

WATER

Bill Carver

“Commander. How was the trip?”

“It was long. Thank you for asking. Two more stops after this and I can get back home.”

“Welcome to our base.”

“I’m glad to finally get here. Major, can you accommodate my crew?”

“Captain?”

“Yes sirs. Arrangements have been made. Our facilities are at your disposal. Our crew will stay out of your way. They are busy, anyway, on the next phase of our plan.”

“Major, can we talk about that now? I’ve got a narrow window for my visit to get my travel plans lined up for the next base I have to visit. Give me a quick rundown and then my team can do a more intension review while you and I discuss other business on the more mundane subjects of command.”

“Of course. Where do you want me to begin? We do have a presentation prepared, but if we’ve learned anything at this base it’s to adjust to changing conditions.”

“This is my first trip to this district. Start with a little about this base.”

“Captain.”

“Sir. This base was established as a forward base for the troops that will arrive in 900. We’ve had this base for 250. We have a crew of forty. The base will accommodate up to three thousand. We have lost three crew members to the local environment. Much of the base is unoccupied and we maintain the main quarters to keep our surveillance on our target. We have minimal defense capabilities, but we are powerful enough at this time to handle the natives if the need arose. At some time in the future that may change, but we have our plan to contain and neutralize the natives, long before the troops arrive in 900.”

“Also Commander, we have tied into the enemies communications network and we have used that to collect much information about them. It’s our core operation to create the plan to defeat them. We expect them to be a minimal problem for the troops when they arrive.”

“Captain. Major. Your time references need to be explained to me.”

“Sorry sir. We’ve found it easier to work with the local time units. This planet revolves around its star at a period that they call one year. So we just shortened it. We expect the troops to arrive in 900 years, in the local vernacular, and we’ve been here for 250 years.”

“What does a year consist of?”

“Each rotation of the planet takes approximately 1/365th of a year. We can get more specific in our own time periods but the conversion makes it a nuisance. Took us quite a long time among ourselves to work in the local time.”

“I understand. When will the next review of your plans with a visiting officer, such as myself be done?”

“In 300. Years.”

“Will your plan be in effect by then?”

“Yes sir. We are arranging the necessary components now.”

“Are you on the planet with anyone now?”

“No sir. They have an unusual culture. They have numerous scenarios in literature and visual media about what they call alien invasions. But it is all considered imaginary. We stay behind this moon that circles the planet and we watch, listen and learn.”

“Moon?”

“This orbiting satellite is called the moon.”

“Thank you Captain. I’ve experienced this in many of our watching stations. They always pick up the local language. You don’t know how many words I know from many worlds.”

“Must be interesting.”

“It has its moments. But continue.”

“Of course sir. Until about 200 years the world was broken up by many tribes

and then their industrial age developed and created a series of aggressive nations.”

“That’s all right Captain. I’ve heard this many times in other worlds. They develop, have wars, conquests and the like. I suppose they continued advancing technologically.”

“Yes. They went nuclear and created a worldwide grid of energy, financing and communications. We were here at the beginning of all of those and it was good timing for us to arrive when we did.”

“Our scouts do a good job of choosing. So Major, are you into the communications grid.”

“Yes sir.”

“No suspicion that you’re here?”

“Just in their imaginative media. But the governments have not found us. We stay on the dark side of the moon and our monitoring equipment is underground. We found this satellite perfect for our purposes.”

“I noticed some unusual equipment on this moon as we entered orbit.”

“Yes. They visited here years ago. One nation, but they haven’t been back. They really want to get to the fourth planet. Lots of spiritual and cultural references to that planet. But we plan to remain hidden from them.”

“Sir, our base may be large but we’ve had many years to hide in on the moon here and once our plan goes into effect, getting to the moon will be the last of the natives’ problems.”

“Your plan won’t cause much destruction to the planet, will it? We’ve lost two planets during my career where our plans did so much more damage to the planet than we anticipated. Invasion fleets and colonization fleets cannot be simply rerouted when things go bad.”

“We understand. We’ve decided to go after a unique feature of the planet that is vital to their survival but is completely worthless and unnecessary to us. We expect that our plan will also allow the temperature of the planet to move in a direction more to our needs.”

“Very good. Tell me about it.”

“As you look at this image of the planet, you notice all the water areas.”

“What does anyone do with all that water? What a wasted area that is.”

“Not on this planet. Water is the basis of their life. Every creature on that planet is dependent on water. There are two kinds of water. They call it fresh water or salt water. The salt water section is most of the planet, as we’ve highlighted here. The fresh water is what the natives require to exist. It is also an important feature of their weather systems. It is needed to nourish the food supply required to live. Currently there is a shortage of the fresh water, which is going to lead to some local wars over the commodity.”

“Fine. Water is important. It that what they call their planet? Based on all the water.”

“Actually no. The planet is named after the solid areas where they live. It is another name for dirt.”

“Strange.”

“Yes sir.”

“So Commander, water is needed for their life. But we don’t require it. This planet is needed for minerals. It will support a colony of miners and after that who cares about it. How long do they estimate the miners will be working here Captain?”

“Two thousand.”

“Does your plan anticipate any survivors?”

“Currently they have around seven billion natives that can fight us for the planet.”

“Really. That many?”

“The population will keep growing. That number does not include any of the other life that exists there. We are doing studies on the viral, bacterial and insect life and how it may affect us. But we can use local extermination methods around the living areas of our establishments to control those.”

“Very good Major. But what about the others?”

“That’s where the properties of water come to our aid and what we are planning.”

“Explain.”

“Captain. You continue.”

“Yes sir. A lot of the fresh water is in colder zones of the planet. Obviously, the natives built their civilizations around those area of easy access and availability to

water. So we plan to take away their water.”

“Poison it?”

“No. Antidotes can be found and not every source of water can be poisoned. We plan to take away their water. There are some strange properties of water. It becomes a solid at a relatively warm temperature to us. But not to the natives of the planet. The planet goes through season cycles of warm and cold. During the cold weather a lot of the water becomes solid.”

“Then all these water sources are no good to them if they freeze up.”

“No sir. Their water freezes from the top down instead of from the bottom up. It is an unusual feature. The frozen water, called ice, floats on top of the bodies of water. Other solid from liquids will sink. But by floating on top, it creates a barrier to the cold weather that allows water underneath to stay liquid. Thus life continues in the cold weather even with the water freezing.”

“How does it happen?”

“Not sure sir. We know that as the water temperature drops it becomes heavier until it reaches a certain temperature, then the water changes properties. The water starts to expand and it becomes lighter as the temperature drops. So the surface level becomes ice and below the ice the water remains liquid. Another property of ice is the thermal low conductivity. The poor conduction of heat from the water under the ice keeps the heat in the water from escaping through the ice. So it's very difficult to completely freeze a body of water. As long as water keeps moving under the ice, most sources of water will remain liquid and usable to life on the planet.”

“Interesting.”

“Yes sir. But much of the water is connected where the natives live. The water moves, but has to be renewed which is where the weather patterns affect the quantity and location of where the water is found.”

“So what do you want to do?”

“Take the water out of circulation. We've come up with a nanoweight to introduce into the water on the planet.”

“Go on.”

“Water is composed of two components on the planet. Two parts hydrogen to

one part oxygen. We designed the nanoweight to make water molecules weigh more. This added weight, we determine that it will allow ice to sink into the water instead of floating on top.”

“Lock up their water in ice?”

“Yes. When the water freezes with the nanoweight, it will sink. This will allow more ice to form and this will also sink until all the water bodies are filled with ice. This will kill all the life that lives in the bodies of water and lock up water. When the weather gets warmer it will melt the surface ice but not the ice in the bottom of the body of water. This will cause a loss of life and mass migration from the colder land masses to the warmer areas, this creates tension and most likely wars between the migrators and those already with water. It will stop the sources of water that lead to many of the moving waters which are used to create the crops and food sources needed for the natives to survive.”

“This will affect the weather patterns?”

“Yes. We project that with much of the colder areas in ice, this will remove a source of water used to create weather storms that redistribute water around the planet. We’ve run computer simulations that you can review, but we project that we can create a colder planet that will become inhabitable to the native species of all types.”

“How long?”

“Should be done by the time the troops arrive. If we do it right, they might not have to do anything.”

“Excellent. There are other worlds in this sector where they can be used. When do you start?”

“We’ve tied into their worldwide communications system with our computer system. They should have the technology to create the nanoweights within the next 24. We’ll use them to create and release the nanoweights into the atmosphere for dispersal to the water. We have a virtual company set up on the planet. We don’t have to be there, but we can work from here and have the natives do all the work.”

“Very good job Major. Nice presentation Captain. Do be careful with the nanoweights. I’ve had some experience when nanos have gone wild. Actually ate one planet by the time the troops got there. Complete waste of resources and time.”

“Yes sir. We have that case study in our records. This is just a simple weight. It will be inert to the natives and it will just make the water molecules weigh a micro fraction more allowing the ice to sink.”

“All plans have risks Commander. We are studying this option and we feel that it will work.”

“Fine Major. Have my team review all your plans and we will proceed based on their recommendations. Now I’m hungry.”

“Yes sir. Follow us and we’ll take care of that.”

At a party in Manhattan, I turned to my host and said, “Tom, where did you get the trick ice? It even tastes like water.”

Tom replied to me, “Al, what are you talking about?”

I held up the glass, pointed to the ice in my glass and said, “Look. The ice is on the bottom of the glass. It’s not floating on top.”

The End

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