

THE ALIENS ARE COMING!

by Dayton Ward

Based upon Star Trek™, created by Gene Roddenberry



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The Aliens Are Coming!

Dayton Ward

July 10th, A.D. 1969

Darkness faded as awareness returned, and he cautiously opened his eyes. Doing so sent a searing jolt of pain directly to the base of his skull.

Captain John Christopher had one hell of a headache.

He opened his eyes fully and took stock of his surroundings. The room he found himself in was a bare cinder-block affair, with no furniture or fixtures save a single lightbulb in the center of the ceiling, hanging inside a protective wire cage. The only door in the room was locked, a guess he confirmed when he tried to open it. He found the room stuffy, and he reached to unzip the top half of his orange flight suit.

The simple action made him pause and realize that he had no idea what had happened. The last thing he remembered was walking from the flight line into the hangar facility containing the pilots' locker room. He recalled starting across the wide expanse of the hangar floor when something came crashing down across the back of his head. Then...

...then he awoke here, with a prize-winning headache.

The room's lone door abruptly opened to admit a man wearing a nondescript black suit with matching shoes and tie and a plain white dress shirt. He carried a manila folder in his left hand. Christopher noted the lines in the man's face and the liberal smattering of gray in his thinning blond hair. He looked to be in his middle to late fifties, but the haunted look in his eyes made him seem older still.

"Where the hell am I?" Christopher barked as the door closed behind the new arrival. He thought the man looked visibly uneasy, almost nervous, as though he was uncomfortable with the situation. Well, good. That made two of them.

They exchanged stares for several seconds, then the other man said, "Where you are is not so important, Captain, as why you are here."

"Fair enough," the pilot replied. "That was my next question."

The other man ran a hand across his face and Christopher saw that it shook slightly. With a smile that seemed forced, he said, "My name is Wainwright, Captain, and you're here because I believe you have information I need."

"What kind of information?"

Bringing up the folder, Wainwright opened it and withdrew a single large photograph, holding it for Christopher to see. It was a grainy, dark image, mostly black, but he recognized the curvature of the Earth as that seen in photos taken during various manned space flights.

He also recognized the object floating over the Earth.

"Oh my god," Christopher breathed.

As a boy, Jimmy Wainwright knew all about alien invasions. He read*The War of the Worlds*. He followed the adventures of Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, and Captain Proton. In the pages of numerous magazines purchased at the drugstore in the sleepy hometown of his youth, Earth was threatened every month. Its men were enslaved and its women carted off to carry out the whims of alien emperors across the universe.

But today, James Wainwright contemplated a real invasion by real aliens. He'd awaited their return ever since that fateful night in the New Mexico desert twenty-two years ago. Was the day he'd been dreading all these years finally at hand?

He stood silently as Christopher studied the object in the photograph, watched as the man's eyes traced over the large saucer shape and the three cylindrical projections, two above the saucer and one below.

"This photograph was taken last year by a military reconnaissance satellite," Wainwright said. "The object was discovered in high orbit above the Earth."

Christopher could not conceal his shock. "Last year? That's the same thing I saw just this morning."

Wainwright nodded. "So I gathered from your cockpit transmissions. Captain, I need to know everything you can tell me about what you saw up there."

Relaxing somewhat, Christopher frowned. "There's not much to tell, really. Air Defense Command tasked me to intercept an unidentified craft over Omaha Air Base. I got to the designated coordinates and there it was, high in the clouds and climbing away fast. At first I thought it was just sunlight reflecting off my canopy. I only saw it for a second or two, and then it was just...gone."

"But you're sure what you saw was the object in this picture?" Wainwright asked, holding up the photo for emphasis.

"Yes, I'm sure of it. What is it? Some kind of Russian rocket?" The pilot's eyes widened at a sudden thought. "Wait a minute. Are they pushing for the Moon? They're not going to beat us, are they? Not

when we're this close?"

Wainwright shook his head. "We don't believe it's Russian, Captain."

"So what, then?"

Pacing slowly around the room, Wainwright didn't reply immediately. Christopher watched as the other man seemed to gather himself, as if preparing for a difficult task.

Finally, he said, "Captain, I've spent the last two decades of my life mired in endless searching, fear, frustration, even humiliation. I've watched this country advance along the technical path toward putting a man on the Moon, all the while failing to grasp the very real dangers lying just beyond the boundaries of our tiny planet. The people of this nation, of this very world in fact, are oblivious to these dangers because those in power wish to keep them ignorant."

Christopher shook his head, annoyed. An edge creeped into his voice as he said, "What are you talking about?"

Wainwright stopped his pacing and stared directly at Christopher. "In July of 1947, I was a captain in the Army Air Corps, stationed at Wright Field in Ohio. One night, an unidentified craft landed in the desert near Roswell, New Mexico. It was retrieved by soldiers from the Army air field there and transported to us, along with its three pilots."

"Russian?" Christopher asked.

"No. Definitely not Russian. They called themselves 'Ferengi,' though to this day I have no idea what that means."

"There's no country called Ferengi," Christopher said, and then his eyes widened. "Wait. Are you saying...?"

Wainwright nodded, the look on his face chilling the pilot to the bone. "Yes. They came from another world." He paused for a moment. The implications of that simple statement never failed to astonish him, even after all these years.

"At first, there were those among us who thought they came in peace." He shook his head in disgust, remembering how that idiot professor, Carlson, had them all slapping their heads and tugging their noses in feeble attempts to communicate. All the while, the aliens had been toying with them.

"However," he continued, "once we started interrogating them, the truth came out. They admitted to being advance scouts for their Ferengi invasion fleet. They were coming to enslave us. They had the ability to control our minds, and they used that power on Carlson and his fiancée to engineer their escape. They got to their ship and flew away, and when they were gone, there was no evidence that they'd ever been here."

He glared at Christopher. "But I saw them, Captain. I know why they came, and I know they'll come back. They no doubt made it back to their leaders and told them all about our defensive capabilities, which compared to their technology were and probably still are pathetic."

Christopher was skeptical. "Mr. Wainwright, I admit it's a fascinating story, but..."

Wainwright cut him off. "For twenty-two years I and others like me have been planning for their return, Captain. President Truman empowered a group of us to investigate UFO sightings with the express purpose of learning as much as we could about them and formulating a defense against them. It was a top-secret program called Project Sign."

The haunted look returned to the man's eyes as he recalled memories from long ago. "The things we discovered were staggering. We were being observed almost constantly. We investigated sightings and some of them did prove to be false. But others, many others, were very true. We compiled thousands of pages of information during the first year alone."

He was staring into the room's lone lightbulb as he continued. "We obtained evidence of their presence, Captain. We captured crashed ships and retrieved alien beings, living and dead. When we started studying their technology, we realized just how out-classed we truly were."

Shaking his head, Christopher said, "This is unbelievable."

"Others thought the same way. Project Sign evolved over the years and its purpose along with it. Soon, our directive was to ensure that any sightings of UFOs were suppressed. We kept amassing the information, but our reports never saw the light of day."

Wainwright was pacing again, talking more to himself than to Christopher. The pilot could see anger welling up in the other man as he weaved the story. He couldn't begin to guess whether the man was constructing his tale from tortured memories or thin air. Wainwright looked to him to be an unhappy man, a man who had seen his share of adversity and injustice, and who was now summoning some final shred of will and purpose in order to try for success one last time.

Either that, or he was stark raving mad.

"Our work was hushed up deliberately, with misleading reports forwarded up to the president. The people running the project wanted UFOs to disappear. They considered the whole thing to be a nuisance." He snorted and shook his head. "Fools, all of them. They had no idea. But the public wasn't stupid. They knew something was up, and they knew the government was trying to sweep it under the rug. They kept protesting, demanding more results. The program finally evolved into Project Blue Book in the early fifties, and for the first time I thought we'd finally get the support we needed."

Wainwright's anxiety was climbing steadily, and Christopher was almost certain the man had forgotten he was even talking to the pilot. He'd unbuttoned his suit jacket and Christopher caught a fleeting glance of a pistol in a shoulder holster under Wainwright's arm.

The pilot stole a look toward the door. Who or what was on the other side? It didn't matter, he decided. He'd take his chances, given the opportunity. All he had to do was get past Wainwright, who seemed to be growing more unbalanced by the minute.

Stalling for time, Christopher asked, "So, what happened?"

"Those idiots!" Wainwright exploded. "The same story all over again, only this time they wanted to take care of this 'UFO craze' once and for all. Evidence was destroyed. Witnesses were forced into silence, bought off, or suffered 'sudden disappearances' or 'mysterious accidents.' The people in charge, the same people I trusted, turned their backs on me. People I called close friends shunned me in hopes of preserving their own pathetic careers."

His eyes burned with hurt, anger, and defeat. "Now they're beginning the first stages of shutting down the program and tying up loose ends like me. I still work on the project, but now I'm a professional disgrace, one of many scapegoats in a massive campaign designed to keep people blissfully unaware of their true status in the interstellar reality!"

The man's losing it, Christopher thought.

Wainwright pointed at him. "But now I've finally got someone who can help me, someone they haven't gotten to yet. You saw that ship, Captain. You know it's real." He pointed to the photo that lay on the floor. "A year ago that thing destroyed a nuclear weapons platform we were trying to put into orbit. It was the most sophisticated piece of hardware in our arsenal, but they destroyed it easily and damn near started World War III in the process. Now it's back, just as we're getting ready for the most ambitious manned space flight in our history. Don't you see what's happening?"

Christopher regarded the man warily. "You think an alien spaceship is here to disrupt the Moon landing? What will that accomplish?"

Gesturing wildly with both hands, Wainwright said, "Can't you see? They want to slap us down, keep us pinned to our own planet. That way, we're all right here when they come to take us over. They can't wait ten or fifteen years to make their move. By then we'll have space stations and a base on the Moon. They're striking now, before we have a chance to learn how to defend ourselves against them."

"You're talking movie stuff, Wainwright," Christopher said, his face screwing up in disdain. "Martians and mind control and taking over the world. It's preposterous! There's no such thing as little green men."

Christopher froze as the words left his mouth. Something was there behind the words, something teasing the edges of his memory. Ghostly images of wide corridors and bright colors called to him. There was a man in a gold shirt with an air of authority about him. Another man in a blue shirt with green-tinged skin and...

"You believe," Wainwright said, pointing at the pilot again. "I can see it in your eyes."

"No," Christopher whispered. It went against everything he took to be true, to be factual. This was fantasy, and madness lay not far beyond it, if Wainwright was any indication.

But the green-skinned man with the pointed ears haunting his memory told him otherwise.

"I...I was there," he said, his voice barely audible. "On the ship. They brought me aboard, destroyed my plane." Confusion clouded his face and he shook his head. "But that's impossible, isn't it? There was no time for that to happen. I only saw it for a second. But I was there. I slept in one of their beds, ate their food."

There was more there, he knew, more memories stubbornly refusing to come forward. Saturn? Why did Saturn seem so important?

"I have to report this," Christopher said. "Tell them what I saw."

"Yes," Wainwright replied. "You have to report it. We have to get this information out, warn people that there's an alien ship up there waiting for God knows what."

"My superiors will inform their leaders. The President will take action, right?"

Scowling, Wainwright said, "The president? Captain, this country is preparing to send three men to the Moon. They know about that ship just as we do, but they can't afford to acknowledge it. Putting a man on the Moon is a political gold mine right now. There's no way they'll risk losing that, even if it costs the lives of three brave men and the work of thousands of other people.

"But we don't have to let that happen. We can take this to the newspeople, get it on television. The government won't have the chance to bury it. They'll have to delay the launch and deal with the problem."

Disbelief clouded Christopher's face. "I can't accept that. I have to believe my superiors will listen to my report and take the proper action. They already know I saw something. I have a duty to report in full detail what I know."

"No!" Wainwright screamed, drawing the pistol from the holster under his arm. "All these years I've tried to get them to understand, to accept the problem and deal with it. But they've ignored me! Destroyed me! They're going to shut Blue Book down soon. This may be my last chance to prove once and for all that I'm right. You're not going to take that away from me."

Christopher stared at the gun. "Shooting me won't help, you know."

"I don't plan to shoot you unless you force me to. But you should know that two of my agents are at this very moment sitting in a car outside your home." He glanced at the watch he wore on his left wrist. "In about twenty minutes, if they don't hear from me, your family will 'mysteriously disappear.' Their only chance is for you to do as I say."

Anger flared up in Christopher. It was obvious now that Wainwright was beyond reason. Years of humiliation and disgrace had robbed him of whatever sense of honor or duty he may have once possessed. Now he was nothing but a battered shell of a man, frantically seizing one final chance at redemption.

"You bastard," he breathed.

"Desperate times, Captain," Wainwright said. "You know what they call for. Now, please, don't make this any more difficult than it has to be." He motioned for Christopher to go to the door. "Let's go."

Christopher stepped to the door and reached for the knob. This time it turned in his hand and he pulled the door open. Beyond, he saw a stark, gray-painted corridor perhaps a hundred feet in length, ending at a set of polished steel elevator doors. He was surprised to find no other people in the hallway.

"Move," Wainwright said, nudging him with the pistol. The pilot opened the door wider to step into the corridor. From the corner of his eye, he saw the other man move to follow.

Christopher yanked the door open with sudden unexpected force. It slammed into Wainwright, catching the man in the face. He howled in pain and reached for his nose. Christopher hit him with the door again and Wainwright fell to the floor, his pistol clattering away across the room. The pilot took off running down the hallway.

He was nearly two thirds of the way to the elevator when something zipped past his ear, the first shot echoing in the narrow corridor. A second shot rang out and a fireball exploded in his shoulder. He stumbled and fell to his knees, his right hand automatically moving to his wounded arm. Pulling the hand

away, he saw it was covered in blood.

"Stop!" Wainwright called out from behind him. Christopher, still on his knees, turned to face the other man. Wainwright's face was bloody, his nose angled unnaturally to the left.

"I'm sorry," Wainwright said, slowly walking up the corridor. A look of sadness dominated the man's features. "I didn't want to hurt you, Captain. I don't want to harm anyone, but surely you can see my position. I've devoted my life to this country, and those in power have abandoned me and others like me to save their own worthless hides. Well, that's ended now. The truth will come out today, and you will help me."

A tone abruptly sounded in the hallway, and their attention was drawn to the elevator. The doors parted to reveal a figure wearing a black suit strikingly similar to the one Wainwright wore. Christopher looked up and his gaze was drawn to blue eyes and honey blond hair. A woman.

Wainwright was caught off guard by the new arrival, his hand jerking the pistol around wildly to point at the woman. Christopher had to wonder how he kept from shooting her accidentally.

"Who are you?" Wainwright snapped.

The woman calmly produced a small wallet from the inside pocket of her suit jacket and showed him a rather plain identification card with her photograph on it.

"Agent Lincoln," she said with an air of authority that seemed in contrast with her apparent youth. "Major Quintanilla has asked me to take Captain Christopher into custody. He wants you to return to Wright-Patterson immediately for debriefing."

"Debriefing," Wainwright echoed. Christopher could see confusion playing across the man's face, breaking through the single-minded focus that had dominated it just seconds before.

The woman, Lincoln, reached into her suit pocket again, this time pulling out a packet of papers held together by the pocket clip of a stout silver pen. Taking the pen in her right hand, she unfolded the papers and held them out to Wainwright. "Here are the orders."

As Wainwright rapidly scanned the papers, Lincoln looked down at Christopher. "Are you all right?"

"Been better," the pilot hissed through clenched teeth.

She returned her attention to Wainwright. "We have to go quickly. Military police have tracked your vehicle to this location. They'll be here in the next few minutes."

"These orders are fake!" Wainwright said suddenly. "The cipher key in the heading is yesterday's code."

The woman's face fell as Wainwright's pistol came up again, this time pointing at her. "I don't know who you are," he said. "But you're not going to stop me from doing what needs to be done. I've been kept down for too long and today is my redemption."

"What the hell is going on?" Christopher demanded, using the wall for support as he pulled himself to his feet. "Who are you?" he asked Lincoln.

Christopher's movements distracted Wainwright, and Lincoln was obviously waiting for just such a

happenstance. Her right hand came up with startling speed, the pen grasped in a firm grip.

The pen...?

A bolt of blue energy erupted from the pen, catching Wainwright full in the chest. The man sighed as the beam enveloped him, the tension immediately leaving his muscles.

"No," he breathed as he sagged to the floor, consciousness slipping away rapidly.

"You're tired, go to sleep," Lincoln said to him. She stepped forward and retrieved his weapon, then turned to Christopher. "I'm sorry this had to happen, Captain, but don't worry. Everything's going to be fine."

"My family," Christopher blurted. "He said he had men ready to take my family."

Lincoln smiled. "Don't worry about that. My...partner... is taking care of that as we speak." She moved closer to inspect the wound in his shoulder. "The bullet passed through cleanly. We can fix that easy enough." She reached into her pocket and produced a device Christopher did not recognize.

"What is that?" he asked as she pressed the object to his shoulder. He grimaced as pain pulsed briefly, but then the device began to hum and soothing warmth washed over his arm.

"This'll heal your wound. There won't even be a scar."

The humming ceased after several seconds and she pulled the device away. He looked down in awe and saw that except for the blood on his suit, there was no sign he'd ever been injured. He groped the back of his shoulder where the bullet's entry wound should have been and found nothing. The woman was as good as her word.

"Groovy, huh?" Lincoln asked.

"It's incredible." He shook his head in disbelief, then looked back at her. "Who are you?"

"Someone who looks out for others when they need looking out for. Mr. Wainwright had a good idea to let people know about UFOs, but he was about to make a huge error. If he'd gotten to the public with what the two of you know, it could have caused a panic. The government might delay the Apollo 11 launch, and that's something that can't be allowed to happen, you know?"

Realization dawned on Christopher's face. "You mean it's true? What he told me? What I saw? All of it?"

"Pretty heavy, huh?" she replied. "Between the two of you, you've got enough information to put UFO groupies and national security bigwigs into a full-blown lather."

Christopher shook his head. "I don't understand. Why are you telling me this?" He indicated the unconscious Wainwright with a wave of his hand. "You must know I have to report everything I've seen today, including all this."

"Because you won't remember any of it," Lincoln said calmly as she brought the pen up once more.

July 16, A.D. 1969

In an apartment in New York City sat a man, a woman, and a cat. The man, a middle-aged gentleman of slim build with intense blue eyes and brown hair peppered with gray, regarded his companion, Roberta Lincoln. At the moment, she was completing a report detailing her last assignment.

"Agent Wainwright has been placed in an Air Force psychiatric facility," she said. "Doctors report he suffered a nervous breakdown due to prolonged work-related stress while assigned to atop-secret military program. He talks endlessly about alien invasion fleets and UFO sightings and how the public needs to be warned. They predict that with the proper therapy, they can assist him to a full recovery inside of a year."

The man rose from his chair, cradling the purring black cat in his arms as he strolled to a window. The apartment overlooked the city, and he stared out at the cityscape for several seconds before saying, "Unfortunate that it had to end that way for him, but at least now he won't endanger himself or history. What about Captain Christopher?"

Roberta replied, "Given the amount of time that had passed since Wainwright kidnapped him, I decided to leave him where I found him. He has no memory of meeting Wainwright. The military police told him about Wainwright's breakdown and attributed his kidnapping to that. As for his encounter with the *Enterprise*, Air Defense Command chalked it up as just another unexplained UFO sighting."

Gary Seven turned from the window, allowing the cat to drop to the floor and scamper away. "Therefore, there's nothing to report to any authorities and no reason for them to delay the launch of Apollo 11. All in all, a successful mission, and quite an accomplishment for your first solo outing."

Closing the report with a sigh, she replied, "I mucked up the cipher code on the fake orders. I almost had him convinced until he saw that."

"A minor mistake, which you overcame and thereby salvaged the operation. Consider it a lesson for the future, Miss Lincoln. It's the little things that will trip you up on missions like ours, not the big ones."

Roberta processed the gentle lecture, then said, "It's too bad we missed the *Enterprise*. I'd have liked to meet Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock again."

The cat made a most derisive noise at that, and Seven regarded the animal with an amused expression. "Quite right, Isis. Roberta, from their point of view, they hadn't met us yet. If we'd met with them on the day Captain Christopher saw the *Enterprise*, we would have risked disrupting the time stream. I don't think I have to remind you the trouble that could cause."

Shaking her head, Roberta blew out a breath of frustration, pausing briefly to give Isis a dirty look that went ignored as the cat began to preen herself.

"Time travel gives me a headache, you know?"

Seven allowed himself the briefest of smiles, a rare display of emotion. "I don't particularly enjoy it myself." He moved back to his seat and turned his attention to the television set that had previously gone ignored. Their assignment here on Earth to ensure humankind's maturation into a peaceful society was ongoing, but for the time being it could take a back seat to the history about to unfold on the screen before them.

Isis returned to Seven's lap once more as her master settled into the sofa. Petting the cat absently, he

said, "Don't worry, Miss Lincoln. Something tells me we haven't seen the last of the Enterprise."

In his home in Nebraska, Captain John Christopher sat with his wife and two daughters transfixed before a television, just like millions of other people all around the world. They watched as a mighty white rocket, the most powerful transportation device ever constructed by humans, shook loose the embrace of gravity and hurtled upward into the blue Florida sky, the first step on a long journey that would forever change the way the inhabitants of Earth viewed their home planet.

Christopher had dreamed of traveling through space. He'd even gone so far as to try out for the fledgling American astronaut program. He hadn't qualified, so like the many others whose dreams would probably never be realized, he would have to be content to merely sit, watch, and celebrate the achievements of others on this momentous day and those that would surely follow.

As the mighty Saturn V soared heavenward, Christopher glanced down to where his two daughters lay on the rug between the television and the couch where he and his wife sat. They were young, still a few years from reaching their teens. It was entirely possible they would grow up in a world where space travel was commonplace. They might even be among those fortunate enough to carry the pioneering spirit of humanity to the stars.

Why not them?

Apollo 11 climbed higher into the sky, but John Christopher was no longer watching. Instead, his thoughts wandered toward the years that lie ahead, and what a future generation of Christophers might contribute to them.

About the Author

Dayton Ward has been a fan of *Star Trek* since conception (his, not the show's). After serving for eleven years in the U.S. Marine Corps, he discovered the private sector and the piles of cash to be made there as a software engineer. His start in professional writing came as a result of placing stories in each of the first three *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* anthologies. With Kevin Dilmore, Dayton also co-wrote the *Interphase* duology for the *Star Trek: S.C.E.* series of "eBooks" as well as that series upcoming *Foundations* trilogy. Though he currently lives in Kansas City with his wife, Michi, he is a Florida native and still maintains a torrid long-distance romance with his beloved Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Feel free to contact Dayton anytime via E-mail at **DWardKC@aol.com.**

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