

22

dildo express

LCTN: SOL-3, CAVE CREEK, ARIZONIA
CORD: SAO-0.01 (1.001au from SOL)
DATE: 2103ce-OCTOBER-6-SATURDAY
TIME: 06:15zulu (local 22:15pst)

Rolling his eyes, Charles Washington tilts his head to the side and while looking out the window, "Right now, he's in my Jacuzzi getting a blow-job from my X.O."

From the phone he hears, ["Why am I not surprised. Then, I venture to guess Mr. Kay is close by. Where the fuck is he?"]

Again Charles looks out the window, "At this moment he's behind my exec, and by the way she's wiggling I believe he's making good on his handle."

["I'm so fucking jealous of Shelly."]

"I don't know if you want to go there, Claudia."

["No, really, I do! I need the diversion. This job is a bitch. So, should I ask who Somalia Slew is?"]

"You're talking to him."

["Where the fuck did you get that?"]

"It's been my gamers I.D. since forever. What can I say?"

["If they only knew..."] She snickers, ["Ya, hide the Genoa. Anyway, we were going to ask but now you *are* going!"]

"I made a promise to my wife."

["General Washington, you saw the photos and read the text message. Delta Echo is sitting out there orbiting Titan, and it's real! You three shit-heads are being asked for by name, so consider yourself RSVP'd and on the manifest! Do you fuckin' read me?"]

"Five-by-five, Madam President."

["I'm glad we can communicate, Chuck. I don't care what you tell Mud. Fuck, tell her the truth! Make it all clandestine and shit! That'll shut her up."]

"Yes, Claudia."

["The Air Force is fueling up a Crew-Dragon and it'll be ready to fly tomorrow night."]

Washington chokes on his drink, "Those are museum pieces!"

["They always keep a couple of sticks operational, and they've proven handy. They also have a near perfect flight record, and you are type rated are you not? So, don't argue."]

"If you say so."

["And, Chuck, keep a tight leash on them. I want the three of you at Camp David the second you get back for debriefing. Oh, and bring Mud while you're at it! It'll be great to see her again."]

Charles rolls his eyes again, "Debriefing? This time ya'll had better make sure the first lady is out of town."

Over the phone the President growls, ["Just get your asses to Vandenburg!"]

01000010-01010010-01000010-00100001

Rachel Washington, Charles' wife, approaches him as he sits on a swing by a fire pit. Every time he looks at her he is amazed by her impossible figure which is the type only realized on the *mud flaps* of 18 wheelers and pickup trucks—which earned her that nickname when she was just a teen. The virtually transparent mesh covering she wears reveals her full hips and bust transected by a wasp-like waist. Magically endowed with the spirit and semble of Jennifer Tilly, Rachel drips of sex as would ones brow by just laying eyes upon her—without the camouflage afforded by a hot and humid day.

Yet, in spite of popular opinion, Chuck *did* marry Rachel for her brains. He, a fiscal conservative, and she, a tree-hugging liberal, were hostile adversaries in debate way back in high school. In time they developed a friendship of sorts and kept in touch throughout their college years. When Charles got out of Annapolis their mutual respect led to an unplanned five-day whirlwind romance and, much to their surprise, nuptials in Vegas.

Now, after twenty-four years being married to Rachel, ten of which he was in space, two kids and a little nip and tuck—she looks almost the same today as she did when she was *mutherfucking* him on counterpoint that cheerful spring day he first met her at seventeen.

Rachel hands Charles a glass of wine and plops down beside him with a bounce, "So, Chucky'poo, who was that on the phone?"

"Your doppelganger."

"Claudia! Hum...considering the number of calls you were getting before she did makes me think that either someone got real stupid, or something blew up. Care to share?"

Charles may be a Marine aviator, an astronaut, a national hero, and pretty damned smart in his own right, but Rachel is, by his own admission, light-years smarter than he, "Claudia wants us to pay her a visit when I get back."

Rachel thinks for a few seconds, "Do you feel it?"

"Wha'?"

Rachel smiles, "I feel a bipolar episode coming on, so you had better level with me before it percolates to the surface, darlin'."

Charles takes the remote and cranks up the music, then says with minimal lip movement, "She wants me to tell you the truth."

Rachel immediately picks up on what's going on, "What's with all the cloak and dagger shit?"

He hands her a folder and she opens it. The first thing she sees is an email, and in it she reads, *...Delta Echo transmitted the following text: Let's chat :o) You will send emissaries, but please bring Drama Flakes, Pushy Harder and Somalia Slew.*

She frowns at this, but then when she looks at the photo on the next page she laughs, "Damn! It looks like a dildo!"

"They're calling it the Dildo Express. And, yes, before you ask, it was Claudia that blurted that out. She's the Pres so it stuck."

Charles takes the folder from Rachel and tosses it on the fire, "You know, anymore it's not an issue of national security—"

Rachel cuts him off, "What do you take me for, an idiot?"

"Well, no, sweetheart!"

She huffs, "Look, E.T. has come a knockin' at our back door and they're asking for you. You *are* retiring soon, so I'll let ya off the hook on this one, but just this one, flyboy."

Relieved, Charles takes a sip of his wine, "Thanks, hon."

"Who else is going?"

"A state-department level rep from us, Russia, China, France, Great Britain and Germany."

"All spooks?" Rachel asks meaning that they're all part of the intelligence community.

"We need people who can shut up. I'm not sure about the boys, though, but *they* want to see 'em."

After a short pause Rachel adds, "If you haven't figured it out yet, Robert is the prize for some odd reason."

"Okay, I'll buy that, but why Jason?"

Rachel scrunches her face a tad, "I can't exactly wrap my brain around it, but you know he's not the clown he portrays himself to be. My gut now tells me Jason is a player in all this."

Charles nods with acknowledgement.

Rachel puts her wine glass down and turns to her husband with a sly grin, "Jacuzzi?"

Charles nods with a smile, then scowls, "You know the rules, hon. No dick while I'm gone."

She whispers, "damn!"

01001110-01000110-01000001-01001000-01010010-01010101

Robert and Jason were stoked. Where riding a space plane is best described as blasé anymore riding a *stick* was totally old-school and exhilarating for them—even for Charles. The three ambassadors that went along for the ride were more like gripped in wide-eyed terror and scrambled to get through the air lock when they finally docked with the Enterprise.

The first of four of the new spatial-displacement drive ships being constructed in orbit, the Enterprise was only half-way outfitted when they started doing trial runs out to Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

This is the third installment of "Enterprise" in NASA's history and the old-timers at the agency are tired of it. The first space shuttle, the one that never made it into space, was named that. The very first *publicly known* space plane was also named the Enterprise and, since the popularity of that old scifi mythos lingers to this day, this ship got saddled with it for all the obvious reasons. Because Challenger and Columbia were names long retired the agency dusted off Atlantis, Discovery and Endeavour for the Enterprise's sister ships.

The four-minute run to Saturn exceeded 20c, and as they slip into formation with Delta-Echo, orbiting the moon Titan, it's the alien ship that closes in to connect with them.

While pressurizing they get a text that the atmosphere on

board is Earth-like and that their respective fauna is neutral to one another, and even though there was every reason to believe them there is still some unease at the thought of exposure. So, after a quick debate and a leap of faith, they elect to leave the bunny suits behind.

They're going into quarantine anyway.

"What the fu!" Was the collective gasp from all those in the air lock of Delta-Echo as they drift towards the floor at 0.15g. When everyone picks themselves up from off the floor the force of the artificial gravity quickly rises to 1g—and this blows away all their minds except for Robert and Jason. They were not surprised one bit.

A doorway opens up and they all file through into a perfectly appointed conference room. The outside of Delta Echo has no visible features whatsoever, but the floor of this room is like a window to the outside giving a spectacular view of the Enterprise and Titan far below.

Another door slides open and three very-human beings walk through, with their leader gesturing to the chairs around the table, "Everybody, take a seat. Glad you could make it."

When they all sit, he says, "By the surprised looks when we walked in I believe you were expecting little green men. In actuality, they're kind'a gray, but before you meet 'em I'm gonna give you some background on us. My name is Marcus Cnaeus Septimus, but you can call me Mark. I was a tribune under Cestius Gallus, and when we got our asses kicked by the Judean's I was picked up by our benefactors after I was left for dead."

The lady to Mark's right speaks up, "I'm Jacqui. The Mohawk butchered my family and took me in. I ran away shortly after that and got picked up. I was four, and I don't remember any of it."

The black man to Mark's left speaks with a Jamaican accent, "I am Abeeku, a runaway slave, and I remember every bit of it."

As if on queue, Robert looks at Jason, "What's your story?"

Surprised, Jason laughs, "What makes you think—"

Robert cuts him off, "It's all very crystal-clear to me now."

"You really want to know?" Jason shrugs, "If you can believe this, I was a pirate under Captain Morgan. On a raid I got gut shot and fell overboard. Hours later these fuckers fished me out and I still had some fight left in me—swinging this cutlass around and shit. Mark had to punch my lights out to get me to stop."

The Russian representative speaks up, "You have agents."

Mark shakes his head and puts his hands out, "Not spying. Watching over individual people is more like it. Like Robert, here." He

leans over the table, "They've been watching you, our species, as they watch over many other species, and now that you're on the road to expansion they want to back off and let you come of age."

Mark thumbs back at an image of the Milky Way as it flashes up behind him—with a small mark indicating where the sun is, "This is where you are, and for one thousand light years in both directions along the Orion Spur is yours to do with as you please. That is, if you knock your shit off and exercise good stewardship."

The Chinese rep then asks in broken English, "Please define what mean you by good stewardship."

Mark frowns, "We are an interesting species. Our benefactors see us as an attractive and noble life form with the greatest potential. They are amazed by our diversity and adaptability, yet are taken aback by the endless variety of ways we find to destroy each other. To say that they're concerned is an understatement but you'll have all the space you need to come to grips with your combative nature."

The United States rep interjects, "The threat implied does not go unnoticed, you understand."

"Nor should it." Mark gives a nervous smile, "But, we're not here to negotiate. You representatives are here to hear what we have to offer, and it *is* generous, so use it wisely. End of discussion." Mark sits back, "Now, would you like to meet our benefactors?"

The United States rep then asks, "They have a name?"

"They've been called lots of things by many peoples, but they themselves have a telepathic language, sort of a mental hieroglyphics where the concept of *us* or *we* translates as '*that which we are*.' The early Egyptians they picked up called them *Nefer-Key*, which means beautiful monkeys. For them that was high praise—so it stuck."

Jason pipes up, "I used to call 'em *les petites merdes gris* for the longest time, but that didn't go over too well when they learned French."

The door slides open and two five-foot, four-inch beings step through. The robes they are wearing drop to the floor and they stand there like two budding teenagers—naked for all to see. Even with their black anime eyes, and diminutive features, humanoid looks humanoid regardless of origin and color of skin. Gray, hairless, athletically built and cut, they are truly gorgeous creatures to behold but, upon review, the strangest and most remarkable thing about these two is their shocking similarity to human beings.

Jason leans over to Robert, and not too quietly he whispers, "The babes taste like Captain Crunch!"

The female Nefer-Key wrinkles her nose, and comments, "Thank you for the compliment, Jaye, but, once again, your endearing charm is overshadowed by your insufferable fuck-tardary."

Robert looks at Jason, "You two have history? Girlfriend?"

"No, my wife."

Bug-eyes all around. Nobody was ready for that one.

The aliens start to don their robes, and as the female walks around the conference room table towards Jason, the male speaks up, "Personally, I would have preferred someone more monochrome for my granddaughter, but Jaye has proven to be a viable addition to our family, and *vastly* entertaining. Hi, I'm Luc..."

As Luc goes about glad-handing the representatives, the female reaches Jason and leans over to kiss him—once, then twice, and when she pulls back her little black tongue flicks the tip of his nose, "Let's get you freshened up. I'll scrub your back."

Jason gestures to Robert, "Lilith, I'd like you to meet Robert."

As Lilith shakes Robert's hand he notices that she has three slender fingers and an opposable thumb that look normal enough, and a second littler thumb—much like a Koala.

Lilith smiles as she coaxes Jason out of the chair and starts to lead him away, "Pleased to meet you, Robert. I've heard so much about you, but we have a time crunch here and I want *all* of my husband's time."

Before she drags him out the door Jason looks back towards Robert, "Sorry, bro, but this I don't share."

Charles and Robert just stare at the door, but it's Charles that quietly intimates their thoughts, "Never thought I'd be jealous of him."

Robert nods with a whisper, "No shit."

Just then Luc takes Charles by the hand, "I'm privileged to meet you, General Washington."

Charles and Robert stand, and Charles says, "My pleasure, Luc is it? Look, I have to know, why are we here?"

As Charles gestures to himself and Robert, Luc laughs, "Well, we are to the point, aren't we. In short, we need an intermediary with your species and we would like to choose Robert for the task. Mr. Graves is exceedingly intelligent, as well as politically neutral..."

Luc shakes Robert's hand, "It's simple, really, just be *the* point man for us, Robert, and we talk to them through you. And, by the way, your ideas on V.P. generators and worm holes are on the

right track. Your ships will be jumping in no time."

Robert thinks for a second, and shrugs, "Sure, I'm game."

Luc turns to the political representatives, "So, gentlemen, you heard right. Mr. Graves is now our primary contact with you. He is the most important individual on your planet next to all your leaders. And, please, maintain his anonymity in this."

The German representative speaks up, "You're shitting us!"

Luc takes one step forward, "Respect our choice or the offer we made you will be withdrawn. This also is not negotiable."

As all six of them reluctantly nod in agreement, Luc smiles, "Excellent! Come on, everybody, let's all take a tour the ship."

On the way out Luc turns to Robert, "Son, you'll be interested to know that after several million of your years we have become rather boring, and studying your planet has been very rewarding for us. You beings are diverse, and your cultures rich, and your languages, arts, literature and entertainment have brought a breath of fresh air to my people. We may be an advanced species, yes, but we have gained much from yours..."

Charles was about to follow when Mark subtly gestures for him to hold back.

Luc laughs, "To have you know, a lot of us have gotten so hooked on some of your television programs that when *Joan of Arcadia* got cancelled the popular vote amongst us was to throw a rock or two down on CBS studios!"

Robert blinks his eyes, "Joan-a-what?"

Luc playfully throws his hands up as they step out of the room, "Cooler heads prevailed!"

Now alone, Charles turns to Mark, "Okay?"

Mark smiles, "Looking forward to retirement?"

Charles shakes his head, "No, not really."

"Well, I *am* looking forward to mine, and that's why you're here, General Washington."

"Please, call me Chuck. And the why is?"

Mark pats Charles on the shoulder, "Okay, Chuck, we have a little proposition for you."

0000001010