

# Laughing Alien

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**Synopsis:** In a remote part of the Southwest, gonzo journalist ZACK HUNTER records the exit of two flying discs from a mesa, then is instantly apprehended by men in black.... In a swank Los Angeles hotel bar, once prominent television journalist TOMMY STONE, 45, knocks back a strong one. Back at his apartment, he gets a strange message from Zack's assistant, and a clip of the discs.

The next day, Tommy attends the presser of Senator JANET CARLSEN, 55, a liberal darling on the rise. Her press secretary, LAURA RYAN, 42, is Tommy's former flame and journalistic partner. Their relationship didn't work out - Laura was the naïve idealist, Tommy the skeptical cynic. Tommy gives Zack's name to Laura and asks her to run it by her "insider wonks."

After finding his apartment tossed, Tommy visits a senior network news producer to share the disc footage as a potential story. The producer is non-committal. Later, Tommy meets up with Laura at an outdoor café. Laura reports that multiple government agencies are interested in Zack. Suddenly, MIB approach Tommy. He runs off with Laura, who gives him a card for "someone who knows about these things."

That someone is CARLOS VAN TASSEL, 70, a luminary among conspiracy theorists and UFO freaks. After Tommy evades the MIB once more, he and Laura set out for Tucson, where Van Tassel lives. Laura explains that her boss, Janet, wants to get the bottom of the disc story and disclose it to the public.

Outside Tucson, a hostile Van Tassel warns off Tommy and Laura with a shotgun, but upon viewing the disc footage, invites them into his bizarre compound. Van Tassel explains he used to have a level 43 security clearance for multiple government agencies. According to him, there has been extensive contact between extraterrestrials and the secret government. Tommy is skeptical. Van Tassel promises to show him something that will rock his world.

Meanwhile, a FEMA agent, FIXX, 64, is tracking Van Tassel's activity. Fixx used to work with Van Tassel, respects him, and has a healthy disdain for his government employer... Van Tassel arranges to have Laura and Tommy taken to a remote reservation. There, their world is indeed rocked when they meet a grey alien being, DAR-EL. Darel is older, quirky, and has a trademark "nit, nit, nit" laugh.

In a pair of interviews, Darel explains how he came to Earth, and some history of his race's interaction with humans. Of more interest to Darel, however, is sharing how his crash and near-death in the desert gave him a new awareness about life. Via a crystal device, Darel also shows them Zack is being held in a secret underground base called Azucar.

Laura and Tommy are stunned by their interaction with Darel. Van Tassel arrives and advocates they go to Azucar and attempt to rescue Zack, with Darel's help. At first Tommy thinks this is crazy, then agrees. With Darel in tow, they barely make it through a roadblock, then Darel, disguised as a child, is seen by a shocked grandma. The news soon gets back to Fixx...

Van Tassel, Tommy, Laura, and Darel make it to a remote location, where they are met by Native American guides, who lead them through a cave system to a back entrance to Azucar. Gaining entry and posing as workers, they are stunned by the size of the multi-leveled facility, and horrified by the strange genetic experiments being conducted there, using humans.

With the help of a pair of sympathetic aliens, they proceed to Zack's cell and release him. They then make their way to a flying disc hangar, pursued by base security. They barely escape, Darel uneasily piloting one of the discs. They are pursued by another disc and hit, crashing into a fast flowing river. The wreckage of the disc serves as whitewater raft through gargantuan rapids.

## Laughing Alien

Page 2

Darel falls off, but is rescued in the river by Tommy, and the whole group makes it safely to shore. They are assisted by a radical river GUIDE who gives them direction to an off-the-grid commune called New Arden. There, Darel and company are warmly greeted by an extreme counterculture group, led by a mischievous older woman, ALANA, who takes a liking to Van Tassel, much to the latter's chagrin.

At the commune, Zack briefs the group on a conspiracy he's uncovered, involving the staging of a fake alien invasion - Operation Moonbeam. Meanwhile, the carefree Darel dances to the Grateful Dead with the commune's children. Tommy shoots a new interview with Darel (the first was lost in the river), in which Darel wisely comments on the nature of life and the universe, leavened with his usual jokes. Meanwhile, Tommy and Laura have a rapprochement - their feelings for each other have rekindled.

Zack is sent off with the interview, while Darel leaves with Native Americans for Shiprock, a mysterious rock formation. According to Darel, there is a second "half" to his crystal device hidden there, which he says is of crucial importance. Van Tassel, Tommy, and Laura leave New Arden separately, just as a fleet of government vehicles approaches. Still tracking all this is Fixx, who is surprised as anyone when the government vehicles stand down.

As they near Shiprock, Van Tassel's vehicle is hailed by a black chopper - it's Senator Carlsen, responding to Laura's secret call for her help. Carlsen assures them she's on their side, saying she's called in favors to help them. They ride in the chopper together to a hidden landing pad on Shiprock's summit, and then descend within.

Inside Shiprock is a top secret installation, and Darel, who has found the other half of the crystal. Carlsen demands the crystal and offers them all rewards if they cooperate. At this point she reveals that Operation Moonbeam is real and a "go." A squadron of private military suddenly converge. Van Tassel foils them by grabbing Darel and the crystals, and attempting to escape. Enraged, Carlsen's "identity cloak" dissolves, revealing her to be a Reptilian. Van Tassel and Darel are wounded but make it outside.

There Fixx is just arriving on the scene. Tommy and Laura rush to Van Tassel and Darel. Van Tassel is okay, but Darel is critically injured. He calmly welcomes his transition, advises Tommy and Laura to love each other, then dies. Carlsen emerges, demanding that Fixx grab the crystals from Van Tassel. Realizing what's happening, Fixx blocks Carlsen's charge while Tommy and Laura bring the two crystal halves together, resulting in a flash of blinding white light.....

Tommy wakes up in his apartment, dazed and confused. His day has an eerie feeling of deja vu as he attends the Janet Carlsen presser, and runs into Laura once again. Laura beckons him into a side room. There, much to his astonishment, he finds Van Tassel and Darel. The "completed" crystal set back time exactly two weeks. What now, Tommy wonders. "We beat them once, and we'll beat them again," crows Van Tassel. "Yeah baby," says Darel, laughing as usual.