

Ford at the Crossroads
by
Robert Rietschel, June 12, 2023

The heat from the twin suns of Tatooine had me bound for the shady side of the street. Shady in every way. None other than the *Mos Eisley Cantina*. I gave a knowing nod to Jake the Bouncer. I had tried to befriend Jake on a previous adventure, but it is so hard to befriend as a Noxious Superior. They are notorious for their strength and melancholia. They are the quintessential loners. How their race breeds is a mystery to outsiders as they are firmly antisocial and determined to dominate others physically. Perhaps their form of procreation involves a high degree of sadomasochism. I wouldn't know. Jake and I only shared a brief conversation at the end of one of his shifts. I offered to buy him a Spiker and he accepted. In return, he showed me where the trap door behind the bar is located if I ever needed to make a quick exit. Hey, it's been known to happen in the mixed company of *Mos Eisley*. Home to the rejects of the outer spiral arm three in our Galactic order. Live to fight another day. That's how come I'm able to make this return engagement.

I was headed to the bar, but the sight of female companionship standing alone at the table in front of me stopped me in my tracks. How she came to be standing there alone defied reason. Can my timing be this good? Am I dreaming? Don't wake me. Her skin is golden. No really. Not a color I'd encountered elsewhere in the Galaxy. I at least had to ask where she was from. I was nearly slack-jawed and must have looked the fool when I blurted out, "Where on earth are you from?" She said, "You're not long on originality, are you? You're making earth references in this eon? Earth joined Atlantis as lost civilizations long ago." "My bad," I replied and continued to make a fool of myself, "I was stunned by your, your, your makeup. I mean coloring. I mean you are positively glowing. Glowing golden like liquid gold. At least let me buy you a Spiker."

She agreed and we got two Spikers dispensed from a passing Robowaiter. She told me she was a hybrid. Her father was an Argonian, and her mother was Orodonian. A union of one place known for its noble gas and the other for its rare metal. The result was a golden glow not found in nature. She said I could learn more in less time if we skipped the talking and melded. Now, in different parts of the Galaxy, that term can mean different things. This time I thought before I spoke. It wasn't natural for me, but I was trying to recover from my awkward introduction. "Since you are one of the Galaxy's Unique's as a hybrid, I must ask what the term meld means to one so rare."

"It's a simple process. We need to share a cell with each other. More than one cell is permitted, but the process requires only the contents of a single cell. This allows us to know all there is about each other. Or at least it allows me to do that. Does your species that that skill set?" I asked her for a bit more information. She told me that hybrids are able to decode the DNA in a single cell and fully understand the person with whom they have melded. This is done without giving up one's identity as only a small sample is taken. Primitive hybrids required far larger samples and lives have been compromised as the samples were taken. Those earlier models are largely extinct now. She was surprised that this wasn't common knowledge in my part of the Galaxy. I assured her it was all news to me, but that we had some interesting ways of sharing DNA. She put her finger to my lips. I thought she was telling me to hush. I was mistaken. She completed her meld in that small gesture. Oddly, I now felt that I'd known her much longer and far more intimately than the brief moment since we'd ordered our drinks. Sadly, she now knew me in ways most revealing. All my faults and my sordid deeds were now internalized.

“You might interest me in another place and time. But I sense you are too conflicted to hold my interest even for a game of Gambit.” She picked up her Spiker and walked over to join a table of undetermined origin. I was left mumbling, “What’s a game of Gambit?” But she ignored me.

You win some, you lose more. So it goes. I know I came in here for a reason, now what was it? I was roaming around Tatooine out in the heat and the rocks. Oh, yeah. I was on an archeological expedition to study the rocks. They have an interesting history. These were the remains of a race of Geopods. The Geopods were ambulatory and clannish. They were common in this sector in the last eon, but they lost out in the war of the Antipodeans. The Antipodeans despised the mobility of the Geopods. They were only able to move at the speed of terra slugs. That’s really slow. The Antipodeans had one weapon that struck terror into the Geopods, and it was a liquid that could disambulate anything that moved. If sprayed onto a Geopod, this liquid would turn the ambulatory Geopod into a stationary rock. All of this is material I used to teach my anthropology students, back when I still held a teaching post. The great mystery of the Geopods was the petroglyphs that were etched onto their surfaces when they lost mobility. These symbols were thought to be the dying words of the Geopod race, and I was here to try to decode those symbols. I was in search of a Rosetta stone equivalent, the Oliver Stone. I had been searching the fourth quadrant and had no luck when I remembered that I was just a short hop from the notorious *Mos Eisley Cantina*. That’s where I was when this scene started.

Oliver Stone yelled, “Cut. Harrison Ford, get your butt over here. You’re supposed to be a pro. Now are you Indiana Jones or Han Solo? It’s one or the other. You’re getting your roles mixed up.”

I complained, “Don’t blame me, Oliver. The writers are on strike and the studio insisted we just wing it. They expect you to direct and me to act and they said they didn’t care how, just make the picture. So, pardon my confusion, but I don’t see your direction giving me much help.”

Stone responded, “The studio didn’t give me any direction where this epic was supposed to go, so you just do both. The public loves both characters, so I’ll just call this picture, *Indiana Jones to Infinity and Beyond*.”

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