

First Contact

JUNE 2025



I was the captain of the first human ship to make contact with an alien civilization. At least, that's how we framed it. The truth was less noble—we weren't there to talk. We came with weapons, with orders, with the quiet confidence of being the more advanced species. After all, our data showed no signs other than a technologically advanced civilization. We called it a peaceful mission, but we were planning an invasion.

But they knew. They had known for a very long time. By the time our mission on Proxima IV was greenlit, they'd had plenty of time to study us—to watch as we bickered over leadership, sabotaged rivals, cut backroom deals. In the end, the U.S. candidate, backed by the mighty Space Force won. Me. White, female, the perfect face of Earth's power in 2100. The others—men, people of color—had only ever been there for show. By the time we reached orbit, they had seen enough.

There were no threats. Just a pulse, a brief flicker on our instruments, and every system aboard the *Gaia* went down. Lights dimmed. Screens froze. I demanded a status report. Harrison, my second-in-command, a capable man who had earned his position through genuine merit, turned toward me speechless, his expression grim. We both understood immediately: the aliens had seized control of our ship.

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Years of military training didn't prepare me for that moment.

I had expected to lead a conquest against drifting sea creatures or slow, dull sentients. Instead, I found myself facing intelligence. Coordination. Cold precision. A stronger captain might have stood tall, rallied her crew, led them into the storm. But I wasn't chosen for my merits. I was chosen because I looked the part and had the right friends in high places. So when their systems shut us down and their ship too over ours, I passed out. Pathetic, I know.

When I regained consciousness, I wasn't on the *Gaia*. The lights were too bright, too blue, the hum of the ship somehow deeper. And I wasn't alone.

A dozen of them stood around me—tall, blue-skinned, still as statues. Their black suits clung to them like armor, eyes fixed on me, unblinking. I was strapped to a bed, unable to move a muscle. In that perfect moment of humiliation, I remembered the protocol: *Be an example for humankind. If captured, behave with dignity.* At least in my final moments, I would be dignified. I breathed in through my nose, smiled faintly, and said something utterly meaningless. A soft string of Earth words engineered to sound non-threatening. They exchanged looks. It worked.

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They chirped—short, clipped sounds that somehow carried intention. Then they tried something else.

Telepathy.

I didn't hear words, but I felt... a question. The shape of it. *Do you consent to communicate?*

I focused hard. Yes. In English. Then Mandarin. Then Russian. Anything I knew. I poured every language I had ever studied into that single thought.

They understood. I was taken into another chamber. Colder. Brighter. I wasn't ready for what came next. Nobody could. First, they replaced my uniform with a black and gold suit. It wasn't just clothing. I had been assigned a role in their hierarchy. I looked like someone important.

Then came the needles. Dozens of them. Piercing my arms, my legs, the base of my skull. I screamed. My body convulsed. My skin *thickened*, like wax melting and reforming, smoothing into something slick, alien. *Blue*. My core temperature plummeted—30°C. 20°C. 10°C. But I didn't shiver. I didn't die. Inside me, everything had been rewritten to match my new species. My DNA—no longer human—restructured itself around six new nucleotides. I wasn't built for oxygen anymore. That element was suddenly inert. Nitrogen, on the other hand, was vital to me.

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"Give me back my old body you fucking aliens! I don't want to be one of you!" - I screamed, to no avail.

As I felt my humanity slowly fade away, my mind was racing. I understood the misunderstanding. Their only way of communicating was by turning me into one of them. They hadn't forced this on me. They'd asked: Do you consent to communicate?

That was all the permission they needed. And I—Earth's proud invasion commander—had said yes like a fool.

What would I say to my crew if I escaped? *"They didn't torture me. They didn't force me. They asked, and I said yes."* Would they even listen to me? Or would they see only the monster I'd become?

At least, my mind would be soon be able to decipher their signals, I told myself, trying to stay positive.

Maybe they could turn me back too. And I could work as an ambassador. Was that naive? Wishful thinking? Probably. Their technology was far superior to ours. They could have annihilated us easily, but they did not seem to be a bellicose race.

As I was thinking, I barely noticed my hair falling away in clumps, revealing a skull that expanded, reshaping itself to hold more.

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More neurons. More synaptic complexity. And across it, moving markings bloomed like ink beneath the skin—ornamental and functional. My ears stretched upward, narrowing into elegant, pointed tips. I was now one indistinguishable from those disgusting creatures. I tried to scream but what came out were chirps. High-pitched, patterned, fast.

Human speech was gone. Even the *concept* of English slipped from my thoughts like vapor. I wasn't translating anything. I was thinking in something else entirely. Something stripped of metaphor or heritage, optimized for reason and speed—like GibberLink, but natural. The language humming in my skull was Neysharii.

I definitely couldn't be an ambassador any longer. I was just one of them.

The Velarx—rulers of Proxima IV—weren't the passive sea-creatures we'd imagined. They'd evolved from oceans but built citadels in orbit, watching us for years while we fought over who'd get to conquer them.

I reached out with my new mind, broadcasting desperation in sharp, pulsing waves: reverse this. Please. I didn't understand what I was agreeing to.

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Then they replied. Not through impulses or suggestions—but directly, with full clarity.

Roughly translated, the message was:

You consented to this. Also, this is a gift to you from our species. You are now more intelligent, more energy-efficient, and your cells do not decay. Why would you want to revert back to human? In return, we simply ask you to serve us.

Their tone wasn't threatening. It was calm. Icy. A statement of fact, not negotiation.

And despite my still-partially-human brain, I had to admit—I saw their logic. Their efficiency. Their superiority.

I tried to explain. I was an ambassador. I hadn't expected this change. I hadn't authorized it.

They cut me short before I finished the thought.

We know your mission. We know your intentions. Spare us the performance.

I nodded. I didn't even fight them. I simply nodded. Then, like a loyal functionary, I asked: What is my assignment?

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They answered without hesitation: You will return to the nearest human base. I froze. My body reacted before I could reason through it. My arms jerked. My throat clenched. I let out a screech—Neysharii—No! Please don't send me back! They'll kill me! The image burned behind my eyes: my crew's faces twisting in revulsion, rifles snapping up, my own voice—this voice—begging in a language they couldn't understand.

But the Velarx were unfazed. A door opened. "We have prepared for this" - they replied. Then they showed it to me. A synthetic skin. Flesh-colored. Anatomically perfect. Modeled on my original face, my original frame. It was me. Or rather, it would be. Worn like clothing.

A Velarx wrapped in the flesh of a dead captain. I swallowed hard. No protest came. Just a slow, quiet gulp. "You will return as yourself. And you will speak on our behalf." Only then did I think to ask about my crew. Shame curdled in my gut—I hadn't spared them a single thought until now. They are unharmed, they said. "Still human." There was a pause. "For now."

"What do you mean for now?"

"Well, eventually, they will be transformed as well."

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"You mean... you want to do this to *them*?" I asked, voice strained. "All of them?"

"Yes." No hesitation. "We're a multi-species civilization but all humans will be upgraded to Velarx standards. It is the optimal solution. No pain. No war. No procreation needed."

I felt a numb kind of panic rise in me. Instead of becoming a hero, I would be responsible for turning all humans into disgusting aliens.

"You shouldn't feel guilt" they added. "You are simply facilitating an inevitable process"

I couldn't cry. My ducts had been restructured. But if I could have, I would have. I needed something to hold on to.

So I reached for the only thing that promised normalcy—the suit.

The synthetic skin slid on easily, adhering to every joint, every curve. It was disturbingly perfect. When I looked in the mirror, I saw *her* again. The woman I used to be. Earth-born. Human. Confident. The lie was beautiful.

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The synthetic skin was disturbingly complete. Hair follicles would grow naturally. My altered metabolism would continue working at 10 degrees, while my skin would feel as warm as 36 degrees. I could infiltrate for months, maybe years. But it was just a mask.

I felt like I was acting in someone else's life. I *looked* human, yes—but I still *sounded* like a Velarx. That same tight, clicking stream of telepathic chirps came out every time I opened my mouth.

"How can I be convincing," I muttered, "if I sound like—"

They cut me off mid-sentence.

A soft pulse hit the base of my skull.

Suddenly, my voice shifted. The fast chirps slowed, reshaped, stretched into syllables and friction sounds. I spoke again.

And this time, it came out in English. That messy patchwork of Germanic spine and Romance gloss. Still the global standard in 2100, for reasons nobody remembered.

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"Wow," I breathed, touching my throat. "I sound like a human again."

"Ok. Send me back!" I stood before the crew of the *Gaia*, their faces a mosaic of relief and suspicion. Lieutenant Chen's grip on her sidearm didn't loosen. "You're *sure* you're unharmed?"

I smiled. A human reflex I had to consciously perform. "They're not hostile. Just cautious. They want to talk."

Lieutenant Ruiz's eyes narrowed. "You were gone for *three* days. No contact. No signals. And now you're back, insisting we lower our shields?"

I swallowed. "They could've killed me. They didn't."

Medical Officer Singh stepped forward, scanner humming. "Let's at least run a full—"

I sidestepped. "Later. Right now, Earth's delegation is waiting."

A beat of silence.