

Petr Hudský: World number 33

Producer: **Kateřina Rathouská**

Sound: **Dominik Budil**

Sound design and Music: **Ondřej Gášek**

Director: **Ondřej David**

Characters and cast:

Captain: Jiří Štrébl

Lieutenant: Matouš Ruml

Marie: Kateřina Rathouská

Singing: Jiří Štrébl, Matouš Ruml, Ondřej David, Nairi David, Nina Rudišová

World Number 33 was first published as a podcast on the Czech Radio portal mujRozhlas.cz as a Christmas present for listeners in December, 2020. This short sci-fi podcast explores the story of the star of Bethlehem, the three kings and the birth of Jesus - as it might have happened. In this version, ‘Captain’ and ‘Lieutenant’ are supernatural beings who travel around the universe on various missions... including one to Earth. A relatively routine operation for ‘Captain’ and ‘Lieutenant’ emerges a crucial event in the life of Earthlings.

The author of the short play - writer and screenwriter **Petr Hudský** (b. 1972) - regularly cooperates with Czech Radio and has explored similar themes in past works. For example, his short play Home Birth - a reference to the Old Testament and the story of Cain and Abel - won the 3rd place at the Prix Marulić in 2013 Short Forms category.

Producer **Kateřina Rathouská** (b. 1977) has also been making short dramatic formats for a long time, especially as part of her Minute Plays project which focused on short radio drama pieces in the broadest sense. Minute Plays and many other projects have been awarded various prizes at festivals at home and abroad.

Captain and lieutenant are on a journey through the universe. Soon we'll learn that they are supernatural beings.

Introductory music – a Christmas carol How Beautiful You Are (only music)

CAPTAIN: *(space ship sounds)* So number 32 is... done. *(space ship sounds)*

LIEUTENANT: Yes, Captain, sir.

CAPTAIN: Continuing.

(the ship flies through the universe)

CAPTAIN: Thirty-three is quite far away, isn't it?

LIEUTENANT: It's light years away... We're almost there, captain.

CAPTAIN: I can see. Give us the report, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT: So... *(sounds)* here it is... *(reading)* Station number 33.

World: Dry land, ocean, air. The highest form of life: mammals, primates.

CAPTAIN: *(sounds)* Hold on, primates?

LIEUTENANT: Yes.

CAPTAIN: The highest life form in World 33 are primates?

LIEUTENANT: Precisely.

CAPTAIN: God blimey...

LIEUTENANT: It says it here, captain. Thirty-three, primates.

(short pause)

CAPTAIN: Can you hand me the list?

LIEUTENANT: Sure. Here you go. *(sounds)* You see, here it is.

CAPTAIN: That must be a mistake, surely? *(sounds)* *(he's trying to remember)*

Thirty-three... The highest form of life there were dinosaurs ...

LIEUTENANT: Yes, Captain, you have excellent memory, it used to be the dinosaurs. But there were terrible problems with behaviour.

CAPTAIN: I remember now... Clever, but they wouldn't listen.

(LIEUTENANT: Hm.) It has been some time now.

LIEUTENANT: I was just beginning my career.

CAPTAIN: What happened to them?

LIEUTENANT: I'll look in the files... *(sounds)* oh, here it is. Rocket Universe-Earth, the Sodom-Gomorrah type, used twice. *(sounds)*

CAPTAIN: Sodom-Gomorrah? Not much could have been left of the dinosaurs but a few bones.

LIEUTENANT: It was a real whack. Well, and after that the primates took over.

CAPTAIN: Primates... I don't know anything more stupid and aggressive. *(short pause)* And what about the second rocket? When did we drop that?

LIEUTENANT: I'll check... *(sounds)* Recently, a few thousands local years ago.

CAPTAIN: Recently? It wouldn't be looking like this here.

LIEUTENANT: The explosive charges were lowered to three thousandths of a percent and the target were just two smallish settlements. Hm, a classic educational exemplary lesson. *(sounds)*

CAPTAIN: Now I get it. Because after a standard Sodom-Gomorrah we would have had to introduce a second batch. And with an interval. *(short pause)* I can see number thirty-three has lots of problems.

LIEUTENANT: Unfortunately, Captain, it's just as you say. They are as stupid as they are wild.

CAPTAIN: I agree. I simply don't get it, how a world like this could have got on our list for the landing of the BIG J.

LIEUTENANT: You're right, they were not on the original list.

CAPTAIN: Were they?! I thought that if there were primates, I would have noticed.

LIEUTENANT: They added them later. *(sounds)* Here, you see, the appendix: add two worlds on the list for the landing of the BIG J: number 33, Earth – primates, and number 51, W9 – boulders. *(sounds)*

CAPTAIN: I can understand why the boulders, but primates.... Such an experiment. *(sounds)* Well, it's their decision and the two of us can't do anything about it now. Poor J-33, I wouldn't want to be in his shoes.

(sounds of landing)

LIEUTENANT: Here we are.

CAPTAIN: Wait a bit I'll just... get my bearings... those are the three?

LIEUTENANT: Yes.

CAPTAIN: Can they see us?

LIEUTENANT: All of them can see us. I've turned on all the lights.

CAPTAIN: It's just whether they've understood they are supposed to follow us.

Turn on the AUDIO.

LIEUTENANT: In a sec.

We hear the sounds of Earth – distant men singing: “We are the three kings, we’re coming to you, wishing you health and happiness. Health, happiness and a long life, we’ve come from far away.”

LIEUTENANT: Ah, it's okay, they are following us, they got it.

CAPTAIN: Great. What about J-33, has he got down already?

LIEUTENANT: A little while ago. The small building over there, it's called a stable in the local language.

We hear a distant crying of a newborn and Mary's soothing voice:

MARY: *(from a distance)* Baby Jesus, don't cry...

CAPTAIN: A stable? Quite a primitive construction.

MARY: *(from a distance)* He's beautiful, isn't he, Joey. Like an angel.

LIEUTENANT: It's a dwelling for a lower form of mammals.

CAPTAIN: Even lower than primates?

LIEUTENANT: Yes, there are quite a few. For example the white ones, can you see the group?

Sheep bleating and a carol sung by children: “How beautiful you are, innocent, in the midst of poverty, we fall down in front of you, we bring you our presents...”

CAPTAIN: I can see them. They are saying something.

LIEUTENANT: No, these creatures... sheep... don't speak.

CAPTAIN: But their jaws are moving.

LIEUTENANT: They are chewing grass, that's one species of the local flora.

CAPTAIN: They eat each other. That's awful. Well, otherwise it seems everything is okay. Turn off the AUDIO.

The sounds from Earth stop.

LIEUTENANT: I'll put it in the logbook.

CAPTAIN: All we can do now is keep our fingers crossed for J-33. It will be tough for him. I have no idea how he can explain some of the things to them.

LIEUTENANT: He's done the training, he knew what he's up to.

CAPTAIN: If he were to simplify it... like really simplify...

LIEUTENANT: How about using fairy tales?

CAPTAIN: Maybe...

Short pause.

CAPTAIN: What do think about leaving the checking term at 75 local years?

LIEUTENANT: You mean like doing them more often? I don't know if we can manage, you know how many worlds we are responsible for. And the budget is tight.

CAPTAIN: I meant just the opposite. I thought of moving it to 100 or 110?

LIEUTENANT: I wouldn't do that, sir, leaving them so long without supervision seems risky to me. Especially with primates.

CAPTAIN: You're right, Lieutenant. We'll stop by according to plan, better safe than sorry.

LIEUTENANT: *(agreeing)* I've put it down. *(sounds)*

CAPTAIN: So that's number 33... done.

LIEUTENANT: Thank God.

CAPTAIN: And now off we go.

(the ship flies off, it continues moving through the universe)

CAPTAIN: What's next?

LIEUTENANT: We're getting closer, I'll find the file... *(sounds)* Here it is...
(reading) Habitat number 34. World: Ocean, air. Highest life form: seaweed.

CAPTAIN: Finally someone intelligent.

(the ship lands)

LIEUTENANT: We're here.

CAPTAIN: Those three are swimming after us?

LIEUTENANT: Yes. No doubt about that. As soon as we appeared, they started following us.

CAPTAIN: Turn on the AUDIO.

LIEUTENANT: Just a sec.

We hear distant splashing and the same song as before "We are the three kings, we're coming to you, wishing you health and happiness..."

CAPTAIN: What about J-34, has he descended already?

LIEUTENANT: He's splashing over there, captain. That little seaweed.

CAPTAIN: Fantastic. *(audio from Earth turns off)* So that's number 34... done.

LIEUTENANT: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN: That was quick. Let's continue.

A short break.

CAPTAIN: How many more worlds do we have to visit?

LIEUTENANT: Myriads, Captain.

(Sounds of the universe at the end.)