

AU  
Sci-Fi  
club



# The Alfred University Science Fiction Club

PRESENTS

## Lanruojifics: Chronicles of Reality Volume IV

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### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*This is the fourth issue of the Scifi Journal, marking another year in which the Scifi Club publishes the stories and artwork of its members. This issue is especially special since we haven't had as many members contribute in past issues as we have for this particular volume. We hope to include even more submissions in next semester's issue.*

*If you wish to view past issues check out our website:*

*<http://campus.alfred.edu/organizations/auscifi/index.html>*

*We also donate a copy of every issue to Special Collections, located in Herrick Library.*

*As always, we welcome new members, either to our regular meetings or as writers/artists for the Sci-Fi Journal.*

*I hope you enjoy our latest issue.*

Fall 1999



## Ophelia, pt. 2

Nancy Sullivan

The next day Zoë walked through the palace in a bright yellow dress. Her hair was swept-up in a complex design of loops and curls. Everyone in the palace discussed what it could mean. The most important of the thousands of conversation that took place that day was between Sebastian and Bernd.

"Have you seen Zoë?" the king asked as soon as Sebastian walked into his office.

"No, but I've heard."

"What do you think it means?"

"I have to admit that I don't know, Your Majesty." Sebastian really didn't know although he was sure that he knew more about it than Bernd.

"Well, if wearing the dubh cianonne was a sign of rebellion, perhaps this means that she's done rebelling?"

"The princess is not a teenager you've told to clean her room. She's a very mature and intelligent woman who has been told from birth that she would be queen when her father died. This could mean that she's done mourning and is now ready to do something. Our problems are just beginning."

Zoë spent the morning in the cathedral thinking about her secession. She had only decided to do *something*; she had not yet chosen *what* that something was going to be. She did not want to cooperate with Sebastian, but she would rather have him on her side than against her. Zoë believed that he could get her to the throne; she also believed that Bernd was ready to get rid of him. However, she could read that Sebastian's ambition was insatiable and that he wanted to be ruler of Ophelia. Although he had come to her for help, she realized that she was an obstacle to his plans for himself.

She wondered what she would be willing to do. What was she supposed to do? How do you overthrow the government?

Zoë sat up. "But I am the government," she said. A moment later she wasn't sure whether or not she had said that out loud. She decided to go back to her

room, but she ran into Sebastian on the way. The meeting was not accidental, and Zoë realized this.

"Good afternoon, Sebastian," she said.

"May I speak to Your Highness in my office?"

"I suppose," she replied. They walk quietly to his office. "I imagine we can't be overheard in here," she said once the door had slid shut.

"You're correct. Would Your Highness like to tell me you plans?" he asked wondering silently to himself whether or not it would be wise to sit down in the Princess's presence.

"First of all," she said sitting down behind Sebastian's desk in such an authoritative manner that he didn't even think of objecting. "I am Queen of Ophelia, crown or no crown, and I suggest that you address me as such."

"Of course, I apologize, Your Majesty. Now, how exactly is Your Majesty planning on gaining your crown?"

At this question, Zoë's confidence faltered slightly though she tried hard to keep it from showing. The shudder that ran through the masterful aura she was trying to cultivate was quite evident to Sebastian who had made his whole living on being able to read a person's every nuance. "I want to take the throne in a coup d'etat," she finally answered.

"No, you don't."

"I don't?" she asked, to surprised to hide it.

"Coups are for generals, not heirs who have hardly been on the planet for three years and have never played a role in its government. You have no authority in the military, and it's not likely that you'll, excuse me, that Your Majesty will be able to gain any."

Zoë was angry more at herself than at Sebastian, thought she didn't want to admit that. Not to be outdone, she thought quickly and said finally, "Then I'll go to the people."

"A popular revolution?" Sebastian asked raising his eyebrows. Zoë thought, does that mean I'm right or wrong?

"Yes."

"They can be hard to control," he said. To Sebastian, the whole conversation was a test of Zoë. He had already charted



out his future plans. The princess/queen would be the nominal leader of a popular revolution that would be engineered and controlled by him.

"But they can be controlled," Zoë replied looking steadily into Sebastian's eyes. "And they can be overwhelming," she said as she began to see visions of Ophelia in arms: crowds moving forward in waves, whole city blocks up in flames, soldiers and civilians blending in the streets until it became impossible to tell them apart. She saw civil war with the death, suffering and famine that would unquestioningly accompany it.

Sebastian almost read her thought. "Civil wars are the most destructive sort. Your Majesty would not be able to quit half-way."

"I realize that, but Bernd is driving this planet into war with Taxlar which could end with us becoming nothing more than a colony again. I can't allow that to happen."

"Is Your Majesty certain you're going to win?"

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"I do not see how I could begin this without believing I will be victorious. I have birth and the gods behind me."

"The gods, perhaps, but what of the Church?" Sebastian began to wonder if the princess was more naïve than he had first thought.

"If the Church supports my uncle, it is corrupt; and the people will know that."

"You'll be sure to tell them, won't you, Your Majesty?"

Zoë smiled. "I'm sure my uncle won't be the one to point it out. Now, I see our biggest problem as this -- how do we get the military on our side? General Groton hates you; and the troops have been so brainwashed by my uncle, that it will be impossible to gain their support."

"That should teach Your Majesty not to leave the army in anyone else's control when you are monarch."

"Answer my question, Sebastian," Zoë ordered calmly, reading through his pause.

"That's a difficult question to answer, Your Majesty," Sebastian was forced to admit. "It seems to me that it will be impossible to rouse the armed forces to Your Majesty's side. Yet, a revolution can't be won without an army. In this day and age guerrilla warfare doesn't have a chance, especially against a man with a complete lack of morals as Your Majesty's uncle. He wouldn't hesitate a moment before killing millions of his own subjects. So, we need to get another fleet and another army." He cleared his throat and did not want to say what was going to come next. "I think you should marry Maxem."

Sirens went off in Zoë's head, and her first impulse was to jump out of her chair. She remained calm, however, and seated. "On other words, you're telling me to exactly what my uncle wants me to."

Clam as she was, she was clearly attacking Sebastian's ideas, and he was taken by surprise. "No, not exactly," he began shakily, "not at all really. Your uncle wants you to go off to Taxlar, have sixteen children, and never set foot on Ophelia again. I was thinking that you could marry Max, and get him to put you on the throne. Once you're on the throne and once you're had your first child, Your Majesty could kill Maxem, and rule Taxlar as regent."



"I've no interest in ruling Taxlar," Zoë replied. "And I don't at all like the idea of being placed upon my throne by the prince of Ophelia's former oppressor."

"Then what does Your Majesty want to do?" Sebastian asked. He was becoming mesmerized by Zoë's voice, and he found himself unable to remove his eyes from hers.

"I will attempt to win the throne with the support of Ophelians and no one else."

"If that fails?"

"I hope I don't live to see it fail." Zoë said simply and walked out.

Sebastian saw the king in the late afternoon, just before dinner, as he usually did.

"Has Your Majesty spoken to the princess yet?" he asked after they had discussed the more mundane matters before them.

"No, I've requested her presence at dinner. Have you?"

"Briefly, Your Majesty, but I could get little out of her. The princess is quite good at keeping her thoughts to herself."

"And you're supposed to be quite good at getting at getting into people's minds. You must find out what she's doing."

"I assure Your Majesty that I will."

Zoë was in her room researching the unrest on Ophelia through the palace's information network. She had full access to all the files although she discovered that she could no longer communicate within or without the palace compound. The door signaled.

"Open." She turned and saw Naill. "Hello," she said, shutting off her console.

"Hi." He sat on the bed. "That's a nice dress."

He can never just ask what he wants to ask, Zoë thought. "Thank you."

"It's nice to see you in something different."

"I felt that it was time to come out of mourning." She volunteered nothing else.

"Now what are you going to do?"

"Move on with my life, I suppose," she said standing and walking to him.

"And what's next for the crown princess?" Naill asked. Before she went away to school, he had often addressed Zoë with her title. She had liked his respectful

disregard of her station. Now, however, he realized that the situation was much different, and he didn't have to wait for the harassed expression that came across her face to know that should have avoided it.

"Zoë," he said, "are you contemplating stealing the throne?"

"I really can't talk about it, Naill," she said almost with a smile. Obviously, if she were planning to seize the throne it would be a secret.

"Don't," he said getting off the bed and taking Zoë by the shoulders. "You can't win. Please, go back to school. Go anywhere."

"Naill . . ." she began.

"No, listen to me. They will get you. You can't do anything on Ophelia without Sebastian learning of it."

"What would you have me do, enter a convent?"

"I want you to live, and what you're planning is suicidal."

"As far as you know, I'm not planning anything."

"But, Zoë . . ."

"I haven't told you anything, have I? You've nothing to forget. I don't think it's good for you to be alone with me anymore, but don't let anyone suspect why. Tell them I'm moody, difficult; say that I've changed too much at school. Say I've gone insane, anything."

"Of course, I'd never give you away, but will you answer some questions?"

"I don't think that's a good idea. The less you know, the easier it will be for you."

"I don't care about ease. I want to know what you're going to do. I think I deserve to know," Naill said.

"Deserve?"

"Well, we did have a relationship once, Zoë. We did care about each other."

Zoë moved back to the console, turned the chair around to face Naill. "We did care about each other once," echoed through her mind. Once, someone cared for me, she thought. Now?

"What do you want to know?" she asked.

Naill thought for a minute, trying to determine which of his many questions should be asked first. "When did the throne become so important to you?"

"Excuse me?" The question quite surprised Zoë.



"Before you went to school, you never mentioned your future as queen. Now you're obsessed with it. That's not all . . . you're a completely different person from my Zoë. You're so much more somber. You used to laugh; now you barely even speak."

She interrupted him. "I was never your Zoë."

He paused, then said with a measurable amount of sadness and regret, "No, I guess not. Apparently, I never knew you."

It was difficult for Zoë to keep herself from being affected by Naill's words or the misty look that passed over his eyes as he spoke. She could not completely repress the feeling that arose somewhere in or around her stomach or the tightening in her throat which, it seemed, could only have been relieved by saying something along the lines of, "I want to be that way again! I was happy with you, too." But the only sentence that could have followed those was; "That all ended three years ago," and that memory crushed any sentimental emotion in her.

Naill meanwhile, had finished his reminiscing. "When did the queenship become the central issue in your life?"

"When I learned it had been taken away from me, but even before I left Ophelia the first time it had become a major concern." She felt as if she were discussing an historical figure in an essay at school.

"What happened?"

Zoë began to reconsider how much Naill should deserved to know. It was actually her personal desire for self-expression and the wish for someone to know that whole story should she fail that were driving her on. She stood and with a barely perceptible movement of her eyes indicated that Naill was to follow her. They walked out of the room. As they went throughout the corridors, she tried to think of a place where they could talk in private.

"Do you mind going outside?" she said.

"No," he replied, adding silently to himself, not for this story.

She took him halfway across the palace grounds to a small very artificial looking brook and waterfall with a few conveniently placed large stones. They sat and Zoë, with a deep breath, began.



"Before I left for school, my uncle made a proposition to me to revive Ophelia's ancient and despicable practice of incest within the royal family."

Naill sat staring at her with his mouth open and a feeling of nausea creeping through his body.

"Unfortunately," she continued, staring at the holographic fish in the brook (real fish were felt to be unsanitary), "I ran away instead of exposing him as a should have. This whole disintegration of Ophelia is my fault."

"I don't think so," Naill said suddenly. Zoë turned and looked at him. "You were young and frightened . . ."

"I was crown princess, and it was made clear to me that the succession was threatened. I had a responsibility, and I ran away from it. I didn't warn anyone about Bernd."

"Your warning might not about changed anything. It just would've put you in the danger you're in now at a time when you had no capability of defending yourself."

Zoë was silent for a moment and considered his comments. "Well, in any case, I came back to take up my responsibilities."

"And that includes overthrowing Bernd?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how?"

"You'll see soon enough."

"I'm sorry, Zoë, but I don't think that you'll get very far."

"Why?"

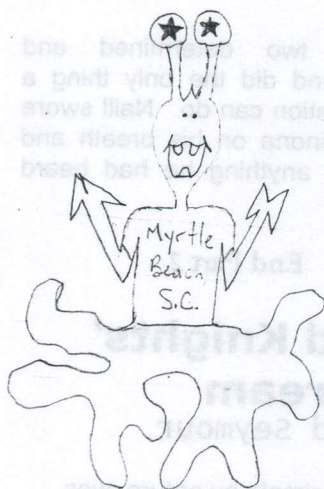
"Sebastian controls this planet, and he knows everything that goes on, especially in the palace. You'll be dead before you leave the ground."

Zoë looked back at the "fish." If Naill was going to be the record, she decided that he should hear everything. "Sebastian already knows."

"What?"

"He knows. He's part of the whole plan." Naill stared in disbelief. "Last night, Sebastian informed me that Bernd, with Sebastian's aid, had poisoned my father." Naill could take no more. He stood up and walked in a small circle waving his arms slightly. His mouth opened and closed a few times. Zoë sat and watched calmly. She had noticed this new ability of hers, to sit quietly and calmly while the others





around her reacted. It was as if she were watching a dull and formulaic drama with little interest.

"Can you believe Sebastian?" he whispered.

"Is it so implausible?"

"No, but Sebastian is hardly a person to trust."

"Naill, whether it is true or not (and I believe it is), Bernd had usurped the throne, my throne. It's my duty to remove him."

Naill sat down again, this time next to Zoë. He wanted to put his arm around her waist, but he knew that she would get up if he did. Zoë read his silence as disapproval.

"There are people who are willing to revolt without me. I can't let them do my work. Bernd isn't fit to be king; you must understand that. He will lead Ophelia into war with Taxlar. I have to do this."

"But . . . Sebastian? How do you know he isn't after the throne for himself?"

"I imagine he is. I have to stay one step ahead." She began to ring her hands in a familiar way. "Listen, this is just speculation, but I think I've figured out most of the story. First, Bernd decided to go for the throne. I don't know exactly when, maybe he always wanted it. So he came to me. That failed, but failed privately so he could continue. Then I guess he realized that he just wasn't smart enough to do it on his own. He contacted Sebastian."

"The most devious political mind on Ophelia," Naill put in, amazed at what had been going on right around him. Here was Zoë, who had been off the planet for three years, telling him what had been taking place right next door. "Did Sebastian or Bernd kill your father?"

"Bernd went to Sebastian looking for a to get to the throne. I believe he had already decided that killing my father would be necessary. Sebastian told me that he helped. He probably told my uncle exactly

what to do, but I doubt he did anything himself."

Naill sat silently digesting it all. Bernd's conniving with Sebastian made sense to him, but the idea of Zoë following in his footsteps didn't. Naill could not understand her motives. He did not believe that Ophelia was headed into war at all. The whole idea of a revolution seemed ridiculous to him. He could see where Zoë would want the throne that by right was hers, but to risk her life for, and encourage others to do so, seemed pointless. Ophelia would not be better off with her dead. He said that last thought out loud.

"I won't go back to school, Naill," she responded. "I can't runaway after what happened in the cathedral?"

Naill could not deny the persuasiveness of the cathedral scene. Perhaps she was Winona's chosen savior for Ophelia. The Rotting Ophelia. "Can I do anything to help you?" he asked quietly.

"Remember what I've told you and everything that comes after this, in case I don't succeed. I want it all recorded somewhere. I know that if I lose I'll be vilified by Bernd. The generations after his death should know the truth."

"I will. I promise, but isn't there some way I could play a more active role?"

"No. I would rather you didn't. Just don't let on that you know anything until this is all over."

"I won't."

"I want you to swear it," Zoë said as she suddenly realized that she could be looking at oblivion if Naill didn't keep his promise.

"I swear," Naill said.

"In the cathedral. Come." Zoë stood and walked toward the palace quickly. Naill followed and realized for the first time that Zoë really was a queen. For years she had been his closest friend. They had most of their time together for several years; they had made love. He had always thought of her simply as Zoë, his friend, his equal, an extension of himself. He had rarely thought of her future as queen;





and when he did, he not think that she would be a very good one. Certainly, she never behaved as a commoner, but she could have passed for a member of the lower aristocracy. She knew all the motions, having been taught them very early. She knew how to address everyone, how to sit, when to speak, the proper subjects, and how to smile and wave and look compassionate towards the subjects; but none of it was in her nature. He could never have imaged calling her "Your Majesty."

Naill hadn't been in the throne room the day Zoë returned from school other wise he would have learned about that aspect of her then. Instead, his old image of Zoë continued. Certainly, he noticed some differences. She was less happy and more pensive, but her father had died recently. Watching her walk before him without turning back to see if he was coming, without waiting for him to catch up, he realized (at last) that the differences in Zoë did not come from the sadness of her father's death. She had become a sovereign.

When they reached the Cathedral, he spoke out. "Zoë, do you really think this is necessary? Don't you trust me?"

"I need you to swear on the Leabher," she replied without turning around and continuing in her straight path to the altar.

"That's a very serious oath." Naill replied. Although he would never have broken his vow to Zoë, swearing the sacred book of their faith could not be taken without pause.

"You must swear," she replied. She had reached the altar. Zoë turned to Naill who stood at the bottom of the three steps that led to the altar. She picked up the book and held it out. "Swear on your breath and on your soul that you will not reveal any of what has happened or what will happen until after I am dead."

"Zoë . . ." Naill began, but he was interrupted by a third person in the Cathedral.

"Swear!" It was Brooke. Although she was much calmer than the infamous day in the Cathedral, she still didn't look normal. The Priestess had never returned to the fury and passion of her prior state, but she still continued in a trance. Naill found himself

caught between two determined and powerful women and did the only thing a man in such a situation can do. Naill swore in the name of Winona on his breath and soul not to reveal anything he had heard until it was all over.

## End Part 2

# A Good Knights' Dream

David Seymour

A Farmer, simple by nature, was walking down a road. He came across a knight standing in the road. His armor reflected the light of the rising sun. The knight's lowered visor hid his face from view.

The knight stood facing a large stone wall. The farmer estimated that the wall was a good seven feet high. The craftsmanship was of good work.

The knight remained motionless and silent so the farmer spoke first. "Good morning, sir knight."

To the farmer's relief (for he was starting to believe that he was talking to a empty suit of armor) the knight turned and faced him. It appeared to the farmer that he might have startled the knight who responded, "And so it is wanderer." The knight then returned to facing the wall.

"It is of good craftsmanship, wouldn't you agree?", said the farmer with his common tongue now in sharp contrast to that of the knight's noble speech.

"What is?", responded the knight.

"The wall is. See how the stones fit. Each cut to very close..."

"It may well be but that is not my concern," interrupted the knight.

"What concerns you, if I may ask?"

The knight, heaving a sigh, answered, "My concern is that it is here in the first place."

"Why does it trouble you?"

"It has been told to me that a maiden lies asleep under a spell behind this wall and in a tower. This villainous wall keeps me from awakening her. That is why this wall concerns me traveler. Have your questions now ceased." The knight returned to contemplating the wall.



A moment of silence past as each stared at the wall. "I could probably give you a boost over the wall if you weren't wearing all that armor.", the farmer said jokingly.

The knight glanced at the farmer then turned back toward the wall. The farmer then started to walk around the wall until he came to a door. He tried the latch and the door opened with a squeak.

"I found the door and its open.", the farmer said.

"A door?" repeated the knight quizzically and walked toward the door. The farmer held the door open for the knight to go through but the knight just stood in front staring at the doorway. After some time, the farmer decided to go inside himself. The knight followed but continued to stare at the doorway as if not comprehending its coming into being.

The farmer had a glance around the interior of the wall. A few statues with flowing water lay about forming a stream that ran through flowerbeds. Lush green grass grew and small birds sung sweet songs in beautiful trees. The air itself smelled of life and refreshed the farmer. And in the center was indeed a tower with the same stone craftsmanship as the wall.

Apparently the sight of the tower was enough to draw the knight's attention away from the doorway. "And now to awaken yon fair maiden.", the knight proclaimed and started walking toward the tower, all the while his suit of armor was clinking and clanking on the stone path. The farmer did not follow but stayed where he was to admire a lovely flowerbed of dandelions.

Suddenly, the knight let out a cry. The farmer ran down the path and found the knight drawing his sword. His attention was on the doorstep of the tower where a dragon lay fast asleep.



The knight started to creep forward but the farmer stopped him and asked, "What are you planning on doing?"

The knight responded in a whisper, "I will dispense of this villainous creature while it sleeps."

"I will not let you!", the farmer said. "You obviously know nothing about tamed dragons. Why they're harmless if you treat them right."

The farmer approached the sleeping dragon. It was a grayish-green color. It lay curled in a ball with its head under its wing. It would probably be about 5 feet from nose to tail when stretched out. On a bowl nearby was written 'Burny'.

"Burny", the farmer whispered. "Burny". The dragon stirred and sleepily looked at the farmer. The farmer took something out of his jacket pocket and held it out to the dragon, which promptly took and ate it.

"What are you doing?", asked the knight.

"Making a friend. These are dragon treats. I have a dragon at home myself so I always carry some.". The dragon, which was up on all fours now and, wagging his tail happily, took another treat.

The farmer then threw one high in the air and said, "Go catch it, Burny." The dragon leapt powerfully into the air and caught it.

While the farmer played with the dragon, the knight returned to his mission. The villainous obstacle was now cleared. Had the farmer seen the knight enter the tower he would have stopped him for not having the decency of at least knocking. However, as the knight saw it, there was no need to knock since the damsel was under an enchanted sleep.

A few minutes after the knight entered the tower, a high-pitched scream, followed by a low-pitched scream, emanated from the tower.

Soon the knight emerged from the doorway. His visor was now up and the farmer could see the wide-eyed expression painted on the wrinkled canvas. He watched as the knight clinked and clanked over to the door in the wall and disappeared.

As the knight left, a maiden entered into the garden. She had a robe on over her nightgown and was armed with a skillet. Her look of fury turned into a look of surprise when she saw the farmer. "Who are you and where did that horrible knight go.", she said as she wiped her mouth with her sleeve.



"My name is John and I'm a farmer. I saw the knight leave through the wall."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Oh. I was just playing with your pet dragon.", he answered. The dragon now sat looking at the farmer, the stick that they had been playing with was lying at his feet.

"He does seem to like you, doesn't he. Have you had much experience with dragons?"

"Oh yes. I grew up with our family always having one on the farm. Helped get rid of the rodents and the occasional cattle thief."

"Hmm. I could use some help with training Burny here.", she said. She lowered the skillet and walked over to pet Burny on the head. "He keeps setting my flowerbeds on fire. Do you know what I could do to stop him?"

"Oh he's just marking his territory. He should outgrow it eventually but there are a few things you can do until then."

And so the conversation went on. John and the maiden, whose name is Jill, sat in the garden and wandered from topic to topic. All the while, Burny received pats on the head and tummy rubs from both.

*Authors' Note: My main focus is on the knight of the story actually. He, of course, represents the typical hero, at first. He is living in his own world. A world where maidens need heroes, dragons are ferocious beasts, and walls are impenetrable. He has a hard time seeing things from a different point of view. At the end I believe that he does see the truth.*

*There seems to be some similarities to him and Don Quixote. They both are delusioned men. However, the difference lies in that Don Quixote was brave but our knight is anything but brave.*

*I also tried to show that we consider a villain to be anything that gets in the way of our hero's goal. Whether it be alive or not.*



## Equalizer

Sean Rook

It's funny really, how things can get so screwed up. Take for example the quick and easy *Slim Trim*, first introduced into the market in 2004. It was supposed to be the greatest thing since liposuction; became an instant hit in most developed countries right from the start. You see, they had to get around the Martin-Briggs legislation of '01 so instead of actually manipulating the genes of their "clients", they instead produced a variation of the Jonah virus. You might ask what the hell a Jonah virus is, well if you'd just give me a sec I'll go ahead and tell you. Without going into any great detail the base of it is that they take a special virus, only one that's empty-can't make ya sick you see, and they fill it up with something useful. I guess you could call it a message in a bottle-but only if you think stupid shit like that makes you sound smart or is funny. Anyways, as I was saying, they basically turned a Jonah virus into a weight loss program. When you get right down to it only the richest, and arguably, fattest people shelled out their dough for this treatment. Very expensive for only losing a few pounds, if you ask me. Well, these scientist types at Hyman Corp, that's the company that first marketed this thing, they thought they was all a bunch of geniuses or something. I remember their televised speech when they was nominated for some award that scientists like to give each other; one of them said something about tackling the common cold as their next project. Heh, as



if anybody with two-cents worth of sense, excluding those who wanted to kiss up to these assholes, would think that would be funny. Hmmm...what's that? You want to know what the point to all this is? Well calm down kiddo, I'm getting to it-but sometimes a good story ain't always one of them shoot-em-up vids you kids watch all...okay, okay. Sit down, I promise I'm almost done...just relax and listen. Where was I? Oh yes, the scientists. Seems these fellas didn't quite figure out that nature doesn't like to be fucked with, nobody thought their little bug would ever mutate into something else. But it did. Didn't take very long neither, maybe a little over a year before the new bug appeared, and not very long after that before everything went to shit. First it started to take off a bit more weight than it was supposed to, the average shmo started to look more like a twig or something. Oh, wait. I forgot to tell you about how the virus started to spread like a plague. All those fancy scientists couldn't keep this thing from spreading from one person to another. Kinda funny, really. All those rich pansies shelling out family fortunes when the average moron is getting it for free. Okay, so it started to infect everyone-'cept for a few lucky losers, and then it started to shave off a bit more weight than you paid for. Some might say they were getting a bit more for their money, but wait, it gets better. This thing started to eat away people's brains. Well, eating them up is a bit too strong, it was more like making them a bit smoother. Huh, well I don't know why but it does make sense if you think about it. I mean, the brain is just a bunch of fatty tissue-but I guess those scientist types hadn't really thought of that. Didn't take long after that for that strain to start spreading across the globe-as they say, "it's a small world afterall." Weird how those infected seemed to devolve or something. You probably won't remember this, but those guys in Atlanta did an autopsy of one of those fellas before this thing had really spread. They compared his brain to that of a monkeys'-which in a way they kinda do resemble monkeys. They don't understand



the concept of clothing at all, but evolution is taking the slack for that I suppose. Maybe it's the virus or some kinda of hyped up version of Darwin's, but they seem to get hairier all the time, guess you'd need a fur coat if you no longer had the sense to wear a T-shirt. Wonder how long it'll be before they start growing tails-that'd be funny, a bunch of giant, anorexic lookin' monkeys ruling the world. But getting to their intelligence, they are stupid as shit. I remember a couple of the suited up scientists who scoped out a few of the victims' houses found whole families dead. Seemed they starved 'cuz they couldn't figure out how to use a doorknob. Well, I really can't see these things carving out the niche regular people've done. Afterall, it was man's intelligence that saved his ass from extinction-which these fellas sure don't have. Once the real "wild" animals figured out they could roam a city at will they started to take a liking to snackin' on our skinny hides. After three years of hiding in this shelter the U.S. was so kind to build, when they still worried about nuclear winter, the only thing that's kept those monkey boys from going extinct is that they breed like a mother fucker. You thought them well-fare cheats had big families? Shit, when I've had to go on patrol I can tell you I've seen half a dozen of them runts hanging on to one bitches' hide-yeah, it'll take a bit more than natural selection to snuff their existence out. Now the question is what's gonna happen to the rest of us; who knows if, if ever, the bug will die out and let the rest of us move out of our comfy little cave. Nuclear missiles, biological weapons, super viruses...funny how all it took to bring the world to its knees was some diet scam that was rushed through testing. Pity really, well, I guess you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.

*Author's Biography: Check out my webpage at*

<http://students.alfred.edu/rooksr/index.html>



# Eyes of the Delta:

## Part III

### The Fallen

Joshua Arzt

Journal Entry #143

Date: September 17, 1995

Time: 2:03 a.m.

*There are times when even I don't know how to feel anymore. I wake up from these horrible nightmares, and I don't know what to do about them. And it's not like it happens some of time. It's every night! Every time I close my damn eyes, they're right there, chasing me into the deepest realm of fear I can ever imagine. Why can't I make them stop. What did I do to deserve this?*

*Dr. Cummings says that it is because I can't let go of my past; because I can't except my father's death. She says that because of my deep love for him, I've had a traumatic reaction to his passing. Well of course I did! He was murdered, in cold blood! The doctor says that I don't sleep enough. I explain to her that I have these nightmares, and she tells me that I need to relax myself before going to sleep. I have tried everything, but the nightmares simply consume any idea of relaxation that passes through my head. As of now, I haven't slept in nearly seven days. I'm tired, but I'm ignoring it. It gets kind of boring at late night, considering I am the only one awake. But, I have done a lot of reading in that time. I read about four books a night! I am sure Dr. Cummings will be annoyed to hear that I haven't slept. I am nearly twenty-four years old now! Do I really need to be told when, or when not to go to bed?*

I wish I could stop dwelling on it, but I can't forget how he died... you know, my father. It was nearly a year ago, when it happened. He was found in an alleyway. From the bloody markings on his body, it was found that he was impaled by a rather large sword. Through the course of my nightly readings, I have been exposed to several books on sword-craft and sword-fighting techniques. I

think I will have found what killed him in a few days. I was permitted to study the forensic reports, so I could draw my conclusions from there. After all, I do have a Ph.D. in Pediatrics. That was good enough for the forensics department at the station downtown.

Well, I am getting tired of writing, and I have to see Lisa (Dr. Cummings), around 9am, so I had better try to calm down a bit between now and then...

Marcus looks up from his notebook for a moment. He rubs his eyes vigorously, as the dim light at his desk makes his eyes strain to read his handwriting in the journal on his desk. It is the only light on in his tiny study on the third floor of his home. He thoughtfully taps his pencil on his right temple for a moment, until his thought process clears up again. Outside, he can hear the faint moan of the wind as it whips through the trees on this rather cool autumn night. The moon lights up his yard, making it seem as though his neighbors forgot to shut off their lights in their backyard. He realizes that he is easily distracted; probably from his exhaustion, and continues his entry.

*...I wonder how long I can keep this up, before I fall asleep? I mean really, a few more days, and I might break a world record or something!*

*That concludes my journal entry for tonight... I have to put down this pencil, and sit outside on the front porch. The dawn will be here in a few hours.*

Sincerely,  
Marcus

-----  
Around 11:30 a.m., Marcus drives to the precinct downtown. As he opens the front doors, he is greeted by the smell of stale cigars, and half-eaten doughnuts from earlier in the morning. He tries not to think of any police stereotypes as he freely allows the doors to close behind him. They make a dull "thwack" as the latch clicks into place. He quietly walks in, and head towards the



back offices. As he passes through, he gets the usual friendly nods from familiar faces that work here. He's been in this place enough times. He watches Sergeant Eaton extinguish his cigar in the ashtray on his desk as he passes by. Marcus examines the hefty man, as he concludes that Eaton's desk must be the source for the stale cigar and doughnut smells he experienced earlier. Continuing on, he ambles over to the far-left corner to where a woman is sitting behind a desk, with her feet propped up, and a newspaper open, blocking her view of him. As he approaches the desk, he can see her name blotter, which reads: Detective R.E. Lelland.

Marcus quietly sits down, and waits for her to acknowledge his presence. She apparently has no idea that he is sitting there, so he decides to draw attention to himself.

"Lelland!" He shouts, "have you finished that report yet?"

The woman leaps out of her chair in surprise, and slaps her paper down on the desk. Seeing that it's him, she curls her lip, and raises her left eyebrow. "Can I help you sir?" she says in a wry, sarcastic tone.

"Yes," he replies, matching her tone. "I was wondering if you could help me find my lunch-date for the afternoon. I was supposed to meet her here, but now I can't seem to find her. Do you think I could arrange to have her picture posted on a milk carton or something?"

"Yeah, very funny," she says with a smirk. "I apologize. I got a little too wrapped up in an article in today's NY Times."

"I see," he replies. "Well, would you rather go to the lunch with today's paper? I promise I'll be emotionally distraught by it!"

"Oh shut up!" she says, standing up. Marcus stands up as well, and walks to the side of her desk, extending his elbow.

"Shall we?" he invites.

"Yes good sir, please lead the way." She takes his arm, and they head towards the door.

"You know, I don't know what to do with you sometimes Rache," he says sarcastically. "You can never be quite on time for anything can you?" They walk past Sergeant Eaton, as he chokes down another jelly doughnut. He is making a large mess of himself, as crumbs fly everywhere while he violently chews.

They approach the front door, and Marcus opens it for her. She walks outside, waiting for him to join her. "Well, you know what Marcus?"

"What?" he asks, closing the door behind him.

"Bite me!" she says, quickly swatting him over the head with the rolled-up newspaper.

"Hey," he shouts in surprise. He loves it when he pisses her off enough for her to say that.

"Oh by the way," she says with a smirk on her face, "the paper is coming to lunch with us. I didn't want it to get jealous."

-----  
The sky is clear and blue, and a light wind sifts through the trees, while busy people walk hurriedly to their destinations through the streets of New York. Marcus and Rachel sit at a table outside of the Yorkshire Café on the corner of Madison Street, and New York Avenue. They are shielded from the bright sun by a table umbrella. It is somewhat warm, and Marcus finds that he doesn't need his jacket today, after all. He drapes it over the back of his chair.

Now, Marcus picks away at his salad, while Rachel eats a large bowl of Lucky Charms. Rachel notices Marcus' lack of hunger, and she carefully puts down her spoon. She looks over at him and stares for awhile, but he is too busy dissecting his salad to notice her staring at him.



"Hello, Earth to Marcus! Is anyone there?" She blatantly remarks.

Marcus drops his fork suddenly from the break in silence, and looks up to meet her stare. "Sorry," he quietly remarks. "I've had a lot on my mind recently."

"Yeah like what?" She continues to munch on her cereal.

"Well, I..."

"Oh, wait!" she shouts, startling Marcus. "I forgot, I'm sorry."

"So then you understand?" he asks, pushing his plate away.

"Look Marcus," she says, putting down her spoon, and lightly wiping her mouth with her napkin. "You have to let this go. I know the loss of your dad is a big deal, but there is nothing you or I can do to bring him back."

"I don't want to bring him back Rache," he protests. "I just want to find who killed him."

"I know you do," she says, placing her hand on his. "But the police never had enough evidence to find the killer. There were no prints at the scene. I should know, I was there!" she says, gripping his hand tighter.

Their waiter approaches the table, and Marcus accepts the check. "Thank you," he says, prompting the waiter to turn around, and return inside.

"I'm just so confused," he says, pulling his hand away from her grip. He starts to rub his eyes.

"You haven't slept in days," she observes, sitting back in her chair.

"No, I haven't," he replies, agreeing with her. He puts down his hands, revealing the now-noticeable black circles under his eyes.

"Look Marcus, we've been friends, best friends for nearly twenty years now. Believe me when I tell you that everything will be okay." She stares at him, until he finally meets her eyes with his. "We'll get by this. But by taking excessive amounts of

time-off from work, and by refusing to sleep, you can't possibly hope to resolve anything for yourself!"

"Well, I..."

"No, nothing!" she says, cutting him off. "I want you to go home, and get some rest. Then maybe later tonight, give me a call."

"Okay," he says, easily surrendering to her will. She has a good point.

Marcus and Rachel get up from the table, and push in their chairs. Rachel starts to walk towards the intersection to cross. "I'll talk to you later, and thanks for lunch." Marcus watches Rachel cross the street, and disappear into the distance. When she is out of sight, Marcus turns around and walks inside to pay the bill.

September 18, 1995

Journal Entry #144

Time: 3:28 a.m.

*I think I have finally found the answers to my query. I have found information, regarding the sword that was used to kill my father. It was a medieval long sword, used sometime in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. I had the metal residue found on his corpse, analyzed, which is where I found how old the sword was. But now, as I look through these books I took out of the library, I have found the only sword that could make that kind of cut. The blade is different from swords that were made after its time. I am guessing that this particular sword used was about forty inches in length, from butt to tip. But why use such a weapon in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it would seem so inefficient?*

*The real burning question is however, who might own such a weapon? And will that lead me to my father's killer?*

*I am unsure as to what the answer to that might be. I will see if I can submit this information as evidence for the case. While the police are checking up on my research, I might just take it upon myself to search the area for sword dealers/owners.*



*It's hard to believe, but I am so tired that I can barely move. I guess that after eight days of neglecting the need to rest, my body would try to retaliate against my efforts to stay awake. I guess I can afford to sleep tonight. I am going to have to, eventually. I hope the nightmares pass me by... I'm not really in the mood for them.*

*So, until we meet again...*

*Sincerely,  
Marcus*

Marcus puts down his pen, and struggles to sit up in his bed. The stress of his bodyweight fights him through all of his efforts. He places his journal down on the nightstand next to his bed. He slowly glances out the window, and watches the moonlight dance across his backyard. Small beams of light from the outside illuminate the otherwise dark room, aside from the meager light from the small lamp at his bedside. Marcus slowly rubs his aching eyes, and finds that his head is already falling back onto the pillow, as if he were moving in slow motion. Before he can protest any further, his eyes close, and the dreams are released.

Marcus looks up at the night sky, and feels the cold rain p patter across his face.

*When did it start raining?*

He slowly looks down, and examines himself. His is adorned in a long black overcoat, and elastic black gloves. He opens the left side of his coat to reveal a sword, sheathed inside the flap.

*Why do I need a sword?*

The rest of his clothing under the coat is completely black.

*This is very weird.*

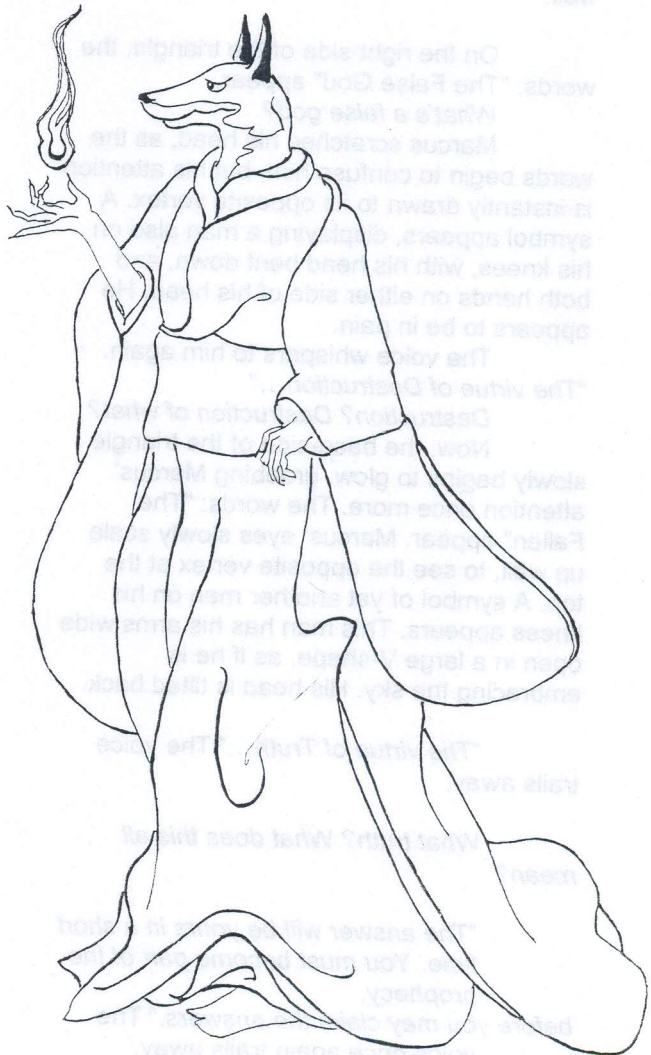
Marcus slowly unsheathes the sword, and exposes it to the air in front of him. The metal shines brightly, from the moonlight reflecting off of it. The sword appears to be a long-sword, similar to the one he identified as the sword that was used on his father. But this is not that weapon. Marcus is somehow certain of this, but he doesn't know why, or how.

Marcus' attention is suddenly taken, by the spontaneous appearance of a dark warehouse in front of him.

*Where did that come from?*

Marcus gets a bad feeling from this place. Inevitably, he gets the suspicious urge to encounter the warehouse. As he approaches the dark structure, the now visible clouds begin to rumble in the sky. It's almost as if they are warning Marcus of an approaching danger. Marcus now pushes open the old doors to the building, and enters. They make a dull creak, as they slowly close behind him. He looks around, as the inside of the warehouse slowly becomes visible. A light at the other side of the warehouse catches his attention instantly. He slowly walks towards it.

When he reaches the other side, he





comes up to a wall with strange markings on it. He can make out a large equilateral triangle that is positioned with one of its vertex's pointing straight up. As he looks closer, he can make out words, next to each side of the triangle. He struggles to focus on the words, since the area is not lit all that well. On the upper left side of the triangle, the words: "The Great Hero" can be made out. Marcus then notices a symbol that appears on the opposite vertex. The symbol presents a man on his knees, with one arm across his chest, and his eyes are closed. It almost looks as if he was praying in a certain fashion.

Something faintly whispers in his mind. *"The virtue of Hope..."*

"What?" Marcus says aloud, but no one answers. He guesses that he only imagined it. He returns his attention to the wall.

On the right side of the triangle, the words: "The False God" appear.

*What's a false god?*

Marcus scratches his head, as the words begin to confuse him, but his attention is instantly drawn to its opposite vertex. A symbol appears, displaying a man also on his knees, with his head bent down, and both hands on either side of his head. He appears to be in pain.

The voice whispers to him again. *"The virtue of Destruction..."*

*Destruction? Destruction of what?*

Now, the base-side of the triangle slowly begins to glow, grabbing Marcus' attention once more. The words: "The Fallen" appear. Marcus' eyes slowly scale up wall, to see the opposite vertex at the top. A symbol of yet another man on his knees appears. This man has his arms wide open in a large V-shape, as if he is embracing the sky. His head is tilted back.

*"The virtue of Truth..."* The voice trails away.

*What truth? What does this all mean?*

*"The answer will be yours in a short time. You must become part of the prophecy, before you may claim the answers."* The voice once again trails away.

*How do I become part of the prophecy?*

*"You must understand the Delta. Only then, will you be permitted to know. That is all that can be said..."* The voice now disappears for good.

*I don't understand any of this.*

Suddenly, without warning, Marcus is hit incredibly hard by an unknown force. He feels himself fly through the wall, where he lands in the dark mud outside. It is raining heavily. Marcus struggles to get up, as he tries to see his attacker through the rain. A shape emerges from the warehouse. No distinct features can be made out. It is just terrifying and large. It draws a large sword from the darkness of its body. Marcus now comes to his feet, slowly retreating, feeling his coat for his sword. He looks down at his coat in surprise.

*Where is my sword?*

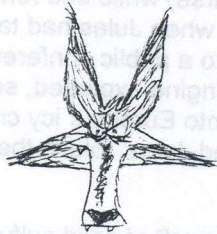
He is unable to find the sword anywhere. He falls back to the ground. The dark figure approaches him, as he struggles to back away in the mud, crawling on his back. He slowly begins to sink, as the dark figure raises its sword into the air. Marcus' heart is beating so hard, that it is resonating through his head. He can't make the rapid pulse stop. The dark figure brings the sword down upon him, as he tries to scream in terror. Unfortunately he is unable to speak. He feels the blade start to cut through his chest. It moves slowly, as if everything were moving in slow motion. The pain is incredible. And then without warning, everything begins to get blurry...

Marcus awakens with a quick jerk. His sheets are covered in sweat. He looks over at his alarm clock, and sees that it is almost 7:30am. His room is still slightly dark, as the dawn slowly creeps into his room.

Marcus slowly decides to get up. He pushes back his sheets, and notices that they are very sticky with something. Surprised by this, Marcus quickly turns on the bed-side lamp, and screams in fear. He is covered in blood! He jumps out of bed, and struggles to peel his shirt off his body. He looks down at his now bloody, exposed chest, and sees that there is a large gaping



wound there. The cut goes from the top of his sternum, to the top of his abdomen. It is still slowly bleeding.



"Oh, Jesus", Marcus yells. He quickly runs into the bathroom. The blood drips on the floor as he moves. He sees the wound in the bathroom mirror as he approaches the sink. He can see the dull white of his sternum underneath the skin. He slowly begins to panic. He jars open the medicine cabinet, looking for anything that might help him to stop the bleeding, so that he can make it to the hospital. He grabs a bunch of random things, and slams the cabinet door shut. He once again appears in the mirror.

"What?" Marcus shouts aloud. He looks in the mirror, and sees that the wound is gone. He drops all of the things from his hands, and quickly looks down, feeling all about his chest. The wound is gone. It was as if it was never there. There isn't even a drop of blood on him. "What the hell?"

Marcus follows the trail back to his bedroom, where he was bleeding earlier. All the drops are gone. He quickly rummages through the sheets, but they are dry. Marcus is trying to figure out what exactly just happened. He looks over at the clock again, and it reads that it is almost 10:30am. "Oh my god!" Marcus shouts. He quickly gets dressed. He is late for his meeting with Rachel.



## The Loki Patera Landing

Jamie Kern

Tessa Vilkanon stared at the monitor screen in wonder.

Blue plumes extended hundreds of kilometers from the surface of the moon before her, raining "snow" and leaving donut-shaped cloud-like features hovering above the eruptions. The snow settled about the volcanoes in whitish sheets, blanketing the surface of the planet. Seeing it this way, Tessa could almost compare it with her northern home on Mars, where snow now fell in abundance. But, she knew that kind of snow would never fall on Io.

The orangey-yellow tinted stuff that seemed to cushion the moon so much like water-snow was actually sulfur, cooled enough to look somewhat like snow after being ejected hundreds of kilometers high by eruptions. Sulfur dioxide frost covered much of Io, and the rocky areas were silicate rock and sulfur compounds, giving parts of the surface a mustard-yellow appearance. She could see where volcanic activity had recently remodeled the surface of the planet – those were the darker areas. And then, she saw the landing site.

It was just coming up on the left side of the screen: the Loki Patera – a lake of liquid sulfur, a dark blotch against a mottled yellow background. Its appearance had changed only slightly in the years since its discovery – an exception to the general life span of Io's features. Liquid sulfur bubbled up to the surface area gently there when compared with the glorious monstrosities of volcanic plumes that shot up almost constantly on the rest of the world. That was precisely why they were landing there.

She heard the ship's captain (and pilot), Jacobi Trenton, grunt. She turned to see him smiling as if there were some private joke on his mind. He did not respond verbally to her comment, however, so she made no attempt at conversation. Heaven knew she had tried often enough. She turned her attention back to the monitor: a smaller version of what Jacobi was looking at. She could have watched his, but his head was in the way.

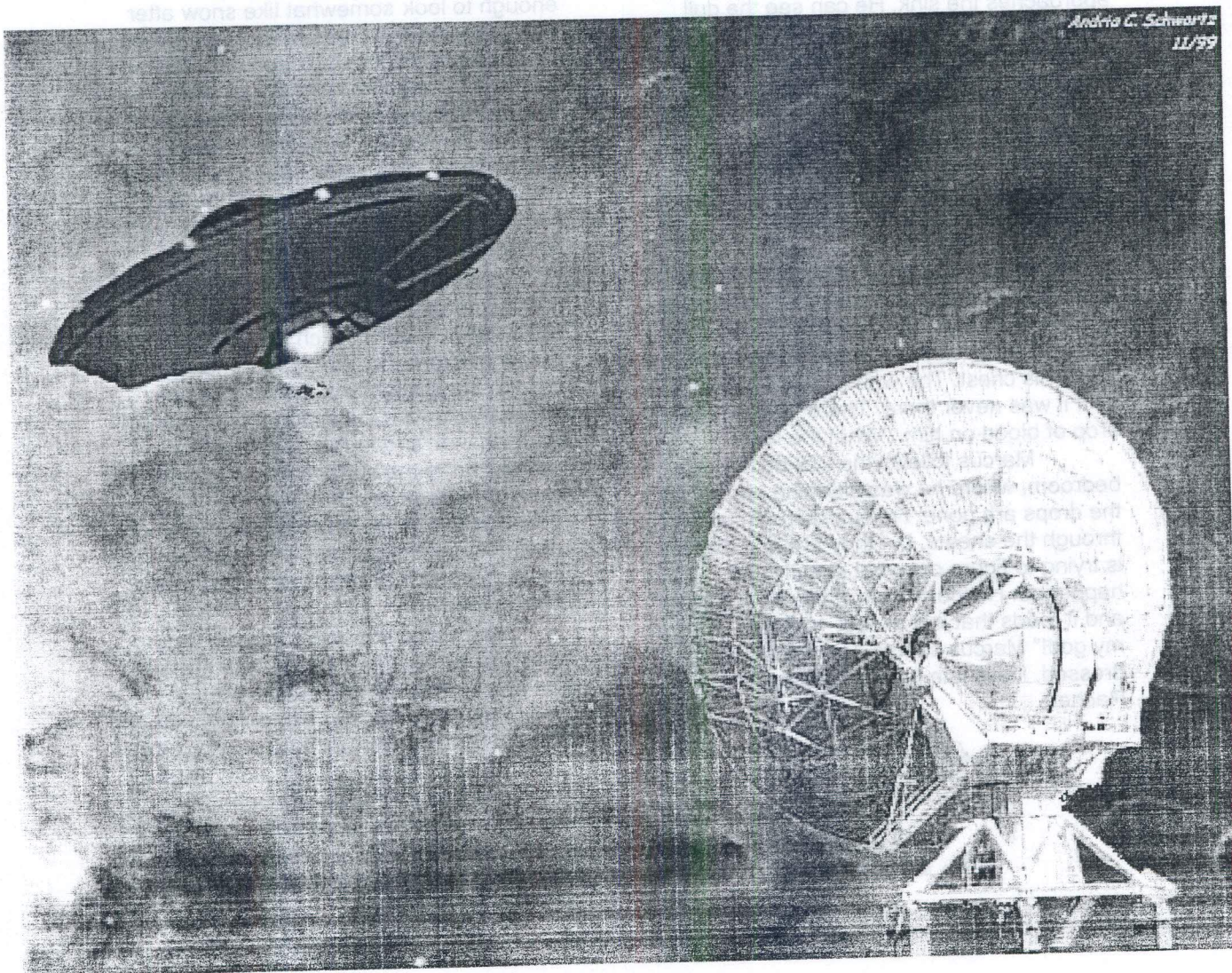


The globe on the screen had grown so that it all did not fit on the screen, so she punched a few buttons, telling the computer to track the Loki Patera site. Then, she sat back and waited, for her work would not begin until they landed on Io.

Her orders from ETCA (Earth Terraforming and Colonization Administration) had been to design, build and test a bio-apparatus on Io. But, the implications of the Io Project (and the consequences if it were to fail) went far deeper than that. The Project had first been proposed by a respected Martian scientist named Jules Binghamton ten Earth years ago, and had been rejected. Io was a huge risk; the constant paving-over of its surface made any long-term colony almost impossible – except, Jules had insisted, in one area. That area was the comparatively

stable Loki Patera. After he had made enough noise, Jules got the funding for his project. Her job, as an engineer, had been to design the bio-apparatus. Jules' job was to take the thing to Io (and receive credit for the mission, of course) while she remained on Europa. Then, when Jules had taken a hover-flight plane to a public conference, something in the engine exploded, sending the ship head-on into Europa's icy crust. Tessa had inherited Jules' role in the project.

They landed on the raft of solid sulfur in the lake, and it took her a few hours to set up the small bio-apparatus they would be testing. Unlike the ship, it included plants and bright lights to circulate the air they breathed. The plants would also provide them with some food, but they had brought





back-up nutrition in case, as well as water; such things would be impossible to find on Io. They had an abundance of batteries as power-sources, but they would need to be re-charged regularly. Usually, this would be done with solar-power, including the sun and Jupiter shine, but Tessa had found another method. The circulation of the liquid sulfur in Loki Patera would give them mechanical energy in addition to solar power, once the collectors were in place. Luckily for them, they did not need much power for temperature control. Most of Io was -143 degrees Celsius, but here, in a relative hot spot, it was closer to 17 degrees Celsius, or 60 degrees Fahrenheit: a reasonable temperature for terrestrial life.

The most important feature of the apparatus, however, was its thrusters: the reason that her creation was not called a bio-dome. They had to give a different name to a new invention. Her apparatus was rather like a mobile home. If, for some reason, this area were to erupt, or show signs that it would soon do so, the apparatus would be able to achieve an orbit around Io until help came, or the danger had passed. This was really what she had been hired to do – to find a safe way to live on a constantly changing moon.

Once they had set up the apparatus itself, and eaten a rather hasty dinner together – Jacobi silent as usual -- they suited up to go outside. They entered the pressurization lock one at a time. When Tessa stepped out, she gazed in awe at the scenery about her. Far to the north was a large cliff, past the end of the sulfur lake surrounding their island-like landing site. Stars were visible in the sky, but only at the edge; Jupiter took up almost the entire sky, especially in the south. It was a huge swirling globe: a mosaic of whites, yellows, oranges and reds, impossible to take in at a glance. When she looked toward the horizon least overshadowed by Jupiter's glory, Tessa could see a faint yellow glow: the result of sulfur particles scattering light. The particles, like everything else, came from volcanic eruptions of sulfur and sulfur dioxide. Tessa also saw Ganymede in the west, floating by Jupiter's edge, and dwarfed by it. Extremely far to the east, she also thought she could see the tip of the blue plume she had been watching before

landing.

The rocky sulfur compounds at her feet were an ugly orange. Unlike much of the planet, this spot was too warm for sulfur dioxide frost to cling to the surface. Otherwise, they would have left footprints. The surface of their little island was not as smooth as the rest of Io's surface, because it was not paved over as often. But, there were still no craters here, which meant there had been sulfur flooding recently, at least when considering how long the moon had existed.

Tessa turned on her radio. "Remember," she said, "don't leave this general area. Once you leave the hot spot, the temperature drops to levels the human body can't tolerate, and we aren't wearing T-suits." T-suits were used to regulate temperatures on both extremely cold and hot worlds. "And don't take the suits off – Io doesn't have enough of an atmosphere to hold you together."

She heard Jacobi's radio click. "Alright chief, we get the picture."

She turned to see him smiling again. *At least he's finding a voice.* She wondered if he was teasing her.

They strode along the wavy surface of the island, depositing collectors in the sulfur lake. Tessa gazed into it, amazed at the smooth circulation of liquid. It wasn't like water on Earth or Mars at all, she realized. Water bubbled to the surface when hot, but this dark, fathomless liquid simply floated to the top in a place, and floated back down in another. It reminded her a lot of when her sister's long hair rose to the top of her swimming pool back home, when they used to count the seconds they could hold their breaths – tendrils slowly seeping to the surface, displacing the cooler liquid at the top. It was an utterly alien beauty, and one she had never expected to see – only hear about when Jules returned.

"Hey, look at that!" She was surprised to hear Jacobi talk, and it startled her out of her reverie.

"What?" she asked.

"The level on the collector rose."

She smiled as she walked over to check the collector. "That's normal. It stores energy, and the longer we leave it here the longer –" She saw the collector



level. "Did I plant it at the right depth...?" She checked the support cables attached to the "shore." They were tight and correctly placed. She looked up at Jacobi, whose face was about two shades lighter than it had been a moment ago. "Let's go check the Others."

They backtracked along the alien shore, checking each collector as they moved. Each one was at a much higher level than the last – and deeper in the sulfur lake. "My god..." she whispered after examining the last one. "The lake is rising!"

She and Jacobi exchanged glances. She had never thought she would see him look anything but amused or annoyed, but now his eyes were wide and he was obviously fidgeting. *And he has to pilot the damn ship!*

Tessa suddenly stood and set a half-jogging, half-running pace toward the apparatus. If the lake kept rising at the same rate – she did the math quickly in her head – an hour and a half at most. It would take a while to get back to the apparatus, then prepare the apparatus, and fire the thrusters in time.

"I think this was a huge mistake!" she gasped into her suit. Jacobi didn't hear her.

When they arrived at the apparatus, unsuited, and began making preparations, she switched on one of the monitors. The lake was definitely closer than it had been. She thought they might have fifteen minutes left. Jacobi was already in the pilot's seat, hopefully preparing for the orbit they would have to achieve within the next few minutes. For once, she didn't check over his shoulder to see if his settings were correct.

*Make sure the ground stabilizers are retracted. Good. "Check trajectory for achieving orbit, Jacobi!" Take fuel conservation into account. The sulfur is getting closer, too close. We aren't ready yet. Too slow. Not going to make it. It's practically here.*

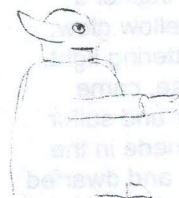
Jacobi fired the thrusters.

"What are you doing?" Tessa screamed, as she was thrown against the floor of the apparatus. Jacobi didn't answer, as usual, but Tessa managed to regain her footing and check her monitor. Jacobi had made the apparatus hover a few kilometers

above the surface of Io, while the sulfur sloshed sluggishly beneath them, tendrils entwining and dissolving as convection slowed beneath them. Then, as Tessa watched her screen in amazement, the liquid began to recede.

"My god!" Her terror flowed away along with the sulfur, which it seemed, only skimmed over the surface enough to leave a slightly smoother coating. "We have to study this! Can you imagine, if that's all that happens here, we can have a huge community at the center of this island!"

How Jedi  
Master Yoda  
Eats a  
Reese's Peanut  
Butter Cup



Size Matters Not  
When It's A Reese's



They were both laughing when Jacobi set the apparatus down. It had been such a short while, but their mission was essentially accomplished. Her invention had been successful, and actually more complex than it needed to be for this part of Io. She was already drawing the blueprints for a large-scale apparatus in her head, grateful to be alive, and thinking gleefully: *Someday white snow will be alien to our children.*

*Authors' Note: This story was originally handed in as a paper for Professor DeGraff's Intro. Astronomy class (which is a lot of fun)!*

## Untitled

Andria Schwartz

*A man sits on the child's bed, where she lays tucked in with her teddy bear clutched in her arms and listens as he tells her a bedtime story.*

Some time back, I died. And went to Hell. And then it turned out that Heaven and Hell are the same place. See, I know what everyone thinks it's like, either you're good and you go to Heaven, or you're bad and you go to Hell, but it doesn't really work that way. What happened was that I was a kidnapper in life, you know, like four year-old little girls, but only ones with strawberry blonde hair--I was a discriminating molester! Yeah, so, I'd kidnap them from the City, and tie them up in my basement in my house in Newburgh--that way I didn't cross any state lines and get really in trouble. So, like, the reason I did this was my sister had hair like that, and it started with her and wanting to know why she had light hair, and Daddy and Mommy had light hair, and I had dark hair. So I scalped her and tried to see if her hair would fit me. Turns out the reason my hair was darker was because Daddy wasn't mine, but I still went around scalping little girls. I guess that's why I ended up in Hell.

Oh yeah, but not what you think of as Hell, none of that fire and brimstone stuff. What is brimstone, anyway? I don't think I've ever met anyone who knows. So I asked the lady behind the desk where all the brimstone was. Huh, what desk? Oh, I didn't tell you, sorry. It was like this doctor's

waiting room: wood floors, maroon and off-white and flowery wall paper, and these nice tapestry couches. Just as I was feeling the impact of the bus treads on my skull, I was in front of the mahogany desk, and knew I was dead.

So where was the fire and brimstone, I asked the receptionist, and she explained to me all about how Hell and Heaven were the same places, and all that. I said, what, and she said, well, we share the same reception and interviewing process. It's just where you go after that, that's different. So where do people go, I asked, and she said that depends on if you're good or bad, so which do you think you were. I scratched my head, and tugged on my chin, and said, um, good? So, if you're good she said, you go to what people think of as Heaven, with all those clouds and angels, and harps, and stuff. And I said, really? And she said, no, but you're not going there anyway, and she laughed. Go take a number and sit down. She had a bitter laugh, Eve did. Oh, that's what her name plaque said. No last name, just Eve.

I slouched over to the couch and glanced at my ticket: #392. I looked up, and they were on number four. I have no clue how much later it was when they called my number, as there was no way to tell time there--the watch on my wrist had disappeared with my life--but I finally got my turn. I went in the office, and the door closed ominously behind me. I won't tell you what happened in there, save that I learned something interesting about angels. Turns out that rather than sinners going and burning in Hell until they make it up, there's angels. Yeah, yeah, I know it's cliché, and that many people have figured it out, but it turns out to be true! When you've sinned like I have, they've gotta do something with you! And you've gotta go and make up for what you've done.

So you see these feathers on my shoulders, kiddo? Yeah, that's okay, you can reach out and feel them. Soft, heh? And they gave me that ring around my head. Oh, stop giggling, it's nothing like a ring around the collar or bathtub. Here, try it on! Ooh, it looks nice on you. The gold goes perfectly with your hair in the moonlight... Why don't you wear it for a while?

Now what was I saying? Oh yeah, I had to atone for what I'd done. So Michael



Pohl, Frederik  
Pohl, Frederik

Pournelle, J.E.  
Pournelle, J.E.  
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Pournelle, J.E.  
Pournelle, J.E.

Reynolds, Mack

Robinson, Kim Stanley  
Robinson, Kim Stanley

Zahn, Timothy  
Zahn, Timothy  
Zahn, Timothy

Beyond the Blue Event Horizon  
Gateway

There will be War  
Men of War  
Blood and Iron  
Day of the Tyrant  
Warrior  
Guns of Darkness  
Call to Battle!  
Armageddon!  
After Amageddon  
The Mercenary  
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Computer War

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Green Mars

Star Wars: Heir to the Empire  
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PS3566.O815 M47  
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PS3576.A33 D37  
PS3576.A33 S73

\*\*\*\*\***Movies**\*\*\*\*\*

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Dark Crystal, The  
Dragonheart  
Ghost in the Shell  
Godzilla, King of the Monsters  
Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster  
Ice Pirates, The  
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Planet of the Apes  
Spaceballs  
Stargate  
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