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

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Our second Mythopoeic Youth installment features an excerpt from a longer story by James Ayling, a high school student in Pasadena, California. James created the CatStar universe when he was very young (like four years of age) and has been expanding on the theme ever since. He hopes to make a career as a writer someday.

CATS DON'T LIE, THEY JUST RIDDLE

by
James S.R. Ayling

The Earth and CatStar have not been in contact for the last seventeen years since the Great War and there is to be none for another twenty years. But the sudden, simultaneous, and complete failure of most castonial crystals --the prime source of power for all Earth technology, won from the Catstilians-- has forced Star Base to order the Star Ship Deep Probe to attempt direct contact with CatStar, the only source of castonial crystals known to Earth.

Although CatStar is located in another universe there is a passage between the two universes, known as the "U-Tunnel." In the seventeen years that Star Base has nursed its wounds it has made a great effort to pinpoint the exact location of the U-Tunnel; the general vicinity is known and it is to this place that the S.S. Deep Probe has been ordered. The Captain and crew of the Deep Probe only hope to recognize the U-Tunnel when they find it...

"What in the world is that?" exclaimed one of the officers as the screen turned on. It was understandable that he should exclaim, because what appeared now was incredible. It looked like a black sun with light at the edges and now and again streaks of light shot over the immense surface like lightning. Then, looking even harder, they saw ships in various areas, looking like ants on a beach ball, and these ships looked very familiar to the crew.

"Well, it might be an experiment," said the very same officer and everyone looked at him and glared. "Sure, CatStar is known to conduct large scale experiments... well aren't they?" and the looks became like bricks.

"Not this large, Vance, definitely not this large," replied Captain Jeret. "But whatever that is we had better get closer."

As they closed the distance a computer transmission came in: "This is a warning: do not proceed on your present course or we will take disciplinary action."

So they stopped and sent their own message, "This is the Earth vessel Deep Probe; we have come to find a thing called the U-Tunnel. Do you know where it may be?"

"Yes," came the reply, but not in a computer's voice, "yes, we know where it is and well we should, for this sun is the U-Tunnel. So you may now return to Earth." The voice was cold and sent shudders up the crew's spines as it said 'Earth.'

"We would like to pass through," and as the captain said this Deep Probe moved forward. But it was by another ship's power that they moved and as the ship connected with Deep Probe, the captain sweat.

Then again came the voice, "Permission to

board your sship?"

"Granted," said a now surprised captain who had half expected his ship to be torn apart.

What now boarded was neither human nor Catstilian but a fox-like being. It had red hair, fox-like ears and eyes, and to top it off, a fox tail. Then another and another and then a lizard-like being that said, "I am Captain Srell, a representative of CatSstar, and you are--?"

"I am Captain Jeret of the Deep Probe, sent to find the U-Tunnel and retrieve more castonial crystals and perhaps establish a mining complex for Earth."

"Do you not have your own mines?" came the curving speech of Srell.

"No"

"Have you any ssalt?"

"A little."

"Iss there any left on Earthh?"

"Yes"

"Good. Perhaps if you let uss mine ssalt we will let Earthh mine for crystalss," the voice of Srell, curving more.

"Why do you need salt from Earth? Are the people in need of it?"

"In our universs ssalt is not needed to ssustain life; it is ussed only in the production of roadss, sshipss, buildingss, and anything elsse made of camilian armor."

"Oh."

"I will talk to Ressav and ssee if you will be allowed to pass." Then he turned and exited, leaving the fox-like beings (called Foxans) on board Deep Probe. Meanwhile, the captain sent news to Earth.

Sitting down and reading a book, Ressav thought about a recent development on CatStar. He thought it was strange that the king would suddenly want to return to Earth and talk to the Terrans about salt mining. But perhaps the king thought the Terrans were in a good mind-frame to talk after seventeen years. Then the door opened and in walked Srell.

"Yes, Srell, what is the news from the Terrans?" asked Ressav dropping his book.

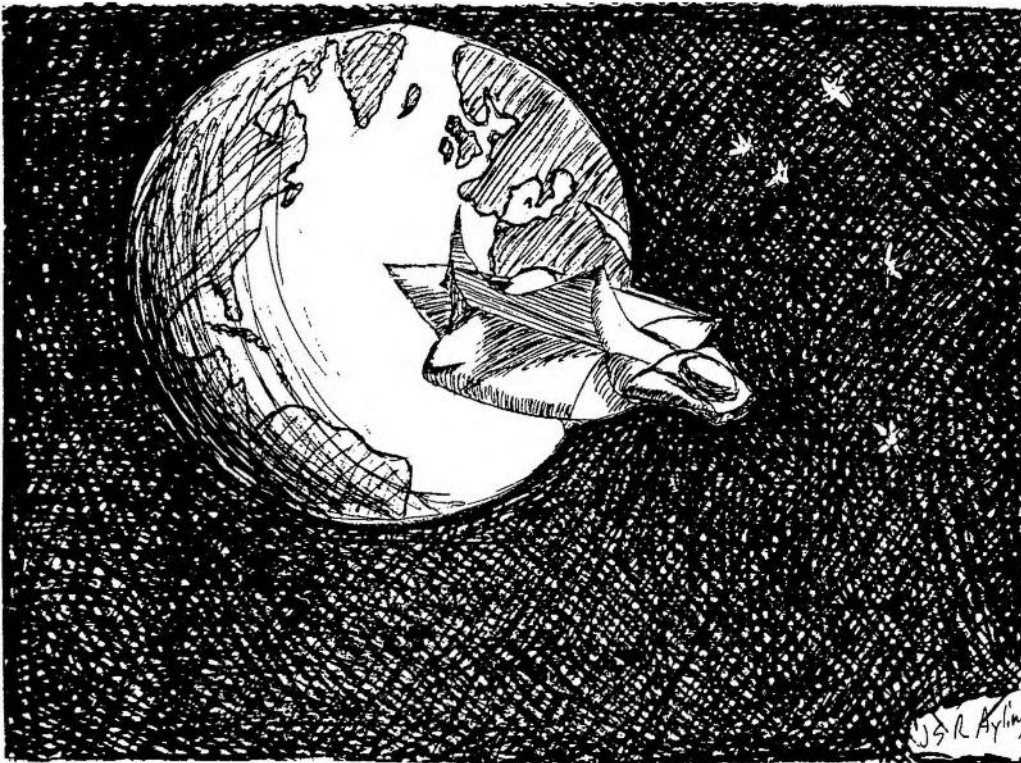
"Ssir, the Terranss would like to pass through the Tunnel."

"Why? What use would it be to them to enter our universe?"

"Jeret ssaid they need a castonial crysstal mine," and Srell sat down, "they ssay they have no miness."

"Xemr'n! There are plenty of planets with the crystals in this universe, or can they not think?!" With that he rose, going to the door he pressed a button and said, "Dalase, get a set of star charts showing castonial crystal deposits and bring them to me."

The intercom buzzed and a Catstilian



The Star Ship Deep Probe leaving the Earth in search of the U-Tunnel.

Next page: General Ressav

appeared on the Deep Probe's screen. His eyes, like those of a cat, looked calm and he said, "Jeret, I have given it thought. There are deposits of crystal on the farthest planet from this sun, you can mine there and my people will show you how. Come aboard Srell's ship, with your crew, after you notify Earth. This was General Ressav."

The crew was motionless until Jeret finished transmitting the message back to Earth and received an answer. Then Vance said, "Are we going to go through or will we stay here, sir?"

"The order is to stay here until more ships arrive with the proper equipment, then who knows. But we are all going over to Srell's ship for dinner." He laughed at the thought and said, "I suppose they have food that humans can eat."

So they went over and found the food better than their own, and talked to the alien crew about their experiences.

* * *

"That was the best meal I have ever had in space," Jeret said with a sigh of contentment.

"We really don't enjoy eating food in the form of pills or in those tiny little food packets," replied Ressav.

An alien officer interrupted. "Sir, not to disturb you, but something's coming through the U-Tunnel," the officer said quickly and hastily.

"I will be up on the bridge in a second, Tigrenan; don't worry," and then turning to Captain Jeret he said, "Come, I will show you the bridge."

"Thank you," replied Jeret with a grin and a grateful tone.

They arrived on the bridge in time to see streaks of lightning shoot across the face of the U-Tunnel as the greatest foe of the Catstilian race, the rebel General Ziddori, came through the tunnel. In The Toy, a twisted fourth-dimensional ship Ziddori had stolen in an earlier adventure

across dimensional barriers.

"No!" shouted Ressav, "He couldn't have broken through Nalan's fleet. Tell the rest of the fleet to attack and destroy Ziddori; Srell, take command of your ship."

"What's going on?" said Jeret.

"Trouble, BIG trouble. Tell your people to board this ship, the Drasc; they will be safer here than on the Deep Probe." Then Ressav picked up a microphone and gave it to Jeret.

Taking the microphone Jeret said, "Attention. Attention please. This is Captain Jeret. Will all Deep Probe crew members please enter the the Drasc and wait for further orders. Thank you."

"Full fighting force...attack!" hissed Srell into the communicator and with that the C.S.S. Drasc and other ships opened fire on The Toy.

While at The Toy an Asp Legionnaire said, "They are opening fire upon us, General."

"Good," answered Ziddori. "Open fire with the antimatter cannon, then fire the Bubble Blaster." Then Ziddori thought, "Now I shall get the control matrix to the Intertime Drive and then I won't have to play these silly games with U-Tunnel guards."

The explosion was blinding as an intense beam of antimatter shot through one of the starships and the fighters caught in the beam were as if they had never been. Then The Toy moved forward and, as it did, it devastated the Catstilian ships. It seemed as if there was no way to stop The Toy and General Ziddori; then they sped off into deep space like the wind.

"What was that?" said Captain Jeret, "Who was that?"

"That was General Ziddori in his new ship. He calls it The Toy," hissed Srell.

"I was never very good at history but that name, Ziddori, it was the name of a Catstilian Asp Legionnaire in the The Great War."

"He iss no a longer catsstilian ssince the firsst King of CatSstar removed him from the House of Xunvax," came Srell's hissing voice.

"Then what is he?" questioned Jeret, now being led by Srell to the door of the bridge.

"He iss a heartless being that will live 'til he iss killed, and that iss almosst impos- sible." Though Srell's face bore no expression, it was clear that he loathed Ziddori.

"Captain Srell," said a Foxan running up to them, "we have tracked the flight path of Zid- dori's ship; it is headed to Earth!"

"Earth?!" cried Jeret, "No, how could that be? What would he want with Earth?"

"Salt, maybe. Or something worse," said General Ressav, now walking from a viewing screen.

"We must warn Earth that he is coming," cried Jeret. "I will go to my ship and use its radio to contact Earth."

"And we will prepare ssome of our sships to return to Earthh withh you," came the curving voice of Srell. So Jeret went to his ship and sent a warning to Earth about the deadly Ziddori. Srell and Ressav sent a message to their other ships and when all preparations were finished they started the day-long acceleration into cas- tonial drive.



On Earth, on the American continent in what was left of California, it was very wet. The idea that one small ship could hurt Earth forces was preposterous but in any event there were guards on watch, just in case. As for this particular guard, he was thinking only of the rain, perpetually soaking him on his patrol around the security center where alien objects were stored for later inspection. Then he heard a noise out in the night-blanketed forest; it was a whirring

sound that slowly died away, like an antique air- plane heading off in the distance. He just stood there looking into the general direction of the sound and hoping that the rain would soon end. Then he heard the noise again and he removed a radio to call in security. But even as he reach- ed for it there was a flash of lightning and the dull roar of thunder, and what the flash revealed stopped him cold.

At the edge of the forest were a line of beings. There were tall snake-like beings, round creatures with great eyes, a tall, very tall man, a giant robot, and other strange and twisted things that he could not identify. He turned on the communicator and another bolt of lightning shot through the air but this did not come from any cloud. It came from that tall man and struck the guard like a speeding train.

"Come," said the tall man, whose name was General Ziddori. He then strode over to the crumpled body of the guard, picked up the radio and turned it off. Then he signaled the group to split up and, with his three companions, he fol- lowed the wall. He stopped, not to rest but be- cause he now was at a gate with guards.

The Drasc came out of castonial drive over Earth with the Deep Probe and more ships follow- ing. General Ressav sent a message to Jeret, "You handle communications with Star Base while we scan for Ziddori. OK?"

"Sure, no problem. Over and out," replied Jeret.

The scanning and the long explanation Cap- tain Jeret gave to the authorities started at the same time. Then Tigrenan looked up from his screen with a grin and said, "We have a fix on Ziddori."

"Well done, Tigrenan. Get Captain Jeret and he can tell us what is so important in that area," the General grinned at Srell; Srell made orders for a landing party.

"We must move fast in order to keep the in- ternal security guards unprepared," whispered General Ziddori. Then they leapt from the sha- dows into full view of the guards and threw poi- son grenades until nothing moved. "Good. Now open the gate, F'vand," Ziddori ordered coldly.

The gate swung open to reveal a small com- plex of buildings and the alien party entered the complex. Then they were seen by a guard who sounded the alarm. Guards ran from buildings, opening fire upon the intruders.

"Men, take care of these fools," shouted Ziddori and with that he became invisible. The guards fell like leaves in a storm but so did Ziddori's men. As for Ziddori, he was behind the guards and looking for the main building. When he found it he pressed his hand against the wall. "Good," thought Ziddori, "the wall is made from camilian armor." He then concentrated and, as he did, a hole started to melt into the wall and the hole quickly became larger. Ziddori then stepped through the hole into a dimly-lit room with hundreds of shelves and thousands of devices upon these shelves, and he began to search.

Sitting down inside the shuttle and strap- ping themselves in, Jeret, Srell, Ressav, and

