

Stardate 00001

In The Beginning

[Simon](#) gives the appearance of always having had been there. Which is an odd look for someone just now sitting down on the sixth seat at the table. He rests his staff awkwardly against the table and pulls forth his wallet (neatly inscribed with the glowing runes of power "Meddle with this Honky!") and pulling forth a credstick before taking up Captain Brro's offer.

"The one thing I miss about Earth, in my many and varied travels, is her alcohol. There's nothing quite like a pleasant chat, with an agreeable human, and a mug full of beer."

His conversation pauses as a waiter brings his drink over.

"I must say, Brro, your ship is looking well."

Floating in, surrounded by only the faintest of murmurs from air warped by the repulsor field [tech, tech] underneath the centre of the nearly spherical environment suit, [Svathlan](#) quietly takes a place at the opposite end of the table to our host. The jade green outfit, its colour broken only by a section of pink graffiti, reading "I am the Great and Powerful Turtle", shifts for a moment, the four arms/tentacles closest to the table shifting into Madrollay greeting forms before coming to a rest, three further tentacles now resting on the edge of the table in politeness forms 'used when in doubt of another's station'. "Ni hao... space! Greetings Captain. Thankyou but no. Alcohol does little for me. I seek instead company and competition."

[Ariel Rommer](#) has been standing apart from her fellow players, but now approaches the table and sits in chair number 2. As she sits, she grimaces. Although she reluctantly surrendered her largest and most obvious weapons when she entered the 'Captains View' (including a standard Space Corp issue 431K Blaster and a well travelled - if decidedly more exotic - laser whip, amongst others) it appears that one of the sizeable armory still secreted about her body is causing her discomfort.

After shifting impatiently in her seat, she turns to address Captain Brro. "I do enjoy Earth Beer Captain. However, I am rather thirsty and, given this rather auspicious occasion, I thought I might celebrate with something a little more uncommon. Water please."

[Zara](#) appears from the shadows, having arrived several hours earlier to meet with the Captain of a supply ship. She approaches the table with a large glass only half full of a luminous red liquid. She eyes Ariel Rommer warily and mutters "Nice pants," as she takes her seat between Simon and Captain Brro.

She greets the others already seated at the table before leaning down to whisper in the ear of a small, light blue robotic dog. After an apparently heated exchange, the dog sputters an expletive before rapidly leaving the room.

[Nick Nitrous \(Galaxy Ranger\)](#) runs into the room, stops short and pauses to glance out the door behind him, then strolls casually over to the table.

"Greetings to y'all fellow sentients. Captain Brro, a beer from old earth would be mighty appreciated".

He lifts up and checks underneath the third chair before collapsing into it.

Bobo the Brown enters the room, almost tripping over his big brown shoes, and as he reaches the table pauses, pleasantly surprised that seat five, what he would have judged a prize middle seat, is free.

“Ah Captain, Primitive Earth Beer (R) the memories it brings! A jug would be most welcome.”

A rattling sound is heard from the ceiling, and some of those present may look up in time to see a ventilation grate being removed and a lithe young figure slip through the narrow gap, pulling the grate back across the hole and dropping into the seat below in a single, deft movement.

Pia holds her breath for a moment as the sound of heavy-booted running in the hallway above first becomes louder, then fades away. With a happy sigh, she smiles across at her host. “Beer? Free Beer? I'd love some!”

Captain Brro takes a stool, and sits in position 8. Placing his hands behind his head, he says, “Well, then, if we're all here, we should begin. If you ladies and gentlemen and squids would like to take a seat, we can get started. Can I offer you sentients a Primitive Earth Beer(R)?”

He looks at the assembled group. “**Pia**, you want to start?”

Brro keys in an order for five beers (and a glass of spring water for Captain Rommer).

“Simon. The **_Wit_** needs refitting, always does. The new mods have been fairly superficial, though they're pretty to look at, but at these prices it'll take several more runs efore I can afford to upgrade the comp systems. May I ask how you are travelling? I did not see your ship - strange looking thing that it was.”

“Many any the secrets contained in a Technomage ship, Brro..” Simon leans back and ponders the universe. “The 5 runes of stealth and hiding inscribed in silicon dances on the rim of its neural net. The 12 secret passcodes of the megaterran conglomerate, and the 3 methods of insuring a windows sytems never shows the blue screen of death.” “And, most importantly - it's painted black.”

“A ship easily missed by the unaided eye.”

Tales are asked, and told

Brro turns to Pia.

“I've heard, Pia, that you outwitted a clan of Ice Pirates, using them to solve the dilemma facing the Aralqueans over the Telusean fire swamps, no doubt profitting from the situation. Would you favour us with this tale?”

A merchant trading vessel makes a shaky landing on Aralquea

Pia drains her pint of beer before replying. “Right!” she says, “The Aralaquean story? Right you are! But how about another beer to wet my throat?”

Clearing said throat portentously, she [begins](#).

- [Pia's Tale](#)

Pia passes the conch

"Ms Rommer," says Pia, "Tell us about your holiday on the culinary planet of [Michelin](#), where you met a prophet whose visions had a way of coming almost - but not quite - true, and what happened when you discovered the source of the prophet's powers."

Simon raises an inquisitive eyebrow in her direction.

"Why, thankyou, Pia. It's, er, lovely".

Ariel gingerly accepts the proffered gift, shakes it gently and then holds it up to her ear.

'Carbonate mineral. No *apparent* moving parts, yet it seems to be emitting some sort of sound... It's amazing what technology can do these days."

She places the conch on the table and settles back in her chair, stretching luxuriously.

"The Michelin trip was rather memorable, although I do think Xoffert got rather a bum deal in the end. But first things first - I seem to have finished my water and I don't want to start without sufficient lubricant."

She orders some Earth Beer.

Life

Ariel sips her recently arrived Earth Beer.

"Ahhh. Better. Much better. You know, the [Michelians](#) have a similar drink to EB. At least, they say its made by the same fermentation process. Tooeze it's called. But nobody?s ever found what it's actually made from. The Space Corp lab once tried to characterise what it was that gave it its distinctive properties. But the funny thing was, while they identified any number of sugars and proteins and other complex molecules, it kept changing. The lab simply couldn't come up with a fixed composition. It was like it was almost alive. And when you actually see a glass of the stuff, it kinda makes sense. Pale green, sweet but pungent, and deliciously fizzy. And it goes straight to your head!"

She grins unexpectedly. "Although, that *is* rather the point."

- [Ariel's Tale](#)

Closure

Ariel smiles brightly "And that's about it really."

Brro applauds laconically. "An excellent story, Ariel."

"Yes, very nice." Zara says, somewhat distracted. The small, light blue robotic dog rushes back in with an electronic pad in its mouth. Zara takes the pad and gets up from the table. Absently scrolling through the document, she heads over to the bar in the far corner to get some ice cream.

"Most entertaining, madam!", Simon smiles. "Would you care to ask Mr. Nitrous about his adventures perhaps?" A brief look of concentration passes over his face as if he is consulting an inner computer. "I believe we have time." Simon pulls out a pocket organiser and looks at it, tapping a few buttons. "Yep, we do."

Bobo shakes his head at the wasteful ice cream carnage described.

"That's as much as can be expected with JIM involved - but you did gain your freedom in the end, I suppose".

He settles back in his chair and looks expectantly toward Nick and Ariel.

Nick Nitrous (G.R) comments

"Damn fine story Ariel"

Ariel asks Nick about stuff

"Right-o then", says Ariel cheerfully.

"So, Nick. I would love to learn the whole truth about how you and then GR rookie Flash Roger helped save Pherion 5 from being overrun by the Arsenium slime monsters. I've never quite believed it the way he tells it - I mean, surely you didn't *really* use nothing but the ships medical kit?"

She looks around absentmindedly.

"And does anyone have something i could put all these Terran bills in?"

Simon idly conjures a shopping trolley as he wonders about the Baron's Log entry.

Bobo looks askance at the shiny new trolley, then extrudes from his chest a small Space-Saver™ wallet - 'Guaranteed to hold 5000 times its external dimensions', and offers it to Ariel.

'Thanks you guys!'

Ariel tilts her head to one side.

"But I might take the wallet. It is a little smaller, after all. Does it really take *five* thousand times? That's so nifty! I'm sure my last one only took three."

Brro snorts. "There's a bin over there."

Terrans are Bad Luck

Ya know Ariel, that story gets better every time Flash tells it. Well, Flash Roger is a pretty good ranger

now, but back when I first met him he had more [chin than brain](#).

- [Nick's Tale](#)

The next tale

Bobo tsk's the terribly environmentally unfriendly Greenhouse Bomb. "Good work on saving Pherion 5, Nick! I only hope the fungicide didn't have too many unexpected repercussions."

He orders another EB, and a large serve of tuber sticks thermally prepared in an organic grease with a saccharine capsaicin flavoured gravylike substance.

"A most excellent tale!", Simon enthuses.

Munching on a tuber stick, Ariel settles back in her chair and casually flings a powerful thigh over the arm rest.

"Thanks, Nick. It's great to hear what happened on the Arsenium craft. Flash usually concentrates on what happened on the Space Fighter. How he had to resist the advances of a horde of Space Nymphs. (Of course, they almost **always** appear in Flash's version of events...)"

Watching the stares

Nick Nitrous seems to be in some form of stasis. A blue nimbus surrounding is comatose form. The distinctive whine of a Thargian assassins rifle is briefly overheard above the din of the customers at the bar.

Simon clears his throat briefly and taps his staff three times on the floor. There is a brief yelp and the sound of someone disintegrating.

"Sorry about that folks, I forgot I may have been followed." He grins momentarily before regarding Nick with a professional eye. "I'm afraid we'll just have to wait out the affects of the Thargian Stasis generator on poor Nick. But I cannot see why it should overly prolong our proceedings."

He turns to Svathlan, "My dear Ambassador Kalderash would you care to continue? I have heard much of your exploits and would be quite particular to the details of when you found that space station chief security officer, Laxx. Who helped you in the disintegration of the Hyper Matter Application Inc. with the use of only a single Nanobot."

"And as I recall, it somehow involved the use of a Canadian Sub- Atomic Neutrino Thermo-enhanced energy cell - but I have no idea how you came across such an Terran artifact."

Simon looks expectantly at the enviroment-suited mass of tentacles.

The shell shifts for the first time, almost as if uncomfortable at the presence of, well, an assassin, so very nearby. 'Yes. That is a very interesting story. I may be forced to gloss over certain particulars due to security concerns applicable even this many years later, but I shall speak of what I may.' 'It all begin in an asteroid mining cluster, in the old Terran system. Fortunately.'

"Asteroid mining in the Terran system? I heard that the Terran asteroid belts were mined out centuries ago." Pia looks curious, rather than confrontational.

Laxx Mining

"Absolutely." Three fine-work tentacles temporarily appear to aid the formation of a humour form, carefully negating the mocking overtone of the basic form. "This was ... [many years ago](#). But yes, it was no longer a functioning cluster, at least if speaking in terms of the mining and processing of basic ores and elements."

- [Svathlan's Tale](#)

Another tale

A meal arrives in front of the big purple egg, apparently ordered remotely. The ambassador picks at it lightly, a tentacle, apparently hollow at the end disappearing small portions of the dish.

"Thank you, Ambassador - an intriguing tale about an enigmatic entity. I think I'll have another beer. Captain Nitrous, please allow me to buy you another, as well, and welcome back."

Pia, also thirsty after another tale, spends the credit earned from her failed wager on another beer and a plate of chips.

"Always good to hear a tale of daring and intrepid nanobot programming. It's my shout this time, Captain Bro"

"A marvelous tale, O Ambassador", Simon comments. His mind is perhaps on other things though. Pondering the use of a Terran Cell instead of Brownian Motion and induced heat exchangers.

Pia approves

"Well," says Pia, "that was a great story. A sentient asteroid belt - who'da thunk it? And how very resourceful of Svathlan to do all that with only a nanobot! Bobo, can you top that?"

"Uh!" Bobo, who for the last little period has been giving a good imitation of a neorealist sculpture from the pre-Vogun School, gives a start.

"I - uh - I'm sure I couldn't possibly have anything of interest to tell! Certainly not in comparison to the system-spanning adventure of Svathlan - nor any of you adventuresome folk! I'm actually quite the homebody - although I admit, a bit of backpacking can be quite fun."

Pia approves, but Svathlan challenges

Not actually bothering to pause in the hoovering up of small snacks, Svathlan speaks. "Surely not, Mr

Brannigan. "I have heard, on rumour from a very good authority, that you were temporarily in charge of the project to create, and the progenitor of, the A-12 'Lictor' droid series. And that further, you were almost single-handedly responsible for shutting down the threat of these combat droids to the twelve Ring-worlds of Arctor, and by extension the very Empire itself, when the original twelve exceeded their programming and began a warlord-esque attempt to control the entire kik-dust production cycle."

"Long queue in the Biped," Zara mutters under her breath as she sits back down at the table, having been mysteriously absent for quite some time. "Backpacking, ey?" She scoffs.

A case of mistaken identity

"Oh my - that was all a mistake!", Bobo seems a little flustered.

"Really - I've never understood how the bureaucrats on Arctor Prime could take one MitSony chrome humaniform model XLVMCCi9200b, for another - but that's [how it all started](#)."

"Indeed. The thermographic wear patterns very rapidly become unique. Anyone can see that."

- [Bobo's Tale](#)

The tale is finished

"Well done!" says Pia. "But the important question remains unanswered: were the Lictors made from chocolate- or ginger & green tea- flavoured icecream?"

Ariel looks at Bobo with a new sense of understanding.

"You know, I've always wondered about the sentient who thought of making an edible android. I mean of **course** the idea is **breathtakingly** brilliant, but it is also more than a little... weird."

She nods her head slowly, "I think it all makes sense now."

"Oh - and great story."

"Indeed, Mr. Fetta. And well told.", Brro turns expectantly to Simon.

Bobo bounces the talking stick...

"My apologies if the ending was a little abrupt," Bobo pauses to emit the sound effect of a throat clearing, "but with all this talk - my throat was getting rather dry."

He looks unashamed at the blatant falsehood, and orders a super-sized EB to support his little social lie. "As a matter of fact, Pia, the Lictors were beer flavoured icecream." He takes a deep draught, then looks over at Simon, who, if he's not mistaken (is he?) looks about ready to tell a tale.

"Although I understand you have some memory problems, Simon," Bobo frowns concernedly as he

scans the Technomage's steel-plated head, "I'm hoping you'll be able to tell us about your use of technomagery in forcing to rationality that dangerously cultish religion which almost swept the galaxy - what was it? Psi-entolo-jee? I believe I heard clams were involved?"

Quack Alert

"A deliciously piquant tale, Mr. Bobo. I applaud your mendacity."

Simon clears his throat, "And you are quite correct in the assumption that the sentient clams of Necron IV were involved in the parareligious jihad to be led by the TechnoElvan wizard, Elrond Halfbad"

"A tale, I shall relate [shortly](#)."

- [Simon's Tale](#)

Pia, her eyes red, sniffs a little. "That poor clam! But what a wonderful story, Mr Technomage."

"Truly, Simon, a narrow escape for the universe at large."

Bobo shakes his head.

"Thank goodness you were on hand."

Zara is asked

"Ever since his noble sacrifice last week", Simon burps, "I keep getting a ache in my heart for Ciao Da, recurring again, and again.." A tear starts to form in his eye, as of a deep internal pain. "Compared to myself, its nobility is not easily absorbed and I am only now aware of the clam's full potential."

A brief spasm of guilt, and then he turns to Zara. "I understand, Ms. Jenkins, that you were on Terra during the invasion. I would be much interested to find out why." "I had heard that you saved all the lawyers on Terra with naught but a particle accelerator and a small can cheese-whiz. I would much like to know the story of how you did this, and more importantly, why?"

"Cheese Whiz?" responds Pia. "Yes, that might have worked. Do tell us how, Zara. And why! It wasn't something to do with the Kalducians, was it?"

Zara finally replies: Rumours and Spies

Zara laughs a little too raucously and glances quickly over her shoulder.

"Yeah, i was there alright. Still cleaning up some of the fallout, as a matter of fact. I'll admit to saving all the Terran lawyers but when you've heard the full story, you'll see it sounds worse than it really was."

- [Zara's Tale](#)

Pia just looks smug, then listens with close attention as the story reaches its conclusion.

"So you really **did** save all the lawyers with a can of cheez whizz. Did you ever come to regret it?"

Spraying a mouthful of yellow gunk, Simon chokes out, "Good grief" as he wonders at the legal ramifications of Zara's actions.

"Ewww" Zara indiscreetly wipes off a small piece of stray yellow gunk from her arm. Turning to Pia she replies, "HAven't regretted it yet, but I guess it's only been a couple of weeks. I'm sure I will when I undoubtedly get their collective bills!" She waves over a holographic waiter and orders another SeaBreeze.

Zara asks a tale of Brro

Zara turns to Brro who seems to have reappeared out of nowhere and says, "Having recently acquired my own cybercompanion, who on a good day is reasonably helpful, I am most interested to hear of the astounding tale of when you found a Nanobot and used it to lead the Space Lizards of Intersolar Space Station Alpha with only the help of your cyberdog." She sits back, looks over a small pad that she has pulled from her pocket and sips her drink quietly.

"I apologize for my apparent loss of concentration, Zara, but as it happens I was musing on the very events of which you speak. It was an old K-9000 series, I believe."

Brro shifts in his seat. "Excuse me, ladies, gentlemen and others, but I must protest that my throat is dry."

He orders another OEB, before turning to begin his story.

"What!?" he says.

- [Brro's Tale](#)

"Speaking of which, I have to be back at the _Wit_ in half an hour - looks like we've finished just in time!", says Brro.

"Oh good show old chap, I do like an ending with a good song and dance number.", says Bobo.

Brro's vote

"My credits are on the Ambassador. Well told, sir, ma'am or other." Brro looks at his timepiece. "Better be getting back to the ship, soon."

Simon's Vote

"Well, I must say, I think I found Ranger Nitrous' story to be quite refreshing" Simon places his three credits in front of Nick.

The Ambassador's vote

“While I don't wish to give the appearance of collusion, I must return the favour. There are of course some matters yet unclear to me, but that often tends to happen when speaking with humanoids.”

My (Zara's) vote is also to Brro.

Ariel has been sitting stock still for some time.

She twitches and a fine layer of dust rises into the air. Or is it?

“Damn TiO2” she mutters as she makes an attempt to brush herself off. “The stuff gets in *everywhere*”.

“Right. Sorry 'bout the delay” she says. “I've been... Away.”

“And of course, making a decision was so *difficult*. That took time too. I enjoyed all the stories but, I think, I'm going to have to go for Simon's.”

Go back to [The Captain's View Hotel](#)

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