



king of space

hypertext science fiction

by sarah smith

illustrated by matt mattingly

watertown, mass.: the eastgate press

founded in 1982, the eastgate press is committed to exploring literature that fully embraces hypertext—nonlinear, interlinked writing presented to readers with the assistance of computers.

eastgate press also publishes michael joyce's *afternoon* and other hypertext works

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Oh woman, mystery, Terra—In that faraway place, the Moon has such gravity that tides and winds follow it round the planet. Great Terra exerts such force that air does not rise but is held down by its own weight. The air is open to the stars. What could be more dangerous or more magnificent? In space not a bee can escape its place in the arcology, but on Terra animals have breathed their lives and died, unseen by any human, as if man were not the king of space.

King of Space is a hypertext science fiction novel, set in a deserted spaceship among the Asteroids. Tam Rosse, political criminal, needs the spaceship to save a revolution. But to get it, he must fight "King" Brady, the only human aboard the ship, and the ship's half-mad interface, the semi-human Lady Nii. Tam Rosse is himself being hunted by the virgin Priestess of Pallas, who needs a lover, bodyguard, and slave.

King of Space breaks new ground in science fiction. Neither a traditional game nor a conventional novel, it mixes literature with animation, mazes, puzzles, and games. It is extensively illustrated by Matt Mattingly. Programming development was headed by Mark Bernstein, developer of HyperGate; the award-winning music is by Michael Druzhinsky.

In spring 1992 Ballantine will publish in hardcover Sarah Smith's mainstream novel **The Vanished Child**, about murder, amnesia, sex, and redemption in turn-of-the-century Boston. She has recently finished a collaborative novel, **Future Boston**, written with authors including Nebula winners Geoffrey Landis, Philip K. Dick Award finalist D. Alexander Smith, and regular *Asimov's* contributors Alexander Jablovkov and Steven Popkes. Her **Future Boston** story, "Three Boston Artists," made the 1990 Recommended Reading lists of *Locus* and *Aboriginal*. She is currently working on a SF novel, **The Bunraku Stars**, set five years after **King of Space**. She lives in Brookline, Mass., with her husband, two children, and a 22-pound Maine Coon cat, Vicious. To keep Vicious in cat food she writes manuals and educational hypermedia. She is an active member of the Cambridge Speculative Fiction Workshop and the Science Fiction Writers of America.

King of Space is published by Eastgate Systems. Eastgate publishes software and hypermedia literature for the Macintosh, including Michael Joyce's mainstream novel **Afternoon** and award-winning simulations. It also distributes StorySpace, an advanced authoring system for hypermedia.

To order your copy of **King of Space**, call 800/562-1638. In Massachusetts and outside the US, call 617/924-9044. The first edition of **King of Space** is now available for \$24.95 and runs on any Macintosh with 1MB or more of memory.

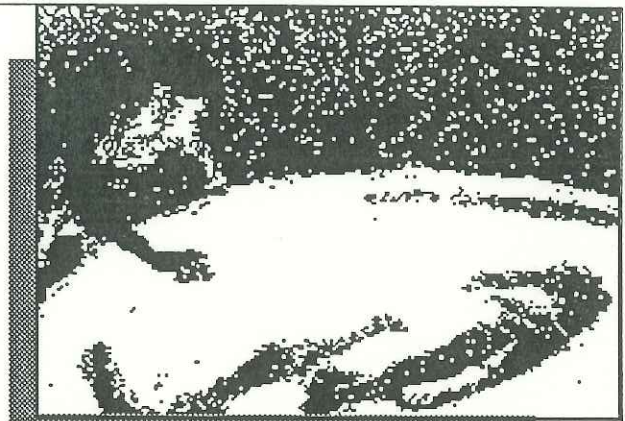
NOTE: **King of Space** contains extensive scenes of sex and violence and is not suitable for children.

KING OF SPACE

A Publisher's View

A Hypertext Novel

- by Sarah Smith
 - *written, not "developed"*
- an escaped con, a priestess, an epidemic survivor, and an intelligent Greatship
 - *places, not dungeons*
 - *people, not twisty little passages*
- reader choices affect point of view, narrative technique, and plot
 - *often in unexpected ways!*
- Art by Matthew Matingly
- Music by Michael Druzinsky
- Starring Isabel Hornstein as The Lady Nil
- Simulations by Bernstein & Humphreys
 - *many media; many headaches*
 - *is this Hollywood?*



An Editor's Anxiety Closet

Will an audience ever exist for serious computer-based fiction? Where is it hiding?

Computer fiction has rarely (never?) dealt seriously with complex, sexual relationships. How will the press react?

Melodrama and silliness are considered the routes to success in computer entertainment. **King Of Space** is often claustrophobic, sometimes somber, and frequently distressing.

How do we proofread a document that's always changing?

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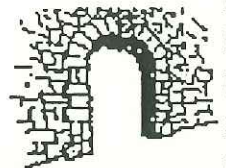
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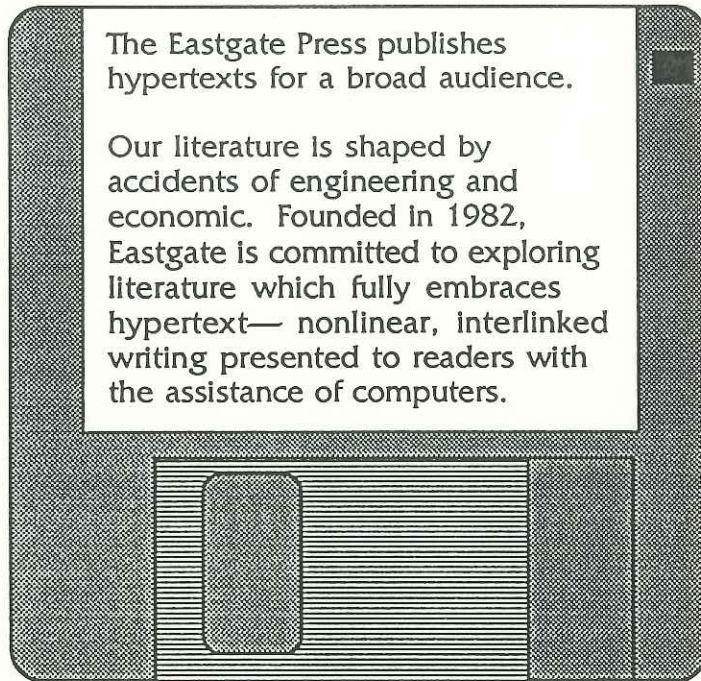
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Michael Joyce (May)

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Bernstein and Sweeney
(August)

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH PAPER?

NOTHING!

Except...

*there is only one "next page"
for every one
every time*

Once the ink is dry, the author is silent.

*If we want a **passive** medium, what's wrong with TV?*

A KING IN SPACE

(c) 1988 Sarah Smith

The supply ship was a trap. The recycler was poisoned; the algae are dying. Only one of the escaped prisoners is still alive. Tam Rosse breathes the foul air in gasps, every breath a knife twisting in his lungs.

Tam Rosse was the youngest and the strongest who fled Circe Prison. Now he is the only one, alone in a dying ship.

The dying ship is mocked by seeds drifting from broken supply bags; winged mutants whirl lazily across the viewport and obscure his sight.

Tam Rosse has seen too much death. Life is a temporary thing.

Go on to the next page.

The torture left nerve-burns on his wrists. His hands shake as he reads the nav charts. No inhabited asteroid, no miner's claim within a halfmonth, and the air will last for only four more days.

Trans-asteroid pilots call this the Nowhere. Twenty or thirty asteroids in the Belt are capable of supporting a small town; a couple of thousand that could support a refueling port. In 690 billion square miles.

The Nowhere will kill him.

Go on to the next page.

Barely visible through his failing viewport, a shadow-shape slides across the stars.

It is a miracle. A huge thing, a greatship from the time of giants, when men lived in the Asteroids as though they were Earth. No beacon lights shine from it; no red warning lamps, no yellow haze of man-manufactured sun. A derelict.

But as the great ship wheels through the stars, he sees a miracle: a tiny moon, a white crescent, moving into elliptical orbit around the wheel.

It is a lifeship (page 4).

Tam Rosse brings his ship into sychronized orbit with the lifeship . . . page 6.

Tam Rosse brings his ship into synchronized orbit with the greatship . . . page 15.

Lifeships are the means by which the Fertile Worlds spread their genes through Terran Space. These small, heavily shielded ships carry genetic material--a selection of base ecologies, suited to any habitat in which Terrans can live. There is only one pilot.

For religious reasons, the pilot of a lifeship is always a woman. But this one is different. She is very young, a virgin girl, still with her moon-earring in her ear.

When the earring is removed, she can access her full powers.

Go back to page 3.

In the lifeship's core of ice, frozen in coldsleep, the girl lies. Over her dark skin are scattered stars, which shine unwaveringly. Seeds in tiny silver darts ray out from her hands, from her fingers, from her feet, from her navel and heart, from her mouth. Silver darts ray in a halo around her head.

When she is unfrozen, the tiny creatures that are her stars will begin testing the atmosphere, the light level. When conditions are favorable for life, her stars will begin to twinkle, as stars do on Earth.

Go on to the next page.

Tam Rosse brings his ship into sychronized orbit with the lifeship.

In the lifeship, Tam Rosse gasps and lets the air clear his lungs. The ship of the Fertile Worlds is smooth and white inside, brightly lit, like the inside of a star's egg.

At the center of the sphere lies the girl in coldsleep.

The girl is encased in a half-moon of what seems like ice. Sparkles of silver ray out from her body. Her skin is the dusky color at the edge of twilight on the Fertile Worlds, and on it stars glow faintly.

He has never seen anything like her. For four years, in Circe prison, he has seen no women at all.

Tam Rosse touches his lips to the ice above her lips . . .

Go to page 7.

Tam Rosse slaps the control to wake her . . . Go to page 8.

She still wears the single moon earring of an unblooded priestess.

He knows what must be done to initialize her powers. He has heard of the ceremonies in prison. No time for delicacy. Tam Rosse reaches through the "ice" and rips the earring out of her ear.

(Graphic.)

The half-moon of ice turns into water, rivulets flowing down into the surface of the egg-ship. There is a flash of great heat, a warmth and wetness. Tam Rosse breaks into a sweat. The girl opens her eyes and reaches up her hand to her bloodied ear.

Go on to page 14.

Tam Rosse slaps the control to waken her. The half-moon of ice melts slowly, rivulets flowing down into the surface of the egg-ship. The rich air becomes even richer, intoxicating, like the air of spring.

Slowly the girl sits up.

Go on to the next page.

She sits up, shaking the water from her dusky skin, as unselfconscious as an animal. She seems very young, but her eyes are calm and ageless. She looks him up and down; she is seeing his jumpsuit, the red of Circe prison.

"I won't hurt you," he stammers.

She laughs. She picks five seeds from the shoulder of his suit. "These will grow here. Give them to me."

Tam Rosse gives her the seeds . . . go to page 10.

Tam Rosse doesn't give her the seeds . . . go to page 12.

He pours the seeds into her cupped hand.

"Help me," he says. "There's a station outside. It's dead--derelict. My ship's recycling algae are dead. I need seeds for both, so both of them can come alive again."

(Graphic)

"Of course," she says.

He takes her arm. Her flesh is as warm as a tropical sea, as warm as the Water Center of a greatship.

Go on to the next page.

She touches a small moon-shaped earring in her right ear.

"I don't have my full powers yet," she says, "but I can do this much."

She touches the nerve scars on his wrist. Unexpectedly the deadened nerves tingle and flare back into life. It is painful; he cries out. She drops her hand, startled. Healer, gardener, priestess of the Fertile Worlds: but she looks flustered and young, like a teenaged girl dressed up for a masquerade on Pallas.

"I didn't think," she said. "It's all been practice, before this."

She is human. He can use her. But he wants to protect her too.

And he knows how she will come to her full powers. A young man must remove that earring. He has heard rumors of the Ceremony of the Priestesses.

Go to page 15.

M. F. V. 11

"They aren't the seeds you want. Help me," he says.

"There's a station outside. It's dead--derelict. My ship's recycling algae are dead. I need seeds for both, so both of them can come alive again."

"Of course," she says.

He takes her arm. Her flesh is as warm as a tropical sea, as warm as the Water Center of a greatship.

She touches her single earring, silver and shaped like the moon. She says, "This is my first ship."

He flushes. He has heard rumors of the Ceremony of the Priestesses. Before she comes to her full powers, a young man must remove that earring.

Go to page 15.

(pure
Maxwell...)

She awakens, but she does not know where she is. A pale man in a red suit stands over her. Strange winged seeds dapple his body.

She shrinks away; her silver-glittering seeds cover her body like wings.

After a minute the man shrugs and says words to her.

She does not understand him; but when he moves away, she follows him.

Go to page 15.

She looks up at him, her eyes ageless and unfathomable.

"You have done the Ceremony," she says.

He nods, his mouth suddenly dry.

"Now I have my powers," she murmurs.

"I need your help to get the ship going," he says.

She sits up, looks him deep in the eyes.

"Oh, yes," she says, "I can do that."

Her body is young, her face unlined, but he wonders why he thought she was a girl.

Go on to page 15.

He goes first, propelling himself down the pitted and murky port-corridor toward the greatship. He can see the white plume of air leaking from his suit. The priestess needs no suit here. Like most of the important Terrans, she is spacehabbed.

He has only a dagger, a prison weapon, made from the Circean mineral called heartsblood, chipped and edged in the long nights of waiting. The thongs that wrap the handle are a man's skin.

Around the lock there are only the fossilized pale marks of water impurities; it has been so long since the lock was opened that no ice crystals blur its metal leaves. The outside of the ship is scarred from meteors and hard radiation.

(Could be a combination-lock puzzle here . . .)

The leaves of the airlock-iris force themselves slowly open, as if they are doing something unnatural, moving against the flow of time.

Go on to the next page. (Which is a graphic: darkness.)

(Graphic: darkness . . . A candle flame flickers. Eyes blink open behind the candle flame.--This is three nodes.)

Inside the airlock waits a man.

Lice crawl in his matted gray hair; his body smells; he is spider-thin, a man who has spent his life in low gravity. His yellow skin is smeared with dirt. Old power wires are tangled into his hair, wires plaited into a rough circle like a crown.

He stares like a man who has seen too much infinity alone.

"I am king," he says. His jumpsuit, stiff with dirt, hangs on his body. He scratches at his withered crotch. He plucks at the name-patch and looks at it curiously as though it is instructions for a machine he does not use.

"I am King Brady."