

Alfred Appledorn sat in his studio in a average home in Bismarck North Dakota. Surrounded by pyramids of books which looked as if they would collapse onto him at any moment. Years of smoke damage tainted the drywall near the window where he often smoked. His looks fit his occupation perfectly. And it is hard to tell whether this was intentional or merely the way that nature just makes people. Long white locks of his beard were stained with tobacco smoke, and his eyebrows were in desperate need of a trimming. He was a mix of Santa Klaus, A homeless guy, and a college professor. Alfred was a professional conspiracy theorist. Writing books about Alien abductions and reinterpretations of ancient writings found on the walls of various ancient indigenous cultures. Amongst the books surrounding him were old high school text books about Physics to the History of the Mayan People. In the corner was an especially dusty pile of his "contemporaries". They all sat, perfectly rigid as the day he got them for free at a conference. He couldn't stand to read anything from any of his peers as they shed light on the fact of just how full of shit he was.

With a final puff on his pipe Alfred removed his glasses and placed them on the small thrift store table beside his chair. His eyes were tired from hours of reading and his old age wasn't helping with his stamina. He gazed to the far corner where his entire series of books could be seen in a nice bookshelf that his daughter had purchased him for Christmas almost a decade ago.

"What a nice girl I ended up getting" Alfred thought to himself. "Even though she is one of the only people who knows that I really don't believe half of the shit I write, she still loves me. Why is that? How can someone love somebody who is obviously in the game of deceit unconditionally?".

Alfred's reverie was broken by the sound of a text message vibrating his mobile phone which lie next to a book about "Art and Physics". As he opened the message he noticed the number was unknown. It simply read.

"I'm out. Come to Kum and Go by the Federal Building in 30 minutes. Do not write me back. The serpent is returning soon. More info later. <3 Quetz"

Alfred's eyes scrunched together as he reread the message a dozen times. He thought someone must be playing a joke on him, or more likely, one of his insane followers was having delusions of grandeur and in some sort of a manic freak out. Quetz was the name he had given his "source" almost 30 years ago while writing his first book "The Return Of The Aztec Serpent". It was short for the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl who was a feathered serpent and had been worshipped as far back as 900 BC. But the problem was. He had made Quetz up, he wasn't real in any way. Just a figment of his imagination that came to him while he was on a week long drug binge in the forests of Chile. There, he had talked to various "medicine men" who were more than likely more interested in his money rather than trying to impart any knowledge on a 25 year old American hippy in search of New Age religion. Quetz was the name he had given to the alien he claimed to have met while camping in the jungle and ingesting DMT non stop. Quetz didn't look like an alien in any way as he had the power to shape shift, and generally he took his position in various governmental roles. Trying to actually do good for the planet, and further mankind. Quetz belonged to a group of aliens which had integrated into modern life. They were our judges, our lawyers, our school teachers, and our congressmen. Quetz was of the M-83 tribe

which were extremely peaceful and interested in passing knowledge throughout the entire universe.

But, the main thing that we shouldn't forget, was that Quetz was a fake. For years Alfred had made a small fortune (most of which he never used on anything besides books and booze) writing books about his communications with this Alien who was revealing governmental secrets, plans for weather controlling stations, and how there was currently a war going on between the M-83 tribe and the Lasticons who were more interested in making Earth subservient in order to prepare it for a full Alien invasion.

Alfred gazed back down at his phone. Scanning the message another time. The thought of calling the police crossed his mind first, as there were some dangerous and emotionally unstable people who did follow his works, and this could very well be one who was trying to lure him into some sort of a bizarre set up. But at the same time, it could be an interesting distraction to what was otherwise a pretty boring evening, in fact, a pretty boring week, on top of a pretty boring month. Alfred decided he would go and if he felt uncomfortable he would be in a public parking lot. So what could really go wrong? He thought that perhaps he could talk to some nutbar and get some ideas for an upcoming book. Really, at this point, what did he have to lose. Schizophrenics always had great new ideas he had never thought of.

Alfred came up from the basement where his man cave resided to see his wife Eva cooking a soup.

"Hey sweetie, I've got to run to Kum and Go to get some chips. Need anything?"

"I'm cooking dinner already, why are you getting chips?" His wife responded

"brain food baby, need anything?" Alfred stated as he grabbed his keys and was almost half way out the door.

"Get some sour cream!" could be heard as Alfred shut the door. He nodded and gave the thumbs up sign as he walked to his car. An old 1992 Ford Thunderbird. The car was a complete pile of shit, but having a clean car was the last thing on Alfred's mind. He was happy with whatever as long as it got him from point A to point B. As Alfred headed down the beautiful tree lined streets he could feel his dugout (a small wooden box which held marijuana and a small pipe which resembled a cigarette) rubbing up against his leg. "Fuck it, why not" he thought as he turned up the radio which was playing Classic Rock and sparked a few hits.

A minivan with a classic soccer mom at the helm pulled up next to him as he was exhaling a giant hit and bobbing his head to some Creedence Clearwater Revival. She glared over at him and Alfred could make out a small child in a car seat in the back through the tinted glass. "Little does she know that I'm on my way to meet my secret Alien source" Alfred thought to himself, smiling, in a marijuana daze. He gave her a friendly North Dakota smile and turned off onto the main road which would take him to Kum and Go. As he approached his destination he found himself getting a bit nervous. After all, he really had no idea whom he was going to meet and perhaps he had acted too impulsively. As he saw the giant red and white sign of the gas station he paused for a moment before turning into the parking lot.

A large black Suburban was parked sideways in the handicapped spot. "Fucking assholes" Alfred thought to himself. Seeing that there was no handicapped sticker anywhere on

the car. He pulled up and that's when it began to dawn on him. That didn't look like an average Suburban, and his suspicions were confirmed when seconds after he pulled up he saw two men in suits open the doors and walk straight up to his window.

"Mr. Appedorn" a young chiseled looking fellow said to him.

"Yeah, what's up?" Alfred Replied

"Quetz would like to speak to you. Follow us, it isn't safe here for long"

"You've got to be kidding me. Let me talk to Quetz" Alfred retorted

At this point the back window of the Suburban cracked. Revealing a cold looking face which simply stated "Come on, Alfred. We have some information for you". And with that the window glided back up, the suits walked back and got into the Suburban, and the SUV started up and proceeded out of the parking lot. "Fucking Fuck" Alfred thought to himself. This didn't seem like a prank anymore. He had been expecting the standard schizo low level intelligence agents he had got ideas from in the past. But this, this seemed kind of legit. He started up the Thunderbird, and followed the black Suburban as the sun began to set.

After 15 minutes they pulled into a dirt parking lot by the bank of the Missouri river. The two suits he had seen before exited their vehicle, and Alfred did the same. Walking towards them. This time one of the men went to the back door and opened it. Out came Mr. Coldface which he had previously seen only through a crack in the window. Coldface looked straight at Alfred as he approached the vehicle. Alfred looked over at the suit he previously spoken with and asked "You mind telling me what the fuck is going on?". Coldface looked straight back at Alfred and stated. "The serpent is returning" .

"Enough with the melodramatic bullshit. Who the fuck are you guys?" Alfred stated, already getting annoyed that they continued to beat around the bush instead of just talking with him straight.

"You act as if the face that gave you all the inspiration for your life's work is completely unknown to you? It is I, Quetz." Mr Coldface said in a monotone manner.

Alfred looked deeply at the cold bluish face of the man opposite him and couldn't believe what he was seeing. In an instant. Like a glimpse of a channel changing, Alfred saw Mr Coldface's face morph into that of a bird head. The two men surrounding him remained absolutely the same. Their chiseled features and cool attitude completely unfazed. Alfred stepped back, his eyes widening in horror. As he turned around he noticed his car had vanished. Running off of adrenaline and fear he attempted to flee but quickly found himself frozen in mid stride, unable to move. Quetz and the suits walked up to him as he stood as a statue. Quetz's eyes were inches from his face and he could see them switch between a reptile's eyes, and a human's with every blink. Quetz started speaking.

"You got some things right throughout all the trite bullshit you've been writing over the years" Alfred wanted to scream, wanted to run, wanted to fight, but he remained frozen, unable to move. Quetz continued "This isn't a warning Alfred, this is a punishment. You see you let out some information we really didn't want public yet. And controlling public opinion is of the utmost importance at this point. You realize that there are real security threats to the country don't you? Alfred?" Alfred was unable to speak but would've loved to spit in his face at this point. Quetz looked at Alfred, smiling. "You do realize there are some very serious security threats to the country don't you? Alfred" He repeated. "And these threats need to stay top secret, because we're at war. You do realize we're at war don't you Alfred. We're in a much larger war than even you ever imagined." Alfred's gaze on Quetz tightened. "And since we are in this war

you've just got to keep some information to yourself. I have no idea how much you learned in Chile, but I can tell you, it was probably more than you should've ever been privy to. You know the country's at war don't you Alfred?" Quetz repeated. "The country's at war". Alfred could see that the two men surrounding Quetz were enjoying it at this point. Their cocky football quarterback jawlines and gelled hair disgusted Alfred. "Now you're going to take this gun Alfred, and you're going to put it into your mouth, and you're going to blow your head off" Quetz stated with a malicious flair.

The gun was placed into Alfred's hand and he started to feel sensation come back into his extremities. Almost like his whole body was pins and needles. His hand slowly pointed the gun towards his face, and then he felt his mouth opening, and then. POP! "Fuck, I'm dead" Alfred thought. Then again. pop! Pop! Alfred opened his eyes to see Quetz's head splattered all over the black Suburban. The two suits had sought cover behind the SUV. It was then that Alfred realized he still had the gun in his hand. His first reaction was to run and he made his way to a grove of cottonwoods. Firing back at the Suburban as he ran. Pop Pop! He saw a few amber bursts amongst the trees. As he entered the grove it was completely black. Suddenly he felt an arm on his shoulder. He looked at a man in a black hood and couldn't make out any facial features, but judging from how he grabbed him he wasn't dangerous, but the sniper in the woods who had saved his life.

Looking back into the parking lot he could see the two suits trying to pull Quetz's body into the Suburban. He looked down at the hooded man who had set up a tripod for his sniper rifle on an old tree trunk. Crack. Another shot rang out. Exploding another one of the suits head all over the passenger window. The last suit ran to the car but was unsuccessful as another bullet from the sniper's rifle stopped him dead in his tracks, slumped onto the hood of the car. The hooded man then folded up the tripod for the rifle and motioned for Alfred to go back to his car which had now miraculously appeared where it had been previously. Within an instant the hooded man had vanished back into the darkness of the cottonwood grove. Alfred stood in the moonlight, looking back at the parking lot and the three bodies covered in blood. He knew now was not the time to reconcile his emotions, now was the time to get the fuck out of there.

He ran back to the car and plopped down inside, jammed the keys in the ignition and sped off. As he drove down the river road he tried and somehow make sense of what had just happened. He wondered if he should call the police, or maybe they were the police. He was completely dumbfounded. He felt his mobile phone buzzing inside his pocket. It was another message. Alfred slowed his car as the illuminated screen glowed. The message read "don't worry, that wasn't Quetz. I'm ok". Alfred drove back to town, picked up some sour cream, and headed back home for dinner.