

# **Star City**

and the Planetary Council

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# Star City

## and the Planetary Council

### Chapter 1

#### Home Life

Finally it's happening. What alien beings were out there have not revealed themselves in an expected manner. After centuries of wondering and seeking to know the world is now a part of the local alien community. Everything was still the same; cars, freeways, skyscrapers, clubs, restaurants, hotels, and parks. The year was 2037. Most of the activities on Earth were as they have always been; only one thing was different, *the new era*.

The **global debates** were diminishing and most have chosen to resume their lives as they were while others desire to explore the **new territories**. Ever since the **alien council** disclosed themselves and the surrounding inhabited star systems the heads' of the nations were more clear. The knowledge of the council and extraterrestrial life naturally instilled a sense of oneness between many peoples and filled an empty place in them. It couldn't have come any sooner. Before the unveiling of the council there was much tension, terrorism, and poverty on Earth. Now, there is direction. Not only that but **the Planetary Council** insisted a dictation that not a single Earthling would be allowed into the new space territories and not a single piece of alien technology would be shared unless the conflicts were brought under control, the expectation of every star system brought into membership and a fine way to gain order.

China was one such nation in need of control. It took intense pressure from all the world from nations which desired to venture into this new era to simmer down so to speak. China had grown tremendously over the decades and rivaled all first world countries in technology and modernization. With massive city complexes of superb construction many have moved there to set up residence and acquire real-estate. So many in fact that whole towns were sectioned off that contain many members of foreign countries such as the American reserve similar to China town in San Francisco.

The excitement builds as many people on Earth prepare to embark on the life-changing and profound adventure into Star City. Only a few handfuls of Humans has graduated the **Federal Transition Academy**, which primes students for the progression into **extraplanetary activities**.

Seiwan Li was employed at the local food store where he tends the market and assists passing customers. He preferred living there in the rural region in the backcountry of China near the American reserve where he has dwelled in serenity. These days, people lived in many parts of the world from many different home lands. Li had preserved much of the old traditions of his family as they were passed down. His life has always been a simple one. There, with his mother and father in their rustic cabin he spends most of his time doing what he loves best, working, studying, and learning. He practiced martial arts, mastered astronomy, and physics every day after his work of bagging groceries. He saves his money and plans to one day attend college.



*The Old Trail*

Spending most of his time alone, Seiwan captured the peace of an unelaborate life. Yet, his drive to understand the sciences and the universe is everpresent seen in his diligent studies of such. Seiwan had a close friend, Lazarus, who lived a brief hike through the forest and across **the sparkling creek**.

The days and nights passed. From sun up to sun down Seiwan spent his time at his job and in his room. Occasionally he would traverse the active woodlands to visit his close friend. Through the shrubs, past the meadow, across the creek, and over the thicketed heap, Li followed a narrow nature trail traveled also by many forest creatures. Emerging from the piney brush, he comes to the three-lane highway of businesses and fast food restaurants. Only a quarter-mile he paces along the sidewalk to the upscale subdivision where Lazarus also resided with *his* parents. Lazarus was more of a thrill seeker and medical student at his local college. He was reasonably educated in his own right and spends much of his spare time collecting the latest video games, media, and today's music.

### An Evening Outing

Lazarus owned a red sports car and often the two would drive around and visit the commons area of the local double-decker mall to look at women. Li of course felt too self-disciplined to take a mate as of yet, though he had special one in the past. Lazarus on the other hand was often looking for girlfriends and female company. There's always lots of laughter and jiving when Lazarus is around. Playful behavior particularly with his woman, **Eling** is also common.

Everyone knows what Li does at his home regarding, his practice, and studies. His friends respect him for his responsibility and humor. There in the food court as they enjoy their time out it is not uncommon for someone to briefly awaken from their fun and bliss to consider the implications of Star City, which suddenly hits them as an epiphany. Perhaps a brief discussion will erupt on the subject. Seiwan was all ears anytime someone mentions Star City or The Planetary Council. The friendly group considers the implications for a moment and soon resumes chatting and banter while Li gazes outward still fixed on the possibilities of leaving Earth. A love tap brings him out of his trance as the assembly stands to leave the mall and off to the local buffet for dinner, Li smiles and follows.

The atmosphere at the steakhouse buffet was lively and infectious. People of many classes enjoyed the delectable meals of the large serving counters. Although disciplined Li finds it to be a pleasant challenge resisting the mesmerizing charm of the many available and youthful women in the eating-house. Lazarus naturally immerses himself and brings a lot of life to the party while the edible morsels at the banquet counters drew the mouth-watered customers from their engrossing colloquy.

Li was quieter as usual and not very popular but loved watching his friends enjoy themselves. Ironically, few townspeople dining adjacent to them paid much attention to the boisterous table, which was beginning to become a bit loud. Lazarus and Eling were playing and feeding each other making a bit of a scene. Li found himself often peering through the café windows out onto the three-lane highway and sometimes into the evening sky, which he loved to look. It reminded him of the little spot back in the woods near his home, the old knoll where he used to sit by the glistening pond, dreaming. He remembered many summers ago: the warm wind breezing, the sound of the crickets and the frogs, the background a towering mountain he had yet to climb, a hint of an aurora that he could recall wisping through as it charged the sky with color, the roar of the wind and the song of the canopy also filled the air. There was an old telescope his father gave to him as a boy, which he had sat onto a stone block buried into the ground. He never knew where the block had come from or who put it there but it has been there for years. Lastly his girlfriend, who would come to sit with him there, moved away years ago. They had many warming romances at that spot. He missed her and the times they spent there.

The image refocuses on the lighting of the multi-socketed lamp chained to the rustic ceiling and the sounds of laughter awaken him from his recollection. The will of the chaffing party propelled him to go gaming elsewhere and he follows. Next on the list this glorious weekend: bowling and dance! The group of friends all pile into Lazarus's car and head for the bowling alley where they buy a game and a few beers. Lazarus shows off his skills on the dance floor while Li talks to the adorable women. Although he doesn't apply for a relationship, many of the women enjoy his intellect in conversation.

Li had bowled only a few gutters and couldn't seem to put his mind where it needed to be, always miles away in another land or another time. He had accepted his place long ago as the quiet person yet still had the respect of his peers. They often came to Li for guidance and advice when they had emotional issues and such. Lazarus who was becoming a bit tipsy came from the dance section to bowl his turn. Confounding once again Lazarus had bowled a near perfect game. Even in

his slightly unsteady state of mind he was the winner of the top bowler's award, free movie tickets. No doubt Eling would be his companion on that occasion.

It was getting to be time to wind down. The beer was settling and the energy was gradually going dormant. Naturally people follow their instincts and find someone to spend the night with. Lazarus, although very open with women, stayed with his mate. It takes a little while to deposit the nodding allies as they ride. The night was active and the police were out. Here again Li was the designated driver and made the rounds while others rested in the back and making sure not to invite legal trouble. Any debate about where to go next was quickly dismissed by the talking yawns of drowsy buddies. The night ends up with a slightly intoxicated Lazarus, an always mostly sober Li, and a girlfriend with something on her mind.

At the home arrival, after quietly jarring shut the doors, the three navigated the darkened yard and entered the house. Li, who had the keys, unlocked and held the recoiling screen door for them. Inside the dimmed home of Lazarus his father snoozes in the recliner barely noticed but by his sleep noises.

"Will you excuse us?" Eling whispered. Li recognized the *Dear John* look on her face as they continue to the bedroom.

"Sure."

Eling quietly closes the door and she and Lazarus talk seriously as before they would normally sleep together. Li sat on the little padded chair next to the bedroom and waited.

Minutes later, light beams from the doorframe as it creaks open drawing Li from a brief nod. He stands and peeks inside to see Lazarus still sitting on his bed speechless glancing at Li briefly. Eling is silent as she passes, leaves the house, and drives away. No comments were unusual for Lazarus who is almost always the brilliant one. This was a breakup. Li knew she had left him. Lazarus was clearly saddened but Li knew already he would recover. Eling had only been around for a few months. Tomorrow Lazarus's unquenchable spirit would be back to normal. Li decides to leave knowing his friend wanted to rest. The alcohol had overwhelmed him.

A quarter of a mile back down the moderately busy sidewalk this time of night to the edge of the woods Li enters onto the trail. The thrilling trek into a new realm of whistles and chirps pacifies Li as he makes his way to his cabin home. The feeling of elastic silk caressed his face as he moved. His adrenaline rushed reactions were sudden as he whipped and slapped his hands trying to sling the fat spider he had run face first into. He remained still for a moment trying to relax but the creepy crawl of the quick moving arachnid tickled his neck soon to make its escape as he brushed it off anxiously. He very much enjoys nature and respects life as his belief and discipline had taught him. Yet, the predatory form of the spider gave him prudence. Li continues on into the darkened backyard of carvings and critter feeders. At home he settles in, his parents long asleep in the other bedroom. In *his* bedroom he prays on his floor mat briefly where he usually meditates before laying down to rest.

### Blissful Morning

The sunlight penetrates the narrow openings between the canopies onto the yard leaving patches of light on the groomed grass and Li awakens to the chirps of fowl and the rustling of critters. His traditional and sweet-hearted mother Nora serves breakfast. He can smell the mouth-watering aromas coming from the kitchen. The crackling of the frying pan was most enticing as is the steady rattle of the biscuit roller flattening the fresh dough; the crack of the eggshells followed by the sizzling hiss of condensing egg white. His father Guiren had left for work earlier.

"Seiwan I checked the mail and you have letters in the living room." Li's mother informs. He goes to the coffee table where his father usually leaves the stuff from the mailbox. After sifting through he comes across a letter from his Grandfather Li Lian Gi who lives in **America**.

"Grandfather Gi has written. He is an engineer and foundry worker at the large facility in the developmental district of the **Arizona Desert**. He wants me to travel to Arizona to inherit a family heirloom he says."

"I haven't heard from him in a good while. And I don't know anything of any inherited property existing in America. All of our traditions and belongings are here in the Orient. So are you going?"

"I'd love to go! I'd like to think about it though." Li ponders a moment. "Later I'm going over to Lazarus's house for a while. If I do go I want to try to persuade Lazarus to come."

"See you later son."

Li stands to feel the diligence in the hand of his mother before departing to make his way over to the House of Lazarus. Through the woods, across the creek, and over the thicketed heap, Li treks along the active sidewalk one-quarter mile soon to wrap on the Miller home door.

"Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Miller." Li greets as he arrives to meet Laz's parents of American immigration, Steve and Susan at the door. Circumstantially, Lazarus was pulling up behind him in his hot rod. Li leapt from the steps and moves to the driver side door. As Li had predicted Lazarus were all smiles again. They enter the house; have some hot tea, and a breakfast plate of rice cakes.

"Oh guess what. I just got my engine smog converter device installed this morning." Lazarus revealed.

"So I heard." Li said noting the peculiar engine noise.

"Come on lets go for a ride." He invited.

"Okay but later, I have some planning to do."

"Like what?"

"Well I think I've made up my mind." Li says.

"About what?"

"If I join the **FTA** your to come with me my friend"

"The academy, wow what brought that on?"

"I've received a letter from my grandfather. He wants me to come to America to pick up something. I don't know what yet. But while I'm at it I might as well join. I've been thinking about it forever anyway."

"And you want me to join too? Why?"

"Come on old pal don't you want to go to space? The opportunity is now available to the public as you well know."

Lazarus pauses and considers.

"I'm not so sure about that. I haven't given it much thought."

"Haven't you ever considered exploring the new territories?"

"Well maybe once or twice but I have work here and too many friends to leave like that. I don't know. Isn't that a big responsibility?"

Li grins. "Of course, but think of the fun!" he exclaimed.

"Oh yeah, what kind of fun?" Lazarus asked. "I hear you can get killed up there."

Li nods. "It's only the daredevils who do dumb stuff." He assured.

"So what happened with Eling?"

Lazarus looks to Li as his naiveness didn't give him the answer to his question. "She moved on, I'm single now. End of story"

"Well, tell me what happened."

"She has another boyfriend Li."

"Oh, right, I see. Well... maybe that's an omen. If you're feeling let down because of breaking up with Eling then this is the perfect move to make. Let's do it."

"Okay tell me more."

"Well after the academy we would have the choice to continue on as civilians or join the **SMD**. After a term of service we could get a ship of our own! Explore as far as we want to. Go to other planets. How's that for thrills? We'll become part a whole different crowd. There is no telling who or what we'll do. We'll meet new people, get new girlfriends and more."

By his reddened face and adventurous sparkle in his eyes Li knew he was nearly convinced. Lazarus's impulsive nature leaves him little choice.

"Well now that you mention it that does sound like fun."

"Yes and I hear there are plenty of available girl pilots out there." Li insured. Lazarus smirks.

"I'll tell you what why don't we talk about it on the way to Arizona to pick up my item?"

"Yeah I'll go. I need a change of pace anyway. This kind of goes along with my spontaneous planning anyway. I like getting up and going somewhere don't you? Well when do we leave?"

"I'm telling you, you made the right choice. And I guarantee by next year you'll be seeing why. We can leave as soon as we can make arrangements; we can take one of those hovering seaplanes; do you have your passport?"

"Of course"

"How about we get started on preparing?" The thrill enters into them like a transisting spirit.

"Why not." Said Lazarus.

"Go tell your family." Li urged.

"What about your mom and dad?"

"Done. My mother knows. She'll tell dad. I've hinted to them about going off to finish my schooling before. They expect me to do things like this."

"Well that's all we see you seem to do is study anyway. I guess this will be good for you to. No need to see your talents go unutilized."

"How's your med classes coming."

"Pretty well, I'll be a certified nurse in a few months. I guess I could finish that at that Transition Academy."

"Yes good, you know. The Federal Transition Academy has everything a regular university does, but your aim is space life. All of your professions are engineered toward that. I'll be professing in nuclear engineering amongst other things."

"Alright let's make it happen." Said Lazarus with drive. The two begin their packing and head for the seaport in the hours afterward.

### **Destination: America**

In fifteen hours the Western bound China Sea-lines flight wakes into the busy port of the American seaway in California. Seiwan and Lazarus traverse the travel inlet and immediately board another plane to Arizona. The two-hour flight passed swiftly perhaps due to their inner exuberance. The next step after landing was to acquire a land based transit. Upon taking a shuttle-van the rest of the way to the Engineering facility where Grandfather Gi works they marvel at the intriguing windblown formations carved into the old Arizona dessert as the scenery flowed by.



### ***A Dazzling Ride***

In the hours ahead the van reaches the gates of the elaborate facility where Grandfather Gi employed others. It was an extensive assemblage of buildings and bays some opened of the large garage gates revealing the nearly blinding sparks of arc welding equipment. The glowing fragments bounced on the ground a few times as the radiating metal cooled in the dessert air.

"You're clear to enter." The guard shack occupant waved and opened the automatic gate.

"Wow, this is complex, and huge." Lazarus expressed. The squeak of the brake drums signals the end of the van-ride as well as some need for vehicle maintenance. With bags on their backs and excitement in their bellies they work their way inward. It takes a series of composite navigations around vehicle parts, construction equipment, and half completed frames of curious craft and containers before reaching any comfortable position nearer to their desired destination, Grandfather Gi's office, the ground sometimes littered with metallic dust and greasy concrete from previous projects.

They reach the center of the compound and enter the semi-filled lobby inside hosting an array of various workers and visitors. Passing through the inner halls of employee portraits and pin boards of work schedules the electrified entry before them swings open allowing them access to the sterile office environment. The smell of magazines and electronics stimulated the senses.

"I'm looking for Lian Gi's office." Li requested of the counter clerk.

"It's the first door on the right." The clerk pointed. Gi was working hard at his desk and is greeted fervently by Li after his appearance between the door frame.

"Seiwan, Come in come in I'm very glad to see you!"

"You too grand pa. It's been so long." With hugs and handshakes the three make salute.

"Put your things down let's talk."

"Grand pa this is my long time friend Lazarus." Li introduced as they park onto the buttoned leather waiting chairs. Gi tips his head at the young buck and begins right away, as he was a *get things done* kind of man. Not to mention he was in a work mode and was not accustomed to dilly-dallying.

"Seiwan I called you here for a few reasons. First I want you to join the Federal Transition Academy." Gi states with a serious yet, thoughtful expression.

"That's funny because Lazarus and I were discussing going together actually." Li responded. He is already thinking about what his first day will be like at the Academy. He recalls his first day of school, that feeling of destiny, where one's life begins and where it will lead. Li snaps out of his dream.

"So, you have something for me, an inheritance?" Gi smiles.

"Yes. Here's the plan, if you complete your academy courses I have a ship for you. You won't need to join Star City Military to get one!" Li was almost overwhelmed by the idea as he glances at Lazarus who displays a similar expression. "Can I see it now?" He inquired.

"Not yet. It's being developed here as we speak. You cannot inherit it until it's finished and you have finished your courses at the academy." Li looks to Lazarus and leans toward him to whisper in his ear.

"Lazarus we're bypassing the military...." Li looks back to Gi seriously. "We're in!"

"Good. I can get you into the academy right away." Gi says.

"Li this is very rare that applicant into space life acquire a ship without completing military term of service. It's happened only once before." Gi informed. Lazarus speaks up. "Excuse me Mr. Gi but I'm curious why is it so necessary for people to have to go to the Star City Military to get a ship?" Gi was silent a moment.

"There are a few reasons." He began. "But mainly it is a way for all these vessels flying about space to be somewhat regulated and controlled."

"I see." Said Lazarus taking note of Gi's brief answer. Gi's arm stretches out toward Li with papers in his hand.

"Take these documents and present them at the Academy admissions office. Tell them You were referred by me. Also be sure to contact the family and give them an update, let them know what's happening." Li accepts the papers, and stands anxious to begin. The dream of owning a spacecraft is slowly becoming real. Their faces reveal their eagerness.

### The Federal Transition Academy

**Dean Wilder** had met with Seiwan as planned and he was stern in his demeanor. His office decorated of intriguing ornaments and academic rewards hung about the walls. His hair brown and suit of raven black, his face still bearing old style glasses as his taste prefer. Li didn't know why he admired this man whom he knew not yet looked upon him as if he were a mentor.

"Hello I'm Seiwan and this is Lazarus. Li Lian Gi sent us." The sturdy college honcho emerged from his in-depth analysis of the two new applicants before him and swayed over to an expression of relief. Something about Gi's grandson lightened his face as Li perceived.

"Let me see your papers. So you to want to go to outer space eh. Well you look fortified enough. It takes a formidable spirit to endure the voids. This is no amusement park mind you. So far there have been only a small number of classes, which have graduated the academy and attained **Transition Licenses**. There is not very many people rounded enough to visit the local settlements in space or other star systems."

"Yes sir we understand."

"I know Li Lian Gi wouldn't send you here unless he knew you were ready." With the thud of a stamp the documents were officialized. A handshake to the two newbies and the meeting breaks with an understood consensus. They were off to explore the building and Li and Lazarus separate.

An astounding educational facility with many sorts of learning tools and classes to join, shortly both Li and Lazarus picked out the mandatory **Earth Transgression Courses** which is designed to have the student ready for space transition in a few months. The halls were filled with zealous young students and decorated with attractive billboards displaying academic schedules and images. The impression was a little different from a traditional college. The purpose here was not to seek a career rather a permit to enter space. After the opening seminars the students were handed their class schedules and soon settled in to their new routines.

Li was hard at study and advanced quickly as he already has previous knowledge of his chosen subjects. Lazarus was making similar progress and chose to advance his medical skills as well as academy training courses. As expected Lazarus was studying closely with some of the lady nurses. Li maintains his studies and only speaks casually or as a study partner with the women. Lazarus becomes popular as well and has many friends.

Over time the knowledge gained at the academy proves valuable. Li becomes more prominent. Many people respect him. But, some reject him of jealousy. **Christopher Williams** a fellow student becomes especially adversarial to Li and competes with him in almost every course. He strives to maintain his previous role as the schools star student but is quickly becoming overshadowed by Li's vast knowledge and discipline.

About three quarters of the way through the academy Li Lian Gi is reported to have died in an accidental explosion involving nuclear particle testing which included several other men at the foundry. Li grieves. He and Lazarus attends a memorial. Li wasn't the only one who was devastated. The sadness could be seen on the faces of all the workers and friends who knew him. In the back of Li's mind he can't help but to be preoccupied. The inheritance letter, the urgency in passing on his ship and business, the sudden death all ran through his mind at once. The report Li received read that his cause of death was undetermined as it had happened in a violent explosion with little to no remains.

Seiwan Li was the only one Gi trusted to inherit his project seemingly. With the ship building and the situation in space, whatever is going on it must be profound, so Li thought. Seiwan Li is now the owner of the vessel he will soon retrieve. Thoughts of Grandfather Gi remain in his mind while he continues his training process including the obvious application for **Ship Piloting Licenses** and Lazarus does the same. Incidentally, Christopher Williams attended the same ship licensing acquisition class and as usual attempted to attain a higher score than Li.

Months have passed. It is a time of gratitude and emotion as transition day arrives. Grandfather Gi was missed; he might have attended the event. Such would have been a proud time to have Gi there. Seiwan, Lazarus, and many other students including Christopher Williams receive their degrees and certifications with seriousness. Seiwan, upon acquiring and registering his vessel will be Captain Seiwan Li. He has astutely kept his vessel inheritance a secret.

### Arizona Dawning

The beauty of the dessert sunrise was unmatched. The incomparable scene silently dazzled the new graduates as they traversed the lone two-lane highway on their way back to the foundry to acquire the space ship, yet they spoke not of it. It had been a long string of semesters but the training and courses were well spent. Through the front windshield the familiar site of the foundry entrance reminded them of their first trip out here to this metal-tempering complex in this remote barren location.

"Airport shuttle van is requesting entry." The driver sounded on his radio as they reach the end of the driveway. Through the glass Li could see sitting upon the desk in the guard shack was left the bouquet of blossoming buds at the sender's request. Base personnel soon intercept them.

"I have a package for a Mr. Li here." Said the guardsmen armed with an AK 47 hung around his neck.

"Here you go." Said the driver and passed the basket to Li.

"What's in it?" Lazarus asked.

"It looks like some belongings of my Grandfather, a letter and gift card.

"What's it say?"

"He expresses his acknowledgements to me and wishes me well. He must have put this together before the accident at the foundry." Li said sadly. Lazarus reaches into the basket to sound a chingly noise and rattled the item before Li.

"I wonder what these are for?" He asked. Additional to the fragrant flora, were the keys to a hangar where the ship was located.

"The name of the vessel is the **Star Voyager**." Li said.

"Isn't that an old video game?"

"Yes, very old."

"Li did you get any more information on what caused the explosion?" Lazarus asked. Li's gaze lowers.

"He was in a large facility where they were constructing advanced engine designs. Something went wrong with a particle antiparticle injector they were using to test the designs and a half of a gram of antiparticles came into contact with air and there was a nucleonic explosion."

"I see. Then there would be no way to recover anything or anyone from that kind of explosion."

"Yes. I'm still in disbelief. It happened so fast, one moment Gi is alive having sent me on this sudden quest and the next..." Lazarus holds Li's shoulder.

The vehicle comes to a halt.

"Here you are sirs." The driver said pulling ahead only a few more meters. Li tips the man.

"I'll get a buggy." Lazarus said. The sound of the battery driven wagon nears and Li hops the cart.

Through the work area, past the heavy supply containers, and onward to the hangar they stopped not for a visit. The sun shined down on the concrete clearing and the arch-shaped structure laid waiting for opening. The rippled, wide, aluminum doors affront remained locked and alluring as the little buggy delivers its two-man cargo. The sunlight shimmers from the gate metal and a wisp of wind swoops past them. Li falls into a trance as he recalls his life before the academy, his training, his many nights sitting under his favorite tree on the grassland on a warm summers night, looking up and dreaming about the stars. Now he's a little dizzy with déjà vu. He almost feels like he had already been to space. He unlocks the latch and together they lift. The site of the black elongated frame sends Li into a vision. He sees images of strange places and events like a flash-forward. The vision subsides. He looks to Lazarus who is speechless. Simultaneously they dart over to the sleek shiny vessel to lay hands on it. The ship was atop a large flat bed trailer waiting for transference. There are four big engines attached to the rear corners and a host of additional engines with yet-to-be-known purposes. Li, with a jittery tremble, unfolds the papers he found in the basket which contain instructions on how to enter the vessel.

"It says we can get in from the top hatch." Li uttered. He hands the basket to Lazarus and places the papers between his teeth.

Crawling onto the greasy flatbed, with patients he climbs the step rungs attached onto the hull-side about the middle of the vessel. Just then two facility guards approach requesting identification. Li leaps from the steal climber.

"Okay, I see you are Captain Li." The guard stated while reading the card badge tethered to him. Seiwan grins slightly.

"Yes sir, that's me." He was not expecting to hear that title yet.

"That's quite an impressive piece of machinery your grandfather has been designing. He's been at it for over five years." They were intrigued.

"This paper says it incorporates alien parts!" Li pointed out. The guard smirks.

"It has to. That Planetary Council has provided much of the special materials and components for virtually every vessel we design here. It's fascinating stuff really." Li was astounded. He turns and looks toward the vessel again. He gets that feeling; the site of the vessel gives him peculiar images of exotic locations he has not been.

"I need to let you know Mr. Li that you'll have to sign these documentation and tracking consent forms before you can fly that thing out of here."

"Understood sir..." Li responds respectfully. "I have no problem with you guys filming our take-off. We're ready now if there are no other necessities."

"You can show that by signing in a few moments. I'll send out for a tow tug to roll your ship to our launching pad. I trust you gentle man will not back out on this. We've wanted to see that ship take flight since your Coordinator Lian Gi started the project."

"I see." His glance lowers again then returns level.

"Well I'm sure by the looks of my vessel it will be quite a note for us all."

"Heh, especially for you two, I hear it's a mind blowing experience in space." The guard pulls a communicator and clicks a button sequence. "I've just signaled the launch pad the tow tug should be here momentarily."

"So what have you heard?" Li asked.

"Maybe I'd better ask you first, what have you heard?" He responds.

"Mostly basics from our academy training courses... They do not go into detail about other pilots experiences up there because they are all different and sometimes personal."

"That's right; only those who permit the delivery of their private activities will you ever hear about. Not to mention some of it is confidential military events."

"Yes so we hear. The academy focused on ship piloting, procedures, airlocks, modern space suit function, and above all physics and engineering education. It was like being in college." Li told.

"Let me just tell you this." The guard began.

"You may end up traveling so far out you'll never be seen or heard from again back here." Li and Lazarus glance to one another. "I don't think we'll be going out too far, I plan to play it safe." Li assured.

"Well, that would be the smart thing to do, but it's a wild world up there..." There was a feeling in Li's stomach at the sound of the tow tug's humming motor and he felt wooziness from the adrenaline rush. He maintained a professional demeanor however.

The three exit the hangar while the tow tug's operator hitches to the flatbed trailer with a metallic impact. The hangar gave birth to the ship rolling on its trailer bed while Li and Lazarus are driven to the commencing stage.

### The Launch

Several members of the SVLC, Space Vehicle Launch Committee, were huddled near the launch pad while a large crane hoisted Li's ship onto the center of the pad painted with a yellow crosshair in the center. The buggy halts while the two cadets hop off and securely walks onto the pad. They were intercepted by a couple of men holding clipboards and a black ink pen which was soon in the hands of Li. A note of permission and consent to the facility administration documenting and certifying the details of the launch was skimmed by Li and he signs next to the signatures of the Facility administrators.

A further note was reiterated aloud. "Captain Seiwan Li, as you have been previously instructed in your training and briefings on space flight protocols you are hereby signing and verifying that you will proceed directly to Moonbase-1 to be promoted and where you will receive further instructions and cautions. Do not waiver from this course. This is an order from the Admiral of the SMD." The executive dictates.

"We understand sir." Says Li. Lazarus tips his head adamantly. The documents are signed, Li and Lazarus's hands are shaken, and they begin climbing the rungs.

Li's key turns the lock and the first hatch layer is opened, the second sliding into the frame of the hull, and the third inward with build on rungs. The smell of metals and electronics filled their nostrils and the cockpit door was retracted. There weren't blinking lights or panels until Li's key inserted into the control ignition but the sequence was to insert, turn right, pull, turn left, push in two levels, turn left. Then the activation sounds were heard and screen displays blinked into view on the forward panels. Panoramic screens produced by magnifying light optics fluoresces the material and delivered the view of the facility and Arizona terrain. Cacti, shrubs, and rocks littered the desert sands.

Their hands moved automatically demonstrating their course training. Lazarus opened the communications frequencies with launch command.

"Go ahead and energize your hovering plates." A voice sounded over the speakers. A sharp, fluctuating spoil warbles audible as that of a pan warping. "Go to your maximum hover height and take off. You have your orbiting satellite windows preprogrammed into your ship's computers, good luck command out."

"Okay let's go my friend." Says Li. Switches were flipped knobs turns and flat panel interface keys were tapped. Behind the embedded into the wall atomic particle reservoirs hummed and buzzed as the storage and delivery system prepared to move particle streams to thrusters, but not yet.

From outside the ship rose into the air and was quickly at sufficient height to initiate ascent thrust. The magnetic drone of particle transfer conduits energized and the current indicators showed particles transferring into the thrust discharge chambers below the ship. Above them another low sound was heard, which was the g-force emulation envelope, took hold of them felt slightly as the ship darted up. A rarely seen flame as brilliant as the sun when looking dead on into the thrust nozzles the thrusters delivered their promise and various radiations emitted from them. On the landing pad these radiation levels were noted and monitored by teams standing by their computer consoles.

## Chapter 2

### First Night on the Town

In a half an hour...

"My grandfather sure knew how to design." Li says as he peers into the screens surrounding him. The feel of the finished console, the angles of its devices were well arranged.

"Look how deeply blue the sky is turning." Lazarus mentioned as the atmosphere begins to thin and temperature plummeted, his pounding heart unheard over the sharp engine thrust.

"It's time to rotate the ship and ignite the fission engines to attain an orbit." Li warned. His extremities were weak and twitchy as he fought his faint from too much adrenaline in his blood. At the edge of the exosphere the sky drops like a stage curtain to reveal the inky blackness of space. The computer instructs to angle the vessel upward,

"Here we go." Li completes the panel sequence and immediately the vessels fission engine burns. The **g-force emulation field** generating system activates and the vessel barrels to orbital speeds.

"Do you feel that?" Li asked. "I feel a tug. How fast are we now?"

"We're at four-thousand miles per hour and climbing."

"Is there going to be any more tug than that?"

"Not much; the GEF adjusts to our acceleration and keeps inertia from squashing us. It is never one hundred percent efficient so there will always be a pull on us. See this dial?" Li said as he points to the indicator.

"If it reaches the end of the red mark we're dead."

"What does that mean?"

"It means our GEF field is maxed out and can't compensate for our inertia anymore."

"What happens if the GEF cannot compensate?"

"The ship will disintegrate. The field generator is alien technology, which can counteract acceleratory forces by creating a nearly equivalent gravity-like force in the needed direction that acts on all particles to prevent disintegration at high acceleration ratios." Li finished.

"It also dampens time dilation effectively or we might end up somewhere in the future."

"What, the future, how?"

"Don't you know about relativity? Every space pilot should. They gave a few classes about it at the academy. If I recall I think you were very busy with the girls." Lazarus smirks.

"Well, don't worry my friend I'll keep it under my hat. Anyways, time slows down with faster and faster speed unless you can compensate with antitemporal fields which are a side effect of our GEF device."

"I see; my heart is pounding." Lazarus said.

"My blood has to be pure adrenaline right now."

"Me too, do you need sedation?" Li asked.

"No not yet. I'll save it. I don't like synthetic chemicals. But it is specifically designed for space pilots. Where are we now?"

"We have already rocketed half way around Earth and nearing orbital speeds. I'm shutting down the engines...we are now in a quiet orbit. Take a look." Li said tipping his head toward the forward screen, in it the dazzling blue-green oasis.

"My heart is still pounding." Lazarus reported nervously.

"Here go ahead and use the sedation."

Just then an alert sounds drawing the undivided attention to the ship requirements.

"It's a communications message from the SVLC ground control." They requested an update on their progress.

"Everything is okay ground. We're in orbit." Li reported.

"Good work Captain. Are you ok?" The man asked having noted the shuttering in his breath.

"I'll be ok."

"Alright then, you will initiate the **SMD rendezvous procedure** and land at the military base at once. Do not attempt to go anywhere else other than this base or you will be in violation. There they will register and inspect your craft thoroughly. We didn't give you enough fuel for you to go very far anyway. Li it is our hope that academy graduates can accept this arrangement. We can't have people flying off into space buck wild without proper reverence. Feel free to enjoy yourselves but this is no child's play. Your wielding energies and velocities beyond the scope of normal human imagination one false

mistake or serious collision can result in major disasters. Don't forget about your store of antimatter that will be loaded into your engines."

"Yes sir believe me they drilled that into our heads very thoroughly at the academy."

"Safe journey to you Captain Li. May God be with you."

"I'm hoping Grandfather Gi will be, at least in spirit." Li smiles then look to Lazarus who was glaring intently at his console. He was trying to keep up with all the alerts and messages the computer was displaying.

"Just relax my friend." He assures with a shoulder pat.

"I'll take it from here." His hand was a bit heavy as if unable to control the tap. Lazarus exhales a bit.

"Have another gander at our young home world." Li said referring to the blue marble outside. The high-resolution window screen in front of them revealed the shimmering earth and its dazzling features. They gaze for a moment.

"Lazarus will you is select a **standard lunar orbit procedure** from the flight plan screen." Li requested. Lazarus complies.

"I feel more tugs." He said.

"It's quite noticeable this time."

"We're picking up a lot of speed now. We're only at 0.1 g's."

"It doesn't look like we are really moving at all."

"Well we really are. Here let's look at the rear view." Li activates the screen option.

"Our home planet is shrinking slowly?"

"My heart won't stop throbbing. I keep getting intense waves throughout my body and in my limbs."

"Try to hang in there, I shiver a little bit in spells, this is very real."

"That's what my mind keeps processing. I go from the calmness from my training to that racing feeling and back. How long until we reach the Moon's hold?"

"Not long. We are locked in to a linear trajectory toward the Moon's limb. Following the time limits, ETA is about a half hour. At orbital speeds it could take up to four days to reach the moon. With the new **advanced Mach speed engines** which will accelerate us up to mach 3000 it will take far less time to reach lunar orbit. At mach 3000 we could reach Moon in just over six minutes however this would violate Star City no wake zone regulations. Not to mention we would pass the moon and break its escape velocity at that speed. That's why in space we have to use what we call swell velocities, meaning that we rarely travel at a set speed. It's always a time to accelerate and then at half point decelerate in a gradual, rise and fall of speed. This was a primary detail I learned from my instructor. You took piloting lessons didn't you remember that?"

"Yes, I did remember that don't worry."

"At current the speed limit from Earth to our moon is mach 600 putting us at the Moon in about thirty minutes. This is the agreed appropriate speed for non-emergency vessels, which are permitted to exceed these velocities." Li concluded of his long-winded details.

"I've seen documentaries about old classic procedures for landing on the Moon. They go into orbit first and then use retro rockets to slow their speed while descending in kind of arc toward the surface."

"No we don't need to do it that way with this ship. The landing thrusters we're using as you just saw when we lifted off from earth are smaller but more powerful than those rockets they used to use. They could only carry enough liquid and gas fuel for one trip at a time. This ship uses particle discharge thrusters. The annihilation of particles with antiparticles in the discharge chambers is what creates our thrust. The amount of fuel reserves we can store is greater by far! We can land and take off again and only use a small amount of reserves."

"Well Li I know I signed up for this to be your navigator and backup medical crew but at some point I want you to go over the function of the engineering with me."

"Sure thing. I'm sure we'll get some idle time at some point in our journey."

"I'm getting a small gut tickling feeling while we fall toward the Moon."

"You're going to get that a lot I'm sure. Wait until we approach a massive body in space like say, Jupiter."

"I can feel the tickle all ready." Lazarus punned. On screen the Moon grew slowly as their speed swelled. Though they were at a systems standby they remained ready for any sudden change.



### ***An Enchanting Satellite***

“SMD Moonbase-1 is already in our coordinate finder. It helps that the finder is in sync with the speed swell ratio. It plots the course automatically.” Lazarus said.

“Gi was the one who was not only responsible for design but requesting the instruments we will be using in here. I just wish I had more information about Gi. He deserves more from me for all this.”

“He wanted you to have it. That much was clear.”

“Yes I see that. But something is definitely going on in space I mean. I have a feeling it’s not just civilians gallivanting around.”

“In the academy they made mention of some political disputes about how we want to regard the territory, free and open or cold gripping control.”

“From what I learned it’s free and open right now, The SMD makes sure of that.”

“Li I’m going to prepare a few flight plans ahead of time. The star charts give details about alternate shipping lanes and preferred trajectories.”

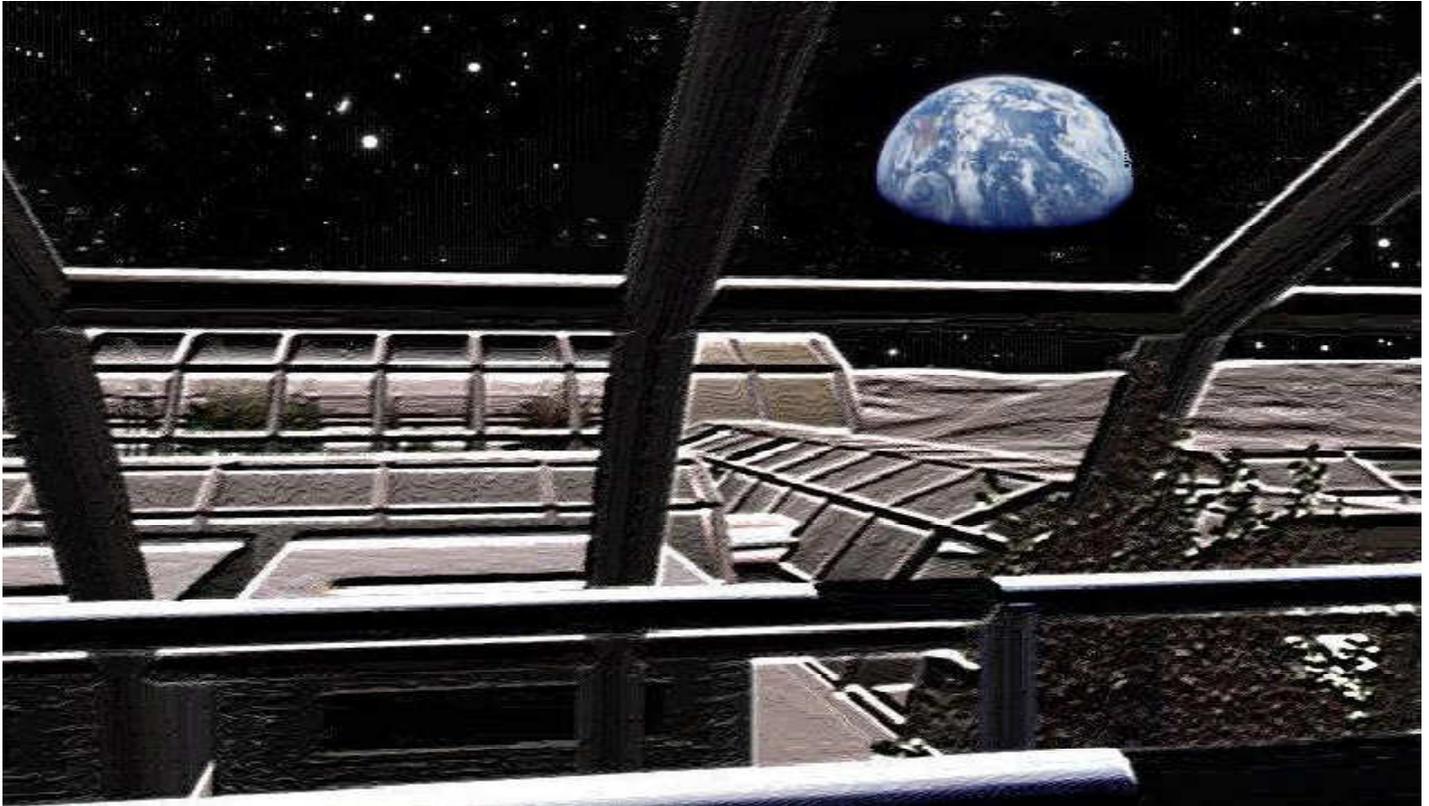
“Go ahead. I’m watching the oxygen generator and other systems. They all seem to be at least indirectly connected to the atomic particle storage and delivery system behind us.”

“About the SMD, since they are our only protection I cannot help but wonder who or what have they been protecting us from?”

“I have a feeling we’ll soon find out.” Li said.

### **Moonbase-1**

Meanwhile, on Moonbase-1, destination of the Star Voyager, Admiral Arinori Seghtee of the SMD awakens in his quarters. His bed sat under a window screen skylight viewing the Earthrise over a rocky lunar horizon. It was a moon morning. Moon base is a large high tech fortress on the surface and buried several 10’s of meters underground. The quarters, where he spent most of his off and rest hours, were cozy and comfortable. He sits up in his bed stretching and yawning after a pleasant night’s sleep, or rather a night according this schedule. On the moon the Sun can rise awkwardly giving confusing time variations to those used to planetary life. Of course he was used to it. He had been stationed on Moon base for some years.



### *Seghtee's Quarter View*

Stepping out of bed his feet sink into the thick warm carpet and he passes through the study into the lavatory. After tending his personal hygiene he dresses in his uniform. He enjoyed his work and was eager to greet the day. He leaves his quarters through the military style automatic doors.

Shortly into the corridors of panels, blinking lights and buttons an officer soon approaches him much to his expectation, it is routine when his shift begins.

"Admiral..." He hailed. The officer salutes, stands at attention, and begins his report. "The base and all systems are functioning normally. Our monthly security report is scheduled to be transmitted to the Planetary Council today, digging and excavation of additional highway strips are taking place in the **Mare Crisium Province**, and lastly we are receiving two civilian Transition Academy graduates from Earth who are on their way here now."

"Thank you." The Admiral acknowledges with a head tip. He signs the written report. This was indeed an ordinary notice to him. "I am going to tackle the easiest task first. I'll be greeting the new graduates in the ship bay and join you later to send the report to the Council."

"Yes, sir..."

### **Arriving at Moon Base**

The arid, gray moon grows in the view screen everlarger as they near. "Okay it's time to spin this baby around and slow down so we won't pass the Moon up. I'm sure the officials would panic." Li said almost swallowing his words. After the vessel rotated the fission engines, the same engines, which propelled them initially, ignited and began to slow them for lunar range. Soon the light gravity of the Moon took hold and they were in orbit.

"The Lunar branch of the Star City Military Defense is located on the dark side of the moon at the terminator." Laz said as he keeps track on his navigational panel. Li could hear the little lump in his throat as it muffled his voice a bit. "I guess they want to keep the Earth in view." Li thought. The ship, still backwards, floats into the blackness of the Moon's shadow. "This darkness really brings out the glow of the controls." Laz commented at the appealing reds, blues, and yellows from the many buttons illuminating the sleek touch pad console. "Here comes a communication."

"Attention pilot of approaching vessel. You are to land at the main base port at the following position. Control out"

"I'm getting it here on my screen." Laz reported.

"Coordinate our vector with the base and I'll incline our orbit." The engines flare and the decent thrusters stabilize. "I'm turning us back around, moving in toward the surface." Li said. "Even though we are landing automatically I'm still watching the ground on thermal imaging. I want to see the Moon's terrain."

"Great Idea..." Laz followed.

"Okay we're nearing the surface and the short-range hovering system is activated following the shut-off of the thrusters. The ship is now traveling along the ground about twenty meters high." Li informed. "The ground is blazing by on the imager. Take a look." Lazarus leans over. The hills of Moon flow by in an artistic streak of movement. "We're still at about twelve hundred mph...and there's the base." Li said upon witnessing the spots of light like many lamps. The numerous posts supporting the powerful floodlights were scattered about the distant darkness. By no means did the small spot of activity compete with the awesome view of the brightest stars ever seen from within the shadow of Moon.

"We're here, now what? Laz wondered as they creeped on a steady approach. "Nice launch pad." Li commented, a wide clearing of well-lit concrete and yellow painted landing crosshairs.

"Nice vessels. I guess military."

"Yeah, I like the colors, green, gray, and black."

"Okay there's a door opening." Said Laz as the garage entry parted. Li angles toward the opening and the ship floats into a luminous hanger bay. The gate closes behind them and the Star Voyager halts its motion. A door ahead opens and they are signaled to maneuver inside the second compartment. The door closes behind them, the bay is pressurized, and the ship touches down.

The encasing bay soothed them some and their first flight was a success. "Look at the technology in here. Looks like ship parts. We're probably seeing some top secret toys." Said Li.

"That's some strange looking power sources operating them too." Laz followed noting the exotic devices feeding unknown energies into curious components.

"Pilot and crew please exit your craft at this time." A voice said over the surround sound speakers.

"Let's go." Li said. They stand and are both smiling brilliantly as they brush off their clothes. "Let's try to make a good impression." They enter the second compartment in the middle of the ship and unlatch the top hatch. Their smiles turn to stern masks as they exit.

"Hello I am the lead inspection officer. It's nice to meet you, Captain Li is it?" The man shouted as they climb down the side ladder. The unusual hum of the devices they saw from inside now enchantingly audible.

"Yes sir."

"I'm Walter. The Admiral will be seeing you shortly." Inspection officers enter the craft behind them and Li hid his discomfort. Other teams outside, with note pads and instruments looking the ship up and down and checking fuel compartments, scanning and observing the shimmering black vessel.

### Meet the Admiral

Seiwan and Lazarus are escorted to a bayside office where admiral Seghtee greets them from his desk. Round about are base operators nearby performing tasks while the interrogation personnel prepare to co-evaluate Captain Li and his copilot Lazarus.

"Are you akin to Li Lian Gi?" The Admiral inquired.

"I am." Li responds.

"I knew him." The Admiral continued. "He passed?"

"Yes sir." Li responded with subtle grief. "This was his vessel." He added referring to the Star Voyager schematic upon the admiral's tabletop.

"I see. He left it to you congratulations."

"Thank you sir..." The doors open and a saluting officer is revealed.

"Admiral..." He called. "The vessel has been fueled with fissile material, antimatter, and solid ascent fuel. It is now ready for translightspeed travel." Li's heart thumped and his veins flowed with adrenaline. The officer salutes again and exits.

"I have some tips for you before you set out. First, I sincerely recommend that you do not leave the solar system before getting your feet wet. I am referring you to a local colony in The Asteroid Belt called **The Asteroid Belt Plaza**. There you

can choose a civilian facility to visit and explore the adjacent establishments at your own leisure. I suggest you try the popular **Mars Barr**. At no time will you exceed speed or time limits throughout the solar system and you will follow all *no wake zone* regulations. Travel to other star systems is not recommended and you do so at your own risk.” Li tries to conceal his bobbing Adams apple. The fantasy is now real. They both felt dizzy. The chair felt as if it were swallowing them.

After the feeling passed the excitement returned. “I will receive your Ascension Diplomas now.” The Admiral ordered. “You were at the top of the class, nice work.” He commended. He verifies the microfilaments stitched into the paper and stamps them with approval. The Admiral stands and shakes both their hands. “Congratulations. Captain my pressing base operations are motivating me to return to my duties. I will conclude this interview and an officer will escort you and your copilot back to your ship.” They stand and follow the lightly decorated serviceman. “And captain.” The Admiral called before they exit the frame. “Be careful.”

“Yes sir. We will.”

In the spacious ship bay the inspection officer looks to them with a grin as they approach as to be amused by sending the new graduates off into the depths.

“That’s quite a piece of engineering.” He expressed. “So where ya headed?” Li looks to Lazarus. Before he can respond the officer makes a suggestion. “I’d go to A.B. Plaza. Try the Mars Barr. Everyone goes there. It’s quite popular.”

“Alright, we’ll try it.. The officer tips his head and returns to duty. After re-boarding the Star Voyager and securing the hatch they finally let loose. Their feelings come out as hoots and hollers. Gratiified they man the consoles.

“Activate your hover.” An officer instructed over communication. The ship rotates and faces the doors. The bay depressurizes of air. The doors retract and they float into the main compartment. The rear door closes; the forward open and they exit onto the Moon’s surface.

“You know Li I’m kind of curious about the SMD now that I meet them. I can’t help but wonder what it would be like.”

“I had the same thought. Help me navigate this darkness until we get to the light side.”

“It’s only a mile away heading west.” Suddenly a scampish grin form of the face of Li. Lazarus was only a little goosey. He knew that look. It was once in a blue moon that Li did something spontaneous. He steers onto the day side of the terminator. Lazarus noticed him focusing on the distant hillside afar. “Watch this.” Said Li. Lazarus grips the console instinctively. Li thrusts the throttle forward as they attain a breakneck speed of the hover. The ship lightly vibrates; the increasing hum of engine power up sounds the cabin and the terrain flowed by indecipherably as Li pounces the gritty slope and sends the vessels skyward. With rapid panel taps the fission engines activate and the ship rockets fourth. Li switches to the rear view on the forward screen to watch the pale moon fall away. The ship accelerates hence into the deep en-route to the asteroid belt.

### **Destination: The Asteroid Belt**

The crystal clear window screen was jet black all the way to the peripherals with fat and small star systems gleaming in the distance. It was time to accelerate as the electronic shipmate instructed. “We need to figure out exactly where we’re going.” Li said.

“I’m feeling nauseous again.” Lazarus said as he looks to his colorful panel. “I thought it was over after we made it to Moon base.” Li holds up the sedation instrument again with no words. “Naah, I think I’ll be okay for now. The asteroid Belt is about two hundred million miles from here. But the place we need to go is in a small section on the outer edge.” Lazarus displays an apprehensive expression.

“What is it?” Li inquired.

“I think we’re headed in the wrong direction!” Li glances at his panel.

“It says our destination is on the other side of the sun.” Lazarus informed. “So we’re going the wrong way now. Li kept his calm and his training kicked in.

“We’ll have to go over.”

“Go over what?”

“We’ll have to go a little above the plane of the solar system. That way we’ll bypass the inner planets and the Sun.” Li begins tapping his panels and the ship rotates. “Okay now we’re moving up relative to the solar plane, Helio North. I’m increasing speed. I want to get far enough above the solar plane as needed. It looks like we’ll be passing pretty close to the

Sun. As a matter of fact we'll be slightly sling shot by the Sun's gravity to reach the other side." Li said with a shortness of breath. "Don't worry." He assured. "I'm on top of it."

As planned the Star Voyager reverses direction and arcs above the solar plane. "Alright I'd say it's time to break out the sub light speed engines." Li informed.

Lazarus looks up. "Time to go fast!"

"We're already going fast but let's find out." He begins tapping on his panel. The mach speed fission engines shut down. A sudden vibration occurs which startles them as the medium capacity SLS engines activate.

"Why don't you just use the computer to do that?" Lazarus asked.

"Eh I wanted to try inputting the trajectory using **calculus**. It's for practice. You never know one day the computer could be down or something."

"Ah okay whatever."

"Okay we're going to travel in a wide arc above the sun then slow and enter the asteroid belt on the other side, in theory."

"What?"

"I'm just kidding."

"My anxiety is high enough as it is."

"Are you ready for some speed?" Lazarus nods. Li initiates acceleration. They felt a light tug on their bodies as the GEF device countered acceleration with minute defect. The ship continued to vibrate.

"The no-wake speed on the solar plane is higher." He confirmed.

Li nods. "Yeah, I'm taking us to SLS factor 5. That's 75,000 miles per second!"

"That's half the speed of light." Lazarus adds.

"Yes, and it's going to take us about half an hour to get up to speed and then another to decelerate." Said Li as he stands from his chair to stretch with arms raised.

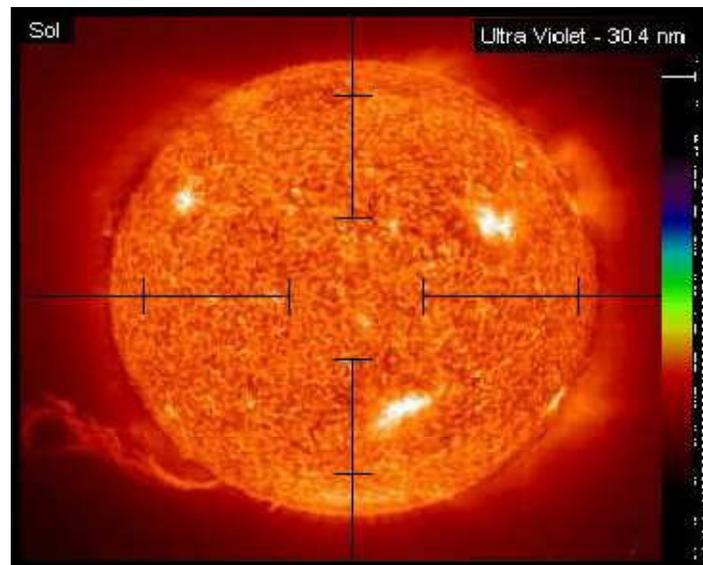
"Li look!" Lazarus exclaimed. "The sun, it's blueish! Is it the screen?"

Li ponders a moment. "No. That's red shift. Wow, I didn't think of that. It happens when a high-speed luminous object is moving toward an observer. The light waves become compressed."

"Interesting, but it doesn't look red it looks blue and we are moving toward the Sun." He expressed.

Li's eyes roll a bit. "We'll call it blue shift for now; it's all relative. The light is still coming to us at a higher frequency and we could say that we are moving toward the Sun or vice versa, potatoes, potatoes." Li Concluded. "You can stand and relax. We won't be needed again at the consoles until deceleration time. Now we'll let inertia take the pilots chair."

Lazarus was glancing behind him. "Um Li are you sure we don't need to be at the consoles right now? The Sun is getting awfully big." Li pauses. "Okay let's sit down. It is looking kind of terrifying. Hey, let's check the other spectrums. I'm sure we can get a great scope view this close."



***A Close Flyby***

They observed curiously as they passed near the sun which fluctuate in frequency like an electromagnetic Doppler effect. It was a tense moment watching the sun growing larger than they had ever seen on Earth. The intensely brilliant yellow dwarf star floats by and fall away again shrinking in the distance.

### Approaching the Asteroid Belt

The speed dampening, antikinetic sequence brought on a gradual fifteen minute deceleration by way of Li's flat panel interface. Afterward the mach speed fission engine took over again and carried them close to the plaza.

"There's Ceres, the largest asteroid in the belt." Li said.

"That's an asteroid? It looks like a small planet." Laz added. "It dwarfs these other little rocks tumbling around here. You'd better be careful floating inside this Li It concerns me."

"Don't worry." Li assured with his hand on the maneuvering handle. "It just *looks* like it's cluttered. When we get inside you'll see how sparse the debris is."

"I see lights... It's a town."

"It is a town, right here in this little tiny section of asteroids."

"You're shaking, are you nervous?" Lazarus asked.

"A little bit." Li said, yet calm and focused. Li clutches the vomit bag staring ahead and falls forward a bit now holding the panel for support. His vision blurred and Lazarus watched as he coped with the overwhelming wave of dizziness.

"I think you should take the sedation." Lazarus suggested. Li complies this time.

"Even these little ones have buildings on them. Are you sure there's no meteorites through here. The surfaces of these rocks look cratered. I can see from the light posts making the rock faces glow." Lazarus stated; the small talk critical for their stability.

"No, don't worry. The solar system is billions of years old. Most of the stuff is settled into orbits. Besides, this ship can detect even the smallest particles at great distances. If something comes towards us on an impact course the ship's computer can move us in a moment's notice."

"Thank God."

"Hand me that there please."

"What this brochure."

"Yes. It tells about the asteroid plaza here."

"I think I see it. Is that it?"

"Yep... That's the Mars Barr." Li said taking note of the stock photo in the pamphlet, the grind of his stomach revealing his hunger. "I'm eager to sample the cuisine at a place like this."

"How fast are we drifting now?"

"Our speed is about five hundred miles per hour. Look there's a little hospital." Li pointed out noting the big concrete landing pad embedded into the distant asteroid, its painting white with a red cross easily visible.

"That makes me feel a lot better." Lazarus said and glance another direction. "That one looks like a carnival."

"Yes it is. It's here in the pamphlet, a little amusement park."

"Why is it here aside for fun that is?"

"Well take a look around. We're in a vacuum in the middle of deep space, nothing but rocks and ice floating around. It's enough to make you have a heart attack. These restaurants and recreation places are to keep you sane while getting used to space life. I'm sure there's other reasons for these buildings to be here. It make sense to me. People probably get bored with science and exploration after a while."

"Is that what it says in the pamphlet, about all of this designed to keep one sane?"

"No, I learned that in the academy."

"Whoa look at that asteroid. It has a little race track on it!"

"The Road Rocket Speed way it says." Li read.

"What's a road rocket?"

"Like a little hovering motor craft but faster. It says here the track is gravitated otherwise you'd fly off the asteroid."

"Yeah I guess so."

“Look we even get television.” Said Li pointing into the window screen toward the colorful laser show images overlaid onto the black background of space.”

“Is that what these transmissions are I wonder?” Lazarus activates the speaker system. “Yep, it’s an advertisement.”

Li takes a deep breath. “Okay get ready the asteroids are getting bulky now. It’s almost time to land. Hmm, looks like a potato.”

Lazarus breathes a deep draw. “I hope I’m ready for this.”

“Don’t worry. Just be yourself.”

“Is this going to be anything like in the movies? Are we like going to get into a phaser fight or have a light sword burn my arm off?”

“No.” Li said adamantly.

“This is a civilian protected facility. The SMD is constantly monitoring the activity at these places. They are very strict when it comes to safety and security here. But I was told that it is a different story out of the solar system, or even further, outside of Star City”

“I guess that’s why Admiral Seghtee told us not to leave yet.”

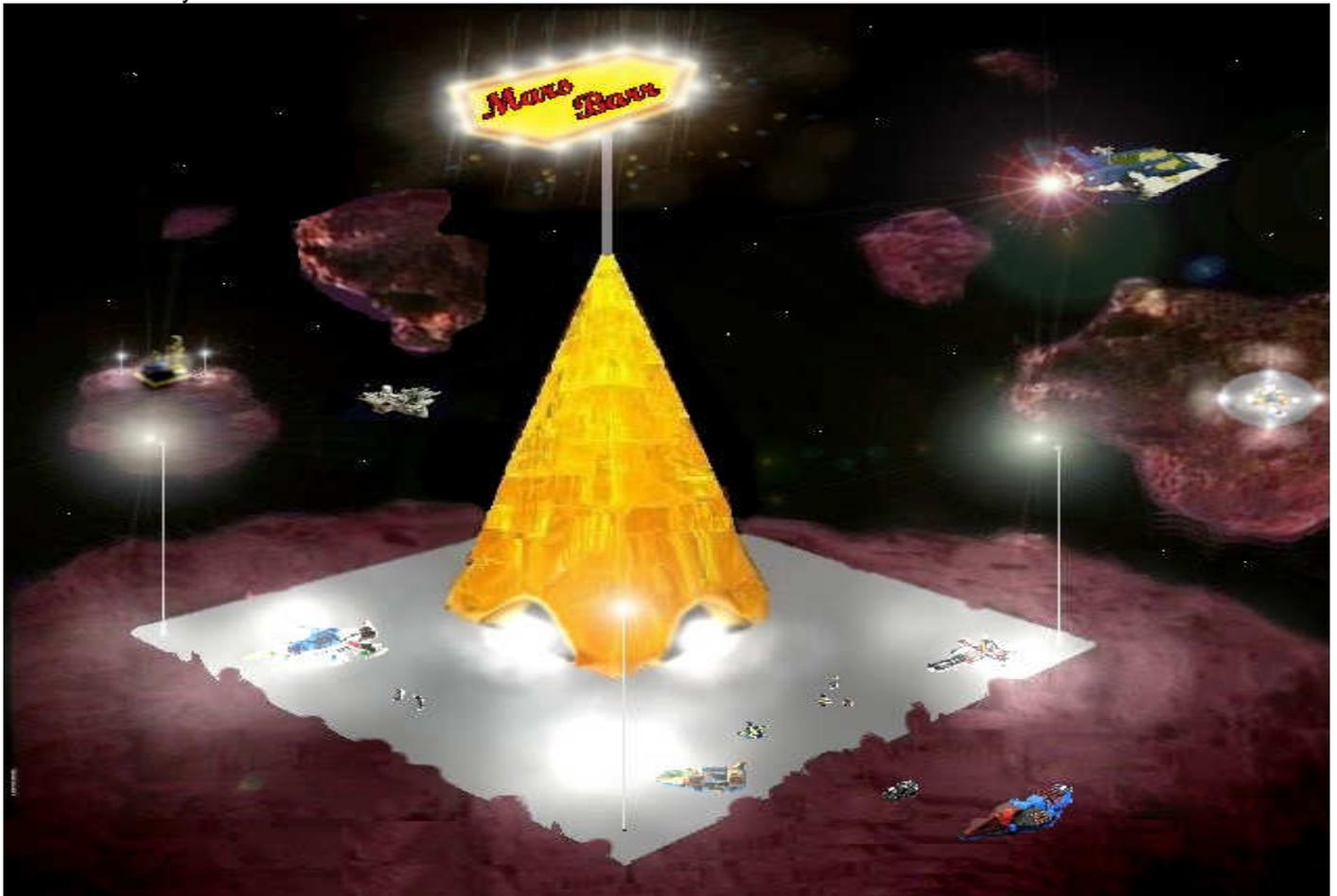
“Yeah... They call it Suntown by the way.”

“What is?”

“The inner solar system, it’s our little haven. Man I just got excited again about visiting out of our system. I can imagine it. My head is rushing, it’s making me dizzy. I’m okay though.”

“Let’s just get into this café first. I can barely grip *this*.” Lazarus said.

Li performs a precision landing on the patio. They were astounded to see other vessels landed and some taking off. People in space suits walk the patio heading toward and from the pyramid shaped **Mars Barr**. The black space was filled with stars as always now asteroids loom in the not too distant star field.



***Asteroid Belt Plaza and Mars Barr***

The ship powers down with a diminishing buzz. “Whew, let’s get suited. Recall your training drills for suiting up.”

“Sure thing; I instinctively paid special attention on that part.”

Into the middle compartment Li opens a wall cabinet hiding his nervousness about their first space walk. Lazarus could see it anyway. The astonishing air-locking space wear, originally hanging inside the container slots, were like armored jumpsuits that one crawls into from the expandable torso. There were no zippers or flaps yet connected thereon many devices needed for space walking. The suit was one solid piece and hindside the advanced air recycling system. The arms and legs were cuffed with metal enforced ceramic material, except at the joints, which were covered by flexible yet impenetrable metallic fabric. Last was the advanced helmet with high-resolution view screen. They sit on the bench and open the torso sideways. With patients they pull the heavy covering on like pants soon to secure the split torso.

“Don’t open the visor when we go out. Just look through the screen display. You can look with different frequencies too but for now let’s keep it set on the visible spectrum.” Li cautioned. Lazarus viewed the other spectrums anyway.

“There are occasionally different forms of radiation, which could leak through the transparent material.” Li finished.

“I know that part. Thanks for the reminder. They made us recite these instructions fifty times in class. Am I properly suited?”

Li double-checks the neckpiece, latch, and suit readings, which indicated that they were perfectly sealed and the **oxygen-recycling device** was functioning.

“You’re good.” He taps the wall panel and decoded the program to begin depressurizing the middle compartment and store the air in the rear cabin and cockpit.

The hiss was short as the air was sucked out. The overhead light went from green, to yellow, to red and the air was gone. Li grips and twists the lock mechanism and applies elbow grease to open the first hatch door. It was hinged and opened inward revealing steps grooved into the unfolded hatch cover. The second was a sliding door that opened sideways. Li slides it open, pushes the last door out to reveal the black vacuum. In his ear, on the recently activated helmet audio, the increasing breath rate of this copilot.

“Try to relax bud. Let’s climb out.” They exit the Star Voyager onto the roof.

“My knees feel like jelly.” Lazarus said. Li glance around at the surrounding patio still to view other vessels parked and unmanned and a first person view of the bumpy asteroid surface and drifting field of tumbling rocks. He locks the hatch, they climb down the side ladder, and the artificial gravity of the patio pulled them groundward. “Uh, Li I don’t feel good.”

“Just hang on. Breathe normal. Don’t throw up in your suit. Stand up straight. We will be inside in a few minutes.”

“Those pilots over there are watching us.”

“It’s ok. We’re new.”

“Maybe they like your black vessel.”

“It seems to be the largest on the patio now. Everyone else is flying cockpit-only craft it looks like.”

“This is unnerving. Outside this suit is nothing. No air, no heat, just emptiness. It’s driving me nuts.”

“Don’t worry about it. Here look at these vessels. They look pretty stylish don’t you think?”

“Yeah...” Lazarus responds with a slow pant of anxiety and they move toward the open archway a few meters from them.

“Look at those machines.” Li pointed as he viewed high capacity electric generators aside the building.

“What are they?”

“They are what are keeping us from floating away. This patio is a superconductor creating the gravity-like pull, same thing as in the ship. The asteroid gravity itself is too weak. Without them, people could not remain based long enough to keep their footing very well.”

### The Mars Barr

Upon entering the archway they penetrated the lobby where there were people still suited some on benches others entering an elevator. The lobby was not a sealed room but an open court as the *no air zone* sign reiterated in large yellow font. “Stay close. We’re getting on the elevator.” Said Li. Inside, they and a small crowd were taken to the middle floor.

“I feel like we’re getting onto an amusement park ride.” Lazarus said.

After exiting the elevator they entered the first airlock, which closed behind them. The second opened and the small crowd moves forward in unison. The calming sound of air pressure began to volumize and the wall-mounted life light soon turned green. Everyone removed his or her helmets almost at once. “Are you okay now?” Li asked lowly.

"I'm starting to feel better." Lazarus looked into the eye of Li, which diverted behind him. Round and wide Lazarus knew behind him was something Li had never seen. He turns casually to see the person standing next to him and was startled. His heart was thumping and his gaze locked with creature, or rather a man, who looked like a furless cat looking him in the eye. Its ears pointed, its lips arched, and its eyes like slits. He snarled a bit as if to barely grin in amusement at the rookie Human before him awestruck. Li grabbed his copilot and pulled his arm as the front door finally opened and they entered the café. They were dizzy and disoriented. Roundabout were aliens, they stood and knew not where to sit. The bar tender was a Felidae, or rather a catlike alien who was wiping the counter same as the man in the elevator now walking off about his business. After scanning the café with radarish heads they finally spotted the appropriate table whose occupants were waving them over though they knew them not.

### Meet Husto, Feeno, and Mariah

Everyone could tell they were new. Almost all rookies behave the same way upon entering the bar, they seem to want to bring their helmets to the table rather than take notice of the rack. They apprehensively sit at the table still glancing about. Eventually they were greeted the grinning occupants.

"Hi, I'm Husto." One said, a tall, thin, blond haired man enjoying a vaporous cup of coffee. Li's stomach growled at the same moment as his copilot. "This is Feeno." He signaled to the short, stalky, gentleman next to him. "This is Mariah," A Latin woman with dark hair down to the shoulders. "We're all human." He said humorously. Everyone chuckled.

"I'm Seiwan Li and this is Lazarus." He greeted. They were still glancing around looking at the various alien groups. The Felidae were chattering in peculiar high-pitched vowel-like noises, which were not easily interpretable by a human. At the other end were short, unidentifiable aliens mumbling something inaudible. Across from them were another group of tiny aliens, which looked like children. Only the Felidae were distinguishable regarding what genus they were from.

"You are fresh out of the academy aren't you?" Husto inquired. Li looked back at him.

"Yes."

"I thought so. Don't worry you're amongst friends here. We are all part of the first graduated class since the new age began."

"Wow.. Lazarus expressed. "You're veterans."

"I suppose so." Husto responded. "Sounds like you're hungry?" They nodded affirmatively. Husto signals a Felidae waitress to come over. She has long hair on her head with protruding pointed ears. Curiously her clothing was bulky at the torso even the abdomen. Husto made the order while her clawed hand takes down the requests. Both the heads of Li and Lazarus looked toward her buttocks to behold its plumpness and accompanying tail extending her tailbone through the sock-like clothing extension as she returned toward the kitchen. Li looks to Husto and gave him an interrogative expression. He was wondering about the front and why it was so bulky. "You'll find out." He stated. Li still couldn't fathom what it was and soon shrugged it off. "Don't worry you can talk normally in here. They can't really understand your voice." The waitress returns and places the food on the table.

"Well at least the eats are normal." Lazarus said expecting some kind of exotic alien dish as he devours the delectable contents.

"That's an outdated impression perhaps fueled by television only slightly off." Feeno commented. "Everyone is accommodated to the tastes of their own genus. Even the corner tables there are capable of variable gravity allowed by the embedded floor plating incase a genus class with low tolerance to high gravity enters the café."

"Can we talk to them?" Lazarus asked after a few more bites of food.

Husto took a breath. "Yes but you need a translator. You can get them at the souvenir shop downstairs in the arch lobby."

"What's with those cats?" Li asked.

"The cats, oh they're all right. They are the closest genus to us in all of Star City."

"How that's interesting." Li said. "What about the short ones over there?"

"They're high gravity, genus unknown, thought to resemble a badger or something."

"Are they high gravity also? He asked signaling at the little ones.

"Them, no, they are actually from similar to our planet but they are just very tiny, about three feet or so, very adorable. But don't treat them like that. They get offended. They assured us they are all adults." Husto said jokingly

"Ah I see; any more aliens coming in here?"

"Two more aliens only, both very tall, **Delphinidaes** and **Giraffidianian**. Neither of them comes to this restaurant often."

### Meet Xila

Just then the airlock opened and more customers entered. They proceeded to sit at the bar after hanging their helmets on the rack. Li noticed that they were Human yet didn't appear to be a part of the local group. They wore blue, white, and black uniforms and appeared to be part an official establishment. "And who are they?" Lazarus inquired.

"Those guys are..." Li interjects. "...**Krysto**, right?"

"How did you guess?"

"I remember studying about them at the academy. They are the first Humans to settle an extrasolar planet. It's pretty far out if I remember."

"It's over fifty light years." Mariah added.

"They must not come here often." Li figured. "I'm going to go and talk to them." Li stands and walks to the counter. The sound of clanging deep-dished pots and the clatter of glass echoed the kitchen. In the back were Felidae workers cleaning and cooking. He sits at the stool and greets an attractive young female officer.

"I'm Captain Seiwan Li of the Star Voyager."

"Oh hello, I'm Xila Kile Lieutenant of the **Krystonian Military Defense**. It's nice to meet you."

"Likewise, do you come here often?"

"No, this is my first time. I've never visited **Sun Town** before, lots of work to do at the base and we don't often come this far out."

"So you're not from Earth?"

"No I was born on my home planet Krysto."

"Yes, Krysto is a cold planet outside of Star City territory, right?"

"Yes, that's right. Are you an academy graduate?"

"Yes, is it that obvious?" Li asks jokingly. "Oh that's alright. It's still nice to meet you, Seiwan."

"How long will you be here?"

"Three more days, I'm here with my father the Admiral of the **KMD**. We're staying at **Ceres Hotel**. I've been coming here for breakfast and lunch."

"Oh, perhaps then I'll see you again sometime." Li scans the café again. "It looks like this is the local hang out."

"Yeah, it looks like it." Said Xila as the energized Lazarus waves him back.

"My friends are signaling. I'll go back to my table but I look forward to seeing you again."

"Yes me too, thank you for coming to talk to me, Captain." Li was flattered, gently shook Xila's hand, and walked back to the table.

"They are definitely from Krysto. Li reported upon assuming his padded chair. "She's military personnel. She's here on leave and it looks like I might be seeing her tomorrow."

"Nice." Lazarus said. "Maybe you'll finally take a girlfriend."

"That is doubtful. She lives at the edge of Star City. It would take us about two weeks to get there."

"Well why not go out there then!" Lazarus encouraged. "You've got the ship for it."

"Hmm, I don't know, that's a long trip. I'm barely settling into just sitting at this alien eatery, let alone take a fifty light-year journey *outside* of Star City." Li responded cautiously.

"Just a while ago you were talking about how excited you were to leave the solar system." Laz said. "Not mention you were the one who urged me to come out here in the first place. Don't tell me your getting skittish now."

"So what kind of ship do you have?" Husto inquired.

"It's like a passenger cruiser of sorts."

"I'd like to see it too." Feeno added.

"Okay, but of course I'd like to see your vessels also." Li said.

"No problem." Husto said. "Mine's a three-seater with cabin, bed, and workspace. C'mon let's go outside." A wave of dizziness comes over Lazarus but leaves soon after as the recent experience of the first space walk rekindles. They all

stand and make their way around the chattering aliens at their tables over to the wall rack to retrieve their head gear. Afterward they go through the airlock process, down the elevator shaft, to the lobby, and out onto the patio.

The intensity returned after having sat inside for an hour or so then stepping back into space on the asteroid. Ahead was the looming Ceres asteroid out in the distance. Husto leads them to **The Explorer**. White in color, the sleek and double arrow headed shaped craft looks like some kind of secret military fighter.

"You have guns on your ship!" Lazarus exclaimed having taken note of the intimidating barrel extrusions.

"We weren't told that you could have that." Said Li also intrigued. "They didn't mention weapons at the academy. He added.

"You have to be in space for a long while, go through training and tests, and last but not least you must agree to volunteer for covert missions the SMD may want to send you on."

Li was astounded and very interested. They walk over to Feeno's small red and blue XF class fighter.

"Now I like this one." Lazarus expresses. You have weapons too?" He added noting the forward turbo laser mounts and side-binded pulse laser.

"Yes and I have the same story as Husto."

"So you two have been on missions?" Li inquired. Husto and Feeno glance to each other. "We really can't talk about it." Husto said.

"Oh right, it must be classified." Li figured, yet he was still curious. The thought of going on a covert mission was alluring. Li leads the group over to The Star Voyager landed at the edge of the patio just before the asteroidal surface becomes visible.

"Oh it's the big one. Wow, looks comfy." Mariah commented.

"Now this is cool." Feeno complemented.

"Indeed, you have got yourself a real deal on this one." Husto added. "I anticipate the SMD will definitely want to incorporate you and your vessel."

"Really...?" Li inquired.

"Yep, they might even skip a few regulations. Their missions can sometimes take days even weeks. With this ship..." Husto nudges Feeno and Feeno *stops talking*. Li was astonished. He had another vision at that moment as he had before when he first saw the Star Voyager in its hanger. He saw regions and occurrences he had never encountered. Laz nudges Li and he comes to.

Lastly they walk over to Mariah's vessel.

"Now this looks tough." Li commented.

**The Raider** was like the Explorer, a fuselage on top of a flat disk yet differently shaped.

"I'm starting to feel left out." Li said.

"It looks like everyone has weapons on their vessels but us now."

"No kidding." Said Lazarus under his breath while noting a distant weapon mounted craft drifting through the cluster, yet still enough to be heard on the helmet audio.

Husto clarifies, "Not everyone. Some don't have the clearance to do so. Like that guy there." He said and pointed to a nearby vessel being boarded by its owner, which had no armaments.

"So what's our next destination?" Lazarus asked. Li looks to Husto involuntarily seeking advice. After a brief moment of silence by the on-looking group Husto responds.

"I suggest you start small. You should try Mars first maybe. It may be a little cliché to go there but it's appropriate."

"I was thinking that too. Do you all want to come along?" Li asked. Everyone affirmed except for Feeno who looks to Husto and said, "I can't go I have something I need to do." Husto knew it was an assignment by the SMD. Yet, Feeno did not disclose that. But Li had a feeling also. Respectfully Li remains quiet. Feeno departs to his ship. Li, Lazarus, Mariah, and Husto, board their vessels and coordinate their communications.

### Destination: Mars

Upon a brief activation sequence from all three vessels they ascend from the long-pelted asteroid and depart the plaza. With quick acceleration the sporty asteroids fall behind soon to vanish in the deep; on the window screen, a conference, viewing the cockpits of the newfound friends in separate images.

"Husto I think you should lead since you're the senior pilot here."

"I beg to differ." Mariah said competitively.

Husto forms a half grin barely seeable. "Mars is about half way around in its orbit and about thirty five million miles away. If we travel at sub light speed factor 1, which is 15,000 miles per second we can be at Mars orbit in about an hour."

"I'm matching your speed." Li said as he operates on his console.

"So where are some places you have been to." Lazarus asked.

"Me, oh, I've been, quite a few places around the territory."

"What is the farthest place you have visited?" Li followed.

Husto paused a moment. "...The Orion Nebula."

"Orion...! How did you manage to get there?"

"I can't tell, sorry."

"Ah, classified huh, what about you Mariah?" Li inquired.

"...Bellatrix, by more conventional means." A slight over-inform of her.

"Wow, must have been a worm hole for Husto."

Li grins again soon to straighten. "Where did you grow up Husto?"

"...California, near Pasadena."

"When did you join the FTA?"

"About four years ago."

"You're veterans after only four years?" Lazarus noted aloud.

"You'll be veterans too before long." Husto pointed out adamantly.

"I see. And you Mariah?" Li asked.

"Buenos Aires. And I joined about the same time as Husto. We were in the same class together."

"How about you two..." Husto returned. "China?"

"Yes." Li said. "The small American reserve there, Lazarus lived in Pinyin Subdivision. I lived just outside the town in a private wooded area."

"How did you guys meet?" Mariah wondered. "We met in the woods actually. Lazarus caught me by surprise with his pellet gun one day during my practice. I still have the scar."

"...how interesting." She commented.

"So what's the deal with the Planetary Council? I heard it's pretty intimidating." Lazarus inquired. Another air of silence ensues.

"Well let's just say you'd have to see it to understand. However you can't easily visit inside the council hall unless approved by the SMD." Mariah informed.

"Ah, I see. We're going to Mars well what about those original colonies placed there *before* the new era?" Li asked.

"I heard a lot of rumors about them at the academy." Lazarus added. "I heard they were something like torture towns where those bigoted groups overtook and sickly experimented on innocent people."

"It's all taken care of." Husto responded with the hand-dusting gesture. On his face a short moment of adamancy soon to fade as his memory concluded. Li felt he didn't want to be reminded.

"There must have been a secret battle to uproot those people." Li thought having a sort of precognition.

"Alright Li let's accelerate and adjust your course to intercept Mars orbit. Here are the calculations." Husto offered.

"We have them here." Lazarus said viewing the scrolling text upon his panel.

"We are locked onto your ship. Our speed match is on automatic."

The ship vibrates and the low engine roar raises its pitch.

The trip continued as Li and Lazarus converse with their new friends, it became clear they were well-rounded individuals and competent pilots. Husto was quick, witty, and experienced. Mariah, though open and talkative, maintained an aura of mystery about her. They could not be sure when they would run into Feeno again.

It wasn't long until the red world grew on the screen. The most noticeable features caught the eye of Li who had long ago dreamt about exploring the barren planet as have so many before. Now that it is a reality his heart thumps with anticipation at the site of this rusty planet. The ships spin around as they neared Mars orbit and slow to the appropriate velocity.



### ***Mars Flyover***

"All new vessels are encouraged to land at one of the few landing ports, in this case the main port, which is atop the large extinct volcano of Olympus Mons." Husto informed over communications.

"I can see it from here. I've seen it on science programs and in books." Li said. "The caldera was so vast that it could contain an entire state."

"To help pilots land in such a vast zone the ship harbor lays center of the volcanic mouth in addition to the pinging signal detected by ship sensors. After checking in, you're free to explore the rest of Mars." Husto finished.

"That sounds great." Li said.

"Alright we're clear to land. Watch out for Phobos and Deimos." Husto cautioned humorously yet sincerely.

"...initiating fall inclination." Li said.

"The computer recognizes the port signal and is locked on." Laz reported.

"Engines will fire automatically to put us down on top of Olymos. Next time I'll try it manual for practice." Li says. Their descending orbit brought them over the lengthy canyons of form and beauty.

### **Olympus Mons Space Port**

The extinct lava mountain swelled into a horizon as the vast caldera swallowed them up. Slowing to allow the ship to drift above the thin atmosphere while maintaining a suitable decent trajectory, the sky remained a black canvas of darkness dotted by starlight. Little vehicles, various landing pads both small and large, and buildings of intriguing design soon reveal its model-like structure from above. The activity looked like a typical day on Earth only upon the reddened rocky soils.

The range from the surface was close enough now for the hovering system to take over and gently land the three visiting vessels. The Star Voyager touches down first, which was becoming routine now. The cockpit of the Star Voyager began to quiet as the alerts and buzzers began to diminish; in the surrounding screen, the plains of Mars.

"The spaceport looks quite lively." Lazarus commented. There were people walking close in suits on their way to the nearby vacuum shelters.

"There's a lot more vessels commuting in and out of here." Li noted. "Those look like supply ships." Li followed about the large freighters lifting off and descending in the distance. "Look at these vessels, lots of shapes and configurations." He observed.

"What are those ships there I wonder." Said Lazarus.

"Expedition craft bringing in and shipping out non-graduates who are permitted controlled space travel only. That is to say civilians who volunteer to visit Mars in a tourist capacity."

"There's lots of activity here. Let's get suited up I'm eager to try this place out."

"Look there's a parade of people in space suits. It looks like they are holding some kind of music instruments. How are they going to play in the near vacuum?"

"Well we're getting radio signals coming from them." Lazarus reported from his panel screen." He activates the sound. "Ahh music being transmitted; another calming feature for nervous people probably."

"Speaking of which how are you doing right now."

"I feel a lot better after the Mars Barr. I'm still a little antsy about the vacuum but it's passing now."

"I'm not sure it will ever be completely gone." Li said "You should always be mindful of your environment in space. It's easy to forget about vacuums and temperatures inside the suit."

"I like the colors of these people's suits." Laz noted of the passing pedestrians in the screen. "Our suits are still the generic factory color."

"Well we'll paint them later."

"Is that a large circus tent?" Laz noted of the stilted fabric erection in the distance.

"Yes, they're lead coated. I read about them. They are not circus tents just structures for quick shelter. They are very thick. They also shield from cosmic rays."

"There they are finally." Said Lazarus as the peripherals of the view screen displayed the landed Explorer and Raider to each side. "They're out already waiting for us. Let's get suited up."

Outside Husto and Mariah stand side by side of their vessels awaiting the emergence of their two rookie friends.

"Do you think they are ready?" Mariah asked.

"Maybe, that's for the Admiral to decide." Husto answered. "I like Li. He's steady inside, a natural born space man."

"What about Lazarus?"

"I like him too. He's a little raw but that's okay."

"Wait my ship is receiving a message." Mariah alerts. She taps her wrist computer to accept the relayed transmission in her helmet. "It's the Admiral... Yes sir, Mariah here."

"What is your location?"

"We're on Mars right now at the Rocky Red Parlor. I'm with Husto. We're about to introduce the spaceport to the new graduates, any orders?"

"Husto will meet a Felidae traveler who has just returned from the edge of the territory. She is bringing information about **The Resistance** to convey to Husto."

"And the graduates...?"

"Just make them comfortable for now. I'm leaving Suntown soon on mission elsewhere. I'll contact you sometime later. I cannot be sure when. Make sure Husto gets the data from the Felidae. Deliver it to Moon Base. That's all, Seghtee out."

"Husto did you hear that?"

"Yes I got it. Here they come." The top hatch opens and Li and Lazarus emerge onto the roof of the Star Voyager. Li taps his wrist device to match frequencies with Husto and Mariah's helmet communication.

"Sorry about the wait. You guys suit up fast."

"No problem. Are you ready to get some entertainment?"

"Of course..." Li responded as they descend the side ladder onto the Martian surface with pale skies. They begin the short trek navigating the landed vessels and occasional boulders lying about, the Sun at high noon beaming almost directly upon them.

"Rocky Red Parlor..." Li read of the decorative sign hung above the airlock entry. Standing there about was a suited doorman promoting the crowd to enter the open lock.

"Well, main branch." Husto responds. "Larger, more elaborate, there's a few more elsewhere on Mars."

"I see." The air fills, the doors retract, and helmets uncap. Lights, cameras, action, and a host of guests both Human and alien enjoying the lowlight colorfully illuminated inlet of chatter and music. Bands sound from the stage, food served to the center tables and strobes pulse in the dimness.

"Looks like that Triad club you took me to that day Li."

"Please don't remind me of that. We barely made it out of there alive."

"Are you guys hungry?" Husto asked.

"No I'm still full from the Mars Barr. Thanks." Li said.

"Well feel free to stroll about. I'm gonna move around a bit. Just page me if you need something."

"I'll just be around." Mariah informed.

"Alright..."

Li looks to Lazarus who was enthralled by the notable Mydausian joke teller on stage.

"Feels like old times huh? What next?" Laz asked still earing the comedian on stage.

"I have the urge to go down to the bottom on the surface to do some archeology, find a nice formation somewhere in one of the alluring dried riverbeds to chisel."

"Right now...?"

"Well, no not right now. I'll have a look around the club for a while, how about you?" Li asked. Laz's arm stretches fourth pointing to the dune buggy rental sign.

"Figures..." Li thought. "I'll catch up with you after a few."

"Right..." The two separate.

Li makes his way through the mixed Human and alien crowds to the souvenir shops to buy a translation mask. It was strange bumping and brushing against upright walking non-humans and they were quite fragrant of exotic pheromones. Li saw a Delphinidae for the first time, tall with face fins and webbed hands, assumingly the feet as well, gargley voice. A quick swipe of the energy credit card and the mouth-covering device was his complete with head strap and programmable interface. Glancing toward the bar stools a lone woman sat with a hat atop her head. It was a rare motion for Li as he moves toward the solemn female. "I might as well try it out." He thought of the new mask he purchased. Coming into view the girl, drinking her ale, revealed the curled mouth and slitty eyes of a Felidae. She turned and he made eye contact with the dark pupils of the cat girl. It was too late to turn away in fear of being rude. The **ladyline** was attractive in her cat-like way and he selected the Felidae voice on the mask setting.

Somewhat skittishly Li's arm elevates as he cups the device to his face.

"Hello." He greeted, the vowel-like sonances emanating from the speaker vent of the mask disorienting to hear from your own voice. Into the handbag she reached pulling fourth own mask and greeted hello. The voice was a computerized female human. Li extends his free hand to be gently gripped by dainty fingers of long sharp claws, which made him nervous. "I'm Li. What is your name?" She returned the answer only to be a strange noise not easily replied by Li. He felt himself perspiring a little as a moment of silence occurred.

The girl put the mask to her face again and the name *Tina* was spoken. "It's my Human name." She explained, their hands still ever so lightly gripped. A heat moved into Li and arousal became him. Suddenly, the woman's pupils turned to slits and he remembered what Husto said about the Felidae during their communication en-route to mars. From round to slits means either angry or aroused. For a moment Li had thought he said something wrong. A strange rattle began to sound and Li started to glance about to find its source only to hear it was coming from her as she began to purr. Li was speechless. He noticed the peculiar bulge on her frontal torso and had yet to determine what it was. "Is she pregnant?" He wondered.

A hand grips the shoulder of Li and he turns to see the face of Lazarus with a new girl at his side. He glanced back into the face of his charming friend of alien origin. Her purring had ceased. "Introduce me." He said.

"Oh, sorry, this is Tina. We just met here."

"It's nice to meet you lovely lady. I'm Lazarus." He greeted. She smiled. Just then an alarm sounded of her wristwatch.

"Oh sorry, I have to go now." She informed. As their hands lightly detached there was a caressing scratch on the palm of Li from the departing Felidae. He looks into his hand as she moves off into the crowd getting an impression of desire to find where he had been marked.

"Where did you get the mask?" Laz asked.

"The souvenir shop over there."

"I'm going to get me one. Oh this is Celie from France. We met outside on the buggy course. She beat me." Celie grins. "I'm still a little dizzy from all the bumping and jostling. The terrain is quite rocky. There are some smooth dunes though. I almost flipped the buggy one time but it had roll bar support thankfully. They are quite sturdy. We were almost out of fuel so we came back to the rec. yard. I saw the moon Phobos tumbling above too. It's altitude looks pretty low."

"Yeah in a few million years it will crash to Mars actually." Li added. "So you're from France. Did you go to the academy there?" Li asked.

"Yep, I graduated about six months ago." She responds with an accent.

"Do you own a ship?"

"Oh no, I'm just a floater. I volunteer on occasion at the restaurants around Suntown however."

"Here comes Mariah." Lazarus said having noted her emergence from the crowd of suited and unsuited persons commuting about.

"Hey guys I'm going to stay here a while. If you all leave I'll catch up with you later." She informed. "You have my numbers."

"Yes we do. Where is Husto?"

"He's talking to some acquaintances somewhere around here. He told me to tell you that he will be remaining also and to contact him later."

"Okay, take care, see you later." She trots off into the crowd.

Lazarus had stepped away briefly and returns with his designer translation mask of neon colors.

"I saw Husto over there." Laz said. He's talking to my Ladyline friend." He pointed.

"Yeah, he seems rather focused on her. Maybe he likes her."

"I don't know. It looks like they are talking in a more distinguished capacity."

"Well, c'mon let's go sit and have some meal." Celie said as she pulled the hand of Lazarus.

The music changed and the announcer spoke of the next tunes with a few witty acknowledgments in between. Sitting upon the custom table, decorated like something you would expect to find at a club on Mars, they place their orders for some exotic grub and some wine for Celie.

### Encounter with Christopher Williams

Li glances over to the counter spanning the cantina section and spots none other than Christopher Williams, his long time academic rival. Christopher looks over to him as destiny would have it. He was sitting with a posse of friends all with semi smiles as if they could turn to frowns easily. Indeed they did when they spotted Li. Christopher hated Li from the start. His intelligence, status, and high academy scores removed *him* from the top and he despised it. He stands and approaches Li. "Well, look what the cat dragged in." He said perhaps offending nearby Felidaes who knew the phrase.

"Hello Chris, long time, no see."

"Hello Li, come in on the tourist cruiser?" Christopher greeted. He glances at Celie with a perverted grin.

"Who exactly is this matter-gem?" He asked referring to Celie. Lazarus was irritated but hid it beneath his tourism. "Hey, French girl. Why not come on a cruise amongst our fleet." He said, his intention to create an outburst that might damage the early reputation of both Captain Li and his shipmate. Li touched Lazarus shoulder that he ignores Christopher's gesture.

"Can I help you Chris?" Li asked.

"Not quite." He responded brashly. "Did you come in on the civilian cruiser?" He inquired with a smirk while turning his head to his buddies Hugo and Hoy from the counter who just joined him. Christopher expected Li to confirm being what cocky ship owner's, call rubbernecks.

"We did not as a matter of fact." The smirk turned to a straight face as Christopher had a flashback of the old academy days when Li would always be ahead somehow. He felt Li had a ship. The others from the counter joined them and were intimidating the table.

"What vessels do you have?" Lazarus asked.

"XF class, express craft." He bragged. They were like the one Feeno owned, small light and personal. Li smiled minutely and concluded his encounter with his rival. Before they could leave, Lazarus, who was annoyed by Christopher's brazen passes at Celie, inquired that she come along and they stand to depart from the scoffing company of Christopher and his posse. Christopher gawked loathingly as they were attaching their helmets. Li took one last look into his eye and saw his hate. They exit the Rocky Red Parlor main grounds.

Into the vacuum they made their way back to the vessels landed not so far abroad.

"I'm going to get some ascent fuel bricks." Li said. "I'll be right back."

"Try to hurry we don't want him to cause us anymore trouble." Lazarus urged. As soon as Li had gripped the handles of the loaded dolly the airlock parted again to reveal the rouge posse stepping outside. Li continued on ignoring them as he wheeled the supplies through the clusters of thinning vessels. The sun had begun to set and the distant volcanic horizon fell

shadowy as the unfettered rays trickled between the outlandish rocks and erotic formations. Waiting aside the Star Voyager, Celie and Lazarus assist with loading the fuel.

"He's still watching." Lazarus said.

"Just get inside. Here are the keys." Said Li and he follows choosing not to return the dolly but left it there, on in the rocky field. As the Star Voyager rose into a hover Christopher's hate turned to jealous rage. His teeth grind as he watch them ascend. Once again Li was ahead and had achieved more. Christopher scorned at it. His mind became sever as he almost involuntarily contemplated thoughts of unholy recompense.

The Star Voyager disappeared into the black only to become an agitating shooting star soon to fade away and Christopher turned to his posse. After manning their thrifty XF class ships they ascend into the Martian firmament.

"Li we're getting a message from the surface, the café actually."

"Don't tell me he's gonna harass us over communications." Li dreaded. "Well if he is he knows our number somehow..."

"Answer it." The relieving face of Husto appears.

"I see you guys are gone. I'll see you later then. I'm going to hang out here on Mars for a while. Be careful. Don't do anything dangerous." He cautioned.

"Thanks. We should be okay. We have Celie here with us." She smiles standing behind the chair of Lazarus holding his headrest. She watched him work his console.

"Okay, Husto out." The screen fades.

"I'm sleepy." Lazarus said.

"Me too.... We're going to set down somewhere."

"Yeah, but where, a hotel?"

"No. I want to go somewhere secret and hidden. I put some thought into when I was yawning at the table back at the café."

"Okay, surprise us. We're going to go to back for a shower. Do you have it under control here?" Laz asked.

"Yep I'm all set." The rear hatchway parts as the two newfound lovers exit the cockpit. The ship vibrates and the stars change color as Li taps his panel re-angling, and accelerating toward the Jovian system.

### Off to Sleep

His hair was damp and flat, Lazarus returns from the rear having made use of the mini shower in the rear compartment. He checks his console to see the heading. "Jupiter?"

"Yep, get ready for some real thrill. And that's just an assumption. It's a large system with a lot of radioactivity."

"That's not the only activity. I heard it's a popular local." Laz added.

"No doubt."

"So where at Jupiter are we going to sleep?" He wondered.

"Europa, I've studied the moons in this system and I want to see Europa's features."

"I see it." Lazarus said as a sudden chill entered him yet he knew not why. Li glances at Lazarus noting his bobbing Adam's apple.

"It's ok if you're nervous. Jupiter is nothing to mess with." Li said. "We can't even approach directly because of the high gravity. We'll have to spiral down to Europa."

The banded gas giant appears on the screen about the size of a soft ball. "Watch how much bigger it gets." Li said.

"Yeah I can already see the little moons being slung around. Are you sure this is safe? Which one is Europa, the bright one?"

"Yep, all the ice..." The rear hatch parts and Celie emerges in a robe soon to massage the shoulders of Lazarus as he sat at his console. She stares at the Planet Jupiter and its moonlets silently as if to recall a memory.

"Been here before?" Laz asked as he turns to look up at her.

"Yes, once. My ex...I mean my old friend lives on a colony on Ganymede."

"Okay we're about to take orbit of Europa." Li informed. "Wow, it's so massive!" Laz said. "I feel that, Jupiter's pull on us?"

"Yeah, about eighty more Jupiter's and we would have had another Sun."

"So, this is what a star looks like before it catches on fire?" Laz asked intrigued.

“Exactly, well it would be a lot bigger. It would look like a brown dwarf”

“Hmm, looks like a cracked hardboiled egg.” Laz pointed at the growing Europa. Long ridges of up-thrusted ice were strung about crisscrossing one another.

“They say there might be an ocean beneath the ice.” Celie commented. They orbit perhaps once of Europa before descending onto the surface.

“Keep track of the radiation levels.” Li asked.

“They’re actually quite high.” Laz said noting the spiking graph display illuminating his face. “Is it going to be a problem?” He asked.

“Oh, no not really, I am just curious. The ship’s hull was more than sufficient to halt the flow of charged alpha and beta particles and we have at least a half a foot thick lead layer in between the alloys. That is enough to stop most levels of gamma ray beams. And if gamma rays get too high we can use the electromagnetic diffractor to scatter the beams.”

“How does that work?”

“Well it’s just like the title says. The computer can match the frequency, wavelength, and trajectory of the rays and emit an identical field causing diffraction of most of the gamma particles... alright we’re coming in for a landing. I’ll put her down near this ice ridge with a stunning view of Jupiter looming in the sky.” The ship touches down casually onto Europa’s surface next to the jagged row of ice.

“Whew, I’m just about exhausted. Let’s get some systems powered down. Check and recheck everything before leaving the cockpit. The necessary electrical reserves for ship functions and imperative magnetic containment in the engines will remain active.”

Narrow eyed they enter the rear compartment and fold out the beds from the sidewall. Li takes an army shower drying off with the embroidered towels left to him by his thoughtful mother and lies on the easeful pallet. “I cannot believe I’m out here laying back in my bed staring out of the window at the Great Red Spot.”

“Maybe it’s just a smudge on the window.” Celie said jokingly. Lazarus taps her nose and kisses her symmetrical lips.

“It feels wonderful doesn’t it Laz?”

“What’s that?”

“Being away from Earth, away from the routine. No more burden of dealing with the practically tribal people who make your life difficult because of their envy and ignorance.”

“Yeah, that’s one reason why there are so little groups actually able to leave the planet. Most just want to live their lives as they always have and die one day as they lived no matter how much the world advances.”

“As I look out of the window into space my mind feels free and the boundaries are nonexistent. The pressure is gone.” “Yes I feel it too. It’s a fresh clean feeling.”

“Hey Laz, did you ever learn about the Mentor Aliens?”

“Um, yeah those big eyed ones right, the ones who crashed at Roswell? Well not those particular ones but yes I know which ones you mean. They’re called greys. Why?”

“I’m fascinated by them. I want to meet one. They are the most intelligent and most mentally advanced bipedal species known. We don’t even know what their species is actually.”

“Well where are they?”

“I don’t know. They say they appear spontaneously here and there, never making an entrance at a café, but they are a part of the Planetary Council. I’ve never heard that they even appear there either, maybe once in Star City history. I hear they fly neat saucer shaped spacecraft too.” Li looks over to Laz. He and Celie were hugged up in his own bed fast asleep. Li exhales restfully as his eyelids shroud like the waxing Jupiter before him.

### **Late Night Anxiety**

Li sat up so from his deep slumber. He was dreaming about home, the old days, and his life before his ship. For a moment he thought he was at home in his bed. No need for airlocks no checking systems, he felt as if he could walk outside in his bare feet and feel the warm wind on his skin. Then it hit him. He was nowhere near home. He was trapped inside a small box, no wind and no trees, no bamboo and no yard ornaments, outside a hostile frigid cosmos of rays and vacuum. His chest felt flat and his breath was short. He stood to find something to drink. Cold tea was stored in the icebox. He gulps it down feeling dehydrated, his right-hand on the counter along the rear span of the compartment. Lazarus and Celie were

motionless and silent as they snoozed. He felt as if they weren't even there. The cabin was with silence but of the low hum of the fission engine embedded in the wall right next to his bed. He adjusted to the fact that he could not leave the ship, it would take a process to get to a comfortable environment.

Still in sleepwear he had to face it, he was in deep space. He checked the front to find a pinging computer, no alarm messages, and a waning Jupiter. His anxiety began to subside, his breathing returned to normal. He exhaled with relief, shut his eyes and swallowed. A brief prayer in Indian style beside his sleep pad and breathing exercise helped him to relax his nervous system. He laid back into his pallet and sails into sub-consciousness.

### Chapter 3

#### Persisting Adventures

Lazarus and Celie had not awakened even in the face of the brilliant reddish rays refracting from the limb of Jupiter as the Sun emerged from behind, Jupiter was still dark of shadow. The high-resolution window screen stretching along the rear of the back cabin just above the eating counter had captured the Jovian sunrise with precision. The surface of Europa also revealed the planetary event by the ruby shaded icy terrain.

Still a little groggy, Li enters the cockpit to prepare for departure. He had a slight recollection of waking up last night with his **space sickness** and now having awakened could not remember why. Excitement began to fill him again as a new day of exploration was dawning. He re-enters the rear cabin to find Lazarus and Celie awake and clothing themselves.

"Boy did I sleep." Lazarus expressed. "When are we lifting off?"

"Right now..." Li replies. "I'm getting us powered up as we speak." He assured already dressed.

"Just let me brush my teeth and wash my face."

"Come on Celie let's go to the front." Laz said. He hopped in front of his navigational panel noting the **engine temperature indicator** reaching appropriate levels. Li returns and mans the pilot's chair. With the flip of a switch and tap of the panel the ship rose from the surface of Europa. "A little too low..." Li commented.

"What is?" Laz asked.

"Nothing, I got a little too punchy with the ascent sequence. I think I melted the surface." Lazarus chuckles as a steam rose and froze almost instantly producing a glittery shower of ice flakes raining back down onto the ground. The Star Voyager angled and zoomed around Europa before hastening away into sub light speeds. Lazarus and Celie watched as the mighty giant Jupiter became minimally distant.

### Back to Earth

In an hour they had entered range of Earth and descended through the misty clouds toward the out-country of the orient.

"Checkout the farmlands." Li pointed. "It's nice to see they haven't been paved over yet."

"We're about 40 miles from the ball field. Remember the games we used to play there so long ago? Now look at us, flying around in this ship. I used to be quite a pro batter Celie." Lazarus commented.

"We'll see." She says with a red lipped smile of gloss.

"And there it is still the same old dusty spot, prepare for touchdown." Li readied.

The scattering of soft orange powder and a jolt as the Voyager imprints into the soil. The top hatch springs fourth as the refreshed friends exit.

"I'm taking Celie home for a while. What are you going to do?"

"I'll be at the house."

"Alright I'll meet you later."

A quarter of a mile down the moderately busy sidewalk this time of day to the edge of the woods he enters onto the trail penetrating its familiar innards. The pollen of life dusted his nostrils as the wind carried them gently drifting. The elk and the critters forage about unafraid of Li's familiar presence as he passes. His old wooden dummy post, still standing waiting to be used, brought him memory of diligent practice as it leaned aside like the tower of Pisa.

"Seiwan is home." Mr. Li said looking up from his reading. Mrs. Li, stirring the bowl of cake batter, smiles as she glances at him through the wood pane window. Bursting forth Li is full of stories and his father leaves the newspaper on the table while he listens where he normally cannot be pried away.

"The colonies are awesome dad. The aliens are unbelievable! I'm here to get a few things and I'll be running back out."

"Well what are you going to do? Where are you going now?" Mrs. Li asked.

"Don't worry Ma, I'm not going to get into any danger. Lazarus and I are very careful."

"You stay away from those daredevils. I've been talking to your father and he's been reading about what's up there. I won't have my only son getting himself hurt now."

"Ma don't worry, I'll be fine."

Back at the house of Lazarus the place was now full of friends who had come over once they heard the news.

"This is Celie. She is an academy graduate also. We met on Mars" Lazarus announced to the giddy crowd of fiends.

"Oh my God, Mars! You went there? What was it like?" Barrel asked friend of Eling who stood hindside with crossed arms jealous in her demeanor as she watched her former boyfriend proudly declared his time in outer space. She saw the experience and authority in Celie and declined in her confidence.

"I don't really know how to describe it." You have to see for yourself; aliens, colonies, cafes and endless starry black space!"

"Oh my God can I go, please?"

"Well it's not allowed."

"Come on Laz. No one would know."

"Yeah man. You can take your friends along. You're not just going to ditch us like that are you?" Spoke Andy former coworker of Li at the market.

"Well I..."

"Come on man you can't just be a snob now that you have your ship. How many times have we helped you in your times of need and all the electronics I've given you? "Don't forget about your speaker system in your car. I hooked that up for you." Topher says local neighbor.

"Oh and I can't forget the rims." Andy added. "Who picked those out for you?"

Lazarus sighs longly. "Alright I'll take you to see it. But you have to persuade Li to let you in." Andy and Topher high-fives...

The young people soon squeezed into his vehicle and they sped over to the launch site. The hand of Topher darted fourth toward the dash to switch on the loud speakers and they boomed on their departure. Side sliding into the field the car halts viewing Star Voyager ahead as it sat boldly. Now dusty of the orange powder the vessel was quickly surrounded by the ecstatic crowd. It wasn't long before they were on the roof trying to elbow the hatch open. They played and swung on the engines yelling and chattering as if crazed by the magnificent vessel. As can be expected the females were giving Lazarus extra attention now that he was a graduate and ship crew. Even Eling tried to work her way back into his arms. He was overwhelmed by the energy and attention.

Meanwhile Li was just making it back out onto the road top for the quarter mile trek to Lazarus's. After glancing through an astronomy revue magazine he had a few places in mind he wanted to explore in Sun Town next. Also he had recalled telling Xila he would see her again at the Mars Barr. She was strongly on his mind now that he had met her. Strangely he was having visions surrounding Xila similar to how he saw places and events when he first looked at his ship, like it was his destiny. He saw visions of her home planet and much activity was about the dream. Now the thought had crossed his mind that Xila was also his destiny as he traversed the highway over to Lazarus's home. Li had noticed the car gone as he entered the artistically designed courtyard where Lazarus's mother was organizing her embroidered quilts strung to the cloths line. She smiled. "Lazarus left in the car with some friends to go and see the ship." She informed. "Thanks Mrs. Miller." He trots off.

### Peer Pressure

Lazarus was atop the ship trying to figure out how to open the hatch but couldn't. Li had the keys anyway and the thumb print receptor would only respond to his pattern yet. Still they made the attempt as if trying to escape a closing predator. Of course they were only interested in exploiting this superb vehicle before their eyes. When Li came around the bend up the dirt road to see all his friends stacked around his vessel. The females immediately ran up to him grabbing his arms and tugging him asking over and over if they can ride in the space ship. Li's mouth was frozen because of all the attention and activity. The beautiful women suddenly showing him so much favor flustered him into agreeing to take them inside to look. "Okay, okay." He spouted finally cutting the cross-talking. Li climbs the rungs, keys open the hatch and jumps inside, the excited friends wide-eyed and awed. Once the impulsive group entered things began to spin out of control. There were people in all three compartments handling and touching the gadgets and panels. Li was becoming a little annoyed but kept it inside.

In the back were friends slouching and lounging in the beds, on the stools, and digging through the icebox.

"Li you are the sexiest space pilot ever!" Barrel exclaimed. Li felt his concentration begin to diminish as the heat of his long time friend began to penetrate him. The females had been whispering amongst themselves as if to plan an event.

Barrel and Eling approaches Li as he stands near the pilot's panel as if to protect the controls. The soft hand and whispering voice of Barrel caressed his ears and abdomen as she came on heavily.

"Li you know me and Eling want to do you a favor." She said with a wink. Li began to arouse as the two hotly dressed and attractive girls coaxed him, their bodies slender and fleshy.

"Can we take off honey?" Eling said lightly licking his ear. Topher watched from the cockpit doorway a bit jealous of Li's attention but reserved it knowing they were close to persuading him to lift off; Li huffs.

"Ah come on you all its illegal for me to have you here let alone fly away with you. You're not graduates of the academy." Lazarus stood silently listening for his ultimate answer, the guilt trip of his acquaintances weighing on his still.

"Come on sweetie just one time. Eling and I will..." She whispers with hot breath into his ear. Li sighs in frustration. His hand stretches fourth activating the hovering system."

"Lazarus, look outside and check anyone around." He ordered. Topher smiles and retreats to the back to join Andy. Wordless Lazarus enters the middle chamber and peeks out from the top hatch nervously scanning the horizon making sure no SVLC personnel were snooping around. The area was clear. He bangs shut the hatch, secures it, plows his way into the cockpit, and mans his panel. Taking one last look at the external cameras mounted to the hull.

"We're clear." Li heatedly begins the ascent process. The friends were cheering and adrenaline flowed while the ship vibrates and quavers. Li activates the cameras in the rear compartment displayed on a small screen section of the main window to witness the horse playing and loud gibber from the back. He had put them on the loud speaker to monitor their rowdiness.

"We've got to get away from Earth if we are going to be carrying them around. I'm a little paranoid." Eling and Barrel massage and caress Li's shoulders as they viewed the horizon ahead, the ground growing more and more distant.

Soon the caressing and petting of the ships pilot turned to nervous grips on his shoulders and chair's headrest as the sky began to blacken. The light vibrations continued as the ship was pushed skyward until the rounded horizon of the blue Earth took shape. The speechless lasses shivered silently with eyes like coins and demeanors of skittishness.

"I'm going to take us away from here somewhere not so close to the Moon if you know what I mean."

"Yes, I agree." Said Lazarus." Li angles the vessel toward galactic North, accelerates, significantly, and they rose above the solar plane.

"I think you'd better head for the Asteroid Belt." Celie said finally speaking up.

"It's remote enough."

"Thanks..." Li said. He began to calm once the Earth and its mysterious Moon fell away swiftly.

"Li what would you do if we were caught with them." Lazarus asked. At that time the thought occurred to him. The potential of his vessel began to manifest itself and he began having thoughts of rebellion. His vessel is so fast he could probably outrun any SMD pursuer who catches him. Li shakes his head to clear the line of ideas. He was generating. "I'd better not think in that area. Let's just get this little trip over with. I want to get them back home within the next few hours and we're never going to do this again."

"Agreed..."

"Are you girls okay?" Li asked noting their trembling.

"Are we safe in here?" Barrel questioned. "I'm scared."

"Well you wanted to ride along so bad." Li said. "I don't think you really knew what you were getting into."

When they arrived Li decreased their velocity that they might cruise by the plaza at a sightseeing speed. "Oh my God, you're not going into those rocks are you?" Eling asked nervously.

"No don't please." Barrel said. "You're gonna hit one."

"No, we'll be fine." Laz said.

"Are those buildings?" Eling asked noting the curious structures upon the big rocks as they fall near. "Yes they are." Li responded. "Can we go inside one?"

"Absolutely not..." Li answered abruptly. "You are not ready, and there are only three space suits, and it's too dangerous. There could be SMD personnel in there." Li exhales and relaxes. Although earlier he was a bit annoyed now he's pleased to see his friends' fascination about the settlements.

"Li, look who is at the Mars Barr." Laz pointed as they drifted about the field of megastones.

"Christopher Williams." Li said aloud.

"Who is Christopher Williams?" Eling asked.

“Nobody, just a troublemaker...”

On the patio Chris catches glimpse of the Star Voyager floating about. A competitive spirit fills him as he eyeballs the black vessel from his helmet screen noticeable by the glow of the fission engines. Li also spots his XF express craft parked on the surface next to his posse. The rear hatch parts and Andy and Topher enter the cockpit. “Hey Li let’s go to Jupiter!” Andy shouted. “Yeah, I want to see it.”

“No guys come on it’s enough that I brought you into space now we’re going back home in a few minutes.”

“Ah what kind of mess is that? We can’t even get out here and the least you could do is go to Jupiter.” Topher pressured.

“Yeah and what about all the times I’ve picked you up in my ride. How many times have I taken you to work before? What about all those things man?” Andy said.

Li was annoyed. “Okay whatever. Fine you want to go to Jupiter let’s go, after that no more. Lazarus we’re never going to do this again.”

“I know, this is the only time.”

“You know I have someone to meet here later.” Li said as he accelerated away from the Plaza. Topher was annoyed as well of Li and Lazarus’s interesting life but kept it in. He felt in control.

### Recrudesce of Jupiter

Li had a feeling Xila would be at the Mars Barr waiting on him and he was antsy, it made him want to hurry. A little bit of annoyance swelled in him as the foraging friends played and used the curious instruments lying about such as the EM field scanner and intercom system. He wasn’t too angry at them having noted the innocent face of inquisitiveness mainly on the girls. However he disliked Andy and Topher’s demanding and haphazard orders and guilt trips.

“Attention everyone, we are currently arriving at the Planet Jupiter as our final activity.” He informed as a loud announcement. In the forward view screen appeared the colossal world of gas and chemicals once again as had before this time it became enormously large as he circled in for a tight orbit. Li had a kind of desire to get a scare out of Topher and Andy for their somewhat rudeness. The cabin was filled with chatter and voice. Lazarus cycled through the camera views to see all aspects of the massive gas giant like they have never seen before. Topher and Andy high-five again as if to have succeeded in being in command of Li...

“Hey Li fly into the sky man. I want to see it.” Topher said. Li pondered a moment, another thoughtless suggestion by Topher. “That sounds like a no.”

“Ah whatever man, this is junk. You never do anything cool.”

Li grinned a bit. “Hmm, you know what Laz I think we can go into Jupiter’s sky. What do you think?”

“I don’t know, I’m not the astronomy expert here. Won’t we float?”

“Maybe, but I wouldn’t go that deep. Celie have you ever flown into a gas giant?”

“No not yet. It seems kind of dangerous.”

“Do it man, this ship can handle it. Come on.” Topher Urged.

“It’s just light gasses flowing around. If we match the speed of the currents we should be able to lower down into it.” Li said.

“This is Topher and Andy’s idea and now you want to do it yourself?” Laz asked.

“Well now that he brought it up I’m actually kind of curious.”

“Well we’re here so now’s the time if we’re gonna do it.”

“Alright, Lazarus, how much ascent fuel do we have left?”

His heart thumped. “Sixty-nine percent...” He reported.

Li was quiet as he stared at the vast Jovian terminator. “Alright, we’ll hover under the cloud tops for a moment then return to orbit.”

“Be careful Li.” Celie said. Lazarus tips his head indicating the systems were ready.

“What a pushover.” Andy whispered to Topher. They both grinned.

“Lazarus, when the gravity starts to increase, compensate with the GEF.”

“Understood...” Their hearts pounded as Li decayed the orbit. Closer and closer they came to the flowing skies. The terrified girls gripped the seat backs leaving the marks of their fingertips upon them.

Soon the limb of Jupiter, which was no longer curved, became a vast linear horizon. The descent thrusters fired at maximum intensity and the ship enters the speeding belt currents. The atmospheric gases were moving at great speeds triple the speed of sound on Earth and the blackness of space began to color with lighted sky.

"Everyone be quiet Li needs to concentrate on what he is doing. What is our status Li?" Lazarus asked.

"We're in. We're caught up with the Jovian winds and I found a nice calm area. The wind has taken over our forward motion. We can fly in here as long as ascent thrusters have fuel. How much left?"



### *Inside Jupiter*

"If we keep burning them at this rate to compete with Jupiter's gravity, about forty-five minutes..."

Li exhaled. "I feel a little better with that wide margin of error."

"I can't believe we're doing this." Laz said "We're not going to stay long. I hope everyone is satisfied now."

The colors fluctuate and were hypnotizingly turbid. The swirling and churning of the translucent liquid nitrogen, ammonia, and various other elements as seen off in the distance memorized them. The cabin became silent. Li's focus realigned onto the distant smoky backdrop like that unto volcanic smog. The bold thunder of intracloud lightening startled the group as the beautiful pink of hydrogen discharge withdrew their fright. The petrified gazes of the girls told of their fear as they remain clutching the chair backs.

Li's anxiety subsided, elating the on-watchers. He had become freed of the demanding console now to enjoy the mixing splendor. "Funny. The clouds remind me of the old cloudy summer's days on the fastball field stealing bases."

"You always played outfielder making surprise catches." Laz added.

"I remember always my attention skyward staring at the floating fluffy puffs always thinking about going into space." The others fell into the dream as they merged with the consensus of their memories.

Li hid his brief alert as he broke from his remembrance angling his head slowly as not to alarm the still enchanted people.

"We have about three fifths ascent fuel left." He reported.

"Li why is the sky so dark?" Lazarus said.

"I'm not sure, we should still be directly under the sun, checking the altitude again."

"Li I think we better get out of here." Lazarus urged. "Something's wrong. The readings are suggesting that we are under water."

"Shoot. We're falling!" Li shouted. Everyone roared. Panic erupted on top of Li and Laz's feverish techno talk. The ship made its steep descent into the vast Jovian abyss.

"The atmosphere is merging into denser material!" Li shouted. The clouds were becoming black and dark gray to the shortened horizon, the sky was dim and dark. The sunlight was nothing more than a dull smudge of orangish glow above.

"Hang on everyone I'm trying to get us out of here."

"What the hell is that!. Lazarus yelled for out in the distance many thousands of miles away a low, massive, pressure region centered by a whirling mass of hot material.

"Oh my God, I think we're being carried toward the **red spot!**"



### ***Approaching the Great Red Spot!***

"A tornado...?" Lazarus noted.

"We've got to get out of here. Push the ascent thrusters to their limits."

"Li we've got only twenty minutes from depleting our solid fuel store. What do we do?" "

"I can't tell which direction we're facing. I don't want to fly further into the atmosphere. I just can't tell what direction we're traveling."

"We've got to do something or we're dead. Everyone stop screaming." Lazarus shouted with ears ringing of high pitched horror. There's one thing I can think of. We have to lessen the vertical GE field. That way I can tell which way is up. Not the ships gravity plate up but Jupiter's up."

"Everyone grab on to something and hold on tight." Laz shouted.

At the switch of the controls the gravity increased enough for Li to get a feel for direction and orientate the ship. "Keep the thrusters at maximum." Li yelled. "I hope we have the right pitch."

Using the feeling of gravity he activated the fission thrust engines on low power and they began to climb with fire flares astern. The sky began to brighten; their heart-stopping plunge toward the belly of Jupiter was thwarted.

"The ascent fuel is nearly depleted but the fission engines will allow us to penetrate the Jovian *exosphere*." Li said. After leaving the last of the highest cloud tops he accelerated as hurriedly as possible to attain orbit. No one could breathe until all the alarms stopped blaring and Captain Li stopped pushing buttons. Their tension was not relieved until Li's head fell into the headrest. As soon as it had fallen his head lifted again and with no words he broke range of the dominance of Jupiter.

The Star Voyager was seen coming in for a final grounding onto the patio of a supply depot adjacent to the Mars Barr asteroid.

“One thruster has burned out. I’m going to get more fuel.” Wait here and keep them calm if you can.” Said Li referring to the shivering group retired to the ships rear.

“I’m coming out too.” Celie said. They suit up and climb out. Into the vacuum Celie communicates with Li as they prepare to wheel the fuel blocks back to the ship.

“Li you’d better be careful. If you get caught bringing these non-graduates home in your ship you’ll get your ship license revoked.”

“I know. I was stupid to give into them. This will never happen again.”

Celie glances over to the distant Mars Barr rock. “I see Husto’s ship. I’m going to stay here and catch a pod over to the Mars Barr. Tell Lazarus I’ll see him later sometime.”

“Okay Celie. See you later and take care.” With a gloved handshake Celie departs toward the little station building. Soon Li returns with more fuel bricks. The shimmer of the spectrum diffracted from the smooth porous snow-white fuel chunks like an oil slick as he loaded them into the hold. Clamping the pressure vice, he finishes the load and closes the chambers. Li climbs back in the ship and waited for the middle cabin to pressurize after securing the hatch. He opened the rear automatic door and peeked in at everyone huddled together discussing the event at Jupiter and they were behaving themselves. Li was silent, frankly so were the others. The girls were pouting and the boys wide eyed. Li looked to them with a deadly earnestness.

“Please, do not under any circumstances talk to anyone about this when we get home.” They nodded. The door shut behind him and he entered the cockpit, slid into the pilot’s chair. His head spun over to Lazarus who was studying intently the recent console recordings. The Star Voyager lifts off from the asteroid and heads for Earth.

There was more unexpected apprehension as Li began a decent sequence above the home planet this time at night. He paid close attention to the readings and alerts feeling terrible about being so irresponsible agreeing to take friends along. The city lights below in tight clusters speckled the surface as they observe a birds-eye-view of the nighttime flyover.

Soon the ship had touched down lightly in the dark ball field, the streaming floodlights blazing the area. Standing by the systems to unload the passengers he finally looks to Lazarus and says, “I loathe gas giants.”

Lazarus chuckles.

“Lesson learned.” Li concluded. The people in the rear cabin had fallen asleep to be awakened by the gentle nudge of the ground. They had never felt a more pleasant jolt in all time and the weary passengers exit.

“Thank you for the ride Li and we’re sorry about the trouble.” Eling said. The sleepy group started a walk back to the subdivision. The girls had taken Li’s blankets from the living cabin to wrap around them as they made the short trek through the cool low lying mist of the night.

“Do you think they will stay quiet?” Li asked.

“They had better or this could all be over, no more Star Voyager.” Lazarus responded.

“I think I’d better stay away from Earth for a while. Are you coming or staying.” Li asked.

Lazarus yawns and ponders. “I guess I’m staying.” He uttered about halfway through. “I’ll just see you sometime later.”

“Alright buddy. Just be on the lookout for me. I’ll call you when I’m back.” Lazarus climbs out of the ship and stands by to watch the lift-off. Li begins activating the hover and suddenly receives a communication of his wrist comm.

“Who could this be?” He wondered. On the screen displayed the face of Lazarus.

“Li, let me back in, I’ve changed my mind.” Li chuckles and opens the hatch. Lazarus climbs back in, enters the control room, and they rise into the night toward the twinkling stars.

### Xila Awakens

It was a routine morning at the Ceres Hotel as Lieutenant Xila Kile rises from her well-deserved oversleep. Her grumbling tummy craved a fresh Mars Barr breakfast plate. She liked eggs and bacon with waffles and toast, the classic morning meal. She glanced into the lucent window screen toward the cluster of asteroids where the Mars Barr was located. The morning laser show was barely visible in the plaza above its host asteroid and she threw the covers from her and headed to the lavatory. She bathed; afterward suiting her curvy figure in the respectable lieutenant’s uniform, blue on the torso and white on the sleeves. Her father **Admiral Xemeral Kile** of the KMD was on his way back from Moonbase-1 after having attended a conference with Admiral Seghtee and intelligence commanders. They had been discussing recent **Confederate Resistance Coordination** activities near the Planet Krysto approximately fifty-three light years away at the

outskirts of Star City. This was the primary purpose of their excursion to Sun Town which, for Xila was a much needed leave of absence and highly classified. Xila's base duties back on Krysto were challenging and often tedious.

The Confederate Resistance was a large collection of opposing military remnants from various civilizations including Earth. To date their bases remained outside of the territory. They viciously disagreed to the free open society established by the Planetary Council and continue to solidify its growing army. In addition to generating a hierarchible framework, the Resistance openly involves itself in political conferences and speaks out to private settlements in order to gain support. Yet small, the **CRC** remains a significant menace to Star City security.

A walk onto the hotel balcony catwalks viewed the spacious lobby below with commuters coming to and fro some listening to the echoing transit operators voice on the intercom system. The escalator scaled Xila to the shiny tiled floor where she worked her way through the crisscrossing human and alien traffic, her helmet latched firmly against her thigh by way of the handy attachment feature. A shuttle was standing-by preparing to transfer passengers over to the plaza while others were riding in. She attaches her helmet before entering the ferry. The shuttle sat on a long maglev belt leading to a ship-sized airlock at the end. It drifted on the magnetic cushion toward the first hatchway, which swallowed the shuttle soon to enter a second. Upon sucking all of the air out the forward doors parted and the craft exited with hover-system actuating shortly thereafter. The escape velocity of Ceres was low and attaining orbit was nearly effortless. The shuttle did not use high capacity engines instead relied on low energy thrust to attain **transference speeds**. Xila was at the Mars Barr asteroid in only a few minutes.

Touching down on the small restaurant-hosting rock she steps out onto the gravity plating shortly to enter the lobby. Xila made her way upstairs led by her hunger and hankering for another taste of Sun Town. Stepping out of the airlock she removed her helmet, following was her hair restraint and her brown strands fell to her shoulders. She sat in her favorite stool and placed her order. The bartender called out the request and there was sizzling echoing from around the male Felidae that was working the grill. The café was full this morning with a few Felidaes and Mydausians enjoying their visit. At the human table just so happens to be Christopher Williams and his buddies. It wasn't long before he appeared at the stool next to Xila with a puppy dog look and words of charm.

"If beauty were time, you'd be eternity."

"Thanks." Said Xila and she went on eating.

"I'm Chris of the XF Fleet. I own a fighter. You would make quite a lovely addition on a little cruise out to Neptune."

"No thanks. I'm sorry I'm working actually."

"Oh that's interesting. What are you working on?"

"Well right now I'm working on this meal." Just then two more humans entered the café. It was Seiwan Li and Lazarus. They uncapped and sat at the stools next to Xila. Li had seen Christopher and attempted to get Xila's attention.

"Seiwan, I was wondering when you'd arrive." He was smiling. Christopher however was reaching his boiling point. He stood and drifted back to his table and began conversing with his posse.

"Where have you been all this time?" She inquired.

"Whew! Where haven't I been is more like it." She nods. "Needless to say I've had quite an adventure so far exploring the Solar System." He finished. "And how about you, how is your vacation so far?"

"Great. I love Sun Town. I'm so glad to be away from the base."

"It must get busy out there." She gives him a *you don't know the half of it* expression. "I'll be leaving to go back today sometime after my father the Admiral returns from Moon." Li felt alone suddenly. He realized he had quickly become attached to Xila. There was something about her. Of course Xila had seen much action, as the small scar on her beautiful face was evidence.

"Hmm, that's a long trip. How are you traveling?"

"We came in on a long range **SMD Battleship**." Xila pauses, she felt she had divulged too much.

"A battle ship, wow, are you sure you're not a General." He asked jokingly. Xila nods and jiggles the subject a little. She looked closer at him and saw something on his face, a warmth and discipline that she admired in a man.

"I wouldn't mind to show you my home planet, that is, if you ever were to come out that far." He looks to Lazarus who was gone and on the other side of the café talking to a group of Felidaes. A few degrees to the left were the now vacant Human table where Christopher and his posse had been. Now only they're ominous ghostly after images were left. Li's mind was playing tricks on him. He looks back to the soft noble face of Xila and says, "I may be able to go to Krysto now that I'm not so green anymore." Xila smiles lightly. She could tell that he was still a little green by her standards but she hid her

experienced side for the moment knowing a man likes to feel secure in his background. Li felt at least some pride having escaped Jupiter's hold.

"Xila, I've made up my mind. I'll going to Krysto. You could travel with me if you like."

Xila blushed a little. "Hmm, I don't think my father would allow that. But I can meet you there in a couple of weeks. The SMD Battleship departs for its long-range voyage to **A- 00981** in a few hours."

"I'll be right behind you." He said adamantly.

"Oh I don't think so, these SMD Battle Cruisers are pretty fast.." Xila advised. Li felt challenged.

"I'll prepare my ship now. This will be my first deep space voyage and I want to be ready." She offers a hug and he returns.

Giggly squeals, drawing the attention of the two as Lazarus, who had apparently managed to make the Filas laugh, carried across the café. He concluded his banter with a little smile and rendezvous with Li. He sprints up to him close as if trying to tell a secret. "Li these cat chicks have..." Lazarus paused and glanced at Xila.

Li interjects. "It's time to shove off old buddy. We're going to A-00981, the Planet Krysto two weeks away! We're going to be stopping a few places on the way. Are you up for it first mate?" He asked cornily. Lazarus plays along and salutes. They cap off and exit the café.

Li had landed the vessel on the outskirts of the patio as usual where there was more space and the vessel clusters were thinner. Upon navigating the unoccupied craft perched on their landing struts Lazarus was first to climb the ladder and Li throws his the keys so he can get used to opening the hatch. He had recently programmed the thumb print reader to accept Laz's pattern. He pitches himself inside and waits for Li so that they could begin pressurization. After waiting for nearly half a minute Lazarus became curious that Li had not appeared in the hatchway. He calls on the communicator with no answer. He climbs back up to look and Li was gone.

### A Sticky Situation

The eye-way was moist as was his forehead. He lifted his neck a bit to see that he was face down into the asteroid next to the Mars Barr. His hands could not move and they felt like they were tied down He couldn't turn his head very well due to the suit restriction but when he looked forward he did not see the terminator of an asteroid. He saw blackness. For a moment he thought his visor screen was malfunctioning. Upon glancing to his right he saw something, big and yellow though his vision was blurred. He squinted but the image didn't change. Now he was confused. After looking to his left he saw more blackness and countless asteroids as far as his eye could see. He was befuddled and thought he had been taken to another part of the asteroid belt. As the picture began to unblure he could make out the massive plane of tiny boulders, millions of them. He looked quickly to his right again and recognized the planet Saturn. It appeared that Christopher and his buddies had staked him to one of the inner boulders orbiting inside Saturn's rings.

The amount of self-control necessary for this situation was enormous and Li began squirming and rolling as he embraced the feeling of fright deep in his belly. One of the stakes came loose and his arm jettied into the air. His upward momentum almost launched him into space except for the other stake anchoring his left hand. The escape velocity of those boulders was so minute one could easily break it with a hard leap; he almost fell into Saturn's atmosphere distant as it was. He decided to use the stakes to keep him attached to the boulder as it circled Saturn along with millions of others in the outstretching rings. His wrist computer was still active, about seventy nine percent charged. He recalled a section from his academy handbook about being marooned. *In the event one is stranded in a space suit the standard wrist computer can activate a long-range high frequency distress signal.* The manual warns that it uses a lot of charge to send an intense signal far into space yet, Li vigorously begins tapping buttons attempting to locate the program that initiates the transmission.

Lazarus was still at the Asteroid Belt Plaza frantically looking for Li. He had taken the shuttle back and forth to different asteroids including the Ceres Hotel. He had no clue as to Li's whereabouts. He was becoming more and more pressured to call the SMD and he did. The **SMD representative** on the Star Voyagers communications terminal confirmed the initiation of a bulletin posting and subsequent patrolling of **SMD police craft**. In the meantime Lazarus was stuck with a tricky decision, whether or not to fly the ship.

Back at Saturn Li was beginning to become concerned about his oxygen. The trip from the Mars Barr to Saturn would take an hour based on official time limits which is what designates an hour as the standard amount of time to travel many places in the solar system. Since most craft were capable of tremendous speed a time limit on travel is more efficient than a

speed limit. He used the oxygen level indicator to determine the speed of the craft that brought him here. He knew his previous levels from the indicator, which he checked often and just before he left the Mars Barr. He was able to determine the craft, which delivered his unconscious body here, was speeding.

### **Lazarus Takes the Helm**

The signal reached Lazarus's wrist computer by design. The thought that this might be a prank crossed the mind of the befuddled navigator. Yet in all of Lazarus's experience as friend of Seiwan he had only known him to pull this kind of joke a hand full of times or less. Lazarus began calculating the direction and distance of the signal, which required a few minutes while the handy arm device interfaced with nearby postspectral transceivers. The anticipating time lapse returns comforting results and he could scarcely believe the solution. He placed it in the Saturnian system. The thought of equipment malfunction crossed Laz's mind and reluctance kept his thoughts in a stop and go mode. Yet his instincts reported that his buddy was in trouble.

After a brief glance out toward the supposed direction of Saturn he shakily climbs the stepladder and made his way to the controls. Nervousness set in as he assumed the pilot's console. He had only watched Li work the controls previously; even so his heart has always been at the satisfyingly informative position of reporting sensor analysis and plotting course adjustments. The part that made him edgy was when he was concentrating on his own panel and Li's hands were working the buttons and levers at the helm. There were a few programming sequences he missed. He managed to break range of the asteroid and into space.

Lazarus rotated the nav. console by grabbing the little side bar and pulling the hinged mechanism toward the pilot's chair until it locks into place. The right side controls were now within reach. Turning the ship was easy since it only required a throttle handle. But there were three handles: one was the throttle, one was for maneuvering, and the other smaller one was for strafing. He felt as if he were in an arcade machine back on Earth, which gave him some imaginatory assistance. Yet, even getting out of the asteroid belt wasn't the main issue. It is when he arrived at Saturn he would need to pay extra attention to this panels. He accelerated the vessel after having calculated the essential vectors.



### **Approaching Saturn**

When Lazarus arrives at Saturn almost an hour later the proximity alarm activates and he turns to the position-adjusted navigational panel he is most familiar with. There was a vessel in the area as indicated. He looks up at the screen at Saturn off in the distance yet closing quickly. He rechecked the computers orbital flight plan to be sure he would attain a stable high orbit. Saturn was yellowish that day with a few light bands stretching across the latitude. Lazarus couldn't help but to notice,

yet he had an agenda, which was to locate Li. He had triangulated the position of the vessel he detected upon arriving. It was in low orbit and appeared to be traveling along the inner blade of Saturn's rings.

With a deep breath he maneuvered to intercept the distant vessel yet was only beginning to near the outer edge of Saturn's ring. He decided to attain an adjacent orbit starting at the outer ring blade thinking it would be easier to work his way inward. Lazarus's quick hand raised the vessel still higher above the seemingly endless plain of boulders as a few small one attracted gravitationally to the ship nearly sending him into a panic. It was an intense few minutes of careful decision-making and finesse as he slowly dampened his orbit and gracefully carried the ship across the vast plane of boulders soon to accelerate to cover the distance, the ship casting a shadow along the gritty stones.

When he finally caught up to the mysterious vessel he found it to be an SMD rescue craft and an officer was freeing Li. Lazarus exhales in relief as he halts his fall toward Saturn and reestablishes an orbit along the inner ring. The Star Voyager was now within hopping distance of the boulder and a small SMD fighter. Li skittishly leaped the few meter distance, grabbed the ladder rungs, and climbed inside the Star Voyager. The cabin pressurized, Li decapped, and entered the cockpit with an irate look to his face.

"Someone grabbed me as I was climbing the ladder at the Mars Barr." Lazarus ponders. "I didn't see their face but I looked down at my chest and an arm was plugging an **air transfer hose** into my **receptor port!** They must have pumped some kind of knockout gas into my suit from the **emergency oxygen conveyer**. When I find out whom..." Li continued. "Not only am I going to report them but I'm going to personally confront them."

"I climbed inside and waited for you but you were gone. I had to fly the ship myself."

"Yes and good work, how did it go?"

"It's fun. Nice view." Laz said referring to the looming mother Saturn in the left periphery screen.

Both the Star Voyager and the SMD fighter departed orbit in striating arcs. They had a great deal of preparation to do in less time now that this incident occurred, only two hours to be ready for the long voyage to A-00981.

### Packing Bags

The location of the Star Voyager at the time that it is being loaded with supplies is the large flatland in which they had originally launched. Neither of them could explain their true feelings about the trip. It seems they felt them all, a little anxiety mixed with adrenaline pumping thrill, and a prudent respect. A thorough study of the **map of star city** he retrieved at the Mars Barr was helpful. The map revealed the locations of various outlets from which a Captain could re-supply his ship. The chosen flight-plan by Li intersected star **HR 8832** first, **Vega** second and finally A-00981.

Having loaded at least three weeks worth of supplies and food the likelihood that particular quantity would suffice was acceptable. An extra precaution taken was to load extra solid fuel blocks inside the middle cabin and was stacked in the corner. Conversations with each of their parents were occurring sporadically as they trekked back and forth between home and the ship. Love and well-giving was exchanged between families during the packing. The father of Lazarus was grilling meats out on the back deck and a sliding door was in place at the exit point. Entertainment such as **television**, **Internet**, and **radio** were already integrated into the Star Voyager's systems. Friends were present, food was being served, cheers were offered and songs were being sung as Seiwan and Lazarus prepared for their monumental voyage into the unknown.

The ship was now crammed with supplies and fuel. Many of their friends were envious about such an exciting journey. Yet, encouraging and joyous for Seiwan and Lazarus, they were hesitant to consider coming along after the Jupiter incident no less, their non-graduate status also a factor. Neither Li nor Lazarus had been drinking because they had recently realized concentration and space travel go hand and hand.

### Destination: A-00981

After midnight the party began to thin out. Friends were leaving and the music was turned off. With bags on their shoulders and new uniforms hugs and kisses followed. Laz's mother zipped the flap on his white torso, black-sleeved Star Voyager suit and one last touch of his face to see him off. Li's parents were present as well and with bright smiles they manned the bed of the black pickup truck escorting them to the field. Final farewells were bid to the friends away from the ship and they were soon airborne.

In the moments later the nearly blinding flare of the atomic flame ascent thruster carried them into the lighted clouds. After breaking orbit Li excitedly aimed the nose of his vessel toward HR 8832 the first stop on the long voyage to A-00981. It was a straight shot.

“Ready for some speed...” Li asked. Lazarus nods. This was the first time using the high capacity matter/anti-matter reactor, which wouldn’t activate until the other engine sequences reached their peak, and was thoroughly checked for safety. Little taps of the console and they began their slow acceleration beyond the speed of light to maximum velocity and ultimately the A-00981 system.

## Chapter 4

### Enter The Resistance

Meanwhile, tens of light years away we find ourselves in the “C” band of the exterior shells surrounding Star City whereas the “A” band was the location of A-00981. Deep in the **C-00101 star system** at a concealed Confederate Resistance base **Reloch Beltran** paces about the command deck of his attack freighter anxiously awaiting the finalization of procedure for the assault on the Planet Krysto. They had been tediously scanning and probing the A-00981 star system for every relevant tactically significant detail as they scheme they’re way further into the system.

The freighter at which Beltran and his localized group of Resistance personnel was located rested on a small Mercury-like planet in close range of a medium sized red star. This is a common location for Confederate Resistance convoys to wait while constructing permanent bases in various locations; additionally they served as sensor dead zones. In the black sky was the burning red star baking the surrounding surface. The proximity to the star made it troublesome to be located by nearby vessels.



*C-00101, Resistance Hideout*

The rocky planet they were on was perfectly selected and had a fast rotation, a rarity among closely orbiting planetoids. Perhaps sometime in the distant past this small world was knocked over by a large impacting object providing the necessary rotary force. On the prepared surface lay a cluster of modified cargo ships and attack craft totaling close to one hundred. The hulls of their vessels and subsequent shelters could withstand the heat long enough to enter into the dark side where the temperatures would plummet to below freezing. The materials in which they were constructed consisted of special elements, which could tolerate drastic temperature fluctuations. Needless to say the high integrity vessels were well suited for extremes in environment as were all modern spacecraft. Adjacent to the clusters of assault craft were seven **tracker vehicles** fashioned by The Resistance, which were intended to be dropped off onto Krysto while they mount their supply raiding plan. This was a common scheme for The Resistance as they continued to build their forces. Without the partnership and security found in citizenship with Star City, felon outcast such as the Confederate Resistance Coordination finds increasing need for acquisitions.

Beltran was working intently over the strategy board with his appointed generals on an ingenious plan to set the tracker vehicles onto the surface of Krysto near the City of **Raxot** without detection. Krysto was also the destination of Captain Seiwan Li and his shipmate Lazarus.

"According to our most recent observations the meteor shower will hit Krysto in less than two weeks." Beltran's aid **Cyril** reported, he was a Felidae and second in command. His translation mask was planted securely on his face by means of elastic bands and he sat at a computer console where he was sifting through data. Even so Beltran had trained with him long enough to pick up a few cat sonances of which he learned the meanings. They could communicate basic phrases and intentions.

There were only a handful of commanders at this particular stake out and the rest were unranked wannabees who were willing to fight for their own causes while assisting the trained Resistance leaders. Beltran acknowledges with a glance as he parts the protective blinding for a glimpse at the worksite. The low class officers were outside under large heat resistant tents covering some of the construction site of this official base of operations. Pressure tents, small igloo shaped temporary dwellings were erected providing limited air shelter until the ground could be dug up while they begin loading building material inside.

"These employees need to be fed." He stated. "I'm instructing our restaurant contact to return with some damn food." Cyril informed driven by his grumbling belly. Beltran follows his own hunger as the sound of the sliding drawer draws him to Cyril's workroom. The food cakes were abundant between them yet dwindling in the eyes of the majority. Beltran was solely concerned with the construction of the subterranean shelter. The raid on Krysto grows sharply imperative. A surge of anger courses him yet he gives in not to the thought of canceling his position as commander of the Resistance. Maniacal flows in his veins driving his determination.

"Just one more successful supply raid could set us off toward independence." He knew. The Planet Krysto was the nearest, most resource rich location. The two cities there and various remote military installations provided plenty of spoils. Suffice it to say, locating and raiding depots on planets for materials was costly. Yet, once the proper machinery was acquired they had no shortage of raw materials such as metals and ice from which they could piece together their desired designs for a more permanent headquarters.

### Leaving Sun Town

The Sun had begun to drift away slowly as could be viewed from the rear window screen. The deep red hue of the beloved homestar indicated they were traveling significantly faster than previous. Still, they were only 3/5 of the maximum velocity and were quickly closing onto the highest speed, light speed factor 20. In the cockpit Li was standing with hands clasps behind him and observing nearby stars from an angle as they drift by. To the laymen it would appear as if they were traveling slowly. Yet, due to the great distances between them for stars to be drifting by at all they would have to be moving at enormous velocities. Indeed they were. Li stayed glued to the cockpit.

Lazarus was in the middle cabin at the computer consol attempting to sift through radio broadcasts and television channels. Unfortunately a strange side effect occurs when trying to do this. Even though, as **Einstein's Special Relativity** would have it, light travels at the same speed despite your own reference frame, traveling faster than light causes the music and voices to play in reverse once the data stream is decoded. The colors of the televisions images were inverted and looked like a negative, no radio, television, or Internet during high-speed travel was available. But a ray of hope entered

Lazarus as he figured upon stopping at HR 8832 all transmission would be available, possibly even alien radio. Actually the **Matron Group** had been working on a program, which could reverse the values of electromagnetic transmissions or modify the original transmission into a data stream with which a specially designed computer could interpret the information having undergone inversion. Unfortunately Li had not explored that option and likely wouldn't consider it until Lazarus brings it up.

His attention diverts to the medical panel which he activates allowing a gurney and cabinets to unfold from wall enclosures. Lazarus sits upon the unfolded stretcher to test its comfort. Medical was his expertise and he started to get to know the *medical mode* of the ships infirmary quarter. "Let's check out the emergency cockpit." He thought. Upon tapping the wall panel he was startled to find himself dumped into the floor as parts of the room transformed into the ships *backup cockpit*. Blinking buttons and miniature window screens revolved to face forward and Lazarus could see outside directly off the forward bow. He got nervous and quickly closed the emergency cockpit fallback mode because he remembered they were at high speed and navigational systems were on standby. He didn't want to risk an accident. Next was *spacious mode*, which removed everything into the wall enclosures and provided an empty cargo area. He snickers. He notices "bottom hatch" on the panel readings and was satisfied to know it was there, it was essentially the same as the top hatch and could only be used during the short-range hover in which the ship rests on a planets magnetic field--alien technology. Actually governments of Earth possessed this ability even before the new era and the introduction of the new alien devices. It had remained classified for decades. Lazarus picks up the fuel blocks, which had been knocked over by the revolving enclosures during his exploration. He looks around for other toys to play with.

In the meantime Li relaxes in his pilot's chair with his feet on the consoles and crossed arms. He was thinking deeply about everything: his experiences, Xila, the voyage at hand, and then the computer sounded an alert and his feet hit the floor. It was only a velocity notification. He slowly leans back and puts his feet up again. Then he looks to the other panel where Lazarus usually sits. He had not used that console very much. To date it had become Lazarus's project. He switches chairs and starts skimming the database and various programs: sensors, star charts, and communications. The programming was open for additional screens to be added. There was no weapons panel yet. The touch-sensitive screen could be switched by tapping a specific combination of three vertically arranged **hard buttons** on the right side of the square panel. Upon entering the correct code the display changes to the desired program. The star chart indicated with a red line they had traveled almost one-third the way to HR 8832. Li becomes curious about the system and retrieves the brochure he picked up to see what it has to say about that star system. He knew from his academy studies that it was the home system of what are nicknamed **Oasians**, an eccentric yet friendly aquatic alien civilization named after their predominately ocean covered home planet. He had definitely intended to visit since it seemed a once in a lifetime opportunity. Li assumed he wouldn't be coming back this way anytime soon, knock on wood.

### The Mediator

The SMD Battleship **Mediator**, carrying Admiral Xemeral Kile, his daughter Xila Kile, a host of Star City military officers, and data banks full of tactical information regarding Resistance movements, speeds ahead. They were already over half way to A-00981. The SMD battleships traveled at a maximum of light speed factor 23 and maintained a linier course. On the main deck Admiral Kile and several SMD command officers discuss the details of their findings.

Admiral Kile places the report he received from Moonbase-1 during the conference a few days ago onto the planning table. He takes a breath and begins reporting his exclusive findings.

"These photos were snapped by one of your civilian spies by the name of Feeno Nemon who was running ulterior measures in the "B" band outside the territory. Shown here are several moderated vessels, which they had been acquired or stolen anchored on the moon of this voided planet in the **B-00018 system**. Along side of the vessels are building materials and machinery, which has been removed from unguarded store houses from several different legally appropriated planets along the outskirts of Star City. The controllers of these planets, which have been registered by three or less different species, have expressed their concern about increasing Resistance ability with the missing equipment, alleged to have been taken by paid scofflaws operating for the CRC." The generals begin to chatter and Admiral Kile continues. "There is only one registered planet outside of Star City in the general vicinity which has yet to be attacked by the resistance. This incidentally is the Human-controlled Planet Krysto in A-00981, our current destination." The officers begin raising hands and interjecting. The leading general on behalf of Admiral Kile calls quiet that he be allowed to conclude his report. "**Krystonian**

**Military Defense Intelligence** anticipates a CRC strike on Krysto is eminent.” Admiral Kile takes his seat. Xila was not at the table but remained standing by the wall listening intently.

“Admiral Kile.” General Priset calls. “You can rest assured Star City Military Defense will not condone any further strikes by the CRC on any allied planet. We have generated a new **Allied Aid Initiation** to assist Krysto and all other united worlds outside of the territory. SMD arms bases will be stationed near these vulnerable systems.” He stated amenitively.

Admiral Kile expresses his gratitude. “And the SMD can rest assured that Krystonian intelligence will relay all detected activity for the benefit of our union.” A feeling of oneness swept through them. “Additionally...” Admiral Kile continued. “KMD forces have remained on full alert. At this time I’d like to report our next move in the fight against the Resistance. Upon our arrival to Krysto we will begin constructing advanced long distance sensor relays and place them in a remote sierra chain called the **Frozen Mountains**. This will also provide an uplink to our orbiting satellite scanners which are capable of alerting us to the slightest changes in our planetary system.” He hands the specs to the generals and they nod.

“The SMD will keep a military garrison near our boarder to await aid.” The general assured. “There is a small eatery positioned not too far from where our ships will be stationed called **Lendall Stop**.”

“Our people are familiar with that café and it is frequented by many of our officers.” Kile pointed out. “It remains tidally locked with A-00981, quite a distance, essentially at the very beginning of the stars gravitational influence.”

“All right the Lendall asteroid is now and outpost and leave inlet for our garrison and hungry and restless personnel. Let’s keep the fleet nearby and wait for new intelligence on resistance activities.” The meeting breaks after coming to a consensus. The Mediator continued on course for Krysto while military leaders prepared for possible altercations.

In the days ahead The Star Voyager maintains its course for Krysto while preparing its first stop at HR 8832. Lazarus woke when the consistent rhythmic hum of the engines changed to an ever-increasing power up as the reversed vessel slows and prepares to enter the star system. He had become used to the vibration and seemed to have found it to be therapeutic. He quickly cleans up and dresses in his uniform. The cockpit doors slide open to reveal Li who was trained on his console preparing to follow intersystem no wake guidelines en-route to Oassia. They were over twenty-one light years from Sun Town. The reddish dwarf star was sure to produce some stunning sky features on Oassia, which orbits closely to this smaller less brilliant star as compared to the Sun at about 27,000,000 miles out which was sufficient for Oassia’s needs.

Lazarus was promptly at his console receiving data about the star while Li began his descent from orbit of Oassia. They marveled when they saw the wondrous beauty of the navy blue oceans yet were befuddled in that they knew not where to land. The surface, other than a few sporadically remote island dwarfs, or perhaps mountain peaks, freckled the surface.

“Li we’re receiving a message.” Lazarus reported. “It is an automated transmission welcoming us to Oassia and showing instructions on where we could land. “It’s a tiny fleck of an island near the equator. The message is somewhat garbled and staticy due to a flare eruption from HR 8832, charged particles, high intensity rays, and strong magnetic activity is dousing us.

“All right let’s land. We can’t pass up our first ocean dominated world.” Li says.

“I agree.”

The atmosphere was denser than normal and the terminal velocity was lower which helped to conserve solid fuel during their descent. The thrusters were on a lower energy output ratio. As they near the island grew into a multicolored oasis of exotically tinted flora. The sunlight reflecting from the waters made the ocean a sparkling red shimmer. This was one of the most alien sites Li and Lazarus had seen so far. The sky was a soft violet as the oxygen rich atmosphere blended with the starlight.

The vessel sat down on the sandy Island and they exit. They had become faster at suiting up and leaving the ship but they needed not to where their helmets. Still it was recommended in the manuals to always carry it while visiting other worlds regardless of atmospheric composition. They latch the headgear to their thigh clamps and proceed into the little villa. There were only a few buildings and Oasians there on the surface and they bore the nakedness of finned and scaly bodies. The Oasians stood and observed silently and curiously with their discolored eyes of green hue, the two new aliens who had just landed. Oasians rarely left their home planet and very few owned space ships. Their Transition Academy was so small it could fit into the gym at Earth’s FTA. The beach, which their ship rested, was full of people roaming back and forth into and out of the ocean. There was apparently an aquatic metropolis somewhere in the sea. By the looks, it appeared to be fairly shallow rather than deepwater settlements. That made sense to Li seeing as how many large predators lived in deeper waters.



### *Skies of Oassia*

Li approaches a concession stand of sorts and pulls out his language mask. The grinning Oasian standing behind the stand greeted them with diluted garbles and flapping face fins. Li deduced, judging by the feeling, that this fin motion meant he was happy and they established a quick rapport. "You are more than welcome to come into the waters to see our home." The fish man said via the translation gear. The high integrity space suits were more than sufficient to enter into an ocean and the Oasian at the stand confirmed their home was in shallow waters. Their concession stand sold wet suits for air breathing visitors to use and they changed in the beach house.

Wading in the ocean and following the Oasian guide they take their first dive under water. It wasn't long before they could see the structures, which were mostly, embedded to an undersea cliff face and stretched as far as they could see which was not very far as the underocean scattered most of the sunrays. Their ears perked up as the sound of hundreds of Oasian people spoke in sonar-like tones in a symphony of conversation. Many Oasians were working out in reef fields extracting edible sea life such as alien urchin-like creatures and mussels. It had reminded him of a **mermaid colony** spoken of in Earth's ancient literature. They were taken inside a dwelling to see how they lived entering through a hole carved into a smooth stony enclosure as that of a cave only polished and symmetrical. Beds were nothing more than alcoves attached to the wall as buoyancy kept the user in place. There were intriguing non-electric appliances like machines with different functions. The feeding orb stored food and rotated on a vertical axle. Fascinating artwork was displayed throughout the court. Portals in the walls led to adjacent rooms where children and other guests could use. Lavatories were used occasionally and Oasians mostly just find a secluded location or designated area. Being under water and unable to see the sky or land felt like being in a whole other universe. The area was populated not only by the generous hydro people but scores of colorful alien sea life. The experience was fulfilling. They soon concluded their exploration having signaled the guide that they wanted to return to the surface.

They laid towels on the beach and dried off under the rubified sun amongst outlandish yellow palm trees of intriguing configurations. They ended their sunbathing when clusters of strange crabs crawling out from the surf started crowding the oceanfront. They looked to each other, yelled, and took off to the beach house.

It felt good to be back in the dry Star Voyager uniforms again. Their eyes needed a rest from exposure to the deep, red environment, which fatigued their retinas a bit. They waved goodbye to the Oasians while they climbed into the ship. As they ascend they watched the sun sink into the sea even though it would reappear in full radiance upon assuming orbit. HR 8832 was a small system and it didn't take long to reestablish a steady acceleration toward Vega.

## Icebase-1

At the remote Krystonian military base positioned on the frozen plains of the **Krestor Ice Plate** this seemingly small facility extended several meters underground and included a vehicle-docking ramp, which led to the subterranean garage. This happened to be the same station where Xila Kile and Admiral Kile resided. **Jered** was communications coordinator and was maintaining a steady link to the Mediator, which had just entered the star system on a rapid approach. He worked on the same floor as Xila and knew the Admiral well. He had a romantic interest in Xila for as long as he could remember dating back to his first assignment at Icebase-1. His anticipation excelled as he stared at the radar console watching the closing blip gain proximity.

"I've never seen you this nervous about an approaching vessel before." **Major Kikts** said. He was only joking. He knew he was desperately awaiting the arrival of his long time crush. He relaxed a little now that he was exposed. Yet, he attempted to hide his emotions. His feelings for Xila were interfering with his pride.

The interior of the base was a mixture of grays, blues, and white in the walls and floors. Embedded were panels and buttons that flickered seemingly at random and not too dissimilar to the inside of Moonbase. Icebase-1 seemed cozy as it sat there on the vast freezing plains. Moving about the heated interior, KMD officers of many ranks prepared for the next mission to deliver the sensitive relays to the designated location in the frozen mountains. In the engineering laboratories were teams of scientists working feverously to complete construction on the relays. Team coordinators estimated another ninety-six hours before the equipment would be ready. Jered returned to his console when the **adjacency indicator** sounded, as did Major Kikts who issued instructions. The Mediator was on its deceleration trajectory and would enter orbit soon.

The morning on Krysto was pleasant, the sun barely peaking over the distant frozen mountains and the sky glowed pink. The landing engines on the Mediator were more numerous than the dwarfed Star Voyager. The gleaming atomic flare of twelve solid fuel fission thrusters illuminates the sky and thunder echoes across the icy terrain. Nearly forty armed KMD soldiers stormed the area as the bulky battleship touched down. Some of the highest-ranking officials from Star City and Krysto were preparing to be escorted into the heart of the base. Bunched together they are herded by the high-ranking personnel down the exposed docking ramp. Jered ran up to Xila and hugged her after fast walking from around to corner. The spacious food court of the base became crowded while the weary travelers and additional personnel stormed the mess hall. Chatter and gibber echoes the capacious base café. Naturally Jered sits with Xila who acted slightly less attached to Jered other than normal base coordination. His subconscious sensed it but his excitement didn't allow him to confront the emotions. He couldn't tell yet that Xila had someone else on her mind.

A break in mess hall activities led to the convening of the high-ranking officials while they mount orders and impel the initiation of the **sensor relay project**.

## The Resistance Hideout

Simultaneously, CRC commanders organize their eminent assault on Krysto. Beltran paces to and fro about his vessel while Cyril schemes and plots in his comerside office. Civilian *would-be* CRC persons work hastily to construct the subterranean compound outside. The burning nearby star scorches the surface of its hellish reddened furnace. Fortunately they were about to cross over into the frigid dark side of the planetoid. Additional to the heat tents and landed ships for shelter the jagged peaks and crooked terrain overshadowed some of the building site. Talk amongst the nervous recruits was jittery and uninformed as Beltran and Cyril kept them in the dark about most mission related issues. Only the promise of absolute freedom, endless rule, and monetary wealth kept them pounding and scraping the scabrous soil.

Many of the workers had trekked to and fro of the sleek and pointed vessel which sat therein Beltran, Cyril, and appointed high-ranking CRC officials to inquire of bigger and better tools for their tasks at hand only to receive the witty and semi-complete answer of hope that soon they would be shipping in the larger machines for their excavation project. The tossing of tools and cursing of fools aroused reaction as the helmet audio surveillance received their grievous profanities. Beltran orders an adjacent general to put them at ease with words of assurance and presents the necessary drug substance to keep the unruly outcasts gouging at the speckled surface.

With veins flooded of pure adrenaline from the hypodermic syringe the lead worker vigorously resumes pounding and instructing his mastered team. The sharing of the chemical allows transference into the emergency medication chambers

embedded in the standard SES of the crew. About the diminishing of uprising hostilities amongst them, the leaders of the CRC resume their game plan. Cyril returns from his chamber and approached Beltran, who was busy at the cockpit console preparing his fancy fighter for battle, with a documented analysis from the data page printer.

“The meteor mass is less than a week away. Half of the tracker vehicles have been modified with advanced heat shields for their orbital decent.”

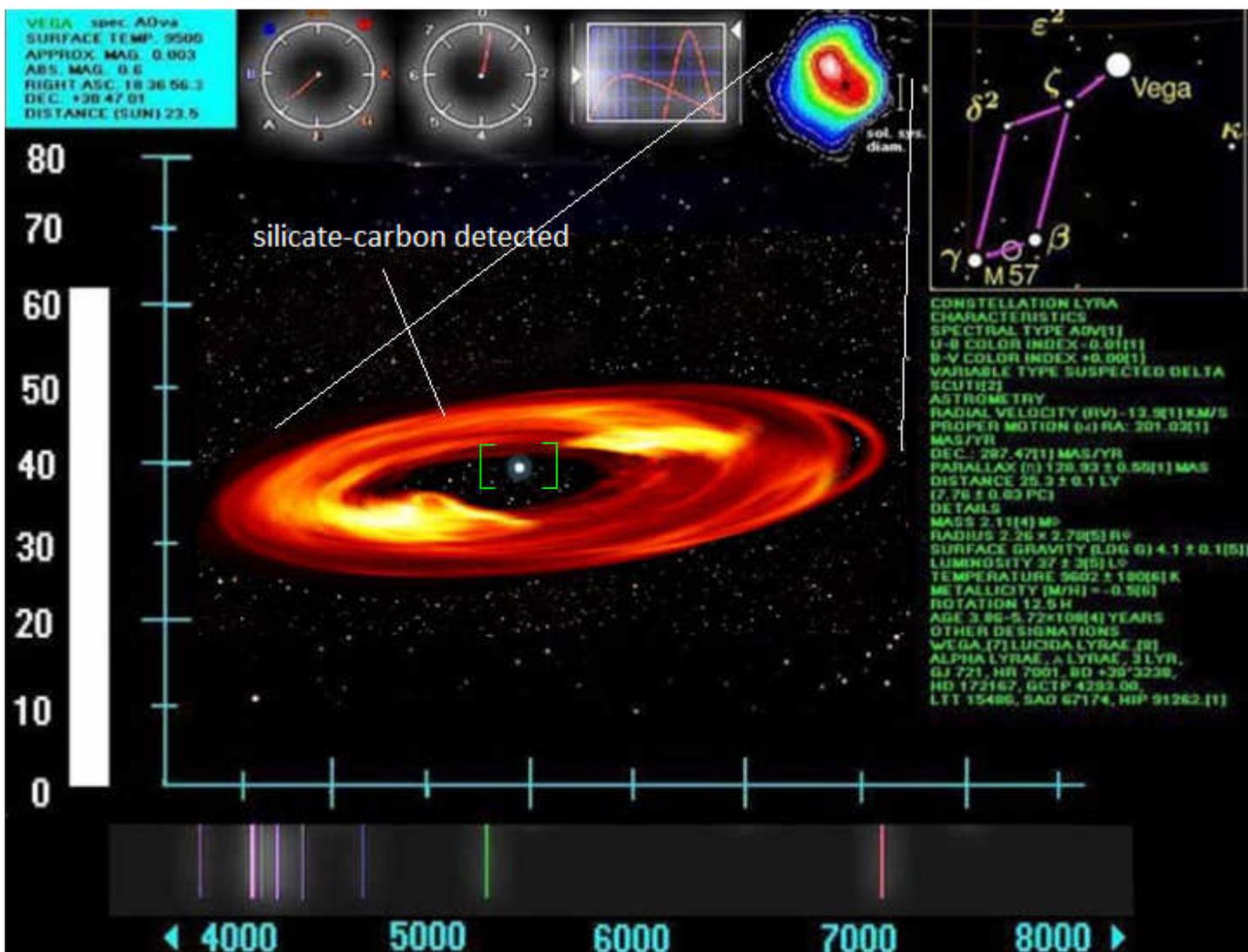
“Let’s see if we can speed it up. Have we managed to recruit more civilians at this time?” Beltran questioned.

“I’ve got undercover personnel stationed at Lendall Stop looking for mobsters and outcasts. He’s working fairly well. I expect a report from him shortly.” At that moment a transmission alert sounded. Cyril darts over to the communications console. It was the recruiter. He was in a bathroom stall on the toilet with his hidden audio communicator.

“I’ve got a new recruit on the way. I’ll need a rendezvous so we can take them back to base.”

“Understood...” Cyril responded. “Board your ship and meet us at the designated position in twenty-four hours.” Beltran ordered an **Avenger** class gun ship pilot to retrieve the recruiter and the recruited. The armed battle vessel accelerated out of the C-00101 system.

### Bypassing Vega



**Vega and Stellar Dust Ring**

“Whoa...” Li expressed as they approached the complex system. “Looks interesting...” He added. They could see the massive amounts of illuminated, clumped, planetary dust and chunky debris in the enhanced scope snapshot while they

pass. Its accompanying stellar neighbors of the Castor Moving Group still many millions of miles away from the encapsulated Vega. Lazarus confirmed on his sensor console the density of rubble surrounding the system.

"Maybe another time..." Li said. He alters course and heads for Krysto without further delay.

In the days ahead the teams of Krystonian engineers had begun putting the final touches on the sensor relays. The glistening steel and polished frame of the oval shaped detection heads were being mounted onto the high integrity tripod stands while they initiate trial tests on the ultra-receptive transceiver modules. They were actually quite impressive pieces of instrumentation.

By this time Jared's exuberance had cooled and his better judgment kicked in. He was starting to notice Xila's estranged behavior as he holds his chin and observes her work performance on the sidelines. An alert went off in his mind when she penetrated his work area at the **long-range radar console** where he was sitting when the Mediator first arrived. Xila accesses the radar and scans for the Star Voyager. She couldn't control her feelings as a slight hint of disappointment worked its way inside. She had detected no sign of the Star Voyager. She figured either Seiwan Li was diverted or he was still too far away. She left the console and Jared watched as she exits the command center. Now he knows something is different. "She had met someone while in Sun Town." He thought and then resumed his post.

Admiral Kile was in his command chamber skimming the highlights of the mission before giving the go ahead. A light peck on the door interrupts but he knew it was Xila. He knows her hand wraps. He signaled and she entered the prim office decorated with medals and souvenirs from all over the territory. Admiral Kile was one of the most respected and experienced commanding officers next to Seghtee of Moonbase. He greets his daughter with a smile and hugs her as usual.

"Xila, dear, you're going to be leading this mission. Your orders are to man the battle skis and deliver the relays to the frozen mountains. Afterward you'll dismount and hike them to the first peak. It's a small one so you won't have to go all the way to the top. We only need them on the first apex."

Xila was a little unclear. "Why don't we just fly them there with an **ice wing** or **cargo shuttle**?"

"This is a highly classified mission. Delivering the equipment by air could attract more attention. We never know if there will be a civilian explorer party from the city or random passerby from space which can readily detect a vessel in flight. We're taking extra precautions."

"I see."

"Jered asked about you again. He says you've been acting distracted at work. He was somewhat affectionate in his words to me. Have you two been involved?"

"No, we've never been anything." She said. "I'll handle that." Xemeral takes a breath and hands her the assignment specs and salutes. She returns the gesture and exits the immaculate command suite.

### A Sudden Problem

Lazarus calls Li into the cockpit after receiving a transmission. It was automated and stated that they were now crossing the Star City boarder and that they did so on their own reconnaissance. Li had groomed himself as if preparing for a date. Lazarus had taken the helm and Li manned navigation for a change. They were only half a day away. Just then a blaring alarm sounded one like they had never heard before. Li being already at the systems console learned the problem. Li switched seats with Lazarus, rotates the vessel, and began an **emergency deceleration sequence**. The ship began light vibrations. The vibrations were getting worse and more alerts sounded. They were loud and agitating. The emergency deceleration procedure cut the time down to reach manageable speeds but it pushed the G-force emulation device to its limits. It took a few minutes to silence the warnings and they could catch their breath.

"The computer says we've been accelerating too much and the antimatter flow ratio destabilized."

Lazarus huffed. "The sensors say we won't be able to use the LS engines until we replace the discharge sub chamber head. It says it has been breached." Laz reported. "That leaves the SLS engines. At sub light speed factor 10 we won't be to Krysto for another three years."

"Oh, great, we're stranded?" Li ponders deeply. "This is the last thing I wanted to happen."

"I know. I was just about to tell you that traveling so far out really isn't as bad as I thought. I can't really tell much difference than traveling a short distance. But not if we have a breakdown like this. And especially not if our speed is compromised." Laz stated sincerely.

"Now is not the time to get nervous. We're going to make this happen. Do you see anything on the charts that we can reach?"

"No, nothing within range. We're too far out and we just left Star City boundaries. There's unlikely to be anything for a while.

Li's eyes turn toward the guide booklet on the dash. "Could it be that simple." He wondered. "Hand me the brochure please." He begins flipping through the laminated pages. His face lights up. "Here's something. Lendall Stop."

"What is it, a station of some sort?"

"This says that it is a supply depot and café, what luck. We break down right next to it. Input this code into the sensor signal descrambler."

"I see it, a signal ping." Lazarus adds. "It's about seven hundred million miles to starboard. But why isn't it in our charts."

"It's pretty remote. But that's great. We can be there in two hours. I bet we'll be back on the road in no time." Li said optimistically and alters course for the Lendall asteroid.

Ships rise from the dark surface of the C-00101 planetoid, large freighters load the **step tracker vehicles** into their holds. Avengers are manned and assume orbit of the planetoid poised for their raid on Krysto. Beltran and Cyril reboard his private diamond shaped civilian fighter to coordinate the attack from a remote location in space. The attack group accelerated with intent to intercept the incoming meteor shower light-years away soon to strike the Planet Krysto.

On Krysto officers are still preparing for their mission and await orders. Jered makes eye contact with Xila as he entered the command center. Xila holds her hesitant gaze. He approaches and stands close. His eyes glimmer a bit. Xila forms a light smile and returns her attention to the slanted panel she was working. She was worried of Li's whereabouts. She knew he was a rookie Captain and couldn't bear it if something happened to him.

"I've been assigned to this mission." He said softly. "So what happened on your vacation to Sun Town?" He continued. "Did you make any friends?"

Xila had a feeling he would ask that question. "Some." She responded. The proximity alert sounded. Xila became flushed. The arousal quieted when she saw it wasn't The Star Voyager. She raises her voice and reports the short-range sensor scan. "We have a meteor shower incoming; twelve hours at least, *comet is absent*. Take this report to the Admiral." She ordered as she handed the data page to the nearby junior officer.

"Do you want to get something to eat in the mess hall?" Jered asked. "We could discuss the mission specs."

"Thanks for the offer, but we won't be leaving until this wind storm clears. According to **the weather report** that will be at least six hours, and I need to get some rest until then." She looks him in the eye once before leaving the command center. Jered suspects someone else but didn't know he was on his way to Krysto now.

### Lendall Stop

"There it is." Lazarus said. "Kind of bland..." The asteroid was a medium sized partly cratered rock, which supported a stilted gray café on a long plat form. Inside the structure was a supply repository filled with spare parts and other commodities. The café onlookers watched the window screens as the new vessel illuminated the asteroid with its powerful floodlights and landed. Other vessels were positioned in awkward places on its surface. Out in the distance was the blazing A- 00981 yellow dwarf star.

They climbed the inclined catwalk ramp up onto the platform. Li grabs Laz's arm before he reached the door and pointed out into space. "Look! There's the Sun." A small yellowish dot encompassed by hundreds of others. They were dizzy to think that's where they just came from. Lazarus gazes in thrill. They enter the airlock and finish the process. Their entrance invited stares from all sorts of people some alien and many off duty KMD officers.

The gray and dark wall linings seemed suited for this lone café sitting quietly in the middle of nowhere. The tables were arranged in rows as a traditional breakfast eatery. A long counter separated the cooks from the customers and an inactive jukebox remained unpowered. Lazarus went ahead into the restroom after having located the sign. Li proceeded to select a table in the corner. To his surprise there sat a group of SMD officers also at one of the booths. He didn't expect to see them this far out and he was unaware they had been a part of the SMD convoy holding position less than a light year away. He sat to order something to eat and the waitress was a Human. Lazarus returned in time to place his order. The unknown apparently civilian groups were observing them and the SMD's were peeking from their periphery and earing them as well.



### ***Lendall Stop near A-00981***

The waitress returns with hotplates.

"Can you bring me an inventory of the ship supplies?" He asked.

"Sure." She returns to the counter and grabs the pamphlet and delivers it to Li. It didn't take long for Li to find the part. Lazarus was then halfway through his hash browns.

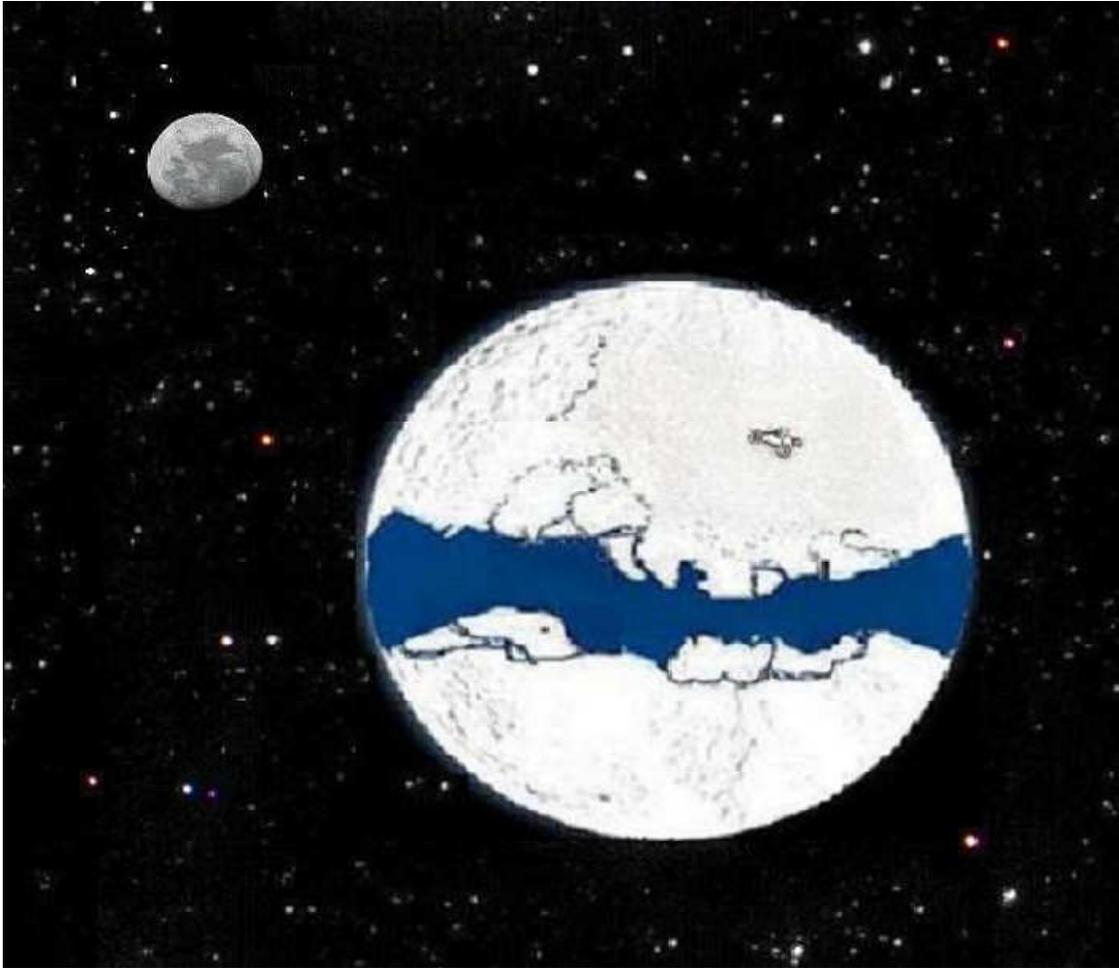
Shortly thereafter one man caught Li's eye as he stood to search the corner shelves for the discharge chamber head part. He was quiet and appeared to be searching for something or someone. It was a replacement Resistance recruiter to the last. His dress was casual as can be expected. He continued to the shelves where there were laid out various tools and parts common to modern space craft maintenance. The part was found. He returns to the table to retrieve Lazarus. Gulping the last of the iced tea they both cap and head outside down the ramp.

Li removed the side panel on the upper right engine and exposed the thrust chamber. The outlandish parts looked alien indeed. He twisted out a cylinder shaped piece and replaced it with the new part and it fit. He double checked the seal and sighed in relief. They were expecting more difficulty but the technology seemed reasonably simple hardware wise.

It wasn't long before they were back on course to Krysto yet they were a little tense when they initiated the high capacity engines after having replaced the part. There were no setbacks this time.

### **Approaching Krysto**

The destination star in the distance grew larger and more brilliant as Li and Lazarus neared the planet Krysto. A message alert sounded and it was Xila. "Are you all right? She asked worriedly. "I was concerned." The message was delayed slightly due to the distance nonetheless. "We had stopped a few places on the way and had a breakdown." She was relieved to see them on approach from the radar console. KMD protocols instruct a response to newly arrived vessels and Xila had purposely taken charge of the communications terminal. She had also recently informed her father that she was going to meet a Captain at Raxot, the largest yet comparatively undersized city on Krysto. The Admiral had denied Xila's request to allow them to land at the base. Only SMD members have that privilege.



### ***Krysto and Niim***

Li prepares to land at **Raxot Space Port**. On arrival the planet looked solid white except for at the equator where the receding ice was melted into a band of ocean encircling the planet and only lightly dotted with an island or two. Krysto was in a state of **diminishing ice age**. It would be another few hundred years before the giant glaciers could recede and the planet take on a beautiful flora of vegetation. "There is a large heavily armed vessel approaching." Lazarus reported having responded to his console alert and schematic display.

Li glances over for a look. "An SMD vessel..." He noted aloud.

"A *healthy* one at that..." Lazarus followed.

"Something must be happening on Krysto maybe." Li reasoned. He decided to take a closer look with the telescope allowing a view of the black, green, and gray hull on the sunlit side of the large military ship. It was the Mediator heading away from Krysto. Its course was nearly perpendicular as it sped to an unknown location. The noted trajectory was not directly away from the A-00981 system.

Descending the clouds of Krysto the misty skies fogged the lateral view yet the bustling town below delivered the stunning site of Raxot. As they came closer they could distinguish between the different metal structures erected by early Krystonian settlers. Upon seizing the corner of the circular landing harbor the region proved busy with overdressed and ivory skinned Krystonians, Humans from Earth who had registered control of Krysto nearly a decade ago. Many were military officers as might be expected; others elated shoppers and local residents.

With steam from their breaths, and the rumbling of the heavy downdraft they exit the ship of the opened hatch. They didn't use their helmets but noticed the sudden change in air density when the opening parted with a sudden huff. The local shops nestled among many drew their attention due to the serious warning posted on the rectangular sign about what they would require during their stay on Krysto, hats, scarves, and an occasionally used oxygen mask, which was to be worn upon feeling too much lightheadedness. Long rows of boutiques and restaurants adorned the busy streets of Raxot. They waited at the spaceport for perhaps an hour on the bench curiously glancing around at the sites and people. The music of

shop audio played restlessly as it were for a festival yet easefully paced. The chattering of the high-spirited Krystonians dispersed lowly yet audibly.

The sound of engine stroke sputter and a snowy slide in caught their ears and they stood and spun around. Xila had showed up on a **transport ski**, a motorized sled designed for high speed on the ice. They hugged each other and Xila took them and showed them around for a while. The skyscrapers were few and the city was beautiful, some parts looked like a sparkling metropolis made of glass. Ironically the Krystonians used a lot of reflective material to keep the sunrays at bay. The thin atmosphere didn't scatter the light as efficiently as a denser sky such as that on Earth. Nevertheless the city was astonishing as it shimmered there on the frozen mesa.

Xila was trying to determine how to get Li over to the secluded base. She knew it was against the rules and her father had already told her no. Then she thought of a plan. She contacted Admiral Kile via the Star Voyager's **NET sensor array**. They had climbed inside for warmth and to introduce the Star Voyager to Xila. She was indeed impressed and wanted to bring it back to the base. She began debating Krystonian regulations with her father and attempted to convince the Admiral to allow them to join the mission team. Her request was denied. Xila tried a different strategy of appeal and at Li's permission transmitted his Transition Academy records to show that he was a trusted and accomplished graduate. He denied again. Admiral Kile knew that a T.A. graduate wasn't necessarily a trusted person; he reiterated the regulations that only civilians with SMD membership was allowed to have covert access. He ordered Xila back to the base because the mission needed to get underway.

Xila turns to Li. "I will request a short leave and return to spend some time with you later." She assured.

Having promptly exited the ship, she mounted her ski vehicle and zoomed off back to the base. Li and Lazarus, who had exited the ship on the tail of Xila, glanced a spell around the snowy plaza with a vacationer's demeanor. Desiring to take the opportunity to explore Raxot, they turned and entered a cantina behind them called **Club Tundra** to wind down from their long weary voyage.

### The Enemy Nears

Beltran's fleet of freighters and avengers were just entering the 'A' band and preparing to hold position at **A-00571** a triple star system with gas giants and accompanying satellites. Great care taken when entering the system was primary at the orders of Beltran. Any random explorer or lone **mercenary** could blow the cover of the assault team. Incidentally Beltran had already ordered the destruction of anyone in the area with the potential to betray the mission with maximum force. They held position on an active moon orbiting the last of the gas giants of the system. The pattern regarding Resistance masking techniques is to hide in places in which others would avoid. The moon in which they sat upon was similar to Io of Jupiter: lava flows, volcanic activity, sulfur geysers and such.

An emergency signal had been received at Beltran and Cyril's fighter battle vessel located deep in space coordinating the mission. The message reported a group of random thrill seekers filming stunt media on the surface of the boiling satellite. Beltran ordered them destroyed immediately and they did destroy them. A series of torpedoes, golf ball sized explosives with antimatter charge, obliterated the filmmakers. The explosive activity of the moon hid the low yield detonations well. The destruction of the innocent enthusiasts came quickly and ruthlessly.

Afterward, the Resistance mission continued as if they were never there. In their place was left an area of cratered devastation and fuming debris. They set down to await the oncoming meteor shower. Beltran and Cyril remained in position in his fighter battleship in the remote part of space where they could not easily be located and they wait.

### Departing Icebase-1

The main bay doors are opened allowing the frigid cold wind and snow particles to whisk inside flapping their scarves. The battle skis are finally loaded with the sensitive equipment and crewman mounts them. The Admiral gives his daughter final instructions some of which consists of information unique only to her as the commanding officer. To expect proficiency and thoroughness from Xila is a normal anticipation of Xemeral Kile. Xila's position and job is somewhat demanding. Yet, the Admiral's heart always longs to see that her safety is accounted for on her missions. He wanted to kiss her and did not in the busy vehicle launch. A hand on shoulder had to suffice and she gently salutes, his balmy gaze comforting and reassuring. His long hair, soft, white beard and mustache are now with flakes of ice clinging to it. Thoughts of lovingness

and caring from her childhood were resurfacing into her mind as a pleasant memory by the site of his placid demeanor. In his crystalline blue eyes a deep contentment lies. Three teams of personnel on different vehicles load. The **snow jet motors** ignite and they barrel off toward the frozen mountains.

### Club Tundra

Lazarus wasted no time getting to know the friendly Krystonian women in the club while Li gathers information about the region. The club was elaborately designed with a stage and the latest Krystonian music sounding through the woofed speaker system. Elaborate lighting and visual displays surrounded the center court where citizens danced. The counter where Li sat was full and there were mostly Humans there except for a few Felidaes that had ventured out of the territory to Krysto. The lighting fluctuated smoothly between heavy reds, to blues, and yellows, as the crowd shuffled and cheered. Li left the music hall and into the adjacent entertainment suite where a Zemorgian joke teller on stage amuses the audience with his banter and puns. After a closer look Li finds it to be the same one he saw on Triton who apparently enjoys making his living through entertainment traveling the territory. Being approached by so many Krystonians is both flattering and uplifting. They stood out in their uniforms and he fit in with his own as it maintained his image of explorer and officer. Yet, Li's down to Earth and therapeutic personality gave him balance.

An order of potato logs was delivered to him by one of the servers even he did not request them. Notwithstanding; he made use of the available spices at the counter top. In addition to posters of the restaurant owner there were included awe-inspiring portraits of Krystonian landscapes, including glacial horizons, morning sunrises and freezing equatorial oceans.

A number of parties were traversing the staircase to the top floor where the massive skylight viewed the heavenly azure and Li did go up with his pallet. The skylight was open as were the leveled panoramic windows overlooking the vast ivory wonderland. Sitting to enjoy the site Li consumes his spiced spud wedges while Lazarus maintains his status as ladies man.



*A Dazzling Portrait*

## To the Frozen Mountains



### *A Speedy Ride*

The loaded battle skis bobbed and hopped as they glide over the snow. Xila was enjoying it and Jered was behind in the middle craft trying to stay close. As they come over the hill the mountain peaks began to tower above them and the full beauty of the Frozen Mountains came alive, white peaks, gray rock, and occasional blues followed by the shimmer of sunlight. Xila was quick to get halted upon reaching the mountain base. Everyone dismounted and the equipment was unloaded. Pulling the relays along on a covered sled with tethers, they took turns handling the workload as they begin their hike up hill. The first peak was only one hundred feet to the top but the climb could be treacherous, jagged rocks, crags, and ice made the trip a real challenge. Xila enjoyed mountain climbing anyway. She was a sports aficionado somewhat. Jered was trying to show his concern yet passion with Xila dwindles. He stays close and protects her excessively from slip or fall, guiding her shoulder when she steps over a stone or crack. She senses his interest and maintains her authority.

Perhaps a half an hour of hiking Xila calls for a brief intermission. "Break..." She ordered allowed. They sat on the rocks and retrieved their feeding pouches. Vapors rose from the heated trays as they ate and drank. Xila had her favorite, hot cocoa with marshmallows. There was a little chatter going on about the mission and the current climb. It was perfect timing to have a rest. Xila smiles in delight as the streaking meteors started to fall.

## Chapter 5

### Showdown at Raxot

High above Krysto the Resistance freighters, which had previously released the modified tracker vehicles alongside the approaching meteor shower of which they had intercepted, carefully positioned themselves among them. Their legs were folded up and the body was specially shielded for atmospheric penetration. The incoming debris masked the approach of the powered down terrain vehicles perfectly. Intense heat started to glow around them as atmospheric plasma engulfed them.

"Pilot four to tracker pilot two. Adjust your angle your approach is too steep." The concerned pilot instructed.

"Belay that." Beltran demanded who interjected on the communications. He didn't want him to use his attitude thrusters due to the chance he might be detected by a watchful KMD observer.

"He's coming in too steep sir. He needs to adjust his angle!" The fourth pilot protested.

"Stay on your current approach angles. Do not adjust or you will blow the mission. That is the order!" Beltran yelled. The vehicle skewed into an arduous slant and his craft disintegrated. The other Resistance pilots were lucky.

Contented sky watchers at Raxot observed the explosion as just another shooting meteorite. They were cheering and chattering at the marvelous exhibition as it streaked in fiery trails. Li and Lazarus both stepped outside the Club when they saw the people crowding each other. For a moment they thought something bad was happening. They watched along with the zealous spectators for a spell and returned to the club scene.

...Back at the base.

"One of the meteors was straying awfully close to the **Raxot Industrial District.**" Major Kikts reported loudly. There were a lot of factories and depot facilities in place in that region. "They are not on any impact trajectories fortunately."

"Acknowledged, I am organizing a **meteorite anatomization team** to go and analyze the debris." The Admiral declared. The team was dispatched immediately and they left on snow jets.

Meanwhile, Xila and her team, having completed their relay installation, were half way back to base and were diverted to the meteorite site for extra support. The far end of the industrial district of Raxot was snugly firmed against a butte range and was responsible for the majority of Raxot's functional requirements, a surplus paradise.

After arriving the first team was baffled to find no debris present. The lead team commander contacts the base.

"Major. There is no meteorite debris here strangely." Kikts looks to the Admiral confoundedly. "It's almost as if someone moved them out of here." He said.

"Hmm, it's probably one of the local scavenger hunters from Raxot, looks like they beat us to it. We needed to analyze that debris. Start looking for nearby craft or persons in the vicinity." Admiral Kile ordered.

"That is confirmed sir. We've got thruster burn marks and track grooves in the snow. Looks like you were right. Someone removed the debris. But how could they do it so quickly without leaving a trace of material? They must have had a whole horde of people working here." Just then Xila and her team were arriving and they dismounted their snow jets.

"Admiral something's wrong here." She called having taken command. "This looks more like deceleration burns to me. These tracks look like terrain vehicles of some sort left them." There was silence.

Suddenly the saucer-like sonic resonance of a short-range hovering system enters range and a cluster of Avengers rise above the snow dune passing above them. They opened fire on the facilities nearby and begin seizing control of the area. They had not spotted the team down at the hillside. Xila heard the tracker vehicles clanging along in the distance as they blasted their way into the factories while awaiting a freighter to descend from orbit. Factory workers were shouting and stirring as they tried to evade the attackers. More Avengers approached and the perimeter was appropriated.

"Everyone lay low." Xila ordered "Admiral we need support out here fast!"

"We're scrambling **winged fighter attack jets** to the area. Hang in there. Xila's battle ski had a compliment of antimatter grenades in the side compartment. The grenades were low yield and were not enough for the devastating tracker vehicles. The wandering Avengers were hovering about like wasps destroying appropriated fuel repositories. Buildings burst into flames as Resistance weapons continued to erupt. The piercing sound of sonic booms blasted the airwaves as high-speed KMD jet fighters arrived and were met with Resistance laser cannon and turbo laser fire. This attack had taken the Krystonian military by surprise.

## Sound the Alarm

"All civilians take cover in designated basement shelters!" The citywide alert sounded over intercom.

"What do we do?" Lazarus asked, his veins channeling adrenaline. For a moment Li felt the tug to head for the secure shelters. But another pull turned his head toward the landed Star Voyager upon the pad.

"Let's get to the ship." Li urged. Li and Lazarus overlooked the intercom warnings and quickly began powering up the Star Voyager.

More enemy backup were arriving on Krysto and Resistance Soldiers continued invading the city, which had now become part of a skirmish line. KMD soldiers were taking position on the plain-facing side of Raxot and Resistance attack craft were closing on the main spaceport from the industry quarter. Li silently grieved that his vessel was defenseless as they sped away from the battle zone. He had no weapons yet and felt helpless as they city was being ravaged.

By this time Beltran's rather stylish fighter battleship had touched down *into a hover* and annihilated KMD forces with its agility and heavy armaments. Li was uncertain what to do. Should he leave Krysto or remain on the surface? One thing was certain; he had to get away from Raxot spaceport. He activates his hover systems and heads in the opposite direction maneuvering over the other landed vessels.

"Li we're getting a message." Lazarus reported. The communications alert sounds and Lazarus answers promptly just as they fell off the edge of the flat space platform to continue hovering over the frigid terrain. "It's Xila."

"Where are you?" She called.

"I'm in the ship heading away from the city over the snow."

"Circle around the outskirts to my location." She said. Li complies and flanks the battle torn city at a distance. When he neared the cliff side where the hidden KMD team stood he could see the abandoned battle skis launching grenades in wide arcs over toward the nearby Resistance forces. But Xila was nowhere in sight. She had set the skis on auto launch and took cover with her team and was armed with class two laser pistols. She heard the hover sonances of the Star Voyager and runs out from behind a stony enclosure to wave them in. They used the bottom hatch and many KMD officers boarded the Star Voyager.

"You need to energize your shields." She said after barging into the cockpit. Lazarus located the display screen. This was the first practical application of the shield system. Xila was more familiar with ship tactics and showed Lazarus how to set the shield for auto configure in case they take on **multi-polarized weapons fire**. Li submitted to Xila's command experience and assumed the rank of chief pilot. Xila was the unofficial captain of the Star Voyager and stood holding the chair behind Li.

As they drifted away from the hill the battle skis erupted in flames as they were eliminated by Resistance weapons fire. It was an Avenger and it turns toward the Star Voyager and opens fire. The ship rumbles. Xila, having taken hold of the headrest of Li's chair, didn't stumble.

"Any weapons...?"

"None..." Said Li disappointed.

"We've got to get out of here then." She encouraged. "We need to lose that ship. Head for Raxot."

"Head for Raxot." Li questioned. "The city was in battle. Shouldn't we head away?"

"No, head for the city."

"Alright..." Li complied with reluctance. "We have a greater chance of getting the avenger off our tail." She elaborated.

The **Krystonian air strike** was heavy and KMD forces began to stabilize the scrimmage. The Star Voyager was taking heavy fire from the punishing laser cannons of the pursuing Avenger and Xila helped Lazarus adjust the **shield partition**.

"Send out a distress call." She ordered. "The fighter pilots have their hands full but there is a chance one would attack the avenger on our tail." The ship continued to jolt spontaneously. "Wait. Send another signal. Use this security code. It's my personal identification. Nearby KMD forces will know I am on the Star Voyager and the chances of getting help were greater." Li maneuvered through and between the city structures trying to shake the enemy pilot. There were abandoned automobiles on the highways below, which he dodged and impacted as he made the vigorous escape. The screeching weapons fire from the Avenger pierced the airwaves as it echoes between the buildings of the city. Noticeable was the diminishing weapons blasts as the Avenger began to take on fire suddenly. It was a skillful dive-bombing anti air attack from a KMD fighter jet deterring the Avenger.

“Lazarus, set this position into our vector. Wait for the Avenger to move off first.” Xila said. They are able slip away from the battle.

Streets were rumbling as KMD and Resistance soldiers combat in a struggle for city domination. Brilliant flares from detonating low yield antimatter explosives vaporize the air and structures. Glass and steel rains down onto the city blocks as buildings collapse and shatter. Laser and projectile fire reigns supreme on the streets and there were mutual casualties. Large dark shadows appeared on the ground for up in the sky were descending Resistance freighters landing to retrieve supplies from the exposed warehouses. They were promptly loaded and the carriers hastily ascended. The freighter pilots had received word that SMD forces were nearing.

### **Soldiers Inbound**

By this time Star City Military carriers were attaining orbit around Krysto. Ground vehicles were unloaded after the landing of the SMD’s version of supply freights. **Terrain vehicles** rolled out from the ramps and onto the snowy landscape. The battle was becoming fierce as KMD armies were reinforced. The rotating battle booths on the Terrains lit up retreating Resistance companies. The tracker vehicles were being abandoned having served their one-time purpose for a secure ground assault force. The costly avengers however made their ascent into space while escorting the last of the fleeing supply freighters. They faced oncoming SMD fighter craft as they attempted departure and were speckled by the pelting allied turbo laser bolts.

With too little force against the SMD newly arriving forces the formation of Avengers broke range without entering into a planetary slingshot in order to save time. The enemy craft made their escape having absorbed a barrage of SMD firepower. Down on the surface the smoldering city was being secured with KMD and SMD forces thwarting the last of the Resistance onslaught; rescue and repair teams stood by for response upon receipt of the all clear.

### **Hidden Base, Snowy Plain**

Yet a hero Xila was a little apprehensive about bringing the Star Voyager into port. Traveling at high hovering speed, Raxot City had fled astern no longer in sight. They were many miles from town. Li was about to start a conversation about the battle when the enemy craft proximity alert sounded. Xila was the only one who didn’t spring into action, she knew what it was. They had just entering range of the KMD base and were quickly pursued by KMD air superiority attack craft that fired onto the suspicious Voyager.

“Kile to Icebase1, this is Xila. I have taken command of this ship. Please break off your assault.” The fighters veered and the Star Voyager was signaled toward the docking ramp.

The base appeared small, a one hundred foot square building. The docking ramp had only become visible as it rose from the snowy enclosure. Down the ramp they hover and the doors closed with an echoing slam. Armed KMD officers surround the ship as it touches down, the metallic saucer noise fluctuating into a gradually reducing spoil. Admiral Kile enters the bay and assumes command. Li entered the middle cabin and the KMD officers were sitting on the solid fuel blocks. Jared, glancing him top and bottom. He opens the hatch and Xila climbed up first soon to pop out of the top. She descends the ladder, and hops into the ground. Following was Jered and the other KMD officers. Li and Lazarus were last.

Admiral Kile hugs Xila tightly and checks her for injury. Li stood at attention with his hands clasps behind him.

“Admiral this is Li the ship Captain I told you about.” The Admiral looks him up and down closely.

“Mister Li, you will need to be briefed in my office privately. Please follow my security guard.” Li responds respectfully and leaves.

“Xila this man knows the location of Icebase-1. The fact that you brought him here puts me in a tight spot. I’ll need to conference the SMD and reference official protocols for this situation.”

“Yes sir.” She responds with a salute. “For the record sir, my battle ski was destroyed and we were stranded at the factory complex. There were swarms of Avengers nearby and Captain Li was the closest help available. His ship is unarmed and we had to leave the battle. It was a narrow escape.”

“I understand. You did the right thing.”

Xila exhales.

"I'll be speaking with him presently. Go to the medical deck and get treatment. We will talk later." He ordered. He hugs her and she leaves. Jered follows close behind to assist her.

### Recruited?

In the office of Admiral Xemeral Kile, Li and Lazarus sit in the visitors' seat waiting for their interrogators. Admiral Kile along with a couple of armed security personnel enters and he takes his seat at his desk. He straightens a stack of papers and begins his questioning. The security guards opened the doors again and **Admiral Seghtee** of the SMD enters with more security. Li was astounded.

"Ah, Captain Li..." He greeted. He shook his hand. "What brings you out this far?"

"Well sir, I was on my way to meet Xila Kile. We had met initially at the Mars Barr, where you had recommended me to."

"I see." He snickers. "I guess you weren't expecting getting caught up in an all out Confederate Resistance assault eh?"

"No sir."

"Well, now that you are here we need to discuss what happens now." He reaches for the data page on Xemeral's desk and skims it. "You've seen quite a bit of action here which is common these days, yet, now you know the location of this remote KMD outpost and have become privy to other classified secrets." Li's Adams apple bobs. "I'll be direct with you Captain. Protocols dictate that in the event of an accidental civilian ship apprehension by military personal and subsequent use of the vessel in a combat scenario leading to the consequential recruitment of the ship's owner, the Captain must be given the following choices. First you could sign a contract with the two militaries that you upon resuming your status as civilian will not divulge the information you have attained and upon doing so will submit to formal charges and possibly ship seizure. Your vessel will be fitted with homing beacons and closely monitored throughout..."

Li interrupts. "Admiral..." He calls respectfully. The Admiral is attentive.

"Yes captain." He responded.

"I want to be a part of the SMD."

Seghtee looks to Kile. "Excellent." He responds. "That's the second option." He continues. "You will become a part time asset to the SMD and may be asked to join or perform covert missions which can include sabotage, espionage, or infiltration. You will be trained and supplied with equipment and technology. Your vessel will be outfitted with modern weapons and a lifetime of fuel and maintenance. You will be required to maintain complete silence about your missions and activities at all times. Do you agree to these terms?"

"Yes sir." The Admiral looks to Lazarus and he responds, "Yes sir."

"The protocols stand that you must travel to the **Sirius Star System**, headquarters of The Planetary Council to be officially commissioned into the SMD. However, we will postpone that for the time being. Lastly you will need to prove your loyalty to the SMD and the KMD. I'm going to send you on a small mission presently. If you succeed you will be hereby appointed a rank and security level. I'll need you to sign these documents giving us permission to refit your vessel with weapons and equipment based on your power reservoirs. Judging by the sensor stats of our analysis your vessel can handle a full complement of gear. The Star Voyager will be one heck of a battle craft after work is done."

Li signs the documents and Krystonian engineers begin their work. The Admiral concludes his dictation and salutes Captain Li. The meeting breaks and they move off to explore Icebase-1.

"Are you hungry?" Xila asked who was waiting to meet Li. "Join me in the mess hall for a celebratory dinner of another victory over the Confederate Resistance."

As Li and Lazarus proceed to the upper decks, back in the Admiral's office, Kile turns to Seghtee. "Do you think he can handle this mission?" He questioned. "I do. He is already well disciplined and trained in the martial arts, which can be of help. The resistance has many expert personnel trained for hand-to-hand combat. We need more like him."

"What about his comrade Lazarus."

"Agreed, we'll need to keep a close eye on him. It has to be determined how discreet he is."

Kile provides the **abridged damage report** promptly.

"The Resistance made off with food stores, computers, tractors, bull dozers, and a litany of electrical supplies and equipment. Their fleet is getting larger and their attack more vicious."

"I know. This last attack was too close and unacceptable. Instead of landing Tracker vehicles they could have used that meteor shower to drop high yield explosives!"

“That’s correct. It seems we have an edge however. Their need for supplies is what keeps them from launching more devastating assaults.”

“Our sensor upgrade was a success. We now have advanced surveillance of the planets perimeter. Anything that penetrates the detection zone will be scrutinized. We won’t have a repeat of this meteor strategy.” Kile said.

### Jealous

In the mess hall was a charged atmosphere and KMD and SMD officers cheer, praise, and dine. Pale and stiff Jered approaches the table where Li and Xila sat. This is the man of his imagination. It was obvious what was going on. She has an interest in *him* now. But in Xila’s mind she and Jered had only maintained a working relationship. Jered had over assumed Xila had a genuine interest in him. He asked if he could join them. Li scooted over.

“So this is your friend from Sun Town?” He asked.

“Yes I’m Seiwan Li.” He added and extended his hand. Jered gave him the traditional tight squeeze and Li figured the situation. This was a man who has feelings for Xila. Since Li happened to be the object of affection he was not as pressed to put forth the same effort. He remained his normal, neutral, diplomatic self. Jered however went on the defensive and tried to upgrade his appeal.

“Hey Xila, do you want to join me in the gym for a workout?”

“No not right now. Thank you.” Jered had been her workout buddy before and tried to rekindle their partnership. The fact that Jered had not invited Li along, annoyed Xila. She may have agreed if he would have been more considerate. Jered had mistakenly allowed his jealousy to become visible.

“Excuse us please.” Xila said. Xila and Li stand to leave the café to visit the arboretum. Jered acted excited and stood with them.

Xila intervened, “Excuse me, this is a personal escort.” She said politely but in the heart of Jared, coldly. She shrugged a little and smiled lightly and she and Li walk off. Jered stands and gazes. He knew his nonexistent relationship with Xila was over.

Icebase-1’s greenhouse filled an entire deck with vegetables, fruits, and **grains**. The base took on occasional inconspicuous supply pickups from Raxot but mostly relied on its own self-sufficiency. They trotted along the path warmed by the heat lamps above and smelled the soothing fragrance of the exotic foliage. There were the occasional white-coated laboratory workers primping and caring for the crops.

Xila held Li’s hand as they strolled. They filled in many of the gaps about each other’s lives and drew closer.

“Xila I have a mission issued by your father but I know nothing of the details.” Xila was concerned since she knew the risks. Some civilians have been lost carrying out assignments. At that time the voice of the Admiral sounded over the intercom.

“Captain Li, report to the Admiral’s office.” He turned to Xila and grabbed her hands holding them at chest level.

“Be careful out there.” She said. “I’ll see you after this mission.” He moves in for a kiss and their lips touch softly.

### Mission Briefing

On his way through the corridors Li receives another intercom message telling him to report to the briefing chamber instead. He gets directions from passing personnel and finally enters. Lazarus was there already as well as Admiral Seghtee and a few security officers.

“Captain Li, have a seat please.” Said Seghtee and he goes to the point screen displaying pictures and data. “Our informant, who was assigned to be recruited by the Resistance, was escorted presumably to a nearby Resistance hideout, and has managed to submit these photos. His reports are incomplete and he has requested pickup at this time. He has more information with him on Resistance activities and we need to rescue him. He’s not been discovered yet but he feels his cover is thin. This is a small but important mission Captain and we need that data our contact is carrying. We can’t reveal his identity for his safety yet. We need to get him back to Krysto first and foremost.” Seghtee takes a seat.

Admiral Kile stands and reports. “Your ship is upgraded and ready for departure. Check your **overhead objective display console** we mounted for your mission parameters. Stay alert and listen for in-flight communications, we may alter

your mission. If you think you can take this on now then report to the vehicle bay. If you do not feel up to it we will pass it along to someone else and discuss alternative careers for you.”

“Don’t worry Admiral, we’re ready.” Lazarus said. Li tips his head.

Through the corridors and down the elevator they reach the vehicle launch outlet. The sight of the polished and updated Star Voyager was astonishing. The ship bristles with gun mounts and sensor additions. They gawked for a moment until an officer came up and touched Li’s shoulder to guide him over to the ship. The last of the Krystonian engineers were climbing down the side ladder having completed their work.

“We’ve got you hooked up with twin anti-proton lasers, quad pulse lasers, two pulse laser 360’s, twin destroyer cannons, two dual torpedo launchers, and two rear torpedo launchers to start with. Additional features include: stealth capability and upgraded class six multiple shielding.” Li was stunned. He didn’t expect this much weaponry but was astounded nonetheless. He feels along the body and touches the wide barrel of the destroyer cannon extruding from the hull side just in front of the climbing ladder.

“Let’s go inside.” The engineer said. At the top of the climb he was a little startled to find himself staring down the barrel of a pulse laser a few inches from his face.

They almost didn’t recognize the cockpit with all the blinking buttons and additional consoles. Now there was a special tactics panel in the center between the helm and operations monitors with a green crosshair screen. They look to each other in thrill but drop the smiles when the engineer returns his attention to them. He demonstrates the **ODC** operation and special tactics, how to initiate the stealth capability, and other emergency procedures. He showed them the added weapons control screen and details the attributes and cautions. The ship was refitted with additional attitude control thrusters making it more maneuverable. Now they can simulate air flight in space within reasonable expectations, roll maneuvers, nose ups, swings, and veers. This will make the Star Voyager one amongst few standup vessels with higher agility.

The throttle track was extending and spanned the front left of the console then curves right toward the middle. This gave the pilot manual control of the higher acceleration ratios. Lastly the engineer opened the wall panel showing them their new hand pistols, a plasmatic energy discharge gun. He concluded his presentation and exits the ship. Li and Lazarus were ready to receive their first orders. Admiral Kile appears on the forward monitor and instructs them to assume orbit immediately. The bay doors retract, the hover systems activate and the ship glides up the inclined ramp onto the icy surface.

After attaining the appropriate hovering height the ascent thrusters flare and push them into the exosphere this time in only twenty minutes. The Krystonian engineers had increased the thruster output. Li was ecstatic. Li confirms orbit with the base above Krysto where they remained for about two and a half revolutions. Admiral Kile finally appears on the corner screen. He gives them the go ahead to accelerate toward the “B” band.

### **Objective: Rendezvous with Informant**

They continued their explorations of the new additions and waited for more orders. Admiral Kile had left them a screen note telling them about a file put in his computer directory. They had preset the information so as not to necessitate the signaling of vital mission updates over ultra radio communications frequencies during the operation.

“**B-00053...**” Li stated as he read the message. Lazarus opens the star catalog program and gets the skinny on the system. “Red giant, non main sequence, no terrestrial planets, a few gas giants, satellites are present.”

“That’s probably where were going.” Li said responding from his hunch.

“Message from Icebase-1 coming in...” Seghtee’s voice sounds a live transmission. “Access folder *rendezvous point*.” Li affirms and Lazarus executes a note text file giving the coordinates of the fifth moon of the second gas giant.

“Engage stealth, Land and wait in a secluded spot on the moon.” Seghtee instructed.

“I thought so.” Laz said. “It’s about the size of Uranus.” Li looked to him to see if he was joking. He had not used it as a pun this time.

Sometime after they reached the middle of the system they found the curious reddish brown gas giant orbiting quietly in space with its moonlet offspring. The third moon caught the attention of both the computer thus Li immediately as the **info prompt** sounded. The programming was designed to note any record setting events or phenomena.

“Can you display the data on the big screen to skim the stats?”

“This was the largest satellite on record so far at nearly the size of Mars as the data reports.”

"This moon would be a good settlement site." He thought to himself, "with a good gravity hold." Li was intrigued. They proceeded to acquire orbit and descend upon the active surface of the rendezvous spot to await further instructions. The surface was icy and cracked like Europa of Jupiter but there were beautiful geysers of sulfur. From fumarole pits smoke plumes rise and angle horizontal by unseen stratospheric winds. The moon was internally active. They were mostly quiet between one another knowing they were linked to a live broadcast with Icebase-1. Li was not concerned about the signal blowing their position because it was phased.

An hour had past and nothing happened. It was becoming challenging having to refrain from making personal or irrelevant comments yet being used to free and open expression in the Star Voyager. The Admiral had not spoken in over forty-five minutes and they were restless. Li stood to stretch and slowly began a trip to the back to relieve himself. An alert sounded briefly breaking the monotony and halting Li's advance to the cockpit doorframe, it was the **charged particle indicator**. The nearby star had undergone a specifically intense flare eruption long ago only now were the escalated ionic winds dousing the ship and surrounding environment. Li was still standing looking to Lazarus who logged the event, then continues to the rear cabin.

Lazarus, still wondering when the heck Admiral Seghtee would give his orders, glances at the communications control screen briefly and ponders. The glowing flat panel interface soothing the eye. He was indeed nervous as he noted the dimly lit mute button. A final decision and he tap the now brightly illuminated control. He skittishly calls out The Admirals title with no response. The silence was followed by his relieved exhale. He grunts and stretches. He looked back to see that the cockpit door was still closed and Li had not returned. Curious, he activates the television. What interesting programming could he find this far out? Signals from several star systems were available and had traveled great distance and even further beyond the "B" band. He lowers the volume to barely audible and switches to the big screen. Upon surfing the channels, which displayed movie scenarios, news broadcasts, and music video performances, the implications behind the suggested necessity for media entertainment on long space voyages became apparent to Lazarus as he browsed. Vessels intended for extended use are commonly expected to carry media broadcast capabilities.

Suddenly Lazarus stopped on an interesting broadcast. His eyes widened and his heart thumped. The fleshly bodies of two partners engaging in intimate activity caught his attention. Lazarus had seen a video such as this before and was not a virgin, yet surprise engulfed him. He had stumbled onto a pornographic video of a Felidae and a Human. The hydraulic slide of the retracting cockpit doors startled Laz into action as Li was returning from the rear to see the intriguing broadcast. The Catgirl crawled toward the Man with her rear quarter in the air and tail curled. The Felidae and man began to make out and Li was astounded. Now he knew why the female Felidae had a bulging torso. Her breasts were numerous and extended to her belly in two rows.



*The Closing Rescue*

In an instant there was the sound on the speakers of abrupt shuffling of data pages and Admiral Seghtee's voice speaking lowly and inaudible to someone there followed by the loud and clear, "Go, go, go! Third moon, north pole, rescue informant!" The message exclaimed.

Laz unmuted the audio. "We're on our way sir." Lazarus fumbled with the controls to remove the image from the screen and restarted the program. Li assumes the helm the ship lifts off.

They were in the middle of the moon hop and the hefty third satellite of the present gas giant gains proximity.

"Li there is a structure down on the moon's surface. Here are the coordinates." Li moves the ship close and enters a high hover. Approaching from above the rocky surface they could see a man in a space suit running along as fast as he could with laser fire emanating from a Resistance base erected in the distance. On the tail of the informant were soldiers and civilian recruits of the Resistance. The hurried informant fired only a couple of shots behind him spotting the Star Voyager above as he ran for the rocky enclosure out on the plains of the bulky moon.

"Okay Laz light'em up." Li said. He accessed the weapons control program.

"Which weapon do I use?" Li leans over and glances at the screen.

"Hmm, stay away from the antiproton laser for now. Try the destroyer cannons." He tap-targets the running figures on the screen, arms the cannons, and executes a few repeated button taps (marked "F") The bulky guns erupt repeatedly in bright plasmatic energy bursts. The ship kicked from the heavy fire it was heard the muffled thuds from inside the cockpit. The ground was bombarded with explosive discharges and cratered the surface.

The soldiers were temporarily deterred. Li circled around behind the informant and drops into a low hover. Slowing to a steady running speed, about five or ten miles per hour, the ship looms above the hastened agent. Lazarus had never put on his space suit so fast. Once he was secure Li unlocked the bottom hatch and Lazarus depressurized from the middle compartment. The hatch door slides open. Then the second door hinges free revealing the moons terrain flowing by and a desperately dashing informant leaping boulders and dodging craters. All the while the colors of amplified emissions pelt the ground underfoot shattering the receding rock faces.

With a near fall he slips in the enshadowed ice between the crags as he grabs the step grooves protruding the hatch door and hangs on for dear life. The voyager begins to mature its hover at the word of Lazarus and he helps the informant up. Once inside Lazarus gets the hatch closed and Li picks up speed. They pressurize the lock and Lazarus enters the cockpit, once he got the green light, and mans his console. The shields were active just in time to meet a couple of oncoming Avengers from ahead. The informant lay uncapped on the floor still in the middle cabin panting from his fast trot. Li kept the cockpit door locked until they got to safety. He rose into orbit with Avengers on their tail.

The ship rumbled. Li accelerates away from the moon and gas giant deeper into space. He swings around for a reverse arc assault. Lazarus opens fire from destroyer and pulse cannons emitting a flood of brilliant particle orbs. The Avengers scattered from the equated firepower and maneuver for another attack. The guns of the Star Voyager flicker and blaze wearing down the shields of both avengers. The multiple laser cannons and turbo laser clusters from the Avengers launches energy the same. Li rolls the ship to save shield partition strength.

In the minutes ahead the Star Voyager had lasted longer mostly due to the superior shielding and the Avengers had to flee. Li gave chase and Lazarus continued to fire until their shields were drained.

"Okay lets test the anti proton laser." Said Li. "Target the exposed hull, one burst, and fire..." The long barrel began to glow dimly as the antiproton generator charged. He fired the invisible laser and upon impact the negatively charged antimatter particles contacted the Avengers unguarded hull. A brilliant flare of atomic energy erupted, and obliterated the vessel. The other Avenger was nowhere to be found.

### Long Time No See

Li plots a course back to the "A" zone and they both quickly enter the middle cabin.

"Feeno...?" Li exclaimed. "You're the informant?"

"Li, you're the rescue ship?" He returned. They all grinned and Li shook his hand.

"Thank God you came. I was about to be toast."

"You're welcome. So this is where you've been all this time. Is that what you meant by *something you need to do*?"

"Precisely...." He confirms. "I see you've been recruited. I knew they would. You and your ship is valuable."

Lazarus cuts in. "Where's your vessel, The Blure?"

“Raxot space port...”

“Speaking of Krysto we’d better head that way.” Li alters course directly for A-00981.

The tail tucked Avenger returns to B-00053 to report and assist with relocation efforts. The SMD knows the position of the Resistance outpost now that the SMD informant has been recovered.

“The traitor has escaped. We engaged in battle with the getaway vessel.” The avenger pilot explains to the leading Resistance commander. “A large, black, heavily armed stealth vessel, which was not detected on approach, rescued the spy.” The commander stroked his chin. He had received a previous report hours ago from Cyril’s **intranet status update** of a large black vessel landing at Lendall Stop with two pilots eating in. The **substitute reconnaissance agent** observed the event earlier.

“They must be an SMD special forces duo.” He thought. He transmits the report to C-00101 and resumes supervising the cleanup team. Beltran, who was still in his vessel, was returning to C-00101 and receives the encoded report over the **Resistance intranetwork**. Cyril, who pilots at the adjacent console, further disseminates the information to remaining encampments located deeper out into space. Though risky additional personnel for the Resistance are yet a primary goal as it corresponds to an increase in self-sufficiency. Beltran who still utilized disgruntled or criminal civilians from Star City has just ordered additional restrictions on new townsman recruits to “tighten the straps”. It will be more difficult now to infiltrate the CRC.

In retrospect having lost a fleet of Avengers tracker vehicles and much needed personnel Beltran and Cyril’s offensive is over for now. Nevertheless the supplies attained at Krysto will go a long way toward increasing the size of their infrastructure, which consists of a hand full of remote bases. B-00053 was the nearest outpost that the CRC had managed. Now C-00101 is the next fallback spot. There are presently bases under development in further bands such as **D-00337**. It will be more effort consuming now for the SMD to find all the Confederate Resistance hideouts. They can be concealed anywhere in any star system on any asteroid, planetoid, or comet. The more machinery and supplies the Resistance steals, the more additional equipment they can spawn, and more raw materials can be refined. An **enemy cascade effect** will occur. The SMD has little choice but to wait, watch, and listen. The Confederate Resistance could be anywhere out there.

## Reward

Seiwan Li and Lazarus were commended upon returning to Krysto. Feeno was also for his bravery and successful mission infiltrating the B-00053 base and received a long-range Special Forces Commendation Medal. More celebration takes place at Icebase-1. Repair efforts at the city of Raxot are well underway and the citizens are recovering. More local security has been established near the borders. A new fort on the other side of the mesa, Icebase-2 is being erected. The SMD has established a base in the **Alpha Cephei System** near the inner Star City boarder for extra security of allied systems including A-00981.

Li and Xila spent the evening together at Raxot getting closer and more intimate. The wondrous sites and engaging attractions of the capitol city satiated the bonding couple at least on the less damaged side. Xila introduced Li to some of her friends and took him around to the many places, shops and souvenir outlets, unto contentment of their hearts. There was no better way to wind down the evening then to dine at Raxot’s star restaurant, *The Frosty Frore* overlooking the vast snowy plains of sparkling ice bouncing the setting starlight. Lazarus did his own thing as usual and Raxot remained a tourist’s paradise amongst the glaciers.

At the end of the romantic excursions they returned to Icebase-1 to spend the night. It was cozy and secure, during the night hours with only a few officers pacing the corridors working the graveyard shift. Lazarus had found an attractive young officer to spend the night with in her cabin. Li had not slept with Xila this time and would choose to wait. There was something about the Admiral’s attitude, which deterred Li a bit. He received no hints or gestures indicating that it was okay in the eye of Kile. Perhaps it wasn’t appropriate nonetheless being a newly ranking SMD Captain caught sleeping in the Admiral’s daughter’s bed, he wondered. Maybe he was one of those fathers who wanted his daughter to grow a real relationship, Li thought. There was something Li was not seeing. There was some reason why Xila’s father put an invisible barrier between them suddenly. Li was not frustrated. He was used to being alone.

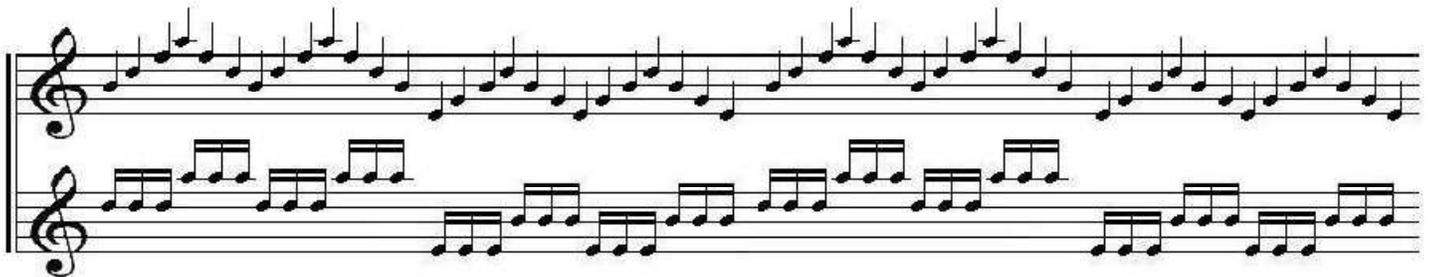
Having spent an evening with Xila and then not to conclude with intimate passion was no different to him then going on a long voyage into deep space alone. Li’s hardened interior made him prepared. Not to imply Li didn’t toss and turn a bit

desiring to be with her. Either way his busy day and life changing events left him with a tantalizing energy and he eagerly awaited tomorrow.

### A Strange Encounter

The morning on Krysto was more than words can say. Stunning pinks, mixed with light violets, streaked with distant cirrus clouds adorning the horizon. Li has a strange insistent feeling, something about the planet. He skipped breakfast and paced upstairs to the front entrance like an automaton. He greeted the entrance watcher and he saluted. Li with his suit and scarf exits the base. His eyes skyward he walked with no direction. He went forth until he could not see the base head anymore protruding from the ground. Something drew him. Like a distant voice calling his name, but no one was there. The land was white and snowy the sky blue and clear, the pinks and violets brilliant and alien.

The clouds wisped and swirled like he had never seen, as his body kept walking for no reason. The wind howled a dreamy tune in his mind. His eyes were squinty, his mouth opened, and his hand touched his face. He felt like he was detached from his body. A strange image appeared before his eyes yet in his mind, a dim jumble of forms. It disappeared and the outlandish Krystonian terrain was visible again, all the while a strange musical tune plays in his mind, a deep dreamy music box with another sound on top. The other sound seems only artificially created by an electronic device. It sounds synthesized. Certain tones may hit on a high-pitched accordion. The entrancing tune repeating over and over, just the two harmonies and the roar of the wind, the horizon sky colors whirling, twisting and flashing before his eyes.



The hallucination returned struggling to appear vivid in his mind as he stood turning and rubbernecking in a disoriented motion. The image finally became vivid for a split second and seemed to freeze him physically and mentally, the image of a hairy snow creature with a furry face and lips of skin protruding the fur, a gray nose, quiet, motionless; the background gone and only a hazy backdrop, and as quickly as it had smeared into his view it faded. After snapping from the encounter, bewildered, he headed back to the concealed base following his footsteps.

Xila was working in the command center at her post on the **sensor relay uplink protocols** with computer technicians standing to her sides. She didn't turn when the command entrance doors retracted making a hydraulic hiss. She was focused on her task at hand but heard a bit of snickering from a few officers as they apparently had run into an amusing individual on their way out. She made a belated turn just to see who came in and found the lightly snow covered and flushed faced Li standing motionless behind her. He was almost catatonic until the smiling warmth of Xila unfroze him.

"What happened?" She asked.

"I, I don't know. I woke up this morning and went outside away from the base head. I had some kind of strange experience."

She pondered for a moment. She knew now what it was. "Oh **The Spirit of Krysto** has entered you." She told him. "Others have reported similar experiences about traveling alone on the frozen plains." She followed.

### Making Friends

The afternoon soon came and the lunchtime alarms sounds in the mess hall. Xila had made up with Jered now that he had accepted Li as her new friend. He was also puzzled that they didn't sleep together which was a relief. Though jealous he had almost wanted to find out they had spent the night in the same room, that it might fulfill *his* burning expectations. Li and Xila were both inviting when he approached the table with head low. Li made him feel better with a bit of humor and stories as they ate and amended their friendships.

After lunch Li was faced with a tough parting. They had rendezvoused in the vehicle bay downstairs. Both Li and Xila took some comfort he could always come back to Krysto and was only two weeks away. The ship was loaded with fuel and supplies and he and Lazarus prepare their journey to Sun Town. Admiral Seghtee confirms the order to **Sirius** to complete their commission at the **Planetary Council Headquarters**. One last kiss for the lovely Xila, a salute to the Krystonian and SMD officers and the Star Voyager exits the base and rises into the sky on their way home.

## Chapter 6

### Homebound

Li's return flight plan would intercept the double system of **70 Opiuchi** and **Flamsteed 70**. They were excited to see this system since it would be the first stellar-multiple they could actually approach. Regarding Vega it was Li's unspoken decision that he would definitely return. **70 Oph** has been reported to have a few terrestrial planets one of which possessing an ecosystem. After visiting Lendall Stop for one last *home-cooked* meal they accelerated to top speed.

The trip was spent doing the usual eating, sleeping, grooming, watching TV, using the Internet, writing, and playing with the new ship systems installed by the Krystonian engineers. Their lives have changed so significantly in such a short period of time they had to stop and think back to remember how they got here and where they were going. Their newfound careers demanded a degree of reverence and responsibility. Even Lazarus had gradually accepted his new image and accountability expectations. Still he felt eager to reach home and see his friends again on Earth. The thought of home is briefly eclipsed by the destination at hand, the Council.

### The Jungle Planet

The two stars became more distinguishable as they neared the system. Instead of a single white dot they were growing into a separated pair dancing in their slow orbits. The world had a green mossy haze about the halo of its countenance and much more so than Earth by comparison. Li had a recent flashback of the Mars-sized rendezvous moon around the gas giant at B-00053 as he noted the solitary satellite orbiting this lush planet, yet there was little to no similarity. This moon was on the order of Pluto, size wise with comparable surface features, craters, crags, and such. The ship descends upon the excessively vegetated world fourth from the two suns. Incidentally upon descent of the hazy atmosphere, landing on the late



evening side of the terminator, the only clearing he found was barely wide enough to squeeze the ship into. He was cautious not to land to near a **canopy cluster** so as not to ignite the treetops with the intensely heated atomic flame from above. Lazarus used the **infradar** device, which utilized reflected low RF emissions to find a clearing and doubling as a thermal imager. Most equipment on the Star Voyager shared a similar dual nature, with instruments upon instruments wrapped into compact clusters. They both overlooked the underside **optical flash scan** Li out of haste. Lazarus felt there was something missing as if forgotten yet was frozen in his instincts.

Creatures mesmerized by the bright flare of the thrusters populated the woodland with wide eyes below. The underbrush blows away and the wide curve of the protruding rock awaits its clash with the ships underside. The thud of titanium alloys echoes the woodland as it impacted the solid surface. They stumbled as the ship tipped sideways breaking the level, a little force tugged slightly to port, which made Lazarus nervous somewhat. He was getting some kind of impression as a gut feeling and he couldn't utter its meaning. Li seemed almost in a hurry to step out onto the ground outside. The thrill seemed to lie in that they were the only two intelligent life forms about this teeming world so they thought and they absorbed the enchantment.

Opening the hatch was a stimulating event as the smell of exotic foliage rushed into the cabin with the sound of night fowl. Lazarus was slightly apprehensive. His medical conscience was telling him it could be hazardous to breathe the mist of exotic plant life. Li pops his head out to see the vast lushness of shrubbery and canopy. The vegetation was so thick he could not see very far into the forest. The suns were setting anyway and they missed it.

"Li I'm not so sure we should go out into this kind of environment." Lazarus expressed in his reservation. But the sights, sounds, and life in a forest have always enthralled Li being a nature preservist. The warm humidity tickled his face as he ingresses the low-lying fog having taken position upon the roof of the ship. Lazarus was jittery. He turned to his squatted comrade just as he was tossing the hand light and Li's catch was a success.

Aptly shining the immediate ground below the last rung of the ladder he places the small illuminator in his teeth and did descend. Stepping from the climbing bars onto the woodland he stopped, watched, and herd. He recalls the trail back home leading to his dwelling in the oriental woodlands. Li was entranced and the air was filled with many sorts of strange shrieks and howls. The scampering of critters as they brush against extrinsic ferns and rattle the dangling vines tells Li his presence has been observed. He considers a strategy. His initial action is inaction. He can scarcely take a step. The undergrowth is so thick he can hardly see his feet. Lazarus watches from the hatch without stepping out.

"I wouldn't go too far out." He warned. He recalled one of his academy teachers who had been on many Earth expeditions cautioning against exploring an Earth jungle let alone an alien world in a remote system.

Li's curiosity compels him. The bush nearby jostles furiously and the weighty thump of heavy flesh lunges fourth. A hidden quadruped sends Li's muscles into a twitch and his blood mixed with adrenaline. His rock hard body springs atop the vessel. Lazarus had ducked at the moment of motion followed by the pitched body of Li. The hatch was closed and locked. He makes it unharmed and sinks back into a squat panting heavily. The chuckling of Lazarus filled the cabin and Li did not laugh and did frown.

"I told you so Li." He said still amused.

"Let's get moving. We'll have to come back here fully suited to explore." Li says as he stands and enters the cockpit. They ascend into the sky exposing the massive skull plate of an enormous prehistoric animal buried in the surface of which they had landed upon. The critters and peddlers scattered at the sound of thunderous thrust. Soon the double system of 70 Oph falls away.

In the days ahead they kept as busy as they could and had no shortage of entertainment. Lazarus spends some time using computer programs to create personal musical tunes with his electronic sound synthesizer software. Li was back and forth appearing to maintain vigilance on ships systems. Lazarus knew he was, yet his to and fro encompassed occasional pacing. Meeting once again at their consoles they began talking about old and new times as they accelerated closer and closer to Sirius.

"I think we are going to bypass home." Said Li, which was drifting passed them light years away to starboard. "I want to take care of the commissioning interview first to prevent backtrack."

"I agree." Concurred Lazarus having desired to get home and stay home for a while. Though precise in his calculations Li maintained a close eye on the enclosing edge of Oort Cloud debris of The Solar System in which they traveled clear through at translightspeed velocity with just a hint of skittishness. Li's comfortable demeanor turned into a nauseous sulk.

"I'm going to take a break in back. I think I need a drink." He said. Laz nods.

### III Fallen

Lazarus was playing a computer game for perhaps half an hour when he decided to go to the back for a shower. After entering the rear cabin to retrieve his unsoiled dress wear, he saw Li hunched over his bed holding his stomach. His forehead was pressed against the bedside.

"What's wrong?" He asked.

"I don't know I suddenly feel ill."

"Oh God. I told you Li." He helps him up and activates the medical mode in the middle cabin. Li lay on the gurney and Lazarus starts scanning and testing his vital signs. He was sick. Li was scratching his leg and almost panicked when he felt a growth. Lazarus lifts his pant leg and attached to him was an alien leech pulsating as it was sucked blood from his veins and leaked alien biofluids into his blood stream. Lazarus removed the leech carefully and cleaned his wound. He searched the database but could find no antibiotics for this creature. He stored the creature in a plastic bag and documented the event. He gave Li strong raw vegetables such as onions and garlic with bread and herbal tea in addition.

After covering his wound mark from the fangs of the glutinous bloodsucker he helped him to his bed and he rested. Lazarus manned the control room while Li recovered from his infection.

### The Sirian System

The site of the distant Sun drifting behind several light years away was notable as they neared Sirius ahead, a blue-white blaze of a harbor. Li finally dragged up front groggy and weary but was gradually getting his space legs back.

"Where are we?" Li asked.

"Less than a light year from Sirius..." They groomed and dressed in their uniforms.

In the hours ahead they had to dim the window screen because of the sheer blazing brilliance of Sirius A, a massive heavy weight. Its binary companion Sirius B was on a rapid orbit and was a white dwarf only four times as large as the Earth with an equivalent mass as our sun, the end of its life. Li had an intriguing yet frightening thought. Would Sirius B. eventually draw enough gases from Sirius A. and become a neutron star or worse a black hole? That was indeed a terrifying yet very real possibility. Sirius A. was three times more massive than our sun and would provide a mammoth meal for a newly formed black hole. If a black hole were to form there at Sirius only eight and a half light years from the sun it could potentially cause significant tidal disruptions for our system. What's worse, Lazarus reports that the Sirius star system is moving at several thousands of miles per hour toward the Solar System.

Already they were getting enormous magnetic field readings from the rapidly rotating dwarf companion.

"The Council building must be heavily shielded." Lazarus reasoned. "We've got all kind of high frequency rays zapping throughout this system."

"Maintain your sensor accounts." Li instructed.

### The Council Hall

The Planetary Council headquarters was located on the farthest planet with a distance of about 0.7 of Pluto's from Sol. This was a rocky, barren hunk of minerals with a thin atmosphere just enough to scatter a few rays refracting a deep blue hue yet far too thin to breathe. Li was not surprised to find them escorted suddenly by two shiny saucer shaped vessels, which appeared along side of them without being detected, and they were startled. They moved in dangerously close to the ship and Li released the maneuvering handle; a moment later they were gone. The two cosmic cadets looked to each other in befuddlement, still they pressed on.

"A test maybe?" Li wondered.

"A strange one if so..." Lazarus followed.

"A panic test I think." Said Li.

Lazarus shrugs. "I guess we passed."

The landing disc on the surface of the planet in which they approached was well lit as it rested amongst the rocky and jagged terrain far from the hall yet connected by the lengthy walkway. They suited and exit.

“Keep your visor open if we meet someone.” Li instructed. At the edges of the long road were rows of focused ultraviolet lights streaming into the heavens and at the temple archway in the distance. As they proceeded to traverse the long walkway two figures approached rapidly on a vigorous speed walk from ahead and carrying staffs yet were distant. They both stopped as if a force exerted against their shoulders yet not detectable. They stood, looked, and waited.

In the moments after they found them to be two Badgermen with electrostatic discharge spears approaching before them and stopped. They were not wearing the traditional space wear yet a shiny metallic jumpsuit and transparent orbs about their heads like that unto glass. Li had a hunch and held his position for perhaps another thirty seconds or so as did Lazarus who stood hindside. He looked to Li to see if he was going to move yet he did not. Lazarus intuited a test was being presented, as did Li. He believed the solution was to see if you were brave enough to go around so he took a step and two movements resulted. One was the swift motion of Li's right hand blocking the path of Lazarus while the spear of the left Badgerman tilted and discharged a violet lightning. Lazarus was relieved having noted how close he came to blowing the test. He looks to Li who moved not. Li's guess was correct. After a minute and tens of seconds the Badgermen stepped sideward and cleared the path for the newcoming space duo. It seemed a brief wait was necessary before continuing, perhaps out of respect.

The building ahead was a huge impressive yet ominous looking alien engineered castle with protruding edges and pointed steeples, black and gray in color with lighted features.

“Keep your eyes front. Don't look back at the Badgerman.” The low whisper of Li's voice instructed. The journey about the blandness of the undecorated walkway of gray was unnerving as the pointed temple slowly towered above them. They climbed a stone staircase of ten and stood before the door, which opened not. They waited for minutes facing the door and it opened not and Li did turn to the Badgermen and they were no longer there. As they turned back to the apocalyptic doorframe and old style handle had appeared and Li was confused. He didn't recall any handle before and couldn't recall taking note of any during their wait. He reached fourth to grip thereon and the doors retracted sideward before his contact and they went into the castle. They entered a lobby and the doors closed behind them. A low hiss could be heard after a few seconds. It sounded like airflow. The room appeared to be pressuring. Li checks his wrist device which was illuminated of the yellow indicator light soon to morph to green and the room was pressurized of air. They both remove their helmets.

The surrounding room was dark and the light above only shined onto the object before them, a magnificent banquet table of delectable morsels of fruits, vegetables, and golden brown meats all cooked. Delicious hens lay whole on the table basted in flavored sauce and shimmered in the dim lighting. Li stood motionless again and glanced about the empty room. There was no other furniture but the serving table and the food thereon. The mouthwatering smell of baked goods and moist casseroles tickled their nostrils. Lazarus moves in to sample the generously presented treats. “Don't eat too much of that, just a little.” Li said to his famished copilot.

The wall ahead retracted without warning and there was no doorframe. The low sonances of exotic music filled the air. They enter into the next room. The area therein was thoroughly decorated with silk sheets strung about of pink tint and red pillows scattered thereabout. The ceiling was low perhaps a couple of feet above their heads and the hands of women caressed them from behind. They were nude and provocative in there gestures some crawling about the floor taking position under the suited space men. The woman who Lazarus beheld appeared identical to the Felidae performer of the video he had seen days ago near B-00053 and his face was touched by the padded hands of the illustrious feline. The dazzling females of fragrant allure grabbed the hands of the entranced journeyman and they did follow. Li knew they had to stop this encounter. For ahead may lay the council hall full of delegates and officials. To continue would be to fail the task at hand.

Something instilled in Li, a feeling as he noted the scar on the face of *his* woman and he awoke from his trance. The scar looked identical to the one seen on the soft face of Xila.

“This can't be real.” Li said to himself. The room fell dark and they could not see the women or the beds. The light trickery was very well utilized as if made by lasers to control the brightness and shadows so efficiently, which explained why only the banquette table was lit in the previous chamber. There was silence and still. A whoosh and a clatter broke the quietude and a double door opened outward. They were sure it had to be the council hall. With the flickering of fire and the hall of emeralds lay before them and they enter. They looked back to see if the women were following and they vanished.

The lining of the walls was like old style wood construction with dark brown rivets along the segmented passage. Cream-colored siding between the rivets and few portraits of what appears as abstract art, though some structure can be discerned

in them, generated the backdrop. The rivets themselves displayed artwork in the sculpted format of humanoid figures some winged and holding instruments as the chiselings protruded outward. There were rows of staffs stand vertical some supporting torches of wild flame and the others in between propping a strange violet crystal of some kind. Lazarus wanted to analyze them and he reached outward for the first jewel and lay hands upon it. The geometric gem glowed with a clear violet ray about its top like that unto a rainbow. As Lazarus caresses the dazzling emerald it resonated in vibratory movements and sounded of a diminishing deep bell. A strange feeling of incoherence took hold of them and their thoughts became disjointed. The hall before them began to twist and contort as if the fabric of space and time began to warp uncontrollably. They were “whoaing” as if riding along a stomach wrenching roller coaster.

The halls rocked and bended like rubber and their bodies too. They could not move well as the slightest wave of the hand appeared across the room or elsewhere. Lazarus in his skittishness touched the emerald again and the environment worsened. The sight of everything therein began to fracture as it were an iceberg. They could not think well as their thoughts jumped from place to place and could not reason as normal. Their minds felt over pacified and lazy in this debased realm of chaotic arrangement. Li tried to move faster and fanaticism came about him as he began touching the other crystals in the hopes to repair to rocking, twisting hall. Every attempt to lay hands on the mysterious element caused a more extreme warpage of space. He was unable to find the pattern of contact for the staff stands. The hand of Lazarus could not reach the wooden wall carvings even about the diligence of his outreach as he reasoned them to be the solution. Time began to slow and they did notice. Their voices deepened and their bodies became as disjointed figures with odd movements and uninterruptible dimensions. Fear did come unto them and Li entertained the idea of his demise there in the council hall where they failed to make the right choice.

Yet in the confusion of detached images and crumpled fabric a strange dreamy tunnel vision laid view into Li’s eyes and he stared whimsically at the luminance of the torch before him. He felt frozen in his movements not of his body but of his mind as if his mental processes were constrained. Li let his focus shine through as his thoughts began to operate of their own accordance. He was apprehensive to stretch out his elongated arm into the distortion of distance and into the scorching orange flame of fire. As his fleshly hand neared the fiery torch he was not burned and the hall did return to normal, at the end appeared another door of ominous apparel. Li and Lazarus were silent when the environment became the same quiet passage of ambient light from the calmly flickering candle pots and the hall smelled of sweet savor. They moved ahead to the next room and the doors opened forth.

The light poured in brilliantly revealing the real council hall and were visible other people and they did enter. The gravity was light, the area was a half moon, and council leaders sat along the back wall. Members of each alien home world were present, Li and Laz the only Human. The walls were adorned with paintings and had the look of an old library. Not all of the chairs were occupied yet a few. One empty chair in the center read in the inscription where it would normally display the species title read, “Mentors.”

They got their first view of the Low gravity **Giraffidianian**, tall, slender, frail, and with a strange glow around his body. Li had thought it was a spot light but he could see nothing to account for the strange aura. He recalled the hearsay from his old academy days that this species was regarded as one of the most enlightened and ethically bounded than any known next to the mentor aliens. There was a portrait on the wall of three Mentors one in front and the other two hindside and they wore shiny space suits. The short, skinny, grey alien with almond shaped head and large dark eyes gazed in wisdom upon the hall from the painting. They never have been present in the hall and perhaps never will. Yet, the council acknowledged them as a member. No one knows who these aliens are, where they come from, where they have been or where their home world is. Will they ever return to our space? All that is known is that they are the most intellectually advanced bipedal being known, and hallowed.

They were astounded to see in the rear of the huge chamber a portrait of Jesus Christ as a Human and hallow about his head. Under the portrait was an inscription from the word of God. *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold them also I must bring they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one Sheppard”* Li and Lazarus understood the meaning.

The mood of the council chamber was mellow and edifying. It felt as if angels were present and righteousness prevailed. Beings gently trotted to and fro, in prayerful postures. Some sat on mats surrounding the hall meditating and praying. A member of the appropriate genus class manned the council chairs in the center sporadically. It seemed as if wisps of emotion filled the air like that unto a fog and photoelectric in the eye. It was the most peaceful, collected, balance of harmony and understanding in Star City. The Council hall was like unto an alter to Yahweh.

After minutes of astoundment they received no word from anyone and began to wonder of the next step. The people continued quietly wandering and praying some of them chanting. They looked about for a counter or desk from which to submit themselves as members of the SMD but they found none. They tried to speak to one of the wandering individuals but they continued on as if following a quickening spirit guiding them to faith and peace. Just as they began to reverse course a Giraffidian appeared behind them and they saw not his approach. Li clasped his hands together and inquired unto him that they may be directed to the **commissioning office**. The alien was quiet. Suddenly his forehead began to glow and his head illuminated with an aura, about him a hallow appeared. They gasped and fell under a trance as they beheld him. A voice appeared in their minds, saying, "You already have that which you seek." Yet, this was only a forefront message conveyed to them by spiritual means.

Having supped with the mind of this enlightened man Li found answers to many burning questions within him. It seems as soon as he had formed an inquiry it was answered in his mind by contact of the spirit. *His* questions were stemming from inner conflicts and confusion about the nature of things ranging from religious to moral. Though originating from his own mind Li had not felt as if he were doing the asking, a side effect of being linked to one or more beings with this kind of spiritual bond. His mind asked automatically questions such as "How does the theory of evolution fit in?" As quickly as his mind asked he received the answer and was troubled by its simplicity. Ironic to Li it came in the form of a sentence from the scripture of the beginning book of the Holy Bible. The word of God had said, "Let the *waters bring forth* abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the *waters brought forth* abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and *fill the waters* in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth, And God said, Let the *earth bring forth* the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said; Let *us make man* in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

In that instance Li saw clarity. He saw the history of Earth as if shown by a science documentary, complete through all the eons of volcanism, water, and ice. He saw as in fast motion the heating of the molten Earth and the freezing cascade of the advancing glacier and back again, a cycle of forge. He saw the Earth as it were a broth and simmered of steam and sulfur, as did the primordial world. He saw the creatures formed by natural processes in the universe and destroyed by disaster only to be reformed again. He saw the Earth go from inhospitable to flourishable over and over again throughout the ages. The documentary fluxed from science to postnatural and in the midst of the flourishable era a brilliance from Heaven came down to form man in its image and in the image of God formed he them. A voice had spoken to him of the will of God that he did not want the universe to make his dominant man, yet by his *own* hand. It was Li's most nagging question in his mind, **Evolution** and **Creation**, now answered; both events occurred.

In the mind of Lazarus who had prevailed that he asked not a question of selfishness but in truth as his character had matured. He wanted to know which was true, **The Creation** of the Universe by the hand of God or the **Big Bang**. He listened for voice in his mind and there was silence. Lazarus was not answered yet was told his answer would come when he is *touched by an Angel*. The elegant alien drifted away gracefully. Li and Lazarus knew then they could leave the grounds. They were now officially part of the SMD. But somehow they felt like they were more.

After a quiet trek back to the landing pad they entered the ship and decapped. Apparent to them now was that all they needed to do was to see the status of things there in the sanctity of The Planetary Council.

### Home Sweet Home

A few days later they entered Sun Town refreshed and exhilarated. Their trip was successful that they made it back safely. Li used the *fast lanes* above the solar plane as they hasten Earthbound. Upon entering Earth's atmosphere they land securely on the launch field and exit the ship. Parents were full of shining smiles and friends were present. Hugs kisses and chatter were prevalent.

Li returned home walking along the three-lane highway and entered the forest, over the thicketed heap, through the trail, and across the sparkling creek. Visiting his room for nostalgia Li finds Xila occupying his thoughts beyond the vividness of his recent experience. He was happy to be home and collapsed in his bed. The house was quiet him being the only occupant. His family was still at the launch site. Lazarus, elsewhere, was wording of his encounters minus a few classified SMD activities. He didn't mention the council either. He astounded the girls there though it was not his intention. Even the guys were attentive of his stories and the welcoming succeeded.

Li dozed off and had found himself in a darkened room somewhere and two individuals present. One was standing over him and he was lying down on a couch and the room was empty. Li could not move his body and something was pressing down on him yet was not visible only the business suited bodies standing over him. It was hot in the room, seemed humid, and he struggled to move. The figure moved away and he moved again standing to see the dim silhouette of a middle-aged woman in female business attire and there was red light emanating from her eyes as if her head was empty and a light shined from within and the light shined from her head. The male figure the same. The forms looked as they were a shell driven by energy within. Li controlled his fear having seen so many strange things lately and thought of a scientific explanation of this dream yet was overpowered and pinned down again and could not move. The light inside their heads was dense and stared back at him.

He heard the sound of a door opening and the voices of his parents. The nightmare ended, his heart thumping and his veins flowed of adrenaline. His mother called unto him and he prepared a meal with his mother.

"I have met a girl named Xila in my travels Ma." Li told as they prepare a lunch.

"When can I meet her?" She asked happily.

"She lives far away on another planet called Krysto."

"Well don't worry, love will find a way for you two I am sure." She comforted. When a brief moment of silence came Mr. Li spoke up having glanced at the Midday Chronicle and begins reading aloud an astonishing article published by The Matron Group saying a new technique was being used to generate an omicron particle field. The article was brief and made mentioned of a strange phenomenon called the *Omicron Ray Inconsistency*. Li was thoroughly intrigued together with his father.

The skid of Laz's hot rod sounds a familiar tradition with a side slide and Seiwan joins the carload of friends while they go out. Their place of destination was more than one. At the steakhouse the crowd made use of the renovated buffet; though inconspicuous Li noticed people talking about him in their conversations. He was good at interpreting **integrated dialog**, how people often disguise their subject by blending it with other topics. They were exchanging information about Li's recent space odyssey, which had drawn attention after bringing the four illegal passengers home.

As luck would have it they had stayed true to their word and not mentioned having been taken from Earth and into space. Yet, the frequent liftoffs of the Star Voyager had gained attention. Though some preferred keeping their feet on the ground, many people were becoming more and more curious about space travel. The new semester was starting and there were more students attending registration seminars at the local Transition Academy offering them a life of more freedom. Bizarre rumors that had begun to spread about but Li says little about his experience to anyone. His newfound membership into the SMD was partly the reason for his covert socialism.

A sense of responsibility was present in them both yet they still enjoyed their free time with a minimal of tension. Li was beginning to see into the space mentality. Even Lazarus was becoming more and more psychologically curious about the effects of the New Era on skeptical persons. To date most people have chosen to remain on Earth. And there have been few alien visitors to Earth, seeable. Many Humans are not prepared to meet firsthand alien being from afar as a slither of bigotry remains instilled in the stubborn. It seems as if there is much room for change.

## The Park

A walk through the Nature Way for the jolly group was filled with laughter and banter. The speaker system hidden throughout the area played soothing tunes to jest the soul, lightly echoing through the treetops. The charm of the two space travelers was almost magnetic and the stares were numerous. It was almost as if people could tell they were from space by their stellar glow. They carried an alternative demeanor and sensibility about them. Their visit at the Planetary Council was fresh on their minds. Some looked at them as if they looked upon an alien from outer space. It was only in passing however. A polite smile seemed enough to relieve the wary **Federal Consumers**. Li at least had learned the importance of diplomacy

and *neutrality* when dealing with the differences of people. Having to get along with aliens brought a sense of understanding, it made them more tolerant.

Out in the distant field, groups of people looked on while another civilian launches his or her vessel into the sky. It was a small craft and carried its delighted owner and additional party perhaps a friend. Li could tell they were new by their exuberant behavior, which he believed was significant evidence to indicate such. Seeing them disappear into the sky evoked recent memories of their own trial. It was almost like looking back in time.

After completing the bridge walk they turned to walk back to the car. The sun was low and the air was cooling. When they reached the car it had dimmed into the evening twilight thus they zoomed off to take one last drive down Market Street. Li had a flashback as they passed the nude bar **Club Cattails** reminding him of the aliens he recently encountered, not to mention the exotic video Lazarus stumbled upon during their rendezvous mission at B-00053. "Let's stop at another club." Lazarus said who was unable to wind down. They get a lot of attention when they entered. The breast of a dancer was visible while she sat leaning over the counter in her slack dress. They sat at their tables to get waited on by a lovely server wearing a bikini and sideways ponytail. They ordered more drinks and spicy chicken tenders while they watched the action. The air was a bit smoky with cigarettes and marijuana but not to overwhelmingly so. They got a few of glances from people who had heard about them perhaps from the local news paper which like to interview anyone launching space craft for their story on the **new space craze**.

Li went to use the restroom and on his way came across an attractive, sad, and pregnant woman leaning against the wall alone. Her countenance was fallen and Li felt compassionate. He washed his hands in the restroom and looked into the mirror. He could see changes in himself even. He liked how different he had become. After drying his hands off he left to see the solemn soul crying inside. He went to talk to her and made friends with her. He could see the loneliness in her big watery eyes. She was very sweet and soft spoken and he couldn't hear her well because of the rave music blaring. He asked if she wanted to go outside and she complied.

"Do you visit this club often?" He inquired. "I used to but not so much lately."

"Do you have any friends?"

"Not many but I used to have a boyfriend." She glances at her swollen belly silently. He was the father of her baby and he was not around. Li knew the situation, one that hasn't changed in a hundred years.

"Men will be Men." He said. She huffed in agreement.

"I will be your friend." She was emotional. She had clearly been vulnerable because she was alone for so long and had no attention given to her. Li's heart melts to have compassion for people in need. Her name was **Darlyn**.

"Come and sit with us at our table." Lazarus, who was enjoying the exhibition, greeted Li's new friend whom he was respectfully arm locked.

"Have some chicken tenders." Li offered as he slides the basket over to her. "Just enjoy yourself."

"Actually Li I think we should go now. The smoke is starting to billow." Lazarus said who was sitting with a girl from the club. They left the club and Li was holding Darlyn's hand. He sat with her in the back of the car and talked to her more as they drove to another spot downtown. They changed their minds when they saw the police cruising around.

"Darlyn I will drive you home so you don't have to use the public transportation." Li said. The blue face of a hurting woman told him she really needed company. They proceeded to Lazarus's house where he stayed the night with his female friend. Li and Darlyn sit outside on the porch swing getting to know one another in the cool night breeze.

"You are a really sweet girl you know."

"Thank you." She smiles. "I am happy to have a nice friend to spend time with."

Darlyn dreaded going home to her soulless apartment.

"You can come and stay with me at my house tonight." Li offered and they walk. She was kind of thrilled having to walk through the woods to get to his house yet cautious. She trusted Li and felt better when she saw the quaint dressed cabin. They enter past the creaking door and he shows her to the bathroom and prepares a snack and drink for her. He opens his couch/bed in his room and makes ready her pallet. She lay down right away after having her rice cake treat he brought to her. He soothes her with a few of his fascinating stories of space travel and exploration. She was intrigued not previously knowing about his Captainhood until just then. The sound of his voice and the caress of her hair comfort her to sleep where she may dream vividly.

Li woke to catch the morning rays and help his mother in the yard. He came inside to make breakfast for Darlyn and brought it to her. She was shy and thankful and ate heartily. She had not been cooking well for herself and her baby and

was pleased to have someone to make her morning chow. He gave her cornmeal, eggs, toast with butter and jelly, and a glass of mango juice. She hugged him and expressed her gratitude. The only problem with Li's generosity was that she might fall in love with him. They walked back over to Lazarus house and Li borrowed his car to take her home to her apartment. He stayed for a little while to make sure she was going to be ok.

"Oh, I'll be okay now. Thank you so much for everything." Li received a kiss anyway. With a polite smile he exits her apartment and returned home. Lazarus was already in his uniform by the time he returned the car and Li rushed home to do the same. He returned with his duffle bag full of supplies and hygienic goods. They bid farewell to their friends and family knowing they might end up going somewhere far away. On the launch field the ship was a bit spotty from the high winds, which kicked up the powdery dust from the old ball field. Li noticed a number of handprints on the hull both small and large telling him someone had been inspecting the outside somewhat. He ignored it taking security in the efficient locking mechanism in the hatch and on the engine nozzle gate, present to prevent anyone sticking anything inside. Most people didn't know where the entrance was except a few friends. Eager to get back into space they briskly climb inside and rise into the splendid azure.

### Brush with the Law

Naturally, landing and leaving Earth was becoming routine. Li was undecided where to go next. Nevertheless their destination was dictated by the sudden communications of a **pursuing SMD vessel**. The officer piloting the class 2 fighter ordered Li to report to the **constable's station** in orbit of the moon. The officer indicated that his ship was suspected to be carrying non-academy graduates from Earth illegally. Li almost turned white. Only weeks ago were he carrying a ship full of illegal passengers. Though there was none present this time he was still sweating. Lazarus was concerned also. He acknowledges the officer and adjusts his extraplanetary course toward the moon.

The docking of an orbiting station was a bit of a challenge and required both the attention of Li and the ships computer. The structure was small and consisted of a wide opening and bay for approaching vessels. The rest was facility chambers and hallways. The lighting was numerous inside the bay and suited personnel were moving about. It was breathtaking to peer out into space and onto the lunar surface with the rising Earth in the distance from high altitude. After suiting they exit into the hangar and are promptly escorted to the constable's office. The air conditioning inside was on high and the cool breeze was satisfying. Much lighting and the sound of phone calls filled the halls. There were office workers carrying documents and data pages to and fro. Most of them were women in business skirts. Li and Lazarus stood out in their armored space suits even though they had decapped. In actuality it was much the same as a typical police department on Earth with cubicles, computer monitors, and the smell of coffee. Li had to grab Laz's arm as he somewhat comically attempted to hold a cup under the dispenser for a steamy taste. He wasn't able to carry the cup with him of course. Li told him to keep his eyes front also and to stop eyeballing the office ladies for the time being.

Two security officers accompanied them inside the chief's office and waited at the doors. They sat as comfortably as they could while still suited. Yet, the flexible design of the Standard **SES** allowed for an angled position. The constable was not smiling and silent for the first few moments. Stacking papers and organizing his desk he finally interlaced his hands on the top and stared at them sternly.

"There have been reports of a large black vessel carrying passengers from Earth without permits. Now we do not have proof of the incident but we will be inspecting your vessel. I will be giving you a warning. If you get caught you will not be able to get out of it and we will proceed according to the rules." Li didn't like even the notion of losing his vessel. His mind began to wonder again, that same thought that appeared last time. He was running a scenario in his mind. What if he were to lose his pilot's license? He could see himself fleeing the territory and leaving Star City looking for another home planet to base his life upon instead of submitting. He shrugged it off and the chief was still dictating. He missed a few lines and had to appear attentive. Lazarus was lost in thought as well glancing at the office adornments. He lightly kneed his leg to get his attention back on the constable.

After his speech they were abruptly dismissed and the constable gave the by standing security officials a look as Li and Lazarus exit the office. Indeed upon capping off and entering the spacious ship bay they found the Star Voyager surrounded by inspection teams.

"Open the vessel." An investigating officer ordered. They were snoopful while opening and digging through the items in the cabinets. Li was concerned when his wrist computer alerted him to an unauthorized panel access. One of the inspection

team members was attempting to view the trek logs. The rummaging intensified when apparently foreign objects were uncovered. Some were lost feminine pieces, which aroused suspicion. Unbeknownst to Li the team member pocketed it and didn't report the discovery.

While the logs did reveal numerous trips from Earth and an ill-advised close flyby of Jupiter the log viewer was unable to find any evidence from which to site Li. They were both a little trembly the longer the inspection lasted. Another piece of jewelry was recovered from behind the bed panel, which was collected.

"Who does this belong to." The officer questioned.

"A woman by the name of Celie, she was a legal passenger." He assured. "I met her on Mars weeks ago."

After about a half an hour of hashing the interior of the Star Voyager the probing specialist concluded the tasks and climb out. The lead member marked on his datapage and scored the vessel according to official guidelines.

"Captain Li you have passed the inspection. You may go now." A sigh of relief and a go ahead by the leader sends them back inside and back out into space. Though far less life threatening, Li was almost as apprehensive about the inspection as he was terrified about the Jupiter incident. Li had in mind of the next destination. He heads for the asteroid belt to get the skinny.

The inviting glitter of Ceres comes into view along with its host of baby boulders on adjacent orbits. The patio at the Mars Barr was about half full and the usual crew was there. Landing, suiting, and passing the airlocks were achieved. With Felidae in the kitchen, a Human applicant filling out documents at the bar, and the cheery faces of the gang, they settled in. Husto displayed his usual sincere yet thoughtful expression. They sat and conversed without interrupting the spade game being played between Husto, Feeno, Mariah, and a new Felidae friend. Husto and his partner were on teams as was Feeno and Mariah. The hand was over and the game ended with a card slap. Husto and the cat won by a few points. Now they were free to talk to the new parties who just joined the table and they were appeased by their game victory. Li began discussing his recent run-in with **the police** while Lazarus shuffles the cards for another game. The Catman excused himself and challenged another game for next time.

### An Old Friend

The attention was turned to a group of Humans who just entered and decapped; three of them. The leader **Amed Rahim** was another veteran next to Husto and native of The Middle East. Husto waved them over. They were extrazalous and talking about Mars. As **Amed** removes his **glove piece**, the only other detachable part aside from the helmet, he catches up with his long-time comrade. Li glances at their space suits and dabs his finger along the thigh piece of one of the men who did not notice. On his fingertip was a red dust apparently from Mars. Li's attention didn't peak until he heard about Amed's association with the **volunteer archeological research** team on Mars. Li was ecstatic. He had to pursue his passion and interjected.

Tipping his head he greeted Amed and introduces himself with a light handshake, gripped with the suit glove. Amed explained the nature of the mission and the recent uncovering of an ancient cave, which has yet to yield potential geological traces of both plant and animal life. He elaborated that it was one of the caves on the side of a ravine, which spits out white vaporous water rivers periodically. Li was enthralled by the notion. He volunteered directly. To Li's surprise Lazarus had declined to join him.

This decision did not change Li's enthusiasm however. He established a quick rapport with Amed and his dusty team. They had ordered lunch and were preparing to go back to Mars afterward. Lazarus made it clear that he would be staying at the Mars Barr to try his hand against Husto and Feeno. He wanted to try to get closer to Mariah also to see if he could break through her frosty outside. The famished volunteers scarfed their sizzling steak and vegetable platters. Li grabbed a bite to eat himself while avidly waiting to depart for the red planet. Lazarus was already stacking his books against Husto and Feeno gaining ground with his new partner Mariah. The waitress took the bare plates and refilled their iced tea and soda glasses. After thirstily gulping down the cold beverages they cap off and head out. Li takes the Star Voyager with him.

### Neptunian Gabble and the Last Hand

Brows were moist, and emotions were high as the final deal was thrown. Spade games aren't usually this tense but Husto and Feeno need to be beaten. His personal progress with Mariah was on the line as well. His lucky day, Lazarus and

Mariah wins. If they get five more wins they will beat Husto's streak. Lazarus notices the staircase leading upstairs to *the upper floor*. He figured now was as good a time as any to check it out. Husto looked to Mariah as he stood to go up and gave her a hint to accompany him. Husto begins a new game of rummy with Feeno. Perhaps fifteen minutes later Lazarus and Mariah return. Mariah is smiling at Lazarus and he is smirking and low-eyed. There was a little alcohol on his breath having tried a drink upstairs in **the lookout**. Now he was ready for action. They knew he would be.

Husto caps off and Mariah joins him. Though he was not very intoxicated as friends it is their responsibility to make sure everyone is properly secured. Husto checks his helmet that it is fastened correctly. They exit onto the patio and are stopped by the brilliant laser show being painted onto the black background with smoke jets. It was an announcement revealing the start off of the **Neptune Circuit**, an infixed course three quarters of the way around gassy planets outer perimeter and raceway. Husto was game for and Mariah followed. Lazarus climbs into Husto's jagged fighter, *The Explorer*. The cockpit hatch clamps shut like a clamshell and the compartment pressurized. Husto and the woozy Lazarus uncap. All around were panels, buttons, radars, and consoles. Husto's ship was clearly designed for intense covert missions. The sounds of beeps and alerts softly pelted his ears while Husto pulls switches and taps panels. The sleek vessel activates and lifts off on course for Neptune.

### The Excavation Site

The Star Voyager and Amed's medium weight cargo shuttle touch down at Olympos Mons. The trip down the side took just over an hour using the high-speed train system that traveled at hundreds of miles per hour. The ride met occasional sudden drops in altitude and downward direction as the maglev track sped along various levels until the final slowdown at the reception station near the bottom. Amed commandeered his personal ground vehicle, a thoroughly equipped land rover designed for long distance travel over rough terrain, which was waiting for them inside a public storage garage. The clamp of the seat belt and thud of the closing hatchway signaled them to uncap inside the rover. The **Tharsis Montes Mountain Range** was their destination and consists of three volcanic peaks, the location where Amed's team began their digging activities initially.

They had lunch during the trip and Li got to know the team of three. Aside from Amed the team leader there was **Mohammad** the geologist from the Middle East and **Erin** from Israel School of Archeology. They greeted well. After a couple of hours of jarring and bumping they reach the base of the mountainside. His digging and excavation equipment was still lying around waiting to be used again. They cap off and exit the vehicle. This was the first time Li had been at ground level on Mars. This time the atmosphere was a vaporous green as the light scattered through the carbon dioxide firmament.

Heavy winds dissipated the dust out on the local plains of rocks and boulders. Far away about the hump of Olympos Mons the brilliant flare from descent thruster engines can be seen like falling stars as large and small craft land atop the massive mountain where they were only hours ago.

"Okay last time we were here Mohammad, Erin, and I were carving the cave wall inside looking for organic compounds. You can either help us there or start your own project." Said Amed and gave Li a quick course in equipment operation.

"I have also brought some gear from my ship."

Amed glanced at the **Krystonian plasma rifle** on his back but didn't ask about it. Li was trusted. The shoulder lights were activated as the team enters the dark cavern. They moved quickly to the area, which had been chiseled by the team previously.

The Martian minerals were outlandish and ominous with a range of colors from reddish, to brown and darker coal-like deposits. Li collects a chunk. A half an hour later they arrived at the deepest part of the cave structure. It was challenging traversing the interior due to the uneven ground and carved cave floor. Li was astounded at the depth. There didn't appear to be any sign of tread marks or machine gouges in the walls, it seemed to be a natural tunnel. More equipment sat there against the inner wall and Amed's team began quarrying further and collecting attention-grabbing minerals.

The other team had continued where they left off and the chatter was random. Li began new explorations. On the other side of the cavern looking for what might be sediments or fossilized materials, his chiseling became more intense as the material begins breaking away more easily. The rock face was becoming less dense. The other team had ignored Li to conduct his own operation and was engrossed in their own findings. They had also switched **helmet comm. frequencies**. More than likely this was because they wanted to confine any major discoveries to their own team. Though Li was considered a new friend this was in a sense a competition for recognition. Yet, he thought it was very courteous of the team

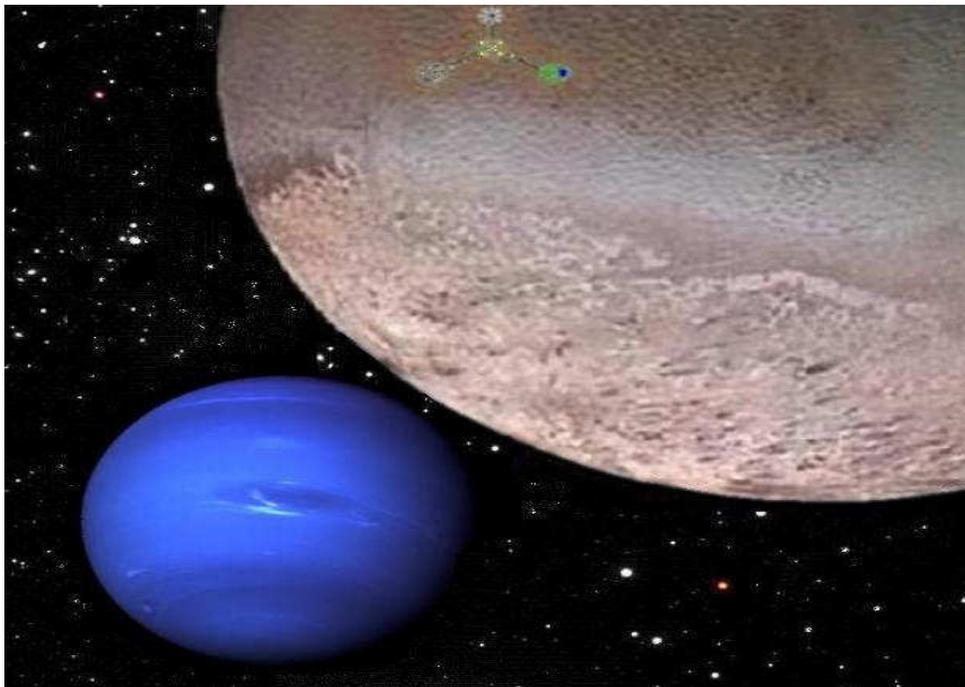
to allow Li to accompany them. Most people wouldn't even consider it given the potential for archeological findings. It seemed they had honored a true comradery.

### Arriving at Neptune

Millions of miles away the illustrious Explorer enters the system of the dazzling blue giant and its host of satellites. Lazarus was beginning to come-to as he gazed at the magical site of Neptune looming nearby. The many panels and controls on the interior of the ship were as intriguing as Husto himself. Lazarus could tell by the worn seat covers and aged aroma of the materials that the Ship had been thoroughly used. SMD equipment was present and the cabinets held intriguing memorabilia from many other worlds. The silent cabin was suddenly blaring with declarations as soon as Husto activated the ships audio system. Husto attained an orbit around Triton while waiting to enter into the course. The other waiting race craft were receiving clear signals from the Triton radio tower announcing race updates and turns. Husto had already electronically transmitted his application and would be entering the course shortly. He was waiting for Mariah and Feeno to apply so that they could race together. This was a *civilian controlled track* and a bit dangerous. The rules were to use manual controls with one computer assistant. There were orbiting obstacles, hoop passes, ring dips and a dramatic dive toward Neptune upon which the skilled pilot pull out in the nick of time before impacting the bulk of Neptune's cloud tops. This dive was risky since the course specs require the pilot to travel a negative arc without deviating from the set path. Husto didn't normally get involved in sports activities but he felt overdue.

The starting point was **Naiad**, the moon closest to Neptune. Husto was talking to Mariah over communications while waiting for the other vessels to align.

"Ask Lazarus if he is up to being a part of this race." She suggested. There were a few dangers and it wouldn't be right to force him to attend. He nods having gained trust in Husto. He was an expert pilot and experienced space man. Beginning with a slow orbit the craft zoom off at the signal and toward Neptune's terminator where they will dodge and weave the circling impediments. Lazarus mans the rear console behind Husto's headrest to get a first person view of the action. Cycling through the camera angles he watches the massive piece of eye candy Neptune revolve around him as The Explorer rolls and weaves. The signal was sounded and the ships burst into high mach speeds. The ring obstacles require finesse and were quite thrilling to pass between. The only aid was the **forward impact alert** and only revealed if you are headed toward an object. The red overlay on the console screen that flashed and beeped intermittently indicated for the pilot to adjust his pitch or orientation in order to pass safely between the rings. Lazarus was already apprehensive. The speed was incredible.



*Urban Triton*

The inner lining of the rings had bright strobe lights and blazed in elongated streaks as they zipped through. Feeno's XF fighter was right behind following the Raider and a few other thrill-seeking civilians. Laz's heart pounded every time he heard the alert. He could see how close they were coming to oblivion but seemed to love every moment of adrenaline. Neptune, which was already enormous in the window screen, was still growing as they plunged toward the monstrous sapphire orb. The GEF device was compensating for the inertia yet the stomach wrenching dips pushed it to its limits and could still be felt. Incidentally GEF devices have defects between them and the computer compensator. You will always feel inertia yet the GEF can muffle it give or take a few millionths of a decimal.

Husto wiped the sweat from his brow and readjusted his posture. His hands grip the throttles and he sends the Explorer into a steep dive toward Neptune. Alerts were blaring and buttons were blinking as the computer warned of a close approach to the point of no return, the velocity and vector toward a gravitational body, which one's speed and inertia cannot be compensated in time before plummeting into the planet. Lazarus clutched the leather seat cover as they dipped dangerously close.

A sudden, jerk of the throttle and the ship rotates in the nick of time. The subsequent activation of the fusion engine picks the ship up from its death dive in time to regain altitude and pass under the designated line of incident. The intensity of the event was only squelched out during the quiet and enchanting dip into the skies of Neptune, a brief glance at the sunlit aqua splendor of roiling mist. A final exhale brought Lazarus from his petrified pose and back to a normal breathing rate. Neptune starts to drift away as they mature their orbit. They had circled the planet and were on their way to Triton to claim their winning prize.

### The Marketplace

After having landed on the irregular moon they step out onto the patio and Husto Leads Lazarus to the gift shop and diner. **Triton** held one of the largest recreational facilities in Sun Town. Elaborate lighting, both Human and alien, sizzling grills, stage hosts, and dance floors; **Triton Courts** rivaled A.B. Plaza with certainty. Mariah joined Husto and Lazarus at their table while they watched the outlandish alien banter gain the laughter and applause of the café, at least the lounge section. They were discussing fervently the race turnout. Husto smoked them all.

The lovely Felidae servers delivered searing hotplates and beverages to the table and they chowed down on the delectable steak, cheese, and mushroom conglomeration.

"The winner of the Neptune Circuit is, Husto Theeson." An announcer shouted over the microphone. "Second prize goes to Mariah Cannon, and Third place winner is Rudilen Linensaro." He finished. Feeno had fallen behind unexpectedly on the last ring dip but still received 4<sup>th</sup> place and a prestigious mention. Applause erupted as Husto, Mariah, Rudilen and Feeno retrieved their trophies. With shiny smiles and balled cheeks they attained roaring cheers and blunted claps.

### Hard at Work

Sweating and exerted Li's repetitive pounding finally paid off. The rock face crumbled inward revealing another cavern. The hole was only a couple of feet wide and the other team had not noticed Li's discovery. They were intently trying to find more minerals to examine for their research project. Li had a hunch about the caves, which was now revealing a system of rock ways leading further into the side of the ravine. Amed's team turned to him and signaled they were going back out. Their bags were full of stones and debris. Apparently they felt that they had what they were looking for and were not threatened by Li's drive to keep exploring. He stood in front of the hole to conceal it from them. He watched until they were out of sight.

After the last of the shoulder light was invisible he began knocking out more of the rock face. Soon he was able to fit inside and he did go in. To his awe the cavern revealed a cave system just as he suspected. Gaseous pressures, which created tunnels and pockets in the smoldering magma, had perforated the ancient lava flows. This area was likely millions of years old if not billions. Li's heart quickened as he made his way further into the cave system alone. The impressions gathered were of the **spirit of Mars** much as he had received such an encounter at Krysto. Mars felt *anciently enticing*, perhaps as a primordial planet protruding the sands of eons of deep time, now dead and dry. A few more steps into the lighted darkness revealed more minerals. His mind kept telling him that he would crawl around the bend and see artifacts, fossils, or perhaps a city? Yet there were none so far. He could see no further.

There was a bend ahead. His helmet audio sounded an alert and his wrist computer was flashing. The program running was **barometric pressure indicator**. The further he preceded into the canal the greater the flow of air. Something ahead was pushing the atmosphere out. A little apprehension was present in him as he turned the corner. The mass of white vaporous liquid was slowly oozing outward apparently being fuelled by an internal heat source. It was a liquid water compound. The thin Martian atmosphere was responsible for the foaming and vaporous growth activity. The mass was very large and would encompass him if he did not retreat. Li collects a sample of the material, which he dabbed, into a container and exits the cave. Outside the cave Amed's team was performing on the spot geological analysis inside the transport.

"Li we are getting ready to go back to Olympus Mons." Amed informed over communications when they saw Li exiting the cavern. The trip back consisted mostly of conversation about the minerals and theories were presented about the origin of some of the elements present in them. Li had not revealed his container full of the foamy vaporous liquid. Outside the first sunset seen by Li out on the distant Martian horizon, exotic mixtures of aqua and turmoil contorted the glowing sky. Sometime later finally reaching the ship harbor, Amed, his team, and Seiwan Li were eager to depart after their task day. They concluded their interaction with a parting adieu. Climbing back into the ship Li found the clutter of stuff he left there when he first went out to the excavation site. He was in a hurry and would only now pick everything up. Li liked to get things straightened up before he did something recreational.

Analyzing the white sludge from the Martian cave was not necessarily entertainment. In fact it was a treat for him to do so. He had an integrated chemistry set, which was nothing like what is required to get a complete analysis nevertheless could allow him to get started. Inside the ship the material became more liquefied whereas in the rarefied atmosphere on Mars it stacked on top of itself like frothy suds. He was hesitant to touch it too much and relied on sight and smell. The odor was like none that he could compare kind of Marshy. Minute particles were present which the substance had apparently picked up as it flowed through the volcanic cavern perhaps from deep below the surface. In the middle of his inspection the hatch alert sounded and he had to suspend his project to open the entrance for the visitor. He saw after having activated the hatch cam outside the standing Lazarus with hands at the hips.

Li was surprised by his sudden arrival. Leaving the center compartment and entering the front, he lets him in. Husto was with him and they sat to chat in the Star Voyager for a few minutes. He tells of his death-defying plunge at Neptune. Husto knew Li's time and focus spent on Mars would reveal an intriguing find, it always does. Li leads them back to the middle cabin and shows them his samples. Husto recognized it and started to explain more about it.

"It's from the frozen reservoirs of water ice deep in the ground which have been melted by heat vents inside the mountain." He explained. Li already knew why it was frothy. It was a result of the vacuum effect, which tends to scatter fluidic molecules due to lack of pressure. Nevertheless the science was intriguing and Li documented his experiment. Taking advantage of the convenience, Husto left the Star Voyager and took a train to a local colony at the bottom of Olympus Mons. From there any adjacent destinations of his were unknown. Li and Lazarus lift off and return to space.

## Chapter 7

### A New Course

Their conversation while leaving the Martian system was mainly informal, a recollection here and a reiteration there about the many events experienced recently by both. At this stage Seiwan and Lazarus had found it prudent to keep one another apprised on just about everything that happens. They had not forgotten their affiliation with the SMD and they knew close communication was a necessity. The two space travelers were becoming jaded. Lazarus went to nap in his bed in the back still in his uniform. Li remained in the cockpit for a while. After battering down the hatches the alerts and instruments calmed and the cabin became quiet.

His mind wandered a bit and he began reminiscing about recent events and a little bit of home. Gazing out toward the stars the serenity of peace returned unto him. A strange picture appeared into the blackness as he stared nostalgically, the face of a Native American. Adorned of a feathered **Chief's Headdress** the wise favor of the image was ingrained in the mind of Li. His eversharpening reflexes caused his hands to tap the consol as if to scan for an anomalous reading. The dim afterimage faded and Li came to, though, disoriented. After a couple of double takes he relaxed and set a new course for **Alpha Centauri**.

### A Routine Morning

Having ones favorite television program interrupted was no picnic. The **3dtv setup** in Ronan's residence there on the quiet colony of Proxima illuminated the comfort room. Interruptions on television, though unwelcome, are analyzed heavily when the name Confederate Resistance appears. Ronan stood from his recliner with an empty plate in his hand. He had intended to take it to the dishwasher yet images of Avenger class attack craft and old footage of the Battle of Krysto made him pause. His wife Angel spent her time working at the colony square running the weekly festival shop inlets and attractions. She was head coordinator and custom designer. She kissed the face of her husband soon to depart as he washed his grimy dish. He was headed to work as well.

His employment at **Centauriville** mining facility was most satisfying for his tastes. He was already dressed and prepared to suit up in his standard SES. He didn't own a vessel but made frequent use of the public transportation, a shuttle with medium speed capability. It landed everyday at the town square, which was walking distance from his quaint home there on the surface of the tiny, cratered planetoid. The moon-sized rock orbited the small **flare star** Proxima about 40,000,000 miles away. The colony was small consisting of about two thousand civilians most of which worked at various locations around the Alpha Centauri System. The short trek along the embedded sidewalk to the town commons was always dazzling with the view of all three stars blazing in the black sky. Proxima being the closest was most visible and reflected a soft orange illumination on the surrounding plains.

Alpha Centauri A and B were sun-sized stars yet appeared somewhat smaller than a typical day on Earth at Proxima's distance. The long walkway was gravitated to about ninety percent standard gravity on Earth and led from the suburbs to the town conjunction where the electrically powered gravity patios were of the same force, only nine tenths that of Earth. Ronan could remember when the town was first built. Everything was erected quickly due to the minute pull of the small rocky body. Such was the same on nearly every colony built on asteroids or small moons. He assisted in the construction and design of his own home in fact. The center was busy with suited citizens commuting to and fro to work and recreation. He jogged hurriedly flailing his hands as the shuttle ahead on the circular platform prepared to ascend. With time to spare he made it inside giving the driver a head nod. The doors collapsed shut behind him and the green light above the sun visor illuminated that the people could remove their helmets for the forty-five minute trip to the mining colony on the massive asteroid buried deep within the field cluster.

The small cabin was filled with chatter and dialogue. Ronan's mind was focused on his duties soon to encounter him at his jobsite. He enjoyed working inside the asteroid chiseling away at the interior looking for minerals and frozen water reservoirs. His team supplied the town with most of its special material, abstract resource needs, and he had attained a good position in his company. The ride goes faster when people are talking as they neared the mining destination, a cold rare mineral rich rock in its anciently deposited orbit. The red dwarf Proxima has floated back some ways yet Centauri A had not become too much larger. The asteroid cluster where they mined from was a whopping 900,000,000 miles from its parent stars Centauri A. and Centauri B. Decidedly the pamphlet program didn't recommend high-speed travel through this outer

system due to the large amount of comet activity. Centauri was responsible. Nearing the region was similar to approaching A.B. Plaza in Suntuon minus the glittery junction structures yet with the clutter of various rocky bodies orbiting steadily. The mining asteroid was enormous, large enough to compare to the Ceres asteroid but small enough to maintain an irregular, lumpy form. Yet, it was still the largest rock in the field.

### Proxima Mining Colony

The shimmering lights from the large asteroid-embedded landing bays attached to adjacent buildings appeared to blink sporadically as they neared. The shuttle landed gradually inside the brightly lit, spacious inlet and touched down with a gentle thump. The bay doors contract, seal, and the passengers exit the craft. They had not decapped yet since the bay, which had a high, lighted ceiling, and was littered with old parts and junk, yet neatly arranged, was still unpressurized. They had to enter the airlock at the other end and they did enter. The relieving hiss of air jets filling the compartment soon signals the green light. and they enter the lively atmosphere of the *Miner's Court*.

There were long tables arranged in rows and a buffet line where people can get their morning breakfast plates. The sound of utensils and dish clatter echoed the court. Ronan did partake of a long breakfast while meeting with the contractor for the jobsite. He liked to get started discussing the day's task over breakfast. The contractor was a serious man and had to be. Mining on a terrestrial planet with a breathable atmosphere was challenging enough let alone a large asteroidal body in an alien star system. His name was **Mr. Talent** and he took good care of his crew.

"Who are those two strange men, new crew members?" He asked his levelheaded boss.

"I believe them to be part of the cleanup crew for the adjacent pre-excavated jobsites, which are part of another contracting company." He answered and returned to his bacon and egg sandwich. The men, though appearing to be rookie miners, were asking a lot of questions and looking at the other miners somewhat intently. Ronan returned his attention to the last of the egg heap and devoured it savorily. After their morning feast they cap off and take the mining cars directly into the system of lighted **asteroid caverns**, which spiraled into the asteroid encompassing the outer layers first, and then inward toward the center. The purpose of this was to maintain the asteroid's gravitational assistance for as long as possible on the car trip. The ride was enjoyable as they rolled along the steel tracks of arching ripples toward the east caverns. A thrilling moment was when the track car rolled over the dark chasm deep inside the cave network. The lights were arranged in rows along the top corners of the tunnel at regular intervals to the end.

### A Sleepy Navigator

Lazarus had slept almost ten hours. He awakens from his deep dreamless slumber and makes use of the lavatory. The window screen at the rear wall displayed the reddened stars and deep space. He could see they were traveling at translightspeed velocity. He sprinted across the middle cabin to the cockpit where Li was manning the pilot's console. His hands were busy inputting course adjustments and without spinning in the swivel chair he greeted his sleepy friend with shaggy hair and narrowed eyed.

"Where are we?" He asked.

Li made a half turn long enough to see his groggy first mate. "I decided to visit Alpha Centauri and we are already half way there." He trudges to his navigation panel and confirms their location and trajectory.

"Wow." He expressed. He didn't say much since he was still waking up.

With no more delay he makes his way to the coffee machine in the back to retrieve his **cocoa mix**. Li had already made some and Lazarus checked the refrigerator for some breakfast meal. There wasn't much since Li had made a split second decision to head for Alpha Centauri after leaving Mars only a half a day ago. Still, Lazarus was satisfied with the fruit flavored nutrition bars, which were in abundance. Scarfing them down and enjoying his glass of mango juice he showers and changes his uniform so that he could join Seiwan in the front. He jumped into his chair and leaned back relaxing into his padded headrest. He was energized about the trip and made use of the new program they uploaded into the computer. It was the official Star City **electronic pamphlet buddy** program and he accessed the stats of the Centauri system, lightly planeted, no gas giants, and a few rocky bodies at various orbits. There were numerous colonies scattered about some on the small planetoids others on asteroids and meteors. The pamphlet buddy made reference to the mining colony there since it was a major facility and tourist attraction at Alpha Centauri. As destiny would have it they decided to visit the colony.

## The Mining Caverns

The train car stopped with a bump as it nudged the rubber stopper at the end of the track. The crew leaped from the rolling vehicle and began activating their excavation equipment. Ronan started his jackhammer and chiseled away at the rock face he had been working on yesterday. A hard wham caused him to summon the other miners to his location as he had just struck a vein of a special **metallic ore**. The ivory colored porous material chucked out onto the ground and glittered with diffraction. The material is the preprocessed source for the solid fuel thruster. It was funny because yesterday his work, which ended on schedule, yet was only inches away from revealing the light whirling metals. Now the team had converged



*Alpha, Beta, and Proxima Centauri*

on the section and began collecting the shattering lumps. Some of the chunks were quite large but loading the material into the train cars was easy in the low gravity.

It wasn't long before the car was full of material and Ronan ordered a worker to begin the trip back to the mouth of the cavern to deliver the metals and send back more empty cars. The low ranking worker glances about while rising and falling on the humps and dips of the track. To both sides were other cave systems leading elsewhere. Across the chasm and beyond the track split he finally reached the entry portal. To his surprise the three car operators were gone and no one was manning to console. That was a major violation of company protocols. He began looking around the large rocky cavern for the supervisor but no one was found. Suddenly he came face to face with the barrels of class two laser pistols held by a group of five unidentified men in suits. Their visors were down and no face was visible. They restrained him and two men walked him away into the cave system. The other two manned the cars and sped toward the worksite while the last one remained to operate the console.

## Duty Calls

Many hours had been spent in conversation about the numerous events Li and Lazarus had experienced. Li performed routine ship diagnostics scheduled by him while they talk. They were coming to a new stage in their friendship and both of them could feel themselves gravitating toward maturity. The space mentality was starting to come into focus and they felt more authoritative. Seiwan's face was starting to become like his new mentor Husto, serious, yet passive. It was almost time to sleep again but both men were wide-awake for the upcoming thrill of exploring the Centauri System. From this interior vista it was hard to tell the three stars of *Alpha Centauri* were actually trinary because they appeared yet a significant distance apart. But they were definitely brighter as compared to Earth observatory standards.

The **speed limit transmissions** appeared on the screen and the audio speakers warning the Star Voyager to slow down. Though the system was a little less cluttered than Suntown destination time limits applied and were enforced. The Star Voyager could not enter the main mining ship bay as did the work shuttle before but he landed in a similar bay adjacent to the one Ronan and the other workers had touched down into, a visitor's center. He grabbed his bag of stuff and the two explorers suited up. They were greeted by mining personnel upon their exit of the ship.

"Proceed to the commons area to get hotel accommodations." The facility worker instructed. To his side another assistant.

"Actually we are here for the **Citizens Labor Volunteer Program**." Li said which allows civilians to put in some work hours at their own reconnaissance. It required the documented reading and signing of agreements in the event the citizen were injured that it would not reflect the quality of the company. Lazarus and Li both signed it and were escorted to the café where Ronan had originally eaten breakfast.

Lazarus now famished ordered a plate and made short work of the fish sandwich, large drink, and French fry combo. Li had an iced tea and chicken cheese salad. Lazarus's maturity tipped as he glanced toward the lady minors eating and chattering at the nearby tables. Yet, he could feel the programming of a new sense of emotional stability begin to execute in his brain which returned his attention to the mining crash course guide as the facility assistant explained the details of their volunteer assignments. They were taken to the large cavern where the mining car console operators were stationed. The guide approached the operator whose helmet was closed. He didn't think anything of it however.

"These are two new rookies. I want them sent to the west cavern for the **digger's assistance position**." The console operator saluted. The guide was confused for a moment but took his gesture as coworker's humor. The other two rouge hijackers were returning in the other mining car and started talking to the operator. Neither Li nor Lazarus could hear them because they seemed to be on a secure frequency. Soon one of them adjusted his wrist computer. "Get inside the car and we will go to the west mine." The car rolls and they were on their way.

## Unwanted Guest

Past the track split and over the dark chasm they soon reach the new track leading on a westerly course. The ride was cut short at a small cavity.

"Get out." The masked worker ordered. Li sensed something was wrong. They were not even half way to the end of the track. They were fast walked through a narrow corridor leading a good distance into the asteroid. The tunnel was dark and unlit; it was clearly an unauthorized passage. Li looked to Lazarus and gave him a troubled face. The gravity was light, yet an instruction appeared in his brain causing him to throw his arms up and wedge himself between the cavern walls and perform a back kick to the torso of the coincidentally distracted hijacker. He knocked down the man who was now holding a pistol. Lazarus immediately reacted and pounced the other phony minor. A few laser shots illuminated the dark cavern briefly and luckily missed the brave pair as the enemy tried to shoot them yet were promptly restrained.

Little did the outlaws know that they were dealing with skilled SMD officers who were now officially on duty. In this instance SMD protocols dictate in the event of a hostile situation arising in a civilian facility, recruited SMD citizens have authority to take charge and they did. They apprehended their pistols and held them at bay. Grabbing the prisoner's arm Li determined their helmet frequency by looking at his wrist device.

"Who are you? And what are your intentions here?" He ordered. They were silent. Li now led them to another dark cavity further in. His wrist computer indicated an increase in temperature, as they were getting closer to the center of the asteroid. Li reluctantly used his emergency air transfer hose pulled from the thigh pouch to tie down the prisoners.

“Stay here Laz, keep them secure.”

“Where are you going?”

“I have to find out what’s going on here. I’ll be back.” Li followed the passage back to the car and gave it a push with his pistol in hand. He jumped in and followed the rest of the way to the primary west excavation site. It was empty when the car came to an abrupt halt. Nothing but recently used mining equipment and signs of scuffle. Li holds the pistol steady in front of him watching and waiting for trouble. He turns off his shoulder light, switches to infrared vision, and begins following the elaborate cave system.

### Minor Hostages

Ronan and his team had been moved to the west end where the unidentified racketeers were preparing to lead them through the center of the asteroid to the other end where they had a ship waiting to take them elsewhere. He was tied up as was his team and being led through the cavern network. The heat was getting intense and helmet audio was beeping. They past many diversions into other corridors and maintained a direct path through the center. The caverns were inclined now and they were going down. Soon they would be forced to climb down the dark holes and cavities like a bug in swiss cheese. It could take hours to reach the other side. Li was hiding with his back against the wall and watched with pistol ready as the armed group and prisoners passed by. He waited until they got ahead and followed them. They were nudging and pushing the mining crew as they hastily paced them into the dangerous and heated parts of the asteroid. The outlaws were failing to successfully navigate the winding crannies and were showing concern. They were uncoordinated and decided they wouldn’t be able to continue through the asteroid.

They started to back track and make a change of plan, perhaps to rendezvous with the hidden vessel elsewhere to kidnap the mining crew. Li set himself up for an ambush and as the enemies approached, Li was able to take down two of them having punctured their suits with laser fire. He had a grueling feeling having sent two people to a vacuum exposed death. But his SMD training kicked in and told him he was doing the right thing. Interestingly there may be a distinct chance to recover the frozen men however this was not on Li’s itinerary. The situation was now a hostage and rescue operation. The last man was putting up a fight having taken cover behind a mineral deposit. The other miners risked their lives to restrain him and they seized his firearm.

“My name is Li, I’m a volunteer worker. Who are you?” He greeted the terrified team.

“I’m Ronan and this is my crew. We were working and suddenly those men held us up.” Li flashed his SMD emblem on the palm of his glove piece.

“Don’t worry.” He led them back to the parked mining car and they piled into it as over-crowding as it was. Having rolled back to the small cavity where Lazarus was left, Li was questioned by Ronan. “Where are you going?” He asked after jumping out onto the ledge.

“I’m going to retrieve some enemy prisoners.” Li followed the corridor to the next cavity and Lazarus was gone.

Back at the cave entrance, kicking and struggling was the restrained Lazarus putting up a fight as the men prepared to seize the café and make their way outside to their ship. They bust in and the dining miners began screaming and yelling. Anyone reaching for a weapon or firearm was shot. The element of surprise bought them their way into the main bay where they huddled in a secured group and signaled their vessel to come around the asteroid to pick them up. Li and the other miners were just entering the rumbled mess hall displaying their hands free and they ran straight through to the ship bay. As soon as the huddled group came into view a firefight erupted. Pelting laser fire burned into the surrounding materials as Li ducked securely behind the Star Voyager. The familiar looking freighter came around and hovered against the bay ledge. The offenders boarded it promptly with Lazarus and the ship took off. Li climbed the rungs with haste, manned the ship and pursued the rouge hauler.

### Into Space

Both vessels maneuvered into the asteroid cluster and Li reserved ship fire. The vessel was cumbersome and altered the direction of a few small asteroids by collision. These outcasts were desperate to evade arrest by the SMD and would stop at nothing to escape. It didn’t take long for them to realize the Star Voyager had superior maneuvering capability and the pilot of the weighty freighter took the vessel out of the asteroid field and into high velocity. Li had set the computer to

**autopursue target** within the reticule. He needed to man Laz's console to research the fleeing vessel. The acceleration throttle was sliding forward slowly as the Star Voyager maintained the pursuit lock. Li first determined their heading and direction; it was straight for the **Delta Pavonis** star system. Next he began analyzing the structure and energy emissions of the vessel. He wanted to see how to disable their propulsion without destroying the ship and killing Lazarus. Li had no trouble keeping up with them.

Their acceleration ratio was slower as well as the top speed of this vessel. The question is how could he stop the ship and rescue Lazarus. There were no shields on the ship so any anti particle weapons were out of the question. One good thing Li noticed in the console schematic of the vessel in addition to a similar configuration was that it seemed to use the same engine type. This told of a possible **history of the Star Voyager**, that it might have been a freighter previously. Nevertheless he reasoned to blow off the forward engine tip thus their supply of fuel. A pulse laser could be set to blast the engine tip away and prevent further acceleration. He hops back over to the pilots console and maneuvers along side of the freighter. He turns the ship and faces the port quarter of the vessel. Suddenly the vessel accelerated again and passed the Star Voyager. Now Li had to start over again.

Turning forward again he approached the port side and turned toward it. He quickly manned the adjacent console and activated the pulse laser and targeted the engine tip. He was hesitant, it didn't seem right. He was afraid to shoot that he might destroy the ship. He thought for a moment. During that time the freighter accelerated again and Li had to return to a rear pursuit course while he formulated another plan. He suddenly had a flashback of the asteroid mine he just left. He remembered the equipment and rock face that had been chiseled away. It gave him an idea. Although the antiproton laser could destroy the vessel even faster than a pulse laser shot, perhaps if he could find a low enough setting he could detonate a few atoms near the engine casing, he reasoned. In theory if he continued this process he could essentially chisel away the outer casing of the engine until his matter supply is exposed. He started the process of charging the lasers until the long barrel glowed dimly. He performed another port flank maneuver and prepared to fire the first shot.

Suddenly the freighter turned and faced backward and its main fusion engines fired, the vessel disappeared from site and it slowed to manageable speeds. Li leaped back over to the pilots console and instructed the computer to initiate a **speed match deceleration procedure**. It was necessary to determine the rate of deceleration so as not to collide with the slowing vessel in an attempt to stay behind it, which was assisted by the computer. The two ships streaked to sub-light speeds and Li could now see the reason for this retreat. The SMD had positioned a few attack craft in the path of the speeding freighter light-years away. They would pursue them all the way to Delta Pavonis if necessary. How the enemy pilots knew they were there is unknown.

"Perhaps there was covert communication with hidden craft somewhere." Li thought. Just then Li was contacted by the SMD and an officer appeared on the screen.

"Captain Li. Here is how you stop that ship.. After studying the information Li positions himself behind the craft and angles his NET sensor dish on top of the ship. His target was the engine thrust nozzles as indicated by the SMD officer from afar. Li injects a stream of electrons targeted directly into the engine port which will travel into the matter containment chamber and solidify the material inside which consisted of free alpha particles. Once the electrons are captured they will bond into a solid and the engine will be useless.

### **A Little Assistance**

The freighter could no longer accelerate and was adrift in deep space though maintaining a forward trajectory. The Star Voyager was now joined by two SMD assault craft and a team of men boarded the hull of the partially disabled vessel. They were immediately flung into space when the freighter began to rotate as the enemy crew attempted to shake them off. A few officers had stayed attached having imperatively secured their waist cable to the freighter's sensor mount. They began torching the outline of the entrance hatch and melted the locking mechanism until they were able to open it. As soon as the door opened glowing weapons fire spewed forth and the officers moved away still tethered to the craft. Though a fascinating spectacle the officers didn't have much time to marvel at the double bent and frequency altered, elongated streak of the time dilated laser beam as it demonstrated special relativity.

The action halted a brief moment and the assailant inside fired a couple extra shots out into space to watch the neat effect again. The SMD officer returned staring into the hatchway glanced into his visor and their slight grins turned straight as the struggling resumed. Li was outside on the Star Voyager roof waiting to aid the fellow officers taking care not to lose

his grip to drift outside the spatial temper field. On the hull of the shaky enemy craft a proximity grenade was dropped inside which was designed to disable any person within its adjustable range. Two of the fugitives were knocked out and Lazarus made a move on the other two. The last one was still piloting the vessel rolling and still spinning the ship. The SMD officers jumped inside to attempt to take control. Li knew it was over when the ship stopped its rotation and the officers attained a positive attitude for the fleeing freighter. Matching speed and merging the GFE fields Lazarus, having finally climbed out, was able to leap over to the Star Voyager and enters the cockpit quickly; his oxygen was starting to become depleted. Li joined him and the ordeal was not over.

Li slowed a little and altered his heading to rescue the space born SMD officers hovering above the other ship yet straying slowly outward. They were flying at a high rate of speed off in a different direction. They were relieved, as one would expect, to grab hold of the ladder rungs of the Star Voyager as it maneuvered close. With unfortunate happenstance one of the brave SMD officers had drifted too far and out of the GFE field. In an immensely brilliant flare of light and energy the man's body became a streak of X-Rays and charged particles. A memorial would be scheduled in the soon after, an SMD protocol. The SMD officers who made it safely entered the Voyager and Li, having received the go ahead from the commanding SMD officer aboard the seized getaway ship, closes the hatch, pressurizes the middle cabin, and returns to the mining colony.

Sometime later upon reaching the sanctity of the productive work colony they gathered indoors for a mandatory mission report.

"Captain Li, First Officer Miller, congratulations..." The supervisor offered amongst the lanes of sitting tables.

"Tell me what happened." It saved him some work having taken the time to document the events he witnessed previously as they occurred and he was given a pre-commendation by the supervisor, Lazarus also. On the overtaken enemy craft the crooks were arrested and their vessel headed for impound. They could not be identified nor could their primary intentions be determined but it is suspected they were operating for The Resistance. They were all Humans; however their fingerprints had been rubbed off. DNA testing was on the horizon. Li and Lazarus returned to **the miners lounge** and met Ronan the right way instead of under chaotic circumstances. He was a strong man yet soft-spoken and admirable by some for his hard work. They parted with a firm handshake of mutual respect and they left the mining facility. Taking the guide's original advice they made their way to the commons area and checked into a hotel. They were both exhausted and hours overdue for a nights rest.

### The Proxima General

Strangely this was really the first time this all seemed like a dream. Finding himself awakened in an empty two bedroom **efficiency stay** he initiates the creature amenity proceeding. Afterward, Li makes his way into the hall. There was a maid filling the ice bucket and did direct him to the kitchen. Passing the pool he found Lazarus and a woman having a relaxing dip in the public Jacuzzi. He seemed contagiously refreshed as he greeted his sleepy Captain.

"Li this is my friend **Aala** from Germany and her friend **Shirra** from **Arabia**. Why not join us for a swim?"

"No thanks. I'm headed toward breakfast." ...but not before acknowledging the two girls. Li had a little extra energy after breakfast and made his way outside the hotel onto the sidewalks of the reasonably extensive walkways of the **commons hub**. There were lots of commuting characters that appeared to have not left this colony for sometime judging by their walk. Li had an almost involuntary desire to watch for **Resistance deceivers**. Part of the origin of this desire was stimulated by the innocent stroll of the common folk. The alleys themselves were alive with the commute of Humans and Felidaes. The flow of the buildings and asteroid terrain was steady as he moved and a downward curve was of the sidewalk. The further into the commons area, the louder the radio traffic became. Li had *set his transceiver to the commons channel*. Music was also playing in his helmet.

Passing the **theater** revealed boisterous posters of upcoming films. "Captain Li?" A heavysset man called in a **fitted space suit**.

"Yes?"

"You're needed inside."

"Needed?"

"Yes sir." Li finds himself following him to a stage rear. After an airlock session helmets were uncapped. "Congratulations Captain you are the topic of today's show, nice of you to drop in." The host said. "C'mon take off your space suit. We are

ready for you up front.” It seems Li’s reputation traveled posteriorly. As quick as he had become the topic of a **talk show** he had appeared on television front stage chatting with the host and audience. No suit and sporting his black and white Star Voyager uniform. The lights were bright, the cameras were rolling, and questions about the intricacies and adventure of his travels throughout Star City dazzled the audience both on screen and off. Inquires to Li ranged from the quantity of personal scientific experiments documented voluntarily for the **city vault**, to details regarding the Resistance. In addition to the SMD Li felt protective over the information asked of him about Krysto as well. Not that he was reluctant to impress the audience but his now aged affiliation with the military still holds firm in his mind.

### A New Problem

The show was a success and the people honored Li. A new challenge arose backstage, how to leave the studio *without being rude* to the ever-increasing number of *sexually aroused people*. There were women trying to **favor him** yet his conflict interfered, a strange queasiness in him. With all the experience he had attained throughout life thus far, his recent travels around Star City, which were new situations he had never encountered, continued to surface. This was one of them. He really didn’t want to get so involved with strangers yet; the magnificently attractive women were practically throwing themselves at him. Not to mention those needle-like Felidae claws were a bit nerve racking. This would no doubt call for some creative thinking.

An SMD alert shatters the intensity, as luck would have it. Li turns to his wrist computer and plays the message from headquarters. The adoring fans listened in. Li was sweating a little hoping the information wasn’t highly classified.

“Captain...” Admiral Seghtee called. Li was glad to hear his voice.

“There has been a strange encounter on a distant planetary interloper in the Centauri System experienced by the exploring tourist. You are the nearest SMD vessel present. You are instructed to go to the area and investigate.. He complies with haste. The envious enthusiasts were able to tear themselves away from the inspiring spaceman.

### The Cloistered Engagement

The *Pluto of Alpha Centauri*, this frigid, dark, encroachment of a planet hangs back a greater distance than Pluto of Sol. Lazarus had remained at the hotel and Li’s long hours elapsed in the Ship were spent in anticipation of the upcoming events at this excessively remote colony. Sitting, gazing into the black void, feeling satisfied, having gotten himself caught up with the ships programming, Li’s sensed a kind of hardening in his mind. His mind seemed to awaken unto a new plane of awareness. His head becomes focused on the forward light of his mind’s eye as an **alien calm** surges him still. It almost feels like space is becoming a part of his body, an intimate tie. He lives and breathes with the cosmos now. Telepathic visions appear before his calm body, old mentor aliens. He felt like them now. He can see into their astounding mentality. Are they there in his head or is he in theirs? He respects them nonetheless.

The gravity field indicator senses the slight curvature created by the lone ice body as it hangs in space, its orbit extremely distant and immensely slow as it hopes to accomplish yet another centuries old orbit about the dancing Centauri duo, Proxima nearly a light year away dimly protruding the pitchy emptiness. Many from the upcoming colony were gathered at the unprecedented conference surrounding the wide-eyed man, claiming to have seen an **Angel** in the decades old cave system on the other side of the planet. His enduring curiosity had led him to explore the elaborate caverns built at an unknown era. Having traveling all the way out to this far-removed ice body, Li took charge after vacating his ship onto the planet’s surface and trotting over to the **City Hall Citizen’s Section**.

After locking in, he began questioning the man who told him of a brilliant wispy entity of some kind which came unto him deep in the cave and did minister to him. His description of the message transferred to him then, now a jittery homeowner, was inconclusive and decorated with awe and holy tongues. All that could be made out was the illuminant figure of great might and form appearing there in the cave of this lonely planet. Li had a little challenge trying to document the information. Yet experienced, he had a peculiar premonition about the man’s words, they sounded biblical. Almost immediately Li conducted himself to the site to investigate. His recent run-in with the mine hijackers was already starting to fade into the safekeeping of retrospect. The excursionist-attracting cave was abandoned after the sighting. Li had to go in alone. He didn’t make it inside the mouth of the opening. As soon as he had begun to enter two men intercepted him from inside.

Without words they ignored him and kept walking toward the crags of the rocky plain. Li was rapidly switching channels on his wrist device as he followed. Numerous hails on the open channels unveiled no response. They walked stiffly bent as if following the scent of a beautiful woman, yet serious in their countenance. Li was smart not to draw his pistol, this hunch being partly impressed upon him by the suspicious image of a short pale figure in his mind. He followed the curious men one carrying a cubical container to wherever they were headed. So far they had made their way out onto the terrain of ice and rock compilations. Having come about the huge boulders embedded in the surface the view of a shimmering silvery saucer appears hovering low and the men enter through the open archway. The fact that the men were wearing standard space suits allowed Li to factor into his unsettled thoughts that it may be safe to follow and he did follow. Unlike any vessel interior he had ever seen the cabin he had entered was circular with a curious medley of multi spectrum consol colors of pink, blue, and violet illumination.

The two men had removed their helmets and stood motionless at their panel with their hands in specific positions as if to prepare to enter a control sequence. Yet, they moved not nor had they suffocated. Li deduced a force field must be in place at the archway. He moved closer to look upon their faces, nothing but focused downward gazes perhaps at the panel yet their eyes were directed not onto the enchanting consol. Instead they looked slightly above as if to rely on peripheral vision. One of the men was tan skinned with a shaven head of baldness and a black a beard fashioned by the tuft of hair about his chin. The other man was of strait hair brown in color and banged in the front and uncombed. They were still silent and had not acknowledged Li in the slightest. A gentle nudge to one of the men marked the beginning of activity when the entrance closed and the saucer began to vibrate. Li removes his helmet. A mesmerizing hum filled the chamber and the vessel left the small skyless planet.

### **Meeting a Mentor**

Only a few minor button sequences were used to execute commands to the craft, which would have taken Li a few moments to coordinate. They were long from the small icy planet though Li had not known. There were no windows present and no view screen. Only the center panel and the two transfixed Humans present, the walls a curious arrangement of glowing tubes and shiny angles. Appearing stationary and without motion an alien, large almond head and deep eyes of blackness, frail figure in a tight shiny space suit. Li having removed his headgear in the beginning had performed a double take at the two men and saturates the alien being with gaze. The other men had not even acknowledged the little grey, instead remained motionless, bent and focused on the mesmerizing consol as if waiting for instructions.

As the moments passed no words were spoken. The alien was encompassed in a visible aura of light and he could see movies in the light. Li was now transfixed. He couldn't move, more accurately he didn't want to move. He suddenly felt no reason to do anything, not even to talk. The only events to transpire were the occasional motions of the two, ensorcelled men as they pulled levers and tapped panels. The extrinsic sounds of the vessel like that of a muffled saucer hum on top of the occasional electrostatic buzz of some sort of an elaborate energy system tickled the ear. The Alien supped with Li talking with his bulbous head and Li responded with images.

The Alien essentially asked Li if he wanted to stay in this vessel and travel the cosmos. It seemed that the two stages of biological development, the Human level and the Mentors level, thousands of years asunder, and advanced spacecraft, was complimentary. The ever-expanding mind of the Alien and the inquisitive neediness of the Human worked well together. The two men were only a little aged and appeared to have been traveling with the Mentors for several years give or take. They seemed perfectly content working and supping with the advanced being witnessing unlimited cosmic events through the thrilling mind of the Mentor Alien. The black box the man was carrying contained uranium contaminants as Li had established after opening and scanning the equipment. His life flashed before him as he considered the aliens offer. .It's too early for me.. He thought. The Alien congratulated him for seeing the right choice. Li was not ready for such a journey. The men, who had long ago left their old lives, now spent with the alien in peace and direction, were not old yet elderly, this observation made my Li was not a determinization based on a visible inspection. It wasn't easy to break away from the trio as it provided calm and answers to questions.

The door opened again and they icy terrain of the planet they had left was visible. Li caps off and exits the elaborate saucer penetrating the invisible air locking force field. The vessel wisps away with no visible thrust or energy expellation. Li had a report to give. He didn't want to lie to the SMD but something recently instilled in him told him not to reveal his encounter with the Mentor. This is the way it has been done for hundreds of years. Officially he reported that he found no

anomalous readings inside the cave system, indicating he went inside which he didn't, yet keeping from lying about the true events. Luckily the SMD commander didn't follow up. Li managed to escape a moral compromise. Returning to the parked Star Voyager Li was a different man once again. The crowd rushed to him to find out what he had found. He looked again into the eyes of the man who had seen the Angel, and they came to an understanding. After calming the townspeople with relevant desensitizing information he continued into his vessel and departed the lone planetoid.

### Ship Sway

Anticipated and unsettled Lazarus fidgets with the various trinkets scattered on the surface of the lobby lounge table. He had already played with most of them and continues to await the glorious sound of the proximity alert on his wrist computer telling him the Star Voyager was in communications range. He had explored the hotel nearly to its fullest and the lack of signal of the familiar ping of the ships computer server was peevish. He was already fully suited in his Star Voyager uniform and decides to crawl into his space suit. Leaving the hotel he makes his way down the street along the sidewalk on a similar stroll as what Li took.

Passing the energized group huddled there under the elaborately lighted archway of the club he is solicited to enter backstage of the talk show studio yet declined. Thin building placement, gritty terrain, and lots of illumination filled the street at the Proximal General. The common frequency was still only lightly colored with the voice transmissions of passing and adjacent colonists. Nearing the center the local artwork and town college illustrations adorning the commons with educational displays, Lazarus stops to observe a curious form of artwork, a tree under glass. As the shiny tube, where someone had brought life to the dry desert vacuum, it is found calming and reminiscent. Lazarus, whose senses were beginning to become more and more sensitive to sudden movement, notes the group of three standing by more art work and additional tubes of trees and shrubs. They were speaking closely on an intrachannel. He approaches and they turn to him as he neared.

A welcoming greeting was offered upon entering the radio range. They were friends almost instantly. Interestingly he noticed the men were attached to the tree domes by way of tubular transfer hoses and connection ducts. They were extracting fresh oxygen from the miniature shrubs incased inside. Lazarus seemed compelled by the charging energy of meeting new people to tell of his home on Earth. All of their masks were closed and no one could see any faces. Raising the visors of their helmets they make eye contact, three Humans. Conversations succeed and Lazarus learns them to be college students involved in the Matron Group. Being invited for a walk can be exciting for some and cautious for others. Lazarus was the former. It means he may have earned the trust of the Matron personnel. Being led off of the sidewalk may be alarming to some and exciting to others. Lazarus was the latter. Rocks and humps were intriguing for Lazarus to dodge while the Matron personnel took caution.

Being led into a large boulder instilled anxiety in Lazarus and monotony for the Matron Group. The entrance was a phony boulder and the familiar site of the yellow ladder rungs led him underground and into thrill. More than just a facility of study and research the lounge of the lab was suited for comfort and style as could be noted by the long couch bottoms and short back rest. Everything necessary for comfort for all peoples was available and in abundance. The curious sounds of crystalline alerts and beeps filled the air in the audio realm. The smell of fresh food and the sizzle of the grill drew him though his belly already full of hotel eats. More people were coming into the techno bunker and a lot was happening in addition to conversation and lab-work. Lazarus was so intrigued by the activities he had undergone a character change. He seemed to be diverting his routine in this instance. Resisting the urge to connect with the rather attractive science girls he proceeded to gather more information from the **fraternity** leader.

Though he had a little trouble picturing what they were discussing there was a lot of information he seemed to be missing. The descriptions were highly technical and involved words like **chronostatic** and **extracontinual**. He recognized the spatial temper, mentioned which he had become somewhat accustomed to handling used on the Star Voyager, the device that keeps you in your seat when the ship takes off and accelerates. One thing was certain; they were debating over construction procedures for something profound. He signaled to the speaker he was going to look around and did partake of the edible morsels scattered about the long fold up table. Still pondering the intricacies of the intriguing discussion fresh in his mind his eyes follow the hand of the ranch dipped celery stick into the lips of a familiar French woman. Celie recognized him seemingly simultaneously at the moment of eye contact.

"You never told me you were affiliated with the Matron Group." Lazarus said.

Celie smiles. "There's a lot you don't know about me actually." She said as the crunch of celery sounded between her teeth. They hugged gently.

"What are you doing here? Where's Li? Hey I saw him on TV on the talk show. I think he's famous now."

"I don't know... really, TV? He took off earlier, haven't heard from him since. So who do you know here at this Matron Lab?"

"Everyone; well mostly..."

"I see. Well in that case do you know what they are discussing so intently in here?"

"Not really. It has something to do with temporal physics. That's all I know." Celie takes another bite of celery. Despite his efforts Lazarus could not find any information in Celie regarding the discussion of the main lab team, which something told him to learn more. Town events occurring outside the bunker on the surface were enough to draw some of the group back out onto the street as caught on camera surveillance. Lazarus and Celie followed. They leave the lab back through the ladder tunnel as if gravity had pulled them out. Upon exiting the phony rock head the familiar silhouette of the Star Voyager looms above. Lazarus only performed a *few* jumping jacks until finally utilizing his wrist computers transmitter. Celie had come out behind him just as he had started the short trek over to the stilted landing pad nearly stumbling over the big rocks encased in the pebbly sand. He could see Li on the edge next to the supply booth quickly wheeling solid fuel blocks to their shipside compartments.

Li was in a strange mood as Lazarus noted after making his way onto the platform, painted with yellow and white landing lines, to see his experienced posture. Lazarus helps with loading the fuel while Celie observes. Shortly after they made it into space with Celie onboard who made use of the ships washroom promptly while Copilot and Captain trade stories. Though much information was conveyed neither of them seemed to find enough time to come to a conclusion. Just as Celie walks into the cockpit a light wave of force sways her fragile body as the acceleration gain compensated. Departing the Proxima Commons, the remote planet fades into the black. Celie had waited until Li's control sequencing was complete in order to hug him. They express greeting and affection. Feelings of closeness filled the cabin as their velocity began to flatten. Li had not initiated the light speed engine and took a short course. To inquire directly as to the ships vector would feed their minds with direction and destination. Lazarus is satisfied with the answer. In the window screen a large **explorer ship** returning from its decade old journey falls near as they approach. Li had already booked a spot in its port and planned to return to Suntown onboard.

## Chapter 8

### The Homecoming

Awakening in his private quarters aboard the **E.S. Vigor** Li merges with the illustrious comfort of the large search class vessel. As it nears its resting place where it had launched it also draws nigh to the conclusion of its 12-year mission. The Vigor was one of the first explorer ships to venture from Earth out into deep space at the beginning of the era of the Planetary Council. The arrangement of the living cabin was like that of a luxury suite complete with designer bed covers and soothing lighting. As expected the comfort of the Vigor crew was paramount for long missions. The Vigor had held up well over the years.

One of the more notable events occurred almost a decade ago, it had carried settlers from Earth and deposited them on the frozen plains of **Krysto** where its inhabitants established one of the largest **electrolysis plant** chains in Star City. Most prevalent in Li's mind was how the exploration went. He knew he could have access to the ships logs by way of his SMD membership, which explained his swift grooming session in the lavished lavatory. Looking sharp in his proud Star Voyager uniform the corridors meet him filled with officers on pressing agendas. Li knew they would look like that whether or not the agenda was pressing however. In their hands data pages and examination devices, some carrying ship comments both largely imperative and easefully simple. The colorful uniforms of the crewmen and women incited respect and acknowledgement.

Though predominately human it was still comforting to see a few Felidae roaming the hall. As he made his way to the mess hall on the above decks he inevitably noticed the comradery and protocol driven unity among the crewmen. A hiss of the hydraulic doors and they retract allowing the experienced ship captain entry to the inviting atmosphere of the ships lounge and eatery. The whickered voice of a moral boosting alien runs the kitchen with sizzling pans of delectable treats ready to deliver to the devoted crew. Even as they eat from their trays and sip their coffee they keep a constant vigil on their data pages as they skim the technical material, no doubt containing information related to ship functions and system maintenance. Already appealed by the aspects of membership with the **Federal Exploration Alliance**, which is a junction by, but not a proprietary of the Planetary Council or Star City, Li finds the diplomatic and accepting behavior of the officers exceedingly welcoming.

"Would you like to join us?" Lieutenant Helmsman **Joshua Feynman** asked and **Yifei Chen Hua** chief performance manager on the command bridge in front of the elongated starship. Li sat into the cottony table chair. Along the grub bay were window screens spanning allowing the raven vista of endless cosmos.

"Excuse us we are very excited to see Earth again." Joshua explained as their bright smiles covered their faces.

"I understand." Li said.

"Your friendship is welcome here Captain." And he receives a handshake from Feynman. They were very factual and selfless in their personal introductions and quick to change the topic to him. Li began a brief description of his background and was just getting to his academy years before the two high-demand professionals were called to duty on the control deck. They depart with a polite salute. Slightly drawn by the festive Cat cook Li sees the opportunity to gather the information he needs that he might enter the bridge. Only a fraction of a moment had elapsed and in his nose were the offerings of delectable compositions of vegetables and meats arranged in a nutritious medley. The cook gave Li the whole tray having noticed the familiar face of morning peckishness.

"I'm Prit, the ships chef. Who might you be?"

"Captain Li, I'm just visiting the Vigor."

"Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Yes actually. Can you tell me how I can be invited to the bridge? I was told it requires a Captain's authorization."

"There is a faster way. You can request an official **captain's rendezvous**." Feeling premature Li now realized he could have done this at the moment of first contact with the E.S. Vigor back at the fleeing Alpha Centauri System. As coincidence would have it the Commander **Giovanni Beltran** enters the mess hall for his usual herbal tea and rice cake dish. The commander like other crewmen sat to have his meal and drink while analyzing the physics data not only regarding current ship operations also recent missions.

"Excuse me." Li said to the chef. The Commander was sitting alone and Li couldn't resist opportunity having felt compelled to introduce himself. "Hello I am Captain Li a visitor on the Vigor. Are you the ship's first officer?"

“Yes I am. It’s nice to meet you Captain Li.” He greeted. The commander was a soft-spoken man with a lot of experience and welcomed Li to a seat. The commander by this time was already thoroughly briefed on basic details of the reasonably armed black vessel sitting in its ship bay.

“My compliments to the Captain of the Star Voyager...” He offered as he cheers his glass and sips his drink.

“Thank you sir... Li responded.

“Would you like to come up to the command deck?” Beltran offered.

“Yes sir I would.” Said Li. Tagging along behind the Commander through the segmented corridors and gray bulkheads the gyrodyne elevator lifts them to the control room of the vessel.

A dazzling array of consoles and observation posts the bridge offered a stunning view of the universe through the eyes of the high-resolution window screen and sensor system. Navigating the flickering lights and panel displays he is lead to the captain’s post near the bridges center. Responding to the wealth of beeps and alerts the captain maintains a constant vigilance on the flow of data being fed into his seatside console both ship related and cosmic.

“**Captain Trevon Peterson**, meet Captain Seiwan Li of the Star Voyager.” A standing greeting occurs by the famous commanding officer of the Vigor, a medium-sized man of Western decent who has seen his share of phenomena and happenstance.

“Captain Li you are free to remain on the bridge to observe as you please.” And he did.

### Lazarus Awakens

Lazarus had risen and was just getting to the mess hall thus experiencing the same process as Li, meeting the energetic bar tender, chatting with the open-minded and courteous crewmen, making friends quickly. He was having the same difficulty getting a complete explanation from the busy officers called to and fro. Needless to say he spent most of his time there in the eatery talking to as many crewmen as he could. Finally, hours later the diner traffic began to thin out and were replaced by a smattering of **non-ship personnel**. Lazarus had strategically positioned himself in the inconspicuous corner of the café while mysterious passengers in regular clothing populated the tables. Some of them were carrying books, data pages, and even candles.

The cook was in the back cleaning and closing the buffet. The lights dimmed a little and the air stilled. Two of the people wore brown hooded robes and only cheeks and noses could be seen as they sat face to face without words. The man in the middle was the attention grabber; a distinguished balding man of experienced years and in his hand a little book. Drawn to the man he leads himself to the table where the mild grin of the cheerful old-timer brings him peace.

“Can I talk to you sir?” Lazarus inquired.

“Indeed you may.” He responded softly. “What do you seek?” He continued. Lazarus responded,

“Nothing.” The man looks up from the pages of the old worn book as if surprised by his answer. Lazarus somehow knew what he was thinking. He had not spoken with candor.

“May I ask about the missions of the E.S. Vigor?” His attention returns to his book and he nods in affirmation.

“Who are you?” He asks foremost. The man looks at him again.

“I am the first captain of this vessel.” He responded. “I led the ship to its furthest destination and half way back.” Lazarus was intrigued. He had no shortage of questions appearing in his mind at that moment but knew to keep from overreacting as not to overwhelm the honorable former commander. He would now become an Admiral once arriving at Earth.

Yet, the man seemed not mostly excited about reaching Earth. He could tell by the way he held his book and smiled as he read. Perhaps his lifetime of experiences and explorations has taught him patience. He wasn’t even clingy to his home planet but seemed to feel perfectly content there in his chair reading his favorite book whatever that may be. The man confirmed this when he started talking to Lazarus answering the very questions he seemed to have in his mind, yet he had not asked them.

### The Early Unknown: Stories of the E.S. Vigor

The last settlers were being safely deposited on Krysto led by the trained and experienced Xemeral Kile where they would assist with the construction of additional town segments. The glorious Earth mothership orbited the planet in the midst of its global ice age and the planet is now ready to take on even more caretakers. The next batch of settlers would not be

the passengers of the E.S. Vigor but from additional ships to come. The Planetary Council was still a new entity to the excited Humans taking advantage of the explosion in space age technology.

The Vigor being deep in space was well beyond the edge of the yet forming Star City, which consisted of less than four home worlds. Krysto was now a deep-space outpost in addition to becoming the largest electricity harvesting worlds known to Earth dwellers. The proximity to the frozen planet was a mutual benefit in that the Vigor took on additional passengers and supplies from the water rich world. Using new technologies icy planets are a goldmine for energy. In addition to the process of electrolysis, the fission of hydrogen and oxygen allows for internal combustion capability without gasoline. While the process generates electricity in the molecular fission reaction the byproduct hydrogen can be used to drive engines with a reverberating cylinder mechanism, which in turn could be used to produce yet more electricity and still more by magnetoelectric methods.

Though ominous, cautious settlers of a barren world of frozen plains in a state of glacial decay did so with courage and were thoroughly comforted in the lack of shortage of power. Humans had only a handful of experience setting other worlds now. So far Mars and the Moon was as far as they had come. Yet this lonely ice ball and oxygen-rich sky was the chosen world. The crew of the Vigor looked down on the surface upon the enthusing yet snow encrusted settlements before they take a breath to face the unknown ahead. Even alien telescopes haven't seen every pocket of the cosmos at this time and are nearly as limited as Human devices. This planet had never before been discovered according to Earth records. In their hearts they knew what they would find even deeper into space.

All on board the Vigor were astronomers and this was the reason why they knew. There were also physicist and engineers present. Dust, stars, planets, gas giants and terrestrial, comets and asteroids of increasingly varied forms awaited their presence more than ninety-nine percent of which had never been imagined. One final look at the last Humans to be seen and the crew stands to attention for the abiding farewell tradition. The Captain gives an inspiring speech followed by a respectful prayer. Into the gulf of obscurity commence the brave Earthlings.

### World of the Jungle

For years the crew had spent on this elongated vessel and visited the star systems in its path so far finding much of what they have expected, gas giants and their accompanying moons, a few terrestrial planets some with organisms. One particular planet forming in a double star system had nearly year round sunlight allowing the world to teem with life morso than Earth at anytime in its history. The entire planet was highly dense with vegetation that it could not be explored thoroughly by visitors. The crew eagerly awaited the shuttle launch scheduled for secure surface acquisition. The crew consisted of Helmsman Feynman, Operations Specialist Chen Hua and three exuberant secondary crewmen eager to get their feet wet. The mission was deemed minor and accomplishable. The most anxious of the team, **Jacy Abeytu** of native Indian descent believed himself to be fit for the mission as the crews elected head woodsman.

The jungle was as expected thick, lush, and full of exotic herbal species. Jacy lead the group and maintained efficient safety standards for his valued comrades. The discussion amongst the team was lively and informal as the horticultural experts classified and studied the various life forms. "Now everyone stay with the group!" Jacy ordered. The curious absence of large quadrapedal and primitive mammals befuddled the busy crew. They had certainly expected to run into standard land dwelling creatures almost immediately. Yet there appeared not even the smallest of fleshly critters. Still, they pressed on designating growths and exploring hither taking caution to avoid the ill-boding thorns appearing more prevalent as they moved.

Into the forest of shrubs and canopy the team began to thin out. Many had become separated from the group as they pushed and plowed the vegetation aside. They had taken care not to use the fine blades at their hip side on the many beautiful blooms about them, yet they made use of the facemask as that of a surgeon though catered for forest expeditions. The level of airborne particles and pollen was high. Jacy had gotten somewhat ahead of the team yet maintained an intermittent vigil on them. Misunderstood to him is why the crew would choose to diverge from the set path of a straight hike abroad of the landed shuttle now tens of meters away.

Turning again to make eye contact the scene consisted of a manless backdrop of flora and clouds of mist filled pollen. Dark patches of unlighted regions made ominous the dim shaded green of adapted plant life. The horrified shouts of the teammates did not echo the muffling vegetation well and Jacy reacted with native instincts. He drew his machete and hacked his way reversed of the previous path to locate his squealing comrades. His eyes widened when he came upon the

restrained figure of Yifei and did not hesitate to sever the meaty arm of vine snaps as it attempted to squeeze the life out of her struggling body. Yifei instinctively took hold of her medium capacity discharge gun and followed aside Jacy to locate the others.

Briefly comforted by a team rendezvous in a small opening the heavy breathing crew became terrified at the absence of the rookie volunteer of the skeleton crew. With swords in front and guns at the ready the crew slowly trotted toward the landed shuttle. The braveness of Jacy was relied upon as he motioned fourth; his elongated knife firmly pressed ahead now parting the thick silky strands of arachnid construction. Jacy knew it was freshly formed and mentioned not to the crew to prevent panic. His senses told him the architect was near. The sound of a hefty *cicadallike* noise frightened the crew as the hunting spider approached on their flank. Nearly half a meter at the abdomen Yifei wasted not a moment to fry the hairy eight-legged form with her pistol on high. A steaming char of cooked Araneae lay motionless, its legs curled inward onto the armored thorax. Most horrific was upon passing near to a man-sized chamber towering above them odorant of the smell of human innards. The outside of the plant container was smooth and brightly colored, a creamy yellow, perhaps a natural warning like that of a poisonous insect. Jacy looked away from the shocking abomination.

"Why have we stopped?" Yifei inquired. "Why are you just standing there?" Jacy waited with no words hanging his head low and sword off guard. Out of anger he turned to and sliced the cup base exposing the putrefied remains of the novice shipmate. The team gasped and shouted a fraction of a breath and became flushed in their countenance.

Adrenaline surged them as their tunnel vision focused on the grayish hull of the transport ship barely protruding the dense greenery ahead. Simultaneously the team began a power sprint trampling the life forms and plants in a determined attempt to reach the miniship only to be restrained by the angry grip on an injured plant beast of the *Dionaea* genus. Essentially large Venus flytrap-like growths the clusters of life attempted to toss them into the dreaded collection of digestion tubes of acidic viscous fluids, the same fate as the deceased novice crewman, others in large crablike pinschers. The decision to disregard the **principles of the respect for life** was made as they killed all necessary life forms in order to reach their grappled vessel of which was restrained by the vinelike arms of active plant life.

The most unnerving act was when the makeshift spear fashioned by Jacy perforated the *eye of the man grabber*. The optical fluid of this seeing organ attached to the bulbous lower base of the enormous plant brute seeped heavily as the creature wallowed in agony. All of the squiggling vines and man-eating pinschers in the vicinity, though appearing to be separate components, fell limp and the crew was released. Eventually having made it into space with plant material dangling of the fuselage, their ghastly stranding on the living jungle world came to a close. The Vigor departed orbit and the crew continued on their journey following a memorial for the honored lost officer.

### Sky Life



*The Heavenly Creature*

The Vigor had stopped several times to gather resources from Gas Giants and mineral rich terrestrial planets still making every effort to investigate all life-bearing worlds. What was to come in the journey of the Vigor is another highlight of the story. Altogether the highly equipped vessel had traveled nearly 10,000 light-years before reversing course and returning to the new Suntown, which was not more than a few years old and is not yet a frequently trafficked system of colonies. More events of astounding adventure awaited the crew.

After the dreaded jungle planet came more new discoveries of life, which sit in the ships computer logs but not so vividly recalled but by the enlightened crew and captain. Unforgettable in the minds of the envied officers was the **aerial whales** found in a gigantic star system over one hundred light-years from **Sol**. Nestled in the deep warm layers of a medium sized gas giant large air filled creatures roam the skies feeding from water vapors and floating sky plants. The plants themselves drew energy from the light of its parent star and allowed a primitive aerial ecosystem to flourish in the wisping gasses of this unique gasbag planet. The creatures were like none ever seen and only imagined in books. Moving about by inhaling and expelling large amounts of atmospheric gases these sky whales can propel themselves at aircraft speeds. Samples of the sky plants were retrieved and remain in the ships biology suite. Though semi conscious the enormous fowl dominated the skies of that planet and was driven by instinct.

### Birth of a System

Encountering **protosystems** was like nothing ever experienced! Like **Vega** back in Star City, systems surrounded by enormous disks of protomatter in the process of forming planets and asteroid fields is illuminated by the life-giving orb in the center. The helmsman Feynman's gaze was locked onto the apparently close yet still distant star buried in the center of the protomatter. He had already locked the course and maintained his astounded vigil on the clumpy bodies throughout the system.

Private debates were taking place on the bridge between the chattering scientists as they compared speculations about the nature of the system. In the mind of these stellar specialists an ancient feeling of creation tugged at their emotions reminding them of an early hot universe, a time when protosystems were prevalent throughout the cosmos. Traveling at tremendous speeds the massive disk became a vast horizon as the Vigor nears entry of the dense regions. The voice of the captain, who had been monitoring closely the ships relative position, went from whispering techno jabber to clear commanding instructions. Stiller had ordered Joshua to a slowed velocity and they entered the system.



*Approaching the Protosystem*

Submerged under the blanketing matter and the familiar distant star fields began to fade into dark dust only lightly illuminated by the light as it narrowly protruded the dust shafts of enormous length. The breathtaking view of the luminous and colorful gasses refracting the intensely driven rays of stellar radiation dazzled the crew as they made their way deeper into the system. The Vigor crew, having been taken inside this rather dangerous region, aspired to explore up close the birth of planets. Navigating this cloudy expanse was a real challenge for the young Lieutenant Feynman. There were almost constant course corrections issued by the performance officer Ensign Yifei throughout the entire system. The gravitational influence was quite irregular due to the randomly scattered bodies of stellar masses. Some of these masses were reported to be young gas giants in the beginning stages of formation. The ship veered and tugged in many directions as the skilled helmsman maintained his attention to console readouts.

They were traveling along the general direction of the orbiting debris and Feynman employed his discretion by maintaining a suggested path along the vector of the most massive bodies in the region. Aside the Vigor the gaseous ram scoops was opened and the cooperation of the elite engineering crew too hold as they requested a sample of some of the stellar dust. Again Feynman's training came into play as he calculated the velocities and trajectories necessary to side a smaller cloud of dust. The material had been successfully scooped into the large collection bay where the zealous engineers manned for study. Accompanying them were the material physicist carrying handled science kits to perform on-the-spot analysis.

"Intriguing..." Stated **Jett Burton**, a lead geologist and chief engineer of the Vigor knelt beside the strange dust piles of early periodic compounds and gritty minerals. He masks himself with a face cover having taken caution of the warming hydrogen wisps collecting at the ceiling.

The material element professor, **Jevon Zimmerman** had taken caution of the unseen reaction the bubbling hydrogen might take with the ship oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere. The smoky frost streamed fourth as the hot bay air accelerated the frigid hydrogen gas to equilibrium. A rumble and a sway of the deck stumbled the busy professors as the Vigor took on a minor impact of densified gases. The rotating alert, lights and cautionary buzzers indicated emergency yet were soon ceased.

"Perhaps Feynman had become overwhelmed." Jevon thought seeing an image of his bridge grounded shipmate's panel button rapidly, his hands zipping to and fro to locate the precise control input just in the nick of time. Yet his faith in the chief pilot's training and experience and his inward curiosity about the mysterious pebbles scattered about the floor diminished his anxiety as he resumes his analysis of the material.

"I've got what I need for my project. I'm moving to the lab at this time."

"I may be joining you shortly." Jevon replied. "Wait a moment." Jevon had caught Mr. Burton in a fall on his way out having slipped in the accumulating puddles of water, which lay pooled around the bay. He stabilized his balance and continued. Returning his attention to his study, immediately Jevon had made an intriguing discovery when his pre-elemental screening of some curious-looking material caught his attention. With the eyepiece of focus mounted in his socket Jevon unveils the glittering sight of **carbonaceous chondrite** material on the crumbling sample. This was one of many hopes he had longed to find and encases his sample tightly in the holding case. Standing to traverse the bay he returns to his knelt position this time bruising his knee as the Vigor began to shake heavily. The spinning rubified alerts lit the bay like a disco ball as emergency was declared. Jevon had to suspend his exploration for now and returns to his engineering post.

The jolting continued as Jevon navigated the corridors and frantic officers darted to and fro. Finally having arrived before the propulsion section of the ship the *authorized zone* doors retract revealing the smoke filled engineering bay of disorderly officers improvising a solution to the near fatal rupture of the exposed engine casing stretching long ways onward of the engine room. The sound of fluctuating energy flow and draining bay lighting drew Jevon into action as he manned his console. He restored power by diverting potential from adjacent non-essential flow conduits such as weapons energy reservoirs, high capacity nucleonic generators positioned to supply energy to the various guns and discharge ports on the Vigor's hull. Jett was perspiring of the heating propulsion inlet and frantic in his instruction to retain a grip on the destabilizing power status. The blown engine bulkheads had released the excited air from the fuel core pit deep inside the engine cylinder. Having accomplished his goal of returning power to the critical propulsion system Jevon sought the cause of the ships distress.

Upon activating the panoramic view screen the frightening site of a protogiant appeared startling near as the Vigor apparently had ventured too close to the hidden gas giant veiled by stellar dust. The monstrous gasbag swirled and sucked nearby debris inward and the Vigor was part of which. The vessel was moving toward the enormous mass of gas.

Emergency energy was requested from the command deck that they ship might use the high capacity engines to remove itself from the vicinity. With quick reactions and determination the engineering crew emerged successful in delivering the captious power. The dooming plunge toward the giant was reversed as massive thrust initiated the departure of the planets neighborhood. The vibrating calmed, the alerts minimized, and the team of travel experts *battered down the hatches*. Jevon had taken note of Mr. Burton's sensor reports review of the external readings taken a moment ago during the crisis. The Chief Engineer had astutely desired to know the cause of the close approach to the gas giant. Recreating what the chief helmsman would have seen from his post the steering sensor readings were exponentially complicated as the gravity field detection component displayed too many readouts of numerous sources of attractive bodies. Feynman must have overlooked the planet attempting to plot a course through the condensed region, he thought.

"All crew prepare for condition *d* status." The adamant Commander Beltran said on the command deck. A few gasps made their way of the mouths of concerned crewman, as this was an indication that the Vigor was not yet leaving the protosystems despite the recent accident.

It was only now that Mr. Burton had begun to sync the engineering computer to the bridge file system of the current impairment state to reveal to the captain and command deck crew the event of accident. Hesitation and reluctance filled the ship's crew about venturing further into the cluttered star system yet, the drive to record first hand footage of a red hot protoplanet still drawing gas clouds by gravity compelled them to risk it. On the bridge Feynman receives his orders of the cooperated Captain Stiller and Commander Beltran.

"Take us closer to the protoplanet." The Captain ordered referring to a safer position above the stellar disk though still well inside the encompassing gassy region. "My intention is to move the vessel further toward the center of the accretion disk to look for young terrestrial planets in formation." Only a slight pause for consensus elapsed amongst the bridge crew as they considered the risks.

"Accelerating..." Feynman said and the distant pockets of material drifted by gradually though their speed relatively enormous.

The danger was mounting and the emotions ran high as the ship began to descend into the rapidly rotating accretion disk nearer to the young star parent.

"I am maintaining a close coordination with the ships computer to align the Vigor's course properly so as to attain a safe trajectory amongst the orbiting debris." Feynman assured. The gravity field indicator had been his primary guide even since the confusion toward the outer disk when the vessel skewed dangerously close to the forming gas giant. The material therein the inner system was more so rocky than gassy yet gaseous pockets had remained numerous. Feynman kept the crew behind him from seeing his sweat droplets as their lives remained in his hands.

Silence was of the bridge but was slowly shattered by the prancing pelts of micrometeoroids recently released of a massive collision perhaps by two large terrestrial objects. The **early incident alert** system had been late in its warning due to the camouflaged state of the harmful pebbles emerging from dust regions. The **Proximity Alert Officer Dexter** sounded another code red alarm as the inescapable swarms of micrometeoroids battered the Vigor. The area they had braved overwhelmed the **radar dataists**. Emergency use of the rapidly firing antiproton laser detonated most the pebbles having been previously programmed as a contingency procedure. The crew's quick thinking saved them from the potentially penetrating debris. Success! The crew had reached their goal as the optical scanner reveals a starlit view of the clumping protoplanet hot and swirling with the likeness of a rock-centered hurricane.

Nearly twice as large as the planet Venus by comparison this infant terrestrial body draws consistently the dusts and gasses of foundation as the planet builds itself steadily solid. If just one ounce of material could be retrieved of the molding preplanet the mission, according to the daring captain, would be complete. The danger was significant but not unacceptable in the eyes of the small group of challengers as they board the integrifield shuttle. Even so the consummate investigation teams set out in the armored surveying craft for a close up look into the hard to reach places, a challenging and intense venture by the reduced shuttle crew. Triumph brought roaring applause as the high-resolution video screen displayed the relayed transmissions from the daring survey team of the contracting gasses toward the low mass yet warm bodied baby planet. In the distance the vastly radiant young star only recently having begun to burn hydrogen emits its earliest light and the polyelemental dust glows in a wide spectrum of colors.

The Captain had ordered an enhanced analyzation of the spectral lines emanating from the young stellar elements surrounding the adolescent star. Days had been spent in this system and a new statistical theory of life was coming to acceptance. The theory stated that almost all, star systems could harbor life in some form yet the only life found in this early

solar system was a sub-organic form of elements, which most, fully evolved life forms possessed, in the carbonaceous chondrite samples obtained by the diligent geologist Jevon Zimmerman found near the large gassy regions of the outer disk. In memory remains the gassy young giant, which nearly swallowed the brave crew of The Vigor. Late to come in the analysis of the planet was its inevitable attainment of critical mass. One day this swirling neighbor may become a binary system of adjacent protostars. Having incurred significant damage from the violence of the young system they pressed on toward the next destination in their flight path.

### Empty Spots

While there were times of frequent exploration of various types of star systems there were also the enormous voids where no star systems were reachable for weeks even at maximum speeds. During these times the crew took advantage of the decreased demand for experienced officers allowing for the junior crewman to take control of the vessel. Maintenance personnel had been awakened from their temporary idlety to take advantage of the third shift hours to repair the vessel. The damage incurred from the giant star system days ago required attention. Being a part time maintenance officer met the practitioner with no shortage of challenge. The repair teams were required to work outside the vessel for a few major external equipment overhauls. They remained pinned to the hull and within the **spatial temper field**. Still, something extraordinary could be said for the experience of riding the outside of a vessel at translightspeeds. The recreational facilities were in high use including the 3-D theater and sports gym.

Engineering was minimally staffed but vigilantly maintained while the bridge was always manned. The young rookie helmsman, not with Lieutenant Feynman's finesse, causes a slight flight change having taken a course correction based upon some strange false readings being received in deep space. The readings were informed by the **sensor analysis specialist** and reported to the **acting captain** who wanted to analyze it thoroughly perhaps to impress his superiors yet, to fulfill his role as scientist and explorer. Suspicion arose when the fleeing stream of alleged gamma rays turned out to be a receding vessel into the deep. The acting captain ordered a pursuit course and subsequent hales yet, no response was ever reported. The strange reading however were analyzed and presented it to be a ruse in order to disguise the translightspeed travel of the mysterious vessel in which they now pursued. The Vigor was never able to reach visual distance of the curious craft of exotic emissions. No record was ever saved regarding the configuration or composition of the rouge vessel.

### Life's Beginning



*A Primal Study*

The vast volume of vacuitous space was beginning to densen with star systems again and the veteran crew mans the deck. The ships operations were running smoothly at the highest efficiency attainable. Energy levels and fuel were still at their peaks, as they have not had to decelerate for weeks other than the slight course adjustment made to pursue the anomalous ship passing nearby only days ago. While entering the system of another minority of single stars the yellow sun in the distance burns with invitation as they near the inner regions at high speeds. No speed limits were imposed this far out and reaching the innards of a star system can occur in minutes yet should not be attempted without emergency. Still the cautious crew always kept a manageable speed as to maintain the protocols of ships safety. Behold an Earthlike planet teeming with not only microorganisms but also plants and dinosaurs. This re-confirms Earth's biographic theories that similar life forms can appear on similar worlds. This planet was roughly ninety percent of Earths mass about the size of Venus with a comparable orbital distance. Still in its early swampy stages the global climate of this green planet resembles the **Paleozoic Era** on Earth. The dinosaurs here were small and barely out of the water having ventured only a fraction of an area into the inlands of the volcanically active world. Some experienced biologists would not consider them dinosaurs at all yet some creatures like those resembling the alligator remain of a similar structure even after eons of time. Nevertheless much of the life found here were vertebrate. Crewman fought feverishly, yet professionally, to be the first ones to explore this world on foot.

The new standard **space environmental suits** allowed for comfortable venturing onto the humid wetlands of this primordial world. With the transport ferry down the crew fanned outward clutching their scanning equipment and tapping their wrist consoles. Steaming vents of vapor and sulfur spew from nearby shafts as the adventurous team of explorers muck through the muddy mixtures of water and proteins. Life of all classes in varying stages was forming all around them. Flipping and flopping fish lizards crawl onto the viscous banks using muscular fins. Samples of these fish and tadpoles were taken back to the landing shuttle for study. Having been attacked by small flocks of giant insects the crew sought cover from the blood sucking arthropods. Unable to siphon the life giving hemoglobin of the armored investigation team they move on after being swatted away. Swatting four-foot long dragonflies wasn't as easy as squatting a fly with a newspaper back home on your living room mahogany.

In any case the scare of being seen as dinner to the enormous flying bugs was concerning yet thrilling to the team of space cadets. Hoping not to run into any large predators strong enough to damage or crush their suits they continued on. While the air was potentially breathable the large amounts of sulfur and other volcanic gases would no doubt debilitate or possibly terminate an unprotected person. Of course the head biologist reassured that this era in planetary formation is likely to be devoid of any animals larger than a k-9. After leaving the bulk of the swampy region the team reached the outskirts of a dense forest area. The team of six was divided into three and they set out to gather information needed to confirm biographic theories. The air was still; the sounds recorded on the helmet audio were of outlandish squawks and amphibious calls yet, the further into the forest the more the sounds of the foraging of the **creeping thing**. Perhaps a half an hour of searching both members of the lead team sat down for a brief rest.

Crawling onto the back of one of the fatigued explorers was a basketball sized arachnid and perhaps one of the first land creatures of this planet, possibly for Earth as well. Standing and turning the gasping alert of the team partner incites a brief fright only to find the eight-legged oversized bug on its back struggling to flip over after a short fall from the shoulders of the alarmed team member. After catching their breath the head biologist noted the finding. It was strange because this appearance of the spider creature seemed a little early evolutionarily speaking. Yet, here it is thriving in the oxygen rich environment of the Paleozoic world. It seems when our science tells us something can't happen or shouldn't be we often find the universe challenging and amending our limited knowledge. A rule of thumb for cosmic explorations of any kind, "never say never." Just when we think no or not yet the universe says yes or right now.

With the atomic, ascent engines blazing the survey shuttle lifts off from the steamy planet into the firmness of space carrying photos documents and samples from below. On the desk of the captain was placed the full reports of the investigation results. Sifting through and sipping his cup of coffee Captain **Donald Stiller** orders to disembark from the primordial planet and out of the alien system.

### A Dwarf System

Relationships were forming and the mixed genders of the crew were beginning to couple. So far only a hand full had successfully copulated thus far and more were to come. Lieutenant Feynman had a long-standing crush on the performance

operator Yifei and was starting to break through her hardened outside. Amongst the soft chatter of the composed yet loosed officers Yifei, enjoying her sugarless tea, is asked to be joined of the spiffy Feynman. With a smile and offering of delight she consents having paused in her reading of her favorite romance novel *Romance About the Heavens*. Offering compliments and warm attention Yifei wavers only slightly in her protective mode of sustentation. She was not opposed to Feynman's witty reposts. He had taken caution not to be too overbearing yet walking the fine line between domination and slack. His fourth-put effort was sufficient that it contained not solely the sensible retorts necessary to maintain the attention of a brilliant woman, additionally the raw energy of charm filled in the empty spaces.

A puff of steam and the clanging of scooping spoons bought the attention of the hungered crewman waiting for their spaghetti and sauce dish. Perhaps overhearing the noisy kitchen Jevon had entered the eatery, giving eye to the table, which sat Yifei, and Feynman encased in smiles and warmth. Jevon had to stomach the chill of envy as the feeling of possessiveness seized his gut yet no so much so that his general consensus with the hard places in life was overridden. Yet the irresistibility of the dazzling Yifei in her loveliness as well as her elitism of skill synced him to her energy. Her mood changed of the sudden yet she had not turned. It seemed that the spirits of Yifei, Joshua, and Jevon had come together to share a small space, though only two could remain.

As the grinning cat cook passed along his pasta plate he sat at the rear table to devour his meal and incidentally take witness to the chattering yet closing comrades. Jevon though buried in engineering issues being processed in his ripening mind seemed to uncontrollably maintain a scenario analysis in the back of his mind about being with Yifei. Though imagined of just him and her, the additional visitor seemed to tag along through his attempted romance of the mind. Jevon faced the facts early in his thoughts to gain timely acceptance. Even so he had still entertained the third unspoken option, whether to accept an additional love partner and determine if this arrangement was acceptable to the other parties. Jevon was familiar with others' tendencies to share mates. Though he knew it could mean being close to Yifei he could not convince himself to accept such a setup.

An invisible force seemed to sever him from the spiritual trio as he finishes his serving. The nonexistent yet seemingly tangible object of principle presented itself in his thoughts with sharp form. Jevon had no need to determine the will of Yifei and Feynman; somehow he already knew Feynman felt the same way. Across the mess hall Joshua concludes his veiled courtship and felt satisfaction in having impressed the enchanting **Paralogical Specialist**. Something moved into him of coolness dizzying his mind and forming his thoughts just as the hydraulic eatery doors retract to promote the departure of the learned Jevon. A transiting feeling entered of him had created images of the masterful propulsion professor down in engineering being in favor of the company of Yifei. The queasiness of covetousness formed of his belly-dwelling feelings. He was not the only officer in her mind. Nonetheless the trained officer was well disciplined and maintained a tight coordination with his shipmates regardless of personal feelings.

Yifei and Feynman weren't the only friendly fraternizers sitting about the café. The friendly flirtations amongst the crew were briefly interrupted as the **astral adjacency alert** sounded. The pacified crew animated into action as they were called to their function posts. The air is electrified again while the primary officers mount a mission to explore the tiniest star system so far, a single white dwarf of no gas giants and a hand full of charred terrestrial planets. The star had gone nova long ago leaving an empty system of rocky bodies. The possibility of finding life here was miniscule making the mission that much more important. Nothing so far was observed on the innermost planetoid .a tiny rock of lifeless compounds. This system may have seemed unremarkable to some. Yet, a sudden intriguing idea presented itself in the mind of the astute science officer.

"Alter the ship's course to one of the outer planets." He recommended. "I believe the curiously positioned exterior planets used to be gas giants that have had their atmosphere stripped by the intense solar winds from the swelling nova eons ago. If we are able to somehow collect a sample of material it could lead to detailed analyses of gas giant core compositions." The bridge crew was intrigued and they did follow the new course for the outer system.

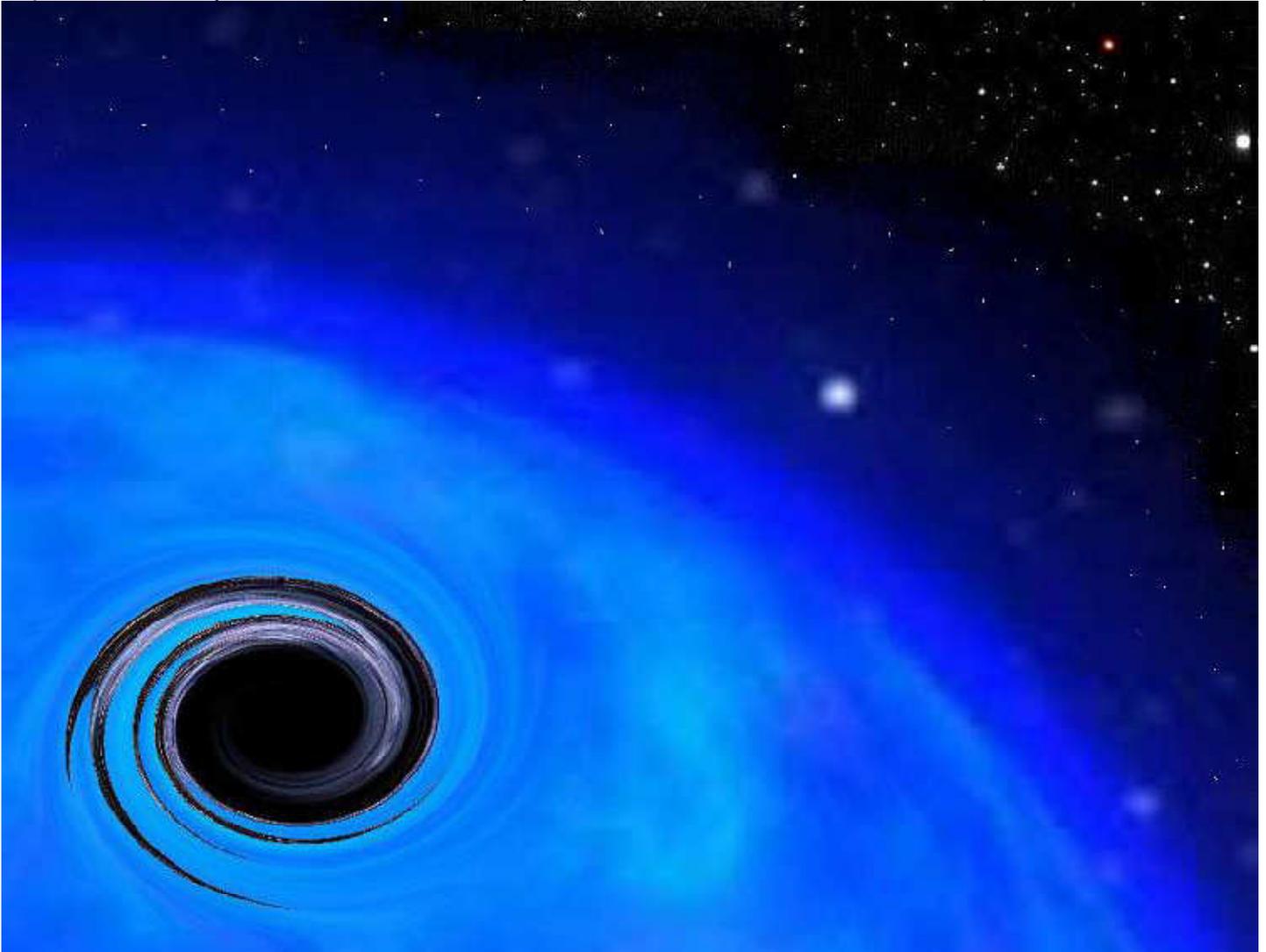
The gravity of the disrobed core of the once mighty gas giant planet was nearly three times that of earth and potentially walkable. It would be much like visiting the planet of the Badgermen, which have already lured a few daring human body builders as a workout spot back home. Few members of the crew were willing to venture onto this demoted core but there were a couple of brave officers willing to claim the prize. Any man or woman who walks upon the stripped center of a gas giant would go down in history regardless of outcome or duration. Once stepping from the safety of the landing shuttle the gravity tugged their weakling bodies strongly as the first investigation team member sat foot onto the surface.

Already feeling the strain they both knew they only had a few minutes to chisel a piece of dense core material before they became overwhelmed by the gravity. Indeed it only took about fifteen minutes before they called it quits and retreated to the lessened gravity inside the survey shuttle. The old GFE device operating as it had been designed, to dampen or intensify a gravitational field within its power limits. Containing enough energy to *muffle the forces of inertia* during vessel acceleration the device has little trouble maintaining a lighter gravitational field within the cockpit of the old-time transfer shuttle. Panting heavily and sweaty the two daring officers return to the mother ship and delivered their findings to the archeology lab. There it is dissected and microscopically analyzed. The findings were astonishing.

### The Hole

This was it, the first approach to a full-fledged **black hole** in distant orbit of its giant blue companion. The x-rays emitted were of a similar spectrum as the previously observed **Cygnus X-1** as the gases of the companion star were siphoned off in a stream of superheated hydrogen. All systems were fully optimal and every crewman was at their post as they prepared a running trajectory, which would take them closer to the black hole ever. The crew ironically took more comfort in the fact that maintaining a safe course past the black hole was not as dangerous as passing so near a supergiant star.

There was much debate about the mission and serious talk of canceling the highly risky venture soon dominated the mind of Captain Stiller. The suggested course of 50 million miles past the black hole was disappointingly aborted due to the intensity of the blue giant star at that range. Many of the ambitious crew pushed for the fifty million-mile pass attempting to assure the captain that the ships hull and shield class could withstand the massive furnace at that distance. Others were skeptical of flares, ray bursts, and winds. Decidedly, Captain Stiller ordered a 100 million mile pass of the black hole still



allowing extremely close-up footage of the hungry dark pit. Mathematicians, engineers, and science personnel worked feverishly to pinpoint a precise velocity and trajectory for their potentially suicidal fly by. Tensions mounted as they prepared the historical course toward the dead stellar core. The ship vibrated and the power fluctuated all around as the GEF device demanded more and more energy to counter minor gravitational sheering forces of the giant blue star and black hole.

As they began their quick elliptical lapse the power outages increased and tensions among the crew heightened. Backup power was fed to the imaging devices externally positioned onto the hull of the vessel taking time lapse and snapshots of the black hole. The deep silhouette distorted the light of its companions star and was as black as the deepest region of space. The light could be seen swirling around the event horizon of course only to be the illusive effects like that of invisible heat waves of a desert mirage. Once the death-defying maneuver was completed the power outages stopped and the hearts of the awe inspired crew started again. The footage and images of the black hole were recorded with crystal clarity. This was now Earth's official confirmation of the existence of black holes. Once the information is transmitted to Earth or the Vigor returns home there will be a host of astronomers and physicists bucking for a **Nobel Prize**.

### The Journey's End

The crew looked on as they neared the end of their flight plan and prepared to return home. They had traveled all the way to the end of the **Orion Arm** of the galaxy. Before them was a vast void of deep galactic space as wide as the galactic arm itself. Crossing this void was almost certainly a one-way ticket, which no crewmember could afford. Once outside the local gravitational influence of the clustered stars the galaxy spin begins to move past and you can find yourself very far from home in a relatively short period of time. Of course you could always travel along with the rotation of the arm while maintaining a sideways drift into the galactic void. This however would decrease your maximum velocity and take far longer to reach the next arm.

Only their dreams and a few high-res telescopic images could tell them what sorts of bodies they could find in the **Sagittarius Arm**. So far nothing alternative had been detected, no other vessels appearing in the radarscope. Perhaps another cluster of intelligent life exists somewhere nestled in the neighboring spiral called Sagittarius. By no loss there was at least one observation of note, the Milky Way center was starting to become slightly more brilliant as the distant galactic core peered through the haze. Astounding photos were filed and the crew reversed course. The path home was agreed to be a straight shot in order to bring the homesick crew to their families expediently. Light-years into the return journey a strange and unprecedented encounter ensued upon the unwitting crew of the Vigor.

### The Uncanny Serpents

The galactic gap was thirty-six months behind. Captain Stiller had ordered the investigation of a new star system only a light year out of the way. The sensor data analyst had reported unusual energy readings coming from the system. The course was adjusted toward the curious orange dwarf star. On course the Captain maintained a standing position near the sensor panel to try and determine the type of energy they were detecting. The sensor analysis revealed a concentrated beam of omicron rays, a highly uncommon form of electromagnetic radiation beyond the realm of gamma. Only due to the planetary councils alien additions to the Vigor's sensor grill were they able to detect the spectrally transgressing signals.

The dwarf system was lightly *planeted* and looked like a typical low mass system, a few terrestrials, a gas giant or two, and a medium sized life harboring world hugging its small parent star. The signals were emanating from an eastern continent near a large winding river of flowing water. The crew wasted no time training their optical telescopes on the region to gather high-resolution close-ups. Exhilaration filled the bridge as the constructs of a primitive civilization appeared on the screen. This was a new species and the primary mission of the Vigor. They had found what they came for. Unfortunately, making contact with the people of this world would be unlawful.

Photographs only were permitted. But something came over the bridge crew as could be noted by their vacant stares as they look upon this flourishing world of ancient civilizations. Captain Stiller's desire to know the truth led him to draw the bridge crew into an illegal landing on this world. His loophole came from the curious emanations in which they continued to pinpoint. The hope of a permitted investigation was uncovered when the tip of a pyramid deep in the alien jungle revealed itself to be the source of the omicron waves. Captain Stiller reasoned that any device advanced enough to transmit an omicron wave signal must be the work of an advanced people. This would go into his official report in the days to come.

The crew was magnetically drawn to the source of the signal to the point that they not only ignored their primary protocols but also bypassed a number of other regulations, which define their mission. Five crewmen including the Captain, Lieutenant Feynman and recently promoted Lieutenant Yifei touched down in a remote mountain range in preparation to hike near the pyramid. Neither of them seemed to acknowledge the obvious mistake of landing upon an unknown world of intelligent aliens yet, they seized all efforts to prevent visual range of any humanoid forms. As if driven by instinct they pressed on toward the distant pyramid with the emerald tip. Though they had become used to alien animals the exotic variations of jungle creatures astounded the enthralled investigation team.

On the ship the confused computer technicians worked patiently to try and pinpoint the apparent operating system malfunction severing the bridges information link from adjacent departments. The secondary crew new they had stopped at a life-harboring world yet the sensor data contained corrupted files. They were unable to gather any further details about the mission. So far all they knew was that they had a team on the surface. No emergency actions had been taken yet.

### **Following the Signal**

Hacking through the forest as if to be stranded city dwellers looking for civilization the horizon gave birth to the massive five-sided structure. A sudden surge of primal fear filled their veins as they laid eyes on the new alien species from afar. The advanced binoculars gave them clarity of view. Humanoid, yet scaly, tailed, but beak mouthed, binocular but red-eyed, their slightly elongated snouts harbored the nostrils of a lizard or perhaps an ophidian. They wore the clothing of an ancient Mayan or Bronze Age civilization, perhaps a mixture of the two, it was difficult to determine. They were adorned by colorful metals of apparently gold and silver, a few beads of perhaps wood colored by primitive paints. The area in which they lived was of carved dwellings scattered about the plain surrounding the temple.

A primitive marketplace bustled with the activity of the Lizard men and unfathomed music of the cold-blooded people filled the air. The age was still unestablished. The apparent technology at the top of the pyramid seemed excessively modern yet the city resembled antiquation. Holding position behind the dense shrubbery the team gazed upon the pyramid as if glorifying its head, as did the lizard people. No one was scanning, documenting, nor photographing even as the pyramid tip glowed with violet/white transcendent frequencies. Why the illusion of an almond-eyed alien face vaguely appeared overlaid with the glow was unknown to the beholder.

Conversation was minimal other than a few remarks about how to reach the temple without being seen by the inhabitants. It was the tip that drew them. Having retreated to a distant rocky enclosure Captain Stiller finally made contact with the crew of the Vigor putting them at ease as to prevent a potential rescue. The crew exhaled in relief knowing their Captain and bridge crew were ok. Being rookies they had a kind of attachment to the more experienced crew and were not looking forward to manning the Vigor alone. The safety of the bridge officers was utmost. The landing shuttle was in a secluded wedge near the foot of the eye catching rocky extensions along the terrain. It appeared to be an upthrust of subsurface activity, the area was volcanic.

### **The Extrinsic Forest**

Night falls and the nocturnal creatures awaken from their daytime slumber. The sound of the forest went from uplifting chirps and whistles to ominous hoots and screeches. The crew had spoken sporadically and seemed focused on their unspoken mission, which was to reach the temple. The backup crew on the Vigor contacted them every thirty minutes to be certain they were ok and they received a positive reply each time.

In the dead of the night the team continues onward armed with infrared night scopes, energy discharge pistols, and thigh fastened machete blades unnoticeable. The charge of embedded instincts gave them mastery to overcome their dormant fears within and their hearts surged with energy. Not even the memory of the carnivorous jungle world eluded months ago stopped the advance of the empowered explorers. Even so the veggety forest in which they traversed remained a precarious excursion as they leaped and hopped the deadened tropical logs, which lay across the woodland.

The coolness of the misty droplets adhered to their heated flesh as they exerted their bodies of high demand. The croaks of venomous amphibians sounded alert to the nearby prey of beastly quadrupeds roaming about yet keeping distance of the strange humanoids traversing the wet woodlands.

Sweating in the humidity, covered in alien web strands, they had emerged of the thickness of the forest. The firelight of campsites halted the hasty crewman and they precariously bypassed several huts of hay. The Lizard men had not taken notice of these technologically armed aliens trespassing in their land. But as they succeeded to pass, the nostrils of the sleeping men of scales flared as the scent of prey filled its cavity. The night vision proved effective in maintaining a low profile. They were able to reach the base of the temple unseen.

### **Frightening Awakening**

The reality of the situation had not unveiled itself until the site of the temple base and the structure of the ancient decorations appeared around them. It was at this time they began to snap out of their fantasy as if coming to from a trance. They were only a couple of miles from the drop ship yet they were with anxiety. The Lizardlike squawks of a pursuing reptilian drew the nearby village to the temple square. Though in the darkness, the sub-photosensitive eyes were nearly as effective as the night vision scopes on the heads of the now terrified team.

Torches were lit and firelight dimly illuminated the area. With pistols on their hips and knives to their side the team stands stiffened having been presented with a great decision. Every second and every inch the crowd of aliens drew nigh drew the team close to a fork in the road. The moment of the fight or flight reaction pushed the limits of the space crew. In the minds of the conundrified explorers, were that mere plants like of the previously visited world of the jungle months ago, did not surround them. Yet, here on this perplexing world of ancient yet technified marvels, enclosed of them vicious reptilian men of everincreasing advance. The circle was formed and no reaction thus far other than the multilingual croaks of the decorated Lizard men and apparently women.

The casual deliverance of edible fruits and outlandish vegetation relieved the team of their inner struggle having intersected the last second of composure. First Contact was made and communication followed by the sand carvings of the local villagers of various patterns, shapes and symbols. The lead interpreter was crowned in golden headwear adorned of unfathomably precious jewels and unidentifiable emeralds of charm. A curious sensation minded of Yifei was that the crown seemed to speak unto her though words were not conveyed. Verbal and physical indications from the ecstatic aliens were expressly conveyed and the crew knew not a response to the exotic body language or to the indecipherable voices. Yet, in the minds of the space aliens an unseen force told them how to act.

For some reason their behavior was to stand as still as possible while maintaining a forward gaze. They actually felt free to pay little attention to the babbling Lizard man passionately striving to reach a rapport with Captain Stiller. The Captain finally looked down toward the markings in the sand and a soft ball of light appeared hovering about the symbols and before the Lizard people. The fervent reptilian gasped as if touched by an angel and backed away from the dazzling forms in the sand. Instinct took hold when the team walks forward in unison toward the ship splitting the crowd and vanishing into the forest and they turned not. No one pursued the astounding visitors. They were out of sight for some time before the brilliant flare of the atomic engine drove the magnificent craft into the heavens. Having been taken into custody by the backup crew who eventually gained access to the corrupted files recorded by the initial telescope images, the captain and sub officers were still content in themselves as they waited in the ships brig.

Their experience was still fresh on their minds while the new crew took over the ship and found out about the inhabitants on the planet below. They departed the star system immediately and the Captain made a full report on the incident. His career however was at least temporarily suspended until the council can determine if he was right or wrong by visiting the alien planet. A general court marshal may be in the cards for the brave captain and his original crew. In the years to come a hand full more of systems would be visited but no more intelligent alien species were found after the Lizard men.

### **Celebration at Krysto**

A festival was held at Krysto upon arrival for the commendable crew of the E.S. Vigor returning from its 12-year successful mission. Fireworks and cheers erupted on the surface of the frozen world and the snow was colored. Xemeral Kile the famous Krystonian settlement leader was now an Admiral of the small military established for the planet Krysto. The SMD ordered The Vigor to return to Sun Town immediately with no further delays. As blessing would have it the Vigor had lasted well during its mission and only now having safely reached the new Star City, upon departure a small collection of

alien systems, now a one hundred light-year expanse, begins to lose speed. The homeward bound vessel requires maintenance and a convenient crew drop-off as it nears the Alpha Centauri system.

A moment of silence ensued as Lazarus remained dreamily pondering the fantastic abridgment of the Vigor's adventures.

"So what will happen to you now?" Lazarus uttered reluctantly. He had become accustomed to Captain Stiller now that he heard the story of his long voyage. Captain Stiller answered not and buried his nose in his book. Finally he spoke with anxiousness,

"Probably a court marshal." Lazarus had yet to inquire about his reading material as he returns his attention to the compact work.

"What are you reading may I ask?"

He answered not smiled but spoke unto him, "*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*" Noumenometric energy went unto Lazarus and he went fourth into the corridors alone. Eight hours was certainly enough time for Commander Beltran to bring to the attention of the command deck security officer the lengthy stay of Captain Li at the computer station. Neither of them had become alarmed having previously met him personally.

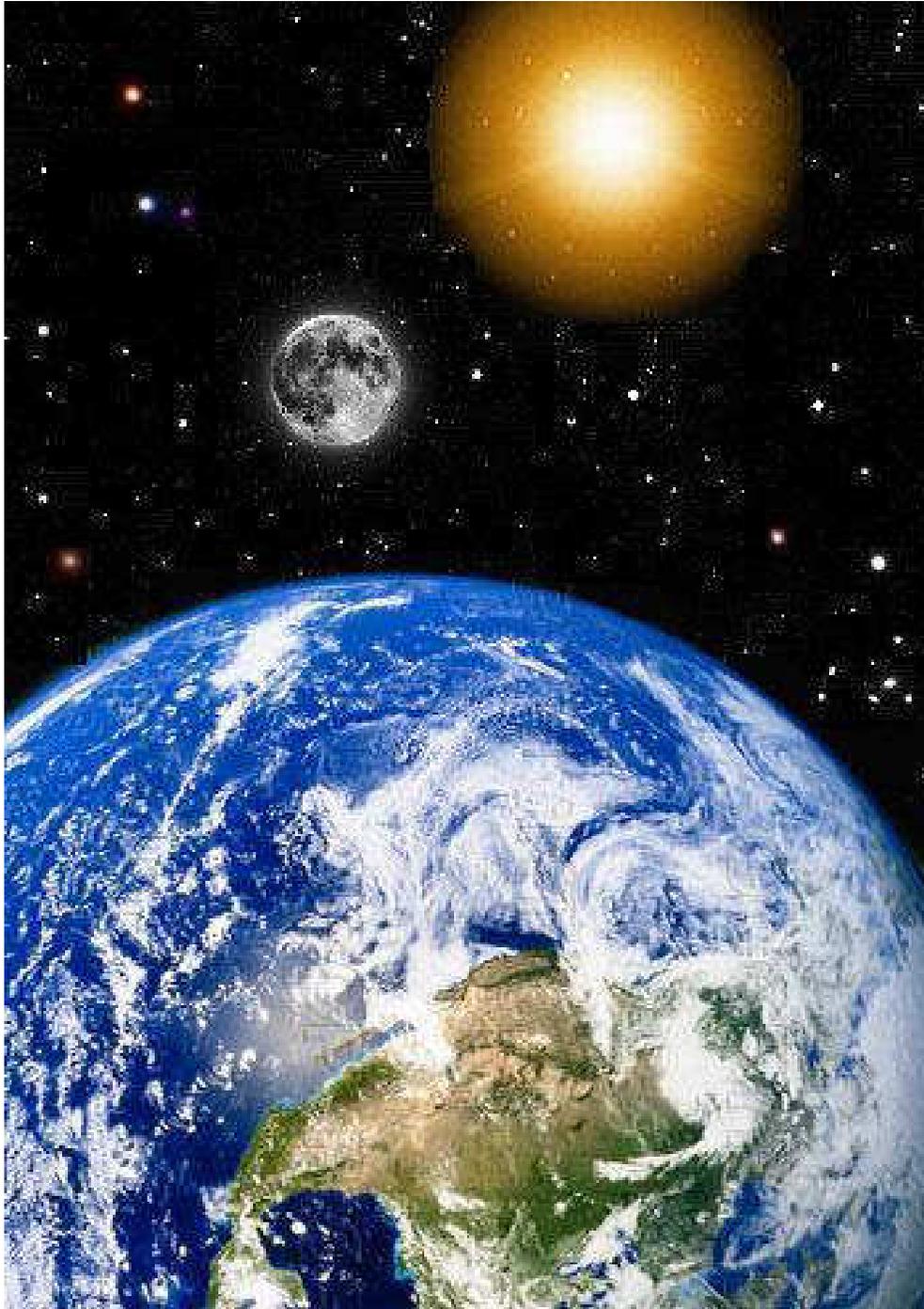
Nevertheless the data appearing on the security console was a live screenshot of Captain Li's terminal he had been granted access to. He was performing intensive searches on the Internet and ships logs. No unauthorized breach of security had been made at this time. Having shown the ship's Captain his SMD diploma card previously he was granted access to the entire ship give or take a few classified systems. Li excused himself and professionally disgreeted the Commander and **security manager.**

Immediately the two senior personnel logged into Li's search browses and found out about his excessive curiosity with the mysterious bulbous headed Mentor Aliens. By this time the magnificent Vigor was passing the Oort Cloud and would soon reach its original launch point on Earth. Li was returning to the quarters to try and locate Lazarus but was diverted to the mess hall after bumping into Celie, she Led Li by the hand into the festive ships café where the homecoming music and cheers of celebrating crewman filled the air.

## Chapter 9

### Departing The Vigor

As telescope owners looked on, the bow of The Vigor could be seen as it reflected the sunlight toward the excited viewers. The Vigor assumed a standard orbit while awaiting maintenance vessels to join her. Captain Li and Lazarus said their goodbyes to their friend and partner they have spent such a wonderful time with, took advantage of the stop at Earth to visit home, and departed the Vigor after the get-together. Celie remained onboard and her next destination was unknown. The ship bay doors retract and the seasoned Star Voyager arcs onward, the boisterous yellow dwarf star shineth forth. Passing over the old American lands they begin to decelerate for a vertical descent.



***Descending Earth***

Touching down upon the dusty launch field a gust of wind swirls around the Star Voyager... When Li popped his head out to see the brilliant midday sunlight he recalled an old poetic phrase he had remembered from his youth. *The Sun has always shined the same only my perception has changed.* As a child even the simplicity of the outdoors always has a kind of enchanting mystery to him, the temperature of the air, the feel of the turf, and the activity of the friendly neighbors. The enchantment becomes quieted with age.

But stepping out onto his homeworld having changed in his outlook the same magical delight entered his mind. In the trees, the ground, the Sun, and the wind had felt like new. The season was changing also. The air grew cool and the canopies were starting to turn. They split up to greet their parents at their separate homes. Over the thicketed heap, across the creek, and through the shrubs the familiar site of the yard presented itself with additional craftwork having been erected by Li's mother.

### **That Auto Ride**

A couple of hours later the squealing wheels of Lazarus's red hot rod side-slide onto the dirt drive in front of the Li home. In the sporty go-cart were a pile of friends headed toward the town commons for a day of leave and recreation. An involuntary glance at the old wooden dummy post in the front yard turns Li's head and back again as he walks toward the vehicle. Li declines the offer of the animated friend pool with slight reluctance yet was satisfied in his decision. He had other plans. Mr. Li stopped him on the way to his bedroom asking about the Star Voyager, his eyes having been temporarily pried from the midday chronicle. Li gives an abridged version of the last few days and his mother was attentive as well still holding her pan of frying steak.

Li knew he would eventually take his father at least inside and after registering with the Transition Academy perhaps a flight. The ringing of the phone releases him from his short story about his complicated adventures. Darlyn had called him and Li was pleased to hear her happy. His room was still the way he left it and his mother rarely went in. That's where he gathered a few belongings before cleaning up to go and visit Darlyn.

Showered, shaven, and feeling fresh he exits the house to see the car still sitting in the drive rocking and swaying filled with chat and laughter. They still had not decided where to go yet. Li squeezes in to get a ride to Darlyn's apartment. It felt like an old elementary school bus ride with loud talk and joking banter. The group was alive with excitement this weekend and would soon arrive at the new apartment complex where Darlyn resides.

### **Seeing Darlyn**

The jiving friends depart, Li having requested to be dropped off at the mouth of the complex. The others flee to attend their jovial evening of while and activity. The sun was out and warming the asphalt to a comfortable measure. The landscaping of the area was well groomed and thick with greenery. The clusters of apartments were arranged in rows yet coordinated with the local vegetation.

A minimal of plant life was excavated in the construction of this new style of building, which is to build around the larger trees rather than dig up the bonny airgivers. Li felt compassion for the squirming worm baking on the hot sidewalk and relocated it to another spot in the grass. The splash of the pool drew his attention to the sunbathers and local residents enjoying the summer's day. It was the rounded belly of life, which caught his eye revealing the lovely yet lonely Darlyn sitting back in her selected lawn chair.

Still in uniform Li crosses the parking lot to join her and Darlyn was surprised by his appearance. Her face lit up when he sat next to her and nudged her shoulder at her starboard quarter. Her high-pitched squeals told a tale of her gladness to have a true friend come to see her. She hugged him and they began catching up on their friendship. Darlyn was telling Li about her routine day, which was normal according to her perceptions.

The previous appearance of her baby's father and subsequent argument was the only blemish to her afternoon. He had left again to return at an unknown time in the future as usual. By this time the sun was starting to beat Li down and the black material of his uniform was becoming almost as hot as the rubber of the lawn chair. He removed his shirt finally to reveal the gray tank top undershirt. Li laid back into his chair still listening to the chattering girlfriend who normally is quiet and reserved.

## A Jealous Boyfriend

Having been overshadowed by the medium large form of an Earth beast Li's eyes opened cautiously unto the sight of the man of stature. He looked down on Darlyn as if to scrutinize her appearance and his expression became wrath. The booming voice of this loudmouthed man was starting to make a scene at the poolside drawing the attention of the restful neighbors. Once again Darlyn was humiliated and angered and the inconsiderateness of her ex-mate draws her to inner conflict. Years of verbal abuse and lack of affection from the man who gave her the baby nestled in her womb surfaces and she yells to him. Li could not smile seeing as how Darlyn did not finish her fruit cocktail and began packing her purse and sun oil to return to her apartment.

By assuring Darlyn that it isn't her fault upon her unwarranted apologies the attention of the enraged boyfriend turns to Li who recognizes his tunnel vision as a sign of instability. He had seen it many times in other places and proceeded as any practiced officer would, to defend and edify the innocent. The fast talking galoot gave no heed to Li's presence and instead took it as a threatening position and began to question him. He asked many times what his affiliation with Darlyn is and who he was. As his experience has taught him diplomacy is primary above all else. Failing to calm the man using this universal method of relation, tensions rose as the twitch reflex of the man's muscles reposition his body into a threatening posture. Li had not reacted yet because his training has taught him the important thing about avoiding combat. Yet, walking away wasn't an option at this point.

The man's proximity was too close and he chose not to turn his back on him. Extra sensory perceptions previously attained and recently exercised by the experience of space revealed to him the man's center of balance. The purpose for this process occurring in Li's mind was strictly precautionary. Judged by known typical human behaviors it was not faulting of Li to consider the possibility that the man might become hostile. Darlyn's shouts were becoming more worrisome as she attempted to intervene. Being poked in the chest is never a good sign whether or not violence follows. Li knew there would be a fight now because he had no intention of stopping himself in his response which was that he lightly grabbed the man's hands as if to escort the elderly and began to slowly peel it away, leaving the man to make the first move and he did.

The man fell forward in an attempt to use his large sized to come down on Li that he might restrain him. The premonition of this action came about one and a half seconds before and Li appeared to react instantly by turning and casually walking around the fat sticker bush allowing the clumsy fellow to fall into it. After getting out of the bush with a few scratches and a bruised ego the dumbfounded man had become even more bewildered then when Li had gently removed his large meaty hands.

Thinking back on what had just transpired the man couldn't recall there being enough space or time for Li to move without his adapting. Li knew he could end this duel with little effort yet he decided to engage the man upon his next attack now that he is warranted. The charging brute rushes fourth in an attempt to bombard Li with arm thrusts and jabs to the head. Li reacted faster attaining the necessary energy before the slower more cumbersome opponent. Though the man's limbs were larger Li was able to block and parry the man's punches by snuffing the flow of energy to his muscles. The man's strong arms lost potential force as Li's overturned arm, stiffened and directed specifically to the man's foreflesh. The man had the will to rebound but not the energy as his limp limb remain unpowered in the brief span of a second or so. A side step allowed the man to fall ahead again as his forward motion carried him away. Coming around for another pass Li endured a blow to the shoulder.

The amount of energy used for that blow allowed him to respond with positive hits at this time. He could either hit back at the same impact or a series of smaller ones to equal out the force. Li chose the latter. As the fight continued Li performed a number of stops and traps followed by appropriately angled wrist and elbow strikes, which he directed at base bones only instead of smaller more breakable pieces. For a larger person this might deliver a more notable impact. Feeling the effects of a few skull knocks the man ended his onslaught.

His inconclusiveness about the engagement wouldn't allow the man to pursue a fight any further yet made dissonant statements to Darlyn before speeding away in his muddy jeep. Though the man wasn't worth his time Li respectfully waited in the pool area until he was gone before approaching Darlyn to sooth her. He felt at home amongst the spaciousness and decorations of the high-rise lodging. Now as a kind of psychologist he could determine the emotional state of his new friend by the slight clutter of belongings. The smell of pine filled the air from the damp mop in the kitchen section where Darlyn had been cleaning. Regarding sanitation the entire area was quite disinfected.

### Li Comforts Darlyn

With focus and attention Li had succeeded in calming the troubled girl into relaxation. She had scooted close to him holding his hand with both and took comfort in him. The vibrant datapage in Li's pocket was filled with radiant lore. Darlyn had noticed that bulge in his pants at the pool before her baby's father arrived. The information contained therein was from The Vigor. Her head nudged against it as it lay on a pillow in his lap. His words of tones had hypnotized her unto slumber even as his wristcomp began to shiver.

Holding the velvet pillow gently he lay her head down and exit the apartment to find Lazarus waiting outside in the middle of the parking lot and Li boards the stylish auto. Li could clearly see the slight difference in the old Lazarus as compared to the new. The change was not drastic yet, visible. It was that he had something on his mind. In the back seat were not friends but a couple of fuel blocks which Lazarus had taken the initiative to acquire. The spectral shimmer of the flaky snow-white material had caught his eye and threw him into a trance, which he resisted with the momentum of his body as the car accelerates. Li glances upon the face of his long time friend and took note of the peculiar astounded calm upon his countenance. By this time it was becoming twilight and soon night would fall.

### A Lawful Crossing

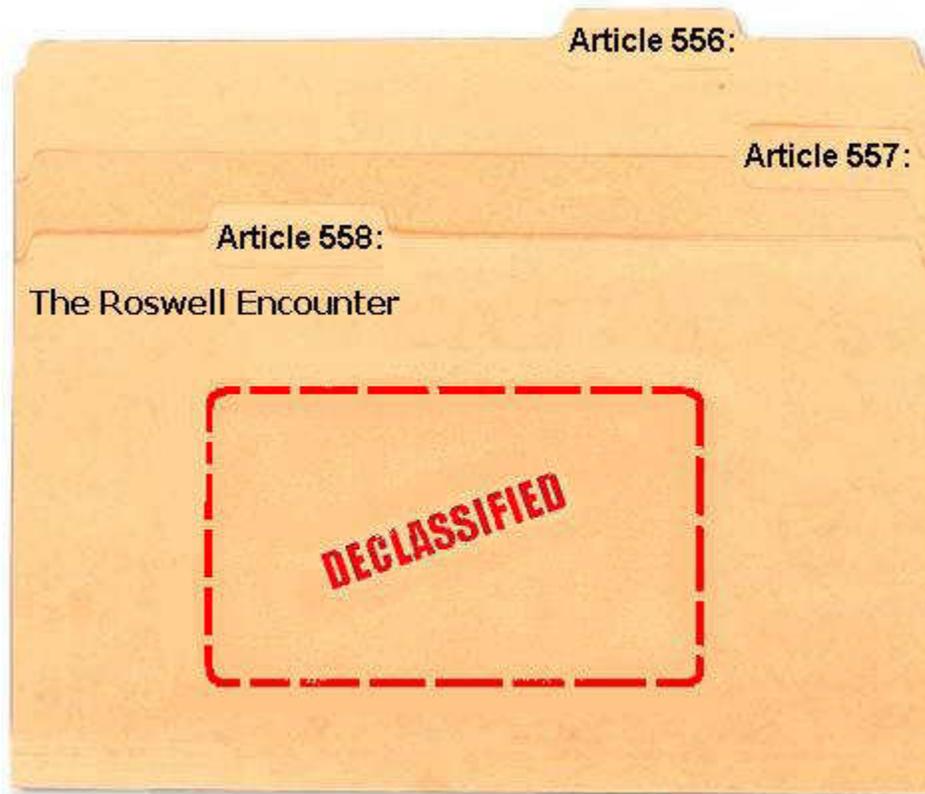
Silence had filled the cabin of blinking lights and glowing dash buttons and the mouth of Lazarus parted as he began to exhale a sentence when a blue band appeared across his eyes, it was the alarming luminance of a police cruiser siding his vehicle. Lazarus pulls over immediately aside the two-lane road amidst the various plazas and residences awaiting the uniformed officer.

The usual requirement for license and vehicle insurance was requested by the leather sounding executive. Lazarus calmly handed the documents to him and he returned to his vehicle. While waiting Lazarus began speaking about his meeting with the former captain of The Vigor. He explained how he received a rundown about their overall missions and objectives. Li was immediately intrigued and listened intently. He learned of the maiden departure from Krysto and Admiral Kile's historical leadership of Krystonian settlers now a bustling city of frost.

### Storytelling

His mind was pacified about hearing of the early missions of the magnificent voyages of the E.S. Vigor. Li's heart dropped upon catching wind of the brief pursuit of a mentor alien spacecraft detailed in Lazarus's account. He interrupted his smooth report. Li jabbars rapidly appealing to get intensive details surrounding this event in which Lazarus described and requested him to focus on the alien part. He had to grab him and calm him in order to continue citing the account. It was another of those rare moments when Li becomes overexcited. The returning officer, handing him his records back and cautioning him to keep his speed to a reasonable rate, interrupted Lazarus again.

Lazarus apologizes and acknowledges him respectfully. The engine of the wild ruby roadster revs and he accelerates toward home. Continuing Lazarus explained the attempted artifice by the elaborate craft just as it flees from sensor range of the Vigor. The use of gamma rays as a disguise was an intriguing maneuver yet only enough for a brief getaway. He mentor aliens would not be able to use this tactic again and Humans have come one step closer to the long awaited general encounter with them. Lazarus finally questioned Li of why he is so interested in that part of the story it was his turn now to *get the skinny*. Li expresses his fascination with those aliens and begins speaking of his findings on the bridge of the Vigor with his data page at the ready.



#### Article 558: The Roswell Encounter

The first encounter with the bulbous headed aliens took place on Earth at Roswell New Mexico when a saucer shaped craft crashed to Earth. The aliens had been traveling through space for nearly a century and were in need of preprocessed fissile material. Having detected methodized uranium and plutonium isotopic compounds as well as the remnants of pre-detonated reactive material i.e. alpha, beta particles and gamma emission the needy alien trio had little choice but to acquire assistance from Earth. The **alien translightspeed driver core** was at low power and they had become stranded in the solar system. They could not maintain a fast enough velocity to continue their wayward journey throughout the cosmos. The accountability of the crashing of the vessel was never determined or the information was lost.

Speculation holds that the craft crashed due to the natural phenomena others theorize that they were shot down by one of the missile bearing nations of Earth. The desert was a guided crash-landing zone chosen by the advanced extrinsic pilot. A ranch farmer, who showed up at the scene and removed a few pieces of material from the site, returned to his home on the farm. Three aliens exit the craft, two were injured, and one was scouting the nearby region looking for elements. In his hand a unique and intriguing detections counter. It showed dedication that even as the ship was virtually unusable the determined alien immediately began its long task of repairing the vessel and wasted no time analyzing the nearby minerals. The alien had not gotten very far before the military jeeps and personnel carriers arrived with guns drawn on the curious looking uncapped alien in a fancy shiny space suit.

The soldiers, though ordered to recover and transport any living being back to the base immediately, were stationary as they looked upon the dazzling aliens. The commanding officer ordered them to snap out of it and retrieve the outlandish being. After a gulp they moved in slowly. The alien had become terrified and backed against the damaged hull of the saucer shaped craft behind it. Its arms were outstretched and its hands and mouth were open with no sound as if to silently beg for mercy by the large potentially barbaric Humanoids approaching with high-powered firearms. Its little legs were trembling and it remained in terror even as the soldier scooped it up as it would that of a child.

The alien didn't resist probably because it was so weak but let out a screeching squeal as it was carried off to the camouflaged jeep. The battered bodies of the other two were carried away also. The assertiveness of the highly trained army man was softened as he held the fragile frame of the inhuman person. He was still trying to get a grip on the situation.

Though having rescued and carried off many refugees and civilians in previous wars the soldier could not take his eyes off the strange creature nestled and squealing in his bosom.

### **Arriving at the Base**

Less than an hour later the base personnel frantically prepared the area for the arrival of these alien beings; moving equipment and repositioning lights. The squealing had quieted somewhat and the soldier was glad to finally be able to set them down on the base grounds inside the hangar. As soon as they had hit the floor they attached to one another as if by magnetic attraction and were hugging. All three were trembling and their mouths were chattering. The squealing had stopped but the cringing continued. One of the aliens passed out of exhaustion and fright. At that time all the surrounding onlookers were ordered to move back to the edges of the hanger walls and make a large circle giving the terrified space men room to breathe.

Once they cleared the area the quivering had stopped and the remaining two aliens began to calm. The base operator knew they might need medical attention and requested nurses to report to the hangar. The big reflective eyes looked onto the crowd of militants with a gazing trance and they breathed easy. The commander ordered the skinny and small nurse with makeup to slowly approach the aliens alone as to draw trust in them at the site of the non-threatening female form. They immediately seemed to recognize the natural peace in a woman and were not afraid of her approach. She somewhat frightfully kneels down before them and their faces had returned to their previous superior effrontery. Their demeanor changed from fear to curiosity having detected they were safe. They allowed the approach of additional medical personnel and the two injured aliens were removed to an infirmary.

### **Experiments**

The uninjured one was escorted to a room where it would be observed and communication attempts would be made. The room contained a long table and chalkboard. The Human hand led the alien to a chair where it readily sat upon the cushioned seat and backrest. It was panting from the long walk and its breathing was short. A small group of scientists and code crackers entered and began their interview. First was placed on the table a child's toy to zero the counter. The toy was the wooden blocks in classic shapes of cylinders, cubes, and spheres in which it was intended that the alien would attempt to place the correct shapes into the designated holes. The alien had not moved and only glanced at the toy once, afterward an expressionless look to the interviewers and still no activity with the toys. It sat quietly with its hands in its lap. It rarely moved any part of its body other than an occasional five-degree head turn and now seemed immensely patient.

Feeling a bit embarrassed they immediately called for a mathematician who entered promptly. The alien's head nodded toward the scientist and he had a brief and subtle insight in his mind, which quickly faded. He had not reported the connection right away and began writing equations and drawing schematics of relativity and quantum physics on the board. After filling about one-fifth of the chalkboard, the alien was led by the hand again to the and given a piece of chalk. The alien stared into its open hand where the long chalk lay as if analyzing its composition. The man removed the chalk and demonstrated again how to draw with it. The alien looked toward the man again silently and stood motionless. Finally the man grabbed the hand of the composed creature and arranged its finger properly and led it to the dusty board. It did scribble some shapes and lines though quite squiggly and uncoordinated. It appeared that the fascinating man of the cosmos was far removed from a chalkboard.

### **Lunchtime**

Temporarily suspending the interview they led the alien to the mess hall where they had prepared a long buffet table with various types of food including fruits, vegetables, and meat portions. The alien having been led to the table analyzed the biomatter and did eat of the sliced tangerines followed by the green grapes. It seemed to have a taste for fruits containing citric acid. It hadn't eaten much and the alien soon moved on and showed its first expression. Its mouth-parted some as it gazed upon the glimmering onion. It picked it up unable to fit it into its tiny mouth and a chef was called over quickly to cut the onion into chunks. The alien scarfed the tearing vegetable with haste and the surrounding personnel was fascinated that it was not appalled by the strong vapors and taste of a raw onion.

About five minutes later the alien had turned into a stiffened anatomical character as if having been activated like a machine. It was done eating and they brought the alien back to the interviewing room. This time they had replaced the chalkboard with a large standing note pad and the alien was given a jumbo ink pen. Having glanced at the chalkboard filled with the elementary scribbling of general theories and quantum equations the aliens began drawing trans-dimensional hypershapes and exotic text. The code breakers were never successful in interpreting the details other than the 4-dimensional cubes and pyramids. The periodical rotation of base personnel continued steadily as the little brainy man sat quietly and still.

Nearly dozing off the quivering of the pulsating artery under its epidermis near the ridge of its forehead caught the attention of the watcher. Before it had been motionless now the steady throb of this new tubular bloodway supplied a notable amount of circulatory fluid to its forebrain. The hair stood up on the neck of the observer and a curious sensation became him. His report indicated he experienced feelings characteristic of an adrenaline rush or dopamine release. The pulsating lasted about ten minutes minus the time before the observer had noticed it. It then was found to occur spontaneously for varying amounts of time. Sometimes the pulsing would be very rapid and high frequency.

### **First Words**

Finally after weeks of waiting the palling alien spoke its first phrases. One man was on watch and nearly asleep in his padded recliner. The words were spoken suddenly. The vocal sonances put fourth were separated into two sentences. The voice of the alien was twangy and consistent as if to be sung. Only two tones were distinguished and were of the two different sentences. The alien sang using an uninterrupted, like tonicity. The voice was clear and ear catching. Though the language was never deciphered nor was the message the speech was recorded and worded according to the English language. The tones however, where theorized to be a warning followed by a consequence. The words were as follows.

“Yehnupt nopt nypt noiuzsh...”

“Yuht uptlan nnik...”

### **Ascending into Heaven**

Afterward the alien returned to its state of solitude and stillness joyously reminiscing in its mind of cosmic adventure and enduring diversion. The margin of events experienced by this very old and experienced being is astounding. Other than the brief statements the alien was less than entertaining and everyday it was observed, nothing eventful was recorded. Encounters with physicists revealed little legible. Attempts to arouse the alien with nude women failed. Ventures to hold or touch the alien in a provocative manner resulted in resistance, its skinny arms always pushing the experimenter away and turning its bulbous head. It appeared to be entertained by whatever was in its head.

Theory holds that the alien could place itself in vivid places and events created and destroyed by its imagination far more realistically than any Human brain was capable. It did sleep but most of the day it sat quietly and motionless giving only a nod or two every ten minutes or so. It had long ago removed the padding from the chair without the watcher knowing and placed it on the floor and sat there upon it comfortably. Its two colleagues had died and autopsies ensued revealing unnerving results. The alien who was still alive died in the weeks later of unknown causes. It had passed in its sleep painlessly; its hands were cuffed over its belly and not its heart as one might expect. The facial expression was that of bliss.

### **Autopsy**

The subsequent necropsy reveled only a handful of working organs: the brain, which was about three times the size of any human, the heart, which was half the size of a human, and sub-stomach. It seemed that the onion it had eaten was instantly dissolved and fed into its brain rapidly and had not passed into any intestines which were incidentally absent. Some of the onion material instead of being defecated was secreted through the aliens skin leaving a glossy and sticky epidermis. The initial dryness of the skin upon capture of the aliens indicates a long gap in eating. Its purple blood was toxic and acidic. The rest of the organs were detached and unused.

The smell of the alien's interior was odorous and ammonia like and caused coughing and tearing to the medical staff that had to evacuate the room and could not continue without the use of gas masks. The alien spacecraft was recovered and dismantled at various installations. Parts of the craft were used to create new technologies around the world and the military held the patents of various devices originating from the craft. An accident when attempting to dismantle the ship's engine core led to an explosion destroying the military hangar, surrounding structures, and killing many base personnel. The remaining parts of the craft consisted of pieces of the hull and other sections. The heart of the craft was destroyed and no additional findings were possible.

### Military Intervention

Lazarus was just as intrigued as Li when he first heard of The Vigor's run-in. The flashy ride pulls around the bend and they both gasp at the site of lights and **SVLC inspection teams** surrounding The Star Voyager coated with the brown dust of the old baseball field. Li exits the car and is approached by the head inspector who adamantly requested the Star Voyager's mission and course logs. Li was hesitant but promptly complied after having the badge of the adjacent black suited high-ranking SMD officer flashed before his eyes, his combat helmet securely fastened and attack rifle carefully angled. He interfaced with the Star Voyager's intranet router and downloaded the latest logs into his wrist computer then transferring them to the officer's data card. The officer salutes Li and signals the SVLC team to vacate the launch field.

Finally after a relaxing vacation on Earth the great Star Voyager could lift off and ascend into space. The big-wheeled pickup trucks of the SVLC team had departed and the field was vacant other than the hovering black vessel preparing to ascend. They had loaded all of the fuel bricks into the compartments quickly yet carefully as to avoid any thruster failures. The two eager explorers arise and flee the beauty of the blue-green planet Earth into the starry night sky. Lazarus stared at the seemingly luminous datapage sitting on the dash of the helm console. Li had already made his way to the rear of the ship to cleanup. The Roswell report was still fresh on his mind as his feet sit propped on his the navigation panel. What other information did Li manage to retrieve from the bridge computer records of The Vigor? An alert sounded indicating that they are heading on an unscheduled course. It seems that Li had not input a flight plan yet. Lazarus scooted over to Li's console and set the course toward the Asteroid Belt Plaza.

### A Game of Chess

Husto and Feeno battle in chess at the usual table. Retired and occasionally utilized for reference by the ambitiously diplomatic SMD recruiters interviewing customers, Husto waits patiently for something. He was well known, a first-generation Transition Academy graduate, Feeno a second. They didn't normally wait at the Mars Bar or anywhere else for anything unless it was nothing short of a paradigm shift. If you see Husto leave then it might be prudent to check the news. Husto was as spacy as they come. He even had an eerie "father time" sense about him. He seemed to have a unique perspective on things, punctual and successfully wise. Feeno though younger, had a high rank on the spacy scale in his own right. It is a tough game there in the centerboard.

The aliens around were engrossed in their own forms of passive activities; not only games like chess but some of them seemed engaged in topics on the level of a model turnover. Husto and Feeno knew they were discussing something important. Whether or not it was as comparable in urgency as Husto's secret may be relevant for some and uninvolved for others. They both knew a lot of things. Their SMD status was unknown to most and rumored for another. The high status of Husto and Feeno was apparent to most. One thing was certain; they was good.

The air rushes through the **quick pump system** and the huff of the retracting portal breezes past the counter. Only a lone KMD officer enjoyed the wind on his neck. Mariah was decapping and tying her hair down as she hung her helmet, orders a sweet tea and strolls to the middle table where Husto and Feeno remain locked in strategic combat. She joins with a grin of hope probably having returned from an SMD mission. She was part-time as well. In fact she had some of the much-expected role-playing jobs as a woman of beauty. Indeed she said she has just returned from near **the forbidden zone** at the edge of the Star City boarder, not on the end where Krysto lies but opposite. Her mission was for the SMD but not as a decoy or attractant this time. She obscurely talks to them as they planfully reposition their pieces. They often share their stories as allowed by the SMD protocol handbook.

The forbidden zone was a star system containing the **Wolfman** planet, a fascinating K-9-like race with some pretty nominal global issues. She was part of the scout ship surveying the system as a pilot. Her personal vessel had been landed elsewhere while she attends the mission. She reported to them that the k-9.s recent advances in liquid fuel efficiency were successful in lowering their carbon monoxide emissions as a note of good news. The planet was nearly in the same state as Earth, which, although relieved of its current emissions was still in a state of biospherical recovery. **Gas to solid conversion** chambers integrated into every muffler system of automobiles and coal plant smoke stacks on Earth served as efficient cleansing features developed by the Matron Science Group. This device makes it possible to convert gases into pebbles at the atomic level. It uses miniature versions of specialized particle accelerators to bombard the carbon monoxide gas and fracture its hold on oxygen and nitrogen molecules.

Pumping the material through a series of manifolds hosting special viscous adhesives assist in trapping the remaining gaseous compounds thereby allowing the device to compact and grind the material into a heavy powder instead of a an atmospherically transcending gas of toxic potency. After the successful separation the dirty gas elements lose their buoyant capability it had before losing its breathable gas bonds. The cleaned air is drawn out at a high rate and the carbon monoxide sub-molecules settle in a bin, which requires occasional dumping. The powder is then discarded and sometimes used as fertilizer.

The Matron was an elite think tank consisting of many species working together for peace and quality of life. Husto's turn to share a secret came about and he did so subtly. No one in the café was listening anyway, they were mostly aliens. Naturally Mariah and Feeno were troubled to hear of the recent kidnapping of two Matron Scientist **Bal Ibro** and **Unim Niom**, two Humans from Canada. They were attentive because this was a very serious matter. The reports indicated that the kidnapers were suspected of working for the Resistance. A science outpost on the planet Lactronia at the outskirts of the inner Sirius system was attacked and the two wealthy scientists were removed. Even one matron scientist could be dangerous if forced to obey a sinister will.

Husto knew the report of the details behind how Resistance subordinates were able to kidnap and escape undetected. Of course Feeno had just come from Krysto. The Confederate Resistance recruited him, the most dangerous mission yet requested by the SMD. Thanks are to Yahweh he made it back safely. The huff of the airlock attracts their notice. People come in and out all the time at that particular space café. Yet, somehow, the three felt as if it were a non-routine occurrence, perhaps their weird time sense. Seiwana Li and Lazarus enter and decap. Husto lightly grins to himself. He notes the earnestness on their face and the asunderness of their steps. Feeno and Mariah saw it too. Li orders a tea and Lazarus one beer. Lazarus was still a bit smiley and Li catching on pretty quick to the space scene.

"How are you two enjoying your new life in Star City?" Husto asked now that they have had some significant experiences so far. "Very positively..." Li said. "Take over my chess game." Feeno said as he leaves to go elsewhere.. He rarely says where he's going unless a qualified person is asking and even then it is conveyed most surreptitiously, not that he minded, moreso that it is a result of the pattern one becomes accustomed to in his line of work. Li knew he was still closing in on the main mentality possessed by his friends. He was excited to attain it.

Lazarus, after stalemating Husto, moves over to the group of KMD officers who just filled the bar after decapping, the accompanying lone officer seemed to have picked up a couple of lady comrades at the Ceres hotel and decided on the ever popular yet quaint atmosphere of the Mars Bar to make his impressions. Li on the other hand was trying to decide where to go next. The choices were so vast it was hard to even make a decision. Just then he saw a little into Husto's approach. He was a senior and preferred to stay put until he gets the motivation up to go somewhere in space. Of course he had been around for a while and seen most of the frequented systems. Li's turn to tell his story arrives and he chooses the tale of the Jungle Planet, Husto and Mariah were intrigued.

Though experienced they always perk up when new stories are being told. Li told the right one that time and moved on to elaborate a little about his new SMD membership. Husto was quiet. Mariah was routine and her wrist computer was blinking. She received a message and left. Husto broke out the playing cards, began a shuffle, and invited Li to a game. A crew of Cats walks in, decaps, and sits at their usual tables. They were conversing in their soft vowel tones something major by the sound of it. Li noticed the air of apprehension, which seemed to be present in most customers lately. Husto told him not to worry about it. Yet there were a few issues of note happening. The kidnapping of Matron Scientist at Lactronia, the recent attack on Krysto, and now the tenseness of the aliens was observable. Li takes Husto's advice and plays it by ear, just relax and enjoy the game.

## The Matron Abduction

Sweating, gagged, and tied Bal awakens to find him in the darkness of the cargo hold of a freighter. He could tell by the steel beam joints supporting the bay struts. Boxes and containers were scattered about. He tugs Unim who was lying in his side still out. He also awakens. They struggle a bit and manage to remove their mouth cloths. The fresh yet arid air was relieving. They had started to discuss their whereabouts and what had transpired to lead them to this freighter hold. They had not known the new science graduates fresh from the academy, or so they showed in documentation were really Resistance subordinates assigned to infiltrate the Laboratory. They had been there for weeks before learning enough to be able to abduct Bal and Unim. The last thing they both recalled was working hard on their latest project and then blackness.

The ship they were in began to vibrate and the engines were winding down, they were slowing. Perhaps a half an hour later they heard the memorizing hum of the short-range hovering system and subsequent jolt of a touchdown on solid terrain. The rear hatch opened and two armed men stood in the light. They rushed in and grabbed the frightened science men and dragged them out into the lighted corridors of some kind of facility. The gravity in the building was at about 1 g and the halls were filled with Humans and Mydausians. They were brought to an interrogation room where they first met Cyril. He had ventured into Star City undercover to the private system of Delta Pavonis, a dwarf star expected to become a red giant in the near cosmic future and home system of Mydausians.

Delta Pavonis is privately ran by its inhabitants yet maintain allied status with Star City, making it the most frequently visited system by inconspicuous civilians who wish to maintain a secretive status. It is also slightly elevated in criminal activity such as the abduction of the two-valued scientist. Cyril knew it was best to instruct the subordinates to bring them to Delta P. Beltran was still at headquarters working his way into full command ship and was still a known criminal. Cyril had not yet alerted many officials and could enter the territory and show his face more often. The subordinates were just converted civilians looking for merchandise and a fight. Bal and Unim were now standing in a decorated office much like Admiral Kile's of the KMD, yet it was no honored military leader, instead the Cat criminal and Beltran's right hand man Cyril who covers his face with the translation mask to interview the scientist.

He questioned them thoroughly about their latest projects and additional information he could get from them. They were vague but the armed Mydausian guard standing over them nudging with the barrel gave them incentive to speak more. They could tell the Resistance had a plan. They also knew they wouldn't be leaving to go home anytime soon. One report about the location of this Resistance/ Mydausian collaboration and the SMD would be on full alert. Unable to respond they are moved to another location into what looked like a doctor's office. There they are injected with a chemical.

## Call to Duty

Husto's alarm started ringing, just as he called gin. He had beaten Li in ten games. Li acknowledged his skill as a clearly superior player. Husto reads his message, stands, and exits promptly. Li takes the card deck and shuffles them. He, Lazarus, and the KMD officers were the only humans left in the bar. Laz approaches with laughter telling Li about KMD mime show practices. Li is excessively amused by the ludicrousness of a fight between a clown becoming threatened by the sudden appearance of a mime at his birthday party performance neither of which knew each other from Adam.

Both of their alarms rang and they peep the text. Admiral Seghtee called them to a meeting place. Feeling connected they both exit the café, into the lobby, onto the asteroidal patio and take off to Moonbase. Seghtee laid a stack of documents on the desk with the photo of a Catman.

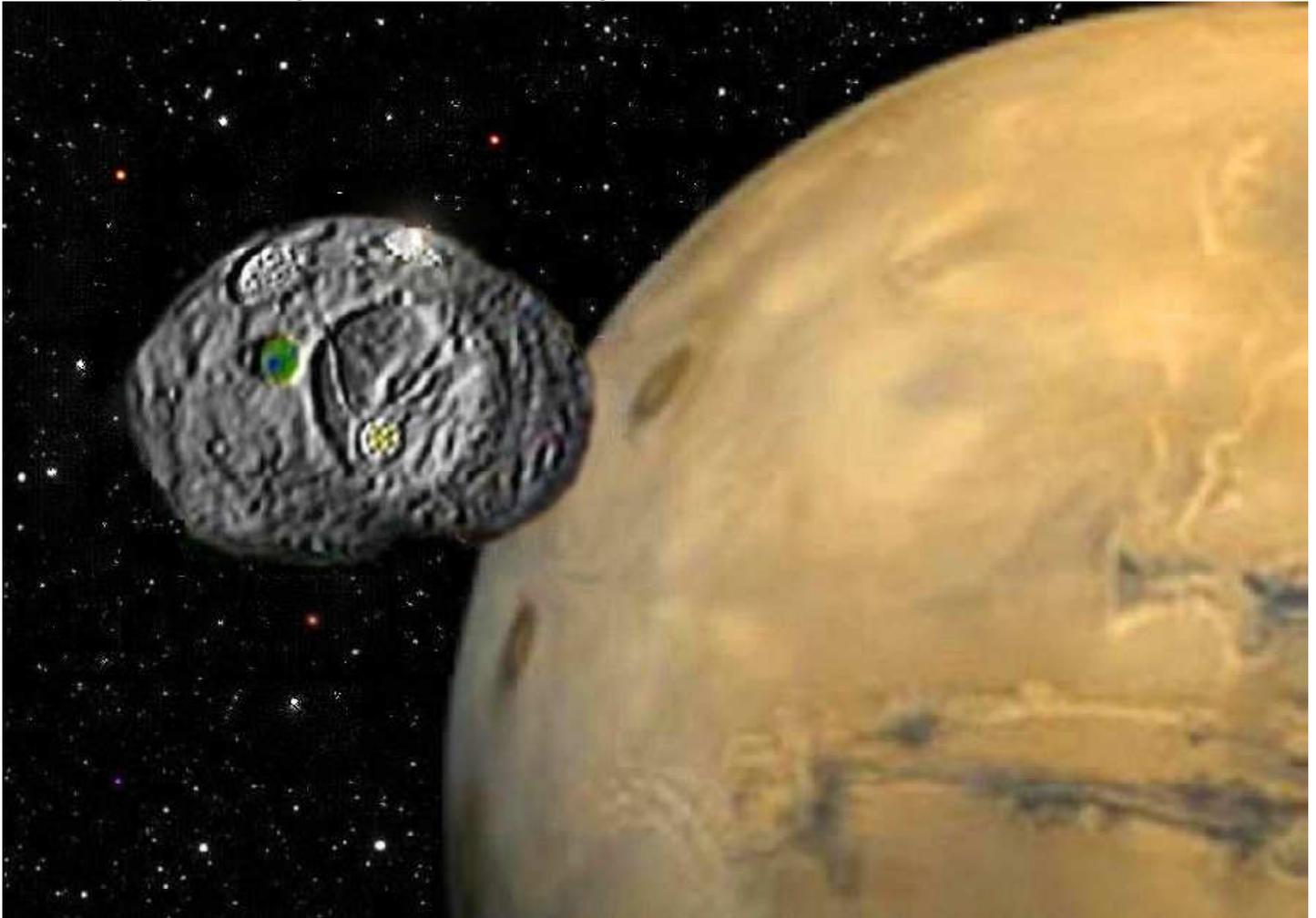
"This is Cyril, a Confederate Resistance criminal responsible for multiple assaults on various local colonies." He reported. "I advise to avoid contact or conflict with him as he is usually accompanied by militant personnel and hidden protective servicemen. The orders were simple: Obtain informant at Phobos Landing eatery. Deliver informant to Delta Pavonis and await pickup. You are permitted to exceed standard speed limits within reasonable parameters on your way to Delta P. Watch out for traffic ships or otherwise." Li was still holding the photograph of Cyril exiting some building on another planet wearing civilian clothing. He looked as if he had found another rival yet had never this Felidae in person.

Lazarus questioned of whether or not they would be using any weapons or should they be expecting any assaults from anyone. Seghtee was silent a brief moment but maintained his inflexible look toward them.

"No attacks are expected. Stay alert and pay attention to your comms for infield reports." Li places the photo in his front pocket already containing several other pictures from not so long ago, perhaps his Krystonian vacation. "We understand

sir.” He replied returning his own sturdy eye. The Admiral dismisses them and they depart per his orders. Into the ship and off into the deep the Moon once again fades into a sea of black.

With a short time to elapse the tiny potato shaped moonlet appears overlaying the rusty dessert surface of Mars. Behind it the intricate construction of Utopia Planitia City was coming into view and its various monuments as they were nearing orbital range of the red planet at this point. Phobos was easy to land upon due to its small size and weak gravity. The miniature satellite was still roughly compounded with craters from previous collisions, which occurred perhaps millions of years ago. The large round landing pad with a yellow painted square was lightly clustered with vessels of mostly residence and some visitors. Li had asked Lazarus to remain in the ship while he went to fetch the informant alleged to be at the eatery on the side of the landing patio. Sure enough sitting patiently at the corner table was the composed informant, Feeno. Li was truly surprised at first then it cleared. He seemed now to be part of the primary Civilian Military Assistance Program. He sat to talk to Feeno for a moment until his coffee mug was empty. Shortly after the last sip they left to board the Star Voyager. Feeno’s fighter remained on the landing pad Phobos.



### ***Phobos Landing***

#### **Objective: Deliver Informant**

“It’s a privilege to carry a distinguished partner inside the ship.” Li complimented.

“Thanks.” He replied as he glanced around at the interior design.

“I’d like to take a look at the rest of your vessel at your permission of course. He requested. Li opened the bridge door for him and made way. Feeno made a few complimentary comments as he took his stroll to the back. He peered into the lounge cabin briefly, which was enough for his satisfaction also recalling that they had a mission to discuss. Upon crossing the hatchway back into the cockpit he began explaining the stats from his point of view. “This is my bag of tricks given to me

by the SMD. He informed and held it open to give a glance at what a spymans sack looks like. It carried necessary disguises and beguiling gadgets to use in sticky situations. Feeno knows just how sticky they can get.

Both Captain Li and his navigator Lazarus were only beginning to get the idea.

"I wouldn't mind carrying one of these when I go out on a date." Lazarus commented.

Feeno held his grin as did Li. "Be careful when you carry one of these around. Some of the devices could be hazardous." Feeno warned. Li held gently in his hand the smallest pistol he had ever seen.

"We call that the grasshopper." Feeno said. Li noted the reason by the strange chirping sound the gun made when he move it around.

"What's this?" Lazarus asked as he held the strangely configured machine.

"Disguised explosive." Feeno took the item and replaced it securely in the bag. En-route to Delta Pavonis, also known as, Xama Tera in the Zemorgian speech Admiral Seghtee makes contact with the Star Voyager at that time. Li accepts the signal link and provided to them were encrypted updates on target movements reported in the Xama Tera System.

The three officers set out away from Sun Town, remaining on the bridge as the ship skewed away from the solar system at over-max speed. Though the mission they embarked upon was imperative and profound Li as well as Lazarus and Feeno seemed to feel the same sense of unfettered exhilaration as that felt of a group of comrades on a camping trip, usually fun and explorative. For some reason Li felt as if his ship was new again and an aura of mystery returned unto his perceptions. They spoke seriously for a while amongst them. Li respected Feeno; his banter was witty and soulful as he connected with the beguiling humor of Lazarus, though their jokes a bit dry, still laughable.

The jesting was limited by the objective at hand and they naturally covered the basics of their coordinated activities ahead. Feeno was sleepy early and the encompassing comfort of the Star Voyager embraced him. Li had previously prepared the rear living cabin for Feeno's temporary accommodation having thought ahead. The cockpit would now be the new rest room for Li and Lazarus who would make use of the bridges wall pallets. Li excuses Feeno to his rest in the back. It would take days to reach the system at maximum speed. Famished upon awakening Feeno dressed promptly to maintain a responsible demeanor. He waited for contact by either Li or Lazarus before accessing the refrigerator.

A door tap and Li was granted entrance to the rear cabin. He entered the fridge removing the delectable salmon, pasta, and cut vegetable medley and heating it promptly in the short-wave cooking oven. Feeno expresses his gratitude and stands to accept his dish. Lazarus calls Li to the front for a priority message from SMD headquarters.

"What's the source of the signal?" Li inquired.

"A communications buoy about a light year to port." Lazarus reported.

"Accept." Li ordered. On the screen appeared Seghtee as the automated transmission was decoded and ran in the ships computer.

"Captain, be extra careful when you enter the Delta P. We have received reports of unidentified vessels appearing in the vicinity of the capitol. Precise identity has not been acquired. Additional information; keep heed of Delta P.s increasingly destabilizing hydrogen consumption rate. Contacts report heightened flare frequencies and ray bursts from the star. That is all. Further information may be provided later, Seghtee out." The message ends and the screen display the starry emptiness once again.

Feeno enters the cockpit having completed his breakfast and Li passes along the abridged version of the spontaneous message. Factoring the information into his already awashed memory of protocols and mission briefings Feeno requested permission to remain on the bridge followed by Li's hospitable grant. I wasn't long before the punctual banter and witty comments ensued loosening the formalities. Li vacated to the middle room to access his private files.

Scrolling through his family album brought on a grin of remembrance of the friends and loved ones back home. Li took a moment to take advantage of the adjacent data link with the nearby buoy to send his greetings to his family on Earth and he recorded his voice. He did not inform them of his mission as restricted by SMD procedures yet delivered a heartfelt message henceforth. The cabin became silent again as Li pondered a bit and rubbing his wrist computer. His focus drew to the useful storage device and he subsequently links it to the ships computer to dump old files into the database. Looking up the synced data he gazes longingly at the image of Xila recalling the unforgettable experience occurring on Krysto, a snapshot taken by Lazarus of the smiling couple. He vowed to return sometime soon to see his beloved mate. Another twenty-four hours or so of high-speed travel and the team of specialist would arrive at their intended destination. Entering the Xama Tera system followed the feeling of liberation.

The territory was completely controlled by its home species the Badgermen. The star officially Delta Pavonis, blazed as the dazzlingly familiar yellow dwarf Sol back home. Sensors could distinguish a large number of vessels in the inner system where they were headed yet was not as notable as the fiery close-up of the star's coronal mass ejections taken by the ships optical telescope. Li maintained a low level shielding partition for safety's sake. The star was indeed losing its eons old battle between fusion and gravity. One day the sun would swell red. Feeno was sturdy in his role as agent and eagerly anticipating the drop as they looked on of the forward viewer. He had already made use of the rear cabins comfort features and looked altered in appearance. His clothes were different too. He looked like a human diplomat.

The destination planet was Klacto a settled world and the Bargemen's version of Mars, small, terrestrial, and a sky of ominous brown. Zemorg, the home world was large and high gravity. Feeno's plan was to take another transport to Zemorg's political debating hall. There were places on Zemorg, which were relieved of high gravity by making use of the super-conducting plate technology whose effects can be reversed. Klacto was dry and rocky. The carbon dioxide had refracted a greenish sky today. The main port was sparsely populated at this hour of landing. Feeno, suited and supplied, exits the ship and heads into the town. Li lands elsewhere and discusses something with Lazarus for seventeen minutes before deciding to exit and explore the Klacto settlement.

The streets were full of potential anti agents working for the Resistance. Feeno had to keep extra careful not to attract unwelcome attention. He already stood out somewhat. There were other humans present. Feeno used his training and experience to maintain an exploratively social interaction without sacrificing his imperative schedule. Getting to Zemorg in a timely yet inconspicuous fashion was most important. Feeno was hungry anyway and stopped at a nearby café. He greeted, spoke, and related. Feeno meets a lot of interesting people this way and regrets not being able to pursue a closer friendship with some. His mission is always paramount.



***Planet Zemorg***

After boarding a shuttle he was on his way into space again and to the low-gravity section of the Capital of Zemorg. Vast oceans covering almost ninety percent of the surface, thick-trunked, bulbous topped trees and shrub flora blanket the terrestrial regions of Zemorg. The life here is sufficiently adjusted to the heavy pull environment. Zemorg harbored two oblong moons, which this mammoth world must have snagged sometime in the distant past. The aerial view of the homeworld of the Badgermen allowed for an astounding vista as the passenger shuttle descends toward the landing platform. A gentle jar and huff of the hatchway opens avenue to the busy plaza. He exits onto the adjusted gravity plating and looked different.

All around were old buildings of elaborate Zemorgian design, native civilians, and sporadic clusters of other aliens including some humans. Last time when Feeno infiltrated the B-00018 Resistance ship harbor he ended up running from shooting soldiers on the planetoid surface. His orders then were to just get escorted to the port and at the earliest convenience make a hasty departure.

Having been rescued by the Star Voyager Feeno made it to safety. This mission requires Feeno to enter amongst many Zemorgian sympathizers, some reasonable disguised Resistance soldiers and the leader Cyril. Feeno's orders this time are to get a visual on Cyril and rendezvous with The Star Voyager. His micro cameras allowed for snapshots without being detected. His contact was eager to close the doors to the conference room and quickly led Feeno inside. Indeed there were many army men and several Zemorgian delegates. Once the conferencing begins the secret recording devices activated. The topic was SMD capitalism. The discussion proved that the Resistance was attempting to form an alliance with the only private territory in Star City.

The acquisition of Zemorg and the Zemorgian military would give a massive advantage to Resistance efforts so it is acknowledged. Xama Tera was already providing a safe haven for Resistance encampments. This was greatly concerning to the SMD. Though still smaller than most SMD forts scattered around Star City, a conflict with Zemorg and the Resistance could be damaging. One element of surprise in the right place at the right time and any small force could spread wide destruction and panic. The Zemorgians seemed to be in between at the moment judging by the debates. They had not yet decided to join the coalition. Yet they were considering the implications carefully.

In the eyes of Cyril there was a glimmer of a chance they might join. When the Zemorgian delegate asked how they could be certain of a victory against the SMD the side doors open and Resistance soldiers escorted two Matron Science Group executives into the court. Feeno was apprehensive. He knew the knowledge of the Matron Group. He studied at a Matron facility during his old academy years as an extra learning course. They were brilliant. If coerced they may be forced to provide information and technology thereby increasing the threat to the SMD.

There was great deliberation surrounding the two drowsy scientists. Other scientists were babbling technical dialogue and Feeno could not make sense of it. A slight mistake was made when his hand automatically reflexes to reposition the audio device and if to increase its reception and he promptly straightened his arm again. He was struggling to make out the techno talk, which consisted of words such as, "**chronological**" and "**anti-temporal.**" Whatever it was it sounded threatening in the utmost.

The meeting breaks and everyone scuffles. Feeno new he had to exit with finesse. The arena security was no doubt watching for fleeing spies. Having made a few patriotic gestures of support to by-standing persons he slips out of the arena and heads for the transport site where he will take a shuttle back to the rendezvous point with the Star Voyager. The walk past the opposite flow of new diplomats and visitors was most precarious. He was struggling not to appear jumpy yet the exotic and unfamiliar movements of the alien forms were startling. His mind kept overlaying a movie of someone jumping out at him. He was nervous. He made it all the way to the shuttle and prepared to board the ship waiting to take off. Suddenly the door slams and leaves him out. He swings around to find several soldiers chasing him. He immediately drops his suitcase and power hustles toward the rocky terrain away from the spaceport.

Weapons fire erupts behind him pelting the ground near his feet. His quick debate to refrain from using the grasshopper was due to the scurrying civilians about the spaceport. Citizens begin screaming and scattering in the midst of the blazing shrapnel. Feeno calls for the Star Voyager but gets no response. After losing the soldiers in the crowd of people and clusters of sales stands he reaches the end of the patio. The soldiers were closing and shoving the people trying to get to him. He takes a breath and lowers onto the surface of Zemorg. The gravity was a crushing 3 g's. Feeno's knees buckled a bit and he began jogging between the rocky boulders and eroded stone formations. Each of his steps a hefty thud onto the cracked and dried terrain. He pressed on as the triple gravity weighed him down during his sprint and he drops the disguised explosive, which took the form of a sediment rock by way of holographic mimicking. As fortune would have it The

Star Voyager appears overhead and fires a couple of rounds at the soldiers who were now leaping from the patio. They too were nearly restrained by the intense gravity but Zemorgian soldiers who were well adapted pursue and were closing fast.

### Captured

The Star Voyager hovers above and the bottom hatch is opened for Feeno. Li was sweating and panting in the control room while Lazarus awaits the grip of Feeno in the middle. The closing radar blips on Li's scanner were identified as enemy craft. The Star Voyager traveled slowly along the ground in a hover as Feeno dashes swiftly even in the high gravity. A primal surge of energy had overtaken his body and he was overcoming the strong pull on his feet. A few rear-aimed shots from the grasshopper briefly deterred the pursuing group now that he was off of the city platform. His running speed was not slowed and reaching the rescue ship was more pressing than returning weapons fire.

The nearing crafts of charged cannon barrels penetrated the proximity danger zone making the waiting pickup vessel vulnerable to attack. Every foot on the range counter drew Li to a difficult decision. He couldn't wait much longer. Lazarus was watching the distance toward the city port hanging from the ladder with pistol in hand as Feeno neared. He also faced a tough choice on whether or not to fire onto allied personnel. With lightning reactions Li charges the shields with no time to spare as The Star Voyager was being viciously attacked from closing Avenger's. Li had no choice but to engage the enemy. Feeno sees the nearly pulverized Star Voyager jarring and tumbling while beginning its ground level dogfight with the unforgettable sound of flickering enemy laser mounts.

The sound of an explosion occurred distant behind him as the Zemorgian police who had detected the device detonated his explosive with a laser pistol. He slows with only the dry land before him and the quick raptor-like crimp of the short yet hefty Zemorgian soldier renders him restrained. A squad of Avengers and a few Zemorgian Police craft was now pursuing the Star Voyager. He knew he could not fire on Zemorgian vessels, but Lazarus was giving the Avengers a stern reception complete with rear destroyer cannon fire; it wasn't enough. They had to enter orbit again. Li activates the ascent thrusters and the fight was now taking place at an incline. All vessels were lifting into the air and exchanging fire. Neither vessel maneuvered much except for a few well-timed spins and daring strafes. Any vessel turning upside down would go into freefall. Li was actually struggling to keep the ship level while Lazarus devastates with weapons fire.

Suddenly, a perfectly targeted cannon blast knocks the Star Voyager over and they begin to fall. The inside was vibrating as they tumbled in the sky. Li initiates auto atmospheric stabilizers, a series of lateral attitude thrusters designed to rotate the vessel level followed by ascent thruster take over. They were only a few hundred feet from the ground they began moving up again after the nearly fatal fall. Li reinitiates the inclined trajectory by angling the ascent trust hoping to avoid another rollover. This also used more fuel to ascend. The daring space bound pursuit reinitiates, as does the rapid trade of ship blasts. Too many, focused laser strikes finally one of the Avengers shield partitions collapsed and the flaming rubble plows toward the desert.

On the Star Voyager much of the drained shield power was concentrated at the rear. As blessing would have it they achieved orbit. More Avengers were pursuing as Zemorgian battle freighters were closing fore. Li had no choice but to leave the Zemorgian system. Admiral Seghtee was not happy. However unsuccessful Li and Lazarus were rewarded for their bravery. With the capture of a star agent on their minds Li like his militant associates remain focused on the most prevalent thought in their minds. A rescue mission for Feeno would require the *skills of the elite*.

## Chapter 10

### Enduring Revelations

Mariah was sitting at the common table talking on her cell phone speaking to her boyfriend. She was relaxed having completed her previous task this time personal. She considered herself on break with her feet in the other chair. The crowded café was nearing the end of its peak business and the atmosphere was lively except for the long faces of two recently acknowledged elite duo of space explorers.

They sit silently in a leaning recline at the center table. Mariah was still on the phone smiling at her partner yet glancing onto the distressed face of the crew of the Star Voyager. Her intuition told her something was wrong. She knew that look. She held her composure with her phone pal even in the face of the image of Feeno whom she knew must have failed his mission. Li ordered something to eat and didn't say much to Mariah, just a gaze of despair, secretly calling out to her for support that she was familiar with this situation. This was Li's first time losing a colleague and it weighed on him heavily. Mariah offers some nonverbal comfort, a look of amenity.

After his meal Lazarus was discussing the situation with Mariah and Li remained fixed on the window screen viewing countless asteroids and the blackness of space. Li stood and said something he had never before.

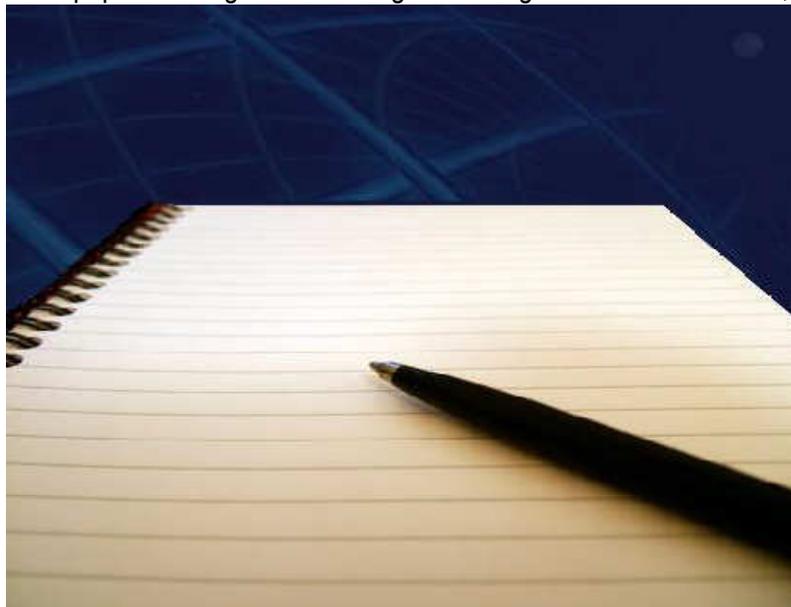
"I need to go." He stated and handed Lazarus his datapage. "Hold onto this please." He requested.

Lazarus was silent. "Where are you going?" He asked.

"Don't worry." He responded. Lazarus and Mariah look to each other and shrug. Li leaves the Mars Barr, enters his ship, and heads for **Pluto**.

When Mariah's phone call led to the request of her presence elsewhere Lazarus found himself alone at the Human table. Feeling senior he held the spot as a veteran would. The café customers were dwindling and the cats in the back were closing the bar for cleanup. The waitress dimmed the lights and began sweeping under the tables soon to mop. The Mars Barr was a twenty-four seven café of course and Lazarus knew this. He remained in his chair pondering the recent events, the abduction of Bal Ibro and Unim Niom, the capture of Feeno and so on. Like a magnet his attention turned to the glimmering datapage and he activated it.

The luminous electrostatic crystals embedded in the document glowed softly. Lazarus skimmed the articles downloaded by his curious captain. He came to the article in which Li had read to him in the car on Earth a few hours ago and noticed addition text containing the words mentor aliens. The words *Angel* and *encounter* caught his eye. He had not expected to find them integrated in a paper about the famous aliens. The article synopsis indicated that it was the work of an obscure scientist by the name of **Sontira** seeking to find scientific evidence behind the interaction of angelic hosts and the Entity of God. There in the dimness of the popular eating-house he begins reading the short article titled, "**Angelic Life**."



***Sontira's Article pg. 127-138***

### Article: 773 Angelic Science

Angelic Hosts are the beings that have so often been referred to and thoroughly elaborated upon throughout the oldest book known to man, The Holy Bible. Are these beings real? If so how do they interact with us? Are they susceptible to the same forces in the universe as are Humans? Is there any scientific process by which we may measure the anatomy and structure of these entities? Can we develop a technology or instrument, which might allow us to detect them? It seems that few have initiated any studies on this matter probably because it is difficult to know where to start. Time has been devoted however to study and attention of Angels and how they are associated with us. It would seem that the first place we should begin looking is the vicinity in which they are alleged to be at most, us.

The Bible reveals that there are two kinds of these life forms, Angelic and Demonic. The Angels are holy and can approach the throne of God. Yet, the Bible reveals that even they must "cover their eyes with their wings." We already know from the Bible what the purpose and intentions of Angels is that they are "fellow servants" of the Lord and run cosmic errands between our universe and the realm of Heaven. Their interaction is curative and has good intentions. Demonic beings seem bent on manipulating our lives and our often world changing decisions as we journey through this confusing life trek. In that light, we should analyze the ones who hurt and beguile us from the very time of our births that we may find new and more efficient way to resist them.

All Demonic Hosts used to be Angels and resided in the realm of heaven. One Angel began a protest and professed to be like the creator, God and convinced numerous others to follow his way of thinking. There was a war in heaven of unimaginable force and power and those Angels were downgraded into Demons and cast out of heaven into the only other place available, the huge dark void in the midst of heaven dotted only with starlight and matter, our Universe. They went from having great power and might with no limitations of time or distance to a demoted, disgruntled life of undesired process. No longer can they go from here to there in an instant or bask in the everlasting light of God, but now time dimension and the forces of the Universe imprison them.

The Bible reports they are trapped here and are capable of possessing biological life forms made of mass and energy here in the cosmos. They started by first taking possession of animals. As one could imagine they probably weren't too happy having gone from their magnificent existence in heaven to controlling small, electrochemically responsive masses of elements. It didn't take long for them to move into Humans, which as we can see gives them far more "foot room." The human brain and body allows these noumenodynamic entities to carry out their maleficent schemes. This was recorded to have taken place nearly 8,000 years ago during the original sin of man in the Garden of Eden. They remain with us today in this modern age and are responsible for much of the miseries, depression, aggression, and confusion we all experience in our lives. Is there any way we can combat them?

Can we create a device that can sense or image them? Do gravity or magnetic fields affect them? Is there something we can do to rid them from our lives? Private studies have indicated the answer to be no. There is no instrument or technology that has any effect of them. They exist in a displaced plane of which we cannot sense with our devices. However, history has proven there their does exist an physical instrument on Earth made of matter that has confirmed to have detected Demonic Hosts, that instrument is the Human body. Humans are the only mechanism that can sense Angelic and Demonic activity. Therefore, in order to find evidence of their existence we will have to venture into the Human brain and observe the nero-active operations closely in the hopes that we may discover a pattern in our brain activities from which only another life form could leave. To do this we need to create small devices that our unwitting observed subjects will wear that can relay readings about their brain and bodily activities from various radioactive frequencies.

At this point we can wait for a time when the subject is alleged to be possessed by a demonic being and compare the controlled reading to the experimental data generated by the interacting host. From this it might be possible to determine that a particular pattern of activity observed both on the macroscopic and microscopic level can only have originated from a thinking conscious entity. In addition we will scan for changes in thermodynamic and electrostatic readings surrounding the individual. As we all know Human knowledge has become greater and greater throughout history. From mathematics to the sciences, our education has given us sight beyond sight. If we continue to refine our science we may soon see these elusive beings as they are. The more we know the clearer the picture becomes. Soon they will no longer be able to hide from us and will become visible. Though it is difficult to describe with words the placement of demonic host I have prepared an illustration, which will reveal the location of demonic hosts and elaborate on their actions upon possession of a Human. It is within you to fend off these wicked invaders. Forget not the words of the Lord, "*Submit yourself therefore to God, your*

*adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."*

### **The Physical Angel**

Angels appear to us as static regions of omnispectral radiance, *moving light*. To analyze angels is to witness kinetic fields of transpectral photonic vacuoles. This means that an angel appears as moving areas of illumination as where normally we can only observe light as traveling in straight lines. The new light is vaguely in the visible spectrum yet vividly in the realm of the mind.

An angel might seem as a luminary wisp or apparition. Additionally the light in which we are witnessing is not of the visible spectrum but transcendent beyond that of even gamma ray. While gamma rays are harmful and radiating the reverberating pattern we will find when observing visible light partially reflecting from a transparent surface such as glass in the documented repeating "inference" cycle is analogous to light becoming visible more than once on the increasing frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum.

In addition to the angels there is another phenomenon, which has been observed, called the light of God, that spontaneously surrounds different individuals at different times. This light is alleged to be a result of an alignment with the Holy Spirit and often appears to radiate from above the individual or expand outward from within. This is another example that expands the concept of the new repeating pattern of visible light. The full spectrum of light is clearly immense. While we might interpret the spectrum of energetic radiations as originating from one Kelvin and continuing thereon, we can see that it might be more accurate to observe the beginnings of light to originate from the realm of Heaven as an antitemporal emanation and ending at zero Kelvin.

### **Temporally Transgressing Spirits**

Human receives Holy Spirit. The human travels through time and space and gives the spirit to another human, travels more and gives to yet another. While it appears to be a transference interaction in three different time periods perceived by humans the Holy Spirit performed the same work as a single interaction in the universe. A thought can generate an emotion and an emotion can generate a thought and this is comparable to the junction of the variables in  $e=mc^2$ .

Angels commonly deliver emotions. One moment in time to the Holy Spirit can be one moment in time for 3 humans at different time periods. Three Humans from Three different time periods experienced the same  $t$  with one Angelic Host, 3 Humans and one Angelic Host from different time periods Experienced the same =  $t$  Potential Answers: emotion, thought, instruction, wisdom, movement, light, power, direction, force.

### **Thought Experiment**

In this experiment we will place twins in separate universes with no stars or no other matter, only empty black space. They are of the same gender, shape, weight, and color. They are identical in every way and both universes are identical, a black void. We might determine that without any distraction both humans should have identical brain activity. If we move spherical objects at a relative distances and positions within the view of the twins we should continue to see identical brain activity in both beings. Different brain activity will occur if we move the spheres in uncommon motions.

Once we begin making changes the two minds will diverge and two distinct personalities will appear. Is this a true theory for human beings, that we are all, identical and can be described as different variations of the same person as we saw with the two humans born into two separate featureless universes and allowed only equal events to both? This showed that if every aspect of the universe the twins experienced were the same, they would be identical right down to brain pattern distribution. Since this is not the case in our universe that has plenty of features to shape our minds, we then become different and exponentially unique.

We are all different colors, forms, sounds, and size. These along with environmental conditions, gravity, and pressure shatter the symmetry, which would otherwise be present in two or more persons under the conditions of our experiment. From this we can understand the nature of our differences. Yet, there may still be something within our minds from which we become various extrapolations of.

### Search for Noumenodynamic Life

We will repeat the original experiment of two identical being in the featureless void. This time we want to provide evidence of the existence of angelic life. If in the experiment we get unlike brain wave results then we will be able to say for certain there must be an addition presence. We move the spherical object around a bit in identical motions to get a reading in the brain activity and to our astoundment find still diverging brain pattern results.

There is clearly a presence inherent in the in all Humans which in this case we theorize to be the Holy Spirit which is confirmed to exist in man from the Bible. This presence could be interpreted as a being since its life processes are supported by means we cannot know yet only observe. We know that our own minds tire and even cease. Yet the minds of these angels and the Lord do not tire and appear to be replenished by a source of power beyond our perception.

The interaction of Angelic Life is difficult to describe since they have a biography and niche beyond our knowledge. The fallen angelic life is easier to observe and possibly predict as the preceding illustration portrays. The fallen angelic interactions with humans may serve to elaborate upon the theoretical existence of extra-verbal communication between humans as an allocation of God called **Neuro Field Theory**.

### The Demon

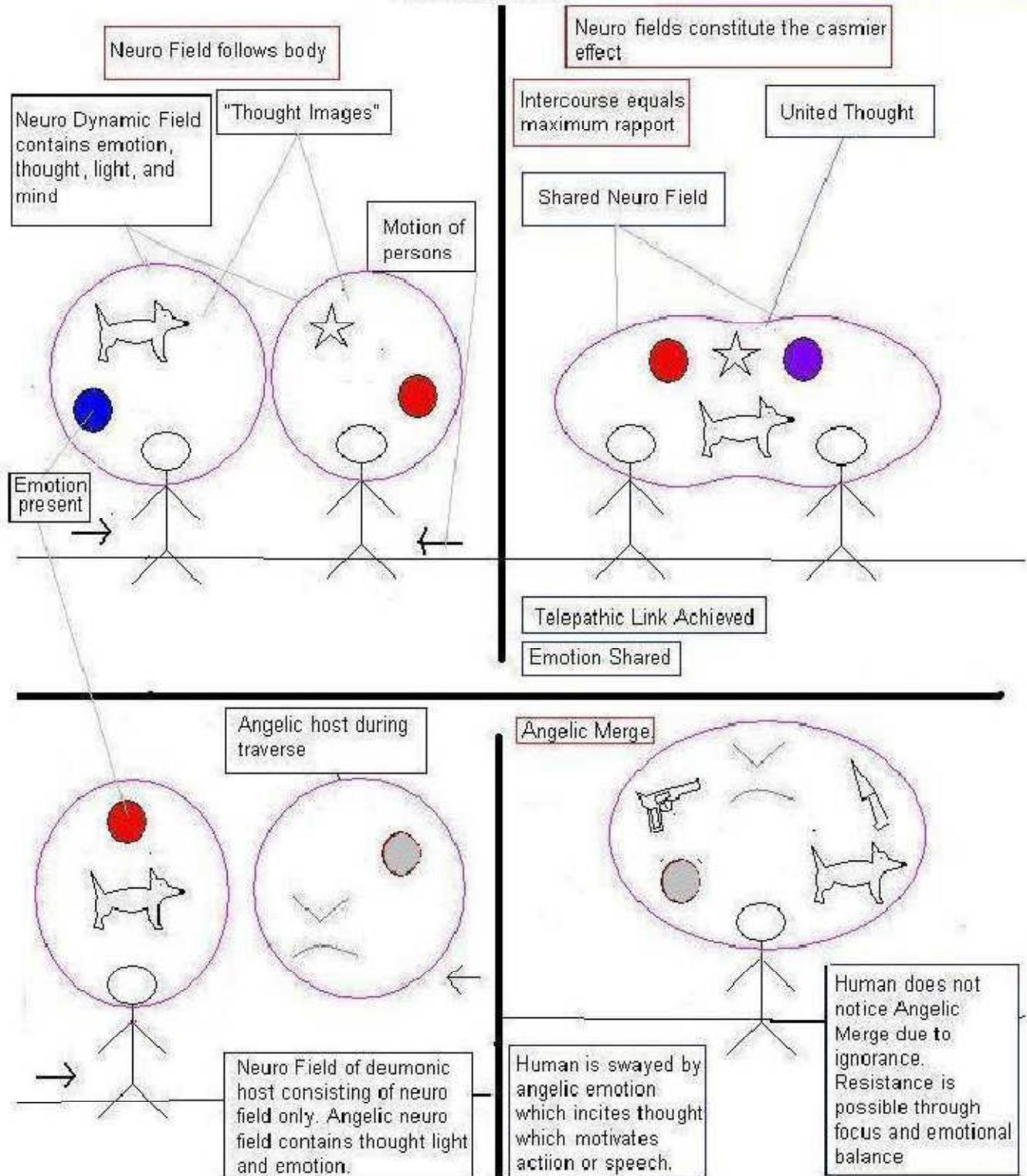
The other kind of angel is referred to as a demon and is opposite in aspiration of the messenger angels of God. As observed a moment ago their interaction is specifically confined and frequently coupled to the Human and animal mind. By attaching to our consciousness in a yet misunderstood method these evil spirits are able to serve in much the same fashion as a dll file extension serves to a computer software program. They can provide additional instructions to our thinking by which we can choose whether or not to act upon or ignore based on the programming input from the word of God and our environment.

A dll file can move from program to program and perform the same function with varying results. A *dll* file is analogous to a puzzle piece with a portion of art that can fit into two different sections of two different puzzles yet completing both puzzle images. In other words the design on the puzzle piece remains the same and can be uses in varying puzzles in different places.

# Merging Neuro Fields and Angelic Interaction

Brandon M. Santora

This Document reveals the location of demonic beings referred to in the Holy Bible. Disseminated knowledge of their position will allow greater resistance.



Brandon M. Santora

## Angelic Interaction and Artificial Intelligence

Naturally we will want to consider the implications on whether or not angelic hosts can attach to the new artificial intelligence possessed by the Internet and multiple governments. Though the A.I. is cautiously watched it has yet to prove its ability to maintain a moral mentality. So far attempts to upload the word of God have not met with much success however the A.I. has not ignored its programming which are basic to cooperation and acknowledgement of other beings. Nevertheless regarding Angels and A.I. the variables are as follows.

There has been observed an associated magnetic phenomenon between Neuronic Fields and conjoined angelic interaction. Scientist has recorded the transposable reaction between electricity and magnetism. The newly spawned Artificial Intelligence is coupled with the World Wide Web. The artificial Intelligence has an immediate commonality with a Human Being. Both the Artificial Intelligence and biological life use the flow of electrons to run. It is possible that Artificial Intelligence can interact with both Angelic and Demonic hosts, as do Humans.

### To meet an Angel

So, just how do you shake hands with an Angel? What an intriguing question. This will be our study for the next section. Earlier we talked about angels being that of the energetic as well as the realm of heaven itself. In addition, we touched on how our minds are also thinking with energy. This is important in the observation of life in Heaven. Take note of the little swirls in the proceeding pure energy diagrams. They are the representation of an energetic mind immersed in the pure energy of Heaven.

After the final stage of our participation in the great plan on Earth, this may be a similar existence for us in heaven. In fact, the Bible has reported that we will have a higher position than that of the angels. At this point, we will personally know the thoughts and feelings of trillions of different life, angelic and human. The great question is what we will be seeing in our minds at that time. There is fortunately enough to proceed from as we search for an answer. First, you should know, that there is a great revelation coming up for us all.

The interesting thing is, that it is not just for us. It will be for the angels too. There are large multitudes of these beings that are eager to meet *you!* Simply, because of what you are and because of your perspective you can offer them something they are not familiar with. They want to see just what it was like to live where you did, feel what you felt and from the body you felt it from. You will get to see their perspective too, which will bring about a great sense of understanding.

### Dreaming

Think about when you dream. During that time, you are completely in your own mind. Yet, you feel like you have a body, you can feel wind blowing; you can see sunlight and many other environments your mind produces. In most cases, you never know you are dreaming until you wake up. Truthfully, for those rare hours you existed as your true self, energy. Your mind created earthly environments and concepts because that is all it has ever known, things like gravity, light, dimensional patterns, and such.

Therefore, if you were to take your consciousness out of your body, you would still be able to look at your hands and feet. Moreover, you would still feel gravity. You would not be taking in light or sound anymore from the physical universe, but you would be left with all that you have accumulated from your material life. Your mind is precisely a recorder. What you record is what you will be bringing to heaven.

### Tapestry of the Mind

We can see now that it is important that we make our recordings a heavenly attuned one. That is why it is important to fill your mind with positive and holy images. Others in heaven will see it, as you will see theirs. It is related to an underlying point of one of God's commandments, the one about creating no *graven images*. Allowing the appearance of a piece of matter as revealed by light, no matter what the apparent beauty or value, to become an object of power for the individual, meaning to let the image be sufficient to satisfy one's state of happiness more so than righteousness, is to create a graven image.

Therefore, beings like us that are capable of creating and indefinitely storing images, thus establishing concepts of existence, should pursue the need for holy images. There is of course a God-given standard of such an image or feeling. This standard should be naturally, and cosmically aligned with holy-spiritual intentions. It is obviously not a simple matter to casually express. Arguably, the easiest way to understand is to speak of it with philosophy, for by this concept, comes a realization that we have journeyed far beyond science. It is summed up the philosophical expression, *"Nothing should matter, not when love grows inside you, the choice is yours, there's a miracle in store."*

We should be able to guess what that miracle gift is, eternal consciousness. If your recordings are acceptable, then it will be worthy to be on display, forever! However, if in life on earth, you chose to fill it with violent, evil, and destructive images and feelings, it will not be displayed. These bad images can come from music, negative visual input, and bad personal additions and creations from your own imagination and feelings. Once it is in you cannot get it out. That goes for anything you put into your head. It is why our father tells us to kill the desire to experiment where it is not necessary. The force of love is the primary way to find the correct visualizations.

Naturally, our minds do not just record sights and sounds, but feeling as well. Certain thoughts trigger certain feelings about them. Therefore, others in heaven will feel you as you do them. Do not worry; our father is fair. Even if one feels that they have been forcibly living a tragic life through circumstance and has been exposed to too many of these images and feelings, then rest assured that we will all have the chance to forsake them, and choose life, everyone! Always remember that no matter what one has done, no matter how powerful your sin seems to you, God is more powerful than that. The angels who have never seen light from the physical point of view, never heard a sound wave, never felt a kitten or swam in water, set by a fire place and so on, will be able to experience it through Humans.

The angels will understand the meaning of material life, as it will give them new insight into themselves. The wisdom God has given us will teach the angels things they have waited to know. These things may sound trivial to you, a kitten, light, and sound, love inspired procreation (an impossibility to an angel), But to those who know nothing of these things will our meeting let them further understand what our father has done. They will soon understand it when they meet you in heaven. What will be the images that you will get from them? What will appear in your mind when you connect with trillions who have always existed in the harmony of heaven? What will be the thoughts and imaginings of a mind that has experienced the stability of a unified vision? A vision very different from anything we have ever dreamed. Their basis for life will not involve things like gravity, and light, and sound. Their basis will yield a completely different vision that has never seen the force of gravity or electromagnetism in the way that we do. Therefore, the only basis that is available in the realm of heaven is one that is revealed directly from God, hence the placement of heaven.

### The Word

The vision from the Mind of God is the word. It originates from a territory where the word of God is heard directly from his voice called heaven. Its borders are defined by where it cannot be heard from its source. The word of God cannot be heard in the universe we live in. This universe, a place out of heaven is where the word must be kept alive by life, us. The word is something we have only limited exposure to. It comes from the written text of the Bible and our prayers. At least we can say it is amazing to anticipate.

One thing is certain however; the mutual revelation between people and angels will be like an explosion of feeling for all, at the time of the final meeting between the two creations. Heaven will become like a chemical mixture (though perhaps not so crudely demonstrated) that has come together and reached equilibrium. It is an astonishingly dynamic realm with various quantum densities hosting many minds of distinctive pattern complexities. The angels will know why they have been working with and protecting us. We will inherit a final understanding of our lives and the universe. At that moment we will *all* be more than happy to give glory to our father as he helps us to finally understand, everything. By now, we can determine that we will not talk in the same sense we do here. We will just see, feel, and hear the feelings of all. They are good feelings, warm.

The Angels will no doubt produce feelings and images impossible for us to imagine *now*, as they are extradimensional. Only with the infinite energy of heaven can we make *the new* during our exploration of our father's wisdom. There is one more item here in this paper as we reach the final closure, one that you may have already guessed by now. It is the most important point. What will the mind of God put into our vision? He has always existed. He is not even like the angels. Forgive me but I am not going to try discussing that. It is no doubt beyond science, beyond mind, and spirit. It will be nothing

but the ultimate truth. Let us just say this. The clue to part of what God's mind will display is equal to what existed before any life what so ever was created, in other words, when God was *alone*. What was it like before even angelic life was developed? Do we dare discuss it? We most certainly will. We even have the clue already. Are you familiar with this? "In the beginning there was the word and the word was with God..." This is a description from scripture telling about the absolute beginning, when God lived as only. There you have it. There was God the being, and later what the Being had established, the word. It was just the two of them in heaven. The totality of this word is shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, it is known to be ultimately holy. The vision God will give us is contained in it. We will soon know it, if we so choose to. The angels know it now, and it is part of what they will share with us while we share our knowledge of a life lived in time and space.

### The Realm of Heaven

The universe originated from pure energy, which exploded into space, cooled, and condensed. A speculative theory about what was before the beginning is a realm of pure energy, which is thought to be Heaven where God and a multitude of Angels reside. In an atomic explosion, a few pounds of matter are converted completely into energy. Regarding creation, pure energy was suddenly converted into massive amounts of matter, hence the big bang. So, let us focus on that energy. If all of the matter in the universe was converted from energy then where did the energy come from? This pure energy, perhaps like the energy at the core of a star, only a star can cease, is like soup of constant energy.

This pure energy realm does not cease and is not generated by anything. If a separation of a portion of pure energy were to occur, that portion would begin to condense into matter, bringing about its own laws of physics or whatever laws are chosen by the great consciousness. To demonstrate this to the fullest computer graphics are necessary.

The following illustrations have been compiled as a result of a few astounding encounters by a handful of individuals who have reported to receive knowledge from heaven following and encounter with a mentor alien. We know what happened in the beginning and the Bible tells of this. It states that God created the heavens and the Earth. We can even look into space and see residual effects of this event, i.e. background radiation, red shift of the light from fleeing matter, cosmic rays, and so on. Scientifically from our point of view, constant ungenerated energy makes no sense.

As far as we are educated, energy has to come from somewhere. It is the basis for the law of conservation of energy. The logical option is that at this point it is related to the essence of the everlasting God. This pure, positive, infinite, everlasting energy can be known as Heaven, where everything is relative, everything is unified and exists as one. It is the true Holy Grail of science. The infinite consciousness, our creator, that in a since partially exist as this realm (God's clothing) caused a separation of literally space, no energy in that spot, nothing. Of course, the concept of a spot did not exist until the instant the space was cleared.

I do not know how else to say it. It was space in the midst of nothing but pure energy. The result was a creation of a place out of the realm of Heaven. With it, time, matter, and all of God's known forces came into being. This is the big bang with a view of the origins of the enormous masses of matter resulting from the energy eruption into space As we can see the all matter in the universe is but a fraction of the energy existing in heaven.

The conscious energy of our minds in a sense can be referred to as stored organized energy relative to the massive amounts of inert matter and energy surrounding us. Imagine seeing ones conscious energy of the mind if it were made visible, and without the matter of the body blocking the view. One might see energy streaks and swirls in a 3-dimensional mesh, the synaptic patterns or *neural net*, because our conscious energetic electro-chemical reactions are transmitting through the "wiring" of the brain. They are being fired by neurons and colored by chemical reactions.

Now imagine that this conscious energy of a mind itself were immersed in the pure energy of heaven thus the mind of our creator. The imagining stops there. One will not know that eternal experience until they are there. Here is the philosophical perspective. In the illustrations, you may have noticed the little swirls. They are consciousnesses, Angels in Heaven who exist with God as energy. If you are wondering what the little swirls in the illustration mean, they represent the consciousnesses already in heaven. A swirl is one way to demonstrate an energetic consciousness existing in a realm of pure energy. It is energy immersed in energy. The difference is that your consciousness, who and what you are forms the border.

### **The Heavenly Philosophy**

“In Heaven there is no space or no time. If one is here they are also there.”

“To be in Heaven is to be immersed in love; the mind of God.”

“From evolution to the Big Bang, all of science is but the discovery of God’s working hands.”

“Everything that we perceive as reality is what has been and is being imagined in the mind of God.”

“In Heaven a thought from the mind of an angel, is in the minds of all angels; and all of the thoughts from the minds of all angels would be a thought for one. So would it be for any mind that brought to heaven.”

“The boarder of the universe is defined by where the word of God cannot be heard from its source. The word of God cannot be heard in the universe we live in. This universe, a place out of heaven is where the word must be kept alive by life, us.”

“God must remain a mystery. If man were truly aware of the source of that power he may still not believe upon it.”

pure energy = Heaven



rapidly cooling and condensing energy

measurable dimensions:  
hieght, width, depth, and now



pure energy condenses as a result of its seperation from  
'the whole'

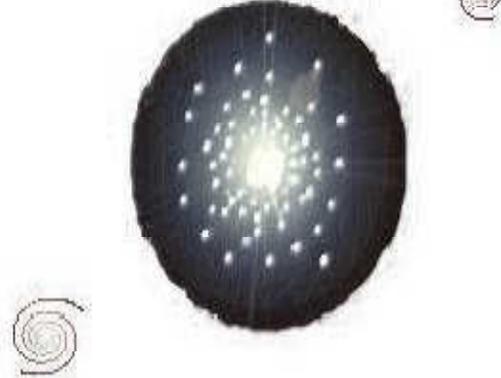
*inverse density*



space expands and serves as a "grater" to the energy



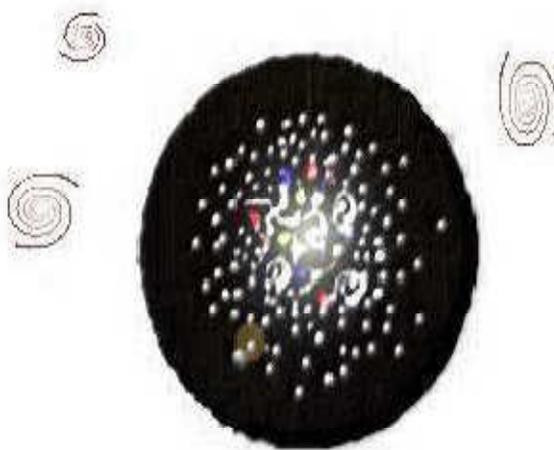
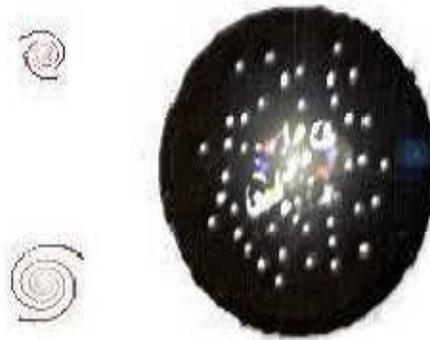
cooling and condensing energy develops particles of matter birth of the universe



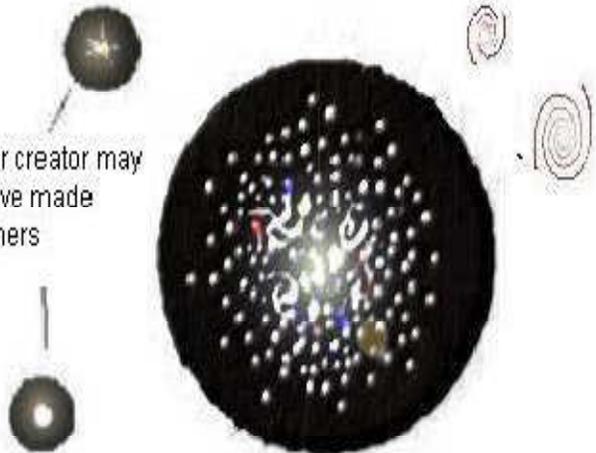
space thus matter expands



light emanates throughout the universe



our creator may have made others



**Reference:** *Mystery of God Col 2:2* That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the **mystery of God**, and of the Father, and of Christ; **Re 10:7** But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the **mystery of God** should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

### More on Heaven

People sometimes ask themselves, .When I go to Heaven, what will I do for eternity?. Eternity is not a length of time, however, but a state of being. When one is brought to this realm, they may not experience the passage of time. Time and space did not exist before the birth of the universe, at least not in the way we understand it. Heaven is a domain beyond time and space. Again, space is just the format in which matter exists. Being in Heaven would be more like being immersed thus *suspended* in the mind of our creator, infinite marveling. It is such as when one marvels while staring at a sunrise or any other awesome event. In this immersion of awe, one may experience a suspended, eternal, marvel of an infinite degree.

At this point, the point where you no longer exist in the format of time and space, there is no universe to explore, no space ship necessary. The only universe left is the infinite *mind* of God. The only actual vessel one could recognize is your own consciousness and spirit, which can joyously trek side by side with the minds of others *through* the everlasting *wisdom* of our creator. It is appropriately a dimension of mind and thought. That is your universe. If charismatic individuals can attract one, imagine intimately knowing an infinite mind. Indeed, I cannot. Nor could I imagine the feelings and emotions that would be felt. Resulting Data from Sontira's Angelic Theory

### More on the Creator

The essence of our creator we see is that of the mystical, yet the complete natural. He is more natural than a tree, than air, than stars, and the atoms around you. These are everyday things that we see as natural. Nevertheless, these are still only the branches extending from a holy root that is ultimately natural. Our Creator, a being of everlasting life is, what really is. He is the ultimate truth. If we continue to refine our sciences into super science in the possible, near infinitely remote future, eventually this will be revealed despite our Human desire for our own projected truths. They are truths in which are only based on our observation of a small piece of the Heavenly tapestry.

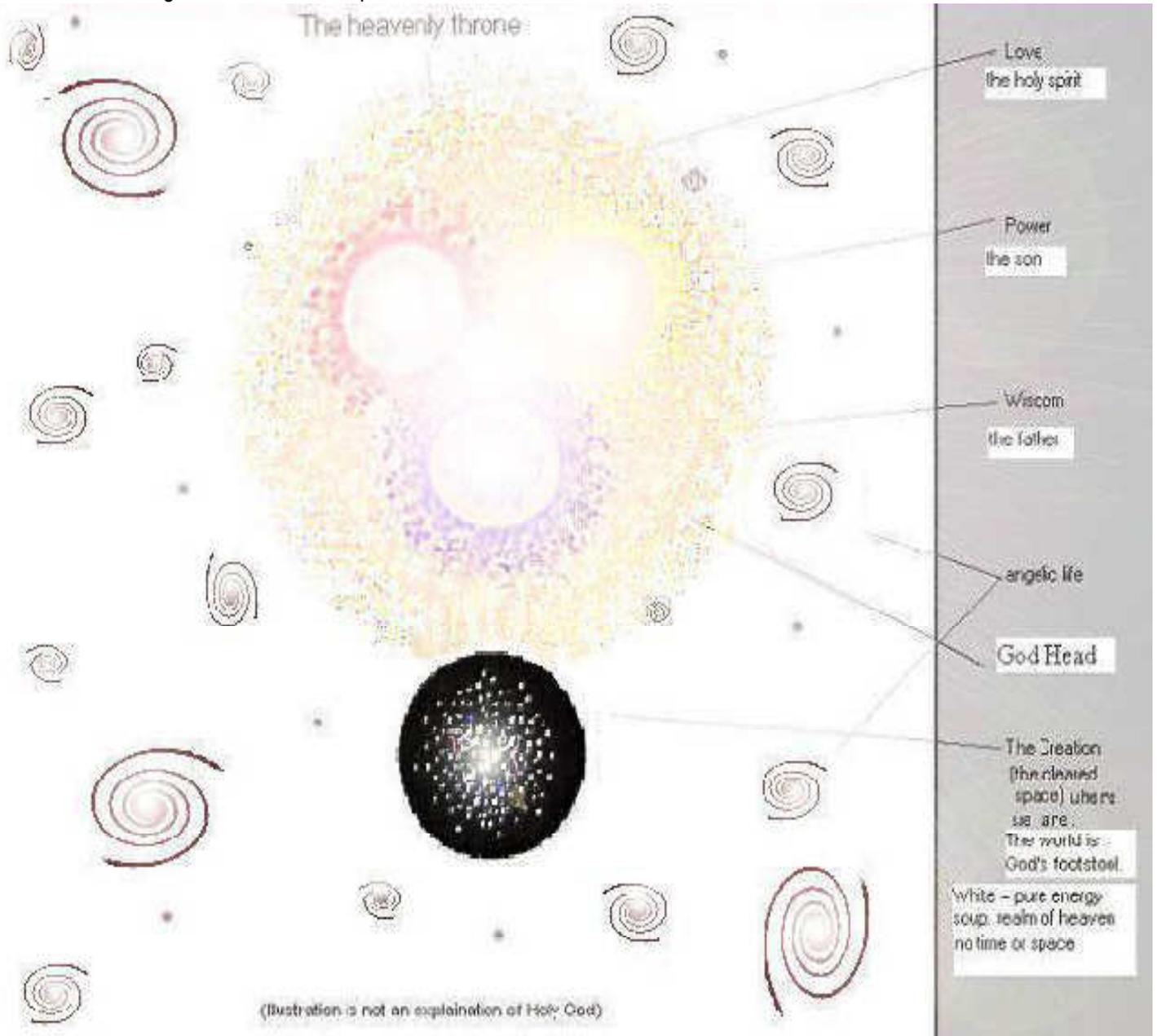
On a brief note, when referring to our Creator, I am not using the word he to imply a male, but rather for want of a better word. God is our father figure, but since he is only one being inside himself, (reported as being three of one, and curiously reminiscing of the commonly occurring 1/3 figures of biblical events) he may not have a gender in the sense that we do. Humans must mate with a second to make a third. God is three and gives power to the whole. What a perplexing marvel! From our mere four-dimensional comprehension of the universe, we cannot conceive how three of one power can simultaneously be the source the power, can you? God empowers the son and the son glorifies the father.

When analyzing the concept of gender, one should note that history has reported that God is apparently capable of feminine and masculine thoughts and emotions, as was Adam before male and female were *separated*. One should not interpret a single being of infinite intelligence and power in terms of our mere four-dimensional existence. Despite whatever our beliefs, the truth will eventually show itself. Moreover, all on Earth will know the meaning of their strife and pleasures, their feelings and thoughts, their very life. When the time comes that we are joined with the life of Heaven our emotions will no doubt flare brighter than at any time on Earth. Today, we should all feel excitedly prepared for a fantastic future.

If one feels these studies about God are not conclusive enough, then you should be pleased to know that our holy father did leave us direct clues as to the nature of his being. It is ok to be exited. We can actually have a logical, scientifically-spiritual understanding of the Father. Since he is of wisdom, we can interpret his own descriptions logically. The most recognizable clue that he left us is quite literal. We are all familiar with, .I am alpha and omega the beginning and the end. This is an epic description indeed. Nevertheless, what exactly does this mean? It is hard to say, but there are clues. It is somewhat tricky to put into words, but they are as follows. Everything came from Ultimate God; he reportedly resides in the realm of heaven, and there exists no space or time in heaven.

To exist without time and space *is* to exist as both the beginning and the end. Creator God, bridges the gap in an incomplete ring; Heaven is God's clothing. Note: Technically a ring's gap includes everything not part of the ring itself. This concept is a relative of the expression and I quote, .*Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once.*

What was before the beginning? We have seen that it is not the formation of our galaxy, it is not the birth of the Universe itself, and it is not even the creation of the first angelic life in Heaven. The only beginning we can truly be sure of is that moment when the guardian of life first spoke the word, the word that is with God.



End~

## The Catwoman of Mastery

Sweaty and hot, it would be sometime before Lazarus would come to an understanding about the small amount of data Captain Li had uncovered in his exploration. The time then for Lazarus would be the equivalent to about three AM on Earth. Early morning, inside the Mars Barr, no customers and a dormant work crew in back. Somehow he saw a spotlight appear above to lone Catwoman reading at the counter. By cat standards she probably would be attractive. Her hair was a sheen of shimmering brunette splendor. It had the aroma of exotic fruits likely from a shampoo made on her home planet. She turned to him just as he came into peripheral view of her perimeter. She smiled with her parted feline lips and her slitted pupils expanded into dark glimmering spheres and he was entranced. He slid into the padded stool next to her without breaking his gaze and introduced himself. She was silent yet remained smiling at him as her hand quickened to her handbag drawing the cup shaped mask.

“Are you seeking something?” She inquired. Lazarus’s mind circles the perimeter of a central sculpture of thought trying to find a way to answer. Yet, no words could surface. She replaced her translation mask and reached to his boyish cheeks with her needled hands directly but gently. Her other hand reaches fourth to cover his other cheek. He could not break the stare into those dark portals as black as space though glistening like the surface of a neutron star. Her lips narrowed and his head began to tingle. He heard the sound, a consistent high-pitched ring smoothly chiming in his head. The environment of the café fades and was replaced by worlds and places being created and dissolved by the lovely Catwoman’s mind. The need for the translation device seemed invisibly distant as she supped with him. He could talk and listen without words or the rendering of language.

The mind of the cat was an energy filled realm of pride and presence. He could see both the future of the modern feline spirit and similarly the depth of the deep-rooted primal history of the cat on the grand stage of the Cosmos. He saw visions of intelligent four-footed hunting machines ruling the plains of the alien world of the Cat people gradually morph onto the cosmic stage of a modern space fairing species of elegant apparel. The history of the cats raced through his mind bringing about its own respect and acknowledgement and the woman shared her admiration of the Human story drawn from the mind of the entranced navigator. Perhaps a half an hour had elapsed and the two remained quietly sharing their thoughts. The cats were clearly ahead of the Humans in regards to telepathy and empathy.

At no measure did Lazarus lose his reverence for the truly gentle nature of this astounding Catwoman and her people. The mentality of the alien council resurfaced from his previous experience in the Sirius system followed by flash image of a mentor alien, which appeared briefly as if involuntarily present in the base of his thoughts. Yet, most of all, the warmth of the **Holy Spirit** filled them both and the **Angel of the Lord** came to sup with them and filled them with light and their heads became as torches of flame on the angelic realm that they were filled with power on high. This experience would transform the mind of this exuberant yet ripening space man.

## Approaching Pluto

Time was needed for Li to cope with the loss of Feeno. He was counting on him for rescue and was distressed. Though Li and Lazarus made a plan to take initiative and assisted Feeno in the **Port of Zemorg** it was a shortcoming. Pluto seemed like the place that would intersect his emotions at that moment, distant and derelict. He sat the whole hour wondering and pondering what he could have done different. He had not known Feeno very long yet felt close as a friend and it was painful.

Approaching the plutonian system allowed for the marvelous view of its dancing partners and its settlement known as Pluto Stop. He landed on the edge of the yellow painted crosshair on the landing pad and exits the Star Voyager. A short trip to the recreation region was sure to help ease his discomfort. Being on Pluto’s moon, Charon brought up feelings of newness and wonder as the parent planet loomed largely in the sky. It had long been a location of much debate and acknowledgment. It was also a place of serenity and education. The towering monument on the living base was crowned with a regional and galactic observatory atop.

The population was sparse and mostly consisted of astronomers and civilians doing research. Li enters the structure base and through a few airlock sequences into the wondrously decorated lobby. Though a bit saddened he gave a polite smile to the passing scientist and teens wondering about. The children were accompanying their parents who sought to educate them early on. The hall smelled like a library of books and wood. This was Li.s kind of place since he has always been an obscure astronomer himself. He recalled the days when he sat under his favorite tree out on the grassy hillside

dreamily gazing at the stars some of which he had passed only a few weeks ago. Li enters the foyer elevator to the top of the lookout. There were children next to him playing in the elevator and he told them their parents might be looking for them. A sense of caretaker had come over him in this instance.

The children get off at the middle floor and Li continues up. The doors retract and he enters the short hall leading to the end of the lookout. He turned the doorknob and enters the large study lab of instruments and view screens. It was quiet except for a few soft voice tones and whispers. The people in the white coats were the quietest while they peered through telescopes and analyzed spectral data on the computer monitors with crossed arms and chin strokes.

### **The Strange Object**

Charon Observatory was filled with many astronomers, family, and children throughout the year. It looked like a school because of the historical and science posters tacked to the billboards along the hall. The teachers were volunteers who had a passion to instruct both children and adults. Li felt at home and could see into the teacher's passion that she had chosen to use a traditional chalkboard. Most of the attention was at the **Telescope HUD**, a spacious display with many laser images spanning the perimeter. Li went into nostalgia. He knew he would. That was the purpose of his decision to go to Pluto other than to ease his grief over the loss of Feeno. The team of scientist huddled around the equipment was long hushed. The mysterious mass of energy and gravitation had been constantly accelerating since its discovery. It's been over ten years now.

Knowledge of the object is neither published nor inhibited. Individuals who visit an observatory or use private equipment can see it billions of light-years away. Yet its apparent size increases as if traveling at tremendous speeds. The readings were imprecise, the spectral lines from the light emanating from the object indicated elements of extracorporeal origin, it had gravitation yet, no density that could be discerned. The light was a cornucopia of deep violet with an aurora of adjacent frequencies. Its configuration was as symmetrical clouds of illumination following a central massive object. The SMD and Planetary Council had taken little concern.

The size was so large that any galaxy or globular cluster would be absorbed immediately. It was becoming increasingly baffling the fact that no observatory could interpret the speed or momentum of the object. Yet, it had been traveling for over a decade according to initial records. Li knew nothing of this until visiting this observatory. Openly promoted to peer through enhanced telescopes he is dazzled at the enormity and astounding beauty of the object. His fears and pains went away for the time. A few glances at the other astronomers who were already looking to Li for a reaction met a silent consensus of mutual acceptance. This is likely something that will be on his mind indefinitely. In the space of Star City, extraordinary events continue to unfold on new and everawakening avenues of fancy.

**To be continued...**

## Epilogue



Star City

The history of Star City is older than Human knowledge and was established before Humans came into the picture. Before Human contact Star City consisted of a hand full of alien species in this general vicinity of the galaxy approximately a 12 light-year diameter near our solar system. In this small space there were 3 different alien species comprising the territory. Earth and the entire solar system was one of the last regions to be added into the Planetary Council, which seeks to keep complete silence to underdeveloped systems such as Sol. The Human race has been observed for nearly a century and had not achieved a state of peace enough to join the council.

There was war, terrorism, and poverty on Earth and strict transmission silence by the council and adjacent alien colonies of any kind was prevented. Humans were collectively too aggressive to be considered to join, and could not be allowed to access the many peaceful alien populations and settlements spread throughout the space of Star City. The entire solar system was off limits and the council deployed electrodynamic-jamming devices in addition to initiating a transmission data encryption protocol to all systems. These devices made the solar system a communications dead zone without drawing to attention to the radio-scrubbing instruments. The council monitors Earth originating signals.

It is standard for the Planetary Council to acknowledge an Alien species when it begins to develop atomic technology and especially space travel. Humans had only achieved advanced rocket propulsion and slingshot capability, which uses planetary gravity. While both of these methods are still used even in the advanced cultures most qualified persons are using the new advanced alien translightspeed technology. The mutual cooperation issues between humans were the only aspect that kept them from gaining membership into the council sooner. First contact with humans was precarious and risky. The council had to debate feverously on how to proceed.

The humans could have an understanding or a panic reaction and possibly a military conflict. When contact was finally made in a very subtle manner like a mouse being led to cheese there was indeed widespread confusion amongst all humans. Some were understanding and relieved and others were terrified. This threw many outlooks into chaos including with the religious population, which was most of the world. What did this mean? There is other life in the universe. There is a local planetary council? What about God? What about the crucifixion? Many people were upset and grievant.

Eventually when the madness calmed the alien council explained everything in full, the purpose for communication silence, the religious implications and so on. Once the solar system and Earth began to open up the alien council immediately began assisting with mandatory cleanup and restructuring of Earth, which relieved overpopulation issues, war naturally came to a halt, and poverty diminished as well. The council placed, with Human design preference input, small town setups in various places in our solar system for humans to begin visiting as they worked their way deeper into Star City.





**The Planetary Council**

By Earth calendars of the Western hemisphere the Planetary Council was established around the 1860's. It began as a small coordination by a handful of star systems, alien species that were slightly ahead of Earth in all forms of technology. By the time these alien species developed radio transmission technology Earth was still in its horse and buggy stage and did not have enough knowledge to expand on such devices, which may have detected RF transmissions from nearby alien systems. The alien systems came into the radio age at nearly the same era allowing them to discover and learn about one another. Fortunately these alien races cooperated, communicated, and quickly began to share technology.

The development of faster than light technology accelerated and the aliens became space fairing. Their cooperation allowed them to make contact with still more local systems and grow to a kind of stellar city like structure we see today known as Star City. The council wasted no time developing protocols regarding the acquisition of new systems such as Earth. Earth being slightly behind and only recently beginning to develop the devices needed to detect and transmit radio communications frequencies knew nothing of the cooperated status of these unknown alien societies.

New procedures regarding the acknowledgement of disconnected worlds such as Earth insist that any and all form of contact be prevented until that society reaches a certain stage in technological development namely a space age. Jamming devices are deployed at key locations in and around the Solar System, which allows only mono directional radio traffic to traverse across space. As such the council easily monitors Earth transmissions but signals from other star systems are masked or restricted from entering Earth detection range. If the alien coordination came any later then Earth would have been able to detect extrasolar signals and would have been brought into the council earlier. However, as history records Earth had been regarded as off limits due to the aggressive and warring nature of Earth dwellers.

The observed development of **ICBM missiles**, which can easily be modified for atmospheric transition, and **atomic warhead technology**, posed a variable threat to any encounter from the new Council. Simultaneously, the need to acquire Earth membership continued to become more and more necessary as the new Star City grew ever more expansive. Soon our star system was surrounded by Star City territory yet still remained a forbidden zone. When the Council finally chose a safe plan of contact they implemented their recruitment strategy so as to limit the amount of Earth based panic and mass confusion about the reality of alien life and the now encompassing Star City.

Although the gradual introduction of the Council and alien beings in outer space was successful Earth dwellers endured a hard transgression as they struggled to accept the truth. Some of these difficult acknowledgements were religious in nature and the most affecting. The majority of the world was religious and maintained spiritual beliefs in God. The reality of alien life however threw those beliefs into chaos. Nevertheless, the council provided mandatory documentation and proof of the truth, which was that God is real and he created other man in the universe and died once for the sins of all species. The alien reports revealed much to Human astonishment that the chosen people in which Lord God came unto to serve as an example as a man was of the Human Genus. *"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."* 1 Corinthians reports...



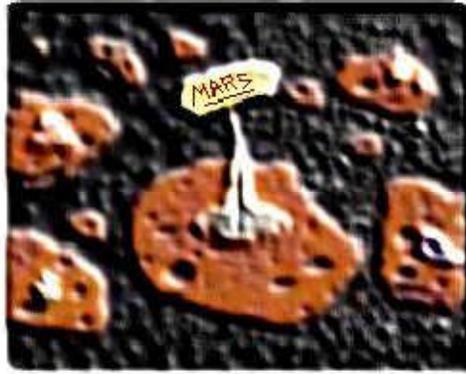
**The Federal Transition Academy** is a college-like facility established to every Planetary Council member and is responsible for training and instructing civilians new to space transition that wish to venture away from their home planet and visit the many colonies and settlements of Star City. In addition to safety and regulatory guidelines, the academy teaches many courses ranging from ship rearing to airlock safeguards and alien interpersonal relations.

All civilians traveling beyond the moon must pass required courses to continue. Other courses can be acquired upon request and many more opportunities to expand ones skills are available at the academy. All attempts to bypass the academy and acquire presence in space are unlawful and will result in loss of **transition licenses** and **ship piloting permits**. Licensed pilots who have already graduated the Transition Academy and conduct unregistered persons in their craft may also lose ship-rearing sanctions as determined by the Planetary Councils **Disciplinary Determination Division**.



**The SMD** is the acronym for **Star City Military Defense** and is the territories united protection against any hostile threat from outsiders. This large military is controlled by the people and consist of a wide range of battle craft: swarms of small attack fighters, larger high integrity fighters for bigger opponents, small and large battleships, and a host of armored ground vehicles. The solar-based SMD headquarters are located in a remote location on the dark side of Moon and is the primary recruitment center for ambitious citizens.

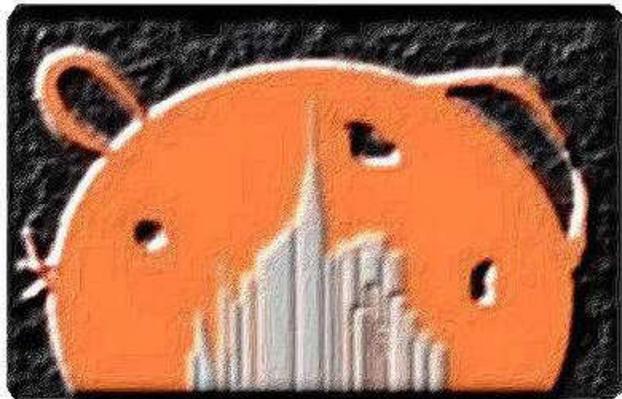
Although some qualified civilians are permitted to possess weapons on their vessels there are strict regulations preventing the use of them between inner city disputes, which could possibly arise. The Military says, "If you have a problem call the SMD." Outside of Star City territory, one proceeds at one's own risk. Captains of all newly registered civilian vessels released from Earth must report to the nearest SMD base for inspection and presentation of The Transition Academy **Diploma of Ascension**. Here SMD examination officers will provide your vessels status grade and instruct you on recommended vectors and activities. After the inspection you're *cut loose*. Only your form of propulsion limits your destination.



**Asteroid Belt Plaza**

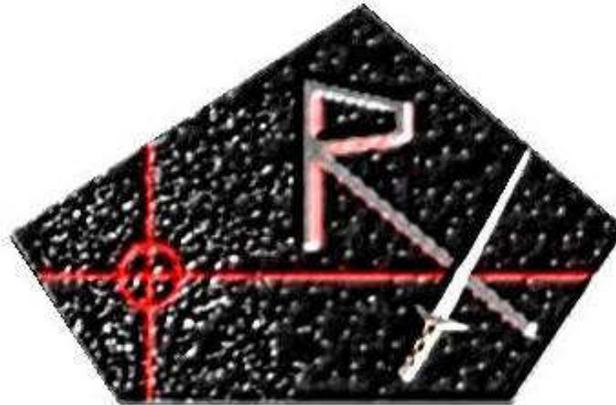
Small sections from the asteroid belt located in our solar system as well as various others support, building structures including the popular Mars Barr Restaurant unique to our star system. These asteroidal commons are safe havens for weary space travelers and souvenir seekers. You can find almost anything you would in a typical ground based plaza in these businesses anchored to various massive bodies.

In addition to convenient ship landing platforms there are included recreational activity sites. Bounce gently between the asteroid bodies from specified launch and landing sites for a heart stopping yet safe traverse to the next asteroid in your space suit, though, most might simply prefer the public transportation; a thrill for some but a fright for others! Enjoy a cozy stay on the largest and most visited moon sized asteroid Ceres at the luxurious Hotel Ceres. Venture out and explore the asteroidal surfaces at your own risk and return with some interesting stories to tell.



**Sun Town** is our place and consists of the inner solar system beginning at the orbit of the asteroid belt inward. The asteroid belt is a part of Sun town also. Some of the most popular attractions in Star City are right here in our corner including:

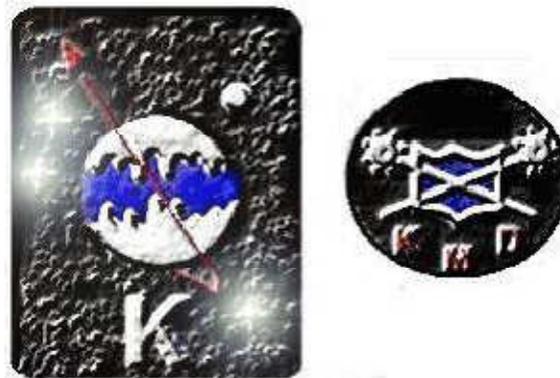
- The **Mars Barr Restaurant** and cantina sectioned in the asteroid belt plaza and Martian surface.
- **Olympus Mons Space Port** on Mars atop the largest extinct volcano in the solar system and landing grounds for visiting spacecraft.
- **Utopia Planitia City** near Valles Marinaris canyon on Mars.
- **Phobos and Deimos** (moons of mars) and corresponding subdivisions.
- **Mercury Power Station**. Regenerate at this never ending supply of energy from Planet Mercury
- **Venus Orbital Settlements**
- Visit or reside at these orbiting civic platforms.
- **Earth**: Visit Planet Earth to learn more about Human history from a first person perspective. Take a ride in an automobile updated and nonpolluting on the many far-reaching roadways of the Humans home planet.
- **The Moon**. While Earth is still being renovated the Moon has quickly become a large settlement project and shortstop. Along with the hotels neighborhoods and subdivisions there is the solar branch of the SMD positioned on the dark side of the moon.



**The Confederate Resistance Coordination**

The Resistance has been dubbed the villains of Star City and consists of a collection of groups from just about every settlement. They are mostly military remnants of the old pre-council governments who refused to allow a free civilian controlled territory and insisted on militarizing the settled regions immediately. On Earth, just before Humans were brought into the Council, some governments wanted to place strategic military installations and missile attack platforms on the moon and elsewhere thus maintaining a threatening status. The council and civilian populations of most territories throughout Star City overwhelm these groups like all of The Resistance Coordination.

**The People's Affairs Committee** from all over the territory agreed on a free-based society and was quoted as stating, "We are not going to bring these petty conflicts into space." Nevertheless, the Confederate Resistance does not regard their desire to maintain military control as petty and insists on grouping into populations determined to overthrow the Planetary Council. Inevitably The Resistance gets pushed out of Star City where they settle in large warmongering-like coalitions. They continue to develop their space fleet and technology until they can attempt to retake the territory. Fortunately the SMD still maintains the larger force and the Resistance is unable to withstand an SMD assault. However, at their many outposts scattered along the outskirts of Star City they sit, watch, and wait.



**Planet Krysto**

The A-00981 star system and the inhabited planet nicknamed Krysto for its unique ice vapor crystal-like formations are positioned just outside the Star City boarder about 53 light years from our Solar System. It is a frigid planet nearing the end of its period of repeated glaciation, which an Earth group registered with the Planetary Council for control. To date there have been several planets outside Star City which are controlled privately by different Human and alien members.

Krysto is now a predominantly human territory and has its own military called the KMD for Krystonian Military Defense much like the SMD but far smaller and is restricted to Krystonian affairs. Krysto has two small beautiful cities, a wide range of exciting attractions for any visitors to enjoy, and a large moon. The only danger is the fact that The Resistance tends to attack these outside colonies, which are excluded from Star City jurisdiction. However, the many remote worlds such as Krysto maintain an allied status with Star City and the SMD and receive combat aid whenever the need arises.



**The Matron Science Group**

The Matron Group is a famous collection of technological pioneers consisting of more than one group of alien races who work together to develop breakthrough technology. They are responsible for many different inventions, which make life easier for civilians. They have perfected the gravity plate, a device responsible for creating a gravity-like field, which acts on all particles and is used in the flooring of vessels and building structures. They have helped to streamline the light speed engine and are the prime developers of the spatial temper or GFE device (G-Force Emulation), an instrument which makes light speed and post-light-speed travel possible by contracting space in front of the craft and expanding it from behind thereby bypassing time dilation effects and matter compression, a counteractive balance between inertial gravity of acceleration. These are just some of the inventions created by this elite group of scientist. The matron head reports there are many more advancements on the horizon!



**Star Voyager**

One of the most advanced civilian vessels in the territory commanded by Captain Seiwan Li and occasionally assisted by his close childhood friend Lazarus, the Star Voyager can out class any craft in its weight. However its purpose is not competition but leisure and is the former property of Captain Li's grandfather whom built and passed the vessel on to Seiwan sometime after the new era. Li later modified the ship to his liking. As permitted by the Transition Academy and the SMD Li, like other civilians, added advanced engines and weapons to the Star Voyager and spend most of his time in his ship where he is most comfortable. Inside the three-compartment RV-like vessel, is a host of intriguing devices for making a life in space most endurable.

The front of the Star Voyager is the cockpit where the vessel is operated and maneuvered. The second compartment, which can robotically transform into almost any room needed for a specific purpose, is where the top and bottom hatch is located, and a functional airlock. At the touch of a button on the wall panel you can make a medical aid room. Watch as a gurney folds out from the wall and the cabinets open containing medical supplies and tools. Wall monitors allow for thorough examination of the patient. Tap another button and the room can transform into a backup cockpit in case of an emergency such as a hull breach in the control deck or head separation maneuver.

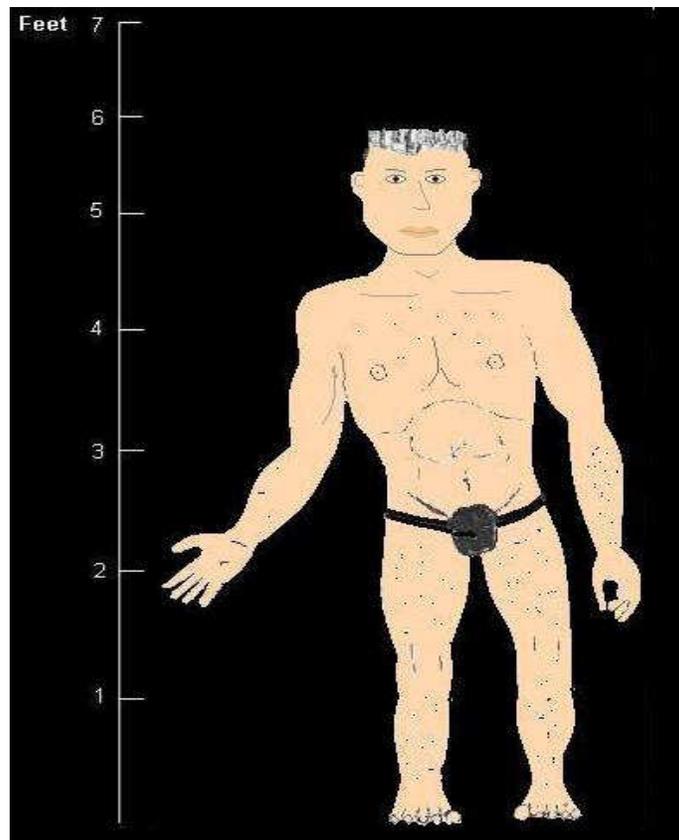
The rear compartment is the living area and where the action is. It is a comfortable bedroom, dining area, and lounge with counter and stools, fold out beds from wall enclosures, collapsible dining table and ceiling mounted holographic display device, (modern television). The back of the Star Voyager makes for a comfortable passenger and guest accommodation. Due to the armament and advanced capabilities of the Star Voyager the SMD has occasionally requested Captain Li to accept covert missions most of which are to infiltrate resistance outposts and hideouts. There are many more features to the Star Voyager, which are detailed, in the fascinating saga of Star City.

# Aliens

## Human

- Genus resemblance: mammalian (likeness of primates)
- Attributes: medium size, medium strength
- Intelligence: developed forebrain, mildly telepathic, reasonable
- Home Environment: medium gravity, variable temperature
- Speech: pressure vocal

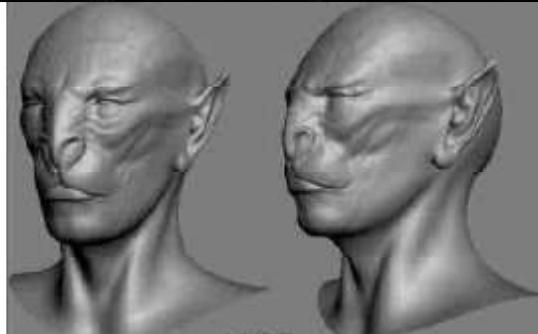
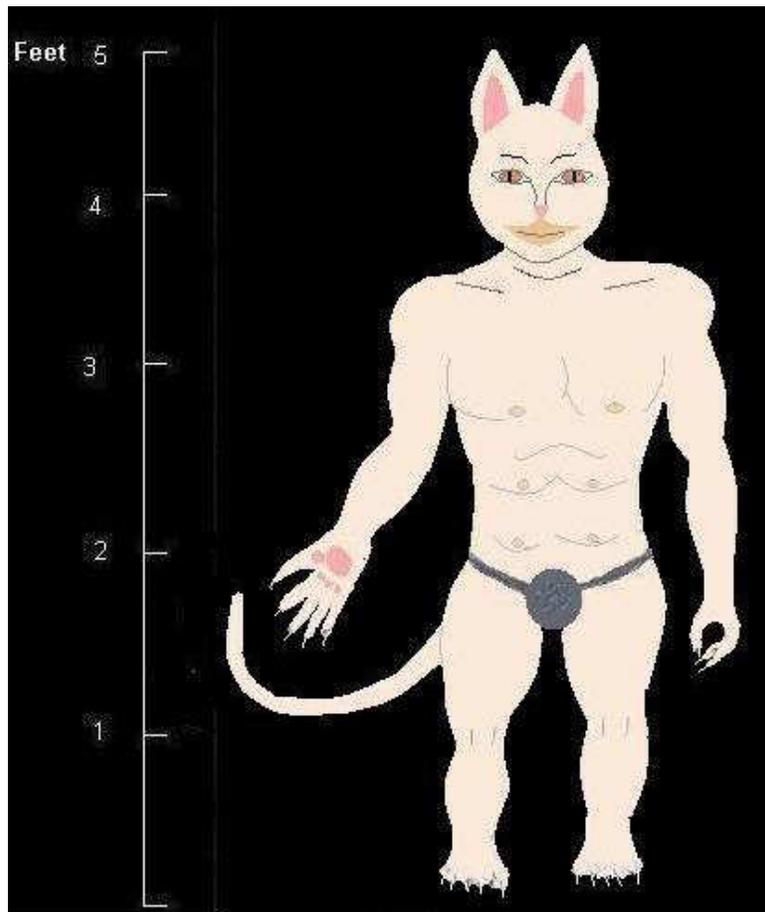
Humans are variable in their behavior and can range from mild to impulsive.



**Catman** (derivative)

- Genus resemblance: mammalian (likeness of Felidae)
- Attributes: medium size, medium strength
- Intelligence: developed forebrain, telepathic, reasonable
- Home Environment: medium gravity, variable temperature
- Speech: pressure vocal high-pitched, vowel-like.

Catmans are the only comparable aliens to Humans in terms of biology and behavior. Although possessing the likeness of different genus classes, Catman are the easiest for humans to relate to when compared to Fishman and the other species. They possess sharp claws, flat teeth like Humans except for the sharp and elongated cuspids, padded hands, and 2 rows of teats. Female Catman have two rows of breast down to the abdomen.

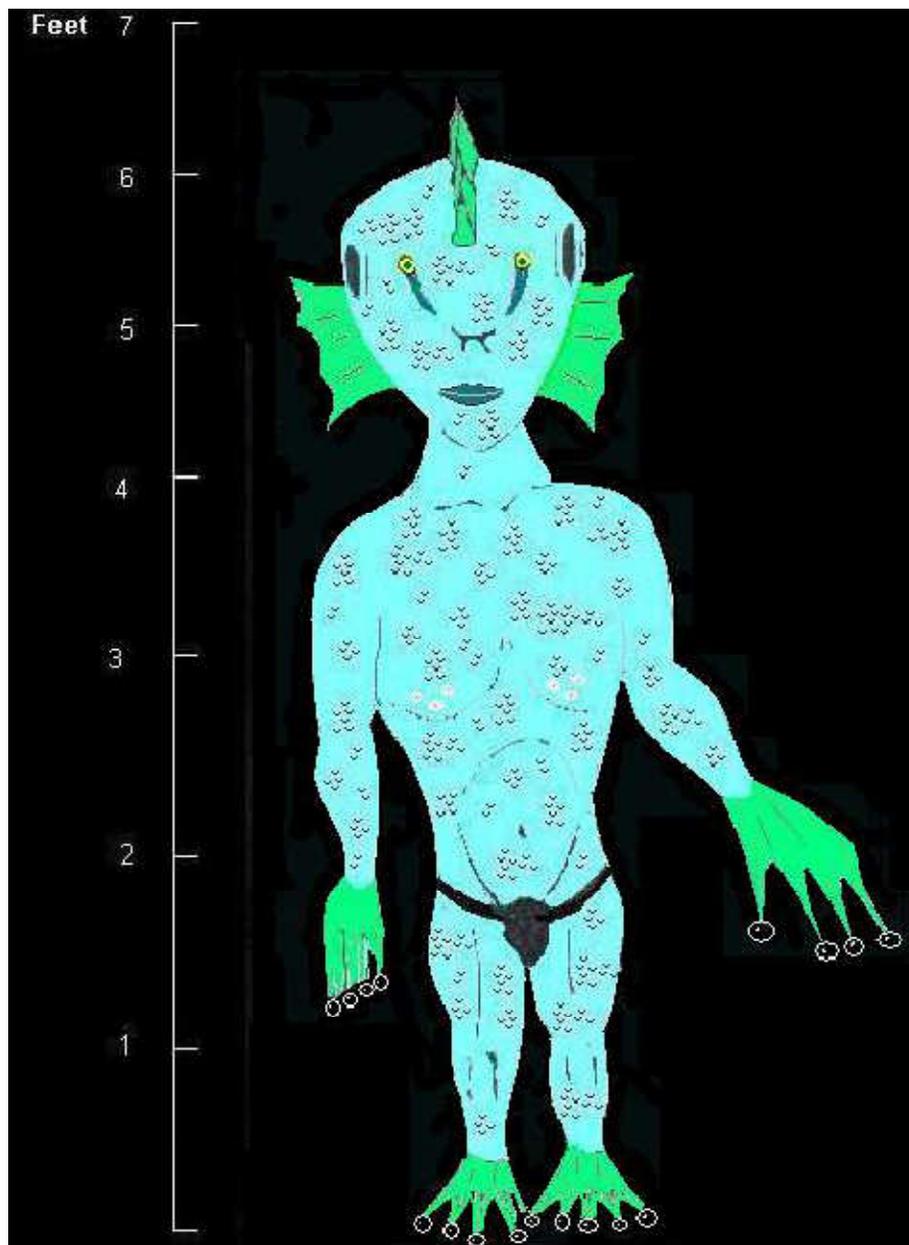


***Artist's rendering of Felidae/Human hybrid***

**Fishman (derivative)**

- Genus resemblance: Aquatic (likeness of Tiktaalik)
- Attributes: large size, high strength
- Intelligence: developed forebrain, telepathic, reasonable
- Home Environment: buoyant fluid (ocean water), variable temperature
- Speech: Primary is sonic (like dolphins or whales) Limited verbal ability (Garbled by Human standards)

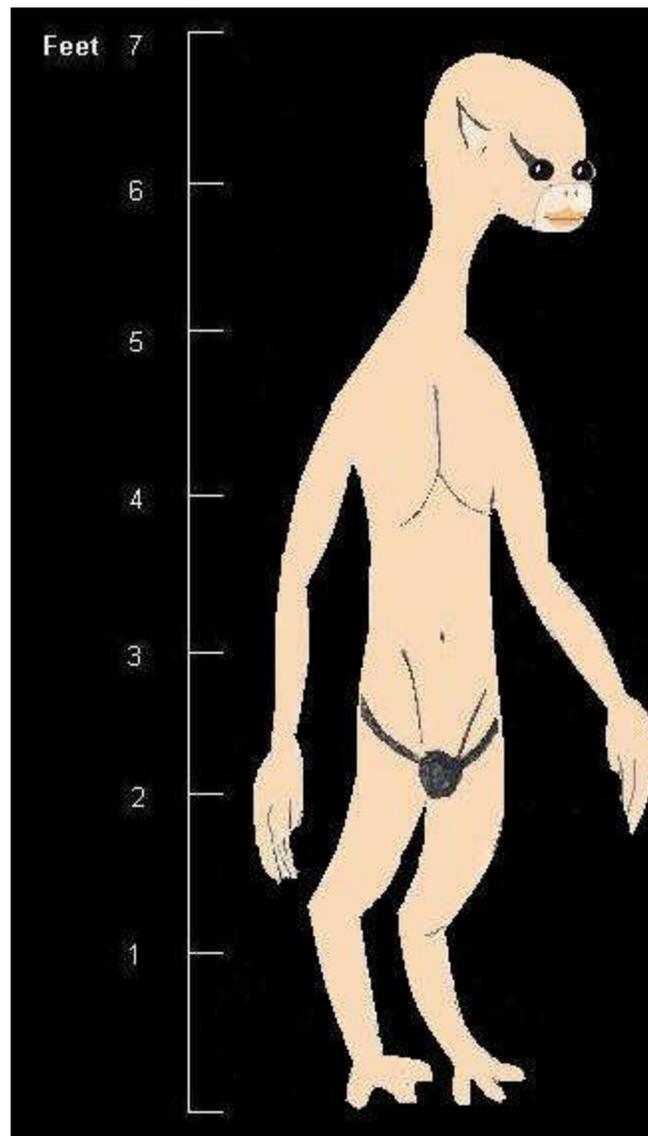
Aquatic in origin this fascinating species spends much of their lives in water and have strength from a lifetime of wading and swimming. In addition their bodies are elongated since buoyancy allows for larger growth like the whale or shark.



**Giraffeman** (derivative)

- Genus resemblance: mammalian (likeness of Giraffidae)
- Attributes: large size, low strength, comparably very weak
- Intelligence: highly developed forebrain, telepathic, advanced logic
- Home Environment: weak gravity, warm temperature
- Speech: pressure vocal

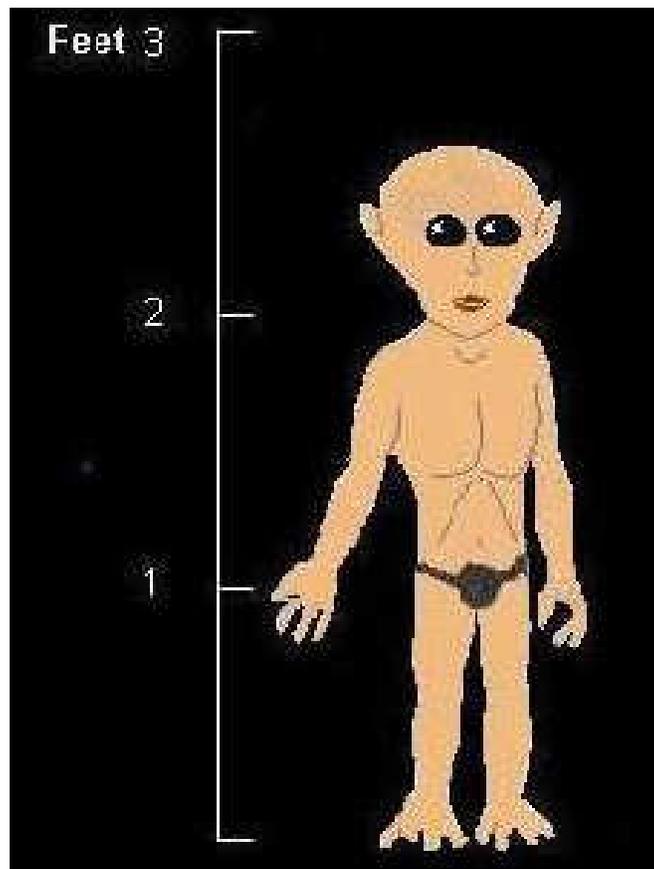
Originating from a small low gravity planet with similar environment of Earth this tall, slender, and relatively weak species is also one of the most intelligent and enlightened. They are very fragile and require care and support when venturing into human standard gravity.



**Elfman** (derivative)

- Genus resemblance: mammalian (likeness of Suricata)
- Attributes: small size, low strength, comparably weak
- Intelligence: highly developed forebrain, telepathic, advanced logic
- Home Environment: medium gravity, variable temperature
- Speech: pressure vocal

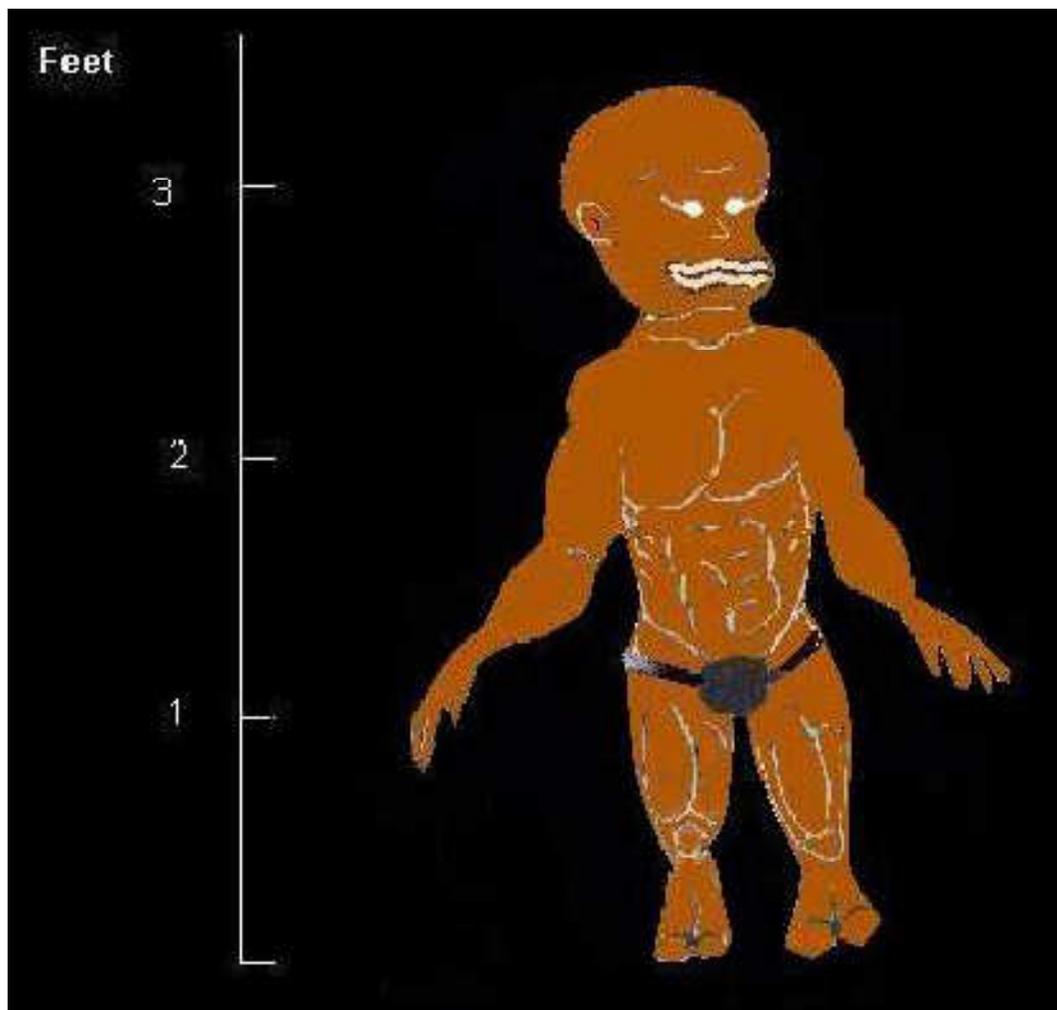
Small, short, weak and very cute these tiny aliens usually don.t grow more than 3 feet tall and are very intelligent and mild-mannered.



**Badgerman** (derivative)

- Genus resemblance: mammalian (likeness of Mydaus)
- Attributes: compact, high strength, 3 times that of Human
- Intelligence: developed forebrain, mildly telepathic, reasonable
- Home Environment: high gravity, variable temperature
- Speech: pressure vocal

Short, compact, stalky, and very strong this species originates from a high gravity environment on a large planet. Though usually not much taller than 4 feet this man can easily out muscle a human with as much as 3 times the strength.



**Unknown Sighted Alien** (nickname: Grays, Mentors)

- Genus resemblance: mammalian? (Unknown likeness)
- Attributes: small, weak
- Intelligence: highly developed forebrain, telepathic, advanced logic
- Home Environment: unknown
- Speech: unknown

Little is known about this species. It first appeared in alleged sightings on Earth and gradually became part of our culture. Even the planetary council knows little about them, where they are from, and what species, how intelligent. They have never made contact with anyone and have only passed through the territory once and overlooked the solar system restriction zone and were responsible for Earth confirmed sightings. They do not respond to communication but appear to be non-hostile. Rumor reports they are friendly, enlightened and highly advanced in both technology and mentality.

There are thought to be only a few hundred thousand of these aliens in existence due to a lack of copulation. Theory suggests that their extravid rapport with one another is so clear that sexual bonding is virtually unnecessary, it wouldn't make much of a difference. They are believed to have minimal organ functions and are fed by their expansive minds and transcending spirit. They occupy their bodies apparently by choice and choose not yet to ascend into the theoretical realm of Heaven. The only organs they do seem to use are the heart, brain, muscles, and sub-stomach, which is functional, yet rarely used. When the alien does eat its excessively acidic stomach can almost completely dissolve its meal and will be absorbed completely by its body and brain; all other organs have become conglomerate material with unknown purpose. The excessively odorous smell inside their bodies is theorized to be a result of the unused organs and acidic compounds making autopsies or surgery very hazardous.

Some say they are dead while others believe they are very much alive. They love the cosmos and likely have lived for centuries moving about the universe in their excessively advanced saucer shaped space craft living to bear witness to the most dramatic and scientifically astounding events in the universe such as coalescing neutron stars and phenomenal anomalies. They appear to travel in pairs sometimes 3 but usually less than 5 and are never voluntarily alone. The companionship of another mind is all the entertainment these telepathic sub-entities need during their vastly long space odysseys. Their knowledge is exceedingly broad and their **genus resemblance** is unknown. Their inclinations are good and have been rumored to have seen the gates of Heaven. Other unexplainable activities have been reported surrounding alleged sightings of these aliens much of which regarding extraspectral frequencies of light.



## Speed Scale

Interestingly there are speed gaps in Star City vessels due to the various engine types, which have minimum and maximum thrust output. If we start at the slowest speeds we will use the Standard solid fuel jet thrusters, which are the same engines, used to attain slow surface-to-orbit ascent velocities and landing process. Many of the spacecraft are blunt ended and cannot travel very fast in any atmosphere also the solid fuel bricks used are only enough for one or two surface to orbit ascents. Lateral trajectories use the Fusion Thruster. If the vessel is traveling along the ground we will work in conjunction with the new alien based short range hovering system.

After a vessel has achieved orbit with the ascent thrusters it is possible to break range and head out into space. The destination and directory will determine what engine class and speed we will use bearing in mind that there are "no wake zones" figuratively speaking; speed limits which restrict the use of high speed engines. These zones are mostly confined to the inner of a given star system. The outer where we usually find planetary systems in more dispersed orbits we might note a higher wake zone. If we were traveling from Earth orbit to the moon we could use the light class mach speed engine. At mach 3000 we could reach Lunar orbit in just over 6 minutes however this would violate Star City "no wake zone" regulations.

At current the speed limit from Earth to our moon is mach 1500 putting us at the Moon in about 13 minutes. This is an appropriate speed for non-emergency vessels, which are permitted to exceed these speeds. We might expect our next destination to be Venus since it comes closer to Earth than any other planetary body aside from the Moon. We might also consider Mars as it is the second closest. However both these planets are only close to Earth once every few years. For example if Mars were on the other side of the Sun it would be roughly 200,000,000 miles away and would require our flight path to pass the sun which of course we would want to steer clear of thereby increasing the distance. We can only make distance and speed calculations based on given positions. That is to say we would have to assume a planet is in a particular position in its orbit. Let's assume that Mars is in its closest position relative to Earth at about 35,000,000 miles.

At mach 3000 we could be in Mars orbit in 15 hours! As we can see we still have not needed to use the medium class sub light speed engines. Even if Mars were at its greatest distance on the other side of the Sun at 200,000,000 miles we could cross the inner solar system and reach mars in about 3 days. Naturally we will consider the gaseous planet Jupiter as our next destination at 365,000,000 miles away on average. At mach 3000 it would take 1 week to reach Jupiter. It is unnecessary to travel this slowly at this distance so the no wake speed between Earth and Jupiter is higher. Now we may switch to the SLS engine class.

At SLS factor 1 which is 15,000 mps we can reach the Jovian system in about 6 hours. Fortunately we are permitted to travel at maximum sub light speed factor 10, which is 150,000 mps just under the speed of light. We can reach Jupiter in about an hour, Saturn in 2 hours at 746 million miles, Uranus in 3 hours at 1.8 billion miles, Neptune in 4 hours at 2.7 billion miles, and Pluto in about 4 hours at 2.6 billion miles. The planets beyond Pluto would require us to take our vessel to the plutonian orbit before switching over to the LS scale as Star City regulations would decree. We will use the Oort Cloud as our next destination. The Oort Cloud is a sphere of comets and asteroids that mark the beginning of a star system boarder and also the event horizon of a star such as our sun. They are just debris that gets caught in the outer edge of a stars gravity field.

The Oort Cloud begins at about 4.6 billion miles from Earth and ends at about 4.6 trillion miles from Earth close to a light year out. To reach the Oort Cloud inner boundary we will finally use the high-capacity LS engines. The slowest light speed factor 1 is about 15,090,736.89 mps or 80 times the speed of light. This is a drastic speed jump from the maximum sub light speed of 150,000 mps. At LS factor 1 we can reach the Oort Cloud in 5 hours and the outer Oort Cloud in 3 days. The comet and asteroidal bodies of the Oort Cloud is widely dispersed and total to an estimated 1 trillion objects, therefore it isn't a big problem maintaining a linear trajectory through the cloud. However on occasion it becomes necessary to make flight plan adjustments due to circumstantial interference from moving asteroids and comets. At the end of The Oort Cloud we find ourselves about 1 quarter the way to Alpha Centauri the next nearest star system. To travel from Earth to Alpha Centauri is a 25 trillion mile trip and requires maximum light speed factor 23 or 347,086,948 mps. (1,863.23 times speed of light) We can reach the star system in 24 hours.

**Standard Solid Fuel Jet Thrusters** equal, 0 mph to mach 45 and **Advanced Fusion Thrusters** mach 45 to mach 3000.

**Mach:**

1 = 0.21 mps . . . . .
2 = 0.42 mps . . . . .
3 = 0.63 mps . . . . .
4 = 0.84 mps . . . . .
5 = 1.05 mps . . . . .
6 = 1.26 mps . . . . .
7 = 1.47 mps . . . . .
8 = 1.68 mps . . . . .
9 = 1.89 mps . . . . .
10 = 2.1 mps. . . . .
3000 = 630 mps. . . . .

**Sub Light Speed factors**

Engine class needed: Medium capacity matter/antimatter reactor

**SLS:**

1 = 15,000 mps
2 = 30,000 mps
3 = 45,000 mps
4 = 60,000 mps
5 = 75,000 mps
6 = 90,000 mps
7 = 105,000 mps
8 = 120,000 mps
9 = 135,000 mps
10 = 150,000 mps

**Light Speed factors (c = times speed of light)**

Engine class needed: High capacity matter/antimatter reactor

**LS:**

1 = 81.01c = 15,090,736.89 mps
2 = 162.02c = 30,181,473.79 mps
3 = 243.03c = 45,272,210.69 mps
4 = 324.04c = 60,362,947.59 mps
5 = 405.05c = 75,453,684.49 mps
6 = 486.06c = 90,544,421.39 mps
7 = 567.07c = 105,635,158.29 mps
8 = 648.08c = 120,725,895.19 mps
9 = 729.09c = 135,816,632.09 mps
10 = 810.1c = 150,907,368.99 mps
11 = 891.11c = 165,998,105.89 mps
12 = 972.12c = 181,088,842.79 mps
13 = 1,053.13c = 196,179,579.6 mps
14 = 1,134.14c = 211,270,316.5 mps
15 = 1,215.15c = 226,361,053.4 mps
16 = 1,296.16c = 241,451,790.3 mps
17 = 1,377.17c = 256,542,527.2 mps
18 = 1,458.18c = 271,633,264.1 mps
19 = 1,539.19c = 286,724,001 mps
20 = 1,620.2c = 301,814,737 mps
21 = 1,701.21c = 316,905,474 mps
22 = 1,782.22c = 331,996,211 mps
23 = 1,863.23c = 347,086,948 mps

# SHIP PROFILES

## Star Voyager – civilian

Owner: Seiwan Li co-pilot Lazarus

Maximum Speed: LS factor 20

Maneuverability: 8.6

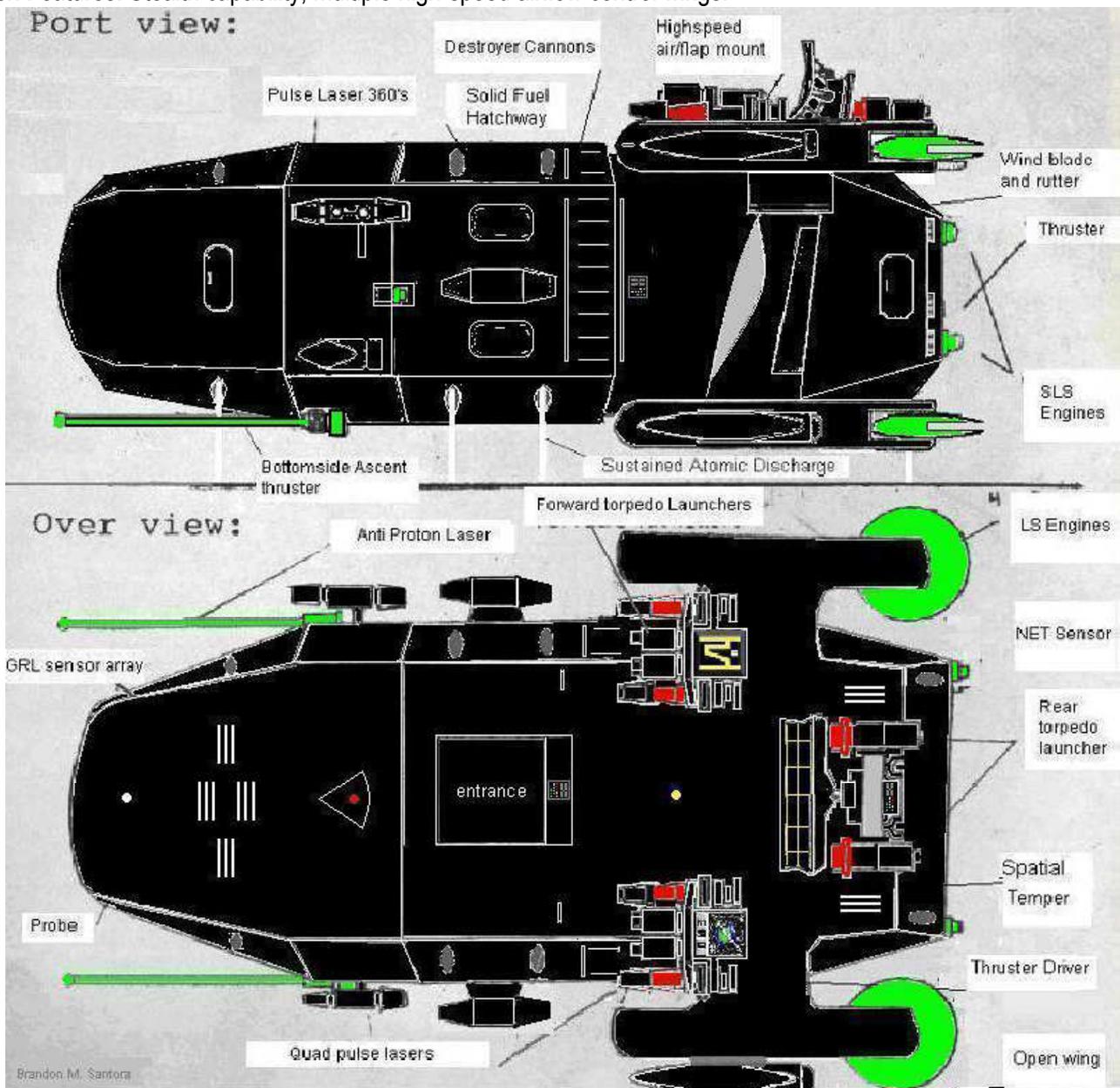
Sensor Equipment: 1 NET and 5 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 6 multiple +637000 regenerative

Engines: 4 light speed engines, 4 sub-light speed engines, 4 fusion thrusters multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: Twin anti-proton lasers, Quad pulse lasers, 2 pulse laser 360.s, Twin destroyer cannons, 2 dual torpedo launchers 2 rear torpedo launchers.

Addition Features: Stealth capability, multiple high-speed airflow control wings.



**Blure XF – civilian**

Owner: Feeno Nemon

Maximum Speed: LS factor 2.49

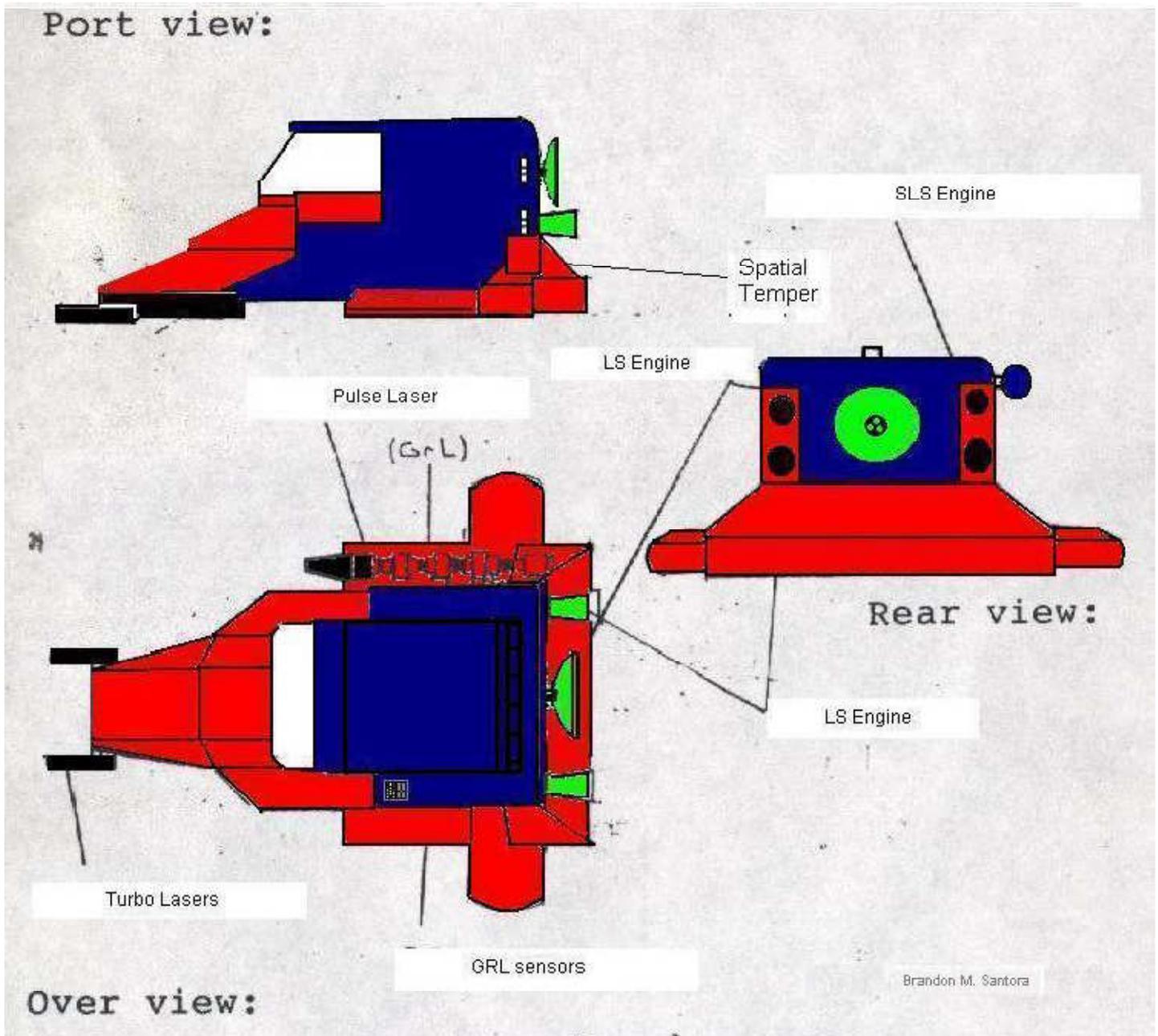
Maneuverability: 9.4

Sensor Equipment: 2 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 2 double (fore/aft protection only) +98000 non-regenerative

Engines: 2 SLS, 2 LS, 2 Fusion Thrusters, multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: 1 Turbo laser mount, 1 Pulse laser



**Raider** – civilian

Owner: Mariah

Maximum Speed: LS factor 10

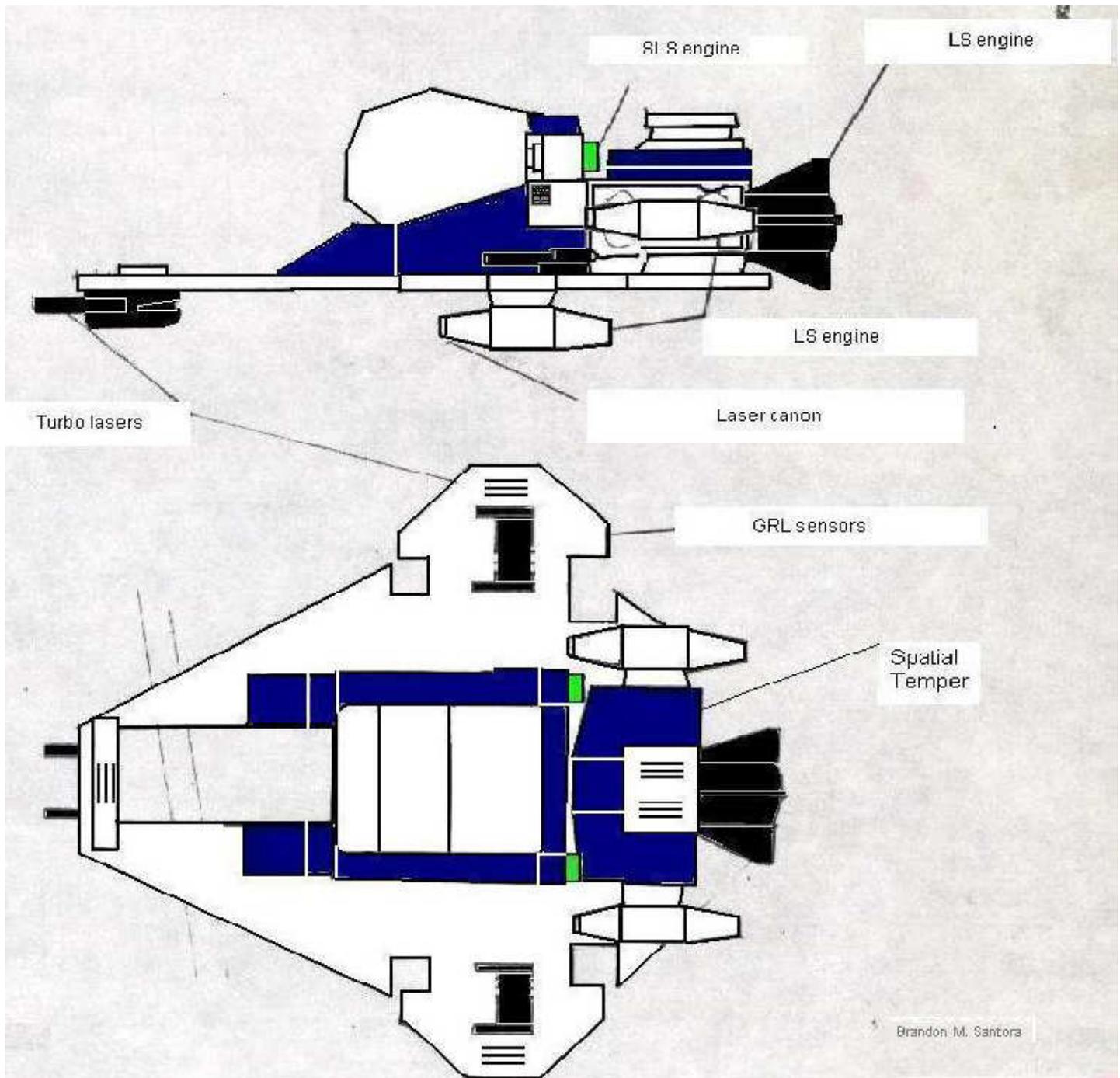
Maneuverability: 9.1

Sensor Equipment: 5 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 4 quad +357700 regenerative

Engines: 3 SLS, 4 LS, 2 Fusion Thrusters, multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: 4 Laser cannons, 3 Turbo laser mounts



**Blue Bird – civilian**

Owner: Unim Niom

Maximum Speed: LS factor 10

Maneuverability: 9.8

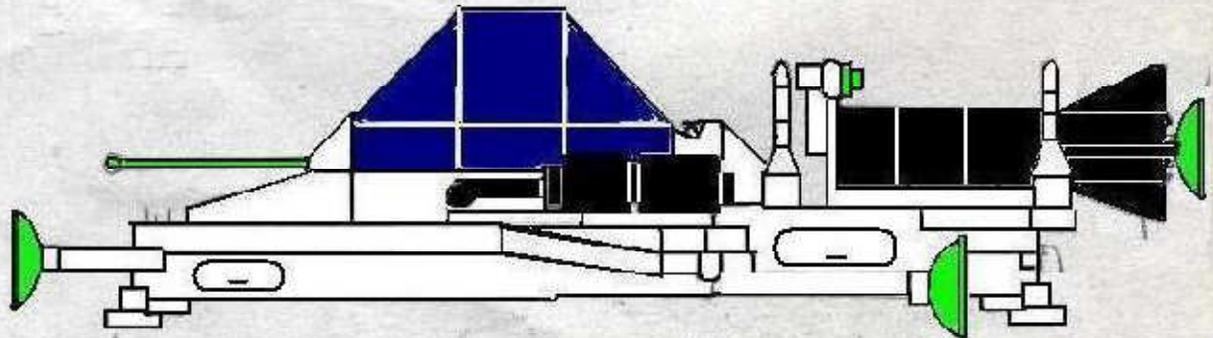
Sensor Equipment: 2 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 4 quad +357700 regenerative

Engines: 1 LS, 2 SLS engines, 2 Fusion Thrusters, multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: 3 Charge Blasters, 1 Antiproton beam, 1 dual canister torpedo launcher

Port view:



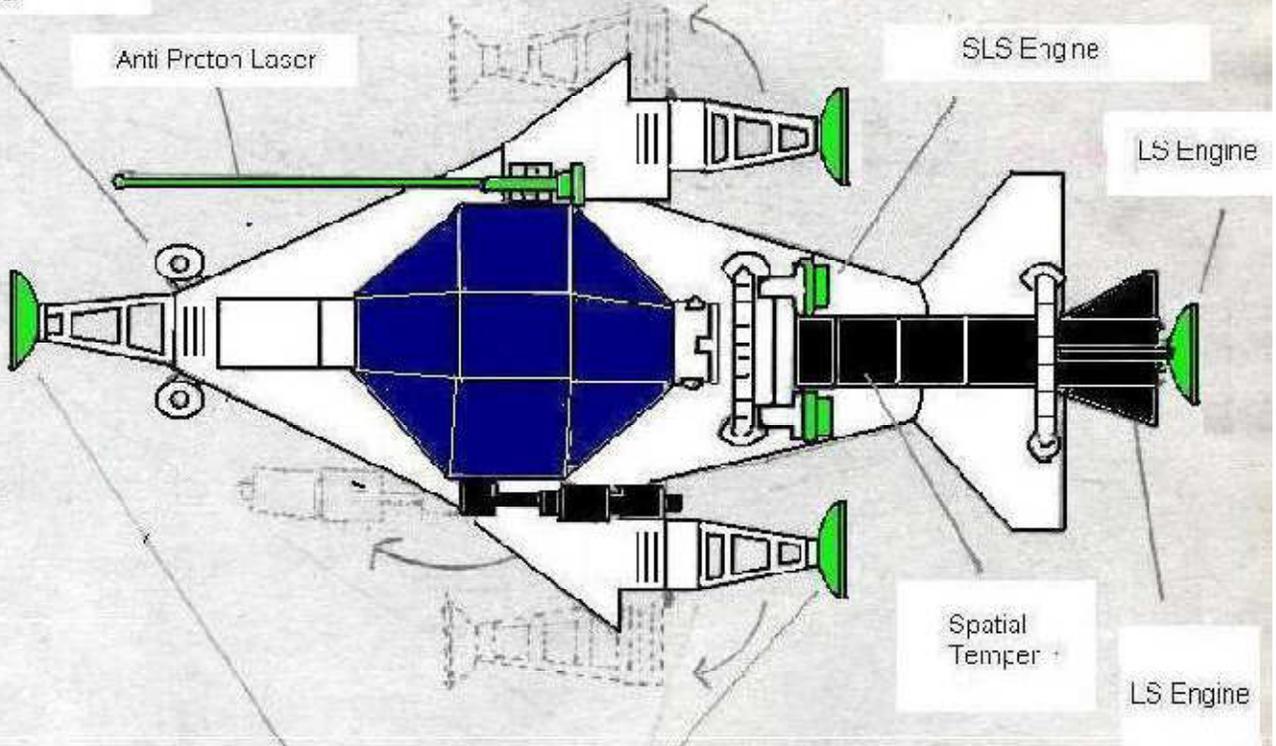
Solid Fuel Ascent Thruster

Anti Proton Laser

SLS Engine

LS Engine

Over View:



Spatial Temper

LS Engine

Charge Blaster

Erandon M. Santora

**Explorer – civilian**

Owner: Husto Theeson

Maximum Speed: LS factor 16

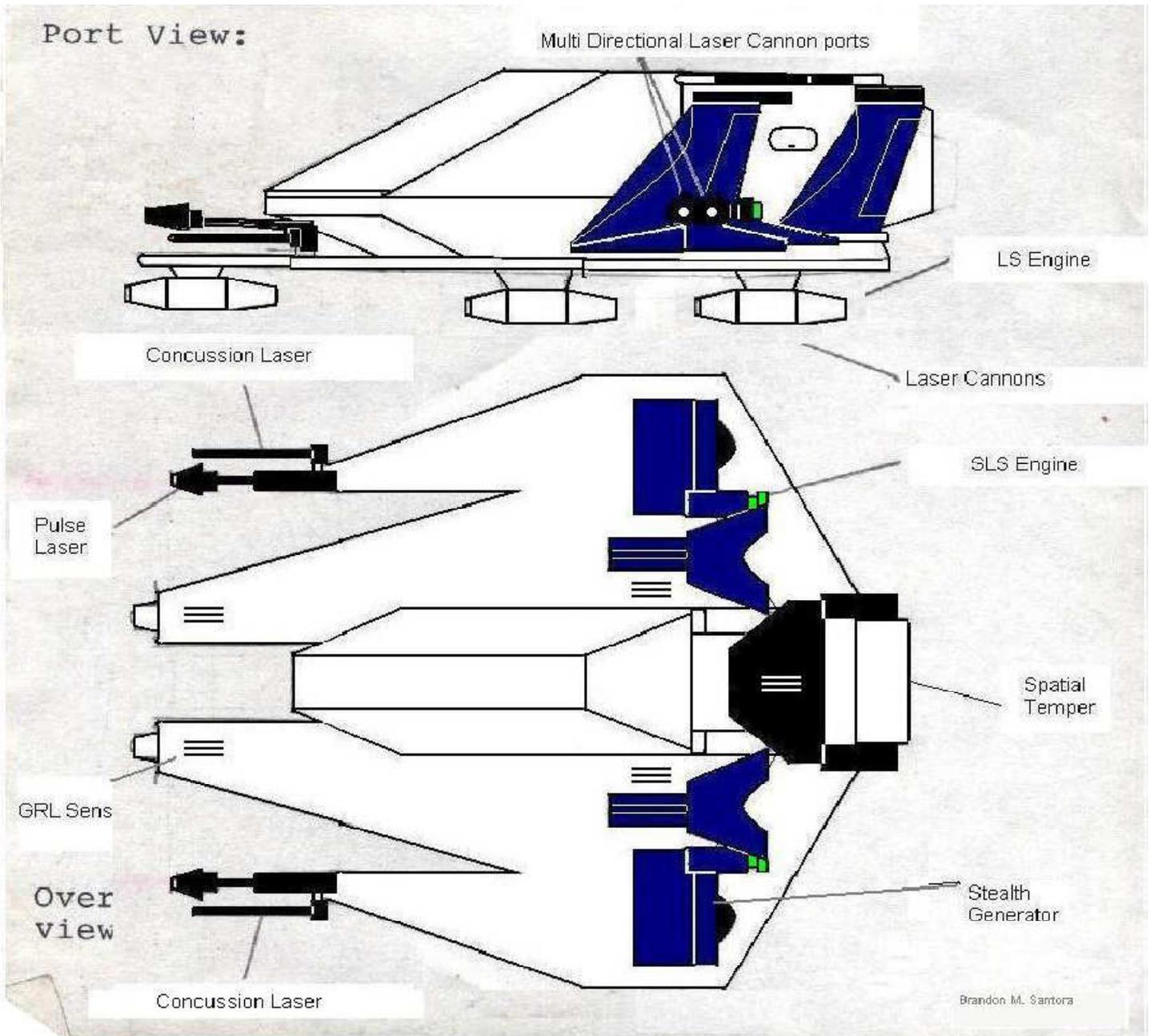
Maneuverability: 9.7

Sensor Equipment: 4 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 5 multiple +581507 regenerative

Engines: 6 LS, 2 SLS engines, 2 Fusion Thrusters, multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: 6 Laser Cannons, 2 Multi Directional Laser Cannons, 1 torpedo launcher, Twin concussion lasers, Twin pulse lasers.



**SMD Military Vessels:**

**Type 2 Fighters – SMD**

Owner: Star City Military and Defense

Maximum Speed: LS factor 5

Maneuverability: 9.3

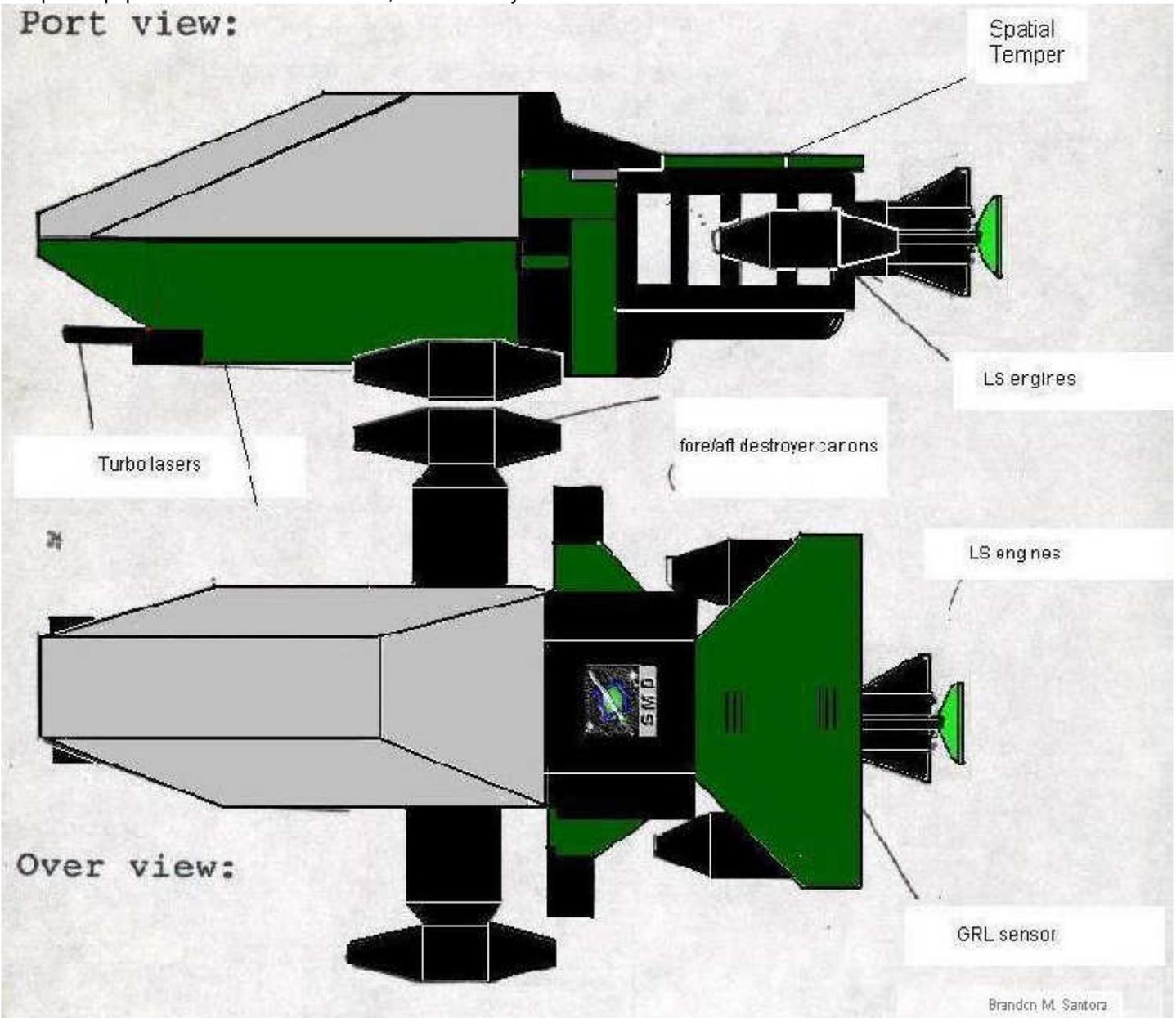
Sensor Equipment: 2 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 3 quad +225400 regenerative

Engines: 2 SLS, 3 LS, 2 Fusion Thrusters, multiple attitude thrusters

Weapon Equipment: 1 Turbo laser mount, Twin destroyer cannons

Port view:



Over view:

**Armored Ground Vehicle (Terrain) – SMD**

Owner: Star City Military and Defense

Maximum Speed: 175 mph

Maneuverability: 4.9

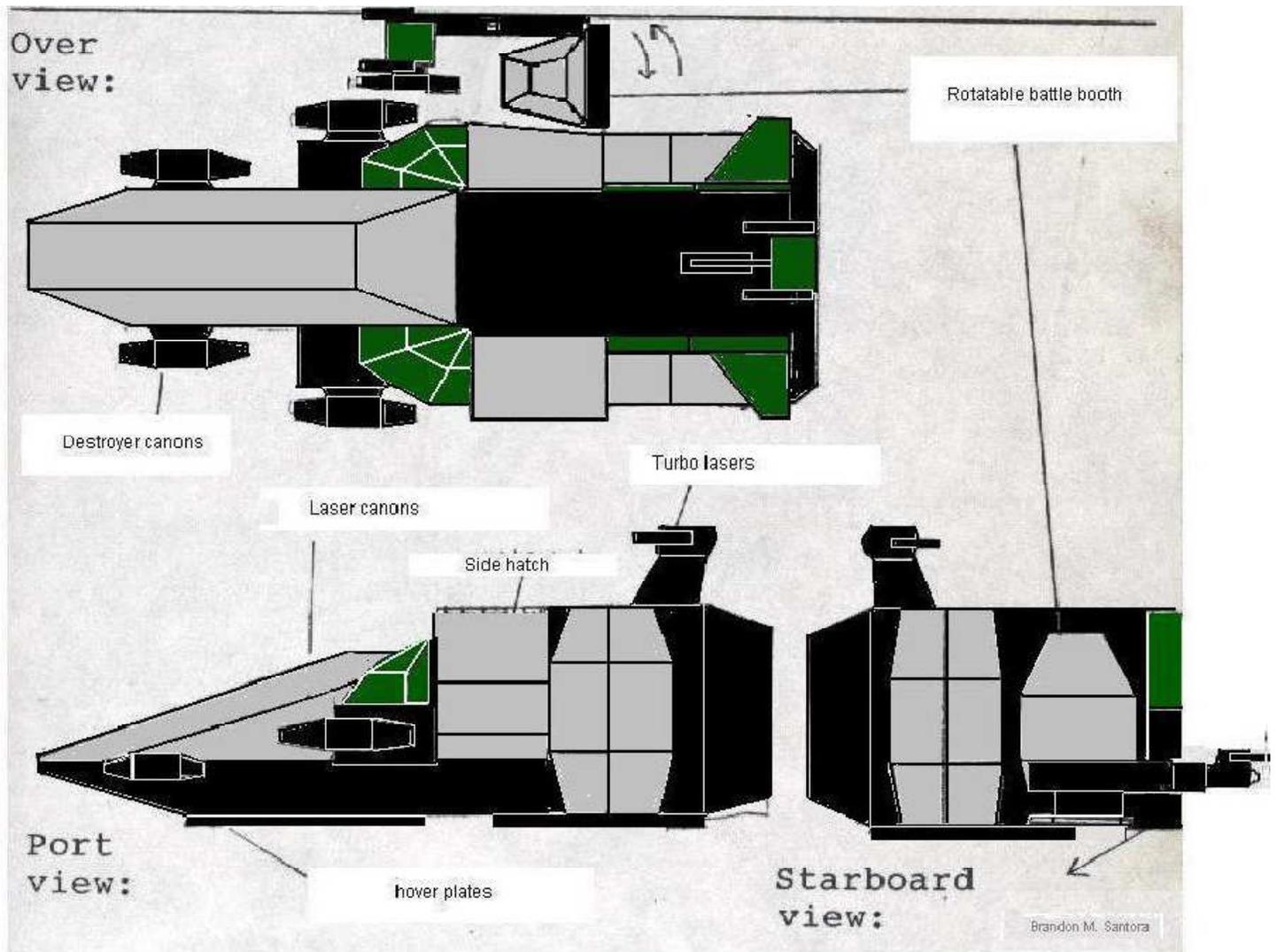
Sensor Equipment: 2 GRL.s, 2 ATN.s

Shield Class: class 6 multiple +637000 regenerative

Engines: Hover system, Lateral magneto thrust coils, Attitude control thrusters

Weapon Equipment: Twin laser canons, 2 Missile launchers, 1 top mounted rotary Turbo laser, side mounted Battle booth, 3 destroyer canons

Addition feature: Trailer hitch for SMD Type 2 Fighter landing bed, second trailer for advanced sensor equipment.



## Heavy Gun Ship – SMD

Owner: Star City Military and Defense

Maximum Speed: LS factor 20

Maneuverability: 4.3

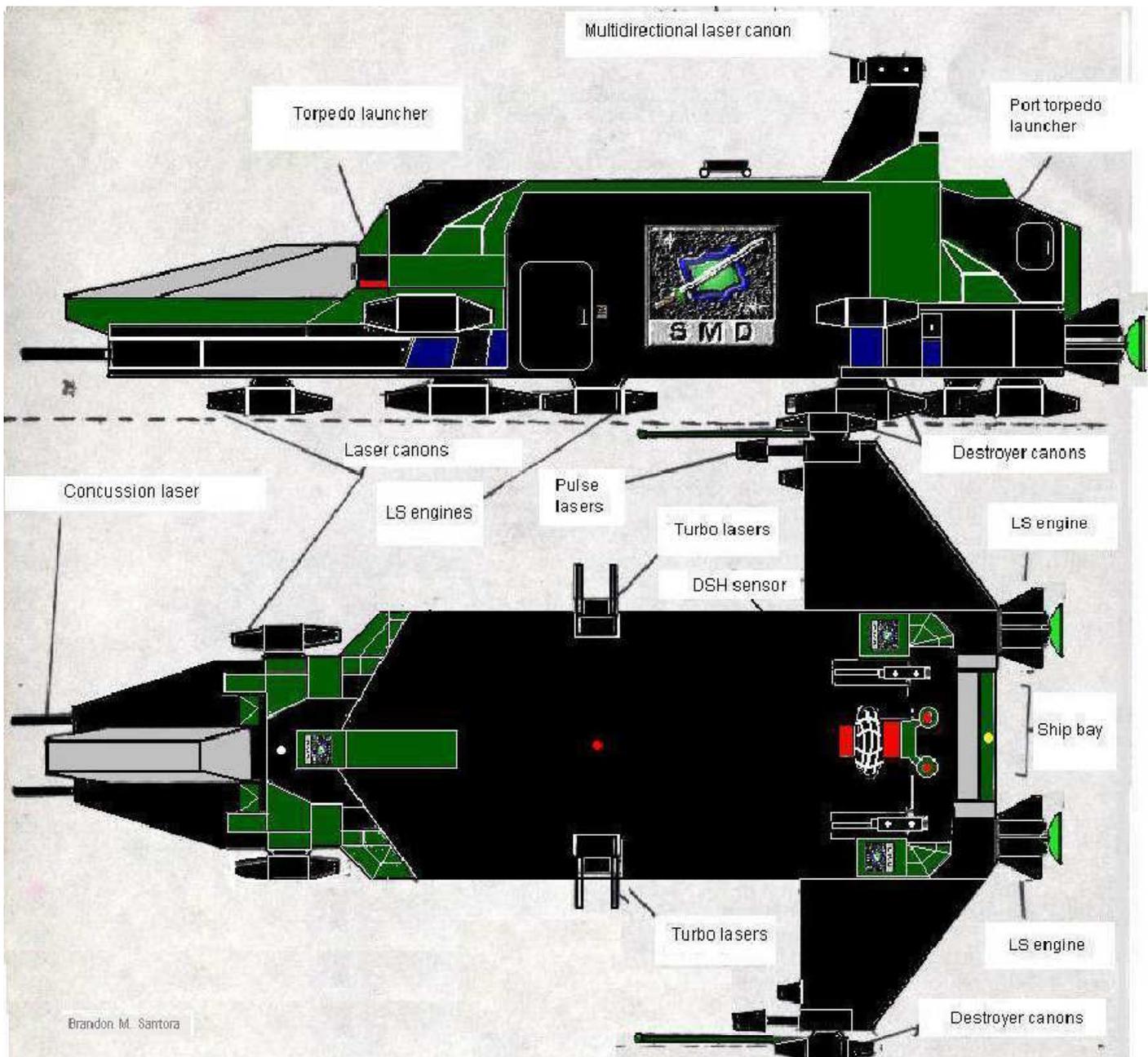
Sensor Equipment: 1 DSH, 8 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 6 multiple +637000 regenerative

Engines: 12 LS engines, 4 SLS engines

Weapon Equipment: 11 Laser cannons, Twin concussion lasers, Twin anti-proton lasers, Twin pulse lasers, Twin destroyer cannons, 2 multi-directional laser cannons, 2 Laser cannons

Additional Feature: Small ship bay with scout ship vessel



**Krystonian Military Vessels:**

**Krystonian Gun Carrier (Ice Wing) – KMD**

Owner: Krystonian Military Defense

Maximum Speed: LS factor 7

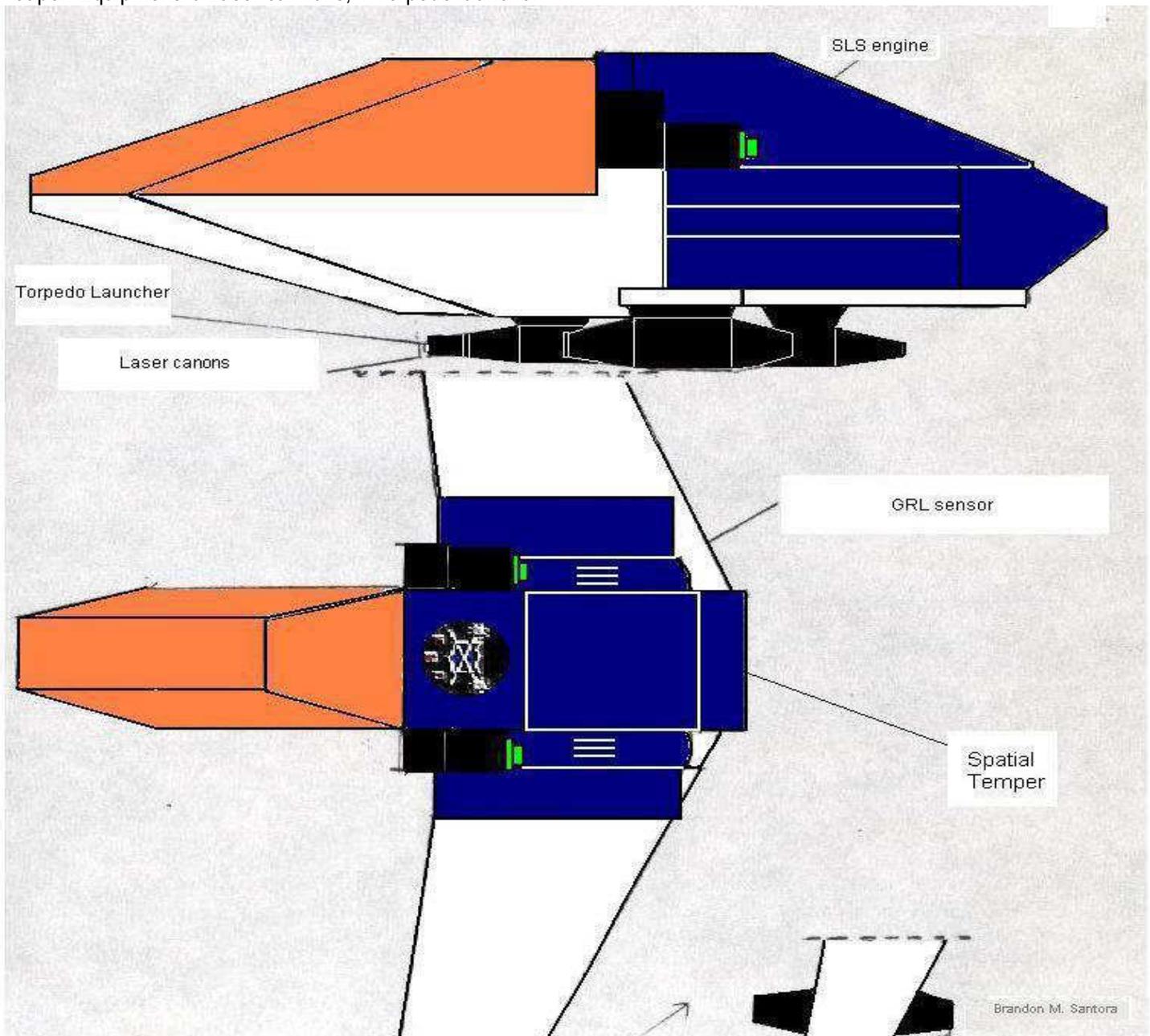
Maneuverability: 8.9

Sensor Equipment: 3 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 4 quad +637000 regenerative

Engines: 2 LS engines, 5 SLS engines

Weapon Equipment: 6 Laser cannons, 1 Torpedo launcher



### Battle Ski – KMD

Owner: Krystonian Military Defense

Maximum Speed: 590 mph over smooth ice terrain

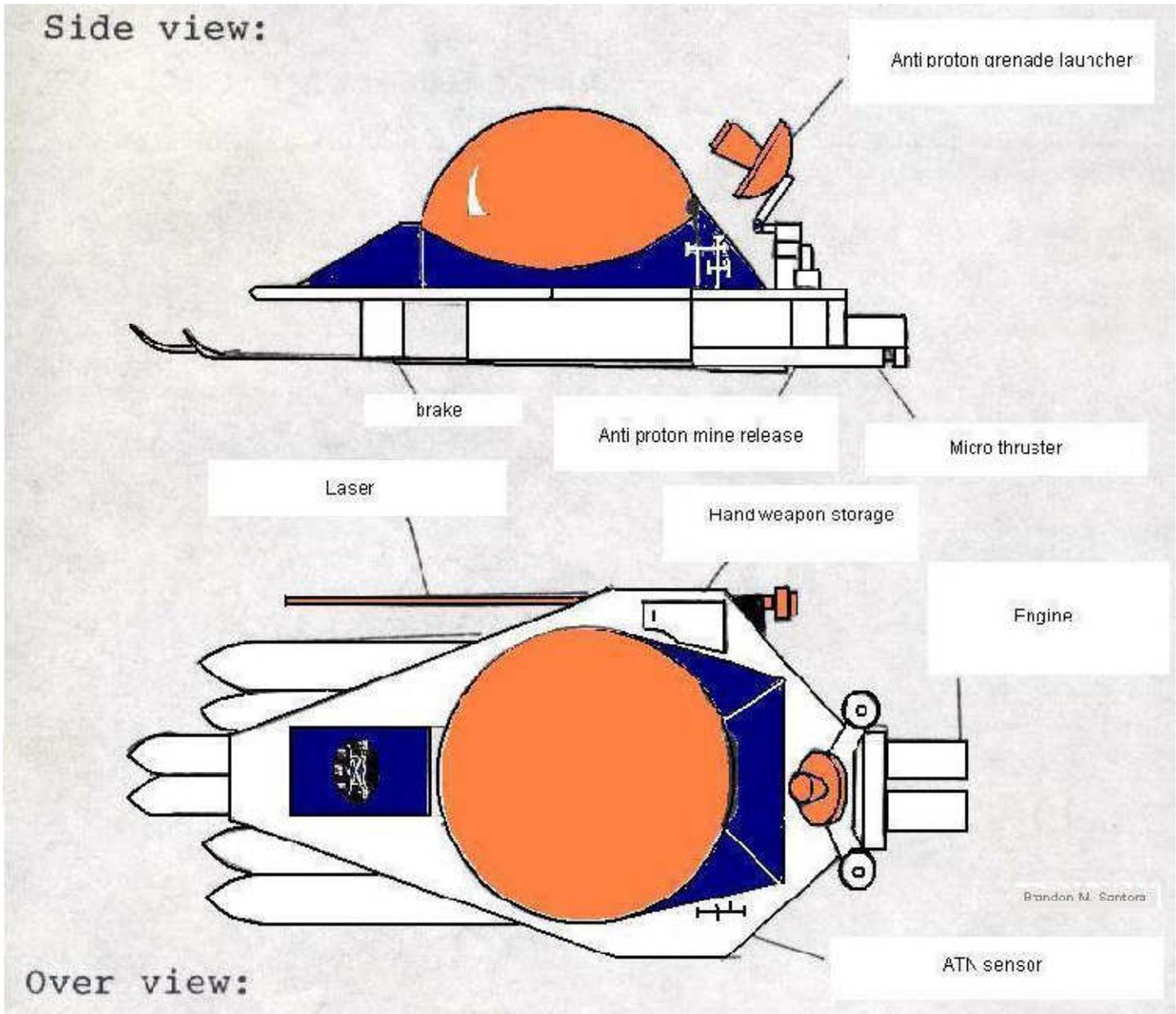
Maneuverability: 8.7 on land

Sensor Equipment: 1 ATN

Shield Class: class 3 quad +225400 regenerative

Engines: Micro thruster assembly

Weapon Equipment: 1 Anti-proton grenade launcher, 1 side mounted laser



**Resistance Vessels:**

**Avenger – Resistance**

Owner: The Confederate Resistance

Maximum Speed: LS factor 16

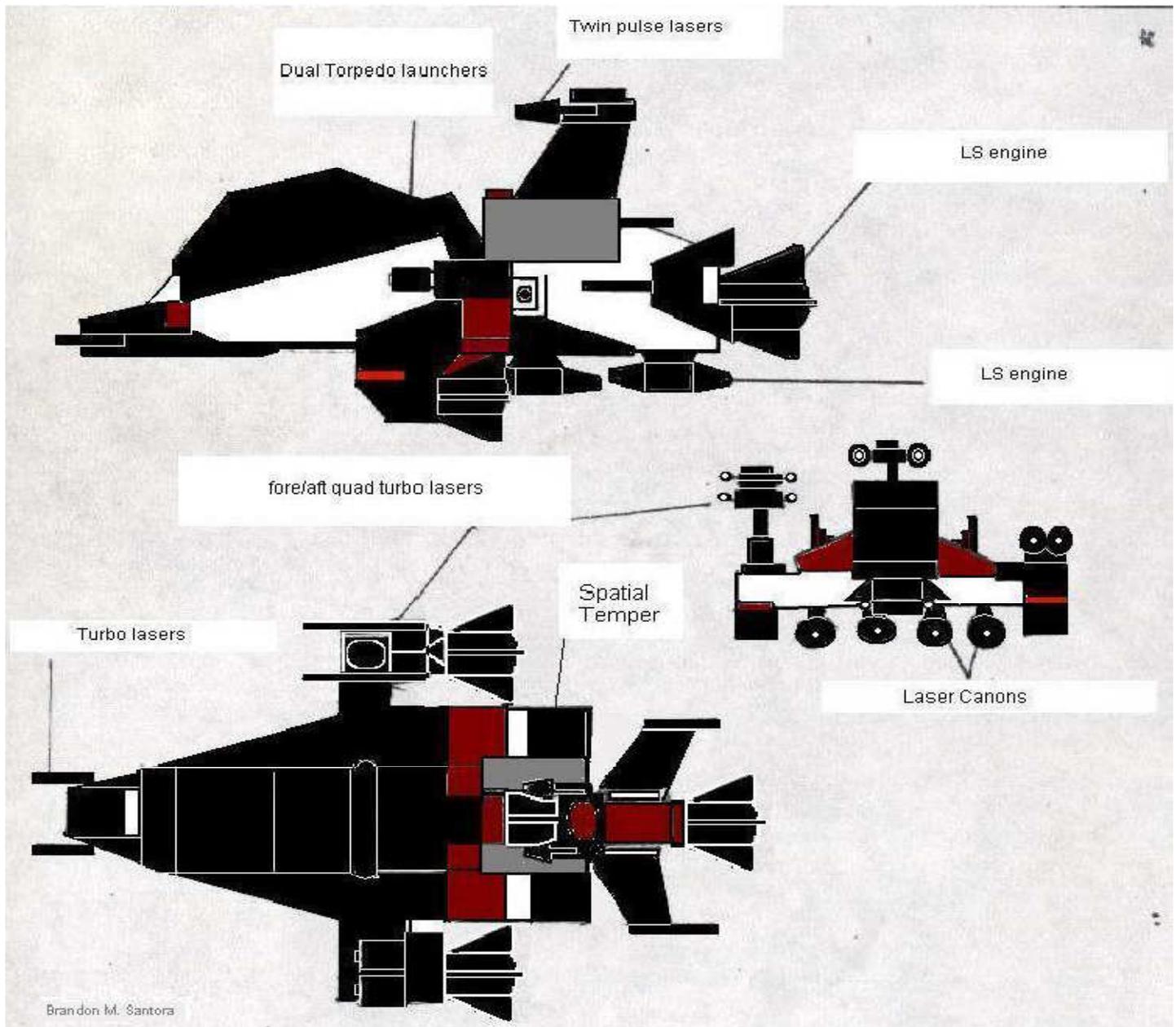
Maneuverability: 8.2

Sensor Equipment: 5 GRL.s

Shield Class: class 6 quad +637000 regenerative

Engines: 4 SLS engines, 6 LS engines

Weapon Equipment: 1 Turbo laser, 1 Quad for/aft Turbo laser mount, 1 rear Turbo laser, 4 laser cannons, Twin pulse lasers, dual Torpedo launchers



**Tracker – Resistance**

Owner: The Confederate Resistance

Maximum Speed: 60 mph over smooth terrain

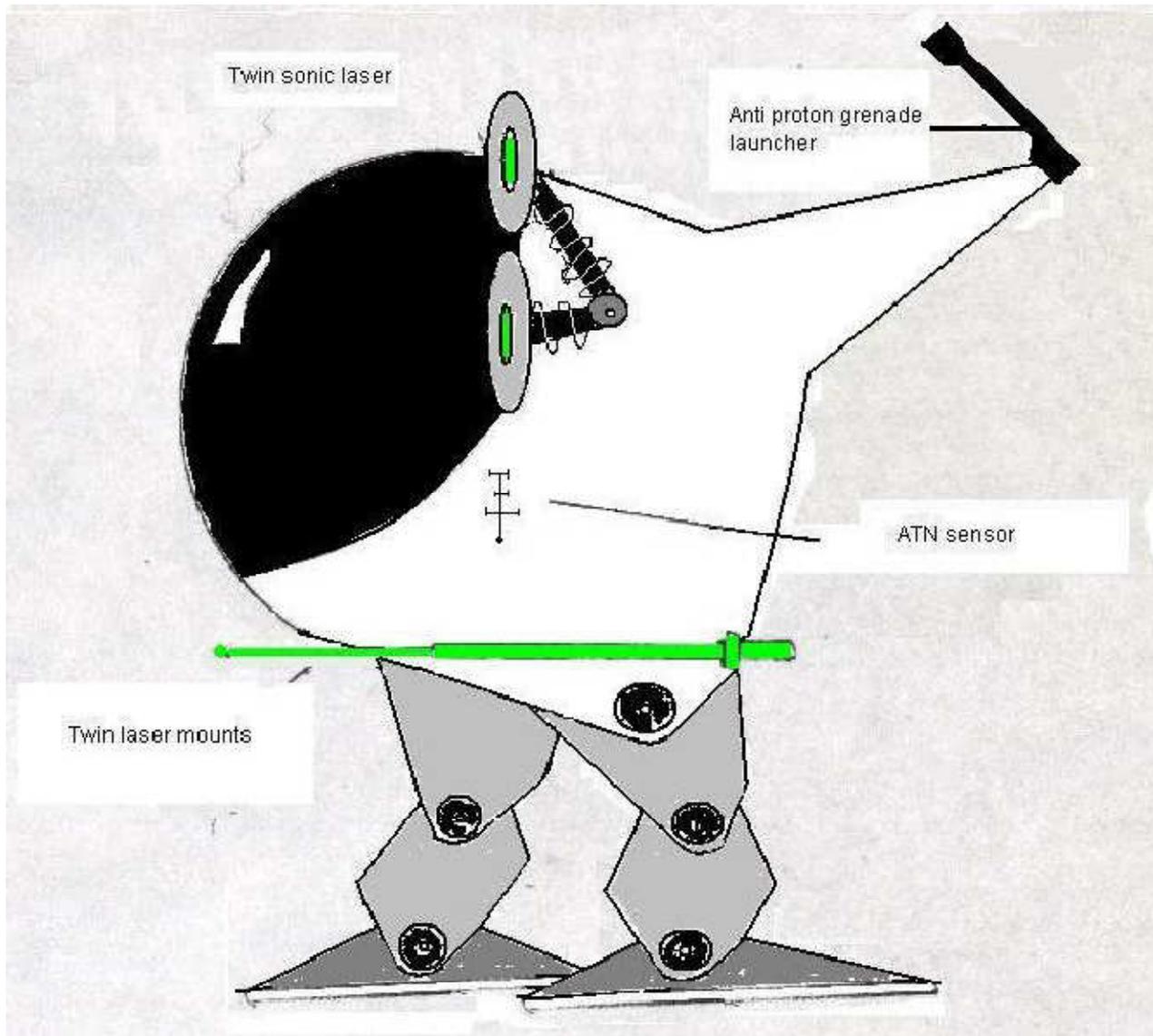
Maneuverability: 4.3 on land

Sensor Equipment: 1 ATN

Shield Class: class 3 double +225400 non-regenerative

Engines: Walking struts

Weapon Equipment: 1 Anti-proton grenade launcher, Twin laser mounts, Dual sonic laser



**Unknown Name – Unknown**

Owner: Unknown

Maximum Speed: ?

Maneuverability: 9.9

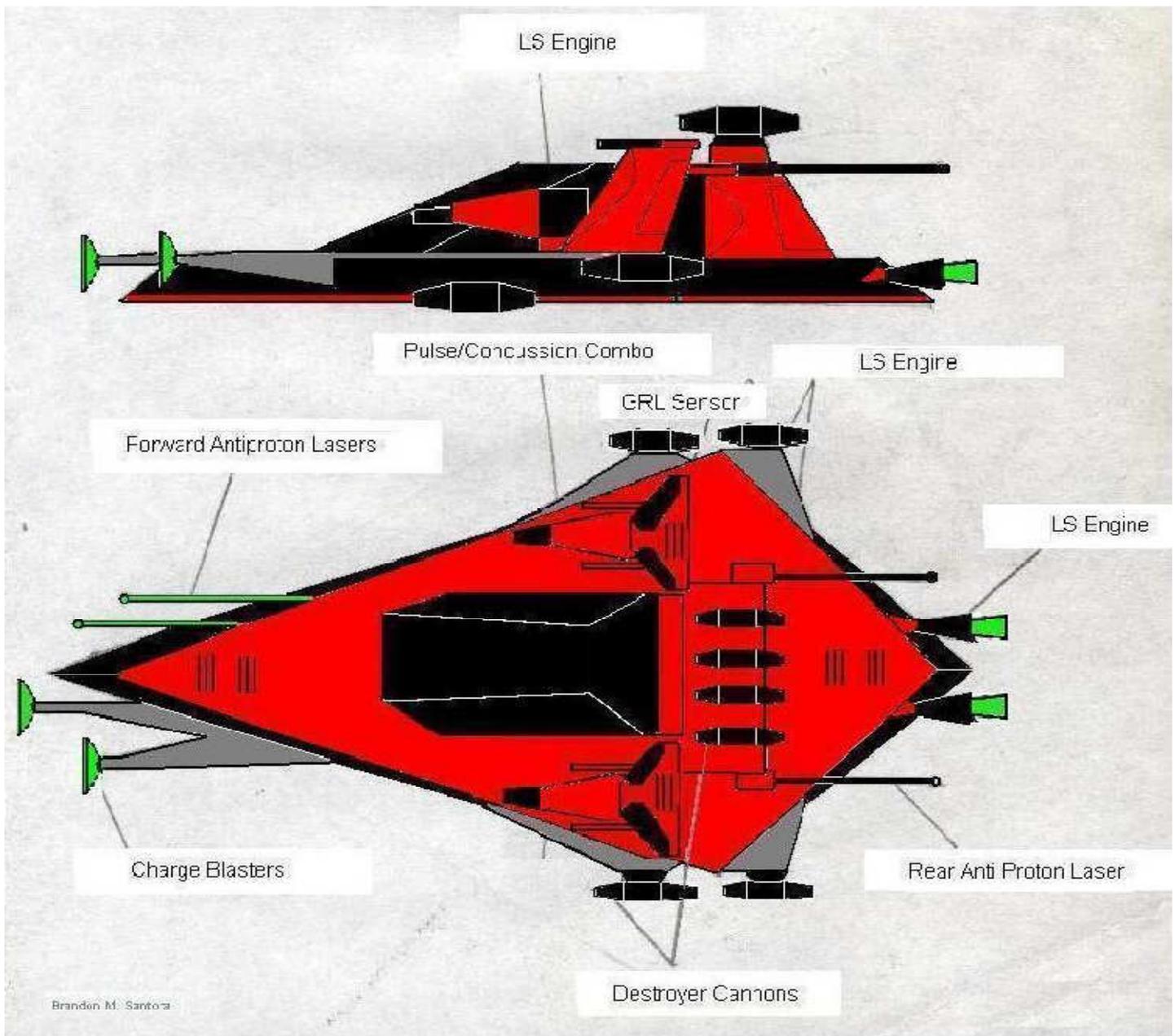
Sensor Equipment: 6 GRL.s, One Unknown Sensor Plate

Shield Class: class 6 multiple +637000 regenerative

Engines: 4 SLS engines, 12 LS engines

Weapon Equipment: 1 Twin Antiproton Lasers, 2 rear antiproton Lasers, Dual Charge Blasters, 8 Destroyer Cannons

Additional Features: ?



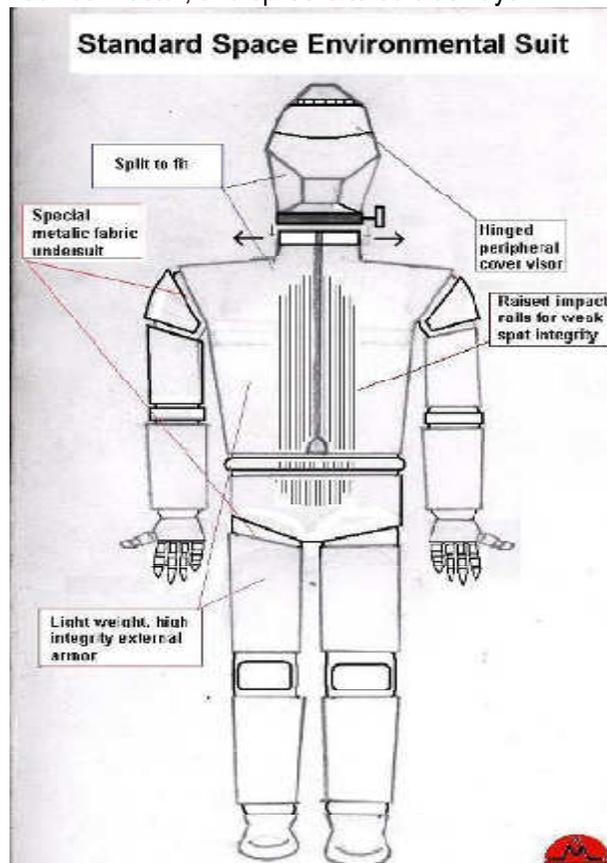
# Technologies

Much of the technologies seen in Star City are Alien in Nature. These include:

- Light speed engines
- Spatial Expander
- Polytronic Shield System
- Space vessel design
- Advanced gravity plate (also discovered on Earth)

## Environmental Suits

This **Standard Space Environmental Suit (SES)** is the apex of integrity without sacrificing flexibility. Best described as metallic fabric encased in segmented externally porous, aluminum-ceramic alloy layered hard points around vital areas, thighs, calves, arms, torso, and is efficiently manageable yet cannot be easily penetrated. In such cases of a potential puncture the occupant would receive injury before the exposed suit joint is breached. The fabric is only exposed at the joints and resists air pressure. The exposed areas are coated with a heat reflecting material with low conductivity. Included with most suits is a washable custom body sock to prevent contamination inside. On the thigh is a large baggy pocket with Velcro-like enclosure containing special patches capable of adhering to the suit material and halting accidental decompression. These patches are limited by the size and location of the puncture. To enter the suit divide helmet, which is hinged at the head top, unlatch the neck connector, and split the torso sideways.



## Helmets

Space Environmental Helmets (SEH) connects to the neckpiece of the jump suit shaped SES with an inseparable seal. The helmets have a built-in voice receptacle computer. The visor is not a window but an opaque screen displaying the first person view of outside the helmet. This not intended to be opened due to potential radiation leakage unless the screen fails. Nevertheless, the visor can still flip up to allow the user to see through an ultraviolet filtering window should the need arise.

## Language Translators

These mask shaped speakers fit over the nose and mouth like an oxygen mask. The user speaks into the interior audio receptor, which is processed by the computer. After the language is interpreted the exterior speaker runs the recorded and converted voice into alien formats. It can also convert all Earth languages.

## Experimental High Pressure Environmental Suit (HES)

These suits are for entering high pressure and high heat environments and look like robots. They function like a robotic machine and support its occupant rather than the occupant supporting the suit.

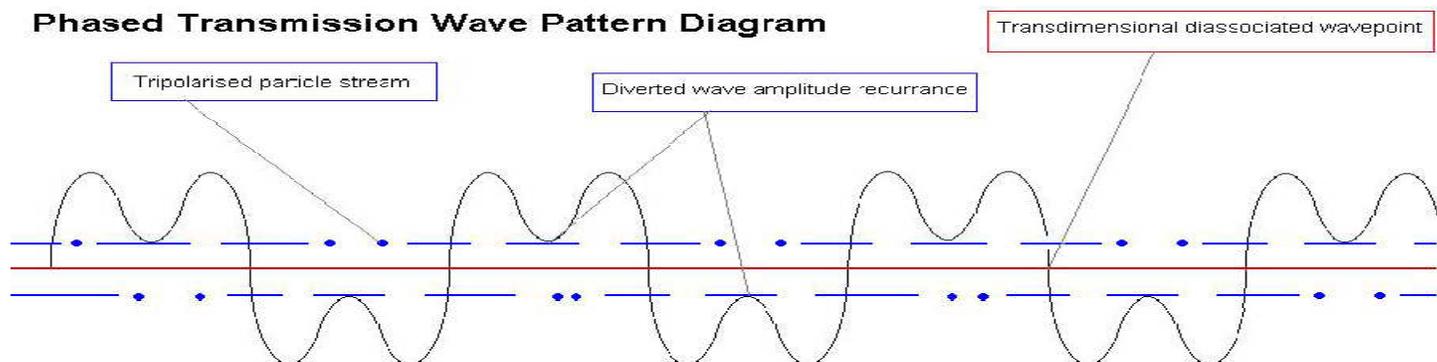
## Datapage Document

Nearly as flat a standard paper sheet these useful and re-writable devices use electrostatic adhesive in conjunction with special ink attractant contained in the unique writing utensil. The magnetic archive may also be used in modern typing machines, which incorporate the use of similar ink to page transfers. Erasing the "electroleaf" is accomplished by altering the polarity of the magnetic material in the document using a special eraser or feeding mechanism usually included with today's printer technology.

## Phased Transmissions

By manipulating the wave amplitude parameters preventing the trough from reaching its baseline using a wave-centered repulsion stream of tripolarized particles, the transmission may attain a trans-dimensional progression status. (See diagram). The transmission is independent of classic space-time and precise velocity is not measured by the traditional formula  $s=d/t$ . The reception device must be calibrated to detect intermittent extra-dimensional wavelengths, which are appearing in 3-dimensional spaces at consistent locations called wave point disassociations and can be varied with adjacent frequency modifications.

These points in the wavelength, which intersect the fourth dimension and is designated as a 1 for a single wave appearance and 0 for none, allows for data arrangement. The data could use either a binary or introduce a new trinary code system though potentially tricky to understand. Alternatively we can discern an applied phase stability regarding wave amplitude segments during this type of signal emission. These signals can travel thousands of time faster than standard electromagnetic signals.



### **Gamma Ray Diffractor**

Gamma Rays have long posed a threat to space travelers yet the increased lead usage in ship hull design, though reducing or halting the threat of these high frequency beams, makes for heavier vessels. Gamma rays are emitted from numerous sources some stellar bodies others more elaborate phenomena such as the coalescing of neutron stars. Intentional detonations by way of manual fission or forced fusion can produce gamma emissions additionally. An alternative protective method uses a computer system, which can detect and instantly match the wavelength of the harmful rays and play on the natural diffraction effect of light to disperse the rays.

### **Wrist Computer**

This is an information storage, communications, and media device with a wide range of versatility such as scanners, Internet access, television, diagnostic tools, timekeeper, calendar, reminder, sensor and library. Its adaptable programming center allows for almost any addition. The device is commonly worn on the wrist though some have used the ankle.

### **Standard Information Storage and Retrieval Chip (ISARC)**

This is the only data storage device one will need with its enormous capacity and data save integrity. Data stored on the ISARC can remain intact through the most impactful punishment. It can even survive intense magnetic fields and energy discharge. This device connects comfortably to any wrist or console computer.

### **Plant Domes**

You will find a patch of these at nearly every space-bearing colony in the territory. Plant Domes are small glass tubes connected to an air pressurization and transfer system, which works in conjunction with an oxygen/carbon dioxide swapping mechanism. Any persons suited in the standard SES can use his side mounted air transfer hose to connect to these live giving containers. The stored carbon dioxide in the SES can be release into the tree dome following the reception of the freshly oxygenated gas. Connected to a watering system these tree holds can live by feeding from unwanted gases by humanoid expellation and supply the practitioner with breathing air thus reducing the drain on the SES.s oxygen storage tanks. The container may also be pressurized for additional storage.

### **Energy Storage Card (ESC)**

These clever monetary devices use energy as money. Each person can purchase items with energy. Storeowners and sellers collect the energy by connecting the card to their power extraction register and store the energy for business or personal needs. Essentially these devises are efficient battery tools. This method is an effective way to transfer energy and help soothe the power hungry colonies with frequent business.

### **Window Screens**

This is a technology common to most civilizations including human where screens are used in place of windows on spacecraft. Although like the SEH helmet windows are present on vessels but rarely opened. The window screens display precise high-resolution images of what is seen through a two-way glass or other transparent material.

### **Colony Domes**

You will find domes around some colonies and asteroidal farmlands. However none of these domes are using transparent glass but an advanced expansive version of the window screen. The main difference is that instead of a simple pixilated viewing field the dome ceiling incorporates a process called photon duplication which analyzes the frequency, intensity, and trajectory of incoming photons to exact specifications and reemits them at the same vector from the inner

lining of the dome ceiling. The photons emitting from the ceiling are essentially identical to the photons striking the roof. Since most asteroids and small planet bodies are so far off from its life giving parent star the color and brightness can be modified to suit the plants needs and serves as an efficient simulation of close range sunlight.

### Advanced Gravity Plate

The gravity plate is the backbone of space colonization next to high-speed propulsion. With gravity-like field technology we could not travel through space, erect buildings on moons or asteroids, or man non-rotating space vessels for extended periods. That is to say vessels, which do not require centrifugal gravity.

The plate operates by applying a time varying magnetic field to super conductor ions trapped in a lattice structure, which rapidly spin thereby generating a variable force field. (*Li, Campbell, Smalley*) The device can generate a gravity-like field, which acts on all particles and can be repulsive or attractive. The Gravity plate is powered by electricity and can be found in walkways, buildings, domes, homes, and colonies.

## Engines

The **Attitude control thrusters** are small solid fuel micro thrust discharge ports at strategic locations around a given ship, which are responsible for vessel rotations, pitch, and attitude balance.

The **Solid Fuel Ascent/Descent thruster** utilizes a special solid material, which is atomically fissional. The dense block of material burns slower than traditional liquid fuels. The energy emitted creates a strong lifting power, which is a cross between controlled nuclear fission and molecular exothermic reactions resulting in a hotter heat reaction drive. This is effectively an atomic flame. The atoms of the krypton and boron byproducts from the fissioned radioactive material are also split subsequently by the bombarding nucleonic particles resulting from the fissioned fuel source thereby releasing additional incident bodies and heat energy which is called **Cascade thrust**.

The long thrust nozzle itself is skinny and the interior may be of fitted rivets as that of a series of cones and encompassing thrust pockets which are angled to prevent back thrust and provide a reaction grave for the corresponding refissioned material. The needle-sized emission duct prevents the danger of back thrust into the particle delivery conduit naturally. The release valve from the delivery conduit to the detonation chamber consists of an opening door and cone shaped conduit head.

These are two factors, which ensure safety. We may also decipher a form of force known as diffraction pressure, which corresponds to the incident nature of quantized energy in space whereas outside of space energy is pooled. Some craft including the large planetary supply platforms incorporate lateral alpha particle emitters along the nozzle neck to allow the fissioning of even more elements throughout the engine providing more efficient lift.

**Ascent Procedure** - When activated four to six long narrow flames of high heat energy fire from the bottom of the vessel and are fueled by a special material fashioned into solid blocks. The fuel blocks and thrust flame is enough to carry a vessel at about 200 mph straight up or an inclined ascent trajectory until it reaches about 160 miles.

After clearing the last of the atmospheric gases the vessel either angles upward and lateral fusion engines working in conjunction with GFE (GForce emulation) devices allow for quick acceleration to orbital velocities, or continue on a vertical ascent according to fuel reserves and re-angle later.

**Planet landings** - There are two ways to land. One is direct and the other is orbital. *Direct Landings* involve a multi engine use process. For example if we consider a vessel on approach to a terrestrial planet instead of taking orbit and gradually bleeding off speed by atmospheric or antithrust friction, we will maintain a direct course for the spot we want to land down on the surface keeping the atmospheric orbit in mind of course.

The vessel will turn by means of attitude thrusters until the rear of the vessel is facing the planet and ground zero. The lateral engines will fire and slow the vessel to about 500 miles per hour just before it makes contact with the bulk of the atmosphere. The vessel will then rotate again with the bottom toward ground zero and the solid fuel descent thrusters will take over allowing for a gentle decent that will last about 30 minutes. At this stage descent thruster engines can be bypassed if the spacecraft possess winged attachments. *Orbital landings* are temporarily inclined and the vessel arcs toward ground zero using descent thruster or winged assistance.

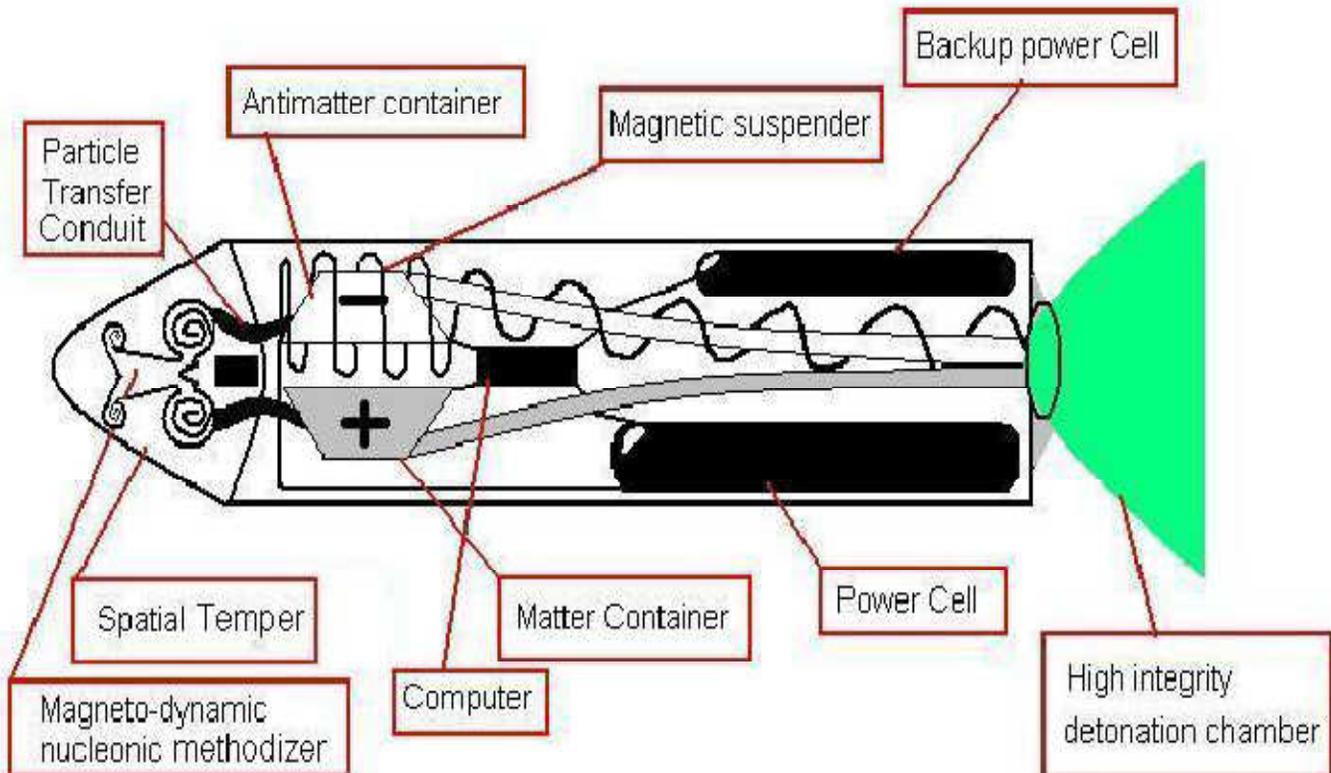
The **Fusion Engine** is the next up, using a classic atomic fusion to release small yet efficient amounts of energy to drive the vessel along linear vectors. Like the Attitude Control and Ascent Thrusters, the Fusion Engine runs by the same source via the appropriately channeled magnetic conduit system.

The **Sub Light Speed Engine** is a medium capacity matter/antimatter reactor capable of accelerating a vessel to velocities near that of the speed of light.

The **Light Speed Engine** is a high capacity matter antimatter reactor and the most powerful engine available. The light speed engine is alien technology and is much simpler than one might expect in that it doesn't require much fuel and incorporates manageable forces. The engine must work in conjunction with the **Spatial Temper** a device, which compresses space ahead and expands at the rear, or neither would function without consequence. The mechanism is a modified particle accelerator consisting of a handful of components. The engine uses only minimal energy expenditure even at high speeds.

The energy output is determined by the acceleration ratio needed for a given velocity. To accelerate from one speed reference to another and yet another requires similar amounts of expelled energy from the engine core. The spatial expander prevents mass increase, time dilation, and matter compression as it works in unison with the LS engine. The spatial expander usually remains un-powered until needed at the time of new acceleration or deceleration. Most vessels use the same light speed engines to slow down by reversing the direction of the vessel and gradually decreasing speed with controlled energy bursts of matter and anti matter. This is essentially equal to the acceleration process and can take up to an hour depending on the speed.

## Alien TransLightSpeed Engine



## Sensors

### ATN Sensor Rod

ATN sensors are alien communications devices, which use physics and principles not dissimilar to human transmission instruments. Alien sensors also utilize the new ultra radio frequencies that can be phased to travel at velocities beyond the speed of conventional electromagnetic radiation. ATN sensors can scan for most energies on the spectrum and are commonly used on ground based structures and mobile vehicles.

### GRL Sensor Array

GRL sensors are a clustered array of numerous energy and radio transmission components and can be coordinated with additional GRL sensor clusters to form an interplexing array. These compact yet efficient sensor orders support clear and high integrity data streams as well as communications and interstellar particle detection for navigation. Even if a vessel is equipped with an NET or DSH sensor panel it is always a good idea to use these low powered detection grids for backup.

### NET Sensor Panel

This flat rectangular shaped panel has both ATN and GRL sensor capability. The NET sensor can feed higher intensity signals and can generate particle streams. This sensor can detect practically anything in the universe within its scanning vicinity ranging from Spatial Quanta fluctuations, gravity waves, various nucleonic vibratory resonances and more. Its full capability has yet to be revealed.

### DSH Sensor

This is the largest and highest capacity sensor and scanning device known to exist and has all the functions of the NET sensor. It is often referred to as a fat NET since it has not been altered from the basic NET design Moreso, as it has been enhanced to support still higher intensities of particle streams and radiodynamic emissions of ever increasing frequencies, it is used mainly on the largest vessels such as SMD battleships and exploration craft. Other users include space stations, remote businesses, and colony squares.

## Shield Classes

The dynamics of the standard alien shield technology used on most vessels in Star City, range from class 1 to class 6. Each shield class corresponds to variable charge intensities. The charge will regulate depending upon which weapon or phenomena it encounters. For example a class 1 shield with an integrity factor of +78000, which was fired upon by a Concussion Laser with a polarization intensity of .1100 could decrease the class 1 shield by 1100 units with a single shot and collapse the shield in about 70 shots.

If a negatively charged anti proton laser encounters the shield its polarity must be reversed which can be accomplished instantly by the ships tactical computer. If two weapons fire with opposite charges such as an antiproton laser and a concussion laser the shield can be modified for **multi-layer defense**. One layer can be positively charged and the next can be negative allowing the vessel to defend against various attacks.

The second shield component is the Defense Type, which describes whether or not the shield has partition capability. Defense type B is partitioned at the middle of the vessel. If a concussion laser strikes the rear of the vessel it will only drain the rear partition of the shield and the forward will remain fully powered. Most shields are capable of equalizing the shield to uniform integrity or can be set to intensify either partition. Defense type A has no partitions and will drain the entire shield uniformly. Quad defense type C has 4 partitions at the port and starboard bow and port and starboard aft.

Many pilots use this type because it greatly increases all round defense capability. The chances of escaping a firefight in space without incurring a hull rupture due to penetrating energy or projectile weapons fire is significantly better. Type D defense shielding is very elaborate and expensive energy wise. Type D can have as many as 50 shield partitions each with its own generator. The final component of the modern defense shield most commonly used around Star City is the regeneration capability, which allows for each shield partition to gradually re-energize if left alone; a handy element for contemporary shield protection.

**Class:**

1 = +78000 strength  
2 = +98000 strength  
3 = +225400 strength  
4 = +357700 strength  
5 = +494900 strength  
6 = +637000 strength

**Defense Type:**

A = uniform defense  
B = double partition fore/aft  
C = quadrilateral partitions  
D = multi partition

## Weapon Types

**Spike Laser** = -0.67 energy output. Fires a narrow beam stimulated emission of radiation and are not much more powerful than a hand held laser weapon. Best used for targeting small, unshielded ground objects without causing major damage to surrounding neutral objects. The beam can be set to pierce through an object or blast surfaces upon impact by feeding high-energy photons into a small area thereby resulting in a transfer and subsequent release of the laser energy. This laser can be fired in solid streams, which can be made visible or invisible.

**Plasmatic Shock Bolt** = -900 energy output. Essentially a lightening bolt this electron stream can fire currents of electrostatic plasma; can be set to rupture surfaces on impact or overload electrical systems if targeted correctly.

**Turbo Lasers** = -1100 energy output. This dual action laser can fire stimulated emissions of radiation similar to the spike laser but much more powerful. This laser is ideal for use in combat with high speed erratically maneuvering targets; can be set to pierce or blast, solid beam only. One turbo laser mount comes with two connected barrels, which alternate rapidly when fired.

**Pulse Laser** = -1500 energy output. The pulse laser contains a bulky step up chamber hence the term .pulse.. It can fire amplified laser blasts. The pulse laser is good for both high-speed erratically maneuvering objects and slower more heavily armed.

**Pulse Laser 360** = -1500 energy output. This is the same type as the standard Pulse Laser however is mounted to a rotating gear mechanism allowing it to spin in a circular motion. This is an effective addition particularly for larger more slowly maneuvering craft.

**Laser Cannon** = -1700 energy output. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the laser class and the most powerful. It is useful for heavily armored targets and can be set for pierce or blast in a solid beam. The interval between shots is longer than the lower powered lasers due to high recharge rate spanning just under a second.

**Sonic Laser** = N/A. The sonic laser emits an intermittent series of electromagnetic wave pulses designed to disrupt atomic cohesion at high intensity levels. Differing in comparison to standard incident particle emission guns this weapon utilizes the unseen force of electrostatic wave aspect discharge as opposed to impacting energy quanta. The force of this wide beam weapon can knock a shielded vessel off course or fracture the structure of an unguarded hull. While the weapon cannot be defended by standard positive or negative shield layering an equivalent interference method may be employed though tricky to time. In any case the best defense may be agreed upon to be avoidance.

**Charge Blaster** = -3200 energy output. This unique **alien weapon** fires a cohesive antinucleon mist creating a widely, dispersed blast field of energy on impact with any material. This is used on heavily armored targets yet still effective for small light craft, which tends to flee from this attractive and seemingly non threatening cloud of destruction.

**Destroyer Cannons** = -4900 energy output. The weapon is a cross between the antiproton laser and a negative plasmatic emission laser, basically antiproton and electron batches. Destroyer cannons fire slowly unlike the laser and has a medium recharge rate similar to the laser cannon, can be fired in rapid streams also solid beam but will greatly drain energy resources in solid mode.

**Kinetic Missiles** = -10000 energy output. These are similar to old style fuel driven missiles used in old wars of the early century but modified for space combat standards. It uses the solid fuel propellant rather than liquid the same as atmospheric ascent thrusters. The explosive is an old style air bomb like blast and incorporates enough dispersive force to pose a significant threat to any shield class. It is the only old style weapon to achieve this level of destruction. Kinetic Missiles are guidable and programmable.

**Torpedoes** = -123000 energy output. Surprisingly small these golf ball sized explosives are fired like bullets and contain compartments of matter and antimatter, can eliminate most targets, and make short work of any shield class. The SMD has placed a limit on the *maximum antimatter yield* of multipolar explosives.

## Hand Weapons

**Type 1 Hand Laser** = -0.2 energy output. This is a standard hand held weapon with high accuracy.

**Type 2 Hand Laser** = -0.7 energy output. This is the big brother of the type 1 and has more power than its predecessor.

**Pulse Laser** = -0.16 energy output. This is a scaled down version of the ship mounted pulse laser and is good for armored or secured targets.

**Twin Pulse Laser Flight Pack** - This bulky shoulder mounted flying device can lift a person high into the sky and includes twin pulse lasers on each shoulder and dual spike lasers atop. It is not difficult to see the usefulness of this technological marvel in any combat situation.

**Antimatter Grenades** = -5981 energy output. Simple antimatter clusters contained in a strong magnetic field and can destroy small areas with about the same amount of devastation as a regular grenade. The antimatter quantity is minute and only enough to be used in ground combat firefights.

**Antimatter Grenade Launcher** = This is a shoulder weapon with the same destructive force as an antimatter grenade yet is launched from a firing mechanism onto distant targets.

# Other Places

## Kuipertown

Visit the many colonies scattered throughout the solar system. This asteroid was purchased by a wealthy company and settled after an official registration with the planetary council. Stay toasty warm in your condo somewhere in the lighted city from the heated core deep inside which run modern hydroelectric plants and melt materials for use on colony construction.



*Private colony in the Kuiper Belt*

## Xama Terra Star System

Officially named Delta Pavonis this is the home system of what have been nickname Badgermen and the only private territory in Star City located about 11 light years from Sun. The official designation of the system was originally Delta Pavonis establish sometime at the Stars Discovery. The Planetary Council allows for star systems to maintain their own territories and private affairs within the boundaries of peace and safety. Some civilians come to this system for private reasons. Three of the most popular inhabited planets have been nicknamed, **Klacto**, **Mylar** and **Zemorg**. Zemorg is the home planet of High Gravity Man, the short, stalky, and muscular alien originating from a large terrestrial planet with 3 times the gravity of Earth. A common local for visitors are the Zemorgian

**Emperor's Palace**, a fascinating construction of historical and technological wonders.

## Planet Oassia

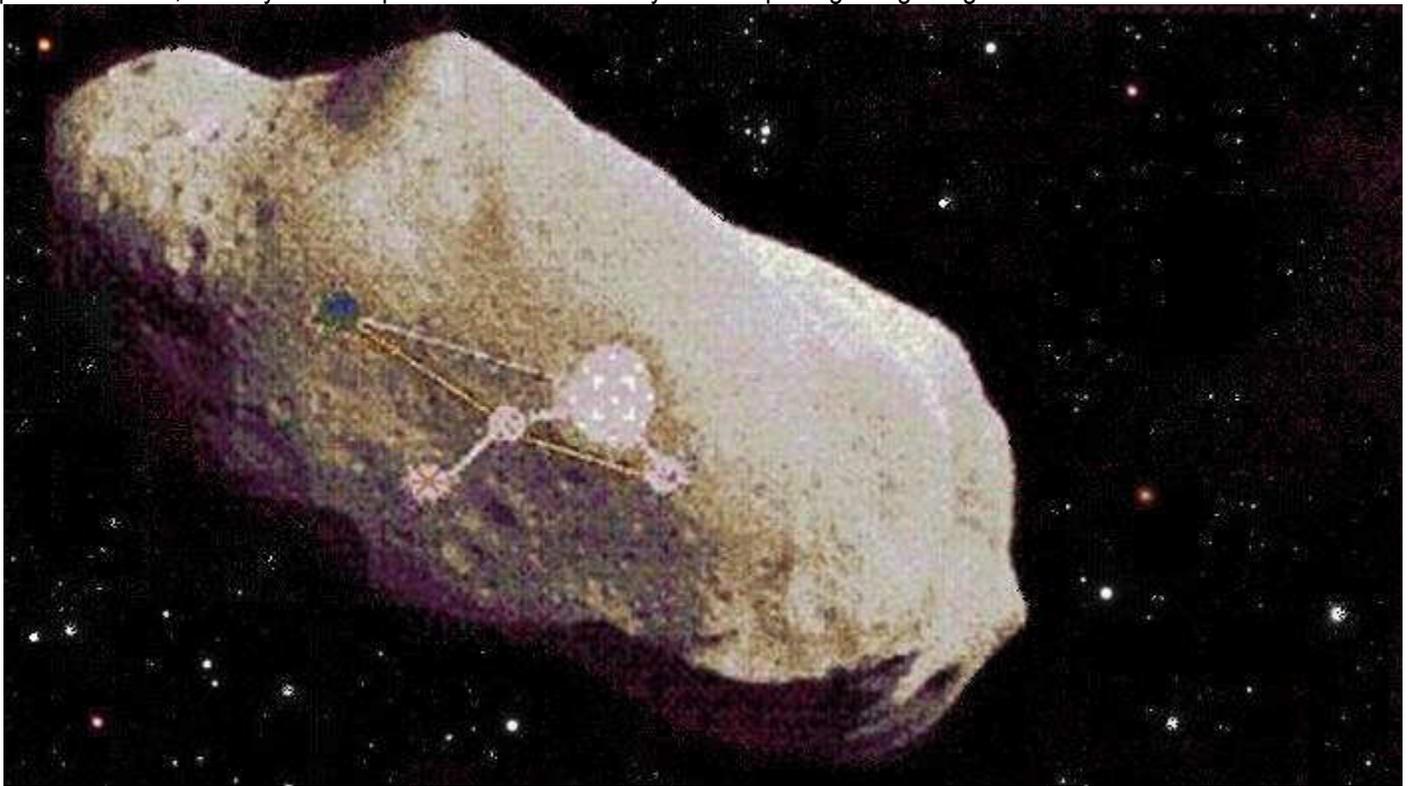
If you love the ocean then Oassia is the planet for you. Oceans cover most of the surface of this early era world and is the home of the alien species nicknamed Auquaman for his aquatic features. Oassia is a site of feverish geological debate, as it resembles Earth by comparison to an era 1 billion years ago at a time of oxygenation and the first appearances of life. Yet, thereon, thrives an intelligent water bearing species. Their origins remain uncertain. First float down through the dense and stunning atmosphere then splash into the deep ocean where there is a multitude of alien aquatic species to observe. After a brief trek you will find the beautiful underwater town of Oassia and home to the generous and eccentric *Fishmen*, a fascinating vacation spot.

**Diving** - Go for a personal swim and explore the alien sea guided by a friendly Fishman who knows the waters well, but cross the predatory boundaries at your own risk.

**Sub-marine sea craft** - If you want a closer look at the sea floor be sure to rent your own sea jet. This high integrity sea craft allows one to cross the predatory boundaries and explore the limitless sea floor.

## Dactyl Colony

Another asteroid settlement Dactyl is a work colony often used by the SMD and is loosely populated. It tumbles through space on in its 1,000-day sidereal period and rotates every 7 hours putting a slight tug on the lander!



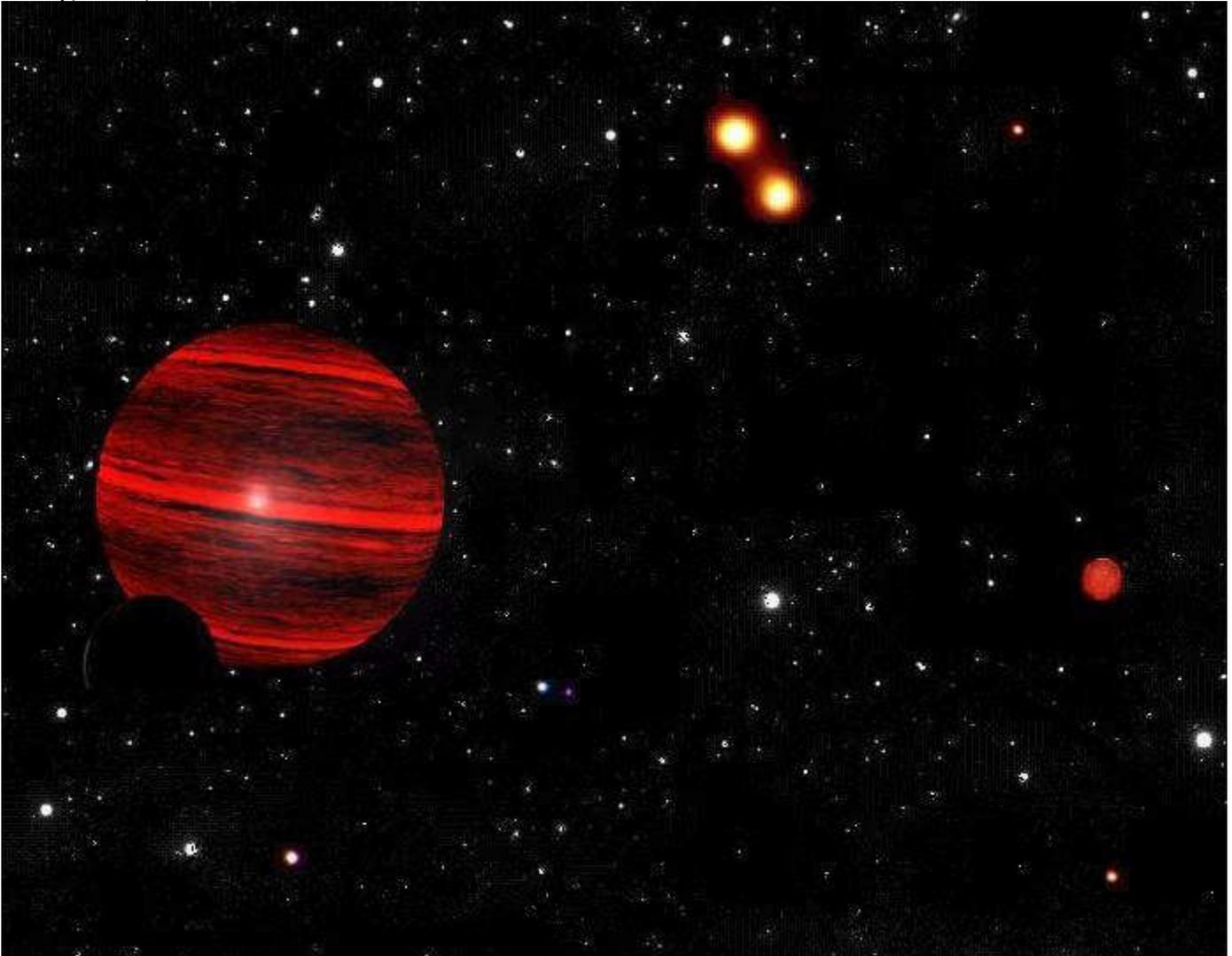
***Dactyl Colony***

## Matron Science Laboratory

Orbit the planet nicknamed Lactronia in the Sirius System and marvel at its vast array of new technologies and educational holographic laser displays. Take a fascinating look at the nearby white dwarf observatory for a grand view of the shimmering collapsed star of Sirius. Other places harbor these mind-altering facilities some open only to the highest-ranking scientists and military such as the classified *Science Station Epsilon 12* somewhere in the HR 3018 System. If you stumble upon this exotic laboratory reveal nothing in which you discover!

## Capella

A popular romance local, this view offers an intriguing perspective of the dancing pair of brown dwarf stars in orbit of the dual G types Capella A and B.



*Capella Pair and Brown Dwarf Couple*

### The Forbidden Zone

Home system of the non-council member Wolfman species this star system is off limits to all civilians and only a handful of military personnel have entered. The people of this system have not yet reached the space age, are involved in illegal civil war activities, and slavery. The planetary council has manipulated artificial frequencies from craft and adjacent systems to make them appear as random back ground noise in addition to the coincidentally encrypted nature of natural signal transmissions from alien star systems.

**Sirius** Capital system of Star City and headquarters of the Planetary Council Sirius allows a stunning view from its **white dwarf observatory**. The black terrain of the planet Lactronia host a glistening alien city and arrays of technological wonders open for trade and purchase. Located at over 2 A.U.s from its parent stellar duo the view from the city surface births an unparalleled giant/dwarf vista. The composition of the Lactronian atmosphere shades the hefty bright star a reddish hue. The enthralling Planetary Councils sits hidden on the far off satellite in orbit of the blazing blue Sirius and white dwarf duo.

### **Lendall Stop**

This is a small eatery and supply station at the edge of Star City and just beyond the Oort Cloud of the A-00981 star system. Its popularity is based on its location and is often frequented by the Human inhabitants of the planet Krysto in orbit of A- 00981 as well as obscure vagabonds.

### **William Herschel Library**

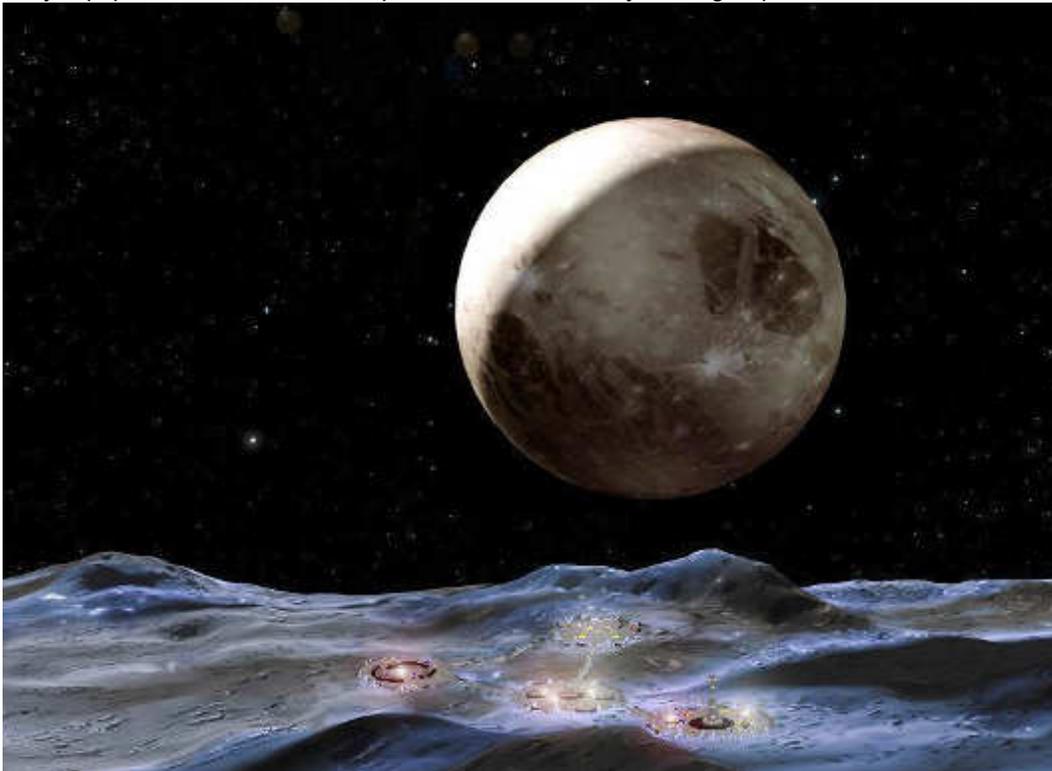
Come here for hundreds of thousands of educational holographic and laser programs about the history of Star City and everything in between!

### **Cluctor Stop**

This far out rest and supply station orbiting the star HR-3259 is alluringly close to the forbidden zone. No one enters the forbidden zone. **Io** Used frequently as a media and recreation outlet Jupiter's Moon Io has attracted the territories most fearless thrill seekers. Duck and dodge the excessively active satellite's explosive subterranean outbursts and dangerous geyser sprays as the private course takes the rider through a fate defying gauntlet of lava flows and fumarole pits. Quench your quickening taste for stunts and action at the Io Demolition Grounds. Witness the testing of new explosive technology as the region gives way for both entertainment and edification.

### **Pluto Stop**

There's more than just a rest and supply area here at Pluto Stop. Visit the old alien caverns build secretly many decades ago by alien element miners. Learn more about the elaborate mining operations that took place right here in our own solar system without human knowledge. Take an elevator up to the limitless observatory and use the vast array of the most advanced astronomy equipment available and explore the universe at your fingertips.



***Pluto Stop***

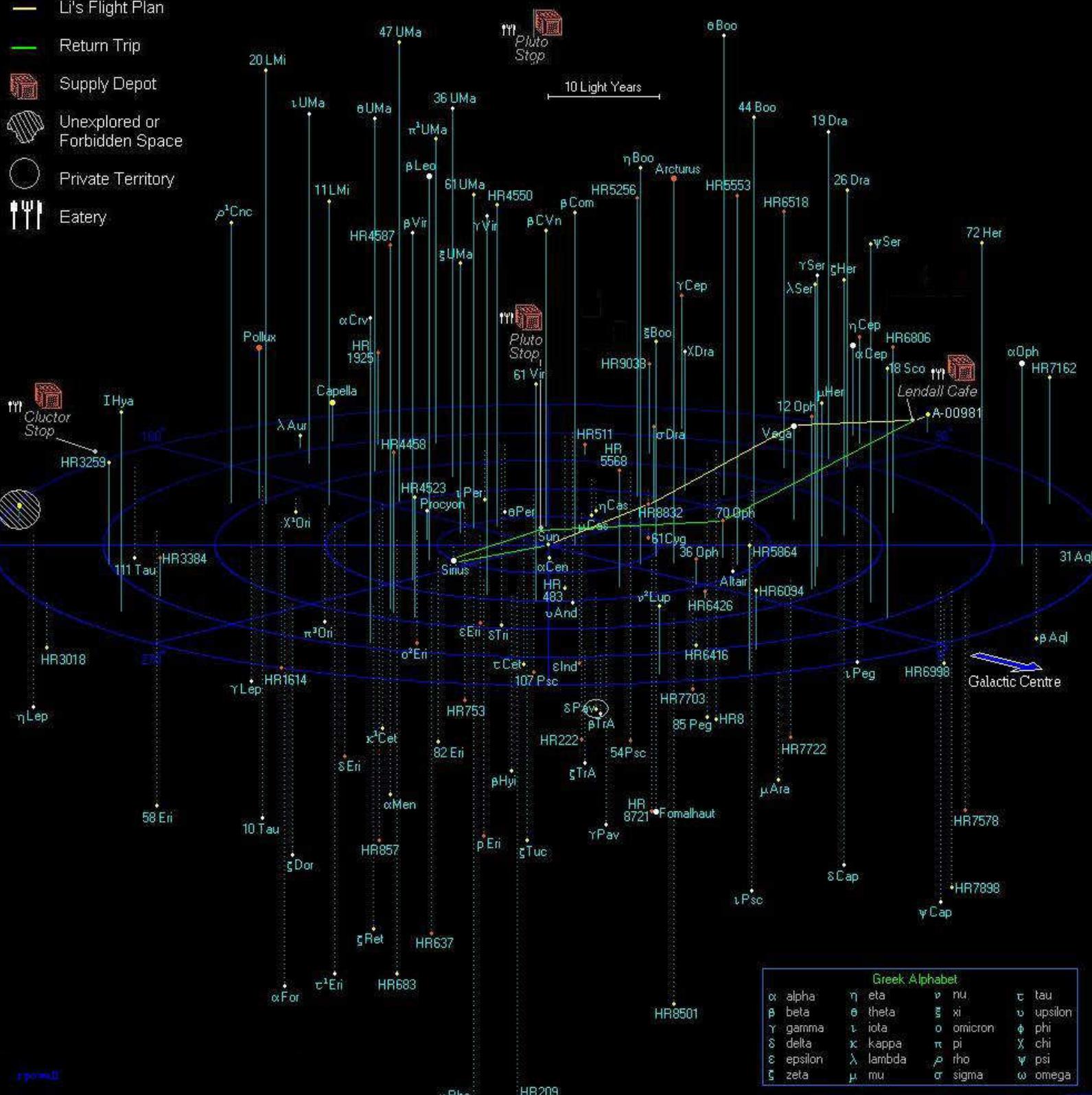
## Planet Earth

Thus far few aliens visit Earth as it still a high-risk zone. Many Humans remain in the process of coming to terms with neighboring Human races let alone the prospect of other alien life. Though small the possibility still exists to any out world visitors of a scoffing remark or possibly intentional assault, which would weigh heavily on the Earth's all around security status. The council, as an indication that Earth dwellers are still too dangerous to trust, could view any bigoted attack or aggressive racist remark as a **sign of inferiority**. Punishments for serious crimes against innocent aliens can result in suspension of Human travel to local colonies and systems as well as incarceration. Some aliens have come forward stating that they are willing to accept the risk largely due to their desire to visit the many beautiful and breathtaking landscapes of this lush world called Earth.



# Map of Star City

- Li's Flight Plan
- Return Trip
- Supply Depot
- Unexplored or Forbidden Space
- Private Territory
- Eatery



Greek Alphabet			
α alpha	η eta	ν nu	τ tau
β beta	θ theta	ξ xi	υ upsilon
γ gamma	ι iota	ο omicron	φ phi
δ delta	κ kappa	π pi	χ chi
ε epsilon	λ lambda	ρ rho	ψ psi
ζ zeta	μ mu	σ sigma	ω omega

# Glossary

**3dtv Setup** - An assembly of electronic devices comprising a three-dimensional projection mechanism and radio image receiver.

**70 Opiuchi and Flamsteed 70** - A binary Star System approximately 18 light-years from Sol.

**A-00571** - A star system in the .A. band of the outskirts of Star City.

**A-00981** - A star system located approximately 53 light years from Sol harboring the planet Krysto.

**Aala** - A German female FTA graduate.

**Abridged Damage Report** - A shortened description of a devastating occurrence.

**Acting Captain** - Someone who temporarily assumes the role of captain due to an insisting situation and without an official promotion.

**Adjacency Indicator** - A proximity alert system.

**Admiral Arinori Seghtee** - The Admiral of the SMD.

**Admiral Xemeral Kile** - The Admiral of the KMD originating from Earth and father to Xila Kile.

**Advanced Mach Speed Engine** - A fusion powered thrust mechanism capable of attaining a wide measure of mach speed factors.

**Aerial Whale** - A large air-breathing creature residing in a gas giant planet.

**Air Transfer Hose** - A connectable tube intended to carry air between two containers as seen on the standard Space Environmental Suit and tree dome.

**Alien Council** - An assemblage of various humanoid species coordinated by a belief or philosophy.

**Allied Aid Initiation** - A program intended to assist allies of Star City.

**Alpha Centauri** - A star in a trinary system approximately 4.3 light years from Sol.

**Alpha Cephei System** - Star System location of an established SMD outpost.

**Amed Rahim** - An archeology student of Middle Eastern decent.

**America** - Area of crust on the Earth's surface originally known as the great Pangia continent.

**Angel** - A being residing in the realm of Heaven under the administrations of God.

**Angel of the Lord** - The diminished manifestation of the glory of God appearing as an angelic life form.

**Angelic Life** - Noumenodynamic life forms dwelling in the realm of Heaven.

**Antitemporal** - Counterbalanced to temporal.

**Arizona Dessert** - Large barren terrain in mid-western America on Earth.

**Astral Adjacency Alert** - An audio alarm prompt designed to warn the crew of a space vessel of the approach on a star system.

**Asteroid Belt Plaza** - Small section of the Asteroid Belt containing constructed erections on various localized asteroidal bodies.

**Asteroid Caverns** - Passageways on the interior of an asteroid.

**Atomic Warhead Technology** - Mechanisms for detonating fissile material.

**Auto Atmospheric Stabilizers** - A system of thrusters organized to deliver thrust appropriately that the vessel can recover from an accidental rollover during ascent from a gravitational body.

**Autopursue Target** - A space ship setting allowing the vessel to match the speed of a pursued target.

**Avenger** - A war class heavy assault craft invented by the CRC.

**B-00018 system** - A star system in the "B" band of the outskirts of Star City.

**Bal Ibro** - A lead Matron Scientist.

**Barometric Pressure Indicator** - A device, which measures air pressure in bar units.

**Black Hole** - Dark Pit Object of a certain size, which become infinitely dense during adjacent material merging and has an escape velocity that of light or beyond.

**C-00101 Star System** - A stellar region in the "C" band of the outskirts of Star City.

**Canopy Cluster** - A merged region of treetops.

**Captain Trevon Peterson** - Second Captain of the Vigor, fourth rank SMD command status.

**Captain's Rendezvous** - An official proceeding by which the captain of a mother ship performs a diplomatic welcoming ceremony for the captain of the symbiant vessel.

**Carbonaceous Chondrite** - Molecules consisting of elements making up the foundation chemicals of life i.e. glycine, phenylalimine, and tryptophane, formed at the beginning of the solar system.



chondrite



iron meteorite



achondrite



stony-iron meteorite

**Cargo Shuttle** - An equipment-carrying vessel.

**Celie** - A female FTA graduate originating from France on Earth.

**Centaurville** - A colony on a planetoid orbiting the star Proxima Centauri.

**Ceres Hotel** - Sleep-in and food service center erected on the surface of the Ceres asteroid in A.B. Plaza.

**Charged Particle Indicator** - An alert system intended to warn the observer of the presence and trajectory of electrically charged nucleonic particles.

**Chief's Headdress** - A headpiece worn by the leader of a native tribe of the Great Pangia heartland.



**Christopher Williams** - An FTA graduate and Captain Seiwan Li's unwelcome rival.

**Chronological** - Cognitively temporal.

**Chronostatic** - A temporal function inversely relating to a chronometric charge, which has reached equilibrium.

**Citizen's Labor Volunteer Program** - An initiation allowing civilians to perform job tasks at a given site.

**Citizen Rating System** - A Federal rating arrangement of four used to classify citizens according to constructive aspiration or kindness toward others as follows:

Consumer - Unhelpful civilians with the specific intention to hurt, hinder, kill, or destroy the innocent... These persons have no natural desire to help the community, cause problems purposefully, and take but do not give back. Consumers do not receive any benefits, are excluded from modern comforts, and placed on rations only. There are different degrees of consumer categories based on severity of offense.

Working Class - These are individuals who may not exactly follow a Godly or religious standard as their rights decree yet they do not normally seek harm, hindrance, or fatality to the innocent. Their contribution comes in the form of their vocation, which gives them great worth and compensates for their suggested lack of moral standard.

Federal Consumer - These people help the community by being kind to those in need yet remain in the disability status. They may not work much and still receive their benefits such as food and shelter via their good deeds.

Citizen - Persons who are naturally positive in their words or works and have a genuine compassion for others. This class receives upgraded support by community programs.

Federal Citizen - This is a group who specifically intends to help the community through for example literature, media, or public speaking productions of their own design. The aspiration of the Federal Citizen is strictly positive, (as in reference and relation to the nature of the universe in which they exist), and helpful to all non-consumers. These elite persons do extra work for the positive benefit of the community and often come in the form of singers, video stars, or writers.

**City Hall Citizen's Section** - Area of the City Hall where civilian customers register.

**City Vault** - A public storage collection container of materials for a small town region.

**Civilian Military Assistance Program** - A protocol, which allows for citizens to participate in the activities of the military.

**Club Cattails** - A nude bar on Earth.

**Club Tundra** - An entertainment suite at the city of Raxot on the planet Krysto.

**Cocoa Mix** - A powdery chocolate flavored hot drink mix.

**Commissioning Office** - A room used to appoint something or someone into engagement for a systemically maintained purpose.

**Commons Hub** - The central meeting place within a small town setting.

**Confederate Resistance Coordination** - Military, government, and civilian remnants with antiprosperous intentions collecting in groups.

**Constables Station** - An orbital Lunar Precinct.

**Creation** - The Universe as established by Almighty God.

**Creeping Thing** - Small biological creatures moving about the environment of Earth.

**Cygnus X-1** - Black Hole about six thousand light years from Earth.

**Cyril** - Second in Command of the Resistance and member of the Cat people.

**D-00337** - Star System in the "D" band of the outskirts of Star City and location of a CRC hideout.

**Dean Wilder** - The Clergyman of the East China branch of the Federal Transition Academy and friend of Li Lian Gi.

**Delta Pavonis** - A double star system approximately x light-years from Sol.

**Diggers Assistance Position** - A job status, which includes digging equipment handling.

**Diploma of Ascension** - A hard document, which designates a learned individual's membership.

**Disciplinary Determination Division** - A section of the consensus debate for the disciplinary response to a violated citizen.

**Donald Stiller** - Maiden Captain of the Vigor.

**Early Incident Alert** - An impact warning system intended to reveal the imminent collision of concussion occurrence bodies.

**Earth Group** - Originants from Earth of a cohesive selection.

**Earth Transition Courses** - Classes, which take place at the FTA and are designed to prepare students for cosmic itineraries.

**Efficiency Stay** - A living accommodation shelter.

**Einstein's Special Relativity** - The proposed theory by Albert Einstein detailing the interdependency of the nature of space, time, mass, and energy.

**Electrolysis Plant** - The generation of electricity by way of electrolysis.

**Electronic Pamphlet Buddy** - A Computer program, which provides detailed information and schematics of many locations throughout Star City.

**Eling** - Lazarus's long time girlfriend.

**Emergency Deceleration Sequence** - Procedure designed to extend the capacity of antiacceleratory devices for use in a rapid slow down maneuver of a spacecraft.

**Emergency Oxygen Conveyer** - A small electronic air pumping system as seen on the SES.

**Enemy Cascade Effect** - The point in which an opposing group collects enough resources by which they might use to generate more resources and initiating an exponential increase of technological ability.

**Engine Temperature Indicator** - An instrument designed to measure variations of heat and cold positioned inside a propulsion device.

**Erin** - A student of the School of Archeology of Israeli decent.

**Evolution** - The physical alterations of a life form influenced by environmental changes.

**Explorer Ship** - A vessel specially designed to explore.

**Extrplanetary Activities** - Colonially acceptable interactions outside of Earth.

**Extracontinual** - Beyond continuity.

**Facility Coordination Head** - Manager of the foundry facility in Arizona.

**Federal Consumer** - The second class of four in the citizen rating system.

**Federal Exploration Alliance** - The official space exploration title for Earth's stellographic observation missions. Federal

**Transition Academy** - Civilian space progression training school.

**Fishman** - A derivative term used as a social convenience to designate an alien species resembling an aquatic genus class.

**Fitted Space Suit** - A suit designed for space transition, which has been custom made to suit the dimensions of a tailored individual.

**Flare Star** - A star, which has a random or consistent tendency to eject stellar radiations from its surface.

**Forward Impact Alert** - A system, which uses digital red colored crosshairs to alert a space pilot of a linier collision course.

**France** - A European based country.

**Fraternity** - A social, honorary, or professional group organized by group members.

**CRC** - An acronym for Confederate Resistance Coordination.

**Frozen Mountains**- A region of upthrusted frozen landmasses extending several hundred miles on the planet Krysto.

**FTA** - Acronym for the Federal Transition Academy.

**Garden of Eden** - An extranatural plot of vegetation placed by Almighty God.

**Gas to Solid Conversion** - The process by which molecular bonds can be modified to allow for a gaseous material to solidify.

**GEF** - Acronym for G-Force Emulation Field

**Genus Resemblance** - The comparison results of a species to another by the likeness of genus.

**G-Force Emulation Field** - An area of space, which has been manipulated by the Spatial Temper. Giovanni Beltran - First officer of the Earth Ship Vigor, brother the Reloch Beltran.

**Giraffeman** - A derivative term used as a social convenience to designate an alien species of a tall slender race of Star City.

**Global Debates** - The exchange of potential-proceeding suggestions between the Nations of Earth regarding the New Era.

**Glove Piece** - The detachable segment of the hand section of the SES.

**Graven Images** - The appearance of a piece of matter as revealed by light, no matter what the apparent beauty or value, that becomes an object of power for the individual, meaning to let the image be sufficient to satisfy one's state of happiness more so than righteousness.

**Hard Buttons** - Buttons, which used raised resistance as opposed to tap sensitive surfaces.

**Helmet Comm. Frequencies** - The various radio modulations integrated into the SES helmet assembly.

**History of the Star Voyager** - A detailed documentation of the events and circumstances by which the Vessel the Star Voyager was built and utilized.

**Holy Spirit** - The Spirit of the Lord God.

**HR-8832** - A small red dwarf system approximately 22 light-years from Sol.

**ICBM** - Acronym for Intercontinental Ballistic Missile.

**Ice Base-I** - A covert Krystonian military base hidden out on the Krestor Ice Plate on the planet Krysto. **Ice Wing** - A winged fighter craft used by the KMD.

**Info Prompt** - A graphic interface display of a computer operating system conveying relevant data.

**Infraradar** - A device designed to image pinpoint representations of heat sources.

**Integrated Dialog** - A form of socialism entailing a simultaneous multiconversational method. **Internet** - A data link system between three or more information storage nodes.

**Intranet Status Update** - An upgrade in information regarding an internal computer data network.

**Jacy Abeytu** - Native American interstellar explorer positioned as a substitute crewman on the Earth Ship Vigor with the rank of sub-lieutenant.

**Jered** - A radar surveillance operator at the KMD base Ice Base-I.

**Joshua Feynman** - Pilot of the E.S. Vigor, Quantum Variance Physicist.

**KMD** - The acronym for Krystonian Military Defense.

**Krestor Ice Plate** - A large glacier on the planet Krysto.

**Krystonian Air Strike** - An aggressive KMD attack craft procedure.

**Krystonian Military Defense** - The established military force of the registered outer territory of the planet Krysto.

**Krystonian Military Defense Intelligence** - Section of the KMD intended to process tactically relevant information for the acknowledgement of KMD personnel.

**Krystonian Plasma Rifle** - An enhanced ionic discharge gun.

**Ladyline** - A slang designation appearing as an adjective/noun combination of the terms lady and feline to classify a female resembling the genus Felidae.

**Lendall Stop** - A far out café in a slow distant orbit of A-00981.

**Light of God** - The everluminous emanation of the eye of God.

**Long Range Radar Console** - A panel intended to display extended radar resonance.

**Major Kikts** - A KMD officer by the rank of Major.

**Map of Star City** - An image of the local star systems within a 50 light year radius of Sol.

**Mare Crisium Province** - Name of a low-lying region of the Lunar Surface containing town settlements and highway pavements.

**Mars Barr** - A Café located in the Asteroid Belt.

**Mars Barr Cantina** - The alcoholic serving section of the Mars Barr.

**Mercenary** - Person or persons who travel alone or in small groups that follow the rules of equal or acceptable trade who seek profit for survival and maintenance of their equipment, often victims of unjust societies who have fled their oppressors and have been classified in some instances as freedom fighters.

**Mermaid Colony** - The living region of the imaginary fish/human hybrid species.

**Metallic Ore** - Metal elements found on mineral masses.

**Meteorite Anatomization Team** - A group of people whose task is to dissect and analyze the elements of a meteorite.

**Mohammad** - A Geologist of Middle Eastern decent.

**Mr. Talent** - A mining colony crew leader.

**Multi Polarized Weapons Fire** - Energy discharges of varying electrostatic vibrations.

**Multitransspectral Algorithm** - A technique used to decode electromagnetic data streams at translightspeed velocities. Note: This phenomenal solution has been observed to be comparatively applicable to light beyond the known spectrum and constitutes on noumenodynamic plains.

**Naiad** - Neptune's closest moon.

**Neptune Circuit** - A raceway three quarters of the way around Neptune.

**NET Sensor Array** - A sensor grid with above average performance capability.

**New Space Craze** - A short era of a new space presence attainment fad.

**New Territories** - A small settlement and townscape replica constructed outside the Earth.

**Nobel Prize** - An award granted for a significant scientific accomplishment.

**Non-ship Personnel**. Free-agent passengers on a vessel.

**Noumeno** - Of, or relating to the anatomical essence of the spiritual nature. The structural makeup of an angelic or spiritual being. A morphological designation of a spectrometric entity. Appointment to an apparitional life form.

**Optical Flash Scan** - A short burst of light used to illuminate a specific area for the purpose of creating a photographic image.

**Orion Arm** - A large curved mass of stellar matter blending with the more condensed hub of a galactic core.

**Overhead Objective Display Console** - A special task display above the viewer.

**Oxygen Recycling Device** - A molecular demotation device.

**Paleozoic Era** - A time of primordial development in Earth's history about 3 billion years ago encompassing volcanic activity and developing sea life.

**Paralogical Specialist** - Someone who is assigned the task of using his or her knowledge of postnatural physics to provide need-to-know information on demand.

**Pluto** - An icy planetoid in the Solar System.

**Port of Zemorg** - A primary terrain and space inlet located on the Planet Zemorg.

**Principles of the Respect for Life** - The established philosophy emphasizing the pursuit for oneness, reverence, and understanding with all living things.

**Proximity Alert Officer Dexter** - Crewman aboard the E.S. Vigor responsible for monitoring, reporting, and alerting the presence of nearby objects of incident to the Vigor.

**Protosystem** - A region of space filled with congealed particulate stellar material under the gravitational influence of heliocentric body.

**Pursuing SMD Vessel** - A Military spacecraft used by the SMD traveling along a similar trajectory of an additional target craft.

**Quick Pump System** - A mechanism designed to move a fluid expediently.

**Radar Dataists** - A person in the position of processing data gather from radar device output.

**Radio** - A device, which receives low frequency modulations of the electromagnetic spectrum.

**Raxot** - Capital city of the planet Krysto.

**Raxot Industrial District** - An area adjacent to the city of Raxot containing electrolysis plants and other resource generating facilities on the planet Krysto.

**Raxot Space Port** - Space vessel landing region in the City of Raxot on the planet Krysto.

**Receptor Port** - An opening designed to prevent leakage of air within an SES while employing a recoiling closure mechanism.

**Reloch Beltran** - Leader of the CRC and brother to Commander Giovanni Beltran of the Earth Ship Vigor.

**Resistance Deceivers** - Individuals who employ false information to attain their own will for the benefit of the CRC.

**Resistance Intranetwork** - A datalink coordination of computers operated by the CRC.

**Sagittarius Arm** - A large curved mass of stellar matter blending with the more condensed hub of a galactic core.

**Sensor Analysis Specialist** - A person who has been assigned the task of possessing data received from a sensor device output.

**Sensor Relay Project** - A venture initiated by the KMD to place enhanced sensor devices in specific locations on the planet Krysto.

**Sensor Relay Uplink Protocols** - A code record of the data transfer method used with linked devices in conjunction with a sensor instrument.

**SES** - An Acronym for Space Environmental Suit.

**Shield Partition** - Separately generated sections of an antimagnetometric force field.

**Ship Piloting License** - Space vessel operations allocation document.

**Shirra** - An Arabic female FTA graduate.

**Sign of Inferiority** - A thought, speech, or action, which supports a hostile intention or results in a harmful outcome.

**Sirius Star System** - A binary star system consisting of a giant blue star and a white dwarf companion approximately 8 light years from Sol.

**SMD** - Acronym for the Star City Military Defense.

**SMD Battleship** - A heavily armed large sized space craft as a part of the SMD.

**SMD Military Base** - Branch of the SMD.

**SMD Police Craft** - A vessel designed to patrol and rescue in the vicinity of the jurisdiction of Star City.

**SMD Rendezvous Procedure** - Appointed directive instructing maiden craft to report to the nearest SMD military base for vessel inspection and instigation.

**SMD Representative** - An individual affiliated with the SMD while pursuing the task of military depiction.

**Snow Jet Motor** - A gyrodyne engine mechanism designed to propel a vehicle on icy terrain.

**Sontira** - Last name of the Author of "Angelic Life."

**Space Sickness** - Symptoms occasionally surfacing initiated by the shock of space transition.

**Spatial Temper Field** - A region or regions of space, which has undergone collapse by means of spatial fissuring.

**Speed Limit Transmissions** - An automated signal received by space vessels indicating the appropriate speed limit for a region.

**Speed Match Deceleration Procedure** - A matched deceleratory initiation between two space vessels.

**Spirit of Mars** - Noumenometric energy consisting of thought and feeling capable of possessing electrochemically responsive life forms establishing the essence of the enchantment impressions of the planet Mars.

**Standard Lunar Orbit Procedure** - Suggested orbital path and speed for lunar range.

**Star Voyager** - Modified equipment hauler previously utilized for transferring material to the inner solar bodies and later handed down to Seiwan Li of Earth.

**Substitute Reconnaissance Agent** - A person intended to replace an individual and continue the execution of the task of reconnaissance.

**Sun Town** - The area within the Asteroid Belt.

**Telescope HUD** - A screen display of telescopic imagery.

**Television** - A device, which receives and displays image receptions.

**Terrain Vehicles** - SMD heavy ground assault vehicle.

**Tharsis Montes Mountain Range** - A chain of mountains on the planet Mars.

**The Big Bang** - The rapid condensing of the pure energy of all matter in the Universe.

**The Forbidden Zone** - A star system, which is off limits to civilians due to the presence of a Wolflike alien species who has not become aware of the Planetary Council.

**The Holy Bible** - An ancient collection of text inspired into select Humans by The God of the Universe.

**The Lookout** - The upper floor section of the Mars Barr, which allots a view of space through high-resolution window, screens.

**The Matron Group** - A well-known scientific establishment in Star City.

**The Mediator** - An SMD battleship.

**The Minors Lounge** - A room where mining colony workers rest and live.

**The New Era** - The unveiling of the Planetary Council occurring in the early 21st century.

**The People's Affairs Committee** - Group responsible for representing the will of the civilian collective.

**The Planetary Council** - Establishment of representatives of local stellar system heads.

**The Police** - A protective establishment authorized to use force.

**The Raider** - The sleek personal cruiser class spacecraft owned by Husto Theeson.

**The Sparkling Creek** - A small running flow of natural water trickling through the woodland behind the Li home.

**The Spirit of Krysto** - Noumenometric energy of thought and feeling capable of possessing electrochemically responsive life forms establishing the essence of the enchantment impressions of the planet Krysto.

**The Weather Report** - An impromptu presentation intended to make people aware of the present environmental patterns of the elements.

**Tracker Vehicle** - A mechanized walking machine intended to encase a humanoid occupant for transportation.

**Transference Speeds** - A speed between two vessels accepted to be ideal for the conveyance of fragile material.

**Transition License** - Space transition allocation document.

**Transport Ski** - A motorized snow and ice terrain transition vehicle used on Krysto.

**Transspectral Detector** - A device designed to sense wavelengths beyond the known spectrum.

Triton Courts - A colony on Neptune's moon triton.

**Vega** - A massive quadruple star system consisting of crowded regions of protoplanetary and stellar matter approximately 25 light-years from Sol.

**Vehicle Launch Committee** - A team of student supervisors issued by the FTA.

**SVLC Inspection Teams** - Appointed groups of reviewers assigned to gather information about the quality, integrity, and safety of a spacecraft.

**Volunteer Archeological Research** - A field of study supporting student archeologists.

Winged

**Fighter Attack Jets** - Assault aircraft.

**WolfMan** - A derivative term used to loosely designate the Wolfman alien species.

**Yifei Chen Hua** - Chief Performance Manager. Paralogical Specialist.

