



Evil Glasses Publication

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Table of Contents



Captain's Log

by Sara Lufrano
page 1



Miss Conception

by Marshall Bowles
page 5



- ▶ Sol System date 2405.16.6.3
- ▶ Captain Amber Paisley
- ▶ Explorer Fleet Starship Definitive

While observing the planet Apex Nine in the Outer Straus System, a mysterious cloud of organic matter, comprised mostly of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen, appeared near the ship. It moved like ocean waves. Quickly the cloud surrounded the ship and seeped inside.

I put all decks on high alert. Kalal Trainer, Chief of Bioengineering, confirmed that the cloud matter was everywhere inside the ship. He listed everywhere it was, in the air, the water, the food, and our clothes, right now, right here it was on our skin. There was no doubt that it was inside all of us. Trainer told me he was almost positive that there was no threat. He would run more tests to see what else may lay in their elemental makeup.

I lowered the ship-wide alert to yellow. I trusted Chief Trainer, but I needed the Doctor involved as well.

The Doctor, Tom Orlando, had already heard everything about the cloud but was more concerned with the recovery of nine of his patients quarantined with Blargius Muscle Flu from a prior mission to Nelves Titan. Those infected with Blargius Muscle Flu had a one in four chance of death and symptoms that kept the patient bedridden until they passed on or recovered with lifelong tissue scarring. The real problem was that those affected with the flu were fully recovered and showed no signs of ever being infected by the virus.

I liked to think that having my nine crewmembers back to work wasn't a problem, but the Doctor didn't see it the same way. I reminded him that since the flu was no longer a threat to their health, he could get to work on the cloud substance's affects without disruption. I chose to ignore his mumblings about "real" priorities.

While I was content in waiting for Trainer and Orlando's conclusions, my First Officer, Sam Castle, expressed his distaste for me not taking the organic matter more seriously. Castle reminded me that the organic matter was inside our bodies. Castle's concerns were exacerbated due to a phobia of "body snatchers." After what happened to him on Shalous, I don't blame him.

It was at this point that I thought I heard a tinny, small voice on the bridge. It was hard to tell what language it was, but I'm sure some of it was English. Something

about final destruction of them. Castle heard a different voice; he described his as being deep and slow.

The Doctor came on the view screen. Before he could get a word out I asked if he had heard any voices. He recommended me for a brain scan and psychotics medication. Behind Dr. Orlando there was an Ensign Jaino doing jumping jacks, running in place, and doing cartwheels. After reminding the Doctor we aren't running a fitness gym he assured me it was all for science. Ensign Jaino had come to sickbay with a broken leg five minutes ago, the bone sticking out of the skin. The Doctor speculated that due to the effects of the cloud of organic matter, Jaino's body had healed at an unprecedented rate. Castle gagged a bit. After what happened to him on Explodus, I don't blame him. Castle agreed, loudly, that these things, Specs, he began calling them, could be capable of anything.

Chief Trainer came on the view screen with a priority message. Crewmembers in Bioengineering were communicating with the Specs. Trainer told us that the Specs yelled, whistled, talked to each other, talked to the humans, they called out to their leader. Castle informed Trainer that we heard them on the bridge as well but not to that extent. Mr. Trainer requested to come to the bridge so that I may speak to the Spec that had infected him. Trainer warned me that his Spec was aggressively Napoleonic.

Once Trainer came onto the bridge, the voices started twittering, cheering, and roaring. It was mildly annoying. I addressed myself to the Spec infecting Chief Trainer. It explained its plan in detail and its reasons for taking over my ship. The Specs, who called themselves the Lclalies, were going to take us to Dextrous Cannus to destroy their enemies, the Xxuzula. I confidently addressed the Lclalie and questioned why we would fight this war for them. The sly little thing laughed.

The First Officer walked to the drive console with heavy feet, his arms swung wildly. Worry was painted on his face, his mouth clamped shut. He punched in coordinates. I ordered him to halt, but he slammed his fist onto the console, initiating a jump to Dextrous Cannus. Dextrous Cannus, was a known system with five planets where only one of the planets was made of solid matter, OP-93. Last time the system was catalogued there were no life forms present.

The Lclalies cheered. Castle gasped and hugged himself as he apologized for disobeying an order. The leader of the Lclalies reminded me they would use us as weapons to destroy the Xxuzula and there was nothing we could do to stop them.

Without warning, the entire bridge crew was beamed down to OP-93. I called back to Definitive, and the Warp Chief reported that she moved outside of her own control. I ordered her to beam us back but she regretfully could not complete the order. She could not lift her hands above the beaming console. I contacted Dr. Orlando and gave him control of the bridge until we were able to beam back.

The ever-present Lclalies told us we were standing in the middle of hostile territory and that in order to survive, we must fight. They said the Xxuzula were fierce, frightening, unforgiving warriors with no remorse or conscience. The Xxuzula were, in simple terms, killers.

Castle was trying to make himself vomit out the Lclalie inside of him. His Lclalie laughed and assured him that it was deeper in his body than that. We had no weapons, we had no defense. How would we survive against such skilled and terrifying creatures?

Off in the distance we noticed circular lights flashing and quickly bouncing toward us. I looked to First Officer Castle. He shook his head in disbelief. The Lclalies gave a battle cry and awkwardly moved members of the bridge crew toward the lights. First Officer Castle shuddered at the sight. After what happened to him on Cenjal, I don't blame him.

The Xxuzula were actually clusters of handball-sized lights. As they approached, they shot energy beams from the middle of their torso-sized bodies. As the beams struck a rock formation next to the crew, they fell to the ground for cover. The Lclalies demanded we fight, fight or die. Castle lurched toward the Xxuzula and kicked one, sending it up into the air, it went higher and higher until it disappeared into the sky. He buried his hands into another and ripped it in two pieces that dissipated quickly, the light dying.

Chief Trainer pulled Castle away from attacking another Xxuzula and then was struck himself by an energy blast. He did not fall to the ground. Instead he looked back to me, shrugged his shoulder, and then looked at the Xxuzula. It fired at Trainer again. It struck him again and puffed away into nothing.

I called to the crewmembers who were laying on the ground. They were dazed by the blast but other wise uninjured. The Xxuzula stopped firing on us and backed away. The Lclalies yelled for us to keep attacking, they moved our arms, our legs toward the Xxuzula.

The Doctor called down and excitedly explained that he found a way to remove the Lclalies from our bodies. I ordered him to beam down immediately. Once Dr. Orlando was on the surface of the planet he extracted the Lclalie from each of us. He pushed a pinky-sized needle into everyone and followed it up with a spritz to close the wound. When he came to me—I swear that it was completely and utterly involuntary—I slapped him. The Lclalie inside me screamed and struggled as the Doctor removed it.

I assured the Xxuzula that humans were not their enemy and that the Lclalies were controlling our bodies. I apologized for First Officer Castle's deadly uncontrollable attack. The Lclalies gathered into a cloud again, pulsed and swayed, and they spoke as one. They vowed they would destroy all of the Xxuzula, that they would be back and in control of a larger, more powerful creature. The Xxuzula all clumped together and formed one giant energy beam that disintegrated the whole of the Lclalies.

The bridge crew and myself beamed back to Definitive. My recommendation moving forward is to set an observation satellite around the planet and monitor the Xxuzula. First Officer Castle agrees completely on the destruction of the Lclalies. I don't blame him.

MISS CONCEPTION

by Marshall Bowles

Henry pointed his laser pistol over his head and blindly fired a pair of warning shots out of the broken windows of his apartment. He yelled loud enough to make sure the cops on the street heard him. "Just turn around and leave!"

The sound of a loudspeaker crackled, and a cop's distorted voice boomed into the room. "We want to resolve this peacefully, Henry. Nobody has to get hurt."

"Ogre's blood! It's too late for that," Henry yelled. The thought of a standoff with the police had seemed exciting at first, but it was terrifying now that he was in the middle of it.

"You know what kind of firepower we have," the cop said, sounding like he was talking through gritted teeth. "If we wanted to storm in there and take you out, you wouldn't be able to stop us."

Henry laughed bitterly. "You and I both know you won't do it," he yelled. "You wouldn't want to damage the goods." Henry checked the power meter on his pistol. It was down to a quarter charge. He guessed it was enough to hold them off for another hour, at most. The whole situation felt like the time his guild, the Shatterkin, valiantly fought and lost to the orcs at Bloodridge Pass.

"Keep thinking that," the cop said. "We have to bring you in alive, but your face doesn't have to be in one piece--" The bullhorn cut off mid-sentence, like someone yanked it out of the cop's hand.

Henry dreaded this day ever since Congress passed the TRIBAL Act. After years of the mainstream media reporting on the dwindling numbers of Navajo, it was inevitable that the nanny state would pass a law requiring people with Navajo ancestry to procreate. Henry happened to be one hundred percent Navajo, and now he was facing a future of involuntary servitude as a father.

"Give them hell, Dragonstar!" The voice of Steelhorn came through on his earbuds. Only Henry's brothers-in-arms knew him as Dragonstar, his character name in the online role-playing game Eldritch Curse. The physical world was a boring place of meaningless shit, and Henry's true place in life was inside the game. Steelhorn was Henry's Shatterkin guild mate, raiding partner, and the best friend Henry ever had.

"Thanks, Steelhorn," Henry said. He glanced at the recently-purchased cameras stuck to the walls inside his apartment. He was live-streaming the confrontation. "How's it looking on social media?"

"Yeah man, you know, we got people on your side. Lots," Steelhorn said.

"Tell it to me straight, sword-brother," Henry said.

"Fuck," Steelhorn said. "It's split thirty-to-seventy against you. The fucking sheeple want the goddamn feds to run everybody's life."

Henry's heart sank. The plan was a failure. Henry had wanted to make a run for the Mexican border, but Steelhorn had convinced him that a standoff with the police was his best shot. It was supposed to inspire enough public support to overturn the TRIBAL Act.

"Listen," Steelhorn said. "It doesn't matter. Fuck those people. You have to keep fighting for yourself. Blacknight blades stand strong!"

"Blacknight blades stand strong!" Henry said. It was their battle cry. Henry tried hard to sound confident.

"Henry, let's take a step back and try this from the beginning. Clean slate." It was the cop on the bullhorn again. His calm voice sounded forced, a weak dam holding back an angry flood of cursing. "What do you say?"

"Fuck off, goblin spawn!" Henry yelled. His voice cracked. He was getting hoarse from all the yelling.

The cop ignored the insult. "We've got seven ladies out here who would like to meet you. All of them are full-blooded Navajo, just like you. I'm going to let them tell you about themselves."

The bullhorn crackled with static, and a woman spoke. "Hi Henry, my name is Debbie. I've lived in the Navajo Nation my whole life. I teach Biology at Diné College, and I know I will make a wonderful mother."

"You're fat and ugly," Henry yelled without bothering to look. Who knows, maybe she was fat and ugly. It did not matter to him. Besides, he was sure a police sniper was outside just waiting for an opportunity to take Henry down with a tranquilizer gun.

The cop jumped back on the bullhorn. "Listen here asshole, you show these women some respect. They're doing their duty to save your people."

"They aren't my people!" Henry yelled. His parents left the reservation before he was born, and Henry lived a typical white bread suburban fucking American-dream life. He knew nothing about his ancestry and he did not care. "My people are the Shatterkin of the Windy Wilds."

The bullhorn cut off, but Henry could hear the cop's distant voice saying, "What the fuck does that mean?"

"Steelhorn," Henry said. "What do I do, man?"

"That depends on how far you're willing to go," Steelhorn said.

Henry felt sick to his stomach. "I'm not going to kill anybody."

"Fine, fine. I wouldn't recommend it anyway." Steelhorn said.

"Dragonstar, you gotta think about what they want from you. They're going to try to make you have babies with all those women out there to preserve the race."

"I don't want to raise any kids," Henry said. He would never have time to play Eldritch Curse if he had to take care of a bunch of his own little bastards.

"I know you don't," Steelhorn said. "But listen, they want a biological father to raise the kids. See what I'm getting at?"

"No," Henry said.

"They won't have any need for you if you can't make babies," Steelhorn said. "So all you got to do is blow off your balls."

"What?" Henry's voice went up two octaves. He felt a tingling sensation in his crotch.

"No sperm, no kids, and you keep your freedom." Steelhorn said it so calmly, like he was discussing the benefits of dragon armor versus regular steel.

"No fucking way," Henry said. "You're out of your elf-forsaken mind."

"It's your only option," Steelhorn said.

The cop came back on the bullhorn. "I'm getting tired of this. You can do this the fun way, or we can strap you down and have a doctor jam a big fat needle into your testicles. Your choice. Five minutes and we're coming in there to get you."

"You can't argue them down," Steelhorn said. "They've made up their minds, and they aren't going to let you have a say. You have to blow off your balls."

Henry's heart beat faster. "I can't..."

"Shh," Steelhorn said. "Don't worry buddy, I'll talk you through it. Just put the gun barrel against your balls."

Henry was shaking, but he did as Steelhorn instructed. He held the laser pistol with both hands to keep it steady. The thin fabric of his pants did nothing to soften the cold hard steel pressing against his sensitive scrotum.

"Put your finger on the trigger," Steelhorn said. A bead of sweat rolled down the side of Henry's face.

"On three, you're going to pull the trigger," Steelhorn said. Henry gritted his teeth. "One...two...THREE!"

"Argh!" Henry pointed the gun at the wall. "I can't do it!"

"Goddammit Dragonstar!" Steelhorn said. "Once you're in custody, you're going to have people watching over you twenty-four seven. You'll never get a moment of free time, and you'll never be able to play Eldritch Curse again. They'll turn you into livestock."

"Three minutes," the cop said.

Steelhorn spoke forcefully in his ear. "Blow. Off. Your balls."

Henry jammed the gun against his crotch again, and his finger caressed the trigger. He swallowed.

"Blacknight blades stand strong!" Steelhorn said.

"Blacknight blades stand strong!" Henry said.

The two of them chanted in unison. "Blacknight blades stand strong! Blacknight blades stand strong!"

Henry screamed. He was going to do it. Fuck the cops. Fuck the system. His finger hovered over the trigger.

Sike Dehaaya turned off the holotape. The simulation dissolved and the rocky surface of Mars reappeared around him. His young Navajo students blinked as their vision adjusted to the bright reddish haze of the sunny Martian afternoon. He took a deep breath of the terraformed air and sighed. Revisiting the past always left him in awe of the strange lives led by his distant ancestors.

"And that is how the genetic purity of our tribe was preserved by the great man known as Henry Wilkins," Sike said. "Any questions?"