

Whippersnapper {Pilot}

Written By: Edmund Alexander Sims

"Why's it taking so long to fix this ship, old man?" Lantonelli urged at the insistence of his laser rifle.

First, the ship belonged to Sam Barrie! Second, the Hadrudzei was not broken. Third, this 'old man' - he played none, and the old dog was about to show these 'kids' a few new tricks. But the handyman did not verbalize any of that.

"The diodes are fried," Sam lied instead, "plus it's just hard for me to focus when I don't know where my grandson is," and then lied again.

A devious eye contact was shared among Prashant, Morales, and Lantonelli - their leader before he cocked his head to the side and sent his men on the way to retrieve the boy. No harm would come to the child, but the safety of a loved one might cause the handyman to work faster. They needed to escape Ceres at all costs, and waiting by a universal rest area for a wayfaring ship had seemingly paid off.

Personal vessels like the Hadrudzei were tiny, so little time passed before Lantonelli heard back across an Ear-To-Mouth Com from his men on the whereabouts of the boy. He alerted, "The child was seen heading into fourth gallows."

Great, except there was no fourth gallows. The Hadrudzei's holographic avatar happened to be at work here. Depicting itself as a dashing younger version of Sam and judging from the ensuing silence, 'Sammy' probably led one of the men out an airlock to the tune of a ten-foot drop - not enough to kill but enough to open up the sinuses a bit. Being the caring grandfather who he was not, the handyman questioned, "Is everything okay?"

"Prashant?" A scream had come across Lantonelli's com but then was immediately choked off and left him to wonder.... Moments later, the bellowing gurgle in his ear which came from Morales' feed left the leader beside himself but more likely alone.

"Anything?" Sam feigned ignorance, reading concerned facial expressions as well as he used them.

Random accidents in proximity detection with the opening and closing of the doors between sections were bound to happen - especially when 'S.A.M.U.E.L.' (the Hadrudzei's main computer) was controlling the helm, so Sam dismissed the evidence of a knocked out goon who had gotten crunched and hurried over to an open escape hatch.

'What happened?' was the response that Lantonelli was searching for, but he blurted out, "What now," and rushed to Sam's side. After peering out onto the landing pad, he thought that climbing down the ladder to assist Prashant was a good idea since Morales remained on board, and the boy still happened to be missing.

The leader thought wrong and caught a boot in the face for his troubles, a groggy Morales as the man was tossed out, and sight of Sam plus Sammy waving from the escape hatch ledge while S.A.M.U.E.L. caused the Hadrudzei to take off. This old man was heading home.