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## ONCE UPON A TIME IN DEEP SPACE

By

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Once upon a time in deep space, a scientist and a holy one decided to have a scrumptious meal of Antares pollywogs. Afterward, they relaxed by lighting up a couple of Tau Ceti cigars. They put their seven-toed feet up on the tables between them.

"Isn't this wonderful?" the scientist exclaimed. "Ah, the wonders of modern science. With it, we can do almost anything."

"It is a great tool," the holy one replied. He blew a long, luxurious smoke ring high in the greenish air. "But it is insignificant compared to the powers of the great god Zore. Praise be to Zore who made the universe and everything in it."

The scientist looked with displeasure over his cigar at the holy one.

"I won't argue that He might have put the original constituents in place," the scientist countered, "but I can show you how it evolved after that."

"The Plod tells me all we need to know," the holy one replied. He smiled to hide his anger. "Your theories are only theories. The Plod tells it like it was."

"And science tells it like it is!" the scientist snapped back. "Physical laws control how the universe operates. They would not be laws were that not so."

"The laws of Zore do not obey those rules. There is no higher power."

“Use your laws to stop this!” the scientist yelled. He jumped up, jerking his laser pistol from his holster and pointing it at the holy one and squeezed the trigger. This completed the circuit that allowed electrons to flow from the power generator in the pistol’s handle to the liquid chamber in the pistol’s barrel. There, atoms excited by the momentum of electron collisions emitted several wavelengths of radiation. This radiation, focused by the gun’s design, leaped outward through the weapon’s barrel as a high-energy beam of coherent light. This light struck the holy man between the eyes, burning a hole through his skull and penetrating his brain. His functions ceased. Death was instantaneous.

The scientist flushed the holy one’s body out into space through an airlock.

Two days later, the scientist was stabbed repeatedly by a group of religious fanatics, disciples of the holy one. As the scientist lay on the floor dying, he thought that Zore had gotten even with him for his blasphemy.

Neither of them had understood. Anything.