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Steward James Ellesmere

Staring at the sleeping sub-Lt. Professor “Elroy,” scratching himself, he smiles, doubting that the gloves will have any impact through the combat skins. The youth and hero of the Euro blitz should be a captain or commodore with his experience being commanding officer of Elroy’s maritime naval base and *his* Cade University as both administrator and Professor Omnidoctorate Shaman as well as due to his mum being a fulltime political Eldermost at D-1 Falklands. Though his mum is the D-12 Eldermost CEL, Elroy’s indelible stamp of intellect, leadership and philosophy on the students and faculty makes it Elroy’s in a real sense. The Assembly of CELs should have intervened to have the teen Raised before the world after the invasion had been repelled using enhanced Lipa-Roycroft rail guns and targeting instruction sets created by him and his faculty done in record time. Many feel that way.

Yet the heir to D-12 Lipa-Roycroft came to Serve as a space-side Warrior, going the route of regular officer troops, never once smelling self-raised and owed anything as D-12 heir. Elroy breezed through every hurdle the instructors supplied. The kid could have taught the teachers at The War College. The war scholars, some younger Professors and two Omnidoctorate Professors from Cade University included, had scoured the archives and had come up with an advanced officer training program.

Rumor has it, the few Cade U lot had more input than the Twelve District scholar-profs combined. (They already had procedures from their stint as water Navy officers under Elroy.) They took over the project as Eldermosts, to the chagrin of the older blokes and their CELs.

They knew what they were about. They had worked for three days straight, speaking with space captains and grilling willing captive officers about their experiences in Euro Union OTS before going into a deep healing sleep. The Assembly approved the special curriculum without any deliberation. A first in the history of the world.

He feels something from the lad. His eyes grow as his ears connect to synapses in his brain. He closes his eyes and listen-feels. It's a Journey Song! No small feat with the weight of a--of quarter a One-eye Blue on them. The Phibbie has lost a lot of mass, the folks at the Falklands Base say. Stories about One-eye Blue are numerous. All true as far as witnesses and vids reveal. A real joker and a D-12 cattle poacher. Thus, the bugger's great bulk for a juvenile.

While waiting on the Professor-officer, he'd dipped into the newsnet. Upon the first speculation by Lungeshark, experts across the globe, thought the problem separation anxiety, since the bond between humans and Phibbian was great. Nearly eight NP years of shadowing Professor Captain Lipa-Roycroft.

A thought comes. He frowns. He mentally counts the years from the youth's rescue of Falklands CEL and the release of the Great Grandmum Lungeshark that changed the history and future of New Patagon. Thirteen. A "Gift Number," as stated by Elroy and his Shamanry. Not his mum's or the CELs' in this case. Elroy is their Eldermost. Kaye Lipa-Roycroft has no dealings with them just because. Her lot had grown up with the old guard of Shaman elders and shall be forever soured unless Chaos' portal opens and showers orchid petals on her.

On second thought, perhaps that is just an excuse. For her son's sake. Out with the old faker Shamanry and in with the reasonable and scientific Shamanry with him as their incontrovertible Eldermost. He grunts with satisfaction. A right and proper change of guard. Those mystic "fakir" fools should have been done away with the moment they came on scene some three centuries ago. But they had captured the imaginations of the majority, which led to New Patagon's social structure and tree-hugger mentality. Professor Elroy has kept that in force, minus the mysticism. More like *cosmos hugging* with Elroy. He swears and lives by the idea that if Tehuelches live with the realities and Gifts of the cosmos, every material care shall be provided. The difference is that it is based on scientific and observable facts and evidence and not on tricks and sleight-of-hand.

The old Shamanry's hold over the planet had been their hold over the revered Lungeshark serum, then produced by unknown means. It should have been obvious since livestock and seeds stolen

and spat out by mature Phibbians came back genetically changed. Shaman Eldermosts in dark caves, with great pomp and ceremony, had bribed the denizens with chunks of meat in exchange for allowing them to commune inside the gullets of the Lungeshark. One imagines they just slept and dreamed rather than receiving any mystical powers.

Lungesharks mouths have a *magical* biochemical process mysteriously able to produce the genetic adjustments that allow terrestrial-Earth life to flourish on New Patagon. Elroy, who is ironically not a permie, uncovered the truth and phenomenon when rescuing CEL Falklands' boat, crew and the hooked Great-great-grandmum Ocher Plate at the Death Abyss. The lengthy stay inside the huge Lungeshark allowed Elroy to remain bronzed for three years before once again having to take injections.

Now, the *educated* Shamanry toss into the mouths human tissue of the various racial profiles and suctions out the resulting saliva. *Afterward* the Phibbians are given a reward of cow or shoat. Or, like Elroy does with One-eye Blue, a brave one takes a rest inside the mouth of a mature Phibbie trolling around their district looking for a reward and *stews in its juices*. Some people are incomprehensible! Lungeshark even more so!

The old Shamanry did entertain the Geepers, their "Northern" Cousins on vacation from their boring and sedentary lives on Graham's Point. They have no predators. Man versus Phibbian always shall be good entertainment. A crewman falls overboard to be swallowed by a Phibbian, and after a great battle, the human vanquishes the beast. By Fertile Crescent reckoning, Graham's Point is eastward rather than northward and southward by the colonists' standards. Has it been so many years?

With this not-war, the Geepers are burying their heads in their pristine sand light years away. No help whatsoever except for traders *selling* foodstuffs via jump ships. Trying. The Assembly of CELs had rejected them after the two years of silence and no assistance in personnel or materiel to build and upgrade installations. Selling. Never offering succor or materiel without price. War profiteering!

Surprised his emotions do not rise up to form a stink, he realizes he is, in fact, calm. His ears catch a near subsonic sound. Not

snoring. A Journey Song? Yes. It is a happy song and calms his psyche. He takes in the youth's essence. After some time, a vision comes. He shakes his head, but the vision persists. An ancient man, in tribal attire of his Patagonian Tehuelches ancestors with confident, wise eyes, stands before a fire. A staff. An ornate staff of his *office* with a fist holding a bolo with green gemstones as the stones. The fire glints off his Shaman eyes. The Great Shaman is speaking. He feels the eyes of the clan elders watching and ears listening to the Sage. Deep inside, he knows that The Great Shaman is explaining the realities of their space-time point.

Past history is present history? Yes. He hears the words:

The great barbarian peoples from the far north have been conquered by white men from land and sea. They shall come all the way to our great land, devoting The Fierce People to slaughter and slavery in the guise of saving our immortal souls. But first, the Tehuelches must survive the plagues of those ones. The men with the cross are as bad as the Aztecs. Evil incarnate, Chiefs. We must act to protect ourselves from both plague and weapons like those we have found on the wreckages of ships with cloth to capture the winds. We know the ways of fierce fire--

Four elders rise. They make hand motions showing their derision, the aged faces their deep disdain for the Shaman who has guided them for decades. The stalwart elders who have known their Shaman as never being wrong or selfish watch the representative chiefs, the cousins of the north, pick up their kits and kin and walk away into the night. The sky opens up with a meteor shower as the Great One raises his staff.

And in your hubris, so shall you die, foolish ones.

Jerking hard and opening his eyes wide, he stares at the youth. The vision is still upon his "third eye," and the meteors surround the Lipa-Roycroft youth and aura of the Ancient. He counts twenty-six meteors. New Patagon people are not superstitious, but they are not stupid to ignore warnings from within. The science-based, practical Fierce People have spent their time on this jewel doing as the ancients of their genes had done, perfecting both the physical and transcendent aspects of living. "Soulical," the modern Shamanry teaches. The entire structure of human experience.

With a model to follow in Elroy and his philosophical adherents' steps, the Bully/New Patagon System is fully devoted

and driven to Raise far above the dormant, frightened and heartless human spirit of non-Tehuelches.

He marvels at the reality in his mind/brain. The vision is appropriate. Small debris from EU warship casualties by Elroy's railgun ingot system still escapes The Brothers and is whisked outward—or downward, depending on viewpoint—leaking through The Brothers toward the planet's gravity well by the residual solar winds raining down debris showers on the thin atmosphere. The salvagers, the stout ore ships circling the planet, "net" the larger debris with a powerful EMF scoop/deflector system, courtesy again of Elroy's Cade U and Cade Base manufacturing and tinkering plants.

He looks upon the screen. They are swiftly approaching the planet. There are no signs of debris falling nor any salvagers moving about on intercept courses. The vision is not literal—And the vision does not follow his eye! He whips his head back to the officer, where the vision remains.

"Jimmy, you are looking strange. Is the youngster okay back there?"

He looks to the camera and nods. Thumb goes up. He taps his throat to access the subdermal appliance. He subvocs, "The boy's thrumming like a Grand One. A Journey Song. And you're not going to believe this, Boss, but James Ellesmere has had a vision. I feel it in my bones that it wasn't a dream. Isn't."

"It is still happening?"

He looks back once again to the sleeping young man. "Yes. Superimposed vision upon reality. Ancient past: Twenty-six meteors began to fall around the Great Shaman after the Northern Cousins left the assembled clan chiefs discussing the invasion of the false Christers. I am seeing the shower as we speak. The celestial space objects are not falling on the cousins departing for their homes. It seems not to be destructive in nature."

"Are you real sure?" Pilot Abercromby asks.

He nods, still seeing the shower around Elroy's head. "It's posdef not stars like getting bonged on the cabbage. Twenty-six. They are falling steady. Very slow-mo, I should have said."

"Hold a few ticks, Jimmy."

Time flows. He keeps watch, hardly daring to blink. But when he does, the vision remains eyelids open or closed.

“James, this is CEL McFigán-Cronje. Tell me what you saw.” The voice sounds skeptical.

He sits up straighter as the D-10 Chief Executive Landsman makes himself known. “Uh, Sir, I am *still seeing* the end of it. The elder chiefs of the Southern Fierce People are watching the cousins leave under a shower of meteors. Twenty-six. No, wait.” He stares at the line of ... “That doesn’t feel correct. The Great Shaman raised his staff, and *then* the meteor shower began. It was--is encircling his head. Surrounding it, I should say, even when the perspective changed to embrace Sublieutenant Elroy. A slight curvature. Not as fast as real meteors. Very slow. More like comets.” His brain is telling him that the interpretation is correct. “Yes! Comets streaking--well, in slow motion, as I’m seeing right now. Like in science vids from normal star systems and cometary bodies.” There are no comets in this star system.

“Like portents.”

Elroy stretches and opens his eyes. His left arm raises through the heavy pull of gees and stays there momentarily in a fist. The two time-realities mesh. The fist is positioned where the Great Shaman’s hand holds the staff toward the sky. The staff lowers, and Elroy reaches higher stretching his shoulders and arms until he is holding the bolo or head in his hand.

“Eldermost - One of the comets flares bright and is gone. One is gone. A flare and it disappeared, Sir.”

Twenty-five comets remain. Another flares and encompasses the staff’s fist/bolo head! The gemstones glow with inner fire lighting up Elroy’s fist and arm until he lowers it into his lap. Still, another begins to glow brighter. The vision fades.

“He - I cannot believe it!”

“Believe what?” Elroy asks with nostrils wide. “You smell ... I don’t know what the smell is. But please get control of yourself, fellow. It’s making me feel uncomfortable.”

“Of course, Lieutenant. Are you okay? Need a bag?”

“Not yet. Hopefully Pilot Abbie knows how to be quick about it, yeah?”

“Will do, young Warrior Professor. Going to have some minutes of freefall. Cannot be helped.”

“Of course, Sir. No disrespect intended. Haven’t yet made a mess out of a transport shuttle. Safety is the key, of course. Blue is fine for now.”

D-10 CEL in his ears: *“Keep the lad talking, James. Ask him questions about Blue.”*

“Sir, how does it feel?”

Elroy answers not about barfing one’s guts up but appropriately. “Ever had a lucid dream state where you are someone else? Or out of body dream? A voice or foreign thought that pops up from nowhere?”

“Um, yes to all.”

“That’s what it’s like but also like... background noise or pressure underwater. Have you felt social pressure on your mind/brain?”

“Of course. But not a constant one. Too busy to navel gaze to figure out what the senses are telling me.”

“Very good, James!”

“Ignorance is bliss, yeah?” Elroy does not emote any *funny* pheromones in the smile. “Then you can imagine how it feels. I got concussed one time that felt a little like that.”

“Ah! Now that I’ve dealt with a few times in space.” He smiles. That slight wooziness is present in his head now! “And I agree, Sir, ignorance is foolish. Dangerous.”

Pride and humor are present in Elroy’s appealing odor and voice. “Next time you feel the social pressure phenomena, concentrate on it. And if you get a sense of the direction it is telling you, write it down and see if it comes to pass. We need more people than D-12 students and faculty or Shamanry feeling the way and direction of our *Time dance* and its pressure.”

He nods. “I understand, Shaman Professor, Sir. GPS is failing us.”

Elroy peers at him and then sighs. “Yeah. The Northern Cousins cannot perceive the *Time dance*. Their hearts have jagged . . . precious metal within, and they greedily refuse to bring them

forth from their vaults to smooth them out. Self-inflicted wounds of the spirit as they hoard them.”

“Navel gazing helps drive our course?”

Elroy shakes his head. *Don't be stupid.* “The *exercise* assists the Shamanry to better control their thought processes for guiding us through the Currents. Hopefully, *collectively*, and to recognize a path of thought and/or action that leads to a successful experiment conclusion. Thought experiment or physical manifestation of such direction. The more time we spend as a group, the better the solution seems to be. Solid science foundation. When we work in unity, egos and division are stymied like building a strong edifice. Does that answer your query?”

“*Yes, it does!*” McFigian-Cronje answers in his ear while he nods in awe at Elroy. He gasps yet again as the vision comes back. This time, a comet strikes Elroy in the groin. The cast-offs from the silent explosion go outward. “*My Eldermost, a comet just hit Elroy in the genitals. Sparks are flying all over the Southern elders.*”