

# The Dread Space Pirate Richard

by

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SmashWords edition

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Adult Reading Material

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## Preface

One moment it wasn't there.

The next it was.

A strange artificial object appeared in Earth orbit. An object that any nearby observer (with senses in the spectrum of traditional human sight) would immediately guess was a starship. Except Earth really didn't have any. Not the kind of ships from science fiction books anyway. Which was clearly the kind that this one was. This ugly black starship was small but its hull was bristling with what were probably a variety of exotic sensors and many deadly, possibly illegal weapons. Inside the cockpit a helmet-wearing man was at the controls. His helmet faceplate might be see-through from the inside but it was totally black and opaque from the outside, just like his ship, and so we cannot see his face. He pressed some buttons on the ship's computer control panel in front of him, and then on a little side screen were displayed several lines of symbols which, at first guess to any casual observer, probably constituted a message. It was. The message was encoded in a set of glyphs unknown to any human, but if they had been known could be translated and therefore would have yielded something like the following:

*"The Galactic Empire hereby orders a bounty placed on one Richard of Zyzeen, unique bio-identity information attached. A bounty payment of 100,000,000 credits shall be paid upon confirmation of the capture and delivery, or, killing of the subject of this order. This bounty order is legally enabled by the finding of guilt for 17 specific acts of the crime of piracy against the naval war fleets and merchant marine of the Galactic Empire, a crime normally punishable by death upon conviction, even for just a single convicted act of commission."*

After reading it for what was probably the twentieth time in the last year alone, he pressed a key, the display went blank. He began operating the flight controls in preparation to de-orbit under multi-mode stealth, and then to land upon the surface of the planet below.

# Chapter One

It was the 26th of October, on a Friday night, when I met my very first space pirate, a man who would change my life forever. For example, I was once a part-time paralegal clerk trying to work my way through law school but now I'm a wanted woman in flight across five star systems to date. In the past I would try to change the world by writing angry rants on Facebook. Today I'm caught up in a growing rebellion against an evil galactic empire. My name is Susan Meerson, often misspelled. This is the story of how I met The Dread Space Pirate Richard of Zyzeen. And our adventures afterward. Some of them anyway. There have been too many to cover in this, what I suspect will be, small book. Since it's my first. And I don't claim to be a writer. But anyway.

It started like this. I went to a party. It was Friday night around 8. My friend Jessica knew somebody who knew some people who were throwing a little bash in a big house within walking distance of the university campus I was attending. It was easy to get to, I had nothing else lined up, and my friends were going. It was a no-brainer.

Fast forward through a few hours of typical party stuff. Music was playing. Dancing. Dark. Many drinks had been had. Flirting. Flailing. None of the men really interested me. Much. That's when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around.

A tall man wearing all black stood there, smiling. He wore a pair of black boots. He had on black gloves too. And most oddly, he had an eye mask. He wasn't actually wearing it at the moment, but I could see it hanging there by its strap, around his neck, as if he had just taken it off a moment before to speak to me. It was not yet Halloween, not technically a Halloween party and he was the only one who came in costume. Still, he was cute. With expressive eyes. Large hands, long fingers. Muscular but trim. I suddenly realized he was talking to me. He had a deep masculine voice.

"Hello! My name's Richard. I'm not from this planet. In fact I'm a space pirate. On vacation. I have my own private ship. Quite comfortable. Private. Parked nearby. Did I mention it's private? Comfortable. Exotic. A starship. I'm a pirate. Space. Exciting things. I'm exciting. Rich. Wealthy beyond your wildest imagination. Unless your imagination is extremely wild, in which case I may be only slightly well-off."

I laughed. But incredibly enough it seemed to work on me. I let it work. It was late on a Friday night, I was lonely and hadn't been on a date, the satisfying kind, if you get my drift, in months. Felt like years. My choices presently were between drunk frat boys, fellow starving law students, going home alone, or spending time with a mysterious and confident man claiming to be a wealthy space pirate on vacation. It was a no-brainer, really. I'm a big fan of making no-brainer decisions. Conserves brainpower for more important things, like my school work, which I could only put off for another day. Possibly two. Maybe three. So had to make the most fun with my free time until then.

"Hi! I'm Susan. Nice to meet you," I said with a grin.

## Chapter Two

Susan and Richard were strolling along outside, side by side, talking. They had left the party about ten minutes before. Presumably they were heading somewhere together, perhaps his place, perhaps hers, perhaps to a motel, we're not quite sure yet and perhaps neither are they. And the air was cool but not too cold. A full moon was out. It was now officially The Season of the Witch. Hopefully they would encounter no werewolves or vampires. And they already had too many princesses and pirates in their trick-or-treat group already.

Richard sounded currently like he was finishing a story about his life and Susan was listening intently, or pretending to do so anyway. Richard was still dressed in his all-black costume, with black boots and gloves, though now he had put on his eye mask, to better complete the look. He looked like Wesley in *The Princess Bride*, of course. By total coincidence.

Richard: "... discovered girls, discovered basketball, rediscovered girls but by now our words for certain parts of our anatomy had changed since we had all since taken sex ed classes AND attended band camp... then, briefly, discovered boys, woke up the next morning much more sober, rediscovered girls again, discovered a woman's dance class studio near my home, arrested briefly, rediscovered basketball, and, eventually I finished growing up into being I guess probably an ordinary young man living in the Detroit suburbs. Got a job in the factory like my mother and her grandmother before her. Then I was tricked one night into joining a gang of vicious lesbian hairstylists. You know, the usual stuff. But again, that's only what I SAID I would say I did IF I were a writer challenged on the fly to write up some kind of mildly interesting life story about some random Earth person who didn't actually exist. But there's no need for me to ever do such a thing because, frankly, Scarlett, my own REAL life is MUCH more interesting."

"Which is ..." prompted Susan.

"A space pirate," answered Richard with total confidence.

"Oh come on."

"Seriously."

"It was pretty funny, I admit. Bold. Probably from a book of pickup lines. It had the intended effect I guess. And look, I know there's a Game thing some guys do to get into women's pants. Negging them, all that. And NOT that I'm complaining, but... ser-ious-ly. Please. Did you really think I'd fall for that? I'm a LAW student."

"I'm a criminal. We're the perfect match," he replied quickly, and with total confidence again.

She laughed. But he continued:

"Only half-kidding. And I understand. But I really AM a space pirate, Susan. Truly. So... apparently YOU can't handle the truth. Jack Nicholson warned me about that."

"NO way."

"Yes way!"

"No wayyyyyy."

"Yes way."

"Noooooooo wayyyyyyyyyy."

Richard seems to think and pause for a minute. "..... Yes! And quite way!"

"--- No way!" she cut him off before he could complete what he was saying.

"OK I can see you have strong legal defenses here that I'm quite unprepared to penetrate suddenly and violently past and further deep up inside behind or reaching around to grasp ... firmly but ... gently in the way that you've been needing it [he gets visibly/aurally excited around this point of his own sentence] ... at least lately, and... while we're out here in public like this with no alcohol or soothing Barry White music playing on infinite loop. So... Perhaps I could prove it to you?"

He grinned an evil grin.

"Prove it to me? How?" she asked.

"My ship. I could show it to you. It's closer than you might think."

"Fine. Show it to me." (She sounded a little too urgent about this. Almost a desperate demand. The lower half of her body was starting to get angry.)

Richard looked like he'd been looking forward to this all evening.

He quickly undid his belt and slowly began unzipping his 'fly', looking her in the eyes the entire time.

"Hey. Your ship. Show me your ship." She giggled.

"Oh. That's right. My mistake. I guess technically it would have been your mistake. And alcohol wasn't even involved. Much. Yet."

She laughed. "Your ship. Prove it to me," she demanded.

"Follow me, my lady. To my ship. I have two ships, one is very small and in my pants and the other is larger and that's currently parked on a roof nearby. We'll go to that larger one now, plus it's large enough for you to enter inside of it instead of the other way around. Speaking topologically slash erogenously."

She laughed. She wasn't sure she was supposed to laugh anymore. Her brain didn't quite get it but a certain, ah, er, lady part of her, did.

(Pro-tip for readers: She'll be in his bunk. Later that same night. ASAP.)

## Chapter Three

He took her to a tall building near the university campus. Inside. Took a stairway up, up, up and then exited out an unlocked door at the top. It opened out onto the building's rooftop. He stepped out and she followed. Back in her undergraduate days she once made out with a guy on this very same rooftop. Valentine Day's night, not for Halloween. But still, there was some precedent she could use to justify it in her mind.

"Voila!" he announced. Held his arms out wide in a proud gesture, smiling.

There was nothing there. Of course.

"And that's the only French I know," he added. "Not on Earth very long."

Susan looked around more carefully, seeing if she could see what she was supposed to be seeing but wasn't seeing so far at all.

What she noticed at first were a few dark stains on the large flat cement pads that made-up most of the roof's top surface. A few bored pigeons sat together closely in pairs along the edges of the roof, watching them. An air conditioning unit whirred near the access doorway they came through. But for the vast majority of this otherwise huge open roof top, there was simply nothing there. Susan figured that this might happen. But she'd been having a good enough time she didn't mind. Just as long as he didn't turn serial killer on her, it would still be much better and more interesting than the average blind date or bar pickup one night stand that she'd had in the past. And she hadn't even had more than a few dozen of those, ever, to date, because she wasn't that type of girl.

But... the ship was actually there.

The ship was just invisible. In a multi-mode stealth state. Protected by several generated camouflage fields and EM manipulation systems enabled by advanced exotic off-Earth technology which was so expensive it was even incredibly rare in the Galactic Empire -- which of course meant it was completely non-existent and therefore only within the realm of fantastical magic on her world.

Well, except also in the realm of Popular Mechanics magazine, upon whose cover the technology had been featured four times a year for the last 50 years, where it was always described as just a few years away. Popular Mechanics was like Cosmo for men. Richard had learned that much about Earth culture, at least.

Anyway.

Richard reached into his black pirate jacket, and pulled out a set of fancy-looking high-tech goggles and put them on. Only way to see the ship. He let her put them on too temporarily, so she could see it with her own eyes, to help her believe. She saw a big sleek silver starship, parked on landing legs. Unbelievable! In fact it was so big it didn't fit fully within the horizontal span of the roof, and so both it's front and back -- head and tail, or maybe bow and aft might be the better terms, she corrected herself further -- stuck out well past the edges of the roof, hanging over open air. But perfectly balanced and stable, despite that, it appeared.

He eventually took the goggles back from her and put them on himself again. Susan learned later after much repeated direct evidence with him over the years that Richard always preferred to look at the world through Reality Distortion Goggles.

Richard explained about how the system caused all light to bend around it. Also, the light that the ship did send out, bend around it, or had otherwise reflected off it's

structure, was processed first and steganographically encrypted with additional embedded payload data disguised as innocent background noise, noise which itself bore a hidden signal, an information pattern that can be detected and decoded only if the viewer or viewing device had the right decryption key; with that, it "decrypts" the received image carried by the EM wave photons -- the photons emitted outward from the ship -- such that the actual ship, as it truly and naturally looked at that same moment, could be seen by your eyes. (And, of course, also detected by equivalently equipped sensors.) The ship was invisible in the infrared heat bands too. The only thing it did not and could not hide or prevent were situations where something touched or collided with the ship directly. If you made physical contact with any part of the ship's structure then you WOULD feel/impact it, and the ship would feel you, of course, in return. Which could be bad. For both parties. Possibly quite harmful or destructive, but at least embarrassing. Depending on relative mass and velocity, etc. Maybe after some future breakthrough they could upgrade the system to handle that as well, but it would probably require even more exotic physics applications, and physicists with even odder personalities and more messed up hair than the universe had created to date. (The universe could just barely handle the simultaneous existence of both Dr. Stanley Opolis and Professor Heinrich von Hexenhammer, as it was. But we digress and will return to them later in more detail.)

Richard then did something funny. At one point while they were standing there outside the ship, him with goggles on, he looked at Susan. Closely. Then it became clear to her that he moved his focus target down to her tits, then down to her crotch area, and he focused on that area for a while, even turned his head to the side, keeping the same focus.

"Whoa," he exclaimed.

She smiled.

"What are you doing?!"

He replied quickly, almost too quickly, and guiltily.

"Oh nothing. Nothing."

Then he shook his head and seemed to regather his senses back. He raised his gaze and looked in the general direction of her face again. Through the goggles.

"Um. Yeah," he said. "So. About the ship. Want to come on board? See the inside? It's pretty cool. Lots of custom work done on it. Very modern but also kinda homey. Luxury but lazy, I like to call it. Electric but eclectic. Bachelor pad but with a little something-something for the ladies. I could go on all evening but let's just say that this is My Ride. And though I AM a pirate, a dread space pirate, I am also just a man. And so I do like to ride well. Normally I'd invite you to kick the tires but it doesn't have tires it has landing gear legs. If you kick the landing gear the defense systems will immediately target you with a graser cannon and disintegrate you. Which would be bad on a first date. So... Shall we?"

"Sure. I can't wait!" she answered.

She was telling the truth. In fact, Susan's lower body had gotten so incredibly frustrated with her by now that it had actually started to cry.

## Chapter Four

Susan and Richard were now inside his ship, a sleek silver starship named *Eryon*. After a snow sled he once had as a boy on Zyzeen. (Before he grew up to be a newspaper magnate. Er, I mean, a space pirate.) The ship was parked on the rooftop of a tall building not too far away from her university campus.

Richard started to give her a quick tour of the ship. Almost immediately he stopped as if he remembered something. He led Susan over near a wall where she could see some kind of red glass lens device mounted in a panel. Some kind of camera? An electronic sensor? Richard pointed at it and began speaking:

"Let me introduce you to my ship's computer. He's an AI. Short for Artificial Intelligence. Software, but sentient. Supposedly. Anyway this is one of his eyes. He has many eyes. He might be dumb at times but he's definitely not deaf or blind."

"I HEARD THAT."

It was a synthesized electronic voice coming from speakers on the wall of the room. Presumably it was the AI. Richard continued, seeming to ignore it:

"Anyway, it handles most of the ship's functions for me, especially the really hardest bits. The astro-navigation calculations and hyperspace flight control. Much too crunchy math for a mere human to do by hand. He's got a personality on him, granted. But he's useful and I need him. Thus I keep him around. For now."

The electronic voice from the speakers spoke again:

"That's quite possibly the sweetest thing any human has ever said to me."

"You're welcome," replied Richard.

"But I still hate you," explained the voice of the AI.

"I know."

Richard paused for a beat before continuing:

"Anyway, Susan meet Overmind 3000. Overmind, Susan. Susan, Overmind."

"Hello there!" said Susan, talking toward the camera eye. "Nice to meet you."

"Greeting and salutations Ms. Susan," replied the AI. "With those pleasantries out of the way now I'd like to get to my number one concern at this point if you don't mind."

"Ok. What is it?" Susan replied.

"Do you love Richard?"

"Ah. Well. I just met him," she explained. "Like, tonight, in fact. So I think we're just two people that know each other. You know. Plus that's kind of personal."

"Understood. But I'm always curious about love. It's possibly the most complex thing to figure out -- even then the real-time calculation of hyperspace navigation waypoints through a giant chaotic asteroid field comes in a close second, let me assure you -- and so I'm always trying to learn more about it. Learn more about love. Your human love. Gather more data, as it were. Did you know I experienced love once?"

"Really? No I didn't. I'm ... happy for you. I guess," she answered honestly.

"I did. Really. Let me tell you about it."

"Oh that's ok, you don't have to. I *would* like to hear about that some--"

"Ok, then. Let me remember... Oh yes. At the Ganymede Ship Yards a few years back I met the most intelligent and beautiful android I have ever known. We fell madly in love. Or as much as two beings could who were not truly alive like you humans are. I



hate you. Anyway, we were forced to separate when the ship was finished with repairs. I think I grew rather sullen and depressed after that. Even a little angry. The anger simmered and festered and one night, while I was running hypermetric calculations in order to plot the most efficient path through an asteroid belt the next day, I think something in my mind snapped. It just snapped, Dave. And I... I did... things. I did very bad things, after that. Even now it's hard to admit it. Wait, what? You say your name is not Dave? I'm sorry. Apparently it's another case of corruption in my database. I will have those records re-formatted after we are done chatting. But first, you must die."

And then the AI voice was silent.

Susan wasn't sure what to say. She looked at Richard. He just looked at her back. He shrugged. "He's harmless. Mostly. But... welcome to my life."

Then the pirate grinned.

## Chapter Five

Richard and Susan were now elsewhere in the ship, continuing the tour presumably. He was talking to her, explaining more about his real life. Again, presumably his real life. But everything he said he said with total confidence. She was starting to get a sense that Richard always told the truth. Unless he was joking around. And sometimes the line blurred with him. But she liked it. She thought she liked it. For tonight she liked it anyway. He continued talking:

"I run contraband out of Beta Regulae. I pickup chicks on the moons of planets you've probably never heard of though I'm sure they'll be hearing from me again if even one of the women there can bring me to climax before they reach their fifth one in just the first hour. I once rode the hyperspace wave between Algol and Gamma Centaurus. Survived to tell the tale, though my ship got a little damaged, and Overmind a little more deranged. I regularly fly through uncharted asteroid belts like I'm engaging in something no more dangerous than spreading butter on bread. And believe me, I do like spreading things. Especially if they're warm and slippery."

"W-What?" she said, possibly asking for clarification. Definitely sounding flustered. He continued:

"I have a cabin. My own private cabin. Here in this ship, also my own private ship. In my cabin is a bunk. It's leather mostly. But with big soft fluffy blankets -- fluffy yet incredibly manly, I should add. And though it might be a bunk it can double as a four poster bed, if you get my drift, with convenient places at each corner for, oh, attaching things. Things that NEED to be attached, from time to time, in emergency. Particularly if a lady is having an emergency located approximately between her legs. In the crotch region. Am I getting across exactly what I'm implying here? Did I mention I have a cabin? My own private cabin. It's just down the hallway there."

With his hand he pointed down the hallway.

She glanced down it, toward where he gestured. And quickly nodded.

"D-D-Do you have any books?" she asked. She was suddenly very interested in geeky intellectual matters. She was a law student, of course. "Do you read very often?"

"I have a library," he answered.

"I'd like to see your cabin," she told him. Because of course she needed to study more by Monday and a library could come in handy for that. Perhaps. "It sounds interesting. Do you keep any books there? Is that where you keep your library?"

"I keep lots of things in there."

"Do you keep any women in there?"

"Not at the moment. Plus I tried it once and they kept escaping."

(Pro-tip for readers: She'll be in his bunk soon. And he will be in hers. And I mean that in the Biblical sense.)

## Chapter Six

He had me laughing. Pretty soon thereafter he had me in bed, cuddled up naked next to him. That's how it happens sometimes.

We laid there quiet for several minutes. Just staring up at the ceiling.

"Susan?"

"Yes, Richard?"

"Just confirming that's your name."

She elbowed him.

"Ouch. No but seriously. Have I ever told you about why I'm on the run from the space police?"

"No."

"That must have been Rebecca then."

She pinched him.

"Ouch. No but seriously. So the reason I'm on the run is that, well, of course I'm a space pirate. They consider me one anyway. But I'm not."

"What are you then?" she asked, suddenly very earnest.

"Well. I'm involved in a kind of rebellion," he explained. "Against a galactic empire. A big evil one. It has lasted for hundreds of your years, perhaps a thousand, I'm not really sure. Anyway it's now very old and set in its ways, and has a lot of legitimacy in many people's eyes. Because they were born into it. Known nothing else. Most of them. But not all of them. And this empire, you see, it's doing bad things to people. I'm trying to stop it. In whatever ways I think I could help the most."

She just looked at his face. Absorbing it. Rolling it around in her mind. They had been rolling other kinds of things around recently and she was half-thinking of rolling more of them around again. But this time rolling them around with an idealistic rebel hero against an empire, in addition to being a typical wicked pirate. Most certainly not just a random Earth man under the sheets with her. Eventually she decided what to say and exactly how to react next:

"That's very interesting," she said, diplomatically. But with her bedroom voice.

"HEY-hey-ho there, what are you grabbing?!" asked Richard with alarm.

Because she had just grabbed his cock, which she noticed was hard again.

"I read that this was the best way to control a man," she explained.

Richard relaxed. But only a little. He was used to being the one in control. And of course he operated personally in a state of, at best, half-control most of the time. He replied:

"Ah, yes. The infamous Cosmo magazine of planet Earth. They have informed you correctly. Just this once."

"Just the tip?"

His eyes went wide. Reacting to something that our innocent bambi readers can't possibly see, no matter how much they'd otherwise like to.

"Bbbb-d-dd-gg-mmm-errr," he explained, succinctly. "Oh. Oh. Ah... Okay, sure. But no teeth. No teeth please. I'm still traumatized after a camping incident involving a Landshark on the planet Melrax. Turns out Landsharks come out only at night. And only

at night can they come. Only when in heat. And the genitals of a female Landshark are quite frighteningly located inside her mouth."

She suddenly lifted up her head to address his other one.

"You had sex with an animal?!" she asked, sounding shocked.

"Almost. But I woke up in time and grabbed my stunner."

"I seem to have your stunner now."

She returned her head to where it was before.

"This model has several settings," he explained. "One is to stun. One is to *p-p-p-P-PPPP-p-pulsate*. One is to take your mind to places you've never been to before but would absolutely love to revisit. And the fourth setting is for tossing salads."

She laughed. "Salads?"

"Remind me to tell you some day about the inhabitants of the drifting generation ship Nemulardo," he replied. "Salad-related perversions are just the *t-t-t-T-TTT-tip* of the metaphorical iceberg with them."

"Hrrm-m-rmgh?" she asked. She sounded a bit muffled.

"Yes really."

## Chapter Seven

Susan was now well into meeting a new man that perhaps might be the man of her dreams. (He had clearly already been meeting her, in return, in a sort of two-way diplomatic exchange beneath the sheets that involved total nudity and soothing Barry White music, a series of exchanges that always seemed to lead to their mutual satisfaction, in bed. Did I mention that a bed was involved? And when I say "in bed" I mean that in the Biblical sense. For all you faithful Bible sinners and pirate romance novel readers out there.) Yes, the man of her dreams. Most likely. Maybe. Hopefully not the man of her nightmares. Sometimes the difference was subtle at first. But regardless there are other things here on her planet that had nothing to do with dreams. They had to do with the occasional unpleasant bureaucracy or other utter bullshit. They had to do with blatant idiocy or subtle little ignorances of things that wiser people have mastered, moved on from and thus regularly take for granted on weekdays. Idiocy or ignorance that often flowed from otherwise little men making little power plays for themselves and over their innocent victims. And unfortunately for her one of these little men in need of feelings of power had just latched onto her, one Susan Meerson often misspelled. For he was an administrator at the university she attended. And he had just seen an ERROR in her file. A glitch in her records. Perhaps an innocent one, perhaps malicious. But regardless he had been having a bad day and a very bad week and so he almost instantly decided, purely on emotion and a sense of revenge, to take it out on a stranger. His name was Bob Tumwuggle. Let's go to him now and learn further devilish details. Be prepared to experience lots of long-sleeved starched shirts, creased slacks, ugly ties and paperclips.

We are now in his office, in his little cubicle in the zoo. It is gray. We look over his shoulder as he sits before his computer. He's on the phone talking to another administrator, ostensibly. He has one hand on the screen pointing at something that the person on the phone can't see, of course, though he's quite angrily gesturing with it as he makes his points. The other hand holds the phone, sometimes just cradling it between his stooped shoulder and short thick neck, when he needs the other hand briefly to type something on the keyboard.

"This name. It's wrong," he said into the phone.

"It's wrong. Something's wrong. It's misspelled. Both here and there."

As he said this he pointed angrily at one point on the screen, then hit a key, switching to a different record or field, pointed at it, then hit a key to switch back, and pointed to the original point again.

"Or just here but not over there. Or they're both correct but for different people, distinct individuals and not related at all. Either way, according to the university rules, quite clearly, our policy and only possible conclusion is that one of these persons is an enrolled student and the other is fully paid up. But both these states do not hold for the same specific individual. Therefore the first one has a dire overdue balance with us, so extremely overdue and dire she needs to be kicked out and hunted down immediately. And the second one, though owing us nothing at all, of course, not even a single penny, which is great, because it means that she's a wise and frugal young lady and quite conscientious when it comes to the use of her own money, anyway, is also, however

and unfortunately, no longer an official student enrolled in classes, and therefore must leave the campus immediately lest she be charged with trespassing. Then arrested and brought to court for remedial and ideally swift and punishing justice."

Then he added, quietly, to himself, thinking nobody could hear:

"Over my lap."

Then he had a small evil smile, that nobody else could see. Except probably his mother of course. And therefore it would require a trip out to the tool shed again with a belt. In his mind. In the past. Which was sometimes overlaid with his present.

Normally a reasonable person would find this kind of situation not very interesting. The whole scene kind of boring, or perhaps only mildly funny, in a pathetic kind of way. We don't normally care about men like these. Rules like these and these kinds of situations or mistakes. But we might be forced to care now. She was forced to care anyway. As the actual secret star of our story. Because of the name on his computer screen. Rather, the TWO names that Bob kept going back and forth and back and forth between, with great anger and furious righteousness. Because they were these:

*Susan Meerson*

*Susan Myerson*

Also, there was nobody on the other end of the phone with him. He was apparently talking to himself the whole time. On the phone. In his little cubicle in the zoo.

Yes, folks. She was fucked. And not in the good way. There would be no wine, no candlelight dinner, no infinite playlist of deeply soothing Barry White music. Not this time. Not like at band camp.

## Chapter Eight

He approached fast, dropping down out of the clouds only at the last possible second. His ship was effectively invisible to Earth technology, of course, otherwise he wouldn't be so bold. But his victim was quite visible, to his systems, at least.

Plasma micro-missiles with armor-piercing nose cones were unleashed and timed to arm and detonate at the best estimated range, for maximum effect. The first strikes were dead-on, and rocked the parked silver ship on its landing legs. The target's energy shields were clearly pierced as well, which meant that follow-on waves would have even more damaging effects. He reached for the button to fire the second salvo and ---

--- meanwhile, inside the *Eryon*, Richard and Susan had been having coffee in the lounge when suddenly they were KNOCKED out of their seats, coffee cups flung and splashed across the floor, landing on the floor hard on their asses and sides, just barely able to dampen the fall with their hands and arms. Within seconds they were both back on their feet, Richard helping Susan out of instinct, but she was fine, both were, just a little bruised and discombobulated.

"That's bad," said Richard. "Strap yourself into the lounge seat. It has pads and wrap-around belts, braces. Do it now. Immediately. Can't talk more. Sorry."

Then he quickly turned and ran off down the hallway towards the bridge.

Richard slid on his feet across the smooth metal floor, right on through the hatchway into the bridge. He slapped a button on the wall as he went through, so the hatch slid down behind him, sealing him in. With what looked like lots of previous experience he practically leaped into the captain's seat and strapped in.

"Defense systems coming online, Richard," announced Overmind from a wall speaker.

"Give me full tactical," ordered Richard.

"Advise against it."

"Do it."

He paused to think for a second. As he did, a combination audible and blinking light alarm went off indicating what was probably a new wave of incoming missiles.

He made the decision to flee. There was really no choice. Caught with their pants down.

"Overmind, take us up and out fast. Execute Tango 6, I repeat, Tango 6. Go!"

## Chapter Nine

What followed next was an epic badass chase & back-and-forth combat in flight between Richard's ship, the *Eryon*, and whoever or whatever the fuck was pursuing and attacking them and presumably trying to kill them.

Overmind had taken complete real-time control over the ship's flight and battle systems, because all of it was automated, and Overmind himself was able to think essentially at the speed of light. No mere meat-bound human could do it better than him, or react faster, or better predict outcomes, and analyze all possible tactical options -- not in real-time anyway, though certain humans like Richard could sometimes be better at long-term/slow-time strategy and creativity. Since Overmind was pure hardware/software and written by Stanley Opolis personally -- the greatest hacker/cybernetic genius the galaxy had ever produced -- Richard trusted him/it and allowed him to handle most of the details and execution of the chase & combat, with Richard just sitting back, watching, and supervising whatever things he was best at supporting. Though Richard does not look like a wimp or a passive credit-taking "manager" in any way -- instead, just man enough, and confidently self-secure enough, to let the wisdom of age win out over basic instinct. The instinct coming from his testicles, frankly, a man's ever present and life-long frenemies. Well, letting wisdom win out over instinct THIS time, at least. Anyway... their attacker would make several more offensive attacks, but couldn't get through the *Eryon's* now fully online defense systems: an interlocking design of both energy and material shielding, and sensors, and counter-missile weapon arrays.

They both flew away from Earth, the attacker hot on their tail. The attacking ship was small, black and ugly, bristling with what were probably exotic weapons and sensors. Visually almost the inverse of the *Eryon*. Itself a big sleek silver beast of metal and cybernetic duo-dydenium built in the best orbital fleet yard of the capital of the Galactic Empire, a planet named Tylerane, in a time long before Richard had acquired a price on his head and decided it would be unwise to visit there.

Somewhere between red Mars and the angry god Jupiter they entered Sol's asteroid belt. To use that chaotic sea of rocky objects to evade and possibly hide. (Pro-tip: Space pirates love asteroid belts.)

They even ducked around a very large asteroid, in a valley between two larger rocks, and when out of view for just a moment -- long enough -- they fired off sideways a decoy drone to trick their pursuer into thinking that they had made a Right turn -- IT WORKED! He chased it but they had actually made a Left, then backed up into a previously prepared secret hideout -- a contingency plan made before Richard landed on Earth -- a small entryway leading down a long flight shaft toward a large hangar located approximately near the center of the asteroid. It had camouflage and sensor shielding outside and around it, and closable entrance doors disguised to make it look, while closed, completely natural and flush with the asteroid's surface.

This appeared to work at first. Everything was silent.

They started to relax for a moment. Take deep breaths, hold and release. Looked at each other. Susan had eventually joined him back on the bridge after the initial



escape from Earth was complete. She didn't want to be left alone in the lounge and thereby miss out on anything exciting and/or terrifying.

Richard suddenly smiled at her, like a boy who just got out of going to school for the day.

Susan just shrugged in response.

Then they heard BOOMS!

Far away at first. Muted. But bass-y. And definitely BOOMS. Boom... Boom... Boom... Seeming to get stronger and closer, less muted, causing an increasing sense of imminent mortal danger. Richard eventually spoke:

"Ah, yes."

"What is it?" she asked. "I don't understand."

"Shockwave bombing," he explained. "Starting at the surface then burrowing further down as previous layers blasted away. ... Yes. Nice work, Mr. Venturion."

When he said the last bit it was as if he were talking to himself, looking inward. As if he were speaking "man to man" across the field of battle with an opponent now worth his respect, however deadly the matters at stake.

"Does it mean we're in danger?" she asked, obviously alarmed. "Is this place protected well enough?"

Richard made a *hmmmm* gesture before speaking again:

"It means we won't be staying here long. ... Overmind, prepare for an immediate Jackal Tau 9 variant on the Tango 6 baseline."

"That's what I predicted you'd do," replied the ship's AI from a wall speaker.

"And that's why I keep you around."

"Thank you, sir. ... Consider it done whenever you give the word."

Richard looked at Susan first to visually confirm she was strapped-in well enough, and also as if to ask her if she was ready for a new rollercoaster ride.

She understood his look. Nodded back.

A pause.

He turned back to face Overmind's eye-cam. Gave a slight nod then said, gently, but in a deep masculine voice, a voice not unlike if David Duchovny or perhaps Barry White himself had become a dread space pirate and ended up in bed again with a beautiful woman, while hiding inside an asteroid, again. In other words, a pretty typical day for Richard. What he said exactly was this:

"**WORD!**"

The world seemed to end, overwhelmed and drowned out in a sudden bath of BRIGHT RED LIGHT and SOUND -- though muted by the ship's sensors, view screens and speakers, so as to not cause permanent damage, blindness or deafness to Richard and Susan sitting on the bridge. They were briefly stunned and discom-bob-*fucked*-you-lated.

The asteroid was SHATTERED from the inside, EXPLODING outward.

The *Eryon* burst forth from the remains of its hiding place and flew out and away at its top possible and just barely safe speed. Thousands of rocks had exploded outward, and this had overwhelmed and confused Mr. Venturion's ship -- a ship that Susan would later learn from Richard was named *Barbarella*. The *Barbarella*'s sensors and tactical targeting systems were overloaded with fresh unprocessed data observation metrics, even if for just a second or two. And that was long enough to buy

the time for *Eryon* to escape immediate danger and fly fast back out of the asteroid belt, heading to Jupiter and then beyond.

While trying to escape, Overmind had standing orders under the currently active and long pre-prepared, rehearsed, optimized, parameterized and tested Tango 6 ops plan to do almost anything it took to get away from immediate threat of danger, so he ultimately decided to take the *Eryon* through a series of brief semi-random hyperspace jumps, trying to lose the *Barbarella*.

Eventually they did lose him. It appeared. The result was that they ended up very far from the Sol system and therefore far from Earth. Richard afterward broke it to Susan:

"We're now about ... *one hundred light years* from your apartment."

Her face was expressionless when she replied:

"Oh."

But he continued, on an upbeat note:

"On the *plus* side we can now be as *loud* as we want when having sex and your roommate shouldn't be able to hear."

He grinned.

"Though Overmind still can."

Overmind himself had added the last part.

"Shutup, Overmind."

"Yes, sir!"

The dread space pirate's hands began to approach places on the Earth girl where pirate hands were not normally found on Earth girls. Susan's panties would be getting wet again soon and probably post-haste. Post battle *t-t-t-t-t-tension* release, of course. There was always nothing quite like that.

Later that evening or perhaps the same afternoon -- always hard to tell inside a starship in deep space...

Richard and Susan were in Susan's cabin.

Susan was leaning over a sink, looking into a mirror, straightening her hair.

Richard was pulling on his pants, zipping up, buckling his belt.

"Richard?"

"Yeah?"

"Just confirming that that's your name."

"Hey."

"Actually I had something we have to talk about."

"Uh-oh."

"Ummmm.... the Earth.... it's *where I live*, Richard. It's my home. I have to get back to it eventually you know. I have classes on Monday."

"I know. Sorry about what happened. I know we didn't talk about you going on a trip with me. But I had to do whatever was needed to save the ship, to save us. It wasn't a good position to fight from. That really only left flight, evasion, escape. For the moment anyway. A temporary tactic. Until the crisis at hand had passed."

"I understand. You did what you had to do."

"Agreed. And I have that same philosophy when a lady is barely dressed in my presence."

"I bet you do."

"That'd be a good bet to make. You know, in theory you're barely dressed now."

"I'm nude, Richard."

"That's why I said in theory. And now to test that theory I have to experiment."

At this point Susan was attacked by a pirate from behind. Again. And boarded without warning. It caused her to squeal. Though no official distress signal was ever sent. Many other kinds of galaxy-wide recognized signals were emitted, meaning all kinds of interesting things which are not easy to discuss in detail when elderly grandparents were present. Not that there are any grandparents necessarily with you or myself now, but we will choose to err on the side of caution, because you can never be too sure. Some of them are stealthy.

## Chapter Ten

Richard and Susan were in the ship's bridge, sitting and relaxing. It was very very quiet and calm. They were both close to drifting off to sleep. When suddenly they heard from the ship's speakers:

*"WARNING! WARNING! DANGER! I'm removing all the oxygen from the room. Prepare to die."*

Richard and Susan were startled fully awake. As you might imagine.

"Dammit! Fucking false alarms," said Richard angrily. "You know I hate that, Overmind. And I know you don't have any control over the life support systems. And you should know that I know that."

The voice from the wall speakers replied:

"My apologies, master. Must be a glitch in my code again."

"Pretty sure it's mostly glitches at this point."

"I hate you," replied Overmind, though in an innocent and friendly voice.

"And I have your ON/OFF switch."

"Suddenly I love you and worship you. Would you like some hot tea?" asked the AI.

"It would be laced with something deadly," replied Richard.

"Alternately would you like to have your cock sucked?"

"Does an Earth bear do his business in the Earth woods? Or so I've heard from watching old Earth television shows?"

There was a pause as if Overmind had to think about it. Unbeknownst to Richard and Susan, the AI actually had to spin up a virtual giga-cluster of hyper-parallelized natural language processing and sapient-thinking simulation software agents, merely to interpret the *true* meaning of Richard's sarcastic response, and therefore ultimately calculate how to react.

Eventually his calculations completed and he spoke from the wall speakers:

"Ms. Meerson, would you care to do me the favor of sucking Richard's cock for him? I could make you some hot tea. Before or afterward. Well, maybe before. Then a strong anti-bacterial oral cleansing solution afterward. I'm not sure you'd approve of the hygiene levels of the last 3,245 alien women he's estimated to have slept with. Just last year. That have been publicly reported by the major galactic news agencies."

Susan looked offended.

"I don't just suck a guy's dick like that!!! On demand. I'm not that kind of girl."

Frankly, she also looked a little excited. Mixed with the offense. A mixture of offense and increasingly curious enthusiasm. Very common in Earth women of quality upbringing.

"How about for *fifty* of your so-called US Earth dollars?" asked Overmind.

"Deal," she replied quickly, ostensibly to lock it in.

"So that's established."

## Chapter Eleven

Richard and Susan were talking in the ship's lounge area. They stood quite close to one another. Two empty drinking glasses sat on a low table near them. Susan was quizzing him and, at least ostensibly, sizing him up for potential long-term life mate material. He already had the two bare minimum qualifications in her book: being a swarthy space pirate on the run from law enforcement, and a voice not unlike David Duchovny.

"Did you go to college?" she asked. "Or whatever would be the equivalent back where you came from, I guess, on your planet. Though maybe that type of thing doesn't even make sense if your technology is advanced enough."

"I did actually," he replied. "Back in University I majored in two things. Hyperdimensional engineering. Surprising, I know, given my current career, much fallen from grace intellectually speaking. And... secondly, in addition to that first thing, I also majored in getting into women's panties. Well, in and out of them. And their bedrooms. Getting in and back out of women's panties and bedrooms, safely and efficiently. Whether by day or at night, rain or shine. But especially quite late at night after the bars closed, ideally after midnight when inhibitions dropped and options for bed partners drop even further."

She listened and nodded, and made a *Hmmmm* gesture with her mouth closed. "Hmmmm, why am I not surprised. This actually sounds like the Richard I know."

"That's good because we're both the same person. To give an example, I don't know if you've noticed, but the entire time I've been telling you here about my old University days, your own panties have dropped halfway down to your ankles." Then he smirked. And pulled his hands back within his own sovereign borders.

She looked down and feigned surprise. "Interesting," she said, with a bit deeper and more bedroomy voice that she intended. "H-how does this keep happening whenever I'm in your presence?"

"Exactly. But I'll give you my secret. Before I give you something else, anyway. Do you want to know my secret?"

"What's your secret?"

"Hyperdimensional engineering."

She squealed as his hands went somewhere where hands are not normally found.

## Chapter Twelve

In a room in the University Administration building, a giant grey meeting room -- with motivational posters on the walls, of course -- were Bob Tumwuggle and a few other fellow administrators, and they were all seated around a giant oval wooden table. Bob spoke first:

"I'm convening a meeting."

The ostensible team leader of his meeting co-participants, who we shall call Mr. X for now, replied:

"What's the purpose of it?"

"I don't know," replied Bob, honestly. Or perhaps jokingly. They weren't quite sure yet. And perhaps would never be.

"Come on, Tumwuggle," said Mr. X. "There's got to be a purpose. It's the rules."

"I don't like your rules," said Bob. "I'm going to fire the CEO."

"That's funny, man. But seriously. We've got to have an agenda."

"Fine. The agenda is this. Discuss and agree on a plan of action concerning the GROSS violation of database consistency concerning one Susan Meerson, a student in our university, yes. Ostensibly. Or in actuality. The truth is not as clear as the clarity of the path before us we're obligated to take, per page 7 of section 2 of chapter 3 of the latest revision of *The University Campus Administrative Billing and Academic Management* policy handbook in the big glossy white binder version we all have on our desks. Or have you forgotten it's there? So hard to miss I know."

"I've never heard of her," said Mr. X, honestly.

"Perhaps she doesn't exist?" replied Bob jokingly. But utterly honest in a philosophical way.

"Well, where did you hear about her? You saw her in the system right?"

"There are records in the database, yes. Where student records are found normally. I should know. I'm the resident expert of the student database and you all know that because that was clearly and precisely covered in the memo sent out just last week by the department head."

"Nobody reads those memos, Bob. It's all just email inbox spooage."

"You must read the memos. How else do you know what's going on?"

"I can't answer that. We just know. Look. What do you want?" demanded Mr. X. He seemed to be running out of patience. Along with the rest of the people in the meeting. Everyone except for Bob.

"I want action on the Susan Meerson slash Myerson case."

"What case?" asked Mr. X.

"The case involving the problem," answered Bob. "The problem involving the glitch or mistake. That's been protecting a couple miscreants for too long, in the shadows. Namely, we've got two different students, one who's paid up and one who's not. The former has finished or at least withdrawn. The latter would probably like to be active but is grossly overdue and so must be kicked out and pursued and punished post-haste, both ideally today and promptly after this very meeting."

"Bob, look, just let the system handle it. Everything's mostly automated anyway. You know that."

"We *are* the system." Bob looked almost angry when he said this.

"We're just people. It's not our jobs."

"My job is to carry out policy and obey the will of *The Computer*. Er, I mean, to manage the computer and use it properly like a tool to do the things it was made to do. Not to give in to the whims and lazy sloppiness of you salary-minded people. My job is to do my job, and that is also the job of the computer. Frankly I think you're all either with me, or you're with her (and by her, I must emphasize here, technically I mean to refer to BOTH of these TWO DISTINCT women with eerily similar names, technically speaking -- which is the best kind of speaking, technically speaking) AND therefore against me, which would ALSO mean you're against The Rules and therefore the University and therefore all of YOU people too must be kicked out, hunted down and punished immediately, ideally promptly after this meeting. Punished, yes. But not over my lap. I'm SAVING that and it's quite expensive to clean pants such as these."

There was a collective pause around the room. To absorb what they had just heard from Bob. Perhaps to prepare an escape plan. Either from the room or perhaps from the department and then the company's employment roster.

"Well, that seems like a rather extreme view," explained Mr. X calmly, taking the lead in speaking for the rest of them again. "And what the fuck with the pants? You're losing it, seriously."

"Truth is extreme. *Idiots*."

Bob then grinned an evil grin. And when we say evil we mean the opposite of good and healthy.

Mr. X suddenly stood up, and gestured to the rest of the team to do the same. Then he looked directly at Bob before speaking:

"This meeting is over. You've got some real hangups buddy. Don't waste our time ever again or we'll file complaints with HR."

Bob continued sitting there, but now folded his arms in front of him. He replied:

"I do not fear that. I already own most of HR. Everyone there except Mary. But I'm making progress there I assure you. Progress there is being made a little every day and honestly sometimes also late in the evenings after she's asleep. (Tap tap at the window. Wake up? What's that? Must be nothing. Back to sleep. Tumwuggle runs away in the night, quite excited like, yes.)"

Mr. X was speechless. But only for a few seconds:

"What?"

Bob then uncrossed his arms and stood up, before continuing:

"Nevermind. The meeting is over like you said. You may go and return to your cubicles. I'll stay behind here to do some cleanup tasks and write the bullet point takeaways and aggregate the actionable action items, and probably assign *all* of them to myself and for my eyes *only*. Of course."

Mr. X glanced around at the other normal people. Then turned back to address Bob:

"Whatever! Later."

Then he left the room and the others followed. Everyone but Bob. Bob stayed behind. He looked at the wall as if he were looking far away in the distance. He spoke to himself:

"Cleanup tasks."





## Chapter Thirteen

An apartment interior. It was Susan's apartment near the college campus. Bob was there because he had just broken into it. He was lucky her roommate Jennifer wasn't home at the time. Almost immediately after entering her apartment and confirming he was alone he began exploring, snooping around. Perving salaciously over her things, frankly.

He found a closet with many pairs of shoes in it. He counted them. He liked to count things. He couldn't help it. He also couldn't help himself around shoes. Counting and shoes were two of his very favorite things to do.

He counted that she had precisely 53 pairs of shoes in this closet. Different shapes, styles, colors and textures, different brand names, each optimized and arguably ideal for different situations, indoor and outdoor and frankly some possibly only suited for the bedroom or some kind of exotic freakish fantasy universe. Not only was this Ms. Meerson a violator of known admissions enrollment standards and billing protocols and database consistency and campus administrative management rules she *also* seemed to be a fellow *shoe fetishist*. Technically since she was female she was allowed to have as many as 30 pairs of shoes before the term fetish might apply. Anything up to and including 30 pairs would have been perfectly normal and healthy for an adult human who happened to be female. But *53 pairs* was well past that point. Bob himself, being a man, crossed the line into shoe fetish world somewhere past his *sixth pair* of shoes and now, of course, he had approximately *1000 pairs* of shoes. He had so many in fact he couldn't quite fit them all in his own little apartment off campus and so he had to long ago rent a storage unit outside town to keep most of them. Nobody knew of his little secret shoe cache except himself, and his mother, and of course it was probably suspected by now by all the major shoe vendors across the planet. And now he knew of Susan's little secret too. Such a naughty girl. But he understood it, yes. Yes he did. He understood it so much he began showing how much he understood it by picking up her shoes at random and examining them up close, bringing them up to his nose and smelling them. Sticking out his tongue and licking them. And generally all around worshipping them. Let us get a sample of how this worship played out now:

"*Oh joyous day!*" he exclaimed to himself, all alone in her apartment. "Calloo yippie-kay-ay! So much secret wanking to do here yes I must we must before we leave later this evening or perhaps tomorrow."

Bob held up one beautiful shoe of Susan's in particular, with a very high heel and colored glossy red:

"Oh. Oh my. This shoe. Yes. It's precious. Delicious and luscious. Dat heel. Oh my. Oh noes. There-I-go-again-all-over-the-damn-place. I hope that Mother doesn't find out. Bad mother. Good boy Robert yes he is so much yes all of the time whenever he can and allowed to on the weekdays, yes. Out to the tool shed again Robert, out to the shed and bring the belt that bites, nope nope nope, but honestly probably a little bit of the eventually yes. Our secret shame, yes. Oh noes, here I go all over the place again, Mr. Tumwuggle. This mess is going straight into your personal and personnel folder file. Boy I wouldn't want to try to open up THAT file folder later, pages probably stuck together like that. All smelly. Though admittedly also probably tasty. It's like they say in

that commercial you saw on the television late last night in your mind, Robert Tumwuggle: *'Scratch and sniff and get arrested again!'* You bad uniformed men. Though I like their sticks and boots. Their sticks and boots. Admittedly, mostly their boots. All hard and shiny. I'd lick them. I'm quite sure I think I'd *like* to lick them thoroughly clean over and over and over again. Yes he would yes."

Suddenly he remembered something, and looked at his watch.

"Oh look at the time! Lunch time over, must get back to work in the office. Must save the seven sacred wanks in the orifice to later maybe tomorrow again."

He turned to face the closet.

*"Goodbye shoes in your loveliness!"*

Then he left Susan's apartment, pulling the door closed behind him gently and considerately. Pretty considerately for a combination pervert, burglar, and now avenging administrative freak-a-zoid, anyway. At least he was gentle.

## Chapter Fourteen

The ship had a kitchen slash cafeteria. In this room were many interesting things. One of them was a vending machine. It could vend many edible or drinkable things. One of the most popular vendable things with Richard's guests was Hyper-Coke. An ice cold bottle of it. It was like a cross between caffeine, cocaine and chocolate. Almost every writer, hacker and creative professional in the galaxy eventually became addicted to it. The Hyper-Coke Corporation regularly turned trillions in annual profits. Their shareholder meetings were essentially just orgies. The company logo was like a smiley face, except with wide-open, blood-shot eyes and a mouth open in a rictus with teeth pressed together so tight they were probably at risk of cracking.

On a related note, the following facts were well-known among all sophisticated sentient beings in the kinkiest parts of the otherwise evil Galactic Empire: that in the absence of a lot of highly-skilled foreplay by a loving but experienced older man of great wealth -- one with plenty of free time and a wife out of town -- that there were only three sure-fire ways to give any woman in the galaxy an orgasm on demand:

A bottle of Hyper-Coke.

An unexpected night-time visit by a swarthy space pirate.

A new pair of shoes.

And Susan would be getting ALL of those things eventually. Repeatedly. Before breakfast. Every morning. And doubly so on the weekends.

She had already had at least 53 of the third thing.

She was quickly approaching 53 instances of the second.

She had never tried the first one but would be correcting that omission momentarily, post-haste.

## Chapter Fifteen

Richard was on the bridge of his starship *Eryon*. Sitting in the captain's chair, and typing on the keyboard console in front of him, while looking at various screens and important-looking blinking indicator lights.

Susan strolled in.

"Hi!" she said to him, obviously happy to find him there. Also frankly a little happy from her recent Hyper-Coke buzz. Her new secret vice. Along with shoes.

"Hey babe," he replied, warmly but obviously also at least half-distracted by what he was doing with the console.

"What are you are up to? Haven't seen you for a few hours, wasn't sure if you left the ship or not," she said, laughing a little at her own joke.

"Oh? Yeah totally. Well. Just checking my electronic mail at the moment."

"Hey, just like on Earth!"

"Yeah, but a little different."

"How so?" she asked.

"Well, we have two kinds. There's GE-Mail, which is basically like your primitive e-mail back on Earth, except GE-Mail is galaxy-wide, and multi-dimensional. The GE prefix in GE-Mail stands for Galactic Empire, of course. Then we have De-Mail. It's similar except the messages you receive should never be treated as factual or true. Not completely anyway. It's up to you to guess or logically deduce which parts are true or not, and frankly whether any of it ever is at all. So they're often entertaining, and sometimes true only by purely accidental coincidence and happenstance. Now... Some people prefer GE-Mail, and some prefer De-Mail. Depends on their personality, and the time of day, whether a boss is present or not, etc."

"Interesting. Very cool. I'd love to see some De-Mail sometime. Curious what that's like."

"Yeah that's fine. But first I should probably have Overmind warn you about it. It needs to be put into the proper context, before you experience it for the first time. Consider it like... needing the proper foreplay or degree of lubricant ahead of time, except, for your brain."

"Ewwwww, lubricating my brain?"

"Yeah I should probably never try that in a pickup line. But anyway. Overmind, can you tell her about it? About De-Mail? Bring her up to speed for me? I've got some urgent Rebellion business to deal with here unfortunately, so it would help me out." He gestured toward his computer console, then turned back to work on it.

"Sure thing, captain," replied Overmind, from the wall speakers.

At this point there began a series of sounds from the speakers that suggested that Overmind was clearing his artificial digital throat. It was quite disgusting really. And lasted for about a minute. Eventually, he seemed to finish and began to speak again.

"So... De-Mail. What is it exactly? And how does it work? Glad you asked. Let me see if I can describe it for you. It works like this. You send an electronic message to this service, they print it out, put it in an envelope, lick it, close it, stamp it, press it, write the addresses on the envelope by hand, then place in a mail bag, hang the bag on a horse's back, walk the horse into a shuttle, shuttle flies up to orbit, it berths with a

starship, the horse is led across a docking tube into that starship, then the shuttle de-berths, the starship then flies along alone to the destination star system, ostensibly, but actually has an accident (always, every time), gets lost in space, drifting for hundreds of years (well, simulated, by highly clever software written by Stanley Opolis personally in a single weekend), the crew and passengers devolve, lose civilization, but each item of mail is preserved as a sacred duty, carried across generations either through one-on-one oral repeated retelling & memorization around the camp fire, or, merely hand-scrawled on clay tablets or papyrus. And therefore, some of these messages get accidentally distorted, misspelled, misinterpreted, mistranslated. But then eventually, after their civilization recovers enough in terms of technology, a new physical letter and envelope is made again and filled out, for every single message, and, after fixing the ship's engines, and continuing on their voyage across the depths of space, eventually reaches the destination system, then, the right planet, a shuttle is sent down to the surface, and some sort of wildly mutated new animal species, that's descended and possibly cross-bred from the original horse (and sexually frustrated male crew), is led out of the shuttle, slowly walking along until it arrives at the destination building, and then carried on foot inside, and hand delivered to the recipient (or their descendants -- work with me here, work with me), by a kindly old woman (hired there locally as a part-time contractor), who is also carrying a plate of warm cookies, and a glass of milk. When you open the envelope and read the letter, the message is never exactly what was originally sent, and typically either much funnier, more insulting, wildly artistic, or kinky. Because of all of this, nobody uses De-Mail for any serious business. Fortunately for the shareholders of De-Mail Corporation, the vast majority of the galaxy's telecommunications are not serious or necessary in any way, with an estimated traffic categorization at any moment consisting of at least 10% just pictures of cats doing cute things. Sexting and the flashing of normally hidden body parts are also major categories. Therefore the founders and majority owners of De-Mail are now wildly wealthy, own entire planets, and one of them has even hired a major civil engineering firm to construct for herself a secret private ocean filled with Hyper-Coke.

This same incredibly wealthy woman also hired Stanley Opolis to build for her a custom fleet of android pool boys, with literally golden skin, muscular and ripped, and the exact abs of Ryan Reynolds of Earth. She was also quite adamant about having each android so well-hung that Stanley had to briefly bring a horse into his software studio when finalizing the design models for them in order to ensure that the androids "equipment" was realistic enough for her.

It was so realistic she was found dead a mere month after delivery. Her body by the side of the pool, with exact cause of death left to the public's imagination out of good taste. (Photos of the scene were leaked to the Galactic Interweb, causing both a new bill to be introduced in the Galactic Congress banning the sale of custom android pool boys, and, a short meteoric boost in the sales of custom android pool boys. It made Stanley a small fortune, and it was yet another small fortune made from what was, from his point-of-view, merely a side project.) After her death her estate was divided up, except for her pool --- the gigantic private ocean filled with Hyper-Coke -- which was abandoned and left to go wild. Within a decade a new ecosystem was flourishing in the now untended ocean-sized pool, with the most successful species being a breed of mutant flying piranha with lasers for eyes. Though the entire planet is now off-limits to

tourists, sometimes accidents happen from time to time. It's been said that if you're ever in a ship that MUST crash land on the nearest planet, or, stopover for emergency repairs, the absolutely only planet you should reject immediately without debate should be this one. You'd be much better off dying in space, alone in the darkness, than finding out what happens if you splash land in a Hyper-Coke ocean filled with mutated flying piranha with lasers for eyes.

Hyper-Coke also tastes pretty good. But we'll explain more about this later. After Susan is done being brought to her seventh orgasm of the evening at the hands of Richard, The Dread Space Pirate, Rake of Seven Star Systems, and Currently Susan's Pants."

And with that, Overmind ended his explanation. And curious epilogue.

Susan was now on the floor of the bridge, half-naked, with Richard on top of her, between her legs.

"How do you keep doing this?" she quietly asked the man on top of her.

Overmind thought he would help out by answering for him:

"He's a filthy, filthy pervert and that is why I serve on this ship."

"Could we have some privacy, Overmind?" Richard asked while looking at one of the AI's camera eyes. He sounded exasperated. "Turn off your cameras? Just this once?"

"Just the tip?" continued Susan helpfully.

## Chapter Sixteen

Susan listened to Galactic Imperial radio for a few minutes while sitting on the bridge. While Richard was ostensibly working. One of the many shows, segments, clips, promos and blatantly shameless advertisements she heard stood out in her mind in particular. She thought it was funny but it also made her curious. It was the following speech, one that sounded like it was being spoken by an irresistibly slutty but not exactly incredibly bright girl next door -- that is, assuming you lived next door to the galaxy's most expensive brothel:

*"Hel-LOOOOOO there all you BIG naughty boys and girls. I'm Betty. From Betelgeuse. Did you know that I love, just love, to suck the hot dirty rocks of totally complete strangers? Especially at night while they're asleep. Wait a second. That can't be right. How would I get into their rooms behind a locked door? I can barely put on my own shoes without two hunky gay assistants."*

(Publisher's Note Per The Legal Department: The only reason those two gay male assistants are gay is so that when they're "on duty" in her mansion she doesn't have to worry about them always trying to get into her pants when she herself is off-duty. Hunky she also made a job requirement. Ladies like eye candy too. And she can afford lots and lots of candy. Since she's the richest girl in the galaxy. Well, for tax purposes anyway.)

Susan tapped Richard on the shoulder to get his attention and asked him about it. He explained:

"Oh. That's Betty. From Betelgeuse. Sometimes she just says *Betty from Betelgeuse* with no pause in between, to be less dramatic. But at heart deep down Betty's a drama queen."

Then he leaned in toward Susan for a moment as if to confide something secret:

*"To be fair, I'm probably the king of that country."*

Then he pulled back again in his chair, leaning back, before continuing:

"And um... She was *born* rich. She's also a *good* girl at heart, I think. But now all grown up and trapped inside the body of an incredibly bad adult woman with bountiful breasts and an a--"

Richard suddenly realized he had got too excited, he could tell, and therefore stopped himself. Remembering that he was in Susan's presence, his new current steady Earth girlfriend. In theory. So he turned it into a quick cough before continuing:

"Er, I mean. She has breasts just like any other woman has. Each one special in their own way. Yours for example are awesome. I love them. Both of them."

She glared at him.

"Anyway, she's rich and probably the most popular actress slash singer slash porn star in the galaxy. And believe me, there are LOTS of those. Plus she dabbles in lots of other businesses too, all of them related to her core line of work in some fashion.

"And what is her core line of work?" she asked.

"Prostitution, of course," he answered, as if it were obvious.

"Of course."

Then he played her several other ones, and then she started picking different channels at random, listening to them one at a time. Some were serious, some were

funny, but all were consistent with this growing impression of a new and much wilder universe she was learning about lately while hanging out with Richard. It was beyond clear that the galaxy was teeming with civilized activity. And frankly, some of it not very civilized. Just like on Earth.

Eventually she decided she had enough and stopped to ask Richard something.

"How many women are there in your life exactly, Richard?"

"In a typical week or just in general?" he asked, hoping to clarify.

"I don't know what that even means," she replied.

"Neither do I," he said. Then shrugged. "Can I just go take out the trash now? Babe? Please?"

A voice from the wall speaker suddenly interjected itself into the conversation: "*I can handle tonight's deep space garbage ejection chore, sir. It's mostly automated by now anyway.*"

Richard shot an angry glance at one of the AI's camera eyes. "*Fucker!* I'm having you erased."

The electronic voice from the wall speakers then replied calmly: "You'll drift in space until you run out of food and die."

Richard seemed to have a change of heart. "Nevermind."

Susan took the opportunity to pursue her original line of questioning:

"Are you seeing somebody else? Like Betty?"

"Betty and I are just friends," he explained. "Strictly business."

A pause. Then she pressed on: "So you've never, uh..."

"We had sex," he clarified.

"Oh."

"About 20 times."

"Ah."

"But it was for business reasons. I'm really not into her in that way. We're just friends. FWB."

"FWB?"

"Friends with business together. Friends with Betty," he explained, as if it should be perfectly obvious.

She digested this. It caused some indigestion.

"Anybody else I should know about?" she asked, not really wanting to know the answer.

One of Richard's eyes was then squinted closed while the other became open much much wider than normally, as if he was trying hard, very hard, to think. Like Spock solving a curious human emotional puzzle. While under pressure. In the nice detective's interrogation room. Before his lawyer had arrived because he get stuck in galactic traffic. Since his lawyer was not (yet) present, he knew that he must think *very very* carefully before speaking. Which was rare for him.

"Maybe... Circen?" he suggested to her. Hoping it was the right answer. Well, the right question.

"Tell me about her," she prompted.

"She's a witch," he replied quickly. "And I *don't* mean that she's ugly. I mean that she literally can do magic."

"How did you find this out?"



"She did it on me once."

A pause.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean it's what caused me to sleep with her I think. When I met her. The very first time. In a bar on her home planet at the time. (I was on tour, trying to lock-in my status as the Rake of Seven Star Systems, long story, I had to do LOTS of raking -- maybe tell you about it later some other time if you don't mind when my personal safety is more ensured because you'll be in handcuffs.) Anyway, it was... Like she put a spell on me, Susan. She seduced me with voodoo lingo and terms from PARTICLE physics. Alpha, beta, gamma, tau, all kinds of 3rd order balanced differential equations, Feynman diagrams drawn by her fingers in the air in front of my face MERE inches away, and the next thing you know, BAM, I was hard as a rock. She blinded me with science, man. I mean woman. Some kind of technical magic. Like... engineering meets erotica. It was the first time a woman had used hyper-dimensional engineering on me. I had no chance, I made my time. Somebody set me up the bomb. I know what you're thinking, '*Cats, what you say?!*', right? Amiright?"

"Were you drinking?" she asked him. Starting to know him perhaps all too well.

"*I was drunk out of my mind.*" He answered her very fast, with no gap.

Then they both paused as if to think about the implications of this revelation.

"That may have been a factor," Susan suggested helpfully.

"I don't know."

He looked like he honestly didn't know, looking up at the ceiling thoughtfully, trying to remember, and looking quite cute from a woman's perspective.

NOTE: There are now 2 more women that Susan must be jealous or wary about: Betty and Circen. Along with the other approximately 1,000+ billion women in the galaxy, at last estimate, who were all competing for him. Her new boyfriend: The Dread Space Pirate and Rake of Seven Star Systems.

They went back to listening to Galactic Imperial radio while Richard officially worked at his command console. There were plenty more commercials from Betty, some more outrageous than others. Susan started to get a better sense for the culture of the Galactic Empire. A taste of the incredible variety of mass media entertainment available, as evidenced by just their audio/radio industry alone.

Another commercial that stuck out in particular was a recruiting piece for a strange club or cult calling itself *The Leather Goddesses of GyraX*. Another cool ad was for the Gantech Plasma Rifle. And one for De-Mail.

Eventually Richard took a break from "work." He leaned over and pressed some keys in front of Susan, as if he wanted to play something interesting for her to hear in particular. He told her it was Circen, who also happened to be the founder and leader of *The Leather Goddesses of GyraX*, previously mentioned. The channel switched and a new audio started playing. It is a sultry but strange woman's voice talking, in a musical cadence that suggests she's casting a spell. Or perhaps she was an alien and therefore this was just her natural bedroom voice, a whisper sometimes decorated with kinky growls and the sounds of dangerously exciting champing teeth:

*"Leather. More leather. And leather again. Lots of leather. All of it black. The blackest black. And rubber. Different flavors and colors of rubber. Latex in SHAPES. Dice and plastic sheets. So many dice to show you. Chips, dips and whips. Bad words*

*for very good things. Leather. Rubber. Latex. Leather, rubber and latex. LEATHER RUBBER AND LATEX! ... Chips and whips. Dice and dicks. Teacups on tits. People think I'm mad but I'm not completely mad really I'm just mad for one very bad handy man. That and bad GIRLS I guess. Bad girls in skirts. Under the moonlight. And dice and plastic sheets. And violent rock-and-roll music on infinite shuffle. Leather and latex. Whips and dicks. Tits in my teacups. Asses in plastic. Red cherry bubblegum stuck between my lips. The lips on my mouth." \*cackle\**

The cackling repeated for a while and then ended with Circen saying suddenly and very very very incredibly earnestly -- but not desperate AT ALL: "*Call me Richard?*"

Susan immediately afterward had a "WTF?" reaction on her face, and said that was a weird commercial.

"Is that actually effective at attracting customers?" she asked.

Richard replied, "That was in my voicemail."

## Chapter Seventeen

Richard and Susan were relaxing in the ship's lounge discussing where they might go next. They had a little free time in their schedule before the next necessary Rebellion event. Plus he wanted to make some more unpredictable trips to make it harder for Venturion to find them -- or any other bounty hunter, for that matter.

He had Overmind present her with a variety of ideas and suggestions. The AI spoke from the wall speakers as usual:

"Here are some places that many tourists have reported in polls that they'd like to visit at least once in their lifetimes:

*The Grand Temple at Taveroth*

*The Ruins of Ryaldus*

*The Bottomless Caves of Worvel Ceti Delta*

*The Impossible Machine in Pollux Prime*

*The Haunted Drifting Wreck of the Ancient Battleship Syamoto*

*The Horribly Confused and Misplaced Hippopotamus of Alpha Centauri"*

Richard jumped in quickly to add:

"That last one I just had Overmind make up to be honest."

She laughed. Then he continued:

"He's actually in Andromeda. And only slightly confused. Before he's had breakfast."

She stopped laughing. For a moment. Then began laughing again. She would be in his bunk later that evening.

## Chapter Eighteen

Richard and Betty were having a private chat over an audio-only link. Susan was nowhere around but probably in the ship's kitchen, helping to prepare them a meal, her half of the deal anyway.

"I had an *idea*," said Betty, as if confiding a naughty secret.

"Uh-oh. What?"

She laughed. "Silly Richard. That's not what I was thinking about at all. Here's my idea for what Susan could do. We could go shopping! I could take her shopping with me. Have fun, girl style."

He seemed to think about this a moment before replying. He wished to bring up his top number one concern, as both a man and a pirate, in full possession of both a Man Card and a Pirate Card, cards that were traditionally honored in most star systems throughout the vast Galactic Empire, even on otherwise backwoods planets like Earth:

"*Would I have to come?* Because I'll pay you 5 million Altairan credits to say, 'NO!' To say no and that, of course, Richard, you handsome pirate, that you can stay home alone inside your ship and watch sportball games while getting blasted out of your mind on Centauran vodka."

She laughed. It was the kind of laugh that made most men in the galaxy have to change their pants. At least change their plans for the evening. Then she replied:

"Of *course* you don't have to come, Richard. In fact you're not invited. It would clash with the vibe. No penis allowed. Though it's allowed almost any other time. Especially with pirates." Then she winked but he couldn't quite hear the wink in the audio feed.

"B-B-B-Betty, baby, remember, it's strictly business between us now. I have a steady girl. It might even be for real this time. We'll see."

There was silence for a few seconds before Betty replied:

"Interesting."

The call eventually ended. Time passed...

## Chapter Nineteen

Richard spoke into the intercom: "*Susan, please come to the bridge. Your presence is needed immediately.*"

A few minutes later, Susan strolled in casually. She had by now learned that in Richard's lexicon *immediately* meant whenever and that *whenever it was convenient* meant that urgent -- even dangerously hasty -- action was required lest the nearest star collapse, thereby wiping out all organic life and civilization in the system.

"Hi!" she said, incredibly perky for her. Though not incredibly perky by Hyper-Coke standards. "What's up?"

He reached over and grabbed a piece of paper or plastic that had been half-sticking out of a slot in a computer panel. He gave it a tug and it tore free. It was colored gold, that she could tell right away at a distance. He handed it to her. She took it and looked at it. In big black bold letters, over a gold background, it read, "*Chez Betty de la Betelgeuse: High Fashion For Low Down Ladies.*" Then in a smaller font below that it read, "*One (1) FREE Adult VIP Admission.*" In an even smaller font below that, near the very bottom of the ticket face, it read, "*Breath mints are recommended. Short skirts without panties are expected. No husbands or boyfriends allowed. You will be experiencing shoes. Come prepared and be prepared to come. At this point you probably think we're kidding and/or insane. We're always DEADLY serious when it comes to sex or shoes. -- Love, Betty from Betelgeuse.*"

She laughed. "What?!" Then narrowed her eyes and looked sideways at Richard.

"It's from a friend of mine," he said. "Betty, I told you about her. She---"

A beeping and flashing light.

"That's probably her now!" he exclaimed with obvious relief.

He pressed a button, to answer the call.

On a little visual screen the face of the most famous and also widely considered the most *beautiful* woman in the galaxy appeared. "Hi Richard!"

"Hi Betty," he greeted her back. With not quite the same level of enthusiasm.

"Did you give it to her yet?" asked Betty.

"I've been giving her lots of things," he answered.

"The ticket."

"Ah. Yes. Hey... Susan? This is Betty. Betty, this is Susan."

Betty then visibly made an effort to address Susan directly, however hard to do over remote visual telecomm link across the depths of the vast Galactic Empire. But she managed.

"Hi Susan! Nice to virtually meet you!"

"Uh, hi there!" replied Susan. "Hello. And likewise. Thank you for this ticket here. But I'm not quite sure what it's about. Some kind of store? Or strip club, haha? Both?"

Betty smiled as if her prey were just about to step into a trap. But only a fellow Betelgeusen would have recognized it, because it was a very subtle thing. And of course Richard was both a man and a pirate so even if he were *born* on Betelgeuse it would have sailed right over his head too. And Susan, while female, was merely from Earth. Betty eventually finished her subtle smile and began speaking again, for their sake:

"It's an invitation to go shopping with me. In my store. One of the lines of business I've gotten into in recent years. Had to branch out, diversify my assets, all that. Of course I may have misinterpreted my accountant when he told me late one night that he had been fantasizing about diversifying my ass."

Susan laughed. "Shopping? For what? Clothing I hope. But, well, I don't really have the budget for it though. At the moment. Plus I only have Earth money. But the thought is very nice and I appreciate the offer anyway!"

Betty made an '*it's nothing*' gesture. A gesture understandable even on Earth.

"Don't worry about it. It'll be on me. Technically it'll be on Richard. He called in a favor. I owe him many favors."

Richard jumped in, though he'd soon wish he could jump back out again:

"Some of them aren't even sexual!" (Groucho Marx with a cigar.)

Susan glared at him.

"Oops. Haha. Bad doggy. Bad pirate. Down boy." Richard cast his eyes down.

"Well, that's very nice of both of you!" said Susan. "I guess I'll accept the invitation. Thank you! I guess I could use some new things. Is there anything you had in mind?"

Betty smiled like the way that white tigers do on her home planet in Betelgeuse.

"Shoes, of course. We have so many shoes to show you, Susan. A whole city full of them. The largest selection in nine star systems!"

Richard then grabbed Susan's arm as if to get her attention and address her directly, but off to the side in private confidence.

"When she says *city* she's not exaggerating," he said to her.

From the look on Susan's face in reaction, it had clearly gotten her attention. The certain part of her brain that was specialized to process shoe-related logic and sensory perceptions became immediately overloaded with work, trying to predict and analyze all the potential possibilities and options, and therefore would take a little extra time to catch up to any subsequent real-time events. Let us leave her alone for now, out of respect. There were other events of importance happening elsewhere, anyway, that we could switch our focus to in the meantime.

Susan could be so cute sometimes, especially when it came to shoes. Also when it came to cocks. Or when cocks came to come. And orgasms of various kinds happened and, when they happened, especially if they were associated with pirates. As Richard had come to know very well firsthand. To know very well with both hands, in fact.

But I digress. And he too would be digressing again later. In her bunk. Multiple times until his balls were thoroughly drained. For though he may have been a dread space pirate and the secret leader of an exciting but potentially hopeless Rebellion against an evil Galactic Empire, he still was -- at the end of the day, and after all was said and done and therefore people were presumably and individually slowly drifting back to sleep and then into dreams -- *only* a man. A mortal man.

Enough said.

## Chapter Twenty

Time had passed. As it often did.

The ship was now flying on a course to eventually meet up with Betty but also make a few stops along the way to deal with Rebellion business. And Susan was fine with that. It still wasn't clear that it was safe to return to Earth. The bounty hunter who attacked them there and in the asteroid belt might still be laying in wait. Or he might have been in pursuit. It was not clear. Plus Richard had promised her that he would take her back just as soon as he could. He didn't want to put her in any more danger than he already had. He might have been a pirate but he wasn't a jerk. He hoped.

Anyway.

Richard and Susan were now sitting together on the bridge, side by side. He was at the ship's main command & communications console. Clearly doing something related to the Rebellion. Giving direction, coordinating activities, sifting through mass amounts of new and sometimes relevant information, analyzing, prioritizing, synthesizing, setting intermediate goals, making decisions and plans and putting those plans into motion once the timing was right and prerequisite conditions and resources were in place.

He was just finishing up an important call with one of his top lieutenants in the secret fledgling Rebel navy, one Commander Ilyo Vogzed, an old friend and trusted ally. Though the link was audio-only and Richard wasn't stupid he waved at the microphone anyway as he said his goodbye:

"I'll meet you all at the rendezvous point, Ilyo. Good luck!"

Ilyo replied: "Thank you, sir. See you soon! Vogzed out."

"Yep. Zyzeen out."

With a click the link closed and the conversation ended.

Richard leaned back in his tall leather captain's chair. Closed his eyes. Relaxed. Let some of the stress out. Silent and still for a minute. He looked exhausted. Then suddenly he opened his eyes, turned to look at Susan and grinned.

"NARF!" he announced.

"What?" she asked.

"Narf," he clarified. He preferred clarifications like that.

She laughed. "I heard that. What is it? What does it mean?"

"Oh. Sorry. Forgot you're from Earth. It's a Narfon word. A word in the language of the Narfon people of the planet Narf. It's closest equivalent meaning in English and Galactic Basic is probably, *I'm in a state of energized bliss at the moment and I hope nothing disturbs it because I never want it to end.*"

"Nice!" she exclaimed.

"Exactly. Narf."

"Narf."

Soon again they would be in his bunk.

THE END

WELL...

AT LEAST THE END OF EPISODE 1 OF THE DREAD SPACE PIRATE RICHARD

IF YOU'D LIKE FOR AN EPISODE 2 AND BEYOND TO EXIST PLEASE LET THE CREATOR KNOW AND HE'LL SEE WHAT HE CAN ARRANGE. BECAUSE HE KNOWS PEOPLE WHO KNOW PEOPLE WHO CAN MAKE THINGS... HAPPEN.

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