

Terrans are Bad Luck

"Right-o then", says Ariel cheerfully.

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

She looks around absentmindedly.

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

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Ya know Ariel, that story gets better every time Flash tells it. Well, Flash Roger is a pretty good ranger now, but back when I first met him he had more chin than brain.

I was returning from a mission in Darmok Space, in a Darmok warp crusier I'd liberated (my own ship had been vaporised by the local law enforcement, but that's another story), when a distress call came over my sub-space communicator.

The call came from a Terran government vessel, stranded on the outer edges of the Pherion system and under attack from a bunch of space fighters. Luckily enough the pirates ran for it as soon as I turned up, I say luckily since the Darmok cruiser was designed for a pilot with about 6 more arms then me. Good thing I'd been taking zero-g tap dancing lessons, else I wouldn't of been able to fly the thing at all.

Turned out the Terren vessel was carrying Jorge Juteson, the Terran ambassador to the Pherion system. A bit of work with a big hammer got the Terran vessels engines running again. And just in time; the pirates hadn't run away, they'd just gone to get friends. I kicked the Terran pilot out and ran that ship hard as I could, but the pirates were going to be on us within a few kilo-secs.

Thinking quick, I turned towards Pherion Major, a gas giant at the systems center. The pirates couldn't track us through PMs atmosphere, and sure enough they gave up the chase soon after we hit the soup. Everything was looking pretty good, until the damn ships engines blew up again.

With no power, we started falling helplessly back into the gas giant, and the explosion showed the pirates where we were. I should of realised that trying to help a Terran is bad luck.

"I'd wager, Nick, that despite your reknowned skills of piloting and flower arrangement, the inferior quality of the ship you were molesting into working correctly proved inequal to the task. Its hull fragmenting almost instantly in the upper atmosphere of the gas giant. And if it weren't for the leviathan fungoid creatures that lived and floated in its stratosphere - you would surely have perished." A credit mote manifests in holographic display.

Jumping out of airlocks for fun

“That's pretty much what happened Simon, has Flash told this story to everyone ?”

“With the engines dead, we dropped into one of the huge and violent storms which were common in the planets stratosphere. Pretty soon the ship was shedding it's skin quicker than a Gundark in malting season. A few of the sensors were still working, and they showed a huge floating mass some several thousand meters below us. Anything was a better option than being crushed with the ship in the lower atmosphere and, so we grabbed space suits, opened the airlock and jumped out into the turbulent (and bright pink) sky.

It's pretty difficult to steer while free falling through an electrical storm the size of a moon, fortunately the island was a large target. As the ground rushed up I braced for a sharp impact, so was pleasantly surprised by the soft and gooey landing, which left me up to my neck in lime green scum. Moments later the arrival of the Ambassador was announced by a sudden wash of slime and a resonant splat. Soon enough we found solid ground, and explored enough to discover that the floating island was in fact a vast mass of fungi of many types, floating randomly through the planets stratosphere.

Now, anyone knows that a giant floating mushroom will react promptly to catching fire. By turning my GR standard issue ray-gun up to the maximal setting we found that a limited form of steering was possible, and so after a few days of pleasant sailing we made it to one of the many hunting lodges scattered around the planet. The assorted tourists staying at the lodge seemed mighty impressed by our mode of transport, and soon enough a party of them had embarked on an expedition aboard the leviathan fungus.

Well, now that I had access to the lodges sub-space communicator, it was easy enough to get in touch with GR HQ. Turns out that they already had a GR jump-ship on it's way out here, and even better they had a new GR space-fighter I could requisition. The bad news was, I'd also been assigned a new Rookie.”

Pia perks up. “You betcha giant floating fungi react promptly to catching fire. You say you set fire to them to help you steer? I don't believe it. Those fungi would have exploded in all directions if they caught fire, setting fire to you and everything for hundreds of metres around. On a planet like that, it would have set off a chain reaction, and you'd have the whole atmosphere burning! I reckon you found some other way to steer, and you made that up so you wouldn't have to tell us.”

This contradiction is accompanied by the appearance of a holocredit above the table.

Don't shoot the yellow fungus

Nick Nitrous (GR, OTE, UHF) scowls briefly at Pia, before continuing

“Well Pia, admittedly I skipped some of the boring technical details.

As it happens, the Terrans and me weren't alone on the island, the whole place was crawling with big bugs. Now, if you've got slime, you expect bugs, but these ones were pretty clever (well, for bugs). They'd built huge sails out of algae all over the island, and were using them to steer the Leviathan Floating Fungus after the bigger lightning storms.

We fooled the bugs storm sense by chucking small chunks of fungus into the wind and vaporising them, so the steering really did use a bit of raygun work. Actually, I think it was the vaporising stuff aspect that appealed to the tourists who set off on the island after us. Unfortunately those tourists were a bit careless about which fungus they shot, soon after we departed aboard the GR jump-ship that particular fungus island caught fire. Don't know where you would of heard of fungus causing a planetary chain reaction though, hell that explosion was barely 10,000 km across.

Now that we were space bound again, I offered to give the ambassador a lift to Pherion 5 so he could get on with his job, which was to mediate a big spat that had erupted between the Pherionians and a bunch of Arsenium Miners living in the systems asteroid belt. (Did I mention that I scored a shiny new space-fighter ?)

Soon enough the the Ambassador, myself and my new rookie were coming into dock at Pherion 5's spaceport, expecting a warm welcome as I'd rescued the amabassador and all that. Now the inhabitants of Pherion 5 are squat, aquatic flightless avians, sort of like a Terran penguin only bright orange. This made pretty difficult not to laugh on seeing the puffed up Pherion military types waiting for us in the hangar. Got a bit easier when the head Penguin announced they were here to arrest Ambassador Juteson and Nick Nitrous, on charges of Genocide."

"Aaaah yes. I believe I've heard of this situation. Unless this is a regular occurence, and I don't know the Pherionians as a species at all well, was not the Ambassador accidentally and fatally shot while trying to escape."

An odd tentacles from the base of the shell slides up over the table edge and, placing a glassite credit plate in the centre of the table, extrudes a spiral of credit dust, which soon sets into it's standard, highly attractive purple sparkly form.

Trust no-one, especially if they spit slime

[OOC one more post will wrap this up]

"Well Svathlan, I expect it happens all the time on these backwater planets. The thought of Ambassador Juteson trying to escape is a hoot, the man was as spineless as a Frequalian Jello Raptor, a deboned one. No offence to any invertebrates present."

"But, back to the story, I had a pretty good idea who had set us up, but I couldn't follow it up if I let myself get arrested. Quickly I stepped forward and introduced myself to the most inflated Pherion 'I'm Flash Roger, Galaxy Ranger. I'm glad you're here; I'd like to turn these two over to the proper authorities', Then, gesturing at my rookie, who of course was the real Flash Roger, 'And, I request that the renegade Galaxy Ranger, Nick Nitrous, be turned over into my custody for later trial' Flash seemed a bit surprised at being misnamed, but was naive enough to trust me. The Pherion guards of course refused to hand anyone over, and took the other two into custody, as well as demanding that I stay on the station until further notice. I'd bought myself a few hours, until a Pherion smart enough to pick one GR from another saw the prisoners"

"I started looking around the rest of the docks, and my suspicions were confirmed far sooner than I expected; down in the repair dock was one of the very ships that had been used to attack the ambassadors ship. It looked like the Pherion military was behind the attempt to kill the Ambassador. Immediately I ran to the transport tubes, if I was right then the Ambassador was in a heap of trouble. (Oh, and Flash too) All too slowly I arrived at the stations small prison area, as soon as I stepped out

of the transport the way was blocked by an armed penguins. I set my GR raygun to nauseate, and a quick blast left the guards well distracted. While I was trying to figure out what to do about the locked blast doors into the prison, a convenient explosion from within took care of them, and almost took care of me as well. Well, I found Flash pretty quick in the ruins of the prison, but the Ambassador had already been shot in his cell. The explosion must have been set by the militant penguins to fake an escape attempt. Flash and I legged it back to my ship, with surprisingly little resistance, and soon enough we were space bound again. "

"With Ambassador Juteson dead, (I sent off a quick sub-space message of condolences to his wife Judy and their boy Elroy), it fell to me to try and negotiate with the Arseniums. Conveniently enough, there was a Arsenium Warcraft approaching Pherion 5 already. I hailed the ship, and they agreed let me talk to their Queen, so long as I did it from aboard their ship. Well, it seemed like a big risk, but in my line of work that's nothing special. Flash volunteered to mind the ship, he turned out to be a quick learner that boy. After we matched course with them it was only a short space walk to the other ships airlock. I was about to get my first look at an Arsenium."

"Now, the GR guidebook classifies Arseniums as a Mucus Based Lifeform, but I tell ya, I know a Slime Monster when I see one. These guys looked like hairballs dipped in used reactor coolant. The interior of the ship was intensely humid, and stringy blue muck dripped off the walls. On my arrival, I was taken to a round room which contained several of the slimy critters and an old, battered robot translator. Soon as I turned up, all of em' (bar the robot) started bouncing around and spitting little blobs of slime. I assume that's how they talk, since the translator crackled into voice"

Nitrous continues in a cheesy fake robot voice, "Welcome, Galaxy Ranger. I'm afraid that your treaty arrives too late. We are tired of the inhabitants of Pherion 5 constantly ignoring our demands." "Well, I protested that the Pherion Military had sabotaged the attempts at mediation, which caused the collection of blobs to start rolling around frantically. The robot translated this as harsh laughter. 'Of course, half the Pherion Military is working for us. Within 20 kiloseconds we will be within range to launch our class one Greenhouse bomb at their icy little planet.' At that moment a dozen more of the slimeballs entered the room, and the translators voice took on a menacing tone, 'As for you, Galaxy Ranger, I doubt you'll be around to see the show'

Never expect gratitude from a Penguin

Nick Nitrous, Galaxy Ranger (TM) pauses to sort out the small pile of wagers on the table, and finishes his beer before resuming the story

"As the droid finished it's cliché ridden threat, I noticed that there were sparks jumping from a loose plate on it's power supply, not that there was any way I could use that while surrounded by threatening slime monsters. Just then, the ship rocked and juddered, throwing the slime monsters into a slippery confusion. Flash, listening from the GR Space Fighter, had launched an attack. This was distraction enough, I leapt forward, overpowered the robot and, ignoring creative verbal abuse in a dozen languages, ripped the cover off it's power supply. Slimy tentacles grabbed at me and the robot from all around. Turns out that the mucus covering the Arseniums was a decent conductor, soon as a tentacle crossed over the robots power plate, it shorted. There was a sudden flash of light and a shower of spare parts. (Fortunately my suits air filters spared me from the stench of charred slime monster). I grabbed one of the strangely shaped weapons off a stunned slimeball, shot at the next one, then turned the gun right way round and tried again. The rest of em returned fire, making it a prudent time to run like hell. I was hoping to find my way to the bomb bay, but it's hard to read the

signs when those signs are actually small pools of colored slime on the floor. Pretty soon I was back at the airlock, with half a shipload of slime monsters behind me. The airlock crew bounced down a side corridor when I turned up (assume they were scared, but really how would ya tell?) The airlock controls were no clearer then the signs, so it fell to the direct approach. I lined up the airlock doors with my new toy, and was rewarded with a dull fading hum. That's when I noticed that my GR issue ray gun was still sitting on the airlock control layout, right where I'd left it after coming aboard. Well, I yelled for joy at being re-united with my best friend, though it was drowned out by the sound of the wall I was using for cover being vaporised."

"Now, the GR issue ray-gun has a wide range of useful settings, with the stipulation that actually using most of them will void the guns warranty (and often the users life insurance policy). I figured that not getting shot was a bigger issue, and so with some trepidation turned the Ray-Guns dial all the way up to 11."

"The next thing I recall I was floating in space, surrounded by debris and covered in slime. The ray gun was warped and half melted, and my glowing teeth lit up the inside of my space helmet. Half a dozen slime monsters were writhing and venting green clouds in the space close to me, and their ship was disappearing in the distance, with a hole in the side looking like a ruptured blister. Flash swung past soon enough and picked me up, though my space fighter was no longer shiny or new after picking a fight with a far larger ship"

"There was no way we'd be able to catch up with the Arsenium warship before it dropped it's Greenhouse bomb, but we still had a chance. Ya standard Greenhouse bomb releases a horde of fast breeding fungus that spread like mad, then decay and release a bunch of gas, quick enough to change the planets atmosphere in a few days. We'd have to deal with them before the lot got entrenched and spread out, probably in the first few hours. Normally, I'd follow standard policy on dealing with this kind of thing, but we didn't have any nukes handy. Next best thing would be a huge load of fungicide. Not the kind of thing that a GR normally carries, but I knew where to get some"

"After I abandoned the Darmok ship I'd flown into the system, it followed the autopilot and finished up in orbit around Pherion 5. A crowded warship gets pretty grungy on a long haul trip, and when ya consider that an average Darmok of Darmok has at least 12 armpits, well you get the picture. We went aboard and got the autodoc to spit out a few Darmok first aid kits, each of which contained enough fungicide to slow down a Leviathan Floater. By now, the Arseniums had dropped their payload, and a confused three way space battle had broken out between the warship and the two factions of the Pherion Military. We got a fix on the bombsite and flew on down towards the surface. Most of Pherion 5's surface is covered in gray ocean or vast planes of reflective ice, the dirty green lump spreading from the bombsite stood out even from 20km up. We set down right at the center of the puddle of muck, loaded up with as much fungicide as we could carry and set to work. After the last couple of days I'd started to really hate fungus and slime, it felt good to get some serious payback. The foam from the Darmok first aid kits worked great. Soon enough we were standing at the bottom of a 100m wide crater, which the planet wrecking fungus had eaten into the ice, covered head to toe in dead green muck."

"Well, a pretty major war erupted in the Pherion System, but the Arseniums had put most of their resources into getting the Greenhouse bomb, so it ended up as a civil war between traditionalist Pherions and the faction who wanted better weather for surfing. Flash and I were still wanted by both sides, despite saving their planet. In the end we had to smuggle ourselves out of the system, we posted ourselves back to GR HQ in cold-sleep capsules disguised as lunch meat shipments. I got back ok; the Aeolian courier service delivered a container full of Frequalan Sentient lounge chairs instead of Flash. Now, if you could get Flash to tell ya how he avoided becoming thinking furniture for a Hedonist Cult, I'd love to hear it"

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