

# The Butterfly Effect

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\_at\_with\_the\_appropriate\_symbol>

Rated: G

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Summary: How did the rock that Clark kicked in the pilot episode save the world?

Author's note: Conversations among and thoughts by Thelsicans have been translated into English for the reader's convenience. Additional notes at bottom of story.

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\*September 1993\*  
Smallville, Kansas

Clark alternately looked at his dad and craned his neck to take in the entire night sky while they discussed Clark's life and aspirations. He started to explain that he was thrilled to be living in Metropolis and working at the Planet, but his voice was not wholeheartedly enthusiastic.

His father interrupted him with the observation, "You still feel like you don't fit in."

"Because I don't. I don't fit in." As if to illustrate his point, Clark kicked a rock so powerfully that it soared into space.

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Thelsican spaceship H22866

Lieutenant Hran studied his console readings for several minutes before reporting to his superior. "The planet appears to be inhabited by a people with at most a class 4 civilization. Impressive, considering that the dominant species has only two limbs for locomotion and two more for object manipulation. I expect it will prove easy to conquer, and it should prove a rich source of resources." The Thelsican approach to relations with other races was simple: Conquer and enslave the inferior, make allies of the equal, and avoid the superior. Hran knew that the inferior races thought the Thelsicans cowardly, but the Thelsicans themselves considered their approach simply to be prudent.

Captain Morb was pleased. This was their last scheduled stop before returning to their home planet of Thelsica. It was always nice to end a mission on a positive note. He replied, "Excellent. Cloak the ship. Enter orbit for additional study. Lieutenant Hran, when you have sufficient bio-information on the dominant species, give the weapons officer the data necessary to calibrate the biodamper prior to invasion. I want the beings to be made docile, but kept uninjured."

"Aye aye, Captain."

Ten minutes after they had entered orbit, the ship rocked violently.

Weapons officer Gleck stated precisely, "We've been hit. Our weapons systems are off-line."

Morb leaned forward. "Any other damage?"

"Negative."

"Where did it come from? Why wasn't I informed of incoming missiles?"

"Our sensors are attuned to notify us of metal-based weapons, sir. This weapon appears to be non-metallic. An analysis of the angle of impact on our ship indicates that the most probable launch site is in a sparsely populated area in the middle of a large land region in the planet's northern hemisphere."

"How could they fire at us with such precision? How could they even know we are here?"

The science officer answered that question. "Unknown, sir.

The technology necessary to defeat our cloak is not typically available until a civilization reaches a class 6 status. Nothing I have observed has contraindicated the initial categorization of this planet's civilization being higher than a class 4."

"Nothing except the ability to disarm a cloaked vessel with such precision. Helmsman, set a course for home. We shall report back to the Resource Acquisition Committee while our ship is repaired."

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\*November 1993\*

Thelsica

The Resource Acquisition Committee had just been briefed about the status of the final planet that had been explored during the most recent expedition. The committee's chair, Senior Acquisitor Claffon, was not satisfied.

"Let me see if I understand your report. You say that your weapons system was disabled by a single weapon of non-metallic composition while you were cloaked — and yet you contend that the civilization is only class 4? Explain."

Captain Morb's proboscis twitched nervously. "Sir, you have the facts at your disposal. I have no explanation for them."

Junior Acquisitor Ngool hesitantly suggested, "Perhaps it was just a coincidence that you were hit? Perhaps the beings hadn't realized you were there, and were just sending something into space as a primitive experiment into extra-planetary locomotion?"

Claffon briefly contemplated that possibility. "That seems highly unlikely to me. The odds against the weapons system being taken out so precisely are astronomical. We need additional information in order to determine the best course of action. I open the floor to suggestions regarding how best to resolve the anomaly posed by the inhabitants of Sol 3."

Someone offered, "Could we send in ground troops to observe the culture firsthand?"

Hran shot down that suggestion. "Negative. Our size and form are too different from that of the indigenous fauna for us to be there unnoticed."

Ngool said, "Perhaps we could develop a test of their weapons capabilities. We'd have to do it in a way which would not reveal our presence. The inhabitants of Sol 3 would have to perceive the threat as coming from a natural source. Might I suggest seeing how they cope with an asteroid colliding with their planet? One large enough to disrupt their civilization. They would use their most advanced weapons systems to attempt to deflect it. And if they fail, the disruption will serve a dual purpose: Not only will we see that they cannot defend themselves, but the resulting chaos will also leave them primed for us to take over."

Claffon's ears shot straight up in delight. "Excellent. Make Sol 3 your first stop on your next voyage."

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\*January 1994\*

Thelsican spaceship H22866

The Thelsican ship had remained cloaked from the time it had entered the solar system.

Interest in the asteroid displayed on the primary screen was currently at a lull. It had been nudged into the desired trajectory some time ago, and it was not due to hit the planet below for over two of the planet's days. This changed when Lieutenant Hran, who had been monitoring the planetary situation, stated, "Object rapidly approaching the asteroid from the planet. Putting it on primary screen."

The picture of the asteroid was replaced by an image of a four-limbed entity of the variety which had created the planet's civilization. Attached to its primarily blue body-covering was a sizable piece of red cloth. The being wore two metallic, cylindrical objects attached to its front. It had been these metallic

devices which the sensors had originally picked up.

The more Hran examined the output of the sensors and the visual image, the more amazed he became. He reported to his captain, "The metallic devices are attached to the entity's face in such a manner as to indicate that they are used to aid its breathing. They do not appear to be assisting it in its flight. Although it is beyond my ken how it is doing it, the being appears to be propelling itself."

Captain Morb leaned forward on his haunches. "Could the breathing devices also serve as explosives?"

"Unknown. Sensors indicate a narrow range of electromagnetic energy originating in extremely close proximity to the being. It appears to be communicating with its compatriots on the ground. This may be a simple fact-finding mission."

All whose work permitted it watched the screen as the entity picked up speed in its approach to the asteroid. All eyes widened and ears shot outward at the sight of the asteroid shattering when it was hit by the entity. Their surprise turned to astonishment upon discovering that the being had not only survived the collision but was well enough to be able to reverse its trajectory to return to the area of land whence it had appeared to have come.

Captain Morb was the first to regain his composure. "Lieutenant Hran, the being did not appear to be wearing any sort of armor. Was it wearing a portable energy field?"

"Negative, sir. It had no protective gear other than the breathing apparatus. The beings on this planet are apparently not only capable of defying gravity and surviving the cold and the radiation of space, but also appear to be stronger physically than any other race we have thus far encountered."

"In your estimation, could they be subdued with our biodampers?"

"No, sir. Not even at their maximum setting."

Captain Morb reached a decision. "The beings on this planet, although technologically fairly primitive, are too physically capable to warrant the effort of attempting to subdue them. In fact, engaging them at all could prove our ruin. At the next Resource Acquisitions Committee meeting, I will recommend in the strongest possible terms against attempting to colonize this planet, and I will further recommend that we prohibit future transit in this area of space."

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\*April 2011\*

Smallville, Kansas

Jonathan was enjoying a rare moment alone with his son. Martha and Lois were putting the girls to bed, and the two men decided to spend their brief free time stargazing together.

Clark broke the silence. "Dad, did you hear that they're retiring SETI? It seems that, except for the New Kryptonians, they've found no evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence, and they've decided it simply wasn't cost effective."

Turning his gaze to Clark, Jonathan asked, "How do you feel about that, son?"

Jonathan wondered at the enigmatic expression on his son's face as he pondered the question. Finally, Clark answered, "Perhaps we're better off on our own."

THE END

Disclaimers: The opening dialogue and Clark's kicking the rock were borrowed from the pilot episode of *Lois & Clark*, written by Deborah Joy LeVine. The asteroid was, of course, the Nightfall asteroid from "All Shook Up," written by Bryce Zabel. I don't own Jonathan, Clark, Martha, Lois, Superman, the rock, or the asteroid. They all belong to Warner Brothers and DC Comics. The plot is very loosely based on a story by Fredric Brown. I don't recall the name of that story — I read it decades ago — but the punch line was that earth narrowly avoided being

enslaved because the alien race, which had picked up a pair of chimpanzees for analysis, thought the earth's inhabitants too stupid to train as slaves. The Thelsicans and the other parts of the plot not already mentioned in this paragraph are mine. I based the dates of the events on the dates the pilot and ASU initially aired and the date that SETI was actually retired.

My thanks go out to my fantastic BRs. Female Hawk, VirginiaR, and AntiKryptonite have all contributed suggestions which have improved the story. My thanks also to my general editor Deja Vu, whose eagle eye and command of punctuation have made the text flow more smoothly. Gracias, merci, danke, grazie, gratias, and thanks again. :-)