

J. MORALES '12

SPACE HACKERS

THE CASE OF THE COUNTERFEIT SUN
CHRISTOPHER GATES

JETHRO MORALES



THE SUN IS DYING.

MINOS-FIVE AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT
ASS-END OF THE KNOWN GALAXY

ONE WEEK AGO A HEALTHY STAR, NOW GOING SUPERNOVA. 1.2 BILLION SETTLERS CONDEMNED TO CERTAIN DEATH.

BUT LET'S HEAR IT IN THEIR OWN WORDS.



ACE RICOCHET
OUTLAW JOURNALIST



AN INTERVIEW? I'M SORRY, THERE'S JUST NOT ENOUGH TIME.



THIS IS A PRESS-FREE ZONE! NO CAMERAS!

"STORY OF A LIFETIME," HE SAYS. "OUR TICKET BACK TO THE TOP."

TIME TA' FACE THE MUSIC, ACE. WE GOT NOTHIN'.



AU CONTRAIRE, LITTLE MONKEY FRIEND. "THE SUPERLATIVE JOURNALIST OFTEN FINDS THE BEST STORIES LURKING BEHIND RETICENCE AND APATHY."

GET YOU A BEER WE NEED A CLOSER LOOK AT THAT SUN.



...
DUDE, DID YOU JUST SPEAK FRENCH?

THE HEAVENS TO BETSY

SHORT-RANGE BROADCASTING SHIP AND
FLYING DEATH-TRAP.



WELL,
LOOKEE
HERE!

ACCORDING TO
THE SENSORS, THERE'S
A **BARCODE** EMBEDDED
IN THE STAR'S UV
SPECTRUM. THIS WHOLE
SOLAR SYSTEM MUST
BE **ARTIFICIAL!**



THE SUN
A CLOSER FN LOOK



I OWE
YA' A WHOLE DAMN
SIX-PACK.

**THE CASE OF THE
COUNTERFEIT
SUN**

WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER GATES ART BY JETHRO MORALES

COLORS BY JUANMAR STUDIOS

INSIDE THE BETSY
BRIDGE/QUARTERS/LAVATORY/
BRIG/BREAK ROOM



THE MINOS SYSTEM'S TERRAFORMING RECORDS ARE MISSING. SO YEAH, THAT'S NOT OMINOUS.

HAM, CAN YOU RUN THAT BARCODE THROUGH THE UNDERNET?



I'M BUSY. MAKE THE FEMALE DO IT.

UGH. "THE FEMALE" HAS A NAME, Y'KNOW.



JAXX, CALM DOWN. HE'S A THOUSAND YEARS OLD. HE'LL DIE SOON.

I DON'T CARE. HE'S A BUTT AND I HATE HIM.



FINE. HAM, STOP BAITING OUR ASSASSIN.

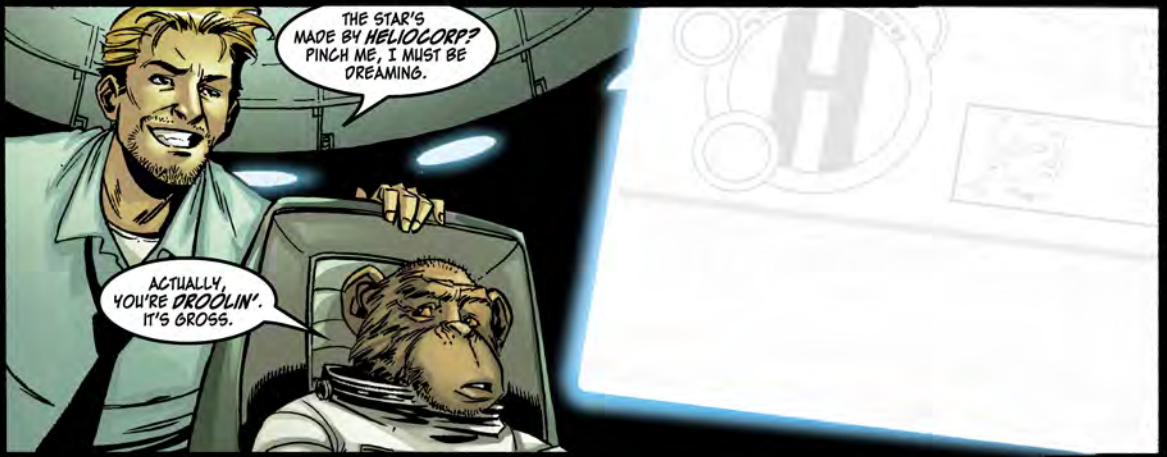
ALSO, WHY IS THERE NO COFFEE?

WE NEEDED THE POWER FOR THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS.



I HATE THIS SHIP.

HEY KID, I GOT... SOMETHIN'.



THE STAR'S MADE BY HELIACORP? PINCH ME, I MUST BE DREAMING.

ACTUALLY, YOU'RE DROOLIN'. IT'S GROSS.



BOSS, ARE YOU SERIOUS?

OHMIGOD, YOU'RE SERIOUS.

BECKETT'S GUIDE TO SPACE JOURNALISM, PAGE 76:

"THE SUPERLATIVE JOURNALIST CONSTANTLY CASTS HIS LINE INTO THE ETHER OF UNIVERSAL EVENTS, HOPING TO REEL IN A STORY OF GREAT WEIGHT AND MAGNITUDE."

HELIOCORP, JAXX. THEM'S BIG FISH.



GUYS, THIS COULD BE OUR CHANCE TO SCOOP THE NETWORK!

WE COULD BE FAMOUS AGAIN!

BUT BY TAKIN' DOWN THE NETWORK'S BIGGEST SPONSOR?

ACE, THIS VENDETTA-- IT'S GONNA KILL YA'.



HEY, YOU REMEMBER HOW THE NETWORK FIRED ME, PUT A BOUNTY ON MY HEAD, AND TOOK AWAY MY SHOW?

YEAH. I'M BASICALLY DEAD ALREADY.



BUT... YOU DESERVED ALL THAT, RIGHT?

WELL, SURE, BUT IT STILL STINGS.

OKAY. FAME AND FORTUNE-- HERE WE COME. AGAIN.

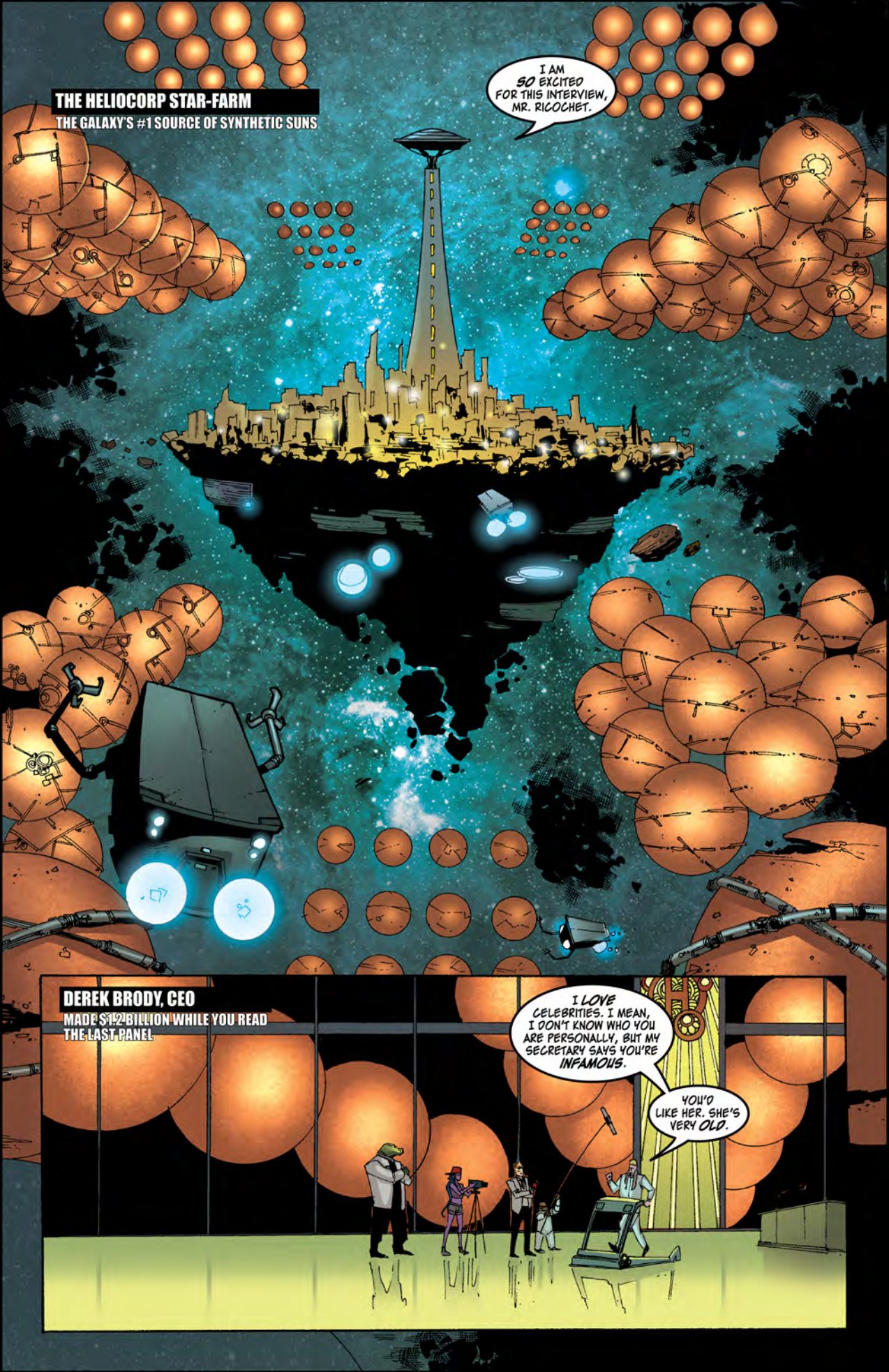
THE HELIACORP STAR-FARM
THE GALAXY'S #1 SOURCE OF SYNTHETIC SUNS

I AM SO EXCITED FOR THIS INTERVIEW, MR. RICOCHET.

DEREK BRODY, CEO
MADE \$12 BILLION WHILE YOU READ THE LAST PANEL

I LOVE CELEBRITIES. I MEAN, I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE PERSONALLY, BUT MY SECRETARY SAYS YOU'RE INFAMOUS.

YOU'D LIKE HER. SHE'S VERY OLD.





RIGHT. MR. BRODY, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE MINOS SYSTEM--

HEY, ARE YOU THIRSTY? SAL, GET THESE 6000 PEOPLE A SMOOTHIE.

THIS STUFF'S EXTRACTED FROM THE WEXLEY TIGER-BEAST.

IT'S THE ONLY CAT IN THE UNIVERSE THAT LACTATES CAFFEINE.

Ew.



THE STAR, BRODY.

OH, THAT. I CHECKED, THAT'S NOT ONE OF OURS.

COULD BE A BOOTLEG. EVERYONE WANTS HELIOPROP SUNS, BUT THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE...

HE'S LYING.



JAXX!

HA! YOUR GIRL'S GOT SPUNK, RICOCHET. I LIKE HER.

OF COURSE, SAL HERE HATES SPUNK. THAT, AND PEOPLE WHO ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS.



I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED.

OH, YOU. BECKETT'S GUIDE TO SPACE JOURNALISM, PAGE 244:

"IF THERE ARE NO VIABLE LEADS, THE SUPERLATIVE JOURNALIST IS PERFECTLY ENTITLED TO BUST SOME HEADS."

THAT CAN'T BE A REAL BOOK.

WHATEVER. GET THIS ON CAMERA, OKAY? IT'S GONNA BE AWESOME.

HI-YAH!

THUNK

Y'KNOW, I TOOK A WHOLE CLASS ON KICKING IN DOORS...

PINE.



SMILE, GREASEBALL!
YOU'RE ON--



...TV?



GENTLEMEN.
OCTO-LADY.

I THINK
THERE'S BEEN A MIS-
UNDERSTANDING.

RICOCHET.
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN
YOU'D BOLLOCKS
THIS UP.



SO, YOU'RE
WHAT...
POLICE?

NO. IDIOT.

WE'RE WITH
THE NETWORK.



OH NO, YOU DO NOT! THIS IS MY STORY.

BOSS...



YOUR STORY?

I'VE BEEN UNDERCOVER FOR THREE YEARS.

GATHERING EVIDENCE, INTERVIEWING WITNESSES...



SEE, HELIOCORP SUNS ARE TICKING TIME BOMBS. AFTER A WHILE, THEY SIMPLY BURN OUT.

SO THE COMPANY DID A STUDY. TURNS OUT, IT'S CHEAPER TO SETTLE LAWSUITS AFTER THE FACT THAN IT IS TO FIX THE PROBLEMS NOW.

BILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE FOR CORPORATE PROFITS, AND I CAN PROVE IT. CAN YOU?



WELL, I CAN NOW.

YOU DON'T BELONG HERE, RICOCHET. YOU'RE NOT EVEN A REAL JOURNALIST. YOU'RE A TALK SHOW HOST!

YOU SHUT YOUR MOUTH-SNOUT-THING!

I AM TOO A REAL JOURNALIST! I'VE BEEN STUDYING! AS SOON AS I BREAK ONE BIG CASE...

DON'T YOU GET IT? IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU!

"THE SUPERLATIVE JOURNALIST REMAINS NEUTRAL IN ALL MATTERS. HE REPORTS THE STORY, BUT HE NEVER -- EVER -- BECOMES THE STORY."

BECKETT'S GUIDE TO SPACE JOURNALISM, PAGE ONE.





OUCH.
YOU OKAY,
KID?



FINE. THIS
STORY IS STUPID,
AND YOU ARE
STUPID.

GUYS, LET'S
GO FIND SOME
REAL NEWS.

"SIGH"

CHILDREN,
I THINK IT'S TIME YOU
GAVE UP THIS CHARADE.
SOMEBODY MIGHT
GET HURT.



OH, YOU MEAN
SOMEONE LIKE
YOU? YEAH, I
WENT THERE!

SAL, YOU
WANT I SHOULD
WARM UP THE
LOBOTOMY
SPHERE?

NO NEED.
HE CAN'T HURT
US.



WE GO LIVE
IN THIRTY. AFTER THAT,
THE WHOLE GALAXY WILL
KNOW WHAT HELIOCORP'S
BEEN UP TO...





KSHIKRSSH



...!



OKAY, SINCE I'M THE ONE WHO LITERALLY **MINORED** IN NO-WIN SITUATIONS, I'M CALLING THIS. WE GOTTA GO.

LIKE, NOW.



ALL THE EVIDENCE WAS ON THAT CAMERA. WITHOUT IT, THOSE PEOPLE DIED FOR NOTHING...



...AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT.

FIVE MINUTES LATER
TURNS OUT, THEY ONLY HAD THREE

"LITERALLY
MINORED IN NO-WIN
SITUATIONS."

MATH PROLLY
WOULDA' BEEN
MORE USEFUL,
HUH?

SHUT UP!
YOU KNOW I
DROPPED OUT
OF ASSASSIN
SCHOOL--

KIDS! ON
THE BETSY,
NOW!

HAM, SET A COURSE
FOR SOME PLACE
NOT-HERE!

AVE!

FWAAASH

KID...

SOMETHIN'S
FOLLOWIN' US.

SOMETHIN'
BIG.

HOW BIG?



UM,
REAL BIG?



MAYBE
WE'LL GO FASTER
IF WE, LIKE, UNPLUG
SOMETHING.



LIKE WHAT,
THE STEERING
WHEEL?



OKAY, I
HAVE A NEW
PLAN.



I'M THE
ONE WITH
THE BOUNTY,
RIGHT?

IF I
GIVE MYSELF UP,
IT SHOULD GIVE THE
TWO OF YOU TIME
TO GET AWAY.

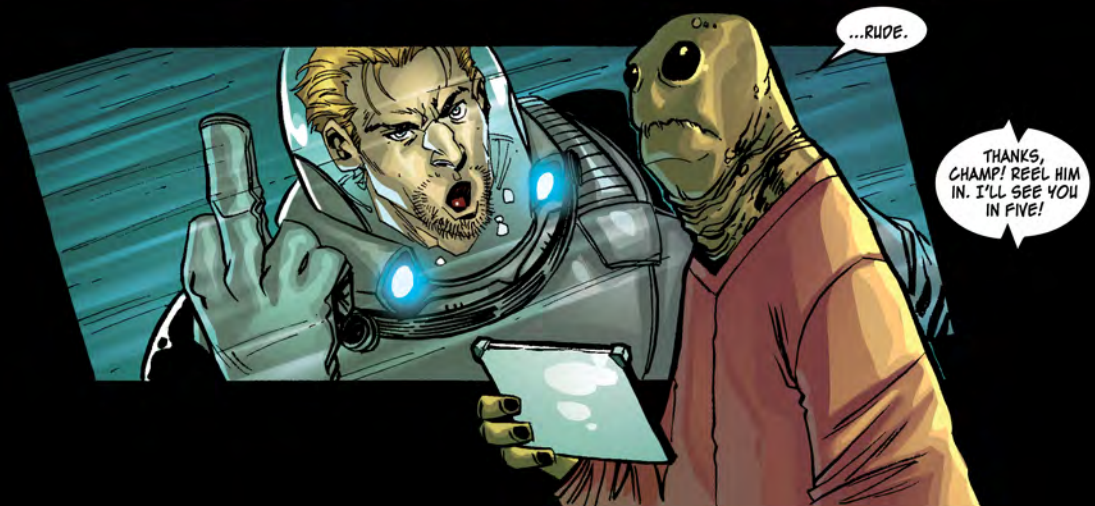


BOSS,
THIS IS DUMB.
YOU CAN'T GO
INTO SPACE BY
YOURSELF!



GEEZ, I'M
SORRY FOR SAYING
YOUR LIFE. TRY NOT
TO GET KILLED,
'KAY?

TOODLES.





"TOOLES." THAT'S HIS LAST WORD. "TOOLES."

AND HE STILL OWES ME, LIKE, THREE PAYCHECKS AND A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION!



ALSO, WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO DIE OUT HERE, SO THAT SUCKS.

HOW CAN YOU JUST... DRINK?

JAXX, LEMME TELL YOU SOMETHIN'...



I'M HUNDREDS A' YEARS OLD. I'VE IMAGINED MY DEATH COUNTLESS TIMES.

AN' I DECIDED A LONG TIME AGO, SO LONG AS I GO SITTIN' NEXT TO A FELLA I RESPECT, I'LL GO HAPPY.

AND HERE WE ARE, THE TWO OF US. THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.



WAIT... YOU KNOW MY NAME?

OF COURSE I DO.



BY THE BY, WHEN YOU WAS IN THE BATHROOM, DOIN'... LADY THINGS...

...ACE TOLD ME THE PLAN.

"LADY THINGS?" OH. MY. GOD.

I WAS CLEANING THE CROCODILE OFF OF MY TANK-TOP!

ALSO, NOT GONNA DIE. YAY.





BY NOW, YOU'RE SO FULL OF THAT STUFF, YOU'RE TRANSMITTING.



AND EVERYTHING YOU SAY OR HEAR OR FEEL...

WELL, IT'S ALL GOING STRAIGHT TO MY SHIP.



WELL WELL, BULLY FOR YOU, YOU'RE RECORDING. SO WHAT?

I KNOW YOUR SHIP IS CRAP. I KNOW IT DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO BROADCAST A WET FART.



BOO-YAH.

THAT'S TRUE. GEE, IF ONLY I SOMEHOW COULD HARNESS THE POWER OF, SAY, A THOUSAND NEWBORN SUNS.

OH. WAIT.

JAXX? HAM? WHEN YOU'RE READY.





LET'S
BURN 'EM
UP.



IT'S
WORKING,
BOSS.

THE WHOLE
DAMN GALAXY'S
GONNA SEE
THIS ONE.



SIR? YOU
HAVE SOME INCOMING
CALLS--

OH GOD.

UM, PATCH
THEM THROUGH?



MINOS-EIGHT SPA & RESORT
POST-RESETTLEMENT

AFTER BRODY'S REMOVAL, HELIOCORP ORGANIZED A TOTAL EVACUATION, ALL EXPENSES PAID.

BUT THE STORY DOESN'T END THERE.

OF COURSE I'M GOING TO SUE.

I'M NOT STUPID.

ALL THIS, THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF ONE, ANONYMOUS HERO--

LOTTA MONEY. OH YEAH.

HOLD IT. YOU'RE ON THE TAPE. YOU CAN'T BE ANONYMOUS.

GIVE ME A BREAK, HUH? I'M NEW TO THIS WHOLE HUMILITY THING.

HEY, LOOK. THE MONKEY WANTS SOMETHING.

BOSS, A NETWORK CRUISER JUST ENTERED THE SECTOR.

WHOOPS, THEN IT'S TIME TO SKEDADDLE. AFTER ALL...

"THE SUPERLATIVE JOURNALIST REPORTS THE STORY, BUT NEVER OUTSTAYS HIS WELCOME."

Y'KNOW, I CHECKED. THAT'S A KID'S BOOK.

...
SHUT UP.

NEXT TIME: ASSASSIN SCHOOL SPORTS SCANDAL!