



The War

of

Wars

Richard Shekari

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By

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Ayiwulu Alaku

Peter Barwa

Emmanuel C. Sambo

Dedication

Krazillian Z.K. Mutebela

Chapter One: 3-2-1 Lift-Off

The three main engines of the shuttle started almost simultaneously. When the countdown clock ticked down to zero, the Solid Rocket Boosters ignited, and the Space Shuttle cleared off the Launchpad.

About two minutes into flight, the crew watched on a small screen as one of the cameras from the shuttle picked up the boosters as they separated themselves from the external tank and fell back down to earth.

“We won’t be needing you, babies!” The Pilot joked. “Say me hi to mother earth!”

“If earth was a human being,” said a woman among the crew, “how do you think the impact would be on her as the boosters hit the ocean?”

“Well, I’ve got a poor sense of humour, Flight Engineer Johnson!” The Commander said, “But I think it’ll be like Hilary’s breath around Trump’s neck; won’t feel it!”

“Whoa!” The crew yelled as they laughed.

“Guess what, Johnson.” The pilot said.

“Yeah?” Responded the Flight Engineer.

“Commander Barry here’s with the feminist team,” added the Pilot, “His wife is the Head of the Women’s Right Brass. So don’t take it personal!”

“Why should I?” She said, “Any man who gets splattered out of a woman, wouldn’t make fun of women!”

“Whoa!” The Pilot remarked, “I wish the guys in the Middle East and Africa heard that!”

James, a young man in his late twenties was quivering as the shuttle pierced through space. The warmth memories of his mother fluxed into his heart, he managed to join the rest of the crew to savour the gag thrown by the Commander

“I promised my mom that I’d be an astronaut someday!” James said, in a shaky voice.

“Aww!” Johnson remarked, “Isn’t that sweet? Well, I guess she just watched your scary butt thrust into space on TV!”

“Well, maybe from above!” He said, “She passed away about two years ago.”

“Ring! Ring! Apology time!” The Pilot said, “Flight Engineer Maurine Johnson, what do you have to say?”

“I’m so sorry, James!” She said, “I didn’t know.”

“It’s okay,” he replied.

“I’m so sorry for your...great loss!” She added, “I believe she’s in a better place!”

“There you go!” The Pilot said, “It wasn’t that hard, was it, Johnson?”

“Shut up, Caleb!” She said.

“Enjoying the view huh, first timer?” Caleb said.

“Yeah?” James responded, “Why is it shaking like this?”

“On an average, a cowboy sits on a horse that’s around 1,123 pounds of flesh or there about,” answered the Pilot. “We on the other hand are stuck like sardine in a can that’s attached to some huge cylinders containing about 383,000 gallons of liquid hydrogen and 143,000 gallons of liquid oxygen or more, son!”

“Wow!” James remarked.

“Sitting ducks in a giant tank of a huge propulsion system that is essentially a controlled bomb! That’s how someone put it!” The Commander said, “Like ants hung to your wife’s cooking gas cylinder back at home. She blows! We’ll all get vapourised!”

“Stop scaring him, guys!” Johnson said.

“I’m not married!” James said.

“Oh! You lucky son of a gun,” interjected the Commander. “I wish we’d switch places. Huh! Just kidding!” He mocked, “I love my wife and kids, and if I’m to come back to this God-forsaken world after this life...I’d want to spend my time with them all over again! You don’t know what you’re missing!”

“How’s it going out there sport?” Said a voice over the radio, “BX9, do you copy?”

“Mission Control, we’re good!” The Commander said, “Caleb’s trying to scare the bit Jesus out of our young Spaceflight Participant here. But we’re all good! Copy?”

“I hope our young Spaceflight Participant left his religious beliefs down here on earth with us, where it belong,” said the voice over the radio. “If he carries that crap up into space he might not survive a millisecond there! Copy!”

The entire crew laughed as the shuttle sailed the orbit.

“You shouldn’t take away the only thing that gives a man hope!” The Commander added.

“You’re right, Commander Barnabas!” Said the voice over the radio, “Sail on!”

Chapter Two: A Boy in Space

The crew got to their destination and docked the shuttle on the space station. After a routine check and debriefing, most of them retired to their small cabins.

As James walked to his cabin, he sighted earth from a window, he stopped to have a good look.

“I can see that the sight of the big blue lady takes your breath away!” Caleb said as he tapped James on the back, “Look at her; so sexy from up here. But down there?” He giggled, “Nothing but war, hatred, prejudice and sheer ignorance!”

“True, you’re right!” James said.

“Hmm! What a beauty!” Caleb added, “These sexy eyes of mine need some sleep. You need to see us at the club the other night; these chicks just couldn’t take their hands off of me when my friend told them I was an astronaut. Maybe when we hit home, you and I could hang out with my homies! What do you say, eh quiet one?”

“Alright, man!” James said, “It’ll be fun!” He sighed, “Earth looks peaceful from up here!”

“Sure, she does!” Caleb added.

“It’s our greed that’s destroying her from down there!” James said, “Who would’ve thought a beautiful thing like this would have thousands, even millions of hungry kids, and a thousand more caught up in some unjust war! If I’d told you I don’t feel sad every time I switch on the news channel, I lied!”

“You’re right!” Caleb said, “For me, it is guilt that overwhelms me. I feel bad for not being able to do anything to stop these wars but hey, life goes on, right?”

The men stayed mute staring down at the giant globe.

“It’s all recorded in the book of Revelation.” James added, “All these tragedies!”

“Oh boy!” Caleb said, “Here we go!”

“No, I’ve got to tell you the truth!” He said, “I know you don’t believe in God and all that but as a scientist maybe you should flip a couple of pages. Look at the world and tell me what you think about all the things that’s unfolding around us!”

“James, really?” Caleb said, “What’s this like...You had to ride your evangelic-horse up into space? Come on, man!”

“Well, if that’s how you see it. So be it.” James said.

“How did you get trapped in this whole religious applesauce?” Caleb asked.

“I came from a Christian home,” James answered, “but trust me; I frowned upon the idea of religion from the start and the whole concept of...”

“Wait! Wait! Wait! I think I know where we’re headed,” Caleb interjected, “You’re going to go all cliché on me; telling me about how much of an unbeliever you were and how some saviour came and saved you from some enemy or perils then you saw this white light bla-bla-bla now you believe in God, and believe in the crappy old 2,000 year old tale about some guy being born of a virgin, who died and rose on the third day. Who’d soon come and save mankind and the world at large from...evil, right?”

“Yeah! You’ve got that right!” James said, “It’s almost like that but I had to seek for Him even after what happened to me, and I...”

“Found Him?” Caleb interjected.

“Yes, you’re right about that too!” James said, “I found Him!”

“And I thought I’d introduce you to my beautiful sister when we get home!” Caleb said, “You just crushed my nuts, man! In space? Not good! This is not good, man! And your profile says you went to Harvard?”

“Well, yes!” He answered, “You see...”

“Gotta go, son!” Caleb tabbed him twice on the back again, “However, I’ll still buy you a drink when we get home but you ain’t gon’ see my cute sister! Sleep tight, buddy!”

“Sure, that’d be cool!” James replied.

The Pilot left him. James turned to the window and sighed.

“Amazing, right?” Johnson said, she stopped and gazed through the same window.

“What?” James said as he turned to Johnson.

“The big blue lady?” She added, “Earth?” she smiled.

“Oh, yeah!” He responded, “A giant big blue marble she is!”

“First time I came up here, I couldn’t take my eyes off of her!” Johnson said, “She’s so beautiful, ain’t she?”

Johnson moved closer to the window and the light from the sun rested on her face.

“Wow!” James said, “You’re...beautiful!” He had a feeling of euphoria as he gazed at Johnson’s face.

“What?” She said, she turned and caught his eyes set in a fixed stare.

“Oh, I mean um...I can’t take my eyes off of um...her...you, you know, earth?” He said, haltingly. “It’s um...she’s more beautiful from up here, right?”

“Yeah!” She replied as she smiled at him.

“I’m James Shinoman!” He said, “We were never properly introduced.”

“Are you sure?” She teased, stretching for a handshake.

“I mean um...well, you know,” he added. “I didn’t want to bug you when I first saw you during my training. You know, I didn’t want to be disqualified or jettisoned for not being serious and all!”

“Yeah,” she remarked. “I noticed that. But if they had wanted you off the mission they would’ve done that the very day you puked in the simulator, James!”

“Oh my God, you heard about it?” He grinned.

“I’ve been working for the agency for six years.” She said, “Let’s just say I know things!” She laughed, “Anyways, I’m

going to uh...go to my cabin. Maybe we'll talk some other time?"

"Alright, Johnson!" He said.

"Uh...please call me, Maurine." She emphasised, "Don't make me miss my name like the rest of the boys do! Catch you later, James!"

Her smile left him frozen by the window.

"Okay," he added, "Catch you later!"

James stood there for a while before moving to his cabin. He tucked himself into his sleeping bag and doze off.

They all rested for some hours.

The crew later got up to begin their mission. At the galley area, James added some water to his beverages through a special tube.

"Alright, guys! Listen up," said the Commander's voice over the speaker. "As you all know we'll be here for just a short period, so we only have 16 days to update the damn computer, check the support systems and clean the damn filters. Our duty is to ensure the smooth operation of the investor's interests up here and fly back home once done, guys!" He cleared his throat, "As much as it is a big deal to

find myself up here, I just can't wait to go back to my family back home. So, safety first. Do your duties and know that we can only survive here as a team! Flight Engineer Johnson, you and your team will go out at exactly twenty-three hundred hours *UTC!*"

"Aye aye, *captain,*" Johnson said. "Twenty-three hundred hours *UTC!* Copy that, Sir!"

The entire crew burst into laughter.

Chapter Three: The Visit

Maurine Johnson and her two man crew got suited up for their first task outside the station but a couple of things went wrong; the station lost communication with the Mission Control Centre, so Barry advised they wait until communication is established.

In the meantime, James gently moved towards Maurine and the duo got into a chat. He managed to lure her into telling him a bit about herself. She told him about Tom, her three year old son and all she needed James to know at that time, including how she got the job. He was the quiet type, so he listened more.

“Well, I guess big Tommy is a proud little man,” he said. “If my mom was an astronaut, I can’t even imagine the thrills and how I’d go about bragging in school and in the neighbourhood.”

Maurine couldn’t stop laughing.

“My mom is the coolest of all the moms!” He mimicked a kid’s voice, “A real super-heroine!”

“Oh my God,” she said as she tried to control her laughter, “But we don’t fly up here to save anyone! The real heroes are

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