

Harm Reduction

by  
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**INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY**

Alarms WAIL throughout the building. SCIENCE WONKS dash around, doomsday panic in their eyes.

GENERAL BRENNER (50s) stares at a ceiling-to-floor screen. Four stars glint on his collar. Tenacity in his eyes.

ONSCREEN: TEN ALIEN WARSHIPS - pointy, nasty red striped things. A design which brings to mind steel arrow heads, mated to African wasps.

ALAN MARKS (30s) clutches papers, races to Brenner's side. A white coat flutters around his scrawny frame. His squeaky voice and awkwardness make him look like a teen.

ALAN

General Brenner, we're receiving a transmission!

BRENNAN

(sarcastic, Southern drawl)  
What's it say? Hello?

Alan gapes, stammers.

BRENNAN

Don't leave humanity hanging, Einstein.  
Spit it out!

ALAN

We don't know. The team's working on a translation.

BRENNAN

Still? Humanity's witnessing First Contact. NASA'S supposed to be the best and brightest. Pull your thumbs outta your asses, and git to work!

ALAN

It's only been a half hour. We're deciphering an alien language. That's not the same as pig latin.

BRENNAN

Duh.

ALAN

In World War II, Germany couldn't crack Navajo code. And that was human. Deconstructing xeno linguistics might take days. Weeks. Months!

BRENNAN

Life ain't perfect, son. Someone's gotta take action. Now. Chop-chop.

An ARMY CAPTAIN hustles by. Brennan grabs him, snarls.

BRENNAN

Captain, inform the Space Station it's Code Red. Order 'em to launch a drone, an ease in for a closer look. And - don't forget - prime their nukes.

ALAN

You put nuclear weapons on the *Space Station*? No-one at NASA was told!

BRENNAN

(shrugs)

That was on a need to know basis, Hawking. So now you know.

ALAN

Sir? I'm flattered, but my last name is "Marks".

Something more gnaws at Alan. Clutching his papers like a life preserver, he fidgets - concerned.

ALAN

General, about that transmission. There's something we haven't told you yet -

The alien warships swarm towards the SPACE STATION: a white, graceful edifice which brings to mind a Kubrick wet dream.

From the station: a sudden FLASH...

A DRONE floats from an open port. It bobs towards the alien fleet. Round, unassuming and beach-ball cute.

ALAN

General, do you think that's wise?

BRENNAN

We've programmed the AI on that probe to make no sudden moves. And it's broadcasting "We Come in Peace" in seven thousand languages.

ALAN

Simultaneously? How?

BRENNAN

Some sorta Quantum Computing flim-fiddle.  
If any of the UFO reports are true, the  
pilots commanding those ships will figure  
at least a few of 'em out!

The lead warship BLINKS. Is it communicating?

BRENNAN

See, Newton? All you "geniuses" watch and  
learn.

Lights on the alien ship FLARE, and blow the probe to  
bits! Brennan's face falls.

BRENNAN

Oops.

ALAN

About that transmission, Sir.

The Station flickers red.

BRENNAN

They're priming the nuclear silos. Hang  
onto your shorts, Sagan. Here goes!

The fleet of warships split, attack the Station from  
opposite flanks! In seconds, the Station's vaporized!

Horrorified silence fills the room.

ALAN

(whispers)

There were seventy-five souls onboard.

Even with his hubris, Brennan deflates.

BRENNAN

Well, ain't that a kick in the crotch.  
They took our Station apart like they was  
hungry Navy Seals, attacking a Girl Scout  
with the last box a' Thin Mints.

ALAN

Which means, if we shoot even one missile  
from Earth-

BRENNAN

Donkey Danglers, humanity is screwed.

Alan shuffles his feet, looks down.

ALAN

Guess it doesn't matter where the transmission came from, after all.

Brennan looks up sharply.

BRENNAN

What?!?

ALAN

The signal. It wasn't emanating from those warships.

He points at the screen. On it, alien ships zip through the cloud of space dust where the Station once was.

They form an ominous single line.

BRENNAN

Holy Hannibal. Looks like a firing squad to me.

(to Alan)

Lemme guess. The transmission came from a mothership. Which is gonna help 'em finish the job?

Almost on cue, a MASSIVE half-crescent shaped ship descends over the line of warships. Its underside pulses; bright blue.

Both Brennan and Alan turn their faces away. Alan slaps a hand over his eyes.

BRENNAN

Kiss your Momma goodbye.

ALAN

You do it. I can't look!

Electricity ZAPS from the larger ship - DISINTEGRATES the alien warbirds!! Alan peeks through his fingers.

ALAN

Wait. What did I just miss?

The screen dissolves in static. Reforms. Featuring:

An ALIEN seated in a command chair. It resembles a Walrus. If a Walrus had tentacles for whiskers, that is.

And spoke perfect British English.

WALRUS ALIEN

Worry not, we come in peace. The Reptilians had hostile motives, but as you can see yourself - they're gone.

ALAN

We're saved. Holy Return of the Jedi!

BRENNAN

Whew. You may look like a pimple on my Uncle Roger's butt, but ain't you a gorgeous sight!

The Walrus alien smiles, revealing rotted teeth. Brennan makes a disgusted face, but regains his composure fast.

BRENNAN

Seems like intelligence gathering's in order. Those losers you just wiped the universe's ass with: they're "Reptilians", you say?

WALRUS ALIEN

I believe, the operative word in your human tongue is "were".

BRENNAN

(laughs)

I like your style, Lumpy. Looks like it's introduction time, too. I am General Donald Brenner: four star military commander of the formidable... well, the *remaining* US Space Force. And you are?

WALRUS ALIEN

I am-

(barks and squeals)

Of the race Demokus. Though for pronunciation's sake, it's best you call me "Ralph."

Alan clears his throat. The Alien and Brennan look sharply his way.

BRENNAN

Boy, don't interrupt leaders when they're in a pow-wow!

WALRUS ALIEN

Earthling, you have something to say?

ALAN

Uh, a question: How are you speaking English?

The alien flexes his tentacles inward, flosses his teeth.

WALRUS ALIEN

As you can see, our technology is far advanced from yours. We've been monitoring your civilization throughout much of its history. Honed from experience, our translation algorithm's are state of the art.

BRENNAN

Mighty impressive, Ralph. Now, I mean no offense to guys like you, but can those algorithms be modified for *American* English? That'd be nicer on the ear. The folks you're talkin' to are true-blue USA: the greatest nation on this here Earth!

WALRUS ALIEN

Of course. Such modifications are - as you say - a breeze.

The Walrus' accent morphs into Southern Twang.

BRENNAN

Ah, that's more like it. This alien has excellent taste. Doesn't he, Newton? But enough with the pleasantries: time to drill down to military brass tacks. What do we owe you for this wonderful service you've bestowed upon our great planet?

The Walrus Alien knots tentacles under his chin, smiles.

WALRUS ALIEN

I'm so very glad you asked.

#### **MOMENTS LATER**

Brennan and Alan stand before the screen, bewildered.

Other scientists crowd in behind them, stunned.

The Alien Walrus counts off a continuing list - raising his tentacles one by one.

With each word, the human's faces drop more.

WALRUS ALIEN

We require approximately seven million humans to help mine the raw material.

ALAN

You don't have robots?

WALRUS ALIEN

Stored on this small ship? There's no room.

BRENNAN

Can't your... uh... kinfolk pitch in?

WALRUS ALIEN

Of course, the Demokus would prefer to do the work ourselves, but we're not fond of your atmosphere. So native labor is the sensible solution here.

(beat)

We also request Earth denuclearize.

ALAN

What?

BRENNAN

Unilaterally disarm? Are you insane?

WALRUS ALIEN

No, simply pragmatic. We wouldn't want any of your inferior nations to develop... a "scratchy middle finger".

ALAN

That's itchy trigger finger.

BRENNAN

De-arm the commies? Hell, if that were all, I'd help 'em pack. But melt down United States defenses? I swear on Eisenhower's balls, no!

WALRUS ALIEN

Why not? Should hostilities ever break out between our species -

BRENNAN

Which you have my word they won't -

WALRUS ALIEN

Well, you already know our military might. So even if your entire arsenal were launched, that would simply make us... annoyed.

ALAN

(whispers)

After which, the Earth would be crushed.



WALRUS ALIEN

You have seen we are your allies. So why not that gesture of good will? Is it - as you say - a deal?

BRENNAN

I'll have to run it up the chain of command. But -

WALRUS ALIEN

You don't have much time. Another Reptilian armada's en-route. We are happy to fend more off, even risking our own casualties - if...

Brennan jumps to attention, salutes.

BRENNAN

Consider the first United States-Demokus treaty ratified. I'll get paperwork started now!

**SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER.**

**EXT. DESERT MINE - DAY**

HUMAN MINERS trudge into caverns, single file. They emerge dusty and weary - carry crates of who-knows-what.

The Demokus mothership monitors the process. Hovering high in the atmosphere, it resembles a huge, half-crescent moon in the sky.

**EXT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY**

A crowd surges against a fence. Screams and waves signs:

\* Earth First!

\* We Don't Need Your Nanny Galaxy. Demokus Go Home Now!

**INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY**

Brennan stands before the screen, red-eyed.

Ralph the Alien-Walrus blinks at him, benign.

Alan races over, hands Brennan a laptop. Which plays video of more protesting CROWDS.

ALAN

They're surging in Russia's streets! The Kremlin won't return England's calls.

BRENNAN

Sure as sugar, I'm not surprised.

Brennan face palms. Groans.

BRENNAN

Ralph, you of all - uh - people know I'm a plain talkin', reasonable sort.

WALRUS ALIEN

By human standards? Of course.

BRENNAN

But this deal of yours has gone too far! Right now while we're jawin' here, two hundred thousand pissed off civilians our clawin' at NASA's gate. The tide's turning against you across the globe. Look!

Brennan flips the PC around, shows the alien the video.

BRENNAN

The planet's pissed off. And can you blame 'em?

WALRUS ALIEN

"Blame" is such an emotional, human word.

BRENNAN

I'm talkin' sense, so listen up! Your mining 'operation' is drainin' crucial resources from human needs. Those folks, all that money - it's needed for lotsa other things.

WALRUS ALIEN

What's more important than our deal?

BRENNAN

Infrastructure. Medical care. The works!

The Walrus Alien shrugs with his tentacles.

WALRUS ALIEN

You can't expect the Demokus to work miracles. Protecting your planet from the Reptilians has stretched our spacefaring forces thin. Which gives both your species and ours just two options.

You decide which is worse: allowing Reptilians to lay waste to your home world? Or be realistic adults, and sacrifice for two more years?

BRENNAN

I speak for the United States, when I say: Hel-

The Alien Walrus' ship shakes. Onscreen, sirens wail.

ALAN

Just like Star Trek. Wow.

BRENNAN

Ralph, report! What just happened? Are y'all OK?

The Alien Walrus types with his tentacles, looks up.

WALRUS ALIEN

Your "Israel" just fired a nuclear missile at my ship. You promised me the Earth had fully disarmed.

BRENNAN

They promised me that, too. Oy.

Grabbing the SAME Captain as before, Brennan barks.

BRENNAN

Get me Jerusalem on the phone!

The Captain cowers, scuttles away.

BRENNAN

(to the Walrus Alien)

My deepest apologies. Have you sustained casualties up there?

WALRUS ALIEN

Not physically. But trust between our species has been destroyed. Consider the Demokus-US treaty... off.

BRENNAN

What of all our sacrifice?

WALRUS ALIEN

A valuable word of advice: the Reptilians are coming. Arm yourselves.

The screen cuts to black.

Overhead: the screeching sound of alien warplanes. Laser blasts. Explosions.

ALAN

That was fast.

BRENNAN

What the everlovin' fuck?

**EXT. DESERT MINE - DAY**

Human miners scatter, terrified.

The Demokus mothership is gone. In its place:

A swarm of Reptilian warships descend and swoop. They pick off humans with each laser blast.

One man successfully dodges. He zigzags, beelines for a car. Fumbling, he drops his keys.

A REPTILIAN rises from behind his Honda. Resembling a seven foot mantis with scales, it aims a pistol.

The man freezes.

MAN

Holy shit.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

(subtitled, into an earpiece)

Ew. They're even squishier up close.

Brimming with anger, the man flips the alien the bird.

MAN

Suck this, you intergalactic alien  
cockroach!

ZZZZZZTTT! The Reptilian vaporizes him to bits.

**INT. NASA COMMAND CENTER - DAY**

**SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER**

Brennan's once proud uniform's in shreds. He hasn't brushed his hair or shaved in weeks.

Nearby, Alan fumbles with wires on a console.

The large screen flickers over both men's heads.

BRENNAN

(sarcastic)

When's the last time you paid the cable bill? Did they teach you *anything* in Ph'd school?

ALAN

You think this is *easy*? The Demokus have hailing frequencies blocked!

Grabbing a familiar passing Captain, Brennan snarls.

BRENNAN

Enough lolly-gaggin', Captain. Gimme the latest lost report. Now!

CAPTAIN

The wasps turned Australia into a mass grave! Everything but Kangaroos, Koalas and Wallabies - gone. No word on New Zealand either.

BRENNAN

No surprise they're hiding. Domestically, what's the stats?

CAPTAIN

New York's held up surprisingly well. They've gone guerrilla in the sewers and rubble, especially in the Bronx. A gang even downed a Wasp ship. It crash landed in the Zoo.

BRENNAN

Excellent! Capture any Wasp prisoners?

CAPTAIN

N-No. The lions were starving. They ate it up.

BRENNAN

Still, one down. More to go!

CAPTAIN

But with three million casualties on our side. As of two PM, Los Angeles is toast.

BRENNAN

Bunch-a bleeding hearts. So what?

A HISS from the screen. It connects!

Walrus Ralph stares down at Brennan with bulging eyes.

WALRUS ALIEN

You look different. Are you shedding?

BRENNAN

NASA is under siege. Who's got time for  
tailors or showers these god-damned days?  
We're too busy fighting off your pals.

WALRUS ALIEN

The Reptilians are no friends of ours.

BRENNAN

Then HELP us, for Christ sake!

WALRUS ALIEN

Who is this Christ? And why?

BRENNAN

Because we're in extermination mode. And  
you *said* you were humankind's allies.

Alan steps to Brennan's side. Pleads with puppy dog eyes:

ALAN

We'll give you anything...

Brennan elbows Alan, hisses.

BRENNAN

Galileo - shut UP!

(to the alien)

Let's level with each other, alpha male  
to alpha alien. If we *wanted* ta  
compromise, what's a few a' your laser  
blasts worth?

WALRUS ALIEN

The mines restored, for starters.

BRENNAN

Uh, no can do. The Wasps - I mean the  
Reptilians - collapsed 'em all.

WALRUS ALIEN

Let it not be said the Demokus are not  
flexible. In lieu of our original pact,  
we would accept: human DNA.

BRENNAN

Excuse me? What'd ya want people DNA  
for... food?

WALRUS ALIEN

Not at all. And a few cells will do. We also stipulate that microchips be implanted throughout your population.

BRENNAN

Microchip us like breedin' stock? That's off the table. No way, Jose!

WALRUS ALIEN

(shrugs)

It will not be onerous. Or painful. We can distribute the micro filaments atmospherically over cities, sprayed into clouds. Do you not already monitor your own citizenry in other ways? How different is what we request?

BRENNAN

We ain't been able to do much since Arlington fell. And even in the good old days, it wasn't every human being on the globe. Just a few million extremists and discontents.

WALRUS ALIEN

The Demokus need "homeland security" too. We cannot risk another atomic weapon thrown at our ship. So we *must* take precautions. Surely you understand.

BRENNAN

Pal, I get it. But that don't mean I like it. Not one little Earth grubbin' bit.

The Walrus fans out his tentacles - a gesture which resembles how a human spreads out their arms.

WALRUS ALIEN

Think of it as "harm reduction." Certainly, we all would prefer planetary utopia. But reasonable life-forms must work with reality as it is.

Alan waves a hand in the air.

ALAN

I've got a question.

BRENNAN

What?!?

ALAN

Ralph, if we negotiate and give you what you want.

WALRUS ALIEN

If your species is rational, you will.

ALAN

Well, where does the compromising stop?

Awkward silence. The alien and Brennan stare. Alan stammers on.

ALAN

You gotta admit, slave labor sucked.

BRENNAN

So? It was better than the massacre we face now! You're outta your league, Heisenberg. Clam up!

ALAN

The Demokus coulda fought and stopped all the killings. Yet they didn't. How come?

WALRUS ALIEN

(suddenly condescending)

This line of questioning betrays your species lack of intellect. You haven't even mastered space flight. You know nothing of how the system works!

ALAN

Hey, don't get me wrong. I admit, humankind's got - well - tons of flaws. But I got my degree from MIT. And something just doesn't add up. If we give you our DNA and microchip the globe... that's bad enough. Two more years down the road, how do we know what you'll ask for next?

The Walrus arches a crinkly eyebrow.

WALRUS ALIEN

An insulting insinuation. We want the best for your species. Which is why - despite your toxic attempt to divide, we're prepared to renew our deal. What shall it be, oh white coated nervous human? Unite with the Demokus? Or perish at the claws of... what do you call Reptilians in your human slang?



ALAN

Wasps.

BRENNAN

Ralph, consider the treaty back on!

The alien smiles, displays clean, pearly white teeth.

BRENNAN

Hey, you're lookin' different too. What's with the new chompers?

WALRUS ALIEN

I've been two years in orbit, awaiting a human change of heart. So I've taken some personal time to improve myself. What do you think - does it "work"?

Brennan nods, flashes "Ralph" a thumbs up.

WALRUS ALIEN

Stand by. I'll reconnect in one Earth day. We will begin microchip manufacture now.

CLICK. The screen turns black.

Alan and Brennan exchange looks.

ALAN

I gotta bad feeling.

BRENNAN

Keep your slide ruler outta military business. In the real world, incremental progress is how it's done. Pros like me call it a strategic retreat. You ask me, Alan - we've won!

Alan smiles, bear-hugs Brennan - who squirms.

ALAN

You remembered my name. Gosh, thanks!

#### **INT. ALIEN MOTHERSHIP**

Walrus Ralph sits at a table - one which bristles with high tech displays.

Two GLASSES rest on coasters before him. One contains blue liquid. The other red.

A door HISSES. The Walrus alien looks up.

As Reptilian leader MCKONEL enters.

WALRUS ALIEN

High council McKonel. Please sit down!

The Reptilian CHITTERS.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

(subtitled)

You are speaking Earth English. Alabamane-  
ese, so I hear. Please switch your  
translating algorithm now. That is far  
too grating to my middle ear.

The Walrus alien reaches behind his neck, twists unseen  
dials. His English morphs into "Chitters".

They speak - both subtitled now.

The Reptilian pinches the red glass between his claws,  
sits.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

Ah, my favorite. For a Demokus, you are  
most kind.

Extending a proboscis, he sucks some down. Starts to put  
down his glass on a display. Walrus Ralph waves his  
tentacles.

WALRUS ALIEN

Make sure you use a coaster. That's a  
very expensive display!

REPTILIAN ALIEN

So did the humans - as YOU say - "play  
ball?"

WALRUS ALIEN

Astonishingly, yes. I give them credit  
for holding out so long. You assaulted  
them quite brutally. I commend your  
effective troops.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

The area they call "Bronx" has been  
difficult. But once the microchips are  
installed-

WALRUS ALIEN

They will be much more compliant. With  
zero cost to us.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

Blowing up ten of our warships isn't  
"zero cost."

WALRUS ALIEN

Those were pilot-less drones, due to be  
decommissioned. So what?

The Walrus alien laughs, flashes his new pearlies.

WALRUS ALIEN

How easily their kind is manipulated by  
fear. Show them a worse alternative, and  
claim to be a friend... humans will give  
us anything a species wants!

The two aliens toast.

REPTILIAN ALIEN

To you, the "lesser evil"!

WALRUS ALIEN

And the ultimate conquest of Earth!

FINAL FADE OUT: