

Jinho Kwak

5/15

The sky was brighter than it had been for weeks; how unfitting for a such a hopeless day, June 9th, a month after 5/15, the day they left.

At the time, I didn't understand why they called the day the aliens came 5/15, after the date. All we'd seen was their ship, a city sized craft casting a shadow somewhere on the Northern Atlantic Ocean. To compare it to a terrorist attack with clear malicious intent seemed a little premature. It did nothing, just observing us.

Meanwhile, the population of Earth imploded over their arrival.

Servers crashed from millions of panicked people looking for information about the "crisis" and the SETI headquarters was overrun by reporters. Thousands of people died simply from the chaos. North Korea took credit for the ship. Government officials reassured their citizens that there was no alien threat in one hour and prepared nuclear weapons in the next.

For an entire month, the world watched tensely as the ship did absolutely nothing.

Which was when my best friend, Jerrard, passing me at school, announced that he would be boarding a boat and then a plane to travel to Antarctica, that he had already packed, and that I should do the same.

"I mean, they might be friendly, but why take the chance? What if they aren't? It's better to be safe and shoot them down, or something," he had explained.

Seeing his paranoia, I answered, "there's no evidence at all about what they would do, and we can't assume that they would be aggressive, because they probably don't have the same

experiences and thought processes we do. This sort of fear is what's making all those people write those crazy theories on Facebook about what'll happen, and nothing they ever say makes any sense. That fear of the unknown, of something alien, is going to make someone do something stupid soon."

Jerrard hesitated, "Well, it's not like my family leaving is going to make any difference. And if we will leave, we should leave now, when people have calmed down a bit. So, I don't know, I'm still going. Tomorrow."

"Suit yourself."

It turned out I was right; later that same day, a rogue group of American soldiers and officers, clearly having planned it for the last month, took control of a military base and got a nuclear missile ready to fire. But before they could properly aim, the military arrived, and in the ensuing confusion, the missile was fired completely off-target.

It was quickly determined that the missile and would land off the coast of France. As governments scrambled to stop this, the entire world was tense again, completely still as it watched what was happening.

Suddenly, as the weapon's path arced over the Atlantic Ocean, it simply stopped, hovering in midair, despite its vigorously working engines, like a fossil trapped in amber. It took everyone about five minutes to realize it had stopped, and another ten minutes for everyone to remember that the alien ship was still there, hovering in exactly the same spot it had been for a month, silently observing. Quickly, heads turned toward it, and, for the first time since arriving at Earth, it moved.

The ship streaked halfway across the globe to the missile in almost less than a minute, so quickly it seemed the Earth itself had turned to greet it, but strangely, there was no sonic boom, there were no massive rushes of air, and the craft didn't even seem to heat. It stopped feet in front of the missile, putting an enormous shadow over the scene. Now, hundreds of millions of people were transfixed to the events unfolding through the eyes of a dozen helicopter-borne camera crews frantically ascending to get a wider angle.

Then, viewers' screens seemed to ripple as a wave of some sort was transmitted from the ship. The missile suddenly seemed to explode, startling many, but in fact, its individual parts had smoothly disassembled themselves, laying themselves out like a three-dimensional blueprint.

For about a minute, all the cameras filmed was the ship seeming to study the thousands of little pieces of metal that were barely visible against the calm sea. The ship shuddered slightly, as if losing its composure for a moment. Then two things happened at once.

First, the air was suddenly full of a million tiny flashes of white as all of what had recently been a missile dropped, falling into the ocean. Even as this was being pointed out by people watching, the ship tilted up, seeming to reach up to the sky, and shot up in a blur, nearly destroying several helicopters, and one camera crew attempted to keep track of its fast ascent, but it was already gone. The area seemed strangely empty without its huge form.

Nobody knew what to do after that. Everyone who was watching either stayed frozen with anticipation, waiting for something else to happen, or even celebrated, but some just turned off our TV's; many of us knew that was it. I turned off the computer I had been watching the livestream with and collapsed on the couch. They weren't coming back.

The phone rang, and I laid there for a few seconds, then picked it up from in front of me. It was Jerrard. “This is great! Do you think we scared them off by firing it, or when they saw what was in the nuke? They won’t be back soon! It’s actually a good thing those nuts did that!” he babbled excitedly, “I’ll call Robert and Jack and we can all celebrate at my house! That’s okay, right?” He hung up before I said anything, not that I would’ve.

He was half right, anyway. Now the aliens knew what sort of people people were. They knew how divided we were, the fears we had that they had no need to have. And they realized what had been attempted to fired at them, and through that, seen why we made it: man is a wolf to man.

So they’d left because they didn’t see any reason they should help a species like us. And by going, they had taken the chance that we could gain anything from the contact. All sorts of knowledge. Cold fusion. Origins of life. Cosmology. New sources of energy. Philosophy. Mathematics. Gone, because we’d told them we couldn’t be given a chance without us trying to destroy something.

Rather than thinking about their leaving, I decided to focus on when the aliens came, vaguely thinking about trying to justify Jerrard’s fears. But once again, my thoughts drifted away. That day was called 5/15. That was a reminder of a more modern fear, one that was justified. But the fears that were tugged along in its wake weren’t. Those fears, and the kind seen today, were what had people make the decisions others would regret.

Breaking out of my pensive state, I got up and walked toward the window, trying to spot any sign of the ship returning, but I could see nothing against the bright sky.