

# **Singularities - The Short Stories**

Jonathan Ghalmi

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Rush

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# Rush

It was a hot day and the convoy was painfully slow. 8 vehicles in total and Logan, Erik, Mark and Steve were right in the middle of it; between the black fumes of the only tank and a troop truck. They were advancing towards the Brooke military base, a dozen miles south of a sandy city growing with all kind of aliens: fast-flying gorgons and gigantic worm-like spawners, known to breed swarms from the spores covering them.

As usual, Steve complained of their slow pace “Guys, every time we need to move to a base from another, it always takes hours. Can’t we just stay in one place?” He marked a pause, the burning air inside their vehicle didn’t allow for long talks “We spend more time in a vehicle than in a bed. That’s freakin’ ridiculous!”

“We need to supply those bases with material and food.” Mark pointed out “And as for the pace, Just go and wake up one of these things, it’s gonna be fun...” he added.

Steve cleared his long and sweaty blond hair away from his sleepless blue eyes annoyed that Mark was right once again “...Yeah, but they could have at least built some freakin’ air conditioning in the ‘bender..”

Logan was silently driving the Hellbender, a large SUV-like vehicle fit for 4 and equipped with a mounted gun instead of actual seats at the back. Not that he liked driving; but he was so often behind the wheel it had become a natural state. No matter the vehicle, the goods they were carrying or the route, he drove and was the best at it.

*At least I leave the guns to them, I'm much better with four wheels.*

"How's it going back there Erik?" He finally asked. No reply. Logan adjusted his glasses to look at the mirror and saw that Erik had covered himself with a large scarf to protect his face from the quickening sand storms that raged throughout the region.

*No wonder he can't hear me...*

"Steve, can you please check on Erik? Just getting sure that everything's alright."

"Sure..." Annoyed, Steve opened the hatch and reached for Erik with his arm; he finally turned around "Hey Log's asking if everything is alright with you?"

Erik lowered the scarf around his mouth, revealing a thick brownish stubble that matched his short hair, colored by the sand "You can tell him that if he really wanna know, next time he should take the gun..."

Steve snorted and got back inside the hellbender; when Logan asked him about Erik, he quickly nodded "He's doing great."

Half an hour had passed and they had barely travelled a mile through the city. It was the most delicate part of the whole journey; the 2 miles across the city were often crawling with aliens but at a pace slow enough, the convoy would look like a giant caterpillar.

*Nothing to worry about.*

Inside the hellbender, the 3 friends were steaming. Mark was regularly cleaning his oversized glasses from mist and scratching the beard he let overgrow to compensate from the hair he was losing. And Erik was now under the assault of another sand storm.

*At least he's got the scarf and those large sunglasses of his.*

Logan tried to reassure everyone that they would soon drive at a faster pace but as long as they were in the city, they had to keep low profile. That meant another hour, or so.

"I'm gonna shoot my brains out." said Steve "It'll be less painful and torturing than rotting inside of this... of this hellcooker."

"And less painful for mankind to support any child you'd wish to have..." remarked Logan.

"Ha-ha-ha, very funny, at least I have a girlfriend with whom I could do that. You can't say that much huh?!"

"Low blow man... low blow."

"You started it!"

"Hey you two... stop it," urged Mark "look ahead!"

Logan saw that the convoy had suddenly stopped at a crossing. He stopped the hellbender as well, grabbed the radio and contacted the head of the convoy. "Alpha 1 this is Hotel 2, what's the status at the front?" The radio

was throwing back the clatter of the other vehicles trying to reach for Alpha 1 but no clear reply came through the channel. Only when all the voices had gone down did he hear Commander Forge. "To all units, cut off your engines. We have a situation at the front. The road ahead is now blocked by debris and we are investigating an alternate route. Please remain..." As he was finishing, they all felt a tremor around the convoy. Windows that hadn't fallen yet were torn apart by the shaking. The buildings on the brink of collapsing added to the debris on the road. Inside the Hellbender, the nervousness was reaching new heights.

"Guys, this is an earthquake right?" Steve asked, tightening his grasp around his gun.

"Sorry to disappoint you but it was too focused around the perimeter to be a regular earthquake." With his scientific expertise, Mark had proven a very reliable source of knowledge, saving them from innumerable situations. Now they all wished to be spared such information.

"So if it's not an earthquake, what then?" Steve said, looking at Mark who was putting on his helmet. He understood what would happen next "...oh shit!"

Logan understood it as well "Brace yourselves guys!" He got ready to turn the engine back on when the call would go before realizing Erik might not have heard the news "Hey Erik! Hey! Get ready to use that gun, we're gonna have some company." He didn't give time for him to reply that he was back on his seat. "Okay guys, we know the drill, we know it better than anything. So stick to it and we'll be fine."



Steve nodded, “O-o-okay, I am calm... I am calm...” he was repeating. Emotional issues led him to experiment methods on how to gain control of his emotions and use them positively. It had been useful in the past; it useless now “SHOOT THE FUCKERS!!! SHOOT THEM DOWN !!!” he yelled when the first gorgons appeared from above and a spawner cracked the ground open under the tank and ate it whole.

Logan didn’t wait for any order and took the matter in his own hands. He turned the engine back on and drove away from the convoy and into the city.

“Guys, it’s rush hour time!”