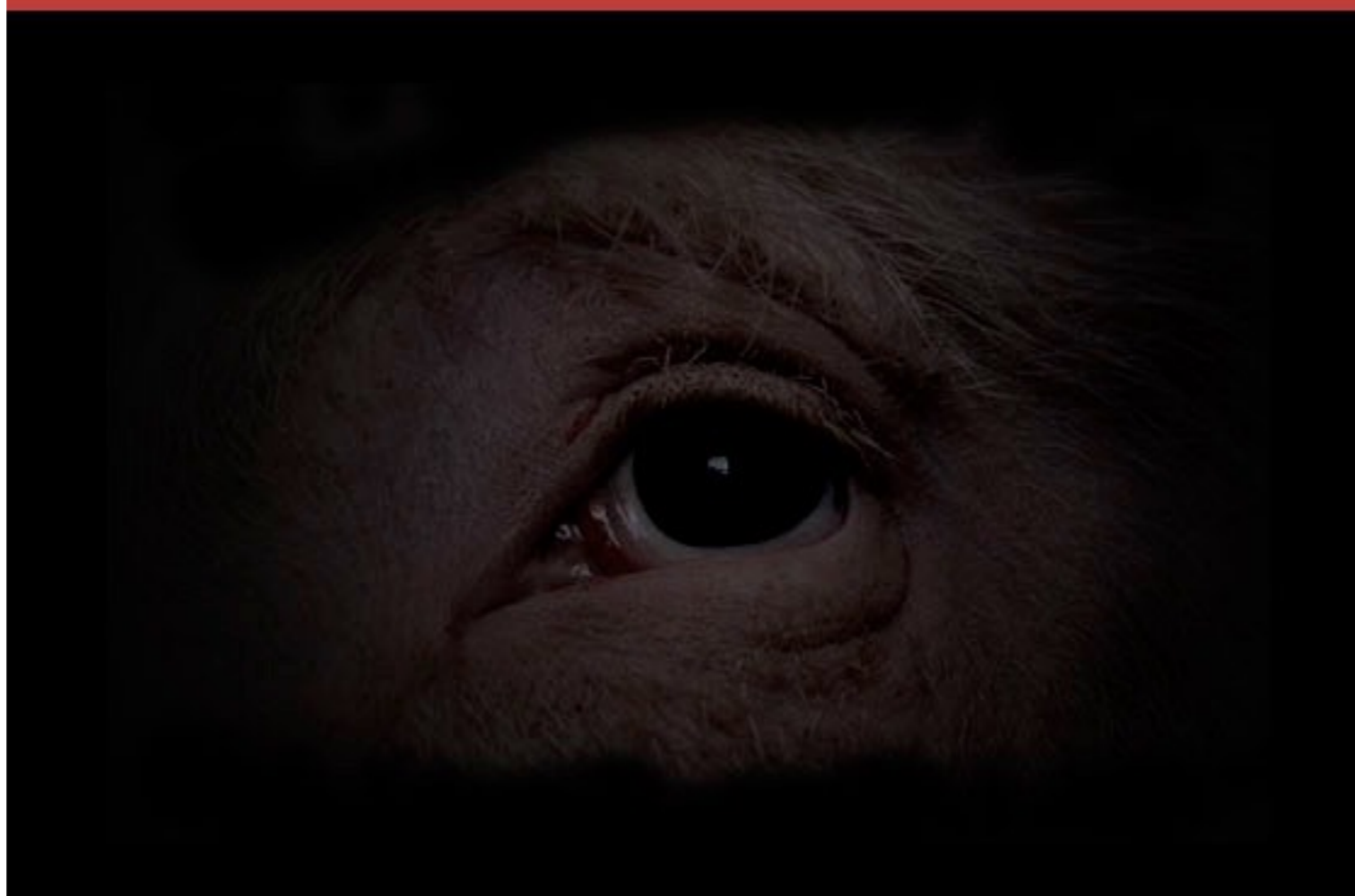


# WUB



**ADAPTATION BY H.FOX**  
**A RECONSIDERATION OF WUB BY PHILIP K. DICK**

# WUB

Workers had almost finished loading supplies for the trip back to Earth. Outside stood the village *Optus*, his arms folded, his face sunk in gloom. Captain Franco walked leisurely toward him, grinning.

“What's the matter?” he said. “You sold the animals to us.”

The *Optus* said nothing. He turned away, collecting his robes. The Captain put his boot on the hem of his robe.

“Just a minute. I'm not finished.”

The *Optus* turned with dignity. “I need to return to my village.” He looked toward the animals and birds being lifted into the interplanetary trawler. “I will never again organize hunts for you.”

Franco paused, “Why not? You people can go out into the veldt and track them all down again. However, when we run out of food on the ship halfway back to Earth...”

“Animals are not food,” the *Optus* turned and walked away. Such warm people on this planet, he sarcastically thought. Franco watched him disappear around a corner.

Then he saw *it*. “My God!” He stood staring, his hands on his hips.

Peterson was walking along the path, his face red, leading *it* by a rope. “Ahoy, Captain,” he said, tugging at the rope.

Franco walked toward him. “What is that?”

The wub stood sagging, its great body settling slowly. It was sitting down, its eyes half shut. A few flies buzzed about its flank, and it switched its tail. *It* sat. There was silence.

“It's a wub,” Peterson said. “I got it from a local for 10 waks. He said it was a very unusual animal. Very respected.”

Franco poked the great sloping side of the wub. “It's a pig! A huge dirty pig!”

“Yes sir, it's a pig. The locals call them wubs.”

“A huge pig. It must weigh four hundred pounds.” Franco grabbed a tuft of the rough hair. The wub gasped. Its eyes opened, small and moist. Then its great mouth twitched. A tear rolled down the wub's cheek and splashed on the floor.

“Maybe it's good to eat,” Peterson said nervously.

“We'll soon find out,” Franco said.

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Once they stabilized the ship after breaking orbit and life had settled into the usual boredom of travel, Captain Franco asked Peterson to fetch the wub so that he might perceive what manner of beast it was. The wub grunted and wheezed, squeezing up the passageway.

"Come on," Peterson grated, pulling at the rope.

The wub twisted, rubbing its skin off on the smooth chrome walls. It burst into the anteroom, tumbling down in a heap. The men leaped up.

"Good Lord," John French said. "What is it and why is it in the anteroom?"

"It's a wub," Peterson answered. "I bought it." He kicked at the wub. The wub stood up unsteadily, panting.

"What's the matter with it?" French came over. "Is it going to be sick?"

They watched. The wub rolled its eyes mournfully. It gazed around at the men.

"I think it's thirsty," Peterson said. He went to get some water.

The wub began to lap gratefully, splashing the men. Captain Franco appeared at the door.

"Let's have a look at it." He advanced, squinting critically. "You got this for 10 waks?"

"Yes, sir," Peterson said. "It eats almost anything. I fed it on grain and it liked that. And then potatoes, and mash, and scraps from the table, and milk. It seems to enjoy eating. After it eats it lies down and goes to sleep."

"I see," Captain Franco said. "You realize that we have a ration on food consumption and can't be feeding an insatiable pig. I think we better plan to eat it soon."

The wub stopped lapping and looked up at the captain.

"Really, Captain," the wub said. "We have barely left and you are already wanting to eat me."

The room was silent.

They all looked at the wub.

"What did it say? What did it say?" asked French.

"It knows we want to eat it."

The captain walked toward the wub. He went all around it, examining it from every side. Then he came back over and stood with the men.

"I wonder if there's a person inside it," he said thoughtfully. "Maybe we should open it up and have a look."

"Oh, goodness!" the wub cried. "Is that all you people can think of, killing and cutting?"

"I don't think there's anyone in there," Peterson mumbled in a low voice.

They all looked at each other. The cook came in.

"You wanted me, Captain?" he said. "What's this thing?"

"This is a wub," Franco said. "It's to be eaten. Will you measure it and figure out..."

"I think we should have a talk," the wub interrupted. "I'd like to discuss this with you, Captain, if I might. I can see that you and I do not agree on some basic issues."

The captain took a long time to answer. The wub waited good-naturedly, licking the water from its jowls.

"Let's talk in private," the captain said at last. The wub rose and padded after the captain.

The cook said, "Well, I'll be in the kitchen, I don't have time for talking animals."

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The wub eased itself down in the corner of the captain's office with a sigh. "You must forgive me," it said. "I'm afraid I'm a bit slow. When one is as large as I..."

The captain nodded impatiently. He sat down at his desk and folded his hands.

"All right," he said. "Let's get this straight. You're a wub and you can talk?"

The wub shrugged. "Not really. That's what they called me back there, I think it is some kind of pig."

"And you speak English? You've been in contact with humans before?"

"No."

"Then how do you do it?"

"Speak English? Am I speaking English? I'm not conscious of speaking anything in particular. I examined Peterson's mind."

"His mind?"

"I studied the contents, especially the semantic warehouse, as I refer to it."

"Hmm," the captain said.

"We are a very old race," the wub said. "Very old and very ponderous. It is difficult for us to move around. You can appreciate that living as a pig has left us at the mercy of more agile forms of life. There was no use in our relying on physical defenses. How could we win? Too heavy to run, too soft to fight, too good-natured to hunt for game. Fortunately we can eat almost anything. We're very open-minded. Tolerant, eclectic. We live and let live. That's how we've survived so long." The wub eyed the captain. "And that's why I so violently objected to this business about having me boiled."

We are not considered food back home. I could see the image in your mind, most of me in the frozen food locker, some of me in the pot, a bit for your pet cat.”

It continued, “A nice apartment you have here, Captain. You keep it quite neat. I respect life-forms that are tidy. Some Martian birds are quite tidy. They throw trash out of their nests and sweep them with their tails.”

“While that is very interesting,” the captain added sarcastically, “we need to get back to the problem.”

“Quite so. You spoke of dining on my body. The taste, I am told, is good. A little fatty, but tender. But how can any lasting contact be established between your people and mine if you resort to such barbaric attitudes? Eat me? Rather you should discuss questions with me, philosophy, the arts.”

The captain stood up. “Philosophically. It might interest you to know that we will be hard put to find enough food for the trip back.”

“I know.” The wub nodded. “But wouldn't it be more in accord with your principles of democracy if we all drew straws, or something along that line? After all, you must protect the minority from just such infringements.”

The captain walked to the door. “You are only an animal, and we eat animals. I don't know what else I can add.”

He opened the door but stood strangely frozen, his mouth wide, his eyes staring, his fingers still on the knob. The wub appeared to fall asleep.

A moment later both snapped back to normal and returned to the anteroom.

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The room was quiet as they walked in.

Captain Franco moved toward the wub. The wub looked up from where it lay in the corner.

“It is interesting,” the wub said, “that you are obsessed with the idea of eating me. I feel like I am learning so much.”

“Get up,” Captain Franco said.

“If you wish.” The wub rose, grunting. “Be patient. It is difficult for me.” It stood, gasping, its tongue lolling foolishly.

“Shoot it now.”

“For God's sake!” Peterson exclaimed.

“Have I done anything to you? I am against the idea of hurting anyone. Anything I might do is only to protect myself. Can you expect me to rush eagerly to my death? I am a sensible being like yourselves. I was curious to see your ship, learn about you. What kind of power runs this lovely ship?”

Captain Franco turned to Peterson, a strange look in his eyes, silent. The wub also fell silent.

“Listen,” Peterson said, licking his lips. “Has it done anything wrong? What harm has it done? I'm asking you. And anyhow, it's still mine. You have no right to shoot it. It doesn't belong to you.”

Franco raised his gun. Staring down at the wub. The wub did not protest but only stared at him with gleaming, moist eyes, he pressed the trigger.

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The taste was excellent. Captan Franco seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.

“More?” he said, looking around. “More? And some wine, perhaps.” John French excused himself without eating a bite.

He turned to Peterson. Peterson sat staring down at his plate, at the potatoes, the green peas, and at the thick slab of tender, warm meat untouched. The Captain put his hand on Peterson's shoulder.

“It is only organic matter, now,” he said. “The life essence is gone.” He ate, spooning up the gravy with some bread.

“I, myself, love to eat. It is one of the greatest things that a living creature can enjoy. Eating, resting, meditation, discussing things.”

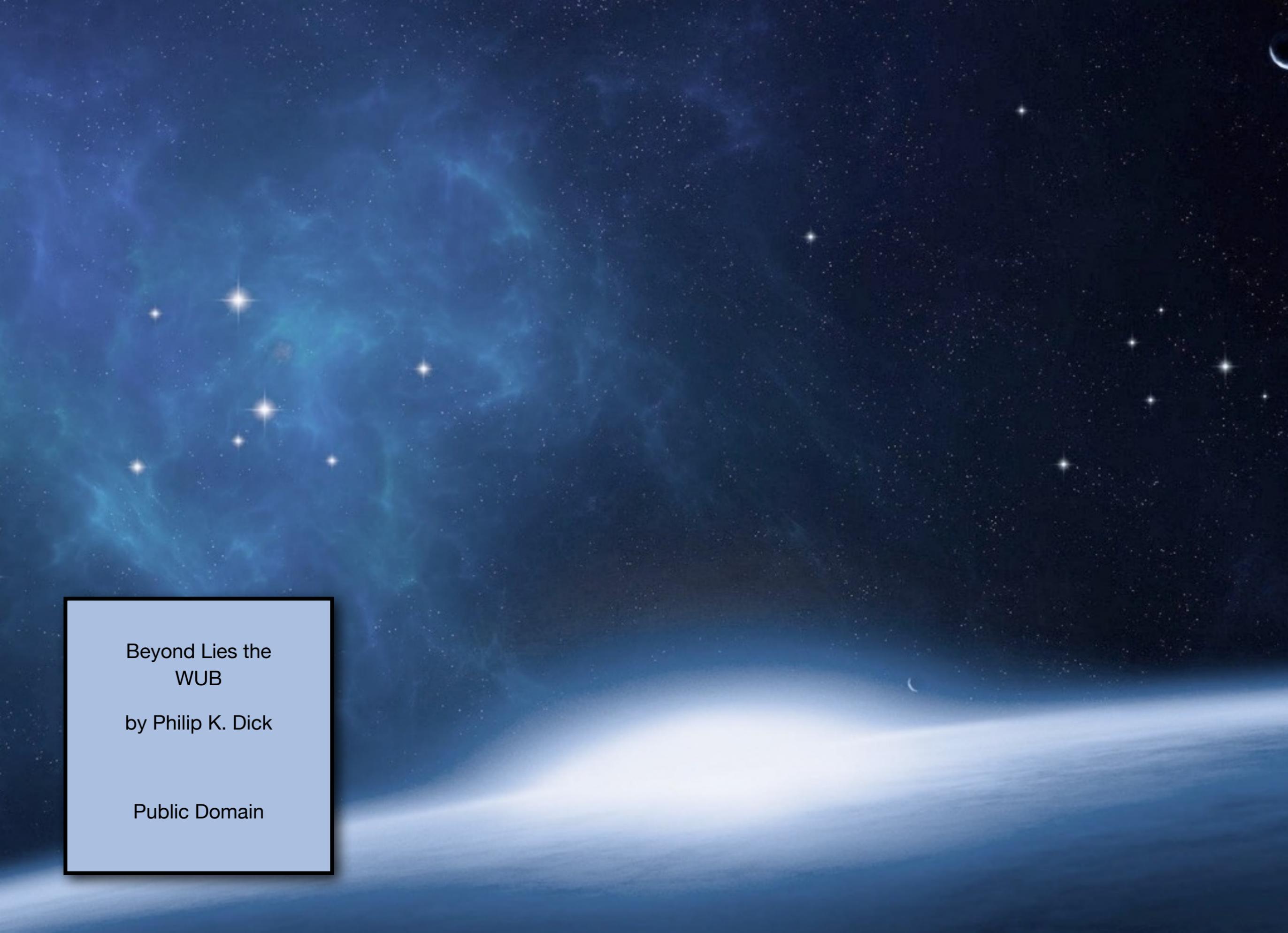
The captain drank some water and sighed. “Well,” he said. “I must say that this was a very enjoyable meal. All the reports I had heard were quite true, the taste of wub. Very fine. But, until now, I was prevented from enjoying this pleasure.”

He dabbed at his lips with his napkin and leaned back in his chair. Peterson stared dejectedly at the table. The captain watched him intently. He leaned over.

“Come, come,” he said. “Cheer up! Let's discuss things.” He smiled. “As I was asking before I was interrupted, what kind of power runs this lovely ship.”

Peterson jerked up, staring.

“Just out of curiosity, what exactly does a captain do,” the captain said.



Beyond Lies the  
WUB

by Philip K. Dick

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