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Star - Date 3009.03

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"My editor had just given me the hardest assignment of my career."

Cover Page Footnote

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By Mike Lamendola

My editor had just given me the hardest assignment of my career.

"I want a human interest story," he bellowed. The cigar in his mouth trembled as he spoke, dropping gray ashes on his shiny plasti-glass desk. "It's got to be good," he said. "And it's got to be funny, as well as sad."

That was all he said, except that story was due for tomorrow's edition.

I gathered my thoughts as I left his office that morning. Writing a human interest story won't be difficult. What would be difficult was trying to find a human on this planet.

Later that evening, I covered a number of bars that were known to cater to the few humans left on Gamma. They all turned up empty of humans. I had, however, one lead left. It was rumored a rather old human frequented the "Jolly Holly Tavern" down by the abandoned space ports. I decided to try there.

When I arrived at the tavern, I wasn't too surprised to discover it met all my expectations. It was an old, rundown two story shack. Many of the windows on the first floor were boarded up. No doubt in a futile attempt to keep in the odious smell that emitted from the place. The area around the tavern was desolate and eerie. In the background loomed the decaying wrecks of old space ships. The place was enough to deter even a hard core reporter like myself from entering. But I had a story to write so in I went.

The inside of the tavern was filled with the smell of stale smoke and sour booze. A number of shady looking characters stood at the bar gulping drinks. None were human. I turned my attention to the tables scattered around the place. The sound of laughter from teasing barmaids and customers filled my ears, but it, too, was non-human.

I was about to leave when I spied a hunched

over figure sitting at a table in the far corner. I approached cautiously and saw it was a human. I quickly introduced myself and asked if I could sit down.

"Sure," he replied through stained and rotting teeth, "if ya buys me a drink." He focused his heavily glazed eyes on me as I sat down. They were set in a face that could easily pass for a dried prune. He looked one hundred years old. He would make a great story, I thought.

I ordered a couple of drinks and told the barmaid to keep them coming. I then proceeded to ask him some questions about himself. He seemed reluctant to talk about his past, but as the drinks began to take effect he slowly opened up.

It seemed to me he had a great burden resting on his shoulders and was content to keep it there. It took well over eight drinks of highly concentrated booze to get him to speak freely.

What he said to me when he opened up, I'll never forget. This decaying old man told me he had once been a Starship Captain.

"Not your everyday Starship Captain," he said, "but the captain of the most powerful ship in the fleet. The U.S.S. Enteritis."

I knew of the Enteritis, as did every school child on Gamma. It was the first ship to enter this part of the galaxy, and was instrumental in the colonization of Gamma more than thirty-five years ago.

My first reaction to this news was disbelief. I couldn't believe this man sitting in this stinking, rotting bar had once been a Starship Captain. But then he told me his name was James T. Kook.

I knew there had once been a James T. Kook in the fleet. And I also knew the story only a few knew of the incident which caused him to resign from the fleet more than forty years ago. I asked him about it. He looked at me for a long time, sipping his drink. Then his eyes grew clear and his voice became strong.

"It happened a long time ago. Yes . . . right after the battle of Beef-Jerkie 3," he said as he drew from the clear pool of his memory. Here is his recollection of the incident:

"Star-date 3009.03. We are patrolling in the Kinkiegon sector of space on a mission so secret that I don't even know what it is," I (Kook) said into the arm of my command chair. First Officer Splick, the Vulcanized man from the plane Vulcando, was at his station monitoring the highlights of the recent Triple Decker Chess Tournament.

"Mr. Splick, scan this sector for Kinkiegons, will you?" I said.

A few seconds later, Splick said, "According to my precise and highly accurate readings, I deduce there are not any Kinkiegons in this or the next four sectors."

"Good," I said feeling somewhat relieved. "We've managed to penetrate Kinkiegon space undetected. We'll know what our mission is pretty soon now." It was then the shit hit the fan, so to speak.

"Captain! Captain!" shouted Mr. Sucklo, a bit excited.

"What is it Mr. Sucklo?" I asked.

"Forward sensors are picking up three Kinkiegon battle cruisers approaching us at warp 10!" he said.

I recalled Splick's earlier deduction and was about to let him in on this little discovery of Sucklo's when, from behind me I heard. . . .

"Wow! Coff, Coff, I mean illogical," Splick said. "That is a highly illogical probability. According to the fundamental laws of light and acceleration, no object could obtain that speed. Here, let me show you some formulas. . . ."

"That will be enough Mr. Splick," I said to shut him up. "We have more important matters at hand. For instance, we are trespassing in Kinkiegon space, which, in essence, is breaking the Meddleration's space treaty with them. Quick thinking will tell you they could blow us out of the sky if they wanted to. Now, I want some solutions," I said dramatically, smashing my hand down.

This show of authority set the bridge crew to thinking, and thinking, and thinking. What a bunch of meat heads, I said to myself as I decided to take charge.

I ordered engineering to cut engines and called down to O'Scotty, my Irish chief-engineer, to turn

the deflectors on full. There was no answer. I called down again and got through.

"O'Scotty, what the hell you doing down there?" I inquired. To the backdrop of music, we heard a slurred voice say over the speaker, "Wella Cap ole buddy, me and yeoman Lovelace was just killing offa bottle of good old Irish Whiskey. . . . Now hold on a sec honey, I'm talking to old hardnose, I mean the Captain. Come on take your hands off my belt. What do ya mean ya want ta see how long it is. Oh, the belt. . . ."

"O'Scotty," I yelled into the mike before the hridge crew, who were hanging on every word, steamed up the room.

"Yes sir," came the reply.

"I want you to give me full power on the deflectors, ok? Think you can handle that?" I asked.

"Oh, one more thing. When you're done O'Scotty, send yeoman Lovelace to my cabin. For disciplinary action of course," I said.

Well, now that pleasure had been taken care of, I turned my full and undivided attention to business.

"Captian," Lt. Urhoopee, the communications officer, said.

"What is it Lieutenant?" I asked.

"There's a message coming in on sub-space one. It's from the Kinkiegons," Urhoopee said.

"Put it on the screen."

"Yes sir," she replied.

Coming into focus on the screen was the ugliest face I had ever seen. It was the face of a Kinkiegon. Now I knew where they got their name.

The Kinkiegon said, "Captain Kook, are you aware that you are trespassing in Kinkiegon territory?"

To which I replied, very cleverly of course, "Why no sir. I wasn't aware of that. Thank you for telling us."

"Why you're welcome captain. . . . now wait a minute. Cut out the dumb act, Kook. You know God durn well what I mean. And now, for that, you're going to pay. So there," the Kinkiegon said. Kinkiegons can be very tempermental when it comes to territory.

There was a long silence. We wondered what they were up to. Then. . . .

"Captain, I've just conferred with my home base and they've decided to set your ship free, but only if you give us your women," the

Kinkiegon said.

Hey, I was pissed when I heard that, so I said, "You just better hang in there, you freaking pointy-eared — no offense Splick—turkey. You aren't gonna take our women away from us. Not without a fight." That outburst surprised me as much as the crew.

"So be it, Kook. You want a fight, you'll get one. Never let it be said that a Kinkiegon warrior ever refused a fight. . . ."

At that point, I had Urhoopee turn off the creep. Also, at that point, the Kinkiegons let go a big one. It came tearing into the ship with such force that it knocked Lt. Urhoopee off my lap. Now I was really pissed.

"Damage reports coming in Captain," Mr. Chickenov said. "It seems the sauna on deck four was punctured and Ensign Horselips was sucked out."

Ensign Horselips sucked out, I thought. Damn, he still owed me fifty credits. I was really smoking.

"Mr. Sucklo, fire our main phasers at them," I said.

"Yes sir," he replied.

"Zap, Zing, Zong," went the phasers.

"Direct hits Captain," Splick said.

"It seems they're starting to back off, sir," Sucklo said.

"Excellent. Now hit the SOB's with a salvo of photon torpedoes," I said.

"Ping, ping, ping," went the torpedoes.

"Another, and another hit, sir." Chickenov said.

"Sir," Splick said, "I calculate that in another 2.224 minutes, the Kinkiegons will high tail it out of here."

"You think so, Splick? I remember the last time you predicted something," I said.

"Captain, the odds are 2.34 billion to one they shall," he replied.

Well, at that point, I decided to give Splick another chance, so I played it cool for 2.224 minutes. I never did find out if he was right because just then I blanked out.

When I regained consciousness, I was lying in my bunk with yeoman Lovelace. I quickly got dressed and headed for the bridge. On my way I saw the ship was in a shambles. Everywhere I looked there were crewmen lying next to each other, mostly male and female, but occasionally male and male. Strange, I thought.

When I got to the bridge, it, too, was in shambles. Everyone was unconscious. Everyone but Splick.

"Splick, what happened here?" I asked.

"Sir, it seems the Kinkiegons, in their retreat, unleashed a new secret weapon on us. It totally disabled the ship."

"What was it? Is the ship all right? And the crew?" I asked.

"The answer to your second and third questions is yes. The answer to the first is that the Kinkiegons released a highly concentrated gas they call Gizbo-Go-Nap. Otherwise known to you Earthlings as Reefer," he said.

"Reefer!" I replied. "But why weren't you affected?"

"We Vulcandos have in our blood an anti-Reefer anti-body. We developed these anti-bodies when we learned to suppress our emotions," he said.

"Then you were straight when this happened. You must also know why the crew is beside itself, no pun intended," I said.

"Yes I know. When the Kinkiegons released the cloud, they also added an agent to it. It is known to you as spanish fly. It made the crew horny as hell," he said, emotionless and straight-faced.

"Amazing. Then while everyone was orgying, the Kinkiegons must have tried to come aboard," I said.

"They did try, but you forget I was unaffected. I beat them off, preventing them from entering the ship," he said.

"Good work Splick. I'm going to recommend you for a medal when we get back. One thing though. You won't mention this incident to Starfeet, will you old buddy? They might look unfavorably on me," I said.

"Then, for the first time, Splick smiled. It wasn't a big smile, but one of those small, crafty Mona Lisa ones. He seemed to look through me to the command chair behind me. It was then I realized my time had run out," the old man said.

He indicated he was tired, got up and left. It was the last time I or anyone else saw him.

I got up to leave, too. I had a story to write. It was a good one and I knew it was true because it was the same story my father had told me. You see, my father was Mr. Splick.