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# Anecdotes of a Zero

(and an escape from the harsh reality)

by Cliff Dale

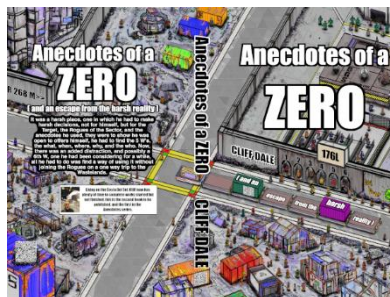
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# Chapter One.

The five Ws.

**What, when, where, why, who**, and other associated descriptions, this is where this anecdote starts.

Not all these elements are necessary to know, some are unhealthy to get familiar with, a good knowledge can be a bonus, certain information can have power, and a deep knowledge, that, can be dangerous.

It may be governed by the “**what**” it is that you know.

It could be determined by the **when** you propose to use this “**what**” that you know.

It may also depend on the **where** you choose to release the “**what**” you know, and the “**when**”, for timing can be absolutely everything.

It could also be influenced by the **why** you intend to divulge this knowledge, and the “**where**”, the “**what**” time this disclosure will be released is still as important, this is the “**when**” to make it count, of course, that is preferably when it hurts the most.

However, knowing the “**who**” in all of this, well, that can make you rich, or more likely, get you killed.

Other anecdotes from this time come about with, “reminds me of the time....”

His workmate had just mentioned that he had seen a nice Fancy to run his hands over, it wasn't necessary, it was certainly a cheap thrill, though, often not for the female concerned, this one wasn't looking worried.

Instinctively the Border Guard said to his Gate Buddy,

“Yeah, I see that one too, that reminds me of the time in Sector One Two Eight, Gate U Eight, Sub-Gate Two, and ....”

Here we go again.

His age could not be determined, he didn't know his birth date, he thought mid-twenty STU something, here, he was about four Sol-R's old.

He had always been told he was a Puke, born of a SLUM maggot, told he was a lean, mean, surviving machine, spat out of some poor alley cat who was probably turfed out and expelled into Limbo. At some point he was given up to the authorities, they would have been anxious to fulfil governmental quotas, and he would have been indoctrinated in a penitentiary workhouse in some far-flung, unnamed, Sector.

He didn't know the truth of the **where**, **when**, or **why**, and he didn't care to know, it served no purpose to know. Everything had to have purpose or it was pointless, a wasted effort was an inefficient use of resources, though, it could be used as subterfuge under the right conditions.

His training had taught him to keep the subject guessing, keep them confused, keep them off balance, to give yourself the edge, even an unfair advantage, to always be that one step ahead.

He was uncomplicated, simple, he liked simple, but he was good at unravelling the twists and turns in the darkness of the worlds he often inhabited, and good at living in the stories that were woven for him, he did complex very well.

Some previous missions were very simple, very basic, others, were deep and complicated, the complicated jobs he liked, they were more challenging, more enjoyable, more worthwhile.

Labels were not his thing, though he had to label people he met, places he visited, it was his job to, but if he was honest, he didn't like much at all really, the game perhaps, all unlisted contacts were a game to be played, not always by the rules, though many of those rules were flexible.

His personal label was basic, average looking, average height, solid, nothing too distinct, he could have facial hair if required, and he thought he looked athletic, not noticeably, not unless completely unclothed, more like endurance than weightlifting.

He was what they referred to as a Thickey, it had nothing to do with his intelligence, just super dense bones as a result of genetic manipulation of the foods he was fed as a child. He had brown eyes, sort of deep and somehow, lost, it added to his simple persona, and his brown hair was often unkempt, but not unruly. He was somewhat ordinary on the outside, unremarkable, blending in, he was good at blending in, becoming part of the scenery, a man of the moment, and then, he was gone in an instant, unremembered, invisible in the greater scheme of things, that definitely suited his persona.

He had done his mandatory juvenile service, that is when they discovered his skills, he didn't think they were much to write home about, not that he had one, nor anyone to write to, but they thought he had talent, it took a whole Sajim year of training to convince him.

His job?

Infiltration; sort the weeds and throw them out, blend in, get dirty, get physical, get results, move on. His job was to shake the tree of Sector life, to rattle it to its roots and see if anyone wanted to collect any falling fruits, to tag the "**who**" that would scoop up the illicit bounty that presented itself, and when he had the names of the Rogues and the Sites they operated in, then, he could go in and weed the problems out, Strim the problem away, to dig out those roots, leaving something behind so that the social conditions of circumstance

can, once more, provide the right environment for the bearing of the sweet fruits of life, it was the rebalancing of the natural order.

What he did wasn't natural, it was often brutal, he went in and ripped those weeds out, usually they went screaming all the way to the incineration bin, that was expulsion, not incarceration, it sent the right message.

He was a messenger.

It was, he conceded, one label that he did like the sound of.

If you tried to look him up in the PG archives then there was little to find, he was a ghost in the machine of life here in this sludge pit of a Sector, in any Sector, and if you ever got close to his real-life story, then you would find his particular records sealed to the highest authority, any bribery offered to dig a bit deeper would get you noticed, then your own life story was likely to get very much shorter.

### **Who** was he?

He went under many names, all were pseudonyms, he had infiltrated many Sectors and Sites in different guises and personas, each one was different, each life story was different, each name was different, each outcome was remarkably similar, weeding.

The name he responded to officially was a code name, Zero, he wasn't the first, he certainly wasn't the last, and this incarnation of Zero wasn't able to remember his birth name and didn't think it was important to try and recall it, even if he had remembered it, it wasn't going to be used.

Perhaps, the proper question should be,

### **What** was he?

Well, he was humanoid to start with, though he wasn't sure how much humanity was left in him anymore, most of that had gone, it raised its head every now and then in an effort to show it wasn't completely absent.

Something evident in all Sectors of this planet was corruption, so he was a tool, a precision tactical weapon in the fight against it, in the fight against unauthorised entry and exit, in the constant fight against the breaking of the rules and the skimming of profits, he was a G-Man, a Government Agent, one of the new breed, SIDs, dedicated, hardened, ruthless, and one more thing he was sure of, he was good at it.

### **Why** did he do it?

Zero wasn't sure anymore, it used to be because it was the right thing to do, he was making the local Sector society better, weeding the plot to allow the flowers to grow free and unmolested, that was such a soft thing to say when he was anything but genteel, it was perhaps untrue as well.

Once the weeds had been Strimmed, it was then up to the SeM's, the Sector Management, to ensure that any spilt seeds were not allowed to grow again, many were not that good at weeding their own plots, that is why Zero was here.

What he did was to set things up to fall, expose the roots and help dig them out, allowing the trunk to fall, taking down all the branches with it, many of them well disguised and some even camouflaged. These things were not going to topple on their own, so, on

occasion, they were helped in the knocking of them over, a subtle nudge here and there, though, at times, what it required to get things really rolling was a hefty boot carefully placed, it was his decision.

For them, once they were uncovered, there was no hiding place, they were going down, they would be Strimmed, weeded, removed to never be allowed to grow again, disposed of, and with roots exposed, any possibility of reseeding was removed, they were allowed to naturally wither and die, out there, way beyond Limbo.

For him, there was no safety net, no back-up on the ground already in place watching his six, no one to come running if he should be unmasked, it was not a job for anyone, but then, Zero wasn't just an "anyone" anyway, it was true to say that he was not completely on his own, there was remote contact, but he was still a one-man rolling mission.

### **Where** was he?

Right now, in Sector 176, talking to his latest WiP-per about a previous life, or at least the few bits of it that could be divulged, he shouldn't give himself away to one of the subjects of his latest mission.

In that previous mission, Zero was at Gate U, more accurately it was the Upper Gate point, a Super Gate, a quad-point entry and exit to, and from, Sectors 234 on the left, Sector 192 opposite, and Sector 169 was to the right.

The Sectors were all mining plots, huge areas that were ten percent SLUM, eighty percent mine work, and the remainder was the infrastructure required to make the place function. There was no logic to the numbering system of the Sectors, they were numbered as they were built, and like the order of the numbering, the buildings were also very much haphazard too, sizes varied, and shapes, it depended on the geology of the land they were built on. The Sectors covered most of this small planet surface, at least the parts that were suitable for mining, the rest of it was natural, that basically meant that there was nothing man-made on it, it was true to say that there was not much natural on it either.

The planet, outside of the Sectors, was too harsh to live in, too harsh to work on unless you were a machine, he wasn't a machine, Zero sometimes felt like a machine, the mask was slipping again.

He found that sometimes, just sometimes, other questions popped up that should be suppressed, his own variations on the 5 Ws.

### **What** was he doing this for?

For the greater good, or so he was told, it wasn't always a convincing argument, some of what Zero did, what he was forced to do to get the required results, went against the principles of the good, he allowed wrong things to happen, didn't halt others, assisted in some of the wrongdoing to prove the guilt, a guilt that just added to his own complicity, it was complicated.

### **Where** was his life journey going?

He didn't know the answer to this one, nor had he fully understood all its consequences on others he met along the way, all Zero ever knew was one mission at a time, when it ended, then orienteering for the new one began shortly afterwards, a re-invention of his self, the

disremembering of the others. The journey was never ending, there was no continuity from the end of one mission to the start of the next, and he usually found himself dropped into a new life, in a new Sector, with more weeding needing to be done.

**When** was this going to end?

That was a good question, Zero sometimes wondered if he wanted it to. He thought that the likely answer to this was another unknown, but it was possibly to be in some dark corridor or back alley, probably with a blade sticking into places he would rather it not be.

**Why** was he still doing this?

That was perhaps the biggest question, the one that raised the most queries when Zero allowed the mask to slip further than the last time, at present, there was perhaps more to this question than could be gaged, it was a deep and complex query that had to have some logic somewhere, he still couldn't find the answer, but, he was getting there.

**Who** was he?

He wasn't sure on that either, but then he was never sure who he was, Zero changed his life story too often to remember the truth. He believed he was one of the good guys, at least he hoped so, what he did was for the common good of those on this little insignificant planet of Sajim, that this "good" often benefitted the governing body too, the PG, well, that was just a welcome bonus, though, as far as he was concerned, it wasn't the deciding factor in any mission.

Zero himself, knew little about his self, he knew he was given to the PG and its indoctrination program, and at a very early age, he was probably around one Sol-R at the time, about five and a quarter Standard Terran Units, years.

There were very few details of his birth mother, in fact, what he had were not details at all, just rumours and innuendo, hard facts were missing, unavailable to him, and it seemed, to others. There were no clues about his birth father either, and no indication of any siblings, nor indeed of any living relatives anywhere on the planet, did that bother him? If he was honest, no it didn't, it made no difference to his way of life, his life was not his own to control anyway, destiny, and a new mission briefing, guided him to his next life. It was not necessary to confuse this next life story with realities, to clutter it up with personal considerations was not going to be of benefit to him, or them, if indeed, they existed. To have no previous history was perhaps something of an advantage, it meant there was no risk of bumping into family members in any Sectors he may find himself in, and Zero had no friends, wanted no friends, in this line of work there were only SiNners, Rogues and Sites, conspirators, the guilty and targets.

Occasionally, Zero would consider that there could be a sixth W of sorts. **'Was.'**

**Was** it possible to leave this life?

It was a deep and complicated question, but yes, he knew it was possible to leave, Zero was sure others had done it. He knew there was no superannuation scheme he could pay into, and there was no old G-Man retirement home to relax in, it appeared the SID didn't look after their own, if they were not working then they were surplus to requirements.

This subject of retirement was another of those important personal life questions he didn't yet have the answer for, but he was working on it. Zero also had to consider if he could financially support any retirement plan, and, of course, if they would let him live long enough to enjoy one.

What he had managed to secure though, was his own personal fund, he had that part covered, and 'they' didn't know about that, but he hadn't worked out how to leave, not yet. He could always ask to leave, though he believed that it was highly risky to do so, and he guessed, it was likely to be more than just an end of career question.

There was more than a sneaking suspicion that should he ask for retirement, then his request was likely to be granted, but not in the way he would have preferred.

Simply put, Zero expected to be retired on a more permanent basis.

That was perhaps another W.

**Wasted.**

## Chapter Two.

The biggest source of employment here was in the mines, all it seemed they did was to allow you to dig out more coinage to feed the habit of distraction. There was not much to do outside of the working environment no matter where you happened to be, and like other places, there was little happening in this Sector except work and leisure.

Work was the motivator, that made the coin to spend on the distractions, the leisure, the pleasures of the Sector, limited as they were.

Leisure activities were perhaps typical of any Sector, there was food, plenty of drink, illegal gambling and loose women, all these distractions were available at the right price.

The food was passable, it was usually quite fresh because it was all grown on-world, all the Sectors had spaces set aside for agriculture, it was another line in taking coinage back from those they paid a wage to, and most of it had good taste, something perhaps not all the places that served it had, and in those Eating Halls, the food was usually reasonably priced, and more importantly, safe. There were rules and regulations in place for the food products, that included the sales prices, the quality of the products produced, and its processing before it gets to the consumer. The fact that the consumer was trapped within the Sector in which the food was grown, and that they worked for the parent company of the grower, all helped in ensuring that quality was good, it would not do to poison the people making the company profit. Food products were grown in tiered platforms that were stacked dozens of layers high, it was an impressive sight to see, and perhaps, one of the nicer places in any Sector, sadly, one that was usually out of bounds to the general masses. The foodstuffs were often grown in the spoil from the mine works, that helped with hiding some of the waste product, and as a bonus, much of it was actually very nutrient-rich, it was ideal for growing crops. For the companies that grew these foodstuffs, the sale of these harvests was not a good source of income, but it was an offset of costs, and no-one got a free handout when it came to food, if you didn't pay, or maybe you couldn't, then you starved.

You could always drink though, alcohol made you forget the hardships for a short while; however, it was a temporary fix, but it worked most of the time. There were plenty of places that sold alcohol, and some Drinking Dens were better than others, but all were equally busy selling the liquid memory blocker, selling the blank moments that made up for a dull day, and there were many of those. This booze was also produced in the Sectors, some had several options, some had just the one or two, not much came from off world, it was too expensive. There was illicit booze too, unregulated, some of it so high in alcohol content that it was positively dangerous, it was often referred to as old one eye, so-called because some heavy drinkers would often lose sight in an eye, occasionally two. This illicit booze didn't go by the ancient name of moon-shine, so named because the product was often made by the light of the moon, at night, in secret, here, there was no shine from a moon, the planet of Sajim didn't have one, and its three suns made sure there was never a night cycle, but it didn't stop them distilling this stuff. Its more common moniker, for

obvious reasons, was sol-shine, and when placed in clear persospex jars outside, it would be finished off to get properly blasted by the solar particle events that happened on a regular basis, this gave the stuff an even deadlier kick.

The gambling was another of those distractions that offered hope but seemed to be hell-bent on removing all traces of it, plunging the gambler back into the pit of gloom, back into the mine works in an attempt to repay the debt. Gambling was not legal though, it was not at all regulated, it was tolerated and therefore had become open to abuse, and the filtering of funds from this enterprise was where the greatest coin was made, and not always by those that ran the Gambling Joints. The women, well, they were a brief comfort, a short moment of fancy in a place that was anything but. The opportunities for corrupt practices were perhaps higher here, people trafficking, forced labour and child slavery, and the kickbacks were almost normal, expected, often demanded, and sometimes with menaces. The nastier side of it was organ removal and stem cell harvesting, people always wanted to remain healthy, to live just that bit longer, and for some reason, it was suggested that new organs helped. It was expensive but available, and someone else paid the ultimate price for the longevity of another's extended life, no one in their right mind donated organs willingly for a stranger. It was a sad fact that these Fancies were not going to be missed, far from it, they were easily overlooked, and so the organ markets and the stem cell replacement clinics had a steady stream of young, and fairly healthy, already exploited, donors, no one cared.

Some of the Miners bought their own Fancies, women that would cohabit in their place of residence in the SLUM, they were low paid but at least they had a place to stay, they would get a roof over their head, and someone that would pay for their food, and to buy them drinks to hide the pain of their mundane existence, and if they were really lucky, there would be someone who would care for them too. Some of the Fancies were illegals, though most were properly documented, fully legit, and if you had a mind to, you could get yourself a day pass out of the Sector, an ECP, and go wander the Limbo, see what Fancies were on offer, and if you found one, if one took your fancy, then you could take their details and see if you could get them an ECP in, not all were eligible. Some of these people would be allowed to come through the Gates and remain in the Sector as fully legal, if not, then they could try a forced entry, come running through the Sector Gates as illegals, or more likely, they would attempt to purchase forged DoC's. Some would pay those in the know for an arranged ingress, a dodgy pass was not a guarantee of admission, but a bribe opened the doors just that bit wider for a bit longer, mind you, the Fancy would have to be pretty special to go to all this trouble, not just especially pretty. Most of those Fancies who found themselves expelled to Limbo from one Sector could get into another, all they needed were genuine personal papers, DoC's, most did still have them. There were a few who had their documents removed, stolen even, often just to ensure that they could not get back into the same Sector to cause problems or embarrassment, or to point the finger at dodgy practises. At the end of the day, there was a need for these people, the Fancies had a niche to fill and they did it admirably, it was when it came to some of the Joy Palaces that things turned a bit uglier. Generally, it was a bit slyer and more underhand when these places were involved, it seemed to bring out the worst in some, determined to supply joy to all at the expense of the misery of others. Very few women chose to be in these places,

some did, and most in the Joy Palaces were paying off some debt or another, and these debts were bought and sold on the open market, to be traded between the Sectors as if the barriers between them did not exist. These debts were rarely of their own making, often it would be a leftover from the miner that hired them as a Fancy in the first place, should that miner die, not uncommon in the mining industry, then there were rarely any funds available to pay off any debts, so, those that cohabited with the miner were deemed to be liable, someone had to pay, and the company that was owed the debt wanted their lump of flesh. Their answer was to sell off the Fancy to reclaim the outstanding amount, this sale would often be to a Joy Palace, it was rarely to another miner, nor an Eating Hall or Drinking Den within its own walls.

### **Why?**

The miners were rarely paid enough in the first place, and many guzzled their earnings away, saving for the future was a concept most of them never grasped, and of course, you wouldn't want a potentially disruptive influence to stay within the Sector, so the debt was often sold to someone on the outside, on the open market. To ensure the Fancy could not return, often their Documents of Confirmation were confiscated, there was a market for these DoC's too. Once a debt was offered, then it was perhaps inevitable that unscrupulous players would be involved in its purchase, and in the abuse of papers.

It was this sort of thing that Zero was looking into in every Sector he was placed in, the illegal gambling, the organised movement of traded Fancies, particularly in the Joy Palaces, he looked into the repurposing of confiscated DoC's. Zero wasn't really interested in the odd Miner paying to get his Fancy through the Gates, though he would be interested in WiP-pers on the Gates, particularly if they made a habit of allowing illegals through.

Sadly, for the masses, the distraction of most of this mess often led nowhere, what followed was destruction, the suicide rate here was phenomenal, and it wasn't just the Fancies, those that cared, and there were very few of those, they didn't seem to want to investigate this why. It seemed all the hard to do stuff made coin, all the good stuff cost you coin, and when one followed the other, the balance between the two was so lopsided, and you could be sure it wasn't in your favour, it just wasn't fair.

The balance needed to be corrected, Zero was good at restoring the balance.

Perhaps, it was true to say that the main reason those that should care, and didn't care to care, was, they were getting "benefits" from the Gambling Joints, the Drinking Dens, and the Joy Palaces of this Sector, it was about to end now Zero was on the case, this was his current assignment, as it was in the previous one, now the cards were not being marked in just the Gambling Joints anymore.

He was here to watch the Gate and the Gatekeepers, wanting to know who spent their wedge in the various entertainment halls, and if they got a discount to do it. On the face of it, it didn't sound such a bad assignment, you get to eat, to drink, to gamble, and get laid, but there was more to it than that. Zero was not just looking for those that were syphoning the profits away from the owners of the establishments, he was looking for the better-organised Gambling operations, the seedier Drinking holes, and the Joy Palaces with medical facilities attached, aiming to weed the organisations behind these establishments, this was the focus of his investigations, and he was well on the way to adding more names to his list.

Right now, though, he was looking for those operators on the Gate, those making an extra wedge, letting in the Inners that had fraudulent DoC's, dodgy entry credentials, that was his entry ticket to the dark alleys and red-light areas of fancy, and of the backhanders offered by the Who's who of this Sector.

There was the potential to save some poor soul from a life of enslavement or the organ market, and this was the bonus, there was always some light to be found even in the darkest of situations, and no matter how deep you needed to dredge, there was usually some good to be found, something to balance out all the crud you needed to wade knee-deep through. Zero always appreciated the good, always looked for it, it was one of the few things that made the job bearable.

He never used to worry about what he did, Zero did his job, took his time, but never wasted it, and left the clean up to those that specialised in it, his job was to be the shovel in the sludge pit, digging away at a channel to create a drain. Zero was draining this cesspit of a Sector, the cleaning of the pus that was the cause of the many infections within its walls, and he was sure that this would eventually lead the way to find the unspoiled, the pure, he knew it was in here somewhere, all you needed to do was dig a little deeper.

His other job, on this mission, and the previous ones, his visible job, was to sort those coming in and out through the Gates, the Inners were those coming in, and the Outers were those who were leaving the Sector, and there were also those just passing through, unsurprisingly, these were called Passers, and depending on what Super Gate they were heading to, they were either Lefties, Righties, Uppers or Downers, but all needed documentation to pass, that was difficult to get and hard to forge, but they sometimes attempted it. Those that did attempt to brave the risks of getting into a Sector undocumented, they were often the very desperate, and frequently, the stupid, very few illegals ever made it, and those that failed rarely survived it.

Of course, for some, those that had no papers at all, this was perhaps where the biggest criminal activity lay, it was in the **when** these DoCs were removed, and the **where** they lost them, and in the **who** had these DoCs now, for **what** purpose, and perhaps in the **why** they could not apply for the issuing of a new replacement, this was not strictly his mission of the moment. Currently, he was looking for how many of these people trying to get into the Sector actually made it, one of the routes they took was fixed, it was the Gate Zero was on, he was looking into the arrangements that had been made, what wheels had been greased, and the places where the screws had been selectively turned.

Here, his job was complicated, there were multiple Sites, there were multiple SiNners, some were to be turned into Rogues, others were WiPpersnappers; these were the people in the general scope of interest, often put in a position where they could only deny what went on, they had not taken part knowingly, nor witnessed the wrongdoing, they only suspected, they had just a snapshot of proceedings.

The places he would monitor were simply referred to as Sites, this is where the 'action' took place, each Site would be given a reference, a SiN, a Site Identification Number. The SiNners were those persons of interest identified at a Site, they were not always the bad guys, sometimes they were the downtrodden, those who were being lent on by the Rogues. As expected, once identified as doing wrong, the SiNners became confirmed as Rogues,

they were the bad guys, those people of principle interest, they were the ones Zero would need to eventually Strim, to weed out, to bin.

First, he had to build a profile, all SiNners and Rogues started off as WiP-pers, Work In Progress Persons, and there was a need to interact with these WiP-pers, the SiNners, and the Rogues, often, on a very personal level, though where possible, he was not permitted to work with them or for them in their illegal activities, certainly not to initiate any activity that involved harm to the person, that would not be ethical, though ethics were not actually of much concern, what 'they' did was rarely ethical, they, he, operated within the law, but only just.

That was a lie, you had to allow things to happen, even assist events to occur, to guide them on occasion, it was the only way to get the dirt on the SiNs and the Rogues within, to sort the WiP-pers into SiNners, or not, as the case may be. It was also true, that sometimes, to promote the dirty WiP-pers to SiNners, to Rogues, you had to get down and dirty yourself, this was leaving the operative at risk of falling into the same practices as those they investigated, but the training was designed to inform the SID-Man of the consequences of their own actions, to take the right course in this engagement, to initiate the end game, another of the Ws.

**Weeding.**

## Chapter Three.

He continued to talk to his latest colleague, Zero was fairly new himself on this Gate, his target, the WiP-per, was an old hand, seen a few Sol-R years, witnessed many dodgy deeds, and without a doubt, performed many himself, he was already a Rogue, number seven. “As I was saying, Gate U-Eight, Sub-Gate Two, there were two of them, proper dribble-licious, nervous, alone, and it didn’t seem right from the off with these two if you know what I mean.”

His colleague obviously did, he just nodded and inspected another entry ECP, waited for the colour to change, waiting for the grope that he knew was to come shortly after.

“Well, these two came forward hesitantly, they offered what were clearly old and outdated passes, and then they offered themselves as payment for entry, well, you can’t refuse a good offer on the odd occasion, can you? I gave the pair of them a good pat down, a firm hand in the right places, as I sure you have done before, and as you will surely do in a few moments, I can see she is smiling over there, she knows, she’s waiting, the Fancy there is wanting to get in, she wants to get this done, you have a willing proper over there, you are one lucky mudder.

Anyway, I gave the pair a good groping, found all that they were hiding were dodgy ECPs, so, I had no option did I, I had to take them up on their offer, I am sure you know what I mean, I had to take them to the Guard House and take down their particulars.”

He knew, Zero could tell that he had had the same offers, had seen the same scenario more than once, probably done exactly those same things, and he may do so again in just a few moments.

“Well, I got as far as stripping the first of the pair, that’s when all hell breaks loose outside, just my luck, we get a Runner, and there’s me, stuck in no man’s land, pants around my ankles, flag raised and ready to surrender to the pleasures of the flesh, and now what can I do? I can’t leave them there, I can’t go out and help my comrades half-cocked, can I? So, I make an executive decision in the heat of the moment, I have no choice but to let the two pass. So, I turf them out the back door while I am adjusting my rigging, and as I go out the front door to assist my Gate Buddy, what do I find? Yep, the trouble is dealt with, that excitement was over, all I got was stimulated, I mean, I didn’t even get to dip it, a most unsatisfactory outcome.”

His colleague was already chuckling his head off, and now, he was laughing so hard there were tears in his eyes and he couldn’t speak, it took a few more TONs of hilarity before he was able to beckon another pass holder through the Gate to check their credentials.

“You crack me up man, your anecdotes are so funny, you have been about a bit, how come you don’t stay?”

Zero needed to tread lightly, his mask was slipping, it could be fatal if he allowed it to drop too far.

“Ah, so simple, I keep screwing it up for myself, too soft I suppose, falling for the sucker stories and the offers of a flight with a Fancy, gets me into trouble every time, I don’t learn, I don’t get invited to stay if you know what I mean, I just never learn.”

His Gate Buddy listened and understood, he knew of the traps, the pitfalls, he had been there, seen it and done it, now he knew how to get around it, that’s what brought him to the B.G.C.I.Ds attention.

He beckoned the Fancy forward, she came willingly, no hesitations, no fears, she knew exactly what she was doing, knew what the Border Guard expected, knew precisely how to get her way with him.

Zero was making his mental notes.

This mission, weeds were many, they were varied, and many were deep-rooted and would be difficult to bin, but Zero would get there, get in there, without a doubt he would get dirty, there would be screaming, but he had selective hearing, he filtered out the screams. It was a good job he could, this was the sort of thing that would keep you awake at night, gnaw away at the conscience, interfere with your work.

**What** was he looking for?

That was a good question, there were, however, multiple answers.

Mainly it was falsehoods, mistruths, flat out lies, the obviously wrong and dishonest replies, this led to the discovery of deeds, and to the proof of the wrongdoing, the players involved. These were not always obvious though, people were good at disguising their shenanigans, though at his present job, on the Gate, they were easy enough to spot.

Zero was not there to catch the hopeful, the one-off lapse, but those that were being paid to let them come in on a regular basis, those that allowed them to pass for a fee, this would lead to those that paid for their entry ticket more than once, and when he had that list of names, and felt he could do no more, a call would be put in to bring in the troops, then, he would be able to create the spark that would fire up the incinerator, to start the Strimming and get weeding, and, to prepare to start blocking out the screams.

This mission, as like several others Zero had completed successfully in the past, he was on the Gates, Border Control. He had the customary grey-blue uniform of the Border Guard Service, and it was one he had used several times before, it fitted well. Zero liked this persona perhaps more than the others, he got to interact with the ordinary people coming in, and not always with the scum of this sludge pit.

Generally, he liked this interaction, there was a bit of banter, the occasional crossed word, and the rare rejection of an ECP, normally this warranted arrest and forced expulsion, if the personal DoC’s were also forged, then that meant expulsion to the forbidding areas outside of all the Sector walls, beyond Limbo, this was not a good place to be.

He was perhaps turning soft, or the mask was slipping further, and more often, depending on how the person reacted to the rejection, Zero would simply turn them away, deny them entry and suggest they try a different Gate, and this time with better DoC’s, preferably genuine ones.

Some would offer bribes, women offered themselves on occasion, that was a slippery slope to start down, but he always smiled, apologised, suggested that if they continued then there would be no option but to detain them, and it would not be to take down their particulars,

they would be ejected just the same, this time to a far worse place than from which they had just come.

The anecdote he had just recounted was not his story, but it was one he had witnessed, and the Guard in question was one Zero later Strimmed, along with a few others on that Gate. Border Control at the Gates was Planetary Government operated, you could not allow the Sectors to maintain their own borders or there would be no controls, there needed to be a regulation of the movement of people or they would abandon low performing Sectors for the better-paid ones, then those Sectors themselves would become a nightmare to operate. Many places were hard enough to operate now, one of the reasons Zero was assigned to a Sector in the first place was because the SeM was not coping with the criminal element. Some of these Rogues were smart, many were just thugs looking to profit from the misery of others, or to just add to that misery with slavery and entrapment, many did something as simple as the watering down of the drinks or providing sub-standard food, but Quality Control was a different department, it was not his, though it was a successful one, Zero had different talents than they could use.

Of course, there was also the issues of contraband, there wasn't much, but food and alcohol were produced in some places far cheaper than in others, so there was a bit of dodgy dealing going on, and yes, there was some smuggled out into Limbo and sold on the open market there, but it wasn't organised, not large scale, it was a minor infringement; he was looking for the big boys, the kingpins of the operation, take them down, and their house of cards comes crashing down with no natural successor brave enough to take it on, they were often on top of the Rogues list.

After a Strim, procedure dictated that the Planetary Government would warn the Sector Management to take a stricter line or they would rescind their mining operator's license, that usually did the trick. Many a Sector he, and others, had been through and Strimmed, were now cleaner, more efficient, safer, and quiet, at least crime-wise, and the Sectors often reported an increase in productivity as a bonus. It made you wonder why the SeM didn't act sooner to clean out the bad influences, the poor practitioners, it did seem to affect standards, and once resolved, productivity, and profit, rose.

There was an important difference to the job he was doing now, on the Gate, and the department Zero worked for in regard to the Strim, there was an interaction and a crossing of lines, but he worked for the P.G.S.I.D, his cover job, as Gate Guard, that was for the BGS, the Border Guard Service, it had its own investigation branch, known as the B.G.C.I.D, the Border Guard Criminal Investigation Division, their remit covered criminal activities of the Guards, his, the dodgy dealings of the businesses in the Sector. Zero never dealt with the B.G.C.I.D directly, only through his own "Control", what they chose to tell the B.G.C.I.D he wasn't aware of, but the dirty BGs would be scooped up in the Strim by the B.G.C.I.D, with the knowledge of any poor practice supplied by P.G.S.I.D Agent, and of course, the B.G.C.I.D needed to provide the replacement when the Strim was done and the screaming stopped.

In any Sector, there were always the little people with big ideas, but often they did not have the nous to continue beyond their small beginnings, so they stayed under Zeros radar, which for them, was a good place to be.

There were no outlets for contraband ore, it was heavy and not something you take out in your pockets to raise funds, illicit or otherwise, so that was something that stayed in Sector, it was sold by the Corporations only, one thing less for the Planetary Government to worry about, if it occurred, then that meant less collected taxes, that was something the PG monitored carefully in the first place, something the Sector Management rarely infringed upon.

To add to the confusion in this mission, there were those that were on duty but were manoeuvred into a position where they were aware of what was going on but couldn't prove it. These were not WiP-pers, they were WiPpersnappers, they had been put into a situation where they could only deny what went on, they had not been allowed to get close enough to witness any doubtful deeds, they may know what had occurred, but often not the how, they only suspected.

Voicing suspicions was hazardous, the next in command, your superior, was probably the very person you would need to report to, they could be the Rogue in charge of the operation you were suspicious of, and it was often said, or at least there were plenty of rumours, about people demoted, people suddenly moved, or people vanished, that meant that those with concerns often stayed silent.

Someone had the nadgers to squeak here, and that someone would get a promotion for this, it wouldn't be Zero, he would be moved on, on to the next mission.

Zero had already started on his WiP list, there were several candidates already, several locations were already flagged as dirty, and at the end, other G-Men would weed these, his job was to flag the SiNners, identify the Rogues, and to weed those on the borders, at the Gates, those not in a dirty location at the time the Strimmer was fired up and let rip. This part of the mission could be time-consuming, the Rogues often saw the danger coming at them and ran, he had, in the past, spent a Rotation, usually far less, hunting a running Rogue, it was perhaps the fun part of this job and featured those who usually screamed the loudest.

He always managed to Strim them eventually.

Zero had been in this Sector for nineteen standard Shift Rotations, it was an easy transition from the previous job, in many respects it was similar, looking for the Rogues preying on the weak, those taking advantage of the unfortunate, making a profit from the misery of others. He Strimmed twenty-nine last time, not personally, but his comprehensive report had listed the Rogues and the Sites in his portion of the Sector, the Target Team did the rest.

It was a tried and tested operation, and it ran like clockwork, once the final report was submitted, the Target Team moved in quickly, quietly, efficiently, ruthlessly. It started with a couple of transport vehicles turning up unannounced at one of the FTGs, sometimes more than one depending on where the SiNs indicated, P.G.S.I.D and B.G.C.I.D operatives would stream in through these Fast Transit Gates, the B.G.C.I.D assisting in the taking down of those identified as corrupt at the Gates, the P.G.S.I.D entered the Sector proper and headed for the SiNs identified, and once there, tagged the Rogues within, no messing, straight in, Strim and bin.

It was always amazing to listen to the kingpin's blubber, 'it's not fair' they'd scream, and perhaps it wasn't, but it was about to get much fairer with them out of the way.

The mask was slipping again, it was becoming personal, them and him.

These Rogues often went kicking and screaming, blaming all and sundry, confirming and further implicating themselves, and others in the chain of command, those on his list, rarely those that were not. He would get no thank you, no pat on the back from those saved, nor from those he worked for, he was required to confirm the Rogues and would be tasked with mopping up the stragglers, tidying up the loose ends, once this was done, Zero would be whisked off for a new assignment where the intense instruction for the next mission would usually start immediately.

The Agents were rarely given time out for R and R, rest and recuperation, there was nowhere to have it, instead, it would be classroom stuff on the next Sector, that was as much rest as any of them got.

The Agent was given info on who was who, who they were going to be, and who they were looking to tag. There was always a heads up on the WiP-pers, and suggestions on Sites to look into, there would be an indication, if it were known, on how deep the Sector Management were involved, and perhaps the local SiNners would be suggested. Once the Agent had this new persona straight in his head, then it was back to another Sector, there would be a new notebook, a freshly sharpened pencil, and an ever-hungry Strimmer.

There was never any level of interference from the SeM, they were never consulted, never given the heads up that the Strim was about to kick off, often they were aware of the issues, the wrongdoings, but chose not to dig too deep for fear that they would then be implicated too, or at least that they would be forced to take action, in the past two Sajim years these Strim operations had been running, there was just the one reported case of a Sector Management taking a pro-active role, doing their own weeding. They didn't like to be seen to be the bad guys, despite what they were doing would actually be good for their business, but it had a negative effect on the workforce, there would be no gambling, there would be stronger drinks and a better quality of food, all at a higher price of course, and there was likely to be a lack of red light Fancies who chose to be there. It wasn't bad for their Corporate business, only bad for the Corporate image, to be seen as buckling under to the "Man", being under the Planetary Government thumb.

This removal of the illegal goings-on wasn't all good either, often crimes against the person would rise after a weeding, but as long as these things had a minimal impact in the day to day running of a Sector, then most of the Management groups chose to ignore the goings-on and let things be, they were good at that, it was what brought the P.G.S.I.D to their doors in the first place, they didn't seem to learn.

It was a rare occurrence to have anyone from the SeM implicated in the dodgy dealings, but it wasn't unheard of either, personally, he had never come across it, but he had seen the public reports where it was the feature of the investigation.

That made it difficult, when you were dealing with Corporate involvement, that was likely to be above his pay grade and security clearance, and it would be the Corporation that owned the Sector he would operate in, though technically, they only owned the rights to mine the Sector, however, they owned the infrastructure within it, and that was some serious investment cost.

Should it be proven that the Sector Management be involved, were inherently corrupt, then there were potentially far more serious consequences beyond a personal liability. As far as

Zero was aware, and he wasn't in the loop for this sort of info, no Sector had ever had their licence revoked, it had been threatened perhaps, but never withdrawn. His list was growing, Zero had isolated two Border Guards reportedly working for themselves, and one confirmed as working for the Rogues, this was the proper, who had just found another one to run his hands over, another poor unfortunate in debt for her man's sins, not that she was responsible, she was probably owed coinage too, but his debt had been passed to her, and likewise, her new debt had been bought by someone else, and here she was at the Gate, though this time she was with company, this time there were three of them.

Currently, he was at Gate L, Sub-Gate 6, and front of the queue there were three women and a single male attempting entry, the man was super cool, confident, cocky even, the women, however, they were scared, you could see the fear in their eyes. They were well aware of the punishment for a failed entry, Limbo, or worse, and should entry be gained, sexual slavery, it wasn't much of a decent choice.

Zero still wasn't the flavour of the day, he had asked one question too many already and his workmate was still suspicious of him, however, he wasn't quite compromised yet, but could be if he kept pushing. He needed to back off, he was the newbie here, experienced on the Gates yes, but at this one, Zero was very much sticking out like a sore thumb. It was partly deliberate, you didn't want to appear super-efficient like you knew everything, that was even more suspicious, he had decided to play ball for a while, stand in the shadows, become invisible again, get back in favour with those he needed to observe from a closer standpoint.

There was a delicate balance to be had, on the one hand, you wanted to get in on the action now, get in on their action, but on the other hand, you knew you had to pick your moment, it would come to you, patience was a virtue. Rushing in headlong was hazardous, not least because the bad guys had Stun Sticks too and knew how to use them, so it was best to wait, they would give, in the end, they just couldn't resist.

His telling of anecdotes of his past was not just one way of lightening the moment, it was suggesting he was open to "other" options and offers, pointing out that it was a failing that had him moved from his post more than once in the past. Zero hinted that he was already a bad boy and knew the ropes, knew how to bend the rules, and this ruse usually worked, given time, they would invite him in to play.

It should be noted that a Stun Stick was a beautiful little gadget, maybe little was not the right term, they were nearly a meter long when extended, and packed quite a wallop, and every Border Guard had one, some of the Rogues had them too, but they used them for a different reason though. These things were real man stoppers, zap a Runner with these things and they could no longer run, they usually worked well, although sometimes, it was too well.

His role on the Gate was to stand back, watch for Runners, in this instance it moved him far enough from the ongoing quadruple document inspection about to take place, that would put enough distance, introduce enough doubt to make any document query invalid, but Zero had a plan, he was going to disobey his instruction, and if challenged, then he would pretend that there was a potential Runner, but was it the calculated risk that should be taken right now?

A Runner was really desperate, probably as desperate as anyone could be, they often had no valid personal documents, they definitely had no entry ECP, and no hope of getting one, therefore, they had no chance of getting in legally. Runners were the easy meat, there was just a narrow window of opportunity and an even narrower alleyway for them to aim at, they were often caught on the run and dealt with severely. Without any genuine personal documentation, they were not going to be placed in Limbo when caught, instead, they would be banished to another of the Ws.

**Wastelands.**

OK, that is your three chapter preview, I hope you like it.  
Depending on the version, the full Kindle version is 309 pages.  
The printed version (6x9") is around 256 pages,  
in either case, all full editions are just over 142,500 words.

Anecdotes of a Zero was released in May 2020, to find it and purchase a copy just go to your usual Amazon online store and enter the title and Author name.

For the printed version, enter the ISBN number shown below the title above.

For the Kindle version, enter the ASIN number shown below the title above.

or simply go to my Author page and you can find it (and all others published) there.

<https://amazon.com/author/cliffdale>

## Zero Glossary.

BGCID – **B**order **G**uard **C**riminal **I**nvigation **D**ivision, they police the BGS.

BGS – **B**order **G**uard **S**ervice, employed by the PG to operate the Sector Gates, they also patrol Limbo.

Caprinicus Bull Hog – small, but very noisy male pig from the planet Caprinicus.

Control – Special PGSID department that specifically operates the Agents.

CUT – **C**lean **U**p **T**eam, mainly cleaning up the dead from Limbo, also PGID Teams during/after the Strim.

COP – **C**ritical **O**verheat **P**oint, a technical issue with small plasma pistols where they overheat and explode

COP-Out – to throw away an overheating pistol before it explodes.

DESMonD – **D**irected **E**nergy **S**ystem, **M**onitor **O**n **D**emand, directed laser system on the GDS.

DG's – They were security at an establishment, **D**oorway **G**uardians, often referred to as Door Goons

DoCs – **D**ocuments **o**f **C**onfirmation, everyone should have personal documents for Identification.

DPRS – **D**eep **P**enetration **R**esonance **S**can, a scanning system like ground penetrating radar.

Drinking Den – a Bar where Sector made alcohol is served.

Eating Halls – places that sold cooked foods, meals.

ECP – **E**lectro-**C**hromatic **P**ass, a Pass that changed colour - plastene sheet, often with holograms and watermarks.

Fancy – or Fancies, are a paid-for love interest, for short-term hire, or paid to co-habit in the long term.

FTG – **F**ast **T**ransit **G**ate, fully automated gate requiring a PG issued pass.

Gambling Joint – a room where illegal gambling takes place.

Gates – simply an official point of entry or exit from a Sector into a Limbo channel.

GDS – **G**round **D**etection **S**ystem, Security detection system at the FTG, scans under the incoming vehicles.

G-man – a Planetary Government agent, an Agent, sometimes referred to as SIDs.

HTV – **H**ire **T**ransport **V**ehicle, basically, a taxi.

IDent Card – An Identity Card, for an Official user, Sector Management, SLF, Border Guard etc.

Illegals – people attempting illicit entry into a Sector, usually over or under the walls.

Inners – people coming in to a sector via the gates.

Joy Palace – a place where you can hire your Fancies by the hour.

Limbo – the space between the Sectors, access ways, a channel between Sector walls (outside).

LiPees – squawk for Life Partners, a companion/love interest not paid, doing it for love not coin.

Miners – most people are employed as miners, digging the Torrezium ore to earn a wage.

Nittob pigeon – a flightless pigeon from Nittob, known for persistently flapping its small wings and trying fly.

Outers – people leaving a sector via the gates.

Passers – people passing through a Sector, not staying in the Sector for more than a STuD, a Sajim day.

Papel Steri-Strips – sterilised sticking plaster for small cuts and abrasions.

PayPAD - **P**ayment **P**roduct **A**ceptance **D**evice, card payment system.

Perp(s) – Perpetrator, a wrongdoer, offender, outlaw.

Persospex – A plastic resin, clear like glass, super tough.

PFDS – **P**ersonal **F**unding **D**epository **S**ervice (a banking account).

PG – **P**lanetary **G**overnment, the governing body in overall control of the Sectors.

PGSID – **P**lanetary **G**overnment **S**ector **I**nfiltration **D**ivision, they operate the Strim.

Plastene – the modern alternative to paper, used to make the ECP amongst other things.

PSMS – The **P**lanetary **S**atellite **M**apping **S**ystem, able to give a precise map referenced location.

Puke – child of a SLUM Maggot, often sold to slavery or carved up for spare parts (organ harvesting).

Rogues – an identified WIP-per, now confirmed as a bad guy.

Runners – people (illegals) attempting to run through an opened gate, sometimes escaping Targets.

SaD – Search and Destroy, sometimes HtK (Hunt to Kill)

Sectors – each walled enclosure was a Sector, on Sajim there were hundreds on the surface (309).

SeM(s) – **S**ector **M**anagement, they operate the Sector, a business venture, owning the Rights to mine.

SGC – **Senior Gate Controller**, the man in charge of the Gate and its Sub-Gates, the most Senior Guard.

Shock Stick – A handheld non-extendable personal version of the Stun Stick, lower voltage.

SIDs – Squawk for the **Sector Infiltration Division**, a shortened version of PGSID.

SiN – Site identification Number, a reference to a Site without having to continually name it in a report.

SiNners – persons in a Site, suspected of, but not yet confirmed as Rogues.

Sites – places where the action is monitored and/or takes place.

SLF – **Security, Local Force**, they are effectively the localised Police and usually operate within a Sector only.

SLUM – **Simple Lodging Unit Municipality**, multiple high-rise structures, collection of accommodations and business.

SLUM maggot – a Fancy forced to work in a Joy Palace to pay off a debt.

Sproggs – Children of miners and Fancies.

Streets – Street clothes, Civvies, not work wear.

Strim – The operation of cleaning up the corrupt practices in a sector, as identified by an Agent.

Stun Sticks – electric shock sticks for the control of people, high voltage (15,000v).

Sub-Gate – multiple entry/exit channels of a Super Gate.

Super Gate – usually a dual, triple or quadruple entry point from other neighbouring Sectors.

Target – A target of the Strim and the Target Team, an individual identified as a Rogue, Rogue on the run (Runner).

TET – **Target Execution Time**, the time the Target Teams move in and raid the SiNs.

Thickie – a person with Super Dense Bones, often a result of genetically modified foods eaten in childhood.

Torrezium – The ore mined on the planet of Sajim.

TT – **Target Team**, the group of PGID operatives from Control that execute the Strim.

Uppers, Downers, Rightie, Leftie, – passers travelling to the various Gates, north, south, east or west.

Wastelands – the open spaces outside of the Sectors, land not suitable for mining.

WIP-pers – **Work in Progress Persons** (of Interest).

WIPpersnappers - People in the general scope of interest, put in a position where they could only deny what went on, they had not taken part knowingly, nor witnessed it, only suspected.

## TIME

STU's – **S**tandard **T**erran **U**nits, an Earth based time unit, also in squawk its known as EssToose.

STuH – **S**tandard **T**erran **u**nit **H**ours, stews (squawk) – this is also a Terran time unit, not Local.

STuD's – **S**tandard **T**ime **u**nit **D**ay (local time, not Terran), squawk was studs on Sajim, 18 LTU's.

Shifts – On Sajim 3 Shifts to a STuD S-1, S-2, S-3, (Red, Blue, Green), a Shift equalled 12 STuH, 6 LTU's.

SR – a complete **S**hift **R**otation and constituted one STuD, a whole day on any planet, on Sajim it was 18 LTU (36 STuH,) and constituted one STuD

LTU's – **L**ocal **T**ime **U**nits, not STuH's, localised to a particular planet, in squawk they were el-toose, on Sajim it equalled 2 STuH's and there were 6 LTU to one Shift

TONs – **T**ime **O**ptimised **N**odes, 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a LTU, based on the local planetary measurements, on Sajim, in the Terran form, one minute and twelve seconds.

Thou's – these were thousandths of an LTU (on Sajim this was 7.2 seconds STU)

PR – **P**lanetary **R**otation, most likely an SR and often equivalent of a STuD, on Sajim it was 20 studs (Standard Time unit Day on Sajim equalled 1.5 Terran days x 20 = 30 days STU)

Sol-R – is a **S**olar **R**otation, a planetary Year, a complete orbit, the time it takes for a planet to revolve around its sun (if it has one) Sajim's solar year was 64 PRs or 1,920 STUs (days), 5.26 STU years (approx.)

## About the Author –

Born in 1961 in London, England, he moved near to Bristol in the summer of '69 and recalls seeing the grainy black and white images of the first moon landing as it happened, it was an exciting time of discovery. Cliff was already an avid reader of Science Fiction by then, and brought up with the excellent BBC TV series Doctor Who, he vividly remembers watching it in black and white in the mid-'60s, (hiding from the Cybermen behind the sofa!), and, reinforcing the Sci-Fi adventure with other TV series in the 70's and 80's with the likes of Blakes Seven, Quatermas, Day of the Triffids and more.

He left school for college, and studied catering, became a chef, and started work for the MoD for a while, which is when he began writing just for fun, essentially just scribbles in a notebook (the paper kind), none of which have survived to tell any tales.

He got married, to Caroline, they had children (2 boys) and the books took a back seat while family life continued, and other commitments took priority. The kids grew up, eventually moved out, and the parents moved on, Caroline and Cliff moved to the Costa Del Sol and have never left it, they have moved around a few times, but the weather there is better for Caroline's health. Once there, the original typed notes for his early book was rediscovered, that book, Orbiter One, kickstarted the little grey cells again, and more story lines were compiled for the Orbiter One series, and other stories were written, now there are several other stories available, like this example, and there are more planned and some waiting to be finished, it seems there are not enough hours in a day, but, he manages to work on more stories here and there, and, there is still the same patience from an understanding wife, more green tea, and many enjoyable hours of thought provoking contemplation with Pink Floyd and David Bowie.

Now, at 59 years of age, he does have a bit more time available, but, as he mentions, not quite as much time left as when he started the original idea, but there are hopes to be able to complete a whole series of follow-on stories to this book, and to many of the others. They are both still on the Costa del Sol enjoying the Spanish weather at the new Finca (house move number 5), with freshly picked and squeezed OJ for breakfast, straight out of the orchard.

At the time of writing this, several other stories are also complete, but this is the second book to be released, The Anecdotes of a Zero (and an escape from the harsh reality) also has a companion story not yet finished, The Anecdotes of an X-ray, and there will be a follow on for Zero.

The next to be released is the Genesis of Capsaa, and currently it has two follow on stories planned, one is nowhere near ready, the other, The Formation of the CPDF, (working title) is getting near to being complete and should be available in late 2020 or early 2021.

For the Orbiter One series, Book Two, Silent Night is still in progress, and there are others planned for the series, these are well mapped out, ready to put to digital ink when Cliff can find the time.

Another completed story that is already released, the third book published, was *Breaking News*, a story about the next virus outbreak to plague planet Earth, and as the saying goes, watch this space for more breaking news on new books. (well, not this one, this one is done)

Anyway, enough of this waffle, Cliff hopes you enjoyed the book, and perhaps you will come across *Book Two* in the series soon, and who knows, the rest of the series in due course.

(July 2020)

#### UPDATE 2026

*Anecdotes of an X-Ray* is aiming for an early 2027 release.

*The Genesis of Capsaa* was released in August 2020.

*The Genesis of the CPDF* was eventually released in May 2026.

*Silent Night*, book two in the *Orbiter One* series was released in May 2021.



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There are more stories relating to the Anecdotes of a Zero and other characters, and their struggles to survive their particular situations. You can find these stories, and much more information, on the Servus Ad Artem website. The direct link for the Library is below.

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