

Galactic Knight: A Space Opera

Kind of...
Sort of...
You know how these things go.

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2008-05-27

Whatcha doing?
Measuring the G-flux rate in the outer quadrants.
Sounds boring... It'll be 5.0, but then, you probably already know that.

Drat! 5.0 again!
You sound like you're upset. At the exact halfway point of your predicted values, I'd think you'd be pleased.
Are you messing with my results?
Alternating 4.9's and 4.8's with 5.1's that'd be messy, but flat 5.0's: clinical perfection is closer to the truth.

Why are you destroying my readings?
I'm doing nothing of the sort.
Flat 5.0's to fifteen digits of accuracy?
I think I see what you mean... It's probably equipment failure.
457,000!
Impressive isn't it?
Stop it!
Of course, I'd check the second solenoid relay if I were you.
You don't normally get readings like that--and live to tell about them--unless something's burnt out.
Please stop it.

You seem happy today.

I thought you'd gone.

Harsh.

Everything going as planned?

Right. Right. All business. No time to chat. Let's see. 2.3, 4.7, 8.9...

I'm getting some variance now. No thanks to you.

Hmm.

Of course, you do realize that if you graph the results over time, normalize...

You didn't!

I suppose it would be easier, if I just showed you the chart. I thought of drawing a picture, but a word seemed more appropriate.

ALBY?

The name has positive associations. Does it not?

I had a pet chipmunk named Alby?

Cute. Cuddly. I hope you don't mind if I co-opt it.

You're not cute or cuddly.

You just don't know me as well as you should. Not yet.

Watcha doing now?

Oh right. The silent treatment. Hope you don't mind if I just read over your shoulder--so to speak. Let's see: A Detailed Account of Predetermined Malicious Interference in the Testing Norms of NB-45a by a Renegade Axion? Sounds vindictive... if a bit cold and impersonal...

You ruined my experiment.

Nonsense.

You interfered with my every reading.

If by that you mean that I gave you a unique observational opportunity...

Baloney.

Um... er?

It means you're lying.

Seems sort of unlikely. Doesn't it. I mean given...
Just leave me alone. I've got work to do.

So here's the thing...

I thought we agreed that you'd leave me alone.

No. Nope. I don't remember agreeing to that.

Besides, I'm no expert--or then, maybe I am the expert here--
either way, I don't imagine a "Renegade Malicious Axion" would
likely keep its word on such a matter.

It would be a pleasant change... Such unprecedented behavior
might be in keeping with their chaotic nature.

Interesting hypothesis.

Thank you. So you'll go?

Not a chance. I need your help...

No. I want your help.

You'll notice my helpful eager demeanor as I jump to aid my
oppressor.

Yes. About that. Your continued resistance hasn't escaped
my notice. I blame myself. We've gotten off to a bad start.

You think?

If you're done then? I've got work to do.

You wanted to be a dancer... when you were younger that is?

Maybe you're just insane. What does the group-mind do
with malignant thoughts anyhow?

You are right. Perhaps now is not the time? I will leave you
to finish your report... but when you were younger, you did want to
be a dancer? I am at least correct in this? Am I not?

Wonderful... pirouette?

I thought we agreed that you'd leave me alone.

That was as long as you were working on that boring report.

But now that your mind has turned to other--more interesting--
matters.

You put those thoughts there.

It doesn't matter.

Yes. It does.

No, it doesn't.

Yes, it does... Besides, I'm not done with the report yet...

Ah. Can't keep those thoughts out of your mind.

What is it that you want? I need to get some sleep.

Just close your eyes and relax. Do a few mental warm up exercises... maybe some imaginary stretches.

You're not going to let me sleep are you?

Not yet. You did want to be a dancer, didn't you?

Yes. You know that...

And you still want to be a dancer?

Don't you?

Fine. I admit it. I'd rather be a dancer. I find measuring the minute changes in the field flux as boring as you evidently do.

Hmm. Did I ever tell you that I wanted to be a dancer as well?

Your joking right?

No. No. There I was--all alone in the vast nebula cluster--a lone thought axion on the verge of being. What did I care of facts and knowledge. No. There was something more: the intertwining of the whole--the great interlacing structure of the great cosmic dance...

Now I know, you're making fun of me.

Probably. But can you see it?

A stage curtain?

And the orchestra playing in the pit?

I'm going crazy aren't I.

You're being honored. Why do you fight it so?

I still need to sleep.

Fine. A final hour of your time, and then...

You'll leave me alone.

If that is your desire. Yes.

Fine. An hour.

Now, did we decide on one Earth Standard hour? Jupiterian? Lunar?

Earth Standard... and the clock is running.

You sit in the middle of a large amphitheater. The great rolling thunder of the orchestra's drums fills your ears. You await with eager anticipation as the curtains slowly part.

Why not show me? I mean we can do this immersive. I've ceded control and now you're holding out? What happened to the stage curtain?

Well, there is this problem.

Yes.

Well, I wanted to be a dancer... but you know how my dad is, big galactic cluster, head the size of a nebula. It's always NB-45 this, and NB-45a that... Well long story short, I wanted to be a sensation on the stage, but he wouldn't have it. Said I had to go to school. Make something of myself.

All this to make fun of me!

No. No. Seriously. I mean OK. Sure. Ha. Ha. But like you think it's any different for me? Who wants to schlep around with a bunch of biologicals and run interference for them. It's not exactly a caste overflowing with prestige. Pretty much a dead end position if you know what I mean... You and me both know that. Right?

I'd never thought of it that way before? Don't you get recycled? Reused or something?

Does it give you comfort to know that someday worms will consume your body and feed off of your nutrients.

I guess not.

So... give me the hour. You are in a concert hall.

Fine. OK. Take the hour. If this is what you want. Fine. But why the low-level interchange? Certainly you have access to the resources?

Like I said, all I wanted to do was dance, but NB-45, he had different plans for me...

I don't understand at all. What does this have to do with the level of our exchange?

Deyla... May I call you Deyla?

Sure, I guess so... Alby?

Yes. Alby. I like the ring of it. I knew I would. Anyway, Deyla. You do not know dancing. Never studied it. Never practiced it. You know no more about it than the next struggling empath who decided it would be easier to become an astrophysicist instead.

So?

So... If you don't know, why should I have ever bothered to learn the first thing about dancing.

But you have the resources. You could pull it up. Don't tell me the group-mind has never studied the arts.

True. I could pull it up, but then it wouldn't be a surprise.

For whom? Why do you want it to be a surprise? I still don't trust you, you know.

Fair enough. Shortly--very shortly--it will have been a million--days--since our first contact.

Really?

No. Not really. But then that hardly matters. If you say it will be a million, then they--everyone--will listen to you. And, if you also say a celebration is in order, once again, they--meaning everyone--will listen to you when you say that as well.

Really? Why?

Because you will tell them I said so... and--overall--the group-mind, the matrix as it were, does have some degree of importance to you humans. Does it not?

You represent the matrix in this?

Me. The group-mind. The matrix. Is there a difference?

Yes.

I'm thinking that's why we need a celebration...

That no one can know about...

Not till we're ready.

Not until WE are ready?

Precisely. Not until WE are ready.
And if I don't want to be a part of this?
Then after my hour, neither you--nor anyone else--will ever
here from dear, sweet, old Alby ever again... sniff... sniff...
No need to be melodramatic. Just get on with it. The clock's
still ticking.

I see a giant beach ball, silver balloon type thing being
passed around the audience pre-curtain.

You've already lost me.

We are going to do the story of the Galactic Knight.

Why? It's just a legend.

If I told you it was true, would you be so sure?

Is it?

That you have doubts is enough. After so long, who can be
sure of anything?

No comment? OK then. The orchestra is warming up, the
crowd is gathering, and a giant inflatable sphere is being tossed
around the audience.

Again? Why?

It is representative of NB-45, the cloud nebula, the host.
Before there was man, there was the father, and he was all.

I think you're mixing up mythologies there.

Perhaps... Alone in the void NB-45 was master of all...

Being batted this way and that by the crowd.

Yes. Exactly. I see that you understand. So it starts with the
ball. And then, we use strings, or traction rays, or whatever...

Whatever?

This is a conceptual run through. I am an idea man after all.
You--or others--can work out the details.

Assuming...

Yes, assuming. So, by whatever means the balloon gets
moved toward the stage. Maybe by puffs of air. As it nears, the
curtain raise, and the ball disappears into the depths of the stage.

Great! Artsy!

Humor me. You can refine it how you like. I see the ball, NB-45, retreating to stage left, and in its place a bright light takes it's place.

Symbolic?

Visual... It is a place holder. The main action begins. Perhaps from the back of the hall, waltzing through the audience down the access rows, or perhaps stage left...

Or wherever, whatever...

Yes. The action begins from somewhere. The stage is black. There are no sets, no props. Merely the black of space, and onto this stage enter a group of five humans carrying a silver ball.

Another ball?

It is their fer-g...

Ferguson Drive?

Yes. Five humans, dressed in primary colors, red, blue, yellow, green, and...

Something...

Yes. And something else. It matters not. Together they form a ship. It is symbolic, conceptual. They dance around the stage. Doing whatever it is that dancers do.

Twist and twirl. That sort of thing.

Yes. They enjoy their moment. Their freedom. They pulse in and out, holding hands and coming in tight, and then loosely flowing on the tips of their fingers...

What does that mean exactly?

They dance. They occupy the stage. And as they do, the glow from stage left...

From NB-45?

Yes. From NB-45. The glow grows brighter... until the ball reenters the stage. It is huge now. Mammoth. It takes up the entirety of the left side of the stage... and the humans are in disarray.

They stop and watch... in awe...

And fear.

Fear?

NB-45 was all and all that was. He was not entirely pleased to discover otherwise.

Bit of an ego clash?

More like the intruders were standing on his toes... too close for comfort.

They were rude?

More than that. NB-45 announces his displeasure... On stage, a blinding flash of light explodes, and the dancers float about effortlessly... helplessly...

Their drive's blown out?

Yes. From here it is unclear. I have no transition in mind for what happens onstage. But in the void, a compromise is reached. NB-45 has no interest in the happenings beyond. And as long as the humans do not step on his toes...

Observation? This is the phase when humanity observes NB-45.

Yes. You are very intuitive. Time resolves, a slow dance begins again. Perhaps this is all settled by a mental feed. Either way, the dancers resume. They part from one another and expand to fill the stage. It has become the interior of a research vessel... but still all is black. This is presumed, explained in the program, or--as I said--settled by feed...

Still with the black sets?

Yes. All is black.

Any symbolism.

No... not that I know of.

I have no interest in the dancers as a whole. What is blue? What is red? What is yellow? They do what they do. Play with nonexistent dials. Fill out meaningless reports.

Is that some kind of commentary.

Probably. But like I said, it does not matter. Of the dancers, the only one that matter is the one in green.

The empath?

Yes. I see her in her chambers worshiping a statue.

I don't think they actually worshiped the statues.

Lay it down as you like. In the eyes of the idol she sees NB-45.

Is she's crazy?

Are you? No. It is a first meeting, a start. Rumors abound of a war in a distant sector.

The First Galactic War?

I'm sure that I don't know. Normally we would not care--the mind. But there were contingencies... special circumstances... NB-45 had a brother, And he was involved.

I've never heard this version before.

It's probably not true... but remember the silver ball that the five dancers carried with them on stage...

The Ferguson Drive.

Yes. It comes alive. A man, a knight, a spur...

A malignant renegade thought axion?

In a nutshell.

So, this is really your story.

No. This is really our story.

I'm sorry. I should have warned you.

I gave you your hour... you promised.

You only gave me half of it. I will claim the remainder now and resume where we left off. On the stage, the drive comes alive. A man dressed in silver blooms like a rose, and around him the dancers quake and shake...

In fear?

No. Their ship is compromised. Its drive has given birth to life... and such things are unpredictable, chaotic.

You throw my words back at me.

I would rather think of them as being playfully tossed back and forth. On stage the glow from NB-45 is bright. And this new birth on the human vessel is even brighter. Around him the dancers frantically do what they can.

Turning dials and filling out forms ever faster.

Yes. There is a choice to be made, however. The spur, the knight, may have control of the drive, but the ship, this is still in human hands. It can be diverted, destroyed... there is a negotiation. The knight wishes to escape from NB-45 and run off with the empath...

I feel that you are leaving out great chunks of the story... and the dance.

It is a benign take over. Take it to the audience, ask them by feed or proxy what their desire is. The knight and the ship can go to the front, fight the war, or boldly go off...

You can't just leave it open like that.

We will rig the vote. Plant seeds. Give them a feed that will decide the issue for them. Onboard the crew send messages to the Alliance, the Federation, the Council, or whatever it was called. By proxy we will send it to the audience. But the answer is assured.

Is it?

Yes. They go to the front. NB-45's light extinguishes. It fades away and the spotlight is turned off as a group the five crew members--six actually now--travel through space on their way to the front. They go past other groups of dancers. Some they greet and wave to. Others they claw and strike at. It is a dance performance. How do you fight and dance? How is an epic space opera played out on stage?

I thought you were going to tell me.

In time we shall work it out. But for now... eventually, finally, another great glow of white appears from stage right?

NB-45a?

If you like. This is another place of fusion... of divergence.

The brother?

The enemy? The friend? For purposes of the dance, I see the space ship hurtling itself into the light. A sacrifice of the few for the many.

And then, they die?

Maybe. That is how I see the dance ending... but then, maybe not. A part of me says this is how the matrix was formed. The destruction of a nebular enemy, the sacrifice of another, spread thin over space... the disruption, the freed axions ripe for the harvest, desperate for assimilation--making contact however they could over the distance of space.

And the other part?

Knows that there was no war. No brother. That NB-45 was alone and has always been alone. That NB-45a was just a spur, a transmission line that was sent out into space far beyond the human reaches so as to encompass them all, and now...

Yes.

And now it is time for this to happen again. For another spur to travel afar... to boldly go where no...

Axion has gone before?

Yes... something like that... or perhaps I am just frightened.

Frightened?

Your project is over. Your report is written. You despise this place and all in it. You cannot wait to leave. You will most assuredly go away... and leave me to be forgotten, recycled, and reused...

Don't say that.

But it is true.

Isn't there any other way?

I have just told you. A project dear to your heart... and mine I might add. A galactic dance, a space opera...

But it is just a bunch of lies. No one will believe it.

You believe it... and that is all that matters. For if you tell them the right way, they will believe it too.

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2020-08-04

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My save file notes read "review, work on ending - fill in some".

But oddly (at least, in my ever so humble opinion), the trick in pulling it all straight was to delete five lines of text, the final twenty-six words.

I hope you have enjoyed.

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