

The Visitor examines the result of sending an invitation into the deepest reaches of the universe. You can never be totally sure that who or what responds will be friendly or have alternative designs.

The Visitor

By Terence A. McSweeney

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THE VISITOR



TERENCE A. McSWEENEY

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CHARACTERS

Dema	Leader of the Greys
Dr. Steven Albright	Army Psychiatrist
Chancellor Beaumont	Special Missions Agent/Maxwell's partner
Francine Bishop	Linguist
Calvin Brown	Navy Seal/Covert Operator
Mason Delatonte	White House Chief of Staff
Trent Dillion	Mission Specialist
Maggie Doyle	Communications Specialist
Dr. Michael Evans	Army Psychiatrist
Robert Gearhardt	Security Advisor
Dan Gordon PhD	Theoretical physicist/ engineer
William Grantford	President of the United States
Michael Holding	Director of FBI
Gary Hunt	Navy Seal/ Covert Operator
Maxwell Jones	Special Missions Agent
Rebecca Jones	Mother of Maxwell Jones
Joan Lewis	Director-World Protectorate
Samantha Maddon	Trader
Keith Maddox	Brigadier General Base Commander

Malatier 4	Prefect of Houteta Religious Order
John Mason	Venture Capitalist
Tim McDougal PhD	Theoretical physicist/ engineer
Samuel Merritt	Farmer
Doris Merritt	Farmer, Samuel Merritt's wife
Bernie Nichols	Special Missions Operative
Ostrix 3	Houteta Trainer of Neophytes
Pannater 1	Houteta Guide Instructor
Américo (Rico) Pérez	Commander Beta Team
Lieutenant Joseph Recolli	Chief Technician Army Research Lab
Saladza	Grey Agent
Fernando Silva	Brazilian Antiquities Minister
Slata	Trusted Advisor for Dema
General Jack Suffolk	Three star general/ Pentagon
Teknokta	Houteta emissary/Maxwell Jones's father
Immanuel Torres	Astrophysicist
Wort	Trusted Advisor for Dema
Rebecca Wymer	Maxwell Jones's birthmother

1.

The boy appeared in the Spring of 2245. It was April 1, 2245, to be exact. He was found by a couple standing in a field on their farm in Kansas. He was about eight or nine, but his age was never quite pinned down as he was only there for a short time. At first, Doris and Samuel Merritt thought the boy was lost. They tried to find where he was from, but the child refused to speak. He just stood in that field staring. Doris welcomed the boy to come out from the cold, but the child firmly stood in place. The Merritts did not know what to do so Samuel pulled out his phone and dialed 911.

“911, what’s your emergency,” answered the operator.

“Hello, my name is Samuel Merritt. I’m calling because there is a child standing out in our field. He seems to be lost.”

“What’s the name of this child?” asked the operator.

“That’s the thing. He doesn’t speak. He must be local because he is not wearing a coat. He couldn’t have come far. It’s ten degrees for heaven’s sake. My wife brought a blanket and wrapped it around him, but he has made no movement whatsoever.”

“Is he conscious?”

“Yes, his eyes are open, and he seems to be aware that we are here.”

“I’m sending an officer to your location. Stay by the child and leave this line open until the officer arrives.”

Samuel acknowledged and kept his phone to his ear.

After a few minutes dawn had finally revealed the sun and its heat began to heat up the land ever so slightly. Doris was waving to Samuel for him to come closer. He did and when he was near, she whispered, “He looked up into the sun.” It was the first sign that the boy gave any

indication that he was aware of his surroundings. Then it happened. The boy looked at both of them, smiled and said,

“Welcome to your new home.”

Doris and Samuel Merritt immediately vanished. All that remained was Samuel’s phone which lay on the unplowed field as the police car pulled up.

2.

The continuous clacking of the rails was hypnotic and soon John was fast asleep after a long day of trading. John Mason had taken this trip from Grand Central to Darien so many times that he knew every conductor and they knew to wake him if he was still sleeping when his stop was near.

“Mr. Mason, Mr. Mason,” the conductor who John knew as Robbie, called and gently shook his arm. John lifted his head and with eyes barely opened said, “Huh?”

“Mr. Mason, Darien stop just ahead.”

“Oh. Thanx,” said John as he squinted to see which conductor woke him and then recognizing the face added, “Robbie.” The conductor smiled acknowledging his sleeping passenger and moved on collecting and clicking tickets that he attached to the seatbacks. John rubbed his eyes and felt the train slow and begin to coast into the station. He put his coat back on and buttoned it up tight to ward off the impending deep freeze that awaited him outside. The train finally stopped and announced, “Darien. Darien, next stop Fairfield station.” John found the nearest door and stepped out onto the platform. The wind buffeted him as he walked to the bridge that extended over the tracks to the commuter lot.

The lot seemed darker tonight and the area where he parked only had one light that was shining. He rushed to get away from the cold, knowing that the interior of his vehicle had been sitting in that cold for over twelve hours. The thought of that gave him a chill. He hurried on while he pressed the button for remote start on his key fob.

As he got closer, he noticed a figure standing directly in his path. He thought, *that's odd. A bit cold to just be standing there.* Immediately, as any vigilant city-goer in the Northeast he was wary of a mugging or

carjacking. He moved to another row of cars to throw the possible assailant off the trail. As he made progress, the figure did not make any attempt to match his steps. He just stood there. *Probably waiting for his girlfriend to get in from the city.* He remembered those days happily and wondered how Jill was getting on after all the time that passed. He turned the corner of the row of cars to finally get to his and there the person was waiting by the door.

“Can I help you?” He asked who he now saw was not a male but a teenage girl. The girl smiled, which somehow looked unnatural for her and she said,

“Welcome to your new home John.” His briefcase dropped onto the pavement as he instantly vanished.

The Darien police drove through the commuter lot after a call they received from a Samantha Mason who reported that her husband had not returned from work in the city. The dispatcher sent a car over to the commuter lot and they found the car and briefcase, but not its owner. When they made their report a missing person’s file was opened and dutifully placed in a drawer of a file cabinet full of them. It was then forgotten.

3.

Samantha Madden ran the office with an iron fist. She was almost as demanding of her people as she was of herself, almost. Long after she escaped the pressure cooker of the trading floor, Maddy, as she was most commonly referred to, was at her desk analyzing the day's trades. She loved this time of night. It was settling, focused and except for the occasional vacuuming of Maria the cleaning lady, quiet. Outside the city was just beginning to light up. It was getting late and Samantha regretted not getting something to eat, but she was in a hurry as it was month-end. These final trades would determine if there was any momentum going into the next quarter cycle. Her stomach gurgled and she rubbed her eyes that were now burning from the glare of the screen. She stood up and walked over to her office window and stared down the forty-three floors watching as the army of cabs bobbed in and out looking for fares. It was like looking at a work of impressionistic art. It was dazzling and a reminder of why she chose to work and live in the city that never sleeps. *Sleep*, Samantha thought it was over-rated. She never slept more than five hours even on the weekends. There was work to do, money to make. She sighed and then turned back to her desk. She stepped back. A dark silhouette of a person stood in her doorway.

"Maria? It's okay. I'm just finishing up. You can come in."

The figure did not move. Samantha asked, "Maria, is everything alright?" No answer. She turned on the overhead light and saw a middle aged woman carrying a small plastic bag. The woman was staring at the wall clock. It was 6:59. The clock ticked over to 7:00. The figure turned to Samantha and said, "Welcome to your new home." Samantha was gone. So too was the mysterious lady.

4.

The lab was a frenetic display of human energy. There were white lab coats moving about, tapping keys, checking measurements and many huddling around a large circular egg like shape made of aluminum and brass. The object vibrated and with that vibration was a luminous glow accompanied by a buzzing hum.

“Doctor Gordon, we are ready for the stress test of materials,” announced his assistant Tim McDougal. Gordon made the last checks of the object and then by hand signal okayed the test. There was a countdown from ten and then a pulse of bright light from the overhead laser shot down on the egg. Immediately the smell of ozone permeated the space. The laser then flickered and died. McDougal confirmed, “Test concluded.” The engineers moved over to the object to evaluate the results. The surface of the object was blackened, but the laser did not cut through the material. The surface of the metal was cold. The test was a success and Doctors Dan Gordon and Tim McDougal had just made history.

There was a great deal of back slapping and high fives. Tim broke out a bottle of Champagne that he had ready just in case they had a breakthrough. Well, they had one tonight. They ended the celebration with a fist bump and then technicians secured the object and left for the day. Gordon and McDougal next settled down in their office and brought out two whiskey glasses. After a generous pour they clinked those glasses and bathed in their achievement. McDougal noticed something out of the corner of his eye. He shouted,

“Is anyone there?” A figure appeared but did not move closer or announce his or herself. Gordon got out of his seat and approached the person who turned out to be a young girl perhaps ten or twelve. He asked, “Dear, are you lost?” The girl just stared.

“What do you make of this Tim?” asked Gordon turning to his partner.

“Not a clue. Perhaps she belongs to one of the techs,” answered the engineer. “I’ll go and check to....” The girl turned, smiled, and said, “Welcome to your new home.” All three disappeared.

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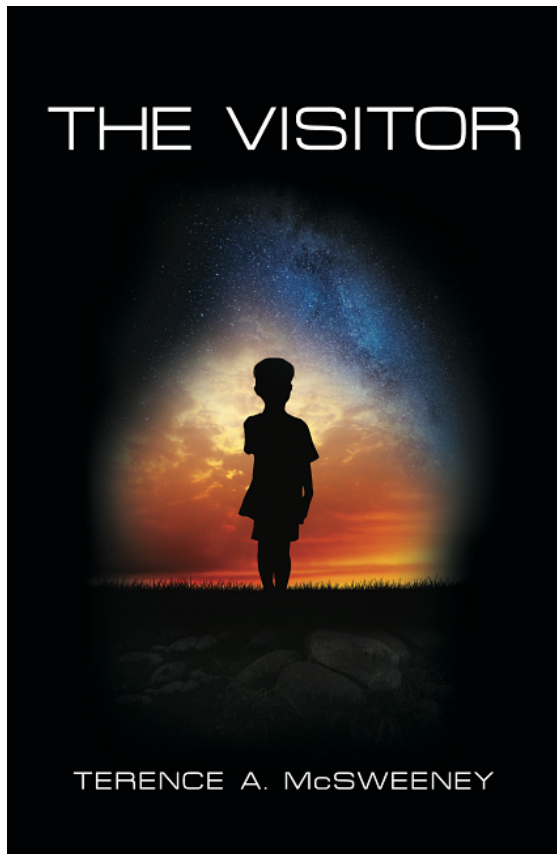
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The Visitor examines the result of sending an invitation into the deepest reaches of the universe. You can never be totally sure that who or what responds will be friendly or have alternative designs.

The Visitor

By Terence A. McSweeney

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