

SELECT YOUR CHAMPIONS

John Moran

Flash
Fiction Online

So there we were: myself and Hannibal and Genghis Khan. Hannibal had the hill, while Genghis was sneaking round the rear.

Only for the lizard to call for another halt.

“What is it now?” I shouted.

The avatar appeared, all Greek robes and long flowing hair. He stood between me and the alien lizard and translated.

“He thinks you should choose only from the last three hundred years.”

I sighed. First he'd said “no females,” then “no superheroes,” and finally “no-one blue,” though that may have lost something in translation.

“All right then,” I said: “Richard Burton and Henry Livingstone.”

They popped into view and jogged off to their pre-arranged positions.

The alien waved its forelegs and tapped insistently on a wrist-communicator.

“It insists on only fictional characters,” said the avatar.

I sat down with my head in my hands.

How easy it had seemed, beforehand. On a routine mission to catalogue a remote quadrant of the galaxy, we had covered a hundred planets before entering sector 11923-4.

The fourth planet had been the interesting one. Towering cliffs, lush jungles, and an unexplained power source near the planet's centre. We had just started to scan it when the avatar appeared.

He was larger than a moon, with piercing blue eyes and muscled forearms. His hand closed easily around our small vessel.

“You have reached an area contested by the Empire of Gron,” he announced. “It shall be our pleasure to see your two races compete in order to find the most worthy.”

After that, it was “Choose your armies” and “Select your champions,” only for each one to be criticized by my alien opponent. The avatar was striving to be scrupulously fair, though even he seemed exasperated by this latest exception.



“Dracula and the Invisible Man,” I said at last. There was a shimmer in the air, a swirl of fog, and the beating of batlike wings. A dark-eyed man stood before me, then went off to hold the hill.

In the distance I could see two lizard-creatures in long purple capes. One held a spear, the other a gun.

The alien captain waved his forelegs and muttered.

“Captain Xram of the Gron finds your choice acceptable,” the avatar announced.

“It’s about time,” I replied.

The spear-lizard screamed, ran towards our position, and leaped high. His crests swirled in the breeze as he flew.

Dracula took him in a melee of wolf and bat and mist. The alien’s body twitched once, then lay still. The vampire licked red from his lips, spat, and said something foul in Transylvanian.

The second alien stepped from a rock and fired. Dracula’s body shivered and glowed to nothing. My eyes cleared to find the alien almost upon me.

“Wait a minute,” I shouted. “I’m not part of the fight!”

He mustn’t have understood, as his gun fired again. Fortunately I come from a later age, and my shield deflected it. Having nowhere else to go, I ran forward, struck his arm, and knocked the weapon away.

He kicked me in the crotch.

As I screamed expletives he lifted his hands and clenched them for a killing blow. I kicked at his leg but I may as well have been kicking a tree-trunk.

His hands raised fully, his muscles tensed. A rock lifted from the ground behind him and struck him in the back of the head.

“Sorry I’m late,” said a voice from nowhere. “The blighters run awfully fast, don’t they?”

I struggled to recover my breath and dignity as the avatar collected us together. The alien lizard had a forlorn look.

“So can we finally claim this territory for the Terran Alliance?” I asked.

“Sorry I’m late,” said a voice from nowhere. “The blighters run awfully fast, don’t they?”

The avatar turned and spoke at length with the lizard. There was much gesturing and emphatic screeching. Finally he turned to me, and spoke with a voice of pain and infinite sadness.

“He says... best two out of three?” 🚫

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John Moran lives in Manchester, with his fiancée and several

thousand books in a house running out of space to store them all. He is, however, addicted to buying more. He enjoys rare sunny days, table-top role playing, and the *City of Heroes* online game. He is looking forward to the upcoming ‘Age of Conan’ in the hope that he will finally get to summon a demon. His job involves a combination of computer hacking and argument, as he attempts to persuade his employer of the virtues of information security. At other times he has been a Unix sysadmin, the owner of an arts and crafts shop, and a nuclear physicist—although not all at the same time. This is his first publication.

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