

Seriousity

A Short Story By Andreas Ingo

Out there in space, seventy-two light-years from earth, a green planet of ice and occasional eruptions from volcanos can be seen. A strange display of a rare character with a display of different deviances of altitude and shades of green. Crystalized gases that have frozen due to low temperature.

In the distance an orange glow marks the border of a remote sun, coming closer to death due to the lack of hydrogen and other gases. The sun is called M-46, an anonymous name given to it by scientists two decades earlier.

On a gigantic mothership called "Home" an army of attack ships and a supporting star fighter are about to be sent beyond the border of the green planet, called "Eruption", to annihilate a threat towards the human foothold in this world. The threat is protecting the planet for mysterious reasons. But it has to be kept in check, and as said, *annihilated*, to make room for the human colonization of Eruption later.

The soldiers enter the attack ships on trembling legs. They have been out before. They have seen the capacity of the strange threat. And it has mysteriously enough displayed characteristics of something alive and organic. Still with artificial parts complementing the strange "life-form" with technological elements. It is a period of hesitation, of talk and counter-talk. Of bad jokes. A sense of euphoria that the very idea of war represents. About a tradition of futuristic armour, battle-plans, heavy weapons and a deadly attitude. The soldiers exchange looks, some of them on stale legs. They try to hide their fear, their longing for an easy escape.

Still they recognize their lot in life.

A military officer, Evan Ly, a talkative man with feminine qualities (as he is a hermaphrodite) has a talk with matter-of-fact qualities. He is trying to inject morale in the soldiers, the pilots and the navigators. The medics too. But he is not doing it in *too* obvious ways. The idea is to plant morale in the soldiers, to *elevate* mood, but also to support them with knowledge of how the attack will be staged.

Occasional laughs can be heard from the soldiers. One of those, Mary Forbes, has a joke about the behaviour of one of the soldiers in one of the training rooms a week before. How stubborn the man had been (Dean Atman), how much of a loser he had been and also that he had bad taste in music.

“Is that truly the state of affairs?” Robert Rickman asks Mary, “Is that truly what Home is?”

“It is.” Mary says with a bad look.

The soldiers enter the attack ships as Evan Ly comments that the pilots and the soldiers have to assume the perspective of the threat. “The Cyclops...” he says (in reference to the Cyclops in the Greek epic poem *The Odyssey*), “The Cyclops knows our ways.” He continues, “We have to know him. We have to assume the perspective from his point of view. To not distort our minds with wishful thinking.”

“But what about the battle plan?” Mary asks Evan Ly.

“Plans are necessary.” Evan Ly says, “Still plans always have to be modified. Do it this way.”

The burners are lit on the attack ships. The soldiers assume their place in the claustrophobic space of the attack ships. They sit silently in wait for command. As they have been instructed to invade the Cyclops after the defence mechanisms have been

neutralized. Some of them puke in their space-suits. A rich arsenal of space-weapons supply their space-suits. Portable lights, infrared technology, communication devices and other technology. They joke in between. Saying that hell is paradise. That the threat of death signals the state of all space marines, excluding themselves of course.

They are deadly warriors thirsting for war to forget about themselves. The only hope they still have.

The space ships finally descend towards the surface of Eruption. A hissing feeling can be sensed by Mary and many others as they watch the planet grow from underneath. But as all angles are relative in space the planet sometimes looks like heaven.

“It is a wonder for sure.” Mary says, “Like looking oneself in the mirror.”

“Fuck off.” Dean Atman says.

* * *

The angle of the planet slowly revolves. The humans see erupting volcanos, the hazy white pattern of frozen ice. And a strange alien line of beings born on the planet. Creating a black line of dots. The humans fly through the black void on steroids. The fusion engines of the attack ships make the space-ships sometimes wobble in space. It is due to the twists and turns of alien winds.

And finally they see the threat: The blue, green and yellow compound of an organic being in outer space. Complete with guard towers. Lasers, photon cannons and much more.

The humans fly towards the threat on slower speed. Passing the giant as the fusion cannon pilots navigate with computer technology to find a good spot for the initial kill. They push the button. At the same time strange shapes leave the Cyclops with a

transparent colour not being able to detect at speed in this furious attempt for victory.

Hunter/Killer drones emerge from the black void altering trajectory to zoom in on the attack ships as the Star Fighter prepares its initial beam strike.

The technology is failing as the Star Fighter loses electricity. The attack beam goes down. The pilots are screaming. A horde of soldiers prepare for the overtaking of the Cyclops later.

And finally the Hunter/Killer attack drones attach themselves to the attack ships and drill themselves into the hull. Many are screaming. Evan Ly gives new orders.

“Forget about the star cannon!” He says aloud, “We have to trust the attack ships! Prepare for invasion!”

The Hunter/Killer drones breach the hull of some of the attack ships. And surprisingly they eject some kind of organic fluid into the attack ships. Coming to full shape as alien beings with a darkly green colour. Leaning to blue.

The soldiers open fire. But not too much of a fire. The hull should never be breached, even if it already is. They fire their automatic weapons against the alien intruders. Seeking shelter in the interior of the attack ships. Some of the pilots gets overtaken by the alien invaders. That uses the human element to take control of the attack ships. Moving their pilots into thoughts, emotions and actions to turn their ships into attacking position towards the star fighter. Aiming their beam weapons towards it and then triggering the beams.

The star-fighter explodes with the heavy burn of its interior gases. It is firmly described as hell.

* * *

The soldiers are back at “Home” with the scares of wounded warriors. They are not many to return to home. Some of them escaped the threat of the evolving alien beings. To dispatch their bodies from the transparent shapes shimmering in the attack ships with the colour of darkly green.

In a hospital bed Mary Forbes comes back to consciousness as she feels the pain of a large wound upon her thigh. This wound has been taken care of by medics in the attack ship but later also by medic personnel in Home.

She is feeling anxious. Dreaming even of human apocalypse. But she is coming to her senses. She doesn't have a will for human defeat. The alien beings did something to her but it is a remote sensation beyond becoming controlled.

At the same time Raymond R. Mill, the main military officer, deduct that the human experience was a large defeat. They couldn't get control over the Cyclops. Rather they *exposed* themselves. And now the alien being must have become better informed. Morale is coming down among the soldiers. Mary Forbes and others (including Dean Atman) are frightened. Even suffering from war trauma. Making their role as soldiers obsolete.

Evan Ly has calmed down from the previous war scenario. He dreams about alien attacks, about the surprising way the Cyclops handled the attack. That probably made the electricity in the Star Fighter go out with unknown means. Disconnecting the main weapon from its proper use.

“And now the Cyclops knows about human strategy and tactics!” He thinks, “It must be seen as a large defeat.”

Mary Forbes comes to her prior physique weeks later. She is discussing the war scenario. And somehow her humour have taken turns. So that the female soldier is more sober than before. Still she has a sense of edge and clear thinking.

Recovering from the war trauma and becoming a good example to follow by others in the same situation.

“How can that be?” Raymond R. Mill ponders, “That the one with bad wounds would become a clear thinking individual?” He ponders, “Could it be the humour? The distance to life?”

Mary Forbes, Robert Rickman and Dean Atman eat lunch together from plates of good variety. The food is good, the sexual tension between Mary and the two others creates a weird bond. As they previously had experienced a proper love triangle. Something not distant from other love triangles in this male dominated world.

“We have to keep joking!” Mary says to the others, “The threat of death is the source of life.” She says, “Creating tension! Making creative leaps necessary and also quite pleasurable.”

“What jokes then?” Robert Rickman asks.

“Jokes about the alien intruders.” Mary says, “How weird it got.”

“Make an example!” Dean Atman asks.

“Yes. The alien intruders shaped me horribly!” Mary says, “Making me a sex drone. How stupid!”

Dean Atman laughs and Robert Rickman smiles a wicked smile.

* * *

The colonists are out on Eruption for a rare mission. To learn more in detail of the alien world. The Cyclops are not seen as it is dwelling in space beyond the horizon. But the alien beings at home in this exotic place are seen in hives. Hives or nests of alien beings living close to the erupting volcanos. That have made the ice melt to expose the green liquid ocean.

The home for several species of aliens in itself.

Some soldiers have become guardians of these colonists. Mary Forbes, Robert Rickman and Dean Atman are three of those. They are out on a science mission. To learn more about the planet in detail. Wearing space suits, driving rovers and supported by fusion ray weapons. Automatic weapons and long steely knives also support the soldiers. To leave space for better security.

But it is a rare walk, a rare race of colonizers. Going by foot and pulled forward by planetary rover vehicles. To watch the green ice. Seen up close with a subtle variation of green shades. Leaning to darkly green. But shades of blue, brown and yellow can also be traced in the surrounding areas.

The colonists are chattering and joking about the alien planet. Of the aliens. The strange sucking forms of alien beings living on the nutrients of the ocean itself.

Evan Ly is among the military support officers. He is giving great attention to strategy and tactics. To see to it that the colonization scenario doesn't degenerate into another suicide attempt. But rather something to be proud of.

Different from the earlier war attempt. And at ease in his military mind he starts to sense that the humans have gone too far.

"Too little attention is put to new decisions and unexpected reasoning." He ponders, "The thinking of Raymond R. Mill is rather a thing of statue. I'm against improper authority!" He thinks, "I'm rather a deviant. A somber thinker. A military officer existing to present new solutions for future wars." He laughs, "One has to combine logic with humour! Thinking about unexpected news in other news connecting to true originality. Beyond our concept of so called creativity. Diverging from old science. Understanding the enemy. Understanding the aliens and ourselves..." He says with an ironic touch of humour, "Not fooling ourselves we truly understand science and logic. To rather learn, to test, to

investigate the unexpected aspects of the multi-verse. Confronting the enemy with a sober mind. Laughing. Digging deeper to unveil the dark threads of the subconscious. Leading to victory.”

THE END