

THE ENEMY WITHIN

THE ENEMY
WITHIN
THE AFFLICTION: BOOK 2

M.J.PETRIN

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ii
Prologue	1
1 Same As It Ever Was	7
2 Much Ado About Nothing	15
3 Moving On	24
4 Reckless Rally	28
5 Discovery	33
6 Friendly Visit	43
7 Girl Talk	54
8 Meetings And Such	60
9 Round Two	71
10 Sightseeing	84

CONTENTS

11	Letting Go	100
12	Hear Me Out	108
13	Behind Door Number 1	115
14	Saying Goodbye	134
15	Alliances	137
16	Picking Up The Pieces	155
17	Training Day	163
18	Homecoming	177
19	Chance Encounter	184
20	History Repeats Itself	188
21	Delaying The Inevitable	196
22	Out Of The Frying Pan	204

CONTENTS

23	Following Breadcrumbs	206
24	The Lightbulb Comes on	219
25	Gray And Blue	231
26	Face To Face	246
27	Delving Deeper	255
28	Pieces In Place	265
29	The Plan	270
30	New Toys	277
31	Old Friends, New News	284
32	The Meeting	294
33	Home Is Where The Vailen Is	304
34	The Visit	316
35	Alien Assistance	328

THE ENEMY WITHIN

CONTENTS

36	Message In A Bottle	339
37	The Gang's All Here	345
38	And So It Was	353
39	A Final Farewell	358
40	The Herald Of My Eye	362

PROLOGUE

“Sheriff Jackson?”

“Bill, ma’am, please call me Bill.”

The Asian reporter smiled. “Bill, thank you for seeing me today. I know you’re a busy man. I’m Miyake Aeko from the New York Times.”

Bill smiled in return and gestured for her to take a seat. “What can I do for you, ma’am?”

“Please, call me Miyake,” the reporter said. “I came to Bends Creek to see if I could get some background for a story I am writing for the Times.”

“What can I help you with?”

“Can you tell me how you met the alien?”

Bill laughed, “You mean Pete?”

“Yes.”

“He just showed up in one of our alleys. He didn’t

know who he was, where he was from, or how he got into the alley.”

“Please go on.” The reporter was writing in her pad and never looked up at Bill.

“Well,” he continued, “Around the time Pete showed up, the Affliction hit our town. Pete was instrumental in helping us deal with the Affliction. I don’t know how he was able to concentrate on helping us with everything he was going through.”

“What was he going through?”

“He didn’t know his real name. He didn’t know where he was from, and he wasn’t sure if he was human.”

“So he confided in you, and that’s how you became friends?”

“Yeah, Pete shared everything with me, Maggie, and Jessica. We were the first to know about Pete’s connection with the Wen. But it was Jessica who helped Pete figure out things on a personal level.”

“That would be Jessica Morales from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta?”

“Yes.”

“How so?”

“One of the findings that resulted from Jessica helping Pete was that the Wen experimented on Pete without his knowledge. During the time he was their guinea pig, he lost all his memories. The experiments took away his ability to experience emotions and feelings, too. The Wen didn’t want Pete to be distracted while he was on his mission.”

“Experiments?”

“Yeah, the Wen experimented on Pete to make him their herald in the fight against the Xanoclax. Their experiments helped Pete gain special skills, but at a cost. When he first came to Bends Creek, it was so bad he wasn’t sure if he was human.”

“Was he able to gain any of these abilities back?”

“Eventually, with time, Pete regained some of his memories. His feelings and emotions aren’t at 100%, but he’s working at it.”

“And Jessica Morales is responsible for Pete regaining his emotions and feelings?”

“He’s a lot better off than he was, thanks to Jessica.”

“Did Jessica have any help?”

“Maggie Carter, my girlfriend, spent a lot of time with the two of them and did her best to help.”

“Do you know the blue alien? I believe her name is Oz? Who is she to Pete?”

“Oz is Pete’s Wen guide. Oz is a Vailen from the planet Wen’q’rixsh, where they exist on logic without emotions. She is an organic being, but enhanced technically. She was assigned to Pete after the experiments on him were successful. She can shapeshift—wait a minute, I believe she called it...hell, I don’t remember what she called what she does. It’s some type of shifting. She can melt into walls and take on different forms, but she doesn’t call it shapeshifting. Oz said that was a human term.”

“Can you explain her abilities and role in all of this?”

“She helped Pete stay focused on their mission. She said that when she is inside Pete’s head, she plugs into him and can enhance his abilities. For example, she can protect him by producing a force field when threatened by an enemy and other stuff above my pay grade.”

“I have seen Oz on the news, and she has a sense of humor. How is that possible for a logic being?”

Bill scratched his head. He knew Pete explained this to him and Maggie at one point. He thought that Maggie would be great to have by his side right now. She had a better memory than he did.

“I think it has something to do with exposure to the Earth’s atmosphere. The gases in the atmosphere affect Oz’s logic somehow, and she acts a little human sometimes.”

“Can you talk about the mission Pete was performing for the Wen?”

“You don’t know about the mission? I’m sure you would have got all the details in your research.”

“I have a lot of pieces, Bill. I want your answers to help corroborate my research.”

Bill shrugged his shoulders. He had given this answer to so many reporters and government officials, one more time wouldn’t hurt, he thought.

Bill answered, “The Xanoclax, as you know, form a barbaric alien tribe that feeds on civilizations that are destroying themselves. The Wen see the Earth on a path of self-destruction due to our acts of racism and hate toward each other. This path of self-destruction somehow showed up on the Xanoclax radar. The Wen wanted to stop the Xanoclax from

invading our planet, so they devised the Affliction, which allows people with prejudices to see other people as their own race. They concluded that if people who judged others by outward appearances saw others as their own race, everyone would get along. If everyone stopped the hate, the Xanoclax would change their mind about invading Earth.”

Miyake wasn’t writing; she only listened while Bill explained the mission.

She interrupted Bill, “You are right, Bill, this part I do know. Can you tell me Pete’s specific role in the Wen mission?”

“I guess you could say he was a liaison for the Wen. He contacted all the world leaders and had them gather for the arrival of the Wen Council. The Wen Council explained the Affliction and why they were doing what they were doing to the planet. Pete was to stay on Earth and make sure that the Xanoclax did not interfere with the progress of the plan.”

“Has Pete relayed any information to you concerning the mission’s progress? Is the mission proceeding as the Wen predicted?”

“Pete has told us, Maggie and I, that everything is going well so far.”

“Do you get to see or talk to Pete?”

“Yeah, he pops in every once in a while. But now that Jessica has moved back to Atlanta, I’m not too sure how often we will get to see him.”

Miyake leaned forward, “While conducting my research, I heard that Pete and Jessica might be romantically involved.”

“That’s too personal for me to discuss. Anyway, it would be difficult for Pete to be romantically involved with anyone right now without 100% of his emotional capabilities. I know Jessica cares about him, and I believe in his way; he cares a lot for her. But I can’t honestly say they are romantically involved.”

“Sheriff, thank you so much for your time.” Miyaki stood up and shook Bill’s hand.

Bill smiled as the reporter walked out of his office.

The clicking of Miyake’s high heels against the metal floor echoed throughout the ship’s hallway. She

walked up to a tall, blue-robed figure. The hood of the robe concealed the tall figure's face. When she reached it, she smiled and morphed, donning a robe similar to the one she faced.

"I don't know how these humans wear these accursed high heels," she grunted and tossed them down the hallway.

"Did you procure any intel vital to our cause?" The robed figure asked in almost a whisper.

Miyake nodded slightly and answered, "I believe I have found the herald's weakness."

1 SAME AS IT EVER WAS

Pete, he's coming back. Watch out!

The Xan warrior floated through the air on an invisible force field under his feet. Pete noticed a circular heat haze under the Xan's boots. The Xan had struck Pete from behind, knocking him down to the ground on the Lawn, and sped off flying. The Xan circled a building and headed back towards Pete.

Oz, I see him. Pete stood up, brushing the dirt and grass off his coat while staring intently at the flying Xan.

I didn't know they could fly. Oz, did you know?

Technologically, they are incredibly advanced. I'm not surprised.

So, no. The answer is no. You didn't know.

If you need to be picky, then you are correct. I didn't know.

We need to discuss this when we are through here.

Yes, sir.

Smartass.

The Xan warrior was approximately 50 yards away, heading towards Pete. His dark green armor did not shimmer, appearing matte black in the sunlight. The warrior raised his hand and began firing laser energy balls in Pete's direction. Each projectile was the size of a softball, the color of the sun, and equally as bright. They descended toward Pete, no smoke emanating from them.

Struggling to dodge the shots' intense brightness, Pete immediately had Oz activate the lens reflectors in his eyes. Like sunglasses, the reflectors toned down the light of the projectiles and made them more accessible to dodge. The projectiles exploded on the ground, creating holes ten times their size. The grass around each hole burned, and smoke filled the air. When Pete dodged the last shot, he stood up and looked around, watching the smoke rise from the fires on the ground. The area resembled a battlefield that had just received massive tank fire. By Pete's count, the Xan shot over a dozen times.

As the Xan flew over Pete's head, he let out a loud, low, tonal, raspy laugh. Pete watched the Xan fly away.

He threw his arms up in the air and yelled, "A gun? Where the hell did he get that gun? Xans have guns? What the hell, Oz? You didn't know about their guns either?"

Come on, man. All aliens have weapons! Oz shouted from inside Pete's head.

But you need to tell me about them before they shoot at me, Pete continued.

Yeah, you're right. My bad.

I'm waiting.

Oz was confused. *What?*

Oz, tell me about it now.

Ok. The Xanoclax can manipulate matter and forge whatever weapon they need to eliminate the threat they are confronting.

Manipulate matter?

Yes, Xans utilize a biotech process to link a warrior's armor to thought. The biotech process enables a Xan to construct a weapon immediately upon request.

Good to know. Thanks.

Pete shook his head and readied himself for the Xan's next pass. He squinted slightly to see through the smoke that surrounded him. He knew if the fight went on much longer, the bystanders who were watching might be hurt and even killed. He stood still, waiting for the Xan to appear through the smoke.

The TV cameras on the National Lawn were trying to capture all the action. Reporters brave enough to stay on their truck roofs called the action sounding more like a play—by—play announcement for a sporting event than

anything else.

“Here is our second sighting of a Xanoclax warrior.” The reporter made no effort to hide the excitement in her voice. “The first sighting, as you recall, was just a few weeks ago at the White House, where many of the world’s leaders gathered to hear the Wen speak for the first time. It appears this Xan warrior is making another pass and heading back.”

The Xan circled and came back towards Pete. Pete knew he had to do something on this pass. He didn’t know how much longer he could avoid the energy blasts. The Xan came closer and fired. Pete dodged the first blast and leaped toward him.

Pete grabbed the Xan from behind and wrapped his arms around his waist, fighting to get a grip on the slick metallic armor. The Xan kept laughing, looking straight ahead and ignoring Pete. Pete’s legs were flailing in the air, and, from a distance, he looked like a banner waving in the wind behind the black-armored Xan. There was nowhere to place his feet, so he just held on.

I didn’t think this through at all, he thought.

The Xan increased his speed as he headed up towards the clouds. Pete’s body continued to fly in the air behind the Xan as he fought to keep his grip around the Xan’s waist. The moisture from the clouds made the Xan’s armor slippery. The Xan’s laughter grew louder and more sinister. Then Pete heard the laugh a lot more clearly, and Pete knew

that clarity wasn't a good sign.

The warrior never changed direction or speed as his laughter grew. His armor blocked the wind from buffeting Pete's face, allowing him to look up. Without slowing his speed, the Xan's head made a 180-degree turn while his body remained forward, looking down at Pete as he was holding on.

"How did he do that?" Pete screamed at Oz.

I don't know. It must be their—

Pete cut Oz off; *yeah, I know their advanced technology.*

Pete looked down. The Xan had taken them up above the clouds. The Xan looked down at Pete. His laughter stopped, and he spoke in a deep, low, grizzled voice, "I need proof of your death, herald."

The Xan raised his right arm, and instantly, a slightly curved, green sword was in his right hand. The Xan brought his sword-bearing hand to the opposite side of his face and made a slicing motion down towards Pete's head. Pete instinctively reacted, releasing his grip on the Xan and sailing backward through the clouds. He raised both his hands and presented two middle fingers to the Xan. The Xan looked shocked that his sword had missed its mark. Then he laughed again, switched his head back to the front of his body, and started flying in a semi-circle through the clouds. When the Xan hovered below them, he didn't see

Pete. He immediately maneuvered himself in a straight line to where he estimated Pete's trajectory would end, waiting directly above the Lawn. He saw the Wen spaceship below, but no falling Pete. His tech did a complete and thorough scan of the area and found no sign of Pete's falling body.

The Xan warrior yelled out an angry, raspy scream. "Where are you, herald?" He looked dumbfounded.

The Xan kept looking down and didn't notice Pete above him.

"Hey, ugly!" Pete yelled, falling through the clouds feet first towards the Xan.

The Xan looked up and yelled in his gravelly voice, "How is this possible, human?"

As Pete's feet hit the Xan in the face, he yelled at the Xan, "I'm a Wen herald; I'm full of all kinds of surprises!"

The blow to the Xan's face sent the Xan spiraling downward. As he tried to redirect his force field from his feet, an alarm went off in his tech. The Xan redirected his attention to it.

"There is an alien explosive attached to your facial armor. Remove it immediately. Warning. Warning. There is an alien explosive attached to your facial armor." And the warning repeated itself over and over again in the Xan's language.

Pete watched the Xan grab the device. Still falling backward,

the Xan looked up at Pete, raised the device towards Pete, and laughed.

Pete raised his right hand. The Xan looked confused as he saw a switch in Pete's raised hand. Pete shrugged his shoulders and tilted his head as he looked at the Xan. The Xan looked at Pete, tilted his head as if mirroring him, and gazed at the device he held. He tried to toss the device, but it stuck to his hand like glue. Pete waved the fingers of his left hand without moving his wrist, a goodbye gesture to the Xan, and pressed the switch. The device immediately exploded, increasing the Xan's velocity as he flew towards the ground. Pete levitated downward, following the Xan as he plummeted to the Earth. The Xan was descending so rapidly that he looked like a falling meteor.

After the Wen meeting in the White House with the world leaders, the president's office ordered the immediate construction of a ten-foot fence along the horizontal perimeter of both sides of the National Lawn. The wall continued from the north end of the fence horizontally across the lawn to the other side, connecting both sides. The process was repeated at the southern end of the wall connecting both sides of the Lawn. The structure resembled a large rectangular box, like a football field, with the spaceship lying directly in the center. The fenced-in area was patrolled 24 -7 by the U.S. Army.

In a further effort to control the masses, the military was instructed by the White House to set up a fenced pedestrian

walkway that passed directly in front of the spaceship. Military contractors constructed a high fence on both sides of the walkway. The pedestrian walkway stretched across the Lawn from the west side of the perimeter fence to the east side. Pedestrians could use the walkway to take pictures of themselves and their families directly in front of the spaceship.

Each visitor had three minutes to take pictures before they were hurried off by the Park Police. The visitors who finished taking photos of the spaceship continued walking across the pathway to the other side of the Lawn. They were allowed to continue taking pictures as long as they kept moving.

Everyone in the crowd around the spaceship waiting in line focused on the action above the clouds, even though the clouds were thick and blocked most of it from the sightseers. Loud oohs and ahs rang out in unison every time the figures became visible. People kept their cell phones pointed up at the sky, hoping to capture all the activity they could.

The following family—a man, a woman, and a small child—was next in line and hurried onto the walkway to see the spaceship. The man lifted his four-year-old son onto his shoulders and stepped away from the fence. His wife backed up to get the best possible shot. As she was clicking her camera, people started shouting.

“Oh my God, look!”

Everyone instinctively looked to the sky to see a large object falling from the clouds. People were filming and taking pictures of the event with their phones. The man with his son on his shoulders turned around and faced the spaceship. Everyone watched in shock as Xan fell faster and faster until he landed on top of the spacecraft. The clunk of metal on metal resounded across the Lawn on impact, and the crowd gasped in unison. He bounced straight back up, over 100 feet into the air.

The people in the crowd of onlookers continued to film as the Xan descended towards the ground. Everyone yelled when he hit the Earth, making a terribly loud thudding sound. The fall created a 20-foot diameter hole in the ground. The four-year-old pointed and laughed. The crowd stood and gawked through the fence at the newly formed crater. Some smoke was rising from the hole. The crowd’s grumbling turned to cheers when they saw Pete slowly descending from the clouds. The closer he got to the Lawn, the louder the cheers became.

Pete stopped on the ground next to the hole. He ignored the crowd, his gaze fixated on the hole.

Pete knelt on one knee and looked down into the hole.
What do you think? Did he survive? He asked Oz.

It’s possible. But if the Xan did survive, it would be logical to assume he is unconscious.

Why is that logical?

There is a high percentage that the explosion knocked him unconscious. Therefore, he could not make the proper adjustments to his force field. The fact that he bounced extremely high off the ship substantiates my conclusions. The bounce height indicates that he did not adjust his force field appropriately.

Man, you're a high-tech data analyst all of a sudden?

Just doing my job, man. Just doing my job.

Pete looked down into the hole. It was difficult to see how deep the abyss was through the gusts of smoke lingering inside, so he jumped feet first into the pit through the smoke. He levitated back up through the hole slowly, holding the Xan warrior by the neck of his armor. When Pete emerged, the crowd of bystanders began cheering again. Pete headed toward the ship. He floated just high enough to not drag the Xan on the ground.

When Pete came to the front of the ship, Oz opened the door. Pete descended and entered the vessel, dragging the Xan warrior behind him. Oz closed the door.