

After the initial shock of having a gun thrust into my back had worn off, I just had a deep sick feeling, right in the pit of my stomach — I knew that I was done for. Anybody who hid out at an abandoned observatory with a gun was obviously a complete maniac!

"Sit down there!" the woman growled. I was pushed into a chair and I collapsed, shaking with fear; then I realised that it wasn't a gun pointing at me but a telescope. I made to get up but the look on the woman's face told me that she could still do me some damage.

"Why are you sneaking around? Are you spying on me?" she asked.

"No! I just wanted to feel closer to my dad — that's why I'm here," I replied.

"Why would being here make you feel closer to your dad?" the woman asked, moving closer to me with a strange look growing on her face.

"Because he's in space..." I said, again thinking that everything was always about dad.

"That's it," she suddenly said to the air, "You're Dan Drake's son. I knew I recognised you from the newspaper.

"So, now we know why I'm here; why are you here, in this observatory?"

"I'm looking for alien life, just like your dad," she said with a grin. "Can you keep a secret? I've found a way to 'use' the Hubble Space Telescope to search for alien communications."

"You've hacked into a billion-pound space-telescope?" I asked, startled that anybody could do such a thing.

"No. Well, yes, but that's the secret," she said with a wink.

All of a sudden, an alarm was heard at the base of the building. "I'll need to check that; I'll be back in a minute." With that, she walked out of the room.

Looking around, I could see rows of dusty old computers and in the middle of this was a gleaming new laptop. In my pocket, my phone buzzed. I thought it might be dad ringing me back; it was a low battery warning. I spotted a USB cable dangling limply from the laptop — to my surprise, it fitted into my ancient, second-hand mobile. There was the normal USB ding-dong but then a secondary sound played and a message popped up saying 'Downloading.' Panicking now, I pulled my phone from the cable but not before the message on the screen said: 'Download Complete.'