

Distractions

STARSTRUCK
by Peter D'Alley

AFTER STEVEN FISHER ENTERS A DOWNED SPACECRAFT THE ALIEN OCCUPANTS WHO ARE FOR ALL PURPOSES ESSENTIALLY HUMAN, AROUSED BY THE COOL AIR AND THE SOUND OF VOICES, AWAKEN FROM THEIR UNCONSCIOUS STATE.

OH, LADY! TRY TO BE A NICE GUY AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENS! HELL TURN ME INTO AN OVERCOOLED T-BONE WITH THAT! I... HEY! THE LADY IS SAYING SOMETHING TO HIM... LADY, THANK YOU!

AS AN UNEASY SILENCE DESCENDS UPON THE GROUP, THE YOUNG WOMAN REACHES OVERHEAD AND GETS A SMALL SUITCASE OPENING IT SHE RUMMAGES AROUND FOR A FEW SECONDS, AND THEN REMOVES A FLAT, THIN OBJECT RESEMBLING A HEADBAND.

SHE PUTS IT ON HIS FOREHEAD AND... (STALOWNI, KA... HEY! YOU'RE SPEAKING ENGLISH! I BROUGHT IT... I BROUGHT IT... ON THE CONTRARY YOU'RE NOW ABLE TO UNDERSTAND ME... INCREDIBLE!

YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE LT. GRENZITZ HERE - HE WAS JUST DOING HIS JOB, AND IT WAS ONLY ON 'STUN'... HOW ARE YOU AND THE CREW?

OH! - FORGIVE MY RUDDNESS, I HAVEN'T EVEN ASKED YOUR NAME. MY NAME IS VISTIL EYSON-THROPPA, AND THIS IS OSTAN FAREITON, MY AIDE. AND WHAT'S YOURS?

STEVEN FISHER - AND CAN I ASK WHY THAT FELLOW CALLED YOU "YOUR MAJESTY"?

WHY, BECAUSE SHE'S THE QUEEN, MAJ? ON, JUST CHECKING, I JUST DON'T RUN INTO MUCH EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL REYNOLDS... THAT'S ALL.

OSTAN WHY DON'T YOU AND LT. GRENZITZ CHECK THE OTHERS? I'LL FILL HIM IN ON OUR SITUATION, BESIDES, I FEEL LIKE SITTING DOWN.

YOU'RE REALLY A QUEEN? WHERE? OUR HOME WORLD IS CALLED SYDOUNGS, I AND MY TEAM OF AIDES AND DIPLOMATS WERE RETURNING FROM AN INTERPLANETARY SUMMIT CONCERNING THE INTER-STAR ALLIANCE'S WAR AGAINST THE H'KALIK PANGALACTIC EMPIRE.

YOU'RE AT WAR? UNFORTUNATELY SO.

W'D BETTER BACKTRACK A BIT FOR YOU, ONCE THE H'KALIKS WERE PART OF THE ALLIANCE, THEN, IS YEARS AGO, A GLOBAL COUP RESULTED IN THE H'KALIK STATE BECOMING A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP, THE RADICAL NEW RULERS PULLED H'KALIK OUT OF THE ALLIANCE, BOASTING OF H'KALIK SUPERIORITY AND INDEPENDENCE. TWO YEARS LATER, THEY DECLARED WAR ON THE ALLIANCE.

MANY FIERCE AND COSTLY BATTLES HAVE BEEN FUGHT SINCE THEN, AND THIRT PLANETS ARE UNDER H'KALIK SUBVERSION, AND FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, THE MAIN FRONT HAS BEEN STAGNATED NEAR SYDOUNGS. LATELY, THE H'KALIKS HAVE BEEN GETTING IMPATIENT, SYDOUNGS HAS BECOME AN OBSESSION FOR THEM, THEY'D DO ANYTHING TO BEAT US.

ANYWAY, LIKE I WAS SAYING, A SHORT TIME AFTER WE LEFT THE SUMMIT, A SMALL FLEET OF H'KALIK DESTROYERS CONVERGED ON OUR SHIP AND EASILY OVERCAME OUR FIGHTER ESCORT. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THEY FOUND OUT OUR FLIGHT PLAN - SUCH THINGS ARE HIGHLY CLASSIFIED. THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE A VERY DEEP AGENT SOMEWHERE, AND DECIDED TO USE HIM FOR THIS OPERATION. THEY MUST ALSO HAVE KNOWN THAT I WOULD BE ON BOARD.

YOU SEE, AS HEAD OF STATE AND THE ARMED FORCES, I KNOW A LOT OF INFORMATION VITAL TO OUR DEFENSE, AND CARRY SEVERAL VERY, VERY IMPORTANT CODES WITH ME. NO, I SHOULD NOT BE TELLING YOU THIS, FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. JUST LET IT BE SAID THAT THE H'KALIKS EVER GOT THEIR HANDS ON THEM, ENOUGH DATA WOULD CHANGE BETWEEN THEM TO SWAY THE COURSE OF THE JVAALIS WAR IN THEIR FAVOR.

WHICH BROUGHT US TO THIS - CRASHED ON A PLANET WITH NO DIPLOMATIC TIES OR COMMUNICATIONS TO HOME.

SO, BASICALLY, YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT THESE... HIGARUCKS ARE TRYING TO KIDNAP YOU?

OR SOMETHING I HAVE... DO YOU THINK THEY'LL FOLLOW YOU? WELL, LET ME JUST SAY THAT.

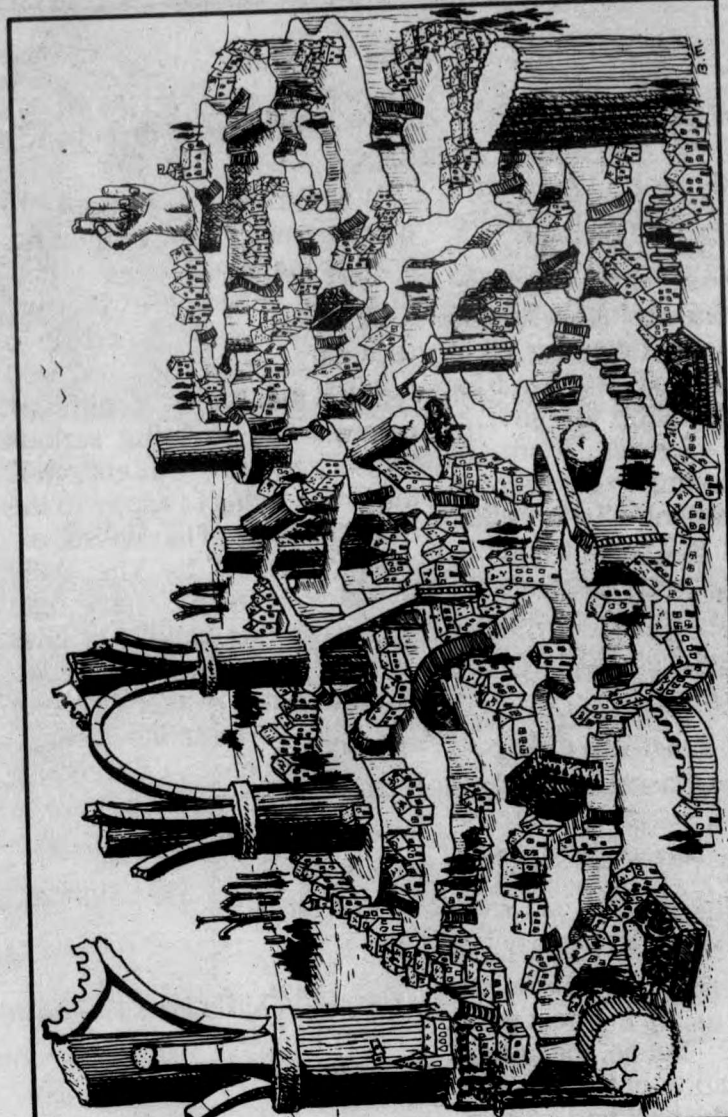
THEY HAVE A REPUTATION FOR FINISHING WHAT THEY START!

THIS THE H'KALIK BATTLESHIP, WINTERBORN, CALLING RECON ONE. REPORT, RECON ONE.

WINTERBORN RECON ONE, WE HAVE EXITED WARP AND SENSING EQUIPMENT HAS TRACKED SYDOUNG CRAFT TO THE THIRD PLANET OF STAR 8091 - 21% OF THIS SECTOR, WHOSE SOLAR SYSTEM WE ARE NOW ENTERING. THE PLANET IS COVERED BY THE OLD NON-INTERFERENCE TREATY.

RECON ONE, YOU ARE ORDERED TO PROCEED. UNDERSTOOD.

TO BE CONTINUED...



Go from church to church using the stairs and ramps. Remember no going thru houses.

BY CHRIS KANE

REST ASSURED, KID... BRUCE WOULD BE INDUBITABLY IMPRESSED. YES, INDEED!

BABY WE WERE BORN TO RUN!

CUZ TRAMPS LIKE US...

I.C.U.

BY BRIAN LINKLETT

MR. JONES

CONDOMS. HEY! A SEXUALLY ACTIVE LIZARD HAS TO BE CAREFUL THESE DAYS!

HEY, LOUNGE LIZARD, WHAT'S HAPPENING? I'M LOOKING FOR CONDOMS

BUT THAT'S YOU MEAN THEY'RE UNDER "HARD WEAR"?

IN A MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE?

IT SAVES ME THE EMBARRASMENT OF BUYING IN PERSON.

A CANADIAN TIRE CATALOGUE!!

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