

THE FAR SIDE OF SPECULON

By Jerry Rabushka

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CAST 1M: JASPER TRONNER, former pilot of an interplanetary space shuttle.

So we're on this spaceship—me and three hot girls. I mean HOT girls. (*really relishing this!*) On a spaceship. Traveling through the galaxy at warp speed.

(*as if people don't believe him*) Yes, really.

(*as a SHIP CAPTAIN*) "This is your captain speaking. We are now traveling at warp speed to planet Earth. We hope you've enjoyed your stay at the amusement park on the far side of planet Speculon."
(*pronounce it Speck-you-lon*)

Ever been to Speculon? Nobody goes anymore. But I went. About forty times! It was my route. Really really rich people from Beverly Hills and Key West and Mumbai and Dubai and Shanghai would fly their kids to the Maxogoth Amusement Park... (*as if HE is a TV ANNOUNCER*) on the far side of Speculon.

It was awesome. Bigger, faster, scarier! The planet's lighter atmosphere, filled with a little bit too much nitrous oxide, left you feeling wondrously lightheaded as the rides whisked you though what *they* called "the air."

Then there were the ads:

(*as a SMALL CHILD in a TV commercial*) Mommy, I'm tired of Disney World.

(*as another*) Daddy, I'm tired of Six Flags over Texas, Mid America, and Georgia. That's eighteen flags I'm tired of!

(*as BOTH KIDS together*) We want to go to Speculon!

(*as a DEEP-VOICED ANNOUNCER*) Speculon... faster, higher, louder... it's out of this world!

Then I'd come on the screen. (*big smile as part of a TV commercial*) "I'm Jasper Tronner, your Speculon shuttle captain. Let me take you there!"

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What we conveniently overlooked was that the far side of Speculon was under the control of the Maxogothic empire and its evil overlord...
(with lots of dread) Zaxor.

(tired of telling this story to people who don't believe him) Why are you acting like it didn't happen? You treat interplanetary history like that tree falling in the forest that nobody hears. That tree is still there.

(as ZAXOR, with a deep booming voice) I am Zaxor, supreme overload and commander of fifty one percent of Speculon. My whim is your law!

If you lived among that 51%... it kind of blew. But the park was incredible! Rides, shows, fun, laughter, kids, ice cream... What we didn't know was that all its employees were political dissidents pressed into forced labor.

They *seemed* happy.

(as a WORKER, very upbeat) Welcome to Maxogoth Park, where we are here only to amuse *you*!

It turned out that the "park" was a giant prison camp we were supporting by buying its overpriced tickets.

(as an ANNOYED FATHER) Forty dollars for a Ferris wheel ride?

(as a WORKER) Yep. Pay up or go home.

(as a KID, nagging) Daddy, I wanna ride it. I wanna ride it right now!

(as a WORKER, gruff) Put the child on the wheel or get out of the line.

(as DADDY) Isn't *anything* free? I spent all my money on the shuttle to get here.

(as WORKER) Nothing is free here... (sadly) Not even... me.

Zaxor wore bright blue and red. Metal. Armor. Like Spiderman but meaner.

I ponied up the \$40 myself and took the kid on the wheel. That was 80 dollars total, but then, I earned a lot of money as (again in a TV voice) "Jasper Tronner, your space ship captain!"

Imagine you're on a Ferris wheel three hundred and fifty feet high going three times as fast as usual, plus you just swallowed five cans of Red Bull.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is Maxogoth Park.

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Some of us knew what was going on, but we decided to stay out of it. We, as in Earth. What were we supposed to do? Invade? We had our hands full at home. Remember that bustup with planet Ogokook? Probably not. That was going on at the same time, so the president had his hands full.

(as the PRESIDENT) We can't save everyone else's world. We are still in a struggle to save our own. If the people of Speculon live under a dictatorship, they need to facilitate a regime change with the blessing—but without the assistance—of planet Earth.

All this came about because some muckraking journalist leaked the truth about Zaxor and Speculon. Soon, people who flew their kids to “the far side” were berated as benefactors of the planet's oppressive rule. And in truth, the money generated by the park went to fund Zaxor's army and his extravagant lifestyle.

That's where the hot girls came in.

(HE enjoys remembering them!) Ellie, Cathy, and Miyako. Swimsuit models. *(As each model might evoke a particular reaction in JASPER, the ACTOR can experiment by saying each name with a different inflection—almost as if just by saying the name, HE can visualize them in front of him; then repeat it the same way each time they are mentioned.)*

They got plenty of attention here on Earth, but it wasn't enough. People accused them of being vapid, empty-headed, and living off their beauty.

Well... We were *all* living off their beauty.

They flew to the park, and in the scantiest of swimsuits they walked back and forth by the entrance holding signs and chanting slogans.

“Free planet Speculon! Send Zaxor packing!”

That got a lot of attention—in this world and *that* one. However, the young lovelies had forgotten that on Speculon, you couldn't walk around in a bathing suit protesting the dictator. Our government thought it was cute. Zaxor and his cronies were not amused. He had the girls arrested and thrown in prison.

(foreshadowing) Bad move, Zaxor! Arresting America's top models was not a good idea.

Our president first tried diplomatic channels, as if reasoning with a power-happy overlord would fix everything in an afternoon. *(as the PRESIDENT)* “I'm getting really really angry, Zaxor. We need to talk.”

Zaxor responded: “You dare to provoke the all-powerful Zaxor!

The president let him have it. “You might be all-powerful on Speculon, but here you can’t even vote.”

Zaxor was quaking in his boots—not—but meanwhile the girls were rotting away in a filthy lockup. Zaxor couldn’t very well put supermodels on a starvation diet... that would be giving in to their demands... so instead, they were forced to eat cake, ice cream and bacon-double-cheeseburgers at every meal.

(as ZAXOR) Soon you’ll be fat and ugly and no one will care about your fate. (*evil laugh as ZAXOR*)

He knew Earth better than he let on.

This was more than we could take—as a nation—as a people—as inhabitants of the great planet Earth. So despite our overstretched budget—I mean, how many interplanetary brouhahas can you finance at one time—we decided to go to war with the evil emperor Zaxor of Speculon.

First, we asked him nicely to free Ellie, Cathy and Miyako, but he refused to let them out until they had gained fifty pounds each and he had ruined their careers. (*seriously, but comically so*) This is the history we don’t teach. This is why future generations of children will never ride the Ferris wheel on the far side of Speculon.

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