light, like false dawn. In alarm he tried to rise to confront the invaders but his limbs would not respond, as if the protective cocoon of dream sleep was preventing his body from moving. With heavily bleary eyes he looked beside him to Belinda who had what appeared to his drugged mind to be a grotesque black spider with three heads hanging threateningly over her. Then a similar mass of heads and limbs appeared over him too. He felt clammy under the press of hands and pointy instruments; cold too as the quilts were removed and the dark figures roamed across their prone bodies. Don fought against their motions in his thoughts as they introduced their probes into him but his mental struggles could not penetrate and would not animate his drugged body. After a short period the agents of race Spargar moved back from their captives and first Don and then Belinda rose naked to sit, then stand slowly alongside their bed. They were, without their own volition, led shuffling by their captors through the bedroom door and on to the landing. The low silvery light followed their progress. Don was aware of being taller than the dark bodies of their tormentors with their malevolent large heads; they were about the same height as his wife slumping along behind him. Don's nightmare was complete when the twins' bedroom door opened and a second group of black bodies led out the twins, so vulnerable in their jammies and ruffled faces. His precious family was in clearest danger, molested under his very gaze and his limbs remained unresponsive to his anguished commands to save them all.

The Spargar aliens with their slender arms would have struggled to

manhandle the large American man but this was unnecessary as the hypnotic drug enabled them to lead the family away conveniently under their own locomotion but under their kidnappers' control. The family were all conscious but their bodies moved like zombies; alarmed eyes connected the parents with their children as if in thick fog or murky water as they were led out the front door and on between the farm outbuildings in single file, parents first, children to the rear, out towards the low-slung spacecraft on the grassy lawns. The whole group could only bumble along slowly with the family struggling against the will of their captors, seeing the waiting craft that was clearly their destination as it swelled and shimmered like a mirage to the incapacitated senses of the family. As they crossed on to the open space of the lawn Don became aware of a new sensation amongst his captors. They were in consternation; something was amiss. He reached for this hope, grappled with that fact mentally seeking an opportunity to protect his family from this unfolding nightmare. He did not yet know that on this occasion, on this particular kidnap, he was fortunate in a way that the very many other victims were not.

The Spargar kidnap gang released their captives who fell to their knees without the external control of the aliens' grasp. The Spargar agents had seen a young woman of average size regarding them, coolly blocking the access ramp to their ship. She was earthly in appearance with medium-length blonde hair, wearing skin-tight jeans over high-top trainers. She wore a knitted top against the night chill. Crucially the two Spargar who piloted the craft lay at her feet moving feebly. To her rear were two large cloaked figures carrying shaped staves that almost glowed in the silvery light. These were vorarms, the fighting weapons of choice of the Cavallos of Dawn, the martial arm of their enemies, race Dawn of Gaya. The Spargar spread out to confront the woman and her guards and released more hypnotic gasses in their direction. The Gayans wore no helmets but were completely unaffected by the gas, wearing their protective gumshields against drugs as well as blows. These Spargar had not come across Gayan enemies

previously; they had only expected a routine kidnap of defenceless Earth people this night. The Spargar reassured themselves with their superior numbers, but they were unconvinced as they glanced at each other, wishing they had a larger band. Looking beyond their own craft in the lawn centre they could see the upright silvery cigar form of a Gayan starcraft of their enemies, taller than the trees it was standing amongst. The Spargar gang knew their commanders would require them to attack these enemies and carry out their abduction mission as planned. They launched a frenzied rush to reclaim their own craft.

Amily concentrated grimly at the tangle of rapidly approaching Spargar agents.

“Today is a very bad day for you. This time we saw you coming and came out to meet you,” she exclaimed into her enemies’ rushing advance. Over her shoulder she quickly said to her formidable friends, “How I detest these foul kidnap gangs, guys. Raffaello on my right side! Umberto, take left and rear!”

“Let’s roll,” replied Raffaello’s baritone voice from the shorter of the two cloaked figures as he moved from behind to Amily’s right and presented his ivory stave in kendo fashion to the oncoming enemy. His taller partner Umberto took a similar stance on the left so that they were either side of Amily in a wedge facing the onrushing Spargar. The Spargar were unarmed having left their weapons on board their craft, only needing their various medical apparatus for incapacitating and kidnapping the sleeping victim family Griffiths. They were not anticipating conflict this night. The three Gayans met the rush with blurring arms and weapons and in a few short seconds the Spargar gang were reduced to groaning, prone figures at the feet of the three Gayans alongside the fallen pilots of the Spargar craft they had dealt with while the kidnapers were at their sinister work in the farmhouse.

The three Gayans moved forward to help the drugged family who were still groggy on hands and knees beyond their collapsed kidnapers. The

Gayans took no further notice of the injured Spargar gang that rose erratically and helped each other gingerly back into their craft. A short time later the dock of the Spargar craft closed, edge lights indicated they had powered up and the craft angled up and escaped soundlessly overhead.

Don Griffiths was still intoxicated but had seen the skirmish and that his attackers had returned to their craft and escaped overhead. He was helped to his feet by a young woman who approached him confidently. She was not speaking but clearly helping him. The two monk-like figures looked ominous but they too were helping and picked up Ethan and Madison and carried them as easily as dolls. The taller one was also walking with Belinda who was slumped against him for support, taking faltering steps back towards their house. Amily led Don Griffiths back into their house and up the stairs. It was obvious from the soft toys and small divans which was the twins' bedroom and she indicated that to the Cavallos who gently deposited the boy and girl back on their beds and covered them up. They then led the parents back to their room and put them back to bed, covering them again with the two quilts against the added cold of the violated farmhouse.

Amily led the two Cavallos, Umberto and Antonio, back out of the house closing the front door behind them. They retraced their steps to their starship among the trees, boarded, powered up and left in the same direction as the Spargar craft, throwing off tiny lime and vermilion sparks as their DMF drive grated the atoms of the still air.

Don and Belinda slept immediately they were laid back in bed, exhausted and still under the influence of the hypnotic drug cocktail from the kidnap gang. It was bright morning when Don woke first, his larger frame working off the drugs faster than his wife. The night's events presented themselves in a rush as a realistic nightmare, the most convincing nightmare ever, set as it was in their new home. Don needed to expel his demons so he rose, pulled on his robe and went downstairs to make a coffee pot for them both. At the foot of the stairs something made him turn to the front door, which

was reassuringly closed. He was turning round to head for the kitchen when a chilling glint on the floor caught his attention. There on the carpet was the brass door lock and flange with a number of long screws scattered around them that last evening were holding the lock securely to the door frame.

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