



The Ethical Way

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"Is it time?" Jarth Rolan asked anxiously. Pilot Lan Barda pushed him gently back into a seat. "No, but very soon. And be calm—you're jumpier than a human."

"But we've waited so long—yes, a long time. And I *am* anxious to get home."

Lan peered calmly out of his vehicle. They were hovering in Earth's upper atmosphere, at the permitted limit.

"Be patient. These people have almost reached the critical point. We'll get the signal before long."

Jarth Rolan popped out of his chair and danced about in nervous excitement.

"Won't it be dangerous? For us, I mean. Going down into that radioactive atmosphere. And how about them—will any of them live? Suppose we wait too long?"

Lan Barda laughed. He was a husky humanoid, pinkish of skin and completely hairless, like all galactics. He slapped Jarth Rolan's back.

"We have experts watching. These humans have used four cobalt bombs, and plenty of smaller stuff. The fallout is close to the danger point. Our observers will know just when we can move in because—" he winked and his voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper—"they're using automatically controlled instruments."

"Oh, my!" Jarth Rolan clapped his hands to his cheeks. "But those are robots—and the use of robots is against religion."

"I know, Jarth. But we won't be using them much longer, will we?" He poked a playful finger into Jarth's ribs. "We'll have slaves—and it'll be completely ethical."

Jarth Rolan winced. "Must you use that word 'slaves,' Lan? It sounds so—" He waved his hands.

Lan laughed again. "Be honest with yourself, Jarth. You're out to make a few *dopolins* for yourself as a slave raider."

"An entrepreneur," said Jarth. "In personal services."

Lan Barda became serious. "There's the signal—it's time to go down. Let's go, Jarth, before somebody else gets them all."

An hour later, it was Lan Barda's turn to be nervous. He watched a needle creep into the red zone.

"Hurry, Jarth. We've been on this planet long enough. That fifth cobalt bomb is sending the index up fast. Can't you skip these last few?"

"Oh, no. Very unethical to leave these three here to die. Must take a small chance, you know. Besides, see the sign on that taxi—just married."

A fine young couple. And a fine young taxi driver. Couldn't sleep if I didn't help these three."

"Couldn't sleep thinking of the profit you'd passed up. Here, let me take that one. We have to get out of here fast."

Jarth Rolan fluttered anxiously about the pilot until they were safely above the poisoned atmosphere.

"How many?" he asked. "Did we fill the ship?"

Lan Barda checked off items on his clipboard. "A thousand and three, with these last ones. You'll make a good profit."

"Not so much the profit. Oh, no. More than that involved. Ethics and religion, Lan. Yes. With all these sla—servants, our people will never have to use robots. They'll be relieved of routine labor and can devote their lives to art and science. And it's all ethical—oh, yes, for these people were doomed."

"Want to know something, Jarth?" Lan Barda bent closer and whispered wickedly. "This ship has automatic controls. Has to. No living being has fast enough reactions to handle an interstellar ship. All robot driven, at least in part."

"Robots! May we be forgiven!" Jarth stared suspiciously at Lan Barda. "Sometimes, Lan, I think you are an agnostic."

The pilot became more serious. "Maybe, Jarth. In our work, we must use robots. We joke about it, but it goes against all galactic belief to let a machine think for us. Maybe that's why we pilots are so cynical."

"A galactic is always ethical," said Jarth Rolan solemnly. "This affair, for example. We let these poor creatures of Earth handle their own affairs with no interference until they doomed themselves. It was unethical to intervene a minute sooner. Yes—the ethical way and I feel better for it and proud to be a galactic."

"That's true," said Lan Barda. "A galactic wouldn't feel right, being a member of the dominant race of the Galaxy, if he didn't help the less fortunate."

Jarth Rolan had prepared a center on his estate for the slaves. The demand was greater than the supply. He chatted happily with his wife.

"An excellent investment, Shalla—yes. And the highest group council wants us to lease them out by the day for the present instead of selling outright."

She nodded. "That's the fair way. Everybody can have a turn having a slave."

"And," said Jarth, rubbing his pink hands, "we'll collect every day and still hold title."

"Will they multiply fast," asked Shalla, "so there will be enough for all?"

"They always did on Earth. Yes. By the time we pass our estate on to our son, this investment will have multiplied in value."

At the center, the slaves clustered about the bulletin boards to read the slave code. The three who had been brought aboard last stood together. Laurent Crotier and his wife Jean were still in their wedding clothes, and Sam the taxi driver was in uniform. They read the seven articles of the slave code.

"We have to work twelve hours a day," Laurent observed. "And have off every seventh day. This could be worse."

"We'll keep our eyes open and wait for our chance," Sam piped up. "Some day we'll make a break out of here."

"Yeah," said Jean. "And remember, Frenchy, no kids."

Nine months later, Laurent, Jr., was born. Before the blessed event, Laurent went to Jarth Rolan with a complaint.

"She can't do it, work twelve hours a day now. You have to change the rules. By gar, if my wife die 'count of this, I goin' kill you, Jarth Rolan."

Jarth Rolan waltzed about nervously, biting his fingernails.

"No, we do not want her to have trouble. No. She will need proper rest. There is a meeting of the highest group council right now, concerning this. Others have the same problem. But yes, I will relieve her of work without waiting for the council's decision. Tell your wife to stay home, Laurent, until the baby is born."

Laurent pushed his luck. "And after that, too. A kid got to have a mother. I do the work for three, you let my wife take care of the family."

"Oh, this *is* a problem!" Jarth Rolan rubbed his fingers unhappily over his bald scalp. "Some of the other females are in the same condition. But it is like planting a crop—one labors hard at the beginning to reap a great harvest later. We will work this out."

The next day, fifteen articles amending the code arrived and were posted. Laurent read happily.

"Now," he said to Jean, "it is the law. You will stay home and have the baby."

"'And for such further period'," she read, "'as is considered necessary.' You sure told him off, Frenchy."

She squeezed his arm affectionately and his chest went out a little.

"And remember," she said, "this is the last one."

"Look at this rule," said Sam. "All kids must be educated. I'm only—" he winked at them—"thirteen. It's off the job and back to school for me."

Laurent blinked. "By gar, Sam, I think you been shaving pretty near as long as I am. But if Jarth Rolan ask me, I say I know Sam is thirteen."

Jarth Rolan came along to explain the amendments.

"We don't want the slaves to be ignorant. Oh, no. It will be worth extra effort and expense to reap the harvest. The slaves will work at many specialized tasks. Even personal servants will read and write letters and help at business and keep accounts—yes, indeed. We must assign some slaves to teaching."

About the time Laurent, Jr., started school, Laurent led a delegation to Jarth Rolan.

"We got some complaint to make. These food servings pretty small lately. We work hard, we have to eat more."

Jarth Rolan's facial skin had developed wrinkles, though the galactics' life span was comparable to a human's and he was only about forty. He fidgeted.

"I am sorry—oh, yes. Sorry. There have been delays in food shipments—the same trouble all over. Too many excused from the work force, you know. Most of the women are pregnant or have children, and teachers and special assignments—but things will improve, believe me. Yes. You will soon find an improvement. Yes—very soon."

The delegation talked it over outside Jarth Rolan's house.

"He's been letting himself go," said a woman. "Did you notice how thin he's become? And the same with his family."

Laurent reflected. "To raise a lot of kids is hard. My father, he work like hell all the time. Raise his own food, don't depend on nobody. I think that land back of the center, we should plough it up and put in some potatoes."

"On our own time?" Sam exclaimed.

Laurent chuckled. "Well, Sam, you got no kids—you just a young boy eighteen years old. By gar, I think you have gray hair when you twenty-one."

The others joined the laughter. Sam's lie about his age had boomeranged—he had been kept in school and denied permission to marry until he was officially eighteen, a few months ago.

Laurent fingered his chin thoughtfully. "I think we look over that land. Maybe we get some time out from our regular work, we do some farming."

Before the blowup on Earth, the galactics had made occasional landings to gather animals and seeds of food plants. Certain centers were put under government control to grow food for the slaves. The people at Jarth Rolan's center saw that this arrangement was breaking down because of the increasing slave population and the diversion of labor to child raising. They looked over the piece of land and Laurent okayed it. They went back to Jarth Rolan. He approved at once.

"Oh, indeed. I can obtain all the equipment you'll need. Get started right away. We can grow a good part of our own food. Yes. I am sure it will work out."

"We goin' need some time for work the farm," Laurent pointed out.

"Oh? I thought maybe in your spare time—"

"You want to kill us?" Sam demanded. "Put us on an extra job after working us hard twelve hours a day?"

"But—there's so little coming in. Still, maybe you're right. Worth the extra trouble and expense now. Building for the future—that's the idea."

Jarth Rolan notified his group leader of the arrangement and it percolated swiftly up through the hierarchy to the council of the highest group heads, who directed policy for the entire Galaxy. There were nine of them and they talked over this development.

"I approve. We should have done it this way from the beginning."

"Of course. But certain advocates of government control insisted on public ownership of the food farms—"

"What do you mean, certain advocates? If you mean me, be galactic enough to say so."

"I intend no personal offense to anybody. But there is bound to be inefficiency in any government project—"

The chairman pounded the table. "Stay with the subject. It has been suggested that each center grow part of its food. I am in favor."

"But it cuts down the available labor force. We're having complaints now about the shortage of slaves—"

"Think of the future. I admit the present situation is difficult. It's like raising a herd of prize cattle—all expense and no profit at first. Then the herd is built up and suddenly you're rich."

"But we're putting so much into it—"

"The more we put in, the more we take out. And they're multiplying rapidly. Remember our new goal of two slaves for each galactic—one for the day shift and one for the night. It's the only way our people can live a

decent life, freed from routine labor, devoting themselves to art and science."

"That's right. We work so our children can lead the better life. It's worth some sacrifice."

The chairman stood up. "Most of us seem willing to endure a little hardship now for the benefit of our children. I suggest we endorse this new procedure."

Laurent, Jr., married the girl next door. Laurent celebrated the wedding with a barrel of beer he had brewed on the farm. Sam became glassy-eyed and lectured the young couple.

"Just wait for the right time. Rise up and capture their spaceships. That's what we'll do. We'll go back to Earth and then let them try to get us off it again."

"But Earth is dead," Laurent, Jr., objected. "We can't live there. Poisonous radiation."

"By gar!" Laurent drained another brew. "You believe everything they tell you, hah? We goin' show them sometime. Like Sam says, not now, but sometime. Maybe me and Sam don't do it, but don't you kids forget—you not goin' be slaves always. You watch for the right time, like Sam says."

His son looked dubious. "But what you told me about Earth doesn't sound so good. Like the way you were so cold and hungry in that shack in Canada. And Mama walking up five flights in New York after working all day in the garment factory. And all those wars! Why did you people spend half your time shooting each other, Dad?"

Laurent belched indignantly. "By gar, boy! We was free! We don't have no galactic stand over us, do this, do that. We was free!"

"We don't work so hard," said his son. "And look at old Jarth Rolan and the others out there—they've given us the day off, but the galactics are all busy in the fields. Everybody has to work, Dad."

Laurent looked through a slight haze at the masters laboring in the potato fields. Farm work and teaching and other special assignments had created a shortage of personal slaves. Jarth Rolan gave preference in leasing slaves to those who came and helped him at the center.

Since having a personal slave was a mark of prestige among the galactics, many of those laboring on the farm were from the highest levels of society.

"They don't know nothing about raise potatoes," Laurent grumbled. "We put in complaint, by damn. We want each one have his own land. I work like jackass, I want to get paid for it."

The highest group council was in session. One member was explaining: "It's the custom of tipping slaves. At first, those who could get a slave were so happy that they often gave him a few coins. Now the custom is firmly established—anybody who doesn't tip a slave is considered cheap. I do it and so do you."

"Of course. What's wrong with giving them a few *polins* now and then? Or a *dopolin* or two when they have a baby or a wedding?"

"Nothing wrong with it, in itself. But they don't spend anything. We supply their food and clothing; nothing else we have seems to appeal to them. The money goes out of circulation. It's estimated that half the money in the Galaxy is being hoarded by slaves."

"What? That's impossible. Just from those small tips?"

"Small tips, but day after day; year after year. Add up some time what you've given and multiply by the number who've been doing it."

"Then that's behind our economic troubles. A currency shortage. Can we take it away from them?"

"Of course not. Besides being unethical, it would turn them against us. They wouldn't understand."

"Then we'll abolish tipping."

"Too late. What we need is an ethical way of getting back that currency."

A new member spoke: "I understand that on Earth these slaves were often addicted to alcohol, gambling and various alkaloids. Perhaps we could introduce these items, under government control, of course—"

He stopped. Eight pair of eyes were blazing at him.

"You're new here," the chairman said. "If you ever make another suggestion like that—"

They pondered. The chairman fingered some papers.

"Here's a suggestion. The slaves have been petitioning for the right to own land. It seems to be the only thing they'll spend their money for."

"Impossible!"

"But maybe—"

"We could limit the holdings."

"And have the land subject to condemnation by the government at a fair price."

The chairman called for order. "Let's argue this out. Remember the slaves will need time to work their land. Since their work day is down to nine hours, we'll have to arrange something."

Jean had been complaining about the lumps in the mattress. When Laurent took them out, there was enough in galactic currency to buy a piece of land in his name and hers, plus a plot for each of the children, and a new mattress as well. Sam was suspicious.

"They're out to get what little we've been able to save, Laurent. They can take the land anytime—for what they call a fair price. Fair! Fine chance they'll be fair about it."

But Laurent kept the land and was even able to buy a piece for each grandchild, although they arrived faster and faster as his own large family grew up and married. One day Jean called him to a new house at the edge of the widely expanded center to see the latest arrival.

Laurent poked a finger at the squalling creature. "So I'm another grandpa. Which one this?"

"This time you're a great-grandpa, Frenchy. This is Laurent 4th."

"You mean we gettin' that old? By damn! Well, I'm buy him a piece of land, too. So much new building, this land be worth plenty when he grows up."

The 512th amendment permitted slaves to retire at 65. Laurent was a leading real estate dealer by that time. He had twenty-three children and more grandchildren than he could count. The center was grown to a city, its main street running through what had been his first farm. Sometimes Laurent relaxed in his rocking chair and needled Sam.

"By gar, Sam, if you not the oldest-looking man of fifty-five I ever see. I think you a hundred years old when you retire. When you havin' that revolution?"

"The day will come if we keep after the young ones. But damn it, Laurent, it's hard to talk any sense into them. Some of them can't even understand me."

"Well, they all talk galactic, Sam. My grandson, he call himself Loran Kotay. But these young people, they have to live their own lives. Hey, look at old Jarth Rolan up there, washing his windows. Old guy should retire, Sam. I'm goin' see a couple of my boys give him a hand."

But Jarth Rolan died before he could afford to retire and was replaced by his only grandson, Jarro Kogar. Laurent and Jean passed on shortly after, leaving nearly four hundred descendants.

Jarro Kogar was a newly married galactic in his early thirties. He moved into the mansion and talked things over with his wife.

"Don't see how we can afford a child right now. Wouldn't be fair to the child. Things will improve in a few years."

"Of course," she said. "We're young—we'll have time to start our family. If we wait, we'll be able to give them more."

They held similar conversations later and one day realized it was too late. Jarro Kogar died in his sixties. His widow directed the center for several more years. The slaves liked her and took good care of her. She left them the estate when she died.

Loran Krotalu protested to the authorities that the slaves didn't want the estate. But the group heads ruled it legal under amendment 1,486, especially since no relatives could be located.

Loran left the center and moved to another city where he found a galactic couple who wanted a slave. He and his family served the galactic couple for many years. This couple, like Jarro Kogar and his wife, were childless and when they both died, Loran and his wife were very grieved.

After the funeral, Loran went into the city. He returned hours later, tired and depressed.

"It's no use," he told his wife. "There's not an unattached galactic in the area. We might get a few hours work a week with one, but we can't have one to ourselves."

"But, Loran, *everybody* in our set works for a galactic!"

"I know," he said miserably. "But it's no use. There must be fifty slaves for every galactic. I've taken a job at the spaceship factory. It's the best I can do."

Membership on the highest group council had become a killing job. Chief problem was the revision of the slave code, which had 3,697 articles. After trying for years to simplify the code, the council members called in Loran Krovalo to fill a vacancy and take over the job.

Loran was known and liked by galactic and slave alike for his brilliant essays on the master-slave relationship. While he was on the council, the Cerberan affair broke out. The Cerberans, an intelligent saurian race from a globular cluster, exploded into the Galaxy in vast numbers. Military action became necessary.

"We can handle them," Loran told the council. "Our factories are mobilized and we have any number of spacemen. We have robot

instruments for fighting that are better than anything they have. We can carry the war to their home planets."

Some of the galactics objected.

"But the use of robots is forbidden. We can't fight the Cerberans with robot-controlled weapons."

"Don't worry, sir," Loran said kindly. "We slaves will take care of it. Our form of religion doesn't prohibit robots unless they are in the shape of a man. We think of real robots as being human in shape."

One of the galactics rose.

"I know you're right, but my conscience won't let me vote for robots in any form. Therefore I am resigning from the council."

A second rose, then a third and fourth. They looked at each other, and one spoke for the group.

"We are also resigning. I suggest that four slaves be appointed in our places for the duration of the war. Then they will have a majority and no galactic need violate his conscience by voting for the use of robots."

The Cerberans were crushed, but the infested area was huge and the invasion of the globular cluster took time. The war emergency lasted fifty years. When it was over, the slaves called on the galactics to take back control of the government.

But the widespread use of robot mechanisms in the war had caused a reaction among the galactics. Their consciences simmered and a wave of orthodoxy swept over their race. There was difficulty in persuading galactics to leave their home planets to sit on the council, because faster-than-light ships used robot controls.

The slaves scoured the planet that housed the council and kept two or three seats filled with galactics for a while. But they were generally old, and they died, and most of them were unmarried or childless.

Loran Crotay, twelfth-generation slave, sat in his home chatting with a friend from far-off Pornalu VI. Being in the space-shipping business, he had many friends throughout the Galaxy.

His wife answered the door and a pink humanoid shuffled in, mumbling greetings, and went into the other room. He was middle-aged, studious and bespectacled, and he wore a wig. Loran's friend watched him curiously.

"Haven't seen one of them in years, Loran. We have a reservation for the poor devils on my planet. Don't reproduce very fast, you know, and they may become extinct. Too bad—they're so likable. Always so ethical and conscientious."

"I know." Loran nodded. "We let poor Vendro make a few *dopolins* tutoring our son. He's very intelligent and a good teacher. I like to help them all I can—the only ethical thing to do. I wouldn't feel like a slave if I didn't give poor Vendro a break."

"That's true," said his friend. "A slave wouldn't feel right, being a member of the dominant race of the Galaxy, if he didn't help the less fortunate."

—JOSEPH FARRELL

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