

A Study in Contradiction

A UFO Introspect

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Based on the Characters and series created by Gerry Anderson



Historian's Note: The events in this story take place during the episode *Reflections in the Water* written by David Tomblin.

“Damn that man anyway,” the blonde SHADO scientist said, under her breath, as she walked back to computer room. “Castor oil! I’ll give him some castor oil!”

Sometimes I'd like to kill him, and other times I'd like to... Virginia Lake stopped short, reluctant, even in her private thoughts, to contemplate them to their logical conclusion. As she made her way to the elevator, she pondered over the enigma that was Ed Straker.

Lake was coming up on a year since taking over as Executive Officer, a position that had challenged her both intellectually and emotionally. The intellectual challenges were obvious to anyone, but the emotional aspect was known only to one of her closest friends. While she was posted to Moonbase, Virginia had become close to Nina Barry and she had shared her private thoughts about Commander Straker with her. Nina responded by saying that she thought the attraction was mutual, but with one notable exception, Ginny had yet to see it. Despite the unspoken tension between them, and the

fact that he never called her by her first name, she had managed to develop a close, albeit complex working relationship with the aloof SHADO commander.

Virginia understood the Commander's frustration with the current situation, she shared it. Earlier that day, SHADO had lost two good men when Deep Space Probe 87 had been destroyed by the aliens massing in area MNL-12. To add to the mystery, they had no idea what the aliens were planning, and the new subroutine, recently installed in the computer, was providing no additional information.

The AAI, or Analytical Artificial Intelligence algorithm, was Virginia's latest project. The software was designed to analyze the alien attacks, and actions, looking for any correlation with current events that could give the aliens a decisive advantage. As with any computer system, the information obtained was only as good as the information provided. *Garbage in, garbage out, so the saying goes.*

Lake knew that Straker's comments were not specifically aimed at her, as she had seen the Commander's seldom shown compassionate side first hand. Straker had raced to her aid when she had been the target of an alien incursion a few months before. Just thinking about the look of concern, on his face that night, sent shivers up her spine. If she hadn't known better, she would have taken his concern to be of a personal nature. *Maybe Nina was right*, she thought. The tenderness he had shown her after rushing to her home was in stark contrast to the pointed sarcasm she was subjected to a few minutes ago. *Well, two can play at that game.* Her own dry wit was every bit as potent as the Commander's, and being second in command gave her partial immunity from insubordination. *After all, Alec got away with it*, the thought causing her to grin with satisfaction.

While Virginia tried to coax more information from the reluctant computer system, Straker and Foster had paid a visit to an underwater dome that Skydiver had located, just off the coast of Cornwall. Unfortunately, their trek offered only more unanswered questions, much to Virginia's chagrin. Adding to the mystery was the fact the Lt. Anderson had been spotted in the underwater dome. Between the Commander's impatience, and Foster's added sarcasm, she had reached her limit.

"We've rephrased the questions twelve different ways. There simply isn't enough information!" she said, exasperated.

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, I'm sorry," said the Commander, his tone indicating resignation. He turned back to Paul Foster. "Now look, Paul, we're not going to be able to find out anything until we get inside that dome."

Straker turned his attention back to her, "As soon as the analyst's report has been fed in, on my knife, let me know."

"Yes sir, we'll do our best," said Virginia, her voice thick with irony.

It was then that Lt Anderson chose to show up from furlough and was quickly taken into custody.

With Straker's attention diverted elsewhere, Virginia focused her efforts on analyzing the material on the Commander's diving knife. At least it was a solid piece of evidence instead of speculation and conjecture.

Lake fed the analysis, done by a member of her research team, into the computer. When she read the final report, the corners of her mouth turned up in a slight grin. *Finally, some answers. And just in time*, she thought, as she saw Straker approaching the platform.

"...the deposits on your knife indicate the substance, from which the undersea construction is made, is of a molecular structure unknown to us. But my conclusion is, entrance could be made by pressure, the rupture would be self sealing," said Lake, reading from the computer report.

"Thank you, Colonel."

"I hope the answers are satisfactory, sir," Ginny added, her voice laced with sarcasm.

Straker turned back to face her.

"Colonel Lake, look, I do understand the problems, and the answers are satisfactory," he said, almost as an apology.

"Thank you, sir."

Straker gave her a very brief smile before launching back into command mode, "Now will you please ask Colonel Foster to get his bags packed?"

Virginia watched, as Straker walked away, her face lined with bemusement.

This man is a study in contradiction. I don't think I will ever understand him.

END