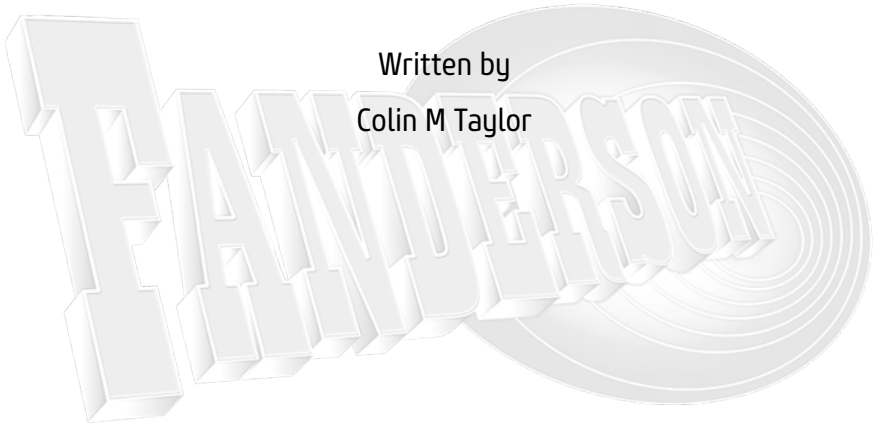


CRISIS

A Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons story

Written by
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CHAPTER ONE

Forty thousand feet above the earth's surface, Cloudbase, Headquarters of the Spectrum Organisation, navigation beacons glowing brightly, hovered effortlessly in the blue-black sky. The full moon shone down onto the vast expanse of the flight deck and the trio of Angel aircraft clamped to it.

The beauty of the night was lost on the figure gazing pensively through a porthole into the darkness outside. Colonel White, Commander-in-Chief of Spectrum, was apprehensive as the News programme began. He'd been warned by his agents to expect trouble. Exactly what the problem might be was not clear, but the intelligence from his agents could usually be relied upon.

As the signature tune surged, he moved back to his desk and ordered Lieutenant Green to relay it to all parts of Cloudbase. "This concerns all of us," he said, by way of explanation. The lead story concerned the closure of the Trans-Alpine road tunnel, owing to its age and the fact that insufficient toll money was being taken to cover the ever-increasing costs of the tunnel, everyone seeming to prefer the much faster monorails.

The next item concerned the impending World-Presidential Elections. Although the current incumbent was generally well thought of, the leading challenger, Senator Grayson, was rapidly gaining in the opinion polls. Grayson was a relative newcomer to the Senate, only having been elected to the house three months before.

The main thrust of his campaign seemed to be an attack on the fiscal policies of the current Government, accusing them of squandering valuable resources on pie-in-the-sky schemes and calling for major cuts in the Armed Forces.

The newsreader then handed over to a reporter in the main Parliament Building where Senator Grayson was, at that moment delivering a speech to the entire Parliament.

The atmosphere had already been whipped up to a fever pitch when the Senator delivered his final broadside: "In addition to keeping massive Armed forces when the whole world has been at peace for decades, he persists in squandering millions so that Spectrum can go chasing phantoms. I say ENOUGH! We have humoured these deluded individuals in their castle in the air for far too long. It's time we stopped their fantasies about Alien Attacks from Mars - I stopped reading fairy stories when I was five! I demand that the World President stops this lunacy NOW!"

The House went wild. A chant of "Stop Spectrum Now." started somewhere on the floor and spread rapidly until the everyone seemed to be chanting in unison.

Grayson allowed himself a half smile of pleasure. It was so nice to have an appreciative audience.

"Cut it!" The voice that Lieutenant Green heard was of an old, worried man. The Colonel had known that the Senator was no fan of Spectrum, but hadn't realised that things were this bad.

At that moment, a light flashed on Lieutenant Green's console. He pressed a switch and listened for a moment before announcing "Chief of Staff for you, Colonel."

"Thank you, Lieutenant, put him on." No matter how bad the situation, Colonel White was always polite.

Down in the Amber Room, Captain Blue was deep in thought. "Sorry, I was miles away," he explained as he realised that Captain Scarlet had just said something. "I said that I thought I could smell burning when I saw you

thinking. It looked painful.” said Scarlet with a grin, just avoiding the newspaper that Blue hurled at him.

“I was actually thinking about that news report.” Blue stated.

“Yeah,” retorted Captain Magenta “That Grayson really has it in for us.”

“I shouldn't worry too much,” said Captain Grey, “These politicians will rant about anything if they think it'll get votes. He'll find another target next week, you'll see.”

“I'm not so sure,” said Scarlet “Senator Grayson is a very powerful man. His favourite hobbyhorse is spending cuts and since we haven't heard a peep from the Mysterons for months, he's bound to say that we aren't needed now.”

That was true; Since the abortive attack on the Trans-European Monorail, three months before, the Mysterons had been conspicuous by their absence and, indeed, some people were beginning to think that the war of nerves had been called off. Scarlet was not one of them.

“You heard what he said on the News,” replied Blue “He doesn't believe in the existence of the Mysterons anyway, so he's bound to think we're wasting our time up here.”

Up in the Control Room, Colonel White's face was grim as he listened to the Chief of Staff. “Finally,” the General continued “Cloudbase is to proceed with all speed to Glenn Field, to await landing instructions prior to decommissioning.”

“With all due respect, General –” White began, but it was too late. The General's face had already disappeared from the screen.

“Cease operations indeed!” he growled.

“The General was right though, about there having been no Mysteron attacks sir. Perhaps they HAVE called the war off.” said Green sympathetically.

"No, Lieutenant, I don't think so," replied Colonel White grimly, "I feel certain that they would have announced the fact. No, they're still waiting for their chance and these orders might just be it. Get me the World President!"

The World President was blunt to the point of rudeness. "The orders were quite explicit, Colonel, The Spectrum organisation is to cease all activities immediately and Cloudbase is to proceed to Glenn Field, where it is to be handed over to the World Air Force."

"Would you mind telling me why, sir?" asked Colonel White with as much patience as he could muster.

"Cost, Colonel," came the reply from the man on the screen "Do you have any idea how much it costs to keep an organisation like Spectrum in business?"

"The cost is high," agreed Colonel White "But the Mysterons -"

"The Mysterons are no worse than any other terrorist group," the President interrupted, "I'm sure that the normal security forces are quite capable of dealing with any situation that may arise."

"The Mysterons are no ordinary terrorist organisation," snapped Colonel White "They have powers we cannot begin to comprehend. Surely you don't deny the attempt on your own life?"

Indeed, after the crew of the Zero-X had mistakenly opened fire on the Martian Complex, the Mysterons had stated that their first act of retaliation, in what had become known as the "War of Nerves", would be to assassinate the very man who was now, seemingly, denying the existence of any threat.

"If you recall, Colonel," the President sneered, "Of the two men you sent to guard me, one tried to blow me up, and the other one kidnapped me!"

Colonel White winced - the President had hit a raw nerve.

The Colonel had sent bodyguards, in the shape of Captains Brown and Scarlet, to escort the World President to the Spectrum Maximum Security Building in New York.

On the way, however, something had happened to them. The bodies of the two officers had been found near the burnt-out wreckage of their Spectrum saloon, but not before Captain Brown had exploded, completely destroying the Maximum Security building and nearly killing the President.

The discovery of Captain Brown's body had alerted the Colonel that Scarlet, too, had been affected and he ordered the Angels, already flying as escort, to intercept him and the President.

Scarlet and the President had ejected from the Passenger Jet in which they had been flying and still holding the President at gunpoint, Scarlet had stolen a car and had driven himself and the President towards London.

The chase had ended in a dramatic shoot-out on the top of the London Car-Vu, with Scarlet falling eight hundred feet to his death and Captain Blue saving the President in the nick of time from the collapsing tower.

What few people outside Spectrum were aware of was that when the body of Captain Scarlet had been returned to Cloudbase for Doctor Fawn to carry out a post-mortem, it was found to have healed completely.

Scarlet had returned to life, but had lost the controlling influence of the Mysterons. Further tests showed he had become indestructible. Thus, he had become an invaluable asset to Spectrum in the war against the Mysterons.

"With respect, Sir, the officers in question, were being controlled by the Mysterons." Colonel White asserted. "They would have been totally unaware of what they were doing."

"So you say, Colonel, I think it's about time we faced facts." The President replied "All these so-called Mysteron attacks are carried out by human beings, just like you and me. There's no evidence that aliens are at work."

There is evidence, however, that Spectrum is costing a very great deal of money. Money that could be more profitably used elsewhere. You have your orders. I suggest you carry them out." With that, the President's face disappeared from the screen.

"Politicians!" snorted Colonel White angrily. "All they ever worry about is money." He pressed a button in front of him and his desk gently rotated until he was once more facing Lieutenant Green. "Lieutenant Green, assemble everyone in the Conference room in five minutes." he ordered.

"S.I.G. sir." replied Green, reaching for a switch.

Several thousand miles away, in the President's office in Geneva, a figure slumped forward in his chair. The strain had been intense. When the Colonel's image had faded from the screen, the figure had seemed to collapse inward like a deflated balloon. With an effort, the figure raised its head and stared at the other occupant of the room "How much longer must this go on?" he whispered. "Until we have achieved our aim, Mr President." Senator Grayson smiled. This wretch was so easy to control. It would be child's play to eliminate Spectrum. That old fool Colonel White would obey orders, no matter how strange they might be, he was sure of that.

"Cease Operations?" Scarlet's voice was incredulous as Colonel White had broken the news.

"Yes Captain, he was emphatic on that point. Spectrum is to cease all operations with immediate effect." Colonel White replied.

"But what about the Mysterons, sir" asked Captain Blue.

"You all saw for yourselves on the Video. He just doesn't believe in their existence." They all lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

A strange thought entered Scarlet's head. He dismissed it as being too crazy for words. It forced its way back and the more he thought about it, the more it seemed to make sense. "Colonel," he began, but before he could utter

another word, he was interrupted by a voice that none of them had wanted to hear again.

The voice was clear, as always, deep and filled with infinite menace.

“THIS IS THE VOICE OF THE MYSTERONS.

WE KNOW THAT YOU CAN HEAR US EARTHMEN.

WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN YOUR UNPROVOKED ATTACK ON OUR MARTIAN COMPLEX.

YOU ARE ALREADY POWERLESS.

WE WILL BE AVENGED.”

“Well, I suppose that means that we're back in business.” smiled Captain Magenta.

“We were never out of business, Captain.” snapped Colonel White crossly.

“What did they mean? 'We are already powerless?’” asked Captain Blue
“Spectrum is still operational.”

“Officially, we're not.” retorted Colonel White. He turned to Lieutenant Green.

“Get me The World President.”

“S.I.G. sir.”

Green tried several times to make contact, but to no avail.

“They've locked us out, sir.” The young Lieutenant stated.

“That does it,” Colonel White thundered “I'm going to see the President in person and find out what he's playing at. Captain Blue, since it was you who rescued the World President from the Car-Vu, I'd like you to accompany me.”

“S.I.G. sir.” Blue acknowledged.

“Should I alert the Angels sir?” asked Green.

"No Lieutenant," White replied, "They may be needed to defend Cloudbase."

"Surely you should be escorted by at least one Angel?" suggested Scarlet.

"No, Captain, Cloudbase is more important than any one individual. They will remain here in case they're needed."

"Well let me come with you then," Scarlet ventured

"No, you are to remain here in charge. You are to keep a round-the-clock radar watch. Is that understood?"

"S.I.G. sir." Scarlet replied resignedly

With that, White strode out, closely followed by Captain Blue.

Ten minutes later, the Spectrum Passenger Jet, with Colonel White and Blue aboard, stood on the deck of Cloudbase, awaiting launch clearance. In the cockpit, Lieutenant Green's voice could be heard clearly over the radio. "This is Spectrum Control. You are clear to go."

"S.I.G." replied Blue, pushing forward the throttles. The Passenger Jet rolled forward and then lifted gracefully into the air, the moonlight glinting on its wings.

"Colonel White and Captain Blue have taken off successfully." reported Lieutenant Green to Captain Scarlet, now seated at the Colonel's desk. "Thank you, Lieutenant." replied Scarlet. "

"I'm sure the Colonel will be able to sort things out," said Green "But I still think he should have had some kind of escort.

"I know what you mean," replied Scarlet "But he was adamant that the Angels were not to leave Cloudbase." As he said this, the answer came to him. They could provide an escort, of sorts, without having the Angels leave Cloudbase. "Start Horizontal Jets, Lieutenant," he ordered "And lay in a course for Geneva."

"S.I.G. Captain Scarlet." smiled Green, reaching for a control. His chair moved along its travelator until it reached the correct place on the console. He touched another control.

Outside, jets flared into life and the huge bulk of Cloudbase, Angel aircraft still firmly clamped to the flight deck, gently picked up speed. There was no way that it could ever hope to catch the Passenger Jet, but at least if the Colonel needed the Angels, they would be close at hand.

In the Passenger Jet, Colonel White and Captain Blue were discussing the situation. "Why do you think the World President has turned against us, sir." asked Captain Blue. "I don't know for certain," replied White "But I have a feeling that there's more to this than meets the eye.

"Could he have been taken over by the Mysterons?"

"It's possible, but I wouldn't have thought it likely," replied White after a moment's consideration "They've already made one unsuccessful attack on him. One of the few things we know about the Mysterons is that they never repeat an attack. No, Captain, one of the few things we can be sure of is that the one person who hasn't been taken over is the World President."

CHAPTER TWO

The Swiss chalet was large and comfortable, obviously a family home. A series of framed photographs stood on the Grand piano, showing the various members of the family. Starting with a wedding group the collection had grown to encompass the new members as they had been born and later, started school. There was even one, taken only a few weeks ago, showing the whole group skiing in the nearby Alps. Now, save for the lone figure watching the News Programme, it was empty. None of the items made an impression on the figure until the World President appeared on the screen. The figure concentrated hard as the President started to speak.

“My Fellow People of Earth, I have decided that, on account of their continued resistance to my orders and the attempts on my life made by two of its members, the Spectrum Organisation is to be considered a subversive organisation and all equipment is to be impounded immediately. In addition, all Spectrum personnel are to surrender to the security services immediately. Failure to do so will result in their immediate arrest.”

The figure sank back and relaxed. Things were working out just fine.

The Programme Controller at the television station allowed herself a small moment of displeasure. It had been a good broadcast but that new vision mixer hadn't been quick enough cutting away from the picture of the President. The audience out there might have seen him sag as he'd finished his speech. Then again, the old boy didn't look all that well anyway. He looked as if he was under strain.

She shrugged. She'd probably find it a strain doing his job.

On Cloudbase, the News broadcast had been watched in horrified silence. Lieutenant Green's normal smile had vanished, to be replaced by a worried frown. No-one said a word. With no-one to defend them, the peoples of Earth were doomed. The Mysterons would win. All this because a politician had changed his mind. Or, as Captain Scarlet surmised, had been persuaded or coerced to change it.

Something started to niggle at the back of his mind. Something he'd just seen had started an alarm bell ringing somewhere in his subconscious.

"Lieutenant Green," he said slowly "Do we have recordings of all the news broadcasts over the last twenty-four hours?"

"Yes Captain Scarlet," Green replied "They are recorded as a matter of course,"

"Play them back." ordered Scarlet.

"All of them?" Green asked in disbelief. "All of them." Scarlet confirmed.

"What are you looking for?" asked Captain Grey.

"I don't know for certain," admitted Scarlet "But there's something in one of these broadcasts that feels wrong somehow and I want to know what it is." He turned to Lieutenant Green: "Whilst Captain Grey and I are reviewing the tapes, try and contact Colonel White to advise him of the situation."

"S.I.G." replied Green and pressed a switch. Scarlet and Grey started to watch the video screens.

"He's WHAT?" thundered Colonel White.

"That's right sir," Green's voice sounded apologetic over the radio. "The World President has just announced that all Spectrum personnel are to surrender to the Security forces immediately."

"Thank you, Lieutenant." White shut off the call. "First we cost too much, now we're subversive." he muttered, lapsing into thought.

"Geneva ten minutes away, Colonel."

"Thank you, Captain." replied White.

At that moment, the radio crackled as a channel was opened.

"Attention, Spectrum Jet," said the voice "This is Flight Seven Three. You are under arrest. You are to land at Geneva airport. Any deviation from your flight path will result in your being shot down. Over."

The two Officers looked out of the cabin windows. On each side they could see World Army Viper aircraft, upon which the Angel aircraft had been based. They had no alternative. "Flight Seven Three," Blue responded "Will follow you to Geneva. Out."

"Try and contact Cloudbase, Captain." ordered White.

"S.I.G." replied Blue, reaching for the radio switch. The pilot of the lead Viper was obviously monitoring their radio, for as soon as Blue had opened the channel, his voice came back over the radio "Flight Seven Three to Spectrum Jet, you are to make no unauthorised radio calls. Failure to comply will result in your immediate destruction."

Colonel White had had enough "This is Colonel White, Commander-in-Chief of Spectrum. Under whose authority are these orders?" he demanded.

"The World President's." came the apologetic reply.

A new voice came over the loudspeaker "This is Geneva Control to Flight Seven Three and Spectrum Jet. You are clear to land on Runway Two-Two Left.

"Captain Blue had no choice "Roger, Geneva Control." he acknowledged.

The Passenger Jet banked onto final approach. The sun was just rising over the hills.

It would be another fine day. Colonel White was in no mood for sunrises.

Captain Scarlet yawned, stretched and looked at his watch. Six a.m. He and Captain Grey had been working half the night. The first part had been easy, editing out the other news items of no interest such as the Trans-Alpine tunnel report. That just left them with two hours ' worth of Political news.

"Just what are we looking for?" Captain Grey had asked as he and Scarlet had started their task.

"Something, anything, that seems out of place." replied Scarlet.

thus, they had watched the video over and over again, forwards and backwards until they both felt that they could recite every word that the politicians had uttered that day. "Yesterday, now." thought Scarlet grimly.

"Come on," he said to Grey "Let's go and grab some coffee."

"Good idea. I could do with a break." agreed Grey.

As they walked down the corridor, Grey said cheerfully "I don't know what sort of people become politicians, but they all seem to say the same sort of thing. Take the World President for example. I always thought that he was a nice guy, but he seems to have changed his whole attitude in the past few weeks. He's even been going on about Spectrum the same way that Senator Grayson does. It's almost as if they have the same speech writer."

The alarm inside Scarlet's head was ringing again. Faint though it was, it was clear. He now knew that he'd have to concentrate on the President.

"I'm going to have another look at the Presidential broadcast," he told Grey.

"But what's the point?" protested Grey "We've both watched them until we can recite every word verbatim."

"I know," agreed Scarlet "We've been obsessed with what's being said. I think we should be checking on what isn't." He turned on his heel and started back down the corridor.

Sighing to himself, Grey followed him.

"This is ridiculous, Colonel." fumed Captain Blue "These guys are treating us like common criminals."

"Unfortunately, Captain that's just what we are, as far as they're concerned." replied White calmly.

No sooner had the Passenger Jet landed and rolled to a halt, than it was surrounded by heavily armed security guards. On stepping down from the aircraft, the two officers had been arrested, their equipment seized and were now locked, in the absence of cells, in a small rest room in the Control Tower of the airport.

Colonel White had immediately demanded to see the World President. The Guard Commander seemed rather uncomfortable at having to arrest Spectrum officers. In fact, for a few moments, he had looked as if he was about to say something, but then thought better of it. He had promised to see what he could do. That had been two hours ago. Since then, they'd heard nothing.

"If only we could get to see the World President," began Captain Blue. He was interrupted by the sound of the door being unlocked.

White stood to welcome the visitor. The door opened and a guard entered, followed by a small, bespectacled man, carrying an attaché case. The guard saluted and left the room. They heard the door being locked.

"Good morning, gentlemen. My name's Johanssen. I shall be your defence counsel. Now, I have already put in a plea of not guilty for you both, but I shall need to hear your side of the matter in order to proceed further."

Captain Blue was the first to break the stunned silence. "Defence Counsel? You mean we're on trial?"

"Quite so, Captain. A full Court Martial." replied Johanssen. "Now, as I was saying -"

White interrupted him "Mr Johanssen, what exactly are we charged with?"

Johanssen looked uncomfortable "I'm afraid the charges are very grave indeed: Mutiny, Treason and Armed Insurrection."

"Armed Insurrection?" thundered White "What the devil are you talking about, man?"

"I'm afraid so, Colonel" Johanssen replied "The Prosecution will be pressing for the maximum penalty."

"Which is?" asked Blue uneasily. Johanssen shuffled uncomfortably, took off his spectacles and polished them as if to put off the fateful moment. "Let me put it this way, Captain," he replied sheepishly "No-one's ever been found guilty twice!"

"There!" Scarlet's voice was triumphant.

The two officers had spent another two hours peering intently at the flickering screen in front of them. This time they were concentrating on the Presidential address, running it backwards and forwards. Captain Grey felt his eyes beginning to twist in their sockets with the strain. Finally, Scarlet had stopped the tape and then started to play it frame-by-frame. He knew he'd almost got it. He'd reached the last few seconds before the end of the broadcast. Just a few more frames, slower and slower until...

"We've been over this tape and found nothing." Protested Grey "Let's face it, we've been barking up the wrong tree for the last few hours."

"That's just it," replied Scarlet. "The evidence has been under our noses all the time. Watch carefully."

Scarlet rewound the machine a few frames and then pressed 'Play'.

"All Spectrum personnel are to surrender to the security services immediately." the voice on the tape proclaimed. "Failure to do so will result in their immediate -" Scarlet stopped the tape and switched to single-frame.

The two officers watched the President as he mouthed the word 'arrest' in slow motion. Then, the clue Scarlet had been looking for, the President's head appeared to drop and his eyes to close. Unfortunately, the programme cut back to the studio before they could be certain. "Well?" asked Scarlet expectantly.

Grey thought for a moment "He looked very much to me," he said slowly "Like a puppet that's just had its strings cut."

"Yes, and did you notice his eyes? They looked glazed." replied Scarlet. "I think he was in some kind of trance, as if he'd been drugged." He rose from his seat, "Come on, let's report this to Colonel White."

The figure in the Swiss apartment sat down to breakfast and opened his newspaper. He smiled when he saw the headline:

SPECTRUM COLONEL ARRESTED

He read the report carefully. Yes, indeed, things were working better than he could ever have hoped. "What do you mean, you can't raise them?" Scarlet snapped angrily at Lieutenant Green.

"That's right, Captain Scarlet," He replied unhappily "I can't make contact with either Colonel White or Captain Blue."

"Keep trying." ordered Scarlet. He had the strangest feeling that something, somewhere was horribly wrong.

Breakfast completed, the figure stood and prepared to go to work in his office in Geneva. From his smart suit and neat attaché case, it was clear he was a man of power and influence.

He paused for a moment in front of one of the photographs on the piano. Vague, half-forgotten memories stirred gently in his mind. He turned away and picking up his case, left the room.

Later, when he had time, he'd dispose of the photographs. They belonged to a past he no longer cared about. He got into his car and drove away. The

annoying thought crossed his mind that he'd have to take the mountain road now that the tunnel was closed.

Still, it had been necessary. It cost far too much. At least, that was the reason he'd given for its closure. The real reason, only he knew.

Not far away, another figure was waiting, binoculars trained on his quarry. It was bitterly cold that high in the mountains, but the figure was oblivious to it. Only humans feel the cold.

Once, as Conrad Turner, he had been a hero in the struggle for world peace, one of Spectrum's finest officers. Because of this, he had been placed in charge of the Zero-X mission to investigate mysterious signals that had originated on Mars. Now, because of a tragic error of judgement in destroying the Mysteron city, he had not only brought the wrath of the Mysterons upon the earth, but had also become their agent, a puppet totally subservient to their wishes. His name - Captain Black.

Through the binoculars, Black could see the elderly gentleman kiss his wife and children, climb into his car and then drive away. He knew what he had to do. He put down the binoculars and reached for the long bundle beside him. Unwrapping the bundle revealed a high-powered rifle with telescopic sight. Putting the sight to his eye, he waited.

"I still can't make contact, Captain." reported Lieutenant Green unhappily.

"Keep trying." Scarlet replied grimly. Something was wrong: The Colonel wouldn't miss a report willingly.

At that moment, a light flashed on Green's console. He pressed a switch. "This is Spectrum Control. Go ahead." he said, trying to hide the worry in his voice.

"This is Spectrum agent Five Three Five. Security forces are hunting me." the message came as a hurried whisper. "Colonel White and Captain Blue

have been arrested and are being held in Geneva airport pending Court Martial."

"Court Martial!" echoed Scarlet in disbelief.

"Hang on," whispered the agent "There's something going on." The Spectrum officers heard the microphone being put down. For a few moments they heard only background noise.

"What's going on?" muttered Grey

"I don't know." said Scarlet. "I suppose we'll have to -" he was interrupted by the radio. The agent was now panic stricken and made no attempt to whisper "Oh my god! they've found me. There's someone with them. It's the Pres-" There was a burst of automatic fire, a scream then silence.

The Spectrum Officers looked at each other aghast. If an agent had lost his life in getting that snippet of information to them, the stakes were high indeed.

The President kicked the body lying on the floor of his office. "Get that out of here." he ordered.

"Yessir." replied the new Guard Commander. He turned to his men. "Right, you heard what the President said, get that body shifted."

Grunting a little at the strain, they dragged the body out, leaving the President and the Commander alone.

The President dismissed him. "Thank you, Commander, that will be all." "Yessir!" The commander saluted, turned on his heel and marched out.

As he marched away, he reflected on how drawn the old guy was looking these days. Pressure of work, he thought to himself.

As the door slid shut, the President's head sagged onto his chest. His head ached. Things were wrong, he knew, but the more he tried to think, the greater the pain. Things had been fine until... until... but the memory just wouldn't come.

Mind still churning like a boiling liquid, he fell into an exhausted sleep

The elderly gentleman was enjoying his drive to work despite the slipperiness of the road. "One would have thought," he pondered, "That by the latter half of the twenty-first century they could have come up with a better way of keeping the mountain roads clear of snow. Ah well."

He contented himself with the fact that, since he would be retiring after this case anyway, he wouldn't have to worry about it much longer. He drove steadily enjoying the bright sunshine. Yes, he thought, it had been a great idea to move to the Alpine cottage. Away from the bustle of the city, but only half-an-hour's drive from it.

It was one of the perks of being the chief Judge in Geneva. That he was the oldest and most respected pleased him immensely.

As he motored sedately down the mountainside, his thoughts turned to the case that he'd have to sit today. A Court Martial. It made a nice change from all that fraud and robbery. A shame too, that such eminent officers should be brought before him. "Thus are the mighty fallen," he mused.

Lost in his thoughts, he passed a sign without noticing it. The message it bore was simple:

DANGER! AVALANCHE.

On the hillside above, Captain Black lined up the cross-hairs precisely, then squeezed gently on the trigger.

The motorist had no chance.

With a roar, the charges, laid by Captain Black, exploded and started an avalanche. The driver was shaken from his reverie by the sound. He looked up and saw the avalanche thundering towards him.

His foot stabbed at the brake pedal, but to no avail. Wheels locked; the car began to skid uncontrollably. The sound of his scream of terror was lost as

the wall of snow and ice, moving faster than an express train, engulfed the car and swept it over the precipice into the gorge below.

Black made his way down the mountainside.

The last flakes of snow settled on the now buried wreckage of the car and driver.

As Black watched, twin circles of light spiralled down from the sky and came to rest briefly before disappearing. He looked up to see the judge standing next to him, his re-created car a little way behind. In a lifeless monotone, Black asked "You know what to do?"

"Yes," the judge replied lifelessly "I know what I must do." With that, he got into his car and drove away.

CHAPTER THREE

“Well, gentlemen,” said Johanssen “I think that's all I can do for the moment. Obviously, I'll need to see the relevant Spectrum records in order to check the veracity of your statements.” “I'm afraid that's out of the question.” said Colonel White gruffly “Security, you understand.” “Colonel White,” Johanssen sighed “Tomorrow, you and Captain Blue will be fighting for your very lives. I need some evidence for your defence. Judge Kemsley, is a very fair man, but he is going to need convincing that these Mysterons are more than a figment of the imagination.” “Very well,” White grunted “What sort of information do you require?”

“Oh, I don't know, really, some case notes perhaps. For example, the assassination of the Director-General of the United Asian Republic. “But how-” Blue began in an astonished voice

“-are we going to retrieve the records?” White continued firmly, cutting off Blue's question with a barely perceptible shake of the head.

“Ah, I'm sure we could fly to Cloudbase,” Johanssen replied with a smile, “Myself and one of you, that is. One of you will have to stay here as a gesture of goodwill.”

“A hostage, in other words.” said Blue sarcastically.

“Please, Captain,” replied Johanssen “I am trying to help you. But in order to do so, I need your help. One of you must fly to Cloudbase with me.”

“Very well,” White sighed “I shall remain here. Captain Blue, you will fly Mr Johanssen to Cloudbase. Give him any information he requires.” “With respect Colonel-” began Blue.

“Captain Blue,” White rebuked him sharply “We may both be under arrest, but until we are both cashiered, I am still your commanding officer. You will give Mr Johanssen every assistance.”

"S.I.G. sir." Blue replied sheepishly.

"Would it not be better if you came with me, Colonel? After all, you would know exactly what evidence we could use."

"No, Mr Johanssen, I have every confidence in Captain Blue. In any case, I would have more hos - GUEST value."

Johanssen looked as if he was about to argue, but then thought better of it. "Thank you, Colonel." Johanssen smiled weakly. He went to the door and knocked on it.

White gestured to Blue and they both turned their backs on Johanssen.

"I knew what you were going to say just now." murmured White "That's why I interrupted you." He nodded towards Johanssen who was deep in conversation with the guard. Keep an eye on him."

"S.I.G. Colonel." replied Blue.

"Coming Captain?" called Johanssen. Without another word, Blue followed him from the room.

White gazed out of the window Far below him, through the thick plate glass window, he could see the tiny figures of Blue and Johanssen as they climbed into the Spectrum Passenger Jet. Moments later, it taxied onto the runway and then took off.

Soon it had banked over the mountains surrounding the city and disappeared into a bank of cloud. He turned away from the window, lost in thought. Why was Johanssen so set on going to Cloudbase? How did he know about that particular case?

Obviously, there was more to Mr Johanssen than met the eye. Twenty minutes later he was disturbed by the sound of the door being unlocked. It was pushed open by a security guard carrying a tray which he put down on the table in the centre of the room.

"The condemned man ate a hearty breakfast." thought Colonel White grimly. "Oh!" exclaimed the stranger at the door "I was expecting to see two of you."

"Who the blazes are you?" White demanded as the stranger closed the door behind him. There was an audible click as the guard locked it.

"Nielsen, Alexander Nielsen," the stranger replied, putting down his briefcase and offering his hand "I have been appointed your Defence Counsel, but I was told that there were two of you."

"What did you say?" White asked him slowly.

"I said that I have been appointed as Defence Counsel for you and Captain Blue." Replied Nielsen "Where is he?"

But White hadn't heard him, his mind was racing. Vague ideas were coalescing into horrifying certainties even as he thought about them.

"Mr Nielsen," I need you to get me out of here." White said quickly

"I'm afraid that's out of the question, Colonel." Nielsen replied sympathetically "I was told that there was no chance of bail being granted in your case."

"Mr Nielsen," White said firmly, I need to contact Cloudbase urgently.

"I'm sorry Colonel, but I was told that you were to be kept incommunicado until tomorrow." White reached over and grabbed Nielsen by the lapels and shook him.

"Listen," he thundered "If I don't warn them in time, everyone on Cloudbase is going to die."

"Warn them of what?" Nielsen asked still shaking from White's grip on him.

White told him.

"Strange," thought Blue to himself as he flew the Jet towards Cloudbase "The old boy's a bit quiet. I'd have thought he'd have been chattering like a

monkey, this being his first flight in a Spectrum jet. Ah well." He concentrated on contacting Cloudbase.

Beside him, in the co-pilot's seat, Johanssen sat motionless. No flicker of emotion crossed his face. He just sat there, like a waxwork.

"Captain Blue to Cloudbase, Captain Blue to Cloudbase, Come in Cloudbase."

With a smile of relief, Lieutenant Green reached over and pressed a switch on the panel in front of him "Go ahead, Captain Blue." he acknowledged.

"We are en route to Cloudbase. Please confirm your location." Blue's voice came over the loudspeaker

"We are seven hundred miles south of Geneva." replied Green "Travelling at low-safe cruising."

"S.I.G." Acknowledged Blue.

"Is the Colonel with you?" asked Captain Scarlet, who was standing just behind Green.

"No, Captain Scarlet," replied Blue, "He's still being held to ensure my return. I have our Defence lawyer with me. He's going to help us to collect evidence."

"S.I.G. Captain Blue." Scarlet signed off.

"I'm going back down to the archives." he informed Green. Something that Captain Grey had said had struck a chord. The World President was being influenced, that he knew. But by whom?

"Mr. President? Mr. President?" No reply. The guard began to tap on the door. Perhaps the old boy had fallen asleep in his office.

No reply. Worried, the guard knocked harder. Soon, he was hammering on the door.

Inside, the World President was oblivious to it all. The guard tried the door: Locked. In desperation, he reached for his radio and called for reinforcements. Within minutes they had arrived.

"It's the President," the guard explained hurriedly, "I think he's in trouble."

The Guard Commander drew his gun, took careful aim and fired. Ordering: "Cover me!", He kicked the door open and dived through the opening. Rolling on his shoulder as he hit the floor, he came to rest behind a sofa. Cautiously, he peered around the side. What he saw made him leap to his feet. The President, slumped back in his seat, appeared lifeless.

"Get an ambulance!" he yelled to the guards who had started to enter the room. He went to the President and started to look for vital signs.

The Spectrum Passenger Jet touched down gently on the flight deck and with a roar of reverse thrust, came to a halt.

Captain Blue shut down the engines and followed by the still silent Johanssen, disembarked. "We'd better go to the Control room first, Mr Johanssen." Blue informed him. Johanssen said nothing. He still had the blank expression that Blue had noticed before.

"Perhaps he's ill." thought Blue to himself, "Maybe I should get Doctor Fawn to look at him."

Turning away from Johanssen for a moment, he pulled down his cap microphone. "Doctor Fawn, this is Captain Blue. Do you think you could spare a few moments to look at Mr Johanssen. He looks a bit off-colour."

"Certainly, Captain," replied the doctor "Bring him down to Sickbay."

"S.I.G. Now, Mr Johanssen..." Blue's voice tailed off. Johanssen had vanished.

"Come on man!" Colonel White growled impatiently to himself.

Nielsen had been away for half an hour already.

White had managed to convince his visitor of the urgency of his request. But Nielsen had yet to convince the Guards.

Unaware of Captain Scarlet's actions, and their consequences, he consoled himself that Captain Blue would still take another thirty minutes to reach Cloudbase. Providing Nielsen could get a message to Lieutenant Green within the next half hour, they could prevent a disaster.

He was interrupted in his thoughts by the sound of the door being unlocked. Nielsen rushed in, clearly agitated. He reached into his case for an object and calling "Catch!", threw it across the room to White. To White's surprise, it was his Spectrum cap.

He donned the cap and pulled down the microphone. "This is Colonel White to Cloudbase," he began.

On Cloudbase, Lieutenant Green's smile at hearing from the Colonel faded, when he heard his message. Then it was his turn to convey bad news.

"He's what?" White thundered in disbelief

"That's right sir," Green's voice sounded apologetic. "Captain Blue landed ten minutes ago and Johanssen's disappeared."

White was appalled. "Find him at all costs. Use every man we've got. White out." he said signing off, his microphone swinging back up onto the peak of his cap.

"We're too late!" he told Nielsen.

Lieutenant Green pressed a switch. His voice was relayed throughout Cloudbase. "This is Lieutenant Green to all Spectrum Personnel. I have just received a call from Colonel White. There is reason to believe that there is a Mysteron agent aboard Cloudbase posing as Mr Johanssen, the lawyer. He must be located Immediately, repeat Immediately!"

"How did you manage to get my cap?" asked Colonel White gratefully. "When I left here," began Nielsen "They took me up to the Guard

Commander's office. He wasn't there. They told me that he'd been called away to the Presidential Palace on urgent business. In fact, they all seemed to be running around like headless chickens."

He noticed the plate that had been left some time before "Oh! you haven't eaten your breakfast."

"I'm not hungry." replied White.

"May I?" asked Nielsen politely "I missed out on breakfast this morning and it's a shame to see all this going to waste."

"Please do," invited Colonel White "But it'll probably be cold."

"Oh, I don't mind." replied Nielsen airily. At that he picked up a sausage and bit into it. "Mm, 's good." he said rather indistinctly

"Can we return to the story?" White asked patiently "You mentioned that the guards were in a state of confusion."

"Oh yes," said Nielsen finishing his mouthful. "There's a rumour flying around that the President was critically ill in hospital."

"What's wrong with him?" asked White.

"No-one seemed to know very much," replied Nielsen "But the official line seemed to be pressure of work."

"Hm, I see." said White pensively.

"Anyway," Nielsen continued, picking up another sausage from the plate and biting into it. "They put me in a room where Captain Blue's and your caps were being kept. It was a simple matter to slip them into my case while no-one was looking. Unfortunately, your guns weren't there otherwise I'd have brought those too."

"Well, I'm very grateful for all you've done Mr Nielsen, you ran a great risk. I'm sure that if anyone can get us acquitted, it'll be you -" his voice tailed off "Mr Nielsen? Mr Nielsen are you alright?"

But Nielsen could no longer hear him. The half-eaten morsel dropped from lifeless fingers. Eyes staring, his body pitched forward and fell to the floor.

Captain Scarlet walked slowly down the corridor, alert for any clue. Like everyone else on Cloudbase, he was combing every inch, looking for the slightest thing out of place. Doctor Fawn's Laboratory: Nothing. No matter where he looked, he'd come up with the same. Johanssen just had to be around somewhere.

He was just about to turn the corner into corridor twelve when his epaulettes flashed blue and his cap microphone swung down into position "Go ahead Captain Blue." he said into the microphone.

"Corridors fifteen to twenty clear." Reported Blue. "How are you getting on?"

"Nothing so far," replied Scarlet "I'm just about to search corridor twelve though I -" His voice tailed off as a wave of nausea swept over him. It could mean only one thing - the presence of a Mysteron.

Since he, himself, had once been under the influence of the Mysterons, an experience he had no recollection of, he had developed a sort of sixth sense, able to detect the presence of a Mysteron. It was this sense that was warning him now.

He became aware that Blue was calling him.

"I think I'm quite close to him." he whispered into his microphone.

Indeed, Johanssen was, at that moment, crouched behind one of the main power conduits leading to the hover combines. If, for any reason they were ever shut down, Cloudbase would plunge from the sky.

"S.I.G. Captain Scarlet." replied Blue "I'm on my way."

Scarlet waited patiently. The feelings of nausea had passed now. He placed his ear to the hatch, hoping to catch any sound that might betray

Johanssen. Other than the sound of the machinery inside, he could hear nothing.

Inside, Johanssen crouched, silent and motionless. Like a waxwork.

Blue arrived two minutes later, closely followed by Captains Grey and Ochre. "Is he in there?" asked Blue breathlessly

"I think so," replied Scarlet "Though I can't hear anything."

"Well," said Ochre "There's only one way to find out."

With that, he pressed the door release and hurriedly stood back.

The door slid quietly back. There was no reaction. Drawing his gun, Scarlet led the way.

The setting sun shone brightly through the porthole, casting brilliant reflections from some pieces of equipment and throwing others into deep shadow. The gentle hum of machinery filled the air.

"Johanssen," called Scarlet "We know you're in here. Give yourself up now, before it's too late."

"You're already too late Earthman," called Johanssen, "Cloudbase is doomed." The voice was clearly Johanssen's, but under the control of the Mysterons, had an added note of arrogance in it.

"What do you mean?" called Scarlet, a note of anxiety creeping into his voice. But there was no reply.

Signalling the others to stay back, Scarlet slowly made his way further into the room, alert for any signs of trouble. Ducking behind some machinery, Scarlet crept slowly towards the point from which Johanssen's voice had emanated.

"Johanssen," called Captain Blue "We have you surrounded. Give yourself up and let us help you."

Not a sound came from the Mysteron.

By now, Scarlet had managed to move round behind Johanssen's position. Cautiously, he peered from behind a piece of machinery. Quickly ducking back out of sight, he pulled down his cap microphone and whispered into it: "Captain Blue, Johanssen's sitting behind a power conduit."

"S. I. G," replied Blue faintly, I'll bring a Mysteron Gun." Blue was referring to the one weapon that could be certain of destroying a Mysteron. It had been here on Cloudbase, during the abortive attempt on General Tiempo's life, that it had been discovered that high voltage electricity could destroy a Mysteron. It had been a relatively straightforward matter to devise a weapon capable of harnessing this effect.

"No!" Scarlet whispered fiercely "The electron beam would probably damage the power control circuits in the conduit."

"What are we going to do then?" asked Blue anxiously.

"He doesn't appear to be armed," replied Scarlet "I'm going to try to reason with him."

"Good Luck Captain Scarlet." Blue signed off. With that, Scarlet's microphone swung back up to the peak of his cap. Drawing a deep breath, he stood up, steeling himself against anything that might happen. "Mr Johanssen," he said firmly "You're beaten. Give yourself up now and we can help you."

Johanssen sat motionless, giving no sign that he'd heard Scarlet. Scarlet moved closer. "Mr Johanssen?" Still no reply. Scarlet reached out and gently touched Johanssen and when there was still no response, shook him. Scarlet hauled Johanssen to his feet.

By now, he had been joined by Captain Blue. "Well, he seems harmless enough," he said to Scarlet "I wonder what he was going to do."

"I don't know," replied Scarlet "Perhaps he was going to -" He suddenly noticed a wisp of smoke "It's a booby trap!" he yelled "Get out of here all of you!" Indeed, smoke was coming from Johanssen's body and clothing in the same way it had just before Captain Brown had exploded. That explosion had completely destroyed the Maximum Security Building. Scarlet had seen the videotape of those events and knew that this blast would certainly destroy Cloudbase.

"What about you?" called Blue from the doorway

"Get out of here!" yelled Scarlet There's only one way to save Cloudbase now, and I'm the one to do it. See you later." With that, he drew his pistol and took aim at the window.

Blue suddenly realised what Scarlet intended and pressed the button to close and seal the hatch. As the hatch slid home, Scarlet fired. The sound of the breaking glass was drowned by the roar of escaping air as the room depressurised, blowing loose items of equipment out into the empty void outside. Scarlet and Johanssen were dragged toward the window by the air pressure.

Closer and closer until finally Johanssen's body disappeared through the hole and began to fall to earth. Scarlet scrambled for a handhold to prevent himself from suffering the same fate. He grabbed for a stanchion and was just able to grasp it. Pulling himself upright, he could see out of the hole. The air pressure was decreasing now and he could hold on without too much trouble. Johanssen's body was already a tiny dot in the distance. A dot which at that moment exploded into a huge fireball, the same way that Captain Brown had before him.

"Strange," thought Scarlet to himself "It's not as cold as I would have expected. In fact, it's quite warm..." Slowly he became aware of a pink mist that seemed to appear from nowhere. Faint singing filled the air. Captain Scarlet had been so engrossed with the view that he had failed to notice

how thin and cold the air had become until it was too late. Gasping for breath, he lost consciousness and toppled out of the window.

CHAPTER FOUR

“How long was the President unconscious before he was discovered?” asked Jaeger, the Senior Consultant examining the unconscious figure of the President.

“We don't know for certain.” replied the registrar “The Guard said that he'd looked in on the President some time before and he'd been fine then.”

“Hm, I see.” said Jaeger thoughtfully. He picked up a sheaf of clinical notes and studied them. “Vital signs are still very weak. It's a good thing you put him onto life-support. I doubt that he'd have lasted this long without it.”

“Do you think he'll live sir?” asked the Registrar.

“It's too early to say as yet.” replied Jaeger “I've never seen anything like it. It's almost as if he's burnt out.”

“What do you think could have caused it?” asked the registrar as they turned to leave “Pressure of work perhaps?”

“I doubt it.” replied Jaeger, holding the door open for his younger colleague. “I've seen exhaustion before, but it's never been as bad as this. Perhaps you should ask him - if he recovers.”

With that, he cast a final glance at his patient and then closed the door.

The Security Guard snapped to attention as the two medical men left the room. “I shall be sending a nurse in to look after the President.” Jaeger informed the guard.

“Yes sir.” the guard acknowledged, saluting smartly. With that, the two medical men strode away down the corridor, leaving the guard to his solitary vigil.

Colonel White's hammering on the door had brought muttered curses as the Guard unlocked the door. Curses that died in his throat as his gaze fell upon Nielsen's body.

"Don't just stand there, man," White had thundered at the guard, standing open mouthed at the door "Do something!"

The tone of Colonel White's voice had shaken the guard from his shock. He fumbled for his radio and called for medical assistance.

Doctor Harvey had arrived five minutes later.

"He was dead before he hit the floor, Colonel." The doctor looked rather uncomfortable as he made his diagnosis.

"What was the cause of death, doctor?" asked White, glad that the doctor had done the decent thing and closed Nielsen's blankly staring eyes.

"I would say some kind of systemic poison, Colonel," replied the doctor "Though I'll have to wait for the results of the post-mortem examination to be certain. The question we must now ask ourselves is: How did he come to be poisoned?"

"I would have thought that that was obvious, doctor." White replied crossly "He was eating food from that plate."

Harvey wagged an admonitory finger "Tch, tch, one should never jump to conclusions, Colonel, it can lead to all sorts of trouble. For example, take my sister -" But White didn't hear him. An appalling thought had just occurred to him. His own words echoed and re-echoed in his mind. "He was eating food from that plate, that plate..." The very plate that had been intended for Captain Blue and himself!

"Anyway," Harvey concluded "I mustn't bore you any longer with family anecdotes. I do have other patients to see to, hopefully," He chuckled, "A bit livelier than Mr Nielsen there." with that, he picked up his hat and left, followed by the guard, closing and locking the door after him.

Colonel White fumed to himself. It was bad enough his defence lawyer dying in front of his eyes, having eaten food meant for his clients, without the doctor having to make a joke of it. On reflection, he mused, perhaps he had been rather hard in his judgement of the doctor. Although he, himself had had to come to terms with losing good men, even friends, to Death, that most relentless of enemies, it must be particularly hard for those whose training demanded that they battle to keep their patients alive no matter how long the odds. The joviality was just the doctor's way of coming to terms with it. He turned and gazed out of the window.

Dusk had fallen and the city was alive with a myriad of twinkling lights. The snowy peaks of the mountains glowed gently in the light of the moon, just beginning her nightly voyage across the trackless ocean of the night sky. As the red and purple hues of evening gave way to the velvet cloak of night, a red pin-point caught his eye. He shook his head sadly. "Mars, planet of War... And what a war!" he murmured quietly to himself.

Pensively, he continued to gaze at the brilliant glow above him. Suddenly, he noticed a small green glow just beside it. "Oh, it's just an aircraft." he thought to himself, "Probably going to land in a minute or so." But as he watched, he realised that the lights were stationary. Discounting helicopters and helijets, which wouldn't hover for so long without moving, left just one possibility...

Relief mixed with anger, White rummaged under a seat cushion, for his cap where he'd stuffed it when the guard came in. Putting it on, he pulled down the microphone. "This is Colonel White to Cloudbase." he snapped "Report your exact position."

Lieutenant Green was surprised to hear from Colonel White and especially in such an abrupt manner "Cloudbase is approximately ten miles from Geneva, Colonel." he replied. "Just as I thought." growled White. "Let me speak to Captain Scarlet."

"I'm afraid Captain Scarlet is dead, sir." replied Green

“How did it happen?” asked White

Green told him everything that Captain Blue had told him. When he had finished, White was satisfied that, at least, Cloudbase was still operational.

The broken window and equipment, lost when the room depressurised, could be replaced at leisure.

“Where's Captain Blue now?” asked White

“He and Destiny Angel are searching the area for Captain Scarlet.

The Spectrum Helicopter settled gently onto the snow-covered ground, the down-draught from its rotors kicking up a flurry of fresh snow. As the shimmering disc slowed down, Captain Blue jumped from the cockpit. “Tell Cloudbase that we've found him.” he called to Destiny Angel. He had to shout above the whine of the turbines.

“S.I.G.” She called back, smiling with relief. She was glad that Captain Blue had picked her to fly this mission.

Captain Blue shivered and pulled his parka more tightly around him. His footsteps crunched in the freshly fallen snow towards the huddled form of his friend. He'd known that the fall from forty thousand feet would make a terrible mess of Captain Scarlet's body, but his stomach still lurched when he turned the body over. It had been worse than usual. Steeling himself against his feelings, he unzipped the body bag that he'd brought with him and set to work.

Nearby, two pairs of eyes witnessed the scene. They had just had time to get under cover before the Spectrum Helicopter had swooped into the valley, its rotors slicing the silence of the night and echoing from the mountain peaks.

They saw Captain Blue finish his grisly task, pick up his burden and carry it to the waiting Helicopter. Moments later, the Spectrum Helicopter lifted

noisily into the air and flew away. As the sound of rotors faded away, the two watchers stood up.

"You know what you must do?" asked Captain Black, his voice a lifeless monotone.

"The Mysterion Instructions will be carried out." replied the newly created Mysterion.

With that, the two figures toiled up the snow-laden slopes to where Black's car was waiting behind a small outcrop of rock. They got in and drove away.

As the Spectrum Helicopter sped towards the comforting bulk of Cloudbase, Captain Blue opened a radio channel to Lieutenant Green. "We have recovered Captain Scarlet's body and are en route to Cloudbase." he reported "E. T. A. Twenty minutes."

"S.I.G." Acknowledged Green "Doctor Fawn is already standing by." "S.I.G." said Blue, breaking the channel.

Destiny knew, on seeing Blue's face as he climbed back into the helicopter, that Scarlet was in a bad way.

"Captain Scarlet, he will be all right?" Destiny had asked Blue.

"Don't worry, Destiny," Blue had reassured her "With a little help from Doctor Fawn, Captain

Scarlet will be back on his feet in no time."

That thought had served to comfort Destiny during the flight.

Blue, too was lost in thought. He wondered exactly how long Scarlet's injuries would take to heal. He had the distinct feeling that the shorter time that Captain Scarlet was out of action, the better.

Had anyone been able to look inside the engine compartment of the helicopter as it winged its way home, they might just have noticed two pale circles of light come to rest on the turbine casing before blinking out of

existence. The effect was dramatic. A turbine blade snapped off at the root and smashed its way through the casing, severing fuel lines and electrical circuits.

The first that the occupants of the helicopter knew was the dull thud as the fuel exploded

“Mon Dieu!” Destiny gasped “I have lost control!”

Indeed, the helicopter began to plunge earthwards, a long ribbon of flame and smoke streaming out behind.

As Destiny struggled with the controls, Blue desperately tried to contact Cloudbase. “This is Captain Blue to Cloudbase, come in Cloudbase.” No reply. Obviously, the radio had been damaged by the explosion.

Narrowly missing a mountain crag by inches, the blazing helicopter plummeted, like a barely guided missile, into a snow-filled valley. Seconds from impact, Destiny gave a final, desperate, pull on the controls. The nose of the helicopter began to rise as the madly spinning blades bit into the air once more and began to provide lift. But it was too little, too late. With a splintering crash, that echoed through the airframe, the tail clipped a tree top. The nose dipped again and the helicopter hit the ground, the landing skids snapping like matchwood. The wreck slid along the ground on its belly, ploughing a giant furrow in the snow and finally coming to rest in a snow-filled hollow.

Silence once more settled upon the valley.

Captain Blue was the first to regain consciousness. He offered a swift vote of thanks to the designers of the safety harness that had saved him from injury in the crash. He undid the harness and leaned over to check Destiny. She was still unconscious. There was a nasty looking gash on her forehead but fortunately it had stopped bleeding.

Once more he tried the radio. Nothing.

Pulling down the microphone, he tried his personal radio, built into his cap. Still no reply. "Perhaps the impact's damaged it," he thought. "I'll have to go for help."

Blue stood up and immediately fell to the deck with a gasp as the searing pain from his ankle lanced upward.

He sat up. To remove his boot to examine his ankle would be foolish. Even if only sprained, it would swell, preventing him from putting his boot back on. Walking barefoot in the snow, he knew, would be extremely foolhardy.

Gingerly, he stood up, using the back of his seat for support. Gently putting weight onto his foot, he decided that his ankle was badly sprained, rather than broken. With a bit of luck, his boot would help to support it. Limping painfully, he made his way back to the rear of the cabin to examine Scarlet's body.

Although he was not yet breathing, the worst of the cuts and abrasions had healed. Blue had never ceased to be amazed at his friend's recuperative powers. Once more he zipped up the bag and then slowly made his way to the exit.

A combination of the cold and the impact had jammed the hatch. Try as he might, Blue could not budge it. There was nothing for it, he decided, He would have to blow the hatch. Flipping open a panel marked 'EMERGENCY HATCH RELEASE', he pulled the handle inside.

With a sharp crack, small charges detonated, hurling the hatch free.

The concussion knocked an already shaky Blue off his feet. His ears rang as his head hit the bulkhead behind him. Gingerly, he put his hand to the back of his head and winced at the new pain to be added to his collection. His fingers came away sticky with blood. He grabbed his cap and feeling slightly sick and more than a little dizzy, carefully got to his feet. He stumbled, rather than climbed, out of the hatchway and fell into the snow, gasping as the icy air hit his lungs.

He sat up slowly, head pounding like a steam hammer. He got up and stumbled over to where the blown hatch lay. Laboriously, he dragged it back to the wreck and finally, after several attempts, managed to place it over the hatchway. At least now, he reasoned, Destiny would stay reasonably warm until he could bring back some help.

Still panting from his exertions, Blue looked around him at the valley floor. Apart from the wreckage of the helicopter, there were no signs of life in the valley. He looked higher up the hillside. Above him, he could see the lights of a building. Maybe he could find help there. Full of hope, he began the long, painful walk.

"Captain Blue, come in Captain Blue." Lieutenant Green was becoming worried. The helicopter was twenty minutes late already and there had been no message from either Captain Blue or Destiny Angel. Anxiously, he switched to the frequency allocated to the Emergency Locator Beacon, fitted to all Spectrum vehicles. Not a whisper. Obviously, something was wrong. Quickly, he opened a channel to Colonel White.

Colonel White stood gazing intently from the window. The flashing of his epaulettes, accompanied by a high pitched bleeping and his cap microphone dropping down into position alerted him that Lieutenant Green was calling him.

"Go ahead Lieutenant Green." White replied into the microphone.

"Colonel," Green said hurriedly "I've lost contact with the helicopter bringing Captain Scarlet's body back to Cloudbase."

"Slow down Lieutenant," said White calmly "Tell me everything that's happened, slowly and carefully."

"Well sir," Green's voice was steadier now, "Captain Blue called in forty minutes ago to say that he and Destiny had found Captain Scarlet's body and were bringing it back to Cloudbase. Since then, there's been no word at all."

"What about the Emergency Locator Beacon?" asked White

"I've already tried, Colonel," Green replied "There's no response at all."
"Launch Angels One, Two and Three, Lieutenant," White ordered, "Tell them to search a fifty-mile radius around the area where Captain Blue was last in contact and alert all Spectrum agents to look out for them. Keep me informed on their progress."

"S.I.G. Sir." Green replied. He closed the channel and pressed another button. "Angel One," he ordered "Immediate Launch!"

Within seconds the lead Angel's engine had reached full power, the deck clamps were released and with a blast of steam, the sleek fighter was catapulted along the flight deck into the air.

Lieutenant Green pressed another button. Down in the Amber Room, the other three Angels heard his order. "Angels Two and Three, Immediate Launch!"

Rhapsody and Symphony dashed across to their seats, picking up their helmets as they ran. As soon as they were seated, Hatches closed in front of them and their seats were quickly lifted into the remaining two Angel aircraft, still clamped to the flight deck. As soon as the seats had locked in position, the clear injector tubes retracted into the deck. Like Angel One before them, they throttled up to full power before being launched along the deck and into the air.

Within seconds they had climbed away from Cloudbase and joined Angel One.

Lieutenant Green's Voice was faint but clear in the Angels' headsets: "This is Cloudbase to all Angels. Proceed to designated search areas. Locate Spectrum helicopter containing Captain Blue, Captain Scarlet and Destiny Angel."

"S.I.G." acknowledged each girl in turn before banking and descending to begin the search. Powerful radar, housed in the needle-like prows of their

aircraft probed far ahead of them looking for the smallest sign of their friends. Even so, it would still take hours to find one small helicopter in the mountainous terrain beneath them.

Captain Blue was exhausted by the time he reached the chalet. The walk had been longer and the hillside steeper than he'd thought. The deep snow had made every step difficult. He was light-headed with concussion and the pain from his ankle.

The chalet was quite large, of classic Swiss design, its snow-covered roof clamped tightly down. A welcoming light glowed warmly over the front door and a gentle stream of smoke issued from the chimney.

Captain Blue smiled to himself as he approached the door. He'd be glad to sit down and warm himself by the fire and then ask the occupants if he could call for an ambulance for Destiny. Grasping the heavy iron knocker, Blue rapped on the door.

"Good evening," began Blue, as the door swung open. "My helicopter has crashed in the valley and I wonder if I might..." His voice tailed off as he recognised Grayson's face. Blue turned to run but his foot slipped on a patch of ice. He yelped as his ankle gave way under him and he crashed to the ground, groaning. His cap lay disregarded where it had fallen in a pool of shadow. Blue could only struggle weakly as Grayson first removed his gun and then half dragged him inside. Leaving Blue on the sofa, Grayson telephoned for the police.

Blue struggled to get up, but the pain from his ankle was too great. He sank back on the sofa as Grayson loomed over him.

"Well, my Spectrum friend," he sneered It looks as if you will be standing trial after all. He put his head back and laughed. The Plan could not possibly fail now.

For want of anything better to do, Colonel White stood at the window, gazing at the outside world. The airport traffic was much less now and

would soon cease altogether as the airport closed down for the night. Already, many of the smaller hangars were in darkness. Soon the rest would follow.

An Intercontinental Airlines Stratojet, the last few passengers having boarded, waited for the passenger terminal walkways to retract before slowly taxiing out across the apron and turning onto the end of the runway.

This late at night, take off permission was immediately granted and it began to roll along the runway, its brilliant take-off lights cutting a swathe through the darkness in front of it. Soon the nosewheels lifted, followed by the main undercarriage and the huge bulk of the aircraft was airborne. Soon it had disappeared from view.

Colonel White was hungry. He hadn't eaten since he'd left Cloudbase, seemingly an eternity ago. On the table behind him a tray of food lay untouched. Even though the poisoned meal, along with the unfortunate Nielsen's body, had been taken away for examination, he had no intention of risking the same fate.

With a click, the door was unlocked and pushed open. A squad of six armed guards entered followed by the Guard Commander.

"Colonel White," he announced "I am to take you under armed guard to the city Detention Centre where you will be held pending Court Martial." "I see." replied White levelly.

"I'm sorry, sir," the Commander added apologetically, but we do have our orders."

"I understand, Sergeant." replied White "But are those really necessary?" he asked indicating the handcuffs swinging from each guard's belt.

The sergeant considered for a moment before shaking his head "No, I can see that you won't cause any trouble. Right then," he said, steering White gently by the arm "Shall we go?" With all the dignity he could muster, Colonel White shook the sergeant's hand free.

"I am quite capable of making my own way, thank you." White rebuked him crossly.

"Sorry sir." apologised the sergeant.

He was about to lead the way when he noticed White's cap.

"I'm sorry sir, I must ask you to give me your cap." he said. White fumed and finally handed it over.

"Thank you, sir." smiled the sergeant, leading the way.

White fumed and then, followed by the guards, left the room.

The Police arrived within minutes and formally arrested a still muzzy Captain Blue on charges of Treason. After a police Surgeon had cleaned and dressed the worst of his cuts, he was bundled unceremoniously into a police van and driven away.

Grayson approached the police officer in charge. "Thank you for handling this matter so efficiently." he said. "I take it you have men out searching for his accomplices?"

"Don't worry sir," the officer reassured him "We've got a helijet out looking for them right now."

Indeed, at that moment, the crew of the police helijet had spotted the wreckage of the Spectrum helicopter. Whilst the observer relayed its position to headquarters, the pilot brought the helijet in to land beside the wreck. The powdery snow erupted upwards under the blast from the vertical jets and the helijet was momentarily enveloped in a white cloud. As the pilot set the engines to idle, the observer leaped out and ran across to the wreck. He clambered inside and checked the occupants. The girl, he decided, would be o. k., but the Spectrum captain would never be o. k again. He was cold to the touch and there was no sign of heartbeat. He heard a sound from the cockpit and went to investigate.

Destiny Angel opened her eyes to find a police officer looking down at her. "It's o.k. miss," he reassured her "You're safe now."

"Where is Captain Blue?" she asked hesitantly, fearing the worst

"He's being taken care of miss," the officer reassured her "He went to get help." He opened the first aid kit he was carrying and started to dress the wound.

"You're lucky," he informed her "It was only a flesh wound." He finished applying the dressing and closed the case.

"Merci." Destiny thanked him with a smile. The smile soon disappeared when she saw his face "I'm sorry, miss, but I must arrest you for being a member of a proscribed organisation. You are not obliged to say anything," he cautioned her "But anything you do say will be recorded and may be given in evidence."

Destiny was too shocked to reply. Silently, she let herself be led to the waiting helijet where she waited whilst Scarlet's body was collected and loaded aboard.

Mission complete, the Helijet lifted gently into the air and set course for Geneva, leaving the wreck of the helicopter like a discarded toy in the snow.

CHAPTER FIVE

Doctor Harvey was not a happy man. In all the years of his career, he'd never seen anything like it. When the body of the luckless Nielsen had been brought in for post mortem, he'd thought that the cause of death would be easy to find. That had been six hours ago, just before the doctor had been due to go home. Really, he should have left it until the morning, but he'd been so sure that he'd be able to have the answer within, at most, half an hour, that he'd started work. Since then, he'd carried out every test in the book and each one had been negative.

He pressed a key on his computer and a picture of the molecule that he'd been able to isolate from Nielsen's blood flashed onto the screen. It matched no known toxin on the toxicological databank. Once again, he pressed the key that asked the computer to analyse the origins of the toxin. Once again, he read the slip of paper that the computer had produced:

TEST SAMPLE 43/69/02:

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS:

CARBON

HYDROGEN

OXYGEN

NITROGEN

CHLORINE

OTHER ELEMENTS:

UNIDENTIFIED

IDENTIFICATION:

NEGATIVE

BIOLOGICAL MECHANISM:

UNKNOWN

SOURCE:

FOOD SAMPLE
PROVIDED

SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION:

UNKNOWN

Harvey sighed. This would mean more work, writing this lot up for the medical journals. He looked at his watch. Eleven fifteen. He was tempted to leave it until the morning, then thought better of it. He was so late now that another half hour wasn't going to make much difference. The dinner party he was supposed to have gone to would have finished by now.

Sadly, he set to work.

The report, strangely enough, caused him less trouble than the post mortem. Basically, he just had to sort the results into a coherent form, write up some background notes and a covering letter to the editor. He waited for the last sheet to come out of the printer, signed it with a flourish and stood up. That was finally it, he told himself, he was definitely going home this time.

He took off his lab coat just as the door was pushed open by a hospital porter, whistling to himself and wheeling in a large trolley. On the trolley was a blanket-shrouded form.

"Another customer for yer." the porter said cheerily "Helicopter crash. Where d'you want it?" Harvey sighed wearily "Put it on the slab please," indicating the one next to the slab on which Nielsen's body lay. "I'll deal with it in the morning." He looked at his watch again. Eleven forty-five. It very nearly WAS morning

"Right y'are then." the porter replied lifting the body onto the slab.

"Right then," he said "I'll see you in the morning." With that, he wheeled his trolley out of the door. His tuneless whistling echoed down the empty corridor.

Harvey sighed to himself. Where on earth did they get porters from these days? Shaking his head sadly, he strolled over to the slab on which the blanket-covered form lay. He lifted the shroud from the corpse's face. Strange, for someone who'd been killed in a helicopter crash, his face was remarkably unmarked. "Ah well", he thought to himself, "It'll keep until

morning." With that, he let the shroud fall back over the corpse's head, picked up his coat and hat from the coat hook behind the door and left, wondering what excuse he could give his wife this time.

Angel Two banked gently round and commenced another sweep. For what must have been hours, the aircraft criss-crossed the search area. Ultra-sensitive instruments, mounted in the nosecone of each aircraft, probed for the smallest clue as to the position of the missing helicopter. Rhapsody Angel pulled back slightly on her control column. Obediently, her aircraft rose over an approaching ridge. Once clear of the obstacle, she pushed gently forward and the aircraft swept down into a snow filled valley. Rhapsody yawned. It had been a long night. At that moment, her radar contacted something small and metallic on the valley floor. As she got closer, she was finally able to identify the object. She turned for a second look. There was no doubt about it.

Triumphantly, all feelings of tiredness gone, she called Cloudbase: "Angel Two to Cloudbase. Have located Spectrum helicopter. Position International Fix System Two Zero Two Four."

"S.I.G." Lieutenant Green acknowledged cheerfully.

He pressed a switch, opening a channel to all the Angels. "All Angels return to Cloudbase. He waited to receive an acknowledgement from each girl in turn before opening a channel to Captains Grey and Ochre, waiting patiently in another Spectrum helicopter down on the flight deck

"This is Control to Captain Grey. Spectrum helicopter located at I. F. S. Two Zero Two Four."

"S.I.G." acknowledged Grey, starting the helicopter's engines.

Soon the helicopter had lifted off from Cloudbase and set course on its errand of mercy. Within minutes, flying at maximum speed, the three Angel aircraft swooped out of the darkness. One by one, they approached the flight deck and prepared to land, decelerating by means of retro rockets

and pitching up into a nose-high attitude. Whilst this happened, the launch deck rose gently on hydraulic rams to meet the incoming aircraft. As soon as each aircraft made contact, clamps engaged, locking it to the deck which then gently descended once more. Within a minute, Rhapsody and Symphony were once more in the Amber Room below. Harmony, as lead Angel, once more waited in her aircraft.

A shaft of moonlight streamed through the window of the dark, deserted mortuary and fell upon the shrouded figure on the slab, illuminating it in a ghostly blue-white light.

The ghost analogy was even more apt as the figure sat bolt upright. The shroud fell away from Captain Scarlet's face and he looked around him

"Obviously not Cloudbase," he mused "I wonder where I am." He shivered and realised he was naked under the shroud. Pulling it tighter for warmth, he looked around him. On the coat hook behind the door, he saw Harvey's Lab Coat. "Better than nothing, I suppose." thought Scarlet to himself, trying it on. The result was a far from perfect fit, Scarlet was at least six inches taller than the doctor, at least he wouldn't be quite so conspicuous but his bare feet might arouse some comment. Fortunately, there were some overshoes, also behind the door.

The corridor outside, though brightly illuminated was deserted, as Scarlet found when he cautiously peered outside. Then he noticed a sign on the door opposite: PATHOLOGY LABORATORY. So, he was in hospital, though how he came to be there instead of Cloudbase Sickbay was still a mystery. Picking a direction more-or-less at random, he walked cautiously up the corridor. As luck would have it, the first door he came across bore the legend: MALE CHANGING. Perhaps he'd be able to find some clothes in there.

Gently, he pushed the door open and peered inside. The room was in darkness. He entered and closed the door behind him. Finding the light switch, he turned it on and started to rummage through the lockers. Of his own uniform, there was no sign, but he managed to find a passable suit and

shoes. He looked at the now discarded Lab coat. It would make a pretty good disguise in a hospital. Someone walking the corridors this late at night was bound to be questioned by an inquisitive nurse. But not, he reasoned, if that person were, or at least appeared to be, a doctor.

The coat he'd 'borrowed' was far too small. He'd just have to find another. Another few minutes of looking through the lockers turned up a lab coat of the right size. Scarlet put it on and stepped out into the corridor.

The Spectrum helicopter settled gently beside the wreckage pin-pointed by Rhapsody Angel. Captain Ochre winced when he saw the gaping hole punched out by the explosion.

Captain Grey had already seen it and pulled down his cap microphone.

"Captain Grey to Cloudbase." he began "We have located Spectrum Helicopter. It looks as if they were forced down by engine failure.

No signs of life, so far. Will call again when we have investigated further."

"S.I.G." acknowledged Lieutenant Green.

Captain Ochre shut down the engines and followed by Captain Grey, disembarked from the helicopter. Carefully, they made their way towards the wreckage.

The moon was just dipping below the mountain peaks now and the two Spectrum officers had to use torches to examine the hulk.

"What do you think?" Grey asked Ochre, the more aviation minded of the two "It looks like turbine failure." replied Ochre "Destiny did a good job getting it down in one piece."

Presently they came to the hatch. From the slight buckling of the edges and the scorch marks on the paintwork, they could tell that the hatch had been blown free then, for whatever reason, placed back over the hole.

"At least one of them got out o.k." commented Ochre, stepping inside, leaving Grey waiting outside. Ochre came back out almost immediately

"They've gone." he informed Grey. "What about Captain Scarlet's body?" asked Grey

"That's gone too." replied Ochre, climbing out. As he did so, the beam of his torch fell on a footprint in the snow, the first of a long trail, leading away up the hillside. Captain Grey opened a channel to Cloudbase "The helicopter's deserted, but we've found some tracks leading away from it. We'll follow them and see if we can find the others. They were probably rescued by someone who saw them come down."

[Up in the Cloudbase Control Room, Lieutenant Green acknowledged the call. "Good luck." he added before signing off.

Technically, it was against Spectrum communications regulations, but Green had the feeling that his colleagues would need all the luck they could get.

The cell was small, windowless and furnished with only the bare minimum, a two tier bunk, a table and a couple of chairs. A door led into the small room, more of an alcove, in which the WC, wash basin and shower cubicle were to be found. The only light came from a bare bulb, protected by armoured glass, recessed into the ceiling.

Colonel White looked at his watch: Three fifteen. He'd been in the cell, beneath the main Hall of Justice for more than three hours. Food had been brought, of course, but he still did not dare touch it.

His guards had been as good as their word, they hadn't bound him, but he knew that it would be foolish to try and escape. He'd just have to put up with whatever his captors did to him until he could think of a way out of this mess.

Wearily, he eased himself onto the lower bunk. The springs in the mattress groaned slightly under his weight as he lay back and closed his eyes. He was just drifting off into sleep when he was disturbed by the sound of the cell door being unlocked.

Quickly he sat upright, all ideas of sleep forgotten. The door creaked open and in marched a prison Warder "Got some company for you." he informed White with a grin. He looked back over his shoulder. "O. K. lads, you can wheel 'em in." he called. Two police officers, one supporting Captain Blue as he hobbled in, the other escorting Destiny Angel, entered the cell.

"Captain Blue! Destiny Angel!" White exclaimed as he noticed the cuts and bruises each was suffering "What happened?"

"We'll be fine, Colonel," replied Blue "Our helicopter crashed."

The police officer supporting Blue helped him onto one of the chairs, Destiny took the other. The police officers and Prison Warder left, closing and locking the door behind them. "Crashed? What do you mean, crashed?" White asked in surprise. Spectrum technicians were the élite; They took pride in their skill at maintaining Spectrum's fleet of vehicles and aircraft

"I do not know, Colonel." Destiny replied "One moment, we were flying back to Cloudbase with Captain Scarlet's body, the next there was an explosion and I could not control the helicopter..."

"DON'T TOUCH THAT!" White's voice carried a note of urgency that Destiny had never heard before. She pulled her hand back, as if stung, from the plate of food that she'd been about to sample.

"There is every reason to believe that the food we have been given has been poisoned." White explained "A poison so deadly that it kills within seconds."

"How can you be so sure, Colonel?" asked Captain Blue.

"Some time after you left with Mr Johanssen," began White "I had a visit from a man called Nielsen, who informed me that he was to be Defence Counsel for you and myself. That and the fact that Mr Johanssen had let slip about the Director-General of the United Asian Republic, a case that had never been released to the media, suggested to me that our Mr Johanssen was in fact a Mysteron Booby Trap, with the aim of destroying Cloudbase."

"Your message only just reached us in time, Colonel." Blue replied

"But what about the food?" asked Destiny

"Unfortunately for Mr. Nielsen, he had missed breakfast so he helped himself to the food that was intended for us. He died instantly. His body is now awaiting post mortem."

"Mon Dieu!" Destiny gasped, putting her hand to her mouth.

Silence descended on the three. The same appalling thought struck them. Someone was trying to kill them. But who? And why?

The problem with hospitals, Captain Scarlet decided, was that there weren't enough corridor plans. "Maybe the designers of this place ought to try and find their way out." He said to himself. So far, there had been no signs of life, not even a porter he could ask for directions. As he approached a door, he could hear voices. Perhaps it was a staff room or something. He knocked on the door. No reply. He knocked again. Still no reply, though the voices were definitely coming from the other side of the door.

He tried the door. It opened revealing a darkened room, the only illumination being from a television screen in the corner. Scarlet found the light switch and pressed it. Revealed by the light was an assortment of easy chairs and low tables with magazines and newspapers strewn carelessly across their tops. A set of French windows, presently curtained, led out into what would be a small garden. This was obviously a day room, probably for some of the patients. A brief burst of music attracted Scarlet's attention back to the television.

"Good morning," the Newsreader began. "Here is the news at three o'clock. Concern is growing over the health of the World President.

He was found by one of his security guards and rushed to Geneva General Hospital, where he was placed on life support.

We can now take you over, live, to the hospital for an up-to-the-minute report.”

The scene changed to an outside view of the hospital, bathed in the glow from spotlights set into the lawn around it. The Reporter was standing next to one of the presidential security guards, who was looking rather nervous in the glare of world publicity.

“An informed source, close to the Government,” the reporter began “Stated that the President is now off of the danger list, but his condition remains poorly. I have with me Sergeant Frank Harker, one of the Presidential guards. Now Sergeant,” the reporter said, turning to Harker “Will you tell us, in your own words, exactly what happened?”

Nurse Daniels' instructions had been very clear on one point in particular: on no account was she to administer any treatment to the patient without a doctor present. Since Jaeger had left those instructions, some two hours had elapsed and it was time for the patient to receive another injection.

Of Jaeger there had been no sign. With a sigh, Nurse Daniels had decided that, under the circumstances, ANY doctor would do so she'd set out to look for one.

As she left the patient's room, the guard, waiting outside snapped to attention.

“I'm going to fetch a doctor so that we can administer treatment to the President.” she informed him.

“Very good, miss.” The guard acknowledged. She shuddered at the sight of his rifle then walked away down the corridor.

“Thank you very much, sergeant.” The reporter continued, turning back to face the camera. “I'll now hand you back to the studio.”

"Thank you." the Newsreader acknowledged. "Earlier this evening, we were able to interview Senator Charles Grayson, front runner in the Presidential election campaign."

The scene shifted to a plush office. Grayson was sitting at ease in his high-backed leather upholstered chair. "It was good of you to see us, Senator." the interviewer began "I'm aware that you are a very busy man."

"Yes, indeed." Grayson replied "Particularly now that the World Security Council has put me in charge of bringing those Spectrum traitors to justice."

Scarlet sighed and shook his head sadly. Grayson could never resist an opportunity to smear Spectrum.

Nurse Daniels was getting agitated; she could not seem to find a doctor anywhere. As she approached a day room, she saw that the light was on. Putting her head round the door, she saw a white coat. She didn't care who it was, they would do.

Captain Scarlet's thoughts were interrupted when he heard a woman's voice behind him. "Excuse me Doctor..."

The interview with Grayson came to an end and the Newsreader carried on with the next story "Earlier this evening, two members of the banned paramilitary organisation, Spectrum, were arrested after an abortive attempt to assassinate Senator Charles Grayson, who has been an outspoken critic of the Organisation. The Senator, who was not at home at the time of the attack, is said to have been shocked by the audacity of the attack. It is thought that the assault failed when the helicopter, carrying the Spectrum terrorists, crashed in a valley close to Grayson's cottage, killing one and injuring the other two."

Scarlet, however, was unable to see any of this. He was being led, down a corridor, by a desperate nurse Daniels. For all her youth and lack of size, she was a force to be reckoned with. "Now look, nurse..." Scarlet protested

to no avail. He stopped himself. To blow his cover now could be dangerous. This nurse could bring security troops down around his ears.

"Now look, nothing!" she snapped back, dragging him by the wrist. The President needs his treatment and I'm going to make sure he gets it!"

The cottage was in darkness when Captains Grey and Ochre reached it. They had followed the footsteps from the crash site and been led here.

"It looks deserted." Grey observed.

"I'm going to look around the back." said Ochre

"S.I.G." replied Grey. "Be careful!" he added as an afterthought

"Yeah, don't worry." replied Ochre with a smile. Carefully, he picked his way around the side of the cottage. All the windows were closed and in darkness. Finally, Ochre reached the back garden. It was much darker now that the moon had set and he found it necessary to use his torch. Suddenly he froze. A pair of golden eyes were staring at him. Obviously, some kind of guard dog, perhaps a Doberman or Rottweiler. Very slowly, he drew his pistol and prepared to fire.

"Good boy." he called to the creature. He blinked and the golden eyes disappeared, to be replaced by a pale blur running towards him. His finger tightened on the trigger then relaxed as the furry form purred and rubbed itself around his legs. A cat!

Ochre realised that he'd been holding his breath and let it out in a rush. He put his gun away and bent down to pick the animal up. It appeared to be a pedigree Persian, little more than a kitten. It purred contentedly as he tickled it gently under the chin.

The cat leapt from his hands, startled by the high-pitched tone and the flashing of his epaulettes as his cap microphone dropped into position.

"Go ahead Captain Grey." Ochre acknowledged. The cat had decided to show off a little. It walked slowly away then lay down and rolled over onto his

back, front paws drawn up to his chin, back legs splayed apart. It looked appealingly at Ochre.

"Are you o.k.?" Grey asked. "I was expecting you back by now."

"Er Yeah, I had a close encounter with a cat." Ochre replied

"A cat?" there was a note of disbelief in Grey's voice

"Yeah, a cat. Big fluffy Persian. A pedigree one by the looks of it." replied Ochre "Still no signs of life." he continued "I guess we'll have to..."

The cat had decided that it was cold. It got up, strolled over to the patch of ground under the kitchen window, gathered itself, then sprang for the window that had conveniently been left open for it.

Captain Ochre became aware that Grey was calling him.

"Sorry about that." he apologised. "The cat's just shown me the way in. Give me two minutes. I'll let you in through the front."

"S.I.G." replied Grey.

Gingerly, Captain Ochre opened the window further and climbed in. By torchlight, he picked his way through to the front of the house, the cat trailing happily at his heels. Ochre opened the front door to admit Captain Grey.

Grey entered but left the door on the latch, in case a hurried exit was required. "What are we looking for?" asked Ochre as they began to search

"We know that at least Captain Blue or Destiny managed to make their way here," replied Grey "We have to try and find out what happened to them."

The inside of the house was immaculate. "In fact," thought Captain Grey, "It's more like a museum exhibit." Indeed, although there was a well-stocked larder, there were no signs that anyone ever used the contents. There were no empty food containers in any of the bins and the waste- paper basket

was also empty. In fact, the only apparent inhabitant of the cottage was the cat, presently busy grooming himself.

Eventually, the two Spectrum Officers found themselves back in the lounge. There had been no evidence whatsoever that their colleagues had visited this place.

"Hey, what's this?" Grey asked, as he picked up one of the photographs from the lid of the piano. By chance, it happened to be the photograph, taken a few weeks before, of the skiing party.

"Do you recognise him?" he asked as Ochre looked at the portrait.

Ochre nodded. "At least we now know who this place belongs to. But who are the others?" Although wrapped up warm against the snow, the father figure in the photograph was Senator Charles Grayson.

The sound of an approaching car made further investigation impossible. The two officers ran from the house, slamming the door behind them. It would be dangerous to be discovered in the Senator's private cottage.

As Grey sprinted for the cover of some shrubs, his foot slipped on a patch of ice and he fell sprawling. As he hit the ground, he noticed a scrap of blue. Without thinking, he grabbed for the object and dived the last few feet into the bushes, landing on Captain Ochre. The car sped into the drive, the beams from its headlights sweeping over the area so recently occupied by Captain Grey. The car came to a halt, its lights were doused and silence returned as the sole occupant switched off the engine.

From behind the bush, Grey and Ochre watched as the driver got out of the car and let himself into the cottage.

"Phew, that was close." panted Captain Ochre

"Yeah, too close." replied Captain Grey, reaching inside his tunic for the bundle that he'd picked up and stuffed there|

"So, Captain Blue was here." said Ochre, looking at Blue's cap that Grey held in his hands. "Yeah," agreed Grey "If Grayson was here when Captain Blue arrived, he'd have had him arrested. Captain Blue has walked straight into a trap."

"Let's get back to the helicopter." suggested Ochre.

"Good idea." agreed Grey.

On Cloudbase, a light flashed on Lieutenant Green's console. "Go ahead Captain Grey." he acknowledged.

"We have followed the footprints to a cottage owned by Senator Grayson." Captain Grey began. "There were no signs of life, but Captain Blue was there, we found his cap.

"I can confirm that." replied Green. "Spectrum agents report that Captain Blue and Destiny Angel have been arrested and taken to the main Hall of Justice in Geneva. They are being held on charges of attempted murder, brought by Senator Grayson himself."

"That figures." muttered Grey "That guy's out to try and crucify us." A thought had been nagging at Captain Ochre:

"We saw a photograph in the cottage of Grayson with a young woman, aged about thirty and a couple of children." He said into his own microphone. "Do records have any family details on him?"

"Hold on." Green replied. He accessed the relevant computer. Within a fraction of a second, it had scanned through its memory. The print-out was brief:

~~~~~  
INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE -

CONSULT WORLD GOVERNMENT DATABASE, GENEVA  
~~~~~

"I'm sorry." Green apologised as he passed the information to his colleagues. "I'll pass on any more information that becomes available."

"S.I.G." Grey and Ochre acknowledged before closing the channel. Captain Grey was puzzled by Ochre's request for information.

"Why the interest in Grayson's family life?" he asked as they began to trudge down the hillside towards the helicopter

"We searched that house from top to bottom, right?" began Ochre

"Right." agreed Grey.

"That was quite definitely a family home."

"So?"

"So where were the family?" asked Ochre

"Away for the weekend, perhaps?" suggested Grey.

"The place was too neat, too tidy for a family, no matter how tidy, especially one with children. That place was like a museum. You know, where they show what life was like years ago"

"I thought that." agreed Grey "But I'm still not sure what you're getting at."

"Neither am I." sighed Ochre "I thought that the information might help. Perhaps we ought to go to Geneva.

"I agree." replied Grey "But not in this." he indicated as they boarded the helicopter. "It's far too conspicuous and vulnerable to anti-aircraft missiles. We'll requisition an S.P.V."

"I'd hardly call an S.P.V. inconspicuous." pointed out Captain Ochre, starting the helicopter's engines."

"I know," replied Grey, "But it's a good deal tougher."

Indeed, the Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle could take just about any punishment thrown at it and if necessary, dish it out by means of a high-powered cannon, normally concealed within the front part of the vehicle.

Captain Ochre could see the logic in this. With a deft touch on the controls, the helicopter rose gently from the ground and set course, away from the lights of Geneva, towards the hiding place of the nearest S.P.V.; a filling station near the mouth of the Trans-Alpine tunnel.

Duvall, the owner of the station, a small, balding man in his fifties was glad to see them. Since the closure of the tunnel, through traffic and hence business, had been minimal.

Captain Grey wasted no time. "Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle Three Two Four, please." he requested.

"Identification please, M'sieu." Duvall was taking no chances. Captain Grey showed him his pass.

"Merci." said Duvall, pressing a concealed switch under the cash register.

With a smooth whine of machinery, the building containing the car wash slid backwards, revealing a large rectangular hole in the concrete hardstanding. A concealed lift whirled into action bringing the silvery-blue bulk of the S.P.V. up from its underground garage.

Captain Grey had one more request of Duvall.

"Do you have any paint spraying equipment?" he asked him

"Yes M'sieu, it is kept in the paint shop."

"What's the idea?" asked Captain Ochre, puzzled by the strange request.

"Those," replied Grey, indicating the Spectrum Badges emblazoned on each side of the S.P.V., "Are a dead giveaway. I'm going to spray them out, to make us slightly less conspicuous. With luck, anyone seeing us will think that the S.P.V. has been captured by the Army."

The job took about ten minutes in all. Because the large bulk of the S.P.V. prevented it from entering the paint shop, the spraying had to be carried out outside, by torchlight. Not a brilliant job, Grey would have been the first to admit, but it would do. Fortunately, Duvall had carried out some minor maintenance on the S.P.V. a week or so before, so he still had some paint left over.

“Good luck M'sieu.” Duvall called after them as the S.P.V. rolled across the garage forecourt, its headlights brilliantly illuminating the road in front of it. It turned onto the main road towards Geneva.

Duvall waited until the tail lamps of the S.P.V. had disappeared before making his way back to his office to report.

“Spectrum Agent Two Two Seven to Cloudbase”, he dictated into a hidden microphone on his desk. “Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle Three Two Four requisitioned by Captains Grey and Ochre at 0345 hours.”

Once under way, Captain Grey reported to Cloudbase.

“Captain Grey to Cloudbase.” he began. “Captain Ochre and I have requisitioned S.P.V. and are en-route to Geneva.”

“S.I.G.” came the acknowledgement from Lieutenant Green.

A few minutes later, the S.P.V. reached a fork in the road.

Through their TV monitors, by means of which they saw the road ahead, whilst sitting backwards in the S.P.V., the two Spectrum Officers could see the road sign just before the fork.

The road to the left led to Geneva, via the mountains. The other arrow on the sign, pointing to the right-hand fork, again indicated Geneva, this time via the Trans Alpine Tunnel, a much shorter route. This road, however had a large TUNNEL CLOSED sign blocking it.

“Well,” said Captain Ochre “It looks as if we'll have to take the Mountain route.”

"Oh no we won't!" replied Grey "Hold on." with that, he gunned the engine of the S.P.V. which surged forward.

The sign never stood a chance. With a splintering crash, the S.P.V. hit it dead on, shattering it and sending slivers of wood flying in all directions. The S. P. V sped on as if nothing had happened.

As they approached the tunnel, they both noticed something strange about it. "Strange," said Captain Ochre, "I thought these tunnels were illuminated."

"They were." agreed Grey "But since they were closed, there was obviously no need to keep the lights on.

The brilliant beams from its lights lancing through the sable blackness within the tunnel, the S.P.V. sped towards Geneva.

CHAPTER SIX

Nurse Daniels busied about her tasks, a bemused Captain Scarlet watching her. Since he had little idea about what she was doing, he agreed with any suggestions she made. Scarlet picked up the consultant's notes and read through them. A lot of the notes went straight over his head. "I need Doctor Fawn to make sense of this lot," he thought to himself.

One thing that was clear, though, was that the World President was now off the danger list, his comatose state had reverted to normal unconsciousness.

He gazed at the sleeping form of the President. The face that had looked so tense and drawn on the video screens had relaxed and looked years younger.

Scarlet's train of thought was interrupted by a muttered curse from the nurse. "I'm sorry nurse, you were saying?" said Scarlet hurriedly.

"This vial is empty," she replied "I distinctly asked for a new one. I'll have to get a new one from the Dispensary." with that, she left.

As the door closed, a sound came from the bed. The President stirred slowly. Scarlet moved over to his bedside.

As the President regained consciousness, he became aware of a face hovering above him. NO! not that face. He opened his mouth to scream in fear and loathing, then let his breath out slowly. His vision had cleared and that face had faded to be replaced by that of a stranger. Yet, in a strange way, he felt as if he knew the face from somewhere. His memory was vague and cloudy and eluded him, yet he knew that this was the face of a friend. He became aware that the face was speaking to him. "Mr President, Mr President." Scarlet's voice echoed and re-echoed inside his head. "Can you hear me?"

The President opened his mouth to reply, but no sound would come. With an effort, he managed to nod. His dry tongue scraped over parched lips. Scarlet suddenly realised the reason for the President's muteness; He was thirsty. Hurriedly, Scarlet looked around the room. There was a small jug of water and a glass on the locker beside the President's bed. Hurriedly, he filled the glass and then gently tilted it to the President's lips. "Easy, sir, easy." Scarlet advised him as he gulped down the liquid. "More?" Scarlet asked as the last few drops drained from the glass. At a nod from the President, Scarlet refilled the glass and again put it to his lips.

Scarlet took the empty glass away and placed it carefully on the locker before helping the President to sit upright.

"Th-thank you." said the President weakly. He looked slowly about him. "Where am I?" he asked weakly

"You're in hospital." Scarlet informed him. "One of your bodyguards found you unconscious in your office. Do you remember anything before that?"

The President winced, the all-too familiar pain, like fire, seared through his skull. "Are you all right, sir?" asked Scarlet worriedly.

"I... have... a... headache." the President gasped, slumping back onto the bed.

Scarlet could only watch, powerless to help, as the President writhed in agony, wave after wave of agonising pain racking his tortured body.

"What's that ahead?" Captain Ochre had been the first to notice the faint glint of something further up the tunnel reflecting the headlights of the S.P.V.

"Let's take a look." replied Grey, slowing the vehicle.

As they got closer, a myriad tiny reflections sparkled, as if a million tiny fireflies were on the road in front of them.

As the S.P.V. came to rest, all was revealed. Brilliantly illuminated by the headlights, a twisted pile of scorched metal, the remains of a family saloon car, its nose buried in the rocky wall of the tunnel.

The two Spectrum Officers descended from the S.P.V., its metal skin gleaming softly in the light reflected from the walls of the tunnel.

Broken glass, the remains of the car windows, crunched under their boots. The sound echoed eerily in the tunnel.

As they approached, they could see that the car had been gutted by fire. Both men felt their stomachs lurch when they saw the inside of the car. The four occupants were burned beyond recognition.

Captain Grey found himself hoping that death had been instantaneous.

As he turned away from the wreck, he noticed a yellow gleam on the road in front of him. He walked slowly towards it.

Picking it up, he brushed the dirt from it. It was a car registration plate, the holes in it indicating that it had been torn free when the car had crashed.

"What have you found?" asked Captain Ochre, noticing the plate in Grey's hand.

"It looks like the registration plate from the car." replied Grey, pulling his cap microphone into position "I'll ask Lieutenant Green to run a check on it."

"We can't." replied Ochre "Radio can't penetrate this deep into the mountains. We'll have to wait until we're out of the tunnel."

Sheepishly, Grey allowed the microphone to swing back up to the peak. Since there was nothing further they could do for the luckless passengers of the car, they once again took their seats.

Quickly, the seats jacked themselves into position on the hatches which then slid shut. Captain Grey gently manoeuvred the bulk of the S.P.V. around the tangled wreckage before accelerating away down the tunnel, its tail

lights turning the wreck to the colour of blood. A colour which faded and died as the vehicle disappeared into the distance.

After what seemed hours, but really only minutes, the attack passed off. The World President lay on the bed, eyes shut, breathing shallowly. Slowly, he opened his eyes again.

"How long have you been having attacks like that?" asked Scarlet

"I... can't... remember." answered the President weakly.

"Please try to remember." Scarlet urged "It's vital."

The President racked his brains. Nothing

"I'm sorry." he apologised "I can't remember."

"Well," asked Scarlet, trying a different approach "What's the last thing that you can remember?"

The President thought for a moment.

"I seem to recall," he began slowly "A large conference in Bermuda."

Scarlet remembered it well. After the Mysterons had threatened to destroy the conference, Spectrum had been asked to ensure the safety of the delegates. On this occasion, however, they had only just succeeded. The Mysteronised tanker aircraft had crashed into the conference hotel just seconds after evacuation had been completed.

"Do you recall what happened?" asked Scarlet.

The President concentrated once more.

"There was some threat to the conference." the President said slowly as his memory drifted slowly back. His brow furrowed with concentration. "Some force called the Mys... Mys..." He faltered.

"Mysterons?" ventured Scarlet helpfully.

"That's it!" the President smiled "The Mysterons. I asked Spectrum to ensure the safety of the delegates." His memory was beginning to clear at last." I think they succeeded too." he added as an afterthought.

"They did." confirmed Scarlet.

The President smiled weakly "I really must go and see them to pass on my thanks and congratulations."

"Strange," thought Scarlet to himself "He has no memory of the last three months." He noticed, too, that the President had lost the harsh tones of late. In fact, he was more like he used to be.

Scarlet decided to take a risk. "Then tell me sir," he ventured "Why did you decide to ban Spectrum?"

The change in the President was startling. Slumping back onto the bed, eyes staring, the very life seemed to drain from his face.

"We have humoured these deluded individuals in their castle in the air for far too long." He stated in a lifeless voice. "It's time we stopped their fantasies about Alien Attacks from Mars." His voice tailed off. He lay motionless, eyes staring blankly at the ceiling.

Scarlet passed a hand in front of the President's eyes. Nothing, no reaction at all. He was about to shake the President, then paused.

The words uttered by the President sounded so familiar. He'd heard them only recently. Suddenly he had it. Scarlet leaned over the President and looked deep into his eyes.

"Who told you?" he asked "Was it Grayson?"

Was there a faint flicker of recognition deep within? Scarlet tried again.

"Grayson." he said, louder. This time there was definitely a flicker, the eyes narrowing momentarily.

Scarlet knew that, if he were to try any further questioning on the subject, he could push the President over the edge into an abyss of screaming madness.

He sat back, lost in thought. Perhaps Doctor Fawn would be able to find a cure for whatever it was that had afflicted the President. He'd have to find a way of getting him to Cloudbase.

His thoughts were interrupted by the door opening. Expecting the nurse, he turned back to gaze at the patient.

"Thank you, doctor. That will be all." Scarlet turned his head slowly towards the visitor.

The voice had been horrifyingly familiar; he'd heard it many times before. One glance confirmed it. GRAYSON!

Scarlet decided to bluff. "I'm afraid that no visitors are allowed. The President is a very sick man."

"Indeed?" Grayson raised a surprised eyebrow. "I was given to understand that the President was off of the danger list."

"Even so, Senator-" Scarlet began

"Anyway," Grayson continued, ignoring Scarlet's interruption, "When I asked Jaeger, the specialist, how the President was, he suggested that I should come and see for myself."

Scarlet knew he was beaten. "Very well then, but I must ask you to keep it as short as possible." A check with the consultant would probably result in his cover being blown and subsequent arrest on who-knew-what trumped up charge. He stood.

"Thank you so much, doctor." The smile on Grayson's face sent a chill up Scarlet's spine. A chill and what else? A momentary feeling of sickness passed over Scarlet as he left the room.

Could it be...?

Scarlet had made a mental note, whilst watching the News in the day room, to find and have a friendly chat with the guard who had discovered the President's comatose form and try to discover whether the President had received any visitors before his attack. Since his interview with the President, Scarlet knew that this was, indeed, the case. He also had a pretty good idea of who that visitor was, but he needed proof. Scarlet knew now that he would definitely have to speak to the guard.

He'd been on duty outside the door of the President's room when Nurse Daniels had taken Scarlet in to look at him. Now, however, he'd been replaced.

The replacement snapped to attention as Scarlet approached. The man was a lot younger than Scarlet, a fact that the Spectrum officer put to good use.

"Where's the other guard," barked Scarlet "The one you relieved?"

"I, ah, well, that is he said something about going down to the cafeteria for a drink." stammered the guard under Scarlet's ferocious stare.

Fortunately, Scarlet had seen signs for the cafeteria on his way up here, so he knew where it was.

"Thanks!" he called back over his shoulder as he sprinted down the corridor.

The guard shook his head wearily. These doctors were all the same. Yell at you one minute, thank you the next. At least you knew where you were in the Army. At least, you did when the politicians kept their bright ideas to themselves. He watched bemused as the young doctor that had just asked him where his mate was ran straight into a much older one, bowling him over.

"And where do you think you're going young man?" fumed Jaeger as he picked himself up from the floor.

It was Scarlet's turn to stammer. "I er, that is, the cafeteria."

"Hmph!" snorted the consultant "Most people I know tend to run away from the place. What's going on? Are they about to shoot the cook?"

"Er no sir." replied Scarlet "I have to meet someone down there."

"Jaeger raised his eyes heavenwards. If only these young housemen would reserve that sort of thing for their spare time. On reflection, hadn't HE been just the same in his days as a houseman?

He sighed. "Go on then. I can't be bothered to reprimand you now. I have a very important patient to treat. But don't let me catch you running in the corridor again." As he turned away to walk towards the President's room.

"No sir. Thank you, sir." Scarlet called after him before turning the corner and sprinting for the lift.

Jaeger heard the distant sound of running footsteps and sighed. That young man was going to end up in a lot of trouble one day.

As the lift doors slid shut, Scarlet breathed a sigh of relief. The man he'd just bumped into was obviously the consultant under whom the President was being treated. Fortunately, he'd assumed from Scarlet's manner that he was a newly-qualified doctor.

It would have been interesting, Scarlet thought, to follow the consultant to the President's room and see his reaction to Grayson's presence there. However, without a reasonable explanation, that was going to arouse the consultant's suspicions. Scarlet's luck had held for too long already. No. It would be better if Scarlet carried on with his original aim of seeing the Security guard and leave Grayson to the Consultant who would, no doubt, call Security and have him removed. That was a prospect that Scarlet found most enjoyable.

The lift came to rest and the doors slid open. Scarlet stepped out into a large dining hall, tastefully decorated with potted palms and plants. In the middle was a small pond into which a small fountain splashed merrily. Recorded birdsong floated gently from hidden speakers. The overall effect

was of a large indoor garden. Scarlet decided that it could be very restful, somewhere to relax and have a meal after a long day on the wards.

This early in the morning, most of the tables were empty, the few customers being night workers. Scarlet's gaze passed over the room and soon located his quarry. Sergeant Harker was sitting at a table enjoying an early breakfast. Scarlet's mouth watered at the sight of the food. He hadn't eaten for hours. Manfully ignoring the hunger pangs, he casually strolled up to Harker's table.

"Sergeant Harker?" he asked politely. The other man looked up from his meal and nodded. Scarlet continued. "I've been asked by the specialist treating the World President to ask you a few questions. Nothing serious, just a few little details that need clearing up."

Harker, chewing on a mouthful of food waved Scarlet to a chair.

Scarlet waited for the sergeant to finish before starting to question him

The Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle sped from the mouth of the tunnel and rolled to a halt at the toll booth. With a smooth whirr of machinery, a hatch opened and the seat mechanism gently lowered Captain Grey to the ground. As the seat came to rest, Grey released his safety harness and walked quickly over to the operator's cabin.

Captain Ochre, meanwhile, had contacted Cloudbase and reported their discovery.

"That's right, Lieutenant." Ochre replied to a question from Lieutenant Green. "About ten miles inside the tunnel."

"And you say that the car was burnt out?" asked Lieutenant Green

"Totally." confirmed Ochre. "There was no way the passengers could have survived."

"I have all that." said Green when he'd finished taking down the details from Captain Ochre.

He pressed a control and his chair moved along the console. He entered the details of the vehicle registration, found by the two Spectrum officers and awaited the printed slip of paper from the computer banks. Within seconds it had slid from a slot.

Green quickly re-opened the communications channel to Captain Ochre.

The toll-booth operator had been more than glad of Captain Grey's company. Since the tunnel had closed, he had technically been unemployed but, since he was close to retirement anyway, the management had let him stay on to warn people that the tunnel was closed.

It didn't matter one little bit that Spectrum had been banned. That was down to the politicians. The same politicians, probably, who'd ordered that he be unemployed, just because the tunnel wasn't making money. He aired his grievances to Captain Grey.

"Them an' their blasted balance sheets." he growled "'Specially that so 'n so Grayson. I knew there'd be trouble, I did, soon as I saw 'im. Drove up, he did, 'im an' 'is greasy smile 'Letter from the President for you.' 'e said an' gave one of 'is laughs. Then 'e drove off before I could open the letter. I'm not surprised neither." "Why?" asked Grey "What did it say."

"It was from the President alright." replied the operator "It was the order to close the tunnel. That's the last time I vote for that guy; I can tell you. Put me out of work it 'as."

Do you still have the letter?" asked Ochre who had just joined Grey and had only heard the tail end of the conversation.

"Course I 'ave." replied the operator. "Ang on, I'll go an' get it." With that, he disappeared into his office.

"Any luck?" asked Grey.

"Yeah." replied Ochre "Lieutenant Green was able to run down the car registration." he broke off as the operator emerged from his office.

"Ere you are." he smiled "I knew I 'ad it somewhere." He passed the letter to Ochre. There was no mistaking the Presidential seal affixed to the bottom.

"Who did you say gave this to you?" asked Ochre, handing back the paper.

"Senator Grayson." growled the operator.

"One final question." began Ochre "Do you remember if Grayson had anyone with him in the car?"

"No." the operator said after a moment's thought "You're sure about that?" Ochre asked excitedly. "Positive." replied the operator

"Thanks." said Ochre gratefully "You've been a great help."

"Come on." he called to Grey. With that, he turned and ran back to the S.P.V. followed by a rather puzzled Captain Grey.

"Thank you, sergeant. You've been most helpful." Scarlet stood up.

Harker had confirmed that Grayson had been the last person to see the President before the latter's collapse. That, coupled with his behaviour just before the Senator had entered, convinced him of one thing - the World President was in mortal danger. He would have to be rescued and taken to Cloudbase where, perhaps, Doctor Fawn could take care of him. He headed once more for the lifts

Once the two Spectrum Officers were safely ensconced in the S.P.V., Captain Ochre felt free to tell Grey what he'd learned.

"Lieutenant Green was able to trace the owner of the car we found." he told Grey "It belonged to none other than Senator Charles Grayson.

Then that means..." began Captain Grey.

"Yes," agreed Ochre "The REAL Senator Grayson is dead."

"SoSo, Grayson's attacks on us weren't just empty rhetoric. He really does want to smash Spectrum."

"Yes," agreed Ochre "It ties in with the Mysteron warning that we were already powerless."

"Then we'll have to find the President and convince him that Grayson is a Mysteron." replied Grey

That's going to be easier said than done." muttered Ochre as the S.P.V. accelerated away from the Toll booth. He opened a communications channel to Lieutenant Green.

"This is Captain Ochre to Cloudbase. Please advise on the current location of the World President."

Lieutenant Green was surprised at Ochre's request. Fortunately, the computers were able to come up with the information within seconds. He was even more surprised at Ochre and Grey's discovery. Once the report was complete, he opened another channel

"This is Cloudbase to all Spectrum agents. You are advised that Senator Charles Grayson is a Mysteron agent."

Outside, the Cloudbase navigation beacons glowed a little less brilliantly as the sable blackness of the night sky began to give way to the first dim light of the approaching dawn.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The lift doors slid open. As he stepped out, Scarlet noticed that the other lift had just left this floor. Any further thoughts in that direction were driven from his mind by the blood-curdling scream of terror from the direction of the President's room. He broke into a run. As he reached the room, he paused. The customary bodyguard had gone and the door was slightly ajar. He paused, holding his breath and listened. The only sound was of someone breathing, almost panting. Scarlet knew there was no time to waste. In one fluid motion he had kicked the door open and dived through. Cautiously, he rose to his feet and looked around him. Nurse Daniels was standing beside the bed, her clenched knuckles pressed tightly to her mouth, eyes staring, oblivious to all save the figure sprawled lifelessly on the bed. The single bullet hole in the head said it all, the dark powder stain around it indicating that it had been fired at close range.

Jaeger had obviously seen too much, thought Scarlet. He became aware once more of the shallow breathing of the nurse. Gently, he released the grip of her hand on the sheet that she'd pulled back from the consultant's head and pulled it back over his sightless eyes.

As he did so, he noticed a flash of blue from the corner of his eye. He'd have to check up on that after he'd taken care of the nurse.

Taking her free hand, he led her unprotestingly into the corridor.

A little way up the corridor, was a small row of seats. Scarlet sat her gently down on one of them. Her eyes were still wide, still seeing the horror in the bed.

"Shock." muttered Scarlet to himself as he slipped back into the room. He looked around until he finally spotted it. He reached down under the bed and his fingers closed upon a familiar shape. As he'd thought, a Spectrum Pistol, from the colour coded top, Captain Blue's.

How it came to be here, Scarlet had no idea, but he knew that it must not be discovered near the body. After all, what better way would there be to incriminate Spectrum even further than by kidnapping the President, killing the specialist treating him, probably the only witness to the kidnapping, and then planting evidence implicating Spectrum? Quickly he hid the pistol inside his lab coat.

Once more, he slipped outside. The nurse sat motionless. He waved a hand in front of her eyes. No response. He'd get nothing from her. All he'd be able to do for her would be to call for a doctor.

There was a telephone on a nearby table. A small placard was attached to the wall next to it. 'FOR MEDICAL STAFF ONLY' Scarlet read. He shrugged his shoulders. This was an emergency after all. He picked up the handset.

"Geneva hospital, two minutes." Captain Ochre reported to Cloudbase. "S.I. G." Acknowledged Lieutenant Green.

"Yes?" the voice of the duty sister at the other end was tetchy, impatient. The impatience soon disappeared when Scarlet requested a doctor be called to attend the stricken nurse and that a police surgeon be called.

"Right," the duty sister told the caller "The doctor will be with you in two minutes. In the meantime, will you give me your name?"

But Scarlet had already replaced the receiver and was running for the lift. As he ran, Scarlet's mind raced. Grayson had the President as a hostage, that he knew. What he didn't know was how much start Grayson had.

The consultant had been murdered as he'd tried to stop Grayson. The body had been placed in the bed so that, to a casual observer, the President would have appeared to be sleeping thus delay the search. It had been by the merest fluke that Scarlet had been in the hospital. Had he not, the crime might not have been discovered for several hours - the nurse would probably have remained in a state of shock for hours.

On the plus side, however, the murder and the fact that the President would not have been very mobile in his current state of health, meant that Grayson would have taken a great deal of time to make good his escape.

Scarlet suddenly remembered the other lift descending just as he'd stepped out of this one. The lift doors slid shut and he pressed the button for the Ground floor. With luck, he could still catch them.

The lift came to rest and the doors began to open. As Scarlet stepped through, there was a loud bang as the main support cable snapped and the lift car plummeted from view. A few seconds later, the sound of the car hitting the bottom of the shaft echoed upwards

Scarlet looked back at the hole. He'd have been killed if he'd been inside the car when the cable broke. Perhaps it had been a delaying tactic by the Mysterons.

"You okay fella?" A young doctor came forward to help him "You could have been killed."

"I'm fine." replied Scarlet, brushing off the doctor's attempts to help him

"Did you see where Senator Grayson went?" he asked

"Yeah, he went that way." replied the doctor, pointing towards the exit

"Did he have anyone with him?" asked Scarlet

"Yeah, fella in a wheelchair." replied the doctor

"How long ago was this?" asked Scarlet

"About two minutes."

"Thanks." the Spectrum officer called back as he sprinted through the main doors.

The cold air outside made Scarlet gasp. He shivered. A man could catch his death, he thought wryly. The sound of a car engine attracted his attention. He could see the tail lights of a saloon disappearing into the distance.

Grayson had obviously had a car waiting. Scarlet looked around him for some form of transport.

His gaze settled upon the only vehicle in sight. A little conspicuous perhaps, but at least it would be fast enough. Scarlet walked quickly up to it. The crew were absent, obviously inside the hospital building.

Fortunately, the keys had been left in the ignition. Scarlet climbed in

The two Paramedics wheeled their now empty trolley along the corridor towards the exit, satisfied at the feeling of a job well done. Mother and baby were doing well. "Tell me, Mick," the younger of the two began "Why don't you write a book about the ambulance service, from our point of view. I'm sure it'd sell."

The older man wasn't convinced. He'd spent the best part of thirty years on the job. He couldn't see anything worth writing about. He stroked his beard thoughtfully "I dunno." he said slowly "After all, who's going to want to buy it?

"Lots of people, I'm sure." the younger man reassured him.

"Yes, but why me?" Mick protested "I'm not a writer."

"But what about your poems?" insisted the younger man. "All the lads at the station enjoy them. And don't forget your articles for the service magazine. That one about the cat was hilarious."

Mick smiled at the memory. Perhaps a few of the funnier anecdotes...

All further thoughts of a literary career were shoved to the back of their minds as they approached the glass doors leading out to the ambulance bay. As the doors slid obediently open, both men heard the sound of the ambulance's engine.

"OY! GET OUT OF THERE!" Mick's voice thundered. But it was too late; With a squeal of tyres, the ambulance sped away from the bay, its open rear doors swinging freely and banging on the sides as it careered across the hospital

grounds in hot pursuit of the fleeing Grayson. As he approached the gate, Scarlet pressed the accelerator pedal to the floor. The ambulance surged forward through the gateway.

At that moment, he spotted the lights of the S.P.V. bearing down upon him. He wrenched the steering wheel hard over and hit the brakes. The two vehicles missed by mere inches, the S. P. V screeching to a halt, the ambulance burying its nose in a tree with a sickening crunch.

Captain Ochre waited just long enough for his hatch to open before releasing his harness and leaping from his seat. He sprinted over to the ambulance, ready to give the maniac inside the benefit of his opinion of them. As he approached, he could see the figure inside struggling to release himself from the wreckage. He grabbed the figure's white-clad shoulder and swung him round.

"Of all the stupid..." he began "Captain Scarlet!" he exclaimed as he recognised the figure.

"Senator Grayson's got the President." Scarlet told Grey as he was helped from the ambulance.

"I've got some news for you," Added Grey. "Our friend Senator Grayson's a Mysteron."

Of course! That explained the faint feeling that Scarlet had felt when Grayson had dismissed him, thinking that he was a doctor.

"Come on!" said Scarlet, starting to run towards the S.P.V. "We've got to catch them."

The two ambulancemen, running for all their worth, reached the S.P.V. at the same time as the Spectrum officers. As they ran, they had seen the near miss and the subsequent meeting between the ambulance and the tree.

"All right then," panted an enraged Mick. "What's the big idea?"

Once before, some joker had hidden his ambulance whilst he was answering an emergency call. He hadn't found it funny then, either. This was about the only thing that could enrage the normally placid man.

"I'll explain later." replied Scarlet quickly.

"You'll explain now!" an enraged Mick, lunging at Scarlet. It took the combined strength of Captain Grey and the other paramedic to restrain him until he'd heard what Scarlet had to say.

"But what about my ambulance?" Mick protested

"Captain Ochre," Scarlet called. "Sort the crash out with the hospital, will you?" he asked as Ochre popped his head out of the open hatchway. "S.I.G." replied Ochre, descending to the ground.

"Now, if you wouldn't mind sir?" said Scarlet, indicating that the paramedic should get into the S.P.V.

"What?" asked Mick, puzzled by Scarlet's suggestion. "Get in!" said Scarlet bundling him inside.

"If the President is as ill as we fear," said Grey by way of explanation as Scarlet steered the bulk of the S.P.V. through the gateway. "We'll need someone medically trained to look after him."

If we can get him back alive, that is, Scarlet thought grimly to himself.

As the sound of the S.P.V. died away, Ochre turned to the young paramedic beside him

"We'd better get started." he told him "Then I'll buy you some coffee.

"Thanks." replied the young man. "But what about Mick? I thought he was going to knock seven bells out of your mate."

"He'll be okay." replied Ochre

Indeed, after his initial misgivings, Mick found that he was enjoying the ride as Captain Scarlet skilfully guided the S.P.V. along the winding roads

through the mountains. Fortunately, there were no junctions or exits for another ten miles or so and despite the delays, they soon began to make up the lost ground between themselves and Grayson.

As they travelled, the two Spectrum Officers each took the opportunity to bring the other up to date with everything that had happened to them. When they had finished, Scarlet turned to the paramedic. "I'm sorry we had to kidnap you Mr..."

"Mick will do." replied the paramedic with a smile. He hadn't had so much excitement in years.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“All stand for his honour Chief Justice Kemsley.” the Clerk of the Court's voice snapped

Captain Blue out of his scrutiny of his surroundings. Court Number One was impressive. Unlike the other courts, this had retained its original wood panelling which had been cleaned and polished until it reflected the overhead lights with a warm golden glow.

Under other circumstances, Blue was sure that he would have found it restful. They had been brought here a few minutes before. From the windows in the corridor outside, Blue could see the early morning traffic as people drove in to work. The early morning sun shone from a cloudless sky, its rays warming his face. Judge Kemsley obviously liked to start early. The spectators in the visitors' gallery had started an excited murmuring as they noticed the Spectrum uniforms. Because of their injuries, Captain Blue and Destiny Angel were permitted to sit on seats that had been provided. Colonel White, however, elected to remain standing rigidly at attention, face expressionless, his eyes stared straight ahead of him.

The murmuring of the audience ceased as Judge Kemsley entered. Silently he entered the chamber and took his seat.

The Clerk of the Court rose. “Colonel White, Commander-in- Chief of the banned Spectrum Organisation, you and your colleagues are charged with High Treason in that you did criminally conspire to assassinate the World President. You are furthermore charged with failure to obey the orders of the World Government and the attempted murder of Senator Charles Grayson. How do you plead?”

Colonel White could only splutter in furious disbelief; After the years of service he'd given, first to the World Navy, then the Universal Secret Service

and latterly as Commander-in-Chief of the Spectrum Organisation, to be charged with such crimes was against all reason.

Finally, he felt able to speak "My lord," he began "I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms. Not only have we no defence counsel, we have had no chance to prepare our case, since we had no real idea of what charges were being brought against us."

"I note your protest." replied the Judge "However I would like to point out that TWO counsels were appointed and I understand that you rejected both of them." White was speechless

Captain Blue leapt to his feet and gasped at the sudden pain from his ankle. "Objection!" he yelled "The first Counsel was a Mysteron booby trap, intended to destroy Cloudbase."

"Please spare us your fantasies Captain." the Judge rebuked him "Otherwise, I may be forced to have you committed. Your objection is overruled. As I said before," the judge continued "You have seen fit to reject the Counsels appointed for you. I therefore appoint you, Colonel White as Defence Counsel.

"Should I enter a plea of Not Guilty?" asked the Clerk of the Court.

"Don't be ridiculous!" retorted Kemsley "Let it be entered that the accused refused to plead."

The Clerk frowned. It was unlike the old boy. Normally, he would have directed that 'Not Guilty' be entered on the record. Still, his was not to reason why. He completed the form as instructed.

SPECTRUM INFORMATION CENTRE - GENEVA NO ADMITTANCE WITHOUT IDENTIFICATION
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The figure nodded slowly as it read the sign then reached for the door control.

The door slid open and admitted a tall figure wearing a long overcoat. Just visible beneath the hem were pair of jackboots. As the moving floor carried him toward the Security desk, automatic guns tracked the figure.

"I require copies of the records concerning the first Mysteron attack on the World President." The figure told the Security Officer

"Identification please." demanded the Guard. A pass was produced, carefully scrutinised and then returned. The door to the vaults slid open at the touch of a hidden control under the Guard's desk

Within minutes, the figure had the tapes he required.

"Come to get evidence to clear Colonel White?" the Guard called to the figure as it left the vaults. "Something like that." came the reply as the floor carried the figure towards the exit. The door slid shut. It was strange that such a well-known Spectrum officer should risk arrest to come here in person to collect the information, the Guard thought to himself. Perhaps, under the circumstances, he was the only one able to. Momentarily, he toyed with the idea of contacting Cloudbase, then thought better of it. The Spectrum Officer's pass had been genuine. Shaking his head wearily, he returned to his book

Captain Blue slumped onto his seat dejectedly. Colonel White stood silently in the dock. The Counsel for the Prosecution rose to speak.

"My Lord," he began. "I intend to show that these criminals have attempted to perpetrate the most heinous of crimes known to our society." the man's

voice was deep, almost monotonous. Captain Blue knew that he'd heard it before. If only he could place it...

Whilst he had been addressing the Judge, the Prosecuting Counsel had managed to keep his back to the accused. Finally, however, he turned to face them. As he did so, Destiny gasped and put her hand to her mouth. It took a moment longer for the others to realise why. Then they saw what she had seen. Under the powdered wig and ornate robes was the pallid complexion of none other than Captain Black!

"It's a kangaroo court, Colonel. We don't stand a chance!" whispered Blue to White

"I know, Captain." was the whispered reply "I know."

Despite its size, the S.P.V. could move swiftly on even the most sinuous of mountain roads and had rapidly made up the lost ground between it and the saloon which was now only a matter of yards ahead

"We'll have force them off the road." Scarlet told Grey. "S.I.G." replied Grey.

"How are you going to do that?" asked Mick, worriedly, he had no wish to pick up bits of body from the wreck of a car. He'd done quite enough of that in his time. "We've only got a small first-aid kit aboard."

"Don't worry." Grey reassured him "Captain Scarlet knows what he's doing."

Gently, Scarlet eased the vehicle forwards until it was running next to the fleeing car. The driver floored the accelerator pedal and the car shot forward. Scarlet, however, could not be beaten so easily. The S.P.V. easily caught it and regained its station.

Scarlet waited until they were approaching an open, snow covered field before making his next move.

The slightest of touches on the controls brought the two speeding vehicles closer and yet closer until with an almost imperceptible bump, they

collided. The effect on the saloon was dramatic. With a squeal of brakes, it left the road, tearing a hole in the fence surrounding the field and hurtled into it.

Totally beyond control, it ploughed a deep furrow in the snow, finally coming to rest in a deep snowdrift.

Scarlet slowed the S.P.V. to a more sedate pace before driving back to the hole and manoeuvring through it. Because the S.P.V. had been specially designed to cross any terrain, it was easily able to cross the snowy field and pulled up a short distance away from the saloon.

As their respective hatches opened, Scarlet and Grey drew their guns, Grey his own and Scarlet the one, belonging to Captain Blue, that he'd liberated from the President's room at the hospital.

"Cover me." Scarlet ordered as he started towards the saloon.

"What about me?" asked Mick as he unbuckled himself from his seat.

"Wait here until I call you," replied Scarlet "There's no point in risking your life needlessly."

With that, he walked slowly toward the saloon, ready to dive for cover at the slightest sign of trouble.

As he approached, he noticed something strange. There was only one passenger visible. Scarlet could see him slumped forward over the steering wheel. Perhaps the President was laying on the rear seats

Confident now that there was no danger, he pulled open the door. Gently, he grasped the driver's shoulder and eased the unconscious form back from the wheel. He gasped as he recognised the face, blank and expressionless, though it was. The last time he'd seen that face had been at the hospital, moments before Grayson had entered the room. Grayson had eluded them; The driver of the car, in a deep trance, was none other than the World President.

"Captain Grey! Mick!" he yelled.

The two men ran as fast as they could across the difficult terrain.

The Paramedic checked the President's vital signs. "He's alive, just." he confirmed "But we'll have to get him to a hospital quickly."

"Right." acknowledged Scarlet "Captain Grey," he turned to the other officer "Contact Cloudbase and have Doctor Fawn put on standby."

S.I.G. "Acknowledged Grey, pulling down his cap microphone.

Whilst Grey made the call, Scarlet helped the paramedic to carry the President to the waiting S.P.V.

"Our nearest helicopter is stationed at a service station near the mouth of the Alpine Tunnel." explained Scarlet. "Once we reach it, we can have the President on Cloudbase within minutes."

The call completed, Grey rejoined his colleagues in the S.P.V. which carefully drove back onto the road before accelerating towards the Service Station and the helicopter waiting there.

Captain Blue rose to his feet once more. "Your Honour," he protested "These accusations are totally without foundation."

"Objection overruled." replied Kemsley "And if these outbursts continue young man, I shall have you removed from the court."

Blue returned to his seat seething with rage.

Colonel White laid a restraining hand on Blue's arm.

"It's as if they're not interested in anything we have to say." Blue whispered to White. White nodded slowly in reply.

Meanwhile, Kemsley had directed Black to continue.

"I will now call the first witness." Black told the court "Senator Charles Grayson."

“Drilling completed sir.” reported the site foreman.

“Right, start laying charges.” replied Baxter, the project manager

“The sooner we blow this tunnel, the sooner we all get paid.” Fortunately, he was only being called upon to seal the entrances, not bring down the whole of the tunnel, but even so, he did not like tunnels one little bit. They always seemed to cause problems when they were blown. Now quarries, they were much easier. Still, he was being paid good money to blow up this tunnel, so blown up it would be, his own thoughts on the matter would have to be set aside.

The Turbines on the Spectrum Helicopter whined into life. As Captain Grey carried out the pre-flight checks, Scarlet helped the paramedic to carry the unconscious form of the President and lay it in the passenger cabin.

“Phew!” he panted “You people really earn your money, having to do this all day.”

“It's nice to be appreciated.” Mick smiled.

Whilst the paramedic prepared his patient for transport, Scarlet fished out a spare Spectrum uniform, stored in a locker at the back of the passenger compartment.

Unlike his normal uniform, the cap, tunic and boots were a dark beige colour, rather than the brilliant scarlet he was used to. Admittedly, the boots and cap were a bit on the tight side but they were still warmer than the thin laboratory coat he'd been wearing since he'd escaped from the hospital. In the absence of a Spectrum parka, the normal wear for wintry conditions, he re-donned the lab coat

More importantly, the in-built radio equipment meant that he could communicate with Cloudbase and his fellow officers once more.

He wasted no time in advising Lieutenant Green.

Green advised Scarlet of the situation:

"We have located the Mysteron Grayson." reported Green. "He is currently testifying in the trial of the Colonel, Captain Blue and Destiny."

"Of course!" Scarlet was triumphant "Why didn't I see it before?"

"See what?" Green was confused

"This whole trial is a Mysteron plot. With trumped-up charges and carefully laid propaganda, The Jury find Colonel White guilty and have him executed, using our own judicial system to render Spectrum useless."

"Lieutenant." he asked "How can we stop the trial?"

"New evidence is the usual way." replied Green or failing that, a Presidential Order, dropping all charges."

"If I'm right, they won't listen to any evidence that won't suit them." said Scarlet "So It'll have to be the Presidential Order. Tell Doctor Fawn that he's got to find out what's wrong with the President, quickly. In the meantime, I shall return to Geneva and attempt to rescue the Colonel. I shall take the Tunnel route, so I'll be out of contact for about twenty minutes."

"S.I.G." Acknowledged Green.

CHAPTER NINE

Another sign had been erected in the mouth of the tunnel.

Once again, splintered wood flew in all directions as Scarlet drove the S.P.V. straight through it and into the tunnel. Had Scarlet read it, he might have considered taking the mountain route. Instead of the previous TUNNEL CLOSED, this sign had borne another message, abrupt and to the point:

**DANGER:
DEMOLITION IN PROGRESS**

“Thank you, Senator, you may step down.” Grayson smiled at Black’s instruction. He was sure that his evidence would drive the last nail into Spectrum’s coffin. It was a pity that his star witness, the President, had been rescued by Spectrum. He scowled at the memory of the chase. Fortunately, his Mysteron masters had helped him to evade capture and brought him here to testify. He stepped down from the witness box.

Black turned once more to the Judge “My lord,” he began “With the aid of my final witness, I shall prove that Colonel White has been the mastermind behind this conspiracy. Before I call him, I would like to say that he is a serving member of Spectrum.” This revelation caused a stir in the gallery.

Blue and Destiny looked at each in amazement.

White stood, his face emotionless, his whitening knuckles the only clue to the cold, silent fury within. Who could betray Spectrum in such a manner and more importantly, why?

The muttering from the visitors quickly grew in audibility until Kemsley rapped sharply with his gavel. “Silence!” he roared. A deathly silence descended upon the chamber.

"Very well." Kemsley informed Black "You may proceed."

"Thank you." replied Black "This Officer who has given many years of service to Spectrum has turned State's Evidence because of his revulsion at the tyranny exhibited by Colonel White. Tyranny! Whoever the Judas was, White would personally kick him out of Spectrum. He'd personally overseen the setting up of the organisation and there was no way he was going to see it destroyed by a traitor from within.

Black had finished his preamble. "I now call the Officer to give his evidence: Captain Scarlet."

White and Blue looked at each other in horror.

Their most trusted of allies, so often risking his life for his colleagues, now so callously turning against them. It was unbelievable.

"Captain Scarlet!" Destiny's voice, pleading, appealing to him, carried across the court-room. The figure climbing to the witness box ignored her. "Silence!" snapped Kemsley. Destiny fell silent. Black began his questioning.

"O. K." ordered Baxter "Sound the alarm." Obediently, the site foreman pressed a button on the console in front of him. The moan of the siren echoed over the site as the workers made for safety. When satisfied that no-one remained in the tunnel, the foreman cut the siren. The last echoes died away and silence descended as Baxter connected the detonator.

"Firing in...three...two...one...", said Baxter.

As his finger reached for the detonator button, he became aware of a sound emanating from the tunnel. His finger jerked away from the button but the circuit had already been made. As the first rumble of the explosion reached him, he became aware of a silvery-blue shape appearing at the tunnel mouth, a shape which sped away split seconds before thousands of tons of rock filled the tunnel. Open mouthed, Baxter and the foreman watched the S.P.V. as it disappeared into the distance.

"How is he doctor?"

As soon as the helicopter had landed, Captain Grey had escorted the President to the Sickbay where Doctor Fawn had begun an exhaustive examination to find the cause of and more importantly, the cure for the President's illness. Grey had waited patiently until it appeared that the doctor had finished before asking the question.

"Physically, he's fine." replied the doctor "But it appears that the President has been under a phenomenal strain. I would say that it's a miracle that his mind hasn't snapped altogether." He put down the syringe that he had just used.

"I've heavily sedated him." Fawn explained. "It's essential that his mind is rested before we can question him. You ought to go and get some rest yourself - you look exhausted."

"Yeah, perhaps you're right." agreed Grey. It HAD been a long night. With that, he made his way to the Room of Sleep.

The Prosecution's questioning of Captain Scarlet had, at first, been relatively harmless, basic facts establishing his credentials and background information concerning his career prior to joining Spectrum

Captain Blue turned to Colonel White. "I don't get it, Colonel." He whispered "Why is he helping the Prosecution."

"I don't know, Captain." White hissed through clenched teeth, "But I'll have his commission for this." He turned his attention back to the court proceedings

"Now, Captain," Black prompted "Will you tell the court about the plan to kidnap the World President?"

"Captain Brown and I were detailed, by Colonel White, to take the World President to New York, where he was to be held at the Spectrum Maximum Security Building."

"Can you prove this?" asked Black

"Yes Sir." replied Scarlet.

In response to a request from the Prosecution, a large video screen had been lowered from the ceiling. After a moment of static, the picture cleared to show a picture of the Cloudbase Control room. White was seated at his desk. He reached over to his controls and pressed buttons to open communications links with Captains Scarlet and Brown

"Captain Brown, I'm putting you in charge of this mission." said the Colonel.

"Yes sir." replied the unseen Captain Brown.

"I don't understand, Colonel," Blue whispered "How did they get the transcripts?"

"Scarlet obviously went to the records centre." replied White. "His pass would have given him clearance to extract any information he felt fit." Their gaze returned to the screen.

The scene had changed to the Maximum Security Vehicle. Inside, Brown and the President were in conversation.

The M.S.V. pulled up outside the Maximum Security Building and Brown led the President inside. They entered the lift to the underground chamber where the President was to be kept.

To White and Blue, the next scene was all too familiar:

The two figures on the screen were now sitting on either side of a desk. The World President tried to make conversation. Brown made no reply. The President tried again "Captain Brown..." the President ventured "Captain Brown are you all right?"

Captain Brown sat motionless in his seat, like a waxwork. Suddenly, a wisp of smoke appeared from his clothing. Then another. The President reached for a button on his desk. The wall behind him swiftly opened upwards, his

seat swept back out of danger and the wall closed just as Captain Brown's body exploded, utterly destroying the building.

The screen went blank.

"So, you see, members of the Jury," Black said as he turned to face them "Colonel White not only instructed Officers under his command to kidnap the World President, but one of those Officers attempted to kill him."

White could stand no more. "I object!" he thundered. "That evidence has been distorted "Are you denying that it was you who appeared on the recording?" asked Kemsley.

"No sir, but..." began White

"Then your objection is overruled." snapped Kemsley testily.

The Clerk of the court frowned once more. He'd attended many cases at which Kemsley had presided. This was totally different. It was almost as if a double had taken the old chap's place. A double with no interest in seeing that justice was done.

Fuming, White sat heavily on the chair that had so far remained empty.

The Spectrum Helicopter touched down on the flight deck. As the turbines shut down, the lift descended, carrying the craft into an airlock and then, when the pressure had been equalized, into the hangar deck. Whilst flightdeck technicians busied around the helicopter, Captain Grey helped the Paramedic unload the President onto a trolley, which they wheeled to the sickbay.

Black continued to question Scarlet

The sense of betrayal was too much for Blue. He leaned over to the Colonel. "If we get out of this alive," he whispered in cold fury "Indestructible or not. I'm personally going to find a way to kill Captain Scarlet."

"We must face facts, Captain." the Colonel replied, a little calmer now, "It's obvious that the Mysterons have regained their hold over him."

The original Scarlet had been killed in a car crash. Although the Mysteron influence had been shaken off by the fall from the Car-Vu, the body that had been taken back to Cloudbase had still been that of the Mysteron duplicate.

White had always had to consider the possibility that someday the Mysterons might, once more, reassert themselves. This had obviously now happened.

Destiny said nothing. A single tear rolled down her cheek.

"The court will now adjourn." Kemsley announced as soon as Black had finished his questioning.

"What about the case for the defence?" asked Blue

"You will be heard after the recess." snapped Kemsley. "For all the good it will do you." he thought to himself

"All Stand." the Clerk of the Court ordered, relieved that he could go outside for a breath of air- the atmosphere within the chamber was electric. He had a distinct feeling that there was more to this case than met the eye.

The Court rose and waited for Kemsley to leave before, themselves, left the room. The guards led Blue, White and Destiny back to their cell.

The S.P.V. came to rest at the foot of the steps leading to the Hall of Justice.

Scarlet had already released his harness before the hatch was fully open. "Come on!" he called to Ochre as he sprinted up the steps.

Ochre, laden with Mysteron detector and gun, following, saw Scarlet stopped by a Security Guard. Scarlet was obviously in no mood to be interrupted. With a blow to the jaw, the Guard spun round and collapsed unconscious, his helmet rolling down a couple of steps before coming to rest.

Without waiting for his colleague, Scarlet ran inside. The entrance hall was huge, ornate columns reaching up from the marble floor to the high vaulted

ceiling above. Signs indicating the various court-rooms pointed in all directions. A court official, busied on some errand, hustled past.

Scarlet grabbed his arm. "Excuse, me," he said politely "Can you tell me where the trial of the Spectrum Officers is taking place?" The man looked as if he had a problem believing what his eyes were telling him.

"Come on man, tell me!" Scarlet snapped.

"Th-that one", he said, pointing towards the closed doors of the main court. "Thank you." replied Scarlet, releasing the official. The official scurried away, still disbelieving the evidence of his own eyes. He had seen identical twins before, but they had never quite been as similar as that.

Scarlet quickly made his way to the doors. He was about to press his ear to the dark oak panels when he was overcome by a deep feeling of nausea, worse than any he had previously encountered. Slowly he began to sink to his knees. At that moment, the door opened. Scarlet looked up. He blinked with disbelief. There, framed in the doorway was... himself!

Weakly, Scarlet felt inside his coat for Blue's gun, but the Mysteron had already drawn his own pistol and taken aim at Scarlet's head.

The Mysteron smiled coldly. "The Mysterons have modified this gun." he informed the kneeling Scarlet. "It will destroy you as you have destroyed us in the past."

His finger tightened on the trigger. Scarlet closed his eyes in defeat

"Goodbye Captain Scarlet."

The high-pitched whine of an electron gun filled the air.

Scarlet opened his eyes, the feelings of nausea gone, and looked up.

The Mysteronised Scarlet stood frozen for a moment, a shocked expression on his face, before falling lifelessly to the floor, his gun skittering away across the floor.

Captain Ochre, smiling broadly, lowered the anti-Mysteron gun.

"Lucky I brought this gadget." he said helping the still shaky Scarlet to his feet.

"I'll say." replied Scarlet with a smile "But how did you know which one to shoot?"

"Simple." replied Ochre "I ran into some poor demented soul muttering about two Captain Scarlets. It seems that he's been working in the Court where the Colonel is in trial and he recognised you as the chief prosecution witness."

"So that's why he looked as if he'd seen a ghost." said Scarlet, lifting the shoulders of his Mysteron counterpart. "There was also the fact," Ochre added "That when you left me behind, you weren't in your uniform." he grabbed the Mysteron's legs and between them, the two officers managed to carry the body into the cloakroom.

"Do you know what I'm going to do when we get back to Cloudbase?" Scarlet asked as they struggled with their burden.

"No, what?" asked Ochre

"Lose some weight." replied Scarlet "I weigh a ton!"

Once in the cloakroom, they looked for a suitable hiding place for the body. "In there." Scarlet suggested, pointing to a half-open cupboard door. Opening the door revealed mops, a bucket and assorted cleaning materials, obviously, the cupboard was used by a cleaner.

Between them, the two Spectrum officers pushed the body into the cupboard, covering it with a dust sheet, and then closed the door.

"What now?" asked Ochre.

"I think we ought to find the Colonel and the others." replied Scarlet. "But first," he added, grabbing an overcoat from a coat-hook and passing it to Ochre "You'd better make yourself a little less conspicuous." The coat was

large and baggy. So much so that the anti-Mysteron gun and could be concealed within it. The Mysteron detector, looking as it did, like a slightly unusual camera which, after all was what it was, Scarlet slung over his shoulder.

"So where do we start looking?" asked Ochre as they left the cloakroom.

The court-room was empty when they cautiously entered the visitor's gallery. "Obviously the court's been adjourned." said Scarlet.

"Let's try the cells." suggested Ochre.

Fortunately, there was a map of the building on a nearby wall and after only a few seconds, they had located the cells.

"Hm, that's very interesting." Commented Ochre, pointing out a feature on the map. "Yes." agreed Scarlet "Come on, time's getting short."

Since it was a Saturday, most of the building was deserted and their footsteps echoed eerily along the corridors. A short flight of stone steps led down to the detention area.

The guard yawned and looked at his watch for the umpteenth time. Even though he had only been on duty for an hour, he was bored. There had been excitement this morning, it was true, when the prisoner in blue had tried to escape. "The tranquillising dart should be wearing off about now." he said to himself.

Any further thoughts were forgotten as he heard footsteps approaching. Perhaps the warders had come to take his charges away. The rotten lot hadn't even offered to bring him back something from the canteen.

He was surprised therefore, when a doctor, stethoscope hanging around his neck, and a man wearing an overcoat, obviously too large for him, strode into view.

"Open up!" ordered Scarlet briskly. The guard turned to unlock the door then stopped himself. "Do you have some sort of identification, sir?" he challenged hesitantly.

"I'm sorry," replied Scarlet "I left it outside in the rush to get here. You see, the old man is very ill and needs regular treatment. When he missed his appointment at the hospital this morning, I feared the worst. This gentleman here," he indicated Ochre "Is the old man's solicitor. He contacted me and we dashed over here. I only hope that we're not too late."

"Gee, I'm sorry." replied the guard, unlocking the door.

Captain Blue slowly became aware of faces looking down at him. It took him a moment to recognise them as Colonel White and Destiny Angel. His head ached from the after-effects of the anaesthetic dart. He groaned.

"How do you feel, Captain?" asked White, concerned as ever for the welfare of his staff.

Blue shook his head to clear it and immediately wished that he hadn't. "I'll be okay, Colonel," he informed White. "I just wish that the steam-hammer would stop."

"You took a great risk, trying to escape." Destiny said quietly

"I know," replied Blue "I thought I could get away with it."

"Well at least the guards used tranquillising darts." said White as he helped Blue to his feet. "We have to be thankful for that."

Before Blue could reply, he was interrupted by the sound of the door being unlocked. Quickly, the two figures were ushered in and the door locked behind them.

It was Destiny who first recognised the taller of the two figures beneath his unusual clothing Blue, heard her exclamation of "Captain Scarlet!" That was enough. With a yell of "TRAITOR!" he lunged at the figure, his fingers locking around Scarlet's throat. Scarlet struggled, but Blue was a man possessed,

anger and hatred lending strength. Scarlet was on his knees before the combined strengths of Ochre and White could drag Blue away. They held him firmly as Scarlet, gasping for breath, slowly got to his feet.

"Captain Blue!" snapped White "You are still an Officer of Spectrum. Kindly act like one." Despite the circumstances in which they found themselves, the Colonel was still very much in control. His rebuke brought Blue to his senses. He stopped struggling but continued to glare malevolently at Scarlet, gently massaging his sore neck. Destiny, in true Gallic style, stood in front of him and spat in his face. A single tear trickling down her cheek, she turned her back on him.

Before Scarlet could utter a word, White had turned to Ochre.

"Captain Ochre," he ordered "You are to place Captain Scarlet under arrest."
"Ochre was confused. "I don't understand, Colonel," he replied.

"Captain Scarlet has been giving evidence against us at the trial." White explained. "Evidence which has been edited to give a totally false picture. It is therefore clear that the Mysterons have once more taken control of him."

"Colonel-" began Scarlet

"Be Quiet!" snapped White "Consider yourself under arrest."

For the first time, White noticed the anti-Mysteron gun, that had been hidden inside Ochre's coat.

"Captain Ochre," he ordered "You are to cover Captain Scarlet. If he makes a false move, you are to fire. Is that understood."

The answer was as unexpected as it was brief: "No sir."

White was furious. "What did you say?" he asked angrily.

"No, sir." replied Ochre. "I have been with this man since early this morning, when we met at the hospital. Apart from five minutes when we arrived, he hasn't been out of my sight."

"There was still time for a Mysteron replica to have been made." insisted Blue."

"Indeed, there WAS a Mysteron copy -" admitted Ochre

"See!" interrupted Blue ecstatically

"But I destroyed it." Ochre continued undaunted

"It had overcome the REAL Scarlet and was just about to finish him off."

"Can you prove this?" asked White

"We left the body in a cloakroom." replied Ochre.

"Well, there's no way of checking whilst we're under arrest." sighed White.

"Perhaps there is." replied Ochre. "What was the Captain Scarlet that you saw wearing?" "Spectrum Uniform." replied White

"Well, there you are." smiled Ochre "The Captain Scarlet that I have spent all morning with, has been wearing what you see now."

Blue was still not quite convinced. "Colonel, how do we know that this man in front of us is the REAL Captain Ochre, not a Mysteron?"

White noticed the Mysteron Detector, still slung over Scarlet's shoulder. "Give me that detector." he ordered "Slowly."

Carefully, Scarlet eased it off his shoulder and passed it to the Colonel.

"Captain Ochre, if you wouldn't mind..." said White, raising the detector. Ochre stood against the wall as White pressed the button, activating it. After a few seconds, he operated the second lever and a photograph popped up. It was a perfect X-Ray photograph. A Mysteron would have been opaque to X-Rays, the result being a normal portrait photograph of the subject. This also happened to be true for Captain Scarlet

"It seems that I owe you an apology Captain Ochre." admitted White

"You too Captain." he said to Scarlet.

"Me too." admitted a sheepish Blue offering his hand to Scarlet who grasped it warmly. "It's a terrible thing, suspicion." He added.

"I'm so glad that you are not a traitor." added Destiny, taking Scarlet's free hand.

White cleared his throat noisily when he noticed this and Destiny let go as if electrified. The Colonel had very strict views on such matters whilst on duty. "Have you come to get us out?" asked Blue.

"I think it would be better if I had your report first, Captain." White said before Scarlet could reply.

"Yes sir." he replied.

When Scarlet and Ochre had finished, White sat for a moment, deep in thought. The more he thought about it, the more he became convinced that the whole trial was no more than an elaborate farce, with one aim, to find him and the others guilty of crimes for which there was a mandatory death sentence.

A break-out was too risky - people might be hurt. No, he would have to come up with a plan... "Captain Scarlet, Captain Ochre, he said after a moment's thought "Listen carefully, this is what I want you to do..."

Ten minutes later, Scarlet and Ochre left the cell, Ochre still wearing his overcoat. "Is he okay?" asked the guard.

"It's too early to say," replied Scarlet "But I've done the best I can." With that, they strode towards the stairs. The guards sighed. He wished that they had stayed longer, just for a chat. He looked at his watch again. Roll on lunch-time. He looked down at his ample waistline and sighed once more. He knew that he really ought to lose some weight, but he was a big lad and needed a lot to keep him going. Sadly, he returned to his solitary vigil.

"So, what do we do now, Colonel?" asked Blue

"We wait, Captain. Our only hope lies with Captain Ochre and Captain Scarlet."

At the main doors to the court-room, the two Captains split up, following their respective orders. "Good luck, Captain Ochre." said Scarlet, before turning on his heel and heading for the cloakroom, in accordance with the Colonel's plan.

"Thanks," muttered Ochre to himself "I'm going to need it."

After a brief detour, he made for the exit. Now unencumbered by the equipment he had previously been carrying; he was able to run for the doors.

Once outside, he paused only to discard the overcoat before sprinting down the steps to the waiting S.P.V. As he reached for the control to open the hatch, he heard a yell behind him. An irate security guard, an ugly bruise staining his cheek, had just left the building and had started to run towards him.

With a gentle whirr, the seat lowered to the ground. Ochre prepared to strap himself in when he became aware of a buzz past his ear. A moment later, he heard the crack of the guard's rifle.

The guard had adopted a kneeling position, his rifle in the firing position. Quickly, the hatch closed as, with a whine, the next bullet ricocheted from the metal of the S.P.V.

"Phew! That was close." muttered Ochre to himself, starting the S.P.V. As it sped away from the Justice Building, he called Cloudbase.

Lieutenant Green was relieved when Ochre called. Relief which soon turned to worry when he learned that the Colonel and the others were not yet safe. However, he set his personal feelings aside as he received his instructions from Captain Ochre.

"I have all that," he told Ochre. He closed the channel and opened another to Geneva Hospital. The Secretary was apologetic. "I'm sorry M'sieu," she informed Green "Doctor Harvey hasn't come in this morning. I believe he had something of a late night last night. It could be that he has overslept."

"Well, do you have a number to contact him?" asked Green

"Why yes M'sieu." replied the secretary. "But," she added "I'm not supposed to tell anyone."

"You must, people's lives depend on my getting in touch with the doctor."

She thought for a moment. Hospital rules were strict on that matter... yet the young man's voice held a note of sincerity that she found impossible to refuse.

Green thanked her hurriedly then made the call.

The alarm clock sat mute on the bedside locker, having long ago rung to exhaustion. Beside it sat a long-forgotten cup of tea, a deep brown skin floating on the by-now cold surface of the liquid. The only sound in the room was that of muffled snoring emanating from somewhere under the blankets on the bed.

The telephone, an antique model with a bell, jangled noisily. It finally succeeded where the alarm had previously failed.

With a faint groan, the huddled form moved slightly. A lone hand worked its way out of the cocoon of blankets and groped for the receiver. The fingers touched and then grasped. The arm withdrew, the handset drawing the coiled cable behind it.

"Yes? What is it?" the muffled voice said sleepily into the telephone. There was a pause as the caller explained what he wanted.

"What!" Doctor Harvey sat bolt upright. The telephone flex, already straightened out by the distance it had travelled, was suddenly pulled taut, flicking the teacup onto the floor.

"Blast!" cursed Harvey "Oh nothing," he explained to the caller "I just spilled my tea."

He yawned and swung his legs off the bed. "Tell your colleague to meet me here." he informed the caller "It'll probably be quicker."

"Thank you, sir." replied Green, closing the channel. Captain Ochre's epaulettes flashed green.

"Go ahead Lieutenant." Ochre said as the cap microphone dropped into place.

"I have been in contact with Doctor Harvey," Green informed him. "He suggests that you meet him at his house, Grid Reference Four Two Seven Seven."

"S.I.G.," replied Ochre "I'm very close to that position now."

Harvey stood up, put his feet into his slippers and then winced; The tea he'd spilt had managed to land in one of them. Slowly, he removed the offending slipper and up-ended it into the cup. "It's going to be one of THOSE days." he said to himself as a thin stream of brown liquid trickled into the cup.

He put the slipper down once more and barefoot, went to his room to dress; He'd been right. His wife hadn't understood. She'd banished him to the spare room. On the other hand, she had brought him his tea this morning, so perhaps she hadn't been as angry as she'd made out.

Captain Ochre arrived ten minutes later, the S. P. V crunching noisily up the gravel drive to the doctor's house. Harvey was more than a little surprised. He'd been expecting a jeep or some kind of saloon. He was even more surprised to find that he was expected to sit facing the rear of this strange looking vehicle. Still, he was prepared to try anything once...

...Apart from Morris Dancing...

CHAPTER TEN

"The court will now rise." The babble of voices was silenced and the assembled court rose as Kemsley once more entered the chamber.

"We have already heard the evidence for the prosecution." The judge informed the Jury. "We will now hear the evidence for the defence."

"For all the good It's going to do us." muttered Blue to himself as Colonel White rose slowly to his feet.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury," White began "It is with a heavy heart that I find myself addressing you."

Grayson let himself relax in his seat. He knew that White and his friends didn't stand a chance. Like a lamb to the slaughter...

"When I first became aware of the charges brought against my colleagues and myself," said White, looking levelly at the Jury "I thought that some ghastly mistake had been made, a misunderstanding that would soon be rectified. These thoughts, however, were forgotten when not one, but two attempts were made on our lives."

"Objection!" Black had leapt to his feet. "The Accused is making wild and uncorroborated claims."

"Objection sustained." replied Kemsley.

"With respect sir," there was a noticeable edge to the Colonel's voice "The claims that I am making are neither wild nor uncorroborated. As you, yourself, pointed out before the recess, two defence counsels were appointed to us. The first, on being taken to Cloudbase, turned out to be nothing more than a Mysteron..."

"Colonel White," Kemsley's voice was like ice "Since you persist with this ridiculous fantasy about aliens, it is clear that your evidence is inadmissible. You may stand down." there was a murmur from the gallery.

"With respect, sir..." began White.

"That will be all, Colonel." interrupted Kemsley "Sit down."

The foreman of the Jury rose to speak, a worried frown upon his face. A short, greying man in his fifties, who had served once before as a juryman, many years before, something about the day's proceedings worried him.

"Yes, yes, what is it?" snapped Kemsley testily

"Excuse me, your honour," he began "I admit that my knowledge of the law is rather more limited than your own and far be it from me to impugn..."

"Well," said the foreman nervously "I would at least like to hear what the accused has to say. After all, if we are to decide his fate..." The rest of the sentence was lost as the rest of the Jury, as one, murmured their agreement, the murmuring grew louder as the spectators in the gallery above agreed with him. Soon, it had increased in volume, with "Quite right too." and "Let him be heard." flying across the chamber.

Grayson's smile faded; This wasn't in the plan...

"Silence!" Kemsley roared, smashing his gavel down on its block.

"This is definitely wrong," thought the Clerk of the Court to himself "The old boy had never been rude to a member of the Jury before. As for using the gavel, that was all-but unheard of."

Kemsley glared around the chamber as the hubbub died away. "I WILL NOT tolerate this behaviour in this court. If there are any more such outbursts, I shall have the chamber cleared and a new Jury appointed."

"Yes," Blue whispered to Destiny "A jury of 'yes' men" Calmly, White rose once more to his feet.

"Surely, there can be no harm in the truth," he said looking straight at Kemsley "If this is a fair hearing." There was a note of challenge in his voice. The Jury murmured its agreement

Kemsley knew he'd been beaten "Very well," he glowered "You may continue."

"Thank you." replied White. "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury," he began, turning to face them. "You are, no doubt wondering why, when two separate counsels were appointed to us, I am standing before you. The answer is simple. They were murdered, the second having eaten food intended for Captain Blue and myself. As my first witness, I intend to call Doctor Charles Harvey, the doctor who carried out the post mortem examination."

Moments later, Harvey was ushered in, briefcase in hand, a shock of tousled hair betraying his hurried journey.

"Doctor Harvey," White began once the ritual of oath-taking had been completed. "You carried out the post-mortem examination on the late Mr Alexander Nielsen."

"That is correct, yes" replied Harvey.

"Would you please tell the court the cause of death?"

Harvey opened his case and removed a sheaf of papers and began to read: "The patient seemed to be showing a kind of Haemo-" "Briefly, please." White interrupted. "Just the basic details." Harvey stopped reading, and blinked. He'd put a lot of effort into the report, now he was going to have to summarise it.

He took a deep breath. "The basic details," he said looking pointedly at White "Are that the poor man was poisoned by a fast-acting systemic poison"

"Exactly which poison was used?" asked White.

Harvey frowned and rubbed his chin. "Ah, well, that's the question. It matches no toxin known to medical science. Detailed chemical analysis reveals very little, the computers were unable to identify all the constituents."

"I see." replied White "Can you tell me the source of this poison?"

"That's simple." smiled Harvey "His stomach contents were absolutely laced with the stuff. He was killed by the food he'd eaten?"

White was not going to get caught in any loopholes: "Exactly what food had he eaten?" he asked "Was there any chance that something he'd eaten before coming to see me had been poisoned?"

"None at all." replied Harvey. "The food samples taken from your cell were heavily contaminated. They were the source of the poison."

"Thank you, doctor." Harvey smiled as he stepped down from the witness box.

"So you see," White addressed the Jury, "The man sent to defend us at this trial was an unwitting victim of an attempt on the lives of Captain Blue and myself. However, this was the second attempt to destroy us. For details of the previous attempt, I shall call Captain Blue." Kemsley glowered at White, but knew that there was nothing, as yet, he could do.

Briefly, Blue covered the events leading up to the meeting with Johanssen then, in greater detail, described the events on Cloudbase.

"...we finally trapped him behind a power conduit." finished Blue

"What happened then?" asked White

"Captain Scarlet moved in whilst I kept Johanssen talking." continued Blue. "I tried to reason with him but he just told me that we were too late to save Cloudbase."

"Go on." urged White.

"We moved in on Johanssen to find his body smoking in the same way as Captain Brown's." continued Blue "I cleared the room and left Captain Scarlet with Johanssen, his plan being to shoot out the window and let the depressurisation carry Johanssen away from Cloudbase."

"What was the result of this action?" asked White.

"Johanssen's body exploded several seconds later." replied Blue. "If it hadn't been for Captain Scarlet's quick thinking, Cloudbase would have been blown to pieces." "What happened to Captain Scarlet?" asked White.

"I guess he must have been blown out by the decompression." replied Blue. "We found his body several miles away.

"Thank you, Captain." said White. "You may stand down." Blue Quickly left the witness box.

White turned once more to face the Jury.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury." he began "Before I call my next witness, I feel that you should be acquainted with some facts. You have already seen that an attempt was made upon the life of the World President by two Spectrum Officers. This is documented fact, which I do not deny"

"Is this relevant?" snapped Kemsley.

White turned to face him. "Yes, sir." replied White "It is." He turned once more to the Jury.

"I admit, too, that I put Captain Brown in charge of the operation" he continued. "However, the mission I gave the two officers was to PROTECT the World President from assassination. I have since learned that within minutes of my order reaching them, BOTH men were involved in a fatal car crash."

The foreman of the Jury stood, a thoughtful expression on his face.

"Excuse me Colonel," he interrupted "Are you telling us that the two men that attempted to kill the President were impostors?"

"That is what we at first thought, yes." replied White "However, what we later discovered was that their bodies had been re-created by the Mysterons."

"Are you saying that they had been brought back to life?" the foreman was rather confused on this point.

"Yes," replied White "But with one major difference. They had no will of their own. They were mindless robots, used by the Mysterons for their own ends. As you have already seen, their first attempt to kill the World President involved turning the reconstructed Captain Brown into a walking bomb."

"This is ridiculous!" retorted Kemsley

"But perfectly true." continued White, ignoring the interruption. He continued: "As you have also seen, Captain Scarlet was the other officer in the car. He too was killed in the crash."

Black rose to his feet. "My lord," he protested "This fantasy has continued for too long."

"I agree." replied Kemsley. "What's more, Colonel White, you have perjured yourself in open court. As you have already seen, Captain Scarlet has given evidence to this court. Or," there was a sneer in his voice "Are you claiming that he too is one of these Mysterons? We have heard quite enough."

He turned to the Jury. "Members of the Jury," he began summing up "You have heard..."

The Clerk of the Court could not remain still any longer. There was definitely something irregular going on.

"My lord," he began as he stood up "I have been Clerk of this court for many years and in all that time, there has never been an occasion where the summing up has begun before both sides have presented their respective cases, no matter how fantastic their stories might seem. In fact, you, yourself--"

Kemsley turned on him: "Do you presume to tell me how to conduct this trial?" he snapped angrily.

"N-No sir" was the nervous reply.

"Then sit down. I will not have junior staff telling me my business. I shall speak to you about this later." Quaking, the unfortunate Clerk returned to his seat. There was no doubt about it, the old boy was becoming decidedly arrogant. His wife and children must be going through hell, the Clerk thought to himself.

Now the distraction was over, Kemsley turned once more to address the Jury: "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you have heard—"

"NOTHING!" yelled Captain Blue, no longer able to contain his anger at this travesty. "The Colonel hasn't been given a chance to present his case." He turned to the Jury, to appeal directly to them.

"In the name of Justice, I ask you to at least hear Colonel White out. You wanted to hear his evidence before."

The foreman thought for a moment, then sat down. The other members of the Jury gathered around him. After several tense moments of muttered discussion, the Jury returned to their seats. The foreman stood once more.

"Your Honour," he began "We agree with the Clerk of the Court. We do not feel that we can come to a just and fair verdict unless we hear everything that the Colonel has to say."

He sat down amidst a round of applause from the Visitor's Gallery

"Silence!" Kemsley had to scream to make himself heard above the commotion.

Finally, the noise faded away. Kemsley conceded: "Very well," he sighed "You may continue."

Grayson frowned. It was proving to be more difficult than he'd expected. He consoled himself with the thought that his enemies' fate was already sealed. Try as they might, there would be no escape for them.

Colonel White continued: "As I was saying, Captain Scarlet was killed in the car crash. The Mysterons created a double of him, which they used to kidnap

the World President.” White then described the gun-battle at the top of the London Car-Vu and the subsequent events.

The members of the Jury looked incredulous at the fantastic story that was being told.

Grayson saw the expressions and relaxed, White was signing his own death sentence. His smile grew broader as White finished his narrative.

“I therefore call my next witness,” said White “Captain Scarlet.”

The atmosphere was electric as the panelled door opened to admit Scarlet, now wearing the replica of his own uniform which he’d removed from the dead reconstruction in the cupboard. The figure moved to take his place in the witness box.

“Objection!” Black stood up. “A Prosecution witness cannot be a witness for the Defence”

“Sustained” said Kemsley

White had had enough of the pretence. He ignored them both.

“Captain Scarlet,” began White “In your own words, will you tell us what happened when Captain Blue brought Mr Johanssen to Cloudbase?”

“Yes Sir.” replied Scarlet. He told the Court of the events leading up to the search and subsequent discovery of Johanssen’s body.

“What happened then?” asked White.

“I knew that we had to get rid of the body before it exploded.” replied Scarlet. “Since it would have taken too long to use normal escape routes, I decided to blow out the window, the air pressure doing the rest.”

“Go on.” encouraged White.

“When I blew the window,” continued Scarlet “Johanssen and I were carried towards it. I managed to hold onto a stanchion to stop myself from being

blown out too. I was able to see the body as it fell. It blew up just afterwards."

"What happened then?" asked White.

Scarlet thought for a moment. "I think I must have passed out." he said slowly. "I remember regaining consciousness in a mortuary..."

At that moment, there was a faint cry from the body of the court and a figure stood up. "But you were left for me to..." said Harvey, pointing at Scarlet.

For a moment, White was unable to recognise the startled figure. Then he realised who it was. "Ah! Doctor Harvey" he smiled "Would you like to finish what you were saying?"

"I er, that is. No, I must be mistaken." stammered the doctor.

"Let me see if I can guess what you were going to say" suggested White "You were going to say 'you were left for me to carry out a post-mortem.' Is that correct?" Dumbly, the doctor nodded.

"And I suppose that when you came to carry out the examination, the body had gone?" Again, the doctor nodded "I thought that someone had moved it." he said quietly.

He stared at Scarlet and shook his head slowly.

White decided to gamble: "Is the man standing in the witness box the same man that you were asked to examine this morning?"

"He appears to be." replied Harvey carefully. He could be locked up in a padded cell for less.

"And the body was dead?" asked White.

"Of course he was dead!" snapped Kemsley "You don't carry out post-mortems on living people.

White ignored him. "What was the presumed cause of death?" he continued.

"Well, replied Harvey, brightening. He was on safer ground now. "I was told that it was a helicopter crash, but the body appeared to be unmarked."

"Thank you." said White "You may sit down." Gratefully, Harvey returned to his seat.

"The evidence is inadmissible." snapped Kemsley. "He was not in the witness box." Captain Blue groaned.

White was not shaken. He addressed the Jury directly "If you remember, Doctor Harvey has already taken the oath. Does it really matter where he gives his evidence?"

The foreman thought for a moment. "No." he said after a moment's thought. "I don't suppose it does."

Kemsley tried again "How do we know that the witness hasn't a twin brother who was killed?"

White turned to Scarlet. "Captain Scarlet. Describe the room in which you found yourself."

When Scarlet had finished, White looked for Harvey. "Doctor Harvey. Is that a correct description of your laboratory?"

The reply was immediate: "Yes sir."

White turned to the Jury. "So, you see, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, an independent MEDICAL witness has confirmed the facts about Captain Scarlet's amazing powers of recovery."

He turned back to Scarlet "Will you please continue Captain?"

The smile had disappeared from Grayson's face. He had the first faint feelings that something, somewhere, had gone wrong.

Doctor Fawn looked for the umpteenth time at his patient. He was relieved to see that the enormous stress seemed to have eased. The heart rate seemed to have slowed too. When the President had been brought in, it had

been pounding fit to burst. He was just about to turn away when patient stirred slightly. That was a good sign. Fawn now knew that the President was in with a fighting chance.

"Thinking that I was a doctor," continued Scarlet "The nurse led me to the World President's room. The nurse had to leave for a few minutes and whilst she was away, the President regained consciousness long enough for me to speak to him."

Grayson frowned. There was definitely something wrong. Scarlet actually seemed to be helping his Spectrum cronies.

He felt inside his jacket for the reassuring weight that he knew would be there.

"What exactly did the President say?" asked White. "At first, he was confused," began Scarlet "In fact he thought that I was someone else and had some sort of attack as a result. When the attack passed, I asked him how long he had been having such attacks. He couldn't remember. In fact, the most recent event he COULD remember was the Bermuda conference, three months ago."

"Did you notice anything else?" asked White.

"Yes, sir." replied Scarlet "I noticed that the President had lost the hard quality from his voice. However, when I asked him why Spectrum had been banned, he went into a trance."

"Did he say anything more?" White pumped, trying to keep the excitement out of his voice.

"Yes sir. He said: 'We have humoured these deluded individuals in their castle in the air for far too long. It's time we stopped their fantasies about alien attacks from Mars.'"

"What happened then?" asked White.

"The President seemed to withdraw into himself," replied Scarlet. "It was as if he'd been switched off. Though he did seem to react to one word, but a visitor arrived and I had to leave."

"I see," replied White, "Please continue."

Grayson, worried now, felt inside his jacket once more. The safety catch released with an almost imperceptible click.

"Why don't you turn on them?" he thought to himself "They must be destroyed; we must not fail."

Unaware of the drama in the court-room, Doctor Fawn had worries of his own. His patient was tossing from side to side and murmuring to himself. He put his ear to the President's mouth, to catch the muttered words.

The words were frightening enough: "...destroyed...must not fail", but he felt a chill run down his spine when he realised that instead of the President's gentle drawl, he was hearing the familiar tones of Senator Charles Grayson.

Scarlet finished his story. He had omitted certain information that he knew that the Colonel already knew.

"Thank you, Captain," said White. As Scarlet left the witness box, White turned to the Jury. "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury," he addressed them "It is clear from the evidence presented by the witnesses for the defence that..."

"You don't expect us to believe your story about Captain Scarlet rising from the dead?" interrupted Kemsley.

"Surely that's a matter for the jury," replied Blue

"But it's quite preposterous" retorted Kemsley.

"I would remind you that according to classical aerodynamics," replied White calmly "It is quite impossible for a bumble bee to fly."

Scowling, Kemsley subsided. The Colonel's logic had beaten him. There was a quiet chuckle from the visitor's gallery as someone enjoyed the Judge's discomfiture.

White turned once more to the jury. "As I was about to say, it is clear that you have been brought here under false pretences. The events of the last forty-eight hours lead me to conclude that this whole trial was arranged as part of a plan to put the Spectrum organisation out of business, leaving the Mysterons free to wreak havoc on the earth. In the minds of those responsible, there was never any intention that Justice, real justice, was to be carried out. We were to be destroyed, using our own laws as the weapon."

There was a stir from the gallery. White ignored it and continued: "The first attempt was to destroy Cloudbase, by means of a booby trap that substituted himself for our defence lawyer, Mr Nielsen. In the attempt Captain Scarlet was killed and a Mysteron double was created, a double that testified against his colleagues, using evidence that had been subtly altered to tell a quite different story."

Grayson stiffened. White was getting uncomfortably close to the truth. Nervously, he felt once more for the gun. White continued:

"When the World President ordered Spectrum to cease operations, it was because it was necessary to the Plan. He was just another tool, to be discarded when no longer required. If you remember, Captain Scarlet told us that he found the President in a disorientated state and so had been confused with someone else. By a strange coincidence, that same person had visited the President soon after, the result being that the President slipped into a coma. It has been said that patients in a coma can still respond to certain stimuli, words or music perhaps. Captain Scarlet found that stimulus. It was the name of the person that the President feared and hated above all others, the person who had been controlling his mind for the past three months." the revulsion was plain in White's voice as he looked

around the chamber for the one face he knew would be there. White's eyes narrowed as he spotted his quarry. "I have you now." he thought. He returned his attention to the Jury, sitting with rapt attention.

"I should point out that no normal man would have been able to accomplish what he did. But then, you are no normal man, are you Senator?"

In a blur of speed Grayson reached for his gun. It was a good try, but not nearly fast enough. With an ear-splitting whine, the electron beam hit him square in the chest and Senator Charles Grayson, or rather his Mysteron double, fell dead. The clatter of his gun hitting the floor was the only sound to break the shocked silence that had descended on the chamber.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Doctor Fawn was worried, nothing he did seemed to help. For the last five minutes, the President had been deliriously tossing his head from side to side and groaning. Spasms of pain wracked the tortured body. Suddenly, he gave a scream of pain and then slumped back, gasping. Doctor fawn bent to examine his patient and was startled to see his eyes opening. The look of pain had passed, but the President had a puzzled expression on his face. "What's going on? Where am I?" he asked weakly.

"You're safe, Mr President." Fawn reassured him. "You're in Cloudbase Sickbay." The President tried to sit up then fell back onto the bed.

"I feel as weak as a kitten" he said.

"I'm not surprised," replied Fawn checking the President's vital signs "You've been very ill." Satisfied that his patient was well enough, Fawn helped him to a sitting position.

"I feel so dizzy" said the President, accepting the glass of water that Fawn offered him. A thought suddenly came to him. "Why am I in Cloudbase? Surely it would have been quicker to take me to the local Hospital.

"It's a long story..." began Fawn.

Carefully, Captain Ochre emerged from his hiding place, the ante-room that he'd earlier discovered on the building plans.

"Whew! That was close." said Blue

"Good shooting Captain." White congratulated him, momentarily forgetting Kemsley. That moment was enough:

"Nobody move!" the automatic in the Judge's hand was small but wicked looking and aimed straight at Destiny Angel. "You! drop the weapon." with a shrug of despair, Ochre put the Electron Gun on the floor and kicked it away from him. He didn't dare risk Destiny's life.

"Now raise your hands, all of you" Slowly, the Spectrum officers obeyed Kemsley's order.

As Doctor Fawn told his story, long hidden memories surfaced. Oblivious now to the outside world, the events of the last three months, until now, just a meaningless blur, became clear. At first, Grayson's suggestions had seemed harmless enough but after a while, the President had found himself giving orders that became increasingly hostile to all that he had held dear. Soon he'd fallen down the slippery slope until the domination was complete. He'd known that Grayson's orders were wrong, but he'd been totally unable to resist. The memory of the death of the Spectrum agent made him feel sick, but there had been nothing he could do to stop himself giving the order. The grip on his mind had tightened until... Nothing. There was no recollection of the last twenty-four hours. He became aware that Fawn had stopped speaking.

"Well, I'm very grateful to you all, doctor." the President said, rather shakily "In fact, I'd like to thank Colonel White in person."

Hadn't he been listening?

"Mr President," repeated Fawn "I've just told you that the Colonel, Destiny Angel and Captain Blue are currently standing in the main Halls of Justice, on trial for their lives!"

"Stand together, all of you." The Spectrum officers had no choice. They moved into the body of the chamber. Idly, Blue glanced around the courtroom, searching for inspiration. He started when he realised that apart from Kemsley, Black and his colleagues the chamber was deserted. "Where is everyone?" he whispered to Destiny.

Black must have heard him "They are no longer necessary, earthman."

This was the first time that Colonel White and Captain Black had come face-to-face since Black had taken command of the Zero-X.

Since it had been the Colonel who had ordered him to take charge of the mission, it was, he supposed, his fault that Black had been reduced to this state. It therefore fell to him to do something to put things right. He addressed his former subordinate: "Captain Black. Why not come back to Spectrum and let us try to help you."

"You're wasting your time, Earthman." replied Black, his voice dull, lifeless.

White wouldn't give in that easily. Perhaps a direct personal appeal... "Captain Scarlet was taken over by the Mysterons too but he managed to break free. Please let us try to help. After all, you were only carrying out my orders."

All eyes were on Black. How would he react? For a moment, it seemed that a flicker of recognition appeared in his eyes. He opened his mouth to speak. "I..." the voice was no longer that of the Mysteron agent. It was that of Conrad Turner, Spectrum agent. But before he could say another word, a brilliant light filled the chamber. An all-too familiar voice addressed them:

"EARTHMEN, WE ARE PEACEFUL BEINGS AND YOU HAVE TRIED TO DESTROY US.
BUT YOU CANNOT SUCCEED.

YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF CRIMES AGAINST THE MYSTERONS AND ARE
TO BE EXECUTED IMMEDIATELY. "

"But listen!" pleaded Blue. The appeal went unheeded. The Mysteron voice continued:

THERE CAN BE NO APPEAL AGAINST THE JUDGEMENT OF THE MYSTERONS.
WE SHALL CONTINUE THE WAR-OF-NERVES UNTIL WE HAVE DESTROYED ALL
LIFE ON EARTH
WE SHALL BE AVENGED".

The light faded. All eyes had been on the ceiling, the apparent source of the light. They turned once more to Captain Black. All the life had drained from his eyes.

He turned once more to Kemsley: "You know what you must do."

White sighed. It had been a good try.

Everyone turned their attention to Kemsley. From his position in his raised seat, he could shoot all of them.

To attempt to rush him would be futile.

Scarlet knew that there was one desperate chance. He took it. Kemsley saw the movement and fired.

Scarlet's leap fell short, the bullet in his chest knocking him to the floor, blood pouring from the wound and staining the expensive carpet.

The others made to help him, but Kemsley's voice stopped them: "The next person to try any false heroics will get the same."

The Spectrum Officers returned their gaze to the Mysteron sitting above them.

Through pain-misted eyes, Scarlet could see his goal in front of him. Consciousness failing fast, he reached for the familiar shape. His fingertips brushed, then grasped. Slowly, ever more painfully, he pulled the object towards him. Knowing he had seconds; he rolled onto his back and squeezed the trigger. He was aware of the whine of the electron gun followed by a muffled thud then silence...

Lieutenant Green received the message from the Television Studio and turned to the World President who was sitting at Colonel White's desk. "World Television are standing by sir." he informed him

"Thank you, Lieutenant," replied the President "I only hope we're in time."

He turned to the camera: "My fellow citizens of Earth," he began "I am speaking to you from Spectrum Headquarters, Cloudbase..."

Captain Blue looked up at White. "He's dead, Colonel." he said sadly. As soon as the ray from the electron gun had destroyed the Mysteronised Kemsley,

Blue had rushed to help the stricken Scarlet. But it had been too late, Scarlet had given his life to save his colleagues. "Well at least he managed to destroy the Mysteron..." replied White. A sudden thought occurred to him. He turned to look for Captain Black. The Mysteron Agent had vanished.

White turned to Captain Ochre: "Did you see where Captain Black went, Captain?"

"Well, I know it sounds crazy sir," began Ochre, still trying to comprehend what he had just seen "But Captain Black just seemed to vanish into thin air. I tried to grab him but it was like trying to catch a shadow."

The Mysterons had no intention of letting their agent be captured by Spectrum and had used their powers to spirit him away.

Blue rose to his feet and looked around the empty Chamber. "What happened to the Jury?" he asked the Colonel.

"I don't know Captain" replied White.

"One thing's for certain." remarked Ochre, a former member of the World Police Corps, "Without Judge or Jury you can't have a court case."

"He's got a point Colonel." added Blue "But what about the ban?"

"We'll deal with that later." replied White decisively. "Captain Ochre, contact Cloudbase and arrange for them to pick us up."

"S.I.G. Sir" replied Ochre. At that moment, his epaulettes flashed green and his microphone dropped into position.

"Talk of the devil!" smiled White.

"Go ahead Lieutenant Green." acknowledged Ochre.

"The World President has recovered consciousness," announced Green and is currently making a World Television broadcast from Cloudbase.

"What's he talking about Lieutenant?" asked White into Ochre's microphone. "I think it would be better if you heard for yourself, Colonel." came the faint

reply. There was a momentary pause and then the President's voice could be faintly heard:

"...and with immediate effect, all charges against the Spectrum organisation are to be dropped."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Some hours later, a conference was convened in the Cloudbase Conference Room.

“Members of Spectrum,” Began White, surveying the gathered faces before him “Together, we have confronted the gravest threat yet to Spectrum’s existence. It is still not clear exactly how Senator Grayson was able to exert so much influence over the President, but Doctor Fawn tells me that the control was released when Grayson was killed. We can only assume that he was being used as a channel by the Mysterons. Doctor Fawn has also confirmed that Captain Scarlet will recover completely within a few days” he noticed Destiny’s gentle smile “However,” he added sternly, “I shall reprimand Captain Scarlet for disobeying my direct order and risking Cloudbase.”

There was, however, a slight twinkle in his eye that told Destiny that, on the other hand, the reprimand just might be forgotten.

White was interrupted by a visitor. “Ah, Mr President!” he smiled

“I just thought that I’d look in before I left, Colonel,” said the President. “To pass on my thanks and congratulations to you all.” There were murmurs of appreciation from the gathered officers. The President paused for a moment, as if deep in thought.

“I do have something of a problem, though. Now that Senator Grayson is dead, there is no-one to stand in the elections. I was wondering if perhaps you might consider the job. I assure you that I’d give you all the assistance you might need.”

Colonel White seemed to be at a loss for words: “I, ah, that is...”

“I think the Colonel’s trying to say that he’s rather busy” ventured Blue, coming to his commander’s rescue”

"Er, yes, yes" blustered White, beginning to regain his composure "Thank you, all the same, sir, but I have enough to do keeping the Mysterons at bay."

"Ah well," the President smiled "It was just a thought."

Ochre excused himself; he had been detailed to fly the President and the Paramedic home, and escorted the two men to the waiting Passenger Jet.

As the footsteps faded away down the corridor, White returned his attention to the conference. "Captain Grey," he said picking up a piece of paper from the desk in front of him. "I think you might find this of interest."

"What is it sir?" asked Grey curiously.

"The bill for respraying one Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle." replied White. He showed the total to Grey, who whistled in disbelief.

"Normally," White continued "The costs of such a deliberate defacement of Spectrum equipment would be deducted from your salary." then the Colonel smiled: "However, under the circumstances..." With that, he tore the bill neatly in half.

His smile faded when he noticed Blue's thoughtful expression. "Is something wrong, Captain?"

"I was just thinking of Captain Black, Colonel." replied Blue. "For a moment, in the court- room, it seemed as if his real personality was about to break free from the Mysterons."

"Yes, Captain." replied White. "He was a good officer. Perhaps someday we'll find a way to help him."

The navigation lights of the giant structure known as Cloudbase blinked into life once more as the golden disc of the setting sun sank gently below the horizon, marking the end of another day.

The next attack might come tomorrow, perhaps in six months, but until the Mysterons called off the War of Nerves, Spectrum would be waiting.

The End