

Sam didn't know what she was doing with her life, especially now at 3:37am sitting in front of a wall of monitors all showing exactly nothing happening. Having recently finished her masters in Interplanetary rock collections strategies, she was thrilled by the low level position at NASA but that enthusiasm drifted when she realised that a not insignificant portion of her job was to monitor the Arecibo Telescope for unusual activity.

'God, why didn't I just join spaceX when I had the chance?' she thought to herself, 'at least then I might get a tesla out the whole deal'. She got up and stretched, then went to the toilet to productively pass time on instagram. She finished up and went off to make a coffee only to be annoyed that Surjan had not cleaned up his coffee cup yet again despite the prominently posted sign.

'Bastard' she said quietly before deciding she had better return to the uninteresting wall.

She sat down and started checking her email when there was a small piece of movement on one of the long range radio wave monitors. Perplexed, she rolled her chair slightly closer to the offending monitor. Odd but probably nothing. She returned to the pressing task of trying to complete all of Angry Birds, she only had 14 levels left but she couldn't quite get the white bird to shit the egg out at the right moment.

Two minutes later, the radio wave started moving again and more vigorously. Sam knew something was very strange and very wrong. It seemed like the wave was following a pattern of peaks and troughs. The panic began setting in, she literally had no idea what was causing this.

Zhang Kejian straightened his tie and adjusted his pocket square. He was unsure of how the party would receive the news he was about to share.

'Esteemed party members, I have been asked to speak to you all regarding the recent cosmic radio wave communication. It seems that an unknown entity in space has initiated contact with Earth

using incredibly sophisticated technology. Across the globe, radio dishes are picking up unique signatures on a repeating loop, indicating some sort of communication.'

He was starting to sweat quite profusely now. Many of the people looking back at him were the most important people in China. He could feel the heat of the lamps beating on his head.

'At this time we do not know what is being said. We do not know by whom it is being said. Merely that something seems to be making a concentrated attempt to send the planet a message.'

There was very little that scared Vladimir Putin but when his team of scientists reported on the decoded message he was petrified. The report detailed that each radio signal picked up by each country was repeating the same message in that country's local language using a systematic translation system.

The message simply said: "Hello, we are coming. We will likely arrive in 5 years time."

The report detailed that it was unclear which direction the radio waves initiated from and it was unclear how they were able to so accurately only hit the radio waves that were designed to listen for extraterrestrial life without causing any interference on other channels. Putin reflected that for the first time in human history, all humans would be grouped into the us category of us and them.

'Its a load ah fuckin shite, mate,' Davey exclaimed at the pub. He had already had 4 or 5 pints when the new hot topic was brought up, the aliens! He was sick of hearing about it and he wasn't going to believe it till a green motherfucker showed up and he saw it in person. 'Its a fucking scam by the government tae get us all worried and pissin oursels so we don't think twice about re-electing the bastards.'

‘How come they are sayin it's happenin over the world then, dickhead?’ retorted Peter. This was a good point but there was nae chance that Davey was gonna fucking say that.

‘It’s a fucking conspiracy man! They’re colluding, they’re all colluding.’ Davey said but he wasn’t convinced and Peter was even less sure. He had been scared by the news and he felt helpless. He felt like this threat was coming from the blackness and there was nothing he could do to stop its arrival. He was literally at the whim of the cosmos.

‘Live in 5, 4, 3, 2...’ and with that the cameras rolled on the 7 o'clock news. ‘Hello, I’m Joanna Gosling and at the top of our news tonight, another message from the stars seems to have been sent, a young man in South London has died in police custody and could your dog be causing your baby to get cancer? All this and more coming up.’

‘Cut to graphic,’ her producer whispered in her ear, ‘and 3, 2, 1 and your back.’

‘To begin with today, it seems like our extraterrestrial friends have sent us an update on their travel. Reports from across the globe say the message that has been received is “We got held up. Be an extra 6 months”. Shaun, what do you make of this?’

‘Well Joanna, I don’t know if there is much to make of this really much to make of this other than wild speculation about what could cause delays to a seemingly sophisticated entity. I personally choose to believe they were briefly held up in intergalactic traffic behind whatever the equivalent of a heavy goods vehicle is. We’ve all been stuck behind that Eddie Stobart truck before.’ he said with a chuckle.

Joanna held her professional face as if it were carved from granite. What a pillock. ‘Ha, a fun idea’ she said with the fake enthusiasm required of her day in, day out. The aliens had her thinking about her life and role in the world, well in the universe really. For the first time she was considering the true scale of things. She thought about the globe and thought about how small Britain is.

She then forced herself to zoom back and look at the earth in comparison to our local solar system. It felt incomprehensible to her. It was too far. It couldn't be real but clearly it was real. She could travel to her house and thus could conceptualise travelling across the vast emptiness of space but the distance seemed beyond anything she could conceptualise. It was, she supposed, galactic distance. How could anything traverse a galaxy? It was hard enough visiting her mum in Norwich never mind casually travelling to a different planet and not even a close planet like Mars or Jupiter. A far away one.

In fact, no one knew if it was far or close. If they would be friendly or aggressive. Would they cause diseases like the British did when colonising the Americas? Look how that turned out for the natives. Yet here was this idiot making jokes about aliens getting stuck in traffic.

A lot of new religious orders were popping up around Pierre. He was surprised how quickly people had stopped coming to his church services since the aliens made contact. He supposed they thought if we weren't alone in the universe then the moral traditions of our past wouldn't be useful but he completely disagreed. He felt more devoted to God than ever. He had certainly never prayed with quite such conviction before. What did God have to say about aliens? Were they also made in his image? Did he send an alien equivalent of Jesus to their planet or were they not quite as violent and brutal as the human race were?

Clearly God made all things including the heavens and the earth and Pierre supposed by extension the rest of the universe and so clearly whatever these beings turned out to be, they would be equally deserving of learning the love of God. In his spare time he had taken to this idea and was preparing his sermons these days with this in mind.

Camile had just held her first meeting of 'the new christians of God for the defence and protection of earth' after leaving Pierre's congregation and it went marvellously. She had ranted and raved at the lectern to over 150 people who were transfixed with her! She had spoken on the days of revelations coming for earth and that this contact was a sign of the apocalypse. She fully expected to see 4 giant horsemen of the apocalypse ransack the globe starting with the impure heathens outside of the european union and then once all the others had been purified, god would open the sky to the heavens and allow his loyal followers to join himself and Jesus in eternal praise. Yes, she thought, that will be what happens.

'And your due date is predicted to be, let me look here,' said Doctor Saeeda, 'ah, April 30th. Well that will be interesting if it's correct.'

Amira couldn't believe it. Everyone knew that was the arrival date of the aliens as if she needed extra problems during birth and now everyone was going to be spending the day looking at the skies trying to spot whatever was coming. She didn't have time for the aliens because she had more issues on earth. Her family Orange plant had a bad case of mushroom root rot and now she was going to try and pop out her little angel while god knows what arrives on earth. No, this simply wouldn't do and she determined that she would handle herself and her family first before turning her attention to aliens.

Watching from the corner of a loud cafe Madison listened to the Queen of England address the country on her birthday. It was only 9 days until the aliens were meant to arrive. They had sent another few updates as they got closer but still no-one knew how to message back. The whole planet felt like it was waiting. Holding its breath. The tension in the air had certainly ramped up over the last month or so. They were coming and most people had accepted it.

‘And remember the old motto: Keep calm and carry on’ she heard the Queen say as she finished her speech. Madison looked down at her coffee cup which had been finished now for around 30 minutes and then checked her phone. Still no text. It was hard not to feel hurt that he was so late. Did he not know that the world was changing in 9 days and we need to use this time of slight normalcy well? There was no evidence to suggest the aliens were going to be harmful or aggressive but there was a clear feeling of people living before the end of the world. Some things that were fundamental before were largely ignored like work deadlines and executive meetings and some things that would have been casually brushed off before now held more weight, like your idiot boyfriend showing up 30 minutes late.

‘The fuck took you so long?’ she said before he had a chance to sit down. To her surprise he didn’t sit down, in fact he knelt in front of her on one knee.

‘Madison, will you marry me?’ he said. Some people in the cafe had noticed the proposal and were looking.

Madison was in shock. This had not been on the cards, in fact she had been thinking about breaking up with him but figured the alien arrival was as good a time as any to break it off. No point letting good dick go to waste with the apocalypse potentially around the corner. Madison was smart though and instead of saying anything just took his hand, led him home and sucked his balls. No need to reject the poor fucker.

Feliciano held his family close. They were all in the same bed, something that hadn’t happened since his children were very young and there was clearly not enough space for all four of them now that his kids were 5 and 7 years old. He didn’t care. He just wanted to hold them, to know they were secure, to know they had experienced a good life in their short years because he had provided them a good life. He had worked hard all his life coming from a poorer province Puerto Rico and now it seemed like that

might have been for nothing. That he had toiled for years as a labourer to ensure his daughter could go on the field trip to the science centre, for his son to have the best birthday party a 5 year old can have, for his wife to enjoy the dresses and jewellery. God he loved his wife. She had been a beauty ever since the day he met her 20 years ago as young teenagers and they had built a successful life and marriage over 13 of those. He watched her blossom into a small business owner and when the kids came she was perfect with them. She was the best thing in his life and he was afraid of what tomorrow would bring.

“Well fuck me!” said Davey as the aliens arrived.