

Saw too much

After a full day at the MGM Grand, I was up \$37 and up to *here* with noise, bells, lights, cigarette smoke. I got in my rental and headed out of town on two-lane blacktop, ambling east with the desert sunset behind me painting the sagebrush pink, looking for quiet.

Two hours later, I had quiet, and full dark, and the dawning realizations that, one, the rental had no GPS, and two, I was lost.

What happened next was all my fault. I was gawking left and right, trying to understand military looking signs, white stenciled letters on khaki, flicking by in my headlight. I just didn't notice the vehicle in my path until it was too late to brake. In a frozen flicker of light I thought it was one of those Tesla truck things, origami-folded steel and glass; and then the hood of the rental crunched solidly into it at 30 miles an hour.

I was dazed for a couple of minutes, and as I got my wits back I saw through my windshield, lit by the cockeyed headlight now pointing skyward, something that had entirely too many arms, and I heard a voice that I can only describe as a cello on amphetamines.

I had barely had time to perceive this much when a large black SUV slid to a stop beside me. I was struggling with my seatbelt as a large man in a dark suit yanked open my door and tried to pull me out of the car, nearly strangling me on my seatbelt in the process. I smelled Axe deodorant as he leaned across me to unfasten the seatbelt. He hauled me out and thrust me into the back seat of the SUV.

He and another dark suited man in the SUV took my drivers license and interrogated me, asking over and over, "So, Mr. uh, *Cortessi*, what are you doing in Area 51? What are you looking for?" My claim that I was just lost didn't seem to satisfy them.

At length a second SUV arrived, and another man dressed in a dark suit leaned in the window and said "The ambassador is not angry. He doesn't want to press charges."

"Yeah," said my main interrogator, "But this dude's seen too much."

"I haven't seen anything!" I protested. "Except that funny car I hit, that Tesla or whatever."

"Yeah," said Mr. Dark Suit One, "A Tesla," and snorted.

"The Ambassador says you looked at him," said Dark Suit Two.

"I, what? What ambassador? I didn't see anything but, like, some arms and..."

"Right, arms. That's it. Well, Mr. Jones—"

"Cortesi"

"It's Jones now. You are going to have a whole new life in a whole new place. I hope you like moonlight because I hear they have, like, six of them."

And that's how I began my new life as a janitor in the Terran embassy building, here on Betelgeuse VI.