

THE GOVERNOR OF URANUS

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CHAPTER ONE

On the planet Mars there were two kingdoms, or perhaps republics, whichever they were, namely the Jrugland Empire and the Lemonland Empire.

Now to give a brief history lesson, roughly 900 years ago, in the 2020's, there were two men from Earth, Joe, a real estate agent, and Crugg, a cyborg, and together they founded a space travel monopoly, and they would take frequent trips to and from Mars, where they eventually settled. From their space company they became so rich that they founded a whole country on Mars, named after a combination of "Crugg" and "Joe", neighboring the preexisting country to the west of it called Lemon Land, which was founded by Elon Musk's number-one-ally-turned-enemy Theodore Billmont, who originally used the land for growing lemons.

Now, for the last 900 years, these two countries have been arch nemeses, having had two major wars called the Lemon-Jrug Wars. The first one happened 500 years ago, and the last one 8 months ago, both of which left the Lemonland Empire in utter chaos, since, of course, they lost both wars.

The previous king of Lemonland, Jimmery Flagghorn, had appointed a man named Phinary Hecklesburg – who lived on Mars – as the governor of the empire's colony on Uranus, which was officially to be pronounced the less funny way, but which still sounds like "urine," and which only consisted of 230 persons since their famine.

Because of the recent devastating assault on their empire – which led to the death of that aforementioned king, leaving King Narmly Gredgings, who was elected in his place, in charge – there was very little food anywhere in the empire. For example, the king was forced to eat lettuce and water for dinner. And Phinary Hecklesburg had been eating dirt on more than one occasion.

So, since the allied king of Venus refused to aid the Lemonland Empire by giving them food, Hecklesburg was sent by the king to check in on the Uranus

colony, which the former cared very little, and for that matter, knew very little, about, and to take food from there to feed the mainland of the empire – he had formerly had his servants do all the work for him, but due to the war, he couldn't pay them enough anymore. He didn't want to go at all.

His ship descended through the foggy atmosphere of the planet, and below the storm clouds that were lingering above his colony.

He got out of the ship and said, "Take me to your leader... I mean, I'm the governor and all, but you must have some sort of local leader.. I mean, when was the last time I was here? Four years ago?"

He was talking to a cynical farmer who was barely able to stay alive on account of the extreme famine in the colony.

In a country-like, almost Scottish accent, he said, "Who the hell do you think you are, sonny, to just come right on over and act all silly, like it's some sorta game ta you?!? Where have y' been when we needed ya, you traitor!?"

"I've been at home; what of it?"

"That's the problem, you dullard, you thick-skulled buffoon! Why didn't you come to our aid eight months ago?!? We've all been starving and suffering, barely getting by day to day!"

"Hey, who do you think YOU are, buster? I'm the damn governor, and you're just some peasant below me. Show some respect! I mean, I've been having lots o' difficulties too, ya know!"

"Like what? Your butler makes you wipe your own ass?"

"Will you shut up! I've had to eat dirt for meals, sometimes, that is. I don't even have much food, that's what the point I'm trying to get across is."

"Well, I've ONLY been eatin' dirt and partly poisonous leaves for the past month! I bet you had a juicy steak this morning!"

"No! I only had a hamburger! The last one in the country!"

"You are an absolute imbecile, ya hear me?! How are you this oblivious of your own stupidity?"

"I prefer to think of myself as an intellectual, thank you very much! I even bought a subscription to the World Intellectuals Forum!"

"Get out of here you bastard! Your 'help' is a little TOO LATE, don'cha think, tardo? Mister-Comes-To-Help-Eight-Months-Too-Late. Screw you!" and he walked away, angrily, as did Hecklesburg.

Eventually, Hecklesburg was able to find the man named Yatrid Jogan, the community leader of the colony.

"Hey," Hecklesburg asked in his typical arrogant, demanding tone, "Are you the leader of this town?"

"Yes... Who are you, and why are you asking?"

"I'm the governor of this colony! That's why I'm asking. Well, actually, I'm asking because I need to know how the colony is doing, by order of the king! So tell me right now, peasant!"

"Wow! Callin' me a peasant, huh? We've needed you, you vile scum, for eight months! Where were you, on vacation?!"

"No, I was actually not on vacation, though I wished I was. I was dealing with important home and personal matters."

"But it's your JOB to make sure our colony is doing well! Why haven't you resigned if you can't handle such a task?"

"What, resign? It's what made me so Rich! I was already rich, but now it's with a capital R."

"And you couldn't have used any of your riches to help us poor serfs?!?"

"Well, -"

"Shush! Storm's a'brewin'! I'd better take shelter! So long!"

Jogan started running toward a bunker to stay during the coming storm, and Hecklesburg ran after him, "Wait up! Wait up! I need shelter too!"

Hecklesburg managed to squeeze himself into the bunker despite Jogan wishing he'd die.

"Stuck with you here, oh man..." muttered Jogan.

"Yeah, stuck with you here indeed."

"Shut up, you cancer!"

"Geeze, alright then, but I'll shut up spitefully."

So for a full 24 hours the two were forced to stay together in the same 15x15 square foot bunker, keeping sparse their bickering.

Hecklesburg could barely sleep at all, since he was used to sleeping on a fancy, soft bed and not on hard stone floor, but Jogan, used to poor conditions, slept even better than he normally sleeps. Hecklesburg was quite jealous of his rest.

Jogan peered out through a tiny slit in the door, "Well, the storm's stopped for now."

So they left the bunker, and Hecklesburg said, "I'd like to speak with you about a plan I have."

"What plan? I don't wanna hear it."

"Well I want you to hear it, as governor and all."

"Fine. What's your horrible plan?"

"It's actually not horrible at all! So my plan is: you guys on this colony will give me all the food you have, except a little bit to sustain yourselves, and we'll take it to feed the mainland country on Mars."

"TAKE OUR FOOD!?!"

"Yes, that's the plan."

"WE ALREADY HAVE ALMOST NO FOOD!"

"There's enough that it could still help feed our mainland masses."

"NO DEAL, YOU SCOUNDREL!"

"Deal? This is an order of the king, not a deal. It's a command that I must fulfill. He's already not that happy with me."

Jogan walked away, furious, trying to be left alone by Hecklesburg, but the latter continued to follow him. But they did not talk for much time.

Hecklesburg left to check on his ship, fearing that the storm had damaged it. It had.

"Jogan," Hecklesburg said, having ascertained his name and found him again, "My ship's broken. I gotta go home sometime. Please help me fix it!"

"I ain't helpin' such scum as you."

"Please.... Pretty please."

"Nope."

"Alright then. Leave me to die..." he said, hoping to gain sympathy.

"Okay. Sounds good to me," he was responded with.

Then Jogan saw the sky, that there were very dark clouds with a hint of blue in them.

"I gotta go," he said, "since there's another, even worse storm coming. It's hydrogen peroxide rain."

"Take me with you to safety!!"

"Why should I??"

"... I promise that I'll help your colony.. I'll get you food, if you'll lead me to safety and will fix your ship... Please!.."

"Let's make an impromptu contract: You hereby declare and vow that you will cease with your former plan to remove food from our colony, and you vow that you will acquire for us more food, on the condition that I will take you to safety from this storm, and that I will help fix your ship. Violation of this contract will meet the death penalty. Deal?"

"Deal." And they shook hands.

So Jogan ran and led Hecklesburg to another equally small bunker.

"Oh man, the king's gonna be so mad with me..." Said Hecklesburg

"I'll try to get you out of some trouble then."

"Good, fool."

"Please stop insulting me."

"Okay, 'tardo.' That's what someone else called me yesterday."

"Shut up."

"I can do that, I guess."

For another day they waited in the bunker, only Jogan sleeping well, and then they left.

"Well, let's fix your ship." Jogan announced. "Where is it? There'll be more hydrogen peroxide rain soon, so let's make it quick."

Hecklesburg led him to it, and showed him what happened when he tried to turn it on: it made a sound, but just powered off again.

"I used to work with space-ships," Jogan said, "Requisite knowledge for being a community leader 'round here. This thing's battery has been drained of all its energy due to the rain. Trust me, it's science. We'll need an external electricity source. Only problem is: we don't have electricity on this planet."

"Man, whoever designed this colony was sure incompetent!"

"You're the governor.. You're the one who denied funding to electrical systems..."

"Well, why doesn't someone else fund it? I don't have all the money in the world."

"You're still quite rich. Everyone here is too poor. It's entirely your fault, but I guess I won't go into that too much."

"You'd better not."

"Look, there's one source of electricity here, but we've never been able to harness it (because of you again): there's a creature that we call the Electrobeast. It can make and even throw electricity from its claws. But it also can make electrical holograms that look like other animals, things, and even people. And they're mostly tangible. We'll need to go through the forest looking for it. But it's dangerous."

"I think you mean YOU'LL need to go. I am not going hunting for some dangerous creature."

"If you don't come I'm not helping you. The deal was only that I'll HELP you fix your ship, not do it all, so you'd better come with me for this."

"Fine!"

So they went.

Jogan said that they should split up and look in different directions, so they did, despite Hecklesburg's great fear.

CHAPTER TWO

40 minutes passed.

"Man," He said, "Am I ever going to find this stupid creature?"

Several minutes later, Jogan returned, saying, "I've checked everywhere; there's no Electrobeast, and I'm gonna look for another option."

"But we've only been looking for 45 minutes."

"Yes, too bad."

"What?"

"You heard me: too bad; I'm quitting."

"You can't just quit like that. You promised to help me!"

"I'll help another way."

"Good. Never mind then."

They got back to the ship, and Jogan said, "Ah, that's it! We need to cut these wires here. But you can do that." Pointing to some wires in the ship's innards.

"Hey, I thought cutting the ship's wires is what breaks it, NOT fixes it."

"Yeah, whatever, anyway, please cut these wires."

"No way."

"Come one."

"Nope. You're an idiot, and you have no idea about ships."

Jogan's body suddenly flickered in and out for several seconds.

"Hey, what's the big idea? Flickering, that doesn't normally happen to a human!... Wait! Are you one of those holograms that the Electrobeast can conjure?"

Suddenly the hologram of Jogan disappeared.

"Ok, disappearing suddenly, that's definitely what no real person would do! That WAS a hologram!"

20 minutes later, Jogan came walking out of the forest, saying, "Hecklesburg, I guess this Electrobeast never even existed at all; just some sorta imagination, I guess."

"What are you talking about?"

"Yeah, I think that whole Electrobeast thing was just a myth, after all."

"Oh, okay. Great for me. Now I'm stuck here."

"Wait, all you gotta do is cut this one little wire here. Then maybe the battery will work again anyway."

"Hey, that's real suspicious, now isn't it?" Hecklesburg went and touched Jogan to see if he was a hologram. "Why do I feel some kind of tingling sensation when I touch you?"

Jogan' threw a fist toward Hecklesburg, which he managed to dodge. Then he threw a fist back, disintegrating the hologram into sparks.

"Aw man! Fool me twice, huh?" He said.

Then he saw a creature walking ominously toward him, conjuring electricity and launching it toward Hecklesburg, who again dodged.

"Wait a minute," He thought while sprinting away and screaming like a girl, "What if I get him to throw electricity at the battery?..."

So he ran to the ship and the Electrobeast launched a ball of electricity toward him, but he jumped out of the way, stubbing his toe, the ball of electricity charging up the ship.

Then the real Jogan arrived, very surprised at what was happening, and he threw his sword (so as to not get electrocuted), which he carried at all times, at the monster, killing it and, from the electricity, creating a nice roasted meat smell.

Hecklesburg and Jogan feasted, having eaten nigh nothing in the past days, on the Electrobeast, scarfing down almost every morsel of flesh.

They had to take a nap on the ship, their digestive systems working overtime.

An hour later they got up and powered on the ship, and Hecklesburg told Jogan that he was going to report to the Lemon King, and that he should come with him.

He agreed.

"Ya know, Yatrid," Hecklesburg announced, "I was actually sad when I thought that the Electrobeast got you. And not sad for my sake, but since I've started to like you. I'm sorry I insulted you various times. Let us be friends."

"Alright, Phinnary, we'll be friends from now on!"

They arrived on Mars, and then to the king's palace.

Hecklesburg knocked, as per the custom, three times.

A servant came and let him in. "Come in. The king awaits to hear from you."

"Uh-oh..." said Hecklesburg.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Phinnary Hecklesburg. Did you do it?"

"Do what, my lord?"

"What I told you to do, idiot!"

"You mean getting food from the Uranus colony?"

"Yes, of course! What else do you think I'm talking about?"

"I don't know."

"Incompetent!"

"Well, anyway, let me tell you what happened instead..." And he told the king that not only was he not going to take food from the colony, but he was actually going to give them more food.

"WHAT!?!"

"Should I tell you again?"

"NO!!"

"Okay."

"And I bet you're asking ME for money to get the food, aren't you??"

"I am not, my lord."

"Yeah, sure, Phinny.... If you really want me to give you money for this asinine plot of yours, you'll have to quash that stupid uprising against my rule on the Jupiter colony. Only then will I permit such a ridiculous idea like this to see fruition. So get to work, dummy!"

"Very well."

And he left and told Jogan what he had to do on Jupiter.

"Oh man, Phin... Well, here we go, sounds pretty difficult.."

"Here we go indeed. Let's stop talking, and start doing. To the ship!" And they went, and they flew to Jupiter and arrived at the spaceport.

"I'm really, really tired, Yatrid, we'd better stay at a hotel for a night so I can get some real rest."

"Okay."

They went to the hotel right by the spaceport called "Jupiter Suites: By Marriott."

"Welcome to Jupiter Suites! We have three rooms available at the moment: The Pit, which is a small hole in the ground replete with all amenities, even a toilet! It'll cost 1500 doubloons per night. Then there's the Jungle Estates, which is just the nearby jungle – it's dangerous – and it costs 3000 doubloons per night! Finally, there's The Room, which is just a regular hotel room. It costs 75 doubloons per night."

"Yeah, we'll take The Room."

"Pay up, buster!"

"Alright." They paid the man the 75 doubloons.

They were taken to a fairly nice room, where finally Hecklesburg could sleep on a fancy bed. Jogan and he said goodnight to each other.

CHAPTER THREE

They woke up in the morning, Hecklesburg announcing, "Let's go to a nice restaurant, and maybe we'll even take a cruise! We're on vacation!"

But then Jogan noticed, "Hey, I'm pretty sure I left my wallet on the table. But now it's not here. Did you move it?"

"No... Hey, where's my wallet too?"

"We've been burglarized, Phin!"

"Oh crap! I had my spaceship license and Governor's ID in there!"

"And now we have no money!"

They left the hotel and tried to get a ride on the Jupiter Express train line.

"50 doubloons please."

"We ain't got that, actually... How about we haggle?"

"No thank you sir."

They left.

"Well that was a bust," said Hecklesburg.

"We gotta get our wallet back!"

"How??"

"Ask around if there have been any thieves about recently."

"Alright, worth a shot."

After walking several steps, an old woman looking 90 years old was rushing by, faster than most old women do.

"Woman," Hecklesburg, "Not so fast. You're walking suspiciously fast for an old lady. Lemme see your ID."

"Who are you, a cop?"

"I'm the governor of Uranus."

"HAHAHA, Your anus! That's hysterical!"

"Shut up!"

"I'd better be going now."

"Not on my watch, although my watch was also stolen last night."

He started following her, and she started running, and so he starting running too. He caught her and took off her old lady mask, revealing a man younger than 30.

"Did you steal my wallet? I see you have several wallets, one the same brand as mine, in that bag of yours."

"See you in court, idiot!" Yelled the man.

So they met in court that night.

"Welcome to court!" Said the judge. "I'll be judgin' ya tonight. Here we have Sigmund Reginold, defendant, versus Phinnary Hecklesburg, plaintiff. What have you to say, Sigmund?"

"Well," he said.

"Good start already," said the judge. "Plus one point."

"Point??" Said Hecklesburg.

"Order in the court! Minus one point for interrupting!"

"But—"

"Minus two more points!"

"So anyway," said Sigmund, "This fool over here, Phinkly or whatever—"

"Phinnary."

"Order in the court! Minus one point! Stop interrupting!"

"Anyway, he, like, assaulted me, and says that I have his wallet, which is a hate crime against me."

"Plus five points!"

"I'm a Jupiterian, and he's a Martian. He's being racist."

"Plus five points! Total score: Sigmund 11, Phinkles -4. Phinkles, your score sucks and you have no lawyer! Get out, you racist bum!"

So they threw him out of court.

"So we need a lawyer," said Jogan.

"Did somebody say lawyer??" Asked excitedly a man lingering also near the court. "I'm the Jalapeño Businessman! I'm jalapeño business! I'll be your lawyer in this case!"

"Deal."

So they arranged a court rematch, as the Jupiterians called it, for the same night.

"Welcome back to court! I'm your judge again, hosting today's rematch! Here we have again Sigmund Reginold, defendant, versus Prickly Hecksberg, plaintiff!"

"Lemme handle this," whispered Jalapeño Businessman.

"So, judge," he said.

"Nice opening! Plus five points!"

"This Sigmund – what a stupid name–"

"Nice burn! Plus four points!"

"Stole my defendant's – and other peoples' – wallets! Look in his handbag!" He walked over and dumped 10 wallets onto the table.

"Plus ten points! One for each wallet! Let's now hear Sigmund's side!"

"Okay, guys, so, like, this –"

"Shut up! Minus ten points" Yelled the judge. "Get OUTTA HERE!"

The total score was Phinary 19, Sigmund -10. The latter was thrown in prison, while Hecklesburg and everyone else got their wallets back.

He and Jogan went back to the train station, paid the 50 doubloons, and boarded.

"All aboard!" Shouted the conductor in his high-pitched voice, who was stationed near the passenger seats. "Two passengers, I see! Where to, voyagers?"

"The south-eastern edge of town."

"Near where the uprising is?"

"Yes."

"Ok! Off we go!"

Ten minutes later, they got off.

There was a forest nearby, where it was rumored the revolutionaries dwelt. Hecklesburg and Jogan walked near it.

"Who goes there?" Boomed a voice coming from the treetops.

"We're fed up with the Lemon Empire. We wanna join the revolution!"

"ID, please." If Hecklesburg's ID was seen, it'd be game over, what with it saying, "GOVERNOR OF URANUS, Appointed by King Flagghorn of the Lemonland Empire."

"Umm... We'll be back later.. We left those on the train."

They went and bought some fake IDs at Gidget's Fake ID Emporium, and then they returned.

They showed the IDs.

"Right this way, gentlemen," the revolutionary said. They were taken to meet the other revolutionaries.

Over the course of three weeks, Hecklesburg and Jogan managed to rise in the revolutionary ranks, meriting to speak to the head planner of their big operation, to bomb Olympia, the capital city of the Lemon Empire's Jupiterian colony, to ashes.

"First, my friend," explained the planner and senior bomber Eduard Sthothstein, "We'll take this here nuclear bomb, powerful enough to destroy the entire city at once, and plant it in this here daycare center," pointing on a map to a building in the center of town. "The code to activate the bomb is 7164, and the code to deactivate in case of emergency is 1357. Now you're gonna plant the bomb with me, I'll run out of town, and you'll suicidally enter the activation code, and after the ten-second countdown, you and the whole city will be smithereens! But it's for the greater good of taking down those Lemon scoundrels. Can you do it, Ranksraber [[Hecklesburg's fake name]]?"

"I sure can!"

"Good. Then I entrust you with the mission."

A week later Eduard and Hecklesburg went to the daycare center, pretended that they were there to pick up a child with a birthday present (the small bomb), entered the back room where no-one was, closed and locked the door, and set down the bomb.

"Alright, Ranksraber, good luck! See you in the afterlife!" And he left.

Hecklesburg carried the bomb secretly all the way back to the revolutionary center, where everyone was wondering why Olympia hadn't blown up yet, taking it on the train to there, and he planted it in the forest, entered the code, set the explosion radius setting to much lower, and sprinted out as fast as he could, hearing as he was far away the destruction of the revolutionaries. A human arm even flew and landed by him, all charred.

"Jinkies!" he said.

He met up with Jogan again, and they went back to Mars to speak with the king.

CHAPTER FOUR

"You have done very, very well, Phinnary!" Exclaimed the king. "I will certainly grant you the necessary resources for your plan: 10,000 workers, and 250,000 doubloons!"

"Why, thank you my lord!"

"You're welcome. Now I will send the workers and the money to the territory; you'll see it by tomorrow morning."

"Very well. Thank you." And he left.

The next morning at the colony, Hecklesburg and Jogan saw a huge space-fleet entering the planet, carrying thousands of men, and chests of great sums of money.

"Everyone!" Commanded Hecklesburg, "You must now build this city up with new houses, electricity, better plumbing, renovate the preexisting infrastructure, and build a dome around the city to keep the hydrogen peroxide rain out! And also you must buy very much food for these people, to last them ages! Go!"

And he sat back and watched them toil, making the city beautiful, building many more houses than there were people, and making the transparent dome, of course with air vents and windows for spacecraft to travel through.

"Thank you so much, Phinnary!" Shouted Jogan.

"Well, now we're even," Hecklesburg responded, "No more owing anybody anything, just the way I like it. Y' know, having all these workers working for me reminds me of when I had my personal servants, except this time no-one's carrying me out of bed in the morning."

The next morning, Hecklesburg sleeping again in Uranus, there were two messengers waiting for him.

One said, "I come from the king of Saturn." And the other said, "Well, I come from the king of Neptune." They both said that their senders needed help to destroy the other one's country in war, and they wanted Hecklesburg to be that help.

They were arguing over which king he should aid. The messenger from Saturn said, "My king will give you 250,000 doubloons and a supply of delicacies!" And the messenger from Neptune said, "Well, my king will give you 30,000 doubloons and kingship over my enemy!"

"Kill them!"

"No, kill them!"

"Wait," said Hecklesburg, "If I destroy both of your countries, do I get both bonuses at the same time?"

"No!"

"Oh, then let me think about whose side I'll join. And as an intellectual, I believe I'm good at doing such thinking. But you just need to give me time. Come back in a week."

"Very well." And they left.

A week later they returned, and he chose the side of the Saturnians.

"Oh wait," he said, "I changed my mind; I choose the Neptunian side."

Thus he became an ally of Neptune – just a dynastic title – king of Neptunia, whom he met on his planet while they discussed the war plans.

"So, Phinnary my old boy," chuckled Neptune, "You'll help me buy hydrogen scrubbers to dry out all of the Saturnians' water, all the water in the world! It turns all hydrogen into oxygen! But only your country has them. Please supply merely ten of them to me, we'll win the war, and you get the booty and the kingship over those bastards!"

"Will I get to take prisoners of war?"

"No."

"Oh man..."

So Hecklesburg went and bought hydrogen scrubbers from his king, and he gave them to Neptune.

"They were on sale; only 999.99 doubloons apiece!" Hecklesburg told Neptune.

"Excellent my good friend, excellent!"

So they both boarded a special military aircraft that said "TOP SECRET OPERATIONS INSIDE. DO NOT INVESTIGATE" on it, and they hovered above the surface of Saturn, planning their placement of the hydrogen scrubbers.

"Let's drop 'em on the ten main water sources in their country!" Said Neptune.

"Sounds good."

"I'll drop five, you drop five, and then we skedaddle from this planet like there's no tomorrow! Got that!"

"I got that indeed!"

They dropped the ten hydrogen scrubbers on the planet, eliminating the ten largest water sources in the country.

"Also, Phinnary, I neglected to tell you this – as a matter of fact, it really was an error on my part that I didn't mention it – you'll have to personally kill the Saturnian king."

"What!?!"

"Sorry.. Well, here ya go!" And he lowered the ship and made Hecklesburg leave to fight the king, also providing a space-pod to fly home after the battle.

"At least he let me off near the palace," Hecklesburg thought.

"Well, well, well—" ominously said the king of Saturn as he appeared.

"Hey! Will people stop saying 'well, well, well' to me? My own king already said that a month ago."

"You interrupted me; I'll have to start over again. Anyway, well, well, well, if it isn't Phinnary Hecklesburg, sent to assassinate me. You've already destroyed our water supply. This isn't necessary."

"For the deal I made with that other guy, it is."

"I'll pay you off."

"I think I prefer kingship over your remaining people for six months. Sounds better."

"Very well. But I won't go out without a fight. On guard!" And he lept toward Hecklesburg with his sword in the air.

"You made me pee my pants!" Hecklesburg said, running out of the way, drawing his sword.

It started raining heavily oxygen rain, a side effect of the hydrogen scrubbers. It soon began pouring forth a flood of liquid.

Hecklesburg launched his sword at his opponent, but he was parried.

While they were fighting, the king of Saturn said, "I've already deployed an army to destroy your Uranus colony..." laughing sinisterly.

"Wait, WHAT!?!"

"Should I repeat it?"

"No, you CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!!"

"Well, it seems that I can; in fact, I've already started doing it."

You know how sword-fights go: not very interesting in writing. So to cut to the final part, Hecklesburg cut off the right hand of the king in which was his sword, and then he beheaded him in a fury. He was furious because his own colony of Uranus, which he started to care about, was now under a massive attack.

Even though by killing the king he now became the new king for six months, he had no time to worry about inheriting the kingdom now; that could wait for later.

So he entered the space-pod and flew home above the speed limit to Uranus, where he saw that many were dead.

He left the ship, someone telling him, "98 have been killed!!"

"Only 98? I thought it would be all... That's not that bad.."

"It IS bad! But yes, the enemy – good thing they didn't damage too badly the newly built city – killed 98 people, but then we explained that doing that was worthless. It doesn't help them to kill the colony, we said. It was too late; their king would already be dead, and then you, their new king, would have them all executed. So they turned around and pretended they never were here."

"Well I'm still going to execute them!"

"Yay!!"

"Look on the bright side: I thought everybody here was going to be killed. 98 people, that's not even half! It could have been much worse. Also, now I'm a king! I can get even more food here!"

The next day, Hecklesburg left the city with an attendant to scope out the land, to decide where to grow food for the people, and to look for possible natural resources.

They wandered far out and split up. Hecklesburg found, in the middle of nowhere, a large pit. At the bottom of the pit was water! But it was very, very deep. So he foolishly walked closer to the edge to get a better look, and the part of the ground he stood on became loose, and he fell into the abyss, probably 70 feet down.

He plummeted down for what felt like a minute. It was an absolutely terrifying experience.

Then he splashed down into the water, which could very well be 100 feet deep. There was some sort of cave system there. The underground lake led to dry land at its shore, and there was some light toward the end of the tunnel which he could see.

So he swam toward it, wondering if this is the "light at the end of the tunnel" that you see after you die.

"I don't feel so dead," thought Hecklesburg. "Though that falling felt almost like it."

He reached after a minute the edge of the water, and he walked onto the dry surface. Then he went toward the light.

CHAPTER FIVE

When he reached the light, he saw and was amazed: there was a whole little world under the surface of the ground! There was vegetation and trees and grass, producing a forest, which all glowed heavily, creating light; the light made the land look like an overcast day on Earth. It was white and not as bright as full sunshine.

"Hello there," said an elderly man.

Hecklesburg was startled.

"Don't be afraid," the man said, walking him through a maze of forest. "I am the elder of this community. Here we have no ruler, not even really a leader, per se. We are an autonomous city, and, a utopia! Welcome to our city. It has no name, by the way." He walked Hecklesburg through some sort of arch which led them to an even brighter – bright like the daylight – place which had buildings, roads, and people: the city of which the man was speaking. "The one thing is: you can't leave. I don't know how to leave, myself; it's impossible. Trying would be futile. Enjoy your stay." And he vanished into the forest.

Hecklesburg was truly astonished. And he didn't know where to go or what to do. He asked around town about how to leave, but they all said that it was impossible. But they advised him to see the Public Amenity Bureau. So there he went.

"Hello, how may I help you? You must be a newcomer."

"Yes, I am. I really would like to get out of here."

"You can't."

"Why not?"

"It's impossible."

"Why?"

"What do you mean why? Why is water wet? It just is, idiot."

"But--"

"What about your butt?"

"I wasn't finish--"

"You weren't what?"

"Oh geeze," he thought to himself.

"So you'd like a government-issued house, wouldn't you?"

"For the time being, I suppose."

"Okay, so let me explain the societal tier system. There are five tiers. You're still at tier 0; you haven't signed up as a citizen yet. When you sign up, you'll be at tier 1, the lowest tier of citizens. You'll only have a mediocre house. If you make 50 meals for the community and produce 50 glasses of water – getting water around here isn't so simple, and that lake below that pit is poisonous --"

"Glad I didn't drink from it..."

"Please stop interrupting, thank you. So then when you make 50 meals and 50 glasses of water, you enter tier 2. You get a better house and more privileges. Then if you save three people from imminent danger, you'll be upgraded to tier 3. Then there's tiers 4 and 5. I'm a 4, as well as most higher-ranking government officers. And only the Elder is at tier 5."

"How do you get to those tiers?"

"No-one knows and no-one cares."

"What? How did you get to that tier?"

"Anyway, here is the form to sign up as a citizen. Just sign your name here."

Hecklesburg decided to drop his question, and he signed, skipping over the probably unimportant details of the contract.

"Congratulations! You're now a tier 1 citizen."

"How many people live in this city?"

"You're asking a bit too many questions, bud."

"This is basic information."

"You JUST became a citizen, and you already want to know these intimate details?"

"Then when will I get to know?"

"Once you get to tier 3, you get to know."

"What if I ask a citizen?"

"Only tier 3 citizens or higher know this information, but they certainly won't share it with anyone on a lower tier. It makes them feel important. Well, next!

"But--"

"Did I stutter? NEXT!"

He left, taken aback by the lack of hospitality. He was given a card with the address of his new house. By the time he found where that street and then particular address was, the illuminating plants had gone to sleep, setting the town in a sort of night. It was nearly pitch black, and there were very few street-lights.

"Man, this house is crap!" He exclaimed when he saw it. "It looks just like a storage shed! And the toilet is just a hole in the backyard. And the toilet paper is just mostly dry leaves!"

"They're not even big leaves," he thought. "And they're sub-par in general."

He didn't know where he would get food and water.

"Time to hit the old proverbial sack," he announced to himself, and he fell asleep in the sleeping bag that was provided for him. Normally he wouldn't be able to sleep on such an uncomfortable surface, but he was now getting used to more poor living conditions.

When he woke up in the morning he found some low-quality bread and a one-gallon jug of water on his doorstep, as well as a salt shaker.

"Ah, socialism at work," he said.

After he finished his bread-and-salt meal with the water (which he drank out of the one cup that was provided to him), he went back to the bureau to inquire of how to start working, that is, producing the 50 meals and glasses of water. He wanted to rise the ranks in society. Then he'd get to know how many people actually lived there, and maybe they'd let him in on some secret way to leave.

He arrived to where he was told to go for the water job. He had to collect dew condensed on leaves in the forest in a bucket, which would then be done various times until the water filled 50 glasses, each equivalent to around one and a half cups in our current system of measurement.

"You must be joking," he said.

"Huh?" The taskmaster was confused.

"Oh man..." Hecklesburg grumbled.

So after two months – though they didn't call them that there; they called them shglunths – Hecklesburg managed to procure 50 glasses-worth of water.

He returned to the bureau.

"Hey, I finished making 50 glasses of water. Now where do I make 50 meals?"

"Go to the Public Feedhouse and give them this—" he gave Hecklesburg a paper slip – "slip, and they'll let you command one of their unused kitchens, to ship out food to peoples' doorsteps – tier 3 peoples' doorsteps."

So he went, he handed the worker at the counter the slip, and he was given a special kitchen to make meals in.

He had to cook 50 frozen steaks, make 50 servings of french fries to go along with the steaks, and also make steak-sauce.

"At least I don't have to make the ketchup; they give me that," he thought.

His basic ingredients given were salt, spices, frozen and uncooked steak cuts of Uranian cow beef, potatoes, nonspecific oil, as well as ketchup and some "steak sauce mix."

"This blows," he moaned, as he started heating up the skillet to cook his first steak.

One "shglunth" later, he had sent out 50 steaks with french fries to tier 3 citizens.

He, fed up with such nonsense, returned to the bureau.

"Well, well, well—" the same clerk said.

"Why does everyone always say that to me?" He complained.

"Shut up. Anyway, you've finally done it; you've made 50 glasses of water and 50 meals. Took you long enough. So here you go, I'm going to press this button—" click – "and, here you are, now at tier 2 in society. You're doing great. Now your bread won't have small amounts of dirt mixed in it."

"What??"

"Nothing. So you also get a better house. No longer a shed, but an actual house, three times bigger than the shed. You also get your own well so you don't have to rely on us to give you water every few days."

"Wait! Then what were those 50 glasses of water I made for?"

"That dew comes from above-ground mist, which we need – since we're actually in a draught – so every extra bit that we add to our water system is very important."

"Wait, I don't understa–"

"Here's your address card and key!" He gave Hecklesburg a card with his new address on it, and the key. His previous "house" didn't even have a key.

"Thanks, sir," he said.

"You're very unwelcome! Goodbye!"

Hecklesburg liked his new house. But it was still nothing like his actual house on Mars. But the government had probably seized that by now; he was dead, they must think.

"Hey, it has an actual toilet!... Oh wait, the 'toilet paper' is still the same leaves! Oh, but they're more dry now. Well, it's an improvement."

Sometimes when he would flush the toilet, his urine or feces would, instead of being flushed down, be spewed out of the toilet onto the floor, and/or his ass. He didn't like that very much.

Within three days – or shlaygs, as they called them there – a notice in the mail said he would have to start work at the marble quarry, a mandatory job for tier 2 citizens.

While he was reading that notice by the mailbox, someone said to him, "Hi, neighbor! I notice you've newly been promoted to this tier 2 house."

"Yep."

"Is your refrigerator running?" He said, trying to pull a joke on him.

"They didn't give me a refrigerator..."

"Well, if you did have one, would it be running?"

"Based on the quality of the toilet they installed, probably not."

"Well, if it was higher quality."

"Then yes."

"Then you'd better catch it! Hahahaha! Got you!"

"No you didn't."

"Ha! Stupid!" And he walked away.

"That joke stunk." Hecklesburg thought.

Three days later, he arrived at the marble quarry.

"Hey you!" Shouted the head of the quarry operation, pointing at Hecklesburg.
"Yes."

"Here's your wooden pickaxe, and here's a partially-hard-hat for you to wear.
Now get to work!"

So Hecklesburg started picking at the marble with his wooden pickaxe, but it didn't even slightly impact the stone. He watched how the others did it. They just hit it really, really hard. So he did too, and eventually a slab of marble cracked off.

"I haven't seen anything made of marble since I've been here," he told another worker.

"Yeah, no-one actually knows where it all goes. Probably to tier 4 officers and the Elder."

When the work day was over (one hour before his bedtime) he walked home, exhausted. He could barely make it.

Next week he was talking to Glork, another worker, whom he'd started to befriend. And they discussed during their 5 minute water-and-salted-bread-break their plans of "saving" each others' lives to help each other get promoted to tier 3.

So, on the one day off per week – or gleek, as it was called there – called Gluneday, they met up by a pit that Glork had noticed one time, and they were looking into it, and Glork pretended to be about to fall into it. They did this so it would show up on the cameras that where everywhere, so they could prove that they actually saved each others' lives. And so Hecklesburg "saved" him from falling, and then he started to fall too as per the plan, then Glork saved him from falling, and they left. One life down, two to go.

One day Hecklesburg went to the Career Bureau and asked for a different job; maybe they had one.

"Okay, let's spin the CAREER WHEEL!" he was told.

It landed on "police officer."

"It's a very deadly, dangerous job, so good luck," the man said.

"Wait, can we spin again?"

"Nope."

And he was booted out. By tomorrow he had to start police training.

Fortunately, in such a communist society, there was no "money," but you still had to work a job, otherwise the government would have a problem with you and put you in jail.

So the next day Hecklesburg arrived at the police station.

"What, another crime happened?" The man at the front desk asked.

"No, I'm here to start police training."

"Oh man, good luck..."

He was fingerprinted and sent to the Training Room. There was a test robot in there that he had to destroy, or at least defeat, to prove his strength.

"I will destroy you," said the robot.

"No, I'M going to destroy YOU!" shouted Hecklesburg aggressively.

"You're a natural already," the man scoring him said.

Then Hecklesburg ran toward the robot, got a metallic knuckle in the face, and then he, after getting up, kicked the robot so it fell over. That automatically ended the testing session.

"Good job, human."

"Yeah, the robot is right; you did good." The man said.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"You're the first government person I've talked to who hasn't insulted me yet."

"Not my style. What, do you want me to insult you?"

"No."

"Good."

So, with such minimal testing, already Hecklesburg got the job.

"Whoa, a badge that says 'Officer Hecklesburg' on it," he said in awe, "Now I'm a governor, a king, AND a police officer at the same time! I'm a busy man. They ought to give me a vacation." He was also given a baton.

Already by his first day on the job, he was scouring the land looking for someone in danger to save.

"That would account for already 33% of my tier-3-getting-to," he said to himself, excited that he was finally so close.

He was told, "We've got a missing person who looks like this," showing him a picture, "and whose name is Shplorg Pfefferson, and we think that 'e's somewhere in the woods. Now go, Phinny."

"But I need to know more."

"Nah, you'll be fine. Just go."

And he went into the woods, calling, "Hey, Shplorg Pfefferson, where are you?" twenty times. He was so excited to save another person. Tier 3 was so close he could taste it, he thought.

One hour later, he finally found someone who matched the picture.

"Oh, Shplorg, I'm from the police, and I'm here to help! Come with me!"

"No!! Don't come any closer! You just want to kill me!"

"No, I'm here to help, you see. Now come on." He went to pull him with him to the station – then he'd say he was unconscious or something when he found him – but then Shplorg screamed, "GET AWAY!!!"

"Calm down, ol' Shplorgy, you'll be alright–"

Shplorg started at Hecklesburg with a knife, so the latter smashed his head in with his baton, killing him.

"Oops," he explained back at the station. "You see, he was trying to kill me; it's self defense. That's legal in this city, I hope. Right?"

"We'll let you off the hook this time, since you're a beginner, and, uh.. He was posing an imminent danger to you."

"Hey, I saved my own life. Does that count toward getting to tier 3?"

"No."

"Aw man..."

"If anything, we should demote you to tier 1, but we'll just let you off with a warning this time."

"Yes sir!"

A week later on duty, at what was essentially night there, Hecklesburg heard sounds of screaming and fighting in an alley.

"Must be some sorta rat or something. Those always elicit fear in people, especially women," he thought.

Then the screaming stopped, and a criminal ran out from the alley.

Hecklesburg ran to the alley, only to see that someone was dead!

"I wasn't even right that it was a woman..."

The next day at the station, as the surveillance footage proved, he had done nothing to stop the murder.

"Phinary," his supervisor said coldly, "You just suck at your job! You've led to the death of two people now in very little time."

"That criminal killed that last man," corrected Hecklesburg.

"But you stood and did nothing."

"I thought it was just a rat."

"What's a 'rat'?"

"You don't have those down here?"

"Have what? What is that?"

"Never-mind..."

"So you will be sentenced to well-watch duty, the most simple, un-mess-up-able job you can have in the police department. This way, you can't possibly ruin anything again."

The next day he had to sit by a public well – which was a very deep, muddy hole in the ground – which he hoped was at least partially fed by the 50 glasses of water he'd had to make, on a chair, from which he was forbidden to get up for the entire shift. There was a table next to it so he could eat his lunch without leaving.

If he left, he was told, he would be executed. He was only allowed to leave if he was absolutely certain that some emergency was happening to someone that he needed to save. It wasn't actually his certainty that counted, but rather that the emergency was happening, but it helped for him to be certain.

"This is a pretty bad situation," he moaned. "And it's really not helping me get to tier 3..."

Eventually a 10-year-old boy ran through the area and into the woods, and his father got to the public well a while later, looking for him.

"Have you seen my boy?" He asked.

"Yes! He went right into those woods! Let ME bring him back!"

So Hecklesburg got up from the chair and ran into the woods, looking for the boy.

He found him, sitting on a tree stump.

"Hello. I'm from the police," Hecklesburg told him. "I don't mean any trouble, only your father is looking for you. Come with me."

"Fine, I'll come back..."

And he went back.

The father was relieved and went away, but there was also a very angry higher-up of Hecklesburg waiting to speak to him.

"Hey, what's the problem?" Hecklesburg asked.

"You got out of your seat, you vermin!"

"I just saved that little boy and brought him back to his father!"

"The father could have done that too, you know. And the boy was just playing. This is your last chance, Hecklesburg. Don't make us chop off your head."

"Okay, sir..."

So he sat back down again.

Five days later – while Hecklesburg started to bring novels they sold in the land for social credit points, which weren't very good, such as Wilhemena The Talking Palm Tree, and Bjorn's Vacation – Hecklesburg just getting to the part where Bjorn goes on his vacation, he heard some more screams coming from behind a shed blocking his view, and he heard a "Save me!" so he ran over to the scene, to see some criminal – not the one from before – threatening a woman (or shgloman, as they called them there) with a knife. He didn't know what he wanted from her, but Hecklesburg said, "I'm from the police! Put your hands up!"

The criminal started chasing Hecklesburg, but the latter slapped the criminal in the face with his wooden staff that he got from the woods, making him drop his knife.

Then other officers arrived and arrested the man.

"Good job, Hecklesburg. You actually saved someone. I'm really surprised. I mean, wow. So yes, you're only one live-saving away from getting to tier 3. I bet you'll like that."

"I do like that indeed."

Two days later, a government bureaucrat came to the public well area to taunt Hecklesburg.

"HELP! HELP!!!" He screamed, behind that same shed from before.

Hecklesburg ran over, but he saw that the bureaucrat was laughing.

"Ha! Got you, you fool! You thought there was actually some emergency happening, didn't you?"

"Yes..."

"Well, now you're going to get executed. Tomorrow, for the town to see. Sit down on that chair and finish your shift, though."

Hecklesburg, utterly terrified, sat down on the chair, waiting for his soon death.

But the bureaucrat pulled another trick on him. He pretended to be falling into the well.

"Oh no, I'm falling! Help!!"

But he slipped and actually started sliding on the mud into the well.

"OKAY, FOR REAL THIS TIME! PLEASE!"

Normally, Hecklesburg wouldn't save the man who was about to have him killed, but it might overturn the execution and get him to tier 3, so he ran over and grabbed the man's arm, and he pulled the very muddy bureaucrat out, the latter almost having fallen into the depths.

"Damn it!" He cursed, enraged. "I was about to have you killed, but now I'm all muddy, you're NOT going to get killed, and you're even getting promoted to tier 3! Damn it all!!"

So Hecklesburg was now upgraded to tier 3. He was given a 3 times bigger house, and he was given a steak and french fries every morning. Also, the toilet paper was better. And he was now permitted to ask at the Population Bureau how many people lived there. If he was going to get out and then release the people from the underground and take them to his colony city, he'd like to know how many people were there.

"There are 9,869 people living here as of now, including the Elder," he was told.

As for leaving, he was still told it was impossible, and he was still denied information on getting to tier 4. It probably involved being in some secret society. Hecklesburg also didn't need to have a job anymore; the lower tiers' labor would support him.

Furthermore, he was now permitted to walk with the Elder on his daily morning walks through the woods. Since there was nothing else better to do, and

since now he didn't have a job, he did that. Maybe that would help him. Maybe he would help him get to tier 4.

"Ah, young one! You've already made it to tier 3! Excellent job! Indeed, come with me on my walk through the woods!"

While they were walking, the Elder kept singing a very interesting song:

First you walk under this arch
Then you walk to this sproutin' tree
And go around it 360 degrees
And then you hit this palm tree 3 times
And go to the upside-down table
And hit its four corners with the wand
And then you sing this merry song!

"What is that you're singing?" Hecklesburg inquired.

"Oh, nothing, it's just a silly little childrens' tune. Nothing much. I don't know what it means myself. But I always sing it on my walks. It reminds me of being young."

Hecklesburg found it somewhat odd.

And in fact, he noticed, on many of their walks they would go through an area in the woods with an arch which then led to a sprouting tree, then a palm tree, and then a strange, ornate, upside-down, metal table. Sometimes he'd walk 360 degrees around it, but nothing would happen. Sometimes he'd even fulfill, while the Elder wasn't there, the entire song. Instead of a wand, he used a stick that he found, though. The Elder would sometimes take a white stick that could be described as a wand on their walks.

Hecklesburg was very curious: surely something very interesting must happen when the song is fulfilled properly.

He, after having done the whole song 5 times, admitted defeat: this really was just some silly childrens' song, and he'd just been wasting his time.

But after a month, he was really getting tired of living in that underground city. And the steak breakfast and dinner was getting old. True, he could tell any working-tier peasant, as he thought of them, to do whatever he wanted, and the Elder even invited him often to play cards with him and have interesting

philosophical discussions about life, during which he learned that the Elder's name was Gaubain, but he was getting sick of it.

So he decided to look into that song again: what was he missing? He was walking under the arch: check. He was walking to the sprouting tree: check. He was going around it 360 degrees: check. He was hitting the palm tree three times: check, both with, and without his stick-wand. He was going to the upside-down table: check. He was hitting the four corners of it with the wand: che-

"Wait!" He thought. "The wand? THE wand? I've been missing that all along!" He realized that the song was talking about the Elder's particular wand. But how would he get it?

He tried asking politely for it, to no avail. He tried buying it; that also didn't work; there was no currency, and the Elder didn't need any more social credit points. So there was only one option left: burglarize it.

Now, the Elder lived in a very small, slightly bigger than tier-1-sized house, but it was in a very beautiful area of the underground, and it was very fancy, with golden items and finely crafted pieces adorning both the inside and the outside.

Hecklesburg would for long periods lurk outside the Elder's house, trying to learn his daily movements: where he went, when he went there, and when that might leave an opening to get the wand.

Fortunately, the Elder had no guards. He preferred to live a relatively secluded life, only selectively encountering others. He would rarely leave the house except in the morning, unless there was some sort of disturbance that he was curious about.

Hecklesburg had his idea: he would make a loud noise around the back of the Elder's house, which would make the latter leave his house to see what had happened, and meanwhile Hecklesburg would enter the house, steal the wand, and leave sneakily.

So he did just that. He banged loudly on the back of his house, and when the Elder went to investigate, he went around the house, opened the door quietly, looked around the small area, managed to find the wand, and he left.

But while Hecklesburg was making his way to the forest with the wand, the Elder spotted him and screamed, "GET BACK HERE WITH MY WAND!!"

So a chase ensued. The Elder, being elderly, could not run as fast as Hecklesburg, but he could still run much faster than most his age. Hecklesburg very

quickly ran under the arch and then to the sprouting tree, walked around it 360 degrees, hit the palm tree 3 times (with the wand), ran to the upside-down table, hit its four corners (the legs) with the wand, and he quickly sung the entire song, the Elder almost having caught him.

POOF!! Hecklesburg disappeared in a puff of smoke, the Elder cursing and yelling. And Hecklesburg was teleported up to the above-ground area, near the mouth of the pit.

"Wow! That's pretty neat!" he said out loud. "Finally out of there. That place sucked."

The Elder couldn't leave the underground, his wand having been stolen.

CHAPTER SIX

Hecklesburg managed to find his way, after hours of course, to the colony, being greeted by an entourage of very pleasantly surprised people.

"YOU'RE ALIVE!" they all said, more or less. And Jogan gave him a very warm welcome, a hug, and an "I missed you! I thought you were dead!"

He told everybody what had happened to him during his three months in the underground city, to everybody's amazement. It was not thought that anyone else but them lived on the planet.

Then he commanded some of his workers to dig an exit to the underground city by the mouth of the pit, and to install a staircase. They did so, and sent heralds into the city, announcing that they could now leave.

And so everybody left, some only leaving because all of their friends were. Also because Hecklesburg said he was going to have them taken out by force. In fact, primarily because of that.

And they all went to Hecklesburg's colonial town and occupied all of the commissioned houses that were supposed to be for future generations, but which now had convenient purposes in the present.

And now the population of that city was exactly 10,000.

But no-one knew where the Elder had went. But it didn't matter, Hecklesburg said.

The colony, now expanding its farmland, needed more hydrogen-peroxide-proof panels to form protective domes above the crops. Hecklesburg was told, to which he was glad, that Jogan had found some very cheap, around half the regular market price, high-quality hydrogen-peroxide-proof panels for sale in Jrugland. Of course, they didn't like having to do business with those filthy Jruglandians, but it would save them money, so it was worth it.

But then, the problem was, Jogan didn't come back. A week had passed, and he wasn't seen.

"He'd better not have fallen into some underground city like me," Hecklesburg said.

Shortly a telegram – they still apparently had those – was delivered to Hecklesburg, an urgent one: "SOS," it was, that's it, and it was sent from a telegram machine in Jugland, in the industrial district of their second biggest city Pankainia.

Hecklesburg was very afraid for his friend, and he knew he had to take action.

"It appears," said one of the colony workers who did personal service for Hecklesburg, "that a warehouse containing hydrogen peroxide proof panels is within a city block of the telegram machine. And in Jugland, quite often wares are sold to the public straight from the warehouses. Those stupid Juglies."

"What if he's being held hostage in the warehouse?"

"Very unlikely."

"Then I don't know how we'll find him.."

"Well, we'll send a search party–"

"I'll go myself."

"Very well. I wouldn't recommend it, but okay."

"And I'll hire a detective there."

So Hecklesburg left in his ship for Mars. He landed at the Pankainia spaceport.

Of course he wasn't received very well, being the governor of Uranus, appointed by the arch nemesis of the Juglandians, the king of Lemonland. So he received many blows and punches. But they didn't dare assassinate him, lest that start another war. As such the military even gave a special command that he be treated the same as any Juglandian.

Somewhat bruised, Hecklesburg finally arrived at the industrial district of Pankainia, a gray landscape of factories, metal refineries, various automobile-related industries, supermarkets aimed toward entire companies ("BUY 500 GET 500 FREE!"), and, what Hecklesburg was looking for, warehouses, the kind that did retail sale.

In the area, warehouses didn't even have addresses, just IDs. The warehouse Hecklesburg needed was 4D36.

So he asked around, inquiring of various smelters and mechanics, to no avail.

He probably spent two and a half hours before he finally found the right warehouse.

"Geeze, these Jrugie idiots have to fix their ID system! They cost me hours!"

There was a homeless man sleeping near the warehouse, using a trash bag as a blanket.

Hecklesburg prodded him until he woke up.

"Sir," Hecklesburg inquired, "Have you seen any suspicious activity around here recently?"

"Whah yes," he said in somewhat of a mumbling voice, "som'm 'appened 'round 'ere just few days 'go, som'm really scared them pants off me."

"What happened? And can you tell me anything about the perpetrator or the victim's appearance?"

"I can't recall nothin' 'bout how they looked, nothin' special, but yes, some sorta kidnappin' happened almost right 'eah. By that telegrammy machine o'er yonder," pointing at it, which Hecklesburg hadn't even noticed. "That's prob'ly all I c'n tell ya, friend."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"Yer welcome." And he went back to sleep under the trash bag.

The warehouse was locked, and so Hecklesburg couldn't proceed there. But at least he now knew where it was.

He went to the police department.

"Hello, this is the Pankainia Police Department, what do you need?"

"Do you know anything about that recent kidnapping by warehouse 4D36?"

"Let me look that up." He searched on his computer database and then he said, "Ongoing investigation. Sir, how are you related to this incident?"

"The person who got kidnapped is my right-hand man; he works for me."

"Tell me everything you know. You're our second witness."

"Who's your first witness?"

"We can't tell you that now. But tell me what you know."

"Okay, so..." And he told the man everything, such as Jogan's name, background, position on Uranus, and the telegram.

"Very good. I mean, not that your friend was kidnapped, but I mean good that you've told us this."

"Thank you."

"I'll file a missing person report, now that we have an actual name..." He did so on his computer system. "We can't do any more for you now. Come back tomorrow in the afternoon."

Hecklesburg left. Now he was going to rent a hotel room.

He got to the hotel (called "Pankainia Discount Hotel", since he wanted to save his money for more important things on this case, and which also, albiet not uniquely, provided the benefit of an armed guard, mandatory for a hotel in Pankainia), put his bags in the room, and then he looked through the phone-book for a detective.

He settled on a decent-looking option, "Galvin Gremmles, P.I."

He didn't call, but instead went to the address listed directly. Even though it was night, Hecklesburg met Gremmles at his office.

"Ah, young whippersnapper, how may I help you? I'm Galvin Gremmles, Private Investigator."

"Hello, I'm Phinnary Hecklesburg, governor of Uranus [he pronounced it the less humorous way], and I need your help to find my missing right-hand man."

"Very interesting. Very interesting indeed. Tell me all the details."

And so he did.

"That was all the more interesting, young whippersnapper! I will join you on this case."

The next morning, they went to the Bureau of Commerce – Hecklesburg sick of bureaus by this point – to ask for more information about warehouse 4D36.

After the clerk entered something in the computer, a file was printed out that he gave to Hecklesburg and Gremmles. It, a somewhat recent newspaper fragment, read:

"Pankainia's Warehouse 4D36 has always been a source of mystery. And behind that mystery, crime. For two decades, the warehouse has purported to contain various wares for sale. But it's always just been a front for mafia activity, would-be customers being greeted by an empty building. And the police has never been able to fully eradicate the criminal doings going on." And so on.

That was just about all they learned.

In the afternoon, they went to the police department to get an update.

"Sorry, Hecklesburg, but there hasn't been anything new. All I can help you with is that we have the key to warehouse 4D36. Here it is." And he gave it to him.

They unlocked the door to the warehouse, only to see absolutely nothing inside except for some insects.

"Young whippersnapper, this is quite a surprise, I dare say."

"Yeah, wow..."

They searched around for loose floorboards or hidden compartments, but they found none.

So that building was worthless in their investigations.

Hecklesburg returned to his hotel, while Gremmles did his detective work. He went back to the police department, told them that there was nothing in the warehouse, and asked for a complete list of all warehouses in that block that weren't open to the public, to investigate them each for possible criminal activity. He was given the list, and the keys to get in the warehouses.

There were only three in that block: the fake hydrogen-peroxide-proof panel one, a defunct one that once stored tomato paste, and another defunct one that used to contain astronomical and astrological items.

Fortunately, the first one was already eliminated.

So Gremmles headed to the tomato paste warehouse. Again, there wasn't much, but there was something; however it was irrelevant to the case: many old cans of tomato paste, surely far past their expiration dates. Gremmles checked everywhere but couldn't find anything useful. So he went to the astronomy warehouse.

In that one there were countless wares strewn about messily: horoscopes, informational posters, astrological charts, even good luck charms. But, on the center of the only upright table in the building, there was an incomplete solar system model.

"This is junk," thought Gremmles. "Or is it a clue?..."

The model only had Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, and Pluto (which had by that point been considered a planet again). It was missing Uranus.

"That's quite suspicious," Gremmles pondered. "My client's friend is from Uranus." And he took a photograph of the model.

"Aha!" Gremmles exclaimed, seeing a file cabinet behind piles of junk. But it was locked.

Gremmles fortunately was acquainted with lock-picking, and had the relevant tools on him. So he picked the lock, only to see one paper inside the entire file cabinet.

"Ah, dots and dashes!" he exclaimed. "A code we have here! Now this is going to be interesting."

He took the paper to a translator and code interpreter, who, as per Gremmles' request, printed two copies of the deciphered Morse code.

It read:

MARK OFF THE PLANET WHICH YOU ARE COMMANDING
MARK OFF THE PLANET ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING
MARK OFF THE PLANET WHICH MOST OUTLIED
MARK OFF THE PLANET WITH WHOM YOU ARE ALLIED
MARK OFF THE PLANET WHICH TO THE FOREMOST IS BESIDE
MARK OFF THE PLANET WHICH ORIGINATED US ALL
MARK OFF THE PLANET WHICH IS MORE THAN A BALL
AND LASTLY MARK OFF THE ONE WHICH IS MORE SMALL
THEN SEE MR. E.S. WHOSE MEN BY YOU HAD A DOWNFALL

- G.

Gremmles went to see Hecklesburg to show him the riddle, for solving it would require Hecklesburg's knowledge; it was addressed to him, Gremmles thought was clear.

"So this G character wants me to find him..." Hecklesburg said nervously. "I mean, otherwise he wouldn't write a riddle for me telling me where to go, right?"

"Right."

"Good."

"So, Mr. Hecklesburg, we shall start by ruling out the most certain ones. There are two planets which you are 'commanding,' that is, governing. But 'the planet which is more than a ball' must be Saturn on account of its auxiliary rings, one of the plants which you govern, so we can confidently say that the first line is referring to the other one, Uranus. So the answer is neither Uranus nor Saturn. 'The planet on which you are standing' is obvious, Mars. Obviously he assumes that you are on the same planet while reading it that he placed the riddle on. 'With whom you are allied' surely is Neptune; that's clear, and 'which originated us all' certainly is Earth, if you

know basic history. Both of our countries were founded by Earth-men, as well as all civilization in the Solar System. Anyway, that now leaves us with Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and Pluto."

"To which the foremost is beside, the foremost, wouldn't that be Mercury, closest to the Sun?"

"I was getting there. So yes, I'd say. Now of course 'the foremost' could also mean population- or economic- wise. But, as for population, Earth is already covered. And economically, Mars is already covered as well. So it must be Mercury. So that eliminates Venus. And 'most outlied,' I believe means the most outlying planet, Pluto, despite the odd past tense. It was needed for the rhyme. Now we just have Mercury and Jupiter. 'The one which is more small' is obviously Mercury. So finally, our answer is Jupiter. But now, do you know any 'E.S.'s?"

"Only one. I think I know who that's talking about."

"Who?"

Hecklesburg told Gremmles about his quashing of the Jupiterian revolution, and how he had worked with Eduard Sthothstein who gave him the bomb he used to destroy them. He said it must be Eduard Sthothstein, only he didn't know what it meant to 'see' him.

"It means to see his grave, I would think," said Gremmles.

"But he was blown up."

"How do you know?"

"The bomb blew up their hideout."

"But he very well could have been away, or it didn't completely incinerate them ALL."

"It's worth a shot."

And they went, with grave-robbing tools – it would be legal to desecrate such a criminal's grave.

They asked the clerk at the Burial Offices of the relevant area of the country if he knew where his tomb was.

"We aren't in charge of burying those filthy uprisers, so no."

So they had to look around the former hideout of the revolutionaries. Eventually they found, by some trees, a large array of tomb-plaques for various

revolutionaries. The mass of graves was very great – apparently many people’s bodies were preserved after the bombing – so Hecklesburg and Gremmles split up.

Eventually, Hecklesburg faintly heard, “Phinnary! Phinnary! I’ve found it!”

Hecklesburg very excitedly ran over to see the grave:

EDUARD STHOTHSTEIN

2931 – 2984

A GREAT HELP TO OUR CAUSE

They dug up the grave, which showed signs of already having been tampered with.

Indeed, they reached the coffin, to see that it wasn’t closed shut. They opened it, to see Eduard Sthothstein’s corpse with a piece of paper on his body.

“Isn’t that something! We’re on the right track!” exclaimed Gremmles.

This time the note wasn’t in Morse code, so they could read it immediately. It was typed.

It read:

On this planet on which you newly stand

Go to the most famous peak in the land

- G.

“Oh man, another stupid riddle!” moaned Hecklesburg.

“Relax, young whippersnapper; this is simple. I only know of one ‘peak’ in this land: the very well known site of Peeablao Peak. This is the most elementary of riddles!”

Peeablao Peak was the chief mountain of the Peeablao Mountain Range, and it was in the capital city Olympia, toward the edge of town.

They took the train back to Olympia and a bus to the north-eastern edge of town where Peeablao Peak was, after buying provisions. Then they started walking up the mountain, Hecklesburg’s sword in his sheath.

“Ha!” exclaimed Gremmles, “I’m not at my physical prime, you know, but my mountain hiking skills are just as good as anybody else’s!”

“Well, as more of an intellectual–”

“You’re no intellectual, young whippersnapper! But I digress.”

"Well anyway, I like to think of myself as one. And that's why I'm having a bit of trouble getting up this mountain. Or maybe it's because I'm lazy."

"It very well could be."

After much time, hours, they reached a somewhat flat stopping point near the top of the mountain. There they feasted on sandwiches, an entire loaf of bread, two cans of soup, and some protein bars. From there they continued, the end just at the edge of sight.

They finally were steps away from the summit.

"Boy would it be bad if this was the wrong place," Hecklesburg said, nervous.

"Indeed, that unlikely hypothetical would be bad."

Hecklesburg unsheathed his sword.

"Who goes there!?" boomed a man waiting on the summit, also unsheathing his sword.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"I am the governor of Uranus—"

"Hahahaha! Your anus! What an introduction!"

"I'm the governor of Uranus [[pronouncing it that time more like 'urine']] and the king of Saturn. Are you related to 'G'?"

"Yes; he has sent me—"

"Whew! Glad this wasn't all for nothing!"

"He has sent me to test your strength, to know whom he is dealing with. So we shall have a duel, and then we shall see what skill you possess. On guard!"

And the duel began.

G's henchman thrust his sword forth at Hecklesburg, who parried it. They fought for much time, Hecklesburg finally managing to end their stalemate, kicking the man's sword out of his hand.

"I see you are much more powerful than I thought," said the man, ready to die. "My master G will take the relevant precautions."

"Tell me something about who G is, and I might let you live."

"I cannot divulge such things, even with such a threat."

And Hecklesburg slew the man on the spot.

"Where do we go now, Gremmles?"

"Back to Pankainia, I suppose."

And so they went, going back down the mountain, another great trek. After they arrived in Pankainia, it was an hour past noon, so they ate lunch.

"I have an idea," pondered Hecklesburg, "about who this G person is."

"Let us hear it."

Hecklesburg told Gremmles what he needed to know about the underground city on Uranus, and the elder there, and how he disappeared after the city's abandonment.

"So, here's the thing: the Elder's name was Gaubain, I learned once."

"Ah, you may have figured out the perpetrator! It took you this long, young whippersnapper!"

Hecklesburg went back to the hotel, while Gremmles told the police the developments on his end, and he asked them how their search was going.

"Well," he was told, "we still haven't found much, by which I mean anything. But we'll send two men to investigate, this time at night, one at the astronomy warehouse, based on your witness, and one to surveil the whole city block. It'll be from 11 P.M. to 2 A.M."

Gremmles went to see Hecklesburg and told him that they should go there too at 11 P.M., since probably the police would be sitting ducks for more henchmen of G to attack; then they could use that opportunity to battle more of G's men, putting G more on the defensive.

"Okay, I'll bring a flashlight and my sword. And, my quick wit. You know, to outsmart the enemy if they show up."

"Sir, this is no time for joking."

"I wasn't joking."

"Stop it. Be serious."

And they went to dinner together to pass the time, at a cheap 24-hour diner.

"So, young whippersnapper," Gremmles began, a bite of steak and eggs in his mouth, "If you'll need to flee from the scene, I'll be waiting in my car for you outside. It'll be on, and so you need just hop in and I'll put the proverbial pedal to the proverbial metal, and we'll elude them. Don't worry, as a detective I've had to do much eluding work in my day."

"Sounds good... How old are you, by the way?"

"How old are YOU, young one?"

"Young one?! I'm 43 years old! That's old, by my standards!"

"Old?!" He chuckled. "I'm 66, you runt."

Hecklesburg exclaimed, "What!?" after he finished chewing, and then swallowing, his bite of pancakes.

"See, I look young for my age, my friend." He looked around 35 years old.

"You really do!"

"I've been a detective for 44 years, since I was 22."

"I've been a governor for 15 years. Almost 16 though. Well, more like 15 and a half. So between 15 and 16, not almost 16, is what I mean. But it is a bit more than half—"

"I get the point. Anyway, I've been a detective since one year before you were born, young one. But I do hear on the news – not that it's a reliable source of information, of course – that you've done very good things for your colony."

"Thank you. It's true."

"However this was preceded by very much neglect thereof. So I have more of a neutral view of your governance."

"Oh."

"And you, being absent for three months, have been unable to properly reign over your temporary kingdom on Saturn. So the Lemon King has been running the country in your stead. And I don't like how he has been doing it. But it is not your fault. But you're a very interesting person, a very interesting client indeed."

"You're a very interesting detective too. You sound like you know a lot. I also know a lot, but I may not sound like it. I gotta work on that."

"I reckon so."

"Many call me stupid, but they haven't gotten to properly know me. Except for my brother. And some of my friends. Not all of my friends think I'm stupid. But most of them do. I think. Actually, I'm quite good at rambling for much time, and, hey, what was I talking about again?"

"Your intellectuality."

"Ah, yes. Forget it." And he called out to the waitress, "Check, please!" And Hecklesburg ate the last bite of his pancakes.

The clock said it was only 9:28 P.M., so they had more time before they needed to go to the warehouse. They were currently at the very edge of the industrial district, not very far from the astronomy warehouse.

Hecklesburg asked for the waitress' phone number, explaining his intelligence, only to get billed an extra 10 doubloon "flirting fee," which he didn't pay and left.

"Let's go to the warehouse early. I'm bored."

"Very well, my friend, we shall go. I will wait with you until the policeman arrives."

They got there a bit less than an hour early, and for very much time nothing happened. The policeman arrived at around 11 P.M., Gremmler went to the car, and Hecklesburg explained to the officer what he was doing.

"Alright, sonny, but if you get killed on accounta' this, it's your fault."

"What if I WANT to get killed?" Hecklesburg retorted, thinking to have outsmarted the officer.

"That's an issue in and of itself, son."

"Why? It's a free country."

"If you keep bein' all annoying like this, then you'll have to leave."

"Fine!"

Approximately 45 minutes later, after the officer had gone to check the situation around the back of the building, Hecklesburg staying inside, the latter heard some brief shouting, culminating with long silence.

"Oh crap," Hecklesburg grumbled, reluctant to take on another foe, "it's time."

So he went to the back of the building, unsheathing his sword, to see the corpse of the policeman on the ground, a masked man with a bloody sword behind him.

Immediately the two launched into intense battle.

"WHO ARE YOU?!" Hecklesburg yelled, matching the high energy situation.

"A hit-man hired by G. He knew you'd be here."

Hecklesburg, after a while of fighting realized an idea. He pulled out his high-powered flashlight, concealing what it was from his opponent, and he turned it on and shined it into his eyes, to his great surprise. He dropped his sword.

Hecklesburg, like at Peebablao Peak, asked the man for information about G, a sword at his neck.

"His men never reveal his secrets. Kill me."

Hecklesburg beat him for much time, to no avail. So he just ended it and decapitated him.

"That oughta teach you a lesson for the next time you try to 'hit' somebody. Oh, wait..."

He went and told Gremmler, still waiting in his car, what had happened.

"Many gruesome encounters I see you are having. Very well, my friend. At least we are showing G that we are stronger than his men."

"Yes, that is good."

"However it could be a trap."

"True, it could be."

"Now, I would be calling G 'Gaubain,' but we are not 100% sure."

"Well I'm pretty sure."

"Many times in my day has my client – even me, on occasion – jumped to conclusions, and quite often we were proven sorely mistaken. I, despite your strong lead, will withhold from certainty. It allows us to deal with the case unbiasedly. For if it were not Gaubain, then us, thinking that it was, we would be acting on a false premise. And that is a big problem, you see."

"Fine, you have a good point, but come on, who else whose name starts with a G has even a minor problem with me?"

"I have a problem that earlier at dinner you took a bite of my steak without permission, and my name starts with a G."

"I offered to give you some of my panca–"

"Forget about this nonsense; I was merely illustrating a point."

"Well I don't buy it. And if I did, I'd want a refund."

"Suit yourself, young whippersnapper, inexperienced compared to me."

"I've experienced a lot in my life."

"Such as?"

"A lot of stuff."

"I'll rescind my question."

"Good."

They decided to stay the night in Hecklesburg's hotel room together, since if one wanted to kill them, they would be doubly strong, for strength is in numbers.

The next morning, they ate in the hotel dining room. They were served shmloatmeal and shlamburgers – as they were unusually called – a strange combination, especially for a hotel breakfast. The only alternative was a grilled cheese shmandwich and black shbeans.

Hecklesburg asked about the unusual menu and strange names of the food.

"It's a discount hotel, remember. You pay less, and in turn we give you less. Got that?"

"Maybe..." He responded.

Then, after eating, he and Gremmles went to the police department.

"We've got some news," said one of the policemen.

"What?" asked Gremmles.

"The policeman dispatched to investigate the warehouse last night has been murdered. And some unknown person nearby was also found dead. And so has the homeless man by the 4D36 warehouse, another murder."

"Oh dear.. We already know about the officer and the other man." He explained what had happened. "But the homeless man, he was a witness of the events, though he could not inform us of much. Anything positive?"

"No."

"Oh man," said Hecklesburg. "I like positive things. And I'd especially like some now..."

"Tough beans."

As Hecklesburg and Gremmles were on their way to see the site of the homeless man's murder, they discussed the situation.

"So, young one, the homeless man was certainly killed after we left last night. And it was obviously by a second henchman of G. I suppose if we lingered, you would have had to fight him as well. Or perhaps the incident occurred hours later toward dawn. Perhaps even later."

They arrived on the scene, to see police tape around the man's body, his head apparently smashed with a brick which was found nearby. Around the back of the building was G's hit-man's body, also surrounded by police tape.

Gremmles asked one of the officers surveilling the premises, referring to the hit-man, "Have you looked in that man's pockets?"

"Yes."

"Well, has anything of note been found?"

"No."

Gremmles went to talk to Hecklesburg.

"I suppose," Gremmles said, "that we should return to the hotel room. It's safer there, what with the guard."

They returned to hear from the man at the hotel's front desk that a man in all black with a knife in a sheath had wanted to see him.

"The armed guard forced him to leave," said the man, "but he did make some sort of threat. I hope it won't be fulfilled."

"Oh dear, young whippersnapper, this may pose a problem for us."

"I bet it will."

"Don't worry," the man at the desk assured them, "I called the police shortly before you arrived, and they will guard the place until we think it's safe."

Hecklesburg and Gremmles went to the room.

The next day, when Hecklesburg and Gremmles were going to check in on the police department, there were indeed several police officers guarding the hotel, but not the usual day-shift armed guard. They didn't think much of it.

But when they got to the police department, they were informed, "Last night, the armed guard for the daytime shift at the hotel you have been staying at has been murdered in his home."

They became quite frightened, Hecklesburg's eyes widening and feeling weary, but Gremmles, older and wiser, maintaining his stoic disposition.

"How dreadful. It appears that we must watch our every step; someone may be lurking, waiting for us."

"I'm really scared... And this time it's not because of the dark." Hecklesburg said.

They asked to, with police escort, see the site of the murder.

"Okay," the policeman said, "we will let you do so. Also, there seems to be a note waiting for you, I neglected to mention. It was found by the knife, and it was signed 'G'."

So they, being driven in a police car, were taken to the house of the murdered guard.

They entered, to see a very ancient-looking, gilded knife in the chest of the guard.

"I guess he needed an armed guard for himself," Hecklesburg mused.

"I suppose so," Gremmles agreed.

"Clearly," an inspecting police officer at the site told them, "this 'G' person must be quite wealthy, to use such an expensive 1983 gilded knife like that. Handmade. 1001 years old, and it was even worth a fortune on the market back then. This is no petty thug."

Hecklesburg shivered again.

"My friend," Gremmles opined, "there is no use in being afraid; we must think calmly. Otherwise we will be easy prey, young whippersnapper."

Hecklesburg tried to calm himself, but his anxiety still continued.

"Well, here's the letter for you from 'G.'" And the officer handed the letter.

It, typed again, read:

MEET ME AT KENDRICK KEEP IF YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR
FRIEND AGAIN

OTHERWISE SAY BYE-BYE

- G.

Hecklesburg became even more terrified.

"Gremmles! Kendrick Keep is an abandoned fortress on Uranus! We have to go there immediately!"

They hurried to the spaceport, got in Hecklesburg's ship, and flew as fast as possible to Uranus.

Now, Kendrick Keep was a fortress built on Uranus during the time of the first Lemon-Jrug war, 5 centuries prior. It was a long way out of the settlement on the planet, and it was originally used by the Lemonland Army to maintain defense against the Jruglandians. The former party, of course, lost the war, but they won that particular battle, the fortress intact to this day, although somewhat damaged by hydrogen peroxide rain.

They arrived, just before sunset, seeing in short distance the old fortress on its high-ground position. They walked up the hill, very cautiously.

Gremmles waiting outside and Hecklesburg's sword in his hand, he entered the open doorway (it had been open for hundreds of years) and gazed around the entry-room. Then he started carefully walking through the dark building, using his flashlight, awaiting at any moment a swift attack by G or one of his henchmen.

Hecklesburg entered the doorway to a large room.

"Well, well, well--"

"That is really getting on my nerves!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Finally we meet, Hecklesburg! It is I, G!"

"YOU!"

"Yes, me indeed..."

"WHERE'S MY FRIEND!?!"

"After you fight me, perhaps you may see him..."

Hecklesburg, enraged with a great fury, pounced on the man, knocking his sword out of his hand, and nearly killed him.

"Wait!" G shouted.

"Wait for my ass."

"I'd rather not! And I'm not actually G!! He hired me to pretend to be him! The real G is on Venus! Please don't kill me!"

"You bastard! You made me think that I actually was fighting him!" He punched the fake G in the stomach and then in the face, knocking out a tooth.

"You're coming with me."

Hecklesburg dragged the man out, and, threatening him with the sword, took him to the colony for arrest. The man was placed in the colony's prison.

But first Hecklesburg had asked about where to go on Venus, and said that if it was a trap he'd be executed. He was told that he himself didn't know, only go somewhere in the capital of Venus, Pustyertame, and that it wasn't a trap.

Hecklesburg and Gremmles went there in the former's ship.

"Well, young whippersnapper, we appear to be getting closer. But it still could be a trap, despite your threat."

"I doubt it." Hecklesburg said in a focused, very serious tone.

"We must still be wary, my friend."

"Yes, I got that already." he said impatiently.

"You know, you needn't get angry about it."

"Galvin, stop."

"Very well, if you so insist."

After they got to Pustyertame, which was enveloped in night, they went straight to the police department there.

In a high-pitched, emasculated voice (similar to that of the train conductor on Jupiter), the man at the front desk said, "Hello! How can I help you?"

"We're looking for a particular gang, run by someone named 'G.'"

"Gang? We've eliminated all gang activity in this city! There is no organized crime here!"

It was true what the man said; the streets of Pustyertame were extremely safe, gang activity having ceased.

Another man appeared behind the front desk: a police officer informing Hecklesburg that the king of Venus would like to speak to him, being the governor of Uranus and king of Saturn.

"Very well. Might he help me with my problem? You know, I'm chasing somebody. Some criminal."

"Yes, maybe."

He was driven with a small entourage to the king's palace, which was also in Pustyertame.

Gremmles again waited outside while Hecklesburg entered.

"Ah, Phinnary Hecklesburg, I've desired to see you!"

"Thank you, my lord. Why do you wish to speak to me?" Hecklesburg knelt.

"I have caught word of your visiting within my kingdom, and as a sworn friend of our Lord Narmly Gredgings, I could not forgo giving you my warmest greetings."

"Ah, thank you my lord! Hey, can I ask a little favor from you?"

"Sure."

"Well, I've been hunting a certain guy who kidnapped my friend and right-hand man as you might say."

"Oh, that's awful!"

"Indeed."

"Well, go on."

"Ok. So..." And he proceeded to tell him all of the relevant details, over the course of ten minutes.

"Oh, that's awful!" he shouted again.

"Truly."

"Well?"

"Ah yes. So, if this 'G' fellow has instructed you to come here to my kingdom, he must mean to fight you here as well."

"That stands to reason, probably."

"Shpeffernaught, come hither!" he called loudly across the broad throne-room. And an elderly man walking with a cane came forward to the king.

"This is my head advisor in the kingdom. He's lived through two centuries of history as it unfolded, and read all, and I mean all, of history's great works of writing, from Plato to Shmertenian, in their original languages."

"Woah!"

"What do you want?" Shpeffernaught said.

"Phinnary, tell him your story."

And that he did, over the course of another ten minutes.

"What you need to do," said Shpeffernaught, "is ride through town in a convoy, in an uncovered vehicle like that one Earthly President you no doubt have learnt about in Earth history class"

"My father kind of just bribed the teacher so I passed the class, because it was too hard for me at the time, and it's just a bunch of useless crap anyway."

"Well, carrying on, young one, you ride through Pustyertame in an uncovered Shlimousine and wait for him to shoot at you from the rooftops, but you make sure to wear a protective, invisible BulletShield 3000, whereby the bullet shall instead bounce off of your head and fly backward at him, killing him and ending your 'G' problem. Fret not, dear little youth, we shall hide the BulletShield 3000's copper collar under your coat so that he be none the wiser."

"Wow, awesome!"

"Yes, now let me fetch one of those trinkets for you, and one for your friend."

And the king said he would gather his army for the convoy.

Ten more minutes went by, Hecklesburg having brought Gremmles inside. They helped each other put on the BulletShield 3000s, and the king came back and Hecklesburg heard the Shlimousine honk its horn right outside.

"Follow me," said the king.

"Very well."

The Shlimousine, foregone by military Jeeps® and followed by more military Jeeps®, each one driven by armed, camouflaged men, with more such men hiding in the trunk peeping out occasionally, rode through the town's main boulevard, the townsfolk standing on the sidewalk and cheering and the women blowing kisses at Hecklesburg, who waved back at everyone with a rich smirk on his face.

"Hey Gremmles, I can't really feel any shield near my face. And, like the guy said, I can't see it either. You sure it's actually working?"

"Don't be silly, young whippersnapper! Of course it's working; it's only meant to shield you from bullets, not from your hands."

"I guess that makes sense." And he went back to waving.

Several more minutes going by, a woman from the civilian crowd threw a rose at Hecklesburg, which he tried to catch, but he missed, and it fell onto the floor of the Shlimousine. He was too busy waving and smirking, so Gremmles bent down to pick it up for him, and right as he did so, a gun went off, blazing a hole in his hair and in the back of the car-seat.

"Look out!" Hecklesburg yelled, after it happened. The Shlimousine-driver made a quick one-eighty, Hecklesburg and Gremmles stayed ducked down in fear for the rest of the drive back to the palace, and the crowds suddenly screamed and ran around in a panic like chickens.

The armed guards saw no-one on the building-rooves, and eventually gave up.

"Honorable King of Upper and Lower Venus!" called Hecklesburg as soon as he reached the throne-room, all guards oddly dismissed. "The plan failed! Galvin was almost shot! What do we do now?!"

The king sighed deeply. "Ah, Hecklesburg, I'm afraid I must now let you know... I am the very one whom you seek."

"What?.. W-what do you mean?"

"You foolish noble.. There never was such an item as a BulletShield 3000, only a copper collar I had my Chief Coppersmith make. Had your friend Galvin only not ducked down to pick up that precious little rose, he would be dead. But the plan backfired."

"Wait, what are you talking about?!"

"I AM G!"

"WHERE IS MY FRIEND?!"

"You have to fight me, fool!"

They raised their swords. They clashed and the king reached forth to stab Hecklesburg, but he parried.

After very much sword-fighting, Hecklesburg cut off the king's hand which held his sword. The king clearly was not a trained fighter.

"GIVE ME MY FRIEND!!"

"Wait! Wait! Hecklesburg, you see!..." He sighed another deep sigh. "... I am also not the G whom you seek after all! That STUPID MONGREL hired me to play this act! My name is Volsvador Harpter, no G!" He began to cry. "Go on! I can't tell you more! Only perhaps your king can help..."

"WHAT?"

"I can say no more... You have defeated me.. Go in peace to your own planet." He sat on his knees sobbing, his patheticness's face buried in his hands.

Just then a herald from the Lemon King came into the throne-room (he was permitted entry on account of the alliance between the Lemonland Empire and Venus).

"Phinary Hecklesburg! Our lord the king of the Lemonland Empire needs to speak to you urgently!"

After the long traveling time, Hecklesburg appeared before King Narmly Gredgings, this time in the open courtyard.

Gredgings had a large, wide grin on his face with sinister eyes.

"Oh, Hecklesburg!!" he boomed in rage. He continued, maniacally, "I have truly played you like a fiddle, you piece of excrement, ruiner of my plans! First you refused to take food from that Uranus colony, which I helped you with once you helped me. But those Jupiterians are now all growing and growing and growing in revolutionary sentiment after how you bombed the entire revolutionaries' base, such a bad maneuver for my kingdom's image! You should have made a deal with them! I only pretended to approve of what you did! Then you released that whole underground city! Our empire had intentionally put that Elder there to keep them all

trapped, those Jrugland prisoners of war! Since you wanted to create all that stupid food for that colony – really, for those animals that you released – and needed protective panels for the farmland, I used that precious opportunity to have your friend kidnapped, making you go on a wild goose chase for ‘G,’ my initial all along, for him, unable to govern that stupid colony properly! Then you made friends with those Jrugland enemies, even hiring one as a detective! I paid the king of Venus to play the ‘G’ character – you are too stupid to realize that his name doesn’t even start with a G – so an unnamed shooter would kill that meddling detective of yours and wipe him out of the picture, and so you would kill the king of Venus in anger, and I would thereby mete out vengeance on him for refusing to give our empire food. But you spared his life! Oh, Phinnary Hecklesburg, you are going down tonight! DIE!!”

They vigorously battled with the sword, until the point of typical weariness, constant swift action, one nearly striking the other but being barely parried.

Gredgings was a very mighty fighter.

“Pathetic!” he shouted. He managed to hit, nearly cutting off, Hecklesburg’s hand, making him drop his sword.

Hecklesburg ran away from him, but he turned around quickly and landed a blow in Gredgings’ face, him losing his sword too.

“Very well!” Gredgings yelled. “Hand-to-hand combat it is, then!”

He started sprinting at Hecklesburg, now them both far from their swords. He punched Hecklesburg very greatly, knocking him to the ground.

Hecklesburg picked up a fallen tree branch as a weapon, and so did Gredgings.

Gredgings smacked Hecklesburg in the face with the branch. Hecklesburg struck his hand. He then tried to hit Gredgings, but a piece of his stick broke off.

Gredgings sprinted again towards Hecklesburg, landing many hard blows. Hecklesburg punched Gredgings in the stomach. Gredgings smashed Hecklesburg’s nose. Hecklesburg hit Gredgings’ stick, breaking a piece off of it.

They continued fighting, almost as if with swords, with the sticks, until both sticks became shortened too greatly.

Gredgings dashed toward Hecklesburg to pound him again, but this time Hecklesburg tripped him, him falling into the damp soil. He leapt up, kicking Hecklesburg in the face.

Gredgings threw a punch toward Hecklesburg, who stopped his fist and instead punched him.

Gredgings pounced on Hecklesburg, them falling into wrestling on the ground. They were as if a ball, battling vigorously like wild cats.

Eventually Hecklesburg arose when he could, and ran near the king's well.

Gredgings followed him, almost pushing him in. Hecklesburg punched Gredgings, who in return hit him in the stomach with his knee.

Hecklesburg charged at Gredgings, but he was stopped and battered. Then Hecklesburg started pushing the king toward the well, who resisted and tried to reverse the situation.

They wrestled standing up, each trying to push the other in, both bloodied.

Hecklesburg smashed the back of Gredgings' neck and began pushing him over the edge of the well.

"YOUR FRIEND IS IN MY DUNGEON!! HE'S IN MY DUNGEON!!"

Gredgings tried to grab on to Hecklesburg's arm, but he resisted, and Gredgings began, still barely holding on, to fall into the deep pit. Finally, Hecklesburg, bruised and battered, felt his hand being released.

He heard a scream as King Narmly Gredgings fell down the well to his doom.

Hecklesburg dropped a heavy metal statue of the king down the hole, to crush what remained intact of his body.

He noticed that on the ground at a small distance was the king's key-chain. Gredgings had dropped it during their wrestling.

Hecklesburg walked through the palace, no guards in sight. They were all commanded to stand by outside so the king could fight without restraint.

Hecklesburg eventually found the dungeon door. He finally tried the right key, and he walked through the corridor of the dungeon, where political prisoners were kept. Then he found his friend Yatrid Jogan.

"Yatrid!"

"Phinnary!"

Hecklesburg unlocked his cell door, and they hugged.

"I've spent day and night looking for you, and finally I've found you!"

"I was told you would be killed!"

Hecklesburg found the king's ship, taking Jogan with him, the two filling each other in on their experiences during the past month.

"Oh, Phinnary, you saved me!"

"Yes, I've grown to not be so cruel like I was before. This has truly humbled me, what has been transpiring."

Hecklesburg used the key on the keychain to power on the ship, Gremmles still waiting outside the palace, and he flew himself and Jogan to Jrugland.

"You see, Yatrid, as killer of the king there, I can't go back. You be the new governor in my stead, well, if I can make such a decision, and I'll be accepted as a hero here in Jrugland. We can only meet when you come to visit here."

"I will do that often then!"

"Goodbye, Yatrid, I will see you later!"

"Goodbye, Phinnary!"

They parted.

Hecklesburg became a national hero in Jrugland for slaying their enemy, the Lemon King. He was promoted to governor of Pankainia, while Jogan was indeed retained as governor of Uranus.

Gremmles was sent a telegram that his job was finished, and he was wired the large payment for his services, and for almost being shot in the head.

"Ah, that fellow was an interesting client. I will miss him."

The new king of the Lemonland Empire, Jimmery Flagghorn II, was less cruel in his ways than Gredgings.

And at least the Uranus colony had food. They had so much food that they were selling it to the rest of the country for much profit. It became the wealthiest colony in the country, with a fast-growing population, 20,000 in merely a year, and a statue of Hecklesburg was built in his honor.

Hecklesburg said to himself, "Geeze, that was a lot a' hard work... I really need a vacation. And I never finished reading Bjorn's Vacation. Okay, once I finish reading it, then I'll go on vacation. That sounds good. It's not even that good of a book, but it's better than that tier-1 toilet paper..."

THE END