

From Kathoon, With Love

A tale of the ~~Legion of Super-Heroes~~ Secret Service

by David Meadows

1. On Her Majesty's Legion Service

The office door opened and a hand snaked round it, holding out a hat. A flick of the wrist, and the hat sailed through the air to land perfectly on the stand across the room. A head followed the hand, and the face of Lyle Norg flashed a roguish grin at the serious-faced youth sitting primly behind the desk.

'And for my next trick,' Norg said, leaving the sentence hanging with promise.

'Stop fooling around, Lyle,' said the lad, suppressing a smile. 'You're late and she's waiting for you.'

'Ouch. Sorry, Magnopenny. Is the ice queen in a temper?'

'When isn't she? You'd better just go straight in.'

Norg strode across the outer office and knocked on the door of the inner sanctum, opening it and entering without waiting for an acknowledgement.

'Sorry I was slightly delayed, S,' he said, carefully closing the door behind him. 'But may I say you're looking particularly elegant today?' he added, a twinkle in his eye.

The stern-faced Titanian head of the Secret Service, known as 'her majesty' by her agents behind her back but known officially only by the initial of her code name, 'S', glared back at him. With her blonde hair pulled back into a severe style and her non-nonsense uniform, she radiated a professional aura that said she would stand for none of Norg's charm offensive.

'Just sit down, 007,' she snapped. 'And if you can be serious for one minute, you have work to do.'

Norg dropped his grin and became all business. 'What do you have for me, S?'

S touched a button on her desk and a number of images flashed on the monitor screen on the far wall as she spoke. Norg swivelled his chair to see them.

'This is the planet Kathoon on the edge of the United Planets. Not an important world, no strategic value, no major exports, perpetual night, as you can see.'

'And we are interested in this world because?'

'This man. Professor Jath. He has recently developed some, shall we say, "interesting" technology, which Earthgov is keen on acquiring.'

'And how do we propose to acquire it?'

'Through this woman.'

Norg's eyes widened at the sight of the image now on the screen. He suppressed the urge to wolf-whistle, knowing that S would not approve.

'This is Jath's daughter, Lydda. She has recently expressed an interest in defecting to Earth. To "buy" her passage, so to speak, she has agreed to bring with her details of her father's work. You will meet her on Kathoon and bring her safely home.'

‘Doesn’t sound too difficult, What’s the catch?’

‘The catch, 007, is that the Dark Circle has also expressed an interest in this technology and we believe they may send agents after her. Particularly, this man.’

The image changed to reveal a hard-faced human with cold, expressionless eyes.

‘Auric Starfinger,’ said S. ‘He’s a wealthy collector of rare finger jewellery, but also a dangerous, ruthless, assassin for hire. I would suggest you do your best to avoid encountering him.’

‘And if I can’t avoid it?’

‘Then make sure it is you that walks away from the encounter, not him. Now, if you are ready, Magnopenny has your travel papers and other details.’

Wordlessly, Norg returned to the outer office. Magnopenny was holding out a small bundle of papers. Norg took them and rifled through them professionally.

‘You have been booked on the luxury liner Monel, direct to Kathoon. Your cover will be one “Bob Cobb”, a travelling salesman for United Planets Exports. You will find the passport and other things in order. You embark this evening, which gives you plenty of time to pay a visit to Five Branch first.’

Norg tucked the papers into an inner pocket, then sat on the edge of Magnopenny’s desk.

‘Thank you Magnopenny. Say, when I’m back, maybe we could do dinner.’ He leaned a little closer to the youth. ‘You could wear that little basque number ...’

‘Oh, do stop that nauseating flirting 007,’ came S’s voice from the desk-mounted intercom.

Norg sat up guiltily. ‘It’s like she can read my thoughts!’ he muttered, then louder said ‘On my way to Five Branch now, S.’ He winked at Magnopenny, picked up his hat, and left the office.

2. The Man with the Golden Ring

Deep within the bowels of the Secret Service building was the domain of Five Branch, the cutting-edge research and development department tasked with creating an ever-expanding array of technology to help the agents of Earthgov carry out their clandestine duties. Lord and master of the laboratory was the irascible and slightly eccentric scientific genius known only as ‘Five’.

Five greeted Norg as he entered the workshop, then immediately turned and walked away from him, talking all the while. Norg followed the white lab coat past a bewildering array of live equipment tests. On one bench, a technician was teleporting insects from one end of the bench to the other via small ‘gates’. Behind that, a young man ingested a beaker of some substance which caused him to swell alarmingly and begin bouncing uncontrollably around the workshop, chased by a posse of anxious technicians.

‘What have you got for me, Five?’ asked Norg, ducking as a punctured containment suit flew a crazy path overhead, spewing random anti-energy as it went.

‘Now pay attention, 007. We have some rather interesting items that we’ve recently developed, and I’ve been itching for a chance to have them field tested.’

‘Field tested? This isn’t going to be another Computo situation is it, Five?’

‘Now that was entirely your own fault, 007,’ said Five disapprovingly. ‘If you insist on ...’

‘All right,’ said Norg, cutting off another reprimand about returning equipment in a broken state. He picked up a small pistol lying on the bench Five had stopped next to. ‘What’s this? A gun?’

‘Not just “a gun”,’ snapped Five, taking it off him. ‘This is a modified McCauley PPK, small enough to fit in an unobtrusive shoulder holster, undetectable by all standard scanners, powerful enough to stun most sentients.’

While Norg pocketed the firearm, Five picked up a golden finger ring which bore the letter ‘L’.

‘This might look like a standard gold signet ring—notice the “L” for Lyle?’ Five paused and looked at Norg for approval. Norg nodded encouragingly.

‘Yes, very good Five. What does it do?’

‘It is constructed of element 152, which as you may know is the anti-gravity element. In short, it will allow the wearer to fly. It is controlled by mental concentration, something which unfortunately you appear incapable of.’

‘I don’t know what you mean, Five,’ said Norg in a distracted tone as he watched a pretty young Talokian technician sashaying past. Five rolled his eyes heavenwards.

‘And finally, this,’ said Five, producing a small flask with a flourish. Norg took it, opened the top, and sniffed appreciatively. ‘Chateau Mooney 2960? An excellent vintage.’

‘Oh don’t be so childish, 007,’ said Five, rescuing the flask before Norg could take a swig. ‘This is an invisibility serum. Use it wisely, there isn’t an awful lot of it.’

With his new equipment, Norg took his leave of Five, left the Secret Service building, and took a cab to his Metropolis apartment where he enjoyed a light lunch of buttered toast washed down with a fine Bollinger, before packing for the trip and heading to the space port to board the Monel.

3. You Only Live Thrice

The giant luxury space liner Monel was berthed at the Metropolis spaceport. Norg had time to admire its black, curved form—rather like a woman in silhouette, he thought, appreciatively—while standing in the interminable check-in queue. Finally, he presented his false credentials for the robot official to scan and stamp, deposited his luggage as requested, and joined the moving walkway which took the passengers across the landing field and up the embarkation ramp of the Monel.

At the entrance port, Captain Gand and several of his senior officers personally greeted each passenger as they filed onto the ship. Gand had the bored air of a man who had spent a thousand years watching people drift past him. On the ship, a steward handed Norg a complimentary Omnicom and glass of champagne. Norg took one sip of the drink and wrinkled his nose as he recognised an ’89 Giffen, a terrible year. He discretely put the glass down on a table, and thumbed on the Omnicom. It opened to the liner’s home page, telling him such useful facts as where the zero-g swimming pool was and how to register for the Dungeons and Dragons tournament. More importantly, it projected a glowing arrow that directed him to his stateroom, number 247.

After wandering the corridors for several minutes, he stopped outside the indicated door. Just as he was about to press his hand to the locking panel, some instinct made him pause. He listened carefully, and sure enough caught the faint sounds of movement from within. The door should have been keyed to his personal palm print, so the only other person who could be in the room was a steward with master access. But just in case, he drew the McCauley PPK from the holster beneath his jacket and palmed the powerful, snub-nosed pistol ready for use. Then he opened the door and stepped across the threshold.

His luggage had already been delivered and placed on the bed. Bending over his suitcase, and rummaging through it, was a rather attractive and athletic-looking brunette. She gave a start when he entered, and turned to face him.

‘Well, hello there,’ Norg drawled, closing and sealing the door. ‘I think you’ll find that’s my luggage.’

‘Yes, I was just realising ... I think I must have entered the wrong ... isn’t this room 347?’ the woman stammered in exaggerated confusion.

‘No, this is 247. You seem to be one deck adrift,’ said Norg, advancing slowly towards her. She backed up until she was trapped against the wall. ‘The name’s Norg. Lyle Norg,’ he said.

‘Luornu,’ replied the woman. ‘I’m so sorry, Mr Norg, for such a silly mistake. I’ll leave now.’

‘Not so fast,’ he said, a dangerous glitter in his eye.

Suddenly, he was aware of two more people standing behind him, though wasn’t sure how they had managed to enter without him hearing. Glancing over his left and right shoulders, he realised that they were exact copies of Luornu.

‘Triplets, eh? I didn’t think the in-flight entertainment was due to start until tomorrow, but I’ll do my best to accommodate all thr—’

One of the Luornus belted him, cutting off his remark. He whipped around and raised his pistol, but before he could fire it the first Luornu, now behind him, wrapped a sinuous arm around his neck, attempting to choke him, and one of the others kicked the pistol clear out of his hand. The third rained blows into his midsection; all three were working as a seamless team to take him down.

With a mighty effort, Norg heaved the first Luornu over his shoulder and sent her crashing to the ground, stunning her and freeing himself from her choke hold. Gasping for air, Norg silently thanked Val Armorr, his jiu-jitsu instructor and occasional lover. But before he could recover further, the remaining Luornus, now reduced to a duo, closed in, punching, kicking, elbowing and kneeing him in all the wrong places. Norg was barely able to defend himself, and was swaying on his feet, close to blacking out, when there was a sudden crackle of electricity and one of the Luornus went ridged, her hair standing on end, and then slipped senseless to the floor. The third Luornu turned to face the new threat, and received a metal fist to her face.

With the relentless assault on him suddenly over, Norg blinked and shook his head to clear his sight. The first thing he saw was a familiar red-haired man grinning at him.

‘Howdy, Lyle!’

‘Felix Lightning! Why you old space dog, what brings you here?’

The two old friends shook hands warmly.

‘The Winath Intelligence Agency believes that there might be some action going down on Kathoon so they’re sending me over there. As soon as I got wind that you were on the same ship, I had an inkling that the action might just be centred on your cabin so I scooted right over.’

‘And I’m glad of it,’ said Norg, turning to the room’s minibar and fixing them each a slug of bourbon, neat, two cubes of ice. ‘So I guess the WIA is still keeping you busy. How are you? How’s the arm?’

‘Oh, I’ve been fine.’ Felix held up his metal arm. The original had been lost in an incident with killer space sharks during an earlier escapade they had shared. ‘Arm’s just as good as the old one, as you can see. So, what’s the score, Lyle?’

In a few sentences, Norg filled Felix in on the details of the mission.

‘I’m heading down to the casino later, to meet a contact who’s supposed to point me to where I can find Lydda Jath on Kathoon. I’ll feel a lot safer knowing you’ve got my back.’

‘Always,’ said Felix, and they clinked glasses.

4. Casino Monel

The Monel’s casino deck was vast and crowded with hundreds of different species speaking dozens of different languages. Cutting a suave figure in his tuxedo, Norg moved through the crowd, making his

way to a baccarat table. Placing a small pile of chips on the green baize, he lifted a finger to summon a waitress.

‘Vodka martini, shaken not stirred.’

Norg left the table after several hands and three martinis. He had won some and lost some, but still had a sizeable pile of chips which he took with him while he sought new diversions. His keen eyes continued to scan the crowd as he moved through it. All he knew about his contact was that it was a Naltorian. Unfortunately, Naltorians didn’t have any distinguishing physical features such as wings or blue skin, so he was unable to pick one out of the crowd. He had to trust that if he made himself conspicuous the contact would find him.

At the roulette table, Norg made several large and risky bets and lost steadily. Soon he was down to his last hundred-credit chip and was regarding the table mournfully. Once this was gone, his expense account wouldn’t cover another stake.

‘Seventeen black,’ breathed a voice in his ear, the low notes and warm breath causing an instant reaction. Norg let his gaze drift to the woman who had appeared by his side. A halo of platinum-blond hair framed enormous blue eyes, and a low-cut dress framed enormous—Norg dragged his gaze back to her eyes.

‘Seventeen black? You’re sure?’

‘Positive,’ she breathed, batting her eyelashes.

Norg threw down the chip, and a second later heard the croupier announce ‘Seventeen black!’

‘It seems you’ve brought me luck, Ms ...?’

‘Call me Nura. And luck had nothing to do with it.’

‘My name’s Norg. Lyle Norg.’

‘I know who you are, Mr Norg.’

Norg began pocketing the now considerable pile of chips the croupier had pushed his way. ‘Then you simply must let me buy you a drink, it’s the least I can do.’

‘I have a better idea. Why don’t you come to my cabin for a more ... intimate discussion? Room 317. I will be waiting.’ Nura moved off through the crowd, hips swaying suggestively beneath her tight gown.

Norg took a few minutes to track down Felix and fill him in on developments. In return Felix confirmed that the Lournu triplets were still safely secured in Felix’s cabin, though questioning them had produced no useful information.

‘I reckon that won’t be the last attempt to scupper this mission, Lyle.’

‘Let them try it, we’ll be ready,’ said Norg confidently.

He picked up a bottle of Forte ’64 and two glasses from the bar, then wasted no time in finding the Naltorian’s stateroom. Before knocking, he paused and listened. His trained ears picked up the sound of running water, and a slow smile spread across his lips. Glancing left and right to confirm that he was unobserved, he pulled a flask from an inside pocket and took a swift swig of the contents. In a twinkling, he had turned completely invisible.

‘Good stuff, Five,’ he breathed to himself. He swiftly hot-wired the door panel to let himself into the room. It was empty, but from the partially open bathroom door came the sound of a shower and wisps of steam.

Placing the bottle and glasses down on a table—where they promptly became visible—Norg padded silently across the room and began rummaging through the chest of drawers. So focussed on the task was he that he was taken by complete surprise when Nura’s voice called, ‘Who’s there?’

He turned to see that she had left the shower and stood dripping wet, her only garment a flimsy towel clutched in front of her. Unable to see Norg, she looked around the room uncertainly, then she saw the open chest of drawers.

‘Have you had a good look at my chest?’

‘Not yet, but I hope to,’ replied Norg cryptically.

Nura’s eyes fixed on approximately where Norg’s voice had come from. ‘I “saw” you coming, Mr Norg,’ she said.

Mysteriously, the towel floated away from her body.

‘I wager you don’t see this coming.’

‘Oh! Mr Norg!’

5. The Lacking Daylights

Kathoon was a world that, through some astronomical quirk, was in perpetual night. As Norg took a taxi from the space port and through planet’s main city to the address Nura had given him, he reflected that if he were the Kathoonian government he would invest in a few more streetlights. The dim, intermittent lighting made the whole city rather grim and unwelcoming, a far cry from the vibrant, affluent worlds on Norg’s side of the United Planets. No wonder so many people from such planets were desperate to defect to Earth.

The cabbie announced that they had arrived. Norg paid him, including a handsome tip, and stepped out onto the gloomy pavement, turning up his collar against the chill night. He stood for a moment, looking at the unprepossessing building in front of him. A faded sign proclaimed it to be the SUBSTITUTE TEMPING AGENCY and the optimistically bombastic tag line beneath read ‘Heroically filling your temporary employment needs since 2963!’ Norg stepped quickly into the building.

A short Tharrite man, identifiable by that planet’s distinctive national costume, sat behind a desk, speaking into an old-style telephone and making notes on a pad. He held up a finger for silence while he finished the call.

Hanging up the phone, the Tharrite bellowed, ‘Ral! I have an assignment for you at the town hall. They need a gardener for some emergency topiary work!’ A young lad rushed out of a side room and barely paused to pluck a shabby, faded green coat from a peg before dashing out of the door.’

‘Busy night,’ said Norg, conversationally.

‘Day!’ snapped the Tharrite, favouring Norg with a frosty look. ‘It’s almost noon!’

‘My apologies, it’s hard to tell. I’m here looking for a temporary employee.’

The Tharrite became all business. ‘Certainly. What are you looking for?’

‘I need a PA to accompany me on a business trip to Earth,’ said Norg, following the formula Nura had coached him with. ‘Qualifications ... must be very tall, strong, and fond of owls.’

The Tharrite broke into a smile. ‘I have just the person,’ he said. ‘Go into interview room three and she will join you, and you can make sure she is suitable.’

Some minutes later, Norg was sitting in an uncomfortable chair in a bare, unwelcoming interview room, drumming his fingers on a chipped table top. The door opened behind him, and Lydda Jath entered. Norg recognised her from his mission briefing, but she was even more remarkable in person. She was surprisingly tall, and made even more so by the enormous beehive her raven hair was teased into. It towered above Norg even after he stood to greet her. Face-to-face, she was strikingly beautiful, and her tight, midnight-blue clothing showed off an admirable figure.

‘Miss Jath? My name is Norg. Lyle Norg. I’m here from Earthgov.’

With a gasp, Lydda Jath sank into a chair, which Norg gallantly held for her. Sitting opposite her, he was quick to put her at her ease.

‘I’m here to escort you to Earth. Berths are booked on the liner Monel, and I have all the paperwork you’ll need, but we must move swiftly.’

‘Mr Norg, you have no idea how difficult it has been, hiding out here, worrying that I would be discovered ...’

‘There, there,’ said Norg, patting her shoulder. ‘There is no more need to worry. We’ll be off this world in a jiffy. But first, I’m afraid I have to ask, about your father’s invention.’

‘Don’t worry, Mr Norg, I have the “price” of my passage.’

‘May I see it?’

‘You’re looking at it now! You see, my father’s invention is in me! It’s coded into the cells of my body!’

‘Then I have another reason not to take my eyes off your body!’ he said. ‘Now come, gather what you need and let’s get out of here.’

6. *Live and Let Eye*

Safely back on the Monel, Norg and Lydda were sharing a cabin for the sake of security. Naturally he had gallantly elected to sleep on the couch, offering Lydda the bed, and to his disappointment she had agreed to the arrangement.

Norg had removed his tie and unbuttoned his shirt, and was making a show of mournfully spreading a thin covering over the cabin’s short couch, when he heard the bathroom door open and Lydda come out. Turning round, he was rather astonished to see she had changed into a curve-hugging, translucent night garment. He watched as she climbed onto the king-sized bed.

‘Well, I’ll just be here on the couch then,’ he said despondently. ‘Shout if you need anything.’

‘Oh stop being ridiculous, Lyle.’ She smiled shyly and patted the space next to her. ‘There’s plenty of room here.’

Needing no further encouragement, Norg scooted over to the bed and reclined next to her. ‘I thought you would never ask.’ He leaned towards her.

‘Please turn the light off first.’

‘Certainly.’ *Click.* ‘Ouch! That’s a very strong grip you have, Ms Jath.’

Some time later, Norg woke from sleep with the feeling something was wrong. Lydda was breathing deeply in the bed next to him and the room seemed otherwise silent, but there was a distinct vibration through the bulkheads that worried him. Suddenly, the silence was punctuated by a distant explosion, and Lydda sat bolt upright.

‘Lyle, what’s happening?’

‘I don’t know, but it can’t be good. Get dressed quickly, there’s a good girl.’

While they were dressing, Captain Gand’s voice came over the ship’s public address system.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, please don’t be alarmed. The ship has been boarded by hostile forces, but all passengers should remain in their cabins while we ... what do you think you’re doing ... you’re Dark Circle! Why I’ll ... oh, no, that’s lead ... don’t ... ack ... urk ...’

‘Lyle!’ Lydda screamed.

‘Come on, quick,’ he urged. He drew his pistol and opening the door cautiously he determined that the corridor was clear. Taking Lydda’s hand in his, he slipped out of the room and they ran down the corridor. Suddenly spying a group of armed Dark Circle agents ahead of him, he pulled Lydda into a side corridor, only to be confronted by a second party of armed men. He heaved a sigh of relief when he recognised Felix at the head of a posse of Science Police.

‘You go, Lyle, we’ll hold them.’

‘But—’

‘Don’t be a stubborn fool, get the girl off the ship!’

A firefight erupted between the Dark Circle goons and the SPs, and Norg saw the wisdom of Felix’s words. Reluctantly, he left the fight to his old friend and led Lydda deeper into the bowels of the ship.

‘Where are we going?’

‘Lifeboat deck. We can take an escape pod and—’

His explanation was cut short by a burst of green energy exploding in front of him and temporarily blinding him. Putting himself protectively in front of the girl, he faced the new threat. Standing before him was a green-clad woman, and hovering beside her was a large, green orb that resembled nothing so much as a giant floating eyeball. With a sinking feeling, Norg recognised the galaxy’s most deadly assassin, the Emerald Empress, and her Emerald Eye of Akron.

‘Run, Lydda,’ he said. But before the girl could move, a green beam flashed past them and spread to form an impenetrable barrier across the corridor, blocking their escape route.

‘Don’t worry about the girl, 007, my employers want her alive when they dissect her. You, on the other hand, I might just dissect now!’

Another green beam stabbed out from the hovering eye, and Norg desperately rolled to the side, avoiding death by a hair’s breadth. Crouching, he fired three shots from his pistol at the Empress. To his dismay, they bounced harmlessly off her personal shields. The Empress laughed.

‘Is that all you have? Oh, this is delicious. Come, try again!’

She spread her arms open, daring him to shoot her. Norg took aim ... and suddenly jerked his arm upwards, shooting at the overhead strip light. It went out in a shower of sparks and the corridor was plunged into darkness.

‘Lydda, tear up the floor!’ he shouted. The quick-witted girl took his meaning instantly, and a metallic rending sound filled the corridor. Norg felt a hand take his arm in a steely grip, and he was pulled through a jagged hole to drop to a lower deck. Blinking in the suddenly light, he saw a row of life-pod entrance hatches.

‘Good girl! Come on!’

He slapped the emergency release button on the nearest hatch, and bundled Lydda inside ahead of him. Turning his back on her, he sealed the hatch and triggered the escape process. With a sudden acceleration, the pod was flung from the ship. Lyle watched the ship dwindling into the distance.

‘That’s one in the eye for the Dark Circle,’ he said. ‘Well, we’ve got a long trip ahead of us in this.’

‘Lyle,’ said Lydda softly from behind him. Norg turned around to stare down the barrel of a gun.

7. Starfinger

‘Auric Starfinger,’ said Norg.

‘I am happy that you’ve heard of me, Mr Norg,’ said the dead-eyed man who had one arm around Lydda’s neck and a gun levelled at Norg’s chest.

Starfinger wore a set of ostentatious finger rings, but other than this vain display he was all business. His look was slightly smug, but his eyes were hard and his pistol unwavering, and Norg had no doubt that he would fire in a heartbeat.

‘Your movements were pitifully easy to predict,’ Starfinger boasted. ‘Too bad for you, Mr Norg, that I no longer need you alive.’

‘I suppose you’re going to put me in some impossible-to-escape death trap while you interrogate me?’

Starfinger raised a surprised eyebrow. ‘No, Mr Norg. I’m going to shoot you.’

Lydda chose that moment to act. The plucky girl rammed her elbow hard into Starfinger’s mid-section, and even without her darkness-dependent strength the blow caused him to double up and exhale in surprise. Enraged, he flung her aside, her head striking the bulkhead hard enough to stun her. Norg lashed out, knocking the pistol from Starfinger’s hand. It skittered behind a console. Before Norg could draw his own pistol, Starfinger was upon him, hard fists battering him unmercifully. Norg raised his hands, trying to protect himself from the onslaught. Starfinger’s hands closed around Norg’s throat and began to wring the life from him. His strength ebbing, Norg pulled ineffectually at the assassin’s wrists. His vision fogged, and as he tried to focus on the deadly hands a desperate thought occurred to him.

‘Last ... request ... see that my wife gets my ... ring ...’

Starfinger’s eyes flickered to Norg’s ring, and lit up with avarice.

‘Never! The pretty ring will be mine!’ He released one hand from Norg’s throat, keeping him pinned with the other. His free hand tore the ring from Norg’s finger, and jabbed it on his own finger.

Summoning the last reserves of his willpower, praying it would work, Norg concentrated on making the ring fly.

‘My ring!’ gloated Starfinger. ‘And now, you will—ahhh!’

Starfinger’s hands were torn from Norg’s throat as an invisible force propelled him backwards across the life pod. He flew backwards into the airlock, and Norg stabbed the controls that closed the inner door and blew the outer one. With a soundless scream, Starfinger went tumbling into the reachless void of space.

Lydda gave a moan as she slowly came to. ‘Where’s Starfinger?’ were her first words.

‘He needed some space,’ said Norg. ‘Now come here...’

The pod drifted silently through space.

Some time later, the radio crackled to life, and S’s anxious voice come from it.

‘007, 007, come in 007. Where are you, Norg?’

Lyle reached over and lazily flicked on the transmitter.

‘Here, S, safe and sound. We’re heading for Earth now, though it might take us some time.’

‘Oh, thank Saturn! Do you have Jath’s technology?’

‘I have its container and I’m probing it now.’

‘Ohhh! Lyle!’

‘What was that sound 007? Norg? Answer this minute! Nor—’

Click.

Lyle Norg will return in *The Eye Who Loved Me*