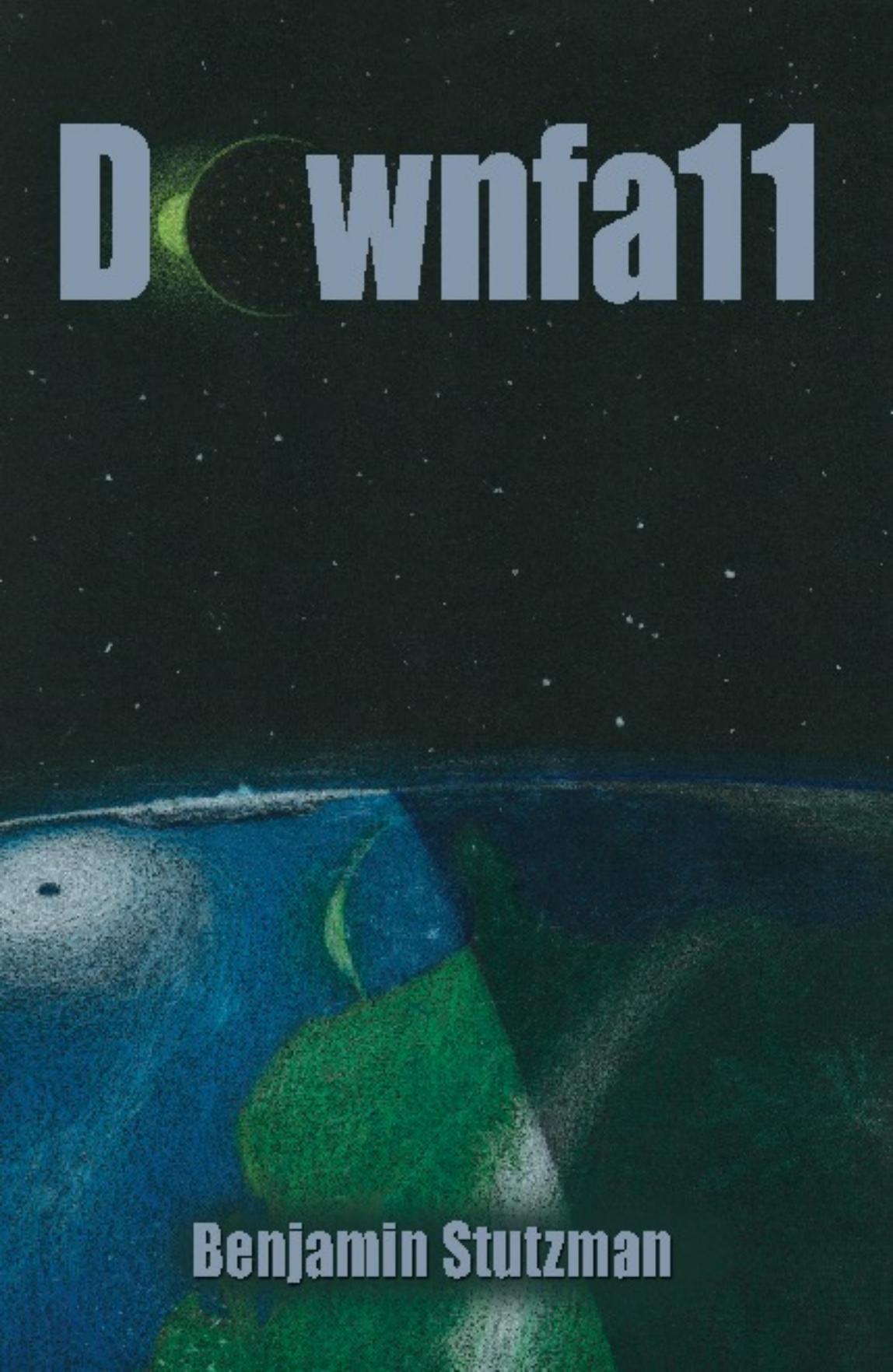
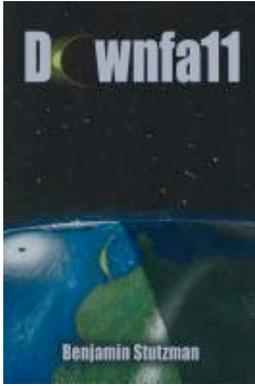


Downfall



Benjamin Stutzman



A powerful alien arrives and declares war on Earth, but informs an elite group of humans of an evil species that's an even greater threat, a fact he keeps from the rest of the world. Converting a plan to eliminate mankind into the biggest uprising ever is the only thing that can change our fate. Fighting the known universe's most powerful race, we'll have every disadvantage, except one - the alien sent to destroy us.

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Prologue

There was a voice; just a random voice, it was low, and very distinctive. The alien spoke:

“Audio log number 25. November 22, 2011.

“My name is Verrater. To my dismay, it came to my attention that this means ‘traitor’ in a certain language on the planet Earth. That describes me not in the slightest; I led a peaceful species on a planet only a few hundred light years away in the Milky Way galaxy. Neither my people nor the humans had any knowledge of one another, nor of the numerous other species that existed when we were attacked, such as a massive, intergalactic, evil race of beings that were systematically exterminating life forms in multiple galaxies.

“For a time, we, like you, lived in relative peace, but this was all about to end. The Temidos’ (or so they are called) massive path of destruction was about to overrun both of our species. Their technology, flawless in all ways but one and even complex enough to cheat death, has existed for over a billion years, almost ten percent of the age of the universe.

“This is the story of our confrontation and the battle for both the human’s and my specie’s existence against the race who almost define the term ‘unbeatable.’

“I have to go.”

[All of the exchanges of speech between the species of these planets have been translated into English.]

On December 21, 912 A.D., four members of the mighty Temido species traveled through space in their ship. Although they moved at roughly 30,000 miles per hour, slower than the speed of light, the wormhole they were in allowed them to reach their destination much faster. The Temidos created this gap in space to take them to within about 25,000 miles from Earth.

They were sent by their ruler to look for resources, materials and food for their needy population millions of light-years away. The aliens stood fifty feet high, and they all wore gray suits. Their heads were enclosed in a glass-like dome, that allowed for easy sight while protecting them against foreign and potentially harmful materials. Their blackish-brown skin bore similarities to

that of an elephant in texture and appearance. Their heavy, large bodies, together with their armor, clanged and banged with every move.

One of them had just put away his communication device. Another asked, “What did *she* want?”

“Just wondering how long until I’ll be back.” The other nearly rolled his eyes.

“That’s exactly why I haven’t selected a mate yet. I don’t like someone always checking up on me.”

“Well, your taskmaster will always be checking up on you.”

“Hey! I didn’t make up that stupid law. Of all the planets we’ve been sent to, nowhere else is someone required to pick out a partner by a certain age or else they’re assigned to resource-collection duty for life; it’s absolutely insane!”

After a short pause, the slightly older one spoke.

“I don’t know if you were in the scouting business yet, but on some of the planets I scouted, the male didn’t pick a mate. The male and the female sort of picked each other.”

“What? How does that work?”

“Well, both of them would form some kind of attraction towards each other. They had a name for it, but I don’t remember what it was. The male would tell the female he had this feeling and she would let him know if she had it too; or something like that.”

The other shook his head rapidly, trying to comprehend what he just heard. After failing, he shouted, “That doesn’t make any sense! What are the chances that both of them would have the same feelings toward each other? It’s a wonder that those species live on to reproduce at all!”

“Could you imagine that happening on our planet?”

“No way, especially with our dictator in charge.”

A voice from the front of the ship yelled, “Hey fools! Get your minds back on your work; we’ll be leaving the portal soon.” They began to move, but not with any sense of urgency.

“This planet better not be like the petty little dwarf planet we got assigned to last time.”

“Don’t worry, intel was strong; they said there are significant life readings on this one.”

“Life?!” the other clarified. “We found nothing but microbes on the last planet with life.”

“It’s supposed to be advanced. Our probes picked up visible structures.”

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“Just more to destroy, eventually, right?” They walked out of the room they began the conversation in, still two rooms from where they needed to be strapped in.

“Yeah, that’s right. You know, I’ve been thinking. As a species, we have eliminated over a hundred different races. Do you ever feel guilty?”

“Better to be the killers than to be the ones getting killed.” he said quickly, as if the speed of the response defended his position.

“Yeah, but think about it for a second. We send out probes to scout for planets, check to make sure they have stuff we can use, and attack the civilization when they have decent technology but have not exhausted all of their resources. Sometimes I just think we should let them be.”

“You’re such a wimp. What would Grackon say?”

“Oh, shut it! I’m just thinking out loud.”

“If we all start thinking like you, we’d be out of a job, single boy.” The other’s face went dead, all signs of positive emotion leaving his face.

“You had to throw that in there, didn’t you?”

“Well, it’s true.”

“I just haven’t found someone good enough for me yet, that’s all. Maybe you have your standards set lower than mine.”

They were interrupted by the alien flying the spacecraft calling on the intercom. “What are you guys doing? For the third time, get ready to leave the wormholes!”

“Relax, big guy, we’re all suited up and making our way to the entry room,” he responded nonchalantly.

“We’re ten seconds from the jump, where are you? Get strapped in, now!” They looked at each other, eyes wide.

“Grab hold of something!” one of them shouted.

Seconds later, a low, short humming sound repeated after they left each level of the wormhole. This happened about six times in slightly decreasing increments of time and the last one sent them into Earth’s atmosphere. The gravity shift from weightlessness to Earth’s gravity shot the ship forward, and the acceleration caused the Temido with a poor grip to lag behind as gravity pulled the ship toward Earth faster than it pulled him. This effect gave him the feeling of cresting a hill on a roller coaster, as the heavier object holding him lurched forward, snapping him back; he smashed into a protruding object on the ceiling of his compartment. This punctured a small hole in the suit he was wearing, unbeknownst to him.

“Deploy parachutes,” he yelled, hoping it would slow the descent rate and cause him to migrate toward the front of the ship, so he could strap himself in.

“We’re still too high,” said the voice from the cockpit. The Temido pressed against the ceiling was in no mood for that response.

Then, as the craft entered our atmosphere, it burst into flames as a result of the enormous friction it was experiencing.

“At least wait until the ship gets out of the inferno or we’ll be airborne for hours,” the other strapped-in alien yelled back to those in trouble.

“Don’t wait; do it now!” he yelled in dire need of the enormous g-force to stop.

“I’ll initiate reverse brakes.” the pilot said. After a short delay, he went ahead and deployed the parachute. It was not fabric, but rather appeared to be aqua-colored light in the shape of a parachute. The ship jolted, and the Temidos stuck on the ceiling fell down with a thud, creating a flopping noise that reverberated around the room.

The spaceship continued to fall toward our planet, headed for what is now Guatemala, in the heart of the ancient Mayan civilization.

Just prior to the ship’s arrival, an elder in the Mayan society was having a discussion with his son.

“But father, how do you know I will make a good leader? There are so many others who seem like a better fit.”

“Almost nobody knows you like I do. All they’re judging you on is your small size and how you act, but people have no idea what someone is capable of until they actually have to lead. You are next in the line of succession, so just tell people who doubt you that you will rule well, and they won’t have to trust you; they’ll just have to wait.”

After thanking his father, he stepped outside of the temple, and something up above caught his eye.

All of the local people outside looked at the sky, terrified of a flaming object heading straight downward and slowing as it approached the ground; a low humming sound followed. It hovered when it got close to the ground, the trees around it bending outward as the ship neared the dense forest below.

A large, flat, round platform extended from the base of the ship, steadying it, while ten other pointy protrusions dug into the ground, even though the ship was far too heavy to need anchoring.

The giant capsule’s doors opened, and a bit of steam came out as a result of the differing air pressures. Each of the huge aliens that emerged left footprints that were at least a few yards across. Trees that were taller than the strange beings were toppled without a hint of resistance.

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The ship's doors closed after they exited the craft, and three of the creatures headed out towards the natives, while the fourth went in a different direction. They had glowing, red eyes, a nose-like structure and holes for ears. Their brains usually communicated using telepathy, but they could talk with their mouths as well. The three creatures sounded like a slow-moving herd of elephants roaming the forest as they headed toward the nearby humans.

The inhabitants of the city, which was only about a mile away, saw what appeared to be a meteor and heard the scattering of birds and the subtle, yet deep sound of the approaching predators. By the time the aliens were about five hundred feet from what is now called Cancun, the Mayans could see them. Mass panic sounded in the small city.

Mayan warriors clearly saw that close combat would be suicidal, so they went to retrieve their spears and atlatls, which were the only projectiles they had. They stormed out of the large palace at the center of the city, onto the adjacent courtyard, ready to mount an offensive, but they halted as the trees near the giant beings suddenly all fell away from them, and a shockwave raced towards them. The excruciatingly loud, low-pitched noise hit like a brick to the face, and as the sound passed the closest Mayans, the Temidos began to attack. Laser emitters incorporated into their goggles fired superheated beams. On their command, the beams shot in the direction they were looking, and each sounded not like thunder, but more like the sound of air being scalded. Each beam caused an explosion that was equal in size to a grenade blast when it struck the ground and even blew through the reinforced palace walls with ease, throwing nearby bodies about like toys.

The Mayans didn't even get within range of a single spear throw. The Temidos released giant bubbles of sweeping, devastating air blasts that cleared all but the heaviest objects in their path.

The Mayans knew they had not even the slightest chance of victory. They stopped the offensive, hoping that the Temidos would relent, but it was no use. This wasn't a war; it was a massacre. With no other visible option, many people fled, but a few stayed and prayed, hoping for a miracle. The Temidos took little notice of this and launched the last few blasts, all but eliminating the palace and every remaining inhabitant. As the temple that stood several stories high fell to the power of the relentless attackers, more blasts were released into the flaming, heaping pile of rubble.

It got quiet as the Temidos were alone once again, and the entire village had been destroyed. They soon received a call back to the ship from the fourth Temido, who was near the spacecraft, having completed his resource-gathering tasks. They brought a few dead humans back with them, to study

their anatomy, which would ensure their invasion on the entire Earth that would someday ensue would be just as easy as their first human purge.

As they re-entered the ship, the two who spoke earlier picked up their conversation where they left off.

“Now, be honest, didn’t you enjoy feeling the rush of superiority from that?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

After moving all of the samples and human remains to sealed containers, the Temidos went into the chamber where they were washed down in a decontamination shower to eliminate any hazardous substances they may have encountered. The purpose was to cleanse them before emerging from their suits, but for the Temidos with the pinhole, it was too late. Germs had invaded; the damage was already done.

They took off in their spaceship, toward their home planet. Their return trip through the multi-leveled wormhole was only about a week long, and on the third day, the Temido with the punctured suit could barely stay upright on its hind legs and stumbled over himself. Using telepathy, one of the others said, “What are you doing?” to the one acting abnormally.

The one in front turned to respond, but he could muster only a few gasps of breath. His eyes stretched open so wide it looked painful. He knew his death was near, but he didn’t have the slightest clue as to what was causing it. His eyebrows drooped over his gleaming eyes as he fell to the ground. Life drained out of him like water down a sewer. The others stood dumbfounded. Without warning, another Temido fell to his knees and collapsed completely, dying soon after. The lead Temido on board looked over at the samples that had been gathered and rushed to figure out what was happening. The only thing that he could think of was the humans, back on their planet, praying in their temple just before they were eliminated.

“Send them a message,” the head Temido on board said to the second telepathically. He stared at the bodies and resource samples as he told the other what to say to his fellow Temidos on his home planet.

“Warn them about the creatures on Planet 111. Either their God is frightfully powerful, or they have some sort of magic powers; tell them not to invade!” When he didn’t get a response, he spoke again, but all he heard were loud thuds resulting from multiple body sections slapping the ground, one after the other. Turning around quickly, he saw what he desperately hoped he wouldn’t. He was the last living Temido aboard. He scrambled across the room and put on a large headset, and then he sent a signal.

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“Stay away from Planet 111,” he grunted, with a sudden aching pain in his stomach, which was roughly the size of a small house. He tried to finish the message, but failed.

“Do not attack; they have some kind of, uh! Some kind of—”
Thump. Thud.

Back on Apophis, the Temidos’ gargantuan home planet, their leader was furious about the news of their deaths. When the automated navigation system shut off at an altitude of about 2,000, the ship crash-landed, which drove it in to the ground slightly. It shuddered, but was not destroyed. The contents, although battered from the impact, confirmed the message that had been received.

“What do you want to do, master?” one asked.

“Our power rivals that of our gods’, but, unlike them, we don’t have the ability to create resources. Without raw materials, we are nearly powerless. We *need* all that we can get, so one day we will formulate a plan to invade Planet 111. Meanwhile, we have plans to conquer four more civilizations; after that, when we have appropriated all their resources, we’ll find a way to return to Planet 111 and wipe them out.”

His closest underling went off and transmitted a signal, which was sent to several others scattered about on the surface.

“It is time to go. Get ready to head to Planet 109!”

“Audio log 26. November 23, 2011.

“And that is when all of our troubles began.”

Chapter 1 **Invasion**

Nearly modern day, location Gliese 591 d (a faraway planet)

At the outer reaches of a distant planetary system, a wormhole appeared and from it a planet nearly twice the size of Jupiter emerged. After it had cleared the gap in space, the hole began to close, as if receiving a command from the massive, traveling planet. Moving at about a million miles per hour, it began to turn toward the space in between that system's red-dwarf star and a much smaller planet nearly 150 million miles from it, known as Gliese 591 d. It was only about the size of Venus and a bit colder than Earth's climate. The civilized inhabitants, known as Otages, were thousands of years ahead of humans in terms of technology. Each stood roughly eight feet tall, was humanoid in shape, and had a flexible, metallic skin. This gave their bodies a grayish hue and protected their human-like brain and other organs. Nonetheless, they were mesmerized when the giant planet appeared overhead. This emotion began to change as the planet headed straight for their sun and, while not on a collision course, a total eclipse became increasingly likely. All eyes looked to the sky as the mammoth planet began to block their sun. A corona, at first visible on the left side, also, slowly disappeared. Had the planet continued on its course, the corona should have been visible on the right side, but as the planet, that appeared three times the size of their sun, went nowhere, the Otages realized this was no normal occurrence. The planet's movement had stopped. Some of the Otages on the surface of Gliese sprang into action. Inside one of their scientific research facilities, the normally subdued staff turned frantic.

"Calculate the size based on the appearance of the diameter and distance, now. Go!"

After an Otage researcher with access to their most complex equipment did a bit of typing on a keyboard, a powerful beam of light shot at the giant planet. It calculated the exact distance based on how long it took the light to reach its target. The timer on the screen read about 5.4 seconds when the beam of light hit. The commander knew that there had to be a mistake or the object was absolutely enormous. The computer did the exact calculations. The giant planet was the equivalent of about 222,000 miles across.

"What?" the commander asked.

“That can’t be right,” said the researcher. “How can that much mass suddenly appear, move into position, and then just stop?”

The commander rushed into another room and, after talking to Verrater, began to rack off commands.

“Alert the entire army; this is code black. Tell them to prepare for an immediate, high intensity assault.”

Just then, messages began to come in from what looked like an air traffic control tower.

“Sir, you should take a look at this.”

On the radar screen circular objects rapidly descended toward the surface almost 5,000 miles out. They all moved at exactly the same speed and held in formation as tightly as a group of military fighter pilots.

“What are those?” one of them asked as they watched the super-fast moving objects fly toward them.

“Check the size,” another worker in the room said.

The response came and the diameter was about equivalent to the height of forty Otages.

“How many?”

“I see twenty, no, thirty, fifty, a hundred, triple digits sir, maybe more.” Obviously, high command was very concerned at this point, but they also had little idea what to do.

Just a bit later, a swarm of Otage rangers covered in metallic suits flew from behind them, sounding similar to a fly-by at a major sporting event. The suits covered little more area than the Otage’s bodies themselves, just large enough to provide propulsion, and bear small weapons. The mysterious spheres were roughly twenty seconds from the ground just coming into sight at the edge of the atmosphere. Their entrance lit up the darkened sky, and they burst into flames upon entry, like a lamp heating up, and slowly illuminating a room as it gets brighter and brighter. Before long, they slowed their descent, hovered just above the surface for a few moments, and then landed. The crackling sound of exhaust they made became louder the closer they came to the ground, as the down-force increased.

Almost a hundred of these oversized metallic balls rained down as the suited rangers entered the drop zone. With reduced peripheral vision, a few Otages were hit by the falling objects. They continued to rain down for roughly ten more seconds until the spheres were scattered all over the landscape.

“Okay, I need a report. What’s going on?” the commander asked.

The radio responded, “We’ll find out soon.”

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The commander looked up at the sky to see no further action.

A group of the suited rangers landed near one of the closest, ominous, black spheres. Although it was settling, the floating dust that remained nearly created a smokescreen. One of the Otages looked up quizzically to see that the giant planet had not budged.

“*What* is it?” one of them asked.

“You’re asking me?” another responded. “Do I look psychic to you?”

Just after that, a strange sound came from the sphere in front. It was loud, similar to a siren, but it spread through the rock layers as well as the air.

“What was that?” the commander barked over the radio.

“I’m not sure,” came the response, before the ground shuddered noticeably for about a second, as if something big inside had just come to life and kept subtly moving thereafter. The capsule began to open and the Otages in front stepped back in fear.

“Shoot it, guys,” said a scared ranger.

“No, back up,” another with more influence said.

Smoke came out in front of them from the differing air pressures, and Temidos emerged afterward.

“I don’t like this! Come on guys, let’s get away from here this instant,” one of the Otages said. Then he tried radioing back “Commander, commander?” but there was no response from the other end.

“My radio’s not working,” the messenger said.

“Hello, can you hear me?” The commander asked. “Hello? Anybody, hello?”

“Get back here,” a member of the group yelled, but as he finished the sentence, there was a deafeningly loud and low-pitched sound that came from the creatures whose eyes were two dim red lights. The other Otage stared awestruck at the massive black alien’s shining, blood-red eyes as it emerged. He had every ounce of his attention focused on the terrifying spectacle, which caused him to not even hear the shouts from behind or realize that the massive Temido was about to crush him. One after the other, two giant black arms slammed to the ground near the capsules as they walked out, each one roughly the size of a small lighthouse. The first one crushed the closest ranger like an ant under a shoe, as he disappeared completely from sight.

“No!” yelled his friend who tried to get him to come back, as he lost his footing from the impacts. The Otages immediately began to shoot short, yellow laser beams out of their helmets that struck an invisible force field which became a dimly visible greenish color with each hit. The horrified

rangers quickly realized that their weapons were utterly ineffective, and they soon fled in an attempt not to share the same fate as their friend.

Feeling helpless, the commander got a pair of binocular-like objects and looked through to see a cloud of fleeing Otages. Some of them were yelling into their microphones.

“Get out of here; they’re coming out of the spheres. Launch missiles, get away!”

As he heard this, the commander looked beyond the rangers to vaguely see giant creatures coming out of the capsules. A suited Otage, who was talking over the radio to the commander, then arrived in person. He swung his legs out in front of him and steadied himself as he landed.

“I don’t know. I don’t know what’s happening. The radio went dead. Then they just emerged and…” he said as the distant invaders began to walk toward them.

The commander quickly racked off questions. “Did you get a good look at them?”

“No, we were too busy esc—”

“Did you shoot at them?” he interrupted.

“Yes; at first nothing was happening—”

“Nothing was happening?”

“No, it was like we were all firing blanks. Then we got further away, and we were getting shots off. They kept hitting some type of force field; once we got outside the radius, we couldn’t get them.”

The commander’s eyes widened, and his heart rate instantly rose. “Did you say ‘force field’?”

“Yes, like an invisible shield.”

“That blocks them from taking hits?”

“Yes!” the suited ranger said.

The commander’s eyes expanded further, his words conveying a nervous tone, now. “So, what you’re telling me is that the airstrike that’s about to land on them isn’t going to do a thing?”

The other Otage’s eyes widened, too. “You launched an air strike!?” he asked.

“Yes, but if you’re right, it will be useless, and will only aggravate them.”

The commander turned on his radio. “Call off the missiles,” he yelled into it, not sure if he was reaching anyone or not.

“It’s too late for that,” came the surprising response.

“What do you mean, it’s too late? Detonate them in the air or something.”

“But sir, we don’t know what will—”

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“Do it NOW!” the commander yelled.

Just then, a roar of missiles came from above them and passed overhead with supersonic speed. The two Otages popped their heads out to see them getting closer and closer to their target.

“Why aren’t they exploding?” the commander asked, and with that, the missiles struck the invaders’ shields. After the momentary whiteout and the weak shockwaves afterwards, the dust partially cleared to reveal the unhindered intruders still advancing. Only the smoke in the air from the explosions remained, motionless, as the giant creatures advanced.

“Do we send the troops out there, sir?” The commander had no immediate response. Without warning, the giant black aliens shot intense orange beams of energy from their eyes and caused sizable explosions when they hit the ground. A network of orange lines shot across the countryside, and the two Otages ducked into a small crevice to avoid the incoming beams. As on Earth, they sizzled through the air until they struck with an explosion.

“Send the troops out *right now!*” he tried saying into the radio. “Destroy the enemy using maximum force!” But he was unable to send the message.

“I’m not getting through!” he yelled. “How are we going to reach the—?”

Then, as if on cue, hundreds of flying-suited rangers forming a large mass flew overhead.

“I’ll be right back, commander,” he said, while simultaneously activating his suit’s thrust, “stay here.”

He flew off behind the cloud of other Otages that were moments away from attacking. Their helmets opened at their forehead area and what appeared to be miniature cannons were inside. They soon glowed and then shot a barrage of lasers at the giant aliens. Like the capsules’ entrance to the atmosphere, the lasers swiftly lit up the darkened sky. They blew up as they hit, revealing the greenish, enveloping shield surrounding the invaders. The Otages were not stupid, they could see that their lasers were not working. When the smoke cleared, it became apparent that the giant aliens were not affected in any way.

“Fall back.” the lead aggressor said into his radio, which broadcasted to the entire group.

Afterward came a sound like all the water in an entire swimming pool boiling away. This huge, synchronized release of energy from the majority of the giant attackers cleared the cloud of flying rangers, like a flamethrower would clear a swarm of mosquitoes. Glowing red hot, the Otages, who were virtually flash-fried, flew helplessly through the air back in the direction they had come. Some fell to the ground, others flew, paralyzed yet conscious,

away from the gamma blast. The angry Temido aggressors continued their assault and then, out of the blue, a few of the black aliens began to shoot deliberately in the air above the terrified commander. He frowned, wondering what they were shooting at. Then, like shots from a small tank, incredibly fast, mini-missiles flew overhead toward the Temidos. They struck, but had no more luck than any before them.

Wearing the most advanced suit they possessed, the leader of the Otages flew in for a landing, narrowly dodging several beams of energy.

Speaking as fast as he could, Verrater said to the commander in his low, very distinctive voice, “Get out of here now, now, now!”

“Wha-what?” was all the commander could manage before their leader grabbed him and threw him into the air.

“We launched the Decimator Missile!”

The commander’s eyes got even larger than they were when he saw the size of the alien planet on the screen. He shook Verrater like a father scolding an unruly child.

“No! No, no, no!” the commander yelled, his voice nearly cracking. “Are you out of your mind? What are you trying to do? You’re going to kill them and us at the same time! And with those shields, they may not even die!”

Verrater yelled, “That’s our last resort,” just as a direct hit from a beam of energy struck the commander. The resulting explosion sent both of them flying, but the commander sustained the brunt of the blast, and he spun helplessly in the opposite direction. Verrater quickly regained his bearings and flew over to the commander, who was barely still alive.

“Commander, get up; we have to leave *now!*”

“No, I—”

Then a massive missile, easily the size of several Otages combined, flew overhead. It sounded similar to a Saturn V rocket taking off. Just the width of the smoke trail above was larger than the size of a house.

“Aaaaaahhh!” the leader said in an increasing volume as he simultaneously grabbed the dazed commander and flew away with as much velocity as the thrust of one suit carrying two Otages could muster. As the massive black creatures saw the giant approaching missile, the Temido in front recognized what was coming and released a low-pitched, but high-intensity signal. The rest then turned away from where it was going to hit and covered their eyes with one of their huge arms. Just at that moment, the commander regained consciousness, upside down and backwards in the arms of Verrater, who was trying to escape, and asked, “What are you doing?” while, from his vantage point, the missile appeared to rise up to the horizon.

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“Cover your eyes!” Verrater said. “And hold on.” Verrater covered his own eyes with one hand while sacrificing his grip on the commander. The missile came down and landed in the field near the shielded Temidos, and it blew.

The blast’s power was unlike anything anyone present had ever witnessed. The light from the blast hurt the Otages eyes even with their arms covering them. It would have been bright enough to nearly blind a human, and it even heated their feet.

It got very quiet and besides Verrater’s flight, only the sound of gentle breeze could be heard. “Brace yourself!” Verrater said, knowing what was coming.

Then, the hot shockwave hit with immense power; the sound of the blast and the force it exerted took him completely by surprise because it hit before he anticipated it would. The commander slipped from Verrater’s grip while they were about 1,000 feet up, moving at nearly the speed of sound.

“Nooooo!” he yelled, but the power of the blast drowned it out.

Just as the chaotic sound and wind died down, so did the light. He made a U-turn as fast as he could and was shocked at the size of the now visible mushroom cloud that extended nearly five miles into the sky. It was darkening once again, still in a planet-wide eclipse. He spotted none of the invaders and didn’t see the commander either as a result of the thick, low-level smoke that enveloped the ground from the explosion. Hopelessly, he began to search.

Roughly five minutes later, when the smoke had nearly dissipated, he found the commander. Though the Otage’s bodies could withstand much more force and battery than a human’s, their exoskeleton being made of a kind of steel-like alloy, Verrater was surprised to find him alive.

“Did we kill them?” was the first thing the commander asked, having been beaten up a second time.

“Most of them, I think.”

“How many of us survived?” he asked.

“Everyone who was outside of that blast radius,” responded Verrater, and that was probably correct, besides the two of them.

The commander said nothing for about six seconds, until he groaned in pain.

“Don’t do this; we can get you help,” Verrater said slowly.

“We both know that’s not true.” His leader had a look of despair on his face. “Just save as many as you can.”

“Commander? Stay with me.”

“As many as—”

And he was gone. An angry Verrater turned around to destroy any Temidos he could find, but all he saw was a giant blackish-brown creature no more than fifty feet away. “Holy—” was all Verrater got out.

The closest Temido was bigger than the three others who followed him, and the ship they had come down in was long and angular, not the spheres of the initial invaders. Presumably, he was the giant aliens’ leader. He let loose an unbearably loud, low-pitched sound that caused the others to stop.

Verrater unleashed a barrage of laser shots that, just as before, hit the shield surrounding the massive creature. He continued to advance until even his shield enveloped Verrater and, though he was still trying to fire shots, nothing was happening. Overcome by shock, Verrater mustered “What do you want from us?”

Their leader’s head was bigger than Verrater’s whole eight-foot-tall body, and his hand came forward as he responded in a low, harsh and scratchy voice. The words were not audible; they were just materializing in Verrater’s mind, almost like Grackon was putting the words there and Verrater’s mind was making the sounds.

“How did you manage to kill my forces? During the slaughter of hundreds of other species, not one Temido has ever been killed while shielded. What was in that missile?”

“I’ll never tell you!” Verrater quickly let out a burst of thrust and helplessly tried to escape, but Grackon shot a snapping release of gamma rays at Verrater that quickly shut down his systems, and he plummeted back to the ground. Without control over his suit’s operation, he was immobilized—it was too heavy for him to move alone. And at that, the large alien grabbed him and brought him into the Temidos’ flagship. When they arrived on the ship, Grackon had no second thoughts about venting his anger towards the Otages. He gave an order to have all of them taken into captivity, and then he turned to Verrater and laid out his demands.

“You will help us, one way or the other, even if your entire species must die.” And then, with no remorse, he threw Verrater at the wall. Verrater saw how fast he was approaching and at the second he would have hit the wall, he regained consciousness.

Verrater’s heart pumped fast as he woke up from the dream. He was huffing and puffing, just as a human would when he regained his bearings. The invasion of his home planet was fresh in his mind; like it happened yesterday, even though it actually occurred years ago.

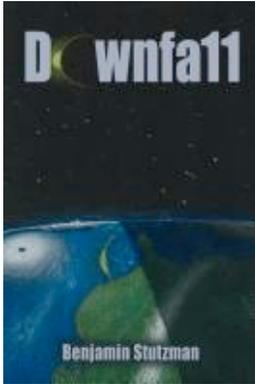
Downfall

“You’ll see them again,” he muttered to himself. “The plan will work; it has to.”

He looked at his calendar, which actually read Earth time, and after seeing the date, he sighed.

“Log 14. November 11, 2011.

*“The date is November 11, 2011 at 1:11 in the morning. The sun’s light is just ever so slightly peeking over the horizon behind me. I’m hovering over my fully submerged spaceship in the Western Atlantic, thinking about the offensive that will begin later today—the attack here on Earth against mankind. This is where **you** come in.”*



A powerful alien arrives and declares war on Earth, but informs an elite group of humans of an evil species that's an even greater threat, a fact he keeps from the rest of the world. Converting a plan to eliminate mankind into the biggest uprising ever is the only thing that can change our fate. Fighting the known universe's most powerful race, we'll have every disadvantage, except one - the alien sent to destroy us.

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