

Dark Energy

The suns of Delta-24 illuminated the surface below, casting twin shadows across the silver dome city of Robertson, named after its founder. The Dark Matter Drive grumbled beneath him, constrained by its Neothine crystal cage, as the spider shaped craft settled onto its eight legs. Home at last? He'd forgotten where his real home was, millions of light-years away in some far off galaxy.

Slithering out of the command space, he, well the nearest gender description to male that was possible for his species, moved to the opening hatch. Gnork knew he wasn't welcome, his appearance caused other species to turn away. His slime covered shiny body with its pungent smell forward protruding tentacles and suspended head was not to everyone's taste.

It was unfortunate for the rest of the universe that his race had been the one to master the awesome power of dark matter. They'd been lucky that Neothine occurred naturally on their home planet, a substance so rare that no other location had been found in the universe to-date, despite extensive searches.

Now it was possible, thanks to dark matter, to navigate the universe in an instant. The human species had been one of the first to embrace this technology, as a result, they'd now built colonies in almost every galaxy. Robertson was a perfect example.

He sensed the security-bot above him as he entered the secure zone. "What are you transporting?"

Focusing his cerebral wave patterns to respond, the translation module in the security-bot echoed, "Neothine."

"Pass" the empty voice responded.

The wall in front of him slide open.

Neothine had other uses. It was impossible to detect eggs concealed within the case he was dragging. Humans weren't the only ones that had plans to colonise the universe. This was the closest trading post to the planet Earth, home of these humans.

The terminal was a hum of activity. Other species scurried, squirmed or strode about their business. None gave him a second glance, the first was more than enough.

He headed for his rendezvous behind the atmosphere generation plant. His final task was to prepare a suitable location for the eggs, somewhere where they would be left undisturbed to germinate. He knew the perfect place.

The security-bot sparked off, "where are you going?" It hovered over the case behind him, scanning the contents.

Gnork focused again, "delivery of Neothine to processing."

"Your direction is incorrect. Divert back to a correct course."

Just a few more slithers and he would have been out of sight.

He had to think fast, he needed a reason. Focusing again, "Contract negotiations are incomplete. I need the Administration centre." The path to the Administration centre would take him past the generation plant.

"Continue."

His cold heart relaxed. Now Gnork could complete his mission.

He found a dark corner behind the generators and slide open the Neothine container. Nestled around it were six yellow eggs. Carefully, his tentacles lifted them out and pushed them under a ledge in the wall. Their sticky surface held them in place. Glancing around to check he had not been disturbed, he replaced the cover.

As he turned to move away, he sprayed fertilising fluid under the ledge. The rancid smell was quickly sucked into the air-conditioning system and neutralised.

In three orbits of the suns, the eggs would hatch. The young Oxcillians would emerge hungry. Their speed a complete contrast to the sluggish adults. They would seek to feed on anything warm-blooded, the quickest way to kick-start their own cold metabolism. Difficult to detect because, their body temperature would be equal to the surroundings, they would travel quickly throughout the small Trading Post.

Within another orbit of the suns, the Trading post would be deserted, except for the rapidly maturing Oxcillians. They would leave the city and burrow into the ground to pupate into mature adults some time later ... and wait.