

Deus Ex Machina

'It appears, MAP was saying, 'that the craft are of extraterrestrial origin.'

Adamson had heard the rumours but - like everyone else involved with the excavation - he didn't believe that such a thing could be possible. The consensus was that it was all a hoax. His bark of laughter was, however, greeted with a blank stare.

'I hope,' MAP spat each word with bullet-like accuracy, 'the Professor can continue to see the funny side.'

Adamson revolved upon his swivel chair to locate the implied audience of more than one. When he'd entered, MAP'd been alone at his desk; now there were two other figures seated at the back of the room - a man and a woman.

'The Bureau of Science', MAP didn't sound delighted, 'are here to see how you react to the news.'

Adamson allowed the pause to lengthen.

'I'd prefer,' MAP's voice was suddenly strident, 'not to address my comments to the back of your neck!'

Adamson obliged smilingly. 'I just don't know,' he camped, '*which* way to turn. 'Not,' he added, that it makes any difference. If they don't stab me in the back - *you* will.'

This time it was MAP who cultivated silent hostility.

'What news?' Curiosity, Adamson often failed to remind himself, tended to produce dead cats. 'All I've heard so far is a lunatic tale of alien spacecraft.'

'Not,' it was the woman who spoke, 'spacecraft.'

Adamson span his chair round. 'Not? What then?'

'Temporal displacers.'

She was, Adamson observed, very beautiful. He'd read somewhere that oriental women were supposed to be expert lovers. Yes, he lashed himself mentally, and he was black, which meant that MAP was a racist and a victim of penis envy. So much for stereotypes. What was it she'd said? 'Temporal?'

'Time machines.' The man on her left seemed to think that was sufficient. Anyway, having delivered this nugget, he motioned for MAP to resume.

'You claim,' again MAP waited for Adamson to revolve in his seat, 'to have discovered the oldest - *the* oldest - human remains. Through 'gene archaeology,' he coughed as if trying not to physically reject Adamson's approach, 'you claim to have pinpointed the exact location in time and space where primates first became human.'

The man in the shadows again drew himself up. 'As you know, we do not believe that the various *inferior* - ', he sneered pointedly, 'and *superior* races - are the descendants of a single breeding pair: that is a myth!' But at least we know who we are, thought Adamson, and wondered what the Dictatorship of the Evangelical White Christian Fundamentalists could possibly have to do with all of this. 'Moreover,' the man-in-the-shadows glanced at a door in the wall to his left, 'alongside the skeletons of those you believe to be the original parents of the human race, a pair of devices were unearthed which, according to the experts,' he jerked his head angrily in the direction of the Bureau's representatives, 'were manufactured by a civilization vastly superior to our own.'

Ah! Adamson thought he knew the Dictatorship's racist views inside out, but xenophobia was something new. Space niggers! He cast his mind back to the day of the double discovery; first they'd found the bones; then, while the rest were at lunch, Jim McGuire had struck 'gold' with his metal detector. The only other person to see what'd been uncovered was MAP, and he'd ordered Jim to seal the burial chamber - then promptly bundled him off in a helijet.

'What makes you think the devices are of alien manufacture? If, as you claim, they're machines for travelling through time, aren't they likely to be products of our own future?'

'We've thought of that,' it was the man from the Dictatorship again, 'but the control systems are designed to be operated by non-humans. However,' his voice took on a lighter note, 'if you can grow an extra arm in the middle of your back...'

'Funny ha ha.' Nevertheless, Adamson *could* visualise a similar creature; but that, he pushed the image away, was ridiculous. 'Okay, granted that the time-travellers were non-human, how come we found their transportation? Surely they intended to go back to wherever it was they came from?'

'The machinery is, so far as we are able to determine, virtually indestructible, and therefore still fully operational,' MAP confirmed.

Evidently his part in the interview was ended. Adamson rotated his chair. 'Are the remains,' clearly MAP had decided that they *were*, 'non-human?'

'No, there're certain oddities,' the shadowy man dismissed these with a shrug, 'but they're recognizably human.'

'So?' Adamson frowned. 'Either the aliens were killed before they could return,' which would explain the machines' presence in the tomb - spoils of battle, 'or they didn't *want* to return.'

'That's what we want you and Miss Chang here,' the man indicated his companion, 'to investigate.'

'But that's impossible. The only way to find out is to...' The shock of realization rendered him dumb for a moment. 'Oh.'

'If we're going to be 'travelling' together,' the woman smiled, 'I think it'll be alright for you to call me Evelyn.'

'Evelyn?' He wasn't curious; just dazed. But she wasn't to know that.

'My father was a 'white devil'. You can't tell,' the smile was gone now, 'until you get up close.'

Was she angry? Racism was, as the appointment of a Dictator to the Bureau of Science showed, still a potent force. If he'd inadvertently touched a raw nerve, he owed her something. 'My name's Jesus. It's a common enough name in Brazil, but with some people it can be an additional source of,' already he felt her empathy, 'irritation?'

She laughed. 'Yes. There is much,' her gaze flicked past, 'bigotry.'

Good. They understood each other. He'd be *able* to work with her. 'Why, to coin a cliché, us?'

'Apparently,' her companion strode across to the door-in-the-wall, 'the alien craft were keyed to their owners' genetic code. It is believed that the two of you provide a close enough match.'

Adamson suppressed his glee. No wonder this Dick'd been spitting fire. These superbeings would never be WASP's!

'That,' the man from the Dictatorship produced a field nullifier, 'together with the high security clearance which you both merit...' He waved his magic wand at the door. 'Open Sesame!'

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Their would-be-steeds, though wheelless, bore a more-than-passing resemblance to pre-fusion Harley-Ds, invoking in them a brief but decisive nostalgia for that spirit of pioneering which the original chrome-and-steel 'hogs' were designed to evoke. However, when the Dictatorship's man began to deliver the inevitable spiel about humanity's future - and their responsibility to it - Evie yawned. Fortunately; or, perhaps, courteously, her boredom was taken as a sign of fatigue.

'Well, when you've seen one time-bender, I suppose you *have* seen 'em all. Why don't you...er...retire early? The trip isn't scheduled 'til noon tomorrow, but we'll want you familiarized with the technicals. How does sixish sound?'

They emerged to find the camp-site dismantled and a micro-tel - flown in by Supa-Transport - plopped down in the middle of what'd been Jim's improvised herb garden (as cook-elect, he'd insisted on certain spices to 'bring out', that is, *disguise*, his food's flavour). Expert lovers? Well, they *were* - different. Her face had that sly-eyed impishness combined with doll-like precision-engineered beauty, and everything was perfectly proportioned, cute little nipples erecting from irresistibly pubescent-seeming cones of creamy gold, but below the tiny waist things were, well, *different*.

The rising self-esteem of the Asian nations - due largely to the success of the trade-wars waged by the Sino-Nippon technopolies - had led them to reject the West's cultural hegemony; but the rest of the world's women were still fashion victims, succumbing to fetishistic decadence, becoming slavish followers of the cult of the stiletto-teetering arse-pouter. The result was - perversion. Apart from - if not creating - *encouraging* (at the very least) the impulse to indulge in anal sex, body fascism had re-modelled the female frame. Present-day women *preferred* to roll onto their bellies, offering a rear-entry for ball-slapping fun; so he'd oblige, slamming it in to the hilt, 'til they'd tasted all the Nubian meat he could give them (nothing more satisfying than plugging a high-arsed white-bitch Nazi); but groans and squirms were no substitute for that look in a girl's eyes as she came, admitting she'd been *had*.

He'd seen an old style inflatable once; apparently the lonely folks'd used 'em before sextronics became a billion-credit state-approved industry. Nowadays everybody got his/her unit when they'd reached puberty (unless their parents objected, and then they'd to prove the kid wasn't sexed-up yet), for the boys, a genuine hole-in-the-corner of their living-cubes: you stuck in your tool and, either let the apparatus suck you off, or else you rammed away at it 'til your load jettisoned; for the girls, a fat sculpted pillar of vibrating plas-flesh (better than whatever the real thing looked like - guaranteed) jutting from a rocking-horse affair: you simply climbed aboard and, living-out that self-fulfilling prophecy of the nursery, rode your

'cock-horse', a 'white lady on a white horse' (if that was your preferred colour scheme), the Shangri-La land of 'As-Much-As-I-Damn-Well-Please.

Scientifically and healthwise it made sense. Youngsters these days weren't the hunched-up, lop-sided, neurotic wankers of the Repressive Years. If the West could only junk its hall-of-mirrors notions of feminine beauty! Even when you could get a girl to lie right-side-up, it was like making love to an old-style inflatable with a cunt half-way up its back. Evie, on the other hand; well, it felt *right*.

'Jesus!'

'That's me babe. Slowly now. Make it last. We might not get another.'

On top now, raising herself to let him watch; slippy black luncheon meat, emerging from her red-lipped pout, almost-but-not-quite losing his straining-to-keep-it-in-tip; then letting herself go, coming down on him like an old-fashioned steam hammer, wriggling in sheer naughty-girl delight for a second or two, before gingerly beginning the ascent once more, scared she might lose it during the climb, wanting it to start at the very instant she made the decision to grind down on him again, wanting him to come too, to feel him shoot it into her, shooting her down, killing her briefly, a 'little death', an all-too-short oblivion.

At the zenith she felt herself going; throwing her head back, russet mane discharging static-electric sparks of blue fire, she eased herself down, settling there Sphinx-like; then, cracking her spine like a whip, she sprang from his cock, dangling her hair over his face, creating between them a tunnel of midnight through which, though blind, he could *sense* the gaze of her cat-green eyes: so *he* surrendered, reaching down between her legs, between *his* legs, a single stroke, spunk raining down, spit-spat on-her-back, dribbling through still-cascading tresses, dripping onto his face, his tongue, into his mouth, 'til she hungrily sealed his lips with a saltier kiss and the pungent smell of ozone.

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The *aliens* were certainly different. He'd found he could manage the forward controls easily enough; although he sometimes wished his arms were longer. Those behind him were, however, a problem. Happily, at least for him, the instruments were locked into a 'there-and-back' mode (the Bureau's hierarchy had declared that the risk involved in attempting an override which could damage the equipment was too great; moreover, rescued aliens might be grateful enough to share *all* their secrets). Because use of the left hand 'search' mechanism would, therefore, be minimal, he'd be able to manipulate the right hand controls while turning sideways to trigger those at the rear - at least that was the theory. The alternative was to rely on the 'auto-pilot', but no one trusted it. Where'd he put his alien if he got one? He had his doubts, but they said it *could* be done; anyway, it was too late to back out now.

He wouldn't even be able to defend himself against attack. One of the features of this gizmo was that you couldn't take back anything that was manufactured. They'd been hard pressed to get them both something they could *wear!* Apparently the contraption itself was organic. Essentially it'd been *grown!* Now *that* was technological advancement! On the other hand, perhaps the aliens weren't as clever as they thought? In the early days of the 'horseless carriage' they'd suggested you wouldn't be able to breathe if you broke a thirty-kilom speed limit. Maybe, when you sped into the future, you'd age and rot? Conversely, when travelling backwards through time, perhaps the entropy arrow got reversed and you grew progressively younger until - pop! - you passed out of existence? That scenario would also account for the missing aliens, their 'time displacers' would, if placed on automatic, have arrived in the past without them. It would also explain why, when the Bureau had picked him for this mission, the Dictatorship of the White Evangelical Christian Fundamentalists had let him go - one less uppity nigger. He tried focusing on images of people enjoying rides in all kinds of present-day high-speed open-air 'horseless carriages', but it didn't help; he found himself holding his breath.

In response to the technician's signal he began to implement the sequence he'd been required to memorise and, as he did so, out of the corner of his eye he watched Evie's fingers performing the same task. She finished without mishap but, in adjusting his stance to reach back for the start/stop lever, he had turned away from her. Consequently, as he used his right hand to open up what he'd come to think of as the 'throttle', he wasn't entirely certain she'd be alongside when he turned back to engage the 'search' function. However, despite the optical distort factor, he could see that they were now 'travelling' together.

The experts said it would take three minutes of 'real' time, but they couldn't be sure how long that would *seem*. They'd been gone almost a minute when the change occurred. Initially he thought it was a hallucination; his arm appeared to be getting longer! However, as his clothes burst open to expose a body rapidly being covered by thick dark hair, he realized his error. It wasn't entropy that time-travel

affected - it was *evolution!* He'd reach his destination with a gene structure millions of years old! The next two minutes were spent in horrified contemplation of this fact; and the experts were proved right: it *seemed* like an eternity. He almost neglected to pull the 'stop' lever; if he *had* missed his cue he'd never have been able to re-enter the space-time continuum: instead, he'd have entered what the experts called 'limbo', a no-place in which death-through-starvation was the only cheering certainty. It was a near thing too; at first he panicked when the warning beacon flashed out: however, as he reached back, the craft was already slowing to a halt. His instinct for self-preservation had, he grinned wryly at the newly-grown tail which had evidently saved him, always been strong. He frowned. It was the aliens' third limb... Then it hit him: these machines weren't designed for *aliens*; they were meant to be used by human beings - like himself and Evie - who would 'evolve' during the trip!

The sight of her jolted him out of his reverie; he hadn't considered how they'd look to each other. Her tawny fur was, however, decidedly attractive; he'd never seen a fabric more sensuously exotic - or was that erotic? She obviously felt the same; as she stroked his own silky hide he tried to say her name, but the articulation wasn't there: he could only manage the first syllable before will power had to give way to biology.

'Ahdm,' she grunted in response. 'Ahdm.'

He couldn't quite make it out. Oh, but of course! She was trying to say *his* name... Adam? Was that it? He couldn't remember. His brain began to buzz insistently; there was something else he was supposed to be doing, something... The Word may have been there in the beginning but, as its buzzing stopped, instinct became king: ignorant of Eve's hideousness, he pulled her towards him.