

# **IT CAME FROM TOMORROW**

**A Futureman Adventure**

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## Prologue

*Perhaps now is as good a time as any to introduce myself. You can call me Orion, and I am the narrator of this story. Why, you might ask, does a written story need a narrator? The answer is simple. You, as the reader, could go on mucking about reading page after page of metaphors and vague literary constructs only to eventually arrive at the conclusion that the author was taking you on some roundabout journey to a very basic idea. I'm here to cut through all of that malarkey and get on with the important business of telling a story.*

*Either that or I am an easy method for lazy writers to avoid having to do quite so much work. Regardless, it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance.*

*Now, let's get on with the business at hand shall we?*



## Chapter One

*Not everyone is cut out to be a hero you know? In fact the average person will tuck tail and run at comical speeds when faced with imminent danger. Yet there are those who have the ability to summon the necessary fortitude to stare death in the face and not blink. Is it bravery? Arrogance? Sheer idiocy?*

*What follows is the tale of one such man, who through a combination of luck, determination, and a healthy sprinkling of the aforementioned idiocy has managed to become something of a hero.*

*Our story begins on a crisp early summer evening, lover's lane, convertible top down...*

Not a cloud in the sky. The ribbon of the Milky Way flows overhead like it has been poured onto a back-lit canopy. Soft music wafts from the car's AM radio. Roger, the football team's star quarterback, stares lustily across the gap on the front bench seat at his sweetheart, Margaret. Only sixteen, she is the youngest girl in the history of Capitol City High

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School to be made Captain of the cheer-leading squad.

Roger had been up here before with his old girlfriend, Sally-Ann, who'd moved away last semester. Something to do with her Dad's work she'd told him. Margaret, on the other hand, had never done anything like this before. She found herself excited, yet terrified beyond belief. She had no idea what was expected of her, so she decided it was best to let him make the first move, and Roger had no difficulty accommodating.

Roger breaks the silence. "It certainly is a nice night for watching stars isn't it Margaret?"

"I'm not sure if I've ever seen a night sky so clear before." he smiles at her with a look that seems to have been practiced repeatedly in a mirror.

"It certainly is, they're magnificent." Margaret responds sheepishly.

"I can think of...one or two things that are just as beautiful." despite the cheesiness of the line Margaret blushes heavily.

The romantic tones of Perry Como are suddenly interrupted by a burst of static emanating from the radio. The teens break their gaze and turn their attention to it.

**IMPORTANT BULLETIN! IMPORTANT  
BULLETIN! SIGHTINGS OF AN UNKNOWN AND**

POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CREATURE HAVE  
BEEN REPORTED TO THIS STATION. ALL  
RESIDENTS IN THE VICINITY OF THE  
NORTHERN HILLS ARE ASKED TO REMAIN  
INDOORS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE...

Roger reaches to lower the volume as the message begins to repeat. Margaret looks over at him, her tender features relaying her fear. Not wanting to give up on the date so easily Roger scoffs, "Creature? Hah."

"Maybe we should go Roger."

"It's a gag! They're trying to scare the kids up here on lover's lane into going home."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah...my big brother said they used to do that kind of thing all of the time." Roger was lying now, and he'd hoped she wouldn't see it in his face.

They sit in silence for a moment before Roger summons the courage to lean in closer for a kiss. He's stopped suddenly by the sound of something scratching against the rear of the car. Both youths turn quickly but there is nothing to be seen save for the skyline and the gentle slope of the hill behind them. Margaret looks to Roger for reassurance and briefly catches a glimpse of something. Fear. At this her own apprehension rises, she clutches Roger's shoulder and pleads with her eyes

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for them to leave. Roger lets out a groan of dissatisfaction.

"What do you think it was?" Margaret asks, almost whispering.

"Whatever it was, it must have gone." Roger says, attempting a matter-of-factly tone. "Besides, what are you worried about with a big strong fellow like me here to protect you?"

Margaret leans closer. "Oh Roger I know...I know you'd protect me. It's just that since..." she begins to tear up.

"Since....what?" Roger asks questioningly, suddenly forgetting about the noise.

"Well, since I was a little girl I've always been afraid of the dark. No matter what my mother or my father or anyone told me I believed that there were monsters in the dark."

At that Roger seizes the opportunity to bolster his credentials as a protector. He pulls Margaret close and musters up his most manly voice. "Well, even if there are monsters out here, I promise I won't let them get anywhere near you!"

Just for making such a concerted effort to make her feel better Margaret plants a quick soft kiss on Roger's lips. He looks rather shocked, something Margaret wouldn't have guessed.

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*It's typically at this point that one of those pesky authors would begin to go on and on with details like who's hand ventured into whose article of clothing and what-not, but not with Orion here. No sir. We're going to.....*

*Did you hear that?*

The young lovebirds are startled out of each other's embrace by another sound, this time emanating from a nearby bush. Margaret can clearly see how annoyed by all of this Roger is becoming. Her first reaction is to be angry with him, but she knows that boys will be boys.

"It's just an animal." Roger states, trying to mask his dissatisfaction.

Finally letting her better judgment override her hormones Margaret replies, "I don't care what it was, I want to go home!"

Reluctantly Roger gives in. He tries desperately to hide the mixture of frustration and disappointment that he's experiencing. Reaching for the key he gives Margaret a quick smile, trying to say "Really, it's ok." with his eyes.

The motor spins over, making a pathetic whining sound, but does not crank. Roger's eyes glance over at Margaret to see her alarm rising by the moment.

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"Don't worry, it does that sometimes. Give it a few minutes and it'll start right up." trying his luck he leans toward her again "Now, where were we?"

"I'm serious! I want to go home now!" she pushes him away, no longer giving in to his boyish charms.

No longer able to hide his annoyance at the situation Roger locks eyes with Margaret and declares in a very matter-of-fact tone, "Look, I'll go check it out. It's probably just a squirrel or something in that bush."

As he reaches for the door Margaret's hand grabs at his shoulder, but he shakes her off. Pulling himself out of the car he can't help but think how he's probably ruined his chances with Margaret for the evening and decides he'll be mad at himself later. He chooses to drop the "good boy" routine and reaches for the pocket of his letterman. From it he produces a pack of cigarettes that he took from his mom's carton, the one she keeps in her nightstand, hoping she wouldn't notice. He inserts one between his lips as he walks over to the bush.

Kicking the bush produces no results and he turns to give Margaret a snide look that says "Told you so!"

She notices the cigarette in his mouth and frowns her disapproval but he doesn't care. He can

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make it up to her another night. This one's been lousy. He walks around to the back side of the bush as he pulls a match from another pocket. Roger strikes the match on one of the buttons on his jacket. As he brings the match to his face the light cast from it reveals something peering at him from inside the bush. Dropping the cigarette from his lips and the match from his hand he manages to bring his arms up in front of his face in a defensive posture and lets out one quick scream.

From the car, only fifteen feet away or so, chills flow up Margaret's spine as she hears the scream. It is followed only by a crunching sound, and then nothing...

She sits frozen in her seat, waiting in silence. She bites her lip, looking at the driver's side door, still open. A moment passes, feeling like an eternity before she finds the courage to lean over, realizing she has to close the door. Her hand timidly reaches for the handle....just a few more inches to go...her fingertips dance along the armrest trying to find purchase. She swallows hard, grabs it and pulls it shut.

Jerking back she pulls her knees into her chest. She closes her eyes and starts to breathe faster, whispering to herself, "It's all a dream, it's all a dream."

The silence is deafening, so quiet she can hear the ringing of the blood in her ears.

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"Margaret." comes a weak voice just outside of the car. It's Roger's voice.

She looks up. It is Roger! He's standing in front of the car, close to the hill's drop-off point....but something's wrong. In the dim light she can see that his lips are stained a dark color, and he just keeps whispering her name. His hand reaches out to her. She looks away, too scared to think.

Nearly at the point of hyperventilation Margaret does not hear the sound of a metallic hand crawling slowly, methodically, like a spider over the car's rear fender. She does not sense the presence that it is attached to.

"Oh God, please help me!" she screams to herself, now crying frantically. She looks up and sees Roger still standing in front of the car, reaching out for her. Then suddenly....he's gone. He falls backward over the steep edge of the hill.

"ROGER!!"

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## Chapter Two

The strike of a Zippo flashes in front of the man's face. A face with a beard, horn-rimmed glasses, and hair pasted down against his scalp with oil. The man's stubbly cheeks draw in as the flame touches the tip of the cigarette that is pressed and shaking nervously between his lips. He stands atop lover's lane, dressed in black trousers, a white button-down shirt, and suspenders. The wind whips through the moderately tall and dry grass. His eyes dart back and forth across the scene in front of him. He draws deep on the cigarette, the morning sun causing sweat to run down his forehead.

The deep scratches in the paint of the car's door, the blood stains on the passenger seat, he inspects each piece of evidence closely. He bends to examine foot prints in the grass, taking another drag off of his cigarette before discarding it. He reaches into his pocket and produces a small black device somewhat larger than his Zippo. On it is a singular large red button and an emblazoned logo featuring

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stylized versions of the letters F and M.

*Were this a movie this would be the time when we'd be treated to images of waves emanating from radio towers, beeping sounds, and an old-style radio announcer's voice saying "Futureman, calling Futureman! Capitol city is in danger! We request your immediate assistance!" However this is not a movie. So feel free to use that imagery should it in any way add to your enjoyment of this book.*

Sam Hill is standing near the car, nervously glancing at his watch and puffing on yet another cigarette. He pulls a handkerchief from his rear pocket and wipes his forehead. A voice suddenly booms from behind him.

"Did someone call for.....FUTUREMAN?"

*Ah, the hero of our story. Tall, dark hair, just a bit of a beer gut. Garbed in a flowing silvery cape, shiny arm bracers, and gleaming mask. A singular logo splashed across his chest. A personal friend of mine I might add. Not always the sharpest knife in the drawer that one, but a heart of gold.*

Sam spins around, tossing his cigarette and extending his hand in greeting. "Futureman! Thank

goodness you're here."

The oddly clad newcomer seems to ignore his request for a hand-shake. "What seems to be the problem?"

Disappointed, Sam withdraws his hand, "There have been seven murders in the last three days Futureman, horrible murders. All of the victims have been found severely mutilated, as if mauled by an animal, but I suspect something far more sinister. Perhaps even the creature you've been hunting all of this time."

He points out the footprints in the grass. Futureman rubs his chin in thought.

"Let me check it with my future-vision."

Futureman squints his eyes and moves his head slightly back and forth from left to right as he analyzes the prints.

Sam looks at him questioningly, raising an eyebrow, as if questioning whether or not anything is happening. Futureman is still squinting and moving his head back and forth ever so slightly.

Sam looks on skeptically. "Is it...?"

"Sshhh!" Futureman awkwardly puts a finger up against Sam's lips. Sam's eyes cross, focusing on the fingers.

After a few more moments, "Same readings as the last two attacks. We're close!"

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He puts his hand on Sam's shoulder. "Its trail seems to lead off towards the park."

"The park?"

"Yes, the park on Elm, the one with the neat swings."

Sam thinks for a moment.... "Oh my sweet lord! My nephew and his teacher are at that park right now!"

"Very well, I must be off to face this menace for the sake of all mankind." Futureman states in his best super-hero voice.

There is a silent pause as both men stand there, neither moving.

"So...are you gonna...fly away? Or..."

"I'm workin' on it." Futureman assures him, with an agitated look on his face.

"You sure?" after another moment.

"Yes, I'm sure. I just have trouble disappearing in front of people, that's all."

"Because it just kind of looks like..."

"What is that big distracting thing behind you!" Futureman yells, "Over there!" He points to the horizon, Sam looks over his shoulder. Futureman punches him squarely in the jaw, attempting to knock him out.

Sam reels backward for a moment then bends over with his hands on his knees. He curses under his breath and spits a little blood onto the grass. He looks

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up slowly, "You want to just take my car?"



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*The cold darkness of space hides many mysteries. Many tiny things lost in the sheer vastness of the cosmos. We turn our attention, for a moment, to one of those objects, the space saucer of the twisted and ruthless Lord of space, Zarkov.*

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Everyone is at their stations. Zarkov sits in his chair, his gaunt figure like a stone obelisk in the center of the room. His dark-circled eyes stare unblinking at the screen in front of him. Shadows caress the curves of his sunken cheeks. His long slender fingers move, lightly rapping his black fingernails against the arm of his throne-like seat.

He glances down at his space-watch, annoyed.  
"Has anyone seen Uranus?"

The bridge is silent, no one answers.

"Where is that ass?" he mutters to himself.

At that moment the door slides open and Uranus enters, the ever-present moronic look on his face, "Sorry".

"If you weren't my sister's brother in law I'd shoot you out of an airlock." Zarkov whispers under his breath.

"What?" a scared and confused look now on Uranus' face.

Zarkov, looking up and smiling, "Nothing. Please go ahead with your.....briefing."

Uranus walks over to a nearby console and flips a few switches. The computer responds with an assault of beeps and blurps. The blackness of space is replaced on the main screen by an image of Earth.

"This is our next target, Eee-aarth." Uranus declares. "Our glorious space emperor Creamface has

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commanded us to seek out its supply of synergium and then to exterminate all life on the planet."

A wicked smile begins to crack on Zarkov's face. He raises his slender right arm and clenches his hand into a fist. He shakes it at the image of Earth on the main imaging screen.

"Soon they will feel the wrath of me, Lord Zarkov."



Sitting in the passenger seat of Sam Hill's green Buick Futureman fiddles with the radio dials.

"There must be something on the radio about the creature."

"Nothing yet. The media thinks this is the work of a serial killer." He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pack of cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"No thanks." Futureman responds, almost condescendingly.

The cigarette in Sam's own mouth droops, he looks confounded by Futureman turning down a smoke.

"Oh." is Sam's only response, followed by an awkward silence.

"In all the time you've been sending me these messages and assisting me with my investigations I've never stopped to ask your name citizen." Futureman says.

Sam appears to be genuinely surprised that Futureman has asked, "You mean you want to know my name?"

Futureman nods.

"Sure, sure. It's Sam, Sam Hill." he looks back to the road for a moment, then turns back, "Now tell

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me something. What *is* this monster?”

“It’s a *robot monster*.” is Futureman’s only reply. The look on his face tells Sam that this creature represents a grave danger to Capitol City.

## Chapter Three

Sunlight filters through the leaves and spills onto the grass. Dr. Miller, a neatly dressed man in his mid-forties is crouched over, filling test tubes with water samples from the park's lake. He is handing them off to his young assistant, Jimmy. All of 15 years of age, Jimmy is deeply interested in science and considers Dr. Miller to be his mentor.

A warm summer morning breeze tousles Jimmy's hair, he smiles. While Dr. Miller is filling the test tubes Jimmy is looking around, taking in nature. He spots something, a strange patch of ground forty or fifty feet away.

"Something odd here Jimmy." Dr. Miller starts to say as he hands Jimmy a test tube, "I have yet to see even a single mosquito larva in these..." expecting Jimmy to grab the sample he ends up dropping it onto his khaki pants. Not being a man with a quick temper he furls his brow and tries to mask his frustration.

"Oh, I'm sorry Doctor Miller!"

Quickly switching to a look of only mild

annoyance the Doctor produces a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes off his pant leg. "It's okay; just try to pay attention Jimmy."

"Yessir. It's just..."

"What is it?" now noticing that Jimmy is looking at something.

"Over there." Jimmy points, "Some marks in the grass."

Taking a few moments to make sure their samples have been properly put away the Doctor rises to his feet and motions for Jimmy to follow him. The two cross the distance casually, taking in the beautiful day and the sounds of children playing in the background. Dr. Miller reaches up to his shirt pocket and selects a pair of tweezers from between his miniature screwdriver and his pack of cigarettes. He bends over near the marks and plucks what looks like a burnt piece of grass from the ground.

"Strange." he comments as he rotates it around, examining both sides.

"What is it Doctor Miller?"

"They almost look like animal tracks. Yet the markings don't seem to be left by the weight of the creature. They look more like burn marks."

He turns to the boy, "Jimmy, run to the car and grab my bag please."

"Yes sir." Jimmy takes off, running

enthusiastically. The professor takes a moment to smile, Jimmy is such a bright boy and very much like the son he and his wife had never been able to have.

Turning his attention back to the tracks he bends down once again to have a closer look at the pattern in the grass. It seems to be meandering off towards a bush near the foot of the hill that marks the northern boundary of the park. From where he's standing something doesn't look right about the bush either. He decides to investigate.

He takes a moment to look back, noticing that the trail seems to originate near the water's edge. He's really hoping that this unusual patch of grass doesn't signify what he thinks it does. He hears his car door slam in the distance. Jimmy's already retrieved the bag, quick boy. Surely enough he's almost all of the way back from the parking lot by the time the professor turns around.

"Here's the bag Doctor Miller." Jimmy says between heavy breaths a moment later as he comes running up to his mentor.

The Doctor acknowledges the boy, "Pull my Geiger counter out of there would you?"

"Your what?" looking confused. Jimmy had heard the word before and even thought that he knew what it was for but didn't know what it looked like and the bag was full of countless different gadgets and

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gizmos. Most of them he knew pretty well but a few he'd never seen the professor use before.

"It's bright yellow, says Civil Defense on it, looks like a box with a handle."

"Okay." Jimmy begins rifling through the bag's contents.

Doctor Miller can't believe what his eyes are seeing. As he walks forward he begins to make out burn patterns on the leaves of the bush almost identical to those on the grass. The tracks seem to lead up to some sort of animal burrow situated near the bush's base. Only the leaves near the bottom of the bush and closest to the burrow appear to have the damage.

"Here you go Doctor." Jimmy hands his mentor the Geiger counter.

Doctor Miller flicks the device's power switch to *on* and is instantly rewarded with a series of clicks. The counter is already picking up something.

"What does it do?" Jimmy felt ashamed for having to ask.

"It measures radioactivity."

"You mean like from an atom bomb?" Jimmy is suddenly alarmed.

"Sort of." he kneels down and waves the device over the tracks, the clicking grows more rapid. "These *are* burn marks." He says, more to himself than to anyone else.

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He is aware that he'd touched the irradiated blade of grass, probably not the best of decisions, but reasons that it's too late to do anything about it. Besides, it likely wasn't enough radiation exposure to cause any kind of lasting damage. Still, it's a reminder to him that science can be dangerous.

"Jimmy." he looks up at the boy, "Go ahead and stand about 10 feet back from me. Just in case." this statement doesn't seem to ease Jimmy's anxiety, but the boy complies.

Doctor Miller, now half-crawling along the ground, waving the Geiger counter out in front of him, edges closer to the hole in the ground. The clicking from the device intensifies with every step. The levels still aren't high enough to cause any immediate damage, but still, he'd better be careful.

As he approaches the hole he leans to peer into it, somewhat apprehensive about what might be inside of it. It's definitely big enough for something the size of a house cat, maybe even a dog. If something is down there and covered in radiation he'd dare not get bit by it. It's dark, he can't see anything.

"Jimmy" he says, without taking his eyes off of the hole, "toss me a rock."

Jimmy quickly finds a rock and rolls it, underhanded like a bowler, towards the Doctor. It lands within a few inches of his foot. The Doctor fumbles

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around for it with his right hand, left hand still clutching the Geiger counter, eyes still locked intently on the burrow's entrance.

Feeling the weight of the rock in his right hand Doctor Miller pauses for just a moment, considers his options, then tosses the rock. He swallows hard as it rolls across the grass, then down into the hole, helped by an apparent downward slope inside the burrow. He waits for a reaction from whatever is inside...

Nothing, it must be empty.

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Zarkov's saucer sits, as if hanging from strings, hovering just high enough over the Earth to prevent being detected by the humans' primitive radar technology. Inside, the evil lord himself is bent over a set of maps, plans, and intelligence data on the planet. Atomic warheads, jet fighters, mobile artillery...none of it posed any real threat to his ship, let alone to his invasion fleet waiting in Z-space.

Hunched over the retractable table that had arisen from the floor in front of his chair he couldn't help but take a moment to look around the room at the men under his command with a bit of contempt.

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Mars...Jupiter...Saturn.....Uranus, ugh. They were all simpletons, but of course that made them malleable. He liked a crew that followed his orders without question. Still, at times he felt as if the only other intelligent creature on-board was his cat.

His thoughts were interrupted by the beeping of Mars' console.

"Sir, we are in position. The fleet acknowledges they are standing by for orders." Mars was the only one of those four twits with at least half a brain. Secretly Zarkov liked him, at least a little.

He could taste the stale air of the bridge all around them as silence returned. This room, this familiar room had been his command center for many battles. It felt like home, even though *home* was something that no longer existed. How long had they been at this?

*The decision came quickly, not like one of those life changing decisions that one broods over for months on end. Surrounded by his merry band of fools Zarkov was about to do something that would change all of our lives forever.*

Raising his head from the maps and other assorted information in front of him he cracks his knuckles. He searches for words.

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*You could almost feel the tension in the room. Everyone waited for their leader to speak. It was really quite tense.....oh I'm getting all giddy....sorry...I'll be quiet now.*

“You’re almighty Emperor Creamface has sent us to this pathetic little water planet for one reason and one reason only.”

“Synergium.” Mars states.

Zarkov smiles, “Exactly,” he turns to Mars, “You get a gold star. Now shut up!”

He rises from his chair, grabbing the staff that had been lying at his side. He looks around the room and cracks a smirk.

“Who can tell me why they think we should abandon this mission and tell Creamface to kiss it?

“Sir?” Saturn asks, bewildered.

“Scan the planet for sources of synergium. And you...” he turns to Jupiter, “Scan Z-space for ten parsecs with a modulating frequency band.”

Zarkov waits patiently for his replies.

“Two synergium sources sir, both are high power, but very small quantities sir. Why would Creamface send us after such a small amount?”

Zarkov is about to respond to Saturn’s question when Jupiter’s console begins to beep. “There’s your

answer. Jupiter?”

“I’ve scanned Z-space like you asked sire, no traces of the fleet for ten parsecs. The signals must have been faked.” Jupiter replies.

“Now, I’ll ask my original question again. Why should we abandon this mission?”

Uncertain, Mars tries, “Because it’s a trap.”

“Very good Mars, two for two!” he condescendingly smiles at Mars, then turns to the others more seriously, “That floating mush head thinks that by sending me to the outskirts of the galaxy with only four guards on a pointless mission that I will be defenseless and open for my spoiled brat of a brother to come in and assassinate me. Well I have a little surprise for both of them.”

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## Chapter Four

“The answer is NO.”

“But Doctor Miller, you’ve got a shovel in your trunk. I saw it earlier.”

“Absolutely not, we have no idea what really caused this radiation or how dangerous it might be. Even if I was willing to risk my own safety I wouldn’t be willing to risk yours.”

“But sir I really think we’re onto something. Don’t you want to be the first to discover something new?”

Appealing to Miller’s curiosity was not going to work. He was already plenty curious, but this had gone far enough.

“You’re so young and full of energy...that’s what I hate about you kids.” he replies, turning toward Jimmy with a smile. “Jimmy?”

A brief moment of panic hits Doctor Miller as he realizes Jimmy isn’t standing where he was just a moment before. Instead the boy is now following what looks like a smaller, more faded version of the trail that

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had led them to the bush. Annoyed, the Doctor gets to his feet and goes after the boy.

“Jimmy, I’m not going to say it again, I’ve....” his jaw drops as he notices what the boy has found. On the side of a rather large oak tree was a rectangular depression roughly two inches deep and probably six feet tall by about three feet wide. It looked like a doorway burned into the side of the tree.

“We need to get samples of the bark!” Jimmy is ecstatic.

Doctor Miller grabs his arm, “Jimmy, this has gone far enough. Whatever it is, it’s a matter for the police, possibly the EPA, but not a high school chemistry teacher and his 15 year old student with an IQ of 290!”

Jimmy lets out a disheartened sigh, “If you say so Professor.”

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“Sir, we are receiving a message from Emp....I mean, Creamface.” Saturn had never said that name aloud with such disdain. Most of their peoples had been made subjects of the evil Creams generations ago. It was no secret that they were hated, but no one dared

mutter such a thing in the company of others.

*I should take this time to elaborate just a little on exactly what a Cream is. They are ill-tempered, narcissistic beings who exist as cream-covered heads floating on a pedestal. It would seem that at one time they existed very much like humans do presently; however, centuries ago they had the good fortune of recovering a crashed alien ship of incredible sophistication.*

*They were able to reverse-engineer its technology, but their planet lacked enough ore to fabricate a fleet of suitably large ships. Intent on conquering the galaxy they made the very rash decision of lopping all of their heads off and slathering themselves with a nutrient cream to stay alive. They could build many tiny ships, but found it rather difficult to do any actual conquering without arms or legs.*

*Being fairly intelligent, however, they found a solution. They hired mercenaries, conquered a few worlds, and then used their new slaves to murder the mercenaries and retrieve the loot. As I said before, quite a despicable lot the Creams are...but I digress.*

“Well?” jolting Saturn out of his reverie, “Open the damned thing!”

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The main screen flashes to life. The image of Creamface, a disembodied head sitting atop a pedestal slathered in a thick white cream comes into focus. It looks pissed.

“Zarkov!”

“Yes *sir*?” the word had an even worse taste than it had for the previous hundred years he’d said it.

“Have you located the synergium?”

“My scanners seem to be having some trouble locating any on the surface of this filthy little blue rock. Are you sure the survey team was correct?”

“Do not question me Zarkov!” it’s voice is deep and raspy, “Or do you not remember what I did to your home planet?”

Zarkov looks at his men, he hasn’t forgotten. Twelve billion Telosians burning as Creamface’s armada bombarded them from orbit. They’d been the only real threat to the Creams. Now they were a memory.

“In the blink of an eye....POOF! Hahahaha.”

Lord Zarkov’s fist clenches and he tries to keep his face straight.

“Your orders were to invade that little dirtball, so do it. You know what happens to those who fail me.”

“Yes sir!” Zarkov snaps, doing a pretty good job of pretending to be a loyal soldier. “I will not fail

you.”

“See that you don’t.” and with that the screen goes black.

Zarkov turns to look at his men. The typical fear displayed in them whenever they’d spoken to Creamface seems to have vanished. For just a moment he is very proud of his brave little band of fools.

“More synergium, more slaves.” Mars says, his voice full of sorrow.

“But if we don’t get it, he’ll kill us for sure.” Uranus states.

All traces of pride Zarkov is feeling vanished with that statement. Instead of repeating himself to Uranus yet again he decides to speak to the others.

“That is a cycle that we must break.”

“How sir?” Mars asks.

“You’ll see.” Zarkov states in his typical vague and arrogant tone. It’s different this time though; he really has no idea what to do.

“I just need time to think.” he mutters under his breath.

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Creamface’s command center is a far cry from

his throne room where the leaders of newly enslaved worlds are paraded and made to beg for mercy. No grand columns made of crystal, no trumpeters, no sparkling fountains or scantily clad servants. This room was dark, lit only by a few overhead lamps. The chamber was round with a ceiling that tapered into a point in the middle. In the center of the room sat a cylindrical pedestal carved from the finest Dantonese marble, atop it, Creamface. In front of him a single large viewer. The walls are clad in Tragyx fur, black as space itself. The single entrance flanked by armed guards, their helmeted breathing barely audible over the background hum of the station's reactors.

"That egotistical moron!" Little does he know that planet is just bait, but before he can figure that out it will be too late!" Creamface erupts into laughter.

From the shadows a large, burly figure steps into the light. From its apparent wear his uniform appears to have seen much battle. His shoulders are adorned with red diamonds, his chest surrounded by a fiery red sash be-speckled with trophies of conquest. Tragyx fur trims his bracers, and a narrow beard follows the contour of his strong jawline. Upon his left cheek sits a scar, a wound that had nearly taken his eye. On his hip an intimidatingly large pistol hangs.

"That bastard is right in position." the figure addresses the Emperor.

## It Came From Tomorrow

Creamface laughs again, a very self-satisfied laugh, “With him out of the way, you will not have to share your glory any longer.”

“Or my percentage of the spoils.” the scarred one sneers.

“The universe will be ours!” nothing satisfied a Cream more than bending someone to his will, “All you have to do is press that button.”

“This button?” the stranger points to a button on the nearest console.

“No. The other one.”

“This one?”

“No. The one to the....no go back, you had it. Yes! That button! Hahaha.”

The stranger’s gloved finger pushes the button hard, as if his anger could be transferred into the weapon by applying more force.

They both look up to the viewer as a stream of energy erupts from the main cannon; nothing can stand up to the power of Creamface’s planet-killing space station. Surely Zarkov will fry like an ant under a magnifying glass.

## It Came From Tomorrow



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Alarms on Zarkov's ship flare to life only nanoseconds before the impact of the faster-than-light weapon strikes them.

On the ground, Doctor Miller thinks he catches a minute flash of light from the corner of his eye. Must be the glint of an airplane, he decides.

Back on the bridge of Zarkov's ship alarms are blaring and the men are struggling to pull themselves to their feet.

## It Came From Tomorrow

“They missed!” Saturn yells over the klaxons.

Zarkov digs his fingernails into the arms of his chair, anger evident in his lean features. A coolant duct ruptures behind him, but he barely notices. He is instead staring intently at the main viewer and the image of Earth suddenly becoming much larger.

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Staring up through the trees at the fireball streaking through the sky Jimmy nearly trips over a stump, Doctor Miller catches him, but the boy continues to run for the car.

“Come on Doctor Miller!”

“Coming....just.....a second.” he never realized how out of shape he’d become working behind a desk. The roaring continues to increase in intensity and seems to be approaching much faster than they had thought.

The two stop for a second and turn to look in terror as it seems that the object might come down straight on top of them. It doesn’t. The rush of air as it passes less than a hundred feet overhead rips leaves from the treetops and nearly sends both of them to the ground.

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The two stop and look at each other in amazement, but then the ground bucks beneath them, this time sending them both face-first into the grass.

Jimmy picks himself off of the ground and spits out a piece of grass. “NEATO!!”

Dr. Miller simply looks toward the growing dust plume roughly a half mile away in sheer astonishment. What on Earth *was* that?

## Chapter Five



*The one thing that a Cream can never bring itself to do is to admit an error, which is why I suspect the whole floating-head thing has stuck around so long. Likewise a Cream could never admit the error of someone directly under its command, especially when that someone was of use at the moment.*

*So unlike most hierarchical systems in the*

## It Came From Tomorrow

*universe it was usually the poor sap at the very bottom that got all of the blame. Which brings us to Creamface's command center with a henchman on his knees, begging for mercy that he knows will never come. Having spent even a modicum of time around the Creams he should have known better.*

“Please sir, I followed your orders precisely.”  
the henchman has no qualms about begging for his life.

Trying to rile up Creamface, “He was supposed to have my brother’s ship in his sights at all times.” the scarred stranger interjects.

“Pathetic excuses!” Creamface knows very well that it had likely been Lord Tang’s fumbling with the controls that had caused the missed shot but he didn’t care. “Give him...THE CREAM!!!”

The henchman’s face, now de-helmeted, has drained of all of its color. He’s a Dralnik, a little smaller than a human with deep-set glowing green eyes and shimmering purplish skin.

“No!” the Dralnik screams as Tang’s guards hold him down. “No, anything but that!”

“Spoon!” Creamface demands.

The door slides open with a hiss and another henchman comes trotting in holding an ornate spoon, likely from the Emperor’s personal cutlery set. He hands it off to Tang and then quickly retreats. All the

while ignoring the poor Dralnik's screams. Tang saunters over to Creamface's pedestal and proceeds to fill the spoon with a good helping of cream.

"No! Please no!"

"Open!" one of the guards seizes the Dralnik by the neck and the other uses his gloved hands to pry the man's mouth open.

Tang drops in a nice sized glob and almost instantly the henchman reacts. The two guards release him and drop him to the floor, his armor making a decidedly loud clank as he lands. He begins to clutch at his throat as steam begins to rise from his body. Tang and Creamface laugh dementedly as the man's body is rapidly reduced to bones and sludge accompanied by a harsh sizzling sound and a fair amount of steam.

"Now THAT is motivation! Am I right people?" Tang asks, his arms out, motioning to unseen henchmen in the shadows.

The room briefly fills with cheers and then the remaining henchmen get back to work at breakneck speed. An automated mop & bucket unit comes through the door with a hiss to clean up the mess.

A huge grin spreads across Creamface's mouth, "I love my job!"

Without the ventilation system operating the air on the bridge of Zarkov's ship is more stagnant than ever. The glancing blow had destroyed their port engine and had sent a feedback pulse into the ship's main systems that had blown out nearly everything onboard. It had also cracked the reactor housing and caused them to have to implode their fuel stack to stave off a meltdown. Mars had barely been able to control their descent and it was a miracle that they had survived.

The bridge is a complete wreck. Mars is operating a console, Uranus under it, repairing the wiring through the access panel on the bottom. Light from the damaged console flickers across Mars' face as it partially comes back to life.

"Wait, you had it right there." he says.

Uranus looks up from under the console with an annoyed grimace, "Wait a minute..." he fiddles with some more wires and is rewarded by a loud pop and a large spark. Smoke rises from the console.

"Never mind." Mars says, rolling his eyes.

"Wait, I can fix it." Uranus assures him.

Mars stares off into space. "We did a good number on the ship this time."

“Yeah.” comes Uranus’ voice from under the console, “It’s broken.”

He continues to tinker. Mars can hear some kind of ratchet-type sound and Uranus mumbling under his breath as he works.

“I can’t believe Creamface actually tried to kill us like that.” Mars’ face shows genuine concern. He’d always known that Creams had little regard for life, but to actually be on the receiving end of Creamface’s wrath so quickly had been a bit of a shock.

“Yeah.” is Uranus’ only response.

“Lord Zarkov will think of something though.”

“Yeah.....unless his brother show’s up.”

At this Mars becomes a little flustered, there had always been competition not only between Zarkov and Tang, but the men under their command as well. “Lord Tang isn’t as infallible as he’d like us to believe.”

“Yeah, he just gets lucky.” Uranus mutters, “In-fall-i-ble, that’s a crazy word, hehe.”

“I mean it’s not that Lord Zarkov is incompetent or anything, he’s far more brilliant than his brother, he’s just...”

“JUST WHAT?” neither of them had heard the hiss of the door as Zarkov had entered. Mars snaps to attention, Uranus attempts to, but smashes his head into the underside of the console.

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“Misunderstood!.....sir.” Mars attempts to save his ass. Uranus is still trying to get to his feet. “Like all military geniuses sir.”

Uranus stand up rubbing his forehead in pain and looks at Mars. “That’s a lot better than what I was gonna say.”

Zarkov scowls, “Status?!”

“The port engine is destroyed, power system failures on all decks, weapons and life support offline.....and our reactor housing is shattered.” Mars replies dutifully. “Not to mention the fact that we’ve got no fuel.”

“What are the conditions on this planet?” Zarkov snaps.

“The air is breathable; the natives have some knowledge of mechanics. We might be able to use them to help repair the ship.”

“But we will need synergium for the reactor core.” Zarkov says to no one in particular, his thoughts trailing off.

“Correct sir, otherwise we can’t lift off. We’re on battery power right now.” Mars responds, then with a concerned look, “But even if we could lift off, where would we go?”

“Judging by that little gift they gave us my suspicions are confirmed...we’re not welcome back with the fleet.”

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“So what are you suggesting sir?” Mars asks.

“We may need a change of address form.”

Zarkov replies, snidely.

Uranus smiles, not really sure what he’s smiling about, but wanting to be a part of it nevertheless. He flips a switch and suddenly the console comes to life. They both turn to him. “Sir, you’re not going to believe this.”

“Ugh, I told you to delete those pictures of my ex-wife for good.”

“No...those two synergium sources we detected from orbit, the ship’s sensors indicate that we’ve crashed fairly close to them. I’ll be able to narrow it down more once we’ve repaired the synergium tracker.”

Zarkov turns to Mars, “Check on the rest of the men, they should be in sickbay getting patched up by the robodoc.

“Yes sir!” both respond in chorus.

Zarkov catches Uranus as he goes to follow Mars, “And Uranus!”

“Yes sir?”

“Change your name please, I’ve been wanting to tell you that for like 10 years. It sounds like I’m saying ‘your anus’.”

“What should I change it to?”

“Anything! I don’t care, just not that.”

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“Ok sir...How about...Neptune?”

“What? Why?” Zarkov asks, looking confused.

He scratches his chin.

“It’s the next planet in this solar system.”

“You mean your real name isn’t....”

“No, it’s Hank. Mars’ is George, Saturns’ is Hubert.”

“Why did you use those fake names on your applications?”

“Sounded more professional.....everyone is naming themselves after stars and planets, it just sounds better. Just ask Jupiter Starlight.”

“Don’t tell me, his real name is...”

“George C. Scott.”

---

Dr. Miller has been trying for several minutes now through his panting to abate Jimmy’s enthusiasm but the boy only continues on. The debris surrounding the impact crater makes for rough going, much of it is hot and steaming, all of it is loose and hard to maintain footing in.

Eventually they reach a point where they can look down into the dip in the Earth and see a shiny disc

shaped object with a large burn mark on its side.

“Hey professor! Looks like the spacemen were in a fight!”

“Well...” trying to catch his breath, “Then they sound like the type we want to steer clear of anyway. We need to go and find a phone...” the Doctor’s words are unheard by the boy who has just taken off down the slope. The crater itself is probably 1200 feet in diameter and nearly 100 feet deep. Jimmy slides down the loose surface, bending low and using his hands to steady himself in the loose soil. Reluctantly Dr. Miller follows. He has a harder time steadying himself than the boy and ends up dropping the Geiger counter. It comes to a stop against a nearby rock as the Doctor himself makes it to the bottom.

As he approaches the craft Jimmy reaches his hand out to touch the hull of the ship but almost instantly jerks it back and cradles it against his chest.

“It’s burning hot!” he says looking back at Dr. Miller who is examining his instrument which seems to be beyond any hope of repair.

“That thing just went through our atmosphere; the friction probably sent that hull upwards of 2,300 degrees or so. It’s a wonder how it even remained intact, especially with this kind of impact. I wonder what type of metal it’s composed of.” Dr. Miller’s curiosity was quickly overcoming his

apprehensiveness.

“Holy smokes, that’s hot!” he exclaims as he walks up beside Jimmy and feels the heat radiating from the craft. “We’d better call the police Jimmy.”

“Why?” both men turn in surprise as a lovely young brunette steps out from the other side of the ship. “So they can call in the G-men and they can keep you from your discovery?”

“Who the heck are you and what are you doing down here?” Miller asks. For a moment he considers the very real possibility that she is some sort of alien. After all, it’s very unlikely anyone could have beaten them to the crash site, even less likely that a woman would scramble down the sides of the crater just like they had. She *was* wearing trousers however, and they were as dirty as his and Jimmy’s.

“Name’s Daphne Fawn.” she states, and then with a coy smile, “I’ve seen one of these ships before. Ten years ago in Roswell, New Mexico. Men in black suits came soon after, made everyone sign papers saying under penalty of death they’d not speak of the things they saw.”

“All the more reason for us to scram!” Dr. Miller states as he gestures for Jimmy to follow him. He turns to leave.

“I’d suggest you do the same Missy.” he says over his shoulder as he motions for Jimmy to follow

him.

“You gonna listen to your Dad kid?”

“He’s not my dad, my daddy is in Heaven. He’s my teacher, Dr. Miller. He’s a scientist.”

Surprised by the brashness of Jimmy’s response the girl momentarily holds her tongue. With that Jimmy bends and picks up a large stone from the crater floor.

“What are you doing kid?” the girl asks, almost nervously.

“How else are we going to see if anyone’s home? I’m going to knock.”

“Oh absolutely not! Jimmy put that rock down...” Dr. Miller’s words are again unheeded.

---

Zarkov’s bridge is quiet; the men are working obediently at repairing their consoles.

Saturn’s voice pierces the silence, “Sir we’ve...”

“Shut up you fool!” Zarkov barks, he turns his head, as if listening to something. “What’s that sound?”

The others halt their work. A faint tapping can

be heard.

“Mars, is someone outside?” Zarkov asks as he turns to his second in command.

Mars rushes to a console and taps a few buttons. A few sounds emanate from the console, and luckily this time, no sparks.

“Sir there are three Earth-beings tapping on the hull of the ship.” Mars looks up with a confused expression on his face. “With a rock.”

Zarkov looks around the room, also confused. He wrinkles his brow in thought, scanning the faces of his crew for answers. Suddenly he turns back to Mars, “Why?”

“I don’t know sir.”

“Well make them stop.....VAPORIZE THEM!”

“We can’t sir, they’re too close to the ship.”

Zarkov’s shoulders slump in discouragement.

“Fine, just....bring them in.”

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“Something’s happening!” Daphne exclaims.

Everyone is startled as a noise begins to emanate from deep inside the craft. There is a hiss and all three jump back as steam or some other gas vents

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from two round holes in the side of the ship. A large heavy door, like a ramp, slowly drops free from the craft's side and a shadowy figure appears to be standing, back-lit by bright light and surrounded by smoke. The form begins to move forward. The three humans tense and their minds race at the thoughts of first contact with an alien species. It's a robot!

*Perhaps I should interject for one moment. You see at this point the author will no doubt try to convince you that what stood before the three onlookers was something along the lines of a menacing mountain of metal, steely gaze, bristling with weapons. In actuality Zarkov's robot is called D4 and resembles nothing of the sort. Think more along the lines of a rubbish bin with tiny wobbly wheels, beady little glowing eyes that appeared to cross, and what looked like a television aerial attached at the top. In fact he started service aboard Zarkov's ship as a trash compacting unit; this makes him not only obedient but also imminently dispensable.*

“The great and honorable Lord Zarkov...” it states in a mechanical tone, then switches to what sounds like a recording of Zarkov's voice “...Savior of the planet Caladar, fearless victor of the Battle of Zeburon 7, destroyer of 10,000 worlds...” the voice

switches back to its mechanical tone "...would like to greet you in the name of peace."

The three look from one to another, Dr. Miller still intensely skeptical of Daphe, the newcomer.

"Please....follow me." the robot states. It rotates a full 180 degrees and then proceeds to roll way into the fog wobbling only slightly as it does so.

Following the mostly comical appearance of the robot the three actually seem to relax somewhat. Surely whoever decided to send such an amusing creature to greet them has a sense of humor.

They begin up the ramp, following the sound of the rattly little robot that has since disappeared into the ship. Their trust is misplaced however, as Saturn and Jupiter spring forth bearing what Dr. Miller can easily see are weapons, some form of rifles to be more exact.

"Say now, what's the meaning of this?" Dr. Miller asks, somewhat outraged.

"You are interfering with Lord Zarkov's plans. You must be dealt with." Saturn declares.

"Who is this Lord Zarkov?" Miller asks. From some unseen place comes the voice of the little robot, "Savior of the Planet Caladar, the fearless victor of the Batt....." the voice is silenced by what sounds like a kick to its metal body and the voice of Uranus, "Shut up you piece of junk!"

Turning his attention back toward his captives

## It Came From Tomorrow

Saturn explains, “He is the destroyer of entire races, the ruler of all of the enslaved worlds, and Emperor Creamface’s right hand man.”

If only the humans knew the truth, that Creamface had tried to kill them. The three look at each other, simply confused by what the alien is saying.

“Hey! This guy invited us on-board, so where is he?” Jimmy asks, probably with a little too much moxie, given their situation.

“Lord Zarkov wishes to see you, but first we must restrain you.” Jupiter declares.

Dr. Miller, ever the man of science looks at the other two. Inside he can barely restrain his frustration at Jimmy, it was his impatience that had gotten them into this mess. Still, he attempts to be a calming factor in this situation. “Just think of it like this, we’re the Earth’s first ambassadors, maybe we should just go along.”

“Whatever you say Dr. Miller, but I’ve got a bad feeling about this.”

*Ah, NOW the boy has a bad feeling about this.*

Daphne, the enigmatic stranger, refuses to be consoled by Dr. Miller. “How can we trust them?” she asks the other two.

“What about you? How do we know you’re not one of them?” Jimmy asks her. Her only response is a raised eyebrow that shows contempt.

Miller raises a hand and interjects, “I’m not asking you to trust them, I’m asking you to trust me. I think once we talk to this Zarkov fellow everything will be straightened out.”

“No way, I’m not going to let them handcuff me!” Daphne turns to leave.

Having lost his patience Jupiter raises his rifle and fires a blast into Daphne’s back. She wilts to the deck and Dr. Miller and Jimmy rush forward to fight the space men who quickly level their rifles at the humans’ heads.

“I wouldn’t do that.” Jupiter states.

“My friend is right,” Saturn smiles, “these weapons *were* on the stun setting,” he flips a switch, “but now they’re on *kill*.”

## Chapter Six

“Locals?” Zarkov asks as Jimmy and Dr. Miller are thrown to the floor at his feet.

“Yes sir.” Saturn replies smugly.

Zarkov bends over in his chair and grasps Jimmy’s face in his hand; he turns the boy’s head from one side to another, looking him over carefully. “You, you’re too young to be a soldier and you...” he turns his gaze to the professor, “you’re too old.”

“We’re not soldiers.” Dr. Miller replies.

Zarkov’s comment had stung more than he would have expected. Sure he was going grey, but did he really look that old? “We’re scientists. We were just curious about you.”

“Ah, scientists, then at least I’ll have a use for you.” Zarkov cracks a wry smile, “Put the two males to work repairing our synergium tracker. The female can go into a holding cell until we can find a use for her.”

Daphne is hauled away, her fearful eyes locked with Jimmy’s. Jimmy is on the brink of crying.

“You look like smart boys; maybe you can tell

me where I can find something.” Zarkov declares.

“I’m not helping you find a gosh-darned thing!” Jimmy snaps.

Zarkov rises from his chair and cracks a wicked smile. He slowly steps over to Jimmy and says, “The last boy who spoke to me like that...” he leans in closer, “he ended up inside an asteroid.”

Jimmy backs away slightly, Dr. Miller refuses to budge.

“Whatever evil plans you have we want no part of them!” Miller asserts.

“Evil plans?” Zarkov scoffs, “You must have me confused with some kind of *villain*.”

“Well even your robot spoke of battles and destroyed worlds.” Miller replies sharply.

“I am a patriot!” Zarkov snaps as he clangs the bottom of his staff on the metal deck plates.

“My race once ruled an entire sector of space. That is until a sadistic emperor from a Cream planet kidnapped a hand full of men, including my brother and I. He forced us to be his soldiers in a galactic war, a war that erased my home planet!” Zarkov leans closer to Dr. Miller, “You see human, I am not the bad guy here. My ship merely crashed on your little rock and now I need a material known as synergium to repair it. However, I need help to find it.”

Dr. Miller swallows hard, trying to maintain his

staunch facade. "I am sorry, but I've never heard of this synergium. It isn't on our periodic table of elements."

"Perio-what?" Zarkov snaps.

Dr. Miller begins to explain but Zarkov cuts him off. "Nevermind, whatever it is you monkeys no doubt have it wrong anyway."

At this Dr. Miller begins to show signs of agitation, he prepares to deliver a snappy comeback but Zarkov muses, "Come now, you are an educated man are you not? Your race split the atom recently, correct?"

"That's right, and yes, I am a man of science." Miller responds proudly, raising his chin and swelling his chest.

Zarkov smiles, "That is just one step away from releasing the dipolar-synion particles and creating the material."

"What are your plans once you get this material?"

"That depends on you. If you agree to help me then I see no reason not to spare your race the horrors of galactic war."

"And if I refuse?"

Lord Zarkov's gaze turns to fury and engages Dr. Miller. He breaks into a maniacal laughter, "You will learn the true meaning of suffering."

“We’ve been at this for hours Futureman.” Sam Hill exclaims, trying to catch his breath.

“And we will keep going at it! That monster can’t be far.” Futureman responds, much less winded from their search than his companion.

“What about that explosion we heard earlier?”

“That was probably just some construction workers; you know they are a hard working group. I think they are working on a dam close by.

*To be completely honest Futureman likely has no idea whether or not a dam is currently under construction in the area. Don’t get me wrong, he’s a good-meaning sort of fellow, albeit he often has to convince others that he knows what he is talking about. After all, people need confidence in their heroes don’t they?*

“That didn’t sound like construction workers.”

“Whatever it was it has nothing to do with us, or the robot monster.” Futureman remarks confidently. “Come on, this area seems clear, let’s get back to your automobile.”

Daphne has long since ceased tugging and thrashing against the space-age chains that bind her to the floor of Zarkov's holding cell. Near the door Saturn stands motionless with a staunch expression on his face. The door whooshes open and Lord Zarkov steps into the room, staff in hand, trying to look as menacing as possible.

"She hasn't said a word since I chained her sir." Saturn reports.

"Heh," Zarkov scoffs, "She is useless. According to the data Mars gathered on this species her kind only exists to bear young and clean up messes."

Saturn softly chuckles.

"I can do more than that." the two turn to the girl chained to the floor. Zarkov walks over to her and kneels beside her. He takes her head in his long slender fingers.

"What *can* you do?"

"I can read in twelve different languages, I'm a black belt in five styles of martial arts, and I can take apart a ham radio and put it back together in 5 minutes."

Saturn, looking particularly smug interjects,

“Big deal, I can do that too.”

Zarkov rises and turns to the door, he has heard enough of this female’s lies.

“Can you pick locks?” Daphne asks.

“Pick locks?” Saturn replies.

The chains fall from her wrists and she springs to her feet. She attacks Saturn with a chop to the neck. As he falls to the floor Daphne pounces on him and continues her assault. Zarkov watches in amusement and begins to laugh. After watching the altercation for a few moments he casually leans his staff over her head, a bright energy pulse leaps forth from the staff’s head and into Daphne’s cranium. She collapses to the floor.

“Haha! Saturn you were bested by a monkey! You are an embarrassment to your race.”

“But sir she...”

“Go get cleaned up!” Zarkov snaps, “The robodoc should still be operational, have him stitch your lip.” at this he chuckles a little.

Hanging his head in shame Saturn pulls himself from the floor and walks out of the room, avoiding eye contact with anyone else. Daphne pulls herself into a sitting position, resting against a nearby wall. Not wanting to let Zarkov see how badly the staff had dazed her she takes a moment to fix her hair.

“I must say, that is quite impressive...for a

monkey.”

Daphne pauses, still trying to inconspicuously regain her composure, “If I’m a monkey, then what are you?”

“Evolution is a funny thing my dear. On most worlds a certain species grows smarter and faster than all others, sheds its tail and fur and walks on its hind legs. It becomes the master of its world.”

“And on your world, what animal was that?”

“The mongoose...oddly enough.”

Daphne gives the matter some thought, feigning deep interest in what Zarkov has to say. She musters the largest amount of false-interest she can and asks, “So tell me about this synergium you’re looking for.”

His ego being pandered to Zarkov is more than happy to oblige, “It is a rare element, only a handful of planets in the galaxy contain any of it naturally.” he pauses to rub his goatee, “We have reason to believe your planet possesses synergium, and we need it to get our ship fully operational again.”

“And you want the old guy and that kid to help you get it?”

“They are assisting in repairs to my tracking device as we speak.”

“Maybe I can help?”

Zarkov squints his eyes, staring deeply at her.

He doesn't quite know what to make of this one. He kneels and leans in closer to better analyze her.

"You've proven to be cunning, but I doubt you could be of any use to me."

With Zarkov fully engaged, his ego catered to, and his interest piqued Daphne would now make her move. She smiles at him seductively; she hopes that this will work on an alien.

"Don't be so sure."

"Hmph, why would you offer to help me?"

"I'm a gambler, and I always know which team to bet on. Right now, I'd say you've got the odds in your favor." For a moment Zarkov considers what she'd think of the odds if she knew the real situation he and his crew were in.

He narrows his eyes, looking at her suspiciously. "How do I know I can trust you?"

She brushes her finger tips along his cheek and twirls one of the ends of his Fu manchu between her fingers. She leans in closer, "Do I *look* like someone you can't trust?" she follows it up with her most seductive smile.

"I don't know, you're the third of these *humans* I've met, and so far you all seem pretty shady to me."

Her fingers begin to dance across his shoulder. He suddenly takes notice and snaps, "What are you doing?"

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She only smiles in return, “You are a *very* powerful man, and I find power very attractive.”

*Perhaps now would be the time for me to interject. You see, the great and powerful Lord Zarkov may be the conqueror of many worlds but he has never been much of a Casanova with the ladies, those of his own species or otherwise. This may not be the most tragic thing ever, since females of his species are over 7 feet tall and are known to crush their mates to death during the act of reproduction. But I digress...*

Zarkov swallows hard, a lump in his throat.  
“Attractive?”

“Oh yes.” she smiles slyly, “I see an opportunity here. You need me, and I need you. I’m bored with this world; I want to see what’s up there. The stars, the planets, black holes, everything.”

“It’s pretty much the same all over, bright twinkly lights with little rocks floating around them.”

“I want to see for myself. I want to be more than just Daphne Fawn, a tom-boy from Nebraska. I want to be.....” she pauses momentarily to think, “your Space Queen!”

“Space Queen?” at this particular moment Zarkov can’t help but wonder if all Earth females are quite so insane, still....she is a female and not an

## It Came From Tomorrow

unattractive one at that. Also the prospect of coitus without the risk of any crushing has a certain appeal.

“Yeah, you’re better half, you’re main squeeze, the one you share you’re victories with.” she pulls herself to a standing position while never breaking eye contact with Zarkov. Holding his hand she helps him to his feet. “We will stand on the rubble of shattered planets and laugh! We will drink wine from the skulls of our vanquished foes!”

Zarkov definitely wouldn’t mind drinking wine from the skull of a certain Cream. “I like you monkey girl, you’re a twisted sadistic bitch.”

“So.....?” she approaches Zarkov and puts her head on his chest. “Can I be your queen?”

“We shall see.” and with that the space lord pulls himself from her grasp, his cape flaps as he turns and exits the room. The door closes with a whoosh and Daphne is left alone with her madness.

## Chapter Seven

An old abandoned house, vacant since the early thirties, sits at the end of Oak Lane. It is a frequent hangout for local undesirables, mostly greaser kids and the occasional wandering hobo. Loose boards dangle from its facade and its yard has been taken over by the shrubs and hedges that were once planted with such loving care. A faint glow can be seen through the moldy window nearest the front porch.

Inside the living room sits Nick, a typical greaser kid. A candle on the hardwood floor near him is illuminating part of what was once someone's living room. Out of the corner of his eye he catches a glimpse of a shadow moving across the porch. Thinking nothing of it he finishes his beer and tosses the bottle across the room. It smashes into so many glass shards, some embed into the mildew covered wallpaper that is now peeling away at every corner.

“Hey! Tommy!”

There is no answer, so begrudgingly he gets to his feet. Tommy had gone to the back only minutes

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ago, claiming he needed to relieve himself. Nick stumbles toward the hallway; he nearly trips over the pile of empty beer bottles they'd been working on all night.

“Where are you guys?”

The hair on the back of his neck suddenly stands on end; despite his inebriated state he knows that something is very wrong. There's something behind him. He can feel its breath.

He goes to turn but is stopped by a long metal tube erupting from the creature's wrist, it smashes into his skull. He never sees his attacker.

Outside the house an overgrown bush rustles. Then another, then another, making a straight b-line for the house. The remnants of a rusty old trash can suddenly clangs and falls to the ground.

“Ahh!” Futureman clasps his hand over his own mouth to keep from screaming. He speaks softly to Sam Hill as he bends over to rub his foot. “This must be the place, my future senses tell me that the evil I sensed before is very close.” Sam nods in agreement.

As the two men approach the front porch cautiously the silence is broken by a scream that sounds as if it was extinguished almost as quickly as it had begun.

Futureman turns to Sam, “It's close!”

He points to the front door. Even in the dim

light of the distant street lamp Sam's eyes can make out distinct claw marks.

"It must be here!" Futureman exclaims.

"Are you sure?"

Bewildered by Sam's doubt Futureman turns to him quizzically, "What else could make claw marks like this?"

"A bear, probably."

"A bear? A bear?!?!? Would a bear do this?"

Futureman reaches into a nearby bush and pulls out what appears to be the corpse of a neighborhood dog, there is a hole in its head. Sam looks at it in disgust.

"Actually, I've seen a bear do that."

"Really? Where?"

"Alaska."

"That doesn't count!" Futureman states in frustration.

"Sure it does."

"No....it doesn't." trying to put an end to this.

"Why not?"

"Because...", now looking quite perturbed, "We're not *in* Alaska."

"Ah! So you admit that a bear could do that?"

"I admit that a bear *could* do that if it were so inclined...but not here."

"So what you're saying is that just because we

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are not in an area populated by bears that it's not possible for a bear to do the damage you've just shown me?" Sam is getting more smug by the moment.

Futureman lets out a sigh, "Those claw marks and that dog's death could be attributed to a bear, possibly a black bear since we are technically within their natural range. However, after following an energy signature here and only moments ago hearing what sounded like a blood-curdling scream emanating from this very house I must jump to the conclusion that it is *not* a bear at all but in fact.....THE ROBOT MONSTER!"

Sam smiles, "Was that so hard?"

"You just wait here." Futureman leaves Sam to his self-satisfaction.

---

"How many beers we got left?" Tommy's question reverberates through the dank old hallway. His footsteps, and those of his friend, Steven, echo against the old wood. Tommy pushes open the door and spots Nick face down in what, in the dim light, they mistake for a puddle of sick.

"Lightweight." he laughs and punches Steven

in the arm, “Grab me a beer.”

“Yeah yeah yeah.” he crouches to open the cooler. The damned hinge is sticking again so he has to pull on it. “You might wanna make sure he’s still breath...” with the combination of his intoxication and an overly zealous tug on the cooler lid he goes tumbling backward, on top of Nick.

“Oh shit man, I’m sorry.” in the dim candle light it suddenly registers that the puddle around him is a deep crimson.

“Oh shit!”

Steven begins flailing his limbs trying to get away from the horrific scene. Tommy extends a hand to help his friend but ends up slipping in the blood himself. A few moments of confusion and terror pass as the two wildly attempt to get to their feet. Steven finally regains his footing and leaves fresh bloody hand prints on the old flower-print wallpaper as he steadies himself against the wall.

There is a sound on the porch and Tommy reaches for a beer bottle, grabbing it by the neck. He smashes it against the metal cooler and brandishes it toward the door which promptly bursts open to reveal none other than.....FUTUREMAN!

By contrast of the dark living room street light pours in from behind him as well as some of the night mist. Tommy and Steven are standing there covered in

blood and panting heavily.

“Greetings people of the past!” he looks down at the corpse splayed on the floor, “Oooh, Ow.”

Tommy and Steven exchange nervous glances. “Is he talking about us?” Tommy asks his friend.

Without missing a beat Futureman replies in his best hero tone, “I’ve come from the future to warn you of an evil lurking in this house!”

“What kind of evil?” the blood-smeared Steven asks.

“A horrible evil!”

Again the two disheveled greasers exchange astonished glances.

“How do we stop it?!” Tommy blurts out.

“We must remove its heart. It is the only part of the robot beast that is truly alive.”

Steven is ready for an explanation, “What is this monster? Why is it after us?”

“That is a long story.”

To their amazement Futureman sits down on the floor, Indian-style. He looks up at them, “Sorry, I’ve been on my feet all day, I need to sit for a little while.”

“Shouldn’t we try to find this thing?” Steven asks, profoundly confused by this whole ordeal.

Futureman tries not to lose his patience, “In a moment, let me rest. Have you been traveling through

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time all day chasing a robot monster? NO! You've been loitering around drinking..." he picks up an empty bottle, "some shitty beer and combing your hair. Now you want to come down on me saying 'We have to kill the monster!' Well I say 'Just a minute! I'm tired.'"

"Can you at least tell us where it came from?" Tommy pleads.

"Oh yeah, that's a funny story. Well, not really funny....more like....tragic..."

*This is the point where, were you watching television, the screen would begin to blur and ripple as if a pebble were tossed into a pond and softly stroking harp music would fill your ears. This however is a book, so as your narrator it is my humble duty to inform you that a flashback is about to take place.*

"It all started in the future with a crazy mad scientist." Futureman's voice fades away.

The lab is dark, illuminated only by the glow of oscilloscope screens and a single overhead incandescent bulb. The buzz of electricity provides a solid layer of white noise to the room. The scientist stands over a table situated directly under the light. His hands clasp in joy as a twisted look of satisfaction crosses his wrinkled face. He has the appearance of having not had a bath in weeks, his hair is matted and

oily and there are several stains on his white lab coat.

“At last I have succeeded in creating a monster that will rid the world of mosquitoes! Those damned mosquitoes!!” he laughs maniacally at his own words.

He is quite serious, he has devoted years of research into creating the first of what would be many such creatures whose sole purpose is to rid the Earth of mosquitoes forever. His prototype monstrosity lies before him, vaguely humanoid in shape; its sinewy limbs are covered in cables and wires which erupt from its flesh at various points. Its face covered in tatters of cloth, a temporary measure until its face mask is completed. From each wrist a small metal protrusion, part of its filter system. Once operational it will insert one of these probes into pond-water and filter mosquito eggs, the other is simply an exhaust port. It is unique in that it is an evolving machine, it will take sustenance from the very mosquito eggs and larvae that it is set to destroy, and then once it has gathered enough energy it will transform into a beast capable of filtering even more water.

These creatures will never tire, they will never age, and they will never give up. They will continue to operate day in and day out until the mosquito is extinct. All that is required to keep this hybrid machine-creature alive is a small amount of a rare-earth element discovered in the arctic. This will be his

only stumbling block; so far he has only managed to procure small amounts of this material.

Bloodshot eyes alive with what could best be described as sheer mania the scientist plants his gloved hand onto a nearby power switch. Unable to contain himself any longer he throws the switch. The beast on the table lurches hard against its restraints as arcs of energy flow into its body from cone shaped emitters situated at the head and foot of the platform.

“YES!!”

The doctor’s mania crests like a wave smashing ashore. He begins to laugh hysterically, a sure sign of what his friends and family have long suspected, he has gone completely insane.

“LIFE FROM THAT WHICH HAS NONE! I AM HEPHAESTUS, DIVINE...”

One of the fuse blocks on the adjacent wall explodes into a shower of sparks and shrapnel. A piece silences the scientist’s rant as it tears into his right cheek. The light dims and sputters. Grasping his face with a blood smeared glove he pulls himself up, using the table as leverage. The explosion was more than just literal, but figurative as well. The once-respected scientist had reached the precipice of inescapable madness and his mind could never be the same again from this moment forth. What had been mania only seconds before now turned to foreboding despair.

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“NO!” he grasps at the monster, begging for his creation to show some sign of life. There is none. It lies as motionless as ever. “No! No.” he collapses to the floor and wraps his body into a fetal position and begins to tear at his own hair, as if trying to claw the madness from his own mind.

The table shakes violently. He ceases his own spasms to lift his head and see what is happening.

Nothing. He lowers his head into his hands.

The table shakes again, violently, this time the robot monster’s body pulls violently at its restraints. Cooling fluid, a thick translucent purple, flows from the monster’s mouth. Its nails dig into the wooden table and with a final spasm that ejects copious amounts of the purple liquid it collapses to the table.

Certain that the creature’s death throws are over and that his experiment has all been for naught the doctor reaches for the table but his hand freezes in place as the monster takes a breath. For a moment it does nothing else, no signs of life other than shallow breathing.

“Yes. Breath! I can fix you!” delighted he leans in close to his creation, as if to comfort it.

Without warning the monster’s right arm bursts free and grabs him by the wrist. Using only a small fraction of its strength the beast snaps the joint, sending him to the floor grasping at it in agony.

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“No! What are you doing?!” his question goes unanswered as the machine-thing rises from the table, easily snapping each restraint one by one.

“The voltage spike scrambled your programming! Stop now I command you!” knowing that his words mean nothing to the creature he reaches for the emergency shut-down remote sitting on a nearby rack but his good arm is grabbed by the monster.

“Stop!”

The monster lifts its right hand and extends it toward the doctor.

“No, you can’t! You must not...”

The wet thud of the monster’s sucking tube smashing through his skull quickly silences his words. The creature has found a much more satisfying source of protein than the mosquito eggs and larvae it was programmed to consume, human brains.

Nathaniel is the university’s janitor; drawn to the laboratory by the sound of the explosion he enters the room through the light-lock at the far end. The room is dark and his eyes are adjusted to the bright hallway outside. He can hear something rustling around and nearly calls out, but instinct stops him. There’s a smell in the air....blood. He recognizes it from hunting trips he went on as a child, a unique metallic smell that you never forget.

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Peeking around the corner his eyes begin to adjust and he can make out a spindly human-like shape in the darkness. It is back-lit by a singular light and only a silhouette is discernible. It is mindlessly searching through gadgets and assorted gear on the shelves. An alarm sounds in Nathan's mind as it reaches into the yellow box in the corner; he knows all too well what is in *that* box.

The creature removes a device from the box that almost immediately begins blinking and beeping. Startled, it drops the gadget to the table but it is too late. A burst of light that resembles a carousel spinning a thousand miles an hour envelopes the creature and it vanishes into thin air.

Nathaniel is very familiar with the time device and he knows that as soon as he cleans up this mess he's going to have to go after the creature.

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"Well, that monster isn't going to destroy itself." Futureman remarks as he stands up, dusting himself off in the process.

"I want to help." Tommy declares, summoning some courage.

## It Came From Tomorrow

"Thank you young man, are you prepared to look death in the eye and not blink?"

Wiping his bloody hands onto his pant-leg the young man thinks for a moment, "Yes."

"Then you lead." Futureman gestures toward the dark and spooky hallway. Tommy and Steven look at each other, each attempting to hide his terror but failing.

"On second thought I don't think I'm ready to look death in the eye just yet."

"Too late!" Futureman shoves Tommy into the hall, following a few feet behind him.

"I think I'll wait here in case the monster comes back." Steven announces.

"Good Idea" Futureman replies, barely turning his head back in acknowledgment.

Tommy turns and gives Steven a scowl. Steven shrugs his shoulders and Tommy mouths him an obscenity. Upon reaching a split in the hallway he and Futureman decide to split up. Futureman assures him all he need do is yell if there is any trouble. Turning back to the hallway Tommy removes a cigarette lighter from his pocket. The metal clink of the lighter's lid flipping open reverberates against the emptiness. With the flick of his thumb the hall is illuminated in a warm orange glow.

There is a shape standing perfectly still further

down the passage. Realizing instantly what it is Tommy goes to yell for help but his voice has abandoned him. Panicking he bolts through the nearest door and slams it shut behind him.

It is an old bathroom. The broken tiling crumbles beneath his feet and makes a grating sound that pierces the silence; he works for a moment to steady himself. He finds purchase on an old towel rack that miraculously still clings to the wall. As his eyes adjust to the overwhelming darkness of the room he can make out faint rays of light penetrating the moldy glass of a window. Each step across the crumbling tile emits sounds that he's sure the creature can hear.

Quickening his pace he smashes his right shin into the remnants of a toilet. No time to stop and attend to it he only curses and continues to the window. Reaching for the frame he gives it a quick tug, but it doesn't budge. He feels around for the lock in the typical spot where a window's lock is. He feels something in the darkness, it feels like a lock but he's not familiar with the design.

He fumbles for the lighter he'd quickly stashed in the pocket of his leather jacket only moments ago. With a metallic clink it flips open. Flash. Flash. It's not lighting. Shit!

Another strike and it comes to life. A shape in the mirror. Tommy has only a split-second to see the monster's arm come at him. The lighter hits the floor

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and slams shut, its flame extinguished forever.

## Chapter Eight

A drop of sweat falls from Dr. Miller's brow and splashes onto the metal surface of the alien tracking device. They've been at this for hours and he's become quite tired. Jimmy is standing near him, handing him tools and holding a light for him. Even the tools themselves are alien and it is only by sheer reasoning and a detailed knowledge of electronics that he is making any progress at all. Upon asking why they couldn't repair the device themselves he had been informed that their repair-bot had been badly damaged in the crash. He wasn't sure if they were lying about that part or not.

Daphne leans against a nearby wall and Mars is monitoring the device's output signals as the professor attempts his repairs. Dr. Miller makes occasional glances at her, questioning without words how she'd managed to be allowed to roam the ship, again wondering if she'd been one of them all along. There was something different about her demeanor now.

"What is taking so long?" she demands.

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Jimmy looks up and scoffs, “We’re going as fast as we can lady. Besides, who made you the boss around here?”

At his snide comment she snaps, “My name isn’t ‘Lady’ you little insect.”

“Lay off him Daphne, he’s just a kid” Dr. Miller replies.

“Maybe your mom and Dad should have raised you better.”

“My mom and dad are dead.” Jimmy begrudgingly responds.

“Aww. You’re an orphan? That is adorable.” she walks over to Jimmy and grabs a chunk of his hair and yanks his head back. “Then the old professor here would be the only one to cry if I snapped your scrawny little neck.”

“Now wait just a gosh darned minute!” Doctor Miller throws his tools to the floor and moves to grab Daphne but is quickly dissuaded by Mars calmly raising his ray-gun and taking aim. “Let him go.”

“Stop giving me excuses and give me a working tracker!” she snaps.

“I’ve never worked on anything like this before. Besides, since when did you care about finding this synergium stuff?”

She pulls hard on Jimmy’s hair; he grinds his teeth, fighting back tears.

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“The next words from your mouth had better be ‘It’s working.’”

Miller resumes his work. A few moments of tinkering and a sarcastic kick to the machine and its screens come to life. Two large blips glow in a pale green color against a black grid-like background.

“The synergium, it’s close.” Mars smiles. “I will inform Lord Zarkov.”

Just then the screen flickers and the signal is lost. Mars’ tattooed face scowls as he eyes Dr. Miller angrily.

“I’ll have it fixed soon enough. Then what about us?” he motions to himself and Jimmy, who is now out of the clutches of Daphne and trying to compose himself.

The spaceman pauses a moment, “When we have the synergium and our ship is at one hundred percent you are free to go.”

“Now hold on Mister, that wasn’t the deal!”

Mars smiles wickedly, “Deals change.”

*That Mars is a shifty fellow. As a matter of fact he came into the service of the space lord by betraying his entire tribe in exchange for some shiny beads and a chance to ride in the “fire chariot”, but that is a story for another time.*

The lamp on the table illuminates with a loud click.

“George, where are you going?”

Her husband, wearing long-sleeved pajamas and a sleeping cap pulls himself from bed and fumbles for his slippers. “I’ve about had it with those kids Doreen! If they don’t learn to stop making so much darned noise why I’ll...”

“George Winters you are not going over there!”

“Just go back to sleep dear, I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.”

She wriggles her nose in thought, after 30 years of marriage she knows her husband and how stubborn he can be. “You’d better be nice to them George, I mean it.”

“Yes dear. Just go to sleep, I’ll be right back.” and with that he turns off the lamp and heads for the door stopping only to grab a golf club from his bag in the corner. He glances back to make sure his wife hasn’t seen. She hasn’t, he can see the back of her head, curlers and all.

Still half asleep but getting angrier by the moment he heads down the stairs, out onto the porch, and into the neighboring yard. Those damned kids

have been using the old Johnson place for years to throw parties. God knows what goes on in there, no doubt drinking, making out, and probably listening to that damned “rock and roll.” Well tonight George Winters has had enough, he’s going to drag those kids out of there and put a few dents in the side of their hot-rods while he’s at it.

From his vantage point in an overgrown hedge Sam Hill watches as a man in his pajamas, wielding a golf club, makes his way through a maze of shrubbery and approaches the abandoned house.

He stomps onto the porch, nearly going through one of the rotten old steps in the process and bangs on the door. There is no response. He knocks again.

“Now listen here, I know you’re in there! I’ve been hearing you making noise all night!”

His face begins to turn red from anger, “I said open this door!”

He reaches for the knob, turns it, and pushes the door open. There in all of its horrifying glory stands the robot monster. It turns toward him suddenly and throws a body, Steven’s body, to the floor. George screams in terror and drops the golf club in favor of shielding his face as the monster comes at him. With a quick flick of its wrist the metal tube impales Mr. Winter’s right hand and burrows straight through into his forehead. In a matter of seconds it devours his grey

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matter. The monster roars in satisfaction and begins to shake uncontrollably. It withdraws its feeding tube and falls to the floor, smashing through several floor boards and ending up on the loose dirt below. Moments of silence follow before a hand, different than before, rises from the hole and paws at the remaining floor. The monster arises, no longer a gangly mesh of sinew, bone & wires. It is now a mass of matted fur-covered flesh with many eyes scattered about its horrific torso. Its large newly-formed mouth drips with the purple cooling fluid and four tentacles writhe on its back.

Too stunned to speak until now Sam Hill panics. "Futureman!"

The monster turns and looks directly at Sam. With amazing speed it leaps from its spot and lands directly on Sam, knocking him clear out of the bush. Gnashing teeth, swiping claws, and flailing tentacles come at Sam as he is pinned to the ground by the immense weight of the monster's body. Purple drool drips onto his arms which are raised in defense.

"Help! Help Me!"

The monster raises its hand and extends its feeding tube, going for the kill.

"I don't think so!" both Sam and the monster turn to see Futureman standing over them. He raises his future-stick and slashes at the beast. A putrid black

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fluid gushes from its wounds as two of its tentacles fall to the ground and flail around in the grass. It cries out in horrible pain and swings its left arm at Futureman, catching him in the gut and sending him flying into a bush near the porch steps.

Futureman snaps back to his feet as fast as he can, but the creature is already gone. It has disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

Cautiously stepping over Mr. Winter's body, as if not wanting to touch it, Futureman approaches Sam and extends an arm to help him up.

"Are you alright?"

"Yes," Sam says, disgustedly looking at his slime-covered shirt, "luckily you managed to scare it off."

"Perhaps, but now it's escaped me again. I must stop this monster before it kills again."

"Yep," Sam mutters as Futureman helps him to his feet, "We should go after it right away."

Futureman holds a hand up to his eyes as if he's scanning the horizon. "You're right. Let's get back to your car. We haven't a minute to spare!"

Sam, still looking disgusted, "You wouldn't happen to have a wet-nap or anything would you?"

*Perhaps future-stick is a term that I should have gone over before this part of the story began. Oh*

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*well, I suppose it's all said and done now isn't it? Well, being the simple chap that he is Futureman had to name his weapon something, and you guessed it, future-stick was at the top of his apparently rather short list.*

## Chapter Nine

Capitol City's town square is abuzz with activity as folks go about their morning routines. Fedora-adorned gentlemen sit on park benches reading newspapers, bottles clank as milk men load their trucks and the ring of a paper boy's bicycle bell fills the air.

A green-dressed lady walking her dog is startled by a sudden scream coming from a nearby alleyway. She scoops up her dainty little pet and turns to see several people yelling and running out of the alley. The screech of tires signals near-collisions as drivers slam on their brakes to avoid hitting the terrified citizens who appear to be running for their lives. As the flailing limbs of the robot monster round the corner of the alleyway the green-dressed lady faints and collapses to the pavement, her little dog bolts for the nearest hiding place and is nearly run over as Sam's Buick drifts around a corner and comes to a lurching stop. Futureman flings the car's passenger door open and jumps to his feet.

A portly lady in a floral print dress, topped with

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an inappropriately large hat, stands next to a baby pram frozen in horror. In front of her stands the robot monster, its fleshy limbs flailing about, its terrible mouth drooling hungrily. The baby in the pram cries loudly seeking to gain its mother's attention, but as the monster approaches her gaze is fixed. Her face contorts into a facade of sheer terror and she lets out a truly spine tingling scream.

Suddenly a lightning bolt hits the monster in the side of its body and a shower of sparks erupts.

"At last I have found you!" Futureman cries, the monster roars in anger and staggers back to its feet. "Your time is up foul monster!"

"Be careful Futureman, he's got radioactive breath!" Sam Hill yells, standing halfway out of his car. His shirt is stained from his previous encounter with the creature and his general level of disarray conveys just how long he and Futureman have been up searching for this monster.

*Now hold on a minute! Just how exactly does Sam know that? Again, here we go with the shoddy writing. Sometimes I wonder why I ever agreed to be a part of this whole thing.*

"Don't worry citizen. Futureman has faced radioactive breath before." he nods at Sam as he

finishes his sentence.

Sensing the creature's rising anger Futureman bolts forward, pushing the lady and the baby pram out of the way just as the monster spews forth its radioactive poison.

Futureman turns to his friend, "Run for cover Sam! I'll deal with this evil beast." Sam Hill acknowledges and dashes for cover. Futureman turns his attention back to the beast and immediately begins to choke and gasp. Unable to resist the radioactive breath he falls to the ground, all the while pulling at the neck of his shirt.

The monster approaches slowly, plodding forth heavily with each step. It pauses for a moment then fires an energy beam directly at Futureman. Barely conscious Futureman manages to lift his arm and deflects the blast with the bracer on his right arm. The blast ricochets back and hits the monster who instantly falls to the ground like a sack of bricks.

Futureman, lying on the ground still gasping, kisses his bracer and collapses back for a moment. He lies there, resting only briefly before pulling himself to his feet. He walks over to the beast, drawing his future-stick for a killing blow but suddenly the beast rears up and strikes him, knocking him to the ground.

It stands over him, profuse amounts of purple drool dripping from its hideous mouth. Futureman

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writhes in protest and disgust. The creature raises its arm and begins to extend its feeding tube. Futureman is pinned down and has no hope of escape. Then, suddenly, an empty oil can hits the beast in the head. It makes a surprised noise and turns to see Sam Hill standing about ten yards away.

“Hey you! Assface!” at this the monster snarls. “Yeah you slime-bag!” he says, pointing at the monster. “Come and get me.”

The monster turns and begins walking toward Sam grumbling in anger all the while.

“What’s that? I’m sorry; I don’t speak shit-head.”

The monster roars, obviously becoming more enraged by the moment.

“Really? If I’d wanted to hear from an asshole I’d have farted!”

Infuriated the monster waves its limbs about and begins to move at a more rapid pace. It quickly comes face to face with Sam and lets out a loud roar. Drool continues to gush from the orifice that could best be described as its mouth.

Very seriously Sam locks eyes with the creature, “Breath mint?” he asks as he lifts a pack of mints.

The monster grumbles then suddenly tenses up, its eyes go blank. Sam had done such a good job of

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distracting the beast that it hadn't even heard Futureman coming up behind it. Sam glances down and sees the future-stick, now covered in dark colored blood, protruding from the monster's chest. Stunned momentarily the monster suddenly realizes what has happened and grabs frantically at the object impaled through its ugly body; it flails around wildly and turns, stumbling toward Futureman.

“Run Sam!”

Sam turns to run; the monster takes a few more plodding steps toward our hero before falling to the ground with a meaty thud. Its body begins to smolder and electricity begins to arc across its cybernetic implants. Light flickers across Futureman's face as his expression turns serious, “Oh sh.....”

---

Zarkov and his men brace themselves as their ship is shaken about by the massive explosion. Lights flicker, making it all the more obvious that the ship is still in need of massive repairs.

“Was that what I think it was?” Zarkov asks his men.

Mars swipes some debris from a nearby

console and attempts to take some readings. A moment passes before several beeps and boops are heard, signifying that he has gotten the thing working. “It’s hard to tell from what I’m seeing here sir, but if I had to guess I’d say that roughly half of the synergium we previously detected has just exploded.”

Zarkov, tired of waiting reaches for a nearby console and presses a button, “Are the monkeys finished with the tracking device?”

A moment passes in silence before the line comes to life, “They’re telling me that it should be working any minute now.” Saturn’s voice confirms.

Zarkov releases the button and with a grin puts the tips of his fingers together in front of his chest. “Excellent!” the grin widens and he bursts into a slow and maniacal laugh.”

---

Under a pile of bricks and other assorted rubble something stirs. Futureman coughs to clear his lungs of ash and soot as he brushes chunks of concrete and gooey remnants of robot monster from himself. His head is ringing and the sun is nearly blocked out from all of the debris in the air but he can make out a shape

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nearby. As his ability to focus returns he can see a charred skeleton lying less than twenty feet away, it's still wearing Sam's clothes.

*This seems like the perfect opportunity for me to interject some snide comment about the quality of the writing in this book....but I feel the previous sentence solidly speaks for itself.*

Futureman fights back a single tear.

"Damn you!" he screams at the sky. "...he still owed me five dollars!"

A beeping sound snaps him back to reality. He reaches down and grabs a device from his belt; it is in fact his time traveling device. It appears to have been damaged in the blast.

"Oh, this is not good." he mutters to himself.

A sound! Someone is coming through the haze. Several shadowy figures step forward, slowed by wading through rubble. Suddenly the visages of Mars and Uranus step out of the fog, guns aimed at Futureman and ready to fire.

"Yep...not good."

"Don't move!" Mars says assertively.

"Do not worry good people. The robot monster has been destroyed."

"Strange clothes." Uranus comments.

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A device on Mars' belt makes a strange warbling sound. He grabs it with his free hand, never taking his aim off of Futureman's head. He waves it through the air then looks down at the device in Futureman's hand. "That's it!"

"That's the source?" Uranus asks.

"The source of what?" Futureman is now very confused.

"We've got no beef with you personally human. We just need the synergium. Hand the device over." Mars orders.

Futureman is taken aback, no one from this time should know about synergium. "How do you know about that? Where are you people from?"

Mars laughs and retorts, "We're not 'people', and we are not from anywhere you've ever heard of."

"You'd be surprised." Futureman remarks.

"Don't make this hard on yourself."

"I won't give it up without a fight, of that you can be sure." Futureman begins to pull himself to his feet.

"We don't want to destroy you but we will if we have to." Mars is now speaking very matter-of-factly. He bites his lower lip and tightens the grip on his gun. Just as his finger moves for the trigger Daphne and Zarkov step through the haze.

"Who the hell is that?" Daphne barks at Mars

in a fashion that nearly makes him want to turn his gun on her. After all, who the hell does she think she is?

“Some badly dressed freak who apparently likes loitering near nuclear explosions.” he quips, “That device he’s holding is loaded with synergium.”

The two stare at each other for a moment with contempt before Zarkov breaks the tension. “And I’m guessing he isn’t willing to hand it over.”

“Not without a fight.” Mars smiles, seemingly eager to test his mettle against this stranger.

In an instant Daphne breaks her thousand-yard-stare with Mars and switches to her seductive tone.

“Zarkov, honey, let me try.”

She swaggers up to Futureman, a demented grin on her face. She casually dusts his shoulder off. He keeps a stern look on his face and never takes his eyes off of her.

“It’s against my code to strike a woman in anger.” he informs her.

Without missing a beat she punches him in the jaw. The blow adds to the ringing already in his ears. He takes a step back, unable to believe she could be capable of such a punch.

Staring straight ahead with a staunch look on his face, “My mother taught me to never hit a...”

She kicks him in the gut and he folds over, groaning in pain.

## It Came From Tomorrow

“I don’t care who or what you are, but my new friends want your fancy gadget.” Daphne declares, pacing back and forth in front of her wounded prey.

“Do you even know what it is?” Futureman asks her.

“No, and I don’t really care. Stop playing the hero and hand it over. Besides, what kind of hero would let all of these innocent people die?” she motions to her surroundings, the utter devastation of downtown Capitol City.

His failure stings, “I can’t allow them to have the time travel device.”

She stops suddenly, looks at his device and then back to Zarkov. She raises an eyebrow, “He’s a time traveler?”

“From some possible future,” Zarkov speaks calmly, “perhaps sent here to fix a mistake.”

Even Daphne’s superb acting skills cannot mask the wheels turning in her head, “A machine that can travel through time could be very valuable.”

“A power many would want to possess.” Zarkov confirms.

“Like your Emperor, Creamface?” she asks.

Zarkov’s expression changes to that of sudden realization, “With a device like this I could go back and prevent that floating head from destroying my home planet.” at this a menacing look flashes across

his face and he raises a balled fist.

“Orders sir?” Mars asks, nervously fidgeting with his gun.

“Kill this ‘Time Man’ and bring me the device.” with this he turns to leave, his cloak making a snapping sound as it flaps in the wind. Daphne turns her nose up at Futureman and turns to follow.

“I am not ‘Time Man’ .....I am  
FUTUREMAN!”

Mars cracks a smile, “Soon you’ll be ‘Dead Man’.”

Mars fires a laser blast which Futureman deflects with his bracer. The blast ricochets and can be heard striking a distant still-standing structure.

“How??” Mars is taken aback.

“Thanks to my futuristic armor.....FUTURE-  
ARMOR!!”

Zarkov turns back toward the action and snaps his finger at Uranus. “Get the device!”

“The device my lord?” Uranus asks, nervously.

“Yes.....the device.” Zarkov’s face cracks into a wicked smile and he bursts into maniacal laughter.

Uranus dashes off and returns quickly with a tall black staff adorned with a large red jewel at the center of its head.

“What is this?” Futureman questions,  
“Whatever evil you have is no match for my future-

armor!”

Uranus hands the staff to his master who raises it high off of the ground and with a commanding amount of force slams it into the ground. The jewel begins to glow with an intense fury and Zarkov’s laughter rises.

Preparing for the worst Futureman’s attention is suddenly turned back to the device on his belt. It is beeping again and making strange noises. Zarkov’s staff fires a fiery red wave of energy at Futureman just as he vanishes into thin air in a carousel of light.

Zarkov, suddenly intensely angry tosses his staff which Uranus barely manages to catch. Rage in his eyes Zarkov snaps his cloak and walks away, his men scramble to follow.

It Came From Tomorrow



## Chapter Ten

Nathaniel, Futureman, wakes to the cold *plop* of a water droplet hitting his forehead. The alleyway is dark and the air is humid. In the distance is the electric hum of traffic on the hoverway. His senses are still numb and it takes him a moment to notice that someone is calling his name.

“Nathaniel. Nathaniel!” the woman’s soft voice speaks. She raises a hand to his sweaty cheek and tries to rouse him.

“Ellie?” he attempts to sit up but is suddenly overcome with vertigo.

“Yeah it’s me, Ellie. Are you ok?”

“Where...where am I?”

“Oh brother.” She looks over her shoulder nervously, “I don’t know what you’ve gotten into this time but I’d better get you home before a protector sees you like this.”

Ellie struggles to get her brother to his feet, his breathing is heavy and he is even drooling a little.

“What *did* you get into this time?” she asks.

## It Came From Tomorrow

“If I told you...” his words slur, “you wouldn’t believe me.”

He lets his head fall back in exhaustion; the stars are bright tonight, even with all of the city’s light pollution.

---

Very far away and in a completely different time a henchman is staring at a very different set of stars through one of his space station’s port-holes.

“Make way!” a commanding voice snaps.

The henchman immediately comes to attention and steps back against the cold steel bulkhead. The door to Emperor Creamface’s command center slides open with a mechanical whirr and Zane, the infamous and deadly space assassin walks around and kneels before his master. Creamface doesn’t even acknowledge him. Instead his focus is on the large screen in front of him. On it are several small picture-in-picture video feeds, most of them displaying strange alien television shows like *Blork and Friends*, *Slavegirls of Delta VII*, and *That’s my Flishnark*.

Creamface is apparently not happy, he mumbles to himself, “I know you’re still alive....just

answer the comms!”

“Sir they’re returning signal.” a henchman at the rear of the room announces.

“Put it on the imager screen.”

“As you request my lord.” the henchman’s console emits a few sounds as he fiddles with the controls and the entertainment programs disappear from the main screen. They are replaced with a flickering image of Lord Zarkov standing in front of a charred bulkhead.

“Is it on?” Zarkov asks, looking to his right at someone off-screen. The audio is tinny, like through an old telephone. He taps the camera with his finger and then leans in to breathe on the lens, fogging it up.

Creamface watches in annoyance as Zarkov proceeds to clean the lens with his cloak. “Is it on?” he asks again, this time more impatiently.

“Yes sir, it’s been on the whole time.” comes the reply.

Zarkov looks back at the camera; the Savior of Planet Caladar is obviously embarrassed. “Emperor are you receiving this?”

“Yes you idiot!” Creamface yells at the screen.

Zarkov straightens quickly. “I apologize.” he gives a glaring look to someone on his right, “We don’t have our screen working yet so I couldn’t see you.” Of course Zarkov is fine with that, he’d rather not have to

stare at that ugly mug anyway.

“Zarkov, why isn’t Earth on its knees begging for mercy?!”

“We....ran into a little problem, my lord. Our ship was struck by a meteor and we crash landed on this planet.” his accusing gaze tells Creamface that he knows very well what struck the ship.

Instinctively Creamface tries to put on an expression of innocence, though it does no good since Zarkov cannot see him.

“Anyway, a meddling human that calls himself Futureman destroyed one of the synergium sources and disappeared with the other.”

“I do not tolerate FAILURE! You’d better continue your mission or I’ll be forced to....to....” he looks around shiftily, again forgetting that Zarkov cannot see him, “send your brother to...*help* you.”

Zarkov, tired of the charade drops all pretenses. “Send whoever you like you sack of Varg Dung! Whoever is foolish enough to come here will pay with their lives and when I’m done with them I’m coming for you! Eat your last meal and make peace with whatever god your people are worshiping this week because I’m going to rip your tongue out and nail it to my bulkhead! Then I’m going to personally stuff you into a sack and shoot you out of an airlock!” Zarkov almost immediately regrets jumping the gun, he’d

planned to bide his time but he'd had enough and simply couldn't hold his tongue any longer.

Creamface looks around the room in astonishment. He finally acknowledges Zane, who begins to crack a smile.

"Zarkov I'm going to have your bowels...." with a nod Zarkov terminates the communication and Creamface is left speaking to a screen full of reality and game shows. He turns his attention to Zane. "Zane! I want Lord Zarkov brought to me at once!"

"Yes my lord," Zane replies in a cool demeanor, "I shall bring him to you strapped to the hull of my ship."

"No! You are to bring him to me alive!"

"Of course my lord." Creamface had never seen even the slightest hint of emotion on Zane's face before but he swore he caught a flash of disappointment. "What of the brother?"

"I will dispatch Lord Tang to Earth. I will tell him that he is to kill his brother and that he will inherit all of his brother's titles and holdings. Once his ship arrives, then you strike. I want Zarkov alive...do what you wish with Tang and his men."

Creamface begins to laugh hysterically and out of fear the henchmen in his command center all join in.

*You'd swear at times that evil madmen were*

## It Came From Tomorrow

*comic geniuses, bursting into laughter and the entire room following suit. I suppose; however, you'd laugh at your boss's jokes too, if they could even be called jokes, if you knew he could have you disintegrated at any moment.*

---

The stars reflect in Nathaniel's eyes as he lies on his bed staring out of the window of his second story apartment. The ambient city glow spills through his window and illuminates his upper body. He is no longer wearing his Futureman costume; instead he's clad in the scratchy wool pajamas his aunt had given to him for Christmas last year. He starts, and then catches himself. He looks around the room. He's very shaken and displaced and not quite sure what has happened. He looks toward the door, at the light spilling in from under its bottom.

"Ellie?"

Creamface, now on his floating mobile platform inspects Tang and his men as they prepare for departure. He smiles deeply, knowing that he is about to rid himself of two very large pains in the.....face.

Tang finishes strapping on his last piece of armor. Made from Varg leather it is studded with little round rivets and reinforced to protect his vital organs in hand to hand combat. He walks over to his men, four of them, creatively called One, Two, Three and Four. He straightens Four's armor and tells Two to check the buckle on his left boot. Outside the station the engines of Tang's war-cruiser *Heart of Telos* being to glow as they are brought online. Creamface had been astonished that Tang would be so brazen as to name his command ship after his fallen home-world. He'd long known that Tang, much more-so than Zarkov, was a threat to the Creams.

"Zarkov has been outsmarted by a human. This is your chance to fully prove yourself to me. Kill your brother and all that is his will be yours."

Tang nods in approval. He motions for his men to begin boarding the ship.

"With my brother out of the way no power in

the galaxy will be able to stand against us.” and with that he turns and walks toward the airlock. His final statement only confirming Creamface’s fears, Tang has the ambition and the audacity to think that he can be in any way the equal of a Cream emperor. He will pay for his arrogance. The allegiance of the two powerful Telosians had been beneficial to the emperor, but now they had become a liability. Creamface no longer needed them to maintain the loyalty of their forces. What remained of the Telosian military would simply be absorbed directly into the Imperial fleet. Without their masters to look over them fear alone would keep them in line.

As the airlock seals Creamface floats over to a nearby wall-screen. The screen comes to life and the visage of Zane appears. Creamface speaks only one word, “Begin.”

---

The smell of home cooked food wafts from the kitchen as Nathaniel sits at a desk with a small brown lamp on it. He is working on his time device with a set of precision screwdrivers. Ellie walks up behind him and puts down a small bowl onto the desk.

## It Came From Tomorrow

“Shepherd’s pie. Hope you’re hungry.”

He looks up at his little sister and smiles.

“Thanks Sis.”

“Don’t thank me. I want to know what’s going on with you.”

“I can’t tell you.”

“Bullshit you can’t tell me. Is it drugs?” her short stocky frame and soft facial features belie her fiery temperament as much as her red hair affirms it.

“It’s not drugs.” he says dispassionately as he turns back to his work.

“Don’t lie to me! I already lost Mom and Dad and I don’t want to lose the last person in this world that gives a damn about me....or at least I thought he did.”

He turns and grabs her hand, “It’s not like that Ellie, I promise.”

“Then what is it? You know you can talk to me.”

He cracks a smile and reaches for his bowl of shepherd’s pie. “If I told you, you’d never believe me.”

“Really?” her curiosity piqued she leans in over his shoulder as he takes a bite of his food, “You do realize that now you *have* to tell me right?”

Suddenly the time device lights up and makes a sound; it’s finished its reboot sequence.

“What *is* that anyway?”

## It Came From Tomorrow

He finishes chewing his first bite, “It’s a device that allows me to travel through time. I’ve been using it to track down a monster from the present that Dr. Miller at the university created to kill mosquitos.”

Ellie looks at him questioningly.

“See, I told you that you wouldn’t believe me.” and with that he returns to his supper.

*Had I been fed such hogwash I likely wouldn’t have believed it either; but it was true. Nathaniel had been using Dr. Miller’s time device for quite some time now to venture into the past and masquerade around as a super hero. The question, however, is whether or not you can blame him. Given the chance wouldn’t anyone want to feel special, like they were making a difference?*

## It Came From Tomorrow



## Chapter Eleven

The commission members each sit at their own small table, each in shadow yet back-lit by a unique color. So secretive that even amongst themselves they appear only as silhouettes.

“Events are not unfolding as they were foreseen. Someone is interfering with our plans.” a deep voice emanates from the silhouette with the red backdrop.

“Impossible, humans of this period do not possess the ability to alter the timeline.” yellow speaks.

A previously dark backdrop illuminates purple to reveal what appears to be a female silhouette, “Incorrect. Our spies indicate there may indeed be a human capable of traversing the timeline. If this is correct he may be undoing everything we are working towards.”

“There is evidence to support this?” yellow again.

“Indeed” purple responds.

“Very well. The commission is authorizing

whatever steps are necessary to bring this human in for questioning.” red concludes.

The lights go dark.

---

Ellie and Nathaniel are sitting at the desk talking over a couple of beers. They had learned to rely very heavily upon one another since their parents had died five years previous in a hover-car accident. Nathaniel had taken up work as a janitor at the university and Ellie was, ironically, a grief counselor at a nearby halfway house. Nathaniel had felt guilty for some time now for keeping his little secret from his sister, but it had provided him a purpose in life that had until that time eluded him.

“I’ve never felt like anything here, but when I go back there I’m a hero...I’m somebody.”

“Nate you’re my big brother, you’re *my* hero.”

“Really? I drink beer, play video games, and work as a janitor.” Nathaniel had never felt like her hero; well maybe when they were children but certainly not now.

“I’m serious. You’ve always kept me safe and watched out for me. It’s only lately that it seems to be

the other way around. I don't want to see you get in trouble or worse end up dead. Then who would I have left? I'd be all alone....and I don't even like cats." they both smile.

The two jump with a start as the front door is kicked in. Two men, neither in uniform, burst through the entrance with weapons drawn. "Protectors! Hands in the air!" the portly one yells.

One of them pushes Ellie back as he grabs Nathaniel, this only enrages him. He momentarily considers punching the officer in the face but a quick glance at Ellie's face reveals her eyes pleading with him not to make matters worse. He puts his hands out to be cuffed. One officer grabs his time travel device from the table as the other cuffs him and begins dragging him toward the door.

"Nate!" Ellie slips out a cry.

He looks back at her, not wanting her to be afraid but he isn't capable of masking his own fear. He's certain that she can see it in his eyes, but only momentarily. One of the officers slips a black bag over his head.

The bag is suddenly ripped off of Nathaniel's head. He is sitting at a metal table with an old-style incandescent light bulb dangling directly over it. Odd, they were outlawed over a decade ago. His time device sits on the table in front of him. Sitting directly across from him is a strange looking officer with a large handlebar mustache and what appears to be a stain from a jelly doughnut on the left breast pocket of his shirt. The officer ever so slowly reaches into his other pocket and produces a pack of cigarettes which he sits on the table in front of him after removing one for himself. He lights the cigarette slowly, takes a drag and then blows the smoke nonchalantly in Nathaniel's direction.

There is an old, nay, ancient-style tape recorder on the table as well and it appears to be recording. The officer takes notice of Nathaniel's acknowledgment of the tape recorder and cracks a half smile. He takes another slow drag and puts the cigarette out on the table then leans in.

"Nathaniel Hawkins. 123 River Ridge Circle, Apartment B, Capitol City. Do you know why you're here?"

"No." he replies honestly.

“Neither do I...and I don’t like that.” something about the officer’s eyes unsettles Nathaniel. The strange guy runs his tongue over his teeth, as if to clean them, and to give himself a moment to think. “I don’t like busting down doors in the middle of the night and dragging away punk kids just for the fun of it. Why are you here?”

“Shit.” he replies nervously, “I don’t know.” Nathaniel can’t tell what kind of game this guy is playing.

The officer leans back and lights another cigarette. “I was told to bring you in and that a Fed would be coming to pick you up. You’re in trouble with the federal government and you have no idea why?”

Nathaniel licks his lips, they’re very dry. “Can I have some water?”

The officer slams his fist onto the table then tosses his cigarette. “What the hell is going on here? I don’t like Feds all up in my shit! Got me?” he looks down at the time device, “And what the fuck is this? We were specifically told to bring in any fancy gadgets you might have on you. Doesn’t that seem a little odd?”

He picks up the time device and begins playing with it.

“I wouldn’t do that.” Nathaniel warns him.

## It Came From Tomorrow

The officer raises an eyebrow. “Oh really? Why not? This some kind of ‘ray gun’ or something?” his remark drips with sarcasm. “What is it?”

Just then the door opens behind Nathaniel and someone steps in. The person whispers into the officer’s ear but Nathaniel can still make it out, although barely.

“The Fed’s here. He’s on his way up.” the newcomer says.

The officer nods and the second person leaves the room.

“That Fed is on his way up here, I need to know what’s going on here.” the mustachioed officer demands.

“Untie my hands and I’ll show you what that device does.” Nathaniel nods toward the time device.

The officer pauses for a moment in thought, then gets up and walks around to unlock Nathaniel’s cuffs. As the officer is releasing his bonds Nathaniel can’t help but feel that this guy doesn’t have a sense of personal space. He’s just too close, unnecessarily close.

“What cologne is that? Tropic Mist?” Nathaniel asks, hoping the guy takes it as it was intended, a comment about his proximity.

Still fiddling around in his pocket for the right key, which he can’t seem to find, the guy seems

oblivious.

“Yeah, my sister got it for me for my birthday.”

Nathaniel shakes his head in agreement, “My sister got me that for my birthday too.”

“No shit? Hah, small world.” the officer remarks, fighting with the cuffs. “This damned pair of cuffs always does this to me....there I got it!”

He leans even further into Nathaniel’s personal space with a very serious look on his face. There is an uncomfortable silence which is broken with, “By the way, what do you think of this mustache? Does it make me attractive?”

Trying to mask his discomfort as much as possible Nathaniel replies, “It looks.....very 19th century. I’m diggin’ it.”

The officer turns away, looking pleased, and takes his seat again. “Now I want to know everything.”

Nathaniel picks up the time device. “Sorry.” He pushes a button and vanishes in a whirl of light.

The officer stands up quickly, tipping the table over in the process. “Shit!!!”

---

There had been quite a commotion in the cargo

hold of Zarkov's ship as Dr. Miller and Jimmy had argued with Mars and Saturn about being freed now that they'd fixed the tracking device. They were exhausted and had only been given minimal food and rest. After a near fist-fight the two humans had been placated with the promise of being released soon, after they had taught the spacemen a few things about human culture. This was of course a stalling tactic to keep the two around as hostages to try to get Futureman to turn himself in. With the synergium in his time device they'd have just enough power to reach one of Zarkov's hidden bases and prepare for a likely-doomed frontal assault on Creamface's command center. Things were grim, but they had to try something.

"I love this game! What do you call it?" Mars asks Dr. Miller.

"Poker." the professor smiles.

"It's genius!" Mars shows his cards, two aces and three sevens. "I win again!" He reaches down and collects the pile of coins from the center of the cargo-crate-turned-table.

"They don't gamble on your planet?" Miller asks a serious question.

"Who has time?" Mars replies.

"The way things are going it looks like we're not going to have much of that left either." Saturn

remarks.

“What do you mean?” Miller asks.

“Lord Zarkov is marked. Whether it’s his brother, Lord Tang, some mercenary, or Emperor Creamface himself someone is coming for him...for all of us.” Saturn explains.

“His brother Tang especially wants him out of the way.” Mars comments.

“And the unholy trio will become an unholy duo.” Saturn interjects.

“You can bet that once Zarkov is dead it won’t be long before Creamface decides to take Tang out as well.” Mars’ comment is more focused toward Saturn than anyone else.

“Sounds like you’re in the middle of a pretty bad feud.” Miller comments.

“Yep, and it doesn’t matter which side you’re on, they’ll all end up dead in the end, then some other guy will come out of the woodwork and lay claim to the galaxy...then it’ll start all over again.” Mars’ tone becomes increasingly depressed.

“It sounds like you’re giving up.” Jimmy speaks up.

“For most of us it is either die or be a slave. At least if we can get our ship going again and get off of this rock Zarkov is willing to use his forces to try and put that to a stop.....at least that’s what he says.” Mars

looks at his hand, then toward Saturn who nods and drops a few coins into the pot.

“Me, I’m going to change the world and make it a better place. You guys can do the same.” Jimmy naively interjects.

“Sure kid, you go on and change the world.” Mars snidely replies.

The door hisses as Daphne enters the room and motions for Miller to approach her. He looks from Mars to Saturn, both shrug and go back to playing cards. He tosses his cards onto the table and walks over to Daphne.

“Is something wrong?” his tone is very higher-than-thou. At this point he trusts the aliens playing poker more than he does her.

She leans in close to him, keeping one eye on the guards as she does so. “I’m going to take out Zarkov. In exactly ten minutes I want you to make a break for it, take the kid with you.”

“Would you be surprised if I said that I don’t believe you?” he asks in a sarcastic tone very untypical to his character.

“Damn it! These guys are about to be neck-deep in trouble and we need to get out of here. If you believe one thing it should be that I want to preserve my own ass.”

“Now *that* I can believe.”

## It Came From Tomorrow

She gives him a mean pair of eyes, "I'm going into the boss's room and he won't be coming out. I'm making my move in exactly ten minutes. So while these jokers are distracted you two bash them over the heads and escape.....or don't....I don't really care."

Miller looks her up and down, "You've been playing us this whole time?"

"Got to play the odds Daddy-O, now get to it!"

With that she walks out of the room. Miller slowly makes his way back to the circle and sits down beside Jimmy who is now conversing with Saturn about Earth sporting events. His eyes scan Saturn and Mars, they don't seem like the most menacing fellows at the moment but Daphne is right, the sooner they get out of this situation the better.

---

Zarkov's private quarters are in a little less disarray than the rest of the ship. Although it isn't the highest priority for him at the moment he does want to at least make a casual attempt at impressing this enticing Earth female. Dirty living quarters may have been acceptable to drunken females back in college on home-world...but adult experience, what little of it

there had been, had taught Zarkov that adult females preferred more cleanly surroundings.

Pushing Zarkov's cat aside Daphne takes a seat on his couch, it is made of the finest Zatrian leather. She pats the cushion, motioning for the space lord to join her.

"So..." he smiles coyly as he sits.

"So..." she repeats his statement with a smile.

"Alone at last." Zarkov's nervous smile reveals his ineptitude with females.

"Yeah..." she leans in closer and puts her head on his shoulder. Her fingers nervously fidget with the handle of the knife hidden in between two of the cushions.

"I'm not really familiar with these...rituals." Zarkov admits while swallowing hard.

"Really? You don't say?" is what runs through Daphne's mind but she manages to keep it contained to her inside voice. "It's okay, I'll teach you."

She raises her head from his shoulder and inches closer to his lips. He pulls back just a little.

"I don't think I'm ready for this." he states, "I mean how do we even know if all the parts are in the same..."

"Shh!" she silences him with a finger over his lips and crawls up into his lap. She presses her lips to his. His eyes go wide like dinner plates, he's caught

## It Came From Tomorrow

off-guard and there will never be a better time to strike. With a single quick motion she pulls the knife from the couch and stabs it into his back, had he been human it would have been a kidney shot.

He screams in agony, strikes her in the face and throws her to the floor. He staggers to his feet clutching at the blade lodged in his back. "You sadistic little bitch!"

"Oh," she smiles, rubbing the blood from her lip, "That's just foreplay."

She jumps to her feet and attacks him. A quick punch to the jaw sends his slender form tumbling to the ground. She pounces on him and strikes him in the chest, then the crotch. She rips the knife free of his flesh and plunges it back in.

---

Doctor Miller looks at his watch. It's 6:09pm. He takes a deep breath and puts his cards down onto the makeshift table.

"I need to stretch the old limbs." he declares as he stands up.

While the others continue their game, hardly even noticing, he quickly glances around at his

surroundings. Only a few feet away, on top of another cargo crate, sits what appears to be a large wrench.

Pretending all the while to be stretching his legs he gingerly walks over to where it rests and picks it up. As he walks back to the table he panics as Jimmy's eyes lock onto him and then the wrench in his hand. He is certain that the other two have noticed the surprise in Jimmy's eyes....but they haven't. Jimmy nervously goes back to his game and the professor slowly inches up behind Mars. Saturn seems to finally notice the surprise in Jimmy's eyes as he looks up to see the professor bring the wrench down, cracking Mars' skull.

Saturn pushes away from the table and reaches for the gun he had carelessly left well out of arms-reach. He has just enough time to reach it but as he brings it around to bear Dr. Miller smashes the wrench into his hand, shattering several bones in the process. The gun falls to the floor with a loud clatter.

Saturn grasps his hand to his body, "Hey! We're all on the same team you don't have to..." he is silenced by a blow to the jaw. His body smashes into the improvised card table sending cards and coins flying in all directions.

As he turns to grab Jimmy's hand the professor can't help but notice the look in the boy's eyes. He appears quite shaken and almost seems afraid of his

mentor. He has never seen the professor act in such a way before. It was something that he would have to explain to the boy later, once they were out of danger.

He grabs Jimmy by the hand and yanks him toward the door. Having been very observant during their stay with the strangers the professor knows exactly where the space craft's exit is and how to open it. As the ramp opens and fresh air rushes in the two are temporarily blinded by the setting sun, its orange rays blasting straight into the open hatch.

There is sudden movement and the blinding light of the sun is blocked out. Standing before them are the forms of Lord Tang and his robot men.

“Where are you two heading in such a hurry?”

“We..” he pauses in mid thought as the imposing space lord steps forward and sniffs him at him.

“You stink of failure. You must have been spending too much time around my incompetent brother! Hah!” he roars into laughter, his men do their best to imitate him.

Jimmy, shaken by the fight in the cargo hold now brazenly finds his courage, “You must be Tang, we’ve heard all about you.”

“Really now? So my baby brother has been running his mouth again? Did he tell you how he stole the throne from me? Or how he sold us out to

Creamface?”

“No, he never mentioned any of that.” at that Jimmy backs down.

“Why would he?” Tang bends down to eye level with Jimmy, staring him down. “You are going to tell me exactly where he is.”

“He’s dead.” Miller speaks softly.

Tang turns his gaze to the professor. “Oh, so you did the leg work for me did you? I would thank you, if you weren’t a liar! Your kind doesn’t have the stomach...or the strength to kill a Telosian.”

“Telosian?” Jimmy asks.

Tang stands to his full height, “Our race. The strongest warriors in a thousand galaxies, bred to kill without mercy, bred to withstand anything that any creature could muster. I seriously doubt you little monkeys have what it takes.”

“Want to see for yourself? He’s in his quarters right now, oh and his men are laid out in the cargo bay.” Doctor Miller retorts.

“Your friend wouldn’t be a liar would he son?” Tang addresses his question to Jimmy.

Jimmy shakes his head. Tang motions for his men to head into the ship except for one which stays to keep an eye on Jimmy and Dr. Miller.

Tang’s men search the cargo hold and find Mars and Saturn, still out cold and bleeding from

wounds, just as the humans had said. Tang meanwhile strides confidently through the corridors of his brother's ship, breathing in what would soon be victory, validation....the end of a very long struggle between the two sons of the last king of Telos.

"Where are you little brother?" his voice echoes in the empty hallways.

Uranus unexpectedly comes at him from around a corner and fires a blast that misses his head by only inches.

"Is that you Uranus?" Tang asks of the minion breathing heavily and cowering just around the corner.

"Shame, I didn't want to kill you."

"I know about Creamface's plan."

"What do you know?"

"That he sent you to kill us, that this whole mission was a fr....a fraud."

"You were always smarter than the rest of these clowns. Why not join me?" even Tang can't help but giggle to himself at that remark.

"I'd rather die free!"

Uranus screams and jumps out from behind the corner once again. His shot is perfectly placed, right between Tang's two hearts but Tang's armor absorbs most of the blast. Only a small sizzling layer of Varg leather reveals that the shot was true. Uranus' face has only a moment to reflect his terror before Tang draws

his weapon and vaporizes him into a fine powder which fills the air and begins to drift down to settle on the deck plate.

“Such a waste...” he walks forward, waving his hand to clear the dust, “Now, let’s find that little brat.”

His footsteps echo down the hallway. He remembers the layout of his brother’s ship perfectly, it had belonged to their father and they had spent much time running up and down those halls pretending to blast each other with toy ray guns. Of course now the game was real.

As he nears the door he knows to be his brother’s private quarters he bellows out, “Come out come out brother. I want to play with you!”

He pauses as he hears a thud against the wall from inside the room. The door slides open and he reaches for his weapon, expecting his brother to jump out, staff in hand. Instead Zarkov falls into the hallway clutching at his body. Blood smears the wall as he slumps against it. Tang walks over to him and looks down in contempt.

“Look at you brother, taken down by a pathetic monkey.” he masks what he feels might actually be concern for his brother in shame.

“Brother...” Zarkov weakly groans.

“Do you know why I’m here?”

Zarkov doesn’t even answer. He closes his eyes

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and accepts his fate. Tang draws his pistol and puts it to Zarkov's head. He wants to tell himself that he's putting his brother out of his misery but he can't admit that he actually cares for this worm. His finger tightens on the trigger...

Suddenly a flash of light and a whoosh of air and Futureman materializes from the ceiling entangled with the robot monster in battle. They land with a thud and roll across the floor towards Tang.

"Is this the time traveler?"

Zarkov looks in utter disbelief at Futureman.

"How?"

Just as suddenly as they had appeared they vanish.

Tang looks down at his dying brother and suddenly catches a glimpse of what he's thinking. This time traveler holds the key to saving their home-world, to stopping the Creams before they even begin their reign of terror.

A beep from his communicator pulls him from his reverie. "What is it?" he barks at the device.

"Sir, there is an incoming message from the mercenary known as Zane." Number Two's voice comes through the little device on Tang's wrist.

"Zane? What does that little twerp want?" he had met the space assassin on multiple occasions and he had a plethora of reasons for distrusting him.

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“Tang!” Zane’s voice erupts from the comm,  
“Emperor Creamface has dispatched me to assist you.”

With that Lord Tang instantly knows that he’s  
been a fool all along. This wasn’t a trap for his brother;  
it was a trap for both of them.

“I do not require assistance. Now run along  
home.”

“Negative, my orders are clear.” and with a  
crackle the communication cuts off.

Tang turns his attention to Zarkov who is  
gasping for breath, “It would seem we have a common  
enemy dear brother.”

“Zane?”

Tang smiles, “I’m going to need you alive.”

## Chapter Twelve

*Our hero, having escaped from the clutches of a mustachioed and inappropriately touchy officer of the law now finds himself hurtling through space-time uncontrollably, jumping through different time periods and alternate timelines. Sounds all rather nauseating to me, but I of course have a notoriously weak stomach. Meanwhile back on Earth, Earth of the past that is, one evil space lord has made amends with another evil space lord in order to go back in time and prevent the destruction of their home-world at the hands of a gang of floating cream-covered heads. It's all very touching really.*

Cradling the comparatively frail body of his brother in his arms Lord Tang makes his way across the crater towards the *Heart of Telos*.

"I should have known that freak would double cross me." Tang admits to his brother.

"Never trust a Cream." Zarkov meekly replies, blood dripping from his mouth.

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“We may have a chance, if we work together.”

“You want to work with me?” Zarkov attempts a laugh.

“Zane is incredibly dangerous, but if we can get you and your men patched up we’ll make a stand here. There are nine of us...” Tang’s sentence is cut off by an incoming call on his comms unit.

“Hostile target designated Jupiter neutralized sir.” comes the voice of Number Three.

“Ok, there are eight of us.”

“Eight? Who else did you kill?” Zarkov asks, more concerned about the wound to his own pride than for the lives of his men.

“Uranus attacked me, I had no choice.”

Zarkov, life slowly leaving his body takes a moment to consider all that has just happened. “You try to kill me, now you want me to save your life?”

“Would you rather die on your knees or on your feet?” Tang leans in close to his brother, “If we survive this we’ll catch that time traveling nuisance and stop all of this from ever happening.”

“When did you become a hero?” Zarkov laughs.

“I let myself be corrupted and I have much penance to pay. We both do.”

Futureman had long since lost count of how many jumps he'd made when he flashes into existence again a couple of meters above the forest floor. The impact knocks the wind out of him and he lies there for a moment trying to regain some composure. After a short while he begins to take notice of sounds around him. Gunfire!

Several minutes pass with his face in the dirt trying to remain out of sight before the gunfire dies down. Cautiously he raises his head above the tall grass to try and assess the situation. The night is moonless and near complete black. He can see no one. Without warning bark flies off of a nearby tree quickly followed by the sound of a rifle. Futureman flattens himself against the Earth again.

“Identifizieren Sie sich! Sind Sie Deutscher?”

“Please don't shoot!” he replies.

“Amerikaner!” a different voice screams out.

“Werfen Sie eine Granate!” the first voice replies.

Futureman hears a thud and the sound of something rolling in the dry grass. He squints in the darkness and can make out what is unmistakably.....a grenade! Just when he is certain he's about to meet his

maker his time device beeps and he vanishes.

Again he is met with the rapid pulsations of light and the nauseating feeling of vertigo. A flash and he lands in an open field, this time it's daylight, but only just. Groaning in pain from the cumulative effects of what is likely a couple of dozen impacts as he's been falling through time he slowly pulls himself to his feet. His time device makes a strange noise and he quickly rips it from his belt. It lets out a final few sparks and strange noises and then goes silent. Whatever era he is currently in he's probably going to be stuck there for a while. He scans the area and is elated to find a synergium signature in the distance. He's not quite certain what the signature means, but it probably at least indicates that he's landed in a time after the atomic age. Good news if he is to have any hope of ever getting his device working again.

Nearly a mile away Tang is helping his brother down the ramp of the *Heart of Telos*. Zarkov's wounds have been sutured by the ship's robodoc and the two are headed back to the other ship to set the auto-destruct sequence.

There is a flicker of light and the two look skyward, the shiny polished-stone looking hull of a ship is beginning to penetrate the cloaking field surrounding the crater. It must be Zane! The cloaking field crackles and sparks as his ship slowly descends

through it; it flickers momentarily and then shuts down completely. The batteries on Zarkov's ship are exhausted and the hastily erected cloaking field was the only thing keeping more humans from finding their impact crater. The ship's engines begin to kick up dust all around and the sound alerts Zarkov and Tang's men, as well as Jimmy and Dr. Miller who quickly come running.

The ship, considerably smaller than the other two craft, sets down nearby with an interesting clunk sound. Tang, being the one to notice details in a combat situation, instantly recognizes the unique sound as signifying a ceramic composite hull.

"Weapons at the ready!" he yells to his men, Zarkov only nods at his two remaining henchmen, both of whom appear battered and bruised.

The smooth lines of Zane's ship, a shiny obsidian ovoid with veins of pulsing blue energy, are broken as a seam appears amidships and a ramp begins to lower. Harsh blue light pours from the interior of the craft and a shape can be made out standing in the opening. The figure at the top of the ramp is wearing a heavy suit of armor similar in appearance to the hull of the ship. It is not as polished however, looking as though it's seen its fair share of action. The figure's head is bald and looks to have been carefully waxed. His eyes are hidden behind some kind of protective

visor.

“Hmmp!” the figure scoffs.

In his hands is a heavy looking rifle, far more serious looking than anything carried by either Zarkov or Tang’s men. He raises it ever so slightly which provokes a clattering of metal as everyone around readies their own weapons. He cracks a wry smile then fires a shot at the ground. The weapon lurches in his hands and sends forth a mighty burst of icy blue energy. It strikes the Earth with such force that it creates a shockwave that causes Zarkov’s cape to ripple and his men to cover their eyes against flying debris. Zarkov and Tang hold their ground, being cocky, and Zane wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Tang.” Zane addresses the space lord as he steps down the ramp. “Your services are no longer required by the Emperor, I have come to relieve you.”

At this Zarkov breaks into a haughty laugh that echoes inside the crater.

“And you...” he turns to Zarkov, “The Emperor has very creative punishments in store for you no doubt. I could save you a lot of pain and vaporize you now....” he raises his weapon, “but *unfortunately* for you I have orders to take you alive.”

Zarkov cracks a large smile, “I’ve waited a long time to say this. ROBOTS, SEIZE HIM!”

The cocky smile vanishes from Zane’s face as

he swings his weapon around and fires off a quick shot pointed straight at Tang's skull. Lord Zarkov raises the head of his staff and blocks the powerful blast, its energy ripples down the handle of the staff and he noticeably winces from the pain.

Tang's robot men rush forward to surround the momentarily stunned Zane. Smashing his staff into the ground again Zarkov returns the blast to its master. The energy bolt slams into Zane's chest armor and sends him flat onto his back. Zarkov turns to Tang, who pats his brother on the shoulder in thanks, and smiles. Zane lies on the ground, his armor smoking.

The robot men surround the felled assassin and lift their weapons, ready to finish the job. Number One turns to his master for approval.

Tang now cracks a smile of his own and nods to his men.

"This is your plan?" comes the harsh tone of Zane, still lying on the ground.

The robot men go for their triggers but it's too late. Zane sweeps one of them to the ground, then jumps up and bashes another in the face with his own gun. The two space lords watch in utter disbelief as Zane rips the third one apart with his bare hands then disarms the fourth, picks up his own weapon, then blows the robot man's innards all over the crater floor. As the first two regain their senses Zarkov gives the

order to his men. "Open fire!"

Mars and Saturn exhaust their entire magazines against Zane's armor as he continues to assail the robot men, one of which he terminates by swinging the butt of his rifle around with enough force to send the bot's head flying from his shoulders. The other manages to get a knife in between Zane's armor plates, but without expressing even a hint of pain Zane kicks the attacker so hard that he flies backwards about 10 feet before crashing into a heap of debris. Zane cracks his knuckles and stares hard at Zarkov.

"Hmmp!"

With a speed not one of them believed was possible Zane rushes forward and grabs Zarkov by the neck. His two men and his brother rush forward to help but are each in turn batted away with only a single hand by the space assassin.

"It really is a shame that I have to bring you back alive." Zane remarks, lifting Zarkov into the air and tightening his grip. The space lord's staff falls to the ground with a metallic clang. Jimmy stands behind the awestruck Dr. Miller, too scared to move.

"Ahh...you're....you're pathetic." Zarkov coughs.

Zane tightens his grip even more, his fingers digging into Zarkov's flesh.

"Because....ack..." Zarkov fights to get his

words out.

“Come on, speak you dog.” Zane loosens his grip ever so slightly.

A wry smile flashes across Zarkov’s face.

“Because...”

Suddenly Zane’s body jerks violently and he drops Zarkov, who lands hard on his knees. What little color there was in the assassin’s already pasty flesh vanishes. His eyes drop to see a large piece of steel erupting out of his own chest. He tries to scream but his lungs are demolished; only a gush of foamy yellow blood sprays from his lips.

Watching the space assassin stagger, trying to remain upright, Tang knows it is only a matter of seconds before he succumbs to the horrific wound inflicted by Mars. To his horror, however, Zane grabs the piece of metal and slowly begins to pull it free. It makes a loud thud as he tosses it to the ground.

“I was going to make this quick and painless.” comes Zane’s voice, not from his lips but instead booming from the intercom of his ship.

Unsure of just what to do Tang rushes forward and punches Zane in the chin, it is so slick with oily alien blood that most of the energy of his blow simply glances off. Zane seems completely unaffected. A second attempt by Tang is met only with a swift punch to the space lord’s sternum, sending him onto his back

in the loose powdery soil.

“How long did you think Creamface would continue to share any vestige of power with the two of you?” the eerily booming voice asks.

“Longer than this.” Tang manages to cough out sarcastically.

“Your pathetic attempt at humor is insufficient,” the now mute and heavily bleeding form of Zane raises its rifle to Tang’s head, “now you will die.”

Without warning a bolt of lightning hits Zane in the hand, knocking the unwieldy weapon from his grasp. He turns so quickly to see where it has come from that he does not notice Tang catch the rifle as it falls. There, thirty or forty yards away stands Futureman. His cape is blowing in the wind and he is attempting his most heroic pose.

“Is this the time traveler?” comes the mechanical voice over the loudspeaker.

“Yes, and I think he’s on our side.” Tang replies with a smile.

“I am only on the side of good and justice!” Futureman proclaims as he raises his future-stick to the sky, “You evil doers will not shed blood on my planet for your wars!”

Sounding unimpressed with Futureman’s bravado the mechanical voice calmly speaks, “I am

curious. Where did you obtain these powers?”

Caught slightly off guard Futureman quickly remarks, “From the FUTURE!”

Tired of this exchange Tang utilizes the distraction and levels the heavy rifle and fires a blast straight into Zane’s chest. It quickly becomes apparent to all of those present just how he managed to remain upright after having a piece of metal shoved clean through his chest. The blast from the weapon leaves a gaping wound in which wires and other sorts of machinery are clearly visible. The cyborg looks down at its own chest, as if to survey the damage.

“Don’t look Jimmy!” Professor Miller shrouds the boy’s eyes.

“How can he still be alive?” Jimmy asks.

“I don’t think he *is*.”

Tang and Zarkov had already come to this conclusion. The biological being known as Zane was killed when he was run through, what stood before them now was simply a re-animated shell that was being controlled by a simulation of Zane’s mind on-board his ship. Zarkov wondered if this was how he was capable of being such a notorious assassin. Perhaps he has the ability to rebuild his biological body after a battle and restore his mind into it, or perhaps this was just some sick and twisted way for him to seek revenge from beyond the grave. An

assurance that whoever someday got lucky enough to off him wouldn't live to boast about it.

The Zane-shell walks slowly over to the ramp of its ship. It presses a few buttons on its left forearm and almost immediately the sound of boots clattering on metal can be heard at the top of the ramp. Ten armed men disembark from the ship. Seven of them surround Tang, Zarkov and his men. Two more stand ready to attack Futureman and another raises his weapon at Dr. Miller and the boy.

"I have been ordered to end this, and I shall." the voice booms from the ship. "Attack!"

Zarkov raises his staff quickly and it emits a flash of light that stuns the men surrounding them. Tang jumps to his feet and he, Mars and Saturn each tackle an enemy.

"These weapons are no match for my Future Amor!" Futureman cries out as the two guards approach him. Not heeding his warnings the guards open fire, energy bolts crack forth from their barrels only to be deflected by the hero's bracers. The bolts ricochet back striking their former masters dead. Futureman feels as though he did provide them with fair warning.

Mars and Saturn are still wrestling with their opponents and Zarkov is trying to pull himself to his feet as Zane, moving much more slowly than before,

begins to approach him. Tang has pulled himself to his feet and ends his first foe with a stomp to the spinal column. The other guards are beginning to regain their composure. Trying to put aside the partial blindness and ringing in their ears they attempt to train their weapons on enemy targets.

One of them is suddenly struck in the back of the knee with a blast of lightning. He falls to the ground, firing his weapon as he falls. The stray shot strikes one of the guard's compatriots in the neck, killing him instantly. Tang, turning to assess the situation, reacts with lightning fast reflexes. He pulls a knife from his boot and throws it into the chest of the nearest guard, then without missing a beat runs at the guard full force and with a flying kick plunges it deeper into the man's flesh. Tang feels alive again, for the first time in ages. His blood is pumping like it hasn't in decades and he once again feels what it's like to be a Telosian warrior.

Tang looks up to survey the situation and see's Zane closing in on his brother about a dozen yards away. Closer by Mars is losing his struggle with one of Zane's men. The guard has him pinned down and is about to plunge a combat knife into his throat when suddenly Saturn comes running up and smashes the large blood-covered piece of metal that had earlier been used against Zane into the side of the guard's

head. His helmet flies off as his body goes limp and crashes to the ground. Tang's many years of combat tell him from the look in the man's eyes that he is dead. That threat neutralized Tang rushes to help his brother.

Futureman is locked in close combat with one of the remaining guards. It's future-stick against laser rifle as they swing their weapons wildly at one another. The guard gets lucky and manages to smash Futureman in the temple with the butt of his gun.

The henchman who has been detaining the professor and Jimmy puts his hand to his ear. Futureman catches sight of this out of the corner of his eye. He knows what it means, instructions from Zane to kill them. Futureman does not let innocents die. Not ever!

With a quick swing of his future-stick he smacks his enemy's helmet and momentarily stuns him. With every bit of energy in his body he takes off running full force toward the guard who has now taken his hand from his ear and is now reaching for his weapon. Futureman is breathing hard and barely hears the crack of the weapon being fired at him from behind. In one motion, no time to spare, he spins in mid-run and deflects the shot while simultaneously unleashing the most powerful blast his future-stick is capable of. The attacker explodes into a cloud of blood, flesh, bone and exotic alien materials. Doctor

Miller clutches Jimmy close as they prepare to meet their ends at the hands of the guard now fingering the trigger of his rifle.

Meanwhile Zarkov raises his staff to shield himself from the Zane-corpse but it simply snatches the staff away and snaps it into two pieces before tossing half of it to the ground.

A gloved finger flexes against the trigger of a Z-style type R31 laser rifle, the guard decides to shoot the boy first. This will be his last thought. With a jumping attack Futureman plunges his future-stick through the back of the man's neck. The weapon fires into the air harmlessly as the guard's body collapses.

"Run! Get out of here!" Futureman yells at the two humans, now more serious than he's ever been. "Run!"

Tang, now in full sprint, reaches down and picks up Zane's heavy rifle. He already knows that it's magazine is empty but he doesn't care. He flings it with all of his might at Zane's head, it works, at least enough to prevent him from running Zarkov through with a fragment of his own staff. The massive impact sends the machine-man stumbling back a few steps. Tang throws himself to the ground in a high speed roll in which he grabs his brother and simultaneously plucks a neutron grenade from his own belt and tosses it into the Zane-corpse's gaping chest cavity. Tang and

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Zarkov come to a stop in a heap, but with Tang on top, shielding his brother.

The blast rends Zane's cyborg body into shrapnel and all forms of alien offal.

Ears ringing from the unexpected explosion, Futureman pulls himself to his feet and surveys his surroundings. Zane is gone. The professor and the boy are climbing up the side of the crater....one of Zane's men is still alive! He's aiming his weapon at the two humans running for their lives. Without hesitation, as he always hoped he could do when the time truly came to be a hero Futureman leaps into action and jumps in front of the shot. He falls to the loose dirt with a hard thud.

"Thought I'd taken care of you!" Saturn yells as he picks up a weapon and shoots the guard who collapses in agony, swearing in some alien language until Saturn ends him with a follow-up shot.

"NO!!!" Jimmy yells from the distant crater wall. He begins sliding down, the professor following.

Tang, aching from several small pieces of shrapnel lodged in his back pulls himself up and helps his brother to his feet. They limp over to where Saturn and Mars are already hunched over Futureman's body. Mars looks back at his master. "His wound may not be that bad, but I don't really know his anatomy. I have no idea if he can recover from this."

“A valiant human,” Zarkov remarks, “Without him we would have all died.” Suddenly his attention turns to the hatch of his own ship, “No! My cat’s getting out!” he looks down at his men, “Which one of you left the door open??”

Just then the ground shudders. The ramp of Zane’s ship begins to rise into the fuselage and it kicks up large amounts of dust as its engines power up and bring it to a hover just above the crater floor. A loud crackle, and then an image appears in the air. It’s Emperor Creamface.

“Tang you annoying little insect!” he booms.

“You sadistic Cream! You’ll have to do better than this.” he motions to the smoldering pile that was once Zane, the infamous space assassin.

“You think you’ve won this don’t you? I can make a hundred more Zanes. I have you where I want you, on a backwards little planet with your brother, and no hope of escape. In a few moments I will fire my nuclear cannon and reduce that dirt ball to ashes! You and your people will be nothing but a memory!”

“Wrong!” Tang yells at the ghostly figure, “You don’t have enough synergium to power your nuclear cannon!”

Creamface’s floating visage roars back in laughter. “I have enough, enough to destroy one planet and two threats to my absolute rule over the entire

galaxy.”

Tang turns his attention to his ship, he runs the calculations in his mind but he knows that he could never get it powered up and lift in time, especially without his men. Zarkov’s men would be useless, his ship was of a completely different design than his brother’s and he didn’t have a month to re-train them.

“No.” Futureman coughs up the word into the loose soil.

Tang turns his attention to the fallen hero but only momentarily, he is pulled back to the hologram with a final booming message. “Today, Tang and Zarkov, sons of Telos, you die by my....” Creamface’s image appears momentarily embarrassed at his loss for words, “You die!!!” and with this the hologram vanishes.

As Jimmy and Doctor Miller approach Tang leans over Futureman, still lying in the dirt. He puts his hand on the man’s shoulder.

“We’ve never been properly introduced, I am Lord Tang.”

“I am...” Futureman struggles to pull himself up slightly, “Futureman.”

“Well Futureman, it would seem that today we have something in common.”

“What’s that?”

“Today we will both have lost our home-

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worlds...and our lives.” he speaks to Futureman yet his gaze looks past him, he appears to be deep in thought.

“Never...” Futureman coughs again, “Never give up.” he reaches for a hand to help him into a sitting position. “What is this threat to my beloved Earth?”

“On his little space station many parsecs away there is an evil emperor, one who destroyed my world and will soon destroy yours. He is already preparing to fire his nuclear cannon. It will exceed the speed of light by many multiples of  $C$  and smash into this planet with enough force to reduce it to atoms.”

“Surely not!”

“It has the power to vaporize a planet with ten times the mass of Earth using only a fraction of its total power.” this time Zarkov, now standing over his brother’s shoulder, speaks.

“How long do we have?”

“Five of your Earth minutes, perhaps less.”

Tang replies.

“No...this can’t be.” Futureman is still clutching his side as he is overcome with emotion. Tears begin to streak down his cheek as he thinks about his sister Ellie. How she’ll never even be born. All of the love and all of the good things in the world snuffed out in a moment like it never even mattered. His tears clean the dirt from his face in meandering little paths down his

cheeks. Sure, things had never been perfect for him. Life had dealt him one bad hand after another but through it all there had been Ellie....he pictures her face...even after what had happened to Mom and Dad, Ellie.

Jimmy comes running up and slides to a stop like a baseball player stealing home base. He scrambles over and throws his arms around Futureman. With big puppy dog eyes he looks into his hero's face, "Say it ain't so Futureman! You can't quit now!"

"There's nothing left any of us can do."

A moment passes as the entire group stands in the crater, each apparently mulling their own fate. Futureman looks up into the nearest alien's face, Lord Zarkov. His perfectly plastered hair is now disheveled and strands of it are blowing in the wind. His eyes catch Futureman's gaze and he shakes his head in a manner that reassures him that there is no hope.

"You've got to try something by gosh, you're Futureman, you're a super hero!" Jimmy insists.

"No Jimmy, I'm not." he's now dropped the heroic voice he adopts as part of his Futureman persona. "My name is Nathaniel. I'm a janitor at a university. I stole a time machine and some space metal from a science lab and I play super hero in the past because my own life is pathetic. *That's* the truth."

Jimmy, apparently stung by the words but not

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deterred, “It isn’t the armor that makes the hero, it’s the man wearing the armor. You have to believe in yourself!”

The hero looks down at his armor, the left side is stained with his own blood. Luckily the blast seems to have mostly cauterized itself and the majority of the bleeding has stopped by this point.

*I am not one to normally wax poetic about overcoming adversity or any such thing. I tend to think of myself as a much more grounded individual, but this time, what the hay! As Futureman looked up into the eyes of that boy who believed in him something inside of him snapped. He was no longer just Nathaniel, he truly was a hero. He’d proved it time and again, or he’d at least given it his best. This time, only, the challenge was much bigger. He could not bumble his way through this, oh no, this time he had to summon all of the courage and tenacity housed within himself and do what he had always dreamed of doing. He would save the entire world!*

“Stand aside Jimmy.” Futureman calls upon his most heroic voice as he looks the boy squarely in the eyes.

No longer feeling any pain nor aware of the tattered and filthy clothing he once donned so proudly

as Nathaniel, the man who needed to be someone's hero, he now stood on his own two feet, prepared to prove himself. It was then that it suddenly dawned on him. Ellie had been his hero, his savior. She had been there when Mom and Dad died. She had pulled him from countless taverns and strip clubs in the wee hours of the morning hardly able to stand on his own. It was her that had cooked him breakfast the next morning and slapped him back into consciousness, she had pushed him to go on fighting, to try harder and harder each day to not only survive but to thrive and he had always let her down. Not this time. This time he got to be the hero, he would save the world and in so doing save the one who had keeping his own sorry ass afloat all of this time.

As the others look on he lifts his feet one at a time, shuffling through the soil as he approaches the exact center of the crater. With a deep and deliberate breath he plants his feet hard into the loose dirt to find purchase and lifts his head to the sky.

"I am Futureman and I am defender of the Earth! Give me your best shot!"

He stands in the center of the field, looking directly at the sky, knowing this will be the point of impact for the cannon blast.

Inside of Creamface's lair there is humor in the air. Never has the Emperor or his men seen such an overly dramatic and ultimately futile act play out.

"This is too easy!" Creamface chuckles.

"Ten seconds to firing position sir." a random henchman announces.

"This Futureman might have been a threat to us, but now he will be nothing more than space dust orbiting a boring yellow star in the far reaches of nowhere."

"Five seconds sir."

"Fire!"

"Two seconds sir."

"I said fire!"

"One second sir."

"Forget the damned countdown and fire the cannon!"

"Firing cannon sir!"

Creamface's massive space station shudders as energy is summoned from deep within its bowels only to be heaved forth with energy on a scale barely measurable. The Emperor smiles in ecstasy as a powerful orange beam blasts forward on his viewing screen.

“Here it comes.” Tang remarks, resigned to his fate, yet still interested to watch the fool try to stop it.

The sky above the crater slowly deepens into a dark orange. A deeper orange than any tropical sunset, clouds for miles around darken and thunder crackles in the distance as gusts of wind begin to buffet those standing inside the crater. Futureman steadies himself, knowing not what to expect, only that he must protect his planet, his family, his friends. He digs the soles of his shoes further into the Earth and crosses his arms in front of his face. The wind picks up greatly and dust begins to swirl around the crater floor, the roaring sound nearly deafens the onlookers.

“AAAHHHHH!!!!”

Just as he screams the beam pierces the clouds and slams into Futureman with the power of a million atom bombs. The force pushes his feet even further into the soil and he screams again as he struggles to hold the energy in place with his future-armor. He can hear Jimmy’s voice in his head, “It isn’t the armor that makes the hero, it’s the man wearing the armor. You have to believe in yourself!”

“I...AM...FUTUREMAN!!!”

With a bright flash that knocks everyone from their feet and shreds Zane’s ship like tissue paper the

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beam is deflected back into space and Futureman collapses to the Earth. Debris rains down all around them.



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Emperor Creamface, ruler of 597 worlds, 246 races, and owner of wealth beyond imagination looks over to his nearest henchman. He forgets his name, Henchman #26 or something like that.

“Do you pray?”

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Looking at the readout on his screen and swallowing hard the henchman turns to his master, “Do you want me to start sir?”

“No, no. It’s too late for that now, just wondering.”

“Do you want me to get your escape pod ready sir?”

Creamface looks over to him, showing what could be mistaken for sympathy if one didn’t know Creams better than that. “That would be nice,” he sighs, “I’m going to miss you Henchman #26.”

“Number 24 sir, and I’m going to miss you too.”

---

Jimmy and Lord Tang rush over to Futureman. Zarkov is lagging behind, limping along using part of his staff as a crutch. The hero’s costume is mostly singed beyond recognition and Futureman appears to be bleeding from many small cuts likely caused by the flying debris.

“Oh gosh Futureman, don’t be dead, please!” Jimmy pleads.

Tang puts his hand on the boy’s shoulder. “He

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sacrificed himself for us Timmy. It is a noble way to meet one's end."

"My name is Jimmy."

"Whatever," Tang states without losing his thoughtful gaze, "the point is, he is in a better place now."

Futureman groans. He weakly opens his eyes and looks up at the two standing over him.

"Did I do it?"

Jimmy, near tears, throws himself to the ground and hugs his hero who groans in pain from the boy's overzealous embrace.

"Oh thank goodness!" Jimmy turns to Tang, "See! He's still alive!"

"You did a very brave thing Futureman. I and my brother are in your debt." Tang speaks honestly.

"I don't want any debts, let's call it even."

They all break into a laugh that is cut short by Jimmy's interjection, "Hey! Where's the professor?"

"Professor? You mean your teacher?"

Futureman asks.

"Yeah you know, Professor Miller. The one I came here with. He was just with us."

"Miller??" Futureman stirs.

"Yes, his last name is Miller."

"He wouldn't happen to have a son would he?"

"No, but he and his wife are really wanting a

son I think.”

Futureman pulls himself to his feet, “We must find him, *now!*”

With brevity and little fanfare Futureman shakes each of the Space Lords’ hands.

“We shall meet again I believe.” Zarkov smiles.

“Perhaps, but you must excuse me.” and with that Futureman and Jimmy run off to check the area for Doctor Miller.

Tang turns to his brother, for the first time in decades thinking of him as a brother. His mind begins to wonder about the possibilities open to them should they decide to finally work together instead of being bitter rivals. With Creamface out of the way an entire new world of possibilities has opened up for them. They can rebuild the Telosian Empire and restore their people’s glory. He squints in the evening sunlight as he turns to face his sibling.

“I think I’ll take off, no real need for me to stick around a crazy planet like this.” he nods toward Zarkov’s ship, “Your ship is pretty wrecked, you’re welcome to join me brother.”

Just then he catches a glimpse of a sizeable piece of metal sticking out of Zarkov’s abdomen. He is clutching it but blood is running out between his fingers. Something strange happens to Tang, his eyes...they’re...watering.

## It Came From Tomorrow

“Brother are you okay??”

“I won’t be for long if you don’t stop crying like a little girl and get me some help.” Zarkov sneers.

Tang wipes the moisture from his eyes and grasps his brother in a manly hug. “Ooh! Remember..the...piece of metal?” Zarkov exclaims.

“Sorry.” Tang jumps back then smiles. “Come on you pain in the ass.”

Nearby, Futureman is searching frantically for the man who could give him so many answers. He almost overlooks a large sheet of metal, likely from Zane’s ship, propped up against some rocks until it begins to move. He runs over and flings it aside. There, in a pile of rubble is the professor, his life cut short by a flying piece of debris that had pierced an artery in his neck, the body is still twitching slightly, but he’s gone. Futureman doesn’t want Jimmy to see him like this. He leans in to check for a pulse but it’s obvious that the professor has expired. He hears Jimmy’s footsteps approach so he quickly re-covers the body with the piece of scrap metal that had hidden it before and turns to catch the boy as he runs up to see what’s been found.

“I’m sorry Jimmy. He’s gone.”

Wild-eyed, Jimmy looks up at Futureman. “No! He can’t be!”

He hugs Futureman tightly and begins to sob.

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As his anger manifests he begins to hit Futureman in the back. Being already beaten and bruised Futureman is not in a position to let this continue so he grabs the boy by the wrists and brings him to a kneeling position on the ground.

Jimmy looks up at him with large tears in his eyes, "He was like a father to me! He was the only person that ever made me feel like I had any kind of potential. He was the only one that ever believed in me, that I could become something."

"What about your real father?"

"He died when I was too little to remember him, and my mother's been gone for years. They never told me what took her but she was sick for a while."

Jimmy looks over at the place where he knows the professor's body is. "I need to see him." he demands.

"No..." but it's too late, the boy breaks free of his grasp and scrambles for the rubble pile. He pulls aside the sheet of metal and gasps. Futureman doesn't even turn to look. A moment later he hears the piece of metal being put back into place and the boy returns. He has a new look on his face.

"I'm going to finish his work." he says angrily, "I will avenge him."

"There's nothing to avenge Jimmy, the one who did this to him is dead."

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“No! He *was* my father, at least the only one I ever knew, and I will get revenge for....for....this!” he points to the location of the body. “He was a brilliant man and I’m the only one who understands his work. I’ll finish his experiments and maybe one day even achieve his greatest goal, perfecting a time displacement device.....like the one you have.”

“Wait, he was working on a time machine?!”

“Yes, it’s only theory though.”

A stark realization suddenly hits Futureman.

“Do you realize what this means?”

“No.”

*I know what you’re thinking, something has finally come unclogged in that brain of his and all of the pieces to this puzzle are falling into place. Unfortunately you’d be wrong...*

“You can fix my time machine!”

“I can try. Like I said it’s just theory, but there’s a ton of research material back at his lab.”

“Thanks Jimmy.....I never caught your last name.”

Jimmy stops and thinks for a moment,

“Miller....call me....Jimmy Miller.”

## Chapter Thirteen

Zarkov orders his men to set the self-destruct on their own ship and to come aboard Tang's vessel when it has been done. Tang and his wounded brother make their way up the ship's ramp and down the narrow corridor toward the sickbay.

"We'll get you all patched up and....." a sound from deep within the ship cuts Tang's sentence short. He knows that sound all too well. The engines are being powered up, but by whom?

"The robodoc will get that out of you, I'm going to the bridge!" he draws his sidearm as he rushes down the corridor. He jumps into the lift and is instantly greeted by the pleasant and easy going music selection he'd had programmed into it but that he's meant to change for months. A smash of the control pad sets it into motion.

As the door slides open acrid smoke, the result of Tang shooting the lift's speaker, wafts out onto the bridge.

"Show yourself!" he demands, his weapon raised.

Nothing. Other than lights flashing on the main

console indicating that the ship's engines are powering up there is no movement whatsoever on the bridge. Then a flash of metal...and pain. With a single blow Daphne jumps out of the shadows and takes down the mighty Telosian warrior with a space wrench to the temple. She picks up his sidearm as he fights to orient himself and discover where he is bleeding from.

He wipes the blood from his left eye and can hazily see a figure standing in front of him, his own gun in her hand and it is pointing straight at his head. In her left hand an obedience collar, the kind he used on his robot men.

"Hello evil space lord number two." she says with a chuckle that gives Tang a peak at her sociopathic nature.

"Who...who in the hell are you and how do you know how to operate my ship?"

"I am....." she thinks for a moment, "You can call me...the Baroness of Space!" at this she cackles maniacally before sending Tang into a deep sleep with a boot to the forehead.

## It Came From Tomorrow



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“What’s that?” Saturn asks as a rumble is felt through the deck of Zarkov’s ship.

Looking every bit as concerned as his compatriot Mars works furiously at the ship’s controls to pull up an outside view. Stubbornly it refuses to cooperate until he kicks a nearby power junction. The screen crackles to life. “They’re leaving us! Lord Zarkov wouldn’t leave us!”

His hands fly over the controls furiously as he

deactivates the self-destruct.

“What do we do now?”

Mars looks over to his friend and shipmate, “We fix this ship and we go after them. Lord Zarkov is in trouble!”

“But how are we supposed to fix the ship Mars? Even if we had half of the parts we need there aren’t any more fuel sources on this planet.”

“Isn’t there?” Mars smiles devilishly.

Saturn knows what his comrade is thinking but isn’t fond of the idea. Even Tang and Zarkov had been honorable enough to allow Futureman to go in peace.

*Was it really honor, I wonder at this moment, or did the two space lords simply decide that it would be simpler to rebuild the Telosian Empire than to travel back in time and have to submit to the brutal and abusive control of their father again?*

“You don’t have to come with me Saturn but I’m going after that synergium and I’m going to help Lord Zarkov.” he states as he begins powering down systems in an attempt to conserve what precious little battery power is left.

Saturn did not share Mars’ obsequious relationship with the space lord and wasn’t ready to risk his life yet again.

Mars gives him one more look before grabbing his gun from where he'd laid it, on Zarkov's chair. He slings it around his shoulder and heads for the door. He's stopped by a rapid beeping alarm sounding from one of the consoles.

Saturn flips a few switches and the image on the viewer changes. It now displays the rim of the crater and something is at its very edge, something large and metal. The two exchange worried glances. A second and then a third vehicle pull up next to the first and men begin to disembark from them and scurry around. One of them, the leader by the apparent regard the others are giving him, holds up a strange cone-shaped object in front of his face.

The two aliens look at each other questioningly. Mars raises an eyebrow and remarks, "Do you hear something?"

"Yes." he fiddles with a few controls, "I'm activating the external audio receivers."

The ship's speaker blares to life, "at once.....I repeat. Alien vessel, this is the United States Army, you are surrounded. You are ordered to surrender yourselves and your craft at once."

The college doesn't look that different than in Nathaniel's time. Sure there are about 20 less layers of paint on the walls and some of the piping and fixtures that are only vestigial in his time still have a use but most things are easily recognizable.

As they walk down those very familiar halls they come closer and closer to the very lab where Nathaniel had watched the horrible robot monster rise into being. Jimmy reaches for the door and swings it open and there it is....a perfectly normal lab. A few tables are strewn about with various experiments on them, most seemingly innocuous. Futureman's apprehensions soon fade away as he stares at the colorful and naive posters covering the walls. One apparently touting the healthfulness of chemically processed food products of tomorrow, another warning of the dangers communism poses to free thought and scientific progress, and another showing the inner workings of an automatic transmission from a 1954 Chevrolet.

Jimmy sits down at the professor's desk and opens one of the drawers. From it he pulls a very thick notebook full of scribbles, drawings, notes, and little scraps taken from scientific journals. Futureman pulls

up a stool and sits next to him. He points to a picture on the desk, a healthy and buxom looking blonde likely in her early thirties.

“So...his wife isn’t pregnant is she?”

“Nope, at least not that I know of. I’d never ask such personal things.” Jimmy states without lifting his eyes from the notebook. “Let me see your time device.”

Futureman pulls it from his belt and plops the sad looking piece of machinery onto the desk in front of the boy. A handful of screws and other assorted bits fall off of it as he does.

“You know in my time there is a Doctor Miller. He invented a time machine too and also my armor....and the robot monster.”

“Weird...” Jimmy replies, not fully paying attention.

“I know! Think maybe they’re related?”

Futureman asks the boy who has now pulled a small tool set from one of the desk’s drawers and is fiddling with the time device.

“Miller *is* a very common last name.”

Futureman shrugs, acknowledging the possibility. “Still, kinda spooky.” he smiles.

A few moments pass in silence before Jimmy holds up the device with pride. “All done.”

Futureman hadn’t even seen the boy do

anything, he'd been too busy scoping out the office and taking occasional glances at that lovely picture of the missus. "Wow," he exclaims, "you really are some kind of genius."

"Thanks, but my real specialty is robotics."

Jimmy comments, at that Futureman eyes him strangely but then dismisses his thoughts. "Will I ever see you again Futureman?"

"Who knows what the future holds?" the time traveling hero chuckles.

"My friends are going to be so jealous that I got to meet you."

"Really? People know about me?"

"Of course! You saved those Wilson kids from that fire on Parkside Drive...ooh and you got Mrs. Shackleswood's cat out of a tree...and how about that time you stopped those guys that tried to rob Center Street Bank? Why my friend Billy, his little brother even made up a costume just like yours."

Futureman had never realized that even the little things he had done had truly been appreciated. He smiles and Jimmy, "You wanna take a picture with me? That'd really impress all of your friends eh?"

"Boy would I!" Jimmy jumps up and dashes off into a supply closet to fetch the professor's camera. He places it on a nearby shelf and sets the timer. The two quickly bunch together and put on their best smiles.

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The camera clicks.

Thrilled with his opportunity to have his picture taken with Futureman Jimmy turns to his hero and says, “You sure are a swell guy Futureman.”

“So are you Jimmy, so are you.” and with that he tousles the boys hair.

He smiles one last time at the boy before activating the device. In a flash of light he is gone.

## Chapter Fourteen

Nathaniel walks into the living room of his apartment. His shower had felt great, he'd never felt so dirty in all of his life. Now he was just exhausted. Towel still wrapped around his waist and carrying the dirty and singed cloth that had once been his Futureman costume he pulls up an ottoman in front of the fireplace and sits.

He looks at the costume in his hands for a moment before tossing it in. He lights a match and gazes into the fire, it seems so small now, so inconsequential, like it couldn't hurt him even if it tried. He smiles and tosses it into the fireplace.

As his tattered outfit goes up in smoke he takes a deep breath, tries to take in what has just happened. He's fought monsters and mutations and robots before, but this was different. It had taken him quite a while to track down the robot monster and in that time he'd had quite a few adventures and saved quite a few lives. He'd also made a few mistakes and he'd have to live with those. This time though he'd made a real difference in the world.....something that lately he'd

been thinking about. How is it that none of the things he'd done in the past show up in any modern history books?

Oh well, not like he'd know anyway. Nathaniel had never been one to do much reading.

He looks over at the mirror on the wall and at the reflection of the man in it. That's what he feels like today, a man. He smiles knowing that he's done a good job.

He reaches for his phone on the nearby table to order a pizza when he spots the kitchen window open. He walks over to close it. It's not like Ellie to leave windows open, that seems more like something he'd do when trying to smoke and not get caught by his protective sister.

Something catches his eye across the street. A black car, and not a normal one, not a hovercar, but a plain old car. It looks like an old Ford from the 1930s or 1940s. Are they even legal anymore? Gasoline has been outmoded for over two decades.

Deciding to think no more of it and heeding his stomach's calling for a large pepperoni with black olives he closes the window and turns back to the living room for his phone. Suddenly a hand wraps around his face, in its palm is a cloth, there's something on the cloth and it doesn't smell very good. He can hear someone else making quite a commotion

## It Came From Tomorrow

in the background just before he blacks out.

He awakens with a start and rubs his forehead which is now pounding. The apartment is in total disarray and looks like it has been ransacked. What just happened? As he sits up he notices a piece of yellow paper stapled to his shirt. He rips it off and weakly reads it aloud:

Nathaniel Hawkins.

You have interfered with our plans.

We need your help to set it right.

We have your sister.

504 Commission Boulevard

Suite 1104

1:00pm or she dies

“Oh no! Ellie!”

He crumples the note and tosses it aside as he rushes to his bedroom. He flings the door open so hard that he smashes the mirror on his wall. Quickly he opens the drawers in his closet organizer and rips everything out, tossing it to the floor already littered in belongings apparently rifled through by his intruders. He opens the false bottom to his sock drawer and pulls out a box labeled:

It Came From Tomorrow

## SPARE TIME DEVICE

Inside the box is another note and it reads:

NICE TRY  
504 COMMISSION BOULEVARD  
SUITE 1104

“Shit!”

## Epilogue

*And so there it is. The end of our little story is not really an end at all, but rather the beginning of a saga much larger than this little book could contain. A whole new chapter is about to begin, for me most literally. The moment I stepped off of Lord Zarkov's ship I had no idea of the wonders that were in store for me. Being stranded on Earth in the year 1957 had, at the time, seemed like the ending to my story. I couldn't have been more wrong.*

*The adventures I was to have could fill volumes...and so they shall, but not today. Right now my bed is warm and my eyes are growing heavy. Time for a nice long cat nap.*



The End



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*To all of our friends and family who have been so  
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