

Silently Helena Russell, along with ten others who are also all wrapped in white garments, entered the Command Center of the Moonbase. They surrounded the Commander's chair and pointed their stun guns toward Koenig. "John Koenig", Helena said calmly, "you are a servant of evil and a continuing danger to our world. This danger must now be eliminated!"

Chaos prevails on Moonbase Alpha. Isolated groups of Alphans fight for power. And nobody has noticed, that the crew has long been under the influence of the Telepaths.

INVASION OF THE TELEPATHS

MONDSTATION 1999

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MONDSTATION 1999

**INVASION OF
THE
TELEPATHS**

THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

**INVASION DER ESPER
BY H. W. SPRINGER**

**CHAPTERS 1 AND 2
AS TRANSLATED BY:
PATRICK ZIMMERMAN**

VERSION 1.0, NOVEMBER 2014

Once again, the Earth's Moon, which was racing uncontrollably through space, approached an unknown solar system. And once again the burning hope, of finding a planet that was suitable for colonization and to be able to finally escape the crowded conditions of the underground base complex, flickered within the crew of Moonbase Alpha. The longing of the Alphans for fresh, natural air, for the warming rays of a sun, for an unlimited freedom of movement, had become increasingly stronger in recent months. It was only a matter of time before the constant pressure of having to always live in a confined space, in an artificial environment, with the same fellow human beings, would evoke a massive psychic explosion amongst the scattered people of the Earth.

And just as it had many times in the past, it looked as if their hopes were not to be unfounded. The star that ruled the stellar system lying before the Moon was of the domestic solar spectral type G. Suns of this type normally produced planets. And if any of the planets of this central star orbited in the area of the so-called habitable zone, it could be assumed with some certainty that it would have Earth-like conditions as well.

But the Moon was still too far away from the alien sun to allow the highly sensitive instruments of the Alphans to determine beyond any shadow of a doubt the planetary circumstances ahead. It was all but certain that there were planets though. Judging by the proportions of the gravitational fields, at least five, probably more. And with every astronomical unit closer

that the Moon approached the system, the measuring instruments gained more insight.

Finally, it was time...

Eight planets could be identified. The distances from the sun to the outer four were all greater than one billion kilometers. Gas giants that were unquestionably not carriers of life.

The same was true for the innermost planet, a glowing hell of the same cut as Mercury. The middle three worlds however...

The Alphans impatiently waited for the computer-simulated images of the planetary surfaces, that would be generated using all of their measurement readings as reference, to be projected onto the Big Screen in the Command Center.

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"Fantastic!" murmured Commander John Koenig.

Mesmerized, his eyes were glued to the sequence of three-dimensional color images that flitted across the Big Screen.

Of course, they were only speculative projections, but the probability that the computer had somehow misinterpreted the data transmitted by the sensors was extremely low. He personally had no doubt that this second world of the six-planet system that they approached came very close to his idea of paradise.

A beach landscape appeared, one that the Commander could hardly imagine being any more enthralling.

His memories of Tahiti and Martinique did not compare, by far, to the southern charm that now spread in front of him.

Incredibly fine-grained yellow sand that shone like

gold dust... a cobalt blue sea, with snow-white foam topped crowns off towards the horizon... blood-red sunlight, bathing the land and water in an unearthly aura of purest beauty...

John Koenig felt it almost as a blasphemous act that Helena Russell, who was standing beside his command chair, snorted through her nose at this very moment.

How profane, he thought, how rude. And it was always said that women were more sensitive to moods than men, and responded more intensely, so this probably wasn't really true. He was a man, but it never would have occurred to him blow his nose like some seal at this moment.

Reluctantly, he turned away from the screen and glared at the Alphan's Medical Chief.

"Must you Helena? This extraordinary environment... doesn't it captivate you? "

The eyes of the doctor widened in slight surprise, it was odd that he would speak so grumpily towards her.

"Yes," she answered, "it captivates me. Rarely in my life have I been repelled by something as much as by those images there."

She pointed with her index finger toward the screen, and the Commander noticed that the index finger was trembling.

He frowned. What was wrong with Helena? She felt disgusted by these images that seemed to have originated from out of a dream and become reality?

She must have gone mad!

Koenig devoted his attention back to the screen.

A scene change had occurred. The computer now simulated a new planetary landscape, completely different but certainly no less impressive, than the magical beach panorama from earlier.

Images of a picturesque forest were presented on the screen. Mighty trees, under whose high canopy, lush vegetation unfolded its splendor. Exotic flowers of never seen varieties formed unique floral carpets. Romantic springs emerged from moss-covered stones, creating glistening waterways that meandered through the botanical paradise.

And this miraculous world was full of life. Birds were flying about, whose feathers shone in all colors of the spectrum. Their appearance was so vivid that John Koenig could almost hear their trills, whistles and singing.

But of course, the simulation of the computer did not go so far that it also included the audio impressions of the observed world. But, even without the illusion of sounds, the wonder-world of this planet that was soon to be within their reach was almost perfect. And not only birds lived in the fairy tale forest. There were also dragonfly-like creatures with ethereal, translucent wings, and other insects, that were not repugnant, but attractive, and even larger animals that reminded him of Earthly deer, however, where grace and charm were concerned, they far exceeded. Nowhere were features of flora or fauna that hurt the human eye or even repelled. Everywhere, there was only beauty, aesthetics... a deep peace.

Again the image sequence on the screen changed. A long shot was visible, the long shot that held a wide landscape that seemed to stretch off into infinity.

A vast green plain stretched out under a bright blue sky. Tall grass, that made him think of the prairies of North America, which surged up and down in waves, as a gentle breeze swept across it.

A wide river, whose water was so clear that one could see their own reflection within, moved its way

through the lush greenness.

Gently rising hills rose in the distance and merged with a cloudless horizon.

It was not just the magic of nature that made John Koenig's heart beat faster. His emotions were nourished as well by the realization that there seemed to be no civilization on this planet. There was no indication that this world had produced intelligent beings. Interferences with nature would have been felt otherwise. But there could be no doubt.

Nowhere was there anything artificial, a settlement, for example, or other traces of planned undertakings.

This planet was... a godsend. Whoever took possession of it, robbed no one.

John Koenig smiled quietly to himself.

It looked as if the Alphans had finally met their new home, after yearning in vain for so long.

*

Doctor Helena Russell was horrified.

The simulated images of the planet's surface that the computer projected onto the screen were really some of the most repulsive things she had ever seen in her life. This planet had to take the spot as the harshest, most hellish and life-unfriendly world in the logs of Moonbase Alpha.

However, she was even more horrified by something other than the terrible planet itself: the reactions of some of the crewmembers, not the least John Koenig's.

He, the security chief Tony Verdeschi, chief pilot Alan Carter, and a few other Alphans that were crowded in the Command Center, seemed downright fascinated by the gruesome images on the Big Screen. Even with the best of intentions, she could not

understand how a civilized person could find enjoyment in these scenes of chaos, violence and unbridled savagery.

Helena had to force herself not to look away from the screen. The images that flashed across the Big Screen were taking on the form of a nightmare.

A beach scene was there. Towering breakers slammed with elemental force against jagged rocks. The water - if it even was water - was a gray-black, thick broth, which made one think of liquid manure. The unsavory liquid blistered and foamed like dirty suds. The whole beach, the pockmarked rocks, and the tangled debris lying around, was covered with a slimy film.

In her youth, Helena had seen a coastal strip on Long Island in New York State that had been contaminated by a leaking oil tanker. The sight of the violated, blighted landscape had burned into her memory. Compared to the images that were now visible on the screen, however, the image of the oil spill now seemed like an invitation for a beach holiday.

The scene changed on the screen...

The computer now simulated a forest landscape. Horribly overgrown trees with scabby barks that made them look as if they were covered with cancerous tumors, cowered under a dark, cloudy sky.

Undergrowth proliferated everywhere, gray on gray. Mushroom-like things that were bursting open and spitting disgusting viscous jelly out. Twitching vines that were as thick as arms, and covered with pallid, bleeding chalices that were open like greedy maws. A stream roiled amongst the deformed plants, separating them with its seething vapors that settled along the shorelines like blight.

And the forest was alive. Disgusting creatures

trudged, slid, and fluttered throughout the woods. Spiders with heads as large as a humans, overly hairy... thigh-thick snakes with sharp, curved teeth and unspeakably treacherous eyes... dinosaur-like monsters that buckled trees with swipes of their massive tails, as if they were matchsticks... giant insects with threatening outstretched barbs... Birds that seemed to consist only of murderous claws and beaks... And they all rushed at each other and gave in to merciless, unbelievably wild battles with each other. Helena had to turn away, because the terrible carnage was beginning to make her nauseous.

Finally, the forest of horror disappeared from the screen and made way for an image of a spacious wasteland of community space, a landscape more desolate and hopeless than any she could have imagined.

From a soil that looked burned grew puny stalks that color-wise were hard to distinguish from the background. A river flowed there with the same liquid manure that Helena already knew from the beach pictures, meandering through the area like a giant intestine. A hurricane-like storm whipped away across the country and drove a pitch-black, whirling cloud of dirt before itself. Lightning flashed down from the dark sky, and huge downpours turned the lowland into a dark mud in seconds.

And the computer relayed another simulation.

The planet was inhabited.

With intelligent beings!

Buildings were visible in the background, adhering to a jagged mountain range. Tremendously massive, fortress-like buildings, which seemed to have been built by the hand of Cyclops.

The computer brought the view of the buildings in

closer using a Zoom effect. The inhabitants of the bulwarks could not be detected, but their actions could be seen.

From two opposed buildings that were about a thousand meters apart, tremendous jets of fire spewed forth, accompanied by black smoke. And the foul streams of fire were not without effect. Cracks and holes were visible in the walls of both structures, with rocks breaking away from the composite material and clattering off into the depths. It would only be a matter of time until both castles were complete ruins.

Here a war was being fought, one as ruthless and merciless as the one amongst the beasts in the forest of horror.

Helena shook herself. This planet was murderous in every aspect, was deadly to any connection. Without question and under no circumstances could it ever become their new home.

And Helena was not saddened, in any way, by that thought.

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Rarely had there ever been such disorder in the Command Center. Everyone was talking to everyone else, loudly, impolitely, hysterically. It was all gestures, screaming, grumbling, sneering outbursts of laughter. And the lines, which had developed between the crewmembers, became ever more apparent: women on one side, men on the other.

For Commander John Koenig there was no question which of the parties had deliberately embarked on a confrontational course here. The so-called weak, or beautiful, sex of course, who appeared not at all that beautiful in moments like this. For a while Koenig

listened to the nagging. Then enough was enough. Abruptly he stood up from his command chair.

"Quiet!"

His voice drowned out everyone else, and he actually quieted everyone down, although John Koenig did get the impression that it was only the calm before a new storm.

Everyone, man and woman alike, watched him. Everyone still regarded his position with respect, he realized with a certain satisfaction.

"Up until now, I had always thought that we were all, without exception, actually adults and reasonable people", he said as calmly as possible. "Therefore, we need to attempt to analyze everything here emotionlessly and with a clear understanding."

He nodded to Maya, the young Psychon. With her sharp intellect and her superior mental abilities, the girl seemed to him to be the most suitable to be able to represent the craziness of her peers. Maya generally tended to think in strictly logical terms.

"So, Maya", he asked of her, "could you please tell everyone what the computer simulation, that we all looked at just now, showed us."

"Of course, John", said the Psychon, who was similarly behaving in an objective manner. "I saw the pictures of a truly hellish planet. Oceans and rivers that seemed to be fed from a sewer..."

"Ridiculous!" shouted the Security Chief Tony Verdeschi in interruption. "You must have been dreaming as the simulation ran."

Immediately, things began to simmer amongst the crewmembers. The Commander had to loudly request for peace and order again. Although he wholeheartedly agreed with his friend Tony, he forcefully asked him to restrain from making any further comments.

"Maya, you're up again", he said to the Psychon.

The girl continued to speak: "mountains eaten away like a set of putrid teeth in some medical text book, cancer-like rampantly growing, repulsive looking plants, nauseating animals, intelligent beings waging a barbaric war..."

"Enough!" the Commander said sharply. He had to maintain an iron will to not go over to Maya and shake some sense into her. He just could not fathom why she wanted to make such a perversion of a dream world. What was the intent – of her and the other women, who also nodded in agreement with the description?

"Let's try this another way", he said taking control. "We're all clear on the fact that we did not just see a real image of the planet, but only a simulation, which was provided by the computer based solely upon measurement readings. Do you agree with me there, Maya?"

"Of course, John."

What an astonishing agreement, thought Koenig.

He resumed the thread and said: "Let's set aside the simulation and concentrate on the individual measurement data, agree?"

Maya nodded.

Koenig left his command console and crossed over to the computer console that displayed the indications of the force of gravity for the planet.

"What are you reading here, Maya?" he asked the Psychon, who had stepped over to his side in the meantime.

"1.9 g ", Maya said promptly.

The Commander sighed loudly. The reading clearly showed 0.87 g, and yet she claimed something else.

He went to the next console. On which the planet's atmosphere was broken down.

"What's the oxygen percentage?" he wanted to know.
"Twenty-eight", the woman answered boldly.

That was too much for John Koenig. "Noooo!" he cried out. "There's twenty-one percent oxygen. Why do you lie so blatantly?"

"I ask you the same, John!" Maya said icily.

And Sandra Benes, who sat before one of the other consoles, jumped to her side to help.

"I really do not know, Commander, why you distort the readings", she asked him boldly. "Maya is completely right. Twenty-eight percent oxygen."

John Koenig abruptly turned away and returned to his chair. He still had the attention of everyone, even if here and there some private discussions had already sprung up.

"Listen to me, you pig-headed daughters of Eve", he called out. "It seems to be your goal of portraying this amazing planet in such a way that it is somehow unsuitable for colonization. You don't want to live on this world, and only the space devil could possibly know why that would be. But I'm telling you. Once we have approached within range of the planet, we'll send out an expedition ship. And if this ship confirms the computer's simulation... whether you want it or not, this planet is going to become both yours, and our, new homeland!"

After these decisive words, it became even more chaotic in the Command Center than it had been earlier.

II

Helena Russell regarded the readings on the monitor that watched over the bodily functions of the patient with satisfaction. Blood pressure, heart activity,

breathing cycle – everything was normal. Only the body temperature was a little bit high. But, without any doubt, the patient's fever would completely fade away fairly soon.

Laura Wynette was in excellent condition. The terrible accident that she had suffered during her work in the laboratory would not have any lasting consequences. It was already getting difficult to recognize that the young woman had suffered from severe third and fourth degree burns. Her charred and scabbed skin had all been replaced by Bioskin. The healing process could not have gone any better. Laura was currently sleeping her way to a speedy recovery.

Helena nodded to her staff doctor Ben Vincent. "I think we can be happy with the progress here, don't you agree, Ben?"

The physician waved his hand. "Small potatoes! I've had patients do better than this that were far worse off than this delicate flower here."

Anger rose within Helena. Vincent had recently taken on a tone that didn't please her at all. And then there was his immense arrogance. I, I, I! He acted like he could run the entire Medical Center by himself. She wondered what it was that had turned him from such a good colleague, yes, even a good friend, into such an unpleasant person.

Abruptly, she felt like leaving, but then decided to remain. John Koenig had entered the Medical Center and approached the bed of Laura Wynette.

"Let's see what we can make of this quitter", he growled. His face was grim, as he looked on Helena challengingly. "Well, how's the damned faker?"

"Laura is not faking", the Doctor said heatedly "As you know quite well, she's had a serious accident..."

"Accident, ha!" the Commander interrupted. "This

was a classic case of self-mutilation. You know how it is with these young ones. Too lazy to work. It's far more convenient and comfortable to just lie in bed and let others do all the labor."

"John!"

Helena was stunned speechless. How could he say such awful things about the poor girl!

"I'm convinced that she should have been up and walking around long ago", John Koenig continued speaking. "Isn't that right, Ben?"

Doctor Vincent nodded. "Certainly, Commander. She acts as if she is terminally ill. In reality, there's nothing wrong. She has long since recovered."

"Ben, what are you talking about?" Helena said full of outrage. Provoked, she glared at her coworker.

"No need to keep up the act, my dear Helena", Vincent snapped back. "I'm a far better physician than you are. And if I tell you that this little slut has been okay for long time now, then you can count on it that I'm telling the complete truth."

The Commander patted the physician on the back. "Leave it to you, Ben, I completely agree with your opinion. Helena is covering for this faker of course. They are all in cahoots, these women."

Helena gave in to it now. "What are you thinking, John Koenig? You are the commander of the base, but that does not give you the right..."

"Shut your trap!" Koenig said roughly.

"What?" Helena did not quite believe what she had heard. She felt blood rise to her face.

"I won't tolerate it!" snapped Koenig. "You don't seem to realize who you are standing in front of? If you call me a tyrant again, I'll relieve you of your post. Is that clear?"

"Tyrant?" Helena repeated, eyes wide in

astonishment. "You claim I called you a tyrant?"

"You deny it now, too?"

Seeking help, Helena turned to Doctor Vincent.

"Ben, say something. I haven't... "

"Yet" stated the physician. "You said tyrant to him. That is not appropriate, my dear Helena. After all, he is the Commander."

"But..."

"Let it go!" John Koenig barked. "For now, I'm only here to make this faker walk."

He stepped up close to the bed of Laura Wynette and leaned over the patient. Gripping her strongly, he pulled her away from the bed coverings.

"Come on, get up, you bitch!"

Helena moaned. "John, please... "

He didn't listen to her. With both hands he grabbed the sleeping young woman by the neck and began shaking her.

"Get up, I say!"

Helplessly, the girl's head flew back and forth.

My God! thought Helena. He's lost his mind. He's going to kill her.

She had to intervene. Immediately!

Full of concern for the well being of her patient, she attempted to grab the arm of the frenzied Commander, but never got the chance. Ben Vincent blocked her way.

"If you attack the Commander, my dear Helena, then I'll have to beat you to the ground", said he in a voice that shocked in its coldness.

"Ben."

"You heard what I said!"

Yes, Helena had heard what he had said. And yet, she found it extremely difficult to comprehend that what was actually going on in this room was, in fact,

really happening.

Ben Vincent, her longtime, always reliable and warm-hearted coworker of many years! And John Koenig, the man she believed she loved! Two people, whom she had thought she knew nearly as well as herself. What a mistake! They had dropped their masks and were showing what they really were: heartless, violent brutes, where everything that would constitute being a human seemed to be missing.

Helena felt like crying. But controlled herself. These men should not see her tears.

After brutally hurling the patient back into the bed cushions, Koenig turned away from the bed.

"I'll give you twenty-four hours, Helena", he barked at her. "If the lazy little bitch is not back at her post, I'll come and get her myself. And then... Well, there are ways and means..."

Without any further words, he left the Medical Center. Ben Vincent went out of the room a little later as well. Helena stayed alone with the sleeping patient, who had luckily survived the rough treatment of the Commander without harm.

Helena could have cried at this point, but she did not. Her thoughts worked feverishly, and it was not long before she had come to a decision.

No way, gentlemen!

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Tony Verdeschi did not feel at all lucky to be in his skin. Neither in his capacity as a Security Chief of Alpha, or as an individual.

No question, the discovery of the planet, that some called Paradise, and that others called Hell, had led to some serious disagreements amongst the Alphans. Of

course, the completely irrational and deliberate misinterpretation of the perfect measurement data by all of the women, and then their unanimous refusal of agreeing to see Paradise as a colonization world, had created tension. The gulf between the sexes continued to grow ever wider, now becoming nearly unbridgeable, and this concerned him deeply. His professional instincts told him that a great deal of unpleasantness was approaching for both him and the rest of his security team.

And as an individual, the situation affected him very negatively as well. His relationship with Maya had cooled considerably. The passionate, interpersonal relationship that existed between him and the beautiful Psychon was in the process of falling apart. And this thought hurt Tony Verdeschi severely. His heart rebelled against the idea, and his mind warned him as well, to not let the situation get to an extreme.

Verdeschi decided to have a deep discussion with Maya. Damn it all, two adults, who still had some feelings remaining for each other, should be able to come to some form of agreement.

Why hesitate any longer? Tony decided it was time to talk with Maya.

On his commlock, he entered her code. She was in her living quarters and answered immediately.

"You?"

"Yes, it's me, Maya."

"What do you want – to talk with me about Hell?"

"No, I didn't intend to talk about Paradise..."

"Hell!"

"All right. About me and Hell", confessed Tony Verdeschi for the sake of peace. "But I'm not talking about the planet, I'm talking about us now. I would like to talk with you again, Maya."

The face of the Psychon expressed her continued unwillingness.

"You think that there's any point to that?" she asked.

"I hope so, Maya!"

"If you say so... Well, then come on over."

Her image disappeared from the small monitor screen of the commlock.

Verdeschi set out on his way and reached the door of her living quarters a short time later. Of course, he could have opened the door by just using his commlock, but he did not want to appear intrusive. Therefore he knocked, as if he was some stranger who was paying a courtesy visit.

Maya opened the door. Personally, and not remotely through a button activation via her commlock.

A good sign? the Security Chief asked himself. He entered the room. Behind him, Maya closed the sliding door.

"So?"

A quick look into her eyes was enough for him to realize that she was not in a conciliatory mood. She downright glared at him as if he was the devil. "The lengths to which you guys are taking things, is light-years too far", she hissed.

"Who's taking what things?" Verdeschi asked calmly, trying to remain peaceful.

"John Koenig, for example. I just talked with Helena. Our great Commander thinks of himself as if he is the Master of the Universe. And why, I ask you? Just because he wants to show us women that we are sooo small. He - you all - are working to get yourselves ready so that you can drag us all down to planet Hell against our will. But I'm telling you, Tony..."

"Maya, we agreed we weren't going to talk about Paradise!"

"Hell, is what the planet is called", corrected the Psychon immediately. "Hell, Hell, Hell!"

"All right. All right" appeased Verdeschi. "Maya..." He stretched out his arms, wanting to pull her close. But she drew back, as if he were some kind of monster.

"You can't make me, you ignorant Terran buffoon!" she raved.

"What..."

"I never want to hear you call me your little Psychon whore again!"

The Security Chief was completely perplexed. "I supposedly called you..." He paused. He was unable to even utter the ugly words he'd just heard.

"Get out of here now, you primitive creature", Maya snapped, "if you only knew just how much you disgust me. Your breath reeks of booze again..."

Tony had not drunk even a single drop in the last several days. Of course, she was saying these things purely to insult him.

With narrowed eyes he looked at her. What did he actually see in her? he abruptly asked himself. She suddenly seemed to him to be ugly, ugly and strange. Her eyes were too far apart, her nose was pointed and far too long, and her unpleasantly protruding lips had a repulsive blue coloring. He must have been insane to have fallen in love with her. Who was she? A member of an alien race, a rather deceitful race at that. Actually, there was no place for an alien being such as her on the Moonbase.

Yes, he thought, that was an idea that needed to be pursued further.

He turned on his heels and left.

The abusive insults that she continued to throw at him as he went on his way, he would certainly not forget.