WarZone Entertainment presents

**Tales**

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**Chapter One**

 “Are you ready?” It was a stupid question, this was the moment that Mike Hammer had been waiting for his whole life. Ever since he was a kid watching reruns of Star Trek. At long last Mike was getting the chance to go to space, to see the world from up above.

 It was a historic voyage. The LSW Corporation had built their first interstellar ship. According to the eggheads, the engine could make it to Mars in just under a month! The ship was said to be faster than anything NASA had ever built, and Mike was getting the chance to pilot it. The idea, at least how it was told to him, was that once he proved it worked, LSW would send a much larger ship to Mars and build a resort. If this trip worked, they were looking at making a great deal of money and Mike was looking at making history. Part of the agreement he made with LSW was that if he piloted the Icarus 1 he would be given the honor of being the first man to step foot on the red planet. It was a dream come true.

 “I was born ready.” Mike said into the comm device. He was sitting inside the Icarus 1, a tiny shuttle that consisted of nothing more than a cockpit and engine. The cockpit was a bit tight, but it was okay, he didn’t need much room and he was only going to be in here for about an hour.

 The comms buzzed before the speakers once more came to life. “Glad to hear it Icarus 1! You are cleared to take off.” The comm cut off and Mike’s heart skipped a beat. This was it, he was being given the okay to initiate take off. In just a few moments he would fulfill his lifelong dream of making it to space.

 Mike initiated the startup sequence, bringing the tiny ship to life. A loud roar came from under him as the ship started to vibrate heavily. His training had prepared him for this, but he was still surprised at just how intense it was. “I’m off!” He shouted through the comms. His voice full of joy and excitement.

 With a powerful lurch the Icarus 1 took off, blasting off into the atmosphere. It wasn’t long before Mike found himself surrounded by the vastness of space and his home world of Earth was beneath him. It was as beautiful as he had ever hoped. No picture or video footage did it justice. It was breathtaking.

 “How’s it looking up there Icarus 1?” Joey said through the comm. Captain Joseph Henderson, a rising star in the Air Force. He was the military liaison for LSW, overseeing this project. He was the one that helped get Mike the job, he was a big shot down there. But to Mike he was just Joey, the punk that he got into far more trouble than was humanly possible with as a kid. He smiled to himself as he reflected on those days long since passed.

 “You have no idea my friend!” Mike said.

 “Glad to hear it. You ready to punch it up?” Joey asked. Mike looked down at the controls in front of him. His heart was pounding, this was the moment he had been waiting for his whole life.

 “I was made for this.” Mike said, his hand hovering over the switch. Once he hit it the ship would accelerate at a speed that no man, no human had ever gone before.

 “Light her up.” Joey’s voice called out.

 Mike took a deep breath as he nodded. “Light her up.” He said more to himself than to the comm device. He hit the device and for a moment, a long moment, nothing happened. “Uh, I think. . . ahhhhh!” His words turned to a scream as the ship picked up speed, throwing Mike back into his seat. It was a few seconds before the internal stabilizers kicked in and Mike could move around as normal.

 “Mike! Mike you okay?” Joey’s voice was panicked.

 “I’m. . .I’m fine. Just, just got caught off guard. Nothing to worry about here.” Mike said trying to act tough.

 “Well I’d say our test pilot screaming like a twelve-year-old girl is something to worry about, but that’s just me.” Joey said, a hint of a laugh in his tone.

 “Just shut up and make sure everything is good on your end. I’m nearing the target.” Mike said. Truth was he still had a few minutes before the moon even came into view, but Mike didn’t care. He was ready. His eyes were glued to the view screen, waiting for any sign. All he had to do was fly around the moon and head back to Earth, thus proving the engine worked. Getting him one step closer to his dream.

 “Everything’s good on our end Icr. . .” the comm fizzled out, just as he was passing the moon. Mike tore his eyes from the vastness of space ahead of him as he glanced down at the controls in front of him. There was no reason the comm should have given out like that. LSW had made thousands of transmissions with drones out here and never had a problem. Something was wrong.

 “Command? Command do you read me?” He called out. No response. Something was jamming his radio, he just didn’t know what. He started to run a diagnostic of all the systems to make sure nothing was malfunctioning, but he had hardly begun when his attention was drawn to something massive in front of him, slowly drifting towards him.

**Chapter Two**

 The Icarus 1’s alarms went off. Something large was closing in on him, and fast. Mike’s mind went blank with fear. He was in the vastness of space, there wasn’t supposed to be anything out here. There were no other ships out in space at the moment, at least that he knew of and none that could out race his.

 All in an instant his thoughts came rushing back into his head. His instincts took over as he pulled up the sensors. Sure enough it wasn’t an asteroid, it was a ship. Far larger than anything he had ever seen in his life. It had to be the size of a small city. Nothing and no one on Earth could have made that.

 He forced the Icarus 1 to the limits of its speed. The ship started to creak around him as more alarms went off. The tiny ship couldn’t handle the strain that Mike was putting on it. It was too much. He punched up the comm device once more.

 “Command! Command! I need help! Can anyone hear me?” He called out in dismay. The comm’s sprang to life. For a moment Mike was overjoyed, but that happiness was short lived. The voice speaking to him was short lived and in a language he had never heard before.

 “What the fuck?” He asked himself.

 All at once the ship lost power. The lights all kicked off and the Icarus 1 slammed to a stop. Mike felt himself floating up against the limits of his restraints. He was terrified, if the ships power was out than it was no longer cleaning the air. He wouldn’t have long before he suffocated.

 He worked desperately to try and bring the ship back to life, but it was all for nothing. It was a hopeless gesture and he knew it. He just felt better trying, after all what other option did he have?

 The harder he worked the harder he found it to breath. He was using up what little air he had. He knew he should stop but he couldn’t. He wasn’t ready to die, not yet.

**Chapter 3**

 Mike’s head was throbbing. It was in large part what woke him. His mind was a blur. He vaguely remembered trying to get the Icarus 1 up and running before passing out. He sat up and looked around. The room was unlike anything he had ever seen before. It was large and circular but a weird shade of a color that could only be described as blue but was not like any blue he had ever seen. It was strangely beautiful.

 The bed he was on was hard and firm yet far more comfortable than anything he had ever felt. The covers that were over him slowly vanished into thin air, almost as if they were never there at all. Inside the room with him was a large upside-down triangle that could only be used as a table. On top of it was a tray with something that smelled good.

 Part of Mike hoped it was food, but he was unsure. The far end of the room had a large triangle that appeared to be a door of some kind. There was a small circle of glass in the middle.

 Mike got to his feet and slowly made his way towards the door. He knew there was no way that it would be unlocked but he figured he had to try. It was more hopeless than he thought. There was no handle anywhere. As far as Mike could see there was no way to open the door. It could only mean one thing, he was in a prison. But whose prison?

 Mike walked over towards the oddly shaped triangle and looked down at what he could only hope was food. It didn’t look like anything he had ever seen before, but it did smell good. He looked around for something to sit down on and no sooner did the thought cross his mind than a second, smaller upside-down triangle materialized next to him. Just the perfect height for him to sit on.

 “What the fuck?” He asked as he took his seat. He poked the square shaped mess in front of him. The texture was unlike anything Mike had ever felt before, but his stomach’s loud growl demanded he test out his theory. He slowly picked it up and put it in his mouth. Almost immediately he found himself gagging. He forced himself to finish eating. As he swallowed the last bite, the table before him vanished. He got to his feet and his chair was gone in the same fashion.

 “Where the hell am I?” Mike asked himself as he looked around the room that was now empty but for the bed he awoke in. The triangle door vanished. Standing in the doorway was a creature unlike anything Mike had ever seen. It towered over Mike, it’s body brownish gray with more muscles than he had ever seen. It was almost reptilian in nature. “What the fuck are you?” Mike asked, his voice cracking under the strain of his stress. The creature smiled at him.

 “I am Grath’tou ruler of the mighty Fintue. Flagship of the Gragon’s 3rd battalion.” The creature said.

 “What? How. . .how can I understand you?” Mike asked, his mind racing as he tried to figure it out. How could this alien creature speak English?

 “The Zetans’ tech works wonders. Tell us Earther, how did you manage to get out this far from your backwater world? Is this your worlds attempt to enter the galaxy at large?” Grath’tou demanded.

 “Earther? Did you just call me an Earther? Not Earthling? Every sci-fi movie ever uses Earthling.” Mike said.

 “Earther, Earthling. What difference does it make? The question remains the same. Is this your world breaking the treaty? I knew Spaced would overreach one day.” Grath’tou said, a sense of joy in his voice. Mike’s mind was racing, none of this made any sense. No matter how hard he tried he couldn’t wrap his mind around what he was hearing.

 “What treaty? Spaced? Um look, this is. . . this is crazy. I’m just a pilot trying to test a new engine. I work for LSW, I don’t. . .I don’t know about anything else.” Mike said. He just wanted to go home. He had never been so scared in his entire life.

 “You know nothing of Spaced, yet you are Earther?” Grath’tou asked.

 “Yes?” Mike said, not knowing what the creature wanted him to say.

 “Interesting. This requires more research. Stay here Earther.” Grath’tou said as he turned and left. The door reappearing in the frame, once more leaving Mike alone in the empty room.

 “Great! Just leave me here.” Mike said. He turned and headed back towards the bed. His thoughts racing, trying to figure anyway out of this situation. He kept coming up blank.

**Chapter 4**

 Mike quickly lost count of how long he was laying there. He never dozed off, but his mind did start to wonder. Time seemed to lose all meaning for him. There was nothing in the whole world for him outside this room. It was quickly becoming all he had left.

 He couldn’t help but wonder what LSW would do when he never reported back. He couldn’t imagine that they would send anyone to search for him, after all he was just a test pilot. He meant nothing to the company or anyone down there, well but for Joey. Joey would try to do something but what could he do? What could anyone do? There was nothing on Earth that could handle something like this. His life was forfeit, he could feel it in his very bones.

 A loud hissing sound sliced through the room, causing Mike to jump up, startled out of his day dream. “What?” He cried out as he looked for the source of the sound. The non-doorway doorway slid back into the wall as two creatures that looked like bigger meaner versions of Grath’tou. Instead of the almost uniform look of Grath’tou, these Gragons wore what looked to be armor made out of some material that Mike had never seen before. Each one holding a blade type weapon.

 “You are to come with us Earther.” The Gragon on the right said. His voice low but firm. He wasn’t someone to mess around with.

 “We going to the spa or what?” Mike said with a laugh, trying to keep himself from pissing his pants.

 “Now!” The Gragon screamed, his voice sending shivers down his spine.

 “Now, right. Let’s go.” Mike said, every inch of him terrified. He allowed the two Gargons to lead him out of his room into the hallways outside. They were the same shade of blue as his room but with an almost greenish tint to them. “Nice ship by the way, not sure if anyone has ever told you guys?” Mike said, trying to get any information out of them that he could, but they gave him nothing.

 As he followed his armed escorts through the ship he tried to take in as much of it as he could but it all seemed to run together in his mind. It was almost impossible to keep track of the path he took. On top of that, not being able to read any of the signs or marking on the walls didn’t help any. There was no way he could get out of here, even if he could get away.

 His guards stopped in front of another triangle door. The door slid into its frame as the talky guard turned to look at him. “In. The Asker shall be in to see you soon.”

 “The asker?” Mike asked, not wanting to know what that meant. He hurried inside as the guard shifted his weapon. No sooner had he walked inside than the door closed behind him. The room was empty but for a single upside-down triangle chair and table. Mike looked around and saw no sign of anyone.

 “So, I take it I’m just supposed to sit here and wait?” He called out to the empty room. Needless to say, there was no answer. He nodded to himself, as he let out a low sigh. “So, that a yes?”

 He shook his head and walked over to the chair and sat down. He felt something clamp around his legs. He looked down just in time to see the floor encase his feet.

 “What the fuck!” He tried to stand but he couldn’t pull free. He placed his hands on the table to try and leverage his way free, but his hands soon suffered the same fate as his feet. “Oh God, this is just great!” He cried to himself. He started to lower his head to the table but stopped himself, not wanting his head encased in the same way as his hands and feet.

 Mike had never known such discomfort. It wasn’t that his hands and feet were in pain while being encased, it was more that they were numb. He couldn’t feel them at all, it was the weirdest sensation that he had ever felt. He looked around the room but saw nothing that he could use to help himself even if he wasn’t stuck in place.

 The adrenaline that he felt when he was first locked into the chair had long since subsided and the wiriness of sitting so still for so long took over. It took every ounce of self-control he possessed to stay awake and yet even that was starting to prove unmanageable. He felt his eye lids start to close just as the triangle door slid open, emitting a bright light into the room. A new Gragon entered the room. This one had what could only be described as a dressier uniform. He carried with him a heavy notebook and what had to be glasses on his head. The lenses of which were ruby red with just the tiniest tint of blue near the center.

 “Earther, I is called Val’Grath, the Asker of the Fintue. Captain Grath’tou has tasked me to learn the extent of Earth’s betrayal.” Val’Grath said, matter-of-factly. Almost as if to him this was nothing more than a normal Tuesday and he was making a sandwich for lunch.

 “Look, Vaul Grooth, like I told your captain, I am not a scout ship,” he stopped to think for a second, catching himself in his lie. “Okay, I am a scout ship, but I wasn’t looking for you or your people or anything like that. The company that hired me, they just want to see if we can colonize Mars. Earth, yeah, it’s getting mighty crowded down there and we would like to expand. It’s what we do.” Mike said.

 “Val’Grath.” Val’Grath said as he took his seat and opened up his notebook. It was filled with more of the markings that littered the ship.

 “Sorry?” Mike asked, unsure of why Val’Grath had restated his name.

 “I is called Val’Grath. It is not a hard name to pronounce, even for one as primitive as thee, so get it right. Although I would prefer you using my title of Asker.” Val’Grath said, his bright green eyes shining in the low light. It gave off the most unsettling of effects.

 “Okay, uh asker. I don’t know anything. This whole thing, it is just one big mistake. I promise you.” Mike said, speaking faster than he ever had in his life. Nerves will do that to you. Val’Garth flipped through his notes, every page filled Mike with terror. He wished more than anything that he could understand the language in the book. Just so he could brace himself for what was coming.

 Val’Grath stopped on a page, that could just as well have been any other page as far as Mike was concerned. “I take it Ra-man is still in charge of Spaced?” Val’Grath looked up, locking eyes with Mike.

 “Ra-Man? I don’t know any Ra-man.” Mike said, wishing that he did.

 “You do not know of Commander Ra-Man? He leads your forces does he not?” Val’Grath asked.

 “No? I don’t know. What forces? The military? I mean is that like a General or something? But no, you called him Commander. I don’t know man, I never really dealt with the military much but for my friend Joey. But he isn’t a Commander, he’s a Captain.” Mike said, wishing that Joey was here now to help him through all of this.

 “Captain. He leads a ship? Earthers have a fleet now?” Val’Grath said writing down notes.

 “What? No. . .no, no fleet. Not a one. Look man, we are a peaceful people. Well we aren’t but we don’t want to hurt you. We don’t want a war with you. Hell, we’d be wiped out.” Mike said.

 “No fleet? Earth is defenseless?” Val’Grath said, with what had to be the most unsettling smile Mike had ever witnessed.

 “What? No, we are very much defended.” Mike said, cursing himself for opening his big mouth.

 “There are many in the High Command that have believed Commander Ra-Man to be a deceitor. Myself among them. But now, now you have confirmed it.” With that Val’Grath rose to his feet. An air of triumph around him. He turned and headed for the door.

 “Wait, I didn’t comfirm anything! I lied. Me and Ra-Man, yeah, we are besties man. Like two peas in a pot or whatever the saying is.” Mike said, trying to get Val’Grath to rethink his discovery, but to no avail. He opened the triangle door.

 “Take the prisoner back to his cell.” Val’Grath told the guards as he exited the room. Mike never would have thought it possible for him to feel worse than he did when he sat down, but as the chair let go of his hands and feet he felt his heart sink. He just doomed his entire planet, all because he couldn’t keep his mouth shut.

**Chapter 5**

 The Gragons guards pulled Mike out of his chair. He had to find a way off the ship and soon. He knew that if he didn’t it would mean his death. The guards pulled him roughly out of the Asker’s room and marched him through the ship. Keeping him firmly between them. Preventing any chance of escape.

 “So, you taking me to my ship right?” Mike asked, hoping they were as stupid as they looked. It didn’t work. The Gragon behind him hit him in the back, knocking him to the ground. He had never felt such pain.

 “Get up!” The Gragon behind him barked. Mike tried to get up but the Gragon kicked him, knocking him face first onto the ground. “I said get up!” He yelled again.

 The Gragon in front of him turned and picked him up by the shirt with one hand and placed him on his feet. “Up!” He turned and started back towards Mike’s cell. The ruthless one pushed him forward. Mike stumbled forward but managed to stay on his feet. He was running out of time, if he didn’t get away soon, he never would. He knew that much.

 BOOM!

 The whole ship rocked sideways, knocking both Mike and his Gragon guards to the ground. Loud alarms sounded throughout the ship. Other Gragons in battle armor stormed past. Mike turned to look at his guards. One was starting to move, clearly hurt. The second one was gushing yellow gunk from his head.

 Another unit of Gragon troops stormed past. The ship was rocked again as the troops vanished behind a corner. Mike seized the moment and sprang to his feet, leaving his guards behind. He could hear them getting to their feet, but he refused to look back. To look back was to welcome death. He knew that in his very bones.

 One hallway lead to another, lead to another. They all looked alike. It didn’t help that every few minutes he had to hide from passing troops. The ship rocked again. Whoever was attacking them meant business and he needed off this ship ASAP.

 The markings on the walls were slightly different from one hallway to another, but not enough for Mike to figure out which way he should go, or even if he was going in circles. The thumping of soldier’s footfalls grew closer and closer, Mike turned and rushed back the way he came. Before long he found himself stopped at a spilt hallway, one that he knew he had passed before, but for the life of him he couldn’t remember which way he came. The footfalls became louder and louder.

 “Come on Mike, just pick a direction!” He screamed at himself before turning towards the right and running as quickly as his legs would carry him.

 Boom!

 The wall in front of him blasted inward, part of the wall knocking him back. He could feel blood pouring down his face as the air flowed out of the room. The air rushing from his lungs as his body was pulled towards the opening. He tried to let out a scream but couldn’t pull in enough air to even attempt it.

 His eyes went wide as the air around him started to freeze. He went flying rapidly towards the hole in the ship at an increasingly alarming rate. Mike forced his eyes closed as he prayed for some miracle to save him.

 He slammed hard into a wall as he managed to catch his breath falling to the ground. He opened his eyes and glanced up. The hole in the ship was still there but everything seemed to be back to normal. He slowly got to his feet, his breathing still a chore.

 He cautiously pushed his hand towards the hole, hitting something solid that wasn’t there. It must have been some kind of force field. Mike was beyond fascinated by it, but that quickly vanished from his mind as he saw what was happening outside the ship. What appeared to be an armada of ships all faced towards the one that Mike was in. Weapons were firing at them and Mike was petrified. He was never going to survive this. He refused to believe it, but it finally clicked for him, he was never going to escape this.

 Boom!

 The ship rocked sideways, knocking Mike to the ground. Being tossed off of his feet snapped him out of his self-pity. He stumbled to his feet and took off at a run. If he was to have any chance at escaping with his life and returning to Earth in time to warn them of what was awaiting them, he had to find his ship. He needed to get off this death trap.

 He stopped at the end of the hall as he heard Gragons running past. They seemed to be wearing space suits. He took a deep breath and started after them. They entered a room at the end of the hall, the triangle door stayed open just long enough for Mike to see all kinds of ships in the room. It would seem he had found the hanger. If they kept his ship it would have to be in there. He just had to hope he could get in, find his ship and escape before being found out.

 He made his way towards the door, tip-toeing so as to not make any noise. He paused before the door, his heart pounding so loud that he was sure they could hear it on the other side. He slowly took a deep breath to steady himself as he stepped in front of the door.

 The door slid open revealing a large hanger with triangular shaped ships. All but a few seemed to either be taking off or preparing to take off. One or two were coming in for crash landings as the ground crew rushed over to them. It was a warzone, which only made sense after seeing the enemy armada outside.

 No one seemed to notice him as he moved away from the open door, making his way farther into the hanger. Standing in an open doorway was a sure-fire way to get caught. Getting out of here was going to be harder than he thought. There was no way he was going to figure out how to fly one of these ships.

 As despair started to set in he spotted his ship sitting in the corner. It was a tiny little junker compared to the fighters that the Gragons were flying. It was his moment, he had a way off this ship. If only he could get to his ship and get off this sinking wreck before it was too late.

 The ship was rocked again, the alarms grew louder than ever. The ground crew started attacking the pilots, trying to steal the remaining fighters. There was no way that could be a good sign. Everything in the hanger was going to hell. He needed to get out of here quickly. The only good news was that no one seemed to be paying him any attention.

 Mike took a deep breath and ran as quickly as he could across the flight deck. A triangle ship came zooming into the hanger, smoke trailing off the back. Mike stopped in his tracks, his eyes wide as the ship came right at him. His mind went blank as he stared at his oncoming death. At the last moment his mind snapped back into place and he dived out of the way. The Triangle ship flew past him, hitting the wall behind and exploding. Chaos broke out, not that it wasn’t already peeking its head into the room. Mike crawled to his feet as the Gragon crew started to panic.

 Mike made it to the Icarus 1. It still seemed to be in working order. He opened the hatch and climbed inside. Everything seemed to be happening to someone else. Mike was moving as if in a trance.

 The Icarus 1 lifted off the hanger deck and started out of the hanger. Mike, still feeling numb, entered into space, finding himself in the middle of a battleground. The Gragon ship was more holes than anything else. The attacking ships were elegant and sleek. They meant business.

 Mike put the Icarus 1 into overburn, trying to get as far away from the battle as he could. The only comfort he had was that sound didn’t travel in space. He didn’t have to hear all the people dying behind him.

**Chapter 6**

 Time seemed to have lost all meaning as the Icarus 1 drifted through space. Having long since run out of fuel. Mike’s stomach felt as if it was eating itself. He had never felt so hungry in his life. He survived the Gragon massacre only to die in the vastness of space. He was nowhere near Earth. Nowhere near his friends or family. He had no way to warn them of what was coming. He only hoped that with the Gragon’s destruction, the danger posed to Earth went with them.

 He hugged himself in the chair as he rolled over to his side, waiting for his death to come. He was going to die out here alone. He took a look out the viewport, taking in the emptiness of space. It was to be the last thing he ever saw. Only it wasn’t empty. Right out to his left was a planet. Large, with what looked to be land and water.

 Mike forced himself to sit up and use the last thrust the Icarus 1 had left to guide her towards the planet. He was going to make a crash landing. It was the only choice he had.

 The Icarus 1 slowly drifted towards the planet, taking what felt like forever. Mike was trying to force himself to stay awake. It took everything he had to keep his eyes open.

 Atmosphere soon surrounded him. The alarms inside the Icarus 1 started screaming at him. He could feel the heat starting to overwhelm him.

 “Please God, just let me make it!” He prayed. It had been some time since he prayed, it wasn’t that he didn’t believe in God. It was just that life had gotten in the way of the things he once took comfort in, including religion.

 The ground came zooming up to Mike as they made it past the atmosphere. He was falling way too fast, there was no way he was going to survive the fall. It was all over in a moment.

 The smell of smoke woke Mike up. He slowly opened, his eyes. His head, hell his entire body aching, as he looked around. He was still in the cockpit of his ship, smoke, far too much smoke, was steaming up from the engine. The viewport was shattered.

 “Ugh.” He said as he slowly sat up. It took him a few minutes to realize that he was breathing. This planet, wherever he was, at least had oxygen. It was a small victory for him. If there was oxygen than that must mean there was plant life, and that meant he had a chance to survive this.

 He forced himself to his feet, climbing out of the wreckage of the Icarus 1. He found himself on a small island, surrounded by water, a greenish yellow water but still water. Mike looked up to a bright green sky and a red sun in the sky.

 He turned back to see the remains of his beloved ship. He already knew he most likely wouldn’t be able to fix this. Wherever he was, he was stuck. In the distance behind his ship he could make out what appeared to be trees. Only the trunks were dark black, and leaves were bright blue with pink fruits hanging from them.

 He pulled the pinkish fruit from the tree and cautiously took a bite. It was sweet tasting, not the best tasting but it would do. After all this was Mike’s home from now on.

**The End**