

**ALIEN HUNTERS:
DISCOVERY**

by

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Alien Hunters: Discovery

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Prologue

1968.

28th October.

Monday.

5:16 pm.

A boy is playing in a wheat field. He absentmindedly throws a ball to himself ... and misses. He sighs as he looks at it lying in the dust. It does not move. It does not explode. It does not transform into a purple robot that sings, dances and makes disgusting smells. It just sits there. The boy continues to look at it. He is not sure whether he can be bothered to pick it up. He glances back towards the house in the distance. With the baby coming soon, he could probably stay out here all night and they would not even notice. He sighs again.

Boredom.

Little does he know, but the solution to his problem is a long way away.

31 million kilometres away to be precise.

At that moment, in the vast emptiness of space, a ship appears.

Well, to be more accurate, a rocky looking blob.

It appeared to be an oversized meteorite, but a closer inspection, not that you would want to, would reveal joints and cracks along its surface. If you decided that your life wasn't really worth living and looked even closer, you would notice that at the rear of the blob - ship - like - thing were thousands of tiny holes. Of course if you were looking that close then your face would have melted into a puddle along with the rest of you, as tiny light blue flames came squirting out of the many holes, propelling the ship forward.

Inside the unusual craft, on top of a large, light green coloured rectangle that was hovering in the air, sat Shmeshplarg. Shmeshplarg was not, of course, her real name. Her real name would be too hard for human fingers to write and definitely so tricky to say that your tongue would tie itself into a knot just thinking about it. So we'll call her Shmeshplarg. It's easier.

Like the boy, Shmeshplarg was also bored.

They were now approaching the three hundred and twelfth planet on their journey. She was growing tired of dropping off cargo. It was against company rules, but she was severely tempted to just jettison what was left ... send it floating off into space with the rest of the rubbish. Gone. Finished. Who would know? They could then start the long, long, loooong journey home right now, no more endless waiting. She hesitated over the pulsing blue circle on the dash in front of her. One press, just one ...

BZZT

The panel in front of her suddenly lit up noisily. She guiltily slipped back into her chair, glancing from side to side to see if anyone had spotted her.

BZZT BZZT

She looked more closely at the flashing, buzzing panel before her. That was odd. She quickly pressed the squelchy, pulsing surface and it glowed. The screen in front of her began to zoom in on the nearest planet. Shmeshplarg leaned forward over the edge of the hovering rectangle.

Why were the scanners going haywire for this planet? It was an incredibly hot wasteland. She looked more closely at the console and then pressed the surface again. The view on the monitor swiveled around and a blue and green speck appeared in the distance. Shmeshplarg pressed here and there on the panel and the screen zoomed in. Her eyes narrowed. She glanced down at the flashing panel in front of her. Could it be? A worthy planet?

She looked up and watched the moon slowly orbit the planet Earth.

...

Deeper within the enormous ship, a member of the crew glanced down absentmindedly at the flashing console. He sighed. Another asteroid. Always asteroids. Why can't it ever be something interesting? Food, for instance. Or a giant floating bubble? Or ... food. Maybe food that looked like a bubble? Anything would be better than this grey sludge that was dripping off his plate. Krastok was about to return to his food when he frowned. Hang on ... his food fell to the ground as he jumped into the air and then ...

... SQUELCH

... he jumped into the roof.

...

... SQUELCH

Shmeshplarg did not even bother to turn around to watch as Krastok rose out of the mushy floor. She stared at the console and tapped it again.

She needed to be sure that it was the right planet this time. Last time ... well, last time was embarrassing for everyone. There was no way that anyone at home was going to pay out such an amazing reward if she was wrong. And they certainly would be extra careful after last time.

One eye watched as Krastok ignored the waiting floating rectangle and started to waddle as fast as he could across the slimy floor.

Shmeshplarg deliberately tried to ignore the advancing bulk that was Krastok. She could press the button now and still be rid of the cargo and ... too late. Krastok was wading closer, like an advancing cruise ship.

Captain!

He actually said, "*Shcroonmarplagger*" or something like that. It was a gloopy, dripping sound that human mouths are not designed to pronounce and would frighten sensitive human ears. As for your eyes ... it's best not to know. Suffice to say, the hideous sound that the alien made has been translated so that your sensitive brain does not melt.

Captain! The alien squelched closer.

Yes, what is it now? Can't you see I have to get the checklist ready? We're almost there.

Shmeshplarg glared at the crew member.

Krastok blushed a deep purple.

I know. But this is important. She looked down at the pulsing floor of the craft to avoid looking into the army of eyes all pointed towards her.

RAAA!

RAAA!

Large pink objects that resembled melted flowers suddenly appeared from the roof.

RAAA!

RAAA!

Look, I don't have time for this. Whatever it is can wait. That blasted alarm has gone off again, Shmeshplarg's hovering rectangle flew over towards the console and her long tentacles waved around tapping at various multi coloured objects that protruded from the dash. She frowned.

Krastok edged himself forward.

Captain Shmeshplarg, that's what I'm trying to tell you. It's about the alarms. There's an asteroid coming ...

RAAA!

RAAA!

... an asteroid? Shmeshplarg's rectangle swivelled to face the quivering crew member.

You call that an asteroid? She tapped a button and the screen displayed a small metal object, about the size of a cat, hurtling towards them.

But Captain, the unfortunate crew member spluttered, *the size is not important. Its speed and direction mean that if we don't change ...*

Enough! Shmeshplarg held up a dripping tentacle in front of Krastok's face.

Another stretched out across the console and squished down a pink flower.

RAAA!

R... The alarm suddenly stopped.

Bintong! Shoot that thing will you? I've got better things to do today than worry about a lump of floating metal. I mean, really? Shmeshplarg waved a tentacle at one of the crew members who quickly depressed a few buttons to ready the ship's weapons.

Krastok sighed, *Captain, it's moving too fast. By my calculations it will hit any mom...*

CRRNCH

There was a faint sound deeper in the ship.

The deck was silent as they all strained to hear.

Shmeshplarg tapped at the console to check the damage.

RAAA!

RAAA!

The melted pink flowers started screaming from the roof.

The captain turned to them.

What? She yelled at the screaming flowers. *Shut up!! Blasted alarm!*

Suddenly the craft started to tilt alarmingly. The five crew on the deck fell onto the floor with two of them falling through it onto the decks below. Shmeshplarg looked up at the console.

KERBOOSH

The ship shook to an explosion that rattled its depths. Smoke started pouring into the cabin. Choking on the ghastly waves, Shmeshplarg tapped madly on the console to regain control of the ship. Elsewhere on the deck, crew members tried frantically to help – some remaining at their stations, others throwing large chunks of the squishy floor at the smoke. The pieces flew through

the air, and then seemed to suck the smoke into them as they fell to the floor. The room began to clear, but they weren't safe yet.

Captain, one of the crew called out. One of the engines has exploded. We've sustained critical damage. We must land now before the rest of the ship goes up.

Captain Shmeshplarg frowned. *What about the escape pods?* she asked.

An eye swivelled in her direction as the crew member's other eyes focussed on the flashing console. *No luck, ma'am. The power is out on that side of the ship. We have to land ... and soon!*

There was a moment's silence as Shmeshplarg tried to halt all of the thoughts racing through her mind.

Krastok stayed near the back of the cavernous room, focussing as hard as he could on the flashing console in front of him. If only the captain had believed him, trusted him, when he first got the news, they wouldn't be in this mess! He fumed as his tentacles moved in a blur, closing down parts of the ship so that the whole thing didn't explode ... hopefully.

Shmeshplarg shook herself and then turned to the crew on the deck.

Alright. All of you do whatever it is you have to do to land this thing on that planet. Scans show there is a primitive civilisation there so, if we can, we'll avoid them.

A lone tentacle quivered in the air.

Shmeshplarg sighed – a low rumbling noise. *Guys, we are in a bit of a rush here to try and avoid this ship being blown up. There isn't really time for questions.*

Um, captain... what about the cargo? The voice tentatively asked.

Shmeshplarg swivelled back to deal with the console flashing in front of her.

If it wasn't for the fact that the power is out on that side, we'd jettison the cargo into space. We have more important things to worry about. Back to work!

Smoke billowing from its side, and teetering wildly, the spacecraft began to enter Earth's atmosphere.

...

Below, on the planet's surface, it was beginning to get dark and the boy knew that it wouldn't be long before his parents called him in. He was still bored, but he wasn't THAT bored that he wanted to go inside. He kicked the ground and then knelt down and watched the ants scurry around. The boy smiled. At least the ants wouldn't be bor...

All of a sudden he saw a light appear on the ground. It started to get bigger. Curious, he got up and walked towards it. It was getting larger and larger. He put his fingers out in the shape of a duck and grinned as he made it quack. The boy wondered what was making such a bright light. Slowly he turned and looked.

A large fiery ball lit up the sky. It was already seemed to be the size of the moon and it was getting bigger. The boy stood and stared. He had heard of meteorites hitting the Earth, but never would he have imagined that he would get to see one! Imagine what they would say at school. The fiery object was moving faster and faster and, with a jolt, the boy realised that it seemed so large because it was, in fact, very, very close.

With a growing sense of panic, the boy turned and started to run. He risked a glance behind him. The meteor was below the clouds and it was massive. The burning flame illuminated the night sky. The boy had no time to savour the spectacular sight as he pushed his burning legs to run faster. He was almost at the house. He could see the door start to open.

KRRRNCH

KERBOOSH

He was blown off his feet from the force of the explosion. The boy flew sideways through the air and landed with a thump in the grass. He shook his head. His whole body was sore, as if it was one giant bruise. The boy held his ribs as he groggily got to his feet and swayed a little as he tried to stand up straight. He fell back onto his bottom. He tried a second time, more carefully. He looked over towards the house. There was a massive smouldering boulder where once his home stood. The boy blinked. He staggered forward, blood dripping from a wound on his head and tears starting to well in his eyes.

“Mum?” As he came closer, he slowed down. “Dad?”

He sniffed. Odd shaped, green, spongy objects protruded from the object. It was easily the size of a three storey building and, from a distance, it resembled a boulder. But as he approached the boy realised that it wasn't a boulder after all.

SHMMP

A large hole appeared in the side of the object, as a large part of it flew through the air and landed smouldering in the grass. Smoke and light poured out from inside the object. The boy stood still, transfixed, unable to take it all in.

The only sounds in the field were the heavy breathing of the boy and the crackling of the fires around the object.

As he watched, the smoke began to clear and a long tentacle slowly snaked its way out of the hole and flopped against the side of the object. The boy jumped back in shock. He barely noticed the sounds of sirens in the distance.

Another tentacle, like a green octopus' arm, stretched its way out. The boy goggled. An alien! "Aaaaaa!" he yelled and he stumbled and ran around towards the other side of the craft, desperately hoping that his parents were ok. As he made his way around, the boy did not see the other aliens stumble out from the spaceship. He also did not notice the flashing sirens and cars start to pull into the long driveway at the farm's entrance. The boy came around to the crushed farmhouse and started to rip away at the debris in the bulky shadow of the smouldering wreckage.

The aliens who emerged scattered in all directions across the field with surprising speed. All that is, but one.

It slowly dragged itself along the ground towards the ruined house, leaving a trail of glowing green liquid puddles behind it.

The boy wiped away tears and ignored his bleeding hands as he threw another board from the ruined house over his shoulder.

AAOW?

He ignored the cat rubbing itself around his legs. They had to be ok, he thought to himself.

The alien was wounded but it could still make out the human in front of it, and it was acutely aware of the sirens getting louder.

SSS

The cat hissed.

The boy kept working feverishly.

The cat let out a low growl.

The boy saw his parents lying to one side of the ruined house.

They must have been blown clear, he thought as he watched them start to wake up.

The alien mustered up its remaining strength and dashed forward.

The cat leapt.

The boy turned.

He caught a glimpse of tentacles ... green ...

,,, and then everything went black.

Chapter 1

Thomas

Present Day

5:16pm.

Thomas looked at the tree. It continued to sway in the breeze, ignoring him. He cautiously looked behind him. His cat, Tabitha, glared at him as she washed herself under the steps. Thomas looked up and he could see the upstairs light glowing in the kitchen and he could just make out the sound of his parents' laughter as they cooked dinner. Good. That means he should have five minutes to practice.

He turned his attention back to the tree and frowned in concentration. He wasn't quite sure if the last time had just been a fluke. He stepped back three paces and began his run up. Closer, closer and then he leapt at the tree with feet outstretched ...