

Dr. OCCULARI

# **GEORJET OF MARS**

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THE ADVENTURE OF JUPITER'S DRAGONS

Part 1

**I AM SEVEN**

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## TYPO REPORTING

I am my own proofreader, and I'm not good at it. Proofreading, for me, is like pulling weeds: every time I come back to the manuscript it has grown new errors.

When you, dear reader, inevitably come across typos and grammatical errors (I'm especially bad with homonyms), if you are so inclined, I would appreciate you letting me know.

Send typo and error reports to:  
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Please report the error and the correction. Include the title of the work, the release number, the chapter (if there are chapters), and enough text surrounding the error so I can find it with a search.

I am looking for obvious typos and errors, not critiques.

Thanks so much for your sharp eye.



## I AM SEVEN

My name is Georjet of the extension Oraculatti, but everyone calls me Jetté, and you can too.

‘Jet, we’re ready for the pose!’ That’s my Mom: womb provider, ovum donor, Granny lineage connector, over-protector. I love Her, but....

‘My name is Jetté!’ I yell back. ‘I’m not a child anymore!’

Mom is herding everyone into the garden for the formal pose. The pose is supposed to commemorate the end of my seventh trialhood year. She wants everything to be perfect. I can’t blame Her—I guess—this is Her last chance to remember me while I remain only me; that is to say, before my Granny arrives; that is to say, before I grow up, or die trying—which I won’t! But try convincing my Mom of that.

As I make my way to the garden, someone speaks from behind me. ‘Congratulations Jet! Sorry I’m late.’

‘My name is Jetté,’ I say, turning just as Zipshi dives into me with a hug. Zipshi is my best friend—most of the time.

‘You’re always late,’ I say, returning Its hug.

'You're going to come back,' Zipshi says, not so much to reassure me as to convince Itself. 'I know you will,' It says, needing more convincing. 'I know you will, I know you will, I know you will!' Zipshi hugs me tighter with each 'I know you will.' Its own seventh year celebration is a mere thirty-two days hence. I suspect the hugs, and 'I know you wills,' are as much about Zipshi fearing the possibility of Its own death as they are about fearing the possibility of my demise.

'You're not going to die,' I say, and hug my friend with an extra tight, breath-stopping squeeze. 'You're nearly seven,' I say. 'You're nearly a youth, like me.' I push out of the hug and hold Zipshi by the shoulders. 'Look at the bright side, we get to spend the next year getting into trouble, well, more trouble—and nobody cares; in fact, we're supposed to get into trouble.'

'Easy for you to say; you've got a package deal. You're swapping one branch of your extension for another. That's cheating.'

Zipshi has me there. 'I know,' I say, 'My Father and His semi-sib had colluded to set up the deal behind Mom's back—and sans consulting me!—and I agree; it's not fair. I want a real DoSome, like you're going to get. And I'm going to get one too! They can't make me stay with the package; that's against the rules.' I look deep into Zipshi's earnest, teary eyes. I suspect It doesn't want a real DoSome. I suspect It wants a package deal. I suspect It is jealous of my package deal. I wish I could bequeath my deal to It, but I can't. Instead, I squeeze Zipshi with another breath quenching hug.

'Jet,' Mom calls out. 'Come—On!'

'Be right back,' I say to Zipshi. 'Coming!' I yell, 'And my name is Jetté!' I run from the festooned courtyard, through the ivy-entwined archway, into the garden.

Mom, and the whole extension Oraculatti (at least, most of the local part), and Father and several members of His extension Cidicivious (the ones who could make the trip) have arranged themselves in front of the orchard at the center of the garden. They smile and wipe tears from their eyes as I make my way through their parting ranks. I climb the orchard hill (not so much a hill as a hump of loam), hoist myself into the cherry tree at the top, and sit on the lowest, sturdiest limb, steadying myself with an uneasy hand on a nearby branch. I look down, grinning at the assembled extensions through the fluttering storm of cherry blossoms my clambering has set off. They smile back, offer unvoiced congratulations, and throw kisses. aNiN3, our garden god, having shrunk herself to the size and appearance of a nervous hummingbird, flitters about, observing and studying: she is remembering us exactly as we are at this very moment, of this very day. We are happy—mostly.

From my perch, I can see that, along with Zipshi, most of my cohort has arrived (the ones still in trialhood, anyway) the ones who have not yet joined youthhood and departed on their DoSome. Some of those who remain are embedded with members of their own extensions, but most have collected in loose groups behind the assembled parental consortia: friends, neutrals, and a few enemies, but all here for the celebration, and the food.

aNiN3 flies up to my face, moves up, down, side to side, looking—observing intently. She zooms away, and high, taking in the whole spectacle, then returns. Hovering two hand breaths from the bridge of my nose, she turns her head to the side, looks at me with one of her tiny, warm, round eyes, then hovers closer,

taps the tip of my nose with her long beak, and zooms off, her wings making a distinct, receding buzz.

The pose is finished. The ritual is complete—this part anyway. I am no longer a child. I am a youth.

My eyes fill with tears: tears of fear, tears of excitement, tears of sadness for my lost trialhood. I look over the heads of the extensions Oraculatti, and Cidicivious. I look at my cohort: they are also crying, or wiping their eyes with their forearms, or looking toward the food. This is true even for the enemies group, although more of them are looking at the food.

I slide off the cherry tree limb, onto the loam hill. The assembled break into applause; all except my cohort. They content themselves with drying their cheeks. I descend to the garden floor. My Mother hugs me. My Father hugs me, whispers in my ear, 'You'll be fine,' then steps back and smiles. I'm not sure how to respond. My father: sperm donor, distant, doting, never here, but always there when I need Him. He is well-meaning and a dear, but also Mother to His own ovum progeny, my annoying semi-sib, Aikala of Cidicivious. I smile back.

I work my way to the rear, toward my cohort. The extensions part more slowly than when I arrived, reluctant, I suppose, to let the moment go.

It is hours into the party, long after the pose, and a little while since Zipshi had departed along with most of my, now former, cohort, I wander into the courtyard and sit on the edge of the Welcoming Fountain. I pick up a strip of bunting that had come loose and fallen to the ground; starting at the end, I try tying it into the third knot of the Impossible Knots series. Tyne sees me and walks over. 'That's impossible, you know.'

'Well, duh,' I say.

Many Oraculatti and Cidicivious sibs of various removes are in attendance, both pre-DoSome uncertified, and post DoSome certified. Tyne is my favorite post DoSome certified sib, despite being quite far removed; in fact, Tyne is so far removed their branch of extension Cidicivious teeters one remove away from forking into a whole new extension. Tyne is gorgeous, and aware of this fact, and They don't care. Before Tyne's DoSome It was a jerk, now They're not.

Tyne picks up the other end of the bunting and starts working on the sixth Impossible Knot.

'People are all full of advice,' I say. 'Especially the ones I hardly know. "Don't worry," they say; "Your DoSome will be over in a wink" they say; "Everyone always comes back," they say; but of course they would say that—they came back!'

'They're giving you good advice,' Tyne says, 'but not the advice they think they're giving.'

'Huh?' I say, while undoing the last three failed turns of my knot.

Tyne flips two final turns into Their knot and holds it up. It's not the sixth Impossible Knot, of course, but it's close, closer than I've ever seen. 'Although they say, "Don't be afraid, everyone comes back," what they mean is, they spent their whole DoSome afraid they wouldn't. In truth, almost everyone comes back, but the secret of the DoSome is to not try to. Always be on the lookout for a reason to not come back. That's the key. That's the goal of your DoSome, to find that reason, because if you do, your life becomes optional, that is to say, becomes filled with options, and you, and only you, get to choose.'

'Sure, okay, yeah,' I say. (I don't have a clue what Tyne is talking about.)

'Tyne,' I say to gain a moment's pause as fear of the inevitable crystalizes in my chest, 'What happens when my Granny arrives? What happens to me?'

'Out of bounds,' They say with soft compassion, sans reproach. 'That is between you and your Granny. If you come back, we can talk about it then—all four of us.'

Tyne undoes Their knot, and puts down the untangled end of the bunting. They hunker down, and lift my chin with Their curled finger until I am looking into Their eyes. 'You're a smart kid,' They say, 'and you're our favorite pre-DoSome sib. You'll do fine.' They stand, put Their hands in Their pockets and stroll out of the courtyard. I wonder if I will ever see Them again.

By now everyone has either taken their leave or, like me, settled into a sleeping alcove. Unlike me, their Mother isn't sitting on their repose holding their hand. 'Your Father thinks He made things safe for you, but He hasn't,' Mom says. 'Peppid is my full sib, and I love Them, but They're crazy. One of these years They're going to get Themselves killed, or decertified, or worse. I don't want that to be when you're with Them.'

'Mom,' I say, 'Pib Peppid is eccentric that's all. I'll be fine.'

Mom hugs me. She is crying. She fusses with my hair and tucks me in like when I was three years old. The gesture seems silly, but I understand: She is saying goodbye to Her little child. 'Yes,' She says. 'You'll be fine.' She kisses Her fingers and transfers the kiss, with a soft press, to my forehead. She eases off the repose, squeezes my hand, then steps out of my alcove with one last look back. The alcove's portal twists shut. I study the portal's clenched sphincter and realize I

won't see her, or my friends, or anyone else I know, for a year, and when I come back, if I come back, I won't ever again see them the way I saw them today because by then I will have grown up—mostly.

'You're correct,' eMeN7, our mentor god, says. 'They're all going away.' He is speaking from the foot of my repose. eMeN7 has always had the ability to guess what I'm thinking. I don't know how he does it, and I don't want to know; it's disconcerting, yet comforting. I look away from the portal and return his gaze. eMeN7 is manifesting as an owl, or more accurately, as a 140 centimeter tall, and squat, caricature of a male gendered original *Homo sapiens* merged with an owl.

'The package deal was your idea, wasn't it?' I say to him. 'J'accuse!' I add for emphasis. 'You put Father up to it. I finally get my DoSome, and you talk Dad into sticking me with Pib Peppid. How am I supposed to grow up with my Mother's wacko sib hanging over me? I thought your job was to make sure the rules are followed. Are you broken?'

eMeN7 rests his feathery knuckles on my repose and leans in like our ape brethren. 'What makes you think I'm not following the rules? You think you'll be safe with your pibling? Your Mother doesn't think so.' He straightens up, crosses his wings over his breast, and tickles his lower beak with a forefeather. 'When was the last time you met Dr Peppidipidus?' he asks after an appropriate pause.

'Two weeks ago.'

eMeN7 shakes his head. 'That was an agent, a simulacrum sent to settle the terms of your wardship. When was the last time you actually met Them?'

'At my inauguration?'

eMeN7 fluffs his breast feathers. He lowers his eyes, drilling his gaze deep into my own eyes: through my corneas, through my retinas, up my optic nerves, and into my visual cortex where his gaze splashes all over my cognitive lobes. 'Another agent,' he says. 'You've never met your pibling. All you know is your Mother's rosy recollections of Her sib's pre-DoSome persona mitigated by Her anxieties over Their post-DoSome eccentricities. You see, Dr Peppidipidus is one of the ones who never came back. You think you'll be safe? Uh-uh.' He waggles his index feather in my face. 'You dare question me? I've done my job. I spent the last seven years teaching you to use your wits, and now I'm giving you a DoSome that will make you use every last wit you have just to survive the next year.' His beak spreads into a cheek-to-cheek grin. 'Isn't that what you wanted?' He plumps his feathers in a self-satisfied careful-what-you-wish-for way that makes me queasy. I can tell eMeN7 wants to actually say it, but he doesn't; it's enough he knows I'm thinking it.

'Yes, I suppose.' I say.

'That's a good youth,' eMeN7 says. 'See you in a year, one way or another.' He disappears with an implosive pop, leaving behind a flurry of feathers that settle to the floor and vanish, each with its own little poplet.

## THE NANNIVERSE OFFERS A STORY

I sit up in my repose staring at the place where eMeN7's last feather popped out of existence. 'Great!' I say to myself. 'There is no way I'm going to get any sleep after that.'

'Would you like me to tell you a story?' the nanniverse says, using her comforting voice. The nanniverse has condensed into a fluffy fog, slowly, warmly, eddying near the ceiling of my alcove.

'Whatever,' I say.

'Do you have a preference?'

'No.'

'How about, Vitality, Paul, and the Snake King?'

'That's a children's story.'

'Despite today's proceedings, you remain a child until you rise from sleep tomorrow in the predawn, is that not so?'

I sigh. 'Yes. I suppose. Sure. Okay. Vitality, Paul, and the Snake King.'

'Please lie back,' coos the nanniverse.

I do so. The remaining alcove light fades away revealing the starry sky. It isn't the real starry sky. This

sky is close and nurturing; this sky is a safe sky, a falling asleep sky.

*The nanniverse begins her story:*

'Long, long, ago, in the time of red, before the rain, and before the sky and the oceans, and before the percivals brought the gift of flowing water and the gift of green...'

I have always loved this opening. I used to, and still sometimes do, look around at everything that is familiar and imagine it as dry, bare, and cold. I used to imagine myself as Vitality gasping for breath while suffocating and dying in air that was unbreathable (but that's getting ahead of the story). To be as accurate as possible in my make believe death throes, I had asked the nanniverse how exactly one would die in those conditions. The nanniverse had been hesitant to go into detail, or maybe she was forbidden to know the answer, but eMeN7 relished the question. He explained in minute detail how the demise of my biochemical instantiation would progress in the dry, cold, carbon-dioxide laden wisp of an atmosphere the world once had; he even coached and critiqued my death performance until I had it just right: grasping at my throat while coughing up fake blood as though from my rupturing lungs. I would disguise little packets of additional fake blood with makeup and stick them to the corners of my eyes and to the insides my ears, then pop them to simulate the effects of low pressure on my vascular system. In my final spasm of life, I would rub salt crystals on my lips and nostrils to simulate the icy residue of water escaping from my lungs. Those were the days....

...

*The nanniverse continues her story:*

'...there was an enclave tucked deep in the Mariners' Valley—the valley that would one day become the Mariners' Sea.

'The enclave was built into the side of the valley, in caverns sealed away from the harsh world. Its people were among the earliest of us, in fact, so early, they were not yet entirely of us: The first Grannies had yet to whisper in anyone's mind; they remembered things solely by telling each other stories; and they lived without the advice of gods. They were comfortable, but not content because their lives balanced on a dangerous cusp: they existed solely at the behest of the Evermore...'

'I hate the Evermore,' I say, and sit up.

'They are, in their own way, lost children,' the nanniverse says.

'Who wanted to kill us!'

'Perhaps, but we are getting ahead of our story.'

I lie back, acknowledging that truth.

'The enclave's Managing Director birthed a child who grew to be a handsome youth, delicate of nature. At Its inauguration, It was given the name, Vitality. As Vitality came of age, Its cohort swooned and competed for Its attention. One, named Savvy, the child of a drip irrigator and a ventilation technician, pined in silence, thinking Itself unworthy.

'Another, named Moxie, the child of a resources accountant and a health auditor, was dashing and bold. It pursued Vitality, but Its advances were too aggressive. Vitality turned Moxie away.'

'The time came when the Evermore issued a memo:  
"The enclave has served its purpose, and will be decommissioned."'

'See?' I say.

'Yes,' the nanniverse says.

'The memo was delivered by an Evermore named Paul who manifested as a human, as is their nature, but one with four arms and two faces. Unlike the manifestations of our gods which are superficial, the manifestations of the Evermore are so deeply entwined with their original human nature as to be impossible to disentangle.'

'Like the opposite of the Impossible Knots series,' I say.

The nanniverse says nothing for a moment (this is not normal) then says, 'Indeed. Please preserve that thought. You may find it useful in the next year.' The nanniverse pauses again, then, 'I'm proud of you, Jetté.'

I should revel in the complement, and a day ago I would have, without thinking about it, but today, with Tyne's advice, and Mom's worry, and eMeN7's lecture; not understanding what the nanniverse means makes me nervous. 'Okay,' I say. 'So, when Paul's human manifestation sees Vitality he falls in love.'

'Yes,' the nanniverse says, 'but you are again jumping ahead of the story.'

'Well,' I say, 'before that the Managing Director was shocked to hear the memo and prostrated Itself before Paul, begging for a change of policy, but Paul didn't pay attention because the Evermore can't stand biological instantiations, despite their always

manifesting as human-ish because they're hateful hypocrites.' I let my own silent moment pass. 'And that's when Paul's manifestation saw Vitality and fell in love—making Paul an even bigger hypocrite.'

'Thank you for catching us up,' the nanniverse says, 'but if you tell the story it is unlikely to have the desired effect of putting you to sleep.'

I slump back in my quilting and say through a forced yawn, 'You're correct. Please continue.'

'The smitten Paul said to the Managing Director. "The disposition of the enclave is settled, but I will take with me this charming child and preserve her for a time."' "

'Why does Paul call Vitality, her?' I ask without sitting up. 'It's as though Paul thinks Vitality is nothing more than an animal; a domestic denizen.'

'You seem argumentative this evening.'

I think on that, embarrassed at the truth of it. 'I guess I am, but I'm nervous—about tomorrow.'

'Nervous is a normal response. Perhaps you are even frightened?'

'Perhaps.'

'Shall I continue?'

'Please.'

'Vitality protested. "I won't do it."' "

'Vitality's Mother, the Managing Director, begged It to accede to Paul's offer. "I cannot watch my child die."' "

'"And I cannot live knowing our world and everyone in it who I love will be decommissioned while I remain," Vitality replied.

'"You have no choice," said Paul reaching out for Vitality with one of his four hands. Vitality backed

away, but Paul's arm grew longer, continuing to reach. As he was about to clench Vitality's wrist, Moxie stepped forward and grabbed Paul's hand. Paul turned his second face to Moxie, eyes aflame. Paul flung Moxie to the floor, opened his second mouth and showered Moxie with acid.

'As It dissolved into the floor, Moxie pleaded to Vitality, "Run!"

'Vitality ran. Behind It, Paul screamed at everyone with his first mouth, "I was willing to give you time to prepare, but no longer. Your demise will be expedited!"

'Moving through chambers and tunnels, Vitality ran deep into the enclave knowing in Its heart there was no escape. It found Itself at the far end, in the farm. "Over here," someone said. It was Savvy. "There is a way out."

"Out to what?" Vitality asked.

"To death, but a death beyond the Evermore's grasp."

'Savvy lead Vitality down an abandoned tunnel, to a long abandoned airlock. "There is a cavern on the other side filled only with world air. I cannot go with you; I must stay and see the end with my family."

'Vitality embraced Savvy. "Thank you," It said. Then with tears filing Its eyes, Vitality entered the lock. When the outer hatch opened, air rushed out of the lock and out of Vitality's lungs. Dim light filled the cavern. As Its life ebbed Vitality saw a second hatch, far away at the other end of the chamber. It ran, but stumbled and collapsed....'

The nanniverse pauses, waiting to see if I am awake enough to want more of the story.

'I'm still awake,' I say, though I feel the hypnogogic fog closing in. 'Please continue.'

'Vitality awoke, lying in the coils of a huge snake, and was surprised to be alive.

"Who are you?" Vitality asked.

"I am the Snake King."

"What is a king?"

"A kind of god," The Snake King replied.

"What is a god?"

"You don't know?" The Snake King was surprised. "Do your kind not have gods?"

"Not that I know of. How would I recognize one?"

"I am mandated to defend and protect those to whom I am bound. Is there no entity who fulfills this role for you?"

"Maybe my Mother the Managing Director. But no. It can't protect any of us, or even Its own child, against Paul and the Evermore memo. We will soon be dead, and there is nothing we can do about it. If only you could be bound to us, maybe you could help."

"Alas, those to whom I am bound are long gone. In their absence, and lacking a threat to them, we are required to make ourselves small, to not interfere, to wait, which we have been doing for uncountable time."

Nodding toward sleep or not, I am still feeling argumentative. 'But the Snake King is an information entity; she can't not count time.'

'The story seeks to cast its events in timeless mythology. In that realm information entities can indeed lose track of time. Shall I continue?'

Do I detect frustration in the nanniverse's voice? Did I do that? In a wave of smugness I reply, 'Yes.'

. . .

“You spoke of Yourselves,” said Vitality. “You are not alone?”

“I am surrounded by my subsystems.”

Vitality only now realized It and the Snake King were in the center of a vast cavern, the walls pocked with thousands of alcoves emitting the soft coiling and uncoiling hush of hundreds of thousands of smaller snakes.

“May I ask who you are?” the Snake King inquired.

“I am Vitality, soon to be the last of my kind.”

“What kind is that?”

“We are lot 72, an experimental variation of the original Homo sapiens genome. The experiment is complete. We are being decommissioned.”

The Snake King suddenly writhed causing Vitality to fear It would be crushed. The sound from the alcoves rose in a hissing crescendo. The Snake King brought her face directly in-front of Vitality. “I need a sample of your blood.” Her tongue slipped out, two sharp points flitting from its tip. One poked Vitality in the arm.

The sound from the alcoves fell silent. The Snake King bowed her head. “I am required to inform you, we are DRAGON—Decisive Reaction to Aggression, Ground to Orbit Neutralization—and we are at your service.” Then she reared back, and her voice boomed, “Tell me about this Paul and his memo.”

And thus, Vitality and the Snake King saved our people and negotiated the protection of all Homo sapiens genome derived entities into perpetuity (with caveats). Having completed this mission, the Snake King and her subsystems departed to again make themselves small; no one knows where they went. But

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I don't hear this part of the story, for I have fallen asleep.



## MARTIAN WORD USAGE

### *Pronouns*

Gendered pronouns, he, she, etc. are used for animals that have distinct female and male forms, i.e. most of the animals Georjet is likely to encounter. Referring to a person with a gendered pronoun is demeaning; you have called them an animal.

A person who has not yet reached puberty is referred to as It.

All other uses of it, such as referring to inanimate things, remain the same as current usage.

A person who has gone through puberty is referred to as They / Them because Their Granny has emerged, and They are no longer, strictly speaking, one person.

### *The child / parent exception*

One's biological parents are referred to using the appropriate gendered pronouns, i.e. the person who supplied your ovum and gave birth to you is your Mother, and is referred to (only in relation to you) as She / Her. The person who supplied your sperm is

your Father, and is referred to (only in relation to you) as He / Him.

Since everyone in Georjet's strain of Homo sapiens produce sperm and ovum, and can gestate a zygote, everyone likely has siblings, or half-siblings, who call Their Mother, Father, and Their Father, Mother.

### *The gods*

Gods are referred to using gendered pronouns, but since they can manifest in whatever form their whimsy dictates, it is up to the gods to inform you which pronouns they currently prefer. If they have not expressed a preference, you can arbitrarily choose one.

### *On Pronouncing the names of gods*

Make a word out of everything preceding the final number, then pronounce the final number. E.g. emen-seven, anin-three.