



*Engine, envelope, Elvis, elephant, earplug, America*

‘Millian!’ Margaret McKlusky exclaimed, as the weak yellow beam of her torch fell upon his grease streaked gagged face. With him, at the back of the paint store, gagged and tied, hand and foot, were the rest of the missing crew of the Divine Vessel. They all began to squirm and through rag gags made unintelligible requests to be released.

‘Millian, what are you doing here? I’ve been looking all over the ship for you. Really, just look at you and your friends all tied up like that. You are kinky. What’s that you are saying dear? What...please try me...No...Oh, untie me...Well, no need to be like that, you only had to ask,’ and with that Margaret got behind Millian and undid the thick rope that bound his hands, though not before having good grope of those tight buns of his. As soon as his hands were free Millian quickly removed his gag and the ropes around his feet, and within a couple of minutes the rest of the crew were free.

As the wind whipped across the growing waves and the storm gained strength outside, they stood around the dim light of Margaret’s torch in the paint store rubbing their sore wrists and listening to the pounding of the sea against the ships hull.

‘What’s going on?’ Jonas, the mimosa yellow gloss now dried across his cheeks, was first to ask the obvious question. ‘First you all disappear and then I wake up tied to the lot of you.’

‘It’s the chief officer and the captain,’ said Vyas, the third mate, rubbing the hamster sized lump that had developed on the back of his head where the fire extinguisher had struck him. ‘I think they are smuggling drugs.’

‘I don’t know about drugs,’ said Sudir, the boson, trying to straighten his broken nose, ‘but they are up to something.’

The deckhands and the chief officer are in on it. There is something going on down in the hold, ow,' he said as his nose crunched into place, 'and the captain fucking punched me.'

'I've seen what's going on down there in the hold,' piped up Millian as he gently eased Margaret's hand from his chest. 'They have been abducting people in all the ports we go to. I saw what they were doing to them. They were cutting open their heads and scooping out their brains. They were fixing them so that they could ride around inside them. But you're wrong, it's not the rest of the crew that's doing it, the ship's being run by a gang of rabbits.'

'What?' Jonas couldn't believe the craziness that he was hearing.

'Not quite Millian.' Jasman the engine room's motorman interjected. Margaret swung the beam of torch round dramatically to shine, albeit weakly, in his face. 'The chief engineer has a rabbit driving his head, I saw it, he had his head open when he was on the toilet, and I saw a rabbit sitting in it.'

'Madness,' muttered Jonas.

'It's what I saw,' continued Jasman. 'I think the rest of the crew have these rabbits in their heads as well. Why else have they all been acting so strange?'

'I think you may just be right,' agreed Millian, 'but what the hell are they doing aboard the Divine Vessel, and what do they want with all those human bodies?'

There was silence among the group, Margaret dramatically shone the torch around the tight circle of faces.

'Leave it out will you,' the second engineer moaned as he shaded his eyes.

'I th...th...th...think I know.' Outside the circle of light stood the tall wiry frame of Uri, the electrician. The group turned to face him as he continued, 'Th...th...th...they are not rabbits, they are a...a...a...aliens.'

'For Christ sakes,' exclaimed Jonas, exasperated.

'No it's true.' Uri replied, picking dried marrow pulp from his hair. 'I h...heard them speaking on the radio to M...mars. I think there are a...a...a...aliens inside the

ra...ra...ra...rabbits, and the ra...rabbits are inside the other cr...cr...crew. They are going to invade the Ea...ea...earth. The other human b...bodies are for their M...m...m...Martian army. We only have until we reach the e...e...e...'

'Engine!' shouted Margaret. 'No, um, envelope, Elvis, um, elephant, ear plug, America?'

'e...e...equator,' stammered Uri finally, 'before the Martian army lands on this ship.'

'Holy cow! We have less than twelve hours!' exclaimed Alfredo, the second mate, somewhat theatrically. 'They've got to be stopped! At all costs!'

'Second mate's right, but how?' said the third mate.

'We have to destroy them right now before the other Martians arrive,' said Millian punching his fist into his other palm. 'They have the four Chinese, the two Filipinos, the chief officer, the chief engineer, and the captain. That's errr...'

'Nine.'

'Yes, nine of them, and we have ...errr ... eleven of us. What have we got to...'

'Well it's all very exciting,' interrupted Margaret, 'but it's past my bedtime now. I think I will leave you boys have your fun. Nighty, night.' With that she wandered out of the paint store, back along the lolling deck and to bed, leaving the group in the dark and momentarily lost for words.

'So ten,' came Millian's voice out of the blackness. 'Ten against nine. The odds are in our favour.'

'But they are fucking blood thirsty aliens!' wailed Alfredo.

'Maybe,' snapped back Millian, 'but if we don't stop then now, it mean curtains for the entire human race.'

'Blimey,' concluded Jonas from the darkness.

'So,' Millian continued, 'I say we arm ourselves with whatever we can find, crowbars, axes, wrenches, flares, piping, chains, and go and kill these brain sucking carrot crunching mother fuckers ... is that alright with you guys?'

'Yes.'

'Sure.'

‘Ok.’

‘I’m in.’

‘Guess so.’

‘Yep.’

‘What have we got to loose.’

‘Errrm ...’

‘Take me too them,’ came the nine replies out of the darkness.

The ten escaped crew armed themselves with whatever was at hand, as Millian had suggested, and made their way out onto the heavily rolling deck. Waves were now breaking over the forecastle and water washed into their shoes. The wind whipped at the tops of the waves and blew sharp needles of spray into the seamen’s eyes. The moon was waxing large in the sky but the heavy clouds smothered it’s light and the men were forced to grope their way along the heaving deck.

‘We should split up,’ shouted Millian over the deafening howl of the wind. ‘I’ll go with Uri to kill the captain, as he’s obviously their leader. Jasman, you and the two engineers get down to the engine room and sort out the chief officer. Second and third mate you head to the bridge and see if you can seize control of the ship, if that’s ok with you?’

‘Sure.’

‘Guess so.’

‘Boson, you take the storekeeper and the painter with you and get down to hold number three. They have to be stopped.’

‘Sorry, I have a question.’ It was Jonas’s voice coming out of the noise of the storm. ‘How come I have to go down to the hold. It sounds to me that there is more than likely going to be six or seven of those things down there.’

‘There is no time for questions, we have to act immediately,’ shouted Millian getting a mouthful of wave at the same time. ‘Lets go.’

Millian and Uri were first to reach their victim. Captain Pimento lay conveniently asleep in his cabin,

and didn't appear to stir as the pair crept in. His silvery moustache rose and fell with his gentle breaths. They leaned over the bed and stared at their sleeping victim. The captain's eyelids were badly swollen and sat heavily on his cheeks, like a couple of apricot halves. Millian slowly raised the fire axe he had armed himself with above his head and prepared to split the captain's head open with one powerful blow.

'Y...y...you sure about this?' whispered a panicked Uri. 'What if we got it wrong and they are not aliens?'

'But you're the one that said they were,' hissed back Millian.

'But what if they are not. It would be mu...mu...mu...mur...mur'

In the instance that Millian took his eyes off the captain and looked into the face of the stammering Ukrainian a foot long kitchen knife flashed out from beneath the bed sheets and plunged upwards burying itself deep into the electrician's chest. Uri's innocent eyes widened with horror and his hands automatically reached up to grab the handle of the knife in his chest, dropping the crowbar he had been armed with. His mouth fell opened and as his last living breath left his body it clearly enunciated his final word, 'murder.' With the blood flowing down both the front and back of his shirt he fell to his knees, and was dead before his head hit the floor.

Millian quickly regained his composure and just as he was about to finish the still reclined captain with a blow from his axe the cabin door burst open. 'Not so fasting young man.' It was the Oddbjorn Ballengrud, the chief officer, his powerful athletic body glistening with sweat and naked except for a pair a clean crisp white Y-fronts. 'That would be no way to be treating your captain.'

Millian span round and taking two quick steps across the room swung the axe at Oddbjorn's chest. Oddbjorn was fast. He dropped down low, whilst sweeping a leg out in front of him. This caught Millian's front leg and took it from under him. As Millian fell Oddbjorn span round and landed a hard chop with the side of one of his

hands on Millian's throat, whilst simultaneously twisting the axe from Millian's grasp with the other. As Millian struggled to regain his breath and his feet, Oddbjorn span around his prey, twisting and twirling the deadly axe in an impressive display of mastery. Millian straighten and prepared to face his adversary once more, but it was already too late, the blade of the axe sliced into his neck with tremendous force, cutting as smoothly through the deck hand's body as the ship through water. The severed head flew off the body, across the cabin and landed neatly in the lap of the captain. Captain Pimento picked it up and studied it with amusement.

'Very good Chief,' Captain Pekka Pimento said to Oddbjorn, who now had blood splattered across his white underpants. 'I see those Van Damm movies have taught you something.'

'I wonder how they all escaped,' mused Oddbjorn, flexing his pecks alternately in the Captain's mirror and trying to ignore the new flaky scabs that had appeared across his stomach. 'We had better go and see what other trouble they are causing.'

Alfredo and Vyas, the second and third mates, had found the bridge of the Divine Vessel deserted when they had burst through the door minutes earlier armed with a mallet and a length of chain. This had been a great relief to the pair as they weren't the fighting kind, and they had laid their weapons down by the door and gone over to the GPS system to find out the ship's position. Vicente wanted to immediately throw the ships engines into reverse preventing it from getting another knot closer to the equator, whilst Vyas was in favour of altering their course just enough for the ship to miss the drop zone on the equator, but hopefully not alerting the Martians. As the pair stood and discussed the merits of each plan, an underpant clad Oddbjorn and pyjamaed Captain Pimento crept up behind them. Vicente got an axe vertically down through the top of his head splitting it in half. This pleased Oddbjorn for the symmetry of his cut and for the medical specimen quality the two halves had. Vyas's end was not quite as tidy, finishing with a

crowbar sticking out of his face.

'Oh, Captain, you brutal thug,' cooed Oddbjorn.

'Thank you very much Chief Chopper,' replied the captain 'Hang on, what's this? He said pointing to the backlit gauge 'The rpm's are dropping, we have started to loose speed.' Looking at each other they said in unison. 'They are in the engine room.'

'Run for your life,' yelled Jonas as he flew along the twain deck corridor, throwing anything he could get his hands on over his shoulder at the pursuing mob of menacing Chinese deck hands. He was yelling to no one in particular apart from himself. The boson had fled in the opposite direction down the corridor with a screw driver sticking out of his leg and two Filipinos hot on his heels. The other member of their fated liberation party lay dead in two halves on the floor of hold number two, the victim of a sharp circular saw and a Martian controlled Filipino angry at being disturbed in the middle of his work. Jonas went up the steps five at a time slamming the hatch to the deck behind him on the hammer brandishing hand of a Chinese crewman. The hatch burst open behind him only moments later, and all four Chinese bodies seemed to throw themselves in his direction at once. Leaping up the side of a container he caught hold of the top edge and swung himself up evading his pursuers grasping hands by a split second. He ran down the length of the container and jumped the gap to the next. Moving quickly he climbed up three more levels of containers until he was stood on the highest one, four stories up from the deck of the ship. Up here the severe pitching and rolling of the ship was amplified and he struggled to stay on his feet. Spinning round he could no sign of his pursuers. Perhaps he had lost them. But for how long would that last?

Jasman, the motorman, and the second and third engineers had planned the storming of the engine room carefully and it had gone pretty well. Andre Valov, the Martian chief engineer, had been caught with his pants down again as he inspected his worsening lumps and

weeping lesions around his genitals and anus. Spotting his three attackers at the last moment through the window of the control room Andre had made a mad dash for the toilet with his trousers around his ankles. He was still barricaded in that small cool room as the two engineers began to slow the engine down. The door to the toilet was made of thick steel, but this was not a problem for Jasman. He fetched the acetylene torch from the workshop and, donning his protective face shield, set about the slow job of cutting off the door's cod sized hinges. He was halfway through the second hinge when he sensed the ship's engine speeding up again. Jasman shouted over his shoulder asking the engineers what the problem was, and shouted his question again as he heard the engines rpm resume their normal speed. But both times there came no reply. Glancing over his shoulder to see why they hadn't responded he let out one of his horror movie screams. The two engineers hung by their necks from the pipes that criss crossed the control rooms ceiling. They had been straggled with chains that now let them sway with the rolling of the ship. Their necks were broken, and there could be absolutely no doubt that they were dead. Advancing towards him was the glistening, scabby torsoed, chief officer in his blood splattered Y-fronts and the puffy apricot halved eyed captain with his large firm round belly sticking out of his unbuttoned pyjama top. They had murder in their eyes and Jasman lost no time at all in dropping his torch and racing out of the far door of the control room.

It didn't take long however for Jasman to find himself surrounded at the bottom of the engine room for the second time that week. This time though his pursuers didn't look like they were going to politely knock him out with a spanner. Andre, now out of the toilet and with his trousers pulled up, lunged at him from behind, getting him in a powerful sweaty bear hug. Lifting the small squealing Indonesian off his feet Andre then lugged him over to the base of the engine where the captain had thoughtfully unlatched and opened a metre square metal door. Inside the black oil covered workings of the engine pounded away, and every couple of

seconds a two tonne piston would fly down to within an inch of the metal block. Jasman's eyes opened so wide that his eyeballs threatened to pop out, and his screaming became ear piercing and hysterical. Oddbjorn lifted Jasman's feet as Andre slowly fed the unfortunate Indonesian head first into the very machine he had spent so many hours lovingly care for. On its next descent the piston collided with Jasman's brittle little brown head with such power that his head exploded like a ripe watermelon dropped from a tall building. Blood and brains and bone and hair shot outwards from the point of impact with tremendous force, coating the inside of the engine and flying into the delighted face of Andre.

Letting the rest of the still twitching body of the motorman drop to the floor, the grinning Andre, still with bits of brain between his teeth, turned to his two colleagues and asked 'So, who's next?'

Sudir the boson swung the long metal pole around his head, wildly trying to keep the two possessed Filipino seamen at bay. 'Stay away from me you fuckers!' he screamed at them, 'or I'm going to hurt the pair of you sooo bad.' One of the Filipino's feigned a move towards him, as the other tried to duck and lunge under the spinning pole. Sudir was at his most alert and had seen it coming. With a quick flick of his thick powerful wrists he brought the heavy steel pole down onto the lunging Filipino's skull, sending the top half spinning off across the deck. As the exposed white rabbit inside fought to regain control of the Filipino and get him back on his feet Sudir brought his heavy boot crashing down upon the bunny's head. As the rabbits skull imploded the phosphorous filled sac of the Martian shot out of the rabbit's ear hole. The bright red glowing yolk at the centre of the jellied sac illuminated the creatures gracefully arc through the air before it came to rest with a flop on the deck of the ship ten metres from the rabbit's now dead body.

Sudir lost no time in turning his attentions to the other Filipino, and with a few well timed twirls and shimmies of his deadly pole brought it smacking down

squarely on the seaman's head. Although the seaman remarkably remained standing, his skull fell apart in two halves, cracked like a coconut with a hammer right down the centre. With another twirl Sudir brought the steel pole down again this time cracking open the astonished looking rabbits head. The rabbits head split to reveal another helpless trembling Martian, but as Sudir flourished his pole for the final killer blow the pole was knocked from his hands from behind and his arms were seized from both sides. He was dragged backwards until he was held fast against one of the huge coils of rope used to tie the Divine Vessel to the dock. To his left he saw the gory brain splattered features of Andre who was pinning back one arm, and to his right the calm but crazed grinning features of Oddbjorn. Sudir spied the angry red lump that he had noticed on Oddbjorn's neck a few days ago. It had now grown to the size of a quail and looked on the verge of exploding. As Sudir struggled to free himself he watched Captain Pimento approach across the deck towards him. The captain paused and bent to pick up the palm sized glowing form of the first Martian from the deck of the ship, and then, stepping over the dead body of one of the Filipino's, reached inside the split open head of the second and retrieved the other pulsing Martian. Holding the pair up in front of his badly swollen eyes he said to them, 'You fought well soldiers, but do not worry, we will get you into new bunny suits and humans in a jiffy. You shall not miss the great day.' He then slipped the two extraterrestrial sacs of gloop into his pocket.

'So,' said the captain, squinting as he addressed Sudir, 'I believe that leaves just two of you meddlesome humans.' Shaking his head like a disappointed parent he added, 'When will you learn?'

The captain signalled to Andre and Oddbjorn and the pair forced Sudir's head against the thick anchor chain and lashed it securely too it. The anchor chain ran down through a foot wide passageway to the heavy anchor below, a passageway too narrow for a body the pass through but probably just wide enough for a head. The captain released the mechanism and, as the anchor

began to fall and the chain fly down the passageway after it, Sudir tensed every muscle in his compact body. It took just a fraction of second for Sudir to die but the results were somewhat spectacular. Sudir's head had entered the passageway smoothly, taking glancing blows from either side of the metal chute. His ears were the first to go, being torn from the sides of his head by the narrow metal sides. The real spectacle came when his shoulders and torso reached the opening. There was a fraction of a seconds pause in the anchors descent as the huge forces played themselves out throughout Sudir's body and then, like an apple being cored, his arms were wrenched from his shoulders and his skin peeled from his body as the chain pulled his head and a circular section of his insides down through the chute with it. The captain threw the lever to reverse the descent of the anchor, and the three Martians looked at the empty human skin and ownerless arms that lay around the narrow opening and laughed.

Jonas crouched with shaky legs on top of the container, high up above the deck of the Divine Vessel, using both hands to keep his balance as the ship crashed through the deep troughs and peaks of the waves. Where had all the Chinese gone? He edged to the side of the container and peered down towards the deck of the ship through the darkness, but he could see no movement whatsoever. Perhaps the Martians had been defeated by the rest of his crew and he was hiding up here like some idiot? Better to be an alive idiot up here, reasoned Jonas, than a dead one down there. He didn't notice the tiny operational lights come on in the cab of one of the ships cranes, and the howl of the wind around his ears stopped him from hearing the massive iron hook of the crane swing through the air towards him, steered expertly by the fast hands of one of the Chinese. The hook struck him squarely on the back of his head, catapulting him from the top of the container. He tumbled the four stories down landing with a crunch onto the deck. His body lay still and broken and bloody tears slowly welled up in his eyes. The waves crashed again and again over

the sides of the ship and as they flowed back to the fathomless depths of the angry sea they dragged Jonas's corpse with them.

As dawn broke, and the mutilated bodies of her crew lay strewn across her decks, the Divine Vessel wept tears of helplessness. The typhoon had passed as quickly as it had arrived and the skies promised to be clear and the temperature hot. Her opulent figure cut gracefully through the now eerily smooth waters of the Pacific, her rate was fourteen knots and there seemed nothing that might stop her reaching the equator on time.