

The Floating Man Wars

A Novel

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Please email me with any questions at johnnbuckley@yahoo.com I answer all reader emails.

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CHAPTER 1

DRIFTING INTO SHORE

Hi I'm Leftic Pages and my life ended long before I wrote these words. Firstly, you must understand what happened to our home world. To put it mildly it was absolutely annihilated. The Baaj came to our world and destroyed every living thing that was there. That means people, plants, animals, insects and even bacteria. What remained? Nothing, nothing at all but coarse sand for as far as the eye could see. Why? That's not an easy query to answer because the truth is just for the fun of it. They did it for the rush of destroying the hard work of an entire world, for a few seconds of hysterical laughter.

We weren't the first, the Lymoo fell under their terror the year prior and the Helm-a planet of scientists-the year before that. There were others, many all over the universe. Their reign of terror is unyielding and unforgiving with no end in sight. The Lymoo gave us a warning that we were next, giving us time to plan and prepare the ships. Our people living on Voca numbered 2 billion, but there was only enough space on the ships for 10 million. A horrible reality to face let me tell ya.

The elderly and sick were ruled out immediately leaving still a vast pool of different races and creeds to choose from. A random lottery was arranged and lucky for me and my wife we were chosen. Then she died, Lai my wife from a blood clot in the brain. That meant my home world was gone and the love of my life was too. These were hard times, the hardest I'd faced. I launched off into the void just 5 days before the Baaj came to Voca. They were quick and they were brutal wasting no time in cleaning the surface of Voca from all life. Then, they poisoned the soil and every single insect and underground creature was killed. Almost 3 million years we had lived there and prospered gone in a few minutes.

I found out quickly that our plan for escape might not work. Honestly, we had no preordained place were going. We just set off into the void *hoping* we'd find a home. 23 Months in space with no suitable

planet and natives were more than restless they were at each other's throats. Would we make it at all? Had the Baaj already killed us off without us knowing it? It seemed hopeless and I felt desperate in the space between my toes. No man or woman can go forever without red grass and sunshine.

84,002 Monday the 5th of Naff

"Hey, is today the day, Pages?" asked Heroy Lood, my best friend and fellow geneticist. He spun around the chair I was sitting at. I noticed, but pretended I didn't. How could he joke when it all seemed lost?

"Look...we're destined to live and thrive. It *will happen*," I curtly replied as the weight of the situation made my eyes feel heavy and wetter than normal. I'm not going to tell someone how to cope, but I need to be allowed my riding space.

"Well, that could be true or we could run out of food and die a horrible death."

"Heroy, I'm not giving up. I don't care about odds I know we're going to find a home. Call me psychic," I said sternly as I stood up quickly and made my way to the marshmallow shaped fridge. God I need a drink, but I swore to my wife I wouldn't.

"Ahhh, come on let's go scare the rest of the crew. Death is just a phase so what," said Heroy jokingly as he followed me into the kitchen. The wall sprung open and a double rack of cooked steak came out simmering. Just in time I thought.

"No...no I won't give up hope," I replied as I cut a steak with a laser knife. Then I continued," The Golarian's have survived every evil army so far and we always will. Remember we are the 58," I said smoothly as I referenced the 58 times the Golarian dynasty was almost destroyed by war, disease, or just bad space luck.

“We are the 58, yes...that is true,” said Heroy as he looked out the window at a pair of stars in the distance.

“And plus...it’s a big universe which means there is always a chance,” I said as I stood up and looked out the window. I believe the best will happen and so it will. In walked Chief Petty Officer Darnluc Gore carrying a holographic cube.

“Gentlemen, hate to break up your nap time, but there’s something the Captain wanted me to discuss with you,” said Darnluc as he set down the cube and tugged at his black silk shirt. Something was up he acted as if he had some bad news to deliver. I very good perceiving these things and it felt off.

“What is it?” asked Heroy as he sat down near the cube and grinned.

“Just this,” said Darnluc flatly as he pressed the top of the cube and out came a glowing map of all the planets within range of our convoy.

“Ok, what...what is it?” I asked sadly as I ran my hand through the hologram and admired the glow.

“It’s this,” replied Darnluc as he pointed to a solar system of 11 planets circling a sun. This looked to be a possible place for us to settle. I wondered if I was wrong about it being bad news.

“Looks promising, but will it support life?” asks Heroy as presses in on one of the planets and it enlarges and appears to have vast oceans and lush lands.

“It better, or we’re going to run out of food,” replied Darnluc sadly as he stood up straight and gave me *the look* you know the one where there’s no easy answer coming.

“What are you talking about, we have enough for several months more,” I said as I folded my arms and glared at Darnluc.

“Yes we do, but there isn’t another suitable set of planets close enough if this one doesn’t work out.”

“What? How can that be?” Heroy asked angrily as he slammed his fist hard onto the table shaking the cube nearly off the side before I grabbed it. I felt the same way.

“Because there are other planets yes, but they are too far away for us to make it. If these planets don’t work out in 7 months we will starve to death,” said Darnluc sadly as he handed me a red computer ball. I held it up to my eyes and saw the nearest planets and the food calculations and saw the problem. This was our last hope.

“Who knows?” asked Heroy as he wiped the sweat from his brow. He wasn’t the only one feeling the heat. We were out of lucky breaks.

“Just us 3 and the Captain. And that’s the way it has to stay, because as you know if the tribes find out its war all over again,” Darnluc said sadly as he pulled out a vapor ball. Vapor balls were concentrated nicotine that you sucked through the nose. I’m told it’s one hell of a rush.

“Secrets get out, they’re gonna mutiny,” I said sternly and then I watched Darnluc start to tear up.

“We can’t fight away our last breathes. The Golarian’s must survive, they must,” said Darnluc tearfully as he fought back tears. Heroy and I stood there unsure what to do or say so we did nothing. I watched as a young man came into the far end of the room, look left then right and wave to me with a letter in his hand. He walked the length the room and I could see it was Gar Giff, an old friend of my late wife Lai.

“I have something for you, its marked private, Leftic,” said Gar brightly as he offered me the letter. I looked at it in his hand for a second or two and then took it. Where I’m from letters are always bad news.

“Great, what crap is this,” I said gruffly as I inspected the letter and then pressed the top right corner and then seal burnt away. I pulled out the letter inside and made my way to the bathroom to read it in private. It read as follows,” *Hi Leftic, I wish this were good news but it isn’t. By now Darnluc has told you of our predicament. What he doesn’t know is that there is only a few weeks worth of food left. Meaning it*

very well is the end of us. There's a slim chance these planets will work out, but you and I were never fools, Leftic. I'm telling and you alone because you are my closest friend. I also want to confess that I slept with Lai several times before she died. I'm sorry our affair was never planned, simply spontaneous old friend. And Lastly, I would like you personally to head up the expedition to the blue planet. I can only trust you and that has always been obvious to me. Who knows, we might make a go of it. Again IM sorry about Lai please forgive me. Your Friend, Mechest." I threw the letter in the toilet and it was vaporized an instant later. I wanted to punch the wall but now was not the time, later that punch would fly. For now I had to find us a home and quick. Mechest had shafted me and pay always come, always.

The following day I made my way to the observatory to take a finer, more powerful look at our planetary options. The closest 2 planets to the sun were wastelands and not suitable for life, but certainly death. The third planet was lush and green but also had thousands of volcano's and certain viruses we didn't love so much. So if it was to any of them it was going to be the fourth planet-Soarverge. I looked over the surface and saw there was a suitable amount of gravity and luscious air quality. You'd be amazed how much Golarian's talk about the *flavor of air*. Our lungs are so sensitive that we've become incredibly particular about what we will and what we *won't breathe*. The Golarian poet Yermys wrote," It's invisible like love, but everywhere I care to be of." He was a smart man even later he died from violent attack at the hands of Gortee gang (they were the resident scumbags pulling hits mostly for the Chancellor. They did what they wanted and Chancellor Gims never said a word).

As I inspected Soaverge I was taken with the abundance of birds and fish. Who knew our new home would be ready for particular dining needs. I glanced over to my left as I felt a pair of eyes on me. A young lady with blue hair named Jelot Parkins was looking me over. She had a particular beauty I had never encountered but the word on her was she loved to stick it her boyfriend's-that gets old pretty fast.

“Hey,” I said softly as my mouth seemed to forget how to smile. She tasted my *hey* and walked briskly over to me with sex in her eyes. At this point I was frozen in time as I forgot what I was doing there in the first place-it’s only the possible end of us all.

“Hey, what’cha doin’?” asks Jelot as she rubbed her neck.

“Ahh, not much just looking for a home for us,” I answered breathlessly as I turned my shoulders to face her. “Do I know you?”

“No...but I know you you’re Leftic Pages the great scientist.”

“Ah yes, but I don’t know if great is the right word. Maybe greatest would suffice.”

“Maybe wiseass would be a better fit. Those pants sure look tight, are they sweaty?” asked Jelot in a seductive voice that caught me completely off guard. I tugged at my shirt-it had been a long time since I’d had sex.

“They’re really tight and hot, maybe you should take them off me,” I answered nervously as I tried not to blow it with every inch of my body. She looked me over and then tugged gently at my crotch. This was hot, very hot and I was instantly sweating.

“Why don’t we go talk in my bed, ya know...naked talk to get to know each other? What do you say?” Jelot asked in a soft voice with her hand tugging at my crotch and her other hand twisting her hair. Up to this point I didn’t realize scientist’s had any groupies-Hell be damned I didn’t mind being the first.

“Yeah, I mean yes talk’s good I like to talk,” I said nervously as thoughts of blowing ran through my head. I needed this to work out bad and I needed her to not know that simple fact.

“Good, come on,” said Jelot warmly as she put her hand in my pocket and caressed my cock. All’s I can think at this point is thank you sweet fate I owe you a beer. We made our way to my room and then

proceeded to *talk for 3 hours*. Boy did I need that. There's nothing like a roll in the hay to boost a man's confidence. Finally out of the losing bracket like is good.

Jelot went off to her job in the clothing store on the red ship (each ship had a color system to identify ships of war and ships of commerce and entertainment) Jelot sold clothes and went back to saving the entire race-almost the same thing relatively.

I was in a hopper-one of our more sophisticated aircraft-flying down to Soaverge to see if we could live in this world. There's nothing more daunting then facing death at a distance. What I mean is, it's not today or even tomorrow but you know it's coming. That's a hard thought to escape. Soaverge has significant mountain ranges and 4 main oceans named: Bacter, Foress, Blam, and Pages (named after me of course). First order of business, identify possible deadly diseases to the Golarian's. The only way to really do that is to sacrifice some criminals at the alter of science. We opened the doors and pushed out 25 men and women. They walked around in a daze at first before rejoicing as the air was fresh and they didn't die instantly.

"Do you think that's a little harsh, Leftic, ya know...throwing them out into what could have been certain death?"asked Heroy as he smoked a blue cigar and tapped my shoulder.

"Not really, 10 of those men were murderers. This is the best it's ever gonna get for them."

"I heard they get their freedom for volunteering," said Heroy implying a question as he laughed like a asshole stealing your beer.

"Yup...that's accurate. Look, so what-I say they've earned it freedom that is," I replied nonchalantly as I grabbed a handful of grass and started to smile to myself. Was this really home? Were the Golarian's spared once more from annihilation?

"Haven't we all," said Heroy as he knelt down beside me and picked up a large flower filled with fruit in its pedals.

“I wouldn’t eat those, they could be poisonous.”

“Maybe, but we might as well find out,” said Heory as he peeled off one of cherry red fruit pedals and then bit into it.

“Well?”

“I can’t breathe call the medic!”

“What, you’re not-

“Shut up, I’m just kidding they’re delicious. Maybe we should grab a Shou and ride around our new home.”

“Fine with me but I’m driving. I’m not ending up in a lake again, Heroy,” I said sternly as I watched the convicts laughing and tossing around a few psychedelic cigarettes. I only hope we can pull it together this time and make a better life for ourselves. That said who knows?

Heroy and I grabbed a Shou and started driving through this long grassy glade (the Shou has 7 foot tall wheels and can drive over any terrain). We floored through a narrow stream and under a majestic waterfall. There in the grass lay one of the female convicts in nothing but a bra and panties. Not the worst thing to see in the morning. Her name was Vola, and good looking was an obvious quality. She straightened up when she heard us getting close and flashed a gorgeous smile for the stone walls of legend.

“Hi, that’s a nice ride you have there,” said Vola as she stood up and arched her back. I knew she was trouble but I looked past my instincts instead. Sometimes a person’s path is better for making the wrong decisions.

“Hi there I’m Leftic and this here is-“

“Heroy, hello there yourself,” interjected Heroy as he smiled. “How does someone with your looks end up breaking the law?” asked Heroy as he slicked back his hair and moved closer to Vola. Vola seemed put off by this with her eyes only smiling for me. I watched carefully as she gently removed Heroy’s hand from her shoulder. There’s some spunk there by God.

“I tried to kill my *EX-husband*,” replied Vola as she took a step towards me.

“What happened?” I asked while the birds chirped louder and louder still.

“He cheated on me with my sister, that’s not anything I can forgive. I’m sorry...but he had it comin’,” said Vola tearfully as she held her head in her hand. She appeared still to be wrecked by what had happened. I watched her cry and felt a pity for her I’d never before encountered. What had that man done to this sweet woman?”

“That’s more common than you know. I found out recently that an old friend of mine slept with my now deceased wife,” I said sadly as I realized I could tell her anything. I felt nervous to what I might reveal but sure she wouldn’t run. Vola looked at me and nodded her head.

“That’s terrible, just terrible. The cheaters don’t know what they’re really destroying until they’ve done it. Then it’s just carnage and sorrow. What was her name?” asked Vola softly as she tied her hair back and pulled it together. She was getting comfort from me and I felt her caring for me. For the first time I felt a certain mirror love for her. That somehow we saw the same image in the mirror for how we viewed love and commitment.

“Lai-Lai was her name. She was beautiful like you,” I said happily as I looked into Vola’s green eyes and drifted away. Heroy meanwhile knew his chances were shot so he lit up a vapor cigar and picked a few berries from a bush.

“Thank you,” answered Vola softly as she showed a hint of a smile and looked at me and then down. We stood there feeling each other’s celestial space and dying not knowing what to say.

I blurted out,” Are you hungry? I’ve got steak strips!”

“Yes, I am hungry let us dine in the woods,” said Vola as she skipped over to the Shou. I pulled a mahogany colored cooler and produced the steak strips and some cold Harvay juice (Harvay is a hard to find juice as the fruit involved doesn’t grow naturally but is genetically engineered in a lab).

“Hey Folks there’s an animal over here!” said Heroy nervously as he moved quickly backwards from the bushes. We followed suit and were quickly sitting three in the Shou. The bushes thrashed back and forth and then a tree was knocked over. Out came a 15 foot tall beast with a horned head and leathery brown skin called a Borman. I grabbed my Nicka (it’s a high condensing laser pistol with a thick handle and large barrel) I took aim as the beast glared at us and kicked the ground hard enough to break rock.

“Leftic, I think it’s hungry. Do you mind if I throw it a streak strip?” asked Vola as she watched the beast get angrier and angrier.

“It’s worth a try,” I replied and then we threw over 4 pieces of steak and the beast devoured them. “Yeah...that did the trick,” I said hopefully but as I did the Borman let out an ungodly scream as smoke came out of its eyes.

“Get us out of here!” shouted Heroy as his gun hand shook and his bore holes in the Borman.

I floored it backwards and the Borman charged us. I floored and turned just to the left of the Borman as its horns scarred the side of Shou. We hurried out into the open field with the Borman hot on our tail. It was obvious we couldn’t outrun it so I looked for an escape route. A yellow river nearby looked to be our only way out.

“I’m gonna try the water hang on!” I said boldly as we ducked the Borman and it headbutted the side of the Shou. Out into the water we drove as the Borman swam behind us. I looked back and the Borman had disappeared below the surface. “I think we ditched him!” I said happily as I steered further out into

the river. A few seconds went by and then the Borman slammed right through the floor of the Shou. Its horn got stuck in my pants and when it pulled down there went the leg of my pants.

“Go for the shore!” ordered Heroy as he helped turn the steering wheel as I inspected what was left of my pants. Bad days go bad and then they go worse. That’s been my ride anyway.

“Oh God, we’re not going to die are we?” asked a perplexed Vola-the drugs she’d taken were giving her a false sense of security. Either way her question scared me. The Borman ripped off the passenger side door with its horn and I realized it was time for action. I aimed at the Borman and fired. My Nicka blew a 2 foot hole in its head and suddenly I felt dumb for not doing that sooner. That said when you’re being attacked your mind isn’t thinking clearly. I watched the dead body of the Borman sink into the river and I worried this planet was a mistake.

Chapter 2

The Floating Man

Time to go see the Floating Man. Inside Burnden Ship the Floating Man is holding court. NO one calls him anything else or they die a horrific death. He lost his humanity when he experimented on himself. Now he continually floats and can shoot lightning bolts from his hands and eyes. Strange for strange sake. I'm on my way to talk to him about an urgent matter me quitting the military (it's my only hope for a normal life).

"Nothing matters in a world of clocks. Fools count the seconds while I never feel the winding of clocks," said The Floating Man as he shot bursts of electricity out his hands and into the ship's window. The electricity bending on the glass and producing a circle of light as he smiled to himself and admired his handywork. Different Kulp-his first in command-stares at the Floating Man and wishes he were him. Kulp is old military which means he's been killing for so long he can't remember anything else. Kulp's brown skinned or as we call it lucky. Why lucky? The Kine (as they called) have a natural pigment that makes them able to settle worlds the pale skinned can not. They are revered in our culture and rightfully so.

"Yes, Floating Man, outside the moment there is only empty space," replied Commander Kulp as he rubbed his hands together and watched the beautiful electricity launch up to the ceiling. The Floating Man was drunk, drunk with power that is. He ruled any way he desired. The amazing thing is he could be worse than he is, but he has restraint (Admirable to see for sure).

The walls to the room spin and go from blue to black and red. The ceiling opens revealing a massive window to space, all this while The Floating Man's android 8Key breezed into the room carrying lunch. He had a large boiled Boar's head (to each his own).

“8Key, what have you got there?”

“What you asked for, My Lord, is it not sufficient?” 8Key averted his eyes and pretended to tidy up a desk as The Floating Man came up to him and put his eyes an inch from 8Key’s. A small stream of electricity carried over to 8Key and caused his mind to race. All the while Commander Kulp inspected the boiled Boar’s head.

“8Key, careful...don’t placate me or I’ll blow you to PIECES!” thundered The Floating Man as he sprayed electricity around the large body of 8Key. 8Key leaned his head back and his eyes rolled into the sides of his eye sockets.

“Floating Man, the Boar’s head is spectacular. Shall we dine?” asked Commander Kulp in an obvious attempt to divert The Floating Man from violence. 8Key fell to one knee and The Floating Man floated over to Kulp. The floor started glowing red and the music of Poright started to play (Poright was a renowned musical prodigy with habits shall we say. Those habits being young woman and large pills).

“Of course we shall! Stand back!” snapped The Floating Man as he grabbed the Boar’s head in his hands and then took a large bite off of it. The gravy and Boar’s blood dripped off his chin with electricity pulsating through it.

I walked around the corner and I saw the scene inside and I knew quitting would not be easy. I slid in through the secret passageway behind the couch. I slowly lifted my head up to survey my options. The Floating Man saw my reflection on the window and smiled to himself. Commander Kulp saw me as well and grinned as he knew I was trying to scare the two of them.

“Why don’t we have a seat on the couch?”

“Of course, Commander, rest a bit,” replied The Floating Man as he grinned and headed for the couch. I wasn’t sure if they had seen me but I still needed to fool them somehow. I slid under the couch

and tried to crawl to the far end of it, but my leg was caught on something. I looked down and it was electricity from The Floating Man pulling at my leg. Damn it, I'm caught.

"Alright you got me. Let go of my leg," I pleaded as I tried to free myself.

"Did you hear anything, Commander?" asked The Floating Man coyly as he grinned and gently tugged on my leg. 8Key smiled and looked under the couch.

"What are you doing under there, Leftic? People are crazy," said 8Key as he offered me his hand I took hold of his massive metal hand and he pulled me out right at the feet of The Floating Man.

"Hey," is all I could muster at this untimely embarrassment, but maybe it would work in my favor. If you make yourself small sometimes you can get the treatment of a king.

"Hey, Leftic, what a pathetic attempt at scaring me," The Floating Man spoke as if he was my father. "Would you like some Boar's head?" The Floating Man asked as he dangled the Boar's head in front of me as it dripped with blood and gravy on my shirt.

"Yes, if you could help me up," I said sadly as looked for some saving grace and found none. The Floating Man grabbed my wrist and hoisted me to my feet like a crane lifting a giant piece of metal. I stood there as they laughed and felt I could have handled this differently.

"Why are you here, Leftic?" asked The Floating Man as he looked me over. I knew he liked me and somehow that had to work in my favor.

"I want out of the military," I stated flatly as I adjusted my shirt and then took a bite off the side of the Boar's head (delicious might I add).

"No," The Floating Man said sadly as if he was asked to eat manure. He floated away from me and I felt completely disarmed and embarrassed. With that said I still think there's a chance.

"Wait...wait a second I've been loyal all these years and I deserve a chance to do something, else."

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