

# Invasion

There was nothing I could do. I couldn't have known. I had to tell myself that that was the truth. But I knew both were a lie. This started with me, and I supposed it had to end with me as well. At the time, reaching out had seemed so innocent and futile. Little did we know, that we were tapping into something best left alone. Our people had reached out in the past, and it destroyed life as they knew it. We had to rebuild everything in society. No one believed the stories, but I do, now.

It all started with a box, a package that lost its way. GESO, the Global Experimental Space Organization, had made a huge breakthrough. They'd found a planet that could support life, with breathable air, water, and people. They were in the process of trying to make contact, but there were rumours that they were struggling, that they were missing something. A package was delivered to our school, just a few miles from the GESO headquarters. We never made the connection.

The only identification on the package to indicate what it was, was a note that read, "I believe this will help. Please accept this donation and put it to use, advancing greater knowledge." The note made sense for the school, so they didn't return the surprise package. Our class was lucky enough to have the largest room, so they set up the device there. It was the strangest contraption I had ever seen, but it was fascinating.

Our teacher spent all his free time trying to get it to work, or do anything at all, but he was always unsuccessful. Two weeks later, my friends Jula, Michik and I were at the school at night, hanging out in our classroom after giving our speeches to the Education Leaders about

# Invasion

what we felt we had learned most in the last year. The speeches didn't go as well as planned, so we laughed about our mistakes with treats and drinks while we waited for our parents.

"Let's try to get the machine to work!" Michik proposed.

"That's a terrible idea." I said.

"C'mon Lilan!" Jula whined grabbing my hand. I raised one eyebrow. "If we start an apocalypse, we'll make sure people know it was our idea."

"Alright." I shrugged. They were right. What was the worst that could happen.

We walked over to the machine and searched for something that looked like an ON button. I looked everywhere, and at the bottom of the machine, on the right side, there was a panel. I hit it and a door bounced open revealing numerous switches. I flipped them all randomly and after a few seconds, the whole machine lit up. Blue, green, orange, red and yellow lights flashed, the buttons illuminated. "Woah." Jula said in a deep voice.

"Cool." Michik said quietly. "Let's see what it can do!"

"Oh! There's a keyboard, let's send a message." Jula proposed. A large, previously empty surface, had lit up revealing that space to be for a large keyboard.

"Yes! I'll type." I replied.

I got my hands on the keyboard and moved my finger around this bumpy pad that moved the cursor around the screen. I clicked on OUTGOING and stood thinking for a moment. I typed out, "Hello" and stopped. For a split second I thought about the repercussions of sending the message, but before I could finish the thought, my finger was off the send button and the message had been sent. To where, at the time, we didn't know.

# Invasion

“That was boring.” groaned Jula. “Move over. Let’s type something more interesting.” Before she could get her hands on the keys, a loud horn made us jump. “Rats! That’s my father.” she huffed, then grabbed her bag and waved goodbye to us before stepping out into the hall.

“Oh that’s my ride over there.” Michik pointed out the window. “You going to be okay here by yourself for a bit?” he asked.

“Yea, the teachers are still here somewhere just in case. I’ll be fine.” I assured him. He nodded and smiled, then grabbed his bag and coat, left the classroom and walked outside to his brother, or maybe his father.

I sat looking at the machine for a while, my feet on the chair in front of me. I got lost in thought sitting there alone. When another teacher burst into the room, I must have jumped three feet off the chair. Mr. Shorehox, or Andre, was also my uncle. My mother was apparently too busy at work, so he was going to take me home. “Hey, you got the machine working.” he commented. I smiled, then walked over to it, flipped the last switch I had flipped that I thought had turned it on and waited a second for it to turn off. “It probably just takes a minute to turn off. It will be fine.”

“I guess.” I said, and grabbed my bag. My eyes were glued to the machine as I left the class and again when we got outside. I stared at it through the window, waiting for it to shut off. But it didn’t. The next day at school, I came in and it was still on. Funnily enough, my first thought was that it would need to be charged, or the battery changed. It had after all, been on all night.

All of my classmates were talking about the machine, and my teacher was overjoyed. But we didn’t touch it all day. Mr. Nickol was afraid someone would touch the wrong button and

# Invasion

break it. After classes were finished, Jula, Michik and I stayed to tell Mr. Nickol about our discovery of the “ON/OFF switch”, but we left out the part about our message. Mr. Nickol told us that we could experiment with the machine each day after classes, as long as we told him what we found.

After a week, we were pretty familiar with most of the buttons, what they said, what they made the screen do, but we did not however know what purpose they had outside of things that popped up on the screen when we pressed them. After three weeks, we became curious about our message, and still couldn't figure out how to turn off the machine. I was thinking about the switches I flipped that got the machine on, and I realized that it was likely a specific order of flipping each switch that got it working. Among the “ON/OFF” switches, I noticed that I had flipped a switch that was labelled ACCEPT INCOMING. It was turned to the red side so I flipped it back to green.

“What does that one do?” Jula asked as I stood up.

“I think it will let us see if someone answered our message. Who knows how long it's been off.” I said leaning on the machine and looking intensely at the screen. Suddenly, a window popped up. I opened it. Someone had replied to our message! The reply was written twice. The first was with funny words that I couldn't understand, the second with words I knew and could read. It said, “Identify yourself.”

I moved to reply. “Are you sure this is safe?” Jula asked.

“Oh come on, you're not backing out now are you? Someone got our message!” I exclaimed.

# Invasion

“Yes but who are they?” she questioned, “What country do they live in? How old are they?”

We don’t know. Just don’t put your surname.” she instructed.

“Fine.” I typed fast. “I am Lilan.” was the second message we sent.

We corresponded with this mystery person for weeks. This was the only thing we didn’t tell Mr. Nickol about. We were afraid he would be angry, and that should have been our first hint that it was a bad idea. Our last message asked if they were planning on visiting our country anytime soon. In previous messages, we had told the mystery person what country we lived in, but we were smart enough not to give too many details. They were from a country we had never heard of, but then we thought maybe it was a city, and finally gave up searching for its whereabouts on a map. The reply to our last message changed everything. It was a one word answer to our question, one word that changed our lives forever. “Soon.”

Within three days of that message, we learned the identities of the people we were corresponding with. They were aliens. The package was meant for GESO. What had we done? Spaceships were landing in every major city, abducting thousands of people from our planet. Many hid underground, but my family was not so lucky as to find shelter. We were taken and put on big ships. Before departing, we demanded we be told where we were going. They told us the name of their planet. It was a funny name. Earth.