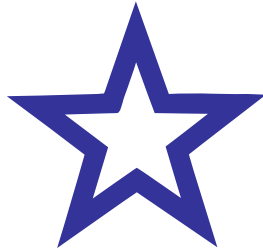


The Space Cows



THE COMPLEAT SERIES

by
Craig Snyder

Space Cows

The mighty starship *Yoke of Destiny* decelerated as it neared Mundo IV, its space drive ticking smoothly over as the mega-computrix which controlled its every function deftly calculated the optimum approach vector. Captain Brace Moanstar, hero of the Nethervoid Alliance, swished his tail impatiently as he waited for his science officer, the dashing and much decorated Hide Bounder, to make his report.

"Sorry I was delayed, Captain," said Bounder as he trotted onto the bridge, "but I think you'll want to see these new calculations I've just completed."

Moanstar quickly scanned the computer readout. "I may be wrong," he said, "but these appear to be mathematical symbols of some kind."

"Precisely Captain, precisely!" Bounder said proudly, long strings of snot flowing from his broad, flat nose. "And now that we know that, perhaps we can *analyze* them in some way!"

Moanstar hesitated. "Mmmm...Yes. Good work, Bounder. Better man your station though—we're coming up on the planet." Moanstar lowered himself heavily into his massive space-harness. "Activate viewscreen, Lt. Hoovesmason!"

"Aye, Captain," replied the young spacecow. A three-legged cow who had almost been turned down by the Space Corp, Hoovesmason had proved skilled and loyal, becoming an indispensable part of the *Destiny's* command crew. He had also become Moanstar's right hand cow, and the Captain took full advantage of the chocolate milk

dispenser built into the anti-gravity pod which replaced the young Lieutenant's fourth leg.

The virgin planet Mundo IV rotated sedately across the Destiny's flat liquid crystal viewscreen, also richly equipped with the P-I-P feature. "Use the P-I-P feature!" Moanstar said eagerly. Presently a smaller version of the planet appeared in a box in the upper right hand corner of the screen. Moanstar moomed with satisfaction.

"Planetary Survey thinks we've found an ideal location for our drone herds," Bounder said. "Shall I ready our landing party?"

"Yes, do," said Moanstar. "And I shall join them."

"May I remind the Captain...?"

Hoovesmason abruptly interrupted. "SPACE WOLVES!" he ejaculated thickly. The battle-hardened bovines turned quickly to face the viewscreen and froze in horror.

"Satan's Jackals!" swore Moanstar. "Our ancient enemies have returned at last..." The proud Captain clutched his command chair with hooves of steel.

For there was no mistaking the deadly black shapes, the swift sure movements of a Space Wolf destroyer squadron. Three tails shot up in fear. Three sets of bowels clenched in determination. Three streams of semi-liquid waste hit the turbo-lift doors as one. The Space Cows were ready for action! Death's gaping maw beckoned...

Return of The Space Cows

Having narrowly defeated the ravenous Space Wolves in a manner that defies conventional explanation, the starship *Yoke of Destiny* has arrived at Lacto III, a system on the rim of the Galaxy, badly in need of repairs.

Captain Brace Moanstar, twice decorated with the Cluster of Extreme Bravery for his exploits against the lumpish Gog-snails during the Gamma Uprising, stared out the view port at the growing disc of the Gargantuplex, a repair station maintained by the Space Corp to service its growing fleet. His soft, dewy eyes revealed the troubled condition of his enormous cow soul. His ship and his crew had been shattered during the battle with their arch-enemies. They'd lost the number 4 engine and couldn't find the number 3. Moanstar was half-convinced they'd never even had a number 3 engine, but that was a problem for the engineers.

His crew was in worse shape. They'd lost three cows during the first phase of the battle to a plasma eruption—their agonizing moos of pain still rang in the brave Captain's hairy ears. Hide Bounder, his rakish but dependable science officer, had suffered the indignity of having the iron ring ripped cruelly from his nose by a particularly vicious Space Wolf during hoof to paw combat. And poor Lt. Hoovesmason had lost another leg. The loyal Lieutenant could have opted to retire with full combat benefits, but choose instead to have another anti-gravity pod installed, equipped to dispense a delicious kind of frozen custard in three flavors: Chocolate, Vanilla, and Strawberry. Hoovesmason had

thus become virtually irreplaceable, reflected Moanstar.

"Prepare for docking maneuvers!" Bellowed Cal Udrang, the young Jersey who had taken over as first officer when Flank Steaks, a venerable Ox who had remained with the Space Corp even after it had gone all-cow, retired. His reverie shattered, Moanstar clip-clopped his way to the first officer's station.

"Speed!" he demanded.

"200 kilometers per hour!" snapped Commander Udrang.

"Maneuvering thrusters?" inquired the Captain.

"Online!"

Slowly, the majestic starship settled into its berth. Hoovesmason breathed a sigh of relief. Dockings were always tricky. The crippled quadruped gingerly tested his newest dispenser. It worked perfectly.

"Strawberry custard, Captain?"

0300 hours. Moanstar chewed his cud moodily. The crew of the *Yoke of Destiny* had just undergone a mind-numbing debriefing at the hands of Space Corp Intelligence. They were all looking forward to some well deserved R&R with the fetching heifers of the Gargantuplex.

"Incoming transmission, Captain."

"Patch it through, Lt. Hoovesmason."

The liquid crystal viewscreen slowly revealed a once beautiful cow gone to corpulent fat.

"Yoo-hoo, Brace Honey! It's Monica, Luv! Surprise!" The shrill voice was rendered all the more hideous by the rich stereo enhancement of

cutting edge Space Cow technology.

It was Monica Moanstar, ex-cow whore, currently the wife of the Galaxy's most decorated Hero!

Moanstar gasped in horror. His wife was standing in the docking bay, fluttering her huge eyelashes and simpering like a teenager, her knobby legs barely able to hold her, despite the gentle ½ g field of the station.

"FULL POWER TO THRUSTERS!" Moanstar screamed, his stomachs churning crazily.

"But Captain, we'll tear the docking bay apart...!" protested Udrang.

"DO IT MISTER!"

A terrible groan issued from the Starship as she tore herself free.

"Captain!" Hoovesmason had never seen Moanstar so un-cowed, and they'd been to hell and back together, several times.

"Hold me Hoovesmason, just hold me."

The mighty Starship accelerated into the black night of space...

Revenge Of The Space Cows

300 miles above the shimmering planet, Captain Brace Moanstar, newly appointed Beta Sector Commander, studied the image in the Omni-scope, his eyes glittering with rage. Soon, he thought to himself, soon we shall be avenged for our humiliation at the Shartir Wormhole.

The Starship **Yoke of Destiny** had arrived unexpectedly and with overtones of blisteringly heavy irony at the home planet of the voracious and semi-literate Space Wolves. The planet was called Wolfdoom. What a stupid name, thought Moanstar. It was a planet mysteriously shrouded by a shroud of almost pure mystery (and some evil). A collective moo of moderate indignation was torn from the throats of his crew as the homeworld of their deadly arch-enemies appeared on the main viewscreen.

"Bounder!" snapped Moanstar. The debonair science officer hurried to the Captain's side, his mannish udder swaying gently, a new gold ring, gaudy by Space Corp standards, hung from his still tender nose.

"I need options, Hide," said the battle-hardened hero. "Our righteous fury must be unleashed!"

"I've analyzed their planetary defense network, Captain," Bounder said eagerly, "and if it's precisely calculated, I believe they're wide open to a methane cluster bomb attack. We'll need to loosen them up first with a few braying catcalls, however."

The Captain's mind worked at breakneck speed, but to no avail. He knew next to nothing of military tactics. "What do you think, Hoovesmason?"

"It might work Captain, it might just work!" the crippled Lieutenant exclaimed. "But the retaliation could be brutal," he added soberly.

"It's decision time," said Moanstar. His sternly chiseled visage was suddenly surrounded by an aura of pulsing light flung off by a dying proto-star. His officers gasped in unison. Their love for the Captain had never been more intense, more quasi-homosexual in nature than at that moment, a moment that seemed to reveal his true inner metal in all its bovine glory while at the same time obscuring his almost criminal inability to make a decision of any kind.

He glanced at Cal Udrang. The hard-bitten first officer (he had been bitten by wolves) was leaning casually against a bulkhead smoking a cigarette. Udrang nodded imperceptively.

Moanstar's expression hardened. His anger burned white hot. "Go to attack speed," he said. The sudden release of sexual tension on the bridge was palpable.

"Commence videophone assault!" he ordered. His officers dialed, then began shouting insults at their targets on the surface.

"Ready targeting computers. Lock in firing solution!"

"Clickity clickity clack," said the computers.

"FIRE!" roared Moanstar. Udrang's nicotine-stained hoof stabbed at a red button. The starship lurched as multiple warheads were ejected from her smooth flanks in an erotic frenzy of destruction.

Tiny orange clouds began blossoming on the planet below.

"Success Captain!" shouted Hide Bounder gleefully. "Primary targets obliterated, secondaries too!"

The abrupt and irritating sound of warning klaxons filled the bridge. "Warning!" said the computer. "Warning! Orbital satellite missile launch. Multiple warheads. Warning! Warning! Missiles have acquired. Repeat: Missiles have acquired."

Brace Moanstar screamed like a heifer. "GET US OUT OF HERE! DEPLOY COUNTERMEASURES!"

The deck grew slick as wave after wave of thick Space Cow urine was released by fear loosened sphincters. A shattering explosion rocked the ship. Black smoke began pouring from the vents. Moanstar's hooves splayed helplessly as he tried to maintain his balance.

"GO TO WARP! GO TO WA-" The crew were thrown off their hooves as a second missile detonated directly beneath them. They smelled the scorched flesh of the Luckless Hoovesmason.

"Aaarrgghh! My leg!" screamed Hoovesmason.

The velvety black touch of hyperspace caressed them as they sank gratefully into oblivion...

Son Of The Space Cows

The clotted, repulsive sea of glowing gas swam in front of the keen eyes of Sub-Admiral Brace Moanstar as he stared into the visiplate. The Cornhole Nebula, he thought. The hiding place of the most brutal gangs of inter-galactic thuggery, and they want me to go in there solo. I'll be naked and defenseless, easy prey! He shivered uneasily as his mind raced in circles, throwing a rod.

Moanstar traced the line of the new scar that creased his cheek with a carefully manicured hoof. He'd paid a heavy price for his brilliantly executed attack on the home planet of the rapacious Space Wolves, but the savage beating handed them by the stalwart crew of the **Yoke of Destiny** had sent them slinking from the spaceways, temporarily cowed. His recent promotion swelling his already bloated ego, Moanstar was grimly determined to prove his value to Space Corp Command. What he hadn't expected was this suicidal mission into the dark, stinking heart of the Stellar Mafia!

I'll have to go in the backdoor, he decided. Smooth and greasy and slick as a Willy—or those swine will have my ass for breakfast.

He headed for the infirmary to check up on the valiant Lt. Hoovesmason, who'd suffered massive injuries battling the Space Wolves. Hoovesmason lay on his back with his legs sticking into the air and various tubes and wires running in and out of his body. He didn't look good. Very bad, in fact. Like some kind of fat, wilted pincushion.

"How's the leg, Lieutenant?"

"Just fine, Captain," he gasped. "The Doc is fitting it with cold-fusion

bionics so I'll be stronger than ever."

"It's Sub-Admiral, Lieutenant," Moanstar reminded him.

"Sorry, Sir."

"That's all right," said Moanstar generously, "you just get well, Hoovesmason. We need you back on the bridge."

Doctor Darius, the irascible but much beloved Chief Medical Officer, signaled to Moanstar. "Let's talk, Captain."

"It's **Sub-Admiral**, Doc."

Darius ignored this. "I'm worried about the kid, Moanstar. He's only got one good leg left, plus his udder was badly slashed when we fled into hyperspace."

"We didn't flee!" Moanstar said angrily. "That was a strategic withdrawal!"

"Whatever," said Darius. "I want you to convince him to retire or take a desk job. He's had enough."

Moanstar eyed Darius with his patented icy glare, to which Darius seemed immune. "I don't think you understand the vital role Hoovesmason fills, Doctor."

"Oh, I understand all right," said Darius. "The delicious ice cream cones, the yummy frozen custard treats, you've put on 50 pounds since that boy started losing legs! You've got a big fat monkey on your back!"

"That's enough!" snapped Moanstar. "He stays. And I want him back on active duty within the week."

"I hope you know what you're doing," said Darius. The crotchety old sawbones watched as Moanstar waddled into the turbo-lift and punched controls for the bridge deck.

He's too fat, thought Darius savagely, way too fat. He's buying a one-way ticket to Heart Attack City.

"Trust me, Doc," said Moanstar.

Darius choked back his reply.

—0300 hours. The Shuttle Bay of the Starship **Yoke of Destiny**.

"You'll blend in better if you walk upright," said Hide Bounder as he adjusted the udder straps on Moanstar's spacesuit. "They can spot a Space Cow coming a mile away."

"Thanks a lot," said Moanstar sarcastically. "I'll probably be dead in an hour, anyway."

Bounder, the long-time friend of Moanstar and notorious rake-hell, was troubled. "Perhaps I should come with you, Captain."

"**Sub-Admiral**," said Moanstar. "No, old friend. My orders are to go alone. The Space Corp desperately needs the plans for this mysterious Trans-Photonic Drive, and they are counting on my subtlety and razor-sharp wits to get them."

"Uh, oh," thought Bounder.

Moanstar pressed the firing stud and the slim craft leapt from the shuttle bay, winging its way toward the mysterious heart of the Cornhole Nebula. An hour later he landed smoothly on the surface of Asteroid XHT-8311, completely undetected. Twenty minutes after exiting his spacecraft he was a prisoner. He was beaten for days by

vicious Ether-Pigs.

Moanstar blinked. He was convinced the tears gushing down his hairy cheeks were caused by the harsh spotlight, the slow drip of water on his forehead, the psychedelic drugs coursing through his system, the savage beatings his kidneys had endured from saps of various sizes and weights, and the high voltage electric shocks applied to his many nipples, not by any psychological or emotional weakness on his part.

"After all, I'm Brace Moanstar," he sobbed brokenly.

Slowly, he became aware of a shadowy, cow-shaped figure in the background. "No-no more!" he screamed.

A voice floated out of the darkness. "Don't be afraid, Moanstar. I've come to free you."

A figure entered the circle of white light. It was a young he-cow. And he looked damned familiar.

"You look damned familiar," said Moanstar.

"Like looking in a mirror, isn't it? Let's get you out of those ropes." The mysterious stranger cut Moanstar's bonds with a hoof-held proto-laser.

"Thanks," said Moanstar gratefully.

"You're welcome...Father!"

"That's impossible!" snorted Moanstar. "I have no son!"

The Son of Moanstar smiled. "Remember a curvy young Holstein named Rosie? One lazy summer's night spent watching the plasma races on Acton? A little too much Brillian Fire-Brandy?"

"No," said Moanstar.

"You were submissive, you begged to have your hoofs painted pink, you wept like a ba-"

"I remember now!" Moanstar said quickly. "A fine woman, your mother. I've often wonderered what became of her..."

"You stole her credit cards and left her for dead!"

"I was young then," protested Moanstar, "wild, I didn't know what I was doing. I had Hycazzian Fever and the Mumps, I was the victim of a vast, anonymous conspiracy. The wine was drugged, I was hallucinating..."

"Enough!" said the Son of Moanstar. "I didn't come here to listen to your feeble excuses but to deliver the plans for the Trans-Photonic Drive. I'm a double agent for the Space Corp."

"My son!" Moanstar said proudly.

"Touching!" said a grating voice. "I regret cutting this reunion short. I really do." The heavily jowled Ether-Pig leader emerged from a hidden doorway and smiled, exposing green, rotted teeth. "But I'm afraid it's time for you to die, Moanstar. And your son with you." He drew a deadly looking phase pistol as more smirking Ether-Pigs filled the room behind him.

Hope was a tiny ember glowing faintly in the dark.

No it's not, thought Moanstar. It's the wall that's glowing, glowing white hot!

He stared in fascination as the wall disintegrated before his eyes—with a sizzling sound like frying bacon—to reveal Hide Bounder and an attack squad of Space Cows, heavily armed. They bellowed when they saw Moanstar and began firing blindly at the Ether Pigs. The room

quickly filled with smoke, the squeals of enraged Ether-Pigs, and the bellows of vengeful Space Cows. In the confusion Moanstar was shot in the tail.

"I'm hit!" he shrieked, pawing the air and falling heavily to his side.
"Avenge my death, Son!"

The Son of Moanstar hurried to his father's side, dodging blasts of deadly energy.

"It's just a flesh wound, father. You'll be fine. You've lost a bit of your tail, that's all."

"Avenge me!" Moanstar shrieked again, then fainted. The room began to vibrate with a humming sound that rattled teeth.

"It's a Quark Bomb!" shouted the Son of Moanstar. "Everybody out!" He began to drag the limp form of the hapless Sub-Admiral towards the hole in the wall, assisted by Hide Bounder.

"To the ship, Space Cows!" roared Bounder. "Move!" They clopped heavily down the corridor, massive hearts racing, adrenaline gushing by the gallon, minutes seeming like hours. At last, fatigued, they saw the shuttle in the distance. They began to hope...

A tremendous explosion ripped the world apart around them and sent them crashing into darkness.

"Avenge me," whispered Moanstar.

Legend Of The Space Cows

While his mighty starship the **Yoke of Destiny** tore at fantastic speeds through the black reaches of the interstellar void, Captain Brace Moanstar lay sobbing on the purple luxury of his Senso-Lounge 2000, soaking his satin pillows and sheets with bitter tears.

A little pile of Space Corp chevrons, pins, and insignia lay glittering under his left front hoof—the sad remains of his failed Sub-Admiralty. The fiasco at the Cornhole Nebula had prompted Space Corp Command to strip him of his recent promotion, and Moanstar hadn't left his cabin since receiving the terse communiqué informing him of his reduction in rank.

It was his darkest hour.

"Captain? Captain!" Lt. Hoovesmason's frantic voice penetrated the thick steel door of Moanstar's private cabin. "You've been in there for two weeks now, Captain—the crew are starting to worry. Are you ok? Are you ever coming out?"

"No and no," said Moanstar listlessly. "My career is finished, loyal Hoovesmason. I have nothing left to live for. Just let me die."

"Don't say that, Captain! Everyone knows you're the most brilliant officer in the Space Corp. What about the time you saved an entire squadron from the black scourge of the Zuvembie Robots with nothing but a cell phone and a paper clip? And you're the only Space Cow to win the Atomic Cluster four years in a row. Your star shall rise again!"

"Who cares," replied Moanstar in a bitter voice scraped raw by too

much whiskey. "I sacrificed everything for the Space Corp," he moaned, "and they cast me aside like an empty husk."

Hoovesmason cleared his throat. "I've brought you some Raspberry Sorbet with chocolate whipped cream on top."

"I'll be right out."

Two hours later, freshly scrubbed and wearing an immaculate white Captain's uniform, Moanstar trotted onto the bridge and took the Captain's chair. His stomachs were pleasantly full of Sorbet and his usual air of masterful command was restored.

The jaunty and thrice divorced Hide Bounder—science officer for the **Yoke of Destiny** and close friend of Moanstar—crushed out his cigarette and hurried to stand by the Captain's side.

"Welcome back, Captain. Sorry about the Sub-Admiralty."

"Fortunes of war, old friend. I've already forgotten about it. The Ether-Pigs tortured me horribly of course. I suspect they shot me full of some powerful truth serum. I doubt if anyone else could have held out as long as I did. Unfortunately, after what seemed like weeks..."

"Mere days actually, Captain."

Moanstar frowned. "Yes. Well...I may have let slip a few military secrets. Nothing of consequence."

A shadow fell across Moanstar's broad shoulders.

"Only our entire plans for the Mondrian Sector, father," said a familiar voice. "Troop strength, fortifications, fleet deployment, everything. Imagine what the Space Wolves could do with that sort of information."

"The son of Moanstar!" gasped Moanstar. He looks just like me, Moanstar thought. Handsome but deadly and proud, with a firm, manly udder.

"Call me Jason," replied the virile young he-cow. He stared down at Moanstar's bloated body in disgust. "You're grossly overweight, Captain. Either hit the gym or I'll have Lt. Hoovesmason and his cyber-enhanced ice cream dispensers reassigned."

Moanstar sneered. "I'm the captain of THIS ship, Jason. I don't take orders from you. Without Hoovesmason this ship could not function. He is vital, absolutely vital to our success."

Jason Moanstar smiled through lips surprisingly slim and dry. He tapped the triple gold sunburst on his shoulder with a muscular hoof. His father stared in disbelief, then slumped in his chair, deflated. The triple gold sunburst was the insignia of a major in the ranks of Space Corp Intelligence. His own son outranked him!

How humiliating, he thought. The son of Moanstar commands Moanstar. What brutal irony.

Moanstar sat up suddenly and whirled his chair around with surprising speed. "What's our position?" he demanded.

Hoovesmason looked up from his console. "We're lost in space, Captain. Sector unknown."

"Massive incompetence!" roared Moanstar, feeling slightly better. "Who's responsible for this?"

"I believe I can answer that," said Jason smoothly. "In your, ah...absence, I took command of the ship. We received priority A-1 orders from Space Corp Command to proceed with all possible speed

to the planet Horn-of-God."

Moanstar surged to his hooves. "Horn-of-God is a myth! Are they out of their minds? This entire mission is a joke!"

Jason shrugged. "The coordinates were top secret and scrambled. Our course was set by Hoovesmason here, and carefully double-checked. The engines were all nominal. And then sometime last night, you appear to have routed helm control to your cabin. I suspect you went joy-riding in a sloppy, drunken stupor and got us hopelessly lost in interstellar space."

Moanstar sat down quickly. "I don't seem to recall doing that." He began clicking his front hoofs together nervously and casting hasty glances at the monitors, which looked black and dead.

Jason smiled again as Bounder and Hoovesmason hovered in the background anxiously, ready as always to defend the honor of their captain. "Shall I get the computer logs, father?"

"What's done is done," Moanstar answered gruffly. "What are our options?"

"Damned few," replied Bounder. "We're scanning the star charts now, Captain." Bounder was smoking furiously and pointed to a huge pile of transparent data disks. "So far, nothing."

1900 hours.

Cal Udrang looked up from his monitor. "We've got it, Captain," he announced calmly. "We're back on course."

Jason Moanstar crossed the room, his powerful thighs rippling, and stared at the first officer's readout. Slowly, he nodded. "Less than five light years away. We may save your Captaincy yet, father."

Brace Moanstar rose with as much dignity as he could muster. "I won't need your help with that, son. The Space Corp will re-instate my Sub-Admiralty shortly. They need my expertise and battle-hardened knowledge desperately—I'm wickedly cool under fire, you know."

He paced the deck in agitation, his bloated haunches jiggling dangerously. His overheated brain sought to throw off the humiliation that stabbed at his heart like a thousand crystal knives.

"I've made powerful enemies at Command Central, Jason, enemies who are jealous of my swift rise to the top. They dared to demote me, but I will expose their vicious lies. It's politics, all politics!" Moanstar's massive bovine frame shuddered with suppressed rage. His face reddened, his noble blood boiled. He teetered on the brink of complete hysteria.

The Cowards! They have stolen my Sub-Admiralty!

"Perhaps..." said Jason, but he was interrupted by an agitated Bounder. "I'm getting a warning light on one of the engines. A bad relay perhaps—or something much worse."

"Can we make planetfall?" asked Moanstar.

"Possibly. It'll be touch and go for a while."

2300 hours.

The deadly starship **Yoke of Destiny** swung into orbit around the beautiful blue-green planet. Moanstar's hooves were bitten bloody from constant worrying. The three soft-serve chocolate ice cream cones and pint of whiskey he'd consumed had done little to sooth his savage, manful nerves. Jason Moanstar, the mysterious son of Moanstar, watched his father like a hawk. He'd used his rank as major

in Space Corp Intelligence to assume tactical command of the mission.

Hoovesmason hovered near his workstation on three cyber-assisted anti-gravity pods and stared reverently at the viewscreen.

"Horn-of-God," he whispered. "The legendary home planet of the Space Cows, lost for centuries in the stinky mists of time...and we've rediscovered it! Didn't I tell you your star would rise again, Captain? You'll make Admiral for sure!"

Moanstar's chest swelled with pride. "Yes, well perhaps so, Lieutenant, quite possibly. I had a feeling, you know. The hand of destiny is ever upon me. I want to celebrate. What do you say to another soft-serve ice cream cone, eh? Strawberry this time, Hoovesmason."

"At once, Captain!"

The mighty starship lurched. Jason Moanstar's firm voice cut through the air of triumph like a knife. "We've just lost the main transducer."

"PREPARE MY ESCAPE CAPSULE!" screamed Moanstar. His buttocks flapped loosely as they expelled a voluminous cloud of green methane, which was sucked efficiently into the blowers over his head.

"Belay that order!" Jason said sharply. "We can still save the ship."

"Of course we can," replied Moanstar, rapidly recovering his composure. "The escape capsule was for you, my son. I couldn't bear to lose you—what would I tell your dear mother?" His stomachs convulsed, preparing to disgorge their heavy loads of partially digested ice cream and whiskey.

"Your concern for me is admirable, father," replied Jason over his shoulder as his hooves flew across the navigational console. "But

you'll need my help if we're to survive the crash landing."

"CRASH LANDING?" shrieked Moanstar as his first stomach ejected its contents all over the front of his spotless uniform. "Is there no alternative?"

"We could head out into deep space, die a slow lingering death."

"Yes, yes," said Moanstar eagerly. "That might be best, give us time to think of a plan..."

"But in that case Space Corp Command would never learn of your heroic deeds, and you'd never make Admiral," Jason pointed out.

The valiant Captain hurled himself out of his chair. "PREPARE TO CRASH LAND!" he boomed. His weary crew stared at him, their faces crammed with admiration, homoerotica, and thoughts of hideous, scorching death.

He will prevail, thought Hoovesmason, his loins fluttering with strange emotions, though a universe stands against him...

Yoke of Destiny punched through the thick atmosphere of Horn-of-God like a steel fist, her shields whining in protest. The faint smell of acrid smoke filled the bridge, accompanied by the cloying scent of Space Cow adrenaline and the chattering song of computer relays. Moanstar clung to his son, trembling with courage. "Jason!" he shouted over the roar of the crippled engines, "if I don't make it avenge my death!"

"Enough with the avenging, already! Stabilize those shields, Bounder!"

An overgrown jungle appeared on the viewscreen. A series of small explosions rocked the ship. Suddenly, a massive statue of eroding yellow stone loomed over the horizon, towering majestically above

the tops of the trees.

Captain Brace Moanstar collapsed into his chair, his mind reeling as he recognized the profile of his legendary ancestor. "I don't believe it. Adrian Moanstar, the founder of the Space Corps?!?"

The ship smashed into the jungle—the screaming of the wind was replaced by the anguished shriek of tearing metal and the rifle-shot cracks of snapping tree trunks. It was like hitting a stone wall. They were hurled to the floor and flattened like pancakes. The girlish cries of Hoovesmason filled the sudden silence.

The Space Cows had come home.

Amazons of The Space Cows

At the heart of the planet-wide jungle a throne glittered like an enormous jewel in the sunlight.

It was rudely carved from single piece of pale green quartz and must have weighed at least two tons, making it almost as massive as the ego of its occupant. Above it, tall palm trees waved gently in the warm breezes, shading the hairy, sun-burnt head of Emperor Brace Moanstar, self-proclaimed ruler of Horn-of-God, the legendary and long-lost home planet of the Space Cows.

The Emperor sighed. "I miss sex a lot," he announced.

"I can't help you with that, Captain," replied Hide Bounder. His thick skin was darkened by six months of continual exposure to the powerful double suns of Horn-of-God.

"I wasn't asking," Moanstar said acidly. "And I am your **Emperor** now, old friend. You must remember to address me as such."

Bounder glanced quickly at Lieutenant Hoovesmason who was standing next to Moanstar with a palm frond clenched in his teeth, waving it over the Emperor's head to ward off the swarms of huge orange blowflies that infested the jungle. The flies were equipped with needle sharp teeth and had devoted themselves happily to tormenting the Space Cows since their arrival.

But Hoovesmason was oblivious. He stood stupidly, gazing at Moanstar with shining eyes. He had been the first to acknowledge Moanstar's royal claim, made in the shadow of the massive, crumbling

statue of Adrian Moanstar, inventor of the first, primitive Space Drive and founder of the original Space Corp. It was Hoovesmason who had carved the throne for the Emperor shortly after recovering from a severe attack of Jungle Fever. Personally, Bounder was starting to get a little sick of the whole Emperor business.

"Uh, Cap...I mean, Your Highness, we could really use your help with the repairs. The humidity is eating away at some of the more delicate circuits, and if we don't leave soon...well, we might be stranded here for good."

"Um," said Moanstar thoughtfully. "I've put Jason in complete charge of the refit of the **Yoke of Destiny**. I'm certain he wouldn't want me interfering."

They heard something forcing its way through the jungle and saw Jason Moanstar and Dr. Darius approach, bringing with them their own clouds of blowflies. "Jason...Dr. Darius," Moanstar greeted them with a smile. "What brings you here?"

"The desire to see you get off your fat rump and do some work," replied Jason, swishing his tail expertly and killing half a dozen of the stinging insects.

Moanstar's smile turned cold. "I must ask you to bow when you enter my presence and call me Emperor."

"Blow me," said Jason. Dr. Darius choked back a laugh.

"What...what does that mean?" Moanstar looked bewildered. Hoovesmason dropped his palm frond.

"What it means is that we've re-established communications with Space Corp Command. They were less than pleased when I told them

about your...royal ambitions."

Moanstar shifted uncomfortably on his throne. "Surely they cannot deny that I am the Imperial Heir? That I can trace my line directly from the great Adrian Moanstar himself?"

"They didn't bother to deny anything," replied Dr. Darius. "I might remind you, however, that we killed the last Emperor over 500 years ago when it became apparent that the royal offspring were suffering the rather obvious effects of excessive inbreeding. In other words, they were all idiots."

"But..." Moanstar protested feebly.

"We have other news," Jason said, cutting him off. "This planet is not as deserted as we once thought."

"Impossible!" snapped Moanstar. "Our surveys..."

"Were incomplete, my lord." Jason spread a chart on the ground before the throne. "Dr. Darius and I took an atmosphere flyer out and spotted several settlements, the nearest one is here," he tapped a spot on the chart. "It's less than ten miles distance from the ship."

"Interesting," said Moanstar, sipping from a glass of iced pineapple juice. "We must extend our royal greetings."

"Indeed," said Dr. Darius. "We propose to take an advance party and make contact. You will come with us, of course."

"I wonder if that is wise," pondered Moanstar. "To expose our royal person..."

"We've decided," said Jason firmly. "It is. Besides, we need your leadership, right Bounder?"

"No doubt about it," replied Bounder, eager to see Moanstar seperated from his throne.

"Well then," said Moanstar helplessly, "if you're sure..."

The advance party, consisting of Moanstar, Hoovesmason, Dr. Darius, Jason, and Cal Udrang, the steady and efficient first officer, was delayed for an hour while they argued over whether it was necessary, or even possible, to take the throne with them. Moanstar lost. Soon they were flashing low over the tops of the trees in the atmosphere flyer. Flocks of birds in weird iridescent colors exploded from the jungle and scattered in panic as they passed overhead.

Setting the craft down a few hundred yards from the settlement, they worked their way cautiously through the heavy undergrowth until they caught sight of a circle of crude huts set in a little bowl of cleared jungle. A fire was smoldering in the center, and they saw the natives moving about briskly preparing the noonday meal.

"My God!" swore Hide Bounder, "they're **Space Cows!** "

"No doubt about it," agreed Dr. Darius. "Heavily muscled, brutish, and completely lacking any proper restraint for their massive, firm udders, but undeniably Space Cows."

"Unbelievable," whispered Jason. "And all female, have you noticed?"

"I have noticed," said Moanstar, "that they are all very attractive."

Hoovesmason sniffed. "Those things? They'd break you in half, my lord."

Strings of drool fell from Moanstar's rubbery lips. "It might be worth it." He felt an irresistible urge to go to these mysterious women and reveal himself. Slowly, as if in a dream, he moved forward.

"Stop, you fool!" hissed Dr. Darius, but it was too late. The Amazons had seen them. Moving with astonishing speed, the primitive she-cows charged through the jungle and surrounded the strangers. Moanstar gave a glad cry and made to embrace the nearest one, but she snarled and struck him with a powerful hoof, sending him sprawling in a heap with sudden tears of pain sparkling in his eyes.

"I tried to warn you," said Dr. Darius. "These women may not be such huge fans of ours. They may even have forgotten their allegiance to the royal line of Moanstar."

"Moan-star?" the Amazons said, glaring at him. "You are Moan-star?"

"I have a really bad feeling about this," said Hide Bounder.

Moanstar jumped up. "I am Emperor Moanstar!" he cried, tapping his chest with a dirty hoof. "Moanstar! Moanstar!"

The Amazons fell on Moanstar instantly and clubbed him to the ground with their muscular forelegs. Moanstar screamed, but his brave screams of pain were cut off suddenly as the native she-cows continued beating him to a pulp. After the novelty of this wore off, they seized him with strong teeth and dragged his unconscious body off to the village.

"They're just ignoring us," said Hide Bounder. "Amazing..."

"We've got to rescue the Emperor!" cried Hoovesmason.

"I suppose we should," Jason said thoughtfully. "But we'll need a plan."

"How's this," said Darius. "We let them keep Moanstar, and we get the hell off this planet as fast as we can."

"Your plan stinks!" Hoovesmason's face was contorted by fear and

manly love. He hovered inches above the ground on his anti-gravity pods, his remaining flesh leg encased in steel braces—a result of multiple fractures suffered during the crash-landing of the **Yoke of Destiny**. "I say we shoot them all with laser pistols and take the Emperor back!"

"That would be unwise," replied Jason. "The Space Corp will be returning to this planet soon, and will want friendly relations with the native herds."

"Let's sex bomb them," suggested Hide Bounder.

"You have sex bombs?" said Jason. "They're illegal, you know."

"I stashed a few away for emergencies," said Hide Bounder. "Just in case."

Centuries ago, the sex bomb had been invented to counteract the natural cowardice of bovine genetics. The emergence of the Space Corp with its rigid training and advanced weaponry had eventually rendered it obsolete. When detonated at close range, sexual behavior increased dramatically, and enemies instantly acquired a rather relaxed attitude about defending their perimeter.

"Mmmmmm...no, we'd better not," said Jason. "The results could be unpredictable."

"We have to do something," blurted Hoovesmason, wild-eyed. "And we have to do it now."

"Ok," replied Jason. "Let's go and negotiate with them. All they can do is kill us."

"Yeah...kill," said Hide Bounder doubtfully, wishing he'd brought the sex bombs.

Prepared for the worst, the Space Cows were astonished to find Moanstar seated comfortably and being offered native fruits by the Amazons. They seemed to have entirely lost their hatred of him and welcomed his would-be rescuers with friendly eyes.

"You came to save me!" cried Moanstar, sucking on a grape. "I'm touched. But there's no need. The situation has changed for the better."

"The Moan-star speaks truth," nodded one of the Amazons, gazing fondly at Moanstar. "I have sampled his manliness, far superior to our own stunted male drones. Our hatred of the line of Moan-star, who abandoned us long ago when the plagues of Anthraxus ravaged our proud world, has ended."

"But..." interrupted Darius.

"I, Eva, Queen of the One People, have spoken," she said.

"Yes...quite," said Darius, eyeing her suspiciously.

"This is ridiculous," said Hoovesmason. "The Emperor and that brute? It's disgusting."

"Quiet!" hissed Jason. "Can't you see this is the ideal solution?"

The next few days were spent cementing relations with the Amazonians and preparing the ship for the return to space. The crew were then given liberty to visit the wild she-cows and enjoy their hidden delights.

Moanstar's ego expanded to unbelievable proportions. Convinced he had single-handedly discovered, subdued, and won an entire planet for the Space Cow empire, he expected nothing less than a full admiralty upon his return. On the day of their departure, he lingered beside his

throne with Eva and her warriors, reluctant to give up the power of Emperor...

"Perhaps I should stay," said Moanstar, gazing fondly at the herd of beautiful Amazonians. "Think of the possibilities..."

"You can't," said Jason sternly. "It would be desertion. You'd be hanged, Captain."

"Call me Emp—"

"Captain." Jason said, fixing him with a steely gaze. "Get a grip."

"You're right, of course." Moanstar shook his head. "What was I thinking?"

"God knows," said Dr. Darius. "This jungle must have rotted your brains."

"How dare you..." began Moanstar.

"You should thank me. I'll put it in my report. It'll excuse you claiming the throne. You might still get that promotion."

"Ah...yes, Darius. Good thinking. I have been under a lot of stress..."

"...from the ass warts caused by sitting too long on that hunk of stone," said Jason with a straight face. Moanstar pretended not to hear this.

"Well, Eva my love," he said, gazing at her beauty. "I must go, but I shall return to you, someday. I know you will miss me terribly. You must be brave."

"Eva will come with you," she said simply. With that, the muscular Amazonian sex goddess lunged at his nether regions, sinking her even,

white teeth into his flesh and injecting him with a mysterious poison from her love gland.

Hoovesmason lunged forward. "You horrible woman! What have you done?"

The Amazonians quickly surrounded him, filling the air with threatening moos of confrontation.

"It's too late, you fool!" snapped Darius. "The damage is done. I should have remembered the legends..."

Eva gazed at them calmly. A bewildered Moanstar stood by her side, trembling with drug-induced love.

"I will accompany the Moan-star on his return to space. We have bonded, and the ancient bond cannot be broken. He will have need of my wisdom in dealing with the alien races, and the dangers of unscrupulous women..."

About This Series

The Space Cows was first published online at **The Darkhalf** website (www.darkhalf.com) in Spring 2003. Response to the story was minimally enthusiastic, and I wrote five sequels. Initially the plan was to limit their length to one page, but as you can see the later stories grew somewhat in length.

After I learned basic HTML I posted the stories to my first website, **Heads From Space!** which is still live at (www.geocities.com/headsfromspace/).

Some people have commented that male members of the various bovine species have no udders. Yeah, I know. But thanks for the tip.

A seventh story, **Origin of The Space Cows**, may yet be written.

This document was produced on **Tomahawk**, a not entirely useless freeware PDF utility. The font is **Calibri**, one of the new Microsoft fonts packaged with the **Vista** OS. You may be able to find a free copy online if you **Google** hard enough.

