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flight
from
new
mu

by . . . Joe Archibald

Septimus Spink had his own ideas about flying disks. They embraced a haywire recklessness — and a survival capacity second to none.

Interplanetary Press—April 10, 2022. Septimus Spink, sole survivor of the Earthian space ship, XXX, was released by the Metropolita Neuropsychiatorium today pronounced as cured as he ever will be. Despite a series of neurotherapeutic high velocity shock treatments, Spink steadfastly refused to recant one word of the story that sent him to the cuckooery. Interviewed by Mars' leading news analyst, Awon R. Mowow, Spink said he was confident that he would be the first citizen of known planets to reach New Mu.

"I am sure," Spink said, "that the characters who took me out of the XXX were natives of New Wu. Correction. I most likely will be the second Earthian to reach that planet. I will not tell you why as they will fling me right back into Bedlam on my plutonylon rompers."

"You still believe what you said about Subcommander Cquob, Fixius Snark and Quartus Goog?" Mowow asked Spink.

"You can quote me," Spink said forcibly. "They got nicked by a strange rebound of the nick of time."

The time-eroded blurbal bromide: "Thomas X—needs no introduction to our readers" has a vigorously new and forceful pertinence when applied to Joe Archibald. For complete, star-bright veracity is never platitudinous And we venture to predict that if there is a single one of our readers who is not already an incurable Archibaldian-humor addict he'll become one when he reads this rollicking new saga of Septimus Spink, star-treader extraordinary.

When I left the XXX hanging in space with gravity pulling it at both ends, their space suits were as empty as Senatorial campaign promises. Looks like we'll have to find a citizen named Sir Isaac Neutron. Ha!"

"What are your immediate plans, Spink?" a Venutian viso-newscaster queried, discreetly keeping his distance.

"As definite as a Nougatine's peace proposal." Spink retorted. "You know that the Unigovernment of Earth figures I have not collected all my ids and libidoes yet and so can't be put back in status quo with Space Squadron Spearhead. It is a fine uraniumite kettle of smelts, gentlemen, what with the Nougatines rearmin' again. You know the new Number One here has forgot about defense and has spent most of the budget on research into the metabolism of the organism. They still laugh at flyin' saucers like they did in 1954, but it is too bad Keyhoe ain't alive as I could tell him I rode in one."

Spink hotly denied he had been offered three thousand Unigovernment clams per week for appearing in a Martian Nocturnal torrid spot.

YEAH, THAT'S what the newspapers said. Even in these times they don't print all the truth. They forgot about the strings I pulled with the Metropolitana ward heelers, and the writ of habeus corpus. I'm out, even though I am watched as close as the seventh son of a seventh son with a bad case of croup. There

is some things I did not tell the Twenty-fourth Estate as according to the records of the Spinks in my hermetically-sealed cylinder they did not breed many idiots.

If a relative of mine got me down here in a flying saucer, I am quite sure the character will decide to pick me up some day. And I'll bet they've already towed the Earthian space pencil, XXX to one of their saucer garages. Well, only time will tell, and I hope it doesn't play me as dirty a trick on me as it did Fixius Snark and Quartus Goog.

Being one of Earth's better known viso-screen hams, I am working at my favorite hobby one day when the Nougats hit Mars with a Pearl Harbor. Three Hydro-radiumjets hit a Martian blasting-off station in medium outer space and wash it up faster than the Metropolitana Yanks did Cincinnati's star southpaw in the last Inter-world Series. I see and hear Earth brass contact the war lords of Mars and Venus. Even Jupiter is jumping.

"All right, I am grounded," I says. "I am a combo of Section Eight and Four F Minus, and am I blue! I will just put in a supply of popcorn an' beer capsules and watch this on my favorite station. I might even go fission."

Then I hear the voice of Number One Coordinator of Space Strategic Command, Bjaal yelp, "Callin' all space pilots, ready or not. Calling all space pilots. Inner and outer space pilots! Everybody who can

walk. This also means you, Septimus Spink."

"I will protest!" I yelps. "I am a mental case. I want a space lawyer!"

"All malingerers will be shot at once!" Bjaal says in a pall-bearer's voice. "This is a war of survival. Operation Curtains will go in effect at once."

"I changed my mind," I says and run out of the house. My space suit and hot rocket are in the garage and I am about to open the door when I hear a voice behind me and it is not of this world. I pivot and look at something I didn't believe the first time I saw it.

"Exquobo gritzmo lexiquosoma!"

The face is familiar, especially the nose. The character has two big eyes that bug out like those of a bullfrog with thyroid trouble. His skin is the color of a half ripe lemon. It is the C.O. of the creeps that dragged me out of the XXX! The little antenna on his pear-shaped noggin is making little da-da-dit-dit-da-da-dit sounds.

"You are still out in left field an' I don't understand a word of your gibberish," I says. "Look, git lost, as I have to go to war."

"Jazplosa!" the thing says and his eyes look mad. Six other yellow-pussed characters come from back of the garage and grab me, and not with what you call hands. They have lunch-hooks that are like tendrils from jungle plants and they wrap them around me, pick me up like I am only a marshmallow and lug me off. A few minutes later I

see that they have landed the saucer on the flat roof of a French-Venutian hand laundry and it looks like it is made of aluminum as thin as a Martian pancake.

"Twiik nojux obwique Spink."

"Spink?" I yelps. "Then you know me, huh?"

The outlandish citizen with a nose like all the Spinks, grins at me as I am carried up the ladder leading down from the saucer. "Loxmiza nostratum," he squawks.

"And put mustard on mine," I says as I am put aboard the saucer. "I was kiddin' myself, huh? I am still in the bughouse and will wake up snug in my orlonylon strait jacket. At least I hope so!"

It is a retake of an opium dream the dome probers claim I had. The inside of the saucer is as spiffy as any lounge in a Neo Yorkus coupon-clipper's club. Then the C.O. of the lemon-skins takes me into the control room.

"Spink," he says, "you are a cousin of mine, twelve times removed!"

You could have knocked me over with a spider leg. "You talked English," I gulp out. "Where are you from, er—?"

"Quantum Spink," the character says. "I am taking you to New Mu."

"Why, that is a million trillion miles from Nougat," I says. "Who taught you to speak English, huh?"

"Why an Earthman named Spink, of course," Quantum says, and hands me a plate of something

that looks like green sawdust. "Eat it, Sep. It is homogenized ambrosia."

"If you don't mind I'll take one of my own veal cutlet capsules," I says, and then there is a lot of gabbing and some whirring and clackety-clack sounds. Arrows start spinning every which way on the instrument panel, and Quantum Spink pulls a little switch and four seconds later I look out and see that we are already passing Asphasia. It is only the rim of the saucer that spins, the New Muan tells me.

"I guess you know the Nougats took a wallop at Mars," I says.

Quantum grins. "We will take care of that on the way, Sep. One thousand New Mu military saucers, carrying Substance YZ2HO, will rendezvous ten million miles south-east of Saturn at 1400 sound hours. We will contact them in just five minutes. You'll see a celestial rhubarb no Earthman ever dreamed up."

"Look, can we take pictures?" I ask, sweating radio-active beads. "I got throwed into a space nuthatch the last time, or did you know?"

"We have a hydrolens camera, Sep," Quantum assures me. "I will give you some prints."

I take a gander through the port-hole and planets go by like mile-stones on the Lincoln elevated throughway.

"No Spink has ever missed a war," Quantum says and crams a handful of ambrosia into his

mouth. "I had to come and get you."

"I'll never be able to thank you," I sniff. "L-Look, cousin, that looks like a school of minnows but we ain't near no water. There's a thous—it is the saucers!"

"Axtonithula!" Quantum yips into a mike he snatches up! "Gargus! Zoonal! Yagiz! Hooxl! Yax Benzi!" He puts down the mike and says he has ordered his four squadron leaders to prepare for the attack on the Nougat rockets that are now just a million miles away. "We want to capture their leader, Mepha Spaam, alive!"

"That I must see," I says. "Nobody, but nobody can convince me I'm here, and if I am not I am cuttin' out paper dolls back in the neuropsychiatorium, and I don't know which is worst or more unhealthy!"

"Your forebears would give their shirts to be here, Sep," the New Muan side of the family says.

"In a few light seconds I will ask them personally, Quantum," I retort, and wipe enough worry dew off my pan to oil all the saucers all around us. "The Spinks sure never missed a thing, did they?"

It is about ten seconds away, the most decisive battle in the history of a dozen worlds. Waterloo, the Marne, Midway, hah; spitball fights. Wait until I tell you.

"Flumpozza!" my wierd cousin yelps, and I find out after that it is New Muan for 'Tallyho!' All the little pear-headed citizens take their

battle stations, and then I see guns stick their noses out of the ports all around the flying saucer. Just picture a pin-wheel buzzing a quadrillion revs every minute, and shooting amo loaded with worse than hydrogen or split-up atoms. In less time than it took me to say Liberace the New Muans saucers chew through a wedge-shaped formation of Nougatine jets.

It is like a thousand circular saws have busted loose and all I can hear is parts of rockets pelting down on the roof of the saucer's control cabin. A Nougat rocket shell spits through the saucer right over my dome and leaves a hole you could drive a cow through, but in the very next second there is no hole. It has sealed itself.

"Get me the head nurse!" I yelp. "I need a shock treatment!"

I look out through the port and see that we are chasing a Nougat space ship right over the top of Asphasia. It is red and black and has a four-legged bird painted on the top.

"It is Mepha Spaam's rocket," Quantum says. "Watch, Sep!"

The enemy space hot rod is galloping at least forty thousand miles every half a minute but the New Mu crate is outlegging it faster than a rabbit does a turtle with arthritis. Then a beam of light shoots out from Quantum's saucer and stabs at the Nougatine space buggy and all at once my tongue glues itself to the roof of my mouth and my eyes bulge out worse than

those of the citizen sitting next to me. The saucer stops dead in space and so does the Nougat hot rod.

"Exzogu Mifto zmack!" Quantum barks into his intercom, and then I look out and see a dozen New Muans running along the beam carrying roscoes. The saucer's gunners cover the citizens, and a shell loaded with Substance YZ goes off and knocks part of the Nougatine's dorsal fin off. The Nougats break out a white flag. "We have found out how to magnetize light rays after we harness 'em, Sep," Quantum says. "We have also succeeded in bending light rays. How's progress on Earth?"

"Oh, we're still drivin' horses compared to you, cousin," I says, my wits near the end.

I look out the port again. The New Muans are coming back across the beam with Mepha Spaam, a citizen who must have been a descendant of Hitler, the old Hun. Spaam has a big head with one eye, a chest like a barrel and a pair of legs no thicker than a crane's. He wears a transparent helmet and an anti-gravity girdle. He is burning worse than the inside of Mt. Vesuvius and is gnashing teeth meshed like the jaws of a bear-trap.

Spaam is brought into the saucer and trussed up with green ropes. "Brooomahoo!" he rips out. "Glopzatma!"

"It is a good thing we don't know what he is callin' us," I says.

"Would you like to talk with

Earth, Sep?" Quantum asks. "I will let you report that the universe is again safe for Democrats."

"All but Maine," I sniff. "They never got beyond the atom!"

The light beam is snapped off, and the saucer begins spinning. Quantum juggles the dials on his unlimited space set and I keep my eye peeled on the viso-screen. We get a shot of a football game on Venus, a beauty contest on Neptune, and a dog show on Uranus. Then the inside of headquarters of Earth's Strategic Space Command begins to shape up. Looking out at me is Commander Bjaal.

"Talk to him, Sep," Quantum says and hands me a mike shaped like a calla lily.

"Septimus Spink callin' Earth!" I gulp. "Spink callin' Commander Bjaal from New Mu space saucer. We have annihilated the Nougatine space armada and have taken Mepha Spaam a prisoner. Over and over!"

"Y-You're in a saucer, Spink?" Bjaal howls through outer and outer space. "Ha ha ha, and I am in limbo. And you will be out on one pullin' this booboo on me."

"Awright," I says, "take a look at my pal here, Bjaal. He is not made up for Hallowe'en. Show yourself, cousin."

Quantum Spink moves in beside me and Bjaal gets as white as bleached milk, and faints like a dame coming face to face with a Martian mouse. It is two minutes later he gets his marbles back.

"Calling Commander Bjaal," Quantum says in the native tongue of one of his forefathers. "When it rains superduraluminadamatine particles you will believe us. This is Quantum Spink, Commander of Saucer Escadrille of New Mu. There'll be no good news in the Nougat Bars tonight. Venus will need no arms, ha! Oh, mad'mois'elle from Armentiers—"

It is right then and there I know that this New Mu denizen is my cousin. "Hand me the mike, pal," I says.

"Calling Commander Bjaal, all quacks in the Neuropsychiatricum in Neo Yorkus!" I snap. "I will sue when I get back to Earth for false incarceration in the violent ward. It is I, Septimus Spink who controls Earth in the palm of my hand. One word from me and New Mu knocks you loose from the solar system. Give all the school kids a three day holiday! Over and out!"

"We are nearin' New Mu," Quantum says, and reduces speed.

I look out the little port over the instrument panel and am the first Earthman to see the remote planet. It is shaped like a fifteen cent baseball that kids have used in three straight ball games and has a greenish-yellow nimbus around it. Quantum gives his crew orders in his native gabble and the saucer comes in and sits down on a saucer drome as if it weighed half as much as an ounce of goose feathers.

"First," Quantum says, "you will have to enter the chlorophlization

chamber, Sep. You wouldn't live two minutes with red blood as you are not part plant like we Muans. It won't hurt a bit. We mix up the sun's rays with extract from the vital plant, zyxothium. Just follow me."

I am taken in a hurry to the place that is shaped like the dome on the capitol building in Washington, and medicos of New Mu grab me, peel off my Earthman's Brooker Brothers suit, and sit me in a little metal bucketseat. They move things that look like sunlamps up close, then pull a master switch. Everything turns greenish yellow and I tingle all over like an old maid finding a burglar in a closet. The little chamber hums like ten million bees at work.

Quantum says that more than rays come out of the tricky lamps. Moisture comes also which is from the zyxothium plant mixture, and is absorbed by my pores.

"In other words, Sep," he divulges, "you sweat in reverse."

"Is that good?" I choke out.

"Your blood stream will absorb the chlorophyl," my cousin many times removed says.

At this moment I wished he had been removed before saucers were invented on New Mu.

A half hour later I am taken out of the chamber into another room where a New Muan interne pricks my finger with a needle. My hair stands on end and lepidoptera gambol in my alimentary canal. I bleed

green. The little medical citizen nods approvingly at Quantum.

"You are ready to set forth into the city of Yzocspink," cousin says. "You will most likely get decorated along with me. New Mu's highest military award is the Crow De Spink. Are you beginning to see, cousin?"

"Yeah. A Spink got here all right back in 1918. Name of Cyril. Nicknamed Muley," I gulped and see a big sign over a building shaped like a wedding cake and as easy to see through as a politician's mullarkey or a Jovian nightie. It says: SPINK VAXOZTZ.

"The Spink Museum," Quantum says. "We have the Spink University Of Advanced Solartechnology, the Spink Baseball Stadium, and the Spink Zoological Gardens. The first space ship ever to leave Earth is in the museum, and a statue of Cyril Spink stands out in front. Made of an alloy of pollybdeum and thyrodium, and won't ever wear out."

"If I remember the records back in my hermetically sealed cylinder," I says. "There was a kraut went up in that rocket with Cyril Spink."

"Ha," Quantum laughs. "He got chicken just after the takeoff and jumped out in a parachute. Maybe he landed in the Earthian alps and is preserved in old fashioned ice."

A few minutes later I am gazing at the twenty foot high statue of Cyril "Muley" Spink, Circa 1918. He is wearing a flying suit of that era when citizens flew as high as ten thousand feet. "He was the

Thomas Edison of New Mu," my cousin says. "There were only three hundred thousand people here when he arrived. Now there are seven million."

"It is hard to believe," I says. "We Spinks could divide but we multiplied pretty lousy."

"We have an Earthian-New Mu dictionary," Quantum tells me. "Or I should say English-New Mu lexicon. Half of us can talk your language, Sep."

Me and Quantum are taken to the New Mu High Command and decorated with the Crow De Spink. Afterward we go out onto a balcony and look down on the city of Yzocspink and my dome spins around worse than the time I first guzzled a fifth of Martian Bam-buie. And when I walk the ground comes up and meets my feet instead of the other way around, and Quantum says it's the chloryphyl in me. What worries me most is the two feelers that pop out of my noggin, but cousin tells me they'll go back as soon as I am dechlorophylized.

Yzocspink is built out of metal, I am told, four hundred times lighter than balsa wood and that no guided missile has been invented that can cut through it. All the buildings are round on top and the city looks like the back of a monstrous whale covered with yellowish green water blisters.

"We will get into my private saucer and go home," Quantum says. "You must meet my daughter, Zyb."

"Huh?" I force out of my throat. "Look, Cousin, I—er—that is, can't I just leave now. I forgot somethin' important on Earth. I forgot to stay there. Let's talk things over."

It is then that I hear the bad news. Quantum Spink looks at me like I am a rodent from Nougat. "What do you think I came after you for, Septimus Spink? I'll tell you! If Earth wants to survive another light year a true Spink will marry my daughter. Any questions?"

"N-N-No!" I gulp, and guess no Spink back over the centuries ever was in a worse kettle of planetary smelts.

I go quietly with Quantum in the saucer, watch him close as he putters with the instrument panel. There is a loud swish. I blink my eyes, cough once, and we are sitting down on the Quantum Spink patio. Out comes Zyb. She has hair that looks like cornsilk, which later I discover to be just that. She wears a thin dress like the old Roman dolls and displays as many curves as a Senatorial southpaw.

She says in my native tongue, "Oh-h-h-h, daddy. This is Septimus" and right away I get a load of New Mu woo.

I guess they don't have no inhibitions or finishin' schools on the planet as she is wrapped around me like a vine while pushing my nose with hers which is Nu Mu's way of kissing. I am trapped, I says to myself frantic. I must get out of here.

Quantum says the wedding ceremonies will begin at eight and will last for three days. There will be great joy on New Mu.

"Thank you, daddy," Zyb says to Quantum. "It is the most wonderful birthday present. An Earthman. A true Spink. I will be the leading lady of New Mu."

I tell myself I will have to work fast before Quantum Spink calls in a lot of his flunkies. One thing I have noticed and that is that New Muans can't run any faster than armadillos. I judge the distance to Quantum's saucer, and take off. The New Muans cup-cake let's out a screech as I dump her into a clump of shrubbery. Quantum rushes into the house as I dash for the saucer and I know he is not after a plant-food sandwich. I am ten feet from the saucer when he comes out and yelps for me to halt. Of course I don't and then I see a tree disappear right next to my elbow as the disintegrator ray hits it.

The second time his aim will be better I am quite sure, and I am very thankful for the buoyancy offered me by my chlorophyl content as I make the jump. I soar through space and into the saucer, then bang the door behind me. As desperate as any Spink back through the ages ever was I try all the switches. Nothing happens. Sweating yellowish green fright ping-pong balls, I look out through the port and see half a hundred New Muans sweeping toward the saucer.

I yank another switch, and the

saucer starts spinning, and suddenly takes off with a whining whooshing Banshee sound that scares my pants to half mast. It is impossible! I am taking off from New Mu in a flying saucer! I am sure Cyril "Muley" Spink would have done the same if he'd had a saucer in 1918.

Well, I says to myself," Calm down, Septimus. This is where you must use your dome an' not get hysterics. You are in a New Mu saucer with gadgets all marked in New Muans gibberish, and if ever a Spink flew by the seat of his pants you have got to now."

Nothing ever flew faster not even the XXX that took me back into time. I sneak a glance out of the front office and expect to see a lost angel thumbing a ride, but instead I discover I am hedge-hopping an outer space atomic service station. I picture the solar system in my mind and look for. Auxiliary Moon 3 that Quantum told me served New Mu. I must have flown ten million miles before I spotted it. I take a small notebook out of my pocket that I filled up with Celestial data when I studied Superadvanced Astronavigation at the Harvardian night school.

On page 11 I find what I am looking for. "Consider now the location of Planet Q. We can specify its position in relation to Planet X by computing its zenith distance, ZQ, and the azimuth from angle QZS, and then multiply by 7.3416. Every star has its fixed time passing

the meridian by the universal sidereal clock and this time is called the right ascension of the star. By using the Einstein III theory of relativity, one planet to the other, it will not be too difficult to determine your way around the solar system. Nutation must be kept in mind, parallaxical phenomena kept in consideration."

"No wonder I flunked," I says. "Just let me spot Nougat an' I'll know the rest of the way."

I fly close to Pluto and some nuclear fission plus hydrogel coughs up at me, and I pull a lever to the right and head for where I think I'll find Saturn. I only miss it by ten thousand miles which was a close call seeing that was only a tenth of a second out of the way. But I do not need no sky map now. Just ten million miles southeast is the milky way and the dippers and even the dumbest astrogators know that you only have to slide down the little constellations making up the handle of the big one and head straight for good old Earth.

I make it in ten minutes flat, circle over the Kremlin in Neo Moscow and hop the Atlantis in a fraction of a second. I keep flying in circles over Metropolita until I find the thingmajig that slows down the saucer. All the harnessed-up energy from the world's uranium mines are tossed up at me but nothing has been invented or discovered anywhere that will penetrate the New Mu flying saucer.

I finally glide down and land

in Centralia Park, and thousands of citizens head for the bomb shelters. I get up and my legs buckle under me like dahlia stems, and remember I am still half a plant.

I push the door open and stagger down the steps that automatically fall into place. Half the armored might of the Eastern Defense Area is rolling toward the saucer. I wave my arms and yelp, "It is I, Septimus Spink!" and then fall flat on my proboscis.

And I do mean flat.

I open my eyes and look up into the face of Commander Bjaal. "L-Look," I says. "Get me to the Metropolita Medical Center an' don't spare the saucers. I am full of chlorophyl and need at least ten blood transfusions. These feelers on my dome ain't pasted on, Buster!"

"A saucer!" Bjaal yelps. "A new Muan flyin' saucer. Spink, where in the world did you—?"

"Are you kiddin'?" I choke out. "Not this world, General. Quick, an ambulance! And throw water on me on the way as I am wilting like any petunia pulled up by the roots."

They get me to the hospital and pump red blood back into my veins. A nurse faints when she sees I bleed green when they poke the needle in my arm. Interplanetary newshounds crowd the operating room. The word goes to Mars, Venus, Jupiter, everywhere.

A nurse says, "Look, Doctor, his feelers are disappearing. His skin is getting pink."

"You are a cute number," I says

to the nurse. "But you should see Zyb. She blushes purple. Uhg!"

They keep me under observation for three days and then let me get up. I feel as if I had been towed through all the subways in the U.S. by a hot rocket, but after all I have not just been around the corner to the drugstore for a concentrated malted.

The next A.M., at a news conference covered by correspondents as far away as Asphasia, I tell my story. I give the bug-eyed characters an account of the wiping out of the Nougat Space squadron, description of the statue of Cyril Spink on New Mu, and of the Rocket, Circa 1818, I saw in the Spink museum.

The high cockalorums of the Neuropsychiatorium in Metropolita demand my removal back to the cuckoo's nest, until the brass shows them the saucer I delivered F.O.B. from New Mu. Instead of a strait jacket I get the Interplanetary Nobel prize and a dozen medals. They make me a Subcommander in Space Squadron X9.

A sample of the green blood they took out of my pipes was sent to the lab for analysis. A scientist reports that it can be manufactured

in great quantities if ever the Allied Planetary war lord deemed it necessary to invade New Mu! The saucer, Bjaal said, would be manufactured by the millions once the smart boys of the age figured out the stuff it was made of.

Three weeks later pieces of the shellacked Nougatine air force fall on Metropolita and leave a film the color of gray snow on the street. And about the same time when I started hamming with my visoscreen I pick up Quantum Spink. Cousin, to my surprise, is not sore at me, and says he won't attack Earth.

"Only a Spink could do what you did, Sep. I can't blame the universe," Quantum says to me. "What else they ever said about the Spinks, they had sportin' blood. Green or red. Ha! Over and out!"

"You are a pal," I says. "Tell Zyb I will send her a package of vigoro for Xmas. Over."

I look out the window at the flying saucer that is on exhibition atop the four thousand foot Empiric Building and sigh deeply. The great wonders of the world, The Pyramids of Cheops in Egypt and the Spinks of Earth and New Mu. As modest as I am I have to admit it.