



SPACE

THE ENDLESS ADVENTURE

An original story by
Grant Garrison

I was polarized... Numb. I couldn't believe they were taking her away from me. ...And all I could do was just stand there and watch. ...Watch as the pale green light beamed down; I couldn't help but notice the subtle, sexy, feminine curves. The shape of a body that knew how to move; How to acquiesce with the very space in which it inhabited. I knew, and could hear a whisper in my mind, a silent scream: "Let me go. Set me free."

I wanted to cry out, but I was in shock and dismay. As far as I knew, we *were* free. ...I was *guaranteed* freedom. ...At least in *this* system. I lost myself in the whirling thoughts of who might be responsible for this; I kept coming back to *Her*.

They were hauling her off, and there was nothing I could do about it.

"Sir?... Sir!?!?", A metallic, soul-less voice severed the thoughts...

"You must comply, sir. Your ID sir..."

Then I felt something in my hand. ...Something, round and solid, yet malleable. Then, I felt strong, large, encompassing arms around my body hauling me, as the thin, fragile deck-hand was broken away from my grasp around its throat. I say "It" because that little heartless bastard looked like a cross between Hammer Head from Star Wars and ET, only thin and stretched smooth, like the little grey sons-of-bitches that used to haul you off when you're sleeping.

.....

"I got dizzy. ...What can I say? The whole docking bay got a little woozy, as I watched my ship get hauled off by you fraggers."

"Got dizzy? ...Got dizzy!? He barked.

"Yeah. Dizzy. Why? You ever get dizzy?"

I knew that was a stupid question, but a funny one; After all, he was yelling at me 'up-side-down'. Funny 'cause it's meant to keep the prisoner off his/hers/its noggin. Then it was too much. The ringing in my head... The sting of burns from the tamers that brought me down and made my hand go loose from the deck hand's neck, (all three feet of that little bastards neck – what's one handful really?), and the bottomless pit from loosing her. ...It all went black.

Pain?... Delirium?... I don't know what it was really. Then another set of bread-truck knuckles jarred my favorite head....

"I'm awake; I'm awake."

Blustering between bloody lips, and then I found a tooth to spit its way to the nearest face I could make out.

"Where'd you get her?"

The gravely voice asked, for what I can only assume was the 'umpteenth' time.

"Won her."

I dribbled another tooth into my lap.

“Her?”

“...Won’er fair and square.” I spat.

“XZISHT!!”

That gregarious, fat pig, blustered at me, as another log of a tail landed square into my favorite ribs.
...All of them.

It sent me reeling, and the lights almost went out again,

“What’s a’ matter? ...loose your favorite suspect?”

Spit and blood fell from my mouth hole as the words leapt carelessly.

“You gonna kill me now or what?”

“We got something better planned for you, old friend.”

This time it was a voice I hadn’t heard, at least not for a while. Before I could wrap my mind around what was going on; ...Another pain. Only... this time it burned from my neck into my brain, and then darkness, again.

.....

I dreamt. I dreamt of her. I dreamt of the oneness, and the endlessness. Together we danced. Danced amongst the stars... Nebulae... And even betwixt the fabric of space itself. ...And time.

My tiny little mind had been expanding. Expanding and embracing a larger universe. I had only just begun to understand a great many things, and then had to go home. I had almost lost myself amongst the multiverse; travelled so far; I thought there was no reason to return to the world I'd left so far, far behind.

I dreamt of my previous exploits... Of the worlds I've travelled to, the ones I haven't been to yet. ...All the while her gentle voice guiding me through the farscapes of my memory, my mind, and even my imagination; Telling me what is out there, and showing me in my mind.

Then... As the mind wandered into the abyss... A rude awakening.

Banging on doors should have been outlawed about 10,000 years ago. But, none the less, banging is what brought the searing pain of light into these eyes. These eyes, that had just seen the other side of reality, now being torn open by the light of day? No. Just the light of the indicators, and monitors, that erupted with excitement at the presence of an intruder upon my domicile.

My hand, still warm and sweaty from clutching my pillow, was gripped into the firing of a weapon as I pointed toward the door, with a vacant reach of my arm. I wanted it be my blaster, but a pillow would keep me from a murder conviction. ...Although that wormy prick might deserve it.

"Seriously!"

“Let me in!”

I heard fear in a familiar voice, shouting through the door. ...Pounding this time.

“Are you in there or what!?”

“...Yeah!”

I rolled over and fell off the GB (gravity bed) onto the floor. (What the hell?)

“Hang on! Hang on! ...son of a bitch, my head hurts.”

“What!?” muffled.

I yelled, “I said my frigging head!..”, I couldn’t yell. “...hurts” I whispered.

I got back up on the sofa and spread my legs out.

“What?” muffled again.

I found the remote and hit the door entry contact.

“Frag!” ...Pain.

“Come in.”

I held my head for the quaking waves of pain I encountered from sitting up.

“Hey man. What happened? I heard you got arrested; Then, I heard you got into a brawl in the bay; Then!... I heard you got de-rezzed! Then I heard this crazy rumor...”

“Shhhhh!”

He came in and sat on the sofa.

“Whu?...”

“Sshhhh.”

“Oh. Right!” Then he got off my legs, and then Dones went into the kitchen.

“I got just what you need”

As he yanked open the fridge and started making his ‘well-known-amongst-friends’ concoction.

“You need my famous...”

“Dones...” I slurred. “I’m not hung...”

“Right, well anyway...”

He totally rejected anything I was about to say.

“I got stopped by the man, and she says you’re behind two months. I told her I was dropping off a check for you and she let me into the complex.”

“Dones.”

“Yeah, well I know you probably don’t care, but I think two months is little much even for YOU.”

“Dones!”

“What? I was just makin’ sure you were still alive. ...After all, two months? We were expecting to hear from you at least six weeks ago.”

“Are you shitting me? What day is this?”

I reeled when he told me.

I stood, and the pounding in my head was keeping me from totally comprehending, and I fell again. Darkness took me again, but this time Donesy was there to keep my head from hitting the coffee table.

“Donesy, you don’t understand.”

“I understand just fine buddy.”

“No Re....”

“Its ok buddy; I got you.”

I sat back down and Dones joined me.

“You don’t understand...” I held my head. “They took her.”

“Yeah I know, last night. I...”

“What do you mean ‘last night’?”

My head left my hands and turned toward my pal.

“I thought you’d be busy breaking her out by now, or at least hiding her out until the smoke clears. ...Where is she? ...In the closet ...the shower? I’ll make breakfast for all three of us, I’ll even keep the eggs a little raw and runny for her...”

“Dones!”

“What?”

“She’s not here”

“What!?”

“Don’t you understand? You said two months or so... The last thing I remember is docking smooth and...” My head went reeling again as I realized I was standing again.

“That means they still got her.”

“Who?” My head ached, and he just looked at me stupid. “...Who Donesy!? Who’s got her?”

“The pigs hauled her off a week after we were all supposed to meet up again. We thought she was looking out for *you* this whole time.”

Every word he spoke crushed my memory and my pride.

“Geese bro, I didn’t know you didn’t know.”

“That’s ok Donesy. Just tell me what happened, only...”

“Anything bro”

“...Only, do it quietly and slowly; This ain’t a hangover.”

.....

There was a moment of hesitation before our hero passed the card key through the lock of his office door. Sometimes too many memories can cloud one’s judgment, but he had to go in anyway.

.....

It wasn’t hard to put together. ...What had happened.

Just by looking around the room I could see that there had been a fight. ...A brutal one.

There were three different kinds of blood on the wall.

Everything was either smashed or broken, including most of the interior walls.

“I guess I won’t be getting my security deposit back” I murmured to myself.

“No. You won’t. *Will you* Mister Harding.”

I didn’t have to turn or look to know it was that snake bitch landlord of mine.

“I don’t suppose you’d remember who did this?”

“For what you owe me, I don’t want to remember *YOU* Harding.”

I couldn’t help but ignore the hissing voice behind me as my eyes caught the fabric and a scent. It was a small but memorable piece of satiny red fabric that sent my memories back. ...Back to what felt like years ago. When I thought things were going too well.

.....

Less than a year ago....

.....

I got out of the cab remembering how much better it felt to pilot my own craft, but I had decided that it was fair enough. After all, any landing you can walk away from....

“Hey! Finally..”

Dones was there to greet me at the walkway where the cab let me out, with a meager tip. (I didn’t approve of the ride over – ‘hack’)

“I was beginning to think you were gonna ditch the party again.”

“What? Me? I’m retired Donesy. I’m done. Line up the shots and let’s tear this place up!”

I sauntered in with Donesy and three or four of our usual suspects.

We made our way past the wildly lit dance floor. It was a crazy scene; With the wildest, craziest menagerie of interstellar bodies. All moving with this galaxies finest rhythm and beat; An undulation of bodies in various states of universal inebriation.

Something caught my eye.

You’d think just about anything in this scene could have done that. Tentacles? Tails? Multiple eyes? Electromagnetic impulses maybe? I don’t know. But there was something. Something dancing and undulating, all the way across the dance floor and above, on the upper dance surface, where the gravity had been reversed.

Looking between the shadowy bodies, dancing between the lights, I saw a pair of eyes. ...And they saw me. I looked hard and long, in between the crowd, as we made our way to the bar.

Dones was the first to speak, though it was Wiggins that shocked me with a smile.

“The first round’s been down three rounds ago.”

Wiggins interrupted,

“Though you were dead!”

“So did I”

He slapped paws with me and we drank a shot to days gone by.

“So what’s the deal with the corner up there”

I gestured toward the up-side-down corner of the dance floor that had the eyes that were captivating me, only to notice they were gone.

“You see’n ghosts again captain?” as Wiggin slammed his shot.

“No-way, I haven’t even caught up to you scoundrels yet.”

I was happy to see them. All of them; So, I made short work of the three shots they put in front of me while we reminisced about the past.

I didn’t want to remember, but I couldn’t help it. I was still trying to forget. I was still trying to forget Her. Wiggins wasn’t here to dwell, none of them were. This was a reunion. Not a funeral.

“Drink up fools!” Mac barked, and the whole gang “who-rawwed” and shot.

The Sarge was right. No sense reliving the past, when more than half of us had moved on to better, greener worlds than the one we once shared.

.....

You see Wiggins was fragging crazy. He wasn’t just certifiably “crazy”, he was “bat-shit crazy”. Or, maybe, he was crazy like a fox? He had the brass convinced he was a hard-core son-of-a-bitch, and a hero. But we all knew different.

He used to joke about how he'd take the APC off the carrier without a Drop Ship altogether. Basically drive the damn thing off the cargo bay floor right into upper atmosphere. We thought he was joking, and almost scared us shitless a few times trying.

Then, one day, he did.

Saved the whole fleet with the craziest stunt ever pulled in a vehicle meant to be driven over rough terrain, NOT one meant for careening through “zero G” at an enemy frigate.

It was suicide, and we knew we were all gonna die.

Somehow, he pulled it off; Got lucky, or how the hell else could you explain us living through that run.

.....

We'd had our objective briefing. We knew the almost impossible odds we were driving into. The Frontier had been penetrated by several waves of combined enemy fleet, and at least two of the opposing forces had conglomerated against us and dug in on a few moons within the outer most system left vulnerable by it's remote logistics.

Initially the “intel” we received seemed clear: That a remote enemy force had attempted to breach and take our outermost perimeter. As our scout ships returned, burning and few, we found that we were sailing headlong into an ambush.

What we thought would be a minor chore of eradication and rescue, turned into a flight of terror and survival as an armada of combined enemy ships de-cloaked and surrounded our vessels.

A reptilian command vessel, and innumerable support ships of varying kind, had established control over the whole system. I had given up my wings a few years ago, but if I'd been a bit more tenacious, I'd have grabbed our helm, and maybe we'd not have had to fight that day.

But there I was, strapped into the APC, ready to get drop-shipped onto the first moon, for a ground-base assault on the enemy base.

Our light fighters were doing there best to take out the enemy squadrons, but the command ship was doling out three dimensional strategies against our almost insignificant force.

Our researchers had been long trying to figure out what the key was to our enemy's insight. They were always in communication, and operating in such intricate orchestration that we'd thought that even the most seemingly insignificant vessel acted as one with the whole of the force.

Then Wiggins broke in over the intercom...

"Ladies and gentlemen... Boys and girls... Please put your seats and tray tables in their fully upright positions."

We weren't ladies or gentlemen, as we looked at each other in belted-in confusion. We could feel the APC pull away from the drop ship, or maybe it was the fact that our entire carrier vessel was hit. Hit badly enough to lose artificial gravity, turn sideways toward the moon below us, and over the enemy command vessel that had just sacked us.

As the hanger bay shifted and turned, was could see forward through the front windows of the APC and out through the docking bay. Where the drop ships were going to take us to the surface of the first moon, our view was partially obscured by the enemy's command ship.

The drop ship, for which our APC was intended to travel by, broke loose above us and exploded after colliding with an in-bound enemy drone. All hell was breaking loose, as the admiral announced evacuation and scuttling procedures. Every face in our platoon looked to the Sarge for some sort of solace. Then Wiggins voice chimed in again with:

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. Please extinguish all smoking materials or devices as we are about to enter some choppy environmental disturbances. However, don’t let this deter you from enjoying your flight. And remember... ‘When you’re flying with us, you’re flying the friendly skies!’”

I got whiplash as the APC swerved past wreckage and, I swear, even Sarge almost lost his cookies as Wiggins drove the APC, peeling into full speed, toward the wide-open hanger bay.

“Wiggins!!!!” Sarge yelled, as he fumbled for the release to his drop harness.

“Go’n for it Sarge!”

Wiggins announced over the comm. (as if he knew the sarge was gonna try to stop him)

We all watched in horror as the opening of the hanger bay got wider and wider, revealing more and more space, moon, and a glimpse of the enemy command ship. I even heard Birch murmuring an ancient prayer, but Franko interrupted with.

“That’s cute, but you know we’re all fraged anyway?”

I thought the weightlessness was gonna last forever as the APC, with all my friends and my favorite hero drifted at maximum velocity toward the first moon of the occupied system.

Then, as the APC seemed hopelessly out of control, a blast of ice-cold air tore past the faces of our platoon from the aft toward the cab of the APC. I saw Wiggins flick a lit cigar out of the driver’s side window. ...Into space. The APC tilted laterally to the left, and he slammed the window shut as the nose of our little, four wheeled carriage of doom lined itself up with the enemy command ship’s bridge.

Sarge belted out to us in familiar, yet unbelievable, command:

“Pressurize, lock and load, and prepare to engage!”

.....

The APC wrecked through the frigate's blast shield, into the command deck. Wiggins said he could remember the look on the enemy admiral's face when his body flew past the windshield into deep space. He still claims that with the guy's last breathe, the enemy admiral cried: "Oh no! Of Course! It's Wiggins!"

If we hadn't been there, we might have let him get beat to death the hundred or so times he told the story.

.....

Still laughing, I turned toward Dones.

"I gotta wring one out Donesy, order me a frou-frou drink this time huh?"

"Really? You getting soft on me Ace?"

"No. Just my sense of humor. ...The same'ole-same'ole get's a little too old sometimes bro"

I whispered loudly over a smidge over the tunes, and I think I hurt Wiggins feelings, because he gave me a sorrowful glance as I left before I could High five his achievements.

Maneuvering between alien life forms I made my way along the bar crowd, toward the head. I heard a voice and a firm but gentle hand on my side.

“Leaving so soon?” She said.

“No. Just taking a pit....”

I turned toward the voice, and I suppressed my shock and amazement.

I don’t know if it was fear or amazement, either way she noticed that I was choked.

“I’m sorry. Maybe I mistook you for someone I thought I knew.”

Was it the tail? Was it the smooth, silky scales that glistened and accentuated her figure beneath the tight strapping of what little garb she wore. I looked up and into mesmerizing eyes and an ancient, beautiful, yet reptilian face. My head tilted, and I blushed.

“Do I know you?”

“I guess not.” She said cautiously.

“I gotta go to th....”

“I’ll order one for both of us. Don’t be long?”

“Sure.”

Confused, I made my way to the privies. How’d she know I was thinking I needed a drink about now?

.....

I stood there, relieving my bladder, twisting my brain over how she might know ME? I don't recall hooking up with a reptilian? They were the enemy for decades, and though many had defected to our side and became citizens of the Federation, I still don't remember even drinking with their kind more than a handful of times.

They're big, brawny, and don't eat or drink anything we'd even remotely call "normal", and I certainly didn't know why this crazy gator lady had singled me out of the crowd. Who did she think I was? Did she know I was responsible for sending a few hundred of her kin to the great beyond? But here we were: In a dingy, nasty dive at the periphery of the semi-civilized part of our galaxy. The war was a whole-nother world away.

As I prepared to shake-off, the urinal crowded up with a couple of towering figures. I glanced into the shiny metal in front of me and noticed three more draconians enter stalls behind me. They were all murmuring to each other as they entered, but were silent now.

I got the overwhelming feeling they were talking about me, and this time it wasn't the drink talking; too silent now. ...Something was rotten in Zen Dark.

Maybe they sensed fear; They can do that. Maybe they didn't like me talking to one of Their girls, but she was talking to ME.

I turned to go, and I tripped and hit the floor. I heard them gutturally chuckle together as a tail retreated casually to the side of the lizard man-beast that loomed over me. He stepped over me toward the washroom attendant, and the little insect-dude scrambled into a diminutive, narrow closet doorway.

...I was alone, in the john, with five of my least favorite species of sentient evil. Well maybe they were just misunderstood? But then I was the one on the shitter floor, and they were chuckling.

"Ha. Ha. Pick on the drunk guy."

I got my legs under me.

“You guys are classy. You could have washed your tail first you know.”

I guess that was the wrong thing to say. Just then a big, thick, strong tail wrapped my favorite head up and into the mirrored wall. It didn’t break, but I felt a tooth come loose.

“What’s a matter? You jealous cause your gal likes the white meat?”

Again... I should learn to keep those kinds of comments to myself, but after a little joy juice the tongue just won’t sit still.

I reached for my blaster, then realized (too late), I’m in a bar, not sim, or on a mission; No blaster on me, and no knife.

The three brutes that were behind me were now standing over my hunched body. I caught a tail, a fist and, I swear, a couple of logs in the ribs and mid-section. I doubled over, breathless and about to pass out.

I saw a familiar set of legs step onto the bathroom tile just in time to get spun head over heals, backward; Jaw-first. ...Why the head? ...Always the head. ...Then darkness. ...Again.

.....

The beating in my brain was starting to sound like voices and loud music pounding, then thumping, then just a muffled blur, and then the right ear popped.

“....and basically that’s how it ended up. ...Geese. When you take a leak you really leave one.”

Cabrerra was leaning into my one open eye.

“I think he should see someone.”

“Bullshit. I’ve seen him WAY worse than this”, Dones this time.

Probably gonna tell them about the time I fell off a gantry onto a taxied dropship.

“Whu is sh....” I tried to murmur out of broken, swollen, mushroomed lips. “I taste metal.”

I spat into my shot glass, and onto the bar. Swallowed it down and tapped for another. I still couldn’t force the other eye open, and swallowing felt like death.

Then.... I felt a pair of hands grab my face, and prying my eyes open I saw Mac....

“Hey Sargle....” I wobbled out.

“Water.” He ordered humorously. It stung, and refreshed and woke the splits in my lips.

“Ok Mac! I’m here! I’m here. Lay off.”

“Bar towel and two more rounds.”

“Sure.” – the least amount of guff I heard the pig faced, man-mountain bartender utter over his cigar stained tusks, all night.