

# The Fate of One Planet

By Ian Dow

## Chapter 18

### Chillies

Creature did not help the new Jay's mood. All it ever seemed to bring Jay to eat was water and a large pot of baked beans, laced with lots of chillies, all of which it had found in the holdall. "I cannot live on solely beans and chillies," protested Jay, "You eat it," he said, as he pushed the pot towards Creature, who made a nervous laugh sound and scuttled out the door.

Jay had to scuttle into the clean-up area again due to his current diet. One feeding time, Creature came into Jay's room, and its skin was glowing orange. In English, it said, "You must eat all of this now, or you will die!"

As far as Jay was aware, Creature had not done him any harm to date; he had no reason not to trust him, therefore, he complied. The chilli beans had something else in them today. When Jay slowed down eating, Creature got agitated and encouraged Jay to eat faster. All until it heard something from the corridor and bolted.

A few seconds later, Left Ball and the stick weapon came through the door. Jay was taken down the corridor to where the two other Balls waited. They then made and published an advert for Jay as a maintenance and cleaning drone. They stripped him and, to finish, said, "When done with this model of drone, as it is so inexpensive, you can throw it away."

With that, Jay was pushed into a chute. Jay tumbled and bounced down familiar tubes, propelled by a rush of air. This, and the food inside, was making Jay very uncomfortable. He ended up in the compression chamber, he opened his mouth wide and put the heels of his hands hard against his ears. Pop. He was blown out into the Sphere, on course for the Brown Lump, and it's already launched Smaller Brown Lumps. The pain inside suddenly made sense, he took a deep breath, and the other Jays commanded, "Now."

The diarrhoea, beans and chillies left his body in a violent burst, as he slowly drifted across the vast arena of the interior of the metal sphere. The Smaller

Brown Lumps were, like Jay, ballistic and had no other propulsion or steerage after launch, they just drifted toward each other.

Then Jay noticed the Smaller Brown Lumps appeared to be moving slightly sideways against the background of the Sphere's walls. This increased until the Smaller Brown Lumps started wiggling in vain, trying to correct their course. The nearest Small Brown Lump snapped at Jay as he drifted past just out of range. In the grand scheme of things, the force of the diarrhoea was not great, but it was just enough over a great distance, in the weightless centre of the Sphere, to push Jay clear of the first launch of the Smaller Brown Lumps.

Jay and the other Jays had been busy studying the Sphere and other things. Jay drifted towards a very long flexible pole sticking out like many others from the arena walls. He wrapped his arms and legs around it and bounced back and forth as it accelerated Jay up to one-G of spin. Jay slid down the pole headfirst and had to grip very hard to stop headbutting the floor. He flipped the right way up for the spin gravity and walked over to a White Parallelogram.

A different Ball with a stick was guarding it. It bellowed, "No powered weapons," in Ball. Jay said back in Ball, "I don't want a fucking weapon." The wall started flashing, and a strange whooping noise started. This alarm signal distracted the guard, who looked around.

Jay said, "I don't want a fucking weapon," again, but this time in English. There was a flash from the White Parallelogram, and Jay had the spiky weapon from the Spikey Ship.

The guard snorted, "You don't know how to use a sophisticated weapon like..." ZAP! The limbs of the guard all fell to the floor simultaneously. All neatly cauterised.

One of the Smaller Brown Lumps had retracted and re-launched at Jay. The other was having trouble due to chilli in its eyes and the diarrhoea in its largemouth. Jay pointed the spiky weapon at the floor and used it in propulsion mode to launch himself off the wall towards the blinded Smaller Brown Lump. The Smaller Brown Lump that had been aiming at Jay decided to bite the limbless guard instead.

Having seen the fate of the first Jay sent into the Sphere, the Jays on the three ships had been working very hard to not let it happen again. They had

practised and practised with the Spikey Weapon until they had the muscle memory to use it without looking at it. The Jays had read all the manuals and knew all of its capabilities.

Jay intercepted the blinded Small Brown Lump's umbilical cord about two thirds the way along from the giant mouth. He used the weapon to power past. When the blinded, and obviously in pain, Smaller Brown Lump went flying past, Jay changed direction and used the weapon to power the other way and slightly out from the vast mouth. The Smaller Brown Lump arced up away from the mouth. Jay holding tight to the umbilical, powered back again. His back-and-forth motion increased the speed of Smaller Brown Lump's rotation until it started to scream.

This got the attention of the other Smaller Brown Lump, who was retracting the limbless guard towards the giant mouth. It dropped the guard toward the mouth, retracted and re-launched across the huge mouth at Jay. As the guard approached the giant mouth, all the eyes closed, and the Giant Brown Lump started to take a breath. The subsequent actions reminded Jay of playing conkers as a child.

He released the umbilical cord of the screaming, blinded Smaller Brown Lump. It smashed with great force into the other Smaller Brown Lump. Jay's perfect timing meant that both Smaller Brown Lumps were knocked and then inhaled into the Giant Brown Lump's windpipe.

The mouth snapped shut, its teeth were probably the only thing that could sever the umbilical cords, and they did. Jay used the weapon to move himself a little further back, and he waited.

All the eyes snapped open at once. The giant mouth opened, and it started violently coughing to no avail. Jay waited. Its vast stomach inverted, and the limbless guard came out past Jay, who just nodded and said, "Morning," to the guard as it drifted past.

This did not solve the Giant Brown Lump's problems, so it inverted its lungs and various other enormous sack-like internal organs. Jay studied the display on the back of the weapon and opened fire with everything the Spikey Weapon had at the chosen targets. The three huge hearts and the five tiny brains were blasted with the electrical fire emanating from Jay's badass weapon. He kept up the assault for several minutes. The Giant Brown Lump

was steaming and smoking. After a while, it could be seen, in the electrical onslaught, to be shrinking. Jay kept up the attack. Lumps and steam boiled off until the Giant Brown Lump was just a large brown stain, with bits of its body floating around the inside of the Sphere.

A Jay on the ships told the Jay with the weapon, "You know you can't actually *kill* that thing?"

The reply was, "Yep, but it will take over one hundred years to get back to even a tenth of its old size.

Jay used the weapon to power out of the expanding cloud of floating burnt body parts. He flew towards a chosen part of the arena's wall singing the 'Fuck you very much' song.

Using a different setting of the Spikey Weapon, Jay cut through the arena wall to get to a 1-G spin corridor. He was naked, not that clean and carrying a badass weapon. No one wanted to mess with him. The whooping sound and flashing walls had all the other aliens on edge and distracted anyway.

He found the room he had been looking for and had to blast the locked door open. This filled the room with smoke. Jay walked in and sat down. The two commentators flapped while the atmosphere system cleared the smoke. They were professionals; they did not let the whooping alarms or smoke from the lock being blown off stop the show. These beings talked Ball, which was in Jay's natural vocal range, and he was getting quite proficient at that language.

One of the commentators jumped a little when it saw Jay sitting there with a deadly weapon on his lap. The other commentator babbled on about how unfair the new alien had been in setting back their Beloved Giant Brown Lump, so much time in regeneration. The first commentator started coughing and nudging the second, who was slightly put out by his colleague's interruption. With a covered sound recording device, he gave a curt, "What?" and then turned enough to see and recognise Jay.

It did not miss a beat.

"And let's now interview the winner of the last 'Flight to Ecstasy'."

"We have that being in our studio now. Did you think you cheated using that weapon?"