

Palladium: Second Contact

Dylan Diggs

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A.D.A. agent Sophia Baker has barely recovered from her last encounter with the Garrack, but the danger from this alien species is not over. Intent on assimilating humans into their collective, the Garrack have landed scouts on Earth. Sophia, along with three other agents, now must eliminate the scouts to prevent a full-scale invasion.

In *Palladium: Second Contact*, author Dylan Diggs continues the adventures of Sophia Baker, twenty-second century agent of the American Defense Agency. Having lost her partner Rick just a few weeks before in a confrontation with the Garrack, Sophia is at loose ends. Aggressive, reckless, and hard as nails, she's a thorn in her supervisor's side, but arguably the best agent they have. The only agent to have encountered the alien race and come out alive, Sophia is the natural choice to go after the scouts. Joining her are partners Kim O'Mally and Hayden Daily, as well as nerdy analyst John Parker, whose brilliance and knowledge of the Garrack almost make up for his lack of field experience.

Second Contact is a thrill ride. Our heroes careen from one encounter with the aliens to another, blowing up a goodly chunk of their path in the process. From the frantic fights on skis in Antarctica to a battle in the sewers of London, the team's fights with the Garrack have the flavor of an action-adventure movie. Sophia herself would make a great action heroine: funny, tough, and impossible to keep down. Her sidekick John is endearing, given to long rambling monologs about ancient mythology and digressions into trivia. "Johnny-boy's" innocence and book smarts are a good foil for Sophia's brand of hardheaded realism.

Diggs uses the struggle against the Garrack as a metaphor for combating terrorism in twenty-first century America. Agent Hayden Daily in particular is disgusted with a great deal of humanity, and his conversations with his partner Kim reveal what must be an all-too-common dilemma among law enforcement: keeping in mind why you fight when you rarely see any evidence of man's goodness. While these conversations allow some insight into the agents' characters, they feel like a digression from the breakneck pace of the rest of the story.

That issue aside, however, *Palladium: Second Contact* is a rip-roaring adventure through a future world. Fans of sci-fi and adventure or law-enforcement stories alike will find a lot to enjoy here.

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