

Persistent Predators

By RetroInferno

A human picked up a name tag and pinned it to his jacket.

It was inscribed with the words, "Hi! My name is: **JACK!**" with an accompanying picture of someone else's face.

Then he patted down his dark green uniform, typically worn by the building's janitorial staff, and placed a similarly colored cap on his shaved head. From there, he made a mental checklist.

Pipes?

Check.

Shotgun shells?

Check.

Detonator?

Check.

One by one, he placed these materials onto a janitorial cart, concealing them amongst some cleaning supplies. He turned his head to the side to find a nude human corpse and plastic explosives planted amidst the building's primary and auxiliary generators. The man shook his head and dragged the dead body to somewhere out of immediate eye view.

Once his affairs were in order, he pushed the cart out of the room and entered the expansive interior of an administrative building. It was arguably one of the most secure locations on the planet. Not only did it help the local bureaucrats secure their grasp on the area, but educational facilities assisted students and ignorant tourists alike with learning more about what lies outside of their star system.

To quickly reach his destination, the man cut through what amounted to a museum, with exhibits devoted to each species in the interstellar federation. Naturally, it was filled to the brim with alien

creatures walking, crawling, and slithering all over the place. He avoided eye contact with the Xenos as he pushed his humble cart. In the process, he spotted two drones fluttering in the air displaying holograms of historically famous humans in commemoration of mankind's entrance into the federation. Today was technically the anniversary, after all.

The only reason why he stopped was that a familiar weapon caught his attention. A Kalashnikov assault rifle lay behind a thin glasslike material alongside photos and holograms of Soviet soldiers confronting a federation starship hovering above Moscow. A similar scene played out in an adjacent exhibit, except it took place in Washington D.C. and an M-14 was displayed instead.

This mere reminder of the past made him clench his fists.

Suddenly, he heard hissing complimented by a young woman's voice. This was thanks to his earpiece, which doubled as a translator, his only means of understanding alien auditory vocalizations.

"Ancient humans used a technique xenobiologists call endurance hunting," explained the resident tour guide.

She spoke to a small crowd of people as the human strolled by. He noticed that members of the crowd took many different shapes and forms, clearly hailing from sectors across the galaxy. Some appeared to be bored, others seemed curious about the newest members of the federation, while a few took pictures of everything with their smart devices.

"Essentially," said the tour guide, "Rather than doing something sensible like hunting with claws or fangs, they simply chased their prey until they died from sheer exhaustion. Humanity's astounding stamina meant that they could afford to do this for entire day cycles!"

A few of the herbivores present appeared disturbed by this information. However, a single small paw was raised amidst the aliens.

"Oh! Do we have a question?" she hissed.

The crowd parted, revealing a small creature that resembled a canine with white fur. He was clearly just a curious pup with a burning question on his young mind.

“Is... is that why the hoo-mens always win the marathons?”

In response, the tour guide clasped her hands together. “Yes! Not only that, but they’re the ones that came up with marathons.” At these words, her AI assistant displayed a hologram of a realistic Spartan warrior. “However, that’s a story for another time.”

Ignoring this commotion, the human took care to push his cart past this assortment of people.

“Speak of the gods!” exclaimed the tour guide. “Everyone say hi to the museum’s friendly neighborhood human!” She waved by utilizing one hand.

This was followed by the crowd of aliens doing their own bizarre greeting expressions. Some individuals decided to take pictures of the human with their smart devices as if they have never seen a janitor in their entire lives. The human vouched for looking away as he departed the scene, yet he could hear the tour guide speak in the distance.

“He’s not so friendly today I suppose.” She paused to snicker. “It might be humanity’s foundation day, but that just means he’s having a bad time thanks to all the extra work. At Least he has the drones to help him.”

The crowd made sounds translating into laughter. “Anyway,” she continued, “Let’s go to the next exhibit!”

Meanwhile, the human exited the museum and entered the main area of the building. From there, he could head to the second floor, where most civilians were simply forbidden. The only obstacle blocking his path came in the form of a security post defending a pair of escalators. However, to the human, they looked like two massive conveyor belts. He wondered why they didn’t just use an elevator instead, even if it was just a two-story building.

He made his way toward the security guard post and peered inside. Two yellow eyes ended up meeting his own.

“Identification please.” hissed the guard.

The creature reminded him of the tour guide from earlier, albeit he was significantly smaller in size and resembled a more traditional snake rather than a python. The human chalked this up to bizarre

sexual dimorphism. Nonetheless, he unclipped and handed over his name badge as requested, resulting in the guard snatching it away. The guard glanced at it before handing it back to the human.

“Password.”

An electronic display started glowing at the human’s waist, complete with a similarly electronic keyboard. Glowing alien characters adorned each digital key.

This prompted the human to pull out a crumpled piece of paper. A password was scribbled across it, roughly translating into “fuckingpassworD1” in an alien tongue. Regardless, matching each character with the right button was child’s play. Upon completion, the guard shooed him away as a metal gate opened.

“Sorry for the hassle Jack. Multi-factor authentication and all of that.” He curled his tail up. “I know that you write the password down because the feds are forcing all of us to learn a universal language, but it’s still a massive security violation.”

“Yea, yea, I know.” said the human as he immediately started ascending to the second floor.

Pushing his cart forward alongside the conveyor belt propelling him upwards greatly accelerated the speed at which he reached the top of it.

Eventually, he came across the main federal offices. Heavily armed guards let him know that he was heading in the right direction. Fortunately, most ignored him. At worst, a federal employee typing away on a computer would give him a weird look before he went on his merry way down several hallways.

At long last, as he approached an area devoted to the security of the building, he spotted his prey.

To be more precise, it was one of the federation’s vice conductors responsible for governing several major solar systems, with Terra’s Sol system being among them. She strongly resembled an anthro moth with white fuzz. Several well armed and armored guards mirrored her every movement. Upon spotting the human, however, her regal composure was replaced by sheer terror as she started screeching.

As she stumbled backwards, the guards aimed their energy weapons at the human, who simply raised his hands in the air with a stoic expression on his face.

One of the guards, who looked like a canine, shook his head. "Hold your fire, at ease everyone." With hesitation, the guards lowered their weapons. "It's just one of the janitors."

"IT'S HIM!" exclaimed the vice conductor, with fear present in her trembling translated voice. Her wings involuntarily flustered in the midst of her panic and she frantically forced herself into a nearby office after struggling to open the door. Two of the four guards ended up following her, leaving the human with the others.

"Hopefully we didn't scare you..." The alien guard squinted his eyes to read the human's name tag. "Jack. She keeps freaking out every time she sees a human. Believe it or not, up until someone talked some sense into her, she tried to ban all humans from entering the building."

"You've heard about all the assassination attempts, right?" piped in another guard with a feminine voice. Although she was mostly covered in armor, it was obvious that she was a human too.

In response, the human dressed as a janitor nodded his head.

"Yeah, it's all over the news," replied the alien guard, "Some group of human supremacist lunatics has been tracking that poor woman across the galaxy. I think she's traumatized."

As usual, the human ignored this small talk as he retrieved a set of two pipes from his cart.

"So what are you doing here anyway?" asked the human guard. "What are those pipes for?"

The man dressed as a janitor shrugged his shoulders. "Well, originally, the pipes were supposed to be for her, but I guess they work just as well on traitors too."

"Wait, what?" she muttered.

The human guard reached for her plasma pistol, only for the man dressed as a janitor to point the pair of pipes at her. One simple motion of the man's hands, where he slammed a small pipe against a large one, caused a nail to strike the primer of a shotgun shell. This sent a deadly blast of shrapnel

towards the woman's unprotected face. Her head ruptured like a melon, sending blood, skull fragments, and bits of brain matter in all directions.

Although momentarily stunned for a split second, the remaining alien guard reacted immediately by slashing the human's midsection with his claws. They easily cleaved through several layers of clothing and penetrated the skin. The human responded in kind by swinging his crude shotgun at the alien's head, and a portion of the pipe handle penetrated the skull, caving in the cranium. Afterward, a freshly minted alien corpse slumped to the ground with a pipe sticking out of its brain dead head.

With blood practically leaking out of his torso, the human walked over to his trusty janitorial cart and retrieved a detonator. He flicked a metallic switch on the detonator, turning a red light green.

Nothing happened.

Worst yet, some of the locals came to investigate and proceeded to freak out upon spotting the bloody mess engulfing the hallway. This caused the human to curse under his breath as he repeatedly turned the switch on and off again. Following a few moments of this, an ear-piercing bang filled the air. All of the lights in the building flickered before deactivating one by one and the area shook momentarily as if there was an earthquake. Then there was the screaming. For some reason, the human's earpiece always translated alien cries of distress as humans either screaming at the top of their lungs or outright wailing. He could hear it both nearby and in the distance.

After determining that his wound was far from fatal, he picked up a dead guard's discarded plasma pistol, then calmly walked towards the room where the vice conductor disappeared.

Suddenly, the aforementioned room's automatic door parted, allowing a single guard to slither out of the room. Upon spotting the human covered in blood, they aimed their weapon and fired, unleashing a hailstorm of laser beams.

In stark contrast, the human aimed his plasma pistol with one hand and pulled the trigger twice. Two plasma bolts struck the serpentine creature's chest, simultaneously eviscerating and cooking the guard's internal organs. As the alien fell to the floor, their rapid laser weapon fired in a variety of directions, with one beam striking the human in the leg.

The last guard ran out of the room, despite the demise of the previous one, and emitted a war cry. It was cut short and turned into a whimper as soon as they saw the human standing right next to them in the doorway. He made short work of the guard by kicking them in the knee, sending the alien crumpling to the floor, before pistol-whipping their face. This rendered the guard unconscious. The human shot the guard in the back of the head for good measure.

He kicked their discarded weapons aside, sending them sliding a short distance down the hallway, before entering the room. Almost immediately, the human couldn't help but notice that the vice conductor was nowhere in sight. Additionally, there were no obvious exits. Just a series of empty workstations.

The man combed through the dark room, quickly searching through the workstations. He assumed that she was hiding under a desk. In the hopes of her having a neurotic breakdown, he fired his plasma pistol at the ceiling several times, accomplishing nothing but damaging it and giving away his location. After a few minutes of this relentless pursuit, he came across the vice conductor's limp body cowering under a desk.

Or at least, she used to be cowering. Her wings enveloped her body in what appeared to be a fetal position. Oddly enough, she didn't respond to the presence of the human. So, the human planted his pistol against her head. Still, he received no response.

After placing his hand on her torso, he discovered that her heart wasn't beating, and her glazed over black eyes showed signs of death. If he had to take a guess, she suffered from a heart attack. Rather than taking chances, a single plasma bolt annihilating her head confirmed that she was dead.

Then the human sighed as he limped out of the room. There was a sharp pain in his leg where the laser beam struck him, not to mention blood was trickling down his torso. He bypassed an alien corpse with a pipe sticking out of its cranium alongside a human that lost their mind. The way that he moved, holding a pistol with one hand as he limped, almost made him look like a shambling corpse.

Occasionally, he had to hide in one of the offices, to avoid more security guards and drones swarming the area. Over time, he reached the area with an escalator, where a frenzied crowd of federal workers was fighting to get to the first floor. He tossed his weapon aside and became just another member of the crowd. People were too concerned with their own safety to notice that he was both bleeding and limping.

Some were attempting to flee down the escalator going upwards, turning it into a treadmill. Unlike traditional treadmills, this one involved people pushing, shoving, crushing, and screaming at each other as they fought over it. The correct escalator was filled to the brim, with a line forming to go down it.

He spent several minutes clutching his chest and joined the other employees as they descended to the first floor. Things weren't any better there.

The human portion of the museum was blown to smithereens and part of the building collapsed on itself. Dozens of dead and wounded aliens were present among the ruins. Meanwhile, a drone displaying the words, "Happy foundation day!" indifferently fluttered around the proximity.

An alien cub, with white fur that resembled a canine, cradled a body that looked like an adult version of themselves. Albeit, the body was missing two limbs and a pool of blood was forming around it.

"Mom?" mewled the cub, "Are you okay?"

Unlike the others that were either fleeing into emergency exits or attempting to help survivors, the human stumbled right out of the front entrance, and he found himself outside. A heavy storm was on the horizon and a torrent of rain covered his new surroundings in precipitation. This concealed his skulking form from clusters of people forming, curious about the chaos that unfolded. In defiance of the storm, neon lights glittered around the city, with the sirens of emergency response units joining them.

As he limped, rain washed over his open wounds, intermingling with his sweat and blood, with fluids dripping across his body. A single shiver went down his spine as the adrenaline rush dissipated. After reaching a parking lot, a single automated taxi awaited him. Its doors flung open like a DeLorean upon detecting him and he practically collapsed inside of its warm interior.

A holographic avatar of a moth-like creature appeared on the taxi's internal display.

"Thank you for choosing Swift Rides! Are you a human by the name of Jack?"

"Yes." he growled.

“Excellent!”

In mere moments, the hovercar closed its doors and darted towards the skyline, allowing the human to run away from the mess that he created.

His job was finally done.