

A VISIT FROM THE STARS

Chapter 1

“Astounding!”

“Absolutely amazing!”

“This is most extraordinary!”

The remarks were superlative and many, for what had happened was something never encountered before.

We are not alone!

We are not the only living, intelligent, species in the universe. The proof was here, and it was not to be denied. The image on the monitors brought to the White House showed what could not be interpreted as anything but a spaceship. A spaceship from another world...

“People, people... Calm down!” It was the president of the United States speaking. “This is a truly remarkable event. But let’s focus on the important thing here. What do we do? Where do we go from here?”

“Should we tell the public?,” asked the press attaché.

“That’s probably not such a good idea,” answered the president. “We could cause mass hysteria and we don’t want panic in our streets now, do we?”

“But the people should know! They already have the image that the government is suppressing the truth. We should once and for all get rid of that impression.”

“In time,” said the president. “In time we will of course let them know. The question is indeed if we could keep them from the truth even if we wanted to... We don’t yet know anything about these aliens. Are they hostile, or are they friendly? I believe this is the most important question right now. How do we find out?”

“Being as we all can see a space faring species,” started the technical attaché, “these aliens are probably thousands of years ahead of us in an evolutionary sense - indicating an intelligence far beyond our comprehension. Thus, I cannot believe that they are anything but friendly. Their violent nature must have either disappeared or become genetically removed centuries ago - or else they would not have lasted as a superior species.”

“Well, some people might say that is a very naive way of putting it,” remarked the general. “I just want to say that we should be prepared if they show a hostile side. They must have a reason for coming here. Maybe - as humans have done as long as they have been humans - to conquer.”

“Relax,” softened the president. “Let’s not get too worked up about it. Of course we should not be too naive and not prepare some sort of defense, but we should not be the ones showing off our weapons first.”

“I think we should prepare for a visit,” the press attaché cut in.

“A visit?,” asked the president.

“Yes! They must know by now that we have seen them, and that must have been their intention. They will most probably land, and someone should welcome them.”

“But...,” the president hesitated. “But how do we communicate?” He was nervous about meeting an alien life form and not being able to tell what they wanted, or what their business was coming to earth.

“Well, as I mentioned before,” the technical attaché continued, “they are far ahead of us. They probably have the technology and intelligence to supply for a solution to that problem. Maybe they will even have learnt to speak our language. Being as it is; they have come to us, and they must know they are far more advanced - they know it’s up to them to find a way to interpret. I don’t want to say too much, but maybe they don’t even speak... Maybe they will have some sort of paranormal abilities, like telepathy.”

The president laughed. “Well, I don’t know if that makes it better or worse... I wouldn’t want an alien to think I’m rude if I don’t like his appearance.”

“I’m not kidding! No one could have the remotest idea what kind of sensory equipment an alien species would have.”

“Okay, okay!” The president calmed down. “So, what are you all saying? Should we arrange for a visit from the stars, and roll out the red carpet?” He started giggling again. “No, seriously, what do you suggest?”

“We should invite the best minds in science and anthropology, and have them standing by for, yes, a visit from the stars.”

“So be it,” said the president, “or maybe I should say, make it so!”

Chapter 2

So, the word was out.

The top scientists from the best universities in the country were flown to Washington in a hurry. After just eight hours most of them were sitting around a big table together with the president and his advisors. They were looking at one big screen, covering most of one of the walls.

“Now, what is all this about?,” asked one professor of physics from MIT. “Mr. President, I don’t want to sound disrespectful, but I was in the middle of some very important research. I hope this is as important as you make it seem.”

Though under normal circumstances the president would have been upset by such a remark, now he couldn’t help but smile. “Please, professor, just wait a few moments and you will not have another doubt!”

The screen came to life, showing the picture of the alien spacecraft, now seeming to be even closer.

“My God!”

“Astounding!”

“Absolutely amazing!”

“This is most extraordinary!”

Chapter 3

“What is that?” asked one of the men.

“What?” questioned the president and turned around to face the screen again.

And indeed, something was happening! The alien craft seemed to open up. At a closer look it was not opening up, but something was being pulled out from an opening and dragged across what seemed to be the front of the ship.

It stopped, and for a few moments nothing more happened. Then, suddenly, flashes of light started spreading over the thing that had been pulled out.

“What is this, what is going on?” The president sounded alarmed. “Could this be a weapon of some kind.”

“Could be, could be...” muttered the general. “Maybe some sort of laser...”

“Don’t be ridiculous!” remarked the professor. “That would be impossible. Whatever it was that was pulled out, it was very thin. It could not possibly be lethal, at least not from that distance to earth.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure...” A scientist specializing in something so odd as hypothetical future technology had also been invited. “Whatever advanced science they possess would to us seem indistinguishable from magic... They could very well have the power to destroy stars in that thin material.”

The president couldn’t help but shudder. “Let’s not hypothesize too much here. Let’s concentrate on what we have. What would be the appropriate first action to take when confronted with one of these aliens?”

“I think the wisest thing is to be very tactful,” said an anthropologist. “We should go easy until we have made sure what their intentions are, and until they understand a little more about us.”

“Yes, I can see the point in that,” answered the president, “we don’t want to take any actions that could even remotely be interpreted as hostile.”

“It’s easy to say, not easy to implement. We have no idea whatsoever what a totally alien intelligence might interpret as hostile. For example, if you extend your hand, maybe they see it as a threat or even as a weapon.”

“But we can agree on that we should try...,” said the president impatiently.

“Yes! Indeed we should!,” answered the professor of future technology. “If they are hostile, or if we make them hostile, there is nothing we could do but pray. We would have no power against a technology that advanced. They could wipe us out!”

“Again,” commented the technical attaché, “I would like to point out that the most probable scenario is that they are friendly and have not even thought of weapons in eons.”

“Touché,” exclaimed another anthropologist, “whatever reason they might have for coming to our solar system, I can not think it is anything but friendly.”

“Perhaps to conquer or enslave...,” started the general.

“What the hell is that!”

All of them were looking at the screen. The random flashes of light had stabilized and formed what was of too perfect resemblance to be interpreted as anything else; letters and numbers.

“My God, they will land. This must be the time of their arrival. AM must stand for the time...”

“I believe not!,” remarked another professor, “I think AM is the abbreviation for amplitude modulation and the numbers are a frequency. I would guess they are using radio waves to send us a message.”

“Quick!,” shouted the president, “get us a radio!”

The radio came in, was turned on and tuned in, but nothing could be heard but static noise.

“Hmm, could I be mistaken? Could those numbers mean something else?”

Suddenly a voice broke through the noise, and the quality of the signal was surprisingly good.

“Hallå,” it said, “Vi anropar planeten jorden.” The voice sounded male and sincere. “Hör ni oss så svara på samma frekvens. Vi vet att ni är oroliga över det här mötet, men vi försäkrar - vi kommer i fred. Vi vill också passa på att gratulera er över er mycket vackra planet. Kanske med vår hjälp kan ni få bukt med era problem.”

Chapter 4

The men at the table sat in silence. About a minute after the voice from the radio had trailed off, the president broke out with an impatient remark:

“I thought you said they would have some interpretation device! What the hell was that supposed to be?”

“Well, Mr. President, I’m just as surprised as you are. Of course the aliens must know that we cannot understand their language. I... I just can’t see why...”

“Maybe it’s a test...,” the technical attaché remarked, “maybe they somehow want to evaluate our response...”

“Oh come on... What good would that do?”

“Just stop this, we should send them a reply. They send a message in their language, so we can send a message in our!”

They started writing a short message to be sent out by a local radio station they were already hooked up with.

No one saw the anthropologist sitting quietly thinking at one corner of the table, and no one heard what he muttered:

“I do not think that was an alien language...”

Chapter 5

The message went out.

They could hear their own message on the radio, being read slowly by the president:

“Welcome friends! I am the president of the united states and wish to welcome you in peace on behalf of all the people of earth. As you most probably understand we did not understand your mess...”

The voice was drowned by the alien voice. Now speaking in perfect English:

“Please, mister president of the united states, shut up!”

Another voice suddenly broke through, crystal clear. The message from the president seemed to have been wiped from the air!

“Vi välkomnar er! Vi har med blandade känslor bevittnat er ankomst. Vi är glada att höra att ni kommer i fred. Tack för komplimangen över vår planet. Vi är själva mycket stolta över vår natur, även om vissa folk vet mindre bra hur man ska handskas med den.

“Så... vill ni möjligen titta ner på en kopp kaffe?” the voice suddenly sounded amused. “Förlåt, det var ett litet skämt. Om ni har tänkt landa skulle vi gärna vilja veta var. Som ni utan tvekan vet, så har vi ganska gott om plats...

“Än en gång, Välkomna!”

Chapter 6

Now the men at the table sat in silence for at least five minutes. The president was sweating on his forehead when he nervously asked no one in particular:

“Now, what is going on? What was that other voice, what were they saying, and why did they politely tell us to shut up!”

No one else around the table had anything to say, so the president continued:

“I do not understand this, do they want a dialogue or not...?”

“I think they do,” the anthropologist cut in. “And I think they have!”

“What do you mean by that? Speak up!”

“I thought already from the first message that that wasn't an alien language. And now I'm sure. It's clearly a Scandinavian language!”

Silence fell again...

“What!?,” the president finally breathed.

“I think they have contacted and received reply from Scandinavia, maybe Sweden or Norway. They told us to shut up when we were interfering with the conversation.”

“Are you kidding?,” asked the president with a face of total astonishment.

“I'm afraid that I most certainly am not.” He sounded a little miserable and ashamed, and didn't want to look the president in the eyes.

“No!” The president shouted! “That must be a mistake! It was clearly an alien language, don't you agree?” He looked around the table at the other men, but they didn't want to meet his eyes.

“This is total humiliation! Total! I mean, for God's sake, we are the united states!”

Chapter 7

No one had said anything for almost an hour. All of them were sitting, quietly thinking for themselves... The atmosphere was somewhat depressed and the radio was still transmitting the strange messages back and forth between earth and the alien space ship.

“...visst! Klockan 15.30 landar vi på vad ni kallar Stadion i Stockholm. Beklagat, Göteborg och Ullevi, men Stockholm har en finare skärgård...”

“Och på frågan om varför vi kontaktade er i Sverige... Ni skulle inte ens behöva fråga! Förutom att ni har det vackraste språket, dessutom det roligaste att lära, och den finaste naturen, så är ni till naturen ett trevligare folk än de flesta andra folkslag på er planet. Ni ska veta att vi har studerat er planet länge och väl...”

“Och vi säger väl det, Operakällaren i kväll...”

Written by Ola Magnusson, May 6, 1997.

Translation of the alien language:

Chapter 3:

“Hello,” it said, “We hail the planet Earth.” The voice sounded male and sincere. “If you hear us, please answer on this frequency. We know that you are anxious about this meeting, but we insure you - we come in peace. We would also like to take the opportunity and congratulate you on your very beautiful planet. Maybe with our help you can get rid of all your problems.”

Chapter 5:

“We welcome you! We have with mixed feelings witnessed your arrival. We are happy to hear that you come in peace. Thank you for the compliment about our planet. We are very proud of our nature ourselves, even if some people know not enough to handle it.

“So... would you perhaps like to drop down for a cup of coffee?” the voice suddenly sounded amused. “Sorry, that was a little joke. If you plan to land we would very much like to know where. As you no doubt know, we have pretty much space...

“One more time, Welcome!”

Chapter 7:

“...sure! At 3.30 p.m. we will land on what you call Stadion (a large stadium) in Stockholm. Sorry, Gothenburg and Ullevi (another large stadium), but Stockholm has a nicer archipelago...

“And on the question of why we contacted you in Sweden... You shouldn't even have to ask! Besides having the most beautiful language, in addition the most fun to learn, and the nicest countryside, you are by nature a nicer people than most other people are on your planet. You must know that we have studied your planet thoroughly for a long time...

“And let's agree on it, Operakällaren (a fine restaurant/nightclub in Stockholm) tonight...”