



AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGIONS

BOOK 15

LIEUTENANT COLUMBUS



WALTER KNIGHT

AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION

BOOK 15

LIEUTENANT COLUMBUS



by
Walter Knight

In this fifteenth installment of the whacky military science fiction series, a new Legion recruit claims Major Lopez (*General Lopez* in the future!) used a time machine to travel from planet New Colorado to bring Christopher Columbus into the United States Galactic Federation Foreign Legion. Lopez of the present, however, doesn't have any knowledge of this, so everyone in the Legion assumes Lieutenant Columbus is a crackpot claiming to be the real Christopher Columbus, credited with discovering America on Old Earth.

Colonel Czerinski, with his usual lackadaisical aplomb, manages to mangle the plot to find gold in the legendary lost mine of old Bob Woodard while pissing off the spiders across the DMZ. Things get even crazier when old foe and hated Legion deserter, Tony 'The Toe' Garcia, makes another appearance, claiming vampire commandos from the future are pursuing him. Everyone knows vampires don't exist – right?

Hargundu the humping camel, and an appearance by revered Smokey the Bear, round out the silliness in this perpetually preposterous military science fiction series.

AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION

Book 15: Lieutenant Columbus

by
Walter Knight

Licensed and Produced through
Penumbra Publishing
<http://PenumbraPublishing.com>



PRINTED IN USA

ISBN/EAN-13: 978-1-935563-87-7
Copyright 2012 Walter Knight
All rights reserved

Also available in EBOOK
ISBN/EAN-13: 978-1-935563-86-0

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, planets, asteroids, alien species, evil empires, galaxies far, far way, or future events and incidents, are the product of the author's imagination, or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons or aliens, living or dead, events or locales including those on Mars and New Colorado, is entirely coincidental.



~BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR~

America's Galactic Foreign Legion series

- Book 1: Feeling Lucky
- Book 2: Reenlistment
- Book 3: Silent Invasion
- Book 4: Demilitarized Zone
- Book 5: Insurgency
- Book 6: Culture War
- Book 7: Enemies
- Book 8: Allies
- Book 9: Scorpions
- Book 10: Peacekeepers
- Book 11: Cemetery City
- Book 12: The Ark
- Book 13: Salesman from Mars
- Book 14: Embassy War
- Book 15: Lieutenant Columbus

Novella related to the series

Vampire in the Outfield



~AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT~

God bless our troops, Penumbra Publishing editor Patricia Morrison, and especially our snipers.

AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION

BOOK 15

LIEUTENANT COLUMBUS



by

Walter Knight



PART I

Lieutenant Columbus

PROLOGUE

Admiral of the Ocean Seas

As the sun set on the historic city of Valladolid, Christoffa Corombo – or Cristóbal Colón, as the Spaniards called him – slowly walked to his residence. Suffering greatly from arthritis and failing health, he felt Death stalking him with every painful step. An old man in his fifties, he judged many days not worth getting up for.

Ignorant children followed behind, chanting, “Admiral of the Mosquitoes!” They stayed just out of reach of his walking stick. The oldest teen dared to throw a rock.

Christoffa ignored them, stewing in his own bitterness. He had been cheated out of fortune and titles by an unappreciative ruler. The King of Spain ignored all messages. Enemies had the king’s ear.

“I discovered a new world!” Columbus continually reminded his many critics. So what if he had not found a shortcut to China and the Indies, or gold for all. His discovery was of much greater importance. “This world has more abundance than the East. But the King of Spain has no interest and rewards me not!” His objections upset them even

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

more.

In the encroaching darkness of twilight, a stranger stepped from the shadows. Columbus drew up short, and the children taunting him scattered.

“Are you Christopher Columbus,” the oddly dressed man demanded. “Admiral of the Ocean seas, Viceroy of the Indies, Discoverer of America?”

Christoffa paused, taking in the stranger's odd clothing and unusual accent. The way he pronounced his name was a variation he'd heard spoken by the English. “Si, I am Christoffa Corombo. Who are you?”

“He discovered lands of vanity and delusion, graves and ruin!” interrupted the leader of the pack of youths. “What business do you have with him?”

The man turned on the youth. “I am a traveler. And you – a nuisance!” He sprayed something in the youth's face, sending him sprawling to the ground screaming and clutching his eyes. The other youths who still lingered fled. The traveler delivered several vicious kicks to the boy's ribs, urging him to get up and stagger away. He returned his attention back to Christoffa and announced, “I am General Manny Lopez, an emissary from America, sent to bestow upon you a gift from America, to the Discoverer of America. We are in your debt and intend to rescue you from your wretched treatment and impending death.”

“A general?” asked Christoffa, doubting. “You seem too young.”

“Like you, I hold many titles. I promoted myself – it's faster that way.”

“You dress odd,” commented Christoffa. “But obviously you are a soldier. Did you say you sailed from the New World?”

“From America,” repeated General Lopez,

patiently. “Like you, I am a conquistador. I have sailed across the stars and time itself to restore your honor, youth, and titles.”

Christoffa gazed speculatively at the heavens. “I have always suspected that each star was its own world, waiting to be discovered and conquered. Yes, I can see it in your eyes; you tell the truth about coming from America. You have the hint of the Arawak people in your features.”

“Not likely,” scoffed General Lopez. “I am from Texas. But, I have sailed across the galaxy and back.”

“I accept that you may have traveled the stars, but you also boast of finding the famed Fountain of Youth?”

“Our technology can extend your life another hundred years and cure your many ailments,” promised General Lopez. “Come with me to new Colorado. A new bountiful life awaits you in a galaxy far, far away, where you will have the respect you deserve. You will live long and prosper.”

“What about my family? My dear sons?”

“I cannot risk changing history. A clone corpse will be left in your deathbed, and you will leave this world alone. Please, sir, sail the stars. It is your destiny, your birthright.”

Christoffa stared off in silence for a moment, watching the twilight turn to dark. He was in his twilight, with not long to live, he was sure. And the time he did have left would be spent in misery and pain and poverty imposed by the litigation with the King over his supposed failure to deliver what he had been sent to do on his various ocean voyages. He glanced at this peculiar stranger promising him renewed life. Although he wanted to believe the things this man claimed, he doubted they were possible. Yet

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

a man of his situation had little left but hope.

With a heavy sigh, he turned to General Lopez and said, "I accept your gracious offer. I will need to set my house in order and say my goodbyes."

"Of course. You have until just before dawn."

Christoffa Corombo walked the rest of the way home to say farewell to his sons and a few faithful servants. He recorded his newest plans of discovery and adventure his journal, leaving the document in a desk drawer. At dawn, he blasted off to the stars with General Lopez, to join America's Galactic Foreign Legion.

A Millennium later ... Mystery at the Museum

General Manny Lopez, CIA Special Agent Max Hobbs, and museum curator Bruce Boedecker, all sat facing each other in a soundproof conference room deep in the bowels of the Smithsonian Museum. Despite a deep-rooted interest in the past, General Lopez had never visited the Smithsonian and was unsure why he had been summoned.

"Do you have an interest in Christopher Columbus?" asked Agent Hobbs, abruptly getting to the point.

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"You accusing me of something?" asked General Lopez, angrily rising from his chair. "What is this about?"

Agent Hobbs handed Lopez an ancient Columbus relic, a journal, long archived under lock and key. "Read it," ordered Agent Hobbs.

General Lopez scowled. *This arrogant fool will pay dearly.* "Columbus was a great conquistador," he

said, gently holding the diary. “So, what do I care of the final ramblings of long-dead Euro-trash?”

“A graduate student doing research on Columbus’s last days found some interesting information that was, until now, undiscovered,” explained Boedecker. “Please read the last page.”

General Lopez carefully opened the fragile diary, turning to the end. Using a translator, Lopez read aloud the last dying words of Christopher Columbus, Admiral of the Ocean Seas. “Today General Manny Lopez, a conquistador of America’s Galactic Foreign Legion, offered to restore my respect, fortune, and youth. General Lopez sails the winds of time and knows the secret of the Fountain of Youth. General Lopez boasts a powerful America conquered the stars. As reward, and in appreciation of my great discovery of the New World, I am to trek the stars too. Destiny is to be seized, and I accept General Lopez’s gracious offer. God willing, I shall return triumphant. God bless and protect my family.”

“You have some explaining to do, mister,” threatened Agent Hobbs.

“What sort of sick joke is this forgery?” scoffed General Lopez, nervously sliding his hand down to his sidearm. “You cannot be serious!”

“The journal is authentic,” explained Boedecker. “We were hoping you could shed some light on history.”



CHAPTER 1

My name is Colonel Joey R. Czerinski, Hero of the Legion, Butcher of New Colorado, Garrison Commander of United States Galactic Federation Foreign Legion troops at the Demilitarized Zone crossroads of New Gobi City, planet of New Colorado. All is good again in the galaxy. I plan to retire soon, living off my many investments.

Today, a young lieutenant stood in front of my desk, saluting, and presenting his orders, fresh from Officer's Candidate School. "Lieutenant Christopher Columbus?" I commented, chuckling as I scanned his file. "Born October Tenth. Your parents have a sense of humor."

"My family is long dead, sir," replied Lieutenant Columbus, stiffening as he gripped the hilt of his sword.

"I'll bet you got into a lot of fights in school."

"At the Academy, jokesters tormented me at their peril!"

"What's with the sword?" I asked, alarmed at Columbus's temper. "What is your accent? Italian?"

"Genoese," answered Lieutenant Columbus, still agitated. "I am from the Republic of Genoa. As a legionnaire, I consider myself Genoese-American. The Legion authorizes officers to carry a bladed weapon of choice. I choose my ceremonial sword over your puny combat knife any day."

"You and Corporal Tonelli should get along fine," I groused, never having heard of Genoese, but knowing enough Italians to recognize another wise

guy.

“Never bring a sword to a gun fight,” interrupted Major Manny Lopez, my second in command. Lopez had been standing to the side, unnoticed until now. “It could be unhealthy. You carry a sword because you fancy yourself a conquistador, like the real Columbus?”

“You!” exclaimed Lieutenant Columbus. “We have met!”

“Not likely,” scoffed Major Lopez. “I was briefed before your arrival. You graduated last in your class, with a reputation for brawling. Welcome to the New Gobi Desert. Everything here bites, pokes, or stings. You should fit in well.”

“Thank you, fellow conquistador,” replied Lieutenant Columbus, his mood much improved as he shook hands. “I assure you, sirs, I am fully competent with all Legion weapons. My sword is for show. I feel naked without it.”

“We are glad to have you,” I said. “You arrived just in time. Tonight the battalion deploys to New Jellystone National Park. Scorpion bandits are poaching buffalo again. Ever since the scorpions found out Smokey the Bear isn’t real, their poaching is out of control. The Legion will put an end to that, once and for all.”

I gazed out my office window at Sergeant Williams and his forest ranger buddies loading top-secret anti-poaching equipment. Williams let out a rebel yell as the last crate was tossed into the back of an armored car.

“It is a cruel twist of fate that I am assigned to this vast ocean of desert,” Lieutenant Columbus said. “Like pirates, those scorpion savages cannot hide forever, and will face the rope or my sword. Colonel

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

Czerinski, your Butcher of New Colorado reputation precedes you, and I am proud to serve under your command.”

“I get a lot of bad press.”



CHAPTER 2

Major Lopez and Lieutenant Columbus rode lazily at the head of the column atop the turret of an armored car. The night air was refreshing. Columbus stared up at the unfamiliar constellations, then checked his GPS. “We approach Scorpion Valley, population ten thousand,” announced Lieutenant Columbus. “But I see no lights.”

“The scorpions live mostly underground,” advised Major Lopez. “They believe it is wrong to disturb the desert ecosystem with surface structures.”

“The desert is like an ocean, with its life underground,” commented Lieutenant Columbus.

“And a perfect disguise above,” agreed Major Lopez, humming a tune from antiquity.

“In the desert, you can’t remember your name,” added Lieutenant Columbus, thoughtfully. “Because there is no one to give you pain.”

“Stop!” interrupted the driver, Private Knight. “There are copyright laws at play. Have you no ethics?”

“That Knight is an odd duck,” grouched Major Lopez. “Always has been. Too many concussions from IEDs.”

“You don’t remember our first meeting?” Columbus asked Lopez, ignoring Knight. “You were a general.”

“I got busted,” explained Major Lopez. “Politics rears its ugly head again. We have never met. I would have remembered a name like Christopher

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

Columbus.”

“You wore five stars on your collar, and you sailed the winds of time.”

“Five stars, eh? That’s a good one!”

“You promoted yourself. It was faster that way.”

“You watch your mouth,” warned Major Lopez, grabbing Columbus by the front of his shirt. “I don’t know what you are about, but you are an odd duck, just like that fool, Knight.”

“I seek gold so I can buy the Fountain of Youth,” replied Lieutenant Columbus, brushing Lopez back. “I will know the secret of your youth.”

“You want to live forever?”

“That is my goal,” boasted Lieutenant Columbus. “So far, so good.”

“No one lives forever,” insisted Major Lopez.

“I suppose you are right,” replied Lieutenant Columbus, looking up at the sky. “I will seize my destiny. And when I die, do not light candles. The stars are enough for me.”

“Another dreamer,” scoffed Major Lopez. “You’ll fit into the Legion just fine. Don’t let the New Gobi kill you first.”

At a crossroads stood the bright golden arches of McDonald’s, and a Texaco gas station. As vehicles lined up for fuel, legionnaires automatically dispersed to secure a perimeter. Lopez and Columbus pulled alongside the drive-up window of McDonald’s, first in line.

“Welcome to Scorpion Valley McDonald’s,” greeted a cheerful young scorpion clerk. “May I take your order, sir?”

“Where is everyone?” asked Lieutenant Columbus, only seeing desert about them. “Did they flee?”

“Asleep, I guess,” the clerk answered. “Graveyard shift is like that.”

“The scorpions live below the surface,” reminded Major Lopez. “A city lies all about us, with its life underground, and a perfect disguise above.”

“Stop!” warned Private Knight again. “I’ll have a Double Quarter Pounder with American cheese, and a large chocolate shake.”

“You can eat MREs, fool,” advised Major Lopez, dismissing the always hungry Knight. “We are searching for buffalo poachers,” he advised the clerk. “What do you know of poachers?”

“I haven’t seen no stinking poachers,” answered the young scorpion. “You don’t look like Smokey the Bear’s forest rangers. Where are your badges?”

“Don’t say it!” implored Private Knight, again.

“Badges?” asked Major Lopez. “We’re the Legion. We don’t need no stinking badges!”

“Are you going to order or not?”

“Fine,” replied Major Lopez, scanning the lighted menu. “I’ll have the Big N’ Tasty Buffalo Burger with cheese, and curly fries.”

“Change my order to three Buffalo Chipotle BBQ Bacon Snack Wraps!” shouted Private Knight, still listening from the driver’s compartment below. “And you had better not spit in my food like you did last time, because I’ll be checking!”

“You, sir?” asked the scorpion clerk, motioning to Lieutenant Columbus.

“I am not much hungry. I will have a Venti, three-pump raspberry, three-pump white chocolate mocha, iced soy, no whip, light ice, and an order of fries. I am lactose intolerant. Are you sure you have not seen any buffalo poachers? Who supplies your meat?”

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

“Sir, we do not serve Venti. You need to go to Starbucks. It is down the road.”

* * * * *

After dinner and the posting of perimeter guards for the night, Lieutenant Columbus slipped out of camp for privacy and to study his GPS. There was gold in the surrounding hills, and Columbus aimed to seek his fortune. The last guard posting was Private Shaky Jake, a spider legionnaire. Columbus had already checked his file. “Private, you used to be a prospector?”

“I still am,” replied Shaky Jake, suspicious of all officers, especially human. “What is it to you, sir?”

“Are you familiar with the Lost Woodard Mine?” asked Lieutenant Columbus conversationally. “It is supposed to be located in these hills.”

“Everyone knows the story of the Lost Woodard Mine. Shops sell treasure maps for the mine to tourists.”

“But you prospected in these parts,” insisted Lieutenant Columbus. “Ever find any trace of gold?”

“No one has ever found gold in these hills. Legend has it that Old Bob Woodard came to town, spouting off about striking the mother lode, but the locals ate him. Old Bob never filed a claim in Scorpion City, so his sad story ends there.”

“You have searched for Bob’s mine. I know you have. You believe it is out there, waiting to be discovered.”

“How do you know my business? You only just got here, and I don’t like being spied on. You know nothing of the New Gobi Desert or the Lost Woodard Mine.”

“I know its approximate location, near Clinton Summit, on the shores of Monica Lake,” advised Lieutenant Columbus, patting his GPS. “But I need a native guide to get me through the bush.”

“Those hills are haunted by the ghost of Old Bob,” whispered Shaky Jake. “Many a fortune hunter has not returned, feared eaten by a vengeful Old Bob. Late at night you can see Bob’s campfire and hear the screams of his victims.”

“You are afraid of ghosts?” asked Lieutenant Columbus. Columbus lit a Cuban cigar as he gazed speculatively at a distant campfire. “Marauding bandits is more likely.”

“No one has ever found gold in these parts. What makes you think you can?”

“Old Bob found gold.”

“Bob was drunk, and his brain addled by the sun.”

“I will split the gold with you.”

“What do you know? Nothing, that’s what.”

“I have a nose for discovering gold,” bragged Lieutenant Columbus. “You would be surprised. I have always proven my skeptics wrong.”

“If we are to be partners, you will share more than a phony tale about following your snout to Bob’s gold. Come clean, human pestilence. Or has the sun addled your brain too?”

“Will you guide me through the hills?”

“What’s with the sword?” asked Shaky Jake, still sizing up the odd human pestilence officer.

“I always carry my sword. It is a part of me.”

“Sergeant Green always carries a scythe. He hears voices too. Do you?”

“I am not guided by voices, only God.”

“You both are crazy human pestilence, crazy like

America's Galactic Foreign Legion

a fox. Quit stalling. Tell me what you know of gold and Old Bob's mine.”

Lieutenant Columbus handed Shaky Jake his GPS, displaying a map to the Lost Woodard Mine and an accompanying archive of its discovery in the future.

