

Copy Edit Sample  
Genre: Science Fiction  
Title: Romeo Savage and the Invasion ©

Graham Shepard hunched up to monitor three chewing hard on stale gum. He lived for this. Being number one. Graham Shepard used to be a nobody--a nerd in a frumpy sweater, athletic with good hair, but undeniably unimportant. In his cubical, he was a god.

Infrared showed an inhospitable, deadly world, what Earth would have been had the invasion succeeded. Navigating always felt good, but by late afternoon, conquering the maze of alien passages gave him a hunger to check the rankings. He felt the itched to see his alias in glowing lights, ahead of all the other Viacite teams.

"Copy that," said Athena through the sat-link and veered left. He watched her infrared dot move across the monitor. She never hesitated to follow his command.

Strange readings--columns of cascading letters and numbers--filled the right monitor as Athena drilled deep into enemy territory. She grazed the edge of the crater, a data dead zone that swallowed up Sentinels. Not his Athena. He'd never let that happen. She was his ticket to fame.

Her dot surged across the screen, precise and graceful as he imagined her traversing the unknown.

Above his head, the red light of the sat-link flashed. Static bombarded his ear. He analyzed the labyrinth of dense shapes until he saw them.

"Six armed hostiles ahead."

Static answered him. He stooped lower, and narrowed his eyes, pulse racing.

"Looks like they've got hostages. A unit of infrareds at," he checked the grid coordinates by tracing his finger over the monitor, "point six four two."

**Commented [JA1]:** Correct paragraph formatting for upload to ebook or web

**Commented [JA2]:** This is a fragment but it's a style choice if you want to leave it or not. I will mark fragments just so you are aware. No need to change if you want them this way.

**Commented [JA3]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA4]:** I love this line! Very intriguing and empowering.

**Commented [JA5]:** Word choice. "Exposed" or "revealed" seems to fit the context better.

**Commented [JA6]:** Remove passive voice.

**Commented [JA7]:** Navigating how? More detail here would be great!

**Commented [JA8]:** Add comma

**Commented [JA9]:** Add comma

**Commented [JA10]:** Remove comma

**Commented [JA11]:** Maybe explain he is talking to her over a headset of some kind? This is inferred but a more concrete description could make this awesome opening even better.

**Commented [JA12]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA13]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA14]:** Remove extra words

**Commented [JA15]:** Remove comma and add the word "and"

The first dot flashed and disappeared. Graham knew what that meant. He didn't hear the fight, just her breathing. Steadfast. That death ~~came~~ could come so quietly ~~always gave made~~ him a twinge.

**Commented [JA16]:** Correct tense

**Commented [JA17]:** Remove passive voice.

**Commented [JA18]:** This sentence is a little unclear. She is fighting and killing people, correct? I like the creepiness of this sentence but maybe just clarify what is happening.

**Commented [JA19]:** Really cool!

He balanced himself over the desk as he watched her make another dot vanish.

Viacite Sentinels were loved and feared in equal measure. Every day he saw why. They lived apart—secluded from average humans like him. Cited for the program at the age of eight, the young sentinels left home to train. Many parents refused to let their offspring enter the brutal program, meaning the bulk of the Sentinel task force had been tapped from loners and orphans. Maybe that's why it was easier for them to kill.

**Commented [JA20]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA21]:** Word choice. "Chosen," "selected," or "marked" might fit the context better.

One dot remained between Athena and the hostages. It was hard to imagine her as a cold-blooded killer. The voice in his head—modulated and smoky—became the voice he heard outside of his cubical too, almost like a second conscience. He'd never seen a picture of her. Viacite had strict rules about such things, but he liked her better than anyone else on the planet.

**Commented [JA22]:** This is powerful. I'm and drawn in to the story even deeper. Great job!

**Commented [JA23]:** Missing "as"

**Commented [JA24]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA25]:** Correct hyphen

**Commented [JA26]:** Change comma to period

She made him into somebody. Romeo Savage.

The world took note of Romeo Savage. Respected him. Worshipped him.

**Commented [JA27]:** Sentence fragments

"Targets neutralized. Pursuing hostages."

The group of dots huddled ten yards from Athena set off his internal risk analysis calculator. He valued her life more than—three, four, five—hostages.

**Commented [JA28]:** Change ellipsis to a hyphen

"The cell is locked. You can hack it, yes?" she asked.

**Commented [JA29]:** This is Athena speaking, correct?

"Our sat-link is weak. Give me thirty seconds."

Graham took a deep breath, exhaled, cracked his knuckles and went to work. He showed off whenever he could. Proved himself worthy of his job as Athena's voice guide the only way he knew how.

**Commented [JA30]:** Remove extra word

**Commented [JA31]:** Sentence fragment

He heard a click on the other end.

“Retrieving hostages.”

Graham held his breath. **Glanced** over his shoulder and saw his boss watching him from a split in office blinds.

**Commented [JA32]:** Sentence fragment

“Savage?” Her whisper enriched the smokiness. “The sat-link is malfunctioning. Switch to a private channel.”

Graham examined the readings. There wasn’t a problem with the connection aside from interference from her location deep in alien territory. He steadied his finger and punched the comms off-network. **Shivered** past the feeling of watching eyes.

**Commented [JA33]:** Fragment

“Tell me why I just did that.”

He waited. **Pushed** the earbud deeper.

**Commented [JA34]:** Fragment. I see why you are doing this. It pushes the action scene along.

“The hostages are alien.”

“That does not compute.”

**Chadray** popped his head above the cubical wall next door.

**Commented [JA35]:** Is this the boss that is watching or a coworker? Maybe point that out a little more clearly or introduce him by name earlier. This felt a little jarring. This scene is super intense and I want to stay in it.

“Everything okay over here?”

Graham forced a smile.

“Fine.”

Chadray squeezed his brows but sunk ~~back~~ below his side of the wall. Graham hunched into the furthest corner.

**Commented [JA36]:** Or is he hunching over the monitors? This made me imagine him backing away from the computers and into a corner.

“Request permission to extract hostages.” **Athena asked.**

**Commented [JA37]:** This is Athena speaking, correct?

“Are you crazy? They could delete our sat-link just for having this conversation.”

Retirement—the last thing Graham wanted. Ever.

“Savage, they are children.”

Graham unbuttoned the collar of his sweater.

“So, what if you rescue them? It’s not like you can unload them at social services.”

“They will die if I leave them.”

Screens surrounded Graham, pressing in, ~~crammed with~~ letters and numbers all bullying him into a decision. He closed his eyes.

**Commented [JA38]:** This is wordy

“Hurry then.”

Her infrared dot reacted ~~quickly~~. His fingers swept over keys with the same speed, already creating a false record for the Viacite database. His gut told him this was wrong, ~~and to~~ leave the alien offspring.

**Commented [JA39]:** Word choice. I’m just being picky but I love this story and a stronger word choice or description here would be great!

Out of his peripheral~~s~~, he watched Athena enter the hostage cell. He paused only for a moment. ~~Listening. Praying~~ the kids wouldn’t sound the alarm.

**Commented [JA40]:** Fragments

“You want out, yes? Then, follow me.” Her maternal tone must have convinced the kids because the assembly of infrared signals moved up the monitor together.

~~Turned~~ out the hostages were a pack of wild animals. At least, that is what ~~he~~ Graham typed into the system.

**Commented [JA41]:** Fragment

**Commented [JA42]:** Add comma

He pressed enter.

~~Spit~~ the gum in the trash.

Glanced at the rankings always on display ~~in at~~ the bottom forefront of the screen.

**Commented [JA43]:** Correct word choice

Still number one.

**Commented [JA44]:** Fragments

It made his mouth water like smelling a holiday feast blindfolded in another room.

The muscles connecting his ear to his neck throbbed, hyper-sensitive to the slightest variance of sound.

Every whisper, every splash, every rapid breath on the other end teetered dangerously close to ending his Viacite reign.

Athena stopped, her dot pensive near fluctuating pixels.

“What do you see, child?”

Graham sharpened the frequency, but the kid’s voice was too weak to cut through the static.

He could see them, a jumble of lights on the screen, but it told him nothing.

His finger floated over the escape command. He curled it back.

Her Athena’s voice broke through, and pierced his eardrum so intensely he felt it down to his gut.

“You’ve been lied to. We all have.”

Monitors pumped out data, an unsatisfying sludge that threatened to drown him.

She was moving again, leading the hostages to a place where the artificial shapes on the screen thinned.

“Follow the road. It will lead you to a village.”

“Have you gone off your super-soldier meds?” Graham glanced back to see if his whisper-yell drew attention. Keyboards clicked and chattering voices droned undisturbed through the office.

“You know any human will terminate them on sight.”

“You trust me, yes?”

Graham nursed a feeling of helplessness. He didn’t answer. He sat before the most advanced technology in the world with no way to control her. Stop her. Save his reputation.

“I must disconnect our sat-link. I’m sorry.”

**Commented [JA45]:** Add comma

**Commented [JA46]:** Clarify. What is “it” here?

**Commented [JA47]:** Remove comma and add “and”

**Commented [JA48]:** Could we get more of his reaction to this? Her words are shocking and I love it. I want to see him shocked as well.

**Commented [JA49]:** Fragments. These are a bit hard to follow. I would recommend rewording this slightly.

Sounds were indistinguishable except for her grunt. She grunted like that once before after taking an alien bullet to the shoulder.

He heard buzzing.

Spitting, hissing, then empty silence.

Commented [JA50]: Fragment

Visitors rarely padded the industrial carpet in this part of the building, so when three middle-aged men in suits passed the cubical farm, Graham knew he had to work fast. He expunged all data and then encrypted his actions. It wouldn't buy a lot of time. Two days at most, but ~~En~~ enough to figure out what was going on.

Commented [JA51]: Add comma

Commented [JA52]: Add comma

He watched while the suits entered Coleman's office. He forced himself up from his chair and approached the room at the end of the hall.

Commented [JA53]: Is Coleman the boss? That means Chadray is a coworker?

He had to do something to save Romeo Savage.

Central air blew down from the vent and chilled the sweat clinging to his skin. He knocked on the door beneath the letters etched in the glass ~~door~~.

Commented [JA54]: Remove extra word

The murmur of voices went silent.

"Enter."

He twisted the knob, pulled open the door, and stepped inside.

Commented [JA55]: Add "and"