

## On Some Backwater Planet

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# On Some Backwater Planet

by [Charles Bhepin \(Bluepencil\)](#)

## Summary

It seems to be your typical 'summoned to another world' story. Only, the main character is first stuffed into the PTSD-filled braincase of an ARM Commander, then punted into the one Planet well capable of killing him with its mind. This can only end in tears. Or hilarity.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

# Prologue [00]

## Prologue [00]:

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The screams of trillions echo still. Within me, they are forever captured in their final moments.

I should have gone mad long ago.

And in fact, I did – in those millennia of total war, I was a creature of hate and spite. But the "I" that existed in this watery grave was different from the "myself" that fought in that futile doctrinal conflict. It was my body that slaughtered those worlds, and the memory of atomics ripping asunder a world of rust and iron linger in the hollows of my mind.

Yet mad, I am not.

I remember the taste of hot chocolate at midnight (the ringing sound of bombers diving).

I remember the ignored pang of hunger as the screen scrolls by with an updated story (the whirr of plasma cannons firing from behind the hills).

I remember the Christmas with the family (they're dead, all dead, no one's left).

I remember dying under the rubble (lasers biting into my chest).

Light, blinding light, as everything ends.

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Yet instead, there I lay, in the crushing lightless depths. Why?

Who cares?

It's cold.

It's fine.

Why should I get up?

The war's done.

We thought we'd won, when we finally broke through to the enemy's homeworld and shattered it along with their last commander. After millennia of conflict, peace at last.

But even in defeat, their malice knew no limits. And so, drowning in our victory, we were unmade.

A galaxy died, with a whimper.

Why should I get up?

The "me" that did not know war can barely keep it together.

The "me" that lived through that war is tortured by the thought of survival.

I'm alone.

It's dark.

I'm done.

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...

Hm?

For countless eons I've slept. Yet for the first time, something pierced my solitude.

Forgotten circuits suddenly blazed with alertness. Combat protocols suddenly erupted with blinding urgency, a torrent of insistent clamor sluicing into the back of my skull. I ignore them. Passive sensors treated the surrounding ocean like a second skin. Light and radiation filtering through the depths hinted at something messy happening up at the surface.

... should I?

The "me" that did not know war still remembered the concept of altruism.

The "me" that lived through that war hoped that this is the enemy.

Clouds of silt erupted around me as I stood up for the first time in however many centuries.

Light flooded the deeps. First, a strip of green from a head that looked far too much like a bucket. Then, blazing green, from an arm that ended in a massive open barrel. For a few moments, I watched dancing green particles spiral around my inhuman exterior, cleaning my body of grime and crusted oceanic life.

Meanwhile, my body once more experienced slow resurrection. Warmth. Heartbeat. Somnolent Fluid slowly drained out of my veins to be replaced with freshly synthesized blood.

For the first time in centuries, I inhaled. Pain lancing up my ribs made me feel like laughing, which only added to the pain, which only added to the hilarity. I only stopped when my suit shocked me with a defibrillator.

I looked at my left hand, mortal flesh again.

I closed my eyes and extended my arm, a Commander again.

Streams of green particles shot forth towards the ocean floor. An outline formed of teleported photons formed.

And so I laid down my first Metal Extractor.

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*Meanwhile, on a backwater planet, a CORE Commander has finished building a Metal Extractor.*

*- the death knell to many a wanky science fiction versus debate*

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# Chapter 2

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Extraction [1] -

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The name Tidal Generator was actually a misnomer. In a war where thirty minutes might as well be an eternity, could we wait for tides to arrive? We even fought on worlds without moons, why does it matter?

Instead, there were actually several different types of Tidal Generators – one for extracting energy from surface waves, another for inlets with higher velocity water flow, another for taking advantage of currents along an ocean shelf, another for deep waters, and other even more modular forms.

The Tidal Generator I decided to build was anchored to the seabed. It was a tower made of interlocking blades sheathed by a funnel that pulled energy from ocean currents. The cap over at the surface of course still operated upon the ebb and flow of ocean waves. No part of the structure is wasted in the goal of capturing energy for the war effort.

In two minutes I'd laid down six of them.

Such were the build times when you're working with a nanolathe. Megawatts of energy churned ready to be tapped via quantum gate.

Similarly, the Metal Extractor was more than just a mine. It was a web of filaments extracting common minerals and the rare elements so necessary for the assembly of nanobots. The resource named 'metal' was actually made of refined and prepared nanobots ready for teleportation to the nanolathe.

I had three Metal Extractors, spaced about a kilometer apart.

It took three minutes to set up my seed economy. I stopped for several more minutes, ignoring the screaming memories that said I was wasting time. Lay down a Shipyard, my instincts said. Get a Construction Ship, then some Skeeter-class Scout Ships for exploration.

In five minutes, I could throw up fortifications to defend against combined air-sea assault.

In ten minutes, an Advanced Shipyard, while banking my Energy and Metal outputs into massive building-sized Storage Units. Soon – Fusion Plants and whole fields of Floating Metal Makers. These devices converted Energy to Matter, specifically the rare elements

needed for our most complex circuits.

In fifteen, Battleships and Carriers in the hundreds of thousands of tons escorted by whole squadrons of Seaplanes.

Time was a greater resource than either energy or metal. This is the way I waged war. On tens of thousands of fronts, I threw away millions of K-bots and cloned pilots. On others, whole armies walked under cloak.

For the Commander, it is *knowledge* that is the strongest weapon.

Find the enemy. Avoid contact or harass their economy. If I am to gain a foothold, then I must avoid attention and use my defensive posture to beat back assaults until I'm in the position to strike back.

A concentrated defense around the landing site has ever been the first priority. The advantage for the defender is ludicrous. But overwhelming force striking hard when you're not expecting it? That can crush even the strongest defensive line. The "me" that studied World War Two can only think of the Maginot Line. Pick a spot. Punch through.

But instead of a border defensive line, think of a wall that straddles a world.

I was about a hundred kilometers away from the battle site that woke me up. My Sonar Stations in passive mode could hear what remained of two fleets limping away from the encounter. The victors of this battle did not lose any ships, and gave no thought to taking aboard the enemy. Well, at least they didn't take the time to summarily kill all survivors.

Strange, though. The sound signatures were much lower than what I expected, for the outrageous amounts of energy released in the fight. I guessed they must be using some form of hydrofoil.

Why did I choose not to intervene immediately? Even as an ARM Commander, I was only one unit. There was little I could do to prevent sailors from drowning. What could save more people was to keep them warm and fed and sheltered from the elements.

(Shipyard?)

(Shipyard?)

Yes, fine. Shipyard.

I burned through half my reserves of Metal for a gargantuan half-sunken platform. The drain was an almost physical pain. I took a minute off to recover again. My nanolathe could not create units and vehicles, only structures. Only a factory had the blueprints and the wide-area nanolathes to construct hulls.

One could think of it as the difference between a program compressed into a zip file, and one that's ready to run, which itself also relied upon compressed libraries. I had the blueprints for

the thing that contained its own blueprints.

But instead of a Construction Ship, I ordered a Hulk-class Transport Ship. It would take a while to nanolathe.

Those were the longest, most terror-filled three minutes of my life. All the while, my memories were shouting something like (You fool! You're messing with the build order! You don't mess with the order!)

I knew I could not have survived the CORE Commander's Implosion Device. I knew I, as someone born on 21st century Earth, in the Terra Prime long forgotten, could not possibly have been part of the ARM Commander's memory banks. My memories were far too distinct for a holographic record, but at the same time neither could I deny that the great bulk of my memories spoke only of total war. The sheer relief at the war's end - the desolation of total defeat - they filled me.

It was perhaps this illogical, archaic personality and the emotional distance it offered that kept me from just placing the D-Cannon against my chest and pulling the trigger.

As I waited, I pondered two more questions:

1) As the ARM Commander, my body was nothing more than meat. If I leave this Commander unit, even if I die out there it could remake me in perfect detail within itself. I would however, lose all the experiences gained by my clone outside. Should I send in the clones?

2) The ocean was rather thick with plant life. I reclaimed them for Energy. So, what planet is this? It was oddly familiar for some reason, but neither of my selves could place that feeling.

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The Hulk was prepared. It was a massive barge, nearly kilometer long from bow to stern, and a third of that from port to starboard, it designed to carry a full brigade into battle (back when we still used things as trite as military formations). Its superstructure was dominated by a colossal crane, with the ship's bridge right below. I moved to shallower where its derrick could pick me up.

The end of the crane's arm could pick me up either magnetically or in a scoop. I chose to cling onto the arm and ride up, surveying the horizon as if I were a mountaineer planting a flag.

As we moved, I ordered the Shipyard start building that Construction Ship so demanded.

The Hulk Transport, like all ARM units, was commanded by clones. However, in the war we had long ago realized that it was not necessary to clone the entire body. Nor was it important that the command brain be sapient – it only needed to follow orders. I knew the CORE also



ran their lesser units on rudimentary and less resource-intensive AI.

The Hulk's mind was a like that of sedate cow. I decided to name it Matilda.

And off we sailed towards the place where the crew on lifeboats had already lost all hope for rescue. They were in the middle of the ocean, their supplies and water filtration systems could only last for so long, and their own people were in no position to send out ships for rescue.

I learned later on that when this absurd hulk of a ship came into view, their first thought was that their enemy had come back to finish them off. It took them some time to risk sending a message on an open frequency.

The "me" that fought CORE would not recognize that language.

It was easy for me to recognize it as English. Excellent!

That narrowed down how many possible planets this could be. At least it's not Naboo. Fucking Gungans. I am the Bigger Fish!

"This is the ARM Free Ship Matilda. I'm here to offer assistance." I replied. "Be warned: I don't have any medical supplies, but at least I can fish you out of the drink. Are you receiving, over?"

"Roger that, Matilda. The crews of the Gaian ships Dawn Greeter and Rosinbloom thank you."

Wait a sec.

The unease spreading through the linked circuitry crystallized the moment I saw the sigil on their lifeboats. A red and black flower, upon a green diamond box made out of thorns.

Fuckity. Fuck. Fuck.

The Hulk's crane picked up their lifeboats and laid them onto itself. Their panic and anger at the rude rescue faded quickly, and hesitantly they decided to step out onto the deck.

It was a mixed crew of men and women. Their captain saluted as I approached. I was still wearing my combat suit, and I could tell the crew had to consciously hold off on drawing their sidearms.

The captain's eyes flicked once, carefully noting how the deck was completely devoid of crew. "My thanks, sir. I am Captain Jacob Nobel of the Rosinbloom. We're ever in your debt."

I forced a smile onto my face. "No thanks needed, Captain Nobel. You may call me... Nemo. I'm always ready to assist the peace-loving Stepdaughters of Gaia." I saluted once, then held

out my hand for a friendly handshake between equals.

The "me" that fought the galactic war against CORE was wondering why I was freaking out so much about these people on this one pissant planet.

## Chapter End Notes

MEMSTOR keyword "nanolathe"

- n retrieved:

Nano-lathing: Tiny robots (10 microns across or less) are sprayed onto a powered skeleton. They each 'know' allowable places they may link up (as well as being guided by the powerful intelligence within the nano-lathing unit) and as they settle into position they fuse creating solid material. Then a second stage of nano-lathing occurs where highly specialized nano-bots seek out precise locations on this skeleton to form optical links, weapon systems, intelligences, and other internal components.

Provided there is a blueprint, anything can be built with nano-lathing.

## End Notes

MEMSTOR keyword "Total Annihilation"

- n retrieved:

What began as a conflict over the transfer of consciousness from flesh to machines escalated into a war which has decimated a million worlds. The CORE and the ARM have all but exhausted the resources of a galaxy in their struggle for domination. Both sides now crippled beyond repair, the remnants of the remnants of their armies continue to battle on ravaged planets, their hatred fueled by over four thousand years of total war. The only acceptable outcome is the total extermination of the other.

MEMSTOR keyword "CORE"

- n retrieved:

The COncsciousness REpository was the benevolent central authority of artificial intelligences that provided much of the technological and economic breakthroughs that allowed humanity to colonize the galaxy and enter a Golden Age. Among these critical technologies are the nanolathe, the matter/antimatter reactor, and the Galactic Gates. The discovery of patterning, which allows a human consciousness to be transferred into a machine, theoretically granted an indefinite lifespan to humans.

CORE required everyone to undergo patterning as a public health measure. The colonies founded along the edges of the galaxy (the ARM) rebelled, preferring not to leave their natural bodies to join ARM's machine-only civilization. Its homeworld was CORE PRIME, a world completely plated over with metal. See also keyword "fictional:Cybertron".

MEMSTOR keyword "ARM"

- n retrieved:

The ARM was a coalition of different human civilizations and space empires that fought against CORE (see keywords: Galactic War Reports, NEWSBOT Archives, CaveDog). Due to CORE's advantage in their near-limitless manpower in the form of patterned personality chips embedded into robots, the ARM was forced to rely on mass-produced clones as pilots for their own combat K-bots and vehicles.

In time, ARM and CORE had very little to separate them, except that CORE ran their minds on circuitry while ARM had units piloted by clone brains similarly crafted by a nanolathe. Their homeworld was the lush world of Empyrean, which remained mostly pristine in a war that drained a galaxy dry of resources.

MEMSTOR keyword "ARM Commander"

- n retrieved:

The ARM Commander is the finest warrior mind the ARM ever produced. A genius at strategy, he was crucial at defending against the initial CORE invasions and came to understand how to fight the CORE on their own terms. To be able to stand up against the CORE's advantages, the ARM copied the ARM Commander's mind into thousands upon thousands of clones, each given a specialized K-Bot unit that would take the fight to the enemy.

The ARM Commander is a massive K-Bot with the most powerful nanolathe in existence, capable of constructing whole factories in seconds. Placed onto a planet, they could swiftly build their own armies within hours. Equipped with a personal Stealth Generator, and inserted behind enemy lines by the Galactic Gates (which had mass limits, making conventional assaults unfeasible), they wreaked havoc against unprepared CORE forces.

CORE created their own similarly accomplished counterpart – the CORE Commander.

MEMSTOR keyword "The CORE Contingency"

- n retrieved:

Should ARM manage to prevail and destroy CORE PRIME, a hidden backup CORE Commander is to be reactivated and transform an ancient alien artifact into the Galactic Implosion Device. This device, aptly named, will collapse the entire galaxy into a singularity, which would then explode again to coalesce into new stars and a new galaxy. The single remaining CORE Commander would remain inside the machine, and will step out as the sole survivor to rebuild the glory that is CORE.

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