

# Episode XXIII<sup>15</sup>

## Molin (or is it Cax)

*GASP* as a plot appears before your very nostrils!  
*THRILL* as the Hax disappear into sub-plot space!  
*DIE* as the author assassinates *your* character!  
 For this is **Zool**, where social workers fear to tread!

“Thank you,” said God without humour, for the situation was hopeless; the O.U.S.F.G. hordes numbered 14 (13 if you count Molin-Cax as 2), and at least six of these were pacifists and/or vegetarians; whilst the Starsheep Troopers appeared enumerable, or possibly more.

“We need a miracle,” cried Jane. “Brothers and sisters fall to your knees and pray!” Everyone ignored her.

“Does anyone want to buy some green rubber wellies with laces at the top?” inquired Rave, who always had an eye for a quick sale. In the ensuing bargaining no-one noticed the distant flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder. Suddenly, a crack appeared in the very fabric of space and a huge human figure appeared. He was pale, bearded and spectacled.

“Hey,” his voice spanned entire galaxies, “I’m auditioning for the part of the baddie in my new film *Indiana Jones Strikes Back For The Third Time*.” The Council of Five looked at one another; this was the break they had all been waiting for. In a rare display of unity, they rose as one to join the Supreme Being.

This, however, did not stop the Starsheep Troopers on and on they came until, due to a giant miscalculation of scale, they disappeared into a mote in God’s eye. “Ooh,” he said, “I wish they had taken off my glasses first.”

“It’s just not fair,” protested Cutlass. “Just as we are about to get into a really good battle, some new author comes along and ruins everything. I was looking forward to wasting a few Starsheep Troopers.”

“Never mind, Cutlass” interrupted Cax, “when we get back to Sane Tans, the most northerly port of Zool (except, of course Elly Maitch) I know of a green jellyoid lifeform for you to exterminate.” This seemed to placate Cutlass who retired into the background, perhaps to reappear later in the story.

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Dubitarius Xam Norocon Objecticus Aristootle Liberloonius XXIII found himself reasoning this way:

“We refuse to have plots,” say the Hax, “for plots deny royalties and without royalties we are nothing (at least nothing important).”

“But,” says Liberloonius, “Quantum Story Dynamics is a dead giveaway, isn’t it?”

“Oh,” say the Hax, “We hadn’t thought of that one,” and they promptly vanish in a cloud of green sweet-smelling steam.

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<sup>15</sup>Just to confuse you

“That was easy,” says Liberloonius and for an encore he proves that corpsicles are popsicles and immediately drowns in a large bowl of raspberry ice-cream.<sup>16</sup>

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“What are we going to now, after all, all of our enemies seem to have become victims of sub-plot space?” asked Thur who was idly fondling Rasputin, who in turn was idly fondling Gestetner’s soul.

“The usual thing that happens now is that we all have a long, protracted, penetrating, and wide-ranging conversation to add to the depth of characterisation and give the audience an insight into our beliefs and motivations<sup>17</sup>,” said Flat Bread. “Oh,” said everyone generally, with the exception of Harkonnen and the Stainless Steel Hamster who were playing caterpillars in a corner.

“Have you all forgotten? Don’t you that today is the day for the recital from the sacred texts. We must go to Sane Tans immediately to prepare for the Lie Berry Me-Thing,” said Cax. “Rasputin, take us to Sane Tans!”

Thur’s trusty battle toucan complied and, an hour later, the spaceship arrived. “It’s a bit squalid isn’t it?” said Flat Bread, who had never been to Sane Tans, having only recently been introduced to the plot. “And another thing, what are we going to do with Gestetner. After all, we can’t very well leave him in the ship.”

“Okay,” said Thur, untying him, “leave him to me, I’ll take care of him with my Ti-kli-do. “Gestetner came quietly and Thur cleaned it up. Everyone filed into the inner sanctum: the Lie Berry. A great hush descended over the assembled O.U.S.F.G. and the ancient litany against *mainstream* was recited:

I will not read mainstream. Mainstream is the mind killer. Mainstream is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face the mainstream. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the mainstream has gone there will be nothing. Only science fiction will remain.

Nobody noticed the Cactus as it edged round the hallowed vault towards Gestetner. It finally reached him and stealthily undid his bonds (spot the continuity error). Together, as the others stood in a trance like state they crept to the 23rd bookcase; on the 5th shelf down, the 23rd book from the left (and the 5th from the right) was *The Eye In The Pyramid*. [Bet you didn’t get that one –ed.]

Suddenly the silence was shattered as Gestetner rasped, “You fools did you think that I really worked for the Council of Five? No, my true masters are now ready to take over the plot for their own nefarious purposes, for I am a servant of the Conspiracy of Illuminated, Royal and Courtly Aristocrats!”

“And I,” said the Cactus, “am the Earthly incarnation of Abdul Hashish-al-Loonybrain himself!” Doctor Death was first to recover from his trance, quickly followed by the others.

“My baby,” he cried, “I’d always hoped that he would become someone famous, but this, it’s wonderful.” At this he collapsed to the floor sobbing and began to smell of elderberries.<sup>18</sup>

“Shouldn’t we help him?” asked Jane.

“No,” replied Cax sternly, “He hasn’t given us his consent. Therefore any attempt to help him would be a violation of his rights.” The others did nothing to help Death perhaps realising at last that libertarianism was right or, more likely, they couldn’t care less about the good (?) Doctor.

<sup>16</sup>For a full account of this and other arguments see Shackle and Brock, *Well that just about wraps it up of Science Fiction* (OUP, 2346).

<sup>17</sup>Those who have read *Conquerors of Zool* before will note the subtle foreshadowing of events to come.

<sup>18</sup>Obscure *Monty Python* reference.

“But what exactly *is* C.I.R.C.A.?” asked Korb, incisive as usual, but for once uninformed.

Gestetner replied “Haven’t you heard of us, you poor ignorant fool? Are you blind? We are a group of historians dedicated to making all history as vague as possible and, I must admit, we’re pretty blatant about it. After all we put our name before every date we alter.” A shroud of understanding descended over the room as everyone suddenly realised why history never made sense. Everyone that is except for Gestetner and the Cactus (obviously), Doctor Death (equally obviously), Cax and Korb (not at all obvious) who quietly began to count down from twenty three. . .

*To be continued. . .*