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Opening extract from

Harvey Drew & the Bin Men from Outer Space

Written by

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CHAPTER ONE

Space: the great dustbin in the sky.

Galaxy 43b is the busiest part of the known universe. It's also the muckiest. Masses of space traffic whizzes around every day and the crews just chuck all their rubbish out of their ships without a second thought. And I mean *all* their rubbish: broken satellites, dirty rocket fuel, pizza boxes, leftover bits of mouldy food and . . . Actually, I'm not even going to mention what else is floating around out there – I'll leave that to your imagination. It's a disgrace.

Fortunately there's a band of modest and unsung heroes who tackle the globs of intergalactic trash every day. They're brave, they're smelly and they're very grubby. They're

the Bin Men of Outer Space. It's a dirty and downright dangerous job.

(Personally, I have absolutely no idea why anyone would want to do it. I wouldn't.)

For a start, their intergalactic garbage spaceship, the *Toxic Spew*, is utterly gross.

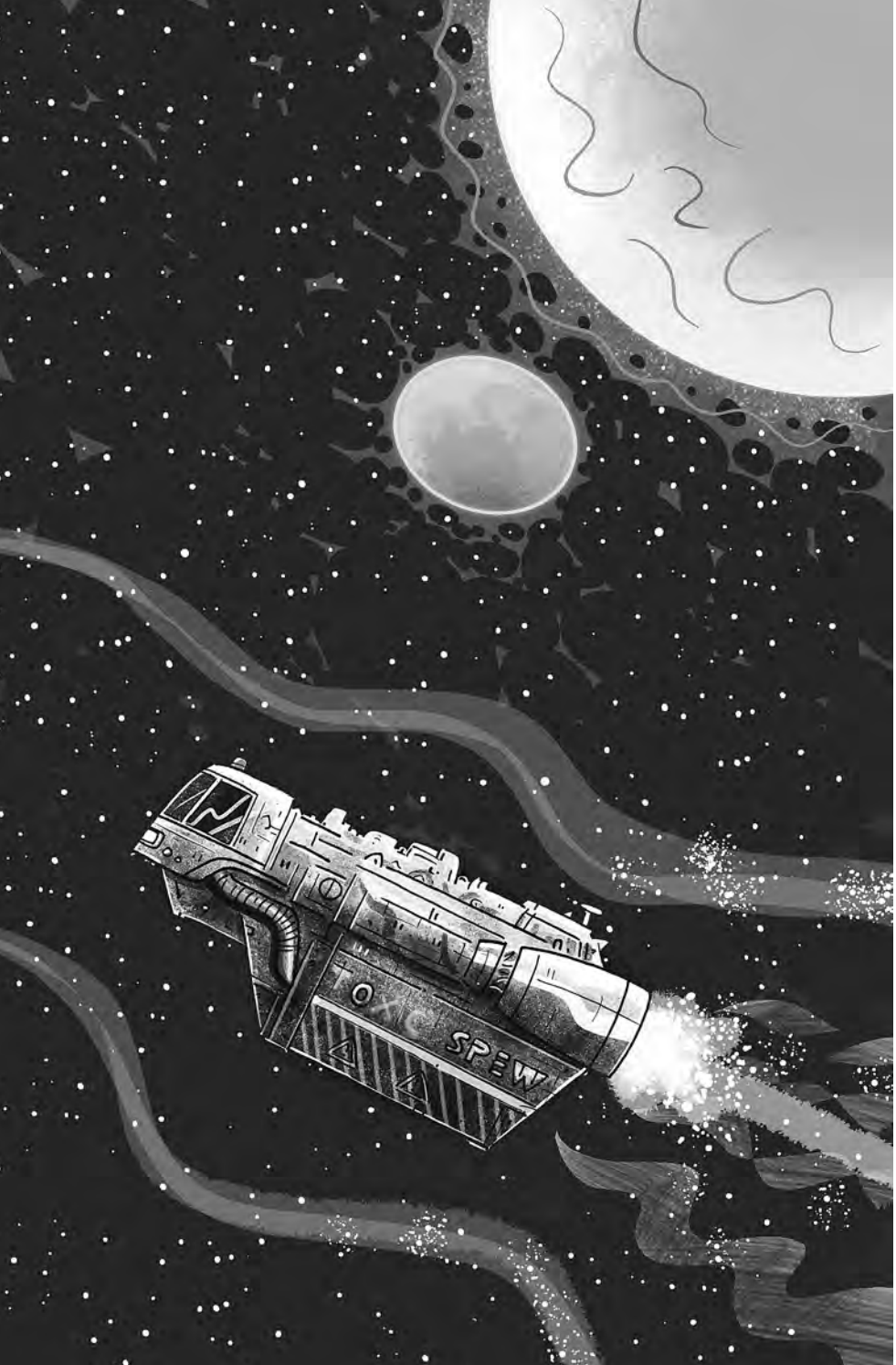
It's barely spaceworthy. It's tatty and battered, the rocket boosters are rusty and the supersonic brakes are well dodgy.

The outside is plastered with oily grime that's so thick you could write your name in it. In fact someone *has* written the ship's name in it. Which is a good thing, because some of the huge metal letters that are meant to spell *TOXIC SPEW* on its side fell off ages ago.

Now it says: *O SPEW*.

And you probably would. Especially if you saw the inside – it's unbelievably filthy.

A faint smell of rotting rubbish lingers


TOXIC
SPEW

everywhere. No, make that a strong smell. Strong as in, stomach-heaving, eye-watering, hold-your-nose-and-try-not-to-gag strong.

Actually, it's probably pointless even bothering to tell you this, because, as this story starts (on Moonsday the 116th of Oort) the *Toxic Spew* was about to be smashed to smithereens.

Chaos on the command bridge

The grotty little spaceship was seconds away from being dragged into the middle of a deadly trash tornado, made up of tons and tons of swirling space junk, and swept away. Like a scab you've picked off your knee in the bath whirling away down the plughole.

It was chaos on the command bridge.

RED ALERT! RED ALERT!

WHOOP! WHOOP! WHOOP!

Alarm bells screamed. But not as loudly as the crew.

'AAAAAARGH!'

Panic on the command bridge

Through the ship's vast vision screens the frantic crew could see the terrifying rubbish tornado looming closer and closer. They wrestled hopelessly with the ship's controls.

'Don't panic! It's just a junk twister,' yelled Chief Rubbish Officer Scrummage fearlessly. 'I've seen far worse. Head for the centre. We'll blast our way out!'

'Are you mad?' cried Gizmo, the Senior Engineering Officer.

'No, just brave!' cried Scrummage boldly. And he posed with his hands on his hips trying to look heroic. 'AHEAD!'

'It's far too risky! REVERSE!' yelled Gizmo. Leaping over to the flight desk he pushed the


SCRUMMAGE
UZMD

pilot out of the way, grabbed the flight joysticks and yanked them backwards.

'NO! AHEAD!' bawled Scrummage, snatching the controls from Gizmo and yanking them forwards.

'Get off my controls!' cried Pilot Officer Maxie, shoving them both away.

'I'm the *senior* officer!' barked Gizmo. 'So I'm in command.'

'Nonsense! I'm much more experienced,' said Scrummage. 'I've flown ships through every kind of space storm in the galaxy.'

'Yes, and all of them either crashed, fell to pieces or blew up!' snorted Gizmo.

'Oh for crying out loud!' yelled Maxie from the flight desk, as the spinning rubbish vortex grew nearer and nearer, drawing the ship towards its horrible fate. 'We're about to be spun to death and whizzed round so quickly that our brains will squish to a mush and trickle down out of our noses!'

Gizmo and Scrummage exchanged startled looks.

‘That’s gross!’ they said, agreeing for once.

Suddenly an enormous plastic tank hurled straight at them from the edge of the garbage whirlpool. Maxie yanked the ship’s controls to SHIELDS UP. But sadly, just . . .

CRUNCH! SPLAT!

. . . a second too late.

The huge container burst as it hit the *Toxic Spew*, exploding its sludgy contents all over the ship’s front vision screen.

‘Flickering spew!’ cried Scrummage.

‘I can’t see!’ Maxie switched the giant screen washers to supersonic spray.

It wasn’t a great help. Space sludge is surprisingly difficult to shift. The giant washers just smeared it all across the screen, making it impossible to see out. But the crew didn’t need to see to know the deadly twister was looming larger and larger.

‘You’re all going to die!’

‘Computer!’ yelled Gizmo. ‘Help!’

A series of lights on the ship’s giant computer flickered on and off, and then it bleeped a couple of times before it spoke. ‘Good morning!’ it said in a cheerful digital voice. ‘Well, it looks like you’ve got a bit of a problem out there, haven’t you? I calculate that’s a force 8 garbage twister and I’m really not sure what you expect me to do to help. But I can tell you that on one hand there’s a 3% chance of surviving – and on the other there’s a 97% chance of total destruction.

‘I reckon:

a) You don’t have enough forward thrust to break through it, or
b) Enough side thrust to go round it.
c) You might have had enough reverse thrust to miss it . . . But
d) Now it’s probably too late.

. . . So I'll wish you a cheery good luck and goodbye. You're all going to die!'

There was silence for a nano-beat as the horrified crew took this in.

'REVERSE!' screamed Scrummage and Gizmo together.

Maxie yanked the joysticks backwards and pulled for all she was worth.

(Blimey, she was lucky they didn't snap off.)

The *Toxic Spew* juddered, its engines screamed, but still it edged nearer and nearer to the deadly twister.

Yup, like I said, any second now the brave little rubbish ship and her crew were about to be pulverised!