

# Klaatu's Handshake

"What happened to your hand, Uncle Ed?"

Sure you want to hear it, Boy? Ok, I'll tell you what happened. First, though, help me burn these papers. There's not much time.

Damned aliens! We knew two years ago they were on their way, but once they landed, President Limbaugh decided to keep it quiet. We on the staff at National Security, Inc. might have had mixed feelings about this, but we were warned. The President was gonna make a deal, a private one at that, to provide labor to the aliens. Told us it would keep us safe. Hell, Charlie Warner threatened to spill the beans to the press, and he disappeared on the way home that evening. That told the rest of us to wear our loyalty on our sleeves, that is, on our American flag lapel pins.

I didn't like it, and told the President so. He shut his door and told me, "I want you to take a little trip for me."

"Where to?" I had that sinking feeling.

"Taipei. Business, Ed. I want you to oversee a new manufacturing project start-up." He turned around from the mirror, adjusted his blonde wig, blotted his lipstick, then walked toward the door. "I'm not gonna have you killed this time...har, har!!"

Ok, it wasn't what I expected. I don't really know what I expected. Believe me, I was nervous. I got on the flight to Taipei. We were met on the tarmac by a delegation of men in yellow suits. Vice President DeLay was there, he approached me.

"Underundersecretary Coonce?"

"Yeah, that's me."

"Good to meet you. Let's go see your new office."

*New office? Shit.* I was starting to panic.

*Hold on, I told myself. Keep your eyes open. You'll get through this.*

About an hour later, I was in a seedy waterfront alley standing at the rear entrance to the **My Little Pony** factory. I guess the rumors were true.

We walked in the door, up two flights of steel stairs onto a catwalk that led to a small office above the bustling, noisy work space. Strange machines clanked and turned, spitting out colorful and unrecognizable parts onto multiple conveyors. Sparks flew from a robotic welder. Alien music, a discordant cacophony of bleats, sqwonks and pinks, blared from oversized speakers.

“Underundersecretary Coonce, this is your office.”

“Thanks,” was all I could say.

“And, meet your new production manager. This is Klaatu.”

“Hello, er...I mean ***Klaatu Barada Nikto***.” I held out my hand, which was a big mistake. Robots painted to look like My Little Pony don’t shake hands.

That’s what happened, nephew. The robot took most of my hand. Only thing left was my middle finger.

Now, let’s hurry, the vengeance patrol is on its way. Throw that book in the fire. Yeah, that one there, *Public Policy vs Reality*, written by me. Good boy, now hand me that rifle and go wait by the door.