

# The Fate of One Planet

by Ian Dow

## Chapter 12

### Doorbell

Jay woke up not feeling too clever. He had a headache from dehydration due to the alcohol and was tired from the vivid dreams. The doorbell was ringing and it had been ringing for some time. It was the food delivery.

"What the heck happened to your nice carpet, mate?" the delivery man said, as he walked the boxes through to the kitchen.

"Ambassadors and spies," was the most Jay could manage.

"If that's the case, mate, I wouldn't let the bastards into my house."

"Good idea," agreed Jay.

A shower, a smoothie and Ibuprofen very slightly improved matters, until the doorbell rang again. Now, a man in a jacket and cap stood in the doorway and said nothing except offering to take Jay somewhere in a Mercedes.

"Nope, I am not getting in a car or going anywhere today."

The doorbell rang again, and this time, it was a beautiful lady with a white Ferrari also offering to take him somewhere. Jay just shut the door.

"White, what *are* they thinking?"

The next caller with a Rolls is, well, Jay is not sure, but Jay was not coming out to play today.

The doorbell rang again, "I will break that bloody thing!"

It was Bea, "you're going to break what?"

"The doorbell has not stopped ringing all morning with everyone wanting a piece of me. And I overdid it last night at the pub. Come in."

"You should never have more than one pint of strong beer. I know that is your optimum beer limit. What happened to the carpet?" Bea observed as she advised Jay.

"Ambassadors and spies." Walking Bea to the kitchen, Jay asked, "tea, coffee-"

"Hot chocolate, *please*," she interrupted with a big smile.

"You're lucky the online delivery man has just been; I was cleaned out yesterday."

The doorbell rang again, and Jay rolled his eyes. A large muscular man with two equally, *'don't fucking mess with me, or I'll rip you a new one'* types, eclipsed all light from Jay's doorstep. Jay's right foot arced behind him for better balance.

"Good morning, sir. We have been asked to come and clean your carpets and furniture if you wish."

Jay let them and their equipment in, and went back into the kitchen. The machines started up, and Jay winced.

"Aarr, did you have one too many last night?" Bea mocked Jay.

"Shall we go into the garden? It's quieter," Jay waved in that general direction. They sat on the garden chairs with the Weapons Grades steaming in the cool morning sunshine.

"They are fit," said Bea. Ogling in at the cleaning men.

"They remind me of people in a gangster movie who go in to clear a house of the dead bodies, so no trace remains."

"Yep, I got that vibe too," said Jay.

Bea dragged her eyes off the house cleaning men and looked at Jay. "Well?"

"Abducted by aliens, escaped a secret military base, chased by blacked-out vehicles, burgled by spies and invaded by so-called Ambassadors from all over the world who want to pick my brains."

"So, just the normal boring stuff then?" said Bea in a flat voice.

"Yep, pretty much so," said Jay.

"*So, who* was the bint in the white Ferrari?"

This made Jay snort with laughter. "With everything going on, *that* is what you ask about! And after you got into that Aston Martin and ogled at my cleaning ladies too..."

"Might not be a good idea to let them hear you call them that."

"Yep, you are probably right on that last one. They both glanced in at the men working very hard to clean the house.

"You have been rubbing shoulders with lots of people in power." Bea said in a slightly coy manner. Jay had heard this tone before, and knew she was after something.

'Here comes the pitch' He thought to himself as Bea inhaled, ready to begin her intended topic of discussion.

"Well... what about you mentioning the plight of the Polar bears' in-"

"No," Jay interrupted.

"So, you don't care if they all die and become extinct then?" Bea's tone changed.

"I didn't say that..." replied Jay.

"What is more important than saving the polar bears?"

"Is someone pressuring you?" Jay inquired.

"You obviously don't care."

"Stop!" shouted Jay.

The house cleaning men looked around. "I have bigger fish to fry than you pressuring me into mentioning the largest and most powerful land carnivore on this planet. Just because I don't exactly subscribe to your exact point of view does not make me wrong. So, stop this *'follow blindly, or we exclude you'* crap. I thought you were more intelligent than that. If you were one of my trainees, I would say, open your eyes to all the information around you. Solar panels on my roof to power my house. A garden full of my own fruit trees and veg growing. I care, but if I don't care *your* way, you get the hump. I don't want to play your silly games anymore. I have to save the whole planet," ranted Jay.

"What!" said Bea. "What do you mean you have to save the *whole* planet?"

"I know you have had your enviro campaign thing for some time, but I have never known you to be that pushy with me before. I think someone is pressuring you on this matter. So, I think you had better go now. As I said, I have more important things to attend to," Jay said firmly.

The man in charge of the cleaners stood at the back door, his shoulders rubbing against both door jambs at the same time. "Thank you, Sir, we have finished. We have put some disposable runners down because the carpet is still slightly damp. It would also be best if you could not use the furniture for a few days, and as you are a surveyor, I do not need to tell you about the risks of condensation, Sir." With that, he nodded, and they left.

"Ok," said Jay collecting Bea's unfinished mug, "Time to go."

"Where are you going?"

"Not me, *you*," was the reply.

"But I haven't even—" Bea started.

"I made a mistake," said Jay, "I foolishly thought you came to see me as an old friend or a neighbour who cared about me. But I got someone with an agenda who thought they could use me."

The doorbell rang once again and Jay walked away to answer it. This time, it was two ladies in trouser suits and immaculate site boots.

"Good morning," they both said together, "We have been asked to ask you, if it is acceptable, to set up a video conference suite in your house. That way, everyone has access without the incessant intrusion."

Jay paused and pondered for a moment. "That sounds like a good idea," and he showed them into the front room, where they could set up.

As they did, Bea left the house in a lousy mood, judging by how she slammed the front door. The tech ladies politely asked if they could move furniture, set it up in a spot, drill through the nine-inch external brick wall and connect a new phone line to the outside of the house. They were polite and professional, so Jay agreed.

Thirty minutes passed until Jay was sat in a comfy chair in front of three very high-definition monitors run by a high-end computer and its own fibre connection to the street pole.

"This is some seriously good shit," said Jay.

"We are glad you like it," the tech ladies said together.

"You were very fast, clean and professional," Jay added.

One of the ladies shook Jay's hand, leaned in and whispered. "The equipment we installed will monitor much more than just your voice and image."

"I kind of guessed that," Jay whispered back.

The second one shook his hand, leaned in and whispered. "It measures thirty-seven different things and can even tell if you need the bathroom."

"Wonderful," said Jay. "Thanks again," he said, as they left.

"Well, I am glad you like it," said a voice from the screen. "Hello, I have been assigned as spokesperson to chair this meeting. When you are ready, are you willing to talk to the world?"

"I guess so," replied Jay.

Wham! In an instant, the screens displayed hundreds of intently listening faces. Due to the high quality of the monitors, you could clearly see large groups of people sitting behind them waiting. Several started talking at once. Jay was a little taken aback by all this attention, and he felt himself consciously suppressing a rising panic as he calculated some numbers in his head.

"Hold it, hold it. Who is missing?" Jay intervened.

"What do you mean, missing?" said the Chairman.

"This is obviously not everyone," said Jay.

"What makes you say that?" Asked the Chairman.

"Well, my images are arranged eight by eight, that's sixty-four, times three monitors, is one-hundred and ninety-two. There are more countries in the United Nations than that. So, who is missing?"

"Umm. North Korea, Palestine, the Holy See, ..."

"Well, ask them if they want in, or I am off the air." said Jay, as he got up and left the room.

A technician leaned into the American representative and said, "So, from him first seeing all the images, to now calling us out on the numbers, it took only one and a quarter-seconds. That's quick, Sir. He's definitely not an idiot, so B.S. won't wash; Sir. Oh, and he needed to go to the bathroom, hence why he walked out. I don't think he's being a prima donna, Sir."

The representative nodded.