



Hyperion 5  
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The sun faded from view as the craft rotated to match the orientation of the station's docking clamps. When they had left earth just five months prior they were full of energy but eating nutrition paste for every meal has a way of wearing you down. The sound of the steel clamps closing on the ships hull caused it to sing with a discordant tune as the metals scraped against each other. Typically these, while unpleasant to hear were a welcoming sign telling the crew that they had reached safety and would soon be met with a warm welcome. The situation the crew found themselves in today was quite different. This crew had been tasked with investigating snails. Snails back on earth were fascinating creatures, they were a kind of language staple. People might call you a snail if you were moving slow or had taken to carting around a large shell on your back. The snails on earth were something of a celebrity compared to the position of most small slimy creatures. They were cuter than slugs but not quite as cute as frogs. Space snails are just as interesting and cute however unlike earth snails that mostly fed on vegetation these space snails fed on human brain matter. Its all our fault really, snails had been happy to live on earth but some scientists wanted to see what would happen if you threw them into space and let them stew for a few years. The common pig if left in the wild will in time grow tusks, grass hoppers will turn to locus during a famine and apparently snails left in space become brain hungry killing machines. They're still small though so its not the worst threat humans have faced however if they get on the back of your neck they can take over your nervous system like a 90s hacker.<sup>1</sup> As we all know, the only thing more terrifying than a human is a human being control by a snail.<sup>2</sup> An easy solution would be to simply not bring snails into space anymore and leave them to their terrestrial fate however space snails leave a trail of slime that has psychoactive properties. A common problem is that a space junkie leaves their snail cage open while tripping. The United States Space Force created a special task force to deal with these cases, equipped with the latest drones and special neck bands they easily dispatch the snails and restore order! Unfortunately due to budget constraints the task force was unable to assist in this particular mission. Instead of a highly trained team of specialists we have space marines.

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1 In the 90s computer many systems were accessible without a password if you knew the right phone number

2 Citation needed

It turns out space wars never happened<sup>3</sup> so the space marines are the least trained, least funded and least prepared branch of every military. The Russians who settled in the northern cap of mars don't even pay their marines, instead relying on prison labor. The marines on this ship came from a small colony on mars that bordered Finland's claim and the United States 2.0<sup>4</sup>. Technically they were United States Marines but they all spoke finish, for the sake of the reader I have translated their dialog for your reading pleasure.<sup>5</sup> There were four marines in total, Nate, Larry, George and Michele who was the pilot. Michele was the least anxious of the bunch as she had no intention of stepping foot in that station. Pilots were expensive to train so she would be taking the shuttle craft back to mars as soon as the marines had dis-embarked. Nate and Larry were the yin and yang of the crew, Nate was all to ready to point his gun at something while Larry was afraid to keep it loaded even before missions like today. He always waited until the docking was finished to load his weapons. George was the oldest of the three and the man in charge, he didn't have much more experience than the others but he acted like he did. Marines typically were armed with a riffle that fired silicon bullets strong enough to break through flesh but not hard enough to pierce the walls of a station<sup>6</sup>, and then they had a pistol that was for emergencies which fired hot plasma bolts. The pistol was for emergencies and was generally risky to use as it could ignite a source of oxygen or pierce the walls and pull everyone out into space. George gripped the order sheet in frustrating, there were several things that bothered him about their orders. One he never wanted to kill another human but given that the station had allegedly been taken over by snails It was probably he would have to shoot at least one snail zombie, the other thing that bothered him was the fact that the orders came in physical paper form rather than an E-mail or something environmentally friendly, and the last thing that bothered him was the fact that this was a planetary defense satellite. Failure would result in the snails holding one of humanities greatest weapons, aboard the station were four missiles loaded with enough nuclear warheads to wipe out all life on the surface of a planet and rather than a complicated control system there were just two levers.

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3 Wars tend to only happen when you have lots of people and its too expensive to visit space just for a silly war, most people are regulated to killing each other on the surface of planets like the pheasants they are.

4 I wish I could say it was better than the first but really its just more of the same but with flair for the dramatic(yes even more than 1.0)

5 Please understand as a result of the translation you will have to forgive any grammatical errors throughout the book.

6 The space needed for the non-ballistic propulsion was too great to fit into a pistol form, at least when accounting for the space marines budget.

One would destroy earth and the other would destroy mars. George never performed well under pressure and he certainly didn't join the marines cause he was clever, he secretly though of himself as something of an idiot so he felt pretty uncomfortable holding the fate of two planets in his hands. It wasn't just his hands though he had Nate and Larry which made him even more uneasy. Larry was such an animal right's activist he was liable to take sides with the snails and Nate was even dumber than Larry. The mission was simple though, just get to the control room near the docking bay, seal it and then gas the station to kill all the snails. Once the snails were gone they would just confirm the levers were safe and call for pick up. As the marines Gathered themselves and entered the airlock their forest camouflage cast a strange reflection against the aluminum frame<sup>7</sup> of the square room as if the walls were mocking the camouflage by making it more apparent against the metal backdrop. Once the doors were sealed behind them Michele left with the shuttle craft and from that point on they would be on their own. George gave the hand signals for Nate and Larry to take point just as they had practiced in the simulations.<sup>8</sup> As they entered the bland hallway that connected the docking port to the control room there was no sign of life, not a snail nor an enslaved human. As they approached the door to the control room they began to hear a rustling over head. In horror they watched as dozens of snails emerged from ventilation ducts on the ceiling. RUN! George shouted as they scrambled towards the door. Once inside they began to hear the footsteps of the human hosts on the station heading in their direction. Quickly they sealed themselves inside the control room and began the purge procedure. After the process started they began looking over each other to see if any snails were on their persons, they also checked the room to make sure things were clear and it appeared to be so. The next four hours<sup>9</sup> felt like they lasted forever as each marine was too anxious to say anything while the gasses cleared the station. Once the process was finished and the system gave the all clear they unlocked the doors and made their way towards the room with the levers which was in the middle of the station. As they passed the rounded halls leading to their destination they saw multitudes of snails and humans scattered over the floors.

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7 There were multitudes of fancy space alloys created for this kind of thing but American Aluminum Makers were having a REALLY good sale the year they put the satellite together.

8 It was not a common practice for the highest rank to remain in the back, George just had a bad feeling about this one.

9 Technically the gasses killed both snails and host on contact but to be sure nothing was missed the process took four hours.

The bulk of the humans wore white lab coats which were fashionable in the science world even among those not working with chemicals, the coats had several large pockets good for holding things and covered the knees to prevent spills on ones pants. There were a few bodies in civilian clothing as well but these were not fashionable enough to mention in much detail and many too unfashionable to mention here without offending the reader and of which would have to be scrubbed from the official reports. When they got to the lever chamber it was free of debris or bodies and looked to be secure. Snails only wanted brains anyway, they didn't have the temperament for planetary destruction. George told his two minions to remain here while he walked away to call for pickup. Could it have been this easy he thought to himself? They rushed the control room before the hosts or snails could get them but it still seemed to easy. Regardless he made the call for pickup and returned to the lever chamber. There he found Larry holding Nate who had a sizable smoking hole in his neck. It was one of the snails he said through tears, Nate was going to pull the lever. George put his hand on Larry's shoulder and offered the best words of consolation he could manage, *better Nate than lever*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This is a pun on the phrase better late than never, it is not a good pun never the less this entire story was written around it.