

aLIEN dECEPTION

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jAMES wOODLAND

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Chapter Five

“Return To Sender”

By

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“NOTHING MORE REFRESHING”

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If at anytime confusion reigns, look in the glossary at the end of this chapter for a list of people, places, things and terms. If all else fails please contact ChinookBreeze at chinookBreeze.com or James Woodland at jameswoodland.com

aCKNOWLEDGMENTS

- The brave Men and Women of the S1 Flight Core
- Shuttlecraft technology
- Food and liquid preservation technology
- Non-edible Jelly molds. Some things never change
- Micro-bone fusers
- Viewing porthole technology
- Gang planks, terrestrial and non-terrestrial

dEDICATION

To all those who get it

tHE sTORY sO fAR

The space colonization ship “Starship One” (S1) cruises through deep space towards a new world for its inhabitants.

Ken Danners has sabotaged the long-range shuttlecraft “Arden” but the “Winning” is sent out to bring back the lost shuttle McCall. Ken is too late to stop it and cryptically states that he has another one thousand years of running around to do!

The riot at the Plowshare Diner in the Lethbridge agridome is quelled but Anne Brown and Maintenance Foreman Ted Saunders have fallen into a sinkhole, along with several Others. Ted sacrifices his life for Anne and she barely makes it out alive...

aLIEN dECEPTION

Chapter Five

Return To Sender

Back out in deep space. Still cold, dark, and deathly void of any sound. This time, however, something was happening. The long-range shuttlecraft “Winning” was blasting its way to its sister ship the “McCall”.

On the bridge of the Winning, Communications Officer Marf Sutherland looked up from a computer monitor he was typing a report into when a low sounding alarm went off on a navigational console. Several monitors and a viewscreen with a grid switched on. Two glowing green dots with numbers and degrees around them came up. One of the dots was slowly approaching the other.

Marf looked the information on the console over then threw a switch on a communications outlet.

In the cramped crew quarters, Captain James Khan laid back on his bunk and read a novel from a monitor attached to a flexible arm that stretched out over his bed from a wall. Across from him co-pilot Shona

Weekes, earphones firmly in place, reclined in a chair and watched a film on a large viewscreen attached to a central viewing console.

Long-range shuttle crew quarters, like the bridge, medical bay and engineering rooms that made the ship up, were small and confined. Two sets of bunk beds for Officers and one for the Captain were set along the walls. Monitors and a few small computer stations were by the bunks, along with lockers for clothes and equipment. The central viewing console encompassed almost a whole section of one of the walls.

“Coming up on the McCall, skipper,” came Marf’s voice from a communications outlet near James.

James reached over and pressed a button on the machine. “On our way” he replied.

James pushed the monitor arm away from him and got up from the bed. He stretched slightly then walked off. As he passed Shona he tapped her on the shoulder.

Shona looked away from her film and saw James walking out of the room. She quickly took off her earphones as she got to her feet. She threw them down on the console, turned it off, and followed James.

Seconds later James and Shona walked onto the bridge and made their way to Marf.

“What’s the latest?” James said to Marf as he looked at the viewscreen with the grid on it. The green dots were virtually on top of one another.

“We should have visual.” Marf answered back to James. “I’ve let S1 know. They’re still holding their breath about the Crew.” He smirked. “Communications still doesn’t like the fact we can’t find the probe the McCall was sent out to replace.”

“Some cran probe is the least of our worries right now.” Answered James as he took a few steps to a navigational panel and threw a switch.

The forward shielding on the shuttle slid down, revealing the space in front of it. Sure enough, the McCall was there.

“Prepare to come along side.” he said. Both he and Shona sat down at the shuttle’s main computer consoles and started to operate them.

“Life signs?” James said to Shona.

Shona looked over a monitor and typed in data. “No” came her answer “but ship’s systems are operating. Nominally.”



“Some crane probe is the least of our worries right now!”

“Bio-scans?”

“Not detecting anything”.

“Then they’re in the tubes. Their reserves have probably run out by now so we’ll need to haul over the load we brought.” He looked at a series of readouts on a monitor. “Does the ship have enough power to operate its depressurization room or do we have to get in the hard way?”

Shona looked over data on a monitor. “It’s okay. We can use the dock.”

James finished with his console and got to his feet.

“Then let’s do this and get home.”

“Auto docking procedures engaged.” said Shona as she worked her console. “Everything will be ready by the time we get suited up.” She stood up beside James.

Marf swung around in his chair and faced the Two. He didn’t say anything as he watched them walk off.

Outside the Winning, the shuttle came up on the McCall and drifted in synch beside her. A docking bridge slowly extended from its exterior hatch to the McCall's exterior hatch.

Extravehicular suits on, James and Shona waited in the shuttle's depressurization room for the interior hatch to close and the room to depressurize.

On the deck beside them were four large duffle bags full of emergency supplies for the now-emptied life-support chambers the McCall Crew might be in.

"You check the rooms. I'll get up front." James said to Shona through the EV suit's communications system.

"Yes sir." Shona answered back, slightly nervous.

The interior hatch closed and sealed. The sound of the room depressurizing was like that of a harsh wind. The ringing in their ears from this was something not even seasoned Flight Core Personnel got over.

James talked to Marf.

“Marf. Everything’s set here. How’s communications?”

“A-okay, Skipper.” came the reply.

The ship’s exterior hatch slid open.

“Alright. Emergency protocols engaged...now.” James pushed a button on his suit and looked across the room at a large monitor. A series of lights came on a panel below it. Data streamed across the monitor then stopped. A medical monitor showing the vital signs of both Pilots came on beside the first one.

James and Shona looked down the docking bridge. The exterior hatch had opened on the McCall. All was in darkness.

“We’ll need to light up until we get power restored.” James said to Shona.

The Two lifted flaps on their wrists, pushed buttons then secured the flaps. Bright light came out from the sides of their helmets.

James picked up two of the duffle bags and walked into the docking bridge. Behind him, Shona picked up the other two bags and apprehensively followed.

No systems were on in the McCall's depressurization room. All was in darkness as James and Shona made their way across the docking bridge and into it. They put the duffle bags of emergency supplies down then stood there and looked around as the exterior hatch closed. James stepped up to a control panel. He threw a few switches and punched a button. The sound of the room depressurizing was similar to that of the Winning. This one, however, was a harsh, deathly wind.

The ship's interior hatch across from them slid open and the Two entered the ship.

In the shuttle's main corridor James and Shona looked around. No systems were operating. All was in blackness. Although in suits they could both feel a distinct cold creeping up their skin.

"Is it just me or does it feel like we've entered a tomb?" asked James.

Not wanting to show how nervous she was, Shona started off towards the rear of the ship. "It's just you," She joked.

On the bridge James looked around. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. It was as if the Crew simply got up and left. He stepped in

front of a computer station and threw a few switches on it. Nothing. He pushed a few buttons then tried the switches again. The console lit up. He looked around the room then walked over to ship's main computer. Moments later he had the lights on in the room.

What he couldn't know was that inside one of the consoles was a strange gel that had been stuck to the inside wall of it. It had a small device inside it that had a glowing white dot circling the centre of it.

Shona looked into the Crew Quarters but found nothing out of the ordinary. When she walked past the medical bay she stopped. The only lights on in the ship appeared to be coming from there. She walked into the room.

Three long objects that looked like tables had multi-coloured lights flashing off and on across them. Because the room was pitch black it seemed like the lights were floating in mid-air. Shona almost jumped out of her suit when the lights came up, revealing the McCall Crew laying in glass-covered tubular life-support chambers.

Ten minutes later James looked the life-support chambers over while Shona studied readouts on a monitor against a wall. They still had their EV suits on.

James stepped back. “Doesn’t appear to be any damage to the chambers...”

“Or the life support systems.” Shona added. She walked beside James. “They’re on empty but...”

James looked at Shona. “But what?”

Shona looked at the chambers. “According to the life-support inventory these three ran out of groceries six days ago.” She looked at James. “Yet their bio-readouts show levels that indicate they ran out yesterday. This crew should be dead.”

James looked back at the chambers. “Same old same old. Systems malfunction.” He walked off. “Medical will get them checked out and we’ll all make beer call at Barkers before heading out again. Right now Let’s get the bags in here and give them something to eat and drink.”

Shona looked at her gloved hands as she followed after James.

“How long until the air filtration systems let us get out of these straight jackets?” She asked.

“Three, maybe four hours. By then I’ll be the only one here on two feet.” James answered her back.

Four the next hour James and Shona replaced the emptied life-support supplies with fresh ones, made sure the McCall Crew was stabilized in their chambers, then made an inspection of the ship. They finally ended up back at the depressurization room. James stood outside as Shona walked in.

“I still don’t get it. All systems operational. Nothing to indicate anything out of the ordinary happened. It’s as if the crew got up, put themselves into hyper-sleep then let the ship drift. Why?” asked Shona.

“I doubt what happened had anything to do with the Crew. We get this tub back home and I’ll wager they find what went wrong after they take it apart. The Crew powered down, sent out a distress signal, got into the chambers and waited.” Said James.

Shona looked around. “I’ve been in a lot of tubs before but right now the sooner I get out of this one the better.”

James chuckled. “Thanks for the pep talk. I’ll think about that while I’m stuck here for the next two weeks nursing fuel reserves that I hope don’t run out until we get back.”

Shona also chuckled. “Sorry skipper.”

The inner hatch closed and sealed. James watched Shona as the room depressurized and the outer hatch opened.

“I’ll be right behind you. Keep in contact,” said James.

Shona took a step back. “Will do.” She turned around and walked off. The outer hatch closed.

The docking bridge between the two shuttles retracted into the Winning. The Winning set off. The McCall followed behind it.

On the McCall bridge James worked the navigational console and looked out the front portholes at the Winning in front of him. He smiled, shook his head and sat back in his seat. Below his right leg, inside the

console he was sitting at, the strange gel with the device in it clung to the wall.

In an examination room in medical bay twelve of S1 sector 5 Anne Brown sat on a bench as she was examined by Dr. Carol Spande. One month ago Anne broke an arm, leg, and several ribs climbing out of a sink hole in an agridome but thanks to thirtieth century medical technology she was healing fast.

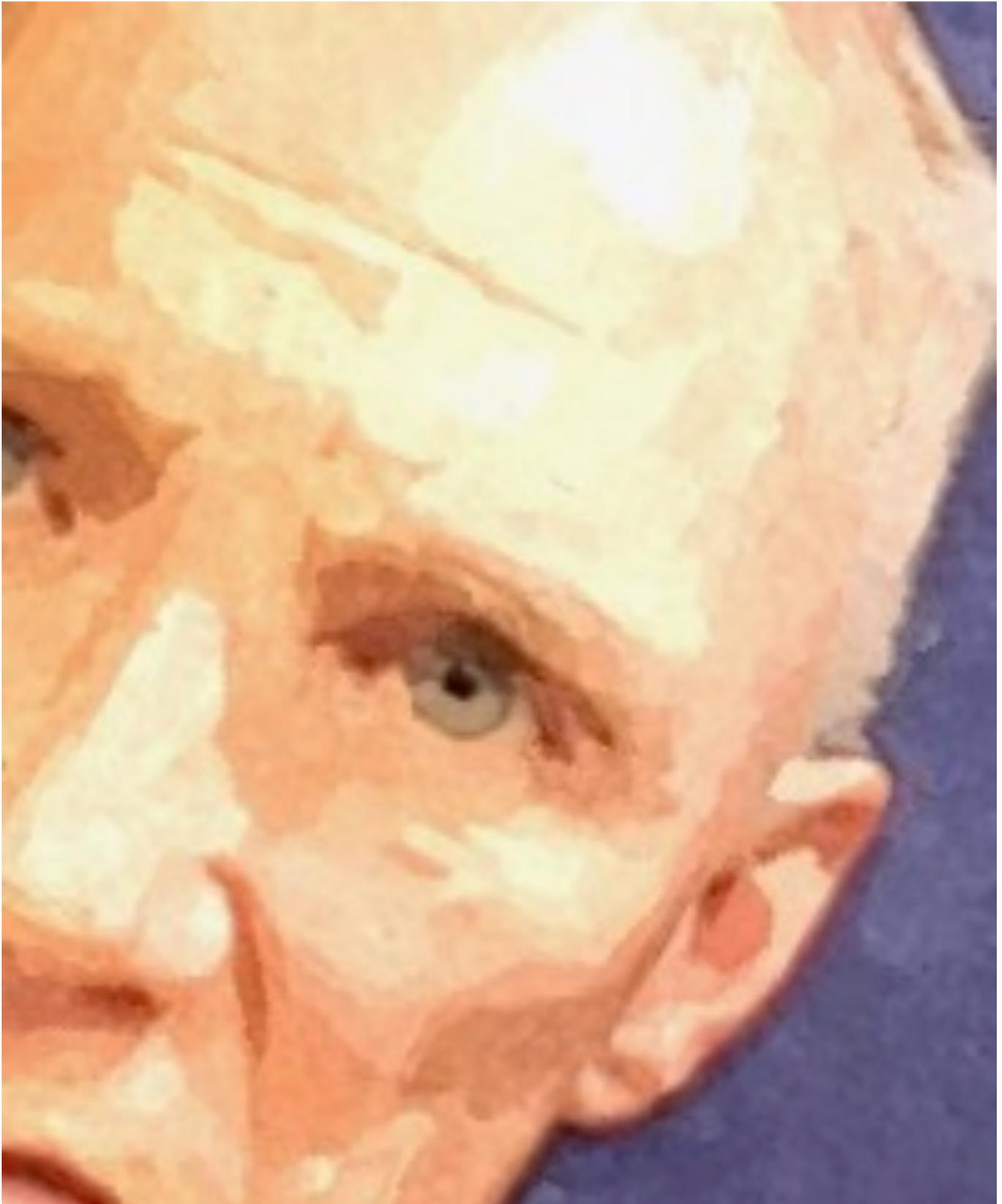
Dr. Spande ran a micro-fuser over Anne's injured arm then checked the readings on a computer next to her. Surprised, she looked at Anne.

“What are you eating these days? That arm is almost back to the way it was before your accident.” She said.

Anne grimaced as she rubbed the arm. “Veggies and supplements. Still hurts like cran.”

“And it's going to continue to hurt like cran while you come off your meds.” Anne thought to herself then spoke up. “Are we done?”

“Sure. You check out fine. I'll send my report to your detachment this afternoon and you can continue your administrative duties.”



“Thanks for the pep talk.”

Anne got off the bench and put on her security jacket.

“How long until I check out for regular duty?”

“When your physical dexterity readings get above the minimum ninety percent. You’re still at seventy-five.”

“But I feel fine!” Anne argued.

Dr. Spande slowly turned around. She crossed her arms and leaned back on a counter.

“I’m sure you do. There’s a reason why the dexterity bar is set at ninety percent. If you weren’t in excellent shape in the first place you might have died when you fell into that hole. As it was you needed help to make it out. Back then you were one hundred percent. Want to repeat it now and see how you do?”

“Okay, okay” Anne conceded.

Dr. Spande got up from the counter.

“Did they ever find the body of that maintenance worker who helped you?”

Anne didn’t say anything for a moment then

“No. They didn’t. They figure he was probably incinerated by fuel vaporators.”

Dr. Spande realized she’d hit a soft spot. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to-”

Anne cut Dr. Spande off. “It’s okay. He’s gone.” She looked at her watch. “In about another hour a good friend will be back to take that memory’s place.”

Anne popped a “Ms. Lowe” mint in her mouth and walked out of the examination room deep in thought.

Shuttlecraft Bay thirty-six. The last place the McCall was seen before disappearing. Now she’s returned.

The bay’s ready room was crowded with Emergency Medical Personnel and equipment ready to transfer the McCall Crew from their life-support chambers to Sickbay Four nearby.

Outside the ready room stood Anne amongst a Crowd of S1 personnel, anxiously waiting for the shuttle’s return. They were all stopped from entering the room by Security Guards blocking the door.

If there was anywhere Anne needed to be right now it was here. She looked around and saw Commander Berth. Forget any Crew, he only wanted information on what the shuttle went out for: a probe that appears to have vanished.

Her data block vibrated. She took it out of her jacket pocket, looked at it then pressed a button on it.

Hector, her Computer Holographic Interface, appeared. He looked around then at Anne.

“You were due back in the squad room twenty minutes ago. When you didn’t answer your messages, I was called to come and get you.” He said to her.

“Who’s on duty now?” Anne replied, not looking at Hector.

Hector thought. “Sergeant Kinslo.”

Anne chuckled. “Life will go on with Sergeant Kinslo. He’s better at paper shuffling than I am anyways.”

“And Staff Sergeant Jaw?” Hector said.

“I’ll handle him when I get back. I have to be here now.”

Hector was going to say something else but Anne looked at him and he remained quiet.

Anne smirked. “I told you she’d come back.”

Hector didn’t respond to this. “I’ll let the squad room know where you are and what you’re doing.”

Anne looked away. “You do that. I’ll get there when I get there.”

Hector faded away. Anne shut off her data block and put it back in her jacket pocket.

In a large second-level viewing room looking down on shuttle bay thirty-six were a noisy crowd of S1 Personnel waiting for the arrival of the McCall.

Chief amongst them was Ken Danners. He looked remorseful as he gazed down at the bay through the viewing port. He didn’t like what was going to happen but what made him so sure something was going to happen?

Suddenly Ken was shoved toward the port as the crowd surged forward and looked down on the shuttle bay. The massive hatchway exposing the room to the outside had slid away and a huge shuttle craft designated “McCall S1” slowly made its way in. The shuttle settled down on the bay’s deck and the bay’s main hatchway closed.

Back in the corridor outside Shuttlecraft Bay Thirty-six’s ready room the Crowd started to talk louder amongst itself. Anne grew tense. One of the Security Guards listened to orders from an ear piece then addressed the Crowd.

“The shuttle’s arrived! Medical Crews are going in! When they’re done the Shuttle Techs will be bringing in their equipment and going over the ship! I’m going to have to get everyone here to leave so we can open up the corridor and get the Crews out and in!”

“Smack that,” Anne said to herself.

The Crowd was pushed back. Anne didn’t move. The Guard trying to push her back did not like what he knew he had to do.

“Sorry Sarg. Orders are orders.”

“You know where you can shove that smack.”

Before tensions erupted a Voice came from out of the crowd.

“It’s okay. She’s with me.”

Anne and the Security Guard looked up.

Wayne Kilgallen, the Sergeant from Security Detachment Seventeen who had assisted Anne during the riot at the Plowshare Diner quickly made his way up to the Two.

The Security Guard moved away.

Wayne looked at Anne. “I knew you’d be here so I pulled command guard duty. Follow me.” Said Wayne.

Anne walked off with him.

The Two entered the shuttle bay ready room and walked out into the bay.

“So how’s the bod?” Asked Wayne.

“Still aching. I assume you’re the same?” Anne replied.

“I didn’t go down the hole. I only got beat up. I heard you went through a cran of smack getting off sick leave and back to work.”

“Still not there yet. Administrative duty or I’d be the one running this show instead of you.”

The Two stopped down from the shuttle.

“Thanks. I wanted to be here when they brought her off.” Anne said to Wayne.

“I knew Captain Manners met a lot to you. And it’s the least a Red can do for one of his own.” This of course was a reference to the emergency Red Security Squads both belonged to.

Anne didn’t look at Wayne. Her eyes were fixed on the shuttle. Wayne looked at Anne then quietly slipped away.

Ken Danners continued to stand behind the portal in the second-level viewing room looking down on shuttle bay thirty-six, watching as the Medics went onboard the ship. Some of the Personnel had left. There was a little more breathing room.

This was absolutely not the cheerful man we saw before.

Ken gazed at the bay for a few moments, thought to himself then walked through the Crowd and left the room.

In the corridor outside the viewing room Ken was in his own world, not watching where he was going. Suddenly he bumped into shuttle Technician Collin Quellie.

“Sorry.” They both said at the same time as they looked at each other.

Ken recognized the man he ran into but the Collin didn’t know him.

“Collin Quellie.” Ken addressed the man.

Collin looked at Ken. “Hi...”

Although Collin had never seen Ken before, Ken acted as if he was about to lose a great friend but could do nothing about it.

“You’re with the Shuttle Tech’s.”

“Yea...” replied Collin.

“Tough job but you’re working with a great bunch of people.”

“You know some of them?” “Uh, no. I’m from communications.

Sometimes when the shuttles go out to fix our malfunctioning equipment

we see your department getting the ship ready. You're with the team that's going to work on the missing shuttle they just brought back."

Collin was baffled. Who was this guy? "On my way down now but how did you-"

Ken cut Collin off. "You ever been through that emotional wringer when you knew you should have done something but you couldn't?"

Collin was totally confused now. "What are you talking about?"

Ken couldn't take it anymore. "Yea, I guess I'm just a nobody rambling on." He backed away from Collin, sighed and cracked a slight smile.

"See you on the other side, Tech!"

Ken turned around and walked away from a man who didn't have a clue what just happened to him. And never would.

On the flight deck of shuttle bay thirty-six Anne watched as Medics brought out three respiration units on gurneys from the McCall. They had taken the Crew out of their life-support chambers and put them in these for transport to Sickbay Four.

Anne tried to get to the gurneys but was pushed back by the Security Guards around them. She finally stopped struggling and stepped back. All she could do was watch her best friend leave her again.

In an insolation room in Sickbay Four an hour later, Flight Core Pilots Kim Manners, Mike Seaver, and John Wendon laid inside their respiration units. Surgeon Dr. Bill Yarney looked at Kim in her unit then up at a computer monitor displaying her vitals. A look of consternation was on his face. He turned when he heard a knock on the room's main door and saw through a window someone standing outside.

He backed up and walked out of the room.

Outside the room S1 Chief Medical Officer Denise Coxtar stood waiting for Dr. Yarney.

Dr. Yarney came out of the insolation room and didn't wait for Dr. Coxtar to lay into him.

“Nothing's changed. We can't get a positive neuroscan.”

“You can't get a positive scan on any of them? That's not possible.”
said Dr. Coxtar.

“This has happened before,” replied Dr. Yarney. “In that circumstance the scanner was shut down, taken apart, and analyzed for damage then fixed and worked fine. But I don’t think that’s the problem here.”

Dr. Coxtar took a step closer to Dr. Yarney. She checked her temper and calmed down. “We brought these pilots in an hour ago and you haven’t even started a neurological examination. If the machine isn’t the problem, then what is?!”

Dr. Yarney stepped away from Dr. Coxtar and walked to his desk. “No Whiskey.” he answered him.

Dr. Coxtar was surprised. “What?”

Dr. Yarney pulled a bottle of whiskey out of a locker, along with two glasses. He set the glasses down on his desk and poured some into each. He put the whiskey bottle down, picked up the two glasses and walked to Dr. Coxtar.

“You know what I haven’t found. You might want to have a shot of this before I tell you what I did find.”

Dr. Coxtar was hesitant but took the glass offered her. The Two drank in one gulp.

“The scanner is working perfectly. There’s just nothing for it to pick up. There is no sign of brain activity at all.” Said Dr. Yarney matter-of-factly.

Dr. Coxtar paused for a few seconds then softly said “Then how are these people alive?”

In the isolation room Kim Manner’s entire body was still. Slowly, her eyes under her eyelids started to move until they were darting back and forth...

End Of Chapter Five

Stay Tuned For The Next Exciting Chapter In The

“aLIEN dECEPTION” Saga!

Coming Soon:

Chapter Six

“Here We Are”

gLOSSARY

People, Places, Things and Terms

A) People

1. Ken Danners

- A mysterious Crewman from the S1 Communications Centre who seems to know something no one else does

2. Anne Brown

- Security Sergeant for detachment twenty one of S1 sector five
- Sergeant for sector five Red Security Squad

3. Wayne Kilgallen

- Red Squad Sergeant from detachment seventeen of S1 sector eight

4. Kim Manners

- Shuttlecraft McCall Pilot an Anne's best friend

5. Mike Seaver

- Shuttlecraft McCall Co-Pilot

6. John Wendon

- Shuttlecraft McCall Communications Officer Wendon

7. James Khan

- Shuttlecraft Winning Pilot

9. Shona Weeks

- Shuttlecraft Winning Co-Pilot

9. Marf Sutherland

- Shuttlecraft Winning Communications Specialist

10. Red Security Squads

- Also known as “Reds” amongst themselves
- S.W.A.T teams sent in from security detachments to quell riots and potentially lethal confrontations

11. Dr. Bill Yarney

- Surgeon caring for the McCall Crew in sick bay four

12. Chief Medical Officer Denise Coxtar

- Head of the medical departments for S1 Sector Five

B) Places

1. Starship One

- S1. A generational ship carrying hundreds of thousands of colonists to the Gliese 581 planetary system twenty light years away from earth.

2. Shuttlecraft McCall

- A long-range exploration shuttle sent out to retrieve a damaged probe called the “Brooks”
- The McCall vanished for a month then was retrieved and brought back to S1

3. Shuttlecraft Winning

- A long-range exploration shuttle sent out to retrieve the shuttlecraft McCall

4. Shuttlecraft Bay Thirty-Six

- The bay the Winning was launched from and returned to

5. Shuttlecraft Bay Thirty-Six Ready Room

- A room for crew to prepare themselves for a shuttle mission

6. Long-Range Shuttlecraft

- Large ships sent out on exploration missions for extended periods of time to explore the area around S1. These ships contained a bridge, crew quarters, medical bay, and engineering room. All of the rooms are small and cramped. The medical bay has four emergency medical life-support chambers that put individuals in hypersleep while feeding them and providing liquids they need to stay alive for one month. All of the chambers are computer-operated and have time counters on them indicating when the individual was put in the chamber.
- Shuttle Depressurization Room
 - A room that acts as a depressurization area between the inside and outside of the shuttle when away from S1
- Shuttle Docking Bridge
 - An enclosed walkway that extends from one shuttle craft to another to avoid a spacewalk. Also used at exterior S1 docking ports

7. Barkers

- A roadhouse diner shuttle pilots favour as their own. Beside the massive shuttle repair bays and pilot training rooms

8. Sick Bay Four

- The medical area where the Crew of the McCall are taken when they are brought back to S1
- Located in S1 Sector Five

C) Things

1. Flight Core

- S1's air force. Anything to do with shuttlecraft and/or exterior S1 operations

2. Extravehicular Suits

- Also called "EV's". Pressurized spacesuits for work outside S1

3. Data Block

- Also called a "D.B's". A device similar to a twenty-first century cellphone that data is kept on

4. Computer Holographic Interfaces

- “C.H.I’s”. Stored in a D.B And used for information and emotional support

5. Hector

- Anne's C.H.I. He's a holographic image that supplies Anne with information and as much emotional guidance as he can

D) Terms

1. R.E.M

- Rapid Eye Movement. A state between consciousness and sleep

2. Shuttlecraft Emergency Protocols

- Automatic systems that come on to ensure the Shuttle and Crew’s safety should an emergency arise. i.e bulkhead seals should a section of the ship be punctured, emergency oxygen should an EV suit be damaged, etc.

3. Same Old Same Old

- The same thing it’s always been.

4. Smack

- Sh*t, Nonsense, B.S

5. Cran

- Hell, damn