



THE SHIP

A SHORT STORY BY ROBERT W. VINCENT



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THE SHIP

The ship was a sleek silvery vessel with hulls honed from carodium the hardest metal within the universe. Its speed was not that of intergalactic cruisers that patrolled the outer perimeters of the known galaxy. But, it really was never constructed for speed.

This vessel was built solely as an inter galactic prospectors home. For within the hulls one could roam the universe in search of precious metals so needed by his world. The home world was running out of gold, platinum, silver, zinc, copper and even iron was in desperate need.

Within the ships hold mighty machines whirling and snapping would break down large clumps of matter collected by giant mechanical hands and placed into the hundreds of various storage tanks. The machines never stopped sorting and carefully placing every precious mineral into the correct tanks for the long journey back home.

This ship was aged from generations of the same family exploring the universe as miners and explorers and yet the ship itself showed little sign of wear or tear.

The ships present operator was the third Captain Lear in the family. He was a stout individual who stood 6.2 trions high, which was a little shorter than his father who was 6.9 trions high and he had his grandfathers deep set black eyes and wrinkled face from the thousand years he had captained the ship. His time to retire was near. And, in a way he was looking forward to retirement and sending his two sons out with the ship. He figured as a rare pair of identical brothers they would cause quite a commotion along the Pinkerton route where the prospectors met to share stories and have some companionship. Prospecting the galaxy was lonely.

In this ship his home away from

home the Third Captain Lear had roamed the Galaxy in search of precious metals. This voyage alone was in its Three Hundredth year. The ships storage vats were according to the gages almost full to capacity. But Captain Lear, knowing that this was to be his last voyage from home had decided that he would only return with a completely full capacity which in these days was a rare event. If he could fill every container his ship could fly the Bango Flag indicating to all that this ship held the ultimate prize. Which would mean that his world would have fresh precious materials enough to survive one more spin of the Triex.

Besides, as his last voyage the third Captain Lear needed an ending to a thousand years prospecting the galaxy from the Pinkerton route through the shades of Hade's Comet which appeared only once every five hundred years. The Captain had seen it four times and wanted once more to watch it slide across the window of space like a giant sparkler lit for a wee time before burning away. Some said when it appeared you could see

it's tail for sixty thousand trions. In reality it's tail was less than 40 thousand trions in length.

Captain Lear gazed longingly out his view port. Trained black eyes on vigil always searching ahead for large clumps of minerals which he could then break down for his storage vats. Light years in travel he had come through the universe seeking and prospecting for all metals that come before him. His ship was so well equipped for the finest detection and analysis of all clumps that he ran into.

Space laws of prospecting. Had declared decades ago that all free lance mineral cruisers had the right to salvage any and all metals that were in clumps that could be a danger to space travel in the future.

This one law served two main purposes.

One it allowed free lance exploration for badly needed minerals for the use of the Captains homeland.

Second it saved the Captains world from spending its money and time to clearing the Galactic Space ways of floating salvage that could danger a space flight in the future.

And Captain Lear as was his father and grandfather before him was renown for his shrewdness in gathering his harvest. Many times he had maneuvered his ship in front of another mineral cruiser only to take first the floating clumps of minerals. A clever but dangerous maneuver.

Captain Lear the first was the creator of this ship. He had designed its construction at a time in history when his world had almost depleted its minerals. Since that date and construction: Twenty more ships identical to this one were made. But this ship was the mother and the leader of all mineral cruisers.

Captain Lear the third captain in the family solely held the responsibility of keeping it the top ship of the fleet.

His grandfather Captain Lear the first had sailed this vessel on three Bango Flag return trips into the galaxy collecting minerals. His Father Captain Lear the second had made only two trips into the voids of space in search of minerals and only one could fly the Bango Flag for on the other tragedy had struck. And the present Captain Lear the Third was now in his completion of his fourth voyage into the dark depths.

And this ship, had been the vessel that his family used on every trip into space. Its hulls had seen over four thousand years of service. Captain Lear the first had sailed it for One-Thousand Four Hundred Years and Thirty before he had retired. Captain Lear the Second had sailed it for another Thousand Six Hundred Years and Twenty before he retired. And Captain Lear the Third was now finishing his One Thousand and Tenth Year of service with this ship.

This ship had collected thousands upon thousands times thousands of clumps of minerals. Sorting and crushing them within its hold.

Systematically storing them within its vats. Each mineral rolled as water through special tubes, crystal clear. Gold tubes, silver tubes, platinum tubes, nickel tubes shimmered like fire as the metals flowed into the vats. A system of immediate separation which his Great Great Great uncle had invented.

The process was simple!

Large clumps of minerals were drawn into the ship and crushed and sorted. The machine works did all the rest by lifting, crushing and sorting. The machines gears hummed and snapped and clanked as it went through its routine processes of breaking down the clumps gathered and immediately busting them and crushing them for separation. It was a remarkable unending action.

Captain Lear the Third still gazing out his view screen watched as eight more clumps appeared before him and his ship. Methodically, but with great precision the Captain slowed

his ship down. His hands carefully and skillfully operating the levers, moving the gears which would bring into the ships hold the small clumps of metals for processing. As the Captain worked the collector arms the ships hull opened automatically like a large carnivorous mouth drawing into its innards the first five clumps of minerals. Its gears began to clank and hum sweeping the masses away. Pounding and smashing the large clumps into a fine powdered dust. The dust retrieved and sent to separation water vats which did the depositing of the various metals into their correct storage vats for their long ride home through the galaxy's. A ride longed for by the Captain. Captain Lear the Third wanted to be back home.

As Captain Lear the Third maneuvered his ship to pick up the next clump. He noted that his automatic spectigram analyzer was registering off its dials. The needles buried their points to the top as if glued there. Alarm bells started

ringing. Never before had Captain Lear the Third seen the like. Never before had the alarm bells rung out. To Captain Lear the Third it appeared as a veritable fortress of precious metals. Its wealth appeared so overpowering that he made the decision to closely examine this clump of minerals before placing it into his mineral extractor. Possible he thought; if he could determine where it had come from, its origin. It could lead him to the greatest treasury of minerals in the universe. A treasury much needed by his home world. One could almost see the Captains rugged face wrinkle up ward as he maneuvered the ships Grapplers to grasp the clump.

The ships grapplers, controlled by the Captains time worn hands carefully ripped the floating mass from the Galaxy and brought it into the ships main cargo hold.

Once inside Captain Lear the Third lowered it slowly to the floor. It's preliminary examination intrigued him. His body fluids were like fire with the extraordinary discovery. His emotions ran high.

Captain Lear the Third paused as he stood next to the clump of metals at his feet. He noted its almost perfect roundness, its tremendous weight as indicated of the scales was astounding at Three Thousand and Twelve queetoos. The Captain was sure now beyond a doubt that this clump of metals was a true discovery. And, this clump held his eyes in a way the Captain knew not. Yet it did!

Captain Lear the Third began his examination. With a high powered drill and bit made of carodium he began. The drill bit entered the mass with ease thereby boring a perfect hole into its center. From the hole oozed liquid forming a small minute pool upon the surface of the clump. Another first for the Captains eyes.

Taking a flakers spoon the Caption lifted a small amount of the oozing red liquid from the clump. It was through this that the Captain studied the make up of the strange mass under his tele-viewer. A device that enlarged small objects so they could be seen and studied even by the black old eyes of this prospector.

It happened while he looked through the viewer. For Captain Lear the Third noted in his ships log that very day the strange events that had led up to his discovery. A discovery now so overwhelming that it would make him a legend in history forever. A discovery so awesome that it scared the Captain. A fear that he had never known before. A realization that had never entered his mind before. A discovery he had made of such magnitude that would affect the mineral collecting for his world for eternity to come. His discovery would be the end of his race he thought.

Captain Lear the Third immediately shut down all operations of his

vessel. Time was of the essence. He must return home as fast as possible and even faster if possible. Time was of the essence.

Captain Lear the Third understood and realized that the trip home would take longer with his ships hold full of minerals. Therefore his next action was a reaction which was necessary in order to make all possible speed in returning to his home world immediately. The Captain scuttled the vats of minerals, gold, copper, platinum, iron, silver; and everything that had taken him hundreds of years to collect. The metals and materials spewed from the vats into darkness void of space. Even with this enormous weight gone from the ships hold it would take no less than ten years to return home. The ships hydro-light engines roared in full power towards home. There would be no Bango Flag flying this time.

During the ten years it took to get home. Captain Lear the Third was able to examine more his great discovery and repeated examining it ever more closely. Carefully Captain

Lear the Third logged every minute detail as he discovered it. He logged every thing he thought would aid his race and world upon his return. This clump of metals was extraordinary. Its intrigue limitless.

It was through this discovery by the Famous Captain Lear the Third that his name would remain in history forever and ever. His discovery was placed in the archives of his homeland on a magnificent stand, where it would remain forever and ever.

Today: One can find attached below and on the right side of the magnificent stand this discovery is explained upon this plaque:

In Honor of Captain Lear the Third, the discoverer and miner that led us to the complete change of Space Laws of Prospecting.

Because we the citizens of Durath believe in like and the right to live we give up all space mining.

**And hereby solemnly pledge to
protect forever this small clump of
minerals we have been told by its tiny
inhabitants is called Earth.**

**The Ship.....Our First Mineral
Cruiser- We honor and Rename as
Earths New Halley's Comet.**