

Primetime on Primus V

Literary Genre III: Science Fiction and Fantasy

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It has been said that the greatest thing one can do is to give his life in the service of others. Out here on Primus V the greatest thing you can do is live one more day.

Iontach stood at the edge of a platform. The smell of saltwater sprayed against him as he descended closer to the rocky waters below. A silver camera sphere followed just above him. It moved about capturing his every movement. He paid it no attention as his focus was elsewhere. The polyurethane gloves he wore warmed, and electricity sizzled as his grip tightened on the trident. The deafening roar of the crowd crashed against his ears. He barely heard the horn of battle blare, but hear it he did. Iontach knelt down, his gaze on a shadow in the water. A shadow growing larger by the second. Layers of ablative armor extended out of his collar and covered mouth. A Selachimorpha, the size of a bus, with its eight-foot dorsal fin leapt out of the water. Its mouth, wider than seven men, open displaying rows of blood-stained teeth. Iontach waited till the last second then leaped from his platform diving toward the waters below.

The city of Scogliera is one of the largest found on the Primus V. That isn't saying much as there are only three cities and a handful of villages on the aquatic world. This is unfortunate for Jericho of the Pescatore clan, as he is not the biggest fan of the city or water for that matter. Born on Earth, before the cataclysm forced his parent to take a leap of faith, Jericho is among the few citizens of Scogliera that can't swim.

"You gotta learn sometime, jump in," shouted Brin. His arms moved about to stay afloat.

Jericho starred out at the horizon. An endless sea of deep blue razored by the sharp waves of neon indigo lay before him.

"Primus herself would have to pull me in," said Jericho. He stood up and walked along the edge of the fishing boat. "If the universe wanted me to be a swimmer, I would have been born to the Nuoto clan, those guys can swim like a fish. Jericho stopped at a small white box. He reached down into the open end of the box.

"You know there were no clans back on Earth. Dive in, and I'll teach you how to tread water at least," said Brin as he bobbed in the water. "If dad were here, he would have just thrown you in."

"Maybe," said Jericho. He smiled at that thought. His dad would definitely have thrown him into the water and told him to sink or swim. Ironically his dad would have also been the one to dive in and rescue him at the first sign of trouble. Jericho pulled a small cephalopod out of the cooler. Its tiny tentacles wrapped around each gloved finger like a parasite.

"What happens if you fall off the boat?" Asked Brin.

"Well then..."

Jericho tightened his hand into a fist. A faint smell of ozone drifted through the air. The cephalopod released its grasp and retreated into a ball as electricity crackled and coursed across the gloves. Jericho pulled back his arm and launched the creature. The cephalopod flew as though it had wings before it smacked into the water several hundred feet away. A shadow appeared beneath it. The creature, as if aware of what was coming squirmed. Its efforts were fruitless as its body seized the paralyzed cephalopod began to sink. Suddenly a fish jumped out of the water, its metallic dagger-like teeth sheared through the defenseless creature.

"That's one way to look at things, not sure it's the best way."

Brin began to swim towards the ship. Jericho walked back towards the stern. He stopped at, then stomped on, a glowing blue pad on the ground. Several beams of light emanated out of the pad. The beams searched the air until they connected. Then one by one, they interlaced like string till a bridge was formed. The light bridge lowered into the water in front of Brin. He walked out of the water on to the bridge and up to his brother Jericho.

"You two ready to head back to the city?" asked Ines as she walked out of the cabin.

"We are ready whenever you are, Mom," said Jericho.

She smiled.

"I will start the engines you boys secure the ampoules. We have a storm coming in, and I can't afford to lose any of this shipment." She said.

Usually, a fishing vessel, The Amelia had been modified for a different purpose. Atop her weathered deck sat four large polished silver ampoules. Thirty feet long and eight feet tall, each was capable of holding ten thousand gallons of Indigo muon. A scarce and addictive substance, Indigo muon can be found only on Primus V. The two-teenager moved quickly to secure their precious cargo.

"You ever wonder how different life would be back on earth?" Asked Jericho.

"Are you kidding me?"

"I am serious."

"Well, I doubt we would be running muon for one."

"That's probably true, and dad would probably still be here."

The two went silent for a moment. The only sound audible was the hum of the ship's repulsors pushing against the wave beneath them as the ship accelerated. A sound that seemed to grow and change. What started as a low pitch rumble began to grow into a high pitch whine.

"Somethings wrong, we are moving too quick," said Brin. He held on to the side of the ampoule and moved to the aft of the ship. He opened a panel, flicked several switches then pushed a flashing button. "Is everything alright, Mom?"

"Nope, we got something closing on us fast," Ines said, her voice hurried.

"Selachimorpha?" Asked Brin, his voice shaky with terror.

"No, I think it's a ship. Could be pirates," Ines said. "Can one of you boys get to the bolt thrower?" She asked.

"On my way."

Brin took off running towards the starboard bolt thrower of The Amelia.

"Everything alright?" Shouted Jericho. He watched as his brother sprinted past.

"We got company, I'm going to man the bolter. Can you finish securing the cargo?"

"I'm on it."

Jericho ran to the third container. His hand reached out to a keypad. He quickly tried to key in the lockdown sequence. His fingers froze just above the last digit. At first it felt like a bee had stung him, then a myliobatid, but in just a couple of seconds the pain stopped him cold. Electricity coursed through his body. Jericho's head seized as he tried to look down. Blood poured out of his side and ran down to the deck floor. He struggled to lift his head. Looking down to the end of the ampoules there was a cruiser on fast approach. It's fore ship bolter lit up as it fired another salvo. He felt another sting on his shoulder, and the world went dark.

The deck was cold against the side of his head. In front of him lay Brin and Ines.

"What do you want to do with them, captain."

"fighters the whole lot of them. We either take them all or none"

"can't we just keep the woman?"

She'll sooner slit our throats in our sleep. Secure the cargo and throw 'em overboard.

A burly man goes to grab Ines. She resists, his closed fist strikes her across the face.

"oh, you are gonna be fun."

Jericho screams into the void, but nothing comes out. He isn't completely stunned. Paralysis persists as he tries to will his body back to life. A twinge of something shoots up the back of Jericho's neck. The sound of cloth ripping echoes in his ears. Finally, a surge of adrenaline flows throughout his body.

"Toilteanas," he screams.

Several of the pirates turn, and the captain walks towards him.

"Toilteanas," Jericho said again.

Like his father before him, he now offered his life in exchange for the freedom of his family. The captain stops in front of him and kneels. The old man's aged face stares with curiosity

"Boy, do you even know what you are saying?" Asked the captain.

Jericho steeled his nerves and stared back at the pirate.

"I challenge anyone of you cowards to a Toilteanas. I win we go free"

The pirates each let out a hearty laugh.

"You lose you all die."

"We are already dead."

"You, get him up and bring him to the ship," said the captain pointing to the burly man.

The giant pirate walked over to Jericho. He reached down and effortlessly picked the boy up off the deck. He pushed Jericho, and the two walked to the pirate's vessel. Larger and more advanced this ship was meant for raiding. We never stood a chance, thought Jericho. The two stop at a small platform on the opposite side of the pirates' ship. The captain waves his hand. The platform beneath the two men hisses, then steam releases from its edges as it rises into the air. When it stops, small devices rise out of the ground. Jericho grabs the two closest to him. Gripping the device, he squeezes till a burst of light emits from both devices. The one taking the shape of a shield the other resembles a shield.

The sizeable burly pirate took off his vest. The barrel-chested monster grabbed the weapon and left the shield.

I Qiknas will be your challenge, said Qiknas pounding on his chest. Jericho, still wobbly, charged him. Qiknas stepped to the side of the attack. Jericho lost his footing, stumbled

forward, and dropped his shield. The light deactivated just before the shield made contact with the water. The group of spectating pirates laughed.

“You embarrass yourself.”

Jericho gritted his teeth as the heat of anger rushed over him like a blast of hot air. He charged Qiknas. This time he feinted left then stabbed right. The giant pirate was not expecting quick movements. Caught off guard, he allowed Jericho to draw first blood. Jericho smiled, his mobility was returning. Qiknas winced, then launched a series of attacks against Jericho. Every swing more thunderous than the last. Jericho’s grip, not at full strength, couldn’t hold on against the onslaught. His sword knocked away, slid to the edge of the platform, then Qiknas’ blade was pointed at his chest.

“Warning Sciliamorph fifty meters out” chirped the ship’s computer over the P.A.

You are better than you look,” yelled the captain. “Join my crew, and only the others have to die here,” He said.

Go eat a Tetraodontidae.” Said Jericho, his disdain and defiance saturated every syllable.

“Warning Sciliamorph twenty meters out.” Warned the ship’s computer.

“Ok then, now you can watch them both die.” Said the captain. “Throw the boy over.”

“No!” Shouted Jericho.

One of the pirates picked up a barely conscious Brin and tossed him into the water. Jericho’s heart felt like it was in a vice. The taste of the sea air was washed away by the tide of vomit rising in his thought. Jericho looked around, then his eyes locked the enormous dorsal fin speeding towards Brin. Then the voice of their father echoed in the back of his mind. *The greatest thing you can do in this world son, is to give your life in the service of others.*

Jericho knocked Qikna’s blade away. He turned and dove for his sword. He rolled like a professional then leapt off the platform. He gripped the sword as though it were one of the cephalopods. The gloves electrified the sword, just as 30-foot Selachimorpha rose from the water. It’s razor-sharp teeth ready to feast. When suddenly, Jericho lands a blow through the top of the shark’s head. Wounded, the shark thrashed. Thrown from the Selachimorpha, Jericho hits the ship’s hull. The world grew cold and dark as he sank into the depth.

It has been nearly seven years since he last saw his mother and brother. The pirates were a mix of Concorso Clan and Guerreiro Clan. Both of which respected the Toilteanas, or one’s willingness to sacrifice. He lost that rite of passage, but with his valor, he had earned his family’s freedom. The catch to losing a rite of passage is you lose your name and clan. That was the day Jericho of the Pescatore clan died and Inotach “shark slayer” of the entertainer clan, Concorso was born.