

## **Alien Intentions**

by James Lynn Smith

Sean went with the biology-inspection group to escape his malaise. It had been four years since his fiancée's death in a road accident, and he was unable feel that much mattered anymore. Though in his early thirties with a B.A. under his belt, he had no fixed career. Lately he worked odd jobs and entered the university again with hopes that a master's degree in government and international politics would give him purpose. After two years, he dropped out. While there, however, he met Jill, a winsome biology graduate student.

"Come with us to the park camp?" she had asked him, also appealing with her bright blue eyes. "We'll collect biological samples from the lake and forest. It's been ten years since the last sampling. Comparisons are important."

"I don't have experience in—"

"No matter." Her short, blonde curls jiggled as she shook her head. "We'll show you how you can help. I think it would be good for you." She smiled.

"I'll give it some thought," Sean said, wondering why she befriended him and feeling a trace of guilt at being emotionally unavailable. With average height, short brown hair, and regular features, he did not feel exceptional, and had given her no reason to care about him. Though she was pretty, to him their real connection was their complete honesty with each other.

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The trip came in Spring, with a second planned for late Summer. The group of five settled into a suite of rooms in a modest resort structure of log construction. Mostly fir trees surrounded it, but flowering shrubs were also planted on the

grounds. The lodge's central living space had a cozy leather couch, dining table, radio, and an old TV. A large stone fireplace took a third of one wall.

Phil, the trip organizer, appeared athletic, trim, and ready to undertake any adventure. "Jill wants the microscope, dissection equipment, and chemicals in the room she's in. Guys, let's give her a hand."

Sean felt a touch of envy for Phil's élan, but pitched in, noting that the microscope was heavy, evidently high quality.

"It looked deserted around here when we drove in," Mike mumbled, tossing his gear onto the bed in his room. Thin and pale, he was the antithesis of the typical camper.

Phil looked at him. "Yeah, the camp is usually shut down for a week this time of year, even the camp office is closed. Rangers go on a park safety inspection before the crowds come."

"It's getting dark. You guys ready to eat?" Tom called from the kitchen. They had bartered him as food provider from a catering deli near the university.

Noting his roly-poly girth, Sean thought he looked the part.

Gathering chairs around the table, five hungry people sat down for the deli-style wraps that Tom brought in with drinks. After another half hour, dark fell over the park and table conversation began to lag.

Feeling like a fifth wheel but hoping to add a little spirit, Sean said, "Jill's microscope can show wonders of the micro world, but the big night above us is also a wonder. Stars probably stand out like beacons."

"We ought to take a look," Jill said, glowing from his acknowledgement. "Away from the city, stargazing is much better. Why don't we all—"

"Listen," Mike cut in. "What's that?"

A rushing sound grew louder and a white light as brilliant as day bathed the outside.

Running about to look out windows and doors, Phil yelled over the noise, “Light’s coming from behind the lodge, in the sky.”

Heart racing, Sean dashed out the front door and saw something titanic pass over the lodge, blotting out a large area of starry sky. Powerful driving lights illuminated trees ahead as the huge object went down over a forested ridge. A deafening, earth shaking boom almost took him off his feet. The sound of falling dishes and broken windowpanes ended the cacophony.

In the distance, he saw a glow against vapors rising from beneath broken fir trees.

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Back inside the lodge, Sean encountered aimless pacing until Phil said, “Someone call 9-1-1. That was not just an aircraft.”

“My cell won’t work,” Mike said.

“Mine, neither,” echoed Jill.

Sean said, “That thing must have had a powerful electromagnetic field. I noticed the iron poker by the fireplace trembling when it was getting near.”

“Burnt out our cell phones?” Tom asked, and fumbled in his pocket. “Yeah, mine’s out too.”

While the group picked up inside the lodge and tried to calm down, Sean went into the front yard to be alone. *Strange, while we’re all shaking like zombies are coming, I feel more alive than in months.* He turned and walked inside again. “Hey guys, I want to go over there and see what it is.” Hoping for company, he added, “Anyone else?”

“No way,” Phil said. “Someone must have seen it on radar and they’ll check it out. We should stay put.”

Mike and Tom’s answers were similar.

“Sean,” Jill said, pleading, “be careful. Just a peek and then come back.”

Frustrated by the prospects of going alone, Sean grabbed a flashlight and his hunting knife, which he fastened to his belt, and tromped out the front door.

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The forest floor was mostly leaves, mixed with pine straw and other conifer residue. Smells alternated between fresh fir and humid wafts of decaying vegetation. Distance was greater than anticipated, and several times he stopped to rest or decide how to avoid boggy ground. Later, broken tree limbs and a glow indicated he was coming upon the object.

The hair on the nape of his neck rose. A circular mound of compressed soil, like a crater rim, outlined a football field-sized object. Its shape resembled a nearly flattened sphere, but too thick top-to-bottom to call it a saucer. *Must be three stories high.* Moonlight reflected off its metal-like surface, smooth but creased by panels, many of which were awry and exuding vapor. On the sides were short projections that had held forward lights. Broken pieces on the ground were the source of an orange glow, still working feebly.

He approached the underside and assumed that a thrust or levitation apparatus was buried in soil beneath his view. The next observation sent a chill through him. The entryway for a door hanging down near the bottom of the craft was shaped like a wide, flattened trapezoid, widest side down. Only four feet high, but seven feet wide. *What kind of thing comes through that?* Goaded by unexpected curiosity, Sean neared the doorway. It was six feet from the ground so he reached up and grabbed hold of the bottom edge of the opening. Swinging back and forth until he could throw one foot over the edge, he struggled up and rolled in sideways. Standing, he gazed at geometry and instrumentation completely strange to him. Except for one thing, a flat rectangular surface, resembling—an operating table. Faint odors like vinegar and ozone from an electrical discharge surrounded him. Looking upward, he gasped. Fluid-filled containers with human parts inside

lined a shelf. Behind him a click sounded. Upon turning, a sudden puff of vapor blew in his face and he collapsed.

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Sean awoke confused, followed by the realization of being strapped horizontally onto the table he had seen. Other equipment was now present. An IV needle was stuck his arm, and an artificial hand from a miniature boom was injecting something into the tube. “No, stop,” he yelled. As his armpits trickled cold sweat, lights began to blink on the complex of equipment near his head. Imbedded within it, directly above his forehead, a glowing coil became brighter.

An invasive thrust startled him. Like a multifaceted epiphany, information rushed into his brain, condensed too tightly to process. Presently, only two messages were clear. Aliens aboard were injured and not a threat to humanity.

Sean questioned this. *No threat? Then why the restraints? Why the human body parts in jars?* He wondered if the non-threatening communication was to mollify humans while aliens did experiments. Hearing minor noises, he could tell some *thing* was behind a partition on his right near his head. Remembering the shape of the doorway chilled any curiosity to *see* the alien. “What’s happening?” he asked. *Waiting for me to react or die from the injection?* There was no answer, vocal or transmitted by the brain-invading coil above his head. Meanwhile, he worked for enough slack in one arm to reach the knife strapped to his belt.

A sudden lurch shook him as the crippled craft settled further into unstable ground. The creature behind the partition fell forward, tumbling downward of Sean’s feet. A chilling screech evoking nightmares came from it and the whole ship. While getting his knife free to cut straps, he heard the struggling creature’s appendages bumping against equipment. They sounded hard, as if covered by an exoskeleton. Through unintentional glances, he could tell it was sizeable, unearthly and had nothing like a face.

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Running, breathless and horrified, Sean put distance between him and the alien craft. He had managed to cut straps, jerk the IV out and scramble out the open door. *No way can something so different with all that technology be good news.* In time he slowed to rest. Losing his flashlight meant travelling by moonlight.

When he was calmer, the blast of mental exposure in the craft began to unfurl, moving from condensed impressions into words, wrapping around his own language to create expression. *“Help Earth prepare for disaster that requires worldwide unity...Select humans for genetic improvement.”* It was impossible to ignore; his vocabulary hijacked, the story would have to play itself out.

Much later, tired and thirsty, Sean reached the lodge. Lights were on inside. He now understood what the alien’s story was.

Jill heard his approach and anxiously ran out to meet him. “Sean, Thank God you’re okay.”

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A change to dry shoes, towel for his damp face, and a beer in hand, Sean felt much better. Curious, eager eyes awaited his story. The attention felt strange. Always a bit withdrawn in groups, it was his late fiancée who had pushed him into being more open.

“So what did you find?” Mike prompted.

Sean told them about the crippled craft, his subjugation, the IV injection, and electromagnetic insertion of compressed data into his brain. Finally, he explained his unlikely escape. Then he noticed the skepticism on their faces.

“Hard to believe man,” Phil said. “So what’s this alien telling us?”

Sean’s expression grew serious. “The message I get is this: The alien vessel had a serious malfunction, and many are wounded. They are no stranger to Earth

and mean us no harm.”

“No stranger to Earth, what does that mean?” Phil asked.

“Not all alien abductions were bogus. They and their partner allies have studied humans for eons.”

“Allies?” Jill asked, raising one brow.

“Yes, the bluish gray bipeds in common abduction lore. Though strange, they look more like us.”

“If aliens don’t want to eat us or meet us in the light of day,” Tom said, “it’s weird they would want to learn about us. There’s never been any official contact.”

Sean set his beer down and rubbed his forehead. “They believe humanity is in danger and want to help.”

“Help, why?” Tom asked, jeering. “Our sun is only okay for millions of years. Asteroids come by once every several millennia.”

Ignoring the mockery, Sean said, “They see humanity as a recent development. These beings may have lasted a million generations. On such a scale, there is much that could wipe out life on Earth. War, overpopulation, droughts, wayward comets, asteroids, global warming, nuclear explosions. The list goes on.”

“I agree,” Jill said, nodding. “Biology is persistent, but delicate. We need to improve our care for life on Earth. Instead, we’re negligent and some day may cease to exist, like species of the past. But why do aliens care if we survive?”

“That question gets us into unexpected territory.” Sean took a deep breath. “They have a...*reverence* for intelligent life, and the technical means to do something about it. We appear to them incapable of caring what happens to our species as a whole, beyond our lifetime and the next two generations or so.”

He noticed the incredulous looks and continued. “Yes, few of us would admit that, and we do have great exceptions in our history. But not enough. Our amazing progress in civilization is spotty and no guarantee of survival.”

Mike said, “You mean we need more people like Moses or Cyrus the Great, talents that inspire a group of people to unite for the common good?”

“Yes, but not ‘a group’—all people. In the last half-million years, they’ve analyzed our DNA, and discovered genes that cause exceptional inspiration and persistence. Also genes that relate specifically to species survival. They’ve even developed a ‘serum’ containing gene carriers that, injected, can modify a suitable person’s DNA to become an exceptional leader. More than that, he’d be obsessed with the multi-generational view of life. Let’s call him a ‘millennial’ leader. He would pass the trait on to his offspring.”

“What about a *she* for this leader?” Jill asked. “And what do you mean by a ‘suitable’ person?”

“Same thing for a female. ‘Suitable’ means the person has to have genetic sequences compatible with insertion of the serum’s gene packets. And get this: They’ve only found *one or two* such persons in the last four hundred years.”

“What happens to ordinary people who get the serum?” Phil asked.

Sean paused while further details sorted themselves in his mind. “The expected response of a *suitable* subject is to perspire and feel feverish for a brief period with a gradual increase of optimism and...euphoria. But a *sensible* kind. I have no word for it. The *ordinary* subject will either have no response or die. Both have occurred. I had no response but tore the IV out soon as I could. There’s more to say,” he said, rubbing his forehead again. “But it’s slow in coming, and I have a headache.”

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While Jill brought aspirin and water, Phil turned the TV on to a news channel, but so far there was nothing concerning a crash. Tom moved to another side of the room and listened to the radio, which had a station in a nearby town.

Headache subsiding, Sean glanced at Jill as she crossed the room. *I should*

*be thrilled to know her. What's wrong with me?* He wasn't shy as others thought, but felt a need to find something vibrant within himself before dealing with emotions.

Soon Mike asked, "Feel like telling us more, Sean?"

He nodded and saw Phil and Tom turn down the news volume and move closer. "They have four options for how they plan to deal with us. The first is secret facilities, hospitals of a sort, to help when war or natural disaster occurs. They already exist, all over the world. Highly clandestine and not active yet. It does not solve the long range problem. Second is to gather a global sampling of people and sequester them for genetic improvements. May take generations. Third is the option to keep searching for more people who have a positive response to the serum I mentioned earlier. The hope is they become millennial leaders with offspring inheriting their traits. The fourth, and last, option is to annihilate us. They fear we could be a threat to alien civilizations elsewhere if we advance technically, but not in worldwide civility."

"Annihilation, that's what I was worried about," Tom muttered.

"Sean," Phil said, "their message is all about how they want to help. Do you really believe that? Could those facilities around the world be extermination sites? What if the message you got is propaganda they implant in anyone they abduct to reduce alarm? They know us far better than we know them."

Sean winced, feeling pressure to make an impossible judgment. "I don't know about the alien intentions, but I'm wary. What I've told you is their message, not my opinion."

"Guys," Jill said "it's late. We need to get as much rest as we can. Tomorrow it'll be light and we can think better. Maybe some officials from the government will get the word and investigate."

"I'm not sleepy," Tom said. "I'll keep the radio on low and listen for

anything creepy outside.”

The crew of five, except Tom, retired to their rooms and tried to sleep.

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“Hey guys, wake up,” Tom called out, racing around banging on doors until the groggy group assembled in the central living space. “It just came over the local radio. The sheriff in nearby Jonesburg received reports about of an unusual light in the forest and later about something hideous attacking people. Said several altercations left farm people wounded and some strange creatures killed. A deputy described one as looking like a 300-pound, crab-spider monstrosity.”

Sean furrowed his brow. *Aliens from the craft*. “Tom, they must have been searching farms for something to help injured comrades.” He paused, another inserted memory surfacing. “No, they were searching for some secret facility, maybe underground. They have such things.”

“This is bad, Sean,” Jill said, voice quavering.

“Yes, either the aliens *are* hostile or so strange-looking that people freak out and get their guns. Aliens are forced to defend themselves. Now the first word getting to the government will be an *attack* by creatures in the night. No diplomacy, no investigation. Just a threat response.”

Phil nodded. “Our Military attacks, and the aliens fight back with incredible, superior weapons. Whether or not they intended peace, now they’d be forced to eliminate us.”

Jill looked at Sean, tears on her cheeks. “Do you think there’s any chance of sane officials communicating with the aliens?”

He hesitated, it pained him to dampen her hope. “No chance, I’m afraid. They look so unbelievably different, and there’s no quick, sure way to transmit understanding.” A deep, throbbing sound made him look upward. Racing outside, he saw a military helicopter silhouetted against the pre-dawn sky, moving toward

the crash site. *Here to take a look. That's all, I hope.*

Back inside he joined the others watching a special newscast on TV. It warned people to stay inside, that the government and military were investigating and prepared to handle any threats.

“No reports on aliens actually being seen,” Mike said.

“Maybe it's to avoid mass panic,” Jill said under her breath.

Sean turned to her. “I think you hit the nail on the head. The less the public knows about military action, the better government likes it.”

Fifteen minutes later, with dawn rays breaking over the hills, the whole sky above the park throbbed with the sound of apache helicopters and the roar of F-35 fighters. There was no standoff. Outside, Sean's heart sank as he and the others saw flickers from beneath helicopters as Hellfire missiles left the rail launchers and streaked toward the crash site.

Explosions, fire, and utter decimation proceeded with a rotating formation of helicopters and jets that must have been planned for multiple assaults on huge targets. Belly-felt booms and fire leaping well above the forest trees lasted for several minutes.

“A few helicopters and jets are beginning to leave now,” Phil said. “They've done their job.”

Sadly, Sean added, “I guess next come the heavy utility 'copters to unload troops and firefighters.” He noticed Jill move close and place her arm around his waist. He and the others merely stood, transfixed and dazed, for several minutes.

“We should pull our gear together and get out of here now,” Phil said.

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Sean sensed it first, more feeling than sound. A deep, subsonic vibration coming from the ground. Then others noticed and their eyes began darting about.

“Look there,” Tom said, pointing.

In the distance, north of the crash site, a region of the forest was rising. Then a vigorous rippling of earth radiated from the region with near-earthquake proportions. “What, a volcano?” someone shouted. Nothing in the previous cacophony compared with the rumbling now heard. The slow rise of forest, large as a sizeable city block, lifted from the earth. Strange whines and drones joined the sound as trees and house-sized parcels of soil fell from the mass. As matter dropped away, a domed shape appeared beneath the top portion.

“It’s one of those giant craft,” Sean yelled. He saw projections from the surface of the object. *Please, no weapons.* Glancing in the southerly direction, he saw a similar craft rising from the forest.

“Jets and helicopters coming back,” Mike said.

Sean looked back to the first craft in time to see a launched Hellfire approaching it. The missile exploded before reaching the huge vessel, leaving it unscathed. *A protective force field?* Then two more missiles, both with the same fate. Fully expecting to see fiery death rays streaking from the alien vessel, he saw instead it joining two others of its kind and steadily rising into the distance. The noise died down, except for the throbbing of multiple helicopters and an occasional jet flyby.

A sudden bolt of thunder shook the sky. A broad, cloudy mass above gradually dissipated, revealing an enormous oval shape with an open underbelly, like a giant maw. The alien vessels ascended into the opening, and doors closed behind them with slow deliberation. Soon the titanic oval began moving upward and, after a minute, was out of sight.

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As military assault aircraft turned away, Sean saw two utility helicopters move to the original crash site. *Like I thought, inspection and post-attack ops.* The skies were much quieter, and most of the group hurried back inside the lodge for

TV news. But he stayed.

Hands on hips, he continued looking skyward. *What just happened? No return fire, but still something's terribly wrong.* He then noticed Jill had remained and turned toward her, seeing concern on her face too.

Tom called from the opened front door of the lodge. "Guys, TV news shows those big craft rising from the ground and lakes all over the world. Leaving without a fight."

"What are you thinking, Sean?" Jill asked, unease in her voice.

"The aliens' story was *true*. They thought they could help humanity survive the long haul." He shook his head. "Creatures that appear incredibly different can be allies, while those almost identical often bicker and murder one another. The Middle East is just one example."

The midmorning sun went behind clouds, adding gloom to the day.

"Cooperation goes beyond form," she said. "Symbiosis is part of organic evolution and extends to—"

"Civilization and politics," he said, finishing her sentence. "We have royally screwed up this contact. Our *best* opportunity for global unity and world-wide cooperation against eventual disaster has gone back to the stars." His voice rose. "Our 'Big Chance' came down from Heaven, and *we weren't ready*." Sean felt his face grow hot and removed the handkerchief from his back pocket and mopped his face.

"You look flushed," Jill said, "though it's cool out here."

"I feel feverish," he said. *Something's happening.* First he felt unstable, as though moving might cause him to float from the ground. Then a sense of being in a rotating door, with alternating emotions of fear and joy rushed over him. Sean staggered backward but eventually regained his balance. His blush began to subside, and a sudden, brief laugh broke from his lips.

“What is it?” She asked.

“Can’t explain,” he muttered. “Just feel optimistic, like...”

She frowned briefly but then raised her brows. “Oh, *no way*. You remember telling us about the serum aliens injected?”

“Yes, it’s some kind of gene-loaded stuff that only enhances—”

“A suitable subject with compatible genetic sequences. Your symptoms just now were what the aliens’ message said they would be for such a person.”

“What?”

“Sean *you* are one of the rare subjects they were looking for. That serum had some kind of gene vector component to compliment or improve your DNA.”

He turned away and gazed into the forest, trying to assess her statements. *The IV must have been in long enough*. Had a terrible burden been thrust upon him? Like a slow, turning carousel, his inner perspective then revealed another side.

A buoyancy unfelt in all his life began surging through him. *So this is what I’m all about*. His introverted traits had resisted petty romance and distracting goals, begging for and making possible something more. Something paramount, giving power and inspiration that would lift him to great accomplishments. He and his offspring would become the first millennial leaders.

Soon, mundane rationale penetrated his euphoria. One doesn’t start at the top. Studies in government and international politics are necessary. *First, finish that degree*. Then he reconsidered. *No, that’s not the first thing*.

Turning toward Jill, he allowed his eyes to fully breathe in the grace of her lithe form. Behind her bright blue eyes, smooth cheeks and supple lips there was also an inner beauty. He now had unrestrained *feeling* for the marvelous creation she was, not merely a knowing. *Can she tell?* This time, no casual glance. Sean gazed steadily into her eyes and smiled.

Jill fell into the open arms of a man who was both the same and new. She nestled her head into the hollow between his shoulder and chest as his hands traced the contours of her body. Then she leaned back and pounded his chest with both fists. “Why does it take intrusion by an alien to make you go for what you want?”

“Ouch,” he said and laughed. “I don’t know how to answer that, but you’re one gorgeous biologist that’s gonna be highly appreciated from now on.”

The sun emerged from behind the cloudbank, shedding light on Wisteria entwined about branches near the lodge porch. Two humans, daring to increase their connection, breathed in morning air with the fragrant aroma of hanging, purple blossoms.

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