

Distractions

STARSTRUCK

By Peter Bailey

LONG AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY, ... NOTHING MUCH WAS GOING ON. BUT IN THE PRESENT TIME - IN THIS GALAXY - EVENTS OF ASTRONOMICAL PROPORTIONS WERE UNFOLDING: PLOTS, BATTLES, AND COLOSSAL CONFLICTS, DETERMINING THE FATES OF HUNDREDS OF WORLDS. AND EVEN AS WE SPEAK...

... ANOTHER ONE UNFOLDS!

BOOM!

DARN! THE SHIELDS ARE GONE!

CAPTAIN, WE JUST LOST THE LAST OF OUR FIGHTER ESCORT, AND THE H'KALIK SHIPS ARE CLOSING IN!

THIS IS AN UNARMED SPACELINER. THESE GUYS ARE IN TROUBLE.

CPT. GANZI: THAT LAST BLAST KNOCKED OUT MOST OF OUR ENGINE REGULATION SUBSYSTEM. WE CAN'T GO ON MUCH LONGER WITHOUT RISKING AN EXPLOSION! WE MUST END!

CAPTAIN, I DON'T NEED TO REMIND YOU OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR CARGO AND PASSENGERS!

BLAST THE INTELLIGENCE AGENTS! HOW'D THE H'KALIKS FIND OUT THAT THE QUEEN WAS ON THIS SHIP? IF THAT MEMORY WARP WITH ALL THE ALLIANCE'S TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON STEALTH SHIPS FALLS INTO ENEMY HANDS...

WE'LL BE FIRED, AT LEAST.

IMBALANCE IN THE WARP ENGINES. THEY'LL EXPLOSIVELY SHEAR US APART IN SIXTY SECONDS.

OH, GREAT!

THEY'RE SHOOTING TO STOP US, NOT TO DESTROY US! THEY WANT THE QUEEN ALIVE!

BLAM!

I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T GET HER! I'LL SEARCH FOR A LIFE-SUPPORTING PLANET.

FAST!

CAPTAIN, I'VE GOT SEVERAL SUITABLE PLANETS FROM THE MEMORY BANKS ONSCREEN AND... EX...

WHAT? WHAT?!

THE PLANET IS UNDER GENERAL ORDER TEN, SIR! IT'S POPULATED, BUT HAS NOT YET BEEN IN CONTACT WITH OTHER WORLDS. ALL CONTACT IS FORBIDDEN WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION, AND IT'S THE ONLY PLANET WE HAVE TIME TO REACH - UNDER MAXIMUM WARP. IT'S EITHER THAT OR - SURRENDER.

WE CAN'T SURRENDER - AND I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT! ABOUT SELF-DESTRUCTING THE ENGINE, SCREEN REGULATIONS! DO WE HAVE ANY OTHER MEANS TO REACH THE PLANET?

JUST SURELY, IF YOU'RE GIVING UP, WE'LL GET THERE FASTER DO YOU THINK?

LET'S GO TO YOUR SKIVVIES, BOYS!

RRRRRRRRRR

ALL OF THE SHIP'S POWER SURGES THROUGH ITS WARP ENGINES, AS IT SIMULTANEOUSLY EXECUTES A SHARP COURSE CHANGE AND CATAPULTS ITSELF TO EMERGENCY WARP SPEED - WARP 3 (100,000,000 TIMES THE SPEED OF LIGHT, OR THREE LIGHT-YEARS A SECOND. (WOW!) THE ENEMY SHIPS, NOT EXPECTING SUCH DESPERATE MEASURES, ARE CAUGHT OFF GUARD, GIVING CPT. GANZI PRECIOUS TIME.

GOPT!

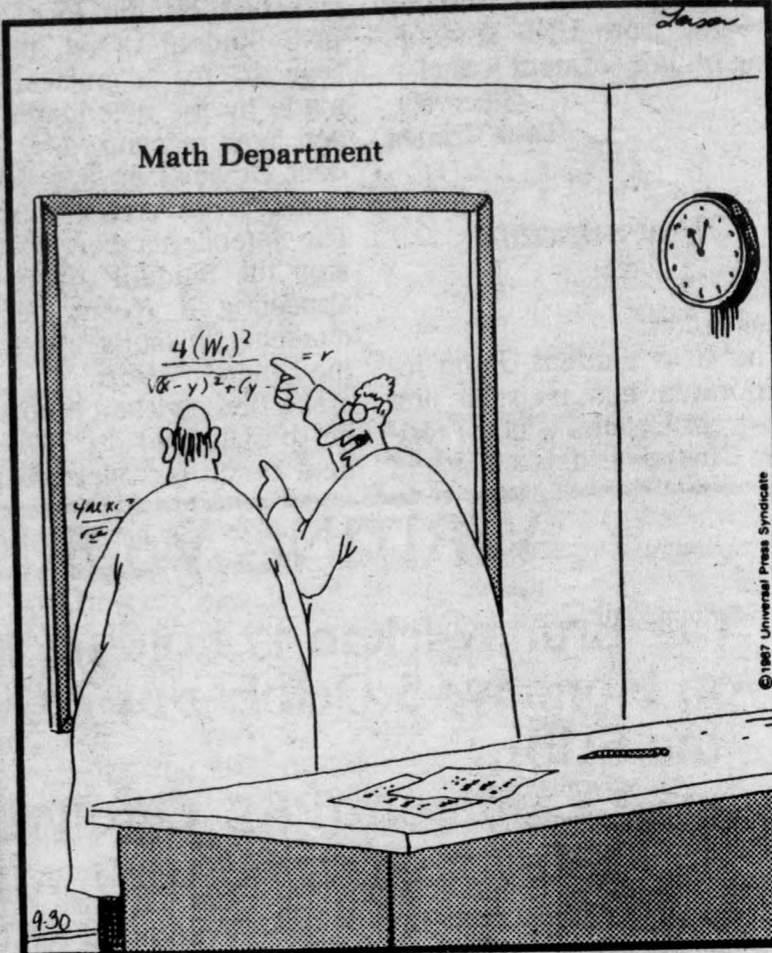
TWENTY-FIVE SECONDS LATER, WITH WARP ENGINES DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE, THE SHIP ENTERS NORMAL SPACE....

... WITH ITS TARGET VERY MUCH IN SIGHT!

LORDY! WE TIMED OUR WARP EXIT INCORRECTLY. WE'LL CRASH IN SECONDS!

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE FAR SIDE By GARY LARSON



"Yes, yes, I know that, Sidney ... everybody knows that! ... But look: Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, do make a right."



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