

The Fate of One Planet

by Ian Dow

Chapter 2

Grabbed

A little earlier

Through the dust and cobweb-covered speakers, played: 'Shine on you Crazy Diamond, Part 1', but not too loud as it was getting late. Jay sat on his stool and looked at his Ducati Darmah's ignition wires. He had finished resetting the ignition pickups in the lovingly polished aluminium cover that now shone like chrome.

With the cover reinstalled onto the motorcycle, this just left the wires to be reconnected. "Oh, bollocks! I should have marked them or taken a photo before disconnecting." He said aloud to himself. "This is off form for me! I am usually much more thorough."

Jay huffed at himself, sat upright, and dislodged a spanner on the bike ramp. Responding rapidly, his right hand flashed out and caught the spanner before it could clatter on the floor. "Well, at least my reactions are still working," Jay leant forward to examine the wires once more.

There was a black and white pair with an O tracer, and the other couple had a V tracer. O and V does not match left and right in Italian or German for the electronics. The wires were the same length, so if logic does not work, that leaves suck it and see. Jay reconnected the wires and let the bike down from the hydraulic stand.

It was too late to start this noisy beast for a test and not piss off the neighbours even more, so he decided to call it a night. Turning off the garage power and stepping into his garden, Jay stood with his head back and admired the night sky. As his night vision improved, after the bright lights of his garage, he could start to see more than just the first magnitude stars.

A dot of light moved against the darkness. "Is that a satellite?" Jay went to take a step forward to get a better view, but a snuffling noise at his feet distracted

him. His head snapped down to try to see a hedgehog in the dark. His legs wobbled in every direction to avoid hurting the creature. With a failure in balance, sight and leg position, Jay hit the floor. Hard.

He opened his eyes to the dark night. A moment of panic soon passed when he realised that the hedgehog was not under him. "What the bloody hell is wrong with me?" he ranted. Jay pushed himself to his feet and looked around. The hedgehog was nowhere to be seen. "What! did I just imagine that?" He knocked the dust off his hands, locked the garage and went to bed.

It was then, that the vivid dreams began...

The two ball-shaped aliens bickered about the ship they had stolen. One wanted to run and hide; the other wanted to use the ship to get something of value first. The arrival of another Ship in their location brought matters to a head, and they ordered the ship to jump to a new location. The White Ship was getting fed up with this, but obliged anyway. They popped back into this universe near a small, uninteresting yellow sun. The balls started looking at their surroundings and were delighted, albeit disgusted, to see the populated planet.

"Look at those ugly beings. They are revolting. We could sell one to the Games."

"Ship, pick the best one and get it."

"Define *best*?" asked the Ship.

"We don't know. You choose," was the retort.

The Ship scanned and found its best choice.

Jay sat up with a start, tangled in bedclothes and in a cold sweat. "Got to lay off the Double Gloucester before bed." He told the empty room.

Showered, dressed and after breakfast, Jay wheeled the Ducati out to the pavement on a beautiful sunny morning and began the starting procedure, with a ritualistic approach: both fuel taps on; flood the front carburettor for six seconds; hold down the rear tickler for nine; throttle twists, so the accelerator

pump sprays fuel into the inlet manifolds.

As Jay was about to swing the kick starter, he saw a curtain in the house opposite twitch. Distracted by the movement, Jay made the classic mistake of a straight leg kick on the big V twin motorcycle. Bang!

Bea's house

Bea shut the curtain and ran for the loo. Tears streamed down her face as she tried not to pee herself, laughing at the image of Jay being blown over the handlebars. Two minutes later, and a full bladder emptied, Bea was still holding her ribs, replaying the image of Jay's short flight in her head.

Five minutes later, back out on the pavement, and the ignition wires were the right way around. The Ducati rumbled into life, and a sore Jay strapped a travel bag to the rear seat and swung on his rucksack before driving out onto the road to start his holiday.

At five o'clock on a Sunday morning, the M25 was surprisingly empty. Planet Earth was its usual beautiful and wonderful self. The rumble of the V twin engine turned into a roar. The motorway was deserted. The sun was shining. Jay was smiling. But the police officers...they looked very angry.

The Brembo callipers stripped the light coating of rust off the steel discs as they turned kinetic energy into heat. The policeman cursed as the speed gun read one mile an hour under the legal speed limit. Jay cruised past and recognised the officer with the speed gun. They have history, which although the result was in Jay's favour, it resulted in a long-standing grudge.

Jay went into 'good boy driving mode'. Inside lane, looking straight ahead, following the speed limit. Predictably however, the police car still gave chase.

Jay went over the crest of the Hertfordshire hill and down into the next valley. There was a sonic boom as the White Ship pounced, and Jay disappeared. The police car came over the brow of the hill to see an empty valley.

"Put your foot down; he's made a run for it." The policeman snapped at his colleague. The blues and twos came on, and the BMW accelerated hard through the valley. Three valleys later, the White Ship dropped Jay and the Ducati with another sonic boom.

"What the heck!?"

Jay was unsure about what had just happened. He shut the throttle and cruised to the hard shoulder at the top of the hill, stunned.

Now two hilltops away, the police spotted Jay and pressed another button on the console. "What! how did he get there so fast?" the aggrieved policeman was incredulous.

A few minutes later, the police car pulled behind a visibly shaking Jay. The mood in the police car was not improved by the computer stating that Jay's average speed over the distance was an improbable 249 miles an hour.

"Did you just see that?" Jay asked.

"You do not have to say anything..." starts Jay's least favourite policeman.

"A giant white ball came down and hit me-"

"But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned..."

"There was a blinding light!"

"...something that you later rely on in court."

"And a huge painful pop, then I'm on a different bit of road!"

Halfway through the last line of the caution, the policeman ran out of steam as the army helicopter banked hard around them. The dry fields produced a lot of dust in the downdraft. The helicopter landed, and the armed soldiers poured out and vaulted the fence. The captain was about to say something but was interrupted by two more loud booms. Fighter jets flew over them low and fast, their sonic booms percussing the ears. After a few seconds, the captain smiled to himself and muttered,

"Second again, guys," glancing up at the jets.

"Hello," he said to Jay ignoring the policeman, "What just happened to you?"

"Well," said Jay,

"A large white ball hit me from the sky. I then experienced a lot of pain, and then I was on my bike in a different place."

"I am arresting you for dangerous driving and breaking the speed limit," said Jay's least favourite policeman, who nobody was listening to.

"I think you had better come with us," said the captain, taking Jay, who was still a bit wobbly, firmly by the arm. The policeman was just about to object when the captain swung around and gave him a very intense stare. "What are you trying to charge this man with?"

"Speeding and..."

"How fast?" Interjected the captain.

"249 miles an hour," said the sheepish, and slightly confused policeman.

"Two hundred and forty-nine miles an hour. Wow... interesting. Do you think this lovely old motorcycle can do that speed, officer?"

"Um, no..?"

"Um, no indeed," said the captain.

"Make yourselves useful and take his bike home, please." With that, the captain whirled a still very unsecure Jay around and took him onboard the helicopter.