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Attack of the Ice-Age Cyborg Kamikaze Holsteins

By Lester W. Smith



For tens of thousands of years, cows have been the predominant intelligent race in our galaxy—every place except on Earth, that is. For some reason, Terran cows just never developed an interest in organic chemistry, quantum mechanics, or electrodynamic prototypical space-time flux science. Instead, they remained content to bask in the sun, munch grass, and crowd together under one tree during lightning storms.

From the very beginning, this lack of ambition seriously disturbed the United Galactic Council, especially considering the fact that Terran humans were beginning to show every sign of evolving in the cows' stead. While humans were learning how to hit things with rocks and how to use fire, the Council debated long and heatedly, but eventually it was decided that the planet should be allowed to pursue its own course—if Terran cows hadn't the spunk to go out and explore the galaxy, then that was their problem.

But there were those among the UGC who stood on the other side of the fence. These were the renegade Holsteins. The Holsteins believed that it was their duty to make Terran cows evolve, so they set about doing just that. Fearing Council censure, however, they kept their plans secret. Clandestinely, they fitted a starship with an experimental laboratory designed to produce a fluid which, when fed to Terran cows, would propel them out of the Grass Age and into space. This laboratory was code-named the "Unified Device for Dispensing Evolutionary Readjustment," or UDDER for short.

Unfortunately, the lab was so large that it would not completely fit into a standard starship. But the Holsteins were up to the challenge. First, they redesigned their ship's interior, knocking out unnecessary walls, scratching from the designs any room that wasn't absolutely necessary. (They kept the engine room and bridge, for instance, but got rid of the brig, or "cow poke.") Also, they built the lab so that its dispensers extended through the floor of the vessel, thereby saving quite a bit of room. Next, they set about trimming the crew size to the bare minimum. They culled their herd of applicants until only a handful of the very best individuals remained. Then they

heavily enhanced those cows cybernetically to make them equal to the rigors of the mission.

In the end, they decided upon a crew of four: Four cows dedicated to the proposition that every bovine creature had a destiny among the stars; four cows willing to suffer hardships to take to their primitive Terran cousins news of just how underprivileged they were; four cows who would travel to a backward planet where savage humans were learning to hunt and eat cattle; four cows with a death wish. Thus were born the Cyborg Kamikaze Holsteins (CKHs).

Cost overruns and production delays held up the launching of the mission for several centuries, and by the time the CKHs reached Earth, the planet had entered another of its ice ages. Not for a moment did the CKHs—now ICKHs (Ice-Age Cyborg Kamikaze Holsteins)—think of turning back, however. They had a mission to perform, and they were bound and determined to accomplish it. Desperately, they cast about for some safe place to land and finally settled (literally) on a major glacier in what is now far northern Canada.

Unfortunately, Terran ice proved too fragile for the weight of the starship, and the Holsteins' vessel sunk into the glacier's depths. With no hope of escaping until the planet thawed, the ICKHs entered their CSIPs (Cattle-leptic Sleep Inducer Pods) and prepared to wait it out. As they slept, they dreamed their dreams of global conquest.

Now it is the 20th century (in case you hadn't noticed), and somewhere on a mountain far to the north, the last of the ice has melted from the Holsteins' craft. Freed from their aeons-long sleep, the ICKHs have emerged to begin a reign of terror upon the Earth. As their power spreads, one question begs to be answered: Who ya gonna call?

REEL ONE: "HOOFING IT TO CANADA"

As this reel opens, Theophylus Brown, a Canadian dairy farmer, calls the Ghostbusters and says he thinks his farm is haunted. Brown has been hearing voices whispering conspiratorially all over his farm, but when he looks, no one is there but him and his cows. Sometimes, when he goes to the barn, he finds the door locked from the inside and hears voices murmuring within. Then, for no apparent reason, the door will unlock; when he searches the barn, again no one is there but him and the cows. And while milk production remains normal, cattle feed consumption is way down. Brown's cows just don't seem to be as hungry any more.

Of course, the voices Brown is hearing are not ghosts, but rather his cows. The ICKHs have been visiting his farm, feeding their UDDER milk to the cows, and now those cows have become intelligent enough to talk. Most of what they're

Note 1: In this adventure, "cow" is used as a generic term for cattle of either sex (as per the word's secondary usage according to Merriam-Webster). It is not intended to indicate a gender bias.

Note 2: This adventure is rated P (excessive punning). Reader discretion is advised.



P. Messer '91

GHOSTBUSTERS™

International

Name: Byron, Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth

Goal: Free Earth's cattle from slavery and incite them to take a place among the stars.

Physical X Ectoplasmic (Check One) Intelligent X Mindless (Check One)

Species or Race: Bovine cyborg

Sex: Bull

Age: Multiple tens of thousands of years.

Hair Color: Predominantly white, black and brown

Eye Color: Brown (of course)

Height: 8-9 feet (standing upright)

Weight: 900+ lbs.

Tags: These cows stand upright on their hind legs, which makes them tower above humans. The long, heavy cow bodies walking upright on spindly cow legs might seem silly were it not for all the frightening cybernetic equipment sprouting from them. The ICKHs have no sense of humor, nor any emotion other than dedication to their mission. They speak in a continual, mechanical monotone.

TRAITS	ROLL		TALENTS	ROLL
	Normal	Current		
Brains	(2)	()	Astronomy	5
Muscles	(5)	()	Break Things	8
Moves	(2)	()	Jump	5
Cool	(4)	()	Lock Horns*	7
Power	(4)	()		
Ectopresence	(0)	()		

***Lock Horns (New Skill):** These cows are nigh unemotional and bullishly dedicated to their mission. They can use the Lock Horns skill to resist the effects whenever a Ghostbuster tries to deter them from their goal.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flight, Invisibility. Note for city-dwelling readers: These powers are not natural to cows. But the ICKHs have gained them as a result of extensive cybernetic modification.

WEAKNESSES

Defense Cracker, Inhibitor. The first represents the fact that if the ICKHs' UDDER machine is somehow destroyed, the ICKHs will be unable to complete their plan for fostering a cattle revolution on Earth. The second represents the fact that if the United Galactic Council members get wind of the ICKHs' activities, they will step in to put a stop to it immediately.

HISTORY & NOTES

Renegades from a galaxy-spanning confederation of cow civilizations, the ICKHs are determined to free Terran cattle from their bondage to humans and to introduce them to a space-age perspective. The ICKHs look upon humans as jackals robbing Terran cows of their destiny.

ENTITY TOUGHNESS

Day's Work.

Power (4)
Traits (6)

Ectopresence (7)
Special Abilities (2 (1G, 1L))

about is whether or not to take the ICKHs up on their offer to help them rule the world. They've been ruminating on the idea for a couple of weeks now without coming to any conclusion. On the one hand, they figure, it might be kind of nice to become space-farers, like the legendary cow that jumped over the moon. On the other hand, they have a pretty cushy position right where they are. Needless to say, the ICKHs are disappointed in Brown's cows' lack of initiative.

The Ghostbusters will have to travel to the farm, but once they arrive there, the cows will keep perfectly silent to avoid giving their developing intelligence away. (Although if one of the Ghostbusters manages a Brains roll at Whole Lots of difficulty, that character may hear the words "Cheese it; here they come" as they approach the barn, but nothing else.) PKE tests reveal no paranormal energy. To all appearances, the dairy farm is completely normal, and Farmer Brown is off his rocker. This lack of supporting evidence will make Brown feel very foolish, to say the least. As the investigation progresses, he grows more and more apologetic, more and more desperate to make small talk with the Ghostbusters to cover up his embarrassment.

Finally, after the entire farm has been searched thoroughly with no evidence of ghosts, Brown tries to change the subject entirely. Leaning on the hindquarters of a nearby cow, he says "So, how do you city boys like this dairy air?" "I beg your pardon!" the cow says, indignantly, and kicks Farmer Brown a distance of several yards. (She thinks she's being made the butt of a joke.) Realizing that the cat is out of the bag, all of Brown's cows break loose and begin a stampede north, toward the ICKHs' starship. (The Ghostbusters should make Moves rolls at A Good Amount of difficulty to avoid being trampled in the stampede.) The cows have no idea what to do about the situation, so they are going to their mentors for help. The Ghostbusters can follow cross-country in Farmer Brown's truck.

REEL TWO: "THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA"

This is the climactic scene of the adventure, and the ghostmaster should milk it for all it's worth. The ICKHs find themselves with quite a problem when Brown's cows arrive. On the one hoof, they don't want to leave the Terran cows to face the wrath of the Ghostbusters, nor do they want to face the Ghostbusters themselves. On the other hoof, their starship will barely hold a crew of four, which makes escaping difficult.

In the end, they manage to herd everyone on board just before the Ghostbusters arrive. When they take off, however, the additional weight makes it very difficult for the vessel to gain altitude, and the crowding makes it hard to steer. The ship slews back and forth across the sky, and for a moment it looks as if it will crash heavily into a pasture, but at the last moment it pulls up, just grazing the field. The Ghostbusters are easily able to keep up with it in Farmer Brown's truck, and they can blast at it with their proton packs, making the ICKHs' attempts to fly even more difficult.

Hitting the lumbering ship with the proton packs involves Very Little difficulty, and if any of the Ghostbusters makes a success roll of Whole Lots of Success or more, it spells UDDER disaster for the ICKHs. In effect, the ship has been creamed. That is, the evolutionary milk device explodes, spraying dairy products over the countryside for miles around, and the starship crashes into a haystack. The Terran cows come spilling out and scatter in all directions. The Ice-Age Cyborg Kamikaze Holsteins climb out and set themselves for a fight.

REEL THREE: "SHOOTING THE BULL"

Now the Ghostbusters get to meet the critters that are behind the sudden



IQ jump of Farmer Brown's cows. For their part, the ICKHs will prepare to sell themselves dearly; they refuse to be cowed by the fact that the Ghostbusters have destroyed their ship. Of course, with their powers of Flight and Invisibility, they should be able to put up an interesting fight. Whether they win or lose this battle makes little difference on a worldwide scale, however.

The Ghostbusters have managed to deal the ICKHs enough of a setback to prevent them from leading a general Terran cattle revolt, and the destruction of the starship has drawn the attention of the United Galactic Council, which will prevent the Holsteins from pursuing the plot any further.

What does remain to be decided by the battle is whether or not the ICKHs escape. If the Ghostbusters manage to round them up, members of the UGC will secretly send a representative to collect them, and they will make the Ghostbusters honorary members of the Council, as long as the Ghostbusters agree to keep the UGCs' existence secret from the rest of humanity. If, on the other hand, the ICKHs best the Ghostbusters, they will escape to plot their revenge.

In any case, as the effects of the stellar milk wear off, Farmer Brown's cows will revert to their original intelligence level and return to the placid existence they once had. And Brown will have a wonderful tall tale to tell his grandchildren when they come to visit. Ω

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CHALLENGE 59½

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Send in the Clowns

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Lester Smith

Apocalypse Cow

or Close Encounters of the Third Kine

In our last episode ("Attack of the Ice-Age, Cyborg, Kamikaze Holsteins," **Challenge 52**), it was revealed that the dominant intelligent life form everywhere throughout the galaxy is cows, with the one exception of Earth. Some member groups of the United Galactic Council (particularly the oft-renegade Holsteins) find it particularly irksome that humans have usurped cows' rightful position on Earth. In a large part, this irritation is due to racial prejudice, but

it also has to do with the fact that Terran cows being dumb prevents the development of any "unified field theory" of galactic cow civilizations.

In the millennia since they first sent their four agents to dispense an evolutionary readjustment on Earth (agents who managed to get their ship frozen in an ice-age glacier, unable to continue their mission until issue 52, just in time to be thwarted by the Ghostbusters), the Holsteins have been eclipsed in power on the United Galactic Council (UGC) by the more visionary Guernsey faction. It was the Guernseys, in fact, who instituted a prime directive for allowing the human race to develop unhindered on Earth. According to that directive, the galactic cow civilizations would continue to observe Earth, but they would do nothing to shape its development. The directive was formalized in the manner of a joke—"Humans are to be seen and not herded"—and therefore was officially dubbed the Prime Rib.

Now, late in Earth's 20th century, just a short time after the Holstein mission came to an abortive close, a new power has risen in the UGC, a power inimical to human existence. This new threat to humans, this force of a third kind, is popularly known in the galaxy as the Jersey State. Like the Holsteins, the Jerseys have set their sights on Earth with the intent of supplanting humans. The site they chose for their first foray was, appropriately, Jersey. But due to poorly folded maps, they landed instead in the Atlantic, just off New York City.

The method of attack the Jerseys have chosen is a giant robot cow originally designed for hauling trash, but now beefed up with heavy weaponry and sent to meat <sic> out some destruction upon the city. That's right, in this adventure, New York is attacked by a CattleMech. The Jerseys are out to make hamburger of the city. (Of course, New Yorkers are used to such trouble by now; for them it's pretty much the same old grind.)

The Ghostbusters are first alerted to the danger when a woman named Ann Thrax phones and says she sees a giant cow swimming into the harbor from the open sea. (The robot's pilot is homing on a radio signal from a cow buoy dropped into the harbor from orbit.) By the time the PCs become involved, the CattleMech will have trashed a long line of warehouses along the docks, creating a new and different sort of New York strip. The destruction is so extensive as to make it obvious that intelligent cows have much more of a stomach for violence than do humans. In fact, cows have twice the stomach for it.

When the Ghostbusters confront the robot, its pilot shouts to them on an external bullhorn, "We cows have passed your intelligence," (to the players it sounds like "pasture intelligence") "and have come to make this planet our own." The machine then blithely stalks on by to continue its destruction.

The Ghostbusters will quickly discover that none of their equipment has any real effect on the robot. Even the beams from their proton packs slide harmlessly off its hide. Careful observation will reveal two weaknesses to the machine's design, however. First, the CattleMech's legs have thousands of tiny holes through them to facilitate radiating heat. If the Ghostbusters were to prepare some steel poles—cut to 10-foot lengths and ground perfectly circular to fit snugly—and push them through one set of holes on each leg, they could pin the limbs in position, preventing the robot from walking any further. Second, the robot is extremely narrow

compared to its length. If the Ghostbusters were to somehow crash a vehicle into one side of the robot (perhaps by running the vehicle up a ramp to fly into the robot's side), they could tip the cow and knock it over. Once on its side, the robot will not be able to rise again.

Both plans have merit. It will be up to the PCs to decide whether to go for the ground round stakes or try for the T-bone collision. In either case, the robot threat will have been ended, and the Jerseys will be too embarrassed to retain their power on the UGC.

Lucky Things, etc.: Facing the terrible puns in this adventure.

Action Opportunities: Tackling the robot. Throwing things at the referee who inflicts this adventure on them.

Nifty Problems: Thinking of some way to defeat the CattleMech while making a bad joke of the process (other than the two methods suggested above).

Neat Characters: Giant robot cow.

Potentially Tricky Stuff: Trying to stop groaning long enough to tell the referee what their characters are doing.

Campaign Hooks: None. If you can think of any cow-related puns I've missed between this and the previous adventure, you're terminally sick but welcome to do another adventure of your own. Ω

GH0STB0STERS™

International

It behooves us to apologize to FASA for butchering its BattleMech trademark and to thank Nick Atlas, who was responsible for this pun. Moo!

The Scroll



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