

## The Plot Thickens. . . and then Congeals

Molin Cax and

Dubiatrius Xam Norocon Objecticus Aristootle Liberloonicus XXIII

Out near the rim of the galaxy, there was a planet inhabited by creatures with deep psychological problems, resulting from mothers who had read too much of Dr Spock and not enough Dr Breggin. This planet was — that’s right — *ZOOL*, Death Planet where the intractable criminals of 10,000 worlds etc. Mighty events were brewing, howling winds were blowing, rain lashed the surface of the globe, thunder rumbled menacingly, lightning flashed (and other such literary devices designed to set the scene).

Somewhere on the surface of Zool was taking place a joint meeting of the Zool Liberation Front (ZLF), the Liberation Front of Zool (LFZ), the Front for the Liberation of Zool (FLZ), and the Front for Zoolian Liberation (FZL). A large and scaly beast arrived at the entrance to the meeting chamber.

“Password?”

“23 Skidoo,” the beast wheezed and then entered just in time to see Molin-Cax the dual entity, leader of the ZLF rise to speak. Molin-Cax paused for a last sip of AUM then his/their voice boomed forth in perfect coordination.

“Friends, enemies, and other sapient, lend me your ears.” As usual Molin-Cax had left his ears at home. Fortunately his comrades had four they could spare.

“I have just received a message via ultra-tight beam inertialess tachyon wave (for technical details come to the discussion meeting on Tuesday) from Prinz Gestetner von Herpes, representing himself, the Mad Alchemist and the Sol-Deneb-Procyon Alliance. I understand that he intends to penetrate the absolutely impenetrable bands of force that tie us to this festering mudball, and set us free to roam, rape, pillage and play Trivial Pursuit in the universe at large. Obviously he has ulterior motives; nevertheless I suggest we cooperate with him.”

At this, such is the power of cognitive dissonance, civil war would have erupted since none of the groups would ever agree with each other. Fortunately, at that very moment, in a voluminous burst of orange smoke smelling of musty old tomes, a figure appeared by the microphone: the aeons-old semi-divine philosopher, Dubiatrius Xam Norocon Objecticus Aristootle Liberloonicus XXIII. Immediately a reverent hush fell over the assembled multitude as they strained to hear his thin voice.

“Greetings, congeries of biological substratum supporting conation, ratiocination, proprioception, and other sapient behaviour, heed my linguistically tenebrous yet ostensibly limpid verbal excretions: the etiologation of the deontologically-determined, algorithmically defined commination of your people is, teleologically speaking, at a chiliastic entelechy. This will be the apotheosis of the apodictically predetermined deracination of the conflated angst of the continuum. You have but to push aside your Freudian gymnophobia and cooperate, without periphrasis or desultory cannulation, with Herpes. Farewell,” Dubiatrius asseverated mellifluously. With this he vanished, returning to the discussion which would decide the ultimate fate of all space and time (his fellow ghostly discussants being two previous inhabitants of the Fordox system — but more of them later).

Fortunately Molin-Cax possessed a linguistic converter and was thus able to explain that Dubiatrius had counseled cooperation. And when Dubiatrius spoke all listened and agreed. . . actually that’s not true but by the time he had finished wielding Hegelian dialectic everyone *thought* they agreed.

The intractable criminals of Zool thus settled down to wait for Herpes (not that they were short of diseases on Zool anyway).

On Whicker's World, Jane and the cactus have just entered the studio where filming of the *Terry Vagon Show* is proceeding.

"Good G.O.G. 666!" Jane exclaimed, "What's going going on?"

Prinz Gestetner von Herpes, already in a particularly irritable mood due to having his beard eaten by a razor-backed inhabitant of Bay-lliol II, had become bored with the show and was busy killing the other guests. He was presently strangling the host of the show, screaming wildly, "Vogoin, vogoin, Vagon!" As the reader already knows Herpes is not nice (though not as bad as AIDS — The Association of Indolent Depraved Socialists). This may have something to do with murdering his wife — Ruth Herpes.

As he turned in their direction, Jane and the cactus hurriedly left the studio. Jane asked for directions to the nearest spaceport, intent on stealing a spaceship. "This isn't *really* immoral," reasoned the galactic agent. "After all it's an axiomatic truth that God exists and that God created everything. Therefore God owns everything. Since any proper reading of the Bible reveals that ownership depends on need, I must own one of those spaceships. QED. *Neep!*"

"This looks like a nice one, except that it's not covered in short fuzzy hair," exclaimed Jane as a large, sleek, black and monstrously phallic spaceship loomed in their path. "But how do we get in?"

"Easy," smiled the Cactus producing a sonic screwdriver and deftly opening the airlock by reversing the polarity of the neutron flow. On the way to the control room they passed what they recognised to be packages of the illegal drug Kof-fee — a fiendish drug used to keep torture victims awake while more pain is created.

After walking through numerous corridors they came to a door marked: CONTROL ROOM. "I wonder when we'll find the control room," mumbled Jane as she walked along reading a book and completely ignoring her surroundings. Ignoring the galactic agent's momentary lapse of acuity, the Cactus entered the control room and looked about for the ship's computer.

"This must be it — *Multiple Access Robotic Information Analyser*. Now, we just need to switch it on and we're away... Okay computer, how do we lift off?" inquired the Cactus.

"Twelve cups of coffee and a perfectly ordinary blanket," replied the computer.

"???" thought Jane and the Cactus. Jane tried again. "Computer, how do we get out of here?"

"He was wearing a frilly green nightie, but no one noticed," replied the Multiple Access Robotic Information Analyser.

Just as our intrepid pair were about to either get annoyed or else start looking for a translating device, Prinz Gestetner von Herpes burst into the room, levelled his fiendish-looking Fluxon Special<sup>9</sup> at the Cactus and fired, blowing the spikey sapient to smithereens.

"Neep! What a mess!" exclaimed Jane, who was not as concerned as you, dear compassionate reader, might expect — but then, after all, she *was* also known as 'W.W.'. "You fiend, you villain, you swine, you, you..." shouted Jane, playing for time as she struggled to pull her double-neutron blaster out of her hip pocket.

Herpes too, was having trouble with his weapon — and it was nothing to do with his name. The problem was not infection but paucity of fluxons. Before galactic agent Howarth could free her gun, Herpes remembered the frighteningly nasty weapon in the cupboard behind him. "Ha ha ha ha *haarrrr!*" he cackled as he pulled open the cupboard doors.

As soon as the doors parted a fearsome poodle floated out — a terrible beast such as one might see in a nightmare (if one was very strange). The poodle floated up to Jane, stopped, barked, then

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<sup>9</sup>For technical details of the Fluxon Special, see *Techniques of Destruction with the Fluxon Special* by Shackle and Brock (OUP, 2112).

exploded, plunging her into unconsciousness.

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“At last you awake, Galactic Agent Howarth,” glowered Herpes, “Oh yes, I know who you are. Enjoy my company while you can, Howarth, for when we reach Zool you will die!” the Prinz snickered, then readjusted his cute red cap.

“Zool?! You fiend! What business have you with Zool, Death Planet where the intractable criminals of 10,000 worlds, etc?” gasped Jane.

Just as Herpes was about to conform to the traditional villain’s role by explaining all to Jane, knowing that she wouldn’t survive to tell anyone (but of course...), he noticed something in his viewscreen. A procession of spacevans was crossing in front of Herpes’ phallic vessel, bearing an insignia proclaiming them to be ‘Keepers of the Galactic Ghetto Library’.

“What’s going on?” inquired Jane.

“Those fools are *still* making their trips in this sector. Will they *never* finish moving books from Summer-Vile [named after the poor weather of the planet — ed.] to Stanscoll?”

Suddenly a huge hand appeared in space, grabbed Herpes phallic spaceship and instantly transported it millions of light-years, depositing it in orbit around:

“*ZOOL!*” cried Jane, recognizing the most hated, feared, loathed, spat upon, cursed and unpopular planet in the universe.

**WHAT** will become of Jane at the hands of the wicked Gestetner von Herpes?

**WHAT** twisted scheme has Herpes cooked up for Zool?

**WHAT** is an intelligent person like you doing reading crap like this?

**WHAT** ?