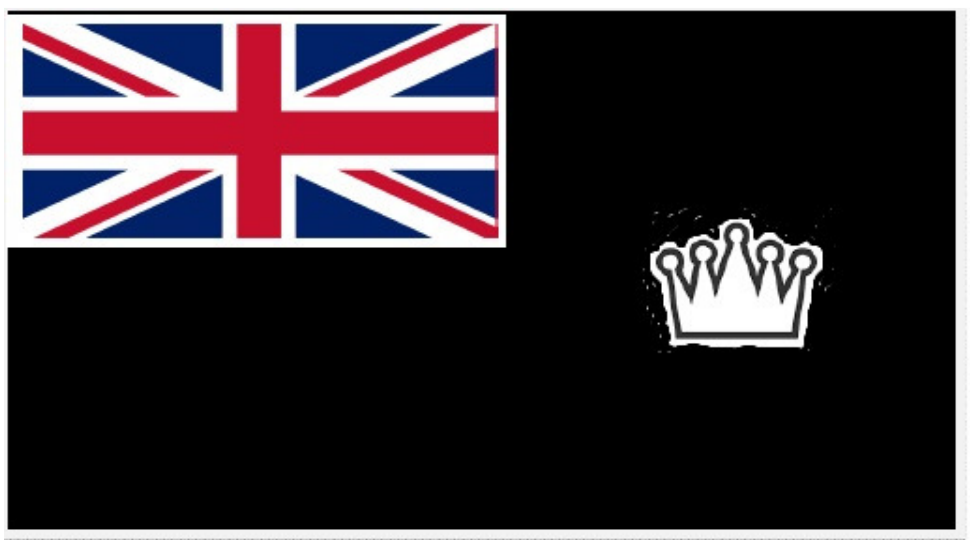


Buoyz 'n Da 'Hood' — 'Space 1989!'



by

Catherine Meadows

Chapter One — ‘A Beginning Is A Dangerous Time...’

It was a cloudy day in Cornwall, but not raining. *Yet.* The breeze, such as it was, was whipping across the runway at RAF St Kylie, disturbed (no doubt) by the bulk of the launch towers.

“Attention!” Sergeant-Major Williams called – and the assembled throng did so. They looked – to an outsider – like a motley crew, all in assorted Royal Navy, Army, and RAF uniforms.

For, so they were.

Yet in a few minutes that would all change.

Forever...

The royal car drew up and Her Majesty the Queen alighted, accompanied by her husband, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. They were greeted by Admiral Sir Peter Lowe, who cagily escorted them to the rostrum.

“Stand at – ease!” Sgt.-Major Williams ordered and – as one – the assembly *moved*. On the rostrum Admiral Lowe directed Her Majesty to the lectern.

“Here it comes...” Wing Commander Colin Darcy mouthed out the side of his mouth... in doing so earned a wuthering glare of disdain from his superior, Captain Elizabeth Bennett, RN. Colin decided to shut-up. For *now...*

“It is a truth universally acknowledged”, the microphone crackled as Her Majesty spoke, “that space is most assuredly the final frontier. This new frontier will need not only thorough exploration, but also policing and protection. To you now falls this duty, in peace, for the good of all mankind. You here today, assembled from all over the Commonwealth, will represent and embody these lofty goals. You are a new service, but you bring with you the long and noble traditions of you antecedents on land, at sea, and in the air. My husband and I have every confidence that you will achieve your mission. I am therefore pleased to grant you, by Royal Warrant, the title and colours of The Royal Space Force...”

There was applause as the new RSF flag was unfurled; a white crown on a black background, with the UK union flag in the corner. “Three cheers for Her Majesty!” Admiral Lowe exclaimed. “Hip-hip – hooray!” came the reply – twice more repeated as the band struck up *‘God Save The Queen’*.

“That’s us. One big happy brand new service”, Lieutenant Commander Bob ‘Digger’ Bradman remarked. Formerly of the Royal Australian Air Force he was

known for his plain-speaking. “We fly off for Woomera tonight, Skip?” he questioned is new Captain.

“We’ll collect our new uniforms first”, Lizzie cautioned.

“Least we’re excused meeting the VIPs?” Colin checked.

“We are”, Lizzie sighed. “We launch for Moonbase in two days. Shakedown cruise”.

“Piece of cake”, Bradman reckoned the new ship would be up for it. ““To infinity and beyond””, he translated the RSF motto, ‘*Ad infinitum – et ultra!*’ back into English...

oOo

“Space is bally crowded these days...” Colin remarked of the volume of ‘traffic’ as weightlessness kicked-in and the ‘Deep Purple’ transport capsule silently moved to orbital rendezvous with the Commonwealth’s space station; separation from the Duckworth-Lewis ‘Athena’ reusable booster now complete.

“Hence our mission, Commander”, Lizzie quelled her irrational irritation with him as she watched the booster fall back to Earth for a controlled landing at Woomera.

“There she blows!” Digger sighted. “Space Station Victory? This is Deep Purple Five. Request permission to dock”.

“Granted”, came back the reply. “*Docking port five*”.

“Roger, wilco”, Digger replied as Colin adjusted the capsule’s trajectory.

“There she is!” Elizabeth suddenly excited as – attached to the space station came into view the gleaming white and orange hull of her new command, *HMS ‘Hood’*, on her sides the ID roundels of blue, white, and red.

“Nice of ‘em to paint targets on for us”, Digger quipped.

“I’m not expecting combat”, Elizabeth (verbally) crushed him. Did he *know*? No! He couldn’t *possibly*...

“How’s my girl?” once inside Space Station Victory Digger engaged the fourth member of the ‘*Hood’s*’ crew, Lieutenant -Commander Indira Khan, formerly of the Indian Air Force.

“She’s prepped and ready”, smiling she floated over: knew well the Aussie engineer’s affection for their new vessel. “Captain”, she then acknowledged Elizabeth. “Admiral Lowe is waiting to see us all”.

“Saint Pete up here?” Colin was shocked at the presence of their veteran monocular commander.

“Bit a flap on”, unsure what else to say Indira led onwards, through the station’s maze of tunnels and equipment. “Did you bring my new uniform?” she checked.

“Ironed it personally”, Digger bantered as they floated into a briefing cabin.

“This is Miss Ealand, of SHADO”, Admiral Lowe introduced the efficient looking blonde woman.

“Of *what?*” Colin queried.

“Blistering barnacles!” Admiral Lowe exclaimed. “Give the young lady a chance to explain”.

“Thank you, Admiral”, the civilian smiled at him. “What you are about to hear is top secret, information usually restricted to the rank of captain and above”.

They all looked at Elizabeth. “Please continue, Miss Ealand”, she ignored her crew. “I think you’ve aroused their... curiosity”.

“I represent a secret organisation called SHADO. That’s an acronym for, Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation. We’re established under UN auspices by the world’s leading governments. To be brief and to the point... our planet is being visited by aliens. *Humanoid aliens*. They’ve been coming since just after the war – and *not* in peace either. I’m afraid the threat of an alien invasion is very, very *real*...”

“Hence the utmost need to keep this information from the public”, Elizabeth advised. “To avoid mass panic”.

“Dingo’s kidneys!” Digger wondered what he was getting into.

“I wondered why the Space Command’s budget was suddenly so huge”, Colin mused.

“Quite so. Hence your RSF charter”, the enigmatic Miss Ealand continued.

“At times you’ll be working with SHADO”, Admiral Lowe elaborated. “And also with vessels of the other Great Powers. For now, take your shakedown cruise to the Moon and back. Don’t be surprised at *anything* to see”.

“The aliens have been quite quiet recently”, Miss Ealand cautioned. “Which is decidedly *worrying*. ‘Hood’s firepower could prove crucial if they come *en masse*”.

“Any questions - none – *good!*” the RSF supremo gave them no chance to ask any. “Dismissed!”

Two hours later *HMS ‘Hood’* began its maiden voyage to the Moon.

Ad infinitum – et ultra!

Chapter Two — ‘Nightflight To Venus’

The ‘shakedown’ cruise to the Moon completed... Lizzie wasn’t surprised to be summoned to Admiral Lowe’s office, immediately upon return to Space Station Victory.

Yet what she found there surprised her. “Ah! Bennett!” the gruff Welshman began as soon as she floated through the hatch. “May I introduce my opposite number, Marshal Bollakoff of the Soviet Union. And this is Captain Tatiana Romanov, skipper of the ‘*Sovetsky Soyuz*’”.

“Sirs”, Elizabeth wasn’t sure how to address the ‘guests’.

“We have decided to pool resources on this one”, the Marshal smiled. “Captain Romanov?”

“*Da*”, the Russian was workwomanlike. “Our recent probe to Venus, ‘*Venera XX*’, abruptly ceased transmission. This was not due to any failure of Soviet engineering - which is the best in world - nor to the planet’s atmospheric conditions. Before it ceased transmission it sent back this image”, she passed across a photograph.

“Golly!” Elizabeth was struck by the picture. A humanoid in a spacesuit was interfering with the Soviet equipment. “The unknown aliens?”

“That’s our working assumption”, Admiral Lowe confirmed.

“UNCLE¹ believes they could be attempting to establish a base there”, Marshal Bollakoff suggested.

“You two are to fly to Venus and investigate”.

“How will the ‘*Hood*’ be given sufficient range?” Elizabeth questioned – guessed the Russkies must be already aware of her ship’s endurance.

“Three ‘Deep Purple’ capsules will be attached to take you there – you can fly back on your own tanks”, Admiral Sir Peter confirmed. “You launch in three days...”

oOo

The message was on repeat. ‘*ici une station de espace – en l’orbite cache a l’terre*’. If able to translate neither Captain Bennett nor Captain Romanov were ‘willing’ to believe what it said. And it was in French, too. All the *Ministerie de Espace* would confide was that, ‘French vessels are currently conducting deep space operations’.

¹ UNCLE = UN intelligence Agency, ‘The United Network Command for Law and Enforcement’ (*Ed.*)

But there was no time to *think* now. “Captain!” Indira reported. “Two blips! Coming in from the planet!”

“Inform the ‘Sovetsky Soyuz’”, Elizabeth calmly ordered.

“Loop transmission ended!” Indira then calmly reported.

“‘Sovetsky Soyuz’ has nothing”, Colin reported.

“Send them our telemetry!” Elizabeth ordered. “Can you get a visual?”

“Aye Ma’am”, he calmly reported. “Golly! Look at this!”

“Oh my!” Lizzie saw Arabic numbers and what looked like WW2 era German markings. “Send back to the Admiralty on Earth as well. Weapons?” she instantly feared.

“All I can make out...” Colin gritted this wasn’t ‘Star Trek’...

“So”, Captain Romanov remarked to her crew, “they are space U-Boats, da?”

“‘Hood’ reports attempting to hail”, came the very professional reply...

“This is British Commonwealth space vessel *HMS ‘Hood’*”. Colin repeated again. “Please identify yourself”.

“*I am Captain Karl Hesse of the Reichs Weltraunflotte*”, finally came back a reply. “*You will surrender immediately*”.

“This is Captain Elizabeth Darcy of the Royal Space Force”, Lizzie indicated she was taking over the conversation. “Did you make a similar offer to the French who were transmitting that message to us?”

“*You will surrender*”, came the reply. “*Or you will die...*”

Report to the ‘Sovetsky Soyuz’ two hostiles”, she calmly announced – then indicated Colin cut coms. “Red alert! Shields up!”

“We don’t have any shields, Captain?”

“No... But I’ve always wanted to say that...” she saw the ‘opposing’ fleets start to slowly manoeuvre... noted their tech seemed somewhat *matched*...

“Reply from Marshal Bollakoff”, Lieutenant Zilensky calmly reported. “We are to send all intelligence and to destroy all ‘space Nazis’, as per the purpose of the United Nations”.

“*Da!*” Tatiana agreed. “Signal ‘Hood’. Any response to our interrogative concerning Carl Hesse?”

“Yes Captain. There was a Nazi military rocket scientist called Bruno Hesse. Unaccounted for at the end of the Great Patriotic War”.

“Interesting”, Tatiana noticed the ‘space Nazis’ attempt to get behind a small nebula, located at one of Venus’ Lagrange points. “Battle stations, Comrades...”

“Unknown French vessel”, Indira’s recorded voice continued to send. “Do you require assistance?” Still no response.

And then all Hell broke loose! “Dingo’s kidneys they’ve got bloody guns!” Digger reported at the ‘Hood’ took terminal damage as she traded rocket blows with a ship sinisterly identified at the ‘Scharnhorst’. Luckily the ‘Sovetsky Soyuz’ intervened to turn that enemy dark – but was then herself crippled by the ‘Scharnhorst’s’ dark sister’, the ‘Gneisenau’.

Then – just as it was looking bad for the UN forces - the radios crackled. “Apologies for the delay, mes amies. This is Captain Pierre Dubois of the AS ‘Napoleon’. Stand by...”

“Strewth Skip!” Digger reported. “We’re on batteries. We’ve got more holes than a Pommy batting order!”

“Get the solar panels working!” Elizabeth demanded. “Top priority!” she tried not to think about the near fate of Apollo 13 if the oxygen ran out...

“You picked up our radio buoy”, Dubois continued to report to his allies. “Vee vill deal with zer boche. You patch your ‘oles, n’est pas?”

“He sounds confident”, Colin noted.

“Pass me that sealant!” Digger interrupted. “If we don’t fix this we’re deader than Ian Botham’s career...”

“Zer ‘Scharnhorst’ is disabled”, Captain Beckenbauer reported back to base.

“Destroy them all”, the Grand Admiral demanded. “Those are the Fuhrer’s orders!”

“Javol!” Hans knew he dare not disobey.

“Captain! The French!” they are trying to ram!”

“Gotten himmel! Evasives!”

“For zer Repulic!” knowing honour and duty demanded this was the end... Captain Dubois lit a cigar as the ‘Napoleon’ engaged ramming speed.

The crunch was audible - as the hiss of escaping air...

oOo

“...so I’m not quite sure who rescued whom”, two weeks later, back at Space Station Victory Lizzie reported to Admiral Lowe.

“Blistering barnacles!” he exclaimed. “Damn lucky you and our Russkie friends were salvaged by the Yanks. No such luck for those brave Frenchies. Looks like the Huns salvaged their ‘Scharnhorst’ too”

“Oh dear, Sir”.

“Quite”, he pursed his brow in thought. “Total news blackout. Alien incursions are bad enough... without causing public panic over potential space Nazis...”

“At least we know they’re there now, Sir?”

“Yes. But likewise they now know that we know they’re there...”

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“Sooner or later our enemies were bound to have discovered us”, the Fuhrer of the Fourth Reich threw back her shock of blonde hair as she contemplated her options. Sole daughter of Adolf and Eva Hitler, she had been but a baby on the last flight out of the Harz mountains. “We must fight to maintain our new world order, here, on Venus”, she addressed her Grand Admiral.

“Klinnsmann?”

“*Javol* my Fuhrer!”

“Order ‘*Bismarck*’ completed as soon as ‘*Scharnhorst*’ is repaired. Top priority!”

“*Javol!*” Erich gave her the ‘German salute’ and departed... it never wise to argue with Adele Hitler...

Chapter Three — ‘The Chances Of Anything Coming From Jasoom...’

“There can no longer be any doubt, Princess!” Magistrate Dorke eyed the metal fragments. “This... *contraption* is not of this world. We can ignore the danger no longer”.

“Yet we always knew this day would come”, Princess Layla decreed. “Since first discovering transmissions from Jasoom fifty years ago²”.

“The ancients were wrong to turn their back in space”, Dorke grimaced. “They seeded Jasoom before The End. And now they will repay us in blood”.

“We do not know *that*?”

“The prisoners we took twenty years ago were clearly warlike”.

“And yet we defeated them?”

“So they occupied Cosoom instead? These other Jasoomians will be no better than the fracking reivers!”

“Who now leave us entirely alone to assault Jasoom?” the princess reminded. “No. We will try diplomacy first. Any beings that forced the Deutschers to leave Jasoom cannot be without merit. Prepare the fleet...”

oOo

“You are ready to launch?” Grand Admiral Klinnsmann questioned. “Ahead of schedule?”

“*Javoll!*” Captain Lutzow assured with a sly grin. “We have ways and means of motivating our Venusian workers”. He paused. “The plan?”

“*Ja.* Fuhrer Directive 87. We will settle accounts with the Martians first. Then we will begin the re-conquest of Earth. As of now”, he sat back in his chair, “battleship ‘*Bismarck*’ is the ultimate weapon in the solar system...”

oOo

Being Secretary General of the United Nations was a heavy load to bear. Because Earth’s nation were rarely ‘united’...

“So”, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar sat back in his chair, “are they a threat, Colonel Straker?”

² An Areen year is roughly two terrestrial years (*Ed.*)

“Possibly Sir”, Ed Straker, Head of SHADO³ was honest. “We know the alien incursions come from beyond the solar system. And now we’ve space Nazis on Venus to factor in too. I suggest taking these Martian overtures at face value. For now. But total media blackout. We could need allies”.

The Secretary General nodded; saw the Security Council members were in agreement...

TWO WEEK’S LATER

The telemetry from Helios was quite clear. In orbit ‘above’ the Sun, it was able to look ‘down’ upon the plane of the solar system, and thereby provide vital surveillance. The Nazis had launched three ships – and they were heading for Mars.

“Can we at least make a gesture?” the Secretary General questioned Colonel Straker.

“It’s beyond SHADO’s range”, Straker shook his head. “What have the Great Powers got nearby?”

“Not a lot”, came his ADC’s reply...”

“Send what we can?” came the Secretary General’s ‘suggestion’. “We can at least *tell* the Martians what’s coming their way...”

oOo

“This is what we already *know*”, back on Mars, Dorke was contemptuous.

“By they do not *know we know*?” Princess Layla was objective. “And they offer their nearest vessel as aid”.

“We cannot trust these Jasoomians. These aliens. *Any aliens!*”

“I have decreed we will give diplomacy a chance. And we *will*”, the Princess remained imperious...

“Bloody hell!” Digger exclaimed.

“Quite”, Colin amused.

“The replenishing robot ‘Deep Purple’s’ are on their way, Captain”, Indira confirmed. “We can be good to go in two days”.

“Mm...” as former Royal Navy officer Lizzie was well aware what had happened the last time a ‘*Hood*’ had gone up against a ‘*Bismarck*’...

oOo

³ ‘Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation’ (Ed.)

“Your skin?” Second Essen questioned the ‘Earther’ known as Indira Khan. “We – I – thought all Jasoomians were pink?”

“Not all of us”, Indira was glad the translator algorithms were working. “Are you all red-skinned?”

“Some are green, like Venusians”, Essen amused back. “They foolishly turned their back on technology and now...”

“Enemy vessels entering radar range!” from the bridge Commander Darcy confirmed.

“Battle stations!” Captain Bennett shouted back.

“See you on the other side...” Indira signed off to her new friend.

“Red bloody alert – shields bloody up...” ‘Digger’ mumbled under his breath.

“Language...” Indira mildly chastised her Aussie ‘Mate’...

On the bridge of the ‘Bismarck’ Admiral Gunther Schwimmer nodded the advance continue. On the far right of the battleline he noted the plotters report that – as well as the Martian *untermenschen* – there was a British vessel. “History repeats”, he smiled. “Once again a ‘Bismarck’ will dispatch a ‘Hood’...”

Across the icy cold of space... Captain Lizzie Bennett, RSF, was having similar thoughts. “We’ve a score to settle here”, she ordered. “Target ‘Bismarck’! all weapons!”

“Aye, aye Skip”, ‘Digger’ prepared to power up the rockets and launchers...

Space battles in the late 20th Century are habitually short. So much can go wrong and ships are so easily ‘broken’. For the ‘Hood’ it began with an incoming salvo from the ‘Scharnhorst’ – rockets (and all ammunition) being precious and not there to waste. Lizzie was pleased to see their Martian allies were tackling the leviathan that was battleship ‘Bismarck’; as well as the two ‘space Nazi’ battlecruisers.

“Return fire!” she changed her orders – and shots from ‘Hood’s’ guns and rockets slammed into the ‘Scharnhorst’, severely damaging her.

“Dingo’s kidneys!” ‘Digger’ exclaimed as the Aream vessels disabled and silenced the ‘Bismarck’.

“The old ‘Hood’ avenged...” Colin remarked. “We’ve got company!” he saw the crippled ‘Scharnhorst’ and her sinister consort ‘Gneisenau’ now bear down directly upon them.

Luckily the surviving Aream ships intervened and ‘Scharnhorst’ too was gone. “Damage report?”

“Thank the Gods for supply Deep Purples”, Indira reported it was minor.

“They’re breaking off!” Colin saw.

“Signal our Arian friends”, Lizzie ordered. “‘Well done’. Oh – and add ‘We’ll be there for you’...”

“Enemy withdrawing!” on the bridge of the ‘*Gneisenau*’ Captain Franz Von Totenhosen listened carefully to the report of his crew.

“Stand by to recover wrecks and survivors...” he hoped he’d not be the ranking officer to have to report their failure to the Fuhrer...

The unexpected explosion was accompanied by a rush of air. Lizzie cannoned back from the blast to collide with her ‘Number One’. For an instant the close proximity of his masculine scent and presence - within her body-space - was quite intoxicating... and totally inappropriate to beat deep within the bosom of a serving RSF officer...

“Fuck it!” ‘Digger’ as he and Indira efficiently tackled the ‘leak’ with plasticard and sealant...

“Who says in space no one can hear you swear?” Colin amused as he disengaged from his captain, quipped to defuse the *moment* that had so unexpectedly passed between them...

“Skip!” ‘Digger’ reported. “We need to get to a port pronto!”

“Understood”, Lizzie pursed her lip in thought. “Lieutenant Khan!” she calmly ordered. “Signal our Martian friends our situation and request permission to land to effect repairs...”

Chapter Four — ‘Any Port...’

“In the Royal Navy they taught us how to act as diplomats”, Lizzie reflected to Colin as the planet Mars loomed through the window.

“I guess a common enemy helps”, he replied that the alien reivers and the ‘space Nazis’ remained a threat (not to mention Earth’s internal squabbles).

TO BE CONTINUED...