

A Lonely Night Apart

A UFO Short Story

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Based on the Characters and series created by Gerry
Anderson



Historians Note: This story takes place in December of 1984, about six months after the episode *The Long Sleep* written by David Tomblin.

It's bad luck for the groom to see the bride the night before the wedding, she had told him. In his mind, he could still see his fiancée's ash-blond hair brushing her shoulders as she shook her head. The moisture glistened in her blue-grey eyes and he knew that she wanted to stay with him, but she clung fast to the belief that doing so would not bode well for their marriage.

Straker found it odd, that someone so entrenched in the scientific disciplines would entail such an archaic superstition. But his future wife was unlike any other woman he had known. She had left HQ before noon, stopping by his office, only briefly, before she left for Brighton to stay with her mother. It had been Lynn who insisted that they follow the tradition. *I want my daughter and future son in-law to start off on the right foot,* she told him. Like her daughter, Lynn Lake was a force to be reckoned with, and she was one of the few people that Straker did not intimidate.

In the end, he was forced to concede, thinking that maybe there was something to this. He had been with his first wife the night before the wedding and

just as they were leaving for their honeymoon, Straker was summoned to New York to meet with the UN delegation tasked with approving the formation of the IAC and SHADO. It was a pattern that eventually destroyed the marriage, and cost him the life of his son, leaving both Ed and Mary embittered for many years. To this day, she would not speak to him.

The bronze colored car pulled into the driveway and Ed sat there for a moment looking at the house that Virginia and he had just purchased. Unlike the house he shared with his first wife, this one had just been remodeled and was in move in condition. By some miracle, between the wedding plans and the needs of SHADO, Virginia had managed to make their new house a home. The furniture was all in place as well as enough wall hangings to give the place a welcoming appearance. Much of their lesser used belongings were still boxed in the basement, but everything had been labeled and somehow, his fiancée knew exactly where everything was.

Ed felt guilty about leaving all of this to her, but the logistics of moving the captured UFO to the research facility had taken up most of his time. It had taken

both him and Paul Foster, nearly a week to arrange for the cover story and supervise the move. They had both worked double shifts and he had seen little of his wife to be during that week. *Don't worry about the move, Ed*, she had said to him, over the phone one night. *I've got it covered.*

As he stepped out of the car and walked up the driveway, the quiet surroundings enveloped him. Their new home was in a secluded neighborhood, something that appealed to their desire for privacy. But unlike his earlier home, seclusion did not come with a price. Invisible to all but those who knew, surveillance cameras were scattered around the property. The studio security personnel who guarded the house were crack SHADO security forces. In addition, a SHADO installation was less than two miles away.

Straker unlocked the front door and when he walked into the empty home, he was greeted by the scent of her perfume. For a moment, he thought she might be there and his heart jumped in anticipation. Oh, how he just wanted to hold her. Next to the answering machine, which was blinking, was an envelope. He picked it up and caught a whiff of her fragrance. He

quickly opened the envelope and read the note inside.

My dearest Ed,

I will be with you in my thoughts, this night.

All my love,

Virginia

He carefully placed the note back in the envelope and held it to his chest. Ed thought back to the first night they had spent together. It truly had been a dark and stormy night, and they had been awakened by the rolls of thunder that had shaken his tiny home. After that night, they had become inseparable, apart only when duty required it. Tonight, they were separated by choice, and respect for tradition.

Ed checked the messages on the machine. One was from HQ, informing him that the “project” had been completed. That meant, Foster had finished securing the captured UFO in the new research facility. Another message was from his sister, Barbara. She would be arriving at Heathrow, first thing in the morning. He knew that Alec planned on picking her up and Ed knew he was just as excited to see her as

he was about the wedding. *I wonder how long it will be before they tie the knot*, he thought.

Straker hadn't been keen on the idea of his best friend dating his kid sister as Barbara was ten years younger than Ed and almost fifteen years junior to Alec. Once again, it was Virginia, and her unique view of things that changed his mind. *Have you ever seen Alec, tow the mark with anyone before*, she asked. Begrudgingly, he was forced to concede her point.

The last message was from Virginia, a simple *love you, miss you*. Virginia's words caused his heart again to ache with the urge to hold her. He closed his eyes, remembering how they had clung to each other, the night Paul and Geoff had rescued him from the underwater dome at the bottom of Loch Ness. He had been missing for six weeks and she had been forced to assume command, believing that he was dead. When they arrived at home they had shared their most passionate encounter, ever, and he wondered if the separation now would spice up their wedding night. *Maybe this cloud does have a silver lining. Absence does make the heart grow fonder*, he thought.

Walking into the kitchen, he found another note. Virginia had made his dinner, it was in the fridge. He took the plate and placed it in the microwave. Although he appreciated the gesture, he was looking forward to cooking in an effort to distract himself from the loneliness that was penetrating his soul. He soon chided himself for his self pity, wondering how she had felt, believing that he had been killed.

After dinner, Ed cleaned the kitchen and sat down to watch the news, and as was usually the case, found himself disgusted by man's disregard for his fellow man. *If only they knew.* He soon turned off the television and sat down at the piano, losing himself in some Borodin.

By ten in the evening he found himself back in the kitchen boiling water for tea, something he seldom drank until he had started seeing Virginia. Mint tea before bed had become a ritual with them. As he set the tea to steep, the phone rang.

“Straker,” he answered, without his usual gruffness.

“Hello, Ed.”

“Oh, it’s you, Alec,” he said, his disappointment clear in his voice.

“You were expecting someone else?” asked Alec, unperturbed.

“I was hoping that Virginia might call. How are you, Alec?”

“Better than you, it seems,” he said. “Missing her already?”

“Does it show?”

“Like a beacon in the night. A blind man could see it with a cane,” quipped Freeman.

“I assume you heard from Barbara,” Straker said.

“Yeah, her flight comes into Heathrow at seven. I’m going to be at the airport by six thirty, just in case.”

“It sounds like I’m not the only that’s missing someone. Have you told her about your reassignment yet?”

“No, I’m saving that as a surprise,” said Alec.

“She’ll be very happy. She told me how much she missed you.”

“I can’t wait to see her, Ed,” he paused for a moment. “I never thought that a couple of old war horses, like us, would ever find happiness.”

“Old, speak for yourself,” said Straker. “Age is a state of mind.”

“Well, I won’t argue with that. Good night Ed, see you tomorrow.”

“Good night, Alec.”

Straker hung up the phone, poured himself a cup of tea, and strolled out into the living room. He sat down on the couch where he would often snuggle with his future wife. Ed could no longer think about his life without her being a part of it. In some of the darkest moments of his life, she had been a beacon of support. From the night that his son had tragically died and he had faced the grief driven wrath of his ex-wife, to the recent passing of his father, when he realized that she was much more to him than a close friend. Tomorrow he would pledge his love and his life to her, till death do they part.

Ed finished his tea and returned the empty cup to the kitchen. He killed the lights and wandered into the bedroom. Quickly, he undressed and climbed

into the bed that they shared mentally preparing himself for a lonely night apart.

“Good night, Virginia, I’ll see you in my dreams,” he said, soon drifting off to sleep.