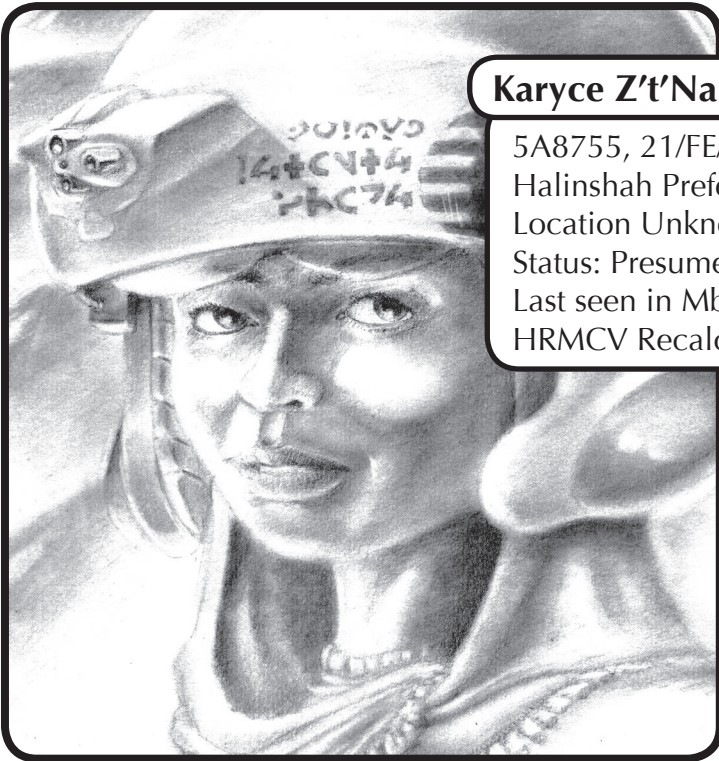


Radome



Short
Story

>>>PSA LIBRARY, INTERP/SCAN
Pan-spektro Analizisto: Biblioteko Skono/tradukisto



Karyce Z't'Nali

5A8755, 21/FE/A+
Halinshah Prefecture, Zerrit 5/Zerrit, Bustani Sct.
Location Unknown.
Status: Presumed Dead.
Last seen in Mbali Sct, incarcerated aboard
HRMCV Recalcitrant (now destroyed by Nexxar)

Karyce finds herself walking amongst aliens, trying to find a way back home. 21 years old, unemployed, she takes to the stars to find her boyfriend and inform him of her pending pregnancy.

However, the Universe has a different plan for her and a chain of events traps her far from home. She joins the crew of a spacecraft which tends toward mercenary and salvage work, but is crewed by wanted criminals. Tracked by the Hegemonic Navy, their ship is impounded, and the crew arrested by the Hegemony ship Recalcitrant, which itself is destroyed in a battle action against the

alien Nexxar.

Karyce's body is recovered from the wreckage, and seeing that she was pregnant, the Nexxar revive her. When the war against the Humans ends, the Nexxar, bound by new treaties preventing their passage in Human space, drop Karyce off in the middle of a burgeoning Interstellar community, where the aliens have never met a human being before.

Karyce ends up learning their languages and their ways, and bums from place to place, job to job, trying to find a way back to Human Space.

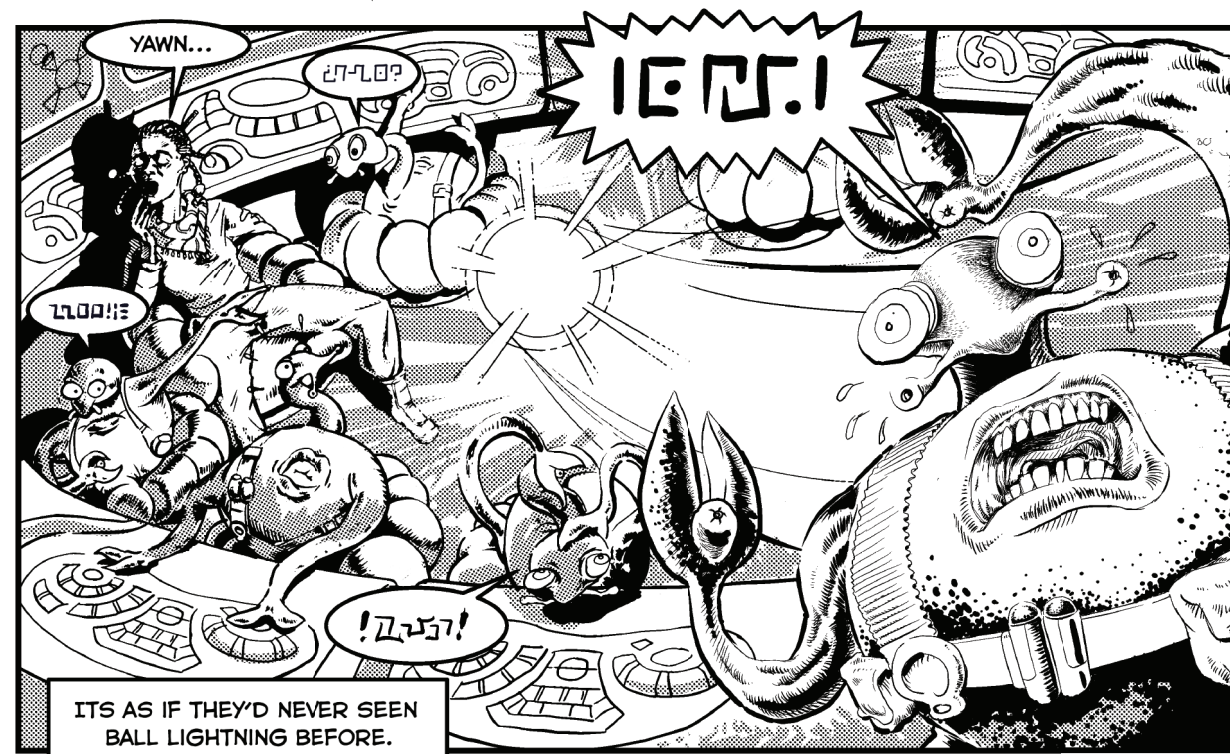
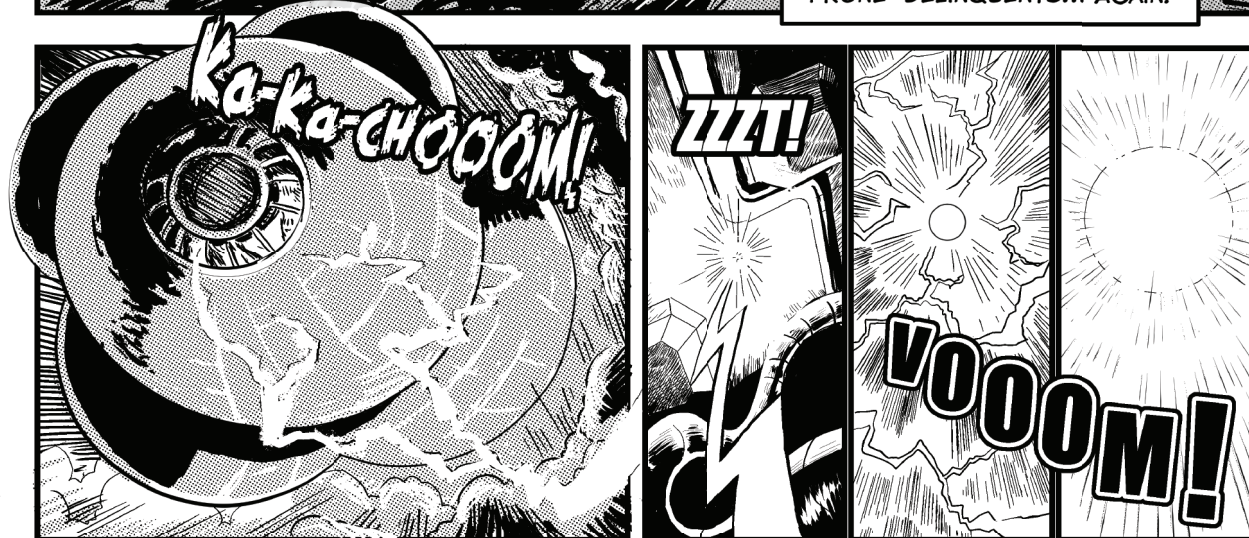
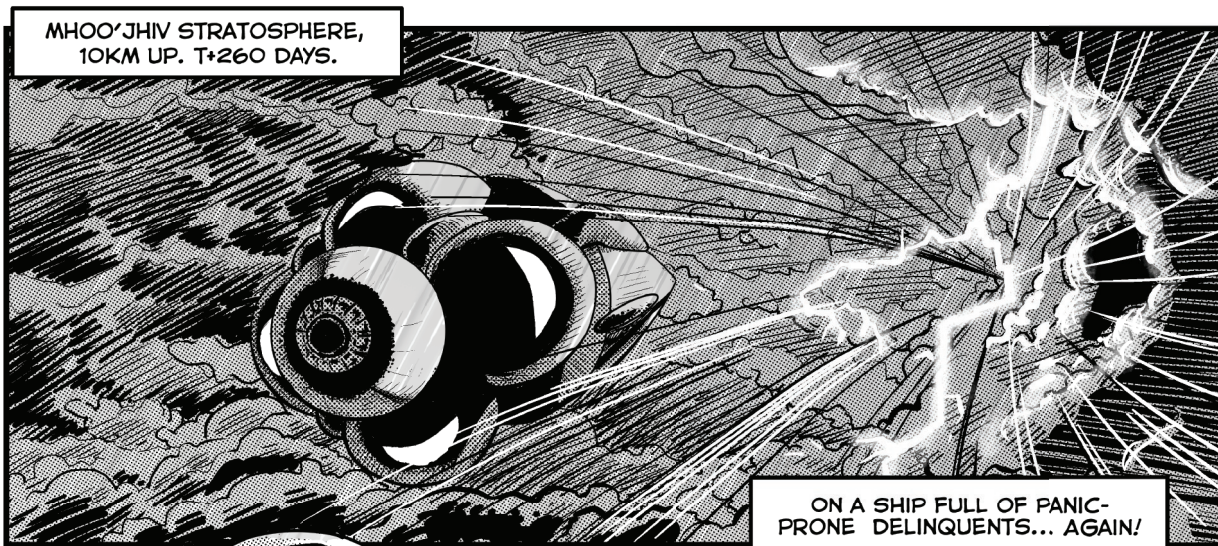
"Radome"

A Short Story by
Pan Spec.
Special Thanks
to Terry Shessair, for the
original idea.

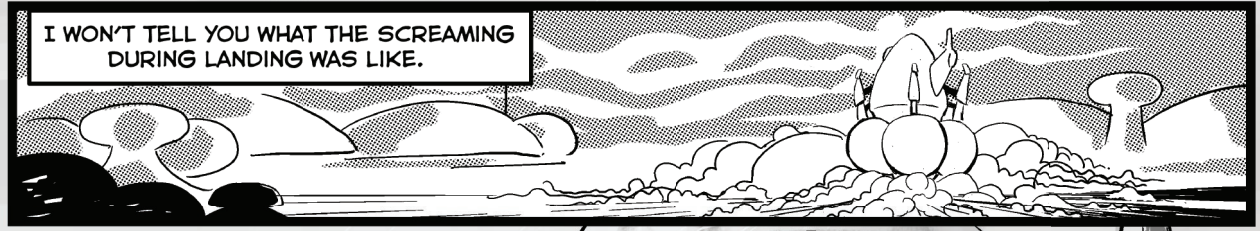
"It is said that the Jha'Jhiv never really learned or discovered anything of value for themselves. Every piece of technology, civil structure, spiritual concept, ethical focus or scientific know-how they ever had was donated or bartered from more sophisticated and altruistic species.

This, of course, isn't entirely true.

Which means, of course, that some of it IS..."



I WON'T TELL YOU WHAT THE SCREAMING DURING LANDING WAS LIKE.



WELL...

THERE'S YOUR PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

BETWEEN A SKILLSOFT TUTOR, SEVERAL POSTINGS AND GOOD OLD BAD LUCK, I'M THE MOST QUALIFIED ENGINEER ON THE SHIP.

AND SINCE I'M THE ONLY HUMAN FOR 20,000 LIGHTS, 21 YEARS OLD WITH NO FORMAL TRAINING, I'D SAY THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING.

THE BALL LIGHTNING HAD LEFT THE HULL LIKE A GREASY FONDUE. THE RADOME WAS TOTALLED, BUT AT LEAST THE DAMAGE WAS CONTAINED.

JHA'JHIV DON'T HANDLE BAD NEWS WELL, SO, I STUCK WITH THE POSITIVE...

IT'S A QUICK JOB, IF YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT PARTS.

YOU DO HAVE PARTS, DON'T YOU? REPLACEMENTS? RIGHT?

!00000!

OKAY, OKAY! RELAX... LET'S GET THINGS STARTED.

HEY, CAP, WHILE THE BOYS ARE DOING REPAIRS...

...HOW ABOUT SOME SHORE LEAVE FOR EVERYONE ELSE?

!00000!

AWESOME, THAT'S REALLY HUMAN OF YA.

YEAH, I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF ANY PROBLEMS COME UP...

WAIT - WHAT?

AFTER ONE DAY ON THE JOB...

HEY, CAP - WELL, YOU WANTED TO KNOW. YEAH, THERE'S A PROBLEM -

ᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒ

NO, NO, WE GET ALONG FINE. ᄒᄒᄒᄒ ISN'T THE PROBLEM...

ITS THE PARTS. LOTSA SPACERS GOT FRIED IN THE STRATOSPHERIC STORMS, SO COMPETITION FOR THEM IS FIERCE. WE'RE LOOKING AT A DELAY.

ᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒ

YES, YES, EVERY LITTLE DEVELOPMENT. NOTHING WILL ESCAPE YOUR UNWAVERING ATTENTION.

BACK TO WORK. WHEN A PRO WORKS HARD, THEY'RE HARDLY WORKIN', RIGHT?

THE NEXT DAY WASN'T MUCH BETTER...

REALLY, HUH? THEY HAD THEIR ORDER IN FIRST, EH?

Jha'jhiv computer & comms link.

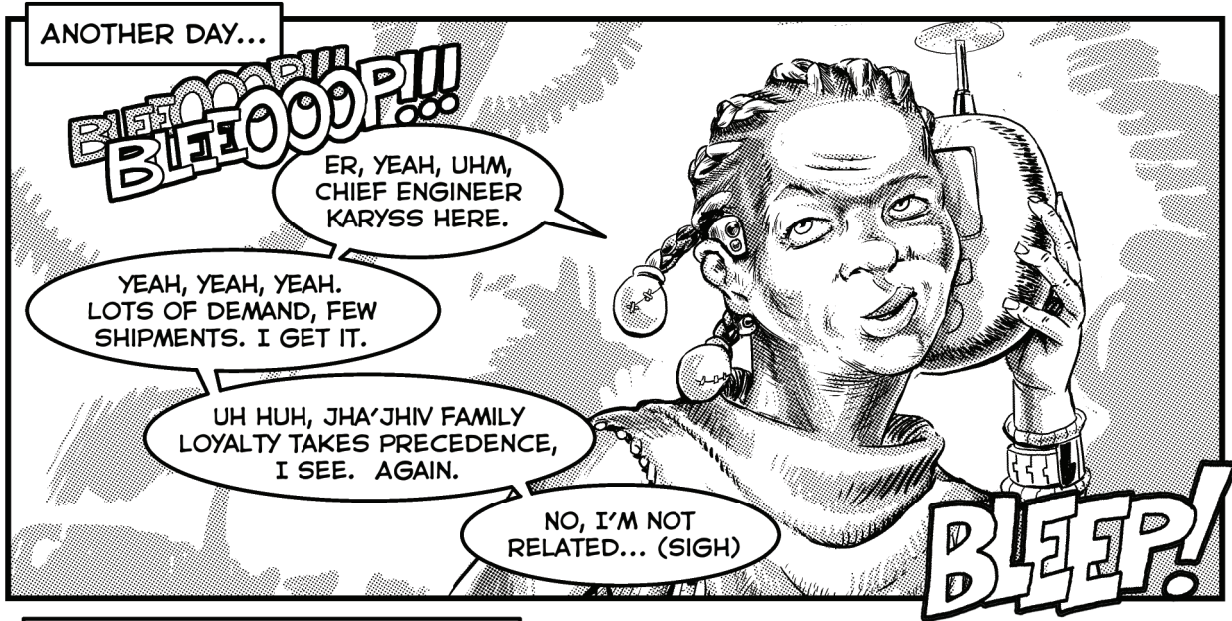
WELL, ACCORDING TO THE SPACEPORT FLIGHT LOGS, THEY ONLY LANDED THIS MORNING...

BLEEP!

ᄒᄒᄒᄒ

ᄒᄒᄒᄒ! DID YOU PUT THAT ORDER IN WHEN I ASKED ?!

!ᄒᄒᄒ!



ANOTHER DAY...

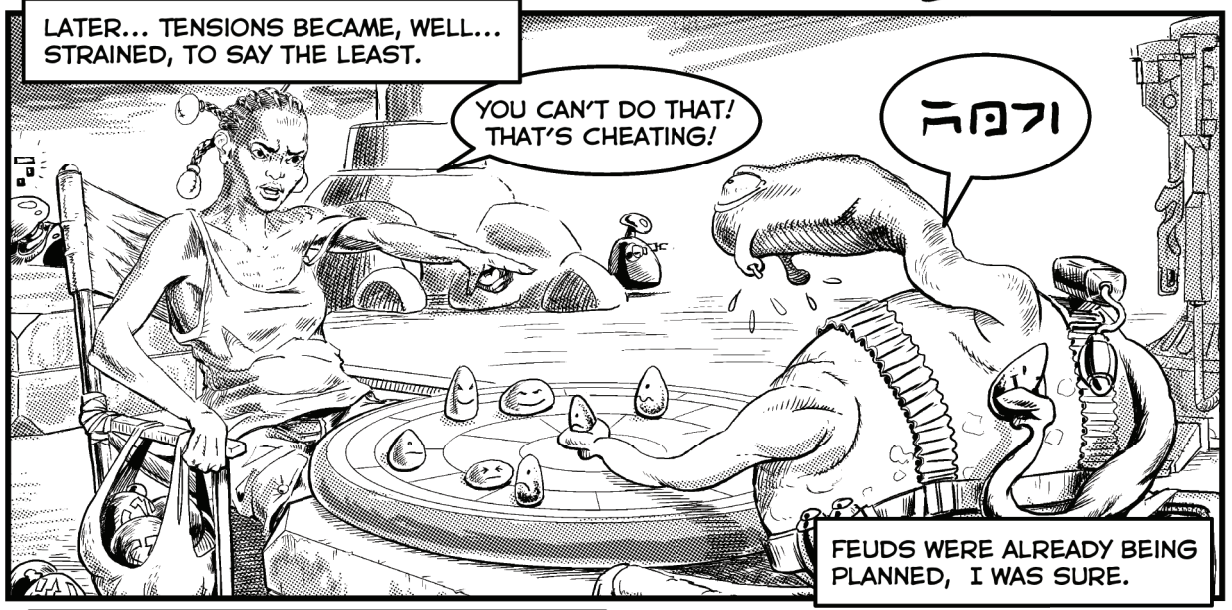
BLIHOOP!!
ER, YEAH, UHM, CHIEF ENGINEER KARYSS HERE.

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH. LOTS OF DEMAND, FEW SHIPMENTS. I GET IT.

UH HUH, JHA'JHIV FAMILY LOYALTY TAKES PRECEDENCE, I SEE. AGAIN.

NO, I'M NOT RELATED... (SIGH)

BLEEP!

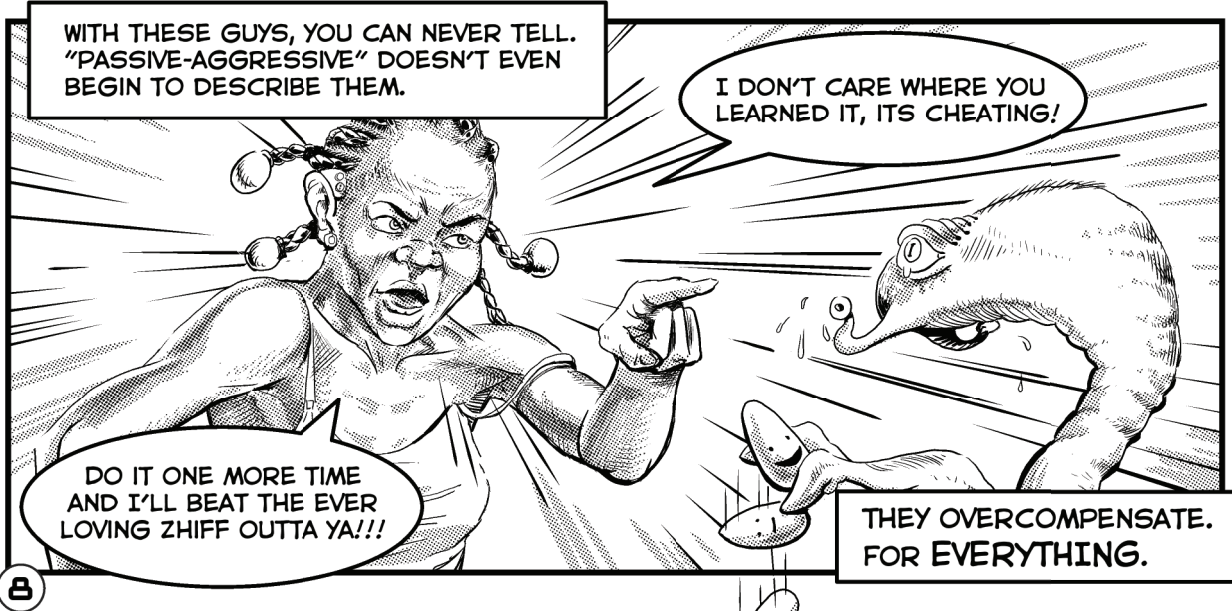


LATER... TENSIONS BECAME, WELL... STRAINED, TO SAY THE LEAST.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT! THAT'S CHEATING!

גריס

FEUDS WERE ALREADY BEING PLANNED, I WAS SURE.



WITH THESE GUYS, YOU CAN NEVER TELL. "PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE" DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE THEM.

I DON'T CARE WHERE YOU LEARNED IT, ITS CHEATING!

DO IT ONE MORE TIME AND I'LL BEAT THE EVER LOVING ZHIFF OUTTA YA!!!

THEY OVERCOMPENSATE. FOR EVERYTHING.

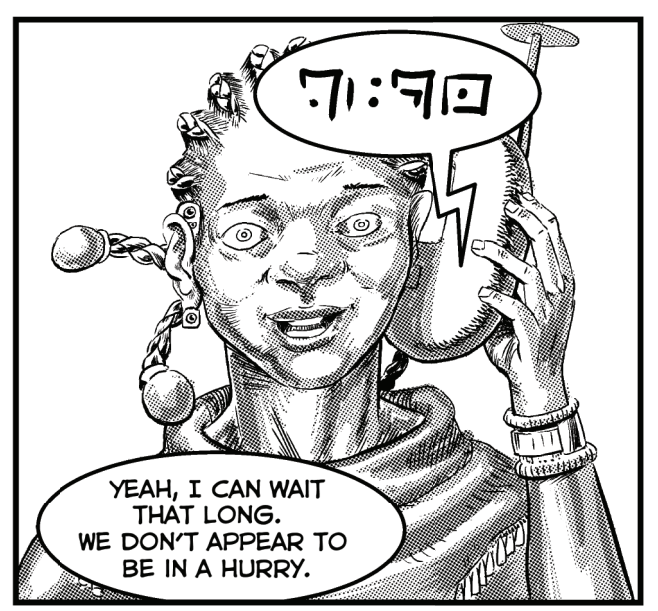


STILL, ALWAYS HOPE FOR TOMORROW, I SAY...

REALLY?!?!?!?

YOU HAVE ONE THAT ISN'T SPOKEN FOR?

HAHA! YES!!!



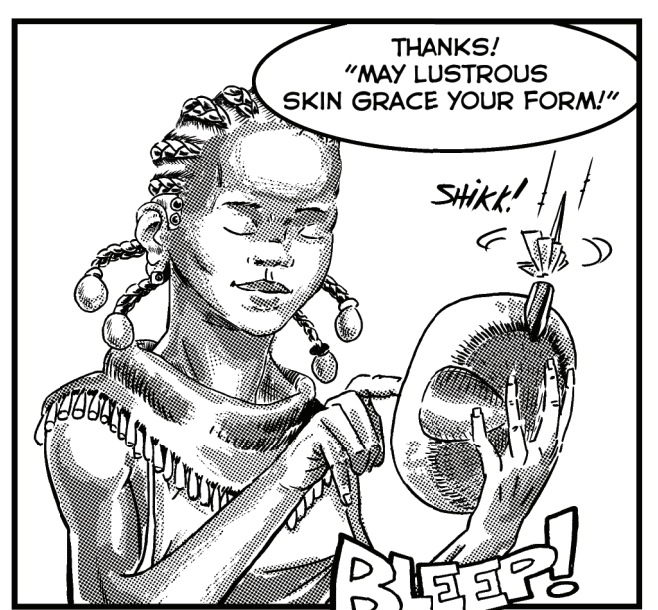
קרי:קרי

YEAH, I CAN WAIT THAT LONG. WE DON'T APPEAR TO BE IN A HURRY.



UH HUH, I'M EVEN LOOKING FORWARD TO SOME SHORE LEAVE.

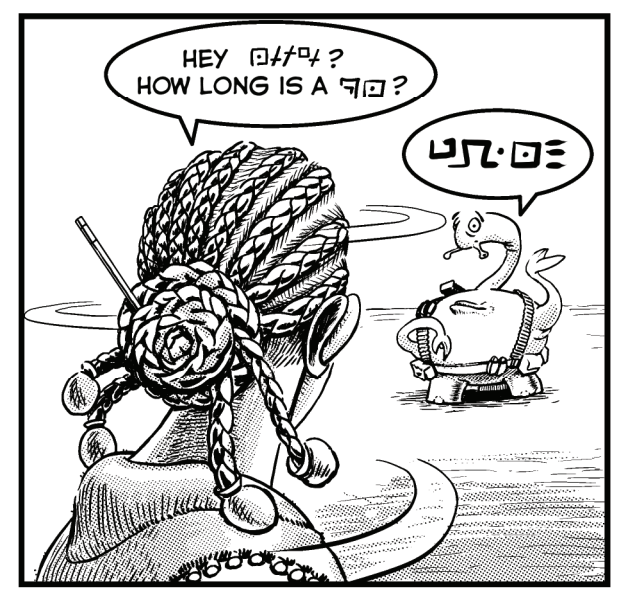
טפוסים!



THANKS! "MAY LUSTROUS SKIN GRACE YOUR FORM!"

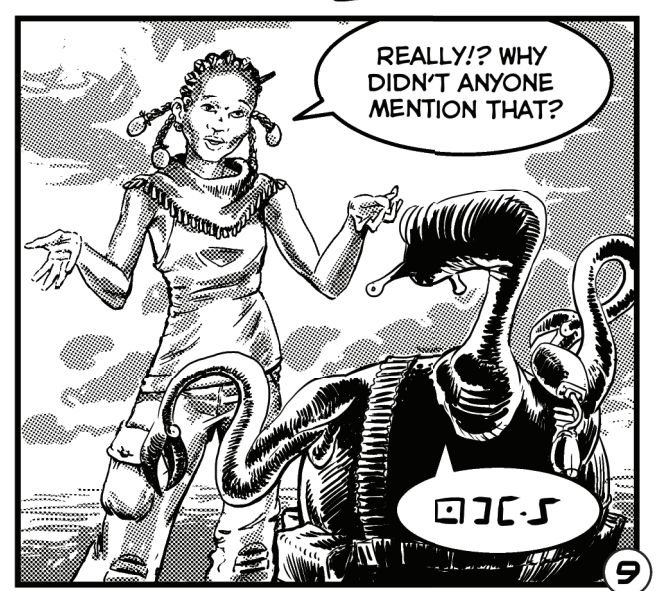
SHIKK!

BLEEP!



HEY קרי:קרי? HOW LONG IS A קרי:קרי?

טפוסים



REALLY?!? WHY DIDN'T ANYONE MENTION THAT?

קרי:קרי

THREE LONG 70S LATER.

הַיְתִדְהֵם

YEAAAAHHHH,
EVERYTHING
IS FINE, CAP.

ולכו

ONE IS ON THE WAY.
I'M EXPECTING IT
VERY.. "SHORTLY".
ONE 70.

YEAH, NO WORRIES, CAP.
ENJOY THE "POTSTICKERS".
I GOTTA GO.

BLEEP!

TIME!!!

CHEATING GETS YOU
NOWHERE!

GELATINOUS
BASTARD...

OI! WHAT DID I
TELL YA?

עִיב

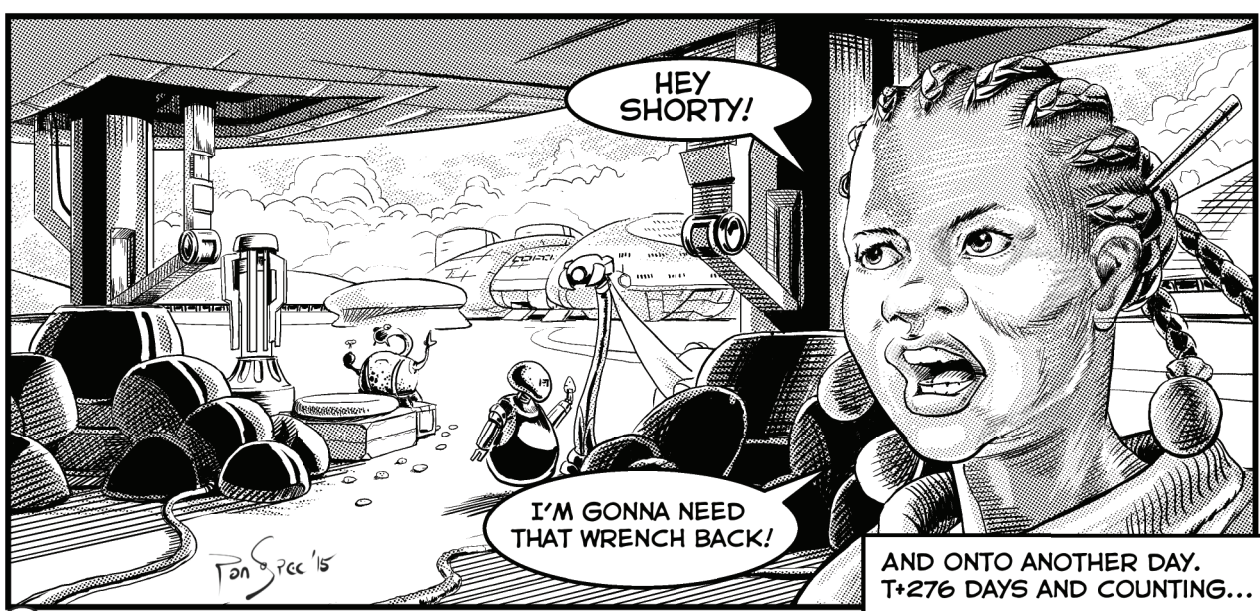
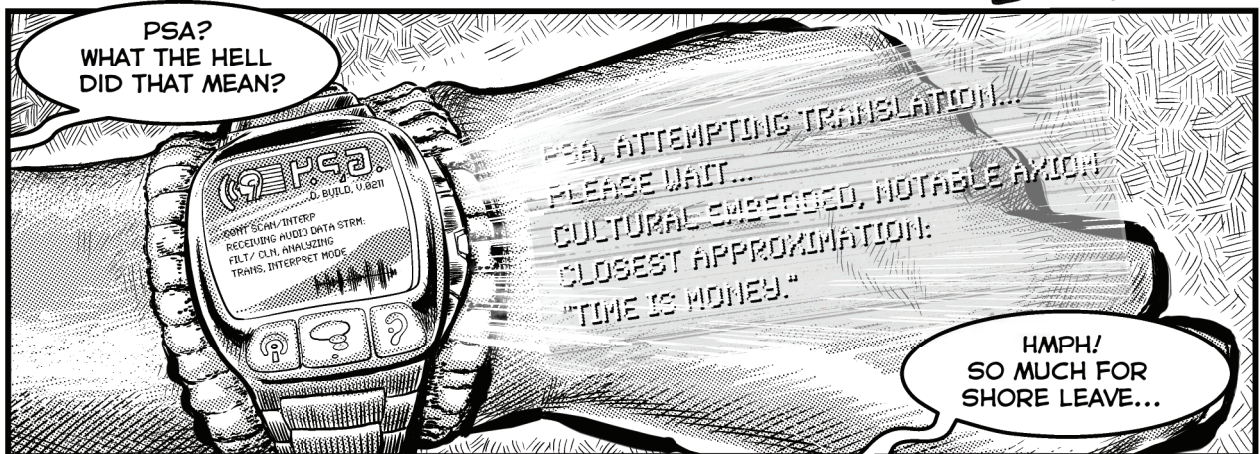
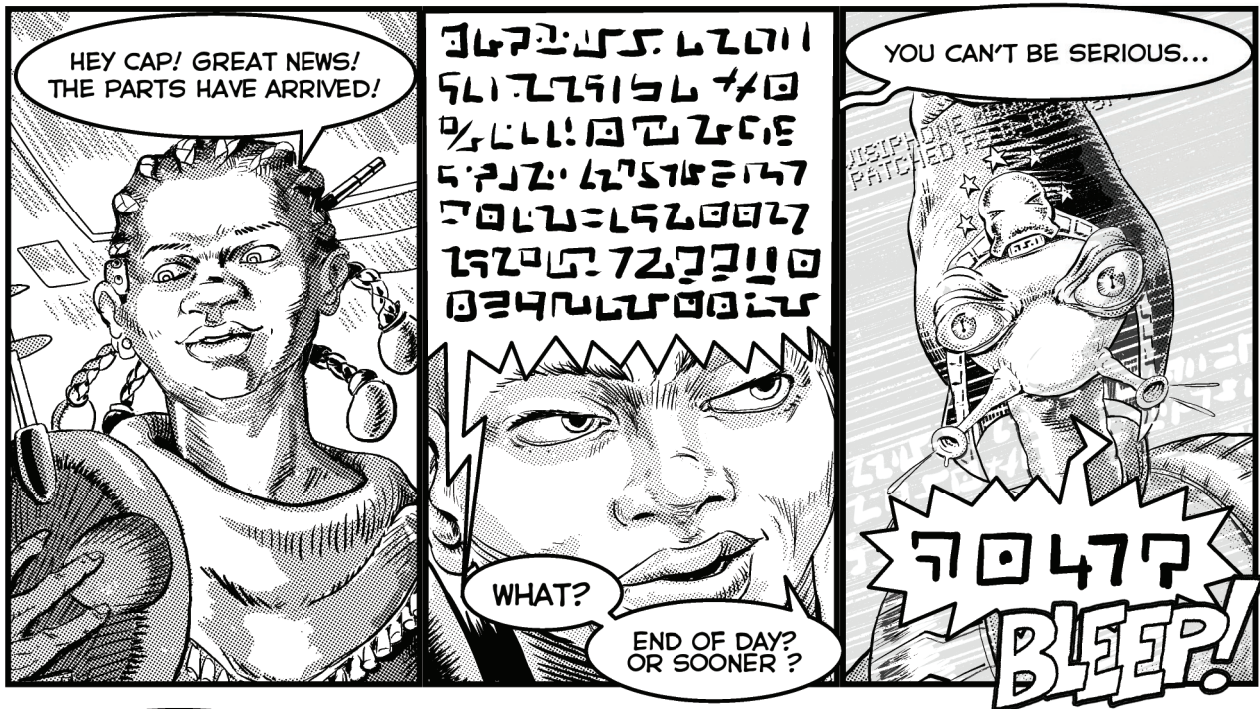
IF YOU
TRIED THAT...

ONE...

MORE...

HE'D BE FINE IN A BIT.
ONE OF THE PROBLEMS
OF A HYDROSTATIC
CIRCULATORY SYSTEM:
HARD TO KEEP IT
UP DURING STRESS.

MAMMALS: 1,
GLOBS OF GOO: ZERO.



PSA LIBRARY DATA, ENTRY JS439
The Jha'Jhiv

Biology

The Jha'Jhiv are a three-legged, globular species evolved from amphibians that essentially tired of swimming. With no physical hard skeleton to support them, they rely on a system hydrostatic bladders that inflate and deflate at will, hooked to a cartilaginous frame. Because of this, they are able to consciously and unconsciously alter their body shape to a great extent without harm. This system relies on the presence of near-constant pressure, so can be easily subverted by exterior stress. Blood-pressure drops or increases upsets their equilibrium, and hence bodily control. In light of this, they prefer to avoid direct confrontations, panic or anxiety inducing situations and are instead evasive, sneaky and passive-aggressive.

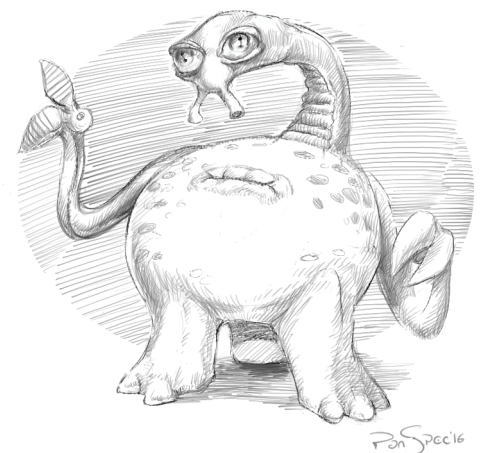
Their bodies consist of a spherically shaped torso, supported by three stubby legs with no discernible foot; a long muscular neck supports a small "head" with two eyes and nostril stalks, that supplement communication through sounds, gestures, etc.

They ingest foods through a vertically oriented toothed mouth on the central body. Diet consists of mulchable vegetation, crustacean and fish derived foods and large amounts of sugary liquids, which they are able to ferment inside their own bodies at an alarming rate.

Jha'Jhiv have two arms, ending in a 2-fingered, padded hand, with a supportive "thumb" stub that has a modified spiracle that allows them to taste what they touch. Their hands do not allow for extremely fine manipulation, so their creations tend to be bulky and round, allowing them to wrap their hands around an item, rather than grip it finely.

Breathing is conducted mainly through the skin, as is temperature regulation, so they tend not to wear much in the way of clothes, except for hazardous environments, such as vacuum work.

Jha'Jhiv clothing, then, is mainly aimed to display status of the individual and provide a framework to retain possessions, such as bags, webbing, etc. Vital organs, including the brain, are contained within the center torso where they are protected by several layers of the fluid-filled bladders that comprise its skeleton.



History

Their amphibian ancestors were hexapodal cephalopods that routinely foraged and hunted for food in tidal pools. Modern water-dwelling cousins of the Jha'Jhiv can still be seen on their homeworld, and comparisons show they have not changed that much.

Evolutionary pressures resulted in specialization of the "head limb" that could be used to poke out of cave holes, above the waterline or around corners. This encouraged the ancestral Jha'Jhiv to spend more productive time out of water and allowed them to leverage land environments.

Even though they show ample curiosity, the Jha'Jhiv realized they didn't have to work that hard to do anything if there is someone around to do it for them. Although they developed a complex civilization, they developed a "work ethic" that enslaved lower-animals and led to the social-abuse of any individual they deemed useful, resulting in a hideous dark age that only ended with the arrival of star-faring species. Contact with aliens brought incredible technologies and a period of enlightenment that continues to this day, but has done little to alter their attitude.

They use a tremendous amount of robotic labour, which they direct with slaver-like attention. As the overseers, and not maintainer of automations, they are oblivious to how things work, or why. So long as someone, or something, is around to provide help, they are easy going, but fail quickly in the face of adversity.

Psychologically, they lack confidence and spirit, unless placed in a position of authority that seems unquestioned. When confronted with confidence, or their authority doubted, they become angry and even violent, which translates into devious schemes of revenge that often backfire. Jha'Jhiv dramatic mythology is filled with tales of revenge schemes that actually worked, and very little else.

