

RETURN 2 EARTH:  
LIBERATION FORCE

BY  
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## CHAPTER ONE -

### A CALL TO ARMS

The Sun over New Earth beamed brightly as Eric pulled gently on the reigns to guide his favorite chestnut around the final turn and into the horse coral. When he entered the Ranch House, his attention was immediately drawn to the bookcase where he investigated the beeping sound coming from behind the books. His look of concern was justified because he knew that that little tiny sound would probably mean big trouble. He removed the books and set them on the desk to get to the secret compartment and retrieve the communication device that was no bigger than a shoebox. When he activated it the familiar voice that came from the device was one that Eric had not heard in eight years.

It was Will's cousin Zackery from back on Old Earth. The message was puzzling to Eric because of the excessive use of slang with touch of Ebonics thrown in. Zackary was a highly educated man who would not speak in this manner unless he was trying to hide something. Eric could make out enough of the message to know that it was as he had expected, there was trouble on the horizon. It took an entire day for Eric to gather his favorite trio of Matt, Will and Art. He invited them out to the ranch that he had built after retirement following his Presidency. Only about a fourth of the infrastructure on New Earth was complete so traveling around the country was quite a challenge.

The men were happy to see Eric, happy to be together again, but those warm and fuzzy feelings will be short lived. Since Eric's wife died from cancer two years ago he had lived alone and had become somewhat of a recluse but on this day he welcomed the company of old friends. "I wanna thank all of you guys for coming. They still haven't built any back roads yet so I know how hard it is getting around." After dinner, drinks were served and the men sat around the table and

watched as Eric took the communicator out of the box. Of the three men Will was the only one who had seen this device before. It sent chills down his spine. He watched as Eric gingerly place the device down on the coffee table. "I guess I should begin with an apology", Eric said. "Before we left Old Earth Will, Harry the Otarian and myself realized that we had the means to develop this device. I knew that you guys had a way to communicate with the Lazonains way back when all of this started but it took months of arm twisting to get Will to lend me his device so that Harry could build this larger, much more powerful model that you see here." "Yeah, that's right." said Matt. He turned to Will and snapped his fingers. "That explains why you didn't have your communicator on the day we left Earth."

Art was not so understanding he took issue with Eric and Will's decision to leave them out of the loop. "Why didn't you tell us? What was all that business you were going on about trust and loyalty? Was it all just a bunch of rubbish?" Eric shrugged his shoulders. "Couldn't risk it," he replied. "Listen, at the time Matt was hearing voices in his head and you were off having your private meetings with the Brit's. I never doubted you two, but Will was the safest bet at that time. I hoped and prayed that this day would never come but here we are. If I hurt your feelings, I am sorry. Once again many lives are at stake so can we get pass this or not?" "Of course we can said Matt, It's water under the bridge, right Art?" Art slowly reached out to shake Eric's hand. "No more secrets, okay mate?" "Okay Art." The two shook on it. "Gentlemen, let's get down to business. What you are about to hear is a coded message from Zackary. Will you are going to have to help us out with this one." Eric started the message.

"Greetings, on the first week of the Aquarius moon the love child of your departed nemesis showed up in a foul mood. His posse in two twenty four seven for duce moons. They got busy with a major smack down WWF style that would make old Charlie Manson proud. All who weren't laying low across the pond now know what Kunta felt like. Without wheels the crew cupid minus nine M

to slide into home plate. Our worldwide four one-one is now in play. Brothers and sisters over here chillin' in the crib thanks to Sara but others with growling stomachs unable to keep it on the down low now resemble cherry on top on cream pie. Speaking of grub, seems like our wanna-be you know who must be getting desperate. Produce grown by farmer brown been doing a upward Houdini on a daily basis. According to last jungle drum report storm headed this way. Number of brother and sister tribes has reached temptation clouds. We are strapped and if necessary will recreate the Thriller in Manila rather than become Farmer Brown for the squatters. SOS, advise nine-eleven signed Gary Cooper."

Eric hit the stop button. The four men looked at each other but sat in silence. The worried expressions on their faces said it all. After a while Will spoke. "They are totally screwed," he said. "When did you get this Eric?" Eric was about to answer when Matt cut in. "Never mind when. What the hell did he just say? What's he talking about?" Will got up and walked over to the bar. "Slavery," he answered as if he was surprised by Matt's question. "Rotart's son Taz is forcing the humans left on Earth to grow food for his people. He knew that they were vulnerable, they have no way to defend themselves. Bastard!" Will slammed his fist down on the bar. "Zack is asking for our help and there's not a damn thing that we can do." Eric tried to console Will. He put his arm on his shoulder. "I know that's your cousin we are talking about and things don't look too good right now, but they haven't got to them yet. If you could translate the entire message maybe our Lazarian friends could mount a rescue operation." "Come on mate," Art and Matt encouraged Will to sit down and decode the message.

Will gathered his composure and translated the message while Matt wrote everything down. "Aquarius, hmm means Taz arrived around the third week in January. It has to be Taz because Zack says departed nemesis meaning Rotart who as far as we know only had one son. He must have brought an army because it took two moons or days for all of them to get there. They are

across the pond meaning England. Cupid minus 9.” Will stroked his chin. “Cupid,” he said to himself. “Ah ha, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Fourteen months minus nine leaves and M for months. It took them five months to get to the base. You see Eric and I knew that in order to send a message this far even with a more powerful transmitter they need to fly one of the scout ships from the Eye of Neptune to the portal before sending the message. Harry gave Zach a remote that brings the ship to the surface but they had to get there first. They are in communication with the underground bases around the world but it looks like the ones running out of food are being caught and forced to work the farms in order to feed Taz’s people back on his home world. He says that Taz and his army are on the way to the United States or what’s left of it.” Will stopped again. “Ok, yea Temptation Clouds must be nine. It looks like our people are preparing to fight. Nine groups of men and maybe some of the women have gotten a hold of some weapons from somewhere. Seems that they would rather fight and die than be taken as slaves. That sounds like Zack alright. I am baffled by this last part. Advise nine-eleven Gary Cooper. I know 911 is September the eleventh, but what the heck does this have to do with Gary Cooper?”

Eric grinned, “I think I can help you out with that one Will. Gary Cooper stared in a western years ago called High Noon. They will be in place to receive our message on 9/11 at noon.” “Fascinating,” said Art, “truly fascinating.” He stared at Will in awe of his ability to translate Zack’s message. “Did you and your cousin work this code out in advance as well?” “No Art, most of it was just stuff we picked up from being raised in the hood. Zach knew they would not be able to figure it out using our dictionaries or history books. I told you he was smart Art.”

Eric was carrying the box back to it’s hiding place when the beeping started again. “Wow, not a peep for eight years and now two messages in two days.” “Greetings New Earth, I am Fantana of Earth’s Guardians. We have been monitoring this frequency. We are aware of your situation and are en route to your planet. Please prepare to receive us in three months time. Please advise T’zar

of our visit. Do not, I repeat do not respond to this message as it will endanger our mission and the safety of your countrymen on Earth.” Eric replayed the message and then clasped his hands behind his head. “Well boys, looks like we’re coming out of retirement. I guess I had better contact the President. Matt would you get a hold of T’zar and Will, just in case we need them give Zonola and Harry a call. Let’s get everyone up to speed.”

For Will waiting three months was like waiting a lifetime. The group met several times over the summer trying to speculate on why Earth’s Guardians were coming and how to rescue those enslaved on Old Earth. No one was sure what time the Lazorians ship would arrive so Will, Art and Matt along with Sara and the kids stayed over at Eric’s ranch. Over the years Matt, Art, and Will had become close friends with the now retired British Prime Minister Anthony Major. The four got together on Wednesday nights to play cards and reminisce about the evacuation. The Prime Minister hitch a ride to the ranch with Zonola and Harry. There ship arrived at the crack of dawn on the day of the big meeting and by early afternoon T’zar, Nyssa, Onan and Lysta landed at the ranch where Eric had fired up the grill and set out tables and chairs so that everyone would be able to eat , drink and get re acquainted while they waited. It was late in the afternoon when Will spotted a glimmer in the sky. “There!” Will pointed to the northern sky. “Do you see it? I think it’s them.” A grayish looking ship about the size of a house began to make its swooping descent. It was a balmy October afternoon. The small group of humans and aliens stood watching in sweaters and jackets as the ship gently landed in the clearing next to the barn as the late afternoon sun bounced off the hull of the steel grey ship. Fantana was the first to exit the ship. Nyssa and the rest of the Lazarions were happy to see a friendly face from home. “I bid you peace and joy,” she said, “Yeshua has blessed us with a safe and swift journey. The beacon in your transmitter has shown us the way. Fantana bowed in Will’s direction. You must be Will.” “Yes,” Will said looking a bit puzzled. “How did you know who I was?”

Fantana grabbed Will by the hand and faced him towards the steps of her ship. "I have a surprise for you." The surprise was not Will's alone; everyone was completely and pleasantly shocked when they saw Zackary step off the ship. "Zack!" Will shouted. He could not believe his eyes. After spending all summer not knowing whether his cousin was dead or alive there he was in the flesh. Zack gave Will a big bear hug. While he got reacquainted with the others the rest of Fantana's party came off the ship so that they could get down to business. Zackery explained to Will how the Minister and Fantana picked him up from Old Earth just days after the message was sent to Eric. They came to see if the Oracles prophecies had come true. "Sorry about the cryptic message cuz but Taz and his army are crawling all over the place. We had to sneak out late at night. Fantana wanted me to come along to give you guys a first hand account as to how bad things are and man are they bad."

Eric guided them into the study where Fantana took over the meeting. "I will get straight to the point." She said. "Our people and our government are aware of what Taz is doing on Earth. We are here to help." "Thank God." Matt said. "How did you find out?" Fantana turned to the little man with the glasses seated to her left. "The government told us," she replied, "Evidently the Oracles foresaw this encounter many years ago and it was decided that it was in the best interest of The Planetary Alliance to remain silent until now." "Why?" Art asked, "I mean how could they sit silently and allow something this horrible to take place?" Again, she turned to the man sitting next to her. He seemed quite uneasy. "I will let Minister Altomere answer that." "Minister!" T'zar said strongly. "Are you in league with the government now?" "A temporary alliance," said Fantana "All will become clear in a moment. Minister, please explain."

The minister wiped the sweat from his brow and adjusted his glasses before addressing the group. "On behalf of the governments of the Planetary Alliance I have been authorized to provide your world with the materials and weapons necessary to construct as many warships as you need

to free your people back on Earth.” “Lies!” T’zar shouted “First you sit idly by and allow millions of humans to be savagely cast into bondage then you offer to help free them! Why?” “Self preservation,” Zachary continued. “Earth’s orbit is un stable. The rain forest is now a desert; the desserts are now a tropical climate. Niagara Falls is nothing more than a stream. Palm trees are growing around the Sphinx. The Earth is slowly being pulled toward the Sun. According to Minister Altomere in six years or less the temperatures at night will average ninety eight degrees, and that’s during the winter. Three years after that..... Well, you get the picture.” Onan asked Will, “Why would Taz go through all of this trouble to conquer a doomed planet?”

The Minister Altomere found his voice once again. “The answer’s a simple one. He shrugged his shoulders, he does not know and by the time he finds out it will be too late. We are a peace loving race, all alliance members abhor violence in any form but humans on the other hand are accustomed to it.” Your societies seem to thrive on it. Fantana could clearly see that the Minister remarks were not going down well. “I will take it from here, Minister.” “People of New Earth, at first I felt as you do now. Used, taken advantage of but I implore you to consider the alternative: without ships and weapons there is little hope for the millions of humans suffering on your former homeland. The Planetary Alliance has shamefully brought time with the blood of your people in hopes that you will rise up and destroy Taz and his army before we become his new prey. But I ask you, What of New Earth?” Fantana spread her arms and looked around the room. “What of your beautiful new home? How will you protect yourselves? I knew your leader. President Walker. He was a brave man, brave but foolish. His judgment was clouded and it cost him his life. The future of all humanity on both old and new Earth’s may depend on what happens in this room today. When Taz finally discovers that he is lord of a doomed planet his attention and yes his anger will turn to New Earth a planet that he feels belongs to the people of Otar. He must be stopped.”

Eric thanked Fantana and called for a vote. Every hand went up. It was a done deal. Eric was sure that the President would go along with the rescue mission. Minister Altomere took the floor again. "In a few days I will be returning home. Consult with your governments so that you may submit a list of what you will need. There are three demands that accompany our arrangement. 1. Knowledge of this deal must be kept secret. All supplies will be dropped off on a secret planet as to not draw suspicion to the Alliance. You must remember that not all members are in favor of this rescue. In some circles you are viewed as heroes in others Earth's Guardians are still considered nothing more than outlaws, and common criminals. 2. Taz must never find out about Earth's pending doom or our hand in this rescue and finally to assure your silence we have appointed ex President Eric Thompson as Earth's ambassador. He will accompany me back to Lazon where he will remain until all of this has come to a conclusion." "What!" Eric snapped. "Are you holding me hostage? Don't you trust us?" He jumped from his seat. "You have as much to lose as we do. You've got a lotta nerve." Gentlemen please, Fantana stepped out in front of Eric who was about to lunge at Altomere. "Everyone please return to your seats. President Thompson, it's not what you think. The citizens of Lazon have the highest respect for you. The members of the Planetary Alliance are divided as usual. Yes, one or two members do see you as insurance, however the others see this as a first step toward admitting Earth into the Alliance. Your leadership during Earth's evacuation is legendary. You are held in the highest regard. You will be provided with a home and the freedom to travel freely anywhere on Lazon whenever you like. What the Minister failed to tell you is that this is not a deal breaker nor is it a demand. Once Earth becomes a member of the alliance your world will be under its protection."

The meeting went on for several hours. The two day visit to New Earth turned into ten. Eric made the decision to go to Lazon, he needed someone to look after his place so it was decided that the ranch would be the base used as the head of operations. Eric and President Marcus Thompson agreed that Matt would be the logical choice to take charge. Everyone involved and

their families moved into or nearby the ranch. Other world leaders were kept on a tight leash in terms of sharing information. Only those at the very top were aware of what was about to take place.

After the ship took off Matt immediately called for a meeting with the entire team and he first turned his attention to Zonola and Harry. "You two have been very quiet lately yet I get the impression that you have had something to say since this all started." "Yes", said Zonola. "Taz's pilots are very experienced, our odds of defeating them will be slim at best. It won't take very long for him to find out that the temperature is rising, he may choose to hold the human hostages as shields." Matt seemed mildly annoyed. "Zonola, why didn't you bring this up ten days ago?" "Because she was embarrassed," said Lysta. "Taz is Otarian, he has brought shame to all of his people. Minister Altomere is a stranger, an outsider; he would have been biased against anything she or Harry would have to offer. Like it or not we are Otarian, said Zonola therefore we share in the shame of his actions."

Matt nodded to acknowledge that he understood. "Anyway, to answer your question, Zonola. As you know, the ships will be Lazon Z class. They are agile and fast with amour plating. Taz has much older ships. Also we hope to outnumber them by two to one, and they will be trained by Nyssa, Onan, T'zar, Harry and yourself. Believe me I have no illusions about this mission. Before this is all over a lot of people will die but millions more will be freed. With the Mother Ship we will be receiving from the Alliance we can transport the warships as we finish building them to a base that will be constructed on the far side of Mars." Matt used charts to illustrate his point. "According to Minister Altomere over the past eight years travel time to our old home planet has been reduced to three months using the new technology and faster ships. We will launch our rescue from Mars. They will be expecting any attack fleet to come through the portals over Earth. I hope these advantages compensate for the skilled pilots that you are talking about."

Zonola gave Harry a light elbow to the ribs. "Go on Harry, tell them. Harry stood up. Matt, there may be something that we could do to help. It's kind of a long shot.... In fact....." Will interrupted, "Come on, Harry. Just spit it out man. Let us decide if it's useful or not. Harry sat down and leaned forward as if he was telling a story around the campfire. "There is a legend that's been passed down from the elders great grandparents then told my parents and finally my parents told me. It spoke of the Great War that almost wiped out our entire race without exploding one bomb or firing a single shot. The story has gotten hazy over the years but it was something about a kind of chemical reaction, I think. One that only affected Otarians, that's why it went down in history as the genocide war that wasn't. The problem is that when Rotart's Grandfather ruled Otar over a hundred years ago he ordered all references to the war removed from the history archives. The word is that only two recorded copies of the events that including how millions of Otarian soldiers were slaughtered still exist. One was passed down to Rotart from his dad and the other was sent off world and locked in a secret chamber after it was transformed into a mysterious secret code. I know that it sounds silly but according to rumor, Rotart's dad had a powerful Mystic encase the coded history inside a huge bolder to prevent his enemies from ever using it again. Some say that the secret chamber is underneath the Eye of Neptune."

"You gotta be kidding me?" Will blurted out. "He sent it to Earth? Even if the story is true Zack and his people don't have the means to translate the code even if they do find it. What about the adversaries? Can't we talk to the army that launched the chemical warfare or whatever it was?" "No", said Harry. "Their entire planet was wiped out by a strange plague about 50 years ago. We suspect that the Otarians released it in to the water as revenge. The reason Earth was chosen is fairly simple. Until recently, humans didn't know of the existence of Neptune's Eye. Even if you did you had no way of making the seven mile journey down to the sea. Floor, and even...."

“Okay, okay, I get your point.” said Matt. “How long would it take to get a message to Zackary and how will he know where to look once he gets back?” “Our transmitter is not as powerful as theirs but they should they should still be in range. No, wait, Art pointed to the box on the dining room table, try the radio Fantana gave us.

Neptune’s Eye was carved out of a rock formation at the bottom of the trench. There is a room on the sub level rear that was always kept locked. Everyone was forbidden to enter that area. The penalty for breaking this rule was death. When the station was abandoned we took a look around but with so much going on at the time we did not give it much thought. Tell Zackary to look for some type of markings or symbols. That may lead him to the info.” Will was not completely satisfied with Harry’s tale about Mystic so he pressed Harry a little further. “Harry, tell me something. Why didn’t Rotart’s grand pa just destroy the information? Why go through all this trouble to conceal it?” “Insurance,” replied Harry. “The Otarians have always been divided race. Rotart’s family has kept control over our people because they know that Rotart and now Taz has the power to wipe them out using the information that we are trying to get our hands on. Taz would not be the first ruler to murder his own people in order to maintain control.” Matt brought Zack and Fantana up to speed before going to his meeting with the President. He knew that it was doubtful that Taz could pick up his transmission so far away from Old Earth.

President Marcus Thompson was a lot like his dad. This made Matt’s job much easier. Matt explained the four year timetable to President Marcus but decided not to tell him Harry’s strange tale about secret weapons, magic spells, and Ontarian legends until he had something more concrete. “Mr. President in order to keep the people of the Lazon government protected T’zar and Nyssa are arranging for the ships to be built on Tygalon; a low tech planet where Nyssa is friends with their leader. As the ships are completed, two thirds will be sent to Mars’ base and the rest will be sent here to New Earth for our pilots to train in. If we are being watched by Taz’s people they

will grossly underestimate the number of warships that we will have. In the meantime, Onan and Lysta are arranging for flight simulators to be built so that training can begin right away.”

Matt helped himself to the freshly brewed pot of coffee while President Thompson read over his report. “Matt?,” “Yes sir,” “According to your report you intend to build twice as many ships in half the time it took us when we left old Earth, and how can we construct a secret base on Mars given the climate on the planet?” “Well sir, this time we aren’t going to build the ships. The Planetary Alliance are lending us something called work-bots.” President Thompson looked up from the report. “Work-bots Matt are you pulling my leg?” “No, Mr. President evidently these work-bots are sophisticated robots that stand about four feet high. Each bot is programmed by a special chips to build or attach one or two pieces of a ship or building, the same piece over and over again nonstop twenty four seven. No coffee breaks, no lunch, and no sick days or holidays. They just keep building and building round the clock. According to the manifest they are sending us several hundred. Most will be sent directly to Tygalon to build ships while the rest will go to Mars to build our base.”

“Great,” said Marcus “you know that sooner or later the word will get out. We have learned a lot from our evacuation of Earth. I want you and your team kept under wraps. You know out of the public’s eye. The more I think about it the more concerned I am about you keeping your people at dad’s ranch. Too exposed; I want everything moved underground.” “Underground, sir? It’s a ranch house there is no underground.” Marcus smiled. “There will be by next week. I am sending out some workers to build a bunker under the house. This will be your center of operations. Report only to me until Operation Chameleon is over.” Matt gave the President a look. “Don’t look at me. It’s the Military Guys, every Military Operation has to have a name. Speaking of names have you decided what to call your group?” “No sir, haven’t given it much thought.” Marcus placed his finger to his temple as if it would help him to think better. “Hummm. How about Shadow Force?”

Matt had a million and one things to do and he did not want to spend all day picking out silly names so he decided to pacify the President. "Sounds good." he said. "The Shadow Force has a nice ring to it." Marcus was pleased. "So it's settled then. Shadow Force it is."

When Matt returned to the ranch he asked Art to make the trip to Tygalon with Nyssa and T'zar. "The President wants at least one of us on this mission. I am asking you because I need Will here to translate in case more coded messages come through. He handed Art a slip of paper, there is a list of things that Nyssa has requested for the trip. The Silver Unicorn leaves in three days." "Happy to do my bit, mate." Art smiled as he took the list from Matt. Until now Art was feeling left out. His field of expertise was programming super computers but since arriving on New Earth, he was kept busy learning new symbols and helping Julie raise their son. "Ah, hang on Matt; I think you made a mistake. Grapes, pineapples, oranges almost the entire list is food. I think this is your grocery list. Am I going to visit an alien planet or am I going to a Hawaiian Luau?" Matt had already started to walk away. He waved goodbye to Art without looking back. On his way out Art heard him say "Talk to Nyssa, it's her list. Catch you later."