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## *chevying chase of the city dragon*

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## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

ministration of the college released only documents related to his physical health. If the rest had been uncovered, he never would have been accepted into the training program. At least a dozen cults that I know of originated as a result of that bit of fate alone, the confidential psychological records.

The details of his life would eventually become more well-known than those of anyone else in the history of the world. Nearly all of the information was inconsequential, but some of it provided insight into his character. He had gone to anti-war demonstrations while in college. He also had an interest in environmental issues and supported prohibiting the use of nuclear energy. A file report stated that Vernon had claimed to believe in God, but we found out that he had not attended church since his youth. I suppose anyone who had not been to church in over 30 years might have had a problem looking into the face of God.

Whether or not he was aware of the extent of his mental instability, we'll never know. He must have recognized that something was wrong. He must have felt some kind of negative emotion like depression, paranoia, or anxiety. Or suicidal impulses. I believe everyone at one time or another experiences emotions like these, at least to a slight degree. But I denied feeling them at all during the psychological evaluations for the next flight.

I was chosen to go.

The space program remains a microcosm of order. To understand what I am planning to do as Vernon's replacement, I think it is necessary to know the kind of man I am. The space program has given me fulfillment; the military has given my life meaning. I want to confront that stereotype directly, the military man, so that it can be put aside. I am conservative, patriotic, and religious. I admit to those characteristics, but I am not a zealot, a blind patriot. I consider myself a rational person, able to make an intelligent, moral judgement.

I believe in this country and its greatness. Of course, mistakes have been made. Human excesses and frailties have been justified in the name of national security. We have not always chosen the best allies. Instances of illegal acts and the subversion of rights have occurred. I am not trying to excuse those things. But the criticism that they generated should not have been perceived as a sign of the country's weakness. Our freedom permits this type of expression. I think the level of criticism is exaggerated. The press tends to exploit the sensational, and the young, the ones who protest, believe that rebelling against authority is fashionable.

Vernon must have believed that the government lacked a conscience. Diverting money spent for national defense could surely ease human suffering, but he should have realized that it would be at the expense of our way of life.

I want to be as honest as possible. I want my actions to be interpreted as those of a rational man. What I intend to do is not my destiny, it is only what I must do.

I am not afraid of death; everyone dies. The possibility of being maimed in war would terrify me, like any other man, but the moment of death does not. This is not heroism, not even bravery. It is only recognition that my turn to die has come. After I fire the booster prematurely, and the capsule drifts away along its spiral path, I'll read from the Bible. Then I'll talk on the radio about the things in which I believe. I want God to hear another point of view.

## chevying chase of the city dragon

old worm, living only in despair's  
dark crack caves' gloom,  
feeding on drug lords' spawn: hopelessness --  
come from your rat's lair -- face my axe!

i know where you stalk for your victims,  
near fate's stark rocks  
scenting depression, anger and fear --  
ousted roachbreath numbing logic.

hear me behind you, life-eating beast.  
laughing blade sings  
dark-burnished, hungry as quick lime  
to slice-crush slime-cord of your life.

we know your secret wisdom-treasure,  
finer than gold,  
understand city dragon's secret:  
"Mechanical is this cosmos,  
it waits for our life-taming wills;  
control power,  
so humans can seize long-hid handles  
and drive this yet unmastered brute."

gain no hope from this grey hunter's agings --  
bards are iron-smiths.  
city children now wield my forged blades  
and my son shall heft bright laughter's sword.

-- Charles Rapp