

# Galactic CorpGov – Theft on Epsilon Five

Jorge had been sent to Epsilon Five to investigate a string of thefts from the Director's Private Storage (DPS). To Jorge, this was a degrading assignment, as he was considered the preeminent investigator in the CorpGov Galactic Security Force.

His success in solving cold cases, which had no leads, and high-profile cases involving elite members of CorpGov was legendary. Hell, he'd even solved the Delilian murders after hundreds of incompetents (now deceased) spent years uncovering fragmentary evidence. So why was he being sent to this shit hole of a planet deep in the Programming Sector?

Hell, he hated programmers of all stripes - they gave him the creeps. They'd sit oblivious to everything in these little chairs, staring mindlessly off into space while their little fingers furiously pounded a keyboard faster and faster.

Hundreds of thousands of these working droids were shoved into massive warehouses, sitting row upon row in their appointed pod with keyboards strapped around their legs, pounding out the crap that kept failing. Code that their little fingers spewed forth into tiny chips implanted in their brains. Chips that allowed them to visualize every line of code they were typing. Chips that allowed them to access any program they were permitted to work upon.

They were allotted two breaks over a sixteen-hour day - two fifteen-minute opportunities to use the restroom and hurriedly down some rotten scrap of food that an elite Director wouldn't even dream of feeding to his Grog.

Their work was mind-numbing, body-wasting drudgery; not much different from the legions of other working slaves bound to Galactic CorpGov. On many worlds across the galaxy, slaves could be found programming, designing, and manufacturing all forms of worthless garbage. Garbage is carelessly created in massive excretions every microsecond - garbage that was consumed by the elite.

Resource wastage was now exacted on a massive scale, not the once decried planetary pillage but an even more dangerous galactic pillage. Every resource on every planet was available for the immediate consumption or conversion by the elite who comprised Galactic CorpGov. All the rest (the slaves) that were trapped within Galactic CorpGov's territorial space were considered expendable factors of production.

Every expense was continually reduced so that profit could be maximized, and these leeches could be satisfied at least for a moment.

But Galactic CorpGov had declared problems of excessive resource depletion, environmental destruction across millions of planets, poor quality, and unsustainable society successes. This was a galaxy operating on fear, distortion, extortion, corruption, and flimsy, disingenuous communication. It was a contortion of reality that only allowed utterances of success.

With a knife at your throat, with your livelihood threatened, not a single slave in this evil culture of falsehood would dare suggest a negative. Therefore, Galactic CorpGov was continually operating in the pink. To reinforce only the positive, the galaxy was fed a thin gruel of propaganda that cleansed hatred from all hearts - everyone exhibited a pleasant, toothy smile. In this alternate universe, a non-reality created by Galactic CorpGov, problems were never allowed to surface, for if they did, they were immediately buried.

By keeping the entire citizenry under lock and key with very little free time to collude or even contemplate their horrible condition, the elite powers at the top of the pyramid had permanently sealed the lid of discontent. Only sporadic individual acts of defiance would erupt, and these were severely dealt with by CorpGov-sanctioned public torture.

Any individual citizen who committed any act deemed offensive to their master corporation or Galactic CorpGov would be hustled straight to the public torture booth. Once there, every fleshy appendage attached to their body was slowly cut off. This horrendous act of indescribable evil was broadcast in real-time via a holographic feed to all the various corporate worksite properties of the Galactic CorpGov planetary system.

To supplement the terror of the gruesome execution, a commentator would run down the list of offenses that the condemned citizen was charged with by his master corporation. Also, Slave Resources would use this opportunity to emphasize all the laws governing every corporate slave.

None of the particulars ever hindered or bothered Jorge because he knew his place on the great crushing wheel of this business and governmental abomination. He was simply an enforcer subject to the same cruel laws as any other citizen. Jorge was the property of the CorpGov Galactic Security Force, also known as CGSF.

His elite masters demanded that Jorge exercise his innate creativity, intelligence, foresight, and problem-solving abilities to protect their interests. Jorge had no room for error or compassion if he wished to survive, for with a slave force spanning an entire galaxy, even those once rare, brilliant minds like his could be found in abundance.

Jorge realized that his very survival depended upon solving every single case. In this galaxy, failure of any kind resulted in your head plopping into a basket and your body quivering

under each gush of blood squirting from your severed neck. Every working slave was expendable.

So, for Jorge, this case on this orange-hued planet was no less important than any other case he'd solved on numerous other worlds. He would ferret out all the particulars from slaves and masters alike, using his time-proven abilities to see what most missed when viewing a forest of incalculable density.

He thought he'd better first talk with Liorb, the Programming Sector Supreme Director, even if he were certain that he'd never gain admittance to this ruler's palace. When he received notification back at the Level 2 slave hostel that this exalted crusher of slaves had permitted Jorge passage into his sanctum, a shock of disbelief wafted from Jorge's palpitating heart.

Now, navigating the cluttered streets of the corporate center Bio in an AV (air vehicle) cab, Jorge was able to take his first look at this hub of technology - the Planetary Directorate for Galaxy CorpGov's preeminent possession. Not exactly relaxed, but with his mind off the upcoming meeting, Jorge just sat back in the seat, stretching out his legs under the front seat of the cabbie.

But this pearl resembled so many other worlds Jorge had seen, all of them rusting hulks of rough metal. Filth, black, encrusted, runny goop, deteriorating buildings listing on foundations left to crumble, no bustle, no commotion, and for that matter no movement in the streets - no, this wasn't the hidden pearl of his dysfunctional society. When an entire population didn't give a hoot whether their society endured, a slow decay set in that ate away at the roots - progression had been traded long ago for elite pillage and its sibling regression.

Jorge's superior mind was finely tuned to 'channels' that most couldn't even receive; channels that had been broadcasting emergency warnings since he was old enough to decipher the signals emitted from his surroundings. It wasn't that Jorge was some superhuman with inhuman powers; it was just that he'd been born with a highly receptive mind. A mind that was able to take in and process inputs at lightning speed, simultaneously from every source.

Jorge was convinced his intellectual adeptness was both a curse and a blessing, for it provided him with insight when others could only walk blindly through life. But it was a curse because, in a society founded upon the cracking rock of stasis, unbending processes, and symbolic democracy ultimately resting in a few all-powerful elites at the top, he was constantly in danger of saying something profound. For the slightest unintended slip coming from his insightful mind would result in a certain unbearable death.

Profound theories, revelations, and any potentially galaxy-shattering pronouncements were reserved for the specially cloned dogma-filled intelligentsia. Crystal clear to Jorge was the stale, moldy nature of such pronouncements. When they were rarely made, they were just a rehash of accepted CorpGov-approved theories. This was because any new variable that was allowed to enter CorpGov's finely tuned culture of terror and coercion had the potential to disrupt their galactic production machine, which clunked along its well-worn path.

A blue-gray Corobian ray shot from either side of the passenger compartment, penetrating both of Jorge's ear canals. Jorge had reached his destination, the Programming Sector Directorate Building. Merging with Jorge's brain, the Citizen Control central processing unit dragged from Jorge's mind the essence of his entire being - his every last thought and feeling.

This intrusion into Jorge's self was essential when those who held power must exert complete control over all their subjects. It was a guarantee that Jorge was permitted to enter the inner sanctum of power for a CorpGov planetary property.

The Corobian ray immediately disposed of those that weren't permitted or invited to any CorpGov power center. Therefore, Jorge was always a bit apprehensive when that hot liquid feeling penetrated his mind. He was acutely aware that minor mistakes were quite common in a galaxy of incompetents and in an "I don't give a damn whether the piece of shit works" slave labor galaxy.

It would be a minor mistake if he died simply because the Corobian ray mistook him for an enemy of the state. Only a mistake or mishap that caused the death of an elite member of Galactic CorpGov would be a significant tragedy in this repulsive society. Jorge was a non-entity, an insignificant piece of dust that could be quickly and cleanly wiped away without a trace.

No matter how many times that warm tingling intruder had invaded him, Jorge couldn't help breaking out in a cold sweat afterwards. Luckily, the only visible sign of weakness discernible was an eruption of water across his brow - no other trace of wetness could be noticeable.

Safe once again in his own inner thoughts, he contemplated how he'd broach his question in the least threatening and most respectful way possible. This Liorb was only the most powerful elite this side of the galaxy. If you took into consideration that the Programming Sector was the most important piece of shit in the shit pile, that meant that Jorge had to be especially careful when questioning Liorb.

The Programming Sector Supreme Director was also rumored to have a terrible temper. When excited, he could and had vaporized not just the slave that had been the ire of his anger but the unfortunate's entire family. This sociopath was more dangerous than any of the other sociopaths who occupied the upper echelon of the dirty crust of Galactic CorpGov. Jorge was not looking forward to this first meeting. He even believed it was possible that he'd leave the Directorate building through the exhaust of the ventilation system's impurity removal tube.

Verified, vetted, and probed without incident, Jorge's passenger compartment swung open, extending an arm that sealed the passageway leading to a black, glittering, reddish hatch that slid open. A deep hissing steam could be heard quickly escaping from the hatch. Jorge even detected a tinge of death leaking slowly into the passageway. Fear could not even begin to describe how Jorge felt at this moment.

Stepping very slowly from the air cab onto the sterilization grid, Jorge, looking down at his body, was shocked to find what must have been millions of sparkling specks making their way toward his face from his feet. Not experiencing a state-of-the-art Malio Sterilization scrub before Jorge was now watching these Energy Crawlers cover every inch of his body - he was also acutely aware that they were also moving under his clothes.

Heaven forbid, if any toxin, allergen, virus, or dirt contaminates the immaculately clean castle of his rulers. In their eyes, he was a dirty heathen, a reject only being admitted into their space for a special purpose, but damn if they'd have him dirty their 'floor'. He'd try not to disturb any precious vapor of air or tidy little trinket in his supreme master's home.

Now with these 'creepies' down in the grid from where they'd crawled, Jorge proceeded ever so carefully to walk toward the open hatch. When he got closer to the hatch, he could see that a gray light vibrated in waves on the other side. Never had Jorge seen an elite at this level of power before. Jorge had no idea of what he'd find on the other side of this opening. For that matter, no slave citizen had ever glimpsed a master of this caliber; they cloistered themselves behind impenetrable walls and energy barriers. So why was this Supreme Ruler willing to see him?

Stepping over the lower lip of the open hatch, Jorge entered the inner sanctum of this all-powerful tyrant. What he experienced on this side was a feeling of dread so intense that he couldn't move his legs. He was psychologically paralyzed right where he stood.

Darkness colored all in a coal black - no light penetrated this working tomb. Glowing crimson dials, knobs, buttons, and touch-sensitive walls with indecipherable information scrolling down toward the floor, all radiated a deeper red, intensifying Jorge's feeling of impending doom. An evil, an indescribable terror, death, hatred; all that could be perceived

by Jorge as bad hung in the air of this place. It leaked into his body through his exposed skin.

The air itself was thick - it vibrated, its visible waves pounding its pungent, sickly smell of carrion deep into Jorge's nose. He felt like vomiting; his senses were overwhelmed - they were being tortured by an ominous entity ready to swoop down on its victim.

But he'd surely be dead right this second if the PS Supreme Director had any intention of killing him on sight? Jorge was now wondering where the Supreme Director was - why hadn't he seen him? Being omnipotent, the Supreme Director had nothing to fear; he was beyond any law, and quite positively didn't need to hide from Jorge.

So where was he? It had been over two hours with no sign of the Director when Jorge decided he'd better take matters into his own hands. He couldn't stand in this chamber indefinitely. He'd either have to find a way out or locate a communication medium that would allow him to contact the Supreme Director.

Neither option had the slightest appeal. Jorge couldn't even envision himself leaving this tomb without the express permission of the Supreme Director, let alone making first contact with this easily irritated dictator. So, he stood until his legs gave out.

Wheezing through cracked lips that hadn't felt cool water in more than a week, Jorge passed his last word to a creature that was looking down at him. "Why?"

Once dead, the creature stood by Jorge's body, looking at it with the dispassionate demeanor of a lab technician. Materializing from the shimmering gray air, yet another beast emerged from the darkness. Both were around four feet in height with large black oblong eyes. Their skin had a white, pasty color, and where their mouths should have been, there was just a small hole. They were dressed in a shiny silver fabric that seemed to absorb light, even the meager red light of this tomb.

With long, spindly hands, they reached down and grabbed Jorge's body, carefully placing it on three thin beams of blood red light that rested in the air.

Telepathically merging, they communicated.

"This specimen is a perfect example of the docile, subservient, and compliant nature of their species."

"Exactly, just feed them a steady stream of propaganda. Keep them fearful of authority even if it's an authority they can't even directly identify, and they can be pacified without the slightest of effort."

"Yes, they are weak beings."

"But that is what makes them such perfect slaves. Remember our leisure depends upon just such obedient, sniveling, frightened, short-sighted conformists that follow along without question."

"This test proved beyond any doubt that humans would be obedient slaves to the end. When the last of their kind are no longer needed, we can be assured even then that they'd comply with our directives."

"Isn't it wonderful that we happened upon such a weak-spirited race, a species that will allow us to commit any travesty imaginable?"

"Remember, when a people's spirit has been destroyed, they are incapable of exacting justice upon their oppressors."

After filing their report, the creatures readied the room for the next infrequent test subject.

A blood red beam now began covering Jorge's body until it resembled a placenta-like cocoon. The bloody cocoon then began to recede into the vibrating gray air, shrinking smaller and smaller until it was completely swallowed up.

Looking in the direction of the gray oscillating air, the two creatures started their walk back into the darkness, merging with its nighttime qualities, only to reappear when another subject was summoned.

Their job was to periodically 'test the water'.

# Silence on the Plains



Ray Pairan