

**HUNT the HOG of
JOE**

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The hog was deadly dangerous and virtually invulnerable—but Planet Maggie's weird laws were what made the hunt really tough!

I: THREEDAY NIGHT

Exceptional noses with aquiline bridges and upswept tips marked the six adult couples who drifted past me through the valve into the astraplane, Ap-GG-12C. They were large, tanned, blue-eyed, brown-haired people; and they wore white coveralls stamped, in strange letters, "Recessive—Alien Status." The varied children with them were designated simply, "Alien."

Another big man, almost identical with the male emigrants, but dressed in a spotted fur G-suit, floated out of the old shuttle, *Joe Nordo III*. The astraplane's quadpilot stopped watching dials, turned to the newcomer, and said, "Passenger for you, Ypsilanti. Hunter Ube Kinlock, meet Dominant Olaf Ypsilanti."

"Low, Ypsilanti," I said, fighting my chronic spacesickness.

The shuttle pilot glared at me. My left hand was a graft, my cheek was freshly scarred, and my scant red hair needed treatments; but I had not supposed I was that repulsive.

Ypsilanti said, "Papers."

"No time for that," the quadpilot interrupted. "Unclinch in ninety-three seconds. He's from GG about the Hog. Long, Kinlock. I'll see you in 264 hours." He urged us through the valves.

On the first deck of the shuttle, I swallowed another SS pill. I was unaccustomed to windows in spacecraft. Eleven hundred kilometers below lay Planet Maggie, of Joe's Sun, with the surface partly in darkness. The awesome, greenish convolutions of the

adjacent dark nebula filled much of the sky as if churning forward to engulf both planet and spaceships.

Ypsilanti swung to the controls. I secured my baggage in the racks and clutched a couch. With horror, I saw that the shuttle's brain had been removed.

Ypsilanti snarled, "Ordinance 419: Aliens ride the lowest deck."

I went through a manhole to the lowest deck, the second one, and lashed myself down. "How did that many emigrants crowd in here?" I quavered.

Ypsilanti said, "Ordinance 481: Passengers shall not talk to pilots."

At a signal from the Ap-GG-12C, Ypsilanti unclined and backed the *Joe Nordo III*, reducing orbital velocity until the astraplane was a bright speck. He unstrapped, floated down to my couch, and said, "Papers." I took the GG Travel Book from my chest pocket. The pilot flipped the pages and sneered, "A hunter! Hunt what?"

"Man-eaters. The Jury asked Galactic Government to destroy the Hog. GG sent me. Can't this wait until you ground this thing?"

Ypsilanti exclaimed, "No alien may hunt on Maggie! Shall wait here."

"The 12C won't return for 264 hours!" I yelled. "GG sent me after the Hog."

Ypsilanti laughed. "No aircraft, bombs, men. Slimy thing, one alien cannot kill the Hog. You smell like your owner, Galactic Government. You are not fit to walk on Maggie."

He resumed the controls.

II: FOURDAY MORNING

Although I had previously been spacesick, airsick, carsick, seasick, and sledsick, the descent to Planet Maggie was the first time I believed that Doreen, Laurinda, and Celestine would never again see me alive. How Ypsilanti, occasionally glancing at the few antiquated instruments, found Joetropolis, even in the blundering hours he took, remained mysterious. At last, I saw a clutter of buildings surrounded by a wall. The buildings expanded with dizzy speed, until the shuttle hovered less than one hundred meters above the ground. I gulped weakly at three figures pushing a long metal tube with wheels into a shed constructed in an angle of the wall.

The shuttle bounced to a tail-first stop. Ypsilanti dropped a door, unreeled a chain ladder, and climbed out.

"Didn't you forget me?" I gasped. I scrambled to the first deck and almost pitched from the ship. Coarse grass with red undertones covered the field except for patches blackened by exhausts. At one border was a crude shed and a wrecked jetcopter. Cultivated areas, interspersed with patches of brush, separated the spaceport and the walls of Joetropolis. Ypsilanti ran wildly down a rutted lane toward the town.

I located a hoist and lowered my four cases. I eased down the chain ladder to the hot, damp soil of Planet Maggie. Joe's Sun, red and bloated, cleared a clump of trees and half blinded me. Small purple birds jeered from the huge leaves of squat weeds along the edge of the field. Four striped, short-tailed, buck-toothed rodents scurried beneath a stump. Another sat on a discarded can and squeaked threateningly.

Even in the .92 Maggiese gravity, my luggage weighed about sixty kilograms. I yanked the braided leather line from the hoist and was attempting to lash the two smaller cases into a pack, when a distant explosion agitated the still air. Two rodents ran out of the grass and vanished down a hole. As the exploding sounds climbed in pitch, I realized they were mighty grunts.

I unpacked, assembled, and activated the hisser. A soft voice said, "No!"

A woman peeped from behind the shuttle's ruddevator. She bore a faint resemblance to Ypsilanti, but her nose was less prominent. She, too, had brown hair, blue eyes, and tanned skin. She said, "Ordinance 53: Aliens shall approach the city unarmed."

"Low," I said. "I'm Ube Kinlock, the hunter GG sent about the Hog. Are you a port officer?"

"Am a hunter also, slightly. Ordinance 33 forbids introductions of alien males to Maggiese females, but am Betty Toal."

She stepped from behind the ruddevator. I inhaled sharply. I had encountered colonies not accepting Galactic standards of decency, but was still shocked by extreme exposure. Toal wore a loose, white sack with head and arm holes. Her elbows, knees, and ankles were nude.

Toal stood about one meter from me and said, "Ordinance 31 forbids alien males to be within ten feet of a female. Ypsilanti should have helped you, but is afraid of the Hog. Is little danger now. The Hog avoids the sun."

"That grunting was the Hog?" I deciphered the inscription on the brooch at her throat as, "Minimum."

Toal said, "Yes. The Hog goes to the swamp. Will help with your luggage."

"It's too heavy for you."

"Am thin but strong by Maggiese standards," Toal said.

I managed to carry three cases and the hisser. Toal retrieved a mesh bag, filled with fruit or vegetables, and picked up the fourth case. She asked, as we walked toward the town, "Is true, in the Explored Galaxy, people do not care how children look?"

"What? Children? Yes, generally. Some believe little boys' ears shouldn't stick out too far, and some consider little girls with golden curls and dimples the most charming, but there isn't much prejudice."

"Is also true," Toal said, "no one must marry someone he dislikes?"

"Sometimes an exchange of x-tops and coupons is involved, but it's usually a free choice."

Toal asked no more questions, but followed along pointing out the ripening crunchies and the blooming goodies. She warned me of toothie tunnels across the path. The striped rodents, she explained, menaced stored food, crops, livestock, and buildings. They were checked, to some extent, by traps, poison, and disease cultures.

A wooden bridge, crushed and splintered in the middle, spanned a ditch. The bridge was actually made of sawed boards and beams, not liquid wood castings. The prints of cloven hoofs and dewclaws spotted the soft ground.

"The Hog!" Toal said. "Passed between me and the wall!"

I dropped the cases and clutched the hisser with both hands.

Toal said, "If carry that for the Hog, he has been shot with those. Did not hurt much. Of course, were older models."

Wiping at the perspiration splashing down my face, I knelt and examined the hoofprints, which were roughly thirty-five centimeters long and spaced, from front hoofs to back, almost five meters apart. "How big is the Hog?" I asked.

"Some sows were nine feet high, fifteen feet long."

We slowly crossed the broken bridge. I said, "What's this about dimensions in feet?"

Toal spoke as if quoting a lesson. "In an old book, Joe Nordo found forgotten English measurements. These matched the Maggiese body. Joe Nordo's feet were one foot long. Center of chest to finger tips, with arm stretched, one yard. First joint of little finger, one inch. Was two yards tall."

Toal suddenly smiled as if unaccustomed to smiling. "Silly," she said. "Learn such things in school." She threw out a hand in a sweeping gesture. "Many things here silly. Is true, in the Explored Galaxy, people do not care if you are blue, black, white? How long your nose is?"

"Yes, officially at least, there's no discrimination between humans and intelligent beings because of physical appearance."

Toal sighed. "Must be wonderful. Wish could leave Maggie."

"Why not?"

"Ordinance 3."

The wall around Joetropolis was made of genuine tree trunks treated with preservative and sharpened at the top. Heavy, pointed, irregularly spaced stakes, thrust at angles into the ground, fringed the wall. The effect of these crude fortifications was barbaric, even primitive. Bare electrical wires, strung on insulators fastened to the stakes, only accentuated the prehistoric picture.

"Follow the marked path," Toal said.

The zigzagging path was not more than a meter wide. I avoided touching the wires and reached open ground. A small gate in the wall swung inward, and a man wearing a white sack stalked out. He looked like an older brother of Ypsilanti. The two men behind him looked like younger brothers. Their knees and elbows were indecently exposed.

"Are arrested!" they chorused. One carried a hisser so ancient that it could have been the original model. The others had hand weapons.

"I apologize if I've broken your laws," I said, "but I don't know—"

"Ignorance of law is no excuse!" exclaimed the older man, who had "Dominant" on his brooch. He ordered, "Stop Betty Toal!" One of the guards chased the fleeing Toal along the wall.

"I'm Ube Kinlock," I said. "Galactic Government sent me in answer to—"

"Silence, criminal alien! Ordinance 55: Criminal aliens shall never speak, unless so ordered."

III: FOURDAY NIGHT

I sat up in the sweltering darkness of the cell. Mortar dropped on the bed from between the logs of the primitive wall. I grabbed a boot to defend myself against rodents but a voice whispered, "Kinlock. Is Betty Toal."

"High, Toal," I said. "What did they do to you?"

"Have not caught me. Brought food and water. Ordinance 102 forbids a meal for criminal aliens. Find the tube? Did they give you water?"

"A few sips." I gulped slightly metallic water from the tube extending through the hole she had made in the daubing. Toal shoved something through the crack. So far as I could determine in the darkness, it was meat between slices of bread.

I munched the concoction and mumbled, "Thanks, Toal. You'd best run before the guards find you. If I ever get out, and you need anything, let me know."

Toal said, too loudly for secrecy, "Am happy to help. Do not worry about prison. Several Maximums and Dominants opposed calling an outside hunter. May be why they arrested you."

"Stand still, Betty Toal!" a rough voice cried in the dark.

A chorus added, "Are arrested!"

A screech preceded the sounds of rapid breathing, slaps, tearing cloth, and stamping feet. "Stop it!" I yelled, trying to see through the crack. "She only brought some water!"

"Check the criminal alien!"

Soon the wooden hall floor creaked and rattled. The door rolled up. Lights blinded me. Three striped toothies streaked for their holes.

"Search him and the room," ordered a Dominant, apparently the man who originally arrested me.

"You don't get much sleep, do you?" I asked.

"Silence!" he said. "Ordinance 55: Criminal—"

I took up the refrain. "—aliens shall never speak, unless so ordered."

The Dominant created fuming noises. The guards searched futilely. In frustration, the Dominant said, "Where is the weapon she gave? Speak."

I said, "I have no weapons, but I'd like to tell you how Galactic Government will react when—"

They walked out and rolled down the door. I flopped on the bed and perspired and brooded.

On Henderson's Globe of Spica, I had planned to terminate my present career with this hunt. I had never especially enjoyed the hazards of hunting, which had cost me a hand, much blood, and large areas of skin. Doreen, Laurinda, Celestine, and I had decided to emigrate to Mother Earth. Game wardens, foresters, and gardeners were needed for the century-old project of reclaiming that world. There I would find work more pleasant than pursuing things with tentacles, fangs, and maws. Of course, if I failed to earn a large fee from this hunt, we would be unable to go.

My principal difficulty was that Maggie was private. GG had no authority except to send inspection parties. A private planet could not attempt inter-planetary or interstellar flight without GG supervision, nor could it own weapons other than those required for defense against native life. Most private planets had been settled two centuries before, when there were individuals wealthy enough to undertake stellar colonization. Few who tried succeeded. The fifteen or twenty private planets in the Explored Galaxy were all eccentric. Some even advocated capital punishment, an archaic system of killing mental defectives.

The one factor on my side was that no GG citizen could be punished by a private planet—or so Galactic law specified.

IV: FIVEDAY MORNING

Toothies raced for their holes when the Dominant and three guards entered the cell. "Did you get any sleep?" I asked.

The Dominant announced, "Shall see the Jury."

They marched me out into the hot, slanting rays of Joe's Sun. Large, brown-haired, big-nosed pedestrians gawked at me with stolid curiosity. The women carefully kept at a distance of ten foot lengths. We turned a corner and passed a column of varied men and women who did not fall within Maggiese standards. They carried or pushed primitive agricultural tools, such as chain saws, weed burners, and self-propelled soil tillers and sickle bars. Their brooches were inscribed, "Farmer."

We climbed a broad flight of plank steps into a huge log building with wooden pillars and carved friezes. The Dominant said, "Guard him," and passed through one of the many doors in the vestibule.

I examined two flat photographs on the wall. I decided that the Maggiese letters labeled the man as Joe Nordo, and that he had said, "To be alike is to be free." The woman was Maggie Ione Curwen Nordo. Evidently, she had never said anything worth quoting.

Although Maggie was rather pretty, she had features similar to Joe's. Joe was a caricature of most of the natives. His face appeared almost in profile, so that the combination concave and convex bridge of his nose jutted prominently.

The Dominant came through another doorway and motioned. The guards ushered me into a room where Betty Toal sat between two more guards. Dirt smeared her face and her torn white sack.

"Low, Toal," I said. "What—"

The Dominant said, "Planetary Ordinance 104: Criminal aliens shall not speak to fallen Maggiese females."

"Can't you do anything but gibber Ordinances?" I yelled. "Toal only gave me some water. If you—"

Leather bands snapped around my wrists. The guards tied me to rings in the wall. The Dominant strapped a harness under my jaw and across the top of my head. I tried to talk, but all that came past my clenched teeth was, "Effhyu hink hyu kun—" and I stopped.

Someone called, "Criminal Minimum Betty Toal!"

Toal left the room between her guards. She returned, in not more than fifteen minutes, alone. She wore loose white coveralls stamped, "Recessive—Alien Status." As she passed me, her teeth flashed in a glad and grateful smile.

V: FIVEDAY AFTERNOON

About two hours past noon of Planet Maggie's twenty-seven hour day, a man called, "Criminal Alien Ube Kinlock!"

Surrounded by guards, I stiffly walked into an auditorium with a high, peaked ceiling supported by heavy wooden beams. A few spectators sat in rows of wooden benches. Tall windows stood open, and mechanisms with rotating blades fanned the air, but the room was stifling. Toothies chased each other across the beams.

At the end of the room, a man sat in a high box. As we approached, I saw that he was a replica of the Joe Nordo portrait in the vestibule. Carved in the molding around the top of the box was the legend, "His Perfectness, Spencer Gaius Quesnay, the Joe Nordo Ideal."

The guards halted and made peculiar gestures, swiftly touching their foreheads with extended hands. One announced, "Your Perfectness, we bring Criminal Alien Ube Kinlock."

Behind a long desk below Spencer Gaius Quesnay's box sat five men—large, tanned, and well provided with noses. A placard identified the man in the center, who had gray in his hair, as, "Foreman Maximum Rory J. N. Eijkman." He said, "Criminal Alien Kinlock broke many Ordinances." He picked up a paper and read from it. "Broke 320 by refusing to show papers to the shuttle pilot, Ypsilanti. Broke 419 when attempted to ride the upper deck. Broke 481 by conversing with the pilot."

The list of my defections grew. My movements had been observed from the wall by something called scopeplate. Any slight suspicion that I had flaunted an Ordinance was assumed to be proven fact. Even my use of the cargo hoist was criminal, and my relationship with Betty Toal was filled with offenses. I grunted indignantly in the head harness, but no one listened. Perspiration drained from my body.

After weary minutes, Eijkman read the last of my foul deeds, which was speaking to Toal in the outer room. Eijkman said, "Because of many crimes, suggest he be charged with breaking 792, which covers disrespect to people and customs of Planet Maggie."

An unusual noise came from the spectators. I twisted my head and saw that they were slapping the palms of their hands together.

Eijkman glanced at the other men behind the desk. He frowned at me and said, "Were you Maggiese, should recommend that you be reduced to Farmer. Are reportedly an agent of the creeping monster, Galactic Government. Were sent to kill the Hog. One alien with nothing but small weapons cannot kill the Hog. Am always opposed to asking Government aid. So—"

A man named Maximum Qasim Pierre Macready, according to his sign, exclaimed, "Foreman, object! If the Hog is not killed, may as well find another continent or island. If this alien—"

"The case concerns the alien, not the Hog," Eijkman said.

"Think it silly for an entire population to be scared by the Hog!" cried J. N. Zengo Bartok, a man leaner than the others. "The alien is a well known hunter. Suppose—"

Eijkman said, "Order!" He glared at me. "Sentencing the alien would require appeal to foul Galactic Government. Recommend deportation."

I had anticipated being dragged away to a gas chamber, or an electric chair, or some other savage torture device; but I still did not like Eijkman's decree.

Eijkman said, "Ordinance 30: Alien tourists shall not stay on Maggie longer than one week. That is, nine days or 243 hours. Must be above air by 26:47 Threeday night."

Bartok objected, "Have not passed the decision!"

Eijkman ignored him. "Since no plane will be in space then, time must be extended."

"Uh—ah, yes, must," said His Perfectness, Spencer Gaius Quesnay, the Joe Nordo Ideal, as he leaned from his box. "Er, should not force the—um—alien to leave without a plane."

Bowing to the box, Eijkman told me, "As His Perfectness explains, must wait here for the Ap-GG-12C. Will return at about 20:50 next Fourday. Shuttle blasts at 18:00."

"Foreman," Bartok again interrupted. "Should see if this alien can destroy the Hog, however long it takes."

The other Maximums began commenting. I fumbled with the head harness. The guards restrained me, but Quesnay gestured from his box and mumbled above the din, "Let, uh, the alien—ah, speak. Would like to, uh, hear him."

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