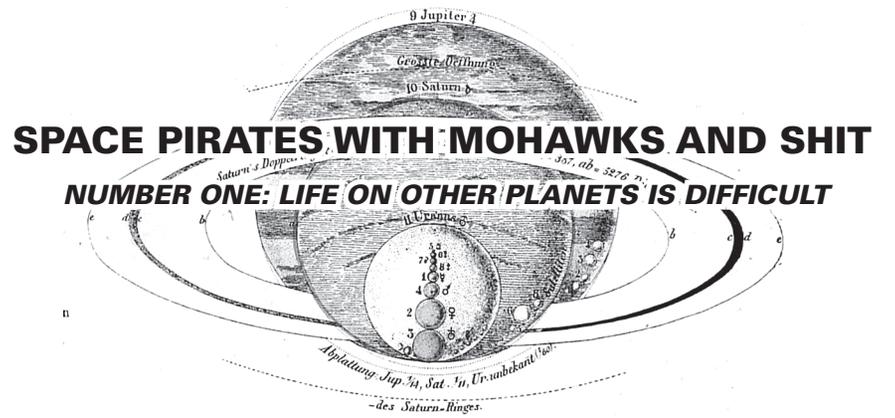
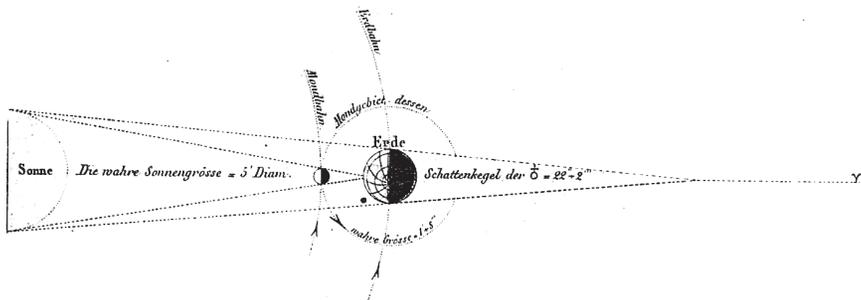


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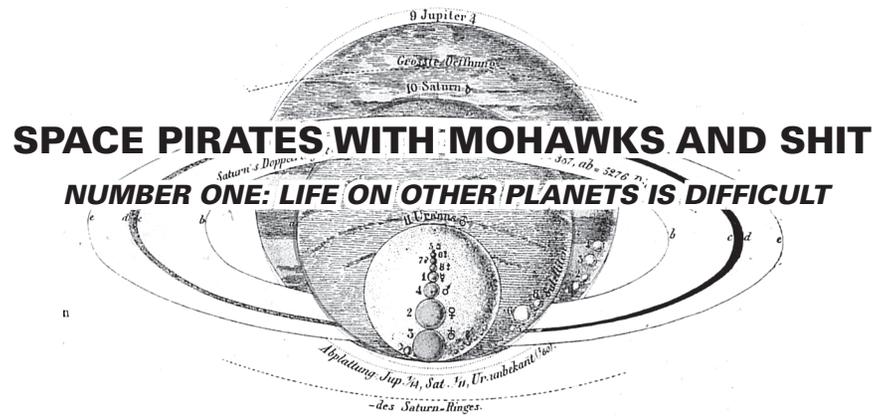


SPACE PIRATES WITH MOHAWKS AND SHIT
NUMBER ONE: LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS IS DIFFICULT

MARGARET KILLJOY



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And Shit*, the finest in Space Punk
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space. Even though space isn't an adjective.
Yet.**

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“Guess I’ll be a couple weeks in bed with nanites, huh?”

“No,” Danarchy said. “This ain’t Mars. We don’t have little robots just waiting to crawl inside you and help your body heal. You’re on Ceres, and you’re going to die.”

“Oh,” Pimples said. He seemed to take the news fairly well. “I got to see Ceres, at least.”

“Yeah,” Danarchy said.

And then the new recruit breathed his last, blood pouring out of his chest.

Two EMTs rushed into the room, saw the corpse, and sat down in defeat.

“What was his name?” one of them asked.

“Trig,” Danarchy said. “His name was Trig. Trig McPimples.”

-15-

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“Trig,” Danarchy said. “His name was Trig. Trig McPimples.”

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Danarchy laughed.

"It's so crazy, being inside the asteroid belt," Pimples said. He pulled down his parasol to look at the sky.

"Yeah, I guess," Danarchy said. "I'm from here. Kinda used to it."

"I've wanted to go into space since I was little," Pimples said. "But until I found out about the spacepunks, the only way into space was to join the space-nazis, you know? And I just couldn't do that. My dad always used to say that—"

But Danarchy never got to learn what it was that Pimples' dad used to say, because a micrometeorite went right through Pimples' chest.

"Shit!" Danarchy said over the comms. "Sci-lab, get the fucking doors open!"

Danarchy scooped up his new friend and ran the few seconds to the doors into the side of the mountain that held the observatory and the terraformers. The first airlock slammed shut, the second opened, and Danarchy cut open Pimples' surface suit.

"It's bad?" Pimples asked.

"It's bad."

-14-

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GET IN THE AIRLOCK," DANARCHY SAID, THREATENING THE freighter captain with a scimitar.

"You're going to rename my ship the *Theremin*?"

"You think I'm happy about it? I wanted it to be the *Aus-Rotten*, but it's not my turn now is it? It's Evey's turn and she wants it called the *Theremin*. You have a problem with it, take it up with her."

"How can you name a ship after some shitty twentieth century crap! It's insulting!" The captain's paunch was absurd in zero-gravity, but he held onto his pride fairly well for a captive in his boxer-briefs standing in front of his executioner.

"Why am I even arguing with you? I'm flushing you out the airlock."

"Have you ever even *heard* a theremin? They sound terrible!"

"Guess you haven't heard *Aus-Rotten* either," Danarchy said. "Now get in the fucking airlock!"

"You get in the airlock."

"No. *I'm* not going to get in the fucking airlock. We're fucking space pirates. We don't go into airlocks, we flush fascist motherfuckers like you out of them."

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“I’m not a fascist,” the captain said.

“You’re not a fascist?”

“No, I’m not. I voted against the Planetary Socialists last election. I’m a Conservative Humanist.”

“What the fuck is a Conservative Humanist?” Danarchy asked.

“I believe in the essential goodness of people. Well, present company excluded. I believe that everyone ought to be given an equal chance to work their way up to the top of the social hierarchy, but no one should be forced to fraternize multi-culturally.”

“So you’re space-nazis who are soft on the race issue?”

“Don’t call them space-nazis, alright? The Planetary Socialist Party saved the human race.”

“By killing all the brown people?”

“Look, I don’t support the Party’s platform on racialized economics. But they’re not nazis—they didn’t actually *kill* anyone. By centralizing power and controlling access to resources, we pulled back from the brink of disaster.”

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Evey just nodded.

“I’ve been thinking a lot about that. I think I can help.” Pimples went into an overview of his plan to lay a conductive ring around the equator of the dwarf planet.

“Yeah, some science folks been working on that,” Greasy said. “I bet they’d love your help, though.”

Everyone looked pleased.

“I have to admit, that’s probably more important than another sword out in space, at least right now,” Danarchy said. “But when you’re done, you get back here and we’ll teach you how to kill some nazis, steal their shit?”

“Of course,” Pimples said, sincerely.

“Well then, Pimples, let’s get you over to the space lab.”

They mostly kept radio silence as they walked. Danarchy started to talk a couple of times, but it was clear that the kid was pretty overwhelmed.

“I was hoping you’d have like, spacesuits with room for your mohawks,” Pimples said as they neared the doors to the colony’s science lab.

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"Well shit," Danarchy said, looking to Evey, "maybe our broadcasts get picked up after all."

"I mean, it's banned, but it's probably the most popular show on Mars," Pimples said. "It probably even gets to Earth."

"Alright, alright," Danarchy said. "One more test. You know what a spacepunk is?"

"A spacepunk is someone who curbstomps space-nazis," Pimples recited.

The three space pirates cheered.

"Okay," Evey said. "So you're our new recruit. Congratulations. Your life expectancy just went down by about forty years. If you don't get stabbed or airlocked by space-nazis, or killed by a micrometeorite on the surface of this rock where there's no atmosphere to burn them up, you're gonna die of cancer at fifty."

"Because there's no magnetic field, right?" Pimples asked, "to ward off space radiation? So every time you're on the surface you're being blasted, and it's even worse in orbit?"

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-12-

space-nazi! Get in the fucking airlock!"

"No," the not-quite-a-fascist said.

Danarchy drew his sword across the man's throat, the droplets of blood floating away through the cargo hold. He pulled his magnetic boot off the floor and kicked the captain's corpse into the airlock, pressed a button, and the man disappeared. Danarchy watched out the small viewport, waiting to see the body inflate as the blood began to boil, but his patience wasn't rewarded and the captain never came into view.

Danarchy ran a hand across his mohawk—so much easier to keep charged in zero-grav—and stalked up onto the control deck, his boots clunking as he went.

"We really going to bring this piece of shit home?" Danarchy asked.

"Yeah, of course. What else we going to do with it?" Evey asked. Where Danarchy was tall and lanky, Evey was short and curved. Her chelsea-hawk was dyed bright pink—though it was hard to tell in the dimly-lit freighter—and her flight suit was zebra-striped.

-5-

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"I don't know, set it on a collision course with the Pentagon or something. Do we really need another ship?"

"We can always use another ship," Evey said.

"Alright, alright," Danarchy said. "Let's just get home and see what kind of booze that guy had aboard."

Evey smiled, and turned to the control panel. Then, after she tried command after command, her smile disappeared. "That fucking captain, he still around?" she asked.

"Probably hasn't floated too far. Want me to go fish?"

"No, no. Probably won't be so talkative. I bet he didn't even know how to fly this thing. It's set to full auto, just a start and stop button."

"You serious?"

"I gotta get manual control of the VASIMR," Evey said.

"Is there an override switch or something?"

"Or something," Evey replied. "Hold onto my arms, will you?"

Danarchy took his friend by the shoulders and held her while she kicked. The plastic control panel broke off at the stem, exposing the wiring.

-6-

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want to call me, like, Calculus? Or Trig?"

"Are you serious?" Evey asked. "You want a tough punk name, like *Calculus*?"

"Yeah," would-be-Trig said.

"That's not really how the funny name thing works," Danarchy said. "If you don't give us anything better, we'll probably just call you Pimples for awhile."

"I like Trig," Pimples said.

"Course you do, Pimples," Danarchy said.

Greasy started laughing.

"Alright let's say we think you're cool enough to be a spacepunk and we let you live on Ceres. You're probably cool enough for that. And if you're dumb enough to want to get yourself killed, we'll let you be a pirate. But first of all, you're gonna have to know who's in charge." Danarchy stepped back and tried his hardest to tower over Pimples, mustering all the false bravado he had.

"That's a trick question?" Pimples said. "No one's in charge. 'With responsibility comes freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility'"

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"Yeah," Danarchy said. "Shit, are we that easy to figure out?"

"Easy? No. I spent almost a year modeling your behavior and running simulations before I found the right ship, the one I knew you'd probably attack."

"Holy fuck, kid," Evey said. "If you can do that, someone else can."

"Yeah, no shit," the stowaway responded. "But I can help you break up your routine a bit, add some chaos into the system."

"I like chaos," Greasy said, still standing a bit away.

"You need chaos," the stowaway nodded.

Evey sheathed her sword, and Danarchy did the same.

"What's with the swords, anyhow? I figured you'd have guns."

"You ever fire a gun in a spaceship?" Danarchy asked.

"No."

"Good. Don't start. With a sword or a knife you can kill the other fellow. With a gun, you'll probably just kill everyone. What's your name, kid?"

"Well I was hoping I'd get a new one. You all have really fun names, right? I want a spacepunk name if I'm going to be a space pirate. You

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Evey cut the wires with snips from her tool belt and then wired up a small tablet computer.

"Home sweet Ceres," she said, "I can't wait to drink."

"I thought you said you got rid of Captain No-Pants," Evey said, over the comms in her surface suit.

"I did," Danarchy replied. But he walked around the outside of the *S.P. Theremin* to where Evey stood. And then he started to laugh.

The captain's blood-drained, space-dust-perforated body was hanging limp off the side of the ship, his magnetic boots holding him tight to the hull.

"You let him die with his boots on?" Evey asked.

"Yeah. He said he voted against the space-nazis."

Evey jumped up the twenty feet—Ceres' gravity being less than two percent of Earth's—and fingered the release switch on the boots. Captain No-Pants drifted to the ground.

"Voted against the space-nazis?"

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the man's affiliation, "a Conservative Humanist, I think."

"Still ran a mining ship for the space-nazis, swastika right there on the hull. I don't care who he votes for every ten years." Evey pulled Captain No-Pants' boots off. "Get my shoulders, would you?"

Danarchy held his friend as best he could. She picked up the body and drop-kicked it. It soared for minutes before floating down to the ground quite far from the ship.

"Let's get off the surface," Danarchy suggested, and they went below.

"Hey, don't kill me or nothing, just let me out."

"Did that shipping container just talk?" Greasy asked. The crew's best mechanic was reading over the cargo manifest of the captured ship, wearing his studded leather jacket, his bihawks charged. They were almost done transferring everything into their warehouse, and everyone was excited to see what they'd brought in.

"I think so," Danarchy said.

"Hey, I want to join the space-pirates! Let me out!"

"Definitely," Danarchy corrected himself. "The shipping container

-8-

definitely just said something."

Someone was banging on the inside of the container. "Come on, for serious! It's cold and dark and I think I've only got like another hour of air."

"Less than that if you keep hollering," Greasy replied.

Evey and Danarchy drew their swords and stood on either side of the container's doors while Greasy triggered the pressure release from afar.

A kid, maybe seventeen if he stood up on his tip-toes, stumbled out in a black, sleeveless t-shirt and tight spacepants. "Thanks," he mumbled, and then sat down on the warehouse floor.

"What are you doing here?" Evey asked, keeping her sword raised but clearly somewhat relaxed.

"I stowed away, figuring you'd capture the ship and all the cargo."

"How the hell'd you know that?" Danarchy asked, "we only attack ships like—"

"Like every few weeks, when the launch window from a given asteroid mine to Mars is almost closed?" The kid smiled under all his mousy hair.

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