

ALIEN RACER

MISSION 5 OF THE BLACK OCEAN SERIES

J. S. MORIN

Alien Racer

Mission 5 of: Black Ocean

Copyright © 2015 J.S. Morin

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed “Attention: Permissions Coordinator,” at the address below.

Magical Scrivener Press 22 Hawkstead Hollow Nashua, NH 03063

www.magicalscrivener.com

Publisher’s Note: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are a product of the author’s imagination. Locales and public names are sometimes used for atmospheric purposes. Any resemblance to actual people, living or dead, or to businesses, companies, events, institutions, or locales is completely coincidental.

Ordering Information: Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the publisher at the address above.

J.S. Morin — First Edition

ISBN: 978-1-939233-71-4

Printed in the United States of America



ALIEN RACER

ENGINES THUNDERED, each growing higher and closer until the Doppler Effect inverted and they sped past. The Squall 2560 race crafts fired maneuvering thrusters as they hit the hairpin turn through the artificial asteroid field of the race-course. It was the Silde Slims 250K, and it was live on holovid feed, pumped directly into the common room of the *Mobius*.

All the sounds were artificial, of course, computer generated to give the old-race feel and rev up the engines of the viewers. But pure racing was hard to watch, just tiny, one-person ships flitting by at outrageous speeds. From a stationary vantage without studio effects, there was no telling who was winning or what was happening in the race.

“My money’s on Tobago,” Carl said, leaning into the next turn as the racers poured through the course single file.

Roddy snorted, the best laugh he could manage with a beer tilted back. “No it’s not. Your account’s on lockdown.”

“Well, it would be, if I was betting on this race,” Carl replied. “Look at those lines. He’s holding tighter to the turns than the other guys out there.”

“Half those guys are women,” Tanny noted. She was seated at the kitchen table, watching from the other side with the bored half-interest of someone who was only watching because it was too loud to ignore. If it wasn’t for the gentle chugging of the food processor and the sandwich it would spit out shortly, Carl didn’t think she’d have stuck around at all.

The racers passed through a translucent checkerboard gate projected across the course like a sheet of holographic glass. It marked the lap, and the Squalls accelerated into a long straightaway, jockeying position. Strictly for the holovid viewers, pop-up logos and pilot names hovered near each vehicle. The announcer was probably yammering about where this driver went to school, or how that driver dreamed of becoming a racer since she was five years old, but Roddy had shut the announcer feed off halfway through Lap 1.

The door to Mort’s quarters opened. “Is it entirely necessary to watch that science-mobile racing at tornado volume? I’m trying to read,” the wizard griped.

“You looking up ways for how to change my hair back to normal?” Carl snapped. It had been two weeks since that azrin sword master—wizard was more like it—had cursed him, turning every hair on his body blue. Mort had deigned to undo all of it but the mop of blue hair on his head. Carl didn’t believe for a second that the wizard had any confusion on how to fix the rest.

“No.”

Carl grabbed the remote from Roddy and cranked the volume until it hurt his ears. He glared at Mort until the wizard retreated into his room. He was probably grumbling something profane, or old, or some Shakespearean combination of the two. But whatever he may have said was drowned out by the synthetic engine noise of sixteen Squall racing ships.

“Do you mind?” Tanny shouted from the kitchen area.

“Yes,” Carl shouted back.

Roddy wrestled the remote from Carl’s hands after a brief struggle and turned the holoprojector down to a tolerable volume. “You can’t stay pissed at Mort forever.”

“I can hold out until he changes my hair back,” Carl said.

The door to Esper’s quarters opened. “Would you mind keeping it down? I’m reading.”

“Two of a fucking kind,” Carl muttered.

Esper looked over to Tanny. “He blow up at Mort again?”

“Yup.”

“It looks fine, you know,” Esper said. “Blue suits you.” The door shut, and she was gone.

“You could probably get him to put it back if you apologize,” Roddy said quietly, barely audible over the race. “Wasn’t his fault you pissed off that azrin shaman or whateverthehell he was.”

“Yeah, but it’s Mort’s job to take care of shit like this,” Carl replied. “Mriy doesn’t let guys rough us up for laughs. Tanny doesn’t land us in restricted space because she’s having a bad day. You don’t vent the waste recycler through the crew cabins as a joke.”

Roddy perked up. “Hey, that *would* be funny.”

“The point is, we have a wizard on board, and it would be nice *if a wizard did his job*,” Carl said, shouting the last words to make sure Mort heard him through the door.

That door opened seconds later. “You want your damn hair back, smart guy?” Mort asked. “How about this? You know that ad that’s been blaring every half hour during that rotten race of yours?”

“The one looking for unsigned racers to join the circuit?” Roddy asked.

“That one,” Mort confirmed. “You’re always yapping

about how you're better than those flyboys who zip around with no one shooting at them. If you can prove it, I'll turn your hair back to that dull hay color you're pining for."

"Fuck that," Carl replied. "I could pay a one-timer to some local wizard to get it fixed. Point is, I shouldn't have to."

"If you don't think you could win, I—"

"Don't pull that psychology shit on me," Carl snapped. "I'm not in the mood."

Roddy scratched his chin with one prehensile foot. "Well, there is that quarter-million terra prize."

There was that. And it was true that none of the racers in the Silde Slims 250K had ever flown under fire. None of them had the kind of chops to match a navy pilot. Plus, Squalls were just a civilian model of Typhoon, stripped down for racing. There probably weren't many *active* fighter pilots in Earth Navy that had as many hours logged in a Typhoon as Carl, never mind a bunch of racer wannabes.

Carl glared sidelong at the wizard, then over to the holo-projector, then back again. "Prize money's mine."

Alone, in the solitude of his quarters, Carl brought up a copy of the advert on his datapad. His wasn't one of the fancy datapads that had a built-in holoprojector, but it could show him a flatvid version, and the info would be the same. That was all that mattered. The laaku narrator spoke perfect English with just enough of a native Edzu accent to sound sophisticated. Unlike the corny ad that got him into trouble on Meyang with the sword-fighting school, this production was silk smooth and polished chrome.

"Think you have what it takes? Those racers aren't doing

anything you can't do—and better. Admit it, you've always wanted to try. Well, pilots, now's your chance. The Silde Slims Cadet Racer Challenge is looking for 16 pilots to compete in a series of grueling challenges to earn ONE spot in the Pan Galactic Race League. The winner will receive fame, glory, a place among the racing elite... and 250,000 terras.

“So ask yourself: Are you the best undiscovered racer in the Galaxy? Are you as good as the pilots of the Pan Galactic Race League? Sign up today and find out.”

If someone had drilled a hole and peeked into Carl's brain, he couldn't have conceived a pitch with a sharper hook or better bait for him. Fuck those laaku psychological martketeers. Carl hit the playback again.

“...The winner will receive fame, glory, a place among the racing elite... and 250,000 terras.

“So ask yourself: Are you the best undiscovered racer in the Galaxy? Are you as good as the pilots of the Pan Galactic Race League? Sign up today and find out.”

... and again.

“...Are you the best undiscovered racer in the Galaxy? Are you as good as the pilots of the Pan Galactic Race League?”

“You bet your ass I am. Maybe better.”

Grab a copy of *Alien Racer*, book 5 of *Black Ocean*, and continue your adventure now.

