



**From the complaint
department to the emperor
of a planet**

D.A.Sanford

From the complaint department to the emperor of a planet

By D.A.Sanford

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for permission from the author contact danielsanford@sbcglobal.net

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Character Sheet



David Sampson



Donna Tilxon



Jack Reed



Karl the gardener



Fred Simpson (slime final form)



Emperor Zorrack Tilxon



Regent

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The crappy job

I hate my job, although I am the supervisor of my department.

David Sampson is my name and I am the total complaint department at the towns branch of a multi planet department conglomerate, Good Goods. It has the intergalactic reputation of carrying nothing but the best merchandise at a good price.

This particular store however has the unique distinction of being the outlet for the seconds, stock over runs, scratched and dented merchandise, in short, the last in line in the whole conglomerate. We are the dumping grounds for the whole galaxy.

There is a policy for our store. No refunds, all sales final. There is a sign stating that clearly over my counter, which is in a small obscured side room. That is the only sign in the whole store.

There is always a line in front of my counter of happy customers trying to return merchandise for a refund. I have the answer to everyone's problems.

"This shirt has an over sown area four inches on the front. I want a refund."

As I point to the sign, I say, "Look at the sign, No refunds, All sales are final. Next"

"This radio does not work."

I point to the sign "Look at the sign, No refunds, All sales are final. Next"

On and on, every day, all week long.

Look at the time. Despite the line, I flip my counter top sign to "out to lunch" and leave. I have learned to ignore the people in line. I hate my crappy job. Minimum wage, a store manager that thinks that his position allows him to verbally abuse not only the staff but even the customers,

I need to quit.

My lunch is almost always a vending machine sandwich. Preferably one that does not really need refrigeration, that feature of the machine has never been fixed. The vending machine is a second also. PB&J is almost a safe bet, as long as it isn't too far out of date.

I go across the street to a small park bench to eat. No luck this time the bread is hard and stale. With the house I inherited when my parents were killed in a plane crash, along with the bills, it's all I can afford so I crunch through it.

As I am crunching, A young child around ten comes up to me

"Excuse me sir, I'm lost. Would you please help me to find the hotel that my father and I are staying at?"

Normally I would tell this kid to shove off. The kid's too polite. Sign of upper class grudgingly talking to a street bum but he said the magic words.

"We are staying at the Imperial Hotel. My father will give you a reward if you bring me back."

Ding, ding, ding, money.

I don't care if I get back to work on time. The possibility of reward compels me to answer.

"Of course I will help you." I toss the brick I was crunching in the trash and start walking

"It is right this way. It's only a few blocks away. follow me."

I escort the child to the front desk of the hotel. There is a man in a very expensive suit standing there. He is clearly upset and almost demanding that the staff help him find his child. He turns around when he hears the child say

"Father, I was lost and this nice man helped me find my way back here."

His father turned out to be a very, very rich corporate mogul. He owned many different businesses. I later found out that he also owned the Imperial Hotel. After politely scolding his son for straying, he offers his hand

"Thank you very much for returning my child. Please come with me. I would like to discuss a reward for your services."

Money! In my mind I do a fist pump.

"Of course," I say.

He leads me to a large meeting room off the lobby.

"Again, I would like to thank you for escorting my son here. A man in my position, anyone in my family can be subject to kidnapping to extort money from me. I thought that he might have been abducted. I'd like to get to know you a little to be able to properly reward you."

Trying to start the conversation, he asks me,

"Where do you work?"

I see my opportunity and set to weaving my sad, sad situation.

"I may not have a job to get back to. You see, I was on my half hour lunch break when your child approached me. I figured that I needed to make sure the child safely got back to you. It wasn't an important job but I was able to make ends meet, just. I'll pawn something to tide myself over until I find another job."

"Well then I have good news for you. You won't have to pawn anything"

Okay lay a big amount on me.

"I have a chain of stores and there is a job opening that store"

Oh shit, don't tell me. My life's bad luck feels like it is going to strike again.

"The store manager wants a position filled"

I ask with trepidation

"What is the name of the store?"

"It's the Good Goods store."

Thought so! It looks like no money, so I lose it.

"That's the crappy store that I have a crappy job in the complaints department!"

He now is very indignant. It seems that I just questioned whether his mother knew his father for more than a brief encounter. I don't care

"I'll have you know that the Good Goods franchise has stores on multiple planets in this galaxy. We run only top goods in all stores." he informs me.

"Someone has been blowing wind up your skirt then. This store is the dumping ground for all the trash that your stores in the galaxy reject."

"That's impossible. Those rejects are being dumped or sold to seconds stores."

"Yup, that's our store. Besides that, what was the job you needed filled? If I may ask."

He tells me that the store manager is looking to fill a supervisory position in the complaint department.

"That bastard is firing me? Well, I'm going back and quitting. He has made almost everyone's job miserable, pissed off customers and ruined your brand's reputation."

"You are the supervisor?"

"Yes but I'm the only one in complaints."

"That can't be right. The position is a supervisor and employee."

"Nope, only me."

He looks like I told him Santa died from soot inhalation. The Easter bunny got eaten by a coyote.

"I cannot believe it."

"Go see for yourself. Tell you what I am going to do for you. I am willing to bet you are going to need a pair of our rejected boxers after you see what I'm going to show you. Dare to come with me? It's only a few blocks away."

With the confidence that he will prove me wrong, he agrees.

"We'll walk. When we get to the store, let me walk in then come in and watch but keep your mouth shut."

I go in and start towards the complaints department. The store manager was waiting for me. In front of the few customers we had, he starts yelling at me.

"What the hell you mean coming back an hour late from lunch? You have a cushy job telling these losers that we have their money, they have this crap. That is your job. Point to your sign and say next . Your fired! I'll get a monkey to do your job."

He is interrupted by someone telling him,

"You should not be treating an employee that way."

The manager doesn't even turn before he yells.

"Why the hell do you think is it your business"

But doesn't finish as he look at the person behind him. when he sees the man he adds,

"Mister fancy suit"

"It is my business."

Dumb is dumb, the manager retorts, "Then explain to me, dumb ass, how is it your business."

Wait for it, I tell myself. The manager, I thought, suddenly had a big wet lump in the back of his pants when the man he was insulting showed him a business card, then tells him

"It is my business because I own this business. Your fired. No, I take that back."

He looks at me "Sorry I forgot to get your name?"

I tell him "David, David Sampson."

"David, you are now this stores manager."

"And you" looking at now ex manager "You are now the supervisor of the complaints. Get to work. Give each one of those customers their money back, full tag price."

"David, please show me the store's merchandise."

We walk around the store. His jaw is dropping.

"Most, if not all of this should have been dumped. I would not even sell it to a second's stores."

"I was in town making a tour of all the Good Goods branches. I see that someone has to be skimming. Sending this junk here while recording that they purchasing this stock as new. I need you to order a few large dumpsters and clear out all the junk. If there is anything left, sell it at ten percent of the listed price. A giant clearance sale."

I suggest that we do that for all the stock with big signs all over the store that it is a second's clearance sale at ten percent of the tag price, no refunds.

"You'll see that people will buy it up."

He goes with my suggestion. In a short time, the store is almost picked clean. What is left was thrown out. After a complete painting and thorough cleaning of the store, the store was stocked with the real Good Goods.

The news stations had an article about a big shake up at Good Goods corporation. The financial head was fired and arrested for embezzlement. The scam was not confined to this planet but to all the planets with the exception of the ones that had only one store. Those rejects were being shipped off site for later dates.

Our store finally had the proper items. They were far better than anything we have had. No complaints only complements. I was being praised for turning the store around. My reputation in the corporate world grew and soon I was managing quite a few stores as district manager.

I was called to corporate headquarters one day. There, I was ushered into the board room.

All the seats were filled with the various corporate department heads. At the head of the table was the man who I told his store was crap. He motioned me to sit down at the empty chair at the opposite end of the table.

"For those of you who don't know him, this is David Sampson. He was the first person that looked me in the eyes and told me that his store was, to use his words, 'Crap'. I saw for myself and it was. Oh, by the way, how is that complaint department's supervisor working out?"

"He isn't" I said "I had to let him go."

"Why?"

"It's this way, with Good Goods there are no complaints. We did not need him and his attitude did not fit into our image."

I actually received applause from the board.

"The reason we brought you here is that, upon my recommendation to this board, you be offered the position of the chief of operations on the planet Tilxon. You will manage the first store and will be responsible for relations with the emperor."

"There has been a suitable manor bought that is yours. The corporation will buy your present home and vehicle along with any service contracts you have. You will have a large expense account due to the fact that you will be entertaining locals where new stores needs to go. It is their custom, entertain then business."

He finishes with.

"The way you think and act are what's needed for this position on this planet. Will you take the challenge?"

I agree to take on the job. Complaint department to a COO of a planet, life's really good.

The company did buy my house and had what I wanted packed up and shipped to Tilxon. It will be there when I reached the new world.

Still finding it hard to believe, I'm now on a shuttle that is taking me to my new life on a world that is far different from whatever I could possibly comprehend.

The arrival

He had my photograph and description. Six foot, brown eyes, brown hair with average build. Leans towards the toned side of average. He was the stereotypical executive assistant. No glasses. With proper etiquette, he could entertain clients but was prone to bouts of total honesty no matter whether feelings are hurt. Listens to good ideas but also quick to shoot down bad ones which sometimes leads to conflicts. As I said stereotypical executive assistant.

Looking at his tablet screen, was the temporary company relations manager until I arrive, Jack Reed. He was waiting for my shuttle to touch down from the docking station in orbit around the planet Tilxon.

When I get off the shuttle, I see him standing there with a Good Goods sign and my name. I walk over to him.

I introduce myself "I'm David Sampson"

But he looks at the tablet, then at me. He does this several times before he talks,

"Just making sure. One cannot be too sure. There are shape sifters out here."

"You want blood for a DNA check?" I say sarcastically.

"Not needed" he replied tapping his tablet. "The latest in interplanetary travel necessities. The personal assistant tablet. Built in DNA detection for positive identification. It has many other functions. You now have one at your manor."

"Jack, first things first. I do not talk business out in public. I even consider in a cab still public."

"Neither do I." He seemed indignant. "I have your limousine waiting outside, not a cab"

I shrug as we go towards the exit.

"Let's talk business in depth at the manor but on the way, fill me in on what the planet politics are right now. Not the public affairs version but the dirty low down. Your real gut feelings. This way I don't accidentally step on someone's toes."

Jack asks, "Accidentally? Does that mean you will do it deliberately?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean."

"Then I need to get some steel toed shoes."

"Only if you think that I will need to do that."

Jack gives me the basics.

The planet Tilxon is just as described. Lush, almost tropical vegetation. A one season climate that is close to constant temperature of our eighty degrees but not as humid. This planet's general population is made up with different humanoid species. Actual full human types are rare and considered the exotic species.

An interesting fact that I am going to look into. For sales purposes I tell myself.

The humanoid systems are almost feudal in nature. Basically, politicians who rule and those who are not. Those who are not, work for their living while supporting the politician's way of life. Everything new must have the wheels greased first. Mainly by parties thrown, dinners and vacations funded by the entertainment budget Good Good's has set up.

Tradition on Tilxon. No laws against it here.

The roads are paved but mostly foot traffic use the paved roads. The actual roads are one hundred feet higher. This planet actually has flying cars. We always talked about it on our planet but went to the "More Ecologically Sound" mass electric transportation system. The strained outdated system crashed the electrical grid because it could not handle the load and nearly putting our world in total blackout.

Plant life is similar to other planets. The differences though are interesting. The biggest threat is a plant commonly called a grabber. The grabber is a carnivorous plant. As you would figure has multi vine like tentacles that grab its prey, it entwines the victim. The victim is dragged back to a pool of flesh dissolving liquid while being held in the pool by the plant. Adding to the danger is the fact that they can move. Not fast but it moves when there is no food available.

Some plant life, on Tilxon, is considered sentient and can walk freely about. They even have areas throughout cities and villages that have special enriched soil that they can put their roots in to nourish themselves and rest. These are enclosed spaces open only to those plants. They should be considered as their version of a hotel. These hotels are run by the government as a tribute to the planet's life supporting vegetation.

Indigenous non sentient wild animal life is also similar to other planets. Some are herbivores but some are carnivorous. The carnivorous wild animals are to be considered very dangerous because all meat is the same to them sentient or not, meat is meat to them. In populated areas they are kept out by protective force fields that stop all animal life.

The different humanoid species along with plant life is free to roam and can pass through the barrier without any trouble.

Jack finishes his brief. "That is the basic about the planet."

We are riding to my manor in Tilxon's version of a limousine. Long multi seat passenger compartment fully furnished of course. It appears that I have a driver in my staff.

"One big warning" Jack adds "Humans are rare here and considered exotic on Tilxon. Being in a power position you will be a target and if you are not very careful, you'll end up being trapped by one or more Tilxonian women. Their race is different from humans even though most physically look similar."

He informs me that there are at least ten females to each male on Tilxon. I think I may like this planet.

Our single store is situated in the capital city of Gendozi. It is a beautiful mixture of styles. Everything from basic box to opulent mansion. The simplest construction was kept clean. The same dwelling on other worlds would be considered slum material, here is considered quaint, Like a tropical island beach hut.

The other end of styles would be considered the best of a place like the Hamptons or Beverly Hills. The only thing is that the difference is not looked down on or envied. On the surface, there is harmony but I only just arrived and true harmony really is almost nonexistent

Jack continues to fill me in on the general knowledge, laws and customs of Tilxon.

"Sentient life is considered sacred. To even harm it will get you into trouble. The worst sentence is permanent expulsion from the planet. Since you are the top official of our company, your will stand out so you need to show authority but understanding of the needs. A royal audience will happen within the week. Be prepared."

A sentient slime named Fred

I've finished with Jack for today. My driver is taking him home. Other than the staff, I'm alone and free to roam. I need to get familiar with my surroundings so I decide to get outside and wander the grounds.

The lawn looks like they use scissors and a ruler to cut it. The garden is beautiful. I was never really interested before I left the complaint department but now I'm different.

I am the same person that I was back then but now I am more aware of my need improve my knowledge. On any planet, knowledge is power. I don't mean power as force, it can and is but I mean that knowledge will help in not getting killed.

If I hadn't been informed, I might have been interested in a plant then found myself as its dinner. I like my new life so the more knowledge I can get the better

The manor is on the opulent side of the spectrum. Very large on a lavish plot of land. It is typical for a tropical climate. White with terracotta roofing tiles. Open to the airflow, screens are prevalent. There are windows and doors but most are of the sliding pocket type. More rooms than I could imagine, but I would expect that it was designed to accommodate the top executives when they come to visit the stores.

A large pool finishes out the estate. All in all, compared to this, my house was a hovel. It was a four room cape on less than an acre.

The garden, no, my garden, is beautiful. The flowers are arranged so that they look natural. Flowers and different bushes combine to form the perfect scene. It all seems to make the viewer relaxed, peaceful like. That is why something cowering in the bushes caught my eye.

There, trying to hide, was a shivering blob. It is around a soccer ball size, opaque and milky in color. I kneeled down to look at it but it tried to back away. It was stopped, cornered by the bush.

"It's okay" I said "I will not harm you"

I pull back my hand. I sit down and start to talk to it.

"You know, I am new here. You are the first thing that I have met."

I had been introduced to the house staff by Jack but this was the first outsider.

Knowing that there are different life forms, I talked to it.

"On the planet I'm from we don't have anyone that looks like you but I have seen pictures about life on other planets. There were a few of what they labeled as slimes. Are you a slime?"

It vibrated slightly.

"Does that mean yes?"

It vibrates again.

Not knowing if that is only a reaction to my voice I change the question to a request.

"Show me what you do if you mean no."

The slime flattens itself.

"That means no?"

It vibrates.

It seems to understand me.

I have in my pocket a sandwich. I like my sammitches, as my father called them, so out of nostalgia, I continued the tradition, in private. No PBJ anymore, these sammitches are fresh MMLT's Bacon lettuce and tomato is on Tilxon mystery meat lettuce and tomato. At least I am calling it lettuce and tomato.

Thinking food is the quickest way to break the ice, I pull the lettuce out and offer it to the slime. It hesitates so I set it on the ground a few inches from it. The slime stretches out and envelopes the lettuce.

"Can I touch you?"

It vibrates, so I touch it. Why do they call these slimes? It is smooth and dry. The word slime implies a sticky feeling.

"Listen, I just can't call you slime or other derivatives of that. Would it be alright if I just named you Fred?"

It vibrated more than just yes.

"Like that name, Fred?"

Again, a vigorous vibration.

"Okay Fred, let's take a walk in the garden my friend."

As I walked Fred bounced behind me. I stop and tell Fred

"I can't have my first friend walking behind me. Please come on up beside me. We walk together"

Fred seems happy as he, since I named it Fred, to me it's he, bounced beside me. I stop to look at a flower, Fred ate the flower. We moved on, the same. I look, he eats.

"At lease let me see it before you eat it."

The next flower Fred hesitates moving around but not eating.

"Okay, I've seen it."

As soon as I said that, the flower was consumed.

I hear someone come up behind us. I turn to see the gardener.

"That damned slime."

He raises his shovel to kill Fred.

"Stop right now. Don't harm Fred."

"Fred, who's Fred? This slime has been eating my flowers. It has nearly wiped out whole sections of my garden."

I look at Fred, "Is that correct?"

Fred vibrates a little.

"He must be hungry" I say to the gardener.

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