

A Matter of Principle

A UFO Story

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Based on the Characters and series created by
Gerry Anderson



Historian's Note: The events depicted here take place immediately after the episode "The Psychobombs" written by Tony Barwick.

Paul Foster checked his watch seeing it was 07:00. He was still tired from the sleepless night as he pictured Linda Simmons dancing through his mind.

He had only known her for about four hours, but in that short time, he had fallen hard for her. So hard, that he had endangered the lives of his comrades. As he considered the events, that led him to bring a woman he barely knew to the base, he still could find no logical reason for his actions. He was still shocked that Straker had let him off so easy.

The mess hall downstairs was crowded that morning. Paul grabbed a cup of black coffee and looked for a place to sit. Over in the corner, Ginny Lake sat at a table by herself as she read a report. Paul walked over to her, hoping to smooth things over with cool, aloof SHADO colonel. When the crisis had ended yesterday,

she had told him in no uncertain terms, what she thought of his actions.

“Mind if I join you?”

Ginny just nodded, not looking up.

Uh...oh, she's still angry with me, thought Paul.

“How are you?”

“Fine,” she answered, somewhat curtly.

Ginny still didn't look up, instead remaining intent on what she was doing. Paul had expected her to be upset with him, but he didn't expect the cold shoulder.

Ginny finished her coffee and looked at him for the first time that morning, noticing how ragged he looked.

“You look like hell, Paul.”

“Gee, thanks.”

Paul noticed her look soften just a bit.

“I'm sorry about Linda,” she finally said.

“Thank you. It was...a terrible sight.”

“Yeah, it was.”

Ginny’s look hardened again as she continued, “You know, Paul, it could have been much worse. Do you know how close that woman came to destroying this base? She would have killed all of us, including the Commander.”

“Virginia, I’d like to talk to you about that...”

“Trust me, you don’t.”

She is still angry with me.

Foster didn’t look forward to this but he needed to clear the air. He considered Ginny to be a friend.

“I think I do, I put everyone here in jeopardy yesterday. It was inexcusable.”

“That’s an understatement,” she said.

They were both silent for a few minutes, then Ginny looked up.

“Paul, if you really want to talk about it, I’ll be in my office in ten minutes. What I have to say is for your ears only.”

Virginia grabbed her report and tray, as she got up and left the table.

Paul watched her walk out thinking; *I think I would rather face the Commander, than the lady that just walked out. What have I gotten myself in for?*

He looked at the clock, it was 07:30, and he had time to check the night logs before he went to see her.

Paul walked into control and grabbed the shift report. *One possible sighting, all clear otherwise,* he read to himself.

“Lt. Johnson, when is the Commander due in?”

“He just called. He should be in around 07:50, sir.”

“All right, I have to go see Colonel Lake.”

“Good luck, sir. She was spitting tacks yesterday.”

Ayshea and Paul were good friends and she knew him well enough to feel comfortable warning him.

“I know, thanks for the warning.”

Ayshea stood and spoke privately to him, “Colonel Lake had words with the Commander after you left, sir. The door was closed so we couldn’t hear what was being said, but I can tell you it was a heated conversation.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Glancing at the clock, he walked out of the control room. It was 07:35.

Paul walked into Ginny’s office at the other end of the complex. He hadn’t been in there since Ginny had taken over as executive officer. Hung

behind her desk, was a beautiful oil painting of the British countryside. Paul was not an art expert but he recognized that this was the work of a skilled artist.

“A gift from my mother,” said Ginny.

“It’s beautiful work,” said Paul as he sat down across from her.

“Thank you,” she said before continuing. “Paul, Commander Straker considers this matter closed, so what we say in here doesn’t leave this office.”

“Agreed.”

“You should know, had I been in command yesterday, you would have found yourself cooling your heels in the brig. What in God’s name were you thinking, bringing her here?” she asked allowing some of her anger to show.

“I believed her, I was sure she was innocent. I had never met anyone like her Ginny. I only

knew her a few hours and it was like I had known her forever.”

“Of course she was innocent Paul. I’m sure Linda didn’t ask for what happened to her. But she was being manipulated by the aliens. She would say anything or do anything to complete the task they had set out for her. Paul you completely lost your objectivity. That simply can’t happen, ever. You are a Colonel in SHADO, third in the chain of command. Your actions are supposed to set the example. Tell me, what kind of lesson does this show to your subordinates?”

“Commander Straker agreed with me,” said Paul getting a bit heated.

“Ed Straker had that prerogative. You did not. This is a matter of principle,” Ginny said giving Foster the full force of her icy blue glare.

Paul lowered his eyes, he knew she was right.

“Paul,” Ginny continued in a softer voice. “I pulled your record this morning. I found it to be checkered with some very good, as well as several extremely poor decisions over the past couple of years. In my opinion, you have a tendency to be hot headed and impulsive. You don’t always think before you act. You told me yourself once that you have ambitions of commanding SHADO one day and I’m here to tell you that you will never get there with a record like this.”

“I’m sorry I let you down,” was all he said.

“I’m not the only one you let down, and I’m certainly not the one you should be apologizing to.”

“I’m going to see him next, I know it was a mistake. To be honest I still don’t know why I did it.”

Virginia softened her look.

“Just between us, I didn’t agree with Ed’s decision either. In fact after you left yesterday the two of us had a very heated discussion over it,” she said.

But you won’t stay mad at him for very long, thought Paul, knowing that she harbored feelings toward the Commander.

“Thanks for letting me clear the air Ginny. I hope that this doesn’t jeopardize our friendship.”

She smiled at him for the first time that morning, “I would hope that you know me better than that.”

“I think I do, thanks.”

Virginia watched him leave, a bemused expression on her face.

Foster walked into the Commander’s office at 07:55. Straker already was looking at the daily reports.

“Good morning Paul. How was your meeting with Colonel Lake?”

Paul felt his jaw drop, “How did you know...?”

“It’s called situational awareness. You remember that from flight school, don’t you? If something happens around here and I don’t know about it, be worried.”

That was a stupid question, thought Foster.

“You know, Paul, sometimes I think the people here are more afraid of her than they are of me.”

“It’s a tossup, sir. Colonel Lake’s wrath is just as legendary as yours, sir.”

“If that’s the case, I should let her handle more of the discipline around here.”

Paul stood at attention and addressed the Commander formally. “Commander, my actions yesterday were inexcusable. I jeopardized this base, as well as the lives of my comrades, including you sir. I respectfully present myself for disciplinary action.”

Straker leaned back in his chair puffing on his cigar.

“Did you learn anything, Paul?”

“Yes sir, something you tried to teach me once before. Things are not always as they appear.”

“Good, maybe there is hope for you yet. Now if you’ll excuse me I have a mound of paperwork to wade through.”

Paul walked into the control room wondering, not for the first time, why Straker let him off so easy. Maybe that was his intent, to make him think.

END