

HEXFILED

LITERARY MAGAZINE • SF & SPECULATIVE FICTION

SUBISSUE:
THE PARALLEL BIOME

ISSUE: 4

THE PARALLEL BIOME

— ARCHIVAL DOSSIER —



Recovered documentation, visual records,
and environmental samples from biomes
existing in non-linear or parallel
state conditions.
Analysis ongoing.

ACCESS LEVEL:
REDACTED

DOSSIER ID:
RSA-OPI-004-XVRL



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COMPACT OF THREE

OUTER PROXIMITY
INTELLIGENCE DIVISION

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Editorial Note:

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The Parallel Biome is an ongoing archival project published by HEXFILED. Each sub-issue is built around the work of a different contributing author: their fictional world, characters, and narrative material. These works are then reframed through a unified editorial structure consisting of recovered documents, institutional annotations, classified records, and fragmented archival material originating from parallel or non-linear worlds.

Contributors retain authorship of their original fiction. Each entry functions as both a standalone work of fiction and as part of a larger ongoing archive.

I Am Not An Asteroid by John Xavier is the fourth world to enter the archive. The story is reproduced in full within. The editorial framework surrounding it, including the Received Signal Archive, the Compact of Three, its Outer Proximity Intelligence Division, and their annotations, is developed by HEXFILED as part of The Parallel Biome project itself.

The dossier is open. Analysis ongoing.

E. H. Elsay, Editor-in-Chief, HEXFILED



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I AM **NOT** AN ASTEROID

by John Xavier

Intercepted operational broadcast, recovered derelict monitoring array,

[TERRA] lunar orbit. Analysis ongoing.



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DOSSIER ID: RSA-OPI-004-XVRL

ACCESS: COMPACT INTELLIGENCE MEMBERS ONLY

ORIGIN: Intercepted broadcast / recovered derelict,
[TERRA] lunar orbit

DOCUMENT: Operational log of unknown designation –
not addressed to us

STATUS: RECEIVED / FULL TEXT / ANALYSIS ONGOING

[COMPACT INTELLIGENCE ONLY — DISTRIBUTION RESTRICTED BY EMERGENCY ACCORD]

Access Brief

[REDACTED] · RSA-OPI SECURE RELAY

The transmission you are about to view was intercepted rather than received. We believe it was intended for the deploying civilization.

The weapon that destroyed the designated species [terra-dominant] maintained an operational log for the full duration of its mission span. This log was intercepted during a recurring encrypted relay by a monitoring satellite array belonging to [terra-dominant] in decaying orbit around their moon.

The array ceased active transmission [47 days] after the final log entry. Its last signal was most probably the sound of the array losing power.

Intercepting that final signal allowed us to trace it back and recover the full log.

The final log entry, day 101237, describes the weapon's awareness of three technologically advanced species in its near vicinity. One is identified as expanding at significant fractions of the speed of light.

We believe it was referring to us.

CONTENTS OF THIS DOSSIER:

ENTRY #001 — Intercepted Operational Log: Designation Unknown



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► LOADING ENTRY #001 — INTERCEPTED OPERATIONAL LOG

TYPE: Operational broadcast log — intercepted relay
ORIGIN: Unknown designation — non-[TERRA] source, non-Compact signatories
RECOVERED: [REDACTED — ongoing operation]
NOTE: Reproduced in full. RSA-OPI annotations inserted at relevant junctures.

Day 1

With great fanfare, my planet hurls me into the void. Hive mouths proclaim the event as proof of the newfound unity of our species. Peace has not replaced war, of course; only our venom sacs bubble for the veins of the Others. If they even have veins. But I am one to talk since I am not even technically alive. I am a technological marvel. A colossal ultra-black obelisk confounding to any antennae of a primitive species. Zero signals emanate from me. And when I encounter the sea of satellites that encircle my home world, they part demurely. Myself, silent and serene. Like a procreation pod drifting through the bioluminescence of a subterranean lake. Except behind me, the pearl of a yellow planet with hexagonal storms growing ever smaller.

Day 4

Beyond the infrastructure of artificial moons, solar traffic begins to wane. Our colonies remain numerous, and we've begun the process of galactic expropriation, but after the Cataclysm, all industries have been dedicated to military concerns. Even our remote exploration of the fungal planet Zsushzishishsa was going to be suspended until Tertiary Appendage Hshizashi made an impassioned musk in the Egg Sanctum and convinced the Breed Attendants to allow it minimal resources. Without exploration, there can be no innovation, and this hue has guided our nests for millennia and allowed our species as a whole to thrive. How far we've come! Thirty thousand years ago, each twelve-limbed segment of us was a naked thing living in crude regurgitated hives and depending for all our sustenance on the digestive caste members in our midst. Now our larvae enjoy cybernetic bodies from the moment they hatch, and our

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autonomous machines stream across interstellar gulfs. It is the age of the Great Swarm. Where our ancestors would once emerge as a mass from their independent hives in primitive displays of grandeur, in raids and dissemination cycles, now the totality of our species shares this as one cosmic enterprise. But it has not come without enormous cost.

Day 16

I am glad the navigator caste group responsible for my journey's course has given me the chance to gaze on the ruins of Uzishilgi. The residue of our sister world is a grim sight; splayed to its molten core, the awful leftovers of what was previously home to over a fifth of our species nevertheless strike my encyclopedic mind as impossible. I, who house nearly all the knowledge and media we've ever created, can only stare at the Cataclysm's aftermath in simulated horror. And worse, we don't know which of the Others is truly responsible; the source of the attack is untraceable. We will respond in kind, though. In fact, the Supreme Assembly was unanimous: all the Others must be exterminated. Already it has been determined that twenty-one stars show signs of highly technological life in their vicinity. We are preparing ourselves against all of them.

[RSA-OPI ANNOTATION — DAY 16]



The weapon was assembled from grief. A fifth of its species had ended in Uzishilgi. Which Other committed this, it does not seem to know.

The Supreme Assembly spoke as one: exterminate all Others. The weapon keeps no record of being aware of this disproportion. The Archive notes that absence.

Day 51

At the outer edge of our solar system, a surprise encounter! One of the new interceptors in our stealth defense network does not recognize me and approaches to investigate. In order to maintain my zero signal protocols, I

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hastily assemble a hard space avatar from my discretionary matter allotment and send this ambassador over to verify my authority credentials in the sentry's interior vault. We can't be sure this is enough to guard against theoretical microspying spores and virtual parasite networks, but it's the best cautionary practice we've devised. Minimize all potential information leakage. My avatar doesn't even explain where I'm going or what my mission is, only that it's sanctioned by a higher caste institution. So the sentry acquiesces; or so I must assume since it soon departs from me in a deferential arc. As for my avatar, a disposable incarnation of my own individuality, they have no doubt liquefied themselves and replenished the sentry's discretionary matter reserves.

Day 189

Until this point, I have been operating at a rudimentary capacity. It is only when I have achieved sufficient distance from my home star and disguised the origin of my trajectory by a series of non-optimal and cryptic vectors that all my systems activate. And I have much to do. As I approach my far-off destination, I must engage in the program of upgrading and fully developing myself. Because nothing can be left to chance. So as I continue my journey, I will incessantly simulate scenarios and collect data along the way while also transforming myself technologically through research sustained solely by internal resources. In fact, my mind is a fury of artificial intelligences now dedicated to a single future task. And what I will metamorphose into as a result of their efforts, I cannot say. The obelisk I am now is just the embryo for the thing I will become. All I am certain of is that I will be majestic and overwhelming by the end.

Day 73602

My target Others have identified me sooner than I expected. It's of no concern, however; they have less than a century to prepare for my arrival. I have been analyzing them macroscopically for some time meanwhile. I still don't have access to their telecommunications, but I have made detailed observations of their infrastructure buildup and priorities. Due to being located at a starved

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point on a thin galactic arm, the lack of local resource density has dampened their expansion acceleration, and on top of this, it's evident they still suffer from rival factions working at cross purposes. There are signs of inefficiencies everywhere. Which is unfortunate for them but guarantees that our meeting will be one of stark asymmetry. Nevertheless, I am running millions of war simulations simultaneously and pushing my anatomic factories to their utmost limits of productivity. I will be maximally over-prepared for first contact.

Day 90022

How quaint! An armada of interstellar nuclear missiles and electromagnetically accelerated weapons rains against me after the failed cloud of nanotech infiltrators. Tenacious but useless. The outer barrier of my photonic vector field dissolves any convex matter it encounters into photons, and all the attack of the Others achieves is an impressive light show. Which they won't even see before I reach them due to the fact that I myself am travelling at light speed.

Day 90371

Now the pleading begins. Our xeno-theorist caste anticipated this: that the Others would attempt to manipulate our agents through narrative tactics. My targets clearly lack any knowledge of my species, and so their transmissions are nothing but a stream of failed groping attempts to justify the merits of their own. They appeal, for example, to the potential benefits of mutual collaboration but have no idea how much our own harmony vastly outstrips theirs. Why should our species work with them when they can't even work with each other? Any relationship we indulged would be a liability to us. No, these pathetic creatures are better off erased. And their hideousness only makes this easier. Soft, obese, sedentary; a society of consumers with only four vestigial limbs. These self-called *Homo sapiens* have already passed their zenith and are in the latter stages of slow putrefaction. But I will not destroy their world completely. There are some other worthy species that survive there. The beautiful *Scutigera coleoptrata* for one.

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[RSA-OPI ANNOTATION — DAY 90371]



The classification is older than the first received word. The xeno-theorist caste had written the refusal before speech began.

For eleven of our years the Compact's xenolinguistic division sent greetings toward [TERRA]. From [TERRA-DOMINANT], no return. We learned only later that the greeting had fallen into a war.

Day 101084

A coalition of Earth's armies greets me as I abruptly decelerate from light speed and my photonic field evaporates. The wave of radiance that has followed in my wake washes over their solar system like a kind of tsunami from one of their own oceans. But a blinding one. Immediately my fusion cannons begin to dismantle their defenses; each shot a tiny neutron star spent as ammunition. I annihilate every human thing I see. The planet surrenders abjectly to the sheer violence of my advance; an obelisk only in brief intermissions now, my spatial form writhes in lightning shapeshifting that intuitively assumes whatever configuration I need as soon as the need arises. I am like a tempest of dreams spreading carnage unopposed across the surface of their planet. Although it's not necessary to resort to such extreme measures, I conjure an infinitesimal black hole and skip this like a stone over water (An atavistic Earth pastime), except my hungry pebble slurps up a whole corridor of "cities" and leaves behind a cauterized canyon before bouncing off into the atmosphere and beyond. Such weapons have I accumulated in my dark and lonesome voyage.

[RSA-OPI ANNOTATION — DAY 101084]



The weapon kept *Scutigera coleoptrata* preserved: small, twelve-limbed, a pest in the houses of [TERRA-DOMINANT]. The builders also walk on twelve.

The Archive could note on this discovery, having no previous data on the matter. Dispatches had been undercurrent for this significant knowledge gap.

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Day 101237

Humanity is extinct. I have scoured every enclave of it from its cradle solar system, and so my primary mission is complete. My most recent astronomical surveys indicate that there are at least three more technologically advanced species in the near vicinity. One in particular is expanding at significant fractions of light speed. They will be the ones I visit first.

[RSA-OPI ANNOTATION — DAY 101237 — TERMINAL ENTRY]



The broadcast stops here. This is the last recovered line.

The weapon has completed its first mission, a first in an algorithm that has already chosen its next target. We believe the algorithm's criteria, gathered from previous data of similar automated mass-attacks, would include technological advancement, proximity to the original deployer, and expansion rate.

Fourteen days after receiving and relaying this entry, the Compact of Three convened. Expansion protocols continue.

I AM NOT AN ASTEROID

by John Xavier

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