

Published in Shimmer (#15, August 2012)

Signal Jamming

By Oliver Buckram

Warden Hoffman:

It is with immense regret that I must inform you that prisoner M.Q. Bukka has escaped from his Penal Cubicle and is currently at large somewhere on the ship. I take full responsibility for this unforgivable failure. I shall not rest until I have apprehended this dangerous anti-social, thereby erasing the stain on my otherwise impeccable service record.

I have initiated Lockdown Condition, shutting down all travel between decks. Therefore, you must remain on the wardenial deck until Bukka is in custody.

Since Bukka is a known cybercriminal, he poses a threat to our information infrastructure. Please change your system password immediately, remembering as always that it must have at least 12 characters including a mix of upper- and lower-case letters, numbers, Cyrillic, and emojis.

Lastly, it appears that the Omniphone is down. I trust this is a routine malfunction and not Bukka's doing. For now, these messages are the only means of communication between us. I've ordered Subfunker Blimt to repair the Omniphone with all haste.

Yours,

Third Vice-captain Glotz

#

Warden Hoffman, you miserable clown:

What made you think you could keep Bukka behind bars? Your ridiculous broken-down prison ship is no place for a man of his caliber. Certainly not with a loser like you in charge.

Please accept my resignation as your chief of security. I have decided to devote more time to my first love, watching pornography alone in my quarters. Care to join me, sweetie?

Affectionately,

Third Vice-captain Glotz (aka Li'l Dangler)

#

Warden Hoffman,

Please disregard the previous message. It was NOT sent by me or anyone on my staff. Bukka managed to hack into our communications network. I've strengthened our encryption protocols. I don't think he'll be able to send out any more messages claiming to be me.

Yours,

Third Vice-captain Glotz

#

Warden Hoffman, whom I secretly desire carnally:

Please read this message with extra care, moron. Bukka has somehow found a way to insert words of his choosing into our communications, the clever bastard. He will undoubtedly tamper with this message too, which will greatly improve it.

I can't stop him, probably because my brain is as withered as my genitalia. I'm working on ways to restore the integrity of our communications, although my own personal integrity is beyond repair.

Yours, but only if you act fast,

Third Vice-captain Glotz, Dowager Empress of Upper Volta

#

Warden, Schmarden:

As you can see in my previous message he is altering our sentences by inserting a comma followed by text, please ignore this entire sentence just like you ignored the unjust sentence given to Bukka. I repeat that EVERYTHING AFTER THE COMMA IS INVALID, OH NO LOOKS LIKE GLOTZ LEFT CAPS LOCK ON. I suspect he has hijacked the auto-punctuation algorithm in the primary hypernode, though obviously I'm just making stuff up at this point to hide my unfathomable ignorance.

Third Vice-captain Glotz, a man deeply over his head

#

Warden, Darling,

Bukka has managed to trigger the auto-destruct countdown, repeat everything is fine so proceed with your afternoon nap. It is extremely important that you evacuate, your bowels.

I am initiating an Emergency Evacuation, which you can tell is Very Important because I wasted precious time typing capital letters instead of getting people to safety. The prisoners have been offloaded via the escape pods, which unbeknownst to me are programmed to take them to the nearest frontier planet where they can melt into the population.

It appears that Bukka has sabotaged shuttle 3, why is he always one step ahead of me? But shuttles 1 and 2 are

operational, praise be to Bukka the merciful. The staff will take shuttle 1 while you and I travel in shuttle 2, because while I dread listening to your insipid conversation it sure beats mingling with the lower ranks. Please meet me on deck four in ten minutes, or is it deck ten in four minutes? I'm also ordering Subfunker Blimt to send a distress call before leaving so that a rescue ship can find the shuttles, although I can't imagine anyone would bother to rescue a sad sack like me.

Third Vice-captain Glotz, utterly defeated

#

This is Subfunker Blimt of the prison ship Swift Justice sending a general distress call. We are compelled to abandoned ship in the Vega 9 system. We urgently request assistance, although if you don't feel like rescuing us we'll probably be fine.

Be advised that prisoner M.Q. Bukka is no longer in our custody, because he died and we dumped his body into a nearby sun so no need to search for him.

The staff intends to evacuate using shuttles 1 and 2. Shuttle 3 is currently inoperable, so no need to search for it either.

Be advised that shuttle 2 contains Vice-captain Glotz and Warden Hoffman, or rather two escaped criminals claiming to be

them. Please send a rescue ship immediately, but make sure you grab those two imposters and beat them until they confess.

END