

Space Pop #1

by XXXX

The Starship Emphasis was not having a good day, as two of their crew members had already died of dysentery because someone shat in the water again.

“How do they even do it?” Medical Supervisor Tom told Bartender Bob. “All the water is in the tank. How do they get to the tank? Is it the superintendent? Is he opening the tank and shitting in it? Did he lose his key? I don't understand.”

“What's creepy,” said Bob, cleaning out the glasses of the patrons who just left, “is that this has happened twice. Once, I understand. Freak accident. Stuff like this happen.”

“They do?”

“But twice. That's a problem.”

It would have not been so much of a problem, had they not been stuck in the same nebula for twelve years, due to some unforeseen, yet unknown phenomena involving dark matter, which kept the universe together as if it were glue. The Emphasis slid right through one huge dollop of it, and they have been immobile ever since.

“You know,” said Tom, “for replicated alcohol, this stuff isn't so bad.” He downed the last drop of a glass of gin and pushed it toward Bob. “The flavor's supposed to fade or something, isn't it?”

“It is,” said Bob. “The more you replicate, the less it should resemble what it originally was. I'm actually surprised it still comes out as gin at all. The other day they were replicating burgers and what came out looked like vomit, moved, and spoke.”

"It spoke?"

"It did. I don't know how it works."

"Well, what did it say?"

"It asked to die."

"Did they kill it, then?"

Bob poured Tom another glass of gin. He said: "They ate it."

"That's sick. The things that happen in this ship are sick," said Tom.

"Why do we go on."

"If you're implying that we just give up, then THAT'S what's sick. You see that?" He pointed to Tom's medical badge, a variation of the Courageous Cosmos Congress (CCC) logo, with the Caduceus.

"That's about perseverance and determination. We can't quit. We're going to get out of here."

"Who shits in the water tank, though? That's all I'm saying. Doesn't it bother you that you're in a ship with that kind of people in it? In the middle of space? Along with food that come to life?"

"What bothers me is that there aren't enough people to help me in this space bar anymore," said Bob.

"What happened to Mervin?"

"Dysentery," said Bob.

"Oh, right," said Tom. "Why don't you put up a sign or something? Or get Jeddah from navigation? He doesn't have much to do now."

Just as Bob was about to answer, there was an explosion. Both of them looked in the direction of the hallway. The door opened and some junior security officers ran inside looking as if they were involved in whatever blew up.

"Lock it lock it lock it lock it lock it," said Junior Security Officer Jill.

"What the fuck is going on?" said Bob.

"We tried replicating pizza," said Junior Security Officer Lance.

There were four of them, all of them teenagers. They came along the Emphasis as a little exchange program with some local school. They forgot how it worked. Something about funds. They were barely nine when they came aboard.

"Dammit," said Bob. "We told you that stuff's become unstable now."

"Didn't you hear about the burger abomination?" said Tom.

"LOCK IT," said Jill.

Bob fiddled under the bar for the remote, but it was too late.

The door opened and there was some vague human shape covered in cheese making its way toward them.

"IT'S OOZING MOZERELLA GOODNESS," said Junior Security Officer Zeus.

He tried to run for it, but Jill and Junior Security Officer Andy held him back.

"NO YOU FOOL," said Andy.

It walked toward them in a slow, viscous gait.

The six of them moved backward toward the windows in proportion.

"This is really awkward," said the pizza. "But I think I gained sentience or something. You really shouldn't replicate something more than fifty times."

"Holy shit," said Tom. "It happened again."

The door opened again and Senior Security Officer Johnston appeared in the doorway.

"What's going on in—what the fuck who's under that molten mozzarella?"

"It's the pizza," said Bob. "It lives."

"You tried replicating that crap again?" said Johnston. "I hid the capsules already!"

"You should've destroyed them," said Bob.

"Well what do we do with it?" said Johnston.

"EAT IT," said Zeus.

"Dispose," said Tom. "This is very unsanitary and it gets all over the floor."

"You do realize I'm right here?" said the pizza.

"Let's keep it," said Bob. "Who could resist it?"

"YES WHO," said Zeus.

“Besides, I need someone to help me around here,” said Bob. “You think you can handle mixing some drinks, pizza?”

The pizza thought about it for a while. “Well, I suppose I can.”

So it was settled, after some dispute over why pizza shouldn't be eaten (Zeus), about why this is probably unsafe (Johnston), and why this is very weird and the situation should not be made weirder (Tom). In the end, however, Bob won; and the Pizza was given a new home in the space bar.

Such was just another half hour in the Spaceship Emphasis.

