

The Holy Cactus

Citrus the Werewolf

On Zool somewhen before later, Jane stood watching the approach of what she later knew as Molin-Cax. When he stood exactly one lethal Kill-o-Zap ray away he stopped and his voices said in unison:

“Welcome to Zool, where the underprivileged and victims of political manoeuvring of 10,000 worlds have been sent into exile by the nasty dictators of our home worlds.”

Jane, of course, knew he was lying and that the approximately two million people/things facing her were actually all criminals. However in her most authoritative voice she said:

“Neep.”

Two million voices replied:

“Weep.”

And promptly fell to their knees and genuflected frequently in her direction (no this was not disgusting). Molin-Cax’s voice rose above the hubbub, “Where is God? His Prophetess is returned from the wilderness.”

God was actually at this moment being pursued by a horde of officials shouting “Hacker” and “Fine him”. Luckily Molin-Cax had a lot of power on Zool and as his words were spoken, God was whisked back to the landing area by a large egg-whisk on overdrive.

“Your Prophetess has returned,” said Molin-Cax.

“Really, well that’s fine, isn’t it,” said God.

“Let’s go to the Temple of the Black Cactus,” chipped in Dr Death and since he was brandishing a 5mm Kill-o-instant-annihilate cannon, no one dared disagree.

Meanwhile what had been happening aboard the ship I hear you ask. OK. Well I’m going to tell you anyway.

After Jane left, the two Revenants had viewed Gestetner and the Mad Alchemist as interlopers and were on the verge of shooting them (at least Korb was) when the computer spoke. “Sorry. Not Nescafé, I meant Maxwell —” At this point Korb shot the computer in its logic circuits which it shut up quickly.

Gestetner used this opportunity to draw a gun. It looked rather odd as he wasn’t an artist but it functioned (it would kill). Seeing this the four came to a very rapid peace treaty as the computer came back on line. “. . . trip. . .,” it said.

“Aha,” gasped Korb, “it’s going to give us a guided tour of the ship.”

“You understood that,” said the incredulous onlookers.

“No, it was a lucky guess,” said Korb, “come on, let’s do the armoury first.”

They reached a large door, identical to all the other large doors on the ship except for the words ‘ARMOURY: DANGER!’ painted on it in red and white stripes.

“Unusual colour scheme,” commented Gestetner.

“No. You’ve just got no colour sense,” replied the Mad Alchemist. However the other three har-

boured a continued suspicion that it was the Mad Alchemist who had warped taste.

“What’s a Newtron Bomb,” asked the tall Revenant with an almost sepulchral whisper. (The armoury was almost like a sepulchre, so it seemed appropriate he thought.)

“It’s a bomb which makes all films, TV, radio, and literary material look like a reworking of Disney’s *Tron*. 99% of the people commit suicide through boredom with no damage to property,” stated the computer matter-of-factly and unusually eloquently.

We must now leave this cosy scene to travel to a planet half way across the Galaxy which will become important later in our plot.

As Thur awoke she remembered the message clearly.

“Am trapped on Zool. Help. This is Jane Howarth.”

This message had repeated several times. (As you can see a temporal anomaly had allowed this message to arrive before it was sent.)

Thur knew what she had to do. Mounting her dragon she called her lion to her as she set off towards the spaceport, a menagerie surrounding her. Finally her Battle Toucan arrived with profuse apologies and blood dripping from its beak.

Once in the ship she accessed the ship’s computer.

“How long to reach Zool?” she asked.

“About 10.5 days — Bara standard.”

“How early was the message?”

“About 10.7 days — Zool standard.”

At this point we return to Jane on Zool in the Temple of the Black Cactus. She was being shown into the room of mysteries where, so she had been lied to, all would be revealed.

Rummaging around in the junk in the room, alone at last, she found a rather battered Telekinetic Transmitter and a diary.

The diary explained the history of the prophetess. Jane soon realised that a subtle reality change had altered the religion so that she resembled the prophetess. Jane was now worried about what would happen when the Zoolians found out the truth.

She decided to gamble on the Telekinetic Transmitter and sent the message: “Am trapped on Zool. Help. This is Jane Howarth.” She had just repeated this when the door opened to reveal Molin-Cax and Dr Death in full military regalia including sacrificial ray guns.

Back on the ship the four intrepid (and both pairs trying to get out of the truce) explorers prepared to leave. Gestetner had the Newtron Bomb detonator, and was agonising over whether he really needed Zool’s help with such a weapon.

- Does Molin-Cax know Jane is not the Prophetess?
- Does he care?
- Will he kill her anyway?
- Just how long is a Zool day compared to a Bara day?

- Can Thur arrive in time?
- Will Gestetner press the button?
- Hopefully this will all be ignored in the next episode.