

Protectors: The Hidden Planet By Jamie Marchant

"Our current scientists all say that it's not possible to hide a planet," said Bob Blackwood in a stern, but calm voice. Bob was not one to get angry at the worst of times. "Again, it could be out of phase! You know, not being tangible in our reality! " reiterated Dave Marcony. As he said this, he dramatically raised his left arm and sliced the air. Dave was known for being dramatic.

The two men got up and brushed off their white T-shirts (used when off-duty). Bob buttoned up his plain brown shirt and Dave did not bother putting on his blue uniform. He rarely wore his; he was so casual that he did not care, and they say he got away with it because he was excellent at the other aspects of his job.

The two men took off for work. Dave may not have bothered to put on his uniform, but he did take a comb out of his brown satchel and comb his dark brown hair on his way there. Dave was tall and medium build. He was unshaven. Although he told others he preferred himself without his facial hair, somehow he never got around to shaving.

He walked briskly down the protector's hallway, enjoying the calm, blue lighting. A sign appeared, which said the date and time in yellow LEDs. It was "September 29th, 2151, 12:50 PM", Dave would be arriving at Launch Bay 6 soon.

Dave loved his work! Missions were exciting and interesting. He was part of the Core Arm; they did the important work of the Protectors organization. The Core Arm's job was protecting Earth and The Alliance (made up of several advanced alien species) from dangers.

Samula, a Sugoan, was doing the pre-flight check on Dave's ship. The Sugoons live on an aquatic world, but can breathe air. They have fish-like faces and tentacles for digits. Samula handed Dave a tablet with his assignment. Dave shuttered on the inside, the pad was covered in the slime that Sugoons secrete from their bodies. He had touched the slime many times before and was 'used to it,' but still did not enjoy it.

Dave entered his ship which was ready to launch. His mission was boring; he had to escort an Aviator (bird alien) ambassador back to the base. "Aviator" was not the real species' name; that name was not pronounceable in English, so everyone just called them Aviators.

When Samula was out of sight (so not to be rude), he wiped off his tablet. He flipped several of the switches and buttons in the small craft and the ship roared to life! He turned to the passenger seat where he had left his purple jacket and gray baseball cap yesterday. He put them on.

A woman named Mary, who Dave did not like, was standing outside the shuttle. She muttered something, but he could not understand since the shuttle door was shut. He opened the door. She said "I am coming too, you know!" in her very high-pitched, energetic voice. Dave checked his tablet to confirm that her attendance was mandatory. Seeing that it was, he sighed in his head and let her in. Dave could work with her even if he did not like her.

She had dark hair in a ponytail, was also medium build and, unlike Dave, was wearing her blue Core Arm uniform. They blasted out on the Space Ramp and off to the planet Pedia where the ambassador was!

It was a long voyage and all you could see was the purple Warp Tunnel. Dave began to think about his companion, Mary. What was it that bothered him about her? He remembered Bob's theory: "She is a lot like you Dave. You see the parts of her that you dislike in yourself." These words echoed in his mind.

A few hours later...

Ambassador Winglock (who preferred to be addressed as "Sir Winglock") sat restlessly in the back of the craft. It was two hours to his planet and, of course, another two to return. "How much longer will it be?" he said in his upper-class voice. Dave and Mary hoped he did not intend to be as pompous as he came across and that it was just a mistake in the Universal Translator. Though given what people said about him, he probably was meant to come across as that pompous.

"We are just passing by the Hidden Planet," said Dave. "You don't really believe that nonsense," retorted Mary. "I do," said Dave and Sir Winglock together. "May we have a look?" Mary shook her head, but Dave agreed and took the ship out of Faster-Than-Light mode.

"What do you think happened to it?" asked Sir Winglock. "It's out of phase!" said Dave, "It's a myth!" Mary said at the same time. "Surely, The Phase would be easy to scan for!" Sir Winglock remarked. "Yes," said Mary. "Not for something that big," said Dave at the same time. "Our species has studied the idea of hiding objects 'Out Of Phases' more than..." He stopped mid-sentence. Even Winglock was not arrogant enough to think that they had studied something more than the Alliance race: the Puka. This race was made mostly of scientists who had studied almost everything in this region of space. Nonetheless, for his amusement, he decided to take a

phase-scanning device out of his pocket and asked Dave to attach it to the ship's sensors.

Nothing happened and they were about to return to the base when, suddenly, there was a small beep from Winglock's device. He looked at it. "There IS something there!" he announced ecstatically.

Everyone was excited since they may have just discovered something truly groundbreaking, a hidden planet!

A few months later.... the Puka rigged the ship to go to the same Phase as the planet and Mary and Dave were again at the planet. They activated the device and felt a strange sensation and saw the planet! It was mostly a desert planet and immediately received a transmission from the surface.

Dave turned on the monitor and there was an old man with a long beard. He bellowed, "I am the great God Uka! You have passed my first test! Pass my other tests and I'll grant you Uka's Powers!"

"If you're a God, then I am Santa Claus!" retorted Dave! "Land here!" snapped Uka and he transmitted a landing coordinate and they landed the ship there.

They were outside of a large pyramid. Mary and Dave got out of the ship. They climbed the pyramid steps and Mary asked Dave "If he is a false God, is this a Pyramid scheme?" Dave shrugged but thought the comment was witty.

The pyramid had all sorts of symbols on it. There was also a keypad. Dave noticed one symbol repeated a lot on the pyramid. He pushed this symbol a few times on the keypad and part of the wall slid open.

Inside was a glass table that had two impressions in the shape of hands. Uka's voice came over a speaker system that the humans could not see. It bellowed, "Place your hands there and you will get my greatest gift! After receiving my gift, you MUST leave!" Dave approached without giving it a second thought. Mary pulled on Dave's jacket and angrily stated "You don't want to end up like Jacopo, do you?". Jacopo was an agent who died by touching an alien device without thinking about it! Uka's voice bellowed, "You will not be harmed!" Mary asked the obvious question: "How do you know? You have never met our species before!" Uka replied, "I scanned you as you landed!" "Scanned?" responded Dave. Mary was confused about Dave's reply, but both of them were quick on their feet. She put her hands on her hips and angrily stated "Yeah, a God should not need a scanner! He should know everything!"

A door they had not seen slid open at the back of the room and Uka walked out. "So what do you really want?" asked Dave. Mary said "You want to get us off the planet

of course!" She pointed at Uka and continued. "You said 'take the power and leave.' Were you hoping, we would take the power and be on our way? If we did not leave, would you use your 'God powers' to make us leave?" Dave continued the thought, "I bet you detected us in orbit the first time a few months ago and planned this out!" "Tell us the truth!" they both demanded!

Uka said "We Ukanians..." Dave interrupted, "They're named after you?" Uka nodded. "Was it always that way?" Uka looked sheepish. "So you told the people of the planet you're a God too?" Mary looked at Uka threateningly. "You know, I bet ya we could find evidence of your false godliness and tell your citizens! We found your planet after all!" She put her hands on her hips and angrily exclaimed, "Why don't you tell us the truth, the whole truth!"

Uka explained. "I am an offworlder like you, but the people of this planet are highly xenophobic. That's why the planet is out of phase. The people here, they would have..." he stuttered "they would have killed me, so I used some of my foreign technology to play a false God!" His voice quivered and he started talking faster due to his anxiety. "I know it was not the right thing to do! Please don't tell anyone! I know a lot of useful knowledge and you can both have my energy powers, Uka's powers!". He shot a light bullet out of his hand and it made a dark mark on the wall.

Mary and Dave went outside to talk about the situation. Mary said to Dave in a hushed voice, "We know the Protectors' Moral Code says we have to report this!", Dave replied ' "My own moral code says the old man is suffering enough with the fear of having to keep up the act; do you agree?" Mary thought it over and nodded. Dave went in and said, "We have decided to keep this to ourselves and you have to do nothing in return!"

Uka looked shocked, Mary said "We are a people of high morals." Still anxious, Uka asked "What will you tell your superiors?" "I have not thought of that," Dave replied. Mary said, "Come aboard our ship and change our sensor logs so we can tell our superiors that we found an inhospitable planet. It will look like a highly advanced civilization brought about their own destruction. Their destruction also put it out of phase. With all the galaxy to explore, nobody will examine it further." Uka said he could do this and so it was done!

On the way back, Dave once again thought about Mary, but instead of focusing on the parts of her he disliked about himself (if that's what he was doing), he focused on the things he loved about himself. He hoped they would work together again soon and that their plan would work and Uka would be left alone. That's what he needed!

THE END.