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Legend of Conquistadors

EARTH CB122XA IS ONE OF the alternate Earths spilling out of the matrix of quantum mechanical points of possibility that make up this part of the multiverse. They do things differently here.

Earth CB122XA, or "Earth," as the locals called it, was a quiet place. A single king ruled the entire planet. It had its cyclones, floods, forest fires, and its plagues and epidemics, just like most of the other Earths. But these came in moderation, especially when compared with elsewhere.

And, just as their people and planets and conditions of Earth came out of the cosmic foam, so did their gods.

This Earth had its own god, generated out of the endless quantum-mechanical possibilities. The locals called him "God." He didn't involve himself in the day-to-day workings of the planet or its people. He preferred not to work miracles, considering them a cheap effect. This god liked to see his people work out things for themselves. But sometimes, when an important point was at issue, or when the life of the entire planet hung in the balance, he had been known to give a hint or two.

This Earth, like all the others, was prone to accidents. Accidents often have forewarnings, but this one had none, unless you count the two spaceships that appeared seemingly from out of nowhere, circled the planet as though they were doing a survey, and then vanished again into space. This Earth, although it was a fairly advanced technological civilization, had no spaceships to send up to find out what the strangers wanted. There was some speculation as to why they had not responded to Earth's signals, but not much, because only a few people had seen them, and their accounts were not generally believed.

All too soon, the ships were back, and they led a fleet of spaceships into the skies of Earth. These ships were large and fully armed, and the people of Earth did not try to oppose them, but waited to see what they would do. To wait was also the decision of Drax, the king of Earth at that time.

The spaceships took up position above Earth's capital city, which was a place of architectural merit with many green spaces. At last a single huge ship came down and landed on the lawn of the king's palace.

Drax said to his court officials, "I guess I'd better see what they want."

He walked out alone to the ship.

After a while a port in the spaceship opened. A group of men marched out. They were tall, broad, ferocious-looking men, wearing battle armor. After them came a single man, larger than the others, dressed in golden armor.

He was taller than his guards by half a head, and proportionately broader. He carried his massive golden armor lightly. He wore metal belts from which hung an assortment of weapons, each more terrifying-looking than the one before. In one hand he carried a mace with a massy head, around which were mounted razor-sharp blades.

King Drax walked up to him and bowed. The golden warrior inclined his head slightly. They sized one another up for a moment.

At last the alien leader spoke. "I am Eduardo. I am the king of this several-million-man army that I have brought to your planet."

"And I am Drax," Drax said. "I am the king of this planet we call Earth. I welcome you. I am amazed to hear you speak our language."

"Universal translating machinery is one of the few things we have retained from our planet's old science. It enables us to give orders to our subject people without having to sully our mouths with their debased languages."

"It's obviously a useful accomplishment," Drax said. "Have you many subject people?"

"Every race we have encountered is now subject to us. Except for the few who preferred to die to the last man."

"Our god would not approve of that," said Drax. "He is not in favor of war. He advises us to go on living by any means possible, and at any price."

"He sounds like a wise god. Let's get down to business. How do you feel about fighting me here and

