

Going to Gimli

Part 1

By Scott Lowther

www.up-ship.com

Copyright 2016

“Oh, hell no,” Zane Waterman grumbled. “Not *tourists*.”

The commercial starship *Corpus Georgi* was a freighter, meant to haul cargo. It could carry passengers, but was not outfitted to be anything but basic transportation.

But Zane had a more important reason why loading the ship full of tourists was a bad idea:

“I don’t wanna.” He scowled and stared off into the distance at a seagull gliding on the evening breeze. He wondered if he could hit it from here.

“Oh, come on, it’ll be fun,” Sarah Rhoades said.

“I’ve heard *that* before.” Zane sighed, shrugged, and accepted it. There was no point in arguing; it was not that big of an issue. And Sarah seemed genuinely excited by the prospect. It was rare that she seemed excited to interact with groups of strangers, and Zane wasn’t going to try to get in the way of that. So... make the best of it. And now wasn’t the time to talk business.

The sun was setting. From the peak of the steep and rugged mountain, Sarah and Zane had one hell of a view. Fletcher Island was spread out below them to the south and south-west; the planet Atlantis’ world-ocean to the north, east and north-west. The sun was fat and red, just touching the horizon. The horizontal light turned the sky a dark purple; the ocean was already nearly black. The islands around Fletcher, part of the same string created as the rim of an ancient impact crater, were visible here and there as bright specks dotting the horizon in all directions. A few kilometers to the west the lights of the hangar and maintenance complex could be just seen, down near the cliffs at the western shore of the island. To the south-east more lights could be seen at the Rhoades house. As the sun sank below the horizon and the natural light failed, the other islands winked out. All that was left were the hangar and housing lights, the emerging stars and two small moons quickly making their way across the sky. In another few minutes myriads of spacecraft would become visible as bright and fast moving specks.

With the sun down, the nightly tradition came to its end. The two stood up; they had been sitting on the hood of the battered old sports car they used to ascend to the peak. Sarah seemed to hesitate. “You want to drive?” Zane asked. Sarah just smiled faintly and stepped around to the drivers side.

It was an older model *Caliber*, all flowing curves and organic shapes, designed to appeal to the eye and cut through the air. The top was down and the AI controls off; it was a purely manual-controlled vehicle. Normally, this was the way Zane liked it. But with Sarah behind the wheel... He shrugged. It wasn't that Sarah was unskilled, it was simply that Zane didn't much care for not being in control of the vehicles he was in.

Still, it was a nice night to be a passenger in a convertible with the top down. The lift fan under the hood whispered to life, the lift jets in the back added their whine, and they lifted off. Sarah made an orbit around the mountain peak, then set out towards the north-east, over the water. With the top down, the wind blew Sarah's long brown hair nearly straight back. Silhouetted against the dark sky, she was lit only by the instruments and the stars. Her alabaster skin glowed faintly red and blue, reflecting the glow of the indicator lights, green eyes glittering. She leaned forwards, smiling broadly with the thrill of flying. Zane did not stare, but he did notice the joy on her face, and smiled faintly in response.

A lazy loop just above the low, dark waves brought them back to the island, south of the Rhoades house with its blazing lights. Then she floored it, blasting the car at tree-top height above the forest that covered the island to the hangar on the west coast a small fraction of a minute later. The car circled the landing pad outside the hangar and came down with just a bit of a bump. "Well done," Zane commented sincerely. "We'll make a pilot of you yet."

"Bah, bah, bah. That's your job," she replied with a laugh. Zane nodded slightly, then shrugged. "Anyway. See you in the morning. We'll go over the job."

"Sounds like a plan," Zane said as he stepped out of the car. With a small wave he turned toward the hangar which held both Sarah's starship and Zane's small apartment. Sarah switched off the flight system and set off for home along the surface road. Zane glanced back to watch the car until the road turned from the clearing into the forest, then went into the cavernous hangar.

The following morning found Sarah and Zane sitting at a small meeting table just inside the large open door of the hangar. With them was the other crew of the starship *Corpus Georgi*... the four-armed teddy bear Loff, a member of the Thessi species, and George, the AI in charge of the ship. George was present only in the form of a disembodied voice emanating from the table.

"So I got a call yesterday from a tour agent in Atlantis City representing a group of tourists," Sarah began. "They want to charter the *Georgi* for a one-way trip to Asgard."

That much Zane had heard the evening before. "Silly," he said. "We're not a bus."

Sarah shrugged. "Yeah, but they're willing to pay. A lot."

"And what's 'a lot'?" George asked, the ever-present tone of annoyance on full display.

Sarah gave a devious grin. "Ten grand per passenger."

Loff twitched his ears in surprise; George, for once, was startled into silence. Zane, however, scowled. "Well, that's just fuckin' stupid," he said after a few seconds. "Luxury cruises don't cost half that. And it's only, what, two hours from here to Asgard."

Sarah just shrugged, still smiling.

"And how many overfunded morons are in this party?"

Sarah beamed. "Fifty."

Zane's scowl turned into a raised eyebrow.

"I don't understand," Loff said. "Asgard is only fifty AUs away. They could easily get a commercial flight for a couple hundred credits each. Like Zane said, they could fly in comfort on a liner for a small fraction of that. Why are they willing to pay that much for a cargo ship?"

Sarah shrugged again. "I asked. The representative was a little vague... I'm not sure she really knew why. But they wanted us specifically. Said something about knowing our reputation."

"Reputation?" Zane snapped. "We don't have a reputation. We're nobody. We've hauled stuff around for a few years. Best we've done is not break anything!"

"I guess we must've impressed somebody," Sarah replied. "But that's not the best part."

"Oh, good."

"They want us to take them to Gimli Lodge!"

"You're joking." Sarah shook her head. "Do they have the permits? We sure as hell don't."

Sarah nodded. "I checked last night. Gimli Lodge has us on their Approved List when we get there. We're to take them there, drop them off and be on our way."

"Who *are* these people?" George asked, managing to sound slightly impressed. Nobody but nobody got to go to Gimli Lodge.

"A bunch of tourists, that's all I've got so far. But there are some stipulations."

"Joy."

"One is that they are to be the only passengers on the trip, and no side cargo."

Zane shrugged. With what they were paying, they could afford to skip carrying cargo... probably for the next several years.

"Another is that they want a good view. Not screens... they want to be able to see out through big windows. Real windows."

Zane looked at Loff. Loff's ears twitched in the way that meant surprise, tinged with annoyance.

"Why?" Zane asked. "It's a short hop from here to Asgard, and nothing to see on the way. We can lift off and dock there in less than three hours."

"That's just it," Sarah replied. "They want something of a sightseeing tour when we get to Asgard. Not just transport there, but at least half a day in orbit before going to Gimli. You know, sightseeing. They also want the crew to be on hand to provide a running commentary. Guided tour stuff."

"Wonderful. So are we going to hire someone to do that? Some chirpy babbler, or something?"

"No," Sarah said flatly. "They want it to be someone on the ship's crew. I figure that the three of us can do it. It'll be fun!"

Zane sighed, closed his eyes tightly and leaned back.

George spoke: "They do know that I'm a hyperdrive ship, yes?"

It was not a minor point. Sublight ships could have as many windows as they could jam into the hull, though few bothered with them. But hyperdrive vessels were a different story. The external circuitry needed to initialize, form, stabilize and, most importantly, constantly aim a hyperspace bubble negated the possibility of truly transparent windows. The *Corpus Georgi* had transparent panels only on the flight deck, and these were a complex kludge of advanced technologies. The windows were at best translucent, being covered with the fine tracery of circuit paths needed for hyperspace travel. With image processors built into the solid structure of the window, from the inside the view through them was much clearer than the human eye actually needed. But these weren't truly clear windows.

"We'd have to modify the ship," Zane said, somewhat lost in thought. "We could remove the upper cargo doors and add windows, but then we'd have to stay sublight. That idea sucks. Or put a big window behind the lower cargo ramp, and open it when we got there."

Sarah shook her head. "The view would be terrible. The ramp would block the view down. The nose would overhang above. Can we do something with the upper cargo hold? How about add windows under the doors?"

Zane grunted positively. "Sure, that'd work. We could dress up the, say, port upper cargo hold to make into a big, luxurious zero-g lounge area, with a big transparent roof. Easy."

Sarah was about to ask why it'd be zero-g, but stopped short when she realized: in that configuration, there'd be a floor but no ceiling apart from the window. And "no ceiling" meant "no artificial gravity." "Crap. No, we can't have it be a zero-g lounge. They'll be barfing all over."

"NOT RECOMMENDED," George announced with vehemence. "I don't care just how rich these people are, I don't want their vomit floating around in me."

“Agreed,” Loff put in. “But how about if we cut the ends off the cargo modules and put domed windows on them, and have them tip up?”

Zane considered it. The *Corpus Georgi* was a Leatherback freighter, so named because of a vague resemblance to a finless sea turtle. The lower portion of the nearly hundred-meter-long ship was a cargo hold accessible via a large door and ramp at the front. The upper cargo hold was split into port and starboard sections with an enclosed hallway running fore and aft down the middle. Access was via four large doors on the upper surface hinged alongside the hallway. Typically the *Corpus Georgi* carried sixteen intermodal shipping containers, used all throughout human space, five meters wide by two and a half tall by sixteen long. They were installed “sideways,” with the smaller faces mating up with the hallway, eight on either side. The containers were easily modified.

“Sure, yeah, that could work,” Zane said, nodding to Loff. “We could chop four of them – say, on the starboard side - short a couple meters, hack the walls out and join them together to make one big box twenty meters wide. We could put a plastiglass bubble wall on the chopped off end, make a window twenty meters by two and a half. Bow it out a bit, and they’d be able to get a hell of a view while staying in a gravity field. We’ll have to put a flexible link on the doors from the accessway to the containers, but that shouldn’t be hard. Tip the containers up ten, fifteen degrees, and that’ll put the windows well outside the ship. Be kind of a one-time thing, though... I don’t imagine we’ll have much used for it again.” He shrugged. Containers were cheap. Heck, once they found an abandoned container floating on the ocean, bumping up against a cliff face near the hangar. What had been inside it didn’t bear too much thinking about, though.

Loff closed his eyes and ran through the construction steps in his head. “We can probably knock it out in a week or so.”

“Concur,” George added. “There will of course need to be a shakedown before you put a whole lot of rich and probably litigious victims – I’m sorry, I mean *customers* – in it.”

“Call it ten days. Does that fit with the customers schedule?”

“Yep. They want to go in a month. I don’t have a passenger list, but the agent said to make provisions for human-type passengers. No cetaceans or cephalopods.”

“Well there’s a bit of good news,” Zane muttered. He liked whales and dolphins well enough, but designing spacecraft accommodations for them was always a pain in the ass. And cephalods... yeesh. Sure, the uplifted ones were smart and all, and made useful citizens, but they were just plain alien. Even more so than the Thessi and the Narth.

The meeting carried on for another twenty minutes, but George hardly paid any attention. He had taken Loff and Zane’s verbal description of the modified cargo containers and had already designed a complete system down to the molecular level, and was bored already. He left a small subset of his personality to monitor the meeting, make the occasional noise of interest and toss out the odd insult, but the rest of him went away, off across the Atlantis planetary web to commune with other AIs.

The next week and a half was, by the standards of the laid back Rhoades Interstellar Transport Company, rather busy. Loff oversaw the construction of the new "lounge" within the cavernous hangar while Zane and George made modifications to the cargo bay to accept and manipulate the new structure. Sarah designed the luxury accommodations for the fifty passengers, modifying the remaining twelve cargo containers into thirty-six suites. Six more cargo containers were loaded into the main cargo bay with modifications for the luxuries the passengers might be expected to demand. The fabbers cranked out a few dozen new bots to serve as the staff.

The windows were on the upper starboard side of the ship, not the front. By adding some thrusters to the interior of the upper cargo doors on the port side, the ship could be reasonably nimbly flown sideways for the sightseeing portion, putting the windows at the "front."

The new lounge was lowered into the upper cargo hold on day nine; right on schedule, day ten saw the ship ready to make a test flight. For this, a quick test hop was made to a low equatorial Atlantis orbit. Once there, the large door over the new lounge was opened and actuators tilted the module up, exposing the long crystal clear window. The crew met in the central hallway that connected to the lounge. Sarah, holding ship's cat Esmeralda, excitedly bounced on the balls of her feet as Zane and Loff joined her. "Ready?" she asked, touching the pad that caused the door to slide open. Beyond the door was a very short hallway, less than two meters; taken from a standard external docking adapter, it blended a flexible corridor with grav plating so that one stayed glue perpendicularly to the floor that curved up to match the extended lounge. There was another door. And then they walked through.

Sarah giggled slightly with joy at what she saw. She had of course been in the lounge many times over the past week, but now it was finished and in its element. The floor and walls were white, the ceiling a solid white glopanel. But at the far end was the two and a half meter tall, twenty meter wide window. It looked out on Atlantis, some three hundred kilometers below. At that moment the *Corpus Georgi* was passing over local noon, lighting up the whole world. From the doorway, the window was filled with the brilliant blues of the Atlantis world ocean. Innumerable small islands appeared as tiny green and brown dots, with many lacey clouds.

"Huh," Zane muttered. Sarah dashed to the window to get a better look. The window, more than fifty percent taller than she, bowed out in the middle by half a meter. Letting Esmeralda down, she leaned out against the window. She could feel a distortion in the gravity field, a lessening and a warping due to the edge effects of the gravplating in the floor and ceiling. It was not a particularly troublesome sensation, but it was slightly disconcerting. Even so, it could not distract her from the sight of her homeworld, brilliantly clear and large. The plastiglass, harder than diamond and tougher than steel, had almost no reflection, so it was almost invisible. Atlantis filled the view. A bit of the ship's hull could be seen below, but it was not noticeable. Esmeralda wandered off to explore the new environment; the solid black cat stood out sharply against the white room.

"Helluva view, huh," Zane said quietly, stepping up beside Sarah. To his mind, Atlantis was a generally fairly dull planet from above. It was almost entirely a shallow ocean, with around a million small islands. The vast majority of them had never been visited by humans, and few were big enough to appear as

much more than specks from this altitude. Of course, storms were always good, and Atlantis could generate some real whamdoodlers when it came to hurricanes. Sadly, only a few minor storms were out and about today.

“Meh,” George said. “I’ve seen it.”

Zane ignored the comment. But as he glanced over at Sarah, he saw from the look on her face the emotion the sight of her homeworld was producing: rapture. “Oh, yeah,” she said at last to herself. “We’re keeping it.”

“Hmmm?”

Sarah beamed at Zane. “We’re leaving this in the ship. When we’re done with this charter, I mean.”

Zane shrugged. “Sure. We don’t get much use out of the cargo containers anyway. Won’t hurt nuthin’ to leave this here.” Sarah turned back to the window. The ship was about to cross the terminator into the night side of the planet; the dark blue waterworld was turning quickly black. Here and there were specks of light from cities, towns, villages and ships at sea; flashes of lightning flickered beneath storms. For Sarah, the view was breathtaking. Loff, too, was entranced. Atlantis was similar to his homeworld in having a vast ocean, but where Atlantis had a vast number of small islands in shallow seas, Thess had two Australia-sized continents on opposite sides of the deep world-girdling ocean.

For Zane it was pretty enough, but it wasn’t that new of a sight. During the launch and return parts of flights, he saw through Georges eyes. Implants, tiny mechanisms carefully wound into his optic nerves, augmented and over-rode the claustrophobic view of the flight deck with the exterior views provided by the ships vast array of sensors. He and George were the only ones to share that view (and George was irritated enough to share it with even one human); Sarah refused to have any such implants, and the Thessi could not physically tolerate them.

So Zane quietly stepped away, leaving Sarah to her ruminations. He pulled a pair of thin black gloves out of a vest pocket and donned them. The gloves automatically shrank themselves to a skin-tight fit, then interfaced with the sensory nerves in his hands. A new set of sensations flooded into his mind: the gloves were tied into the ships gravitational systems, and now he could “feel” the slight variations in strength and vector of ships gravity. He wandered the lounge, his hands held out before him, making the occasional arcane gesture as he felt the grav-field and made slight adjustments. On the whole the gravity field was uniform at 1 G, and uniformly perpendicular to the floor, but a few minor blips in the gravity diodes in floor and ceiling were needed. The biggest anomalies were at the window, but there was little to be done there. If the passengers didn’t want to feel a little loopy next to the window, then maybe they shouldn’t lean on it.

After three full orbits, George announced that structural and environmental systems all showed no flaws. He transmitted the findings down to Atlantis Space Traffic Control and the travel agent. His signoff was all that was needed to make the shipboard modifications legal and approved for passenger use. With some reluctance, Sarah ordered a return to Fletcher Island.

It was another two and a half weeks until the charter. In that time, they had no other scheduled flights. In previous eras, such long gaps between paying jobs would have been a sign of impending financial ruin. But in an era when power was free and anything physical a person might want could be fabbed at the cost of only raw materials and energy, there was little enough need for income. Sarah owned the *Corpus Georgi* free and clear. She and Zane also owned outright Fletcher Island and everything on it. Fuel for the fusion engines and powerplants came from the sea; repair and upkeep came from subsentient bot laborers. They need never fly another gram of cargo, and they could live out their lives in comfort and with as much adventure as they wanted. Still, the urge for profit was still there. And of course, both Loff and George were wanting a steady paycheck; unlike Zane and Sarah, they were not property owners.

In that two and a half weeks, Zane and Sarah were able to find out little about the passengers other than numbers. Most of the passengers were paired up, though seven were travelling singly; there were two sets of three and one of four. One pair was defined, unhelpfully, as “small” and were to be assigned the smallest available cabin. The identities of the passengers would not be provided until boarding to preserve their privacy. This irritated both Zane and George, and for the same reason: they wanted to look up the passengers and find out why they wanted this ship in particular. But the travel agent serving as the go-between was adamant.

Zane and Sarah debated who these people might be several times. The need for privacy was perhaps most confusing of all... Atlantis was a sleepy, quiet planet with little scandal or trouble to think of. Sure, the truly rich were weird; it took a special drive to become recognizably wealthy in a society without poverty and with little of value to buy. The super-rich tended to lavish funds on massive engineering projects, funding the arts, funding expeditions to explore and colonize. And they almost always had their own fleet of ships. So, the question always came back to “why did they charter us,” a question with no obvious answer.

Typically, the *Corpus Georgi* would pick up cargo or passengers at a spaceport. But here again eccentricity reared up. The passengers would meet the ship at Fletcher Island. This filled Sarah with a deep sense of unease; she had purchased the island specifically to get away from people. The island was her sanctuary, and having dozens of strangers suddenly show up defeated the purpose.

The news that the passengers were going to land on Fletcher Island disturbed Zane nearly as much as it did Sarah, but more in the direction of annoyance than dread. He did not have the aversion to crowds that she had. Still, it was an invasion... and he was uncertain how Sarah would react to so many people. She was still so fragile...

The day of the charter flight dawned. The travel agent had remained apologetic, but she could provide no information even about how the passengers were going to arrive at Fletcher Island, only what time: noon, sharp.

The group probably thought they were being cleverly mysterious, Zane thought. But technology provided options in the form of a million publicly accessible cameras in orbit around Atlantis. He and George sifted through the many public imagery feeds, looking for any vehicle that might be heading

their way. Ocean ships, submarines, sub-orbital lofters, spacecraft, everything was watched and examined to see if it might be heading towards Fletcher Island. There were many vehicles to choose from, but only a few were heading anywhere near the island. Then, an hour and a half before the scheduled arrival, a vehicle changed course, turning 60 degrees to make a beeline straight for the island. One orbital camera had a view from directly overhead, and showed it clearly.

Zane's eyebrows were up. "The hell is that?" he asked himself, then called for Sarah. He was in the starships spartan wardroom, looking at a wall-sized display of the live orbital footage. Momentarily Sarah came in, Loff in tow. "Here they come," Zane said, gesturing towards the image.

"What the hell is that?" Sarah asked.

"That," George replied, his voice dripping with contempt, "is seriously obsolete."

Rather than the glittering ship or sleek spacecraft they had expected, there was an aircraft heading their way. A ghost from half a millennia in the past, it had straight wings with nearly a hundred meters span and eight propellers which, if the orbital sensors were to be believed, were powered by internal combustion engines burning hydrocarbon fuel. It was a dull silver and had no markings. George instantly examined public records and found that the aircraft had been built a year prior for an anonymous private buyer. The aircraft was, if such a thing was to be believed, largely made out of *wood*, coated with an aluminum *paint*.

Zane shook his head. "The rich really are different," he said. At least now they knew what to expect.

Right on schedule, the airplane made a slow, graceful orbit of the island, finally landing in the calm waters half a kilometer south of the hangar. Engines idling, it nosed itself towards the beach. Fifty meters off shore, the nose raised up, exposing the cavernous inner hold. Three hovercraft – equally ancient technology – sprang forth and ran up the beach. The crew of the *Corpus Georgi* awaited them outside the hangar, watching their progress with video transmitted from drones far overhead.

"A bit theatrical, aren't they," Loff observed.

"They're trying too hard," Zane replied. Sarah gave a soft grunt in agreement.

The hovercraft worked their way up the beach and onto the shallow sloping fields that rose to the hangar area. Turbohaft engines roaring, spewing rarely-experienced hydrocarbon exhaust as they went, the clumsy loud anachronisms finally pulled up to the open area before the hangar and settled down. The trio of vehicles stopped about thirty meters in front of Sarah, Zane and Loff, who themselves stood in the blazing noon sunlight, thirty meters or so in front of the hangars open door. Sarah wore her Captains uniform, copied and adjusted from a mid-20th century luxury liner design, complete with cap. Zanes dark blue workmans outfit, complete with many-pocketed vest and a lump under his shirt which may or may not have been a concealed weapon, contrasted greatly with Sarahs clean bright-white costume. Loff wore little more than his utility belt, boots and gloves; the rest of him being covered in brown fur.

Loff took a few tentative steps back; Zane stood next to Sarah, looming a third of a meter taller than her, arms folded across his chest. As the whine of the turbine engines finally died away and the craft settled, hatches opened in their bows. From the middle one a man sprung out, clearly a bundle of energy and cheerfulness. Shortish, slightly pudgy and florid-faced, he was dressed oddly. Covered in leather and what appeared to be an overly complex suit made out of canvas, wearing a pith helmet and wielding a swagger stick, he looked to Sarah like a caricature of an ancient explorer archetype, down to the muttonchops, one of those Victorian era types from the “Tarzan” vids that were popular in her youth. Zane had never seen those, and didn’t know what to make of him. Loff was even more confused. George recognized the costume for what it was, but didn’t judge the man for it. He merely judged the man as he judged every other human: poorly.

As passengers began pouring out of the hovercraft, they gathered around the man with the helmet and the stick. They were a wildly variegated group of people, wearing all manner of garish outfits, generally tending towards the exceedingly fashionable. A conservatively dressed woman that Sarah recognized as the travel agent spoke with the man briefly, then turned towards the starship crew. Leaving the others behind, she strode towards them with purpose and the broad smile of a professional used to dealing with people.

“Hi,” she said when a few meters away, “Jennifer Stroad, Outward Bound Travel. You must be Captain Rhoades?”

“That’s me,” Sarah said, shaking the travel agent’s hand. In the handshake data passed; the travel agent got confirmation of Sarah Rhoades’ ID via her implants, while Sarah got the travel agent’s credentials via an earpiece. Implants were not Sarah’s thing.

The paperwork out of the way, Sarah introduced her crew, Loff as maintenance tech, Zane as pilot and George – in the form of a small floating camera interface – as ship’s AI. “Hello,” Loff said to the tour agent, offering his upper right hand. She took it with a truly genuine smile; the Thessi knew that humans – especially human females – found their species to be “cute.” This fact had proven useful.

Zane held up a hand in a lackadaisical gesture of welcome and said “Howdy.”

George simply muttered “Meh.”

“So, these are your passengers,” the tour agent said, a little louder than necessary, gesturing back to the mingling group. At that signal, they started walking closer, led by the man in the ridiculous helmet.

“Cheerio!” he called out. He stuck out his hand: “You must be the famous Sarah Rhoades and Zane Waterman!”

The crew knew the names were correct, but none of them saw Sarah or Zane as “famous.”

“Uhh...” Sarah stammered, gingerly taking the man’s hand. Zane frowned, eyebrow upraised. Loff, however, noticed that the travel agent was quickly turning a distinct shade of red, and seemed to be backing off. His experience with humans suggested that this was probably not a good sign.

“My name is Matheson St. John-Smythe,” the man said, brightly. He pronounced it “Sin Jin,” to which Zane thought *Bullshit*.

“And we,” St. John-Smythe continued, loudly, theatrically, waving his swagger stick back to indicate the crowd behind him, “are *The Adventure Seekers!*”

Oh, shit, the entire crew of the *Corpus Georgi* thought, as one, in their own particular languages. But Zane was the only one to say it out loud. Because of all the ships that could have taken this band of overdressed tourists from Atlantis to Asgard, it was immediately clear why they had been chosen.

.....