

The Tsignassian

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The harvesting vessel creaked and groaned. Steam jetted against rusted metal as Jethro walked up the stairs, expertly dodging the jet.

"Hey, Buck," he said, "How we looking?"

The reptile shrugged and reached over with a stubby arm to tap on a gauge, the needle of which abruptly sprang to the right.

"Typical," he replied.

Jethro nodded and scratched his alligator-like neck with an arm just as stumpy as his coworker's.

"Same shit, different day, huh?"

"Yeah."

They both stared out the observation window for a few minutes before Jethro turned and poured himself a cup of coffee. He grimaced.

"Man, how old *is* that stuff?" he asked.

"Been there all night, man."

"Geez."

Jethro emptied the cup down the drain, the hot liquid making the pipes groan and creak.

"You know the boss says you gotta cool that shit off first, right?" Buck said blandly.

"Aww, this old rust-bucket will live," Jethro said, making a face and mockingly patting the nearest wall.

The ship clanked in response. The pumping room was not large—barely big enough for the two of them, the console, a couple of chairs, and a table back behind them on which the coffeemaker and cups sat. The whole thing sat atop a wrought iron platform reached by the rusty metal staircase where Jethro had dodged the steam jet.

"You know," Buck began as he looked out the window, "It's amazing how you get used to things."

Jethro looked up. "Huh?"

"The Tsignassian," Buck said, gesturing with his head out the window.

Jethro chuckled as he filled and started the coffee pot.

"Yeah, I guess."

Out the window lay a wide, white expanse lightly illuminated in a faint, off-white glow of its own making. Easily the size of a small planet, the Tsignassian was a unique being in the universe, an anthropomorphic, scaleless dragon. The harvester floated a little below his waist, and a long umbilical snaked its way down to him. For decades, the vessel had collected from him the most prized substance in the galaxy: his semen. A miracle substance, the dragon's essence served nearly every purpose imaginable, far supplanting centuries-old technologies like nanotubes, solar power, and carbon fiber.

It was a perfect power source; its unusual make-up meant that when it burned, its by-products were naturally unstable and would react violently with each other. Over a hundred years ago, inventors developed engines that harnessed both the initial burn and the secondary reaction, making the stuff 100% efficient and with the highest energy density of any known substance. Best of all, it required no oxygen and could be ignited even in the vacuum of space, which made it an ideal fuel for the many spacecraft that relied on it.

As a building material, the stuff was unlike anything else: simply applying different kinds of energy to it completely changed its structure. In its natural state, it was a thick fluid, thinner than pudding but thicker than vegetable oil. When electricity was passed through it, it became ductile, like a metal, and could be pounded and formed. When heated, it became embrittled and could be chiseled like stone. When compressed, it matched the shape of its enclosure and could be molded into any shape. Applying combinations of energy yielded interesting results, too, such as being able to return it to its liquid state or

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lock its current properties to prevent further changes. In this way, it could be made thin and flexible enough to wear it like clothing, or it could be made thick and rigid enough to build roads, buildings, and even vehicles out of. In a pinch, it even provided a good balance of macronutrients and a variety of micronutrients as well—if you could stomach the idea of eating dragon cum.

It was, in short, the most precious substance in existence, and it was up to harvesting crews like Jethro, Buck, and their crewmates to collect it for transport back to civilization.

Ironically, the only thing it couldn't do, it seemed, was make another one of the Tsignassians that produced it. Though explorers had searched light-years in every direction, another one could not be found anywhere, let alone a female.

Cloning was out of the question. The creature appeared for all intents to be of biological make-up, but nobody could figure out how to create another one. Nothing comparable to chromosomes or DNA had ever been found, and scientists were still at a complete loss to understand its anatomy, let alone its physiology or reproductive processes. Priceless as a natural resource, governments had long since signed treaties with each other agreeing to share the harvests. Too much depended on it for anyone to threaten the source of nearly everything people burned, wore, drove or drove over, ate, or lived in.

As for the Tsignassian himself, he was, in a word, breathtaking. His body was chiseled with muscle and covered in flawless, white skin that seemed to glisten like snow under a harvest moon. His chest rose and fell in a very slow rhythm, taking as much as a day to complete one cycle. What he breathed, nobody could begin to imagine, but there were somehow small currents in the vacuum of space near his mouth that would gently tug at and repel vessels that strayed too near. His form was sleek and sensual, and he was proportionately much taller than the crew for his girth. Enormous, ethereal wings sprouted from his shoulder blades. Seemingly made of pure energy, they glowed and shimmered like the aurora borealis in the vast darkness of space, placidly spreading out for thousands of miles to either side of the Tsignassian's body.

But even more impressive than all of that, if it is possible, was the Tsignassian's malehood. Scores of miles wide and hundreds of miles tall, it jutted sharply up from his body like a mountain, and like a mountain, it was covered in thick, armored plates, some form of reptilian sheath, perhaps. Yet though harder than diamonds, those plates were just as flexible and pliable as the rest of his skin, and they lightly pulsed with each throb of the creature's member. Beneath this tower of fertility lay the creature's testes, each one an orb the size of a continent, the two of them encased in a perfectly smooth, lily-white scrotum whose gentle lines and curvature made it the most graceful, sensuous feature of his already-magnificent body.

He was a truly breathtaking sight.

But, when you had spent the last six years running the harvester, you did tend to lose sight of all that. You focused on things that were relevant, things that would get you paid: what were your production numbers for the day? Did anybody get hurt? Was your preventative maintenance done on the vessel?

The answer to the last question was increasingly a resounding, "no." The original harvesting crews were still scared of the Tsignassian and worried that he'd wake up. They worried that their equipment would fail, and they'd get blown off into space by an errant jet from the creature's powerful cock, or they'd somehow harvest too fast and suck him dry. But that was nearly a hundred years ago, shortly after the Tsignassian was first discovered. There wasn't even anybody left alive from those original crews, and the crews these days had literally subsisted completely off of Tsignassian products their entire lives. It was a way of life, something to be taken for granted.

Unfortunately, that also meant that most of them didn't even know what preventative maintenance to perform or how often, let alone *how*, and the harvester was showing its age. Still using the same old gauges installed when it was built, the harvester was a cantankerous old girl. But, like living off of Tsignassian essence, the crew took it as a fact of life that the harvester occasionally did weird things, not bothering to identify a root cause or trying to fix it.

That was why accidents were still a thing—increasingly so. Modern ships all had plenty of life support, safety systems, backup safety systems, and myriad other controls in place to make sure that even if you tripped while running with a pair of scissors, it took at least two dozen simultaneous failures for you to so

much as drop them, let alone anything as impossible as impale yourself! That was not the harvester. The harvester still used steam turbines heated by a slow, steady stream of Tsignassian spunk. That steam occasionally liked to leak out and scald people, so the crew just avoided the known steam jets. Occasionally a new one would appear, a few people would get scalded, word would get around, and people would learn to avoid that one, too.

Far more alarming than that was when the harvester just quit harvesting. The crew had procedures in place for what to do when that happened, but it happened so infrequently that people frequently forgot what they were supposed to do, panicked, and made it worse. A few years ago, the harvester *had* been blown off the Tsignassian's cock and hurtled some hundred thousand miles away before the crew finally recovered and got it reattached. At the time, committees were formed to address the lack of preparation, new procedures were put in place, and everybody was *certain* that the crew would know exactly what to do the next time it happened. They even did drills once a week so they'd be prepared. But once a week became once a month, then once a quarter, then twice a year, then once a year, and eventually stopped entirely. Nobody could remember the last time they did a drill or preventative maintenance, and the stars were once again aligning for disaster to strike.

Outside the window, the Tsignassian drifted placidly, glowing dimly in the darkness. His cock and armor-flaps shuddered in response to the milking apparatus as pump after pump of his precious semen made its way up the umbilical, where it splashed into a battery of holding tanks, each a cube with each side the length of a football field. The Tsignassian filled about forty of them each day, and a constant flurry of ships came and went, exchanging filled containers for empty ones.

But here in the pumping room, things were boring, the same gauges day in and day out, the same steam jets out to spit at the inattentive, the same lousy coffee. All they had to do was watch to make sure the milking apparatus kept working.

As the only moving part on the harvester, the milking apparatus was the most likely thing to fail. It had been carefully designed in response to myriad tests performed a century ago to determine the optimal stimulation to give the Tsignassian in order to achieve maximum return for minimal energy expended. Like his semen, the Tsignassian responded to different kinds of energy input, and the milking apparatus was designed to provide just the right amounts of each. Nearly transparent, it fit semi-snugly around his enormous testicles, sheath, shaft, and head and ran off its own supply of Tsignassian semen diverted off the main umbilical.

Designed with its own control loop that continuously optimized itself through advanced machine learning and artificial intelligence, the only feedback the milking apparatus needed from the ship was an emergency-stop signal. It automatically gently warmed and cooled the Tsignassian's genitals in a rhythmic fashion to keep the creature fully erect and aroused but not enough to wake him. Meanwhile, electric currents passed through the Tsignassian's flesh at a faster rate, modulated by different frequencies and intensities to maximize the force of each spurt. A series of rings along the Tsignassian's shaft contracted and relaxed in time to provide a milking sensation. A series of large, luxuriously soft pads traveled up and down and around the enormous prick's length and circumference, carefully choreographed to avoid the squeezing rings. The pads exuded a slippery substance refined directly from Tsignassian semen that prevented chafing while enhancing the pleasurable sensation of them gliding tantalizingly over the tender flesh. Finally, a dome-shaped cap covered the Tsignassian's tip and directed the umbilical into his urethra while using its own set of pads and electrodes to focus stimulation on his glans.

All of these mechanisms worked harmoniously together, improving with time to optimize the flow from the Tsignassian's gonads into the harvest tanks. Any slower, and production would decrease; any faster, and the flow would begin to overload the system. But the system had been running with only a couple of hiccups for nearly a century, and everybody was complacently content to let it do its thing.

And then disaster struck.

There was a deafening screech that came from everywhere at once, and Jethro and Buck instinctively covered their ears. It lasted for a good thirty seconds before it quit. The two crewmates cautiously uncovered their ears and looked around.

"What the hell was that?!" Buck asked.

"No idea," Jethro replied. "But there's nothing in *here* that could have made that noise."

They glanced at each other and then looked out the window. Far below them, they could see the movement of the pads as they traced their way along the Tsignassian's member.

Jethro did a double-take. "Hey, do those look fast to you?" he asked.

Buck looked down and frowned. "Huh," he said thoughtfully. "I'm not sure. Maybe a bit?"

Before their eyes, the pads began to speed up, and the rest of the mechanisms moved in concert to stay synchronized.

"Yeah, I think you're right," Buck said. "Huh, I dunno if I've ever seen it do that before."

While the two technicians incompetently pondered the situation, the milking apparatus was having a distinct effect on the Tsignassian. The increased demand on his body made a shadow of a grimace pass over his face, as if he was experiencing a bad dream. His body tensed subtly, but even the subtlest movement on a creature thousands of miles wide was very noticeable to the much smaller creatures around him. Still, his enormous testes held ample reserve; it would take a long time at the current rate before they depleted.

A voice came over the intercom.

"Hey, pump control, what the hell is going on in there?"

The two exchanged glances, and Jethro pushed a button.

"No idea," he said. "There was a loud screeching, and then it went away."

"Well, did you *look* to see what might have happened? I've got transports nearly running into each other to avoid getting hit by the Tsignassian's wings! Run a diagnostic. How do your numbers look?"

Jethro rolled his eyes, annoyed, and looked at the gauges. "Normal," he said. "Everything looks normal."

"Did ya *tap* each of the gauges? You know how they like to stick."

The two technicians grunted under their breaths—they hated it when their boss got involved in their day-to-day activities. They begrudgingly began tapping gauges one-by-one.

"Still normal," Jethro reported.

"Whoa!" Buck gasped.

Jethro turned his head to look, and his eyes bulged on seeing the last gauge.

"Uh, sir, we might have a problem," he said.

"What?"

"Output's running at about double its usual rate."

"What?! Shit, shut it down!"

"Wait, really? Isn't double good?"

"Yes, really! That harvester isn't designed to handle that kind of flow! Shut it down before the increased pressure destroys the—"

He was interrupted by a loud explosion originating from the milking apparatus's cock-tip.

"Jethro, look!" Buck cried.

Jethro turned to look and saw the pads and squeezing rings moving easily ten times faster than he had ever seen them move before. The Tsignassian's body went completely rigid, and they could already tell that his breathing had sped up, coming in fast, shallow gasps.

“Jethro, get it shut off!” the voice crackled urgently. “The whole thing has gone unstable. If you don’t get it shut off, the damage could be catastrophic!”

“How do I do that?!” Jethro asked helplessly.

“Use the emergency-stop button, you idiot!” the voice snapped.

“Where is it?”

“It’s on the console, the big, red button that says, ‘STOP’.”

Jethro frowned and went silent, looking over the console.

“There’s no big, red button here, boss,” he said at last.

“What the fuck are you talking about? Your whole job—literally the only reason you are there—is to push the big, red button if something goes wrong! And now you’re telling me you can’t even *find* the big, red button? It’s bigger than your hand, it’s red, it’s round, and it says, ‘STOP’. Are you *seriously* telling me you can’t see that?”

Jethro and Buck exchanged glances.

“No, boss, it’s really not there,” Buck said.

“Fucking idiots,” the voice muttered—the crew members could practically hear their boss pinching the bridge of his nose. “Look, we don’t have much time,” the voice said, recomposed. “Are you *sure* there is not a big, red button on the console?”

“Yeah, boss,” Jethro replied. “There’s the gauges on the left showing the levels in the tanks and whether they’re connected or not, then a big, empty space, and then the gauges on the right show how much we’re pumping, pressure, and all that.”

“Big, empty space... Oh, fucking damn it!”

“What?”

“Look on the wall on the far right, right next to the ceiling. Is there a big, red button there?”

The two looked. “N—no, boss. There’s a really little, black something sticking out of the corner, but that’s it.”

“That! Yes! Press that!” the voice barked. “Press it as hard as you can and hold it! Fuck, I forgot we moved the e-stop above the coffeemaker to make space to eat our lunches, and then we kept accidentally bumping it when we walked in, so we moved it to the far wall, and then we kept hitting our heads on it, so we made it really small. You got it pressed?”

“Yeah, just about to—”

The harvester lurched violently, and out the window, the crew members could see the umbilical detach from the milking apparatus and hurtle through space. The other end—the end attached to the harvester—held fast, and the umbilical abruptly changed direction, coming straight towards the holding tanks and moving like an impossibly long whip at terrifying speed.

“Oh, shit!” Jethro cried just as the umbilical crashed into the tanks, its momentum severing them and sending them flying into space, along with a dozen transport ships that happened to be in the way.

Meanwhile, the Tsignassian’s hips bucked hard as his cock continued to spray enough cum with each pump to fill a tractor trailer. No longer contained within the umbilical, each blast shot through space at alarming speed, crashing into anything in its path

Unfortunately, as the umbilical blew off, it took with it the only means to communicate between the pumping control station and the milking apparatus. As a result, by the time Buck actually pressed the button, the milking apparatus had no way of detecting it. Meanwhile, the first explosion was exactly what the crew’s boss had worried about: the flow reduction valve that prevented too much semen from entering the milking apparatus destroying itself under the increased pressure. With the governor destroyed—that was the shriek they all heard—there was nothing now to prevent the milking apparatus from going faster

and faster without limit. Of course, the faster it went, the harder the Tsignassian came, which dumped even *more* semen into the milking apparatus, creating a positive feedback loop that would only stop if the milking apparatus destroyed itself or the Tsignassian ran out of cum.

“Shit, what do we do?!” Jethro cried.

“I don’t know!” the intercom cried back. “Fuck; this wasn’t in the training!”

Panic ensued in the control room as the Tsignassian’s hips began to buck harder and harder, flinging truck-sized cum-bullets haphazardly through space. They crashed into transports and holding tanks, breaking them off and splattering into a billion tiny projectiles that rained down on the control room.

Meanwhile, the Tsignassian was feeling the effects. Engineered to reproduce—hence his copious stockpile of jism—his body quickly reacted to the increased demand for his essence. His balls squeezed hard, violently emptying stuttering bursts of underdeveloped gametes into his urethra to be sputtered out into space. Sensing that his reserves were draining fast, his body quickly redirected more nutrients towards his testes, which went into overdrive as they quadrupled their production rate, halving the time each gamete took to mature and producing twice as many of them at a time using special cells reserved for times of crisis just like this.

But all of that extra energy had to come from somewhere. The surface temperature and consequent glow on his chest, head, and groin all increased as his body adapted to the new demands. Meanwhile, the light in his extremities dulled. His wings lost their shimmer and appeared pale gray as energy was directed away from them and towards the Tsignassian’s core functions.

It suddenly got darker in the control room as the light from the dragon’s wings vanished.

“Oh, shit...” Buck murmured, looking out the window.

“Uh, sir, we might have a *really* big problem,” Jethro said. “The dragon’s wings...they just disappeared.”

“I’m looking, I’m looking,” the other end crackled. “There’s nothing in any of these training manuals about what to do, nothing about a backup emergency off, nothing about a manual override, nothing!”

With less light, the other changes on his body became more apparent, too. The dimness that started at his claws began working its way up his fingers and toes. It was probably for the crewmates’ benefit that they couldn’t see what happened next.

After the light went out completely over a patch of skin, the cells that made up the Tsignassian’s extremities began to lyse, committing mass suicide and being absorbed by the healthier cells next to them. Sensing that they were now the extremities and that the creature was still under duress, these cells then lysed and passed both their own and the energy of the cells they’d just eaten to the healthy cells closer to the Tsignassian’s core.

At a microscopic level, this might have seemed clean and efficient, but at a macro level, it was far less pretty. His fingertips dissolved, leaving nothing to hold onto his claws, and so they fell off one-by-one and began drifting aimlessly through space. His skin lysed faster than muscle and blood, which lysed faster than sinew, leaving only his bones intact. As a result, his skin disappeared, exposing layers of deteriorating muscle below it, which dissolved in patches, leaving holes where the bone could be seen underneath. His tendons and ligaments stretched out for miles, floating aimlessly until they slowly dissolved from the tips towards his chest.

With less and less muscle on his legs to thrust, replaced by huge, open, bleeding wounds, his body fell still, save for the rhythmic throbbing of his cock and clenching of his balls. But all the energy harvested from the rest of his body gave new life to his genitalia, and the sputtering bursts quickly filled back out to become strong, full spurts once again.

Unfortunately, those full spurts also fed new life to the milking apparatus, which resumed its ministrations on the Tsignassian’s penis with even greater vigor. All the while, the Tsignassian’s face contorted into an ever-deepening grimace.

“Boss, uh, all that I can see of the Tsignassian is his head, chest, and crotch,” Jethro said nervously. “You got any idea what to do, yet? Boss?”

The intercom was silent. One of the blasts from the Tsignassian's cock had knocked out communications. Jethro and Buck were stranded and had no idea what to do, but before they could lament their fates, the Tsignassian's penis sputtered—the heroic efforts his body was making to meet the demand placed on it had only increased the demand even more—and now even his sacrificed limbs weren't enough to keep up. The light slowly dimmed on his neck and abdomen, leaving his head, chest, and groin isolated as little islands of light.

"What the fuck?!" Buck cried.

Looking down, by the light of the Tsignassian's chest and groin, they could at last see what was happening to him. His skin dissolved away, leaving his organs exposed. His intestines and stomach slowly disintegrated, leaving their contents to float in space as a black, runny, sticky mass. His lungs and heart continued to function, weakly, as his other organs turned into a runny mass and disappeared, exposing his spine and ribcage. His face looked very pained, now, but he still made no attempt to wake up.

His neck, meanwhile, had done much the same, leaving only his blood vessels and spine intact as the tendons that linked his head to his body slowly disappeared.

Jethro threw up at the sight. The severity of the situation was beginning to dawn on both of them: the Tsignassian would not survive. The source of all their energy, their clothing, their buildings, their vehicles, even their emergency rations, was going to die, and it was all their fault.

It suddenly got much darker as the light on the Tsignassian's head went out.

"N-no!" Buck protested feebly, pressing his stubby hands to the window as he looked on helplessly.

The light from the Tsignassian's chest just barely let them see as his eyelids dissolved, releasing his already-liquified eyeballs into space before they dissolved, passing their energy back to him via a single cell before it lysed, too. The skin on his once-beautiful face rotted away, revealing staring, empty eye sockets that spoke of the terrible demand the milking apparatus placed on him. Though the crew members could not see it inside the Tsignassian's skull, his brain throbbed against the freezing vacuum of space through those empty eye-sockets. Yet his brain was no longer necessary: every cell in his body knew what to do when it came to this. The crevices in his brain began to widen as the gray and white matter eroded away over agonizing minutes.

And then the Tsignassian was, for all intents and purposes, dead.

Things suddenly started happening quickly. Though his semen production had slowed, and thus the demand had, too, there was still more demand than the Tsignassian's brain, skin, and eyes had provided energy to meet. His chest at last succumbed to the needs of his gonads, and it, too, dimmed as his body prepared to enter its terminal phase.

His lungs went first. Faintly illuminated by his genitals so very far away, they appeared as a paper-thin, barely reflective surface just as beautiful and elegant as his skin had been only hours ago. There was a shimmering effect as they started disintegrating, and in less than a minute, they were completely gone. His heart followed, beating until the very end, when its muscles at last atrophied to the point that it couldn't beat even once more. The outer wall disappeared, briefly revealing the valves and flaps inside before they disappeared.

His ribcage was empty, all life gone from it, and deathly still: a ruined husk of the once-beautiful Tsignassian.

Now all that remained of his flesh was the mountain of his prick, still valiantly trying to assuage the relentless milking apparatus that continually dogged it. But his penis's respite was finally coming. The light exuded at its tip flickered, struggling desperately to stay lit, but at last it failed and went dark. As his glans began to destroy itself, the cap of the milking apparatus fell off and drifted aimlessly into space, revealing the extent of the damage in gory detail.

The skin disintegrated, leaving his corpus spongiosum still engorged with blood but without anything to keep it contained. Blood began to seep from the many holes in the porous flesh, joining his cum in drifting aimlessly through space. As the spongy tissue dissolved like a marshmallow in acid, his proud member

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lost its turgor and began to deflate, slowing the loss of blood but dissolving faster as it went, exposing his tortured penis's urethra. As the structural elements of his penis shrank, the milking apparatus pads that stroked it fell off and went flying into space, and the rings that used to squeeze it now grasped at nothing but vacuum. They eventually fell off and began to drift aimlessly like the cap, still attempting to squeeze until their tether to the milking apparatus's control center broke. Then they went still.

Yet still the sensations on the disembodied testes continued to weakly spur them on. The Tsignassian's urethra, made of stringier stuff than the rest of his penis, lingered long after the surrounding tissue dissolved, flopping and flailing with each spurt and sending cum jetting off in every direction. Yet it, too, succumbed and began to shorten, until all that was left was a little nub where it joined his testes.

Without a penis left, the Tsignassian's strained orbs were all that remained. With nothing to brace against, they quivered against each other but could no longer contract. The light began to fade, and just before his scrotum dissolved, they pressed themselves together. The smooth, exquisite skin on the Tsignassian's scrotum disintegrated, taking with it the last of the light. In the pitch blackness, the two testes shivered exhaustedly against each other for a few long minutes. Then the left one disappeared, and the right one struggled to produce one last, little gob of cum.

But there was nothing to propel that last globule on its way. The testicle dissolved, leaving its last creation orphaned between the skeletal remains of the Tsignassian's legs.

Jethro turned grimly to Buck, and they exchanged nods. Buck opened a container under the console, handed a pill to Jethro, and took one for himself. They each downed their pills with deep swigs of the terrible coffee.

Life on the harvester ceased, leaving a motionless shell in the cold vastness of space. Together with the Tsignassian's frigid, indestructible skeleton, it would serve as a grim reminder for all eternity of the senseless tragedy.