

Flight without Limits

2009 Edition

a novel
by Rolf A. F. Witzsche

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Imagine, traveling in an instant to wherever you want to be!
The universe is your playground. Thought becomes expression.

This is science fiction. But maybe mentally it shouldn't be.

The novel is about a space voyage to Alpha Centauri, the nearest solar system to our own. It starts as a high tech voyage, and then becomes much more than that. It links up with a future that is moving backwards. It also comes upon a present that has no future, but for which a future is created that has no limits.

Of course, being able to travel to wherever one may want to be has certain social advantages, and also challenges. Of course, politically, this capability has even greater challenges attached.

Some people say that we will never have the capability, to go physically in an instant wherever we want to be. They might be right. But we do have that kind of capability mentally in the world of science, romance, and spirituality, all of which are threaded through the novel.

You may find that when you return you have left some of the old limits behind.

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Chapter 1 - The Paradox

When I saw it, I could only stare and wonder. It appeared as it were from another world, a metal block the size of a cigarette package, polished, with razor sharp edges. It reflected the blue of the ceiling against the light blue fabric of my towel, on which it lay, giving the appearance as though it was translucent in one direction.

I leaned over the edge of the Jacuzzi to have another look. It had come into view while my eyes had wondered through clouds of steam rising from the water, boiling with millions of bubbles that burst into a fine spray adding a shade of mystery to the fantasy worlds of my waking dreams. Seeing the object had startled me. It seemed real, but it didn't fit. How did it get into the pool area, and who had put it onto my towel? I looked around. There was no one in the pool area with me.

I decided that I would ignore it as an image conjured up by an over worked mind. Under normal circumstances I might have reached for it, handled it, examined it for its texture, its weight, or what ring it might have, had not every bone in my body ached. Instead, I let myself slip deeper into the hot water and convinced myself that there wasn't really anything there. It felt good doing that, since it saved me the task of finding rationality for the irrational.

In a way, this reflected my battles with the captain. The very hall still 'echoed' his violent shouts, so undignified for a captain, reminiscent to scenes from old Nazi movies. He was determined to break my "affair" with Natalia, as he defined this honest response to the deep feelings of two human beings to each other. He fought a psychological war, interlaced with meaningless medleys on the subject of marriage, morality, the importance of our mission, and his dream of having absolute authority over his crew.

"You are morally bankrupt!" he yells at me.

"And you're bankrupt as a human being!" I reply in the best civil fashion I could muster.

As a rule, I submitted to such shouting matches only in private. I had learned to ignore his attacks at other occasions as some incurable madness from another world or another time.

Apart from this special madness the captain was a likable fellow. So I decided to be cautious and ignore whatever I couldn't deal with, to keep the rest alive. It seemed the sensible thing to do.

Seeing the metal object on my towel was like a parallel situation. It seemed that I could only deal with it by ignoring it. As I slipped deeper

into the Jacuzzi until its hot water covered my head. I felt a great peace. Indeed, that appeared to be the right method of treating a puzzle like that. For twenty hours, I and scores of others had struggled deep inside the ship, in 'the pit' as we called the physical plant, which had become an arena of a life and death drama. Everything we had set out to accomplish with this mission, to say nothing of our own life, had depended on the success of our work in the pit. And by gollie, we had won this fight! We had won it hands down, and I had played a central role in this titanic struggle.

It had started routinely three days ago with a siren call that sounded no different than any of the nightly calls to the bridge, generated by a computer randomized program to test our emergency responses. I noticed that it was three AM exactly, when the emergency signal woke me.

Half in a daze I rushed to the bridge, since everyone's arrival is timed during tests. Only this wasn't a test. Something was going on. Every person who had any responsibility for the mission was there. The deep space navigation officer, the logistics officer, the power systems officer, the mathematical systems officer, all were there. Everyone was in a state of confused excitement. The ship's power monitoring system had detected a phase shift fluctuation, I was told. And not just one, but two of the ship's five generators were malfunctioning in this fashion. When I came to the bridge, nobody knew for certain what it all meant. A third generator had begun to indicate the same failure just as I walked in.

"It's a wobbler!" the electrical systems officer explains like a town crier. He says he had seen it once before.

His explanation was that the turbine shafts had excessive play in their bearings that caused gap variations at the generator rotors.

I noticed the mechanical engineering officer putting both hands over his face. God, if that man was right, it meant that we had to invent a new type of bearing, manufacture them aboard ship, and install them in five generators the size of a house.

"How much time do we have?" yells the mechanical engineering officer.

The captain's face is blank, white as a sheet; silent.

"Twenty four hours, with one generator running," calculates the bio-plant officer. Twenty-four hours is the maximum time we can run the agro plant in the dark and without the feed stations operating. After this we risk our food supply.

"We can risk having one generator becoming damaged beyond repair, running with bad bearings for a day, while we rebuilt the others. But can we do it in a day?" says the electrical engineering officer calmly.

"Anything longer than a day will damage our food supply," warns the bio-plant officer again.

Someone shakes the captain up. "Make some decisions!"

In time, decisions were made. Four of the ship's five generators were turned off. The one with the least bearing noise was chosen to stay in operation. The others were to be rebuilt. Orders now flowed from the captain in one continuous stream, as to who would be responsible for any specific phase of the repair work, etc. etc.

Strangely, nobody complained. Neither did anyone swear at those engineers at home who had overlooked the obvious, that the weightlessness of space would cause the rotors to sit freer in their bearings, free to move, free to start bouncing, putting greater stress on the metal than the steady force of gravity would have on earth. They also had overlooked the possible loss of redundancy through simultaneous failures when using the same design throughout the ship. They certainly had "screwed up royally," as the mission specialist had put it. We could have lived indefinitely with two of the five generators functioning. But since the design fault had imposed the same damaging stress on every unit, we were lucky we had had anything left running. The entire complex could have been out. Of course nobody knew for how long the unit would last that we had still running. This was an emergency situation of the severest order?

The captain assigned me the task of creating a new metal for the new bearings, appropriate for the increased stress. This was easily said, but not easily done. He obviously had no idea what he was asking.

Three other persons were given the task of re-designing the functional structure of the bearings. The rest of the work was assigned to whoever had any experience with heavy equipment. Recruitment started immediately to get the disassembly of the turbines and generators under way as soon they had cooled down enough to be handled.

No one dared to say no to the captain, not to any request, or disagree with what he had ordered, even when it seemed the impossible. Except it dawned on me in the elevator to the machine room that I didn't have the faintest idea of how it could possibly be done, of how I might come up with an improved alloy in so short a time. As it happened, the first idea that popped into mind was the right one. No struggle was necessary. I didn't have to wrack my brains. The idea came, like rain out of a cloudless sky.

The metal object on my towel had appeared the same way. I stared at it from time to time. It had a perfect shine to it. It appeared like a dream now, of a metallurgist searching for the ideal metal to make bearings from. It certainly wasn't made of any ordinary metal. No ordinary metal could be super-polished to this perfection. I supposed that it had to be extremely hard and very dense.

I leaned back once more, driven by a faint spark of curiosity, to get a glimpse of it, unobstructed by the steam. It looked even more fascinating. But it's all academic, I reasoned. The work with the bearings

was finished. Besides, I was proud of the Zirconium/Platinum combination that I had invented, an alloy in which the platinum is suspended within a tight ceramic-aluminum lattice where it may act like so many ball bearings embedded in a sea of grease. It was the result of great genius, so I kept convincing myself. And boy, did it feel good to be so proud of oneself. The bearings would last a thousand years, I was sure of it.

My thoughts, however, were interrupted. I noticed Natalia coming from the changing rooms.

"Hey, what had caused you to volunteer for this suicide mission," I say to her with the straightest face I could muster as she closed the door behind her.

She steps down into the steaming water to join me. Her face shows some pain. "Oh, dis is hot," she utters. She looks perplexed as she makes herself comfortable. She smiles. "Remember, you did that! Don't you recall how you twisted my arm to get me to join up?" Her smile turns into a grin.

Of course it hadn't been like that at all. She would never have allowed herself to be arm-twisted, not by anyone. Opinions and appearances carried as little weight with her, as the supposed glory of positions and titles, or the sting of gossip. What mattered to her, were results, the bottom line profit that enlarged her experience. Neither could she stand anything connected with bureaucracy, idleness, closed mind bickering. She was my kind of girl, a whirlwind in person. Whatever she came into contact with exploded into movement. I was glad she had chosen to come along. I hadn't twisted her arm at all. The mission itself had done that, the call of frontiers...

Her smile faded when I told her of our struggles in the belly of the ship. But could she judge the depth of those struggles? No, her face didn't reveal that. We had fought endless seeming hours in total weightlessness, in an atmosphere of chaos, the air filled with sweat, steam, and the noise of air driven tools, chains, winches, all interspersed by commands bellowed out by the foreman, who conducted the disassembly of the still incredibly hot turbine generators. They were too hot to be touched with bare hands.

She responded by telling me that she wasn't at all surprised, only that it happened so soon. We had hardly gone a year, a mere three trillion kilometers, a pittance! It shouldn't have happened so soon that we faced these near impossible obstacles, not while our destination was still over four light-years away. "If this is the beginning, what in heavens will we yet have to face?" I heard me saying to Natalia. "I had said this to myself over and over, while the work was going on."

Our mission was to explore one of the two solar systems that are closest to Earth. If it had humanoid life on one of its planets, and these humanoid life forms were intelligent, and the civilizations they formed hap-

pened to be more advanced than ours, we stood to gain important knowledge that could be crucial for saving the human race in its endless wars against itself. This was the reason for which the ship was built, to explore the Alpha Centauri system, a solar system which combined three suns locked together into a single gravitational structure of great complexity, which could theoretically have several planets with features similar to our Earth.

"A suicide mission," Natalia repeats. She shakes her head. "No! That's not what this is. It's the opposite!" she says.

Her insistence reminded me of the enthusiasm I once had myself, for this mission. Mankind's greatest opportunity, I had called it. No, she shouldn't have needed to remind me of the fact that this wasn't just a mere game of exploration. It had evolved out of a most desperate effort to find answers to the challenging questions of how to maintain human existence on earth in the face of nuclear weapons, economic chaos, and an exploding pandemic of species-threatening diseases.

Her words sounded like clichés, a sermon I had once preached myself a thousand times during the years of international fund raising. I stopped listening to her, as my own voice within became a thunder that required great effort to subdue. This was the most deadly serious mission that had ever been launched!

Throughout the struggle with my own fears, stirred by a growing doubt that we would reach our goal alive, my gaze rested on her. My eyes kept drinking in her image. I felt I had a right to do what seemed impolite at best. After having stood for twenty hours at the fusion furnace, the x-ray microscope, the computer, fighting feverishly against time in an effort to achieve the impossible, I had achieved a miracle. I had been drawing together the very depth of all that was within me, harnessing the experiences of a lifetime to put together this new alloy that had never been invented before. I felt I had a perfect right to stare at her in repayment for having saved her life, too.

And even after the metal was brewed, the very challenge of forging it into bearings which had to work perfectly the first time was worth the highest reward a nation could ever offer. I wasn't asking for much, merely for her permission of resting my eyes on her? The work in the pit had been a sweat job of an intensity I had never before encountered. All I knew, was, that my task had to be accomplished before the mechanical engineering officer would burst into the ship's smithy and demand the 'gold' he had a right to expect with no delay. The only rest period that I was able to allow myself in those twenty some hours, was a ten minute snooze in a corner of the 'ceiling,' wedged between a grease drum anchored to a beam and a stack of oily rags that had been discarded and tied to a post.

Those ten minutes corresponded to the time required for the bearings to cool, after the forging process, before they could be fitted. The

worst, however, was the agony of waiting, wondering if the bearings would do the job they were designed to do. This agony alone should have been sufficient to demand a King's ransom. For the moment, however, Natalia was sufficient for me. She represented the world to me, all that was wonderful about being alive as a human being. She was one of those rare individuals that one meets perhaps only once in a lifetime and counts this a blessing forever.

We had traveled far in the mind; to depths, heights, and places that make all the excursions of the world's jet setters, combined, appear as nothing in comparison. And this traveling wasn't the aimless kind of mind excursion, a withdrawal into the realm of semi-unconsciousness that is cherished as a realm of freedom by the new psychedelic culture which was sweeping the globe, of hard music, cheap sex, and mind-destroying drugs.

While looking at Natalia across the Jacuzzi, the day came to mind when she had invited me to her room in order to discuss the constitution of the ship. She had called it the most remarkable piece of governmental technology she had ever seen; "a daring step beyond democracy."

"Look!" she had entreated me, and had held the book right under my nose. "As far as I understand this, the captain has no power over our life, none whatsoever! The only authority he has is to transact the laws of this document, to make certain that the departments that operate the ship are functioning responsibly according to the form outlined in this document of law." Her eyes had sparkled when she spoke.

When she had closed the book, she had said, "Whoever wrote this law, means to tell us something. The fact is we are living a paradox!"

"A paradox?" I had repeated.

"Yes! Don't you see? We've launched this great mission to explore other worlds in search for answers of the kind that we should really find in ourselves. What we are looking for is a mental technology by which we can regard one another as human beings. I think this is the bottom line, the answer to everything that we are after. It is the answer to war, to deprivation, even AIDS. We've mobilized the resources of the world for this mission, the paradox is that we haven't yet found a way to allow ourselves to explore what it means to regard each other as human beings. We treat each other as members of institutions; as married, single, democrats, doctors, socialists, feminists, or poor underprivileged minorities; but we never treat each other unconditionally as people, without at the same time denying our individuality that makes each one of us special. Aren't we primarily people, instead of being primarily democrats, or married individuals?"

I will never forget how surprised I had been. I had felt instinctively that she had been right, that the heart of this mission lay not at all in exploring the stars, but in exploring ourselves, in finding the courage to do this, which now stood out as a key-factor to human survival.

Actually, I should have been more than surprised. I should have been grateful to her on more than one count. The captain, who had stood between us ever since we had set foot on this ship, acting as though it

were his special responsibility to chaperon all married people, had been dethroned by her discovery of the law. The first door to exploring one other as human beings had been opened. "I think we are both intelligent enough not to hurt each other as we shed the mythologies," she had said.

Oh I agreed with her! Except, this hadn't altered our relationship to the captain. That remained the same.

The captain was a short man with little dignity. Everybody called him Johnny. Some took it as a joke. To me he seemed like a good friend, except for his madness. This had been hard to handle right from the start.

The first time Natalia came to the table where I played chess with him, I embraced her with a quick kiss and then introduced her to everyone. She had sat down and had watched our game for a while.

"Hey! Watch out for your castle!" She had warned me at one point.

"Ah, but watch this!" I had replied, and not heeding the exposed castle, I had taken the captain's queen with a knight, a worthwhile trade for a castle.

She grinned and left us some moments later.

I recall that she had barely stood up when the captain became uneasy. "I want you to know," he had said to me with the face of a judge passing a life sentence, "that I did not see what has transpired between you, and I will not see it again. Is this understood?"

I nodded. I said, "Yes sir!" I bowed as politely as I could! I was astounded, even perplexed, as I watched him clear the chess board, putting the figures back into their box, all over such a little thing.

"I won't overlook it the next time," he said and left the table.

I remembered that I just sat there with my mouth open. It had come like a shock to Natalia too, when I had told her.

"How is one to deal with a person like that?" she had asked.

I had no idea then, that one day I would gladly kissed his hands on my knees for the outrageous thing he had done, for Natalia wasn't the kind of person who could ignore things like that and let him get away with it. She was a 'fire' that could change the world. And that she did.

Natalia's studying of the constitution made it quite clear to us that we had a right to stand up against him. What he had tried to shut down became an open door to the most remarkable association between two people that evolved like no other love affair likely ever had, out of an exploration into the fundamentals of law.

How dry! Right? For me, this wasn't dry at all. It was exciting.

"Hey look here! Look there!" That's how it went, virtually for the entire first night we met in her quarters for this purpose. "Look, no one at all on this ship has any authority over us!" she exclaimed at one point, with a big grin on her face. She pointed to an article, under discipline: "Any individual who subscribes to the laws of this document may engage in individual personal associations of any form, which shall be acknowledged

publicly, neither shall any person or officer interfere with the internal affairs of such associations."

We looked at each other.

Some place deep inside me I felt that she already knew what we would discover.

Looking at her through the steam, watching her innocent gentle expression was like being transposed back to the day that followed. She had worn a giant T-shirt that day, with "University of California" printed on it in bold letters. Someone had given it to her, she said. It was too huge as a shirt and a wee bit too short to be worn as a dress. But that's how she wore it. Also, as far as I could make out, this was all that she wore.

Oh my God! For ten years I had hoped to meet her in a situation like this. Her legs were excitingly bare, smooth, and her breasts hardly hidden by the deep cut in the partially unbuttoned shirt.

My God! My God! I had said to myself over and over. The constitution gives us total freedom. Indeed! She had pointed this out. We required no one's approval... I had looked at her, silently, and received in reply one of the most wonderfully wicked grins that does total justice to such a situation.

"Except there is a catch," she had said on one of those days. She had said that the constitution, although it provides total freedom, is by its nature a limit to the totality of the freedom it provides.

She spoke without a smile.

"What limits?" I had said.

"It requires one to pull back to a certain extend."

"Pull back from the very freedom it offers?"

She had nodded, and begun to smile again. "Freedom demands responsibility," she had said. Her words seemed totally at odds with her appearance that had always been excitedly casual in those days. "The way the constitution is written," she had said, "seems to indicate that the substance of freedom is founded on responsibility and becomes a function of it. The one can't exist without the other. Technology can open the door to freedom, but can it give you what you are unable to grasp? We must be responsible for the risks we take!"

I had agreed with her. Freedom without limits can become a slave-master. I knew that.

She had looked at me with her big brown eyes, waiting for a reply. I was too perplexed to say anything.

"We are both sexual human beings," she had continued in time. "We live with our sexuality twenty-four hours a day. Out of it arise obvious sexual needs. Is it wise to deny that these needs exist?" She had paused momentarily. "Is it wise to ignore these needs?" she had continued. "Is it wise to pretend that Mother Nature has exceeded its greatest marvel in creating mankind, but has goofed on one fundamental point that must be ignored at all cost?"

"This would be absurd!" I had said.

"The constitution doesn't deal in absurdities," she had said quietly. "I see it as a chart for developing our mental technology. It encourages an intelligent daring to open the door to the world as far as one is able to bear, being constantly sensitive to the point of becoming overwhelmed by the process."

I had agreed, more mechanically perhaps, than with reasoned conviction.

"Would you say we are intelligent enough to take up the challenge and not hurt anyone, especially those we have left behind?" she had asked.

"Whatever blesses one must benefit all concerned. If it doesn't I won't have any part of it," I replied.

With these words from me still on my lips, she had started to completely unbutton her shirt that day after just a week of studying the constitution together.

I helped her remove it.

All that I had been able to think of at this moment, was that the very realization of many dreams lay before me, that however now hinged on the measure of intelligence that would hold us back from overstepping the fine line beyond which our actions would no longer add anything of value to our being, but take away everything.

"Wow!" was really all that I had been able to utter upon seeing her standing stark naked in front of me, a feeling that almost overwhelmed the carefully determined points of reference that had enabled this moment to be.

As it was, this evening marked the beginning of a wonderful adventure; a frontier exploration in its own right, something dynamic, something that never stood still, that was always referenced against the fine line between freedom and slavery, a combination of reaching out and drawing back. We soon realized that this line itself was constantly shifting.

There certainly was never anything dull about our affair. It had started with a bang, which may well be described as an orgy of passion for life that gave way in time to lighthearted fun out of which evolved the deepest sense of honesty for one another that was an adventure in itself, a journey into the inner nature of human existence. It made us alive. It made us sensitive of each other's needs and feelings, including those anchored deep within ourselves. We said things to each other in those days that seemed crazy. They could never have been taken seriously in a literal sense. One day I proposed marriage to her, which, as she was well aware of, couldn't have been further from my mind.

This particular incidence of a spontaneous reaction to a feeling that needed expression, brought something to light that couldn't have been said in any other way. There was honesty in this lie. It made the conventional forms of honesty a closed-lip silence. This silence, which usually prevails on the subject, appeared to me as a gross form of dishonesty to one self and

one another.

This kind of honest adoration that spoke volumes in its own way was of course interwoven into the fabric of fun that had turned our association into something quite special. The world lay at our fingertips. We probed into areas that neither of us had ever thought existed. One night after the movies, we wondered whether it was more morally right to produce nothing, than coercing people into accepting an illusion as fact, as the movies did. And how does it alter the game when the illusion is understood as an illusion? Is it morally right to lye, if the lye is expected?

We also had great fun with exploring the stars, looking for nebulae, trying to orient ourselves to the Milky Way galaxy, in respect to what we could see from the ship. We also pretended to be actors now and then, and play-acted rolls from whatever plays we could find in the library or invent for ourselves, of kings and queens and ancient castles. There never was a dull moment when we were together, or a moment of want.

Sitting in the Jacuzzi, I remembered a day of a time long before this all happened. We had met by chance at the atrium and had started to talk. Among other things she had asked what it felt like being dead! I knew exactly what she meant. This question of course had never been asked again. However, one evening, recently, when we met at the very same spot, as we frequently did, she did ask a similar question. She asked what it felt like to know, and she whispered the rest into my ear, that she was absolutely stark naked underneath the dress that she wore. I looked at her. She wore a full flowing gown that revealed nothing unusual. Ah, but I knew. I felt anything but dead this evening and told her so. I felt exited as a little boy. We went to the ship's lounge for a drink, listened to some music, and enjoyed each other's company in this strange daring situation, fantasized a little, danced a lot, and made each other feel special all evening. There had been movement in those moments filled with the dynamics of life and spontaneity, as though we had stepped into a different space, a space of love, appreciation, and response.

It became a lot of fun to be daring like this in the long idle hours of living on ship, when the duty had shrunk to just four hour-shifts a day. We were living like tightrope walkers crossing over Niagara Falls. I had even felt an extension of this feeling in the pit of the ship, while forging for the first time in human history a set of Zirconium/Platinum bearings for the turbine shafts on which our existence depended. I had no choice but to be daring, and to trust the strength of a lifetime of experience, appreciating that I was 'substantial' enough to meet this most pressing need. Being daring came easily now; the technology of it had become second nature to me, a source of confidence in the substance of my being.

Seeing Natalia's face faintly through the steam over the Jacuzzi, and

also remembering the comfort that I derived from that, was no doubt intertwined with the excitement that had gripped us in this still ongoing adventure. She had never had occasion again to ask what it is like to be dead; tired maybe, but never dead.

But there was one thing that hurt deeply that day in the Jacuzzi, which hurt more than the pain of my aching muscles. It was a hurt that was hard to define that came from the general indifference I had witnessed to what had happened. It struck like a blow into the stomach.

When I had emerged from the elevator on the seventeenth level, dirty like a chimney sweep, no one had taken note of me. People had passed by. Some had looked the other way. I had stopped at the railing of the great atrium. I had looked down on the crowd that gathered at the main floor. It had been past shift change already. What had struck me like a knife, was that everything looked so damn terribly normal. People were waiting down there for the movie to start. Nobody had told them. Nobody had known that their life had hung in the balance as if it hadn't been their business to be aware of what was happening to their very existence.

It appears that the few people who had seen me, hadn't suspected anything. Hadn't anyone been the slightest bit interested? Apparently nobody cared. Were they all dead? Not a single person had stopped and asked what had happened, why I had been covered in grease and muck. Only Natalia seemed to care about what I might be feeling. She even went as far as taking her bathing suit top off for a suitable diversion. Or was this merely another move in the game we played with the captain? Or maybe it was both.

At the moment I was too tired to reason this thing out further, to its very depth. I felt content for the fact that she did what she did. I was happy to be there with her in this fashion.

Our ship was without doubt the most advanced spacecraft ever built. Every conceivable comfort was provided for. The only conventional factor on ship, that had reduced the entire equation to something conventional, was the ship's obvious need for people. The captain himself, our Johnny, was the most conventional, not to say primitive factor of them all. He regarded himself as some supreme ruler of a mighty empire, sovereign even above the law on which his authority rested. In his mind, 'transact' meant to 'conduct.' He aimed to conduct the affairs of everyone around. Natalia and I had sat down with him many times, in an effort to reason with him from a platform of law. But who can reason with a captain who insists that he is right?

The existence of laws meant nothing to him, logic meant even less. As he saw it, Natalia and I violated a code of ethics, as both of us were married to different partners left behind. He became enraged over it. His little mind translated the world into black and white. How small his world must have been!

The captain called me to his office once and virtually pleaded with me for almost an hour to subject ourselves to his vision. He felt that everything the mission was designed to accomplish hinged on his perception of the moral integrity of every single crewmember aboard. I agreed with him on some points, but not with his interpretation as to what morality is, which he was determined to impose on everyone.

"Who told Einstein to invent the theory of relativity?" I say to him sharply, looking him in the eye.

"No one did! But that's not the issue here!" he replies with a polite smile as though he was talking to children.

"Yes it is the issue!" I say to him. "This is indeed the issue at hand. Einstein had the Universe before him. His horizon was not narrowed with limits. He was able to reach for the infinite, and what he discovered there was marvelous beyond measure. And our case covers exactly the same issue!"

Johnny shakes his head; "How can I make you understand?"

"You obviously can't," I say, and simply walk out.

I felt uneasy afterwards for not having healed anything with this exchange of words.

"What I find hardest to take, is his damn politeness while in fact he means to kill one," commented Natalia the next day after she had her own 'interview' with him. "How can this bastard smile and talk so smoothly, and politely, while he rams his sword deep into your soul that he seeks to destroy? He is attacking my integrity, denying my intelligence, blocking my right to acknowledge what I honestly feel, even to grow up as a human being who aims to understand its existence."

She stoped for a moment. She obviously had to. She was getting angrier by the minute. Eventually she says in a laughing tone of voice that she had never seen dishonesty more 'voluptuously' displayed, and more eloquently voiced than by him, "by our sweet little Johnny."

Three times the captain had tried to get Natalia removed from her post at the bio-plant, and had failed. Since I was more accessible to him as part of the structural maintenance crew, I received the brunt of his silent rage. I was recommended for the worst jobs that could be found. I even wondered if my selection to the work crew in the pit was inspired by the same motive. If it was, this was criminal, for I was by no means the most experienced metallurgist on board. There should have been a team formed, consisting of the very best.

Naturally, his vendetta against us became public knowledge. For some reasons, he lashed out against us most often in public, apparently to embarrass us.

Once he cornered us in the restaurant. One can't just leave when the captain comes and sits at ones table. As usually, within minutes, he utters one of his snide remarks. "Why must you always be so 'coohtchy coohtchy' together?" he practically scolds us, right at the supper table.

"Could you please translate this?" says one of the engineers who seemed more embarrassed by his captain's manners than we should have been by his remarks.

"Well... You know..." He makes some gestures with his hands.

He looks at us, sets his glasses in order, and then lets his hands drop. Instead of answering the engineer's question, he speaks to Natalia and to me. "I hope you two are aware that your behavior has been recorded and has been made reference to in your service log."

"Oh, and in the captain's log too?" Natalia says to him calmly.

"Underlined in red," he says, pretending he joked.

"Did you also explain in the log the cause for which you have disregarded the constitution?" Natalia asks in a calm manner. Anyone could see that she found it hard to suppress a smile. "And captain, did you also explain in your log why you have appointed only one single person to the task of creating the new metal for the generator bearings on which all of our lives depend every day? You may get the Golden Medal of Honor for this wise decision when we get home."

Poor Johnny! He put his spoon down and left the table. Had he ever misjudged Natalia! She had handled the Communists in Russia, who had been renowned for their brute power and relentless persistence. Poor little Johnny, did he not realize that he was like a baby compared to them?

Actually, I had misjudged Natalia myself. I would never have dreamed that she would get herself half undressed for my sake, in a public place as the pool area was, regardless of the fact that we were the only ones there with the exception of the security cameras.

As I pondered these things, the strange metal object came to mind again. It struck me that her bathing suit top now lay on my towel; very close to where the metal object had been that was no longer there. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Nothing had changed. There was only my towel and her bathing suit top, and nothing more.

In a way I was glad that the object had disappeared. Now I didn't have to deal with it anymore, waste any thought over it. Natalia, on the other hand, was real and worth pondering over. Her presence always commanded attention, the kind of attention that was gladly given. Maybe under different circumstances I might have wondered about the mystery of this small metal object that I was sure I had seen. Not this time. Having Natalia on the ship was compensation for everything I found lacking in this flying palace of steel and high-tech machinery. She was my link to a world we all had chosen to leave behind. I had no idea, then, what such a sacrifice would mean.

Natalia's family and my own had been as close to one another as though we were one family. During the first months, it was a great comfort to both of us, to have one another as a link to the familiar.

I could still remember when I felt for the first time a faint notion of the scope of the sacrifice this mission implied. It happened on the day that we left, amidst shedding tears while saying good bye to everyone, to all whom I had shared my life with for so many years. I had this sickening feeling, just for a moment, that I might never see my children again, whom, as I began to realize, I hadn't really known, not even my wife, as much as I would have wanted to. However, in the excitement of seeing the ship that we were about to enter, the sadness became dampened, then vanished for a while.

The ship stood sixteen hundred feet tall, a monument to man's ingenuity and industry, a technological marvel as tall as a mountain, powered by a complex of 12 deuterium-tritium fusion engines, capable of a grand total of 10-G acceleration, sustainable for ten years in continuous use.

The ship was a grand sight indeed, a monument in its own right. It was free standing over a fire pit the size of a small city. Rumors had it that the European Space Center, south of Munich, had been built exclusively for this one mission.

We blasted off in late afternoon of a fine summer Sunday, with a 2G-acceleration force. The entire launch sequence went flawless, with the kind of perfection that one might expect if the launch had been practiced a thousand times. The liftoff felt firm, as firmly as I remembered being pressed into the seat of a jet fighter that made it to forty thousand feet in less than a minute.

The ship rose. It's hard to describe. Seeing the Earth's surface fading into a light-blue haze brought back this feeling of a great sacrifice, only stronger now. A whole way of life seems to have come to a sudden end. For twelve years I would not feel the warmth of the sunshine, hear the laughter of children, the wind, the rain, hear the song of birds, see the familiar faces of loved ones, feel their embrace and the joy of hugging. We were entering a world of perpetual darkness illuminated only by some faint traces of starlight that pervades the Universe of outer space.

The steps to the bus, before we were driven to the launch site, were the hardest steps I had ever taken, and still they seemed easy to take compared to those mentally taken after lift off. When we were waving to one another, a glass barrier had separated us. Still, we had been seeing each other while waving good bye. Later, when looking into the awesome black of space, I wondered if this sad good bye might be the last and final one.

We were out of the Earth's atmosphere in less than three minutes. In twelve minutes we had passed the moon, and at the half-hour mark, both the Earth and the moon had become indistinguishable from the rest of

the stars of the Milky Way galaxy. Getting back home now depended on the precision of our on-board star mapping system that would allow us to re-trace our steps provided it would perform error free for a minimum of twelve years.

Of our six-year journey to Alpha Centauri, nine months would be required to accelerate the ship. At a steady acceleration of 1G those nine months would be required for the ship to reach its cruising velocity of 82% the speed of light. But the months passed, spell-bound by anticipation and fears. Would we survive travelling that fast? When the engines finally became silent, the ship began to spin along its axis at a carefully controlled speed to provide a new source for artificial gravity. The gravity effect was no longer provided from acceleration of the ship and everyone within it, but from centrifugal force. The swimming pool, now became a long band of water held in place exclusively by the ship's rotational centrifugal force. At this point the entire ship had to be re-arranged, from gravity simulated by the thrust of the engines that had stopped, to the new centrifugal gravity which acted from a different angle. For this changing physical environment the entire ship had to be rearranged. The Agro-Plant's vast forest of food plants and various trees had to be re-arranged, to say nothing of our living quarters and control centers. What used to be the floor now became a wall, and what used to be a wall now became the floor. After the 'rebuilding' of the ship was completed, finally, there was peace again, that is as much of a peace was possible with the captain conducting all the minutiae of life aboard the ship.'

It was about a month after the gravity transition that Natalia had realized that we actually had an option to opt out of the game of war that the captain was conducting.

"Why should we react to him at all?" she says to me in her quarters where we routinely met. "We don't have to play any game. We can let him play this game of war by himself. We don't need his sanction, in fact we don't need anything from him that he insists he must give us, but can't."

"What more could he do?" I ask her.

I had smiled that day, knowing that he could do nothing more than he had already done. He could stagger our shifts so that our work periods would never overlap. That was already happening. The inconvenience was minor. Nobody had more than four hours of work each day. There wasn't that much work to do on those 'normal' days. If the ship had a jail, perhaps I might have been condemned to rot in it, but as it was, this personal vendetta the captain was fighting was harder on him than on us. He had built a jail for himself. We simply stopped worrying about his war, and

let him rage on as he wished.

Of course him sending me into the pit, instead of a better man, or even a whole metallurgical team, could have spelled disaster for me and us all if I had failed. It could have endangered the entire mission. It might have even cost the life of everyone on board. I was amazed by how far he was prepared to push his vendetta. When the job was done, he could barely bring himself to acknowledge that I had succeeded. In fact, I could barely believe myself that I had succeeded. What he had asked me to do seemed totally impossible. At least it seemed so at first. I was sure that not even Natalia could fully understand what had happened. Maybe I had succeeded for the simple reason that Natalia's life too had been hanging in the balance. Perhaps this, all by itself, had caused me to pull out all the stops, digging deep into my inner resources as I had never done in all my life. Now however, as it was past, the whole episode seemed as bewildering as a fading dream that drifts away with the sunrise. And yes, out of it came an amazing sunrise that was quite unexpected.

The part that the captain played in this sequence, that forced me to dig deeper, soon became unimportant. Whatever he had done, or was still scheming, was his responsibility, not ours. Even the prospect that the issue between us could spill over and divide the crew wasn't really our responsibility either. We didn't feel responsible for meeting their challenges too. Nevertheless Natalia and I took the greatest care to stay out of Johnny's way, as much as it was possible to do so. It was a bit inconvenient at times, but nothing more than that. Since his office was on the way to the 'planetarium,' this meant that I had to take the long way around to get there. The long way meant going down to the third level, coming back up through the end of the living quarters, and this every time I wanted some quiet time of contemplation, looking at the stars, or to meet Natalia there during our shift-breaks. Still, the detour, as long as it was, seemed easier than walking past the captain's open door.

Chapter 2 - Window to the World

"Can you remember how simple life was in Russia, compared to this?" I ask Natalia as we met in the planetarium as we often did.

Of course, we didn't have to meet there in order to be together for intimacies. We met there, because the stars fascinated us. There was something about the stars that made everything equal. It made everything equal like that accident had done at a Soviet missile station that had released a missile. The missile had wiped out the northeastern USA and had collapsed the USA overnight to the status of a third rate entity of no significance. The USA had ceased to matter from that day forward as if it had exited the Universe. None of that seemed significant anymore. It was behind us. The world recovered, though millions had perished. In a round about way those terrible days had changed the world for the better. It had forced mankind to dig deep, which everyone had refused to do before, so that the calamity was allowed to happen by default. This subsequent digging deep into its humanity had rescued mankind from a threat to its civilization that no one had have the courage to counter under the thumb of empires wanting to be. Ironically an accident had caused that change. For four thousand years mankind had been stuck under the thumb of empires, from the Brahmin Empire in early India that nearly destroyed a budding civilization, to the Persian Empire, the Roman and Byzantine Empire, to the Lombard banking empire, and the Venetian Empire that eventually became the British Empire, which staged the rise of the fascist empires in Europe, and then around the world. Mankind should have countered this trend with the strength of its own resources. Mankind should have ended the reign of empires, the source for every war and for the black ages that have darkened history. Had mankind's inner resources been applied to gain its freedom as human beings, a long string of horrific tragedies could have been avoided. This simple reality, of course, was so much easier to recognize now, when seen from space where the human being is alone, a shining star in a vast void.

Speaking of the celestial stars, the simple reality was that the same stars had shone over my home in Ohio that had also shone over Natalia's home in Kiev, where we first met. The stars had become a great equalizers in that respect, because even after all those years had passed, the stars had remained still the same, even when seen from far out in space and a vast distance from Earth. It appeared to me that our giant ship seemed utterly insignificant in those vast spaces of the Universe, while it was a marvel in our eyes, a marvel of marvels that brought us closer to infinity and also to the utter absurdity of our petty divisions. If the ship brought home nothing else, but this vision that unites man and the Universe, I felt that the effort of building the ship would be more than repaid.

As the ship rotated on its axis, the planetarium opened up a grand view of an endless sea of thousands of distant lights that continuously rolled by our window. The greatest fascination, however, lay in that which we could not see, It came from the excitement of imagining and speculating what wonders lay beyond the tiny fraction of the Universe that our limited senses could behold, though even this tiny bit seemed infinite itself.

Our view was limited by distant blue, red, green and yellow gas clouds that seemed to glow at various intensities in the far reaches of space. Other obstructions were dark clouds of dust that filter the light from the most distant places. They say that the distant stars would appear a billion times brighter without these clouds of dust. We would be able to see clusters of galaxies. Even the many millions of stars in our own galaxy would then make our heavens ablaze with a great brilliance. Perhaps we should be thankful that their brilliance is shrouded in dust, which also blocks the cosmic radiation that might be harmful at a million-times greater intensity.

Our real life planetarium, that had been officially named The Thomas Jefferson Observatory, was always kept open to the 'public' whenever it wasn't required for navigating the ship or for mission related research. It was constructed somewhat like a theater. It consisted of a large room with twenty rows of seats that were facing towards a stage that was itself a giant mirror mounted over a window in the hull through which one could look out into space. Sometimes Natalia and I wondered if we were witnessing stars being created without being aware of it, or saw some dying out into oblivion. The thought was exciting, except we didn't know what to look for.

Actually, we could only see a narrow band of space. When we crouched down at the view port and looked straight ahead, the sky appeared totally black. The blue shift that results from flying into the oncoming light compressed the light waves, even the heat waves, into an invisible 'color.' The same was true for light coming from the rear, which we were running away from. Its color was stretched into total invisibility by the so-called red shift. Only the light that came to us sideways didn't get stretched or compressed, which we weren't flying into or away from. Of course, these effects could be corrected electronically. Indeed, they were so in real-time fashion for the use by the bridge personnel.

The planetarium could be linked into this electronic telescope system. The telescope itself resided inside a maneuverable module within the nose cone of the ship. At the planetarium the telescope's images were relayed to a screen mounted over to the top of the mirror. The images were the result of technological miracles provided by a high-speed, high-resolution video facility.

At the planetarium, the telescope was programmable via a hand held console, when control was relinquished at the bridge. The images could be computer enhanced, clarified, and also be adjusted to include a much wider spectrum than visible light, or be filtered to a very narrow band of

a single specific color. We could see the Andromeda Galaxy in marvelous detail, measure its energy distribution and do all sorts of fancy things that seemed limited only by one's imagination that itself appeared to be greatly enhanced by the capabilities of this marvel of technology.

In a sense, Natalia and I realized that this was also what the ship's constitution was designed to do on the social level. It was the end product of a mental technology that allowed us to see and experience what would normally be hidden. Under its law the captain had no right to deny these broader horizons that came to the foreground by this new and wide open 'technology.'

One thing was certain, and the famous quote of Jefferson that was inscribed into the right wall of the observatory was appropriately chosen in this sense. The quote was inscribed in gold letters. "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Nothing seemed more certain than this, because our ship was the living evidence that he had been right, and that he had been able to inspire humanity to adapt this attitude.

There was also a second quote, by a modern poet, Baxter T. Tate, a poet and a humanitarian. He had contributed immensely during the worldwide fund raising for the ship. "In the free mind, origins and sanctions of ideas exist in the relations of people to each other, to their Universe, and within the interplay of thought that experience generates."

I wondered at times if the captain had ever set foot into the planetarium and pondered over those words that were inscribed into its walls, as Natalia and I had.

One day I had come early for meeting Natalia there. I had come to the planetarium long before Natalia normally arrived. The place was empty, except for a single other person, a man in bridge personnel uniform whom I vaguely remembered as having seen at the time of the crisis in the pit. I joined him. I sat next to him and started a conversation. I mentioned to him the puzzle that Natalia and I had puzzled over, whether one could actually see stars being born.

"That's easy," he says and starts to explain what he says is the most widely held theory of the various life cycles of the different types of stars.

He told a fascinating story.

"If only Natalia would have come early too!" I kept saying to myself. I knew she would have loved to hear his explanations. Since I had long been familiar with the ship's telescope, I was able to find examples of what he was talking about, with his guidance of course.

"The outcome depends on the size of a planet," he says after a brief pause. "The size of the planet in turn depends on the density of the

clouds of gas, dust, and the electric currents that are present in the expanding arms of galaxies. All of that stuff is flowing inward towards the center of the galaxy, where the stars are formed. Gravitational attraction pulls the gas clouds together until they condense. Electric attraction adds to the mix. Magnetism is also abundant, and so are vast intergalactic plasma currents that converge at the galactic center. In this immensely powerful dynamic environment the stars are born. Some are big, some are small."

He says that it was once believed that if a star's mass is small, like that of Jupiter, which holds barely a tenth of the mass of the sun, the internal heat is insufficient to ignite the hydrogen fusion reaction that powers every sun according to the most commonly held theory of the Universe. A small star is then deemed to cool into a brown dwarf that remains unchanged for an indefinite time. He also says that modern discoveries indicate that every sun in the Universe is electrically heated, at its surface, being powered externally, rather than being a hydrogen fusion furnace burning like a continuously exploding thermonuclear bomb.

I shake my head and laugh. "You are putting me on. You are spinning a web of something that nobody can see."

"Of course, this can't be seen with a telescope," he comments quietly. "And what cannot be seen, can be imagined in different ways. The official story has it that any star with the approximate mass of our sun has a rather typical history. After it first ignites, the star goes through a jet phase where immense amounts of materials are blown away by its ignition explosions. The materials subsequently condense into planets that, like the Earth, will the orbit their sun."

It was not difficult to find a star that appeared to be in a jet phase. We could even see the blobs of matter that the star had spit out within its jet streams. "Some of these blobs have been observed with a size of up to five light years across," says the man. "A lump like this, only much smaller, might have been the cradle of the Earth. On the other hand, what we see might be just a gigantic light show of vast electric currents flowing in plasma. That is what a nebula is. Depending on the density and flow pattern of the electric currents, fantastic pattern of glowing rings and clouds, and amazing structures are formed. Often we find a large star at their center."

"Fascinating!" I say with a smile. "I have already seen some of those glowing structures and wondered how they came to be."

He says that there are many theories that people fight over to explain these structures. "Some are quite comical," he says. "One of the oldest theory has it that a typical sun exhausts its hydrogen in about ten billion years; after which two things happen. With the internal hydrogen-fusion explosion becoming halted, the outward pressure in the star subsides. At this stage a new cycle of collapse begins. It starts deep, as its center is drawn into itself, heating up the central core in the process, as it did before, only this time generating much greater temperatures, so much so that the star's outer layers expand into a red giant. However, when the

internal heat becomes sufficient to ignite helium-burning nuclear fusion, the star will burn as before, for another season. Eventually the internal pressure caused by the fusion process becomes so great that it drives the core apart. This goes on until the helium is used up and helium fusion stops. As the result of this the core cools and contracts again and then re-ignites itself to burn the next heavier element in nuclear fusion. In this process the original hydrogen and helium becomes fused into carbon. At this point the star dies. All what will remain then is a slowly cooling white dwarf made of pure carbon, like a diamond in the sky. At this point the star is no longer a sun. It is dead..."

I was fascinated by the man telling me all this, and especially so when we were able to find examples of the various stages of a star's development according to this theory, which he emphasized was but a theory, a nice tale that remains without substance in proof. Apparently, he wasn't finished yet. He leaned back, crossed his legs, and made himself comfortable as though he had just begun.

I wished Natalia had come by. She usually did after her shift on every Wednesday. I told my newfound friend that his talk was most fascinating and that Natalia would certainly have loved to hear it.

"Fascinating!" he repeats. "Just wait!" he says. "You haven't seen anything yet. A star of ten solar masses is deemed go through the same process that burns hydrogen and the helium and so on, but being more massive, it will continue on burning as a nuclear furnace way past the carbon stage. The greater its mass is, the greater will be the gravity that acts on the star's core, and therefore the greater will be the temperature resulting from its cycles of contraction. Thus, in the case of a nuclear fusion furnace of ten solar masses a stage will be reached when its core becomes totally converted into iron.

"At this point," he says and begins to grin, "it becomes interesting." He says that iron has a special quality in that it absorbs energy rather than releasing it, which causes a phenomenal thing to happen. He says that as the core contracts more and more, all the while storing up energy in its iron atoms, a point will be reached when the gravity becomes so great that it literally crushes the atomic structure at the center of the star.

"Suddenly all the stored energy is released," he says. "The super-charged core rebounds, and in less than a second it throws off its entire energy in the form of immense shock waves that will so superheat the outer envelope of the star that the entire star literally explodes. The end result is a super nova, a fireball of immense size and of a brilliance that is greater than a billion suns combined. In a stellar holocaust of such proportions all the rest of the heavy elements are deemed to be concocted, including some that will eventually decay into uranium."

He says that the only thing that's left of a star after such an explosion, is a tiny clump of neutrons of unimaginable density which is put

into a rapid spin, forming a fast rotating piece of matter with an extremely intense magnetic field extending from it, as the tiny clump has retained the original planet's magnetic field and gravity. It seems as if the entire star, ten times the size of our sun, had melted down into a lump the size of Manhattan, with none of its original magnetic field and gravity having been lost, which is now concentrated a hundred million times. He says that the field is so strong that it violently interacts with whatever particles its gravity attracts, whose atoms then become torn and distorted as the field rotates. He gestures with his hands to explain the process. "The violent distortion then causes them to emit bursts of radiation," he says. "The intensity is so great that it can be felt at huge distances. A pulsar, as such a star is officially called, can no longer be seen. It can only be heard..."

"Fascinating! Fascinating!" I interject, as I stretch myself in my seat to be more comfortable.

I tell him moments later that I could program the ship's telescope to scan for super bright radiating objects, or to look for super novas.

"Don't bother!" he says. "A super nova rarely lasts more than a few months, and there are only thirty erupting in an average year in a typical galaxy. Also the Milky Way galaxy is so full of interstellar dust that you can't see hardly past your nose."

He suggests that one's chances of actually seeing a super nova are about the same as winning a lottery, and he adds that the chance is equally as small that a super nova actually is what it is deemed to be. The last super nova that was seen on Earth was seen in the 1600th, he said, and another one far away, had been detected by telescope in 1981 in a galaxy 50 million light years away. What was seen might have been nothing more than just another plasma-electric light show. People tend to see what they want to see. God only knows what had been seen in the 1600s. The trouble with this kind of 'seeing' is that people might not see the Universe for all the 'trees.'

"Oh, that's too bad," I reply. "I was all set to look for a super-nova," I add jokingly.

"Oh, nonsense!" he answers, "I've got something far more interesting to show you than a supernova, something far more exciting. Have you ever seen a black hole?"

I had no answer for him this time. Again, I wished Natalia was present. If she only would come! What is keeping her?

"Suppose that a star is lucky enough to sweep up fifty solar masses or more, all into one coherent entity," the man continues.

"Wow!"

"Wow is right!"

I nod, contend that I had reacted correctly.

"Imagine the gravity that builds up when such a monster begins to collapse!"

I answer by shaking my head. "I can't..."

"Gravity becomes so great that nothing can escape from it," he

says. "It becomes so great that it effectively overpowers the expanding force of nuclear fusion by which the entire planet literally folds into itself, which in turn causes its gravity to increase to unimaginable proportions. "The collapse preempts the conditions required for a super nova explosion," he says. "The entire star, once a violent fireball, suddenly vanishes out of sight as though it has exited the Universe, which in a sense it has at this point."

"I always wondered what a black hole was," I say to him. "Except one can't see a black hole, can one?"

He shakes his head. "Black holes exist only in dreams. Still, it is said that one can recognize it by its effects. I can show you what is deemed to be a ten thousand solar mass hole, if you're interested."

"You can? That's super! What quadrant is it in? Orion?" I merely guessed, just to say something, out of sheer excitement.

"Orion!" He grins and shakes his head. "No my friend."

It was at this very moment while he spoke that I noticed the strange metal object again that I had puzzled over at the pool. He held it in his hand! I was stunned. I stared at it, speechless.

"Here!" he says as he passes it to me. I grasp, but can't hold it. It slips out of my fingers as it had ball bearings all around its surface. I try to pick it off the floor. What a hopeless endeavor that was. Lifting a fish out of a stream would have seemed easy in comparison. This thing was as smooth as nothing ever had been that I had seen. No dirt would stick to it, I was sure of it.

He begins to laugh.

"What the heck is it?" I ask. "It's a solid piece of metal, isn't it?"

He says nothing, but smiles.

I give up trying to lift it off the floor. I fondled it with awe, thinking of my bearings, how crude they were compared to it.

"Zirconium based, with platinum implanted?" I ask.

"Come on! Zirconium! Platinum! You know yourself that it isn't made of something that crude!" He picks it up, effortlessly, and throws it hard towards the window.

God! I thought my heart would stop. If the window shattered that separates us from space....

Well, it didn't.

The window was a nineteen-meter wide sheet of optical glass, ten feet deep and a few inches thick, mounted in the floor below the mirror. Before I could faint out of sheer fright that the window would break, I realized that the metal object had passed clean through it without leaving a mark. I could see it floating away from the ship into space. There wasn't as much as a scratch on the window.

I must have sat there with my mouth and eyes open for minutes, totally stunned. I couldn't even formulate the simple question as to what had happened, or who he really was.

"Hey buddy, I'm from Ohio," he replied as though I had asked him.

"My name is Martin, Edward Bandford, the son of the farmer Drake Bandford of Bellbrock, south of Dayton."

I just stared at him and shook my head repeatedly, and more so as I watched him moments later in utter disbelief, as he retrieved the object again. With a simple gesture of his hands he caused the object to return, just like a father might summon a child from a playing field. It obeyed! It floated back to us, right through the window and into his hand.

I still couldn't utter a word.

"I can explain this," he says and grins.

"No! Nothing can explain this," I reply slowly as I gained control of my senses.

"Certainly I can. It is simple, really."

"No! You can't explain what is impossible to happen."

"Except you have seen it happening, have you not?"

"I saw a mirage, a dream..."

He shakes his hand and makes a gesture like a priest might make. "You have seen the Bohr/Miller effect in action!"

I still could only shake my head. "...The what?"

He gives the metal object to me once more. He places it in my lap.

I find that I can cradle it with my hands, and that if I grasped it with both hands, forming a cup, I could handle it almost as securely as he. I decide to test this thing by throwing it against the window as he had done.

"Don't! Are you mad!" he shouts. "You break the window."

I lowerer it again.

"It isn't that easily done," he sort of sighs.

"Then explain!"

He says that this was exactly what he had done all along when he talked about stars, although the Bohr/Miller effect had really nothing to do with the stellar Universe. "The stellar Universe just happens to be the most graphic example of a universal reaction based on a particular law that is barely understood and deemed the law of matter. While most everything you see appears to correspond to this law, there are exceptions. In fact, the more honestly you look the more exceptions come to light as they must, because generally people don't look honestly."

"Exceptions to what, to material law?"

"Why not? A friend of mine, Neils Bohr and his college Edward Miller, happened to have discovered that this particular law that we mistakenly call a universal law, isn't the ultimate operating law in the Universe. Once you pass a certain threshold you can become aware of a totally different universal reality. Bohr calls this the super-complex domain."

I was too amazed to interrupt him now.

He said nothing more either, for quite sometime.

"Space isn't empty," he says finally, as though this type of reasoning provides another possible approach. "The apparent void of space is an endless sea of latent energy. According to material law, based on the shortest possible wavelength, it has been calculated that one cubic centimeter of so-called empty space contains more energy than all the energy displayed in the entire known Universe. The speed limit of light, that seems basic throughout the Universe, stems from the propagation characteristic of this latent energy. Everything that has a physical base, is indeed tied to this factor and limited by it."

He pauses again.

"Thought isn't physical," he says a while later. "An idea isn't energy, or made up of energy. It's an entirely different ball of wax."

He stops again.

"You mean to say there are no limits to an idea," I help him along in finding some useful approach.

"There are no limits, period! I can take you to Andromeda and back, all before supper," he grins.

"Have you ever seen your ship from the outside?" he asks moments later as though he was changing the subject.

"Sure I have, we all have; why do you ask?"

"No I didn't mean before you left home. I meant now, as it floats in space."

"You know darn well...." I virtually protest.

He takes my hand and squeezes it. "You can trust me. You and I can slip through this wall..."

"I will die. My blood will boil in the vacuum of space. My body will explode! Besides, I'll suffocate without oxygen..."

"I know all this," he interrupts. "What you say is true, but only in context to the environment of the ship that you are comfortable with. You live by the laws you have chosen to live by. I'm merely offering a choice. You can choose to override these laws, you can change the game, you can dance to a different tune. In fact you can become the Lord of the Dance and call the tune yourself!"

While he was still speaking, he stands up and practically pushes me through the hull of the ship into space.

I gulp one last breath, in total desperation, but find to my utter astonishment that I didn't need it. We were floating alongside the spacecraft towards its nose cone that glowed brilliantly blue. I touch myself; I hadn't exploded. Maybe I am already dead, a mere ghost, I thought.

He asks me to look ahead. Ahead of us lay a field of stars as wide as I could see. "This should not be possible," I say to him. "We shouldn't be able to see those stars, because of the blue-shift effect," I said to him, astonished beyond measure, but I can see everything perfectly as if we stood still.

"We are standing still," he replies. "We transpose ourselves forward

in small steps, repeated a hundred times a second. In between those jumps we stand still. We don't fly into the light, or away from it."

To me, the entire experience appeared like an incomprehensible puzzle.

"Let me tell you one more secret," he says as we reached the front of the ship. "It may surprise you, but your ship already employs the Bohr/Miller effect!"

"What!" I exclaim. It suddenly occurred to me that we could talk in space without air.

"Tell me, what happens if a jet fighter flies at top speed into the sea?" the man asks.

"It disintegrates."

"OK. The same thing happens to atoms that are driven at light speed against the sea of latent energy that fills all space. They would fall into disarray and explode in a fiery chasm if this were to happen! However, your ship travels near the speed of light and merely glows. The Bohr/Miller effect makes this possible. Your engineers have built the nose cone based on the Bohr/Miller principle. It creates something like a black hole in reverse, around the ship."

"Of course," I say, jokingly. "Of course!"

"No seriously!" he says. "The Bohr/Miller effect allows your ship to travel untouched right through the center of a planet and come out on the other side with not so much as a scratch on it, and without anyone ever realizing that it happened. At 250,000 km per second, you wouldn't notice it anyway. What's a five-thousand-kilometer transition that lasts a fiftieth of a second? It is nothing. It is a blink of an eye. Without the Bohr/Miller effect, you would have been dead long ago. There is no collision avoidance possible once you travel at near light speed..."

"All right then!" I interrupt him. "If this is so, who told our engineers about the Bohr/Miller effect?"

He shrugs his shoulders. "Maybe someone discovered it in Bohr's old writings and put two and two together and added to it the theory of black holes. In any case they've done it, and found a rather ingenious application for it."

"But didn't you say the Bohr/Miller effect is a mental technology?" I ask as we encircle the nose cone.

Martin grins. "Sure it is! But it's not some kind of mind over matter force. It isn't magic. It's real!"

I look at him in disbelief.

"Doesn't a wheel roll every time its principle is properly applied?" he asks. "You don't have to re-invent the wheel when you need one. Once the utility of mechanical principles has been discovered, they can always be utilized. The same holds true for every different sphere of reality. The Bohr/Miller effect merely utilizes a different subset of natural phenomena. To you the material Universe is all there is, while it is merely a subset of a much broader reality. Your perception is limited by what you allow

yourself to see."

He begins to grin again. "There is a sharp delineation between the various subsets of reality," he said. "The delineation makes it hard to perceive anything outside of one's sphere. You can only notice the occasional strange affect that cannot be rationally explained except as a phenomenon of a different subset of reality."

I suppose I would have questioned this logic, had I not been experiencing its very essence by existing in space without air and without a pressure suit.

"Oh, I almost forgot," he interrupts my thoughts. "I promised to show you my super-star of all the black holes. It's not the biggest by any means, but one of the most exciting of all the black holes I've come across," he said.

"Shouldn't we rather use the telescope?" I ask.

"Telescope!" he says. "I'll take you there!"

"Now?" I ask, utterly surprised.

"Sure, why not? I'll have you back before supper."

"Oh, it's that close!"

"As a matter of fact, it's on the other side of the Milky Way."

"Now, that's almost home base," I joke.

To my surprise he didn't grin. "Haven't you learned anything from what I have said," he nearly scolds me. "The term 'close' has no validity in this particular sphere of reality that you have now entered!"

I wave him off with my hand. He didn't have to explain. In any case, before I realized what he was getting at, I experienced the essence of it. We were suddenly a hundred thousand light years above the center of the Milky Way, so it seemed, looking down on it. It lay below us like a huge, nearly circular, carpet of stars with a bright center and spiral like arms extending from it.

"What do you see?" he asks as we moved towards the other side of this wheel of countless billions of stars that are suns. The stars lay stretched out beneath us like an immense three dimensional computer graphics display that one can rotate at will and view from all angles as the computer translates its image according to mathematical processes.

"I see an amazing labyrinth, too vast to imagine," I say to him. "I see our world as but a speck in a vast sea of solar systems that may all be totally empty. Do you think there exist other civilizations in the Milky Way?"

He nods, the laughs. "Why should only one single solar system out of 300 billion have intelligent life in it? And why should our galaxy be that one out of trillions of billions of galaxies in the Universe?"

He stops and then changes the subject, before I could answer. He shows me what we came to view, one single rather large star near one of the arms of the galaxy. The star was significantly brighter than most. As we drew closer, it stood out bright against the sea of lesser stars.

"There can you see it?" he says and points to an inconsistency in the background that looked like a ring of stars around a dark void. As we moved closer, the stars that formed the ring began to dance, twirling every which way around the void like a living crown gracing an invisible god.

Martin explains that the gravity of a collapsed star of ten thousand solar masses is sufficient to totally disrupt the distribution of energy in the space surrounding it, so that light can no longer be propagated in the normal manner.

"You can't propagate ripples across a pond that has no water in it," he says with a grin.

I just nod. The whole thing was like a fairy tale to me that strangely made sense.

"What appears to us like a black hole," he says, "is in reality one of the brightest objects in the Universe."

I nod again. He could have told me anything. Who was I to doubt him?

"Can you prove that a ten-thousand solar mass star is inside there?" I say cautiously. "How do you know that it is there if you can't see it."

"It can be seen by its effect."

"The ring of dancing stars is an interesting optical illusion, I grant you that, I say to him."

He explains that light is propagated at different angles and speeds across areas of different energy density surrounding the black hole.

"Are you saying that the whole thing acts like a giant distortion lens?" I say to him and raise my finger. "You are putting me on, aren't you? Is this another plasma-electric light show?"

He grins and explains that one could say that the space around it becomes "geometrically curved in some fashion, as space typically is." He grins now even more. "Modern science takes this as proof that there is an immensely massive star inside this black hole that no one can actually see. You are right in suggesting that the effect we see of so-called gravitational lensing, could also be an electromagnetic plasma effect. Why should gravity, the weakest force in the Universe, have the strongest effect? And what about distance, time, and so-called matter that really doesn't exist either except as energy ordered by harmonizing Principle? Should these little things overpower the force of intention? The irony is, we don't even know what causes the force of gravity to have the effect it has, yet we arrogantly say that gravity rules all phenomena. The bottom line is that we are still exploring in this Universe, you and I, and may remain that for a long time to come, except that we move in different directions. There are many ways possible to exploring the Universe."

The whole thing appeared like magic to me. Of course he was right when he said that I hadn't seen anything yet. Still, it made sense in a way what he said. He said that space, emptied of its energy background, can't conduct light. That made sense. Then I thought of something that became

of astonishing significance only much later after we had returned to the ship. If no light escapes from the planet inside the black hole, if indeed there is such a thing, then no light can pass into it either. Not only does the brightest type of star in the Universe appear as a black hole to us in this manner, but the entire Universe in which we live must in like manner appear as a black void when seen from the vantage point of this black-hole star. Maybe that was the same in science where it is so easy to construct ones own black hole around one. Maybe that was the reason why the Bohr/Miller effect had remained unknown for so long. In essence it appeared as if a valid concept had indeed slipped out of our Universe.

As I began to ponder these things, the effects of the black hole became more and more fascinating in its many metaphorical signification. Soon we were near enough to see another marvelous light show of optical magic. A large star that Martin had pointed out became torn apart in front of my eyes. Then within moments, it became reassembled again into thin threads of light that painted a pinwheel across the black hole. Moments later the pinwheel disappeared and the star re-assembled itself. Martin explained later that the effect that we had seen was an electromagnetic effect. "Light is an electromagnetic phenomenon, and so is electromagnetism in plasma streams. The two are related. One affects the other. Is this the lensing effect that we see?"

"Do we have two separate views of the Universe here?" I say cautiously. "You say one is ruled by gravity as the primary force, and the other is ruled by the electromagnetic force."

"If you are stuck in one, you can't see the other," he says.

"This makes sense," I reply. "But which one is real? Or is there a third one?"

"The electric force is 39 orders of magnitude stronger," says Martin. "Does this rule out that there might yet exist a still stronger force that no one has yet discovered or fully understands. The Bohr/Miller effect is far from being understood."

I stopped probing the question. I became content to enjoy the view.

"The Bohr/Miller effect is one of the things you will discover when you stop taking everything for granted," Martin says to me after we had turned back. "It's not the physical domain that limits you," he says emphatically. "Only the limits that you place on yourself can limit you. We have found this out to a small degree, but this bit has changed our life. Sometimes I wish it hadn't, because it has also isolated us. So, I am glad that I am able to take you a few steps out of your small Universe and invite you into mine. Unfortunately, I can only do this on a one on one basis. That is why I had to keep your friend Natalia occupied. That may soon change, though."

I felt that I knew what he had meant. Two isolated subsets of reality can't exist without either containing any reference to the other.

There must be always minutely recognizable effects that hint to the as yet unseen. In a way, reality itself had appeared more and more like the black star that I had 'seen,' though it couldn't be seen in the standard sense of seeing, if indeed it did exist at all. If he was right, than, that I too, was one of those black stars that had become isolated from the real Universe by the gravity that I had placed on myself in terms of imagined limits. Martin had illustrated that one could step away from that. There was no need for a black hole effect to be submitted to in my consciousness and in my life. Wow! What a thought! What a revelation!

"Is this how you discovered the Bohr/Miller effect?" I ask him after I explained what I had just realized.

He doesn't answer my question. "Do you want to zip back to the ship, or cruise back?" he changes the subject.

"Let's cruise back, very slowly, but fast enough to be on time for dinner."

"Oh you! You have a lot to learn," he says and grins. "You should realize by now that time and speed are likewise invalid terms in the subset of reality that I invited you into, where physical distance and material laws have absolutely no validity."

I nodded as a response. Of course I should have known what was so obvious, but the bewilderment had caused me more and more to suspend what is termed 'logical' thinking and begin to think in 'illogical' terms where the logical rationality was overlaid with limits that I had falsely placed on myself. He could have said that two and two equal three, and I would have believed him, because he would have been able to prove that too. In a way, I could understand this already without his help. Natalia and I were two individuals, but combined we had become a force that the captain's war couldn't touch. In fact, I realized that we were many times greater than even three, working and thinking together. We had become a 'multitude.' I could suddenly see why all the empires in human history had been so adamant about dividing and isolating humanity. The forceful isolation, often enforced with the death penalty, gave the rulers the only chance they had to survive as an imperial force. Undivided, humanity would have eradicated all the empires long ago, together with the very idea of imperialism that can exist only on the platform of artificially imposed limits.

"We can return to the ship in time for last Monday's breakfast," Martin says to me, interrupting my thoughts.

I was amazed realizing the tremendous implication his theories had.

"I could even get you there with all the knowledge that you have gained today," Martin adds.

"Could you really do that?" I ask.

"Well, why not?" he says and grins again, as if this was a stupid question.

"Well, I'd prefer to arrive at supper time today, that's enough to

come to terms with," I say.

"So be it," he says and grins.

We had a most wonderful cruise back, full of magnificent vistas and marvelous thoughts with implications that I could not understand. The Universe lay at my fingertips. It was marvelous! Its power seemed to lay in my grasp, if indeed, power wasn't another invalid concept. Had he not promised that I could be master of my dance, and be calling the tune? Wow! This must mean that I can have power over the power of the Universe!

"Ah, but you can be master only of your own dance, my friend," he cautions me.

I felt sad when our journey ended. As he had promised, we were back at the ship in time for supper. I could have gone on and on, with perfect ease. The last step, therefore, seemed somewhat difficult. He practically had to push me through the hull of the ship again.

Once inside, I realized that I was breathing air again and was feeling hungry too. Also Natalia came back to mind again when I saw her at the supper table.

What could I tell her about my adventure, or even to the captain?

As I came closer, I noticed that the captain was sitting at her table, locked in some intense discussion with her. He always waved his arms about when he gets excited.

When I was close enough to get her attention, something caused me to stop. My own words startled me that I had spoken to Martin, that I would explode if I moved into outer space. Did I have a right to force the captain into an environment in which he was unable to exist? He would explode. His blood would boil. He would suffocate in a vacuum.

Indeed all this was already happening. The realization came like a shock to me.

When Natalia noticed me I must have been standing for some moments in the restaurant. Slowly I began to notice that she waved to me. I waved her off, and pointed to the captain. She nodded gently, but did she really understand?

This short excursion into space had a much greater affect on me than I realized. Things that I touched, that I came in contact with, appeared different. The restaurant hadn't changed, although it was quite empty that night for the time it was. But I had changed.

It wasn't that I had a problem with finding a table or had lost my appetite. No, to the contrary, there were plenty of free tables and I was looking forward to dinner as I had seldom done before. Three different dishes were offered that night. I loved the Hungarian goulash that the ship's kitchen offered, even though it was made with simulated meat. But it was made with real vegetables. It was always done to perfection. Only now,

there was something extra about it all. After having seen the raw majesty of the Universe, there was something very special about this meal and what it represented. It had a majesty of its own. The red peppers, the potatoes, the centuries of tradition in fine cooking, were all drawn into one. They were drawn together into a work of art that projected an image of a world that is wholly different from the Universe of space; a separate sphere with its own separate reality standing as far apart on its own, as any planet inside a black hole.

We had built this ship to explore the Universe. Now that I had gained a glimpse of it, it began to dawn on me what a marvelous Universe lay right inside this ship. I suddenly relished this human world. As if someone had thrown a switch, its wonders became alive, a world of marvelous things. Their depth can never be measured with references to material law coming into view. These things pertain to what humanity is, to what it has built, to what its efforts represent, things of exquisite care, delicate balance, gentle benevolence.

I could feel the burning of the red peppers of the goulash all the way down to the bottom of my stomach. What a feast! What wonderful complexities were embedded in this simple meal, served with a glass of red wine that was ingeniously produced aboard ship?

I knew how the vegetables were grown, how the agro-plant operated, but not how the wine was made. The agro-plant, a marvel in itself, functioned on a rather simple principle. Meal planning was done four months in advance. A computer generated from it the appropriate orders to the nurseries. From there on, the process continued automatically in an assembly line fashion. A long string of machine seeded flats are passed through brightly illumined growing areas, through watering stations, feeding stations, etc. etc., until at the right moment, the required plants arrived at the harvesting station at their absolute prime, ready for immediate use. In this respect, the meal represented a marvel of ingenuity.

The ship itself seemed no longer to be just a machine. It represented much more than that. It became alive with meaning as an extension of our humanity, something that grew out the very depths of what humanity is, a monument to something wonderfully rich and immensely substantial. Our humanity came to light in this dimension as something that I too had for far too long grossly taken for granted so that it had been left largely unexplored and unappreciated. It represented a jewel of a Universe within a Universe. Its central sun was a God of Love, its light infinite Mind, its force a boundless Truth we had barely dared to touch, its atmosphere - the atmosphere of an infinite Soul - that we all expressed in our rich and all-embracing humanity aglow in beauty and life. What is a super nova compared to that? What stellar complexity compared to the infinite complexities involved in making goulash? This pot of goulash before me represented a mental and biophysical technology of near unimaginable dimensions that I was just beginning to fathom, something that only humanity was capable of expressing to the full, as far as I could tell. It seemed absurd to place

limits on it of any kind.

Between the main meal and the dessert still another one of those near unfathomable dimensions popped into view, with an intensity that demanded attention. Two tables in front of me in a direct line of sight sat a beautiful woman. I don't think I touched my dessert that day. I must have stared holes through her as though I had never seen a female human being before.

She notices me, smiles and then blushes.

I don't know whether it was her hair that struck me, or the shape of her face, or the way she wore her blouse. One word came to mind. A jewel! She was a jewel of a jewel of the Universe. I drank in this sight with the same thirst and eagerness as I had done only moments before, when the great carpet of stars of the Milky Way galaxy had been stretched out beneath my feet on our way to the black hole.

When I came to my senses again, I noticed that she had left. She was near the door already.

"Go and run after her!" I hear a voice say within.

I couldn't move. I was too shy to even stand up. Still, I managed to stand up eventually. It took all the strength I had.

The thought came almost like a command, "To hell with your shyness. You must do this!"

I looked around. At this moment I noticed the captain. I would catch his attention if I was to run after her.

"To hell with the captain!" says the voice within.

"What about Natalia?" I ask myself. "What if Natalia will see me running after another woman? I can't do this.

"You must do this," says the voice again. "Natalia is too intelligent to be hurt."

At this point the Bohr/Miller effect comes to mind again as a tempting alternative. Oh God, will it work? I close my eyes as tight as I could.

"I'm sorry! How clumsy of me?" I hear someone say to me before I open my eyes again.

"The voice sounded like the voice of my thoughts. Had the voice from within spoken again? Except this new voice sounded different, clearer, gentler, and less urgent.

That's when I noticed that the person that I had bumped into was her. I opened my eyes fully. There she was, right in front of me. The Bohr/Miller effect had worked. I was suddenly blocking her way. I simply stood there like a stone, immovable. I was flabbergasted. I didn't know what to say.

"I wasn't looking where I was going," she says to me gently.

I reply that it was entirely my fault. I say that I had tried to catch

up with her, but hadn't done a good job of it. "I wanted to meet you," I add.

She smiles. "Yes, I believe that. I had noticed you staring at me," she says moments later. She speaks with a smile that belonged into a world of its own, a world that no mathematical formula could ever describe.

I remain in a daze. Nothing seemed quite real anymore. A door had opened to a New World and to a New Dance. This was a different dance than I had danced before. Had I already become the master of my dance and moved with it into this new sphere of boundless wonders?

I vow to be careful not to put any limitations on what this dance might present. I certainly had never felt anything like this before.

"You are a star among stars," I whisper to her, to my own surprise. "That's why I couldn't keep my eyes off you. If one blinks, the wonder is all too often lost and the star is gone."

She and I both blushed.

"Oh, I see, you are trying to flatter me, or entice me," she replies gently. Her voice appears so clear as if I had never heard the likes of it before. It had a quality that no electronic imaging system could ever map out in true justice.

"No, no!" I stutter. "I just... Well, I just tried to put words to a reality that I seemed to have perceived for the first time in my life."

To judge by her look, she didn't seem to believe what she was hearing. How could she have?

"You are very kind," she says politely.

At this moment the elevator arrived.

"I must go to work," she says. The open elevator must have seemed like an escape-opportunity for her. Still, she hesitates for a split second and smiles.

"Oh, how wonderfully complex a human being is?" I hear myself say to the voice within. "A computer makes absolute choices. It answers, yes, no, but never anything in between. No machine is yet capable of scanning a near infinite range of implications and come up with an answer that is a sixty percent Yes and forty percent No.

"Allow me to accompany you," I reply as swiftly as I was able to get my reasoning in order to formulate a sentence.

She presses the button for level six. "Let me warn you, I'm a sewer worker," she says.

I look at her clothing. A black evening dress and a blouse made of silk seemed inappropriate. A row of silver buttons were narrowly spaced in the front of the blouse, put through perfectly stitched buttonholes. A delicate chain of gold graced her neck, made of a pattern of tiny links woven into a design that resembled the texture of reptile skin.

"A sewer worker?" I hear myself say to her with amazement. "I had never had much to do with the sewer station. I had seen it once a

long time ago, before it had been put in operation. It had been originally designed to employ water hyacinths as I remember." That was all that I knew about it.

She nods slightly and smiles.

"Yes, I would love to see the sewer station," I answer her smile.

"As you wish," she says gently and smiles again.

"I have ten minutes," I hear myself say to her as I looked at the clock in the elevator. The next moment I hear myself mentally correcting this statement, saying, "NO! Time is an invalid concept!"

"You work on level six, that's near the forty-percent gravity mark, isn't it?" I say as the elevator stops, just to break the silence.

"It's just under forty-percent," she says, "but you guessed very closely. Are you an engineer?"

"Forty percent is better than zero-percent," I reply. "Forty percent is like heaven when compared to weightlessness."

"You've worked in zero-percent gravity, haven't you? This means that you are an engineer?"

"Worked? No, that's not the word," I interrupt her. "I have struggled. I have fought. I have performed the toughest job I've ever done in my entire life, in zero gravity. No, I didn't work as an engineer."

"You did this in the ship here?" she asks. "At level zero?"

I nod. "My involvement resulted from a vendetta," I say cautiously. "Have you ever done anything at zero gravity? When you lift a heavy object off the floor, it's almost as hard to get it 'unstuck' as in normal gravity. But once the thing is moving, it is just as hard to stop it unless one is anchored to the floor. It is likely that it hits one on the head. Have you ever done anything in zero gravity?"

She shakes her head. "Have you ever worked at forty percent?"

I say that I hadn't. "May I accompany you..." I had kept the 'hold' button pressed while we talked.

She blushes instantly.

"I have been in training for six weeks," she says as we enter the station. The elevator stop was the station. My surprise causes her to grin. She looks at me to judge my response, and evidently finds it amusing. "I'm replacing a person that was needed at the biology lab," she says, as if to hide her grin. "It wasn't easy to qualify. In order to qualify for this job, I had to take a crash course in bacteriology, plant growth biology, micro virology..."

"My God, all of this is required to become a sewer worker?" I interrupt her in a serious tone.

She continues grinning.

Well, she didn't have to say more about herself. The complexity of the station was amazing. This wasn't just a sewer station. This was a science

station, and by all that I could see she was a full-fledged, top-notch scientist. She showed me the lab area first and introduced me to her coworker. Her own workstation was the most complex in the lab, in terms of strange looking instruments, none of which were familiar to me.

Outside of the lab, lay the vast multistage purification system. That's what she called it. In real terms it was a sweet smelling garden, immersed in a soft pink light. Inside the laboratory that was of a considerable size, the lighting was subdued. Her coworker barely looked up as we entered. My newfound friend explained that her coworker was occupied with a Circular Intensity Differential Scattering device, which she said was the latest in biophysical spectroscopy.

It was easy to see by the way she spoke that she was proud to be a part of a team of that stature and was working in this atmosphere that truly matched her fine clothing. I felt proud of her myself. I also felt proud to know someone like her, and to be a part of the kind of world in which this was possible. The advanced technology that she worked with, which filled the lab, didn't come from the moon. It was an extension of the depth of mankind, and I was a part of it. We all were, and so was the science that motivated her, which in turn made it possible for this ship to function. All of that had become a part of her life and my life, which altogether added a wonderful hue to our existence now.

She offered me a place to sit outside in the garden, then took a rather large sample from the pond and placed it on an induction heater on a nearby counter.

"I take it that you do like coffee," she says with a smile.

I would have choked and said no, had she not mentioned her courses in bacteriology and micro virology before. I knew I could rely on her judgment that the water was pure.

"Yes, I'd love some," I reply.

"Oh, you do have great courage!" she says and smiles.

"No, but I trust you," I reply.

We took a stroll through the 'garden' moments later, as she called the pond area, while the water was heating. The garden appeared to be a vast array of hundreds of ponds. She also pointed out that there were three more sub-levels below us with numerous tanks for "bacteriological preprocessing." She told me that collecting and analyzing samples from the final stages of the purification process was on the shift-roster of duties to be performed that evening. She performed the task with the same care with which her coworker had studied whatever it was she had under investigation. Her coworker hadn't even looked up when she had greeted her. She had merely moved a hand and said, "Hi-there, Jill!" Also, there appeared to be no one else on duty at the sewer station as far as I could tell.

"You're are a star among stars," I say to her as we enter the

garden on the lower level collecting the required samples, "you and your friend both are."

Jill smiles in reply, but doesn't say anything. At the close distance between us, while collecting the samples for which I was allowed to hold the tray, Jill appeared to me even more beautiful than she had back at the restaurant across the two empty tables.

Natalia came to mind. I hoped that my being with Jill wouldn't hurt Natalia.

At this moment the ship's constitution came to mind, and most of all my friend Martin's words, that I was the master of my dance. Only, did I have the right to invite another person to join my kind of dancing?

"If the dance is enriching her as a human being, then perhaps you may invite her to dance with you," says the voice within me, gently.

I looked up confused.

This must have puzzled her. Her smile had faded and turned into a concerned kind of look.

"Forgive me, I'm not much in control of myself today," I say to her quickly.

My comment about stars and her being the most precious among them didn't seem to be the right thing to say for an introduction. I had screwed up. I wasn't at all happy with it. And if I wasn't comfortable with it, I figured, neither could she be. But how is one to repair the damage?

"I've come through a lot of strange circumstances today that I can't explain in any rational manner," I say to her quietly, "so I won't even attempt it."

"No, don't belittle yourself," she says gently. "You are a star too, a courageous and beautiful star. I love to hear you say those sparkling things about me, seeing that you're honest about it. It happens much too seldom that people dare to be honest in this way, almost never."

"I'm merely trying to be honest with myself," I answer.

"Are you an artist, then?" she asks.

"I don't know," I say quietly, "I really don't know."

We walked back to the upper-level lab. She suggests that the coffee-water might be heated.

"I really should be going now," I say to her at the upper end of the stairway. We came closer at this moment. She had stopped at the top of the stairs. We were near enough for a kiss. I was frightened and excited all at once, and of course filled with the most wonderful feeling all of a sudden. I held her gently, just for a brief moment. At this moment I realized that I wasn't so much in love with her specifically, as I was in love with all mankind, which we were a part of, which she represented in the loveliest way as a woman.

Being in love with her was like being in love with myself. What a strange and wonderful feeling this was! She didn't appear in any way less special in this broader focus, if not more special because of it.

In this trance the inner voice spoke again. "You fool," it said. "You had asked her if she had ever done 'something' at zero gravity, and she had said, no. Then you had asked her again if she was comfortable at forty-percent gravity. You knew what you were asking, and she didn't throw you out by your ears. Instead she blushed. Only a fool would consider leaving after this promise of a coming paradise! James, don't be a fool!" said the voice within. "Don't put limits on this!"

The next thing I became aware of, was her asking if I wouldn't want to stay for coffee. The words were sweetly spoken.

"I'd gladly stay for a century," I burst out and start to laugh. "Thanks for the invitation. To be honest, there's no place I would rather be than right here. The hack with what I had planned to do. There's nothing planned that can't wait till tomorrow. Being here with you has the highest priority that I can think of." I begin to laugh. I even bow and say, thank you, once more.

Jill blushes again while I say these things, and grins at the same time. "Am I so important to you that you would gladly stay for a century? What a wonderful thing to say!"

"It's true," I say in reply and smile. "Maybe a century is too short!"

Indeed, we traversed a century of traditional barriers over the cup of coffee that she had made and had served outside of the lab in this garden of pink light and sweet smelling air. A group of white garden furniture was set up near one of the ponds. They seemed arranged as a casual rest area, but also for studying. I noticed a stack of books on a table. But mostly I kept looking at her as if I had found a great treasure and might be in danger of loosing it if I kept my eyes of it for even one moment. Hadn't the metal object disappeared that way at the Jacuzzi?

"Why are you so fascinated by me?" she asks me at one point when the water was boiling for the second cup of coffee.

The second cup of coffee was as great as the first. It was real coffee, ingeniously grown on board the ship in a planter at the back of the garden. "It has been roasted in the lab," she explains. Of course the coffee had nothing to do with what fascinated me about her, if indeed I knew the answer.

"Why do you work at the sewer station?" I ask in order to avoid the answer.

"Me? The ship couldn't function without the station," she says proudly.

"May I kiss you?" I add instantly, changing the subject again.

She nods and smiles. Oh, how I loved this reaction. "The sewer station signifies life," she says, as if it was for a diversion on her part, reacting as if she hadn't heard. "Everything that is essential for life gets recycled here," she adds.

"This makes the station the most precious domain in the entire ship," I answer, "and the people who work here the most precious for their humanity."

"Is that what you want to kiss me for?" she asked.

"Yes, for a start, and also for a lot of wonderful other reasons that you cannot imagine and I can barely grasp. Enough to kiss all of your lips."

"All of my lips?" she repeats. "What do you mean by, all?" she says slowly and blushes again.

"Because you are a human being," I answer quickly. "That makes you most precious. However, as I said, that's only the beginning, because even as a human being you are very special. Have you ever seen yourself smile? If you had, then you would know. Have you ever loved yourself as I do, for your looks and your wonderful gentle heart, your wit, your caring for life? Then you might begin to glimpse something precious. Who in the world wouldn't want to embrace you and kiss your lips? Who wouldn't dream such wonderful dreams?"

"Maybe there is one person that I know who would," she says, "someone who dares to build bearings for generators out of platinum and zirconium to save the life of everyone on this ship." She begins to grin as she says this, almost laugh.

"Do you really mean that?" I ask. "How did you know? The captain never announced anything about that."

"A friend told me. So you see, what you did is not unappreciated. It never was. A few people know that you exist. This all by itself makes you the most beautiful man on the entire flying planet of ours," she says and nods. "I always wanted to meet the man, to find out what he would say. And here you are!"

"To find out what he would say?" I repeat. "Like, talking about lips and gravity?" I couldn't hold back a grin any longer. "That's not what you expected, right?"

She shook her head. "No James, but have you ever looked into a mirror yourself? Did you ever see you smile? You won't find the likes of it anywhere in the Universe, but here. Did you ever see a star smile? There is no such thing as a smiling star. A smile is the light of a great Spirit that we are a part of. It is an expression of a different reality than the material. It is a spiritual expression. You are a living being that is existing in a spiritual Universe. Have you ever seen yourself that way in a mirror?"

"Actually no," I say quietly, "not in the way you have put it. Have you?"

She nods. "I thought about this when you were talking about lips?" she adds, speaking more softly now. "Are you an expert on lips too?"

"Oh, I thought we were talking about life and the sewer station and everything that springs out of life?" I say and start to grin myself again.

"Ah, I see," she says. "We are having a dialog that involves multiple voices exploring the same theme like great bel-canto singing."

I nod. "And the main theme here is lips, and love, and embracing and kissing and all," I affirm.

"Is the term, all, a metaphor?" she asks quickly. "Or does it relate to something specific?"

"Something specific, I would say, relating to lips of course," I reply. "It might also be related to this wonderful environment here, surrounded by acres of flowers, soft light, sweet fragrant air and the gentle stillness. It all opens up boundless possibilities in which the term, all, can have many a signification. Life and its beauty can have many facets and might exist without limits. Some of these are found in lips and in love, at least some people may think so, maybe even all people do so, sometimes even without acknowledging it."

Her face becomes a radiant smile. "Which girl wouldn't want these to be drawn together?" she says and begins to grin again. "Maybe some might not, but this girl is not one of them," she adds.

She came close to me at this moment, close enough for a tight embrace. "All lips you say?" she adds before we kiss. "Right here?" she says many moments later with the same radiant smile.

"What other place on this ship can compare to this garden?" I ask. "What greater metaphor can one find? We are all beautiful flowers in the garden of life. Some are men, and some are woman. Do you know what a wonderful woman I saw in you in the lunchroom when I couldn't keep my eyes off you? You must have thought that I had never seen a female human being in all my life. It was that kind of miracle, seeing you. I was almost too shy to say hallo, and all that, because you're a woman. But I also found the courage for this very reason to stand up and meet you. If I hadn't given myself this courage the loss would have been too great. So I have dared, as if against all odds."

"And you succeeded. I love to be loved as a woman, because that's what I am," she answers before our lips met again. "I'm not just a woman by name. I'm a person and a woman."

"Oh, you are a woman of a beautiful soul," I say, "and with beautiful lips. All of them."

"All of them? Oh, how would you know?" she says and invites me to dance.

We danced in the garden, although there was no music to be heard. She invites me to dance with her the tango.

"I presumed a lot," I say to her, "when I said, all of them! I tend to presume a lot of things."

I spoke to her while we danced the tango to the tune of our own melodies.

We danced well, as much as there was space for dancing between the ponds, and as much as dancing was still manageable at forty-percent gravity and reduced traction.

"Am I presuming correctly in what I'm presuming?" I say to her when the dancing comes to halt. Oh, I loved the Spanish fire in her eyes as we had danced.

"The answer depends on what you are presuming," she replies and grins again. "Are you presuming that there are other possibilities at forty

percent gravity, involving other lips?"

"There may be possibilities that no one has yet discovered," I say cautiously, reaching my hands out to suggest more dancing. We were now moving deeper and deeper into the endless seeming labyrinth of flowering ponds.

"Lips at forty-percent, who knows?" I say right in flow of the dancing. "Something like that might open up a whole new discipline of science to explore."

"With lots of studying being involved," she answers, "and lots of homework, which may drag on for years."

"Why talk of years when a single moment can be an eternity?" I reply. "There is so much to be studied, it may become an eternity."

"Ah, this may also be a study that one never tires of," she replies and stops the dance. "Of course, we'll never know if we don't begin," she adds.

"My scientific mind tells me that at forty-percent gravity the floor should feel nine times softer," I say in reply. "Should we test the theory? The same mind also tells me that it is rare that so many elements are coming together at one time, as is happening now, so that one simply cannot ignore the logic that is unfolding."

"Like what?" she asked.

"A, there is you," I say. "No one could be lovelier to behold. B, we are surrounded by a sea of flowers, a scene that would be hard to match even on Earth. C, we live in a micro-gravity world that makes one as light as an angel with white wings, afloat on a silver-white cloud. D, the whole world that surrounds us is bathed in a lovely pink light, matching the pink of lips, panties, and many other things."

"Ah, but you're wrong on item, D," she said. "There are no panties, pink or otherwise. Why would a girl need them? Why should we emulate you boys, where it's a part of the package? We dance our own dance. We call our own tune, and if it is the heart that sings, then the melodies will always match the melodies of other hearts, and the freer the song becomes, the greater the joy will be."

I agreed with this assessment.

"Actually, you are wrong about the clouds too," says Jill a while later. "And you are wrong about the micro-gravity too, that you say is making the floor appear nine times softer. I think it is actually nine-and-a-half times softer, and the cloud is pink that I am floating on, and it has the number nine written on it in golden letters."

"Is anything else wrong that I said?" I ask a while afterwards.

"Actually no," she says. "No matter how hard I try, I can't think of any complaints. Can you?"

"No!"

"Yes, I do have a complaint," I said to her a long time later, breaking the silence. "The complaint is against myself."

"Oh?"

"When I took my heart in hand and dared to come after you, to say hello, I wanted to say to you, thank you for being in the world. I have failed to say this. So here it is: Thank you Jill, for being a part of this Universe."

"Oh, I think you have been saying this in more ways than you can imagine," she replies.

"And you too," I add.

"But you are right, we can't say it often enough," she says, and then she says it again with another hug and another kiss.

And so the moments turned into hours.

My love for Natalia was as if it stood centuries apart from my love for Jill, as if each one existed in a different sphere or time. Martin would have called this distinction an invalid concept as it contained a sense of separation. I realized that. I also realized that my love for each was actually the same in principle, though individual in expression. This glorious spark of an idea took away the division, separation, and any sense of isolation between Natalia and Jill. This wonderful multiplicity in unity quickly became almost a paradox for me that I nearly couldn't figure out, but eventually did. The paradox seemed related to an invalid concept. The concept of separation was invalid, while the concept of an all-embracing individuality was not. Its universality was uniting. We were all human beings and spectacular in our own way.

Nevertheless, a trifle of the old notion remained. The idea of closeness was related to the concept of separation as negation. That concept too, had to be scrapped. The idea came that the concept of closeness can stand on its own as a manifest of our common humanity that we all share, which had rendered our human world so unspeakably rich. The challenge, thus, became one of letting go of even that, and to embrace the truth that there exists no principle for separation which would make this closeness appear special rather than normal and universal. Jill became intertwined with this endlessly challenging project that we had no intention to define a limit for.

I didn't meet Natalia until two days later. We met by chance, as we often do. I saw her in the Atrium looking down from the ninth level. All paths within the ship converge at the atrium. I had just come off duty that day. I waved when I saw her, and took the elevator up. I had no idea in what manner my latest adventure of our universal human embrace would evidence itself with her, which had evolved at first out of my daring adventure with Martin into space, exploring the Universe, and then had reflected itself onto Jill.

Natalia smiles as she sees me coming out of the elevator. We

embrace each other as usual. "I like your choice of partners," she says. She says this with a smile that quickly turns into a grin. "I saw you at the ten o'clock breakfast with Jill Lacayo! You looked great together. A word of caution though, if I may be as bold. When everybody catches on and new trends come out of it, the environment in the ship will become so filled with light that we will all have to wear sunglasses. The captain wouldn't like that. He likes things dark and dim." She begins to laugh.

I could have embraced her for this lovely comment, and I did, and the kisses that followed did make the world brighter indeed. She could have been cruel. She could have said, I've seen you with your new lover, or other woman, or whatever. But she didn't. She didn't say these things. I knew this wasn't by accident. She always took great care in choosing her words when matters were important. This time her words reflected what I, too, felt deep in my heart and soul, that nothing had taken place that was in any way abnormal or extraordinary, so that it would be excluding her.

"Your mental horizon has grown to include another dimension," she says moments later. "Nothing of value has become lost. To the contrary; something that we've come to know as being of great value has become expanded!"

Oh boy! How I loved her for this! She must have felt the truth of it, too.

"You're great!" I reply and extend the reply into another long drawn out kiss, and this time I hoped that the captain would plainly see us.

"I'm glad for you," says Natalia after the kiss, "and I'm proud of you. What makes people special to me is this wonderful ambition we human beings have to improve our world, to find ways to improve our life, to broaden our base of living. That's what I have always valued. That's why I am on this ship. That's what I admire in you. I find it terribly sad when people let their dreams stop! Humanity can't afford that. Humanity nearly died when it stopped living. That's why our world had been in such great danger and still is to some degree. I think what it is happening here may be the answer that this ship was built for. It carries an example now that, when followed up, could breathe new life back into humanity. And if I'm not mistaken, you had started this fight for a brighter world already on Earth. Our ship would never have been built had there been no one like you with great, but realizable dreams, and the courage to be chasing after them. I would even say that if it were not for grand dreams and courageous dreamers, humanity would have died out irreparably. That's why I love you, and always have, and always will, you beautiful man." She grins as she says this and offers another kiss at the end.

"Oh heavenly days!" I said to myself after our embrace ended. Her words were music to my ears. To say that I grinned in reply would be a gross understatement.

"Meeting Jill changed my life. It made it brighter. I think it made yours brighter too. Wherever love blossoms the world becomes brighter," I say, although cautiously. I couldn't help smile.

"That must have been some event to have changed your life," says Natalia.

"Oh it was, Natalia, it was," I reply happily. "It was one those rare things that fairy tales are made of. It was like magic. It began with a smile. But behind that smile unfolded a beautiful mind and a kind and gentle soul. They shone like a light. It took but a fraction of a moment to be touched by that light. Wow! I said to myself. There actually seemed to be somebody home. I knocked at the door and said hallo. What followed really did change my life, Natalia. It made it so much richer, a great deal richer, and that won't go away again."

"Wow! is right!" says Natalia, "and I am glad for you. This is wonderful."

"Except you don't know the half of it yet," I say, "nor would you likely guess what happened deep within, what has changed the world for me in a way I never thought possible."

"And what might that be?" she asks.

"I have made a discovery," I reply, "a real scientific discovery."

"With Jill?"

"No. It was because of Jill. I discovered a scientific basis for quantifying love."

"That's getting interesting," says Natalia.

"No, profound, would be a better word," I reply.

"Did you say that something profound has happened that night?" she says and begins to grin again, from ear to ear.

"No, Natalia, not just that night. It lasted for three days."

"Wow, you had a three day sexual encounter! Is that what you are saying? That must be a world-record. No, that's nothing less than a galactic endurance record, I would say," she says and continues grinning.

"No, Natalia! It's the other way around," I say and began to grin too, and I wish the captain would see us. "The sex part didn't last half an hour, probably much less. It was interesting and nice, but it really didn't measure up to what came out of it."

"So, what was it then, James, that lasted for three days?"

"Can't you guess? I was in a tizzy for three whole days. I was floating on air. I was feeling all fuzzy inside. This fuzzy tizzy felt rich, wonderful, and bright. Compared to that, those twenty minutes of sexual intimacies didn't amount to much. I find this contrast amazing, don't you? For three thousand years we've divided the whole of humanity along sexual lines. Sexual division goes deeper and is more universal than any other form of division we've invented. Then, when one finally takes this horrendous step and tests those axioms that have divided the whole world, and one really dares to look for the truth, there isn't much there to crow about."

"It took you that long to figure this out?" she says and keeps on grinning, though the grin was gradually fading into a mere smile.

"It should have been obvious," I say in reply. "The fact is, one really has to work at it to stretch this sex ecstasy out for twenty minutes, and I don't think I am alone in this predicament. I certainly have never met anyone who could stretch it out for three days on end. In contrast to that, this fuzzy tizzy that seemed like heaven happened all on its own. I didn't have to do anything for it. To the contrary, it simply wouldn't fade away. It lasted for three days, and hasn't stopped, really. Doesn't that tell you something about where love really lies? This fuzzy tizzy still continues to some degree. I think this contrast makes it pretty clear what is really of value."

"And you attribute this all to Jill?" she asks.

"In a way, yes. Sure, Jill had something to do with that. It took me half a minute when I first met her, to realize that 'wow' there is somebody home. We talked only for three hours after that and had the loveliest dialog. It seemed as though we spoke for centuries."

"I remember that it was something like that when we first met," says Natalia. "I can still remember the fuzzy tizzy days."

"I think it was in Kiev where we met, a long time ago, wasn't it?" I say with a nod.

"Except we never had a single sexual encounter until we got here on the ship," says Natalia. She stops smiling. "I had dreamed about it, back then, but it never came to be. It looks now that we didn't miss that much. I kind of figured this out over the years. Still, it would have been nice."

"Guess what was missing when Jill and I had our intimacies," I say to her and couldn't help a smile. "You won't believe this," I say. "I missed our dialogs. I missed the ideas we had shared and enriched one-another with. I was too quiet. Still, I'm glad it happened. I see now that a barrier was put out of the way."

"I never saw it that way, back then," says Natalia.

"Neither did I," I say to her. "However, just for that, we should have had sex in Kiev. We wouldn't have felt then, that there had been something missing between us. We would have known with certainty, that what we already embraced apart from sex was that greatest thing in the world that sex wouldn't have made any greater. We would have been happier then, not that we weren't happy to know one-another."

"Oh, that had bothered you too?" she says.

"Of course it had," I say in reply, "but meeting Jill in this wonderful way illustrated to me that we can leave those regrets of our history behind, because we had embraced in those days everything that mattered. I think what made Jill so special to me now that I got my eyes open, is the simple fact that when I look into her face, I see a light there. There is somebody home. In such circumstances, who really needs sex? Just look at us. We need so little of it that if the captain found out, he would get another fit of anger realizing that he made such a big fuzz over such a

small thing."

Natalia seems to agree fully. She just smiles and says nothing. "There is one more thing that I find wonderful about what has happened," she adds. She speaks with the same smile after a few moments of silence. "I find it wonderful that you haven't chosen just anyone to expand your world with. I had my eyes set on Jill a long time ago, for you, hoping that you would recognize her, and recognize her as someone quite precious, someone I felt you would love to know. Except, you had kept your eyes closed. It made me almost uncomfortable to be the only woman in your life. It made the world so small. But how would you react if Jill went a different road tomorrow and never wanted to see you again? Would you cry? Would you run after her?"

"I've been blind, I know," I say in response. "You are right on this one, and Jill helped me with that. She opened a door for me to our humanity. That door is open now. She has her place in my heart for that, and always will. What happens from tomorrow on will not change that, Natalia. Her life is her own. If she chooses to come through the door tomorrow that she helped open, I will rejoice. If she stays away for a week, or thousand days, or forever, I will still treasure her. I won't run after her and try to change her mind. I won't be like the captain is, who tries to run everybody's life. I am sure others will come to this door sooner or later, that she has helped to open. Of course I think she will come back to this door too. She may even knock on the door and invite me to her own world, or somebody else will invite all three of us to other worlds of a kind we cannot even yet imagine. I think this is more likely to happen than not."

"I think you may be right," Natalia interrupts me. "It may well be that all of us haven't opened our eyes wide enough yet. You certainly hadn't for a long time."

"Ah, but you are at fault for the delay, more than I was," I counter her. "I couldn't embrace just anyone, you know. You had set too high a standard." I began to laugh. "You've been incomparable by a long way, so I stopped comparing. The field had become too narrow. Then a strange fellow appeared and talked to me in the observatory. He invited me to look at the Universe. He showed me how vast and how empty it is. Suddenly I realized how infinitely precious we all are as human beings, and beautiful and complex. The realization widened the field of my vision by more than you can imagine. And then, suddenly there was Jill, two tables from me in the lunchroom. I wondered why I had never seen her before. I hadn't even known her name then. And you know what, I was scared that my being with her would hurt you. I was probably as scared about hurting you as I was shy in introducing myself to Jill."

"Oh you!" she interrupts me.

"Hey, honestly, I meant what I said, Natalia. I meant all of it! I also believe that the greatest treasure we have as human beings is our

infinite individuality that is blending like so many words of a poem, or the flow of sounds that blend into a symphony. That is how I found Jill, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if you were to become a part of this symphony since you had your eyes set on Jill long before I had. Does that thought scare you? Does it scare you to become a part of a grand symphony in which we all have our own dance to dance, directed by our heart, while our voices mingle into a majestic whole, where countless instruments and artists produce a sound that no one can produce alone? Does that sound too profound to be possible?"

Natalia shakes her head. "No, it sounds wonderful. The beginning, apparently, has already been made," she says and begins to grin. "The world looks a lot bigger now. But what does this make me in the orchestra?" she says and starts to laugh. "Does it make me a Piccolo?"

"Oh, yes, indeed Natalia. Your voice is as clear as a Piccolo, your mind soars like a violin that sings, your wits is like a trumpet that calls to attention, and your honesty like a bassoon that sets the mood. You're a saxophone, a French horn..."

"Eh, a French horn!" she grins. "Is this a compliment?"

"Oh it is. To me, you're the Horn of Plenty!" I say with a twinkle, while I tap the top of her leg three times in quick succession.

"You fiend!" she says and grins. She invites me for a swim after this.

Naturally, I had expected some change to take place in our feelings toward each other in the 'shadow' of the great adventure that Martin and I had. Oh, it had changed me indeed, though I was at a loss for words to talk to anyone about it, and I felt I probably wouldn't for a long time. But Jill was a part of that, and this, at least, I could talk about freely. This part of my new world I understood, and I didn't hide our association under a blanket. I just hadn't expected anything as rich to unfold from it, with such a measure that it would enrich Natalia as well. It seemed that a New World had begun. Oh, if the captain would ever dare again to stand in the way, God help him! He would get a surprise response.

We had a great time at the pool that day, Natalia and I, and went dancing afterwards. Three days later Jill joined us quite regularly at the pool, and for the dancing afterwards. I just can't remember anymore who invited whom, and how it all came about. It didn't seem to matter. I only remember that something wonderful came out of it that made the new times distinct from all previous occasions. It made the new times richer. I soon realized that the exquisite gentleness and wit that I had so much admired in Jill, came to light in Natalia's every expression. I realized that it had all been there before, but that I just hadn't opened my eyes wide enough to notice.

"How grand we are as human beings?" I thought. "We seemed to make each other shine more brightly the more we are in touch with one-

another." It seemed to me that we are a living paradox in that respect that can only be resolved in the complex domain where it is possible to understand that one plus one equals three, or even five. When the whole is vastly greater than its parts, the paradox makes no sense. It makes no sense on any other platform except the complex domain where it becomes profound. That is how our union appeared and unfolded now more and more.

Of course, I realized that Natalia hadn't changed. It was I, who had changed. Whatever of her loveliness hadn't moved me before, obviously hadn't been caused by any lack on her part. The lack had been my own. I had lived in a separate Universe, as it were, a Universe that had been riddled with lack and self-imposed limits. I had mistakenly thought this to be a Universe of freedom. "Maybe this is the heart of the Bohr/Miller principle," I thought, "that there can be no distance, even between what is individually worlds apart like a number of separate loves, becoming one."

I wondered if this was a beginning for a brand new way of dancing. I wondered if this is the way it all begins when one is touched by the Bohr/Miller effect. I wondered if this grand beginning would also mark the beginning of my earning my 'wings' to traverse the heavens in Martin's style? I puzzled about this.

Apart from this, there was still another thing that struck me as odd. Something had changed with this experience. Our strife with the captain appeared to be totally out of line in the face of this new reality. Something had to be done to address that. It wasn't that I felt anymore hurt by the captain's attacks. To the contrary, his attacks seemed more childish now than before. That's probably why I had hoped the captain would see Natalia and I at the Atrium and see me embracing Jill as well. The strange thing was that I felt hurt mostly by the pain that the captain inflicted on himself with his small-minded attitude. I felt that something had to be done to help him to achieve a victory for himself in his one-man war that he fought against himself, while he had been aiming at us as a convenient target. I felt that I had to help him for my own sake. His pain overshadowed something of great value to myself that I didn't want to lose. I faced him on this note and laid it out straight that his self-torture had become offensive to me, and wanted it stopped. He reacted shocked. I realized an awesome truth in this connection, that one can't be sensitive to life and be at the same time like an Elephant in a China shop. The two were clearly mutually exclusive. But why hadn't I seen this before? It seemed so elementary now. Had I been blind?

I could only marvel suddenly, at the things that I had seen and touched, and had experienced. What a giant stride in the technology of living this small shift in the mental realm had brought about when Martin had opened his window to the Universe for me, and with it had opened my eyes. I was amazed. I was overjoyed by the promise it held.

I met Martin again. This time I was in the middle of repairing a pump that belonged to the ship's inertial balancing system. Of course one doesn't just meet Martin. I didn't realize this then, that whenever Martin appears it's always, bang - super nova time. With Martin on the scene one gets inevitably swept up in a torrent of events.

"Do you want to go for a swim?" I ask him when the pump was humming again. I was in need of a shower after working deep inside the belly of the ship for half a day. He nodded innocently and covered my eyes with his hands, and zip... We were floating stark naked in the ship's swimming pool. He laughed and splashed me.

"We can't stay here like this!" I protest.

"Why not?" he replies. He says he always swims in the nude when visiting the Earth. Then he laughs. "The separation between the sexes, by marriage or whatever, or between people in general, has no meaning in my Universe where distance is not a valid factor."

"But in this ship it is a factor," I protest.

"No, it is only assumed to be a factor, even though the concept is totally invalid." Martin laughs again while he says this.

"Forgive me," he adds moments later. "I don't aim to be rude. I just want to help you wake up to the reality of your being. How can you be the master of your dance if you don't know the world in which you are dancing? So, please forgive me if I appeared rude," he adds.

This time he doesn't cover my eyes. As I blink, zip, splash... we are swimming in the crystal waters of a world of bright sunshine, floating among petals of flowers that had fallen from hundreds of flowering trees at the shore. "Welcome to Bohr's planet," says Martin when I came to my senses. He grins like a boy of tens whose trick had just been found out. "We are presently three galaxy clusters away from the ship," he says. "So, lets enjoy ourselves. After our swim, I'll introduce you to the most eccentric person on this planet."

I was sure this person had to be Bohr. It just had to be, or someone like him. At least that's what I hoped for. What an opportunity such a meeting would give me for getting some more pointers!

We came to a gigantic dome after the swim. The dome appeared to be made of Martin's metal, a metal that looked like the small block I had seen in the ship, except this time it was more golden in color. Of course it was polished to the same, fine perfection. Or was this its natural state?

"That's Bohr's museum," Martin explains.

"Of course it is," I reply mechanically.

I didn't know what to expect. Once we were inside, walking became difficult on the super polished surface that was more slippery than the slickest ice. Still, that posed not a great problem. I stepped back, took a run at the entrance, and swoosh; I skittered down the long corridor that extended from the entranceway. The corridor was actually a channel cut through boxes and shelves full of stuff of every description. The place looked like a warehouse, more than a museum. At the center of the dome were people, quietly milling around. I figured that Bohr would most likely be among them.

"Watch out!" I yell, "I can't stop!" Someone jumps out of my way as I sail by.

"You've brought too much baggage with you," Martin cries after me.

I knew what he meant. The baggage consisted of a brain-load of invalid concepts. Just in time, I remembered the Bohr/Miller effect. It enabled me to stop just inches away from crashing into the far wall.

"Very good!" says Martin after I had come back. He introduces me to everyone...

"And this is Olaf," says Martin, pointing to a small elderly man with an extremely short neck and an almost perfectly round face. "We usually call him Bohr," he says. "We call him Bohr in honor of the famous theoretical physicist Niels Bohr, our one time professor at the days back in Stockholm."

Our Bohr didn't react to this introduction. He kept on talking to the person he was in conversation with. I noticed his eyes were unusually alive when he talked, maybe more so than Albert Einstein's might have been.

"Have you ever met Albert Einstein," I ask Olaf that Martin called Bohr. I asked when he stopped talking. I immediately added a question about how he felt I might help humanity to get out of its nuclear nightmare that Einstein had started.

Bohr stood up and ran some fingers through his hair. "Unfortunately we have all met Albert," he replied in a slight accent. "Albert was the black sheep of the family...."

"A black sheep!" I interrupt him, "You must be mistaken, Albert Einstein was a great man who merely unleashed something that may destroy humanity. He may have imposed an impossible challenge...."

"Great, my foot!" Bohr interrupts. "A great fool he was, yes, he gave his children matches without the scientific foundation of how to control fire," says Bohr. "The fool had no compassion for humanity," he added. "He called himself a scientist, and as you say the whole world called him that, but being without compassion, what a scientist could he be? He pushed humanity into the complex domain in terms of physics, but he left the door to the complex domain closed in terms of the principle of universal love. Humanity needs to stand in the complex domain with both feet, not just one. That's why no one can take any decent steps forward. The way I see it, humanity will tear itself to pieces trying to move in two different

Universes at the same time. Carl Gauss was a much better man than Albert was. Carl opened the gates to the complex domain in terms of advanced mathematical concepts. He also knew that humanity was too narrow-minded to live in the complex domain. So he wrote a thesis on the theme and called all the great minds of his time a bunch of fools. That opened a few people's eyes. But Albert didn't even do that much. He should have presented the principle of universal love that was needed to use his physical discovery. But he wasn't a scientist, was he? He didn't know what love is. Also his theories on physics were incomplete."

Bohr said nothing more after this. He looked me in the eye and studied my reaction.

"Albert was a bit like you, in a way," he says moments later. "You have no compassion for humanity either!"

His answer shocked me. How could he say such a thing? I felt the very opposite to be true. Before I could refute him, he turned and gestured that I follow. He treated me to a brief tour of his museum, which he says he had built for his own benefit to trace the history of mankind. He took me to the far side of the building, along a narrow aisle to a workstation where I expected to receive the by then overdue, deeply reasoned explanation as to why he felt I lacked compassion for humanity. I was disappointed again. Without saying anything he showed me a sealed glass dome under which two bearing shells were mounted. What in heaven's name was this supposed to prove that he had my test version of the bearings I had built for our five generators? He looked at me and grinned. He didn't even say how he got them, nor anything else, but abruptly excused himself. "I'll ask Odessa to look after you," he adds, as he leaves me standing.

Odessa appeared to be one of his female staff who more than compensated for Bohr's apparent rudeness.

As I found out later, Odessa wasn't from Russia, as her name might suggest, but from the Amazon basin, from a small village of central Brazil. Her name seemed more linked to the word odyssey than to anything else. Being touched by her became an odyssey into a whole new Universe of loveliness.

She bids me welcome to the planet and says that she would take me wherever I want to go. I told her that I didn't know anything about the planet, but would love to see her home to get a feeling for the lifestyle the planet allows. She smiles ever so softly and says in perfect English; "It's not far from here. We will have lunch there, if you like."

Her home is located at the top of a riverbank, where the river sharply turns. The river skirts a mountain, then flows into a gorge towards a sea, as she explains. The house is stretched out on a plateau covered with wild grasses and groups of flowering trees, some bearing red and yellow fruit. The edge towards the river is carved into terraces that are overgrown with dozens of species of flowers that make the landscape appear as though is painted with broad daring strokes, outlining the path of the

river with bands of color.

We sat outside in the sunshine, in recliners from Sweden, on a marble platform from Pag Yugoslavia. We ate crepes filled with marinated sweet fruit, collected fresh from Bohr's planet. Instead of dessert, however, which was definitely not needed, she gave me a tour of the grounds.

Although our bodies never touched on any occasion, I felt intimately close to her, in a way that I had not felt towards any other human being. I could feel her warmth wherever we went, her sex linked to the deepest part of myself, to her satisfaction with living that shone gently in her eyes and struck a long dormant chord. As we walked in the garden I could feel her presence reflected everywhere. It was even reflected in my soul, in my entire being, as though we were one.

Evidently, she could sense how she affected me, perhaps by my unreserved responding to her all-pervading presence.

"What you feel shouldn't puzzle you," she says after long period of silence. "You are touched by another facet of that new reality that you had not known before. Living isn't physical, it's spiritual. You are beginning to discover your spirituality." She touches my hand. "What is this?" she asked.

"It's my hand," I say.

"Of course it is, but is it flesh and bones?" she says. "It's Spirit in manifest form. But that takes a long time to come to terms with."

"Spirit?" I repeat.

"All is the manifest of Spirit," she says gently. "Every single atom in the entire Universe is a structure that derives its shape and all its characteristic from the force of principles. Nothing would exist without these ordering principles. Not a single planet would exist, much less galaxies of them. But what came first, the principles or its expressions that shape the atoms and thereby construct what we call the Universe? Didn't the principles come first? It's a Universe of Spirit that we live in, and its order is harmonious and intelligent in design. Then look at life. Each living cell reflects vast principles of chemical construction and interaction and replication. Life is an immensely complex construct. But didn't the principles precede the first cell? Without the process of principles there would be no cell, no development, no creativity, no intelligently directed growth of anything. Principles move everything. Life is Spirit manifesting itself. Spirit is the 'sun' of the Universe. Everything unfolds around it and derives its existence from it. Nothing exists that is isolated from this 'sun.' That makes us all truly one in essence though individual in form. We are united by the Spirit that is the Spirit of the Universe. Should we not feel this oneness and respond to it, and so be enriched by the wonders that unfold before us?"

I nod silently. I couldn't deny what was actually already happening.

"Let me tell you, that what you feel now is more natural than everything that you considered to be a part of closeness, like the sexual feelings you have felt before. You had limited your sexual feelings by

treating them as sensual impulses. They are much more than this and luckily so, for were they not so, you would have a difficult paradox to resolve. You have entered a Universe in which time and distance have no meaning, because there exists nothing that isn't the expression of the same Spirit that is the 'sun' of the Universe. This applies to us right here, you and me included. There is no 'distance' between us to bridge, because that distance doesn't exist as a reality. The very idea of being close to another person has no meaning, when there exists no distance in real terms. The final reality, of course, lies even beyond that. What you feel is the unfolding oneness of all being. Being close to another person is a primitive concept that must give way to experiencing the oneness in which there is no separation. Don't be surprised if your experience during your visit here is richer than what most people experience in a lifetime bound to the Earth. In this 'unfolding' Universe of ours, where space and time have no meaning, one touches upon the absolute that cannot be easily explained, but can be recognized by its effects. Of course the absolute has no limit. It does not impose a limit that one cannot go beyond. Infinity is not a limit to itself. Limits are invalid concepts that we leave behind like the darkness of night when the day dawns. The absolute is Love. One cannot go beyond it. Nor would one want to, because at the absolute the Universe expands horizontally, that is laterally. Everything unfolds laterally. We can see this unfolding beginning in love. Love has no limits, because it unfolds laterally in its infinite dimension. Does this make sense?" she asked.

I nod and answer with a long lasting embrace that gave expression to the new feeling, a feeling of being infinitely embraced.

The feeling that I felt being together with Odessa, was as rich as the day was bright, and the sun seemed brighter on Bohr's planet. Also the sun on Bohr's planet set with brighter colors in the sky than I had seen anywhere else. I was almost overwhelmed by it. It added a crowning splendor to my first evening there that I was privileged to share with Odessa.

I wondered whether this feeling, and the love that embraced me, were merely a reflection of my new awareness of something wonderful that had always been a reality, but one that I had not accepted before. In the past it didn't seem to fit into the mold of the traditional Universe, and its lower dimensions defined in terms of space and time and the privatization of everything, like privatized love, written in small letters; privatized money, the withholding of love, the key to wars; privatized property, the root of all the poverty that turned the Earth into a dark and meager place. Now the incredibly profound that no one would even look at before, seemed suddenly totally real.

"Would you like to go swimming?" Odessa asked when the sky had turned a deep cobalt blue that bordered on black. I say yes. She invites me to her favorite lake in the woods behind the house, where she says the

waters, fed by several hot springs feels pleasantly warm for a nighttime swim.

We swam for an hour until a hundred thousand stars filled the cobalt blue sky. After our swim we strolled along the riverbank in the brightness of this starlight. The path wound through tall stands of flowers that appeared silver in color. In a moonless setting, one is intensely aware of the starlight and its splendor.

Much later we went to bed together. The bedroom was an open room kept cool by the late-night breeze. There was no tension in being in bed with her, or ecstasy, or pretense, nor anything that was in any way comparable to what I had cherished before. She called the bedroom her special room. It was the highest room of the house, built with a retractable roof so that the Universe itself became its ceiling and we were at one with it as we should be being a part of it. There was no intimacy that I knew that could exceed the intimacy of that night, nor had I ever felt closer to anyone. Still, neither trespassing nor attachment marred the closeness of this union that became an appreciation of greater wonders that far supersedes what we called physical sensuousness. It was as if sex, as I had known it, had no validity at all in that reality that seemed infinitely more valid on this new platform that I had barely began to understand.

What unfolded was something that could not be theorized, something where the actual experiencing of the reality becomes the driver for discovery by which the operating principle comes to light. I had no idea before meeting Odessa that a love like this could exist. Sex permeated her nature, but to 'embrace' it physically was unthinkable. Loving Jill seemed incredibly primitive in comparison with what was unfolding now, even while it was a step of growing up that would never be invalid or be forgotten or be less beautiful in the future.

I mentioned Jill to Odessa.

"Don't let this love slip away," she says. "Let it be for as long as it needs to be," she says. "Relish it. Relish it as a stepping stone to the greater that you will thereby achieve."

She pointed to the walls of the bedroom and says that the one facing south would reflect the morning glow before the sunrise. The one to the west would next reflect the sunrise itself. The wall to the north would reflect the brightness of the day. And finally in the evening the golden glow of the sunset would illumine the wall facing east. She added that this cycle is repeated every day. "The dawn is not invalid," she says, "nor is the sunrise or the sunset, simply because the noonday is brighter. We need the entire vast and varied cycle that has many facets. We need every part of it, because the Spirit of the Universe is not a simplistic sun, but one with many avenues. This means that your love for Jill will likely move through the whole cycle with you, and her love for you too, again and again."

Being touched by Odessa in this wide and open way conveyed a

feeling to the soul that was like an arousal from a deep sleep, saying to consciousness: "Get with it! The time has come to put away the toys of babies! Let everything become new according to the new day."

My reaction to this was like saying to myself: "But of course! If it's only a body you want, that's all you will get. We have lived in small houses with small windows, because this was the type of world we had built for ourselves."

Werner Heisenberg's words came to mind that the physical Universe was like clouds of dust thrown into the face of spiritual immensity, imposing dense blindness upon thought. Or was it not Heisenberg that says this, but some other great scientist? The saying seemed true. I could ill afford blindness, certainly not now when so much was to be gained.

I felt feelings when I was with Odessa that I had never felt before. It was as if I had never known the depth of my own being. To be with her was like taking part in something that we, in the conventional world, had never known or even dreamed of before. Indeed, how can one possibly define a love that is but a reflection of a unity with oneself, an acceptance of oneself, defined in a world in which separation has no meaning? People always say that this can't be done, for it exists in a world that most people reject as invalid, especially people like our captain who would never ever be able to understand his humanity, locked in his house without even the smallest windows. In the world that existed on Bohr's planet, the windows were huge, love and unity became one. What a privilege it was to experience that reality, and to be there, and especially to have the privilege to experience this reality with someone like Odessa.

In this gentle night that we shared sex was not for gaining anything, but for enriching one-another which appeared to be the only valid platform for true riches. There was never the faintest thought in her presence about stealing a kiss, a hug, or anything else. I felt more an urgency to step back; to let the reality unfold that was embracing us all in which we found the so-long unseen starlight of our humanity.

In this night of sharing, or more correctly, of being one, the wine of the feast was love, the candlelight romance, the appetizer sex, so that everything, which followed, was beyond anything that words can convey. Nor did we need words. There existed no gulf to be bridged over, for which words would be needed.

An orange moon appeared on the horizon at dawn after midnight, surrounded by a turquoise sky. Though the sky never became totally dark after it had turned a deep cobalt blue, it was of such clarity so as not to blot out the stars. The rising of the moon didn't overpower the starlight, except in the areas of the brighter turquoise. The stars seemed important to Odessa. They seemed intertwined with our love as both reflected the principles that manifest the Spirit of the Universe. I began to appreciate gradually, why the bedroom had to be a room without a ceiling and roof,

a room that was open to the Universe as much as this could be arranged.

The orange moon only added to this perception. The shapes of the sculptures in the room projected dark blue shadows on the wall. I could also hear the flow of the river and the sound of the wind in the trees beside the house. I could even smell the fragrance of their flowers. Then the thought dawned that it would be pleasant in the morning light, if we could swim among the pedals of their flowers that the trees shed liberally into the water, probably to make room for new blossoms. Life was so incredibly profusely rich on this planet that the riches of the richer love unfolding didn't seem to be out of place at all. I didn't dare sleep so as not to miss anything, since those riches were profusely reflected in the way our night had unfolded.

Our time together, though time was invalid, as I was beginning to sense, had become a rich unfolding of generosity, warmth, and affection, of an intensity that could brighten ones soul for weeks and months to come, perhaps years. Hasn't it been said that in the presence of such riches a single moment is like a thousand years? I felt that night like I was already swimming among the rose pedals that fell so easily into her favorite lake, a profusion of riches to shower the moment that would last a thousand years. Those moments seemed to have no boundary in this land of boundless unity.

The poetry of that night was of our own making. Of course it was also helped by the loveliness that surrounded us, including the stars. Both the natural beauty and our own beauty appeared as rich as our bodies appeared in the beauty of our multifaceted, boundless embrace that unfolded constantly in the environment of this one common universal Soul that colors all beauty and life, which we turned into a new form of poetry, a form that exists without words.

For a moment I struggled to think about what type of music would match the sense of unity flowing from our common Soul. Mozart's music is rich, beautiful, generous, and uplifting, but its tones, that speak to the soul, didn't seem to match the bright colors of the unity that had pervaded the 'brightness' of this night. Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, and others perhaps had an inkling of the sublime, but had they ever experienced it? Not likely, I thought. How could they have, who could not have set foot on Bohr's planet, since the technology to get to this place had not existed in their time?

The greatest pleasure of that night, though, was its peace, a peace that was refreshing, that was more restful than the deepest sleep in unconsciousness. I felt refreshed in the morning, alive, nurtured, and satisfied.

The morning, of course, came as she had foretold, when the orange moon-glow at dawn, gave way to the light of a golden sunrise. Odessa took this early light as a signal for getting up. She invited me to the balcony, where we stood at the edge of a world bathed in the purest gold. Its

brilliance was reflected in the sky, and in the water of the sea far out in the distance. In this quiet atmosphere we talked very little, as if all had already been said. Later we shared our breakfast in this morning light. The breakfast that seemed to last for hours.

What I found pleasantly missing at this festival of life, was idle talk. At one point I began to tell her about my appreciation, to acknowledge what I felt, but she put a finger over my lips. Naturally, she was right. There was nothing we needed to communicate with words. Our eyes and smiles, our gestures, our responses, all spoke in their own language, giving an acknowledgment that words could never fully describe.

Martin returned around noon. He met us during our swim in the lake. He said in passing that it was high time for him to take me back home to the ship, before I would be missed. Odessa agreed.

I didn't mind the least going back now. I saw it as a part of the cycle of the eternal day traced out by the sun, a cycle that would repeat itself as such cycles do by the power of the principle of the Universe.

Of course, returning to the ship with Martin became another rare treat. We didn't just zip back. He boasted that he could show me the Universe if I were interested. Before I could nod, stars surrounded us. It was as if we were an intricate part of a computer graphics illustration in which a million light years of space can be traversed in a minute. The background changed. The stars drew together and formed a carpet of fainter and fainter dots that eventually blended into a haze out of which the familiar spiral pattern of a galaxy became outlined. As the spiral became more defined, it became smaller. Soon other galaxies came into view; some were merely bright and hazy spots in an immensely black emptiness. "We are now seeing an entire cluster of galaxies," says Martin. In time I could recognize five distinct clusters of galaxies.

"Did you ever look for the edge of the Universe?" I asked him.

"No!" he says. "What you see may be the extent of it."

He told me later that he was afraid to go much further, in case that he might get lost. "Of course it might be," he says, "that our immediate Universe is merely a nucleus of a larger atom." Suddenly he waved his hands about: "Turn around, quickly!"

Oh, what a sight came into view. We were approaching another galaxy cluster. We were racing toward it, cutting through the center and nipping the outer edge of a galaxy. A shower of a million streaks of light passed by us, and then it was dark again. Now it stayed dark for a very long time.

"The third cluster," he says, "contains the Milky Way. See there!" he says when we came closer. "You can't miss it! The good old Milky Way is the third galaxy from the edge of the cluster; the one with its arms looking somewhat ragged. You'll find the ship in the second arm clockwise from the short one, near the outer edge, just above the main disk." He describes the two groups of stars between which the ship was. He says one of these

were the sun of the Earth, and the others the suns of the Alpha Centauri system.

It puzzled me that he could recognize so tiny a ship in this immense jungle of stars and planets. "Ah, but I thought that Odessa gave you a lesson in making interplanetary connections," he says. "Mind is reflected in mind. That's how I located your ship in the first place," he added. "Without knowing it, your people reflected my presence back to me into space like a radar reflector. That's the reason why one of our people must always stay on Bohr's planet."

I had no choice but to believe him. I couldn't recognize the ship myself until it appeared right in front of me like some dark comet cutting its way through the background of energy that fills all space.

I stayed at the planetarium for a while, where we entered the ship as before, and where Martin said, good bye. I remained at the planetarium for half an hour, as though I was afraid to get back into the Old World of the ship again. I felt an apprehension that I couldn't understand. In fact, I felt that I understood very little of the significance of the events that had come and gone like a whirlwind. The planetarium was as quiet as it usually was. Here at least, everything had remained the same. But what about me? What had happened to me? Had I changed? I already knew the answer. I knew that I had changed. Had I not felt, seen, and experienced things that no one on the ship would be able to accept as rationally credible if I told them. Even I had trouble with that. For instance, the concept of separation between people appeared to be no more valid than the concept of distance between physical points in space. Separation and disunity did not exist as a reality on Bohr's planet. At least this is what I appeared to have experienced with Odessa. I liked the promise it held. I was excited about it. The physically sensual, like so many clouds of dust thrown into the face of spiritual immensity, appeared as dense blindness compared with the superabundance of feelings that had pervaded those hours of being with Odessa.

I was reluctant to leave the planetarium in case I would lose what I had found, or in case I had not lost anything and would not be able to deal with this broader reality, while living once again in the conventional environment of the ship. It stood to reason that my visit to Bohr's planet would reflect itself in some way onto my association with Natalia, with the captain, and with my newfound joy in life, named Jill, from the sewer station. Ah, but suddenly another idea came that all my associations in the ship would be enriched by the growing awareness that there is no distance in the valid Universe with Spirit being the central sun that is reflected by countless harmonizing principles. And so it was indeed.

Without me ever mentioning the unmentionable, the little distance that had remained between Natalia and Jill and I, was destined to quietly, and naturally, diminish.

Chapter 3 - Miracle Images

When I came into the atrium one morning after shift change the place was in the process of being decorated, as if for a party. It was still early in the morning. The domed ceiling was dark orange, signaling the 'dawn' before the 'sunrise.' The passing of our day in the ship had been color coded into the lighting system throughout the entire ship. Night was indicated with the ceilings becoming a dark blue, while at mid day, the lights were brilliantly white.

Below the dusk orange dome of the atrium, countless paper streamers crossed the open space in every direction intersecting horizontally and vertically. The streamers were illumined further by countless lanterns strung from railing to railing, and from floor to floor.

"What's up?" I ask the nearest person with amazement. He shrugs his shoulders. That's when I notice Natalia. She appears to be equally puzzled.

"What's with the Chinese paper lanterns?" I ask her.

"Aren't they cute?" she replies.

Some of the larger lanterns looked like planets floating in space.

"Maybe it is the captain's birthday?" I joke.

"I think it's for a wedding, or a carnival dance," she says and begins to grin.

"Hey, a carnival would be great! Wouldn't it?"

"Where have you been?" says someone passing by, hearing us talk. "Tomorrow is homecoming day! We'll be celebrating the return of the first surveyor probe." The voice came from a girl who was directing the re-arrangement of potted plants on the main floor. "Tomorrow we'll have our first close up view of Alpha Centauri!"

Of course! Yes! I gradually remembered. Five probes had been launched before the ship got under way, the first one five years in advance. The probes had been designated for a planet-system mapping mission. The first probe was to record all orbital paths, photograph the surface of every major planet, and then rendezvous with the ship at a predetermined point in space.

We were told that the bulletin board revealed the agenda of the celebrations to come. There was to be a full crew meeting with a formal luncheon at noon, followed by the arrival of the first probe within some hours. The final event of the celebration would take place at the atrium where the captain would unveil a scale model of the entire Alpha Centauri system that would be constructed from measurements brought back by the probe. Together with this amazing feat a photo exhibition would be set up,

reconstructed from video scans the probe was expected to bring. The final event was scheduled for noon the following day or for the day after. In between, somewhere, would be a computer graphics demonstration of the gravitational interaction of the three-sun system, mathematically reconstructed, all from the measurements taken by the probe.

The probe was expected to be a gold mine of information.

"That's going to be some party!" says Natalia excitedly.

"We will have a chance to see what no man has ever seen before," says the girl who was in charge of the decoration. "We will be the first of mankind to have a close-up look at another solar system."

I could sense her excitement. I looked around quickly, scanning the space for the captain and then hugged the girl. What we expected was indeed worthy a celebration. I was glad Martin hadn't shown me the Alpha Centauri system, yet. This pre-visit was to be our own victory, honestly won against the most imprisoning limits, pushing back frontiers to the very edge of the 'possible.' That, too, must have been the way Bohr and his group started out, rather than taking their giant leap from a standing start. Even a super nova has a long history as a star while it gathers up energy over countless millions of years before the super nova explosion springs it into a different form of "life" in the space of one single, final second. Advancing with the best of our earthly technologies had become our stepping stone towards the freedoms inherent in the Bohr/Miller effect. And now we were on the verge of a significant victory, a super nova of our own making in our Universe of profound discoveries.

"Not even the crossing of billions of light years of space, visiting planets of other galaxy clusters, measures up to the significance of seeing this probe coming in," I say to Natalia.

"You dreamer!" she says, and hugs me in return.

Her hug now felt richer in the wake of the mental odyssey in which Odessa had left her mark. It didn't have the connotation of being anything physical. It was perhaps another historic event, where the human experience was drawn beyond the limits imposed by its traditional material mentality. Natalia looks up and smiles as if she was feeling something too. She obviously did.

"I have crossed billions of light years while visiting planets of other galaxies," I say to her.

"Sure you have, we all have," she says and smiles. "It's easy to do in dreams. But the probe coming back, that's not a dream. That's a miracle."

The luncheon commenced exactly as planned. Nobody worked that day, except for a few volunteers who were involved with the meals and essential tasks. As it turned out the probe didn't arrive on time. It didn't arrive until six that evening. Of course, considering that it had traveled over

sixty trillion kilometers, it was more exactly on time than any train or plane ever had been in all of human history.

The computer simulation was ready at midnight. "That's a hell of a good job," said a voice from behind me in the theater when the show commenced. The man who spoke, was Martin.

"At first I was fascinated by this ship," he whispered, "because I have a weakness for primitive technology. But this one here is top notch. There's nothing primitive about it."

I leaned back and grinned.

This was music to my ears.

The simulation showed every planet that circled the three suns, including their moons. The simulation could be speeded up, by which the interaction of the various gravitational fields became clearly visible. Also the relative size of each planet was indicated, together with an estimated possibility of finding humanoid life there. One planet showed some hope. It was a smaller planet than the Earth. The planet was orbiting the sun marked Gamma. The planet was indicated to have a relative Earth-mass of point eight.

"Have you ever been on Gamma Point Eight," I whisper to Martin. He shakes his head. "Maybe Bohr has, I must ask him."

Moments later he taps me on the shoulder. "Odessa asked me to convey her love," he whispers.

"Eh, who is this Odessa?" Natalia gets into the act.

I introduce Natalia to him.

"Odessa is my wife," says Martin, "whom your friend had an affair with a couple of eons ago."

Natalia takes a deep breath, but Martin waves her off: "They spent an afternoon together in my house, and slept together for one night."

"What house?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I had invited your friend to my house on Bohr's planet, that's three galaxy clusters from here. Bohr required my help for a while, so he suggested that Odessa look after your friend. I'm sure James couldn't have told you about it, he doesn't fully understand himself what had happened."

Natalia reacts like I had at first, with her mouth open, speechless, staring into space.

"If you want to get away from this ship for a holiday, my house is open to you both, any time," he adds with his usual grin.

Before she could reply Martin was gone, and I was left with the momentous task of explaining the unexplainable.

Somewhere in between all this occurred the great unveiling of the model of Alpha Centauri. Captain Matthew, or Mat, as some people called him, who didn't call him Johnny, opened the ceremony with a speech. It was a short speech about the model and those who made it. Then he

opened the floor to a dance. Strangely, the person he chose to have his first dance with, was Natalia. For the moment it appeared that the bitter war between us, which had nearly spilled out over the whole ship, had been temporarily set aside, or we had won the war. It appeared that we had been successful in taking away his battlefield with no loss to ourselves. Or perhaps he felt himself to have been the victor, since we no longer challenged his austere morality. But the real victory, if there was such a thing, was ours. I felt that we had won since we had learned that the freedom indicated in the constitution, was merely a challenge to expand our individually, instead of a license to force anyone else onto the same platform. This step forward left the captain off the hook, as he no longer was required to 'authorize' us to be ourselves, as our love moved us on. Whoever wrote the constitution must have been advanced enough to recognize that the wider horizons that it encourages, inevitably become a protection also for those left mentally behind, like our captain.

Looking back over this period, I had no doubt that Martin would have suggested that warfare is an invalid concept anyway, imposed solely by the same kind of limitations as are time, distance, and separation. It seemed we didn't have to play any game at all to be free. Our association became closer, but it was no longer of a type that the captain could sink his teeth in and bite. Neither was this accomplishment entirely due to Martin's teaching, as I first thought. Martin had merely opened a door. The rest came as a consequence of my stepping through the door. It came almost by itself.

Naturally, Martin was welcomed by Natalia and I, and also by Jill. We told him that he was welcome at any time he cared to look us up. It was always great to have his company, to be touched by his insights into many things, and for his assistance that was well appreciated. By no means did I count myself as an equal to him, certainly not in terms of space travel. It didn't seem wise for me to apply the Bohr/Miller effect for anything more than just a few small steps, like that day when I needed it for getting close to Jill, intercepting her near the elevator. Natalia and Jill were even less 'experienced,' with a heart full of doubt.

When Martin came back in a month, both Natalia and Jill were ready to allow him to guide us together in our first combined adventure which would take us no farther than to sneak a look at the Alpha Centauri system. We explored every planet. As the probe had reported, some planets had thick forests, lush vegetation, but no animal life. Most planets, though, were bare. Only Gamma .8 showed some promise of being interesting. As the computer had rightly estimated, it did have the right atmosphere, and it did have some people on it, similar to human beings.

Martin suggests upon closer investigation that we should not make contact at this time. He says that he feels the people would not be able to understand our presence.

I wanted to argue that point.

"Making contact now might spoil your chances later," he suggests, before I have a chance to object.

Martin also says something scary. He says that the people on this planet appear to be in some state of silent war with each other, which he says, we should be cautious about. He says that the society on the planet appears to be a very primitive type of society that has not as yet developed the mental technology to exist without war.

"How can you tell that?" Natalia asks.

"That's easy," answers Martin. "They have not developed any significant space presence, or any space presence at all. War usually prevents the kind of scientific and technological development that a space presence requires. You'll most likely find a primitive, and possibly brutal, if not fascist society on this planet."

"Fascist?" Natalia repeats.

"Oh you can handle this," Martin grins. "But why would you be interested in such a society? That's what I can't understand."

After that short excursion to the Alpha Centauri system, Martin invited us for an entire week to his home on Bohr's planet where he and Odessa showed us around, cared for us, and gave us a wonderful vacation in the sun, complete with swimming among flower peddals. At the end, as any good host would, Martin escorted us graciously back to the ship.

In the months and years that followed, Martin came less often, maybe once every two months. But his style never changed. It was as always, bang - super nova time! We must have explored half the Universe by the time the ship arrived at Alpha Centauri. We encountered civilizations at their Stone Age stage, as well as at their most advanced stage that even Bohr could not comprehend, and virtually at every imaginable stage in between. We have seen the Hitlers at war. There are always some Hitlers at war somewhere in the Universe. And we have seen civilizations in which the Hitlers would never have a chance. In time, a definite pattern emerged. Limitation and war went together, with the wars being interrupted only by periods of poverty, or else there was freedom and peace found in an atmosphere of genuine prosperity. There was never a mingling of the two.

Bohr explained this phenomenon by suggesting that war, poverty, and limitations are one and the same thing and are all invalid phenomena. He said that freedom, peace, and prosperity, in contrast, must be understood as valid expressions of universal principles. Their substance is real, rather than being a myth. He also said that the two groups are as diametrically distinct from one-another as if they pertained to a separate Universe. That's how Martin confirmed the theory by which he lived. "One thing, though, puzzles our friend Bohr," Martin added. "He can't imagine how we could shuttle so unaffectedly between one and the other.

I assured him that we didn't really do that. I assured him that we

merely shuttled between two of the same kind of Universe. The ship wasn't a scene of war, poverty and limitation anymore. I affirmed this fact most vigorously. At least it wasn't that in the grosser sense of the word.

Bohr had to agree. In fact he came to visit us on the ship almost as often as we were guests on his planet. After each tour of his 'exploration' with us, we would visit there for a week and be back at the ship without missing a shift. Bohr, Martin, and Odessa would all come to the ship occasionally for a concert or a movie, or when a special event happened that promised to become interesting. Occasionally Martin and Odessa would also invite us to the Earth for a symphony concert. As far as Martin was concerned, there was no greater music found anywhere in the Universe than that of the Earth.

The hardest part of those concert trips was in not being able to make us known to our families back home. We could see them, but not talk, for their own protection. If we were to reveal ourselves, we would jolt them into our world. Martin warned that they would not survive the transition. Only once was I able to let them know that I still cared for them. When the maple tree died that had always stood in front of our home, I persuaded Martin into replacing it with one of those lovely flowering trees that grow in great profusion on Bohr's planet.

He did it as a scientific experiment, to see if such a transplant could be done.

One of the special occasions, for which even Werner Heisenberg came to the ship, and he arrived alone one day, was the expected arrival of the last scout probe. Werner Heisenberg loved the excitement. By then, everyone on board spoke about Alpha Centauri and had gone almost berserk over this little planet. The last probe had been designed to collect high-resolution pictures of the planet surface, monitor radio and television broadcasts if there were any, pinpoint their sources and do some general infrared mapping. A highly paralleled, Josephson-based computer had been readied during the preceding week for instant video processing and to perform a priority selection of the vast amount of data the probe should have collected over its one year mission surrounding the planet. Also, the computer was programmed for language decoding, in case there were radio and TV broadcasts recorded by the probe.

Bohr himself, who arrived later, called the occasion a milestone in human history. There was probably no man more excited than he was, when the final probe locked itself into a synchronous flight pass with the ship, and began to transmit its data. Bohr, though, unlike Heissenberg, made no efforts to conceal his presence. He was the one person on our ship who seemed to be simultaneously everywhere where things were happening. He knew everything, saw everything, and acted accordingly. Once I even saw him giving orders to the captain, and the captain following his command. Maybe he, more than anyone else on the ship, realized the significance that this event had for mankind. It was as though he could read the future,

which he claimed he could, since the concept of time and future was invalid anyway in his frame of reference.

What amazed Martin, as he said later, was the fact that an automated probe could actually function flawlessly for seven years in the hostile environment of space, perform a complex mission along the way, and navigate itself back to a rendezvous with the ship at a closing speed of over twice the speed of light. Seeing its pictures of rocks, mountains, craters, cities, agricultural fields, all scanned onto the screen before us, totally amazed Martin, when he joined us for the 'unveiling.'

The theater was crammed to the last square inch of floor space when the unveiling began. Within fifteen minutes, the computer had selected the data of Gamma .8 as the most promising, and given it high priority for transmission. We saw pictures of fields that looked like they had been carefully cultivated. When we saw the first traces of a city, everyone cheered and yelled. There was no peace for at least fifteen minutes.

By this time the screen changed and a television broadcast appeared. The voice had been electronically translated into English. Bohr was beside himself. The language of other civilizations had always been a problem for him. The broadcast was in color and showed erect entities not so much different than we were. Their hair was not as dense, their skin darker, and their eyes were similar to those of the Chinese.

The show that we saw appeared to be a detective story. There were people peering around corners and through windows, there was a chase scene by bicycle. We didn't see any cars. Was this from the present time, or a movie from the past? The question turned out to be one of the main questions that surfaced.

The outside scenes showed an elegant, modern city. We saw tall buildings lavishly constructed with generous use of plate glass and some kind of marble. Only the mode of transportation didn't fit. Everything that moved seemed to be out of step with the city's modern architecture. We saw buggies in the streets instead of cars, drawn by animals akin to oxen. The only modern piece of transportation that we saw was one lonely electric streetcar.

"Something is wrong," Martin agrees with Bohr. "You can't construct these giant glass castles with oxen drawn transportation."

"Maybe they ran out of oil?" I suggest.

"Nonsense," says Bohr. "They can only have run out of their soul. Oil isn't everything. Anyone can harvest nuclear fusion if enough effort is expended. But if you let go of your soul, you will find this effort too expensive, and you'll die. The most potent killer in the Universe is a primitive lifestyle. I've seen it over and over."

"Yap!" Martin agrees.

"It's not going to be a picnicking, landing down there," says Werner Heisenberg. "Look at their faces, they don't look happy, they don't even look alive."

"The light is gone out in them," says Martin.

"You're wasting your effort going down there, trying to learn something," says Bohr to me in his usual straightforward manner, with the captain sitting two rows in front of us.

The captain turns around towards us. "That is all nonsense! Open your eyes! I see a rich society there. I see no beggars. I see no one in sloppy clothes, or starved or destitute sleeping on street corners. The city looks clean, not overcrowded, there is peace and order. And the lack of cars; that's wonderful! I'd prefer animal carts a thousand times over the gasoline driven, air poisoning traffic we used to have."

The captain turns back again, not waiting for an answer. Bohr doesn't give him one either.

"A society is like a star," Bohr whispers to me. "If they haven't accumulated enough gravity within themselves, mentally, they'll reach a threshold where the structure falls apart on which most people's livelihood depends. On Earth we called this the Empire Period, a four thousand year period of poverty and war. Without technologies and vast industries, entire cultures tend to vanish. So tell me, what do you expect to learn from them, when you have refused for millennia to learn the lesson of their fate from your own history? Mankind could have stood on the moon in 200 AD if it hadn't been for the weight of empires dragging it down. That is what you will face at Gamma Point Eight. The young there, won't remember how things once were, or they may regard it as not important to them. Poverty has become a religion to them all, like with your captain, who rather sees clean streets than people in them, or orderly stagnation on his ship, instead of your excitement with living and with freedom and caring."

"And the old people won't tell you anything either," adds Odessa. "They likely never knew what hit them."

"You should look for a society that had enough inner strength to survive and prosper," Bohr comes back. "You should look for a society that had enough strength in itself to get past the threshold of the empire period, the small-minded period that is rich in poverty syndromes. That is what I see you are clinging to right now inside this ship. I know several societies of the caliber that you should be looking for, from which you could learn a great deal. There is one in particular that I have named planet Odessa, or planet 'O' for short. Even I could learn a lot from those people if I were to be able to decode their language."

"Ah, I see, you have a plan for this ship," says Natalia.

"Well, shouldn't it be used the best way possible when an entire civilization is at stake?" Bohr comes back, whispering, unabashed.

"We can have the ship in orbit above planet 'O' within seconds," says Martin. "We could..."

"Do you really believe these people will let you have their ship," Odessa interrupts, "especially when they're so close to the goal that they waited five years for, which, at the moment, looks quite wonderful in their eyes?"

Nobody answers Odessa for a very long time.

Monotonously the broadcast continued. Most of the people around us, however, seemed to be excited. The detective-show was followed by a sort of news cast that showed the city again. The picture was the same. It also showed some scenes of the countryside, a tumult of manual labor harvesting a grain crop.

"We could call for a vote on the ship," I suggest to Bohr. He doesn't answer.

One thing I figured out about Bohr, when apparently he felt that I had asked a stupid question to which I should know the answer myself, he never bothered to respond. At first I was annoyed, now I respected that. I didn't really want to be taught. However, I also found that I could rely on him, questioning me, should I come up with a wrong conclusion.

"I guess you can't impose a democratic decision on something that pertains to the very depth of one's existence," I come back.

Bohr still doesn't answer, which meant that I was either completely right, or would soon realize my error.

"We must let the little children have their wish," says Bohr after a long, long silence, as though he had to re-think his plan.

"Going to Alpha Centauri will still take another nine months," I comment, "while humanity back home is at the threshold of nuclear war, economic chaos, and a rapidly spreading disease that may over-power the human race."

As neither Bohr nor Martin answered, it dawned on me that the concept of time had no validity with them as they had amply demonstrated. So I dropped the subject, puzzled by what would be happening now. One thing that I realized by then, was that time was always of utmost importance to whom it had significance, whom it had captured as slaves, or had blinded with its limits, so that they could not see the substance of the world that is found apart from it.

Bohr and Werner went home after their disappointing encounter with the captain. They called him an explorer that travels the Universe with his eyes and his mind closed. Martin and Odessa remained for a while to "keep an eye on things," as they said.

Bohr might have wished that he had stayed, too. Hardly eight hours had passed when a complete language training package had been produced, with written text, video, and computer generated sound pattern as a pronunciation aid. A half a day earlier no one on ship, except us, knew that these people existed. Now, with the aid of computer assisted translation, we would have been able to converse with them in their own language. At the projected time of our landing on the planet the entire ship's business would be conducted in Gamma .8 language, as a final training effort. I

suggested to Martin that the efficiency of our electronic information processing technology would impress even someone like Bohr.

"He'd become green with envy," says Martin.

Odessa laughs.

"Jokes aside," says Martin. "Our greatest problem is located in not being able to communicate with other societies. Of course one can draw a lot of conclusions from what one sees, but without a machine of this caliber, one doesn't stand much of a chance to start a meaningful dialog. Living among the people helps a bit, but this takes a lot of patience and effort, and in the end one still can't be sure."

"You mean you people don't know everything?" Natalia remarks.

"All we know, is how to bypass the laws of matter," says Martin.

"Actually we're not particularly smart and inventive when it comes to intelligent things. Being able to bypass some material limitations doesn't help much in extending one's genius. We are bound to the same basic method for investigation that you are bound to."

"We haven't crossed any threshold in this area yet," Martin adds.

"We have a few advantages, though," Odessa admits. "We don't have to expend any effort on our physical maintenance, which has put us a few steps ahead of you. Except we don't have the technological equipment to make use of this advantage to the fullest. The problem is that the more advanced a person becomes, the greater is the need for sophisticated high tech machinery to support the work the advantage enables. That's why Bohr has actually stopped doing research some years ago, out of sheer frustration."

"Then Bohr would love to have access to what this ship has to offer," I say to Odessa.

"He would come alive again," she replies.

"Haven't you noticed how boring he can be?" Martin adds. "You should have seen him in the olden days! Bohr isn't his real name. We were all students of Niels Bohr in Copenhagen, at the Institute of Theoretical Physics, and we were great fans of Heisenberg who worked in Leipzig and sometimes at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. One day we wanted to hear a special lecture that Heisenberg was giving in Leipzig. We had heard some great stuff through the rumor mill coming out of Berlin that something big was going to be presented in Leipzig. We simply had to get to Leipzig, but it also looked like that the war was about to start. One of us started to fantasize, that if we reversed everything we had ever learned about the nature of matter, we might be able to leap over its hurdles and be in Leipzig and back all in the same day. How we got to the Amazon instead, on that day, nobody knows. All that anyone remembered was that our ideas became crazier and crazier as we joked with each other. It took us a whole week to get back from the Amazon, and then another year to figure out the scientific background behind what had happened." Martin added that he got dispelled once for a week, for giving a paper on the theoretical possibility of reaching beyond the threshold of matter into another sphere

of reality. "The official judgment was that such 'pranks' were dishonoring the institution. There were a lot of pranks perpetrated in those days," he says.

"That's when you left the planet?" I ask.

"Oh no!" he says. "We started small, going to England at first, then to Africa and South America." He says that a tiger attacked him once. The tiger seemed to come out of no-where. If it hadn't been for Odessa he would be dead. "Exploring planets seemed safer," he says and grins. "Once we found a planet that suited us, we simply stayed. Olaf called it Bohr's planet, since Niels Bohr had laid the foundation for the breakthrough that got us there. Somehow the name Bohr became attached to Olaf from that day on. Besides, the two were quite alike in many ways."

"That is quite an interesting tale," I say, "and you know how to tell it well! But, how goes the real story?"

"Hey, that was the real story, with one exception maybe! Sometimes we wished we had taken the train to Leipzig that day. We feel there are many things yet to be learned that we have no access to. We've worked ourselves into an disadvantage out of which you might be able to help us, for your own good, of course."

"You mean by re-routing the ship to Odessa planet, or planet 'O' as you call it?" I reply with a grin.

"That may be quite a challenge," adds Natalia. "If you knew our captain, you wouldn't even think it. He thinks this Gamma .8 place is heaven."

"Some heaven!" Martin replies.

Natalia was right. There was no way in sight to stop the landing. Before the day was out, the command was given to prepare the ship for deceleration. The clock was set to minus four hundred hours.

Martin's comment was that the landing was sheer madness. He left immediately once the transition time was announced. His last words were that Bohr isn't going to sit idly by while the greatest opportunity for mankind goes out the window over the stubbornness of one single man.

The long sequence of preparations began anew that was now required before retropower could be initiated with artificial gravity being applied from a different direction again. Furnishings had to be re-arranged and fastened to accommodate the impending shift in artificial gravity. The pool had to be emptied into tanks; plants stored away, lounges tied down. The sewer station suffered the greatest upset. Every plant had to be uprooted and be packaged for re-use at an alternate site. Even the ship's engines had to undergo a major modification. All forty-eight units, arranged in twelve clusters, had to be relocated to the top of a six-hundred-foot tower and be tilted the opposite way, towards the ship, minus a twenty-degree outward projection so that their energy streams would be focused away from the hull. At first, the six-hundred-foot tower had to be erected. A base for it extended through the center of the engine platform. A million

bolts, so it seemed, were required to hold the tower in place. I suddenly realized that the tower would have to withstand several times the weight of the ship!

The engine platform was a world of grotesque metal sculpture interconnected by arrays of pipes, flexible hoses, and cables. I was part of the work team. Assembling the tower was like putting together a Mechanoset of gigantic proportions. Also, we were doing this work in the dark and lonely world of space. Only now, being in space was different. Traveling with Martin, I recalled being surrounded by a sea of stars. There were no stars overhead of the platform, and those on the horizon appeared yellow, turning darker and towards the red the higher they stood over us.

No one was startled, except me. Everyone else expected the phenomenon. We were racing away from any light source that lay behind the ship so that an incoming wave appeared to be stretched in time to a point where the eye could no longer recognize it as light. What had startled me about this phenomena, was that it didn't agree with my previous experience in space. Not the slightest trace of any red or blue shift had been apparent when Martin had taken me to see the 'black hole.' Maybe the difference came from being still tied to the sphere of reality that pertains to the ship, being tied to its atmosphere that extended from it into the space suit I was wearing. Being in space felt different now. I felt encumbered by the unwieldy suit. Martin would laugh if he saw me like that, I was sure of it.

Once the tower was built, the entire engine platform was disassembled. The pieces were raised to the top of the tower where they were reassembled with all the engines gimballed below the tower platform, facing towards the ship but tilted away from it to deflect the retrofire. A million connections had to be severed and be re-established. Each engine module contained four separate functional engines, each to be used at different speeds relative to the background of space. While working on the platform, we were warned not to peer over the edge of it. The shielding effect of the nose cone extended no more than a foot beyond the periphery of the ship. Anyone who would extend his hand or head, beyond this zone of protection, would come into contact with the energy background of space that would tear apart the atomic structures of his body moving at near light speed velocity. That's why the ship couldn't be turned around to have its engines face forward in the manner that slow-moving space ships decelerate.

When the huge work was complete, including that of preparing the ship internally for gravity change, the time had come to implement the deceleration process. This meant that once again everyone was taking the elevator to level zero, to the great auditorium. At level zero, however, nobody walks anymore, everyone floats. We sort of floated out of the elevator, bumped into each other or against the ceiling. The trick was to come close to an empty seat and take hold of it. They could have issued us magnetic shoes, except this way, it was more fun.

Strapped into our seats, we spend the next half-hour watching a movie. After that the captain made a speech on the historic importance of the occasion. Half an hour into his speech I felt the retro-engines ignite and building up power for retarding the ship. That's when Bohr showed up. He suddenly appeared on the stage. He obviously had searched the galaxies, or at least the costume archives of Hollywood, for a suitable attire. He wore a glittering golden suit of the kind Alvis Presley might have once worn at the height of his concert career.

Bohr's timing was excellent. Only on rare occasions such as this, was the entire crew brought together into one place. He got everyone's attention without fail. Before the captain apparently realized what happened, Bohr was addressing the assembly. He addressed the people right in the middle of the captain's speech, informing them about the insanity of the intended landing.

"There isn't anything there to see, except a remnant of a civilization that has failed itself. Sure you have seen clean cities, all spaciouly laid out, not crowded as the big cities at more. I say, what you saw were ghost towns that had been created by millions of deaths. You saw the end-result of a dying civilization. Can you expect to learn anything new from those who have failed themselves? The Earth is awash with examples of this sort. Just look at its present civilization. The economies are driven by greed, moving constantly towards greater and greater accumulations of wealth. The paradox is that the very people, on whose backs this wealth was gauged out of the living of humanity, admire the wealthy as though they are heroes. They admire them for their skills in stealing the lifeblood out of them. While people generally abhor violations of human rights, they tend to condone them in their own midst. Even slavery, over which wars have been fought to put an end to it, is far from gone. It is being celebrated. The problem is that people willingly enslave themselves to the most relentless masters if that is their only hope for survival. All this they call human nature. By listening to a mentality they mistakenly regard as their own inner voice, which they have not yet discovered, they condemn themselves. The people at Gamma .8 have gone the same route. The only difference is that they have succumbed to their illusions and stopped defending themselves. They have stopped to stand up for their rights. What you will see is a 'neutron star' of pure mental hell, a concentrated fascism that contains all the fundamental mistakes left unresolved over the centuries. And you want to learn from them?"

Bohr suggested that if we were lucky enough not to be killed we stood an excellent chance to be hypnotized by this mentality, and so suffer a tragic net loss while we wanted to gain insight.

Instead of landing on Gamma .8, Bohr suggested that he should take all of them, together with the ship, to a highly advanced civilization, a civilization that has not collapsed itself. He spoke of planet 'O,' known to us, as planet Odessa, which he said, was a worthy match for the best humanity had brought forth, which was embodied in this ship. He assured us

that the intelligence behind the ship's technology represents a giant step by humanity beyond limits. He called it a fitting stepping stone towards a more worthy goal, meaning by that the exploring of the world of planet 'O' where people had moved beyond the threshold of those mental limits that now threaten to shut down humanity. He admitted that he himself was still in many ways caught in the web of these self-imposed mental snares in which humanity has entangled itself, but....

At this point Bohr is cut off. The captain intervenes.

"I have, at this moment, activated the final automatic sequence for retro power," says the captain. "This sequence will take us right through to the final orbit insertion at Gamma .8 without a possible manual override. The sequence is too complex for anyone to tinker with. And in respect to the insanity you have just been exposed to," he began to laugh. "Really! That is no longer worth wasting any breath over, in discussing it. Am I not right?"

His face becomes hard as his thin laughter dies down. He raises his hand as though he swore. "Anything that does not constructively add to our goal of landing at Gamma .8 must be regarded as academic treason from this point on, and must be met with appropriate measures."

Bohr stands aghast. With his mouth still open from his last words he shrugs his shoulders and vanishes.

At this instant the giant screen of the auditorium came alive with a laser projected simulation of what happened to the ship. Magnetic flow engines located on the periphery of the ship slowed its rotational movement. At the same time the main engines were turned on and held at $0.001G$, trimmed to precise balance. This sequence repeated itself until it was held at $0.300G$. Then a computer generated cartoon showed us how the agro plant was converted; how its flats of plants were rotated ninety degrees at a special adjustment station, together with their associated light panels.

I recalled the last gravity change process. No information had been given then. We had simply been sent to the auditorium where a long movie had been playing.

It felt good to know what was going on. The agro plant conversion process was to take two hours as we were told by one of the officers of the ship, after which the gravity change would continue.

Since we had three tens of normal gravity by then, we were invited to unbuckle and move around. The officer even announced that the dance floor was open, one floor below the auditorium.

Few people seemed eager to dance, however. I certainly didn't feel like dancing after the way Bohr was rebuffed. I went down stairs, though, with Natalia. To my greatest surprise, I noticed Bohr on the dance floor, having a great time with Jill. He had shed his glistening Gold suit, for some tight black jeans and a black and silver striped shirt.

I ask Natalia for a dance.

"Not now," she says quietly.

"What about me?" I hear a voice from behind me. It was Odessa.

I bow, and off we were as floating through space. Dancing at three tens of normal gravity is indeed a lot of fun, but I had experience with this, dancing with Jill at the sewer station.

We bumped into Bohr more than once, together with Jill.

"I haven't seen you so alive, not in years," Odessa says to Olaf when Jill had become exhausted and we had all retired to a sitting area built into the wall.

"The same goes for you, 'O,'" Olaf replies and begins to grin. "You haven't called me Olaf for years."

"I'm surprised at you too," I say to Bohr, after I gained my breath again. "Why have you given up so easily in the auditorium?"

"Given up! Who has given up? Not I! I never give up," he grins. "It just wasn't the right moment to push further. What humanity is there in pushing them into a violent conflict with the captain, over something they don't yet understand? Men like the captain are dangerous. You'd be surprised to find out what they are capable of."

"Besides, Olaf has said enough," adds 'O.' "The ship is full of intelligent people. To force-feed them would be an insult to their dignity."

"Whenever I'm at this ship," says Olaf, "I realize that the intelligence that went into the building of it, is still around. How then can I loose hope?" His face became serious though. Neither smile nor laughter seemed possible. "Many of the people might die, because of the captain!" he says and closes his eyes. "They may support the captain on this mission as far as he demands, but they can't escape the consequences of the insanity of their actions."

When supper was called, the dining room on the next level below us was set up as for a festive occasion, with white table cloths and a genuine red rose on every table.

"Gosh! Where did the captain get those from?" marvels Jill, then turns, and looks at Olaf, who begins to smile again. "From your planet?" Olaf, as we now called him, shakes his head. "The roses came from planet 'O,'" he corrects her in a soft whisper.

"I'd love to gather bundles of flowers again," says Jill.

"Oh you will," Olaf replies, "but not on this Gamma planet. You won't be able to pick flowers until you pick them on planet 'O!'"

Olaf, Martin, and 'O' disappeared that night. They vanished as they usually did. They exited near the end of another dance session that went on for many hours past midnight. I wondered if they were aware of the immense amount of work that needed to be done.

Every room aboard ship had to be rebuilt. What used to be the

floor, now became a wall. The ceiling, too, had to be moved. Elevator shafts had to be converted to hallways, and hallways to elevator shafts. Even the Atrium was constructed in a modular fashion. Stairs, walkways, the dome, everything could be taken apart and re-assembled as the new gravity orientation required. There were plug-ins for everything, everywhere. Everything was color-coded. The light pipe connectors for the ceiling panels, for instance, were blue. There were connectors for computer access, air conditioning, power, intercom, alarm systems, light switches.

The doors throughout the ship were as wide as they were high for that purpose, with panels closing from all four corners. The doors looked the same no matter how the rooms were arranged around them according to the three different directions in which the ship's artificial gravity would act upon us. Most of the rebuilding was done at three tenth of normal gravity.

The physical rebuilding of the ship, and the even larger task of a language training effort that would enable us to speak the Gamma language well enough to partake in parliamentary discussions, left us nearly breathless for exhaustion until one day, orbit insertion had been achieved. So, once more the engines were stopped, the ship began to roll on its axis, and every room had to be rebuilt again.

This time, Olaf didn't show up for the gathering in the great auditorium during gravity change. The huge movie screen was filled with close ups of Gamma .8 with views of its three moons and two sister suns that were brighter than its own red sun was. This show was equally as exciting, if not more so than the first one.

Later on, selected TV broadcasts were relayed to the screen, to monitor if the ship had been sighted. Which it hadn't.

Eventually, the captain announced the names of the first landing team. He himself would be the leader of it. My name, and that of Jill, Natalia, and Mark, was among twenty-five other names. Mark was a friend of Jill.

It struck me as odd that our entire group was called out. I didn't expect the honor to be chosen for the first mission. It quickly dawned on me that this wasn't an honor. Every military company needs some elements that are expendable when a situation gets hot, someone to hold the line so that the rest might escape. This, evidently, was to be us!

According to measurements it was summer on the planet. We were provided with the appropriate clothing, a bicycle for transportation, but no weapons, except for a knife. We were also supplied with a communicator each which could reach the ship, and four video cameras for the company as a whole. Each person was provisioned with enough food for five days. Everyone carried his own. Camping equipment was distributed to groups of four persons according to our own choosing. Naturally, our group stayed together, especially after we had realized what our selection to this company might signify.

I felt a strange apprehension the day when the shuttle doors closed behind us and the exit bay opened. Slowly, almost imperceptible at first, the shuttle was propelled out of the ship towards the planet, controlled by small thrusters. Most of the time we floated silently. An occasional burst of retro fire slowed us to the required rate of descend. The planet soon lay below us like a vast gray and blue carpet. The ship itself could no longer be seen. A strange New World lay before us now. In this atmosphere the majestic Strauss Waltz came to mind from the old movie, 2001 - A Space Odyssey.

We landed as planned, on a high plateau at the foot of a glacier. The landing craft would not be noticed there. Also the solid rock at this site would allow us to land unnoticed, as our landing jets wouldn't whirl clouds of dust into the air.

To the right was a meadow that sloped upward to an ice covered mountain that towered thousands of feet above us. To the left, a gorge dropped off that opened into a side valley. The survey photos had shown an animal trail along the ledge, which would become our path.

We left the shuttle, pushing our bikes in single file, our luggage strapped on tight. We were like a strange company of western tourists in an alien Himalayan setting.

The trail soon entered a virgin forest of Juniper-like trees. At times we could ride the bikes, so smooth was the trail in the forest. But where were the animals?

At a crossing behind a waterfall the secret of the trail began to unravel. This wasn't an animal trail. A log extended over a gorge. Its top was flattened with primitive tools. We could see the chop marks.

The entire journey, of course, was video transmitted to the ship. Chop marks and all.

Eventually we came to a clearing with a lake that had a temple like structure on its opposite shore. The trail ended at the lake.

It took nearly two hours to get everyone ferried across in the only inflatable raft we had. The temple was made of marble, consisting of four pillars with a dome-like roof. Grass grew where the stones were joined. The place appeared to have been deserted. We stopped for a picnic. Some people went for a swim. The lake must have been fed by hot springs. Its water was warm and clear, with a slight smell of sulfur.

The rest of the trail passed through what looked like a bamboo forest. Near the end, the trail became largely obliterated with leaves that worried the captain, but caused us no problem except to slow our progress. Nevertheless, by nightfall we had reached our destination, the edge of a meadow that rose up from the main valley. Oh, what a joy! We were embracing each other for the sheer excitement of the moment. Gone were our fears and reservations. We could see the village through the binoculars, a quaint farming village at the end of a narrow dirt road. Another dirt road extended from the village into the valley. Strangely, though, not a soul could

be seen, on the road, or in the fields beyond the meadow.

We set up camp. Soon the orange glow of Beta Sun dominated the sky like the harvest moon does on clear autumn days, only warmer and brighter. The climate certainly was lovely according to our standards, and more so for everyone that had been confined to the ship for those long years. Camping must have seemed heavenly to them.

We broke camp at dawn. The early sunshine glistened on the dew of the meadow as we pushed our bikes through a sea of tall grasses towards the road. A few animals could be seen grassing near the village.

Finally, when we reached the road we were able to use our bicycles again. The lead bike, ridden by the captain of course, had a video camera mounted on its handlebars. I felt both, excited and tense now. We had no idea what we were getting into, and Martin's warning was coming to mind briefly. Still, those warnings were soon pushed into the background again.

We entered the village in tight formation, like a group of tourists might be expected to. The dirt road took us to an open space inside the village. The road encircled the village pond that took up most of the space. There were houses on all sides of the open space. All houses had wooden fences in front of them. Still, the place was as empty as if it were a ghost town. Of course the day had just begun.

The first to discover us, were the children. Except, they were too shy to come near us.

"The men from the city are here!" they shout in front of a prominent place at the edge of the village, near another lake among the fields.

A darkly dressed figure comes out into the open, walking towards us with the children all around, pointing in our direction.

"Go and find Reuel," the figure commands in a voice that carries well in the morning stillness. The figure was that of a man, an old man. He introduces himself as Mahesh, after we stopped at his side. He bids us welcome.

"We are not from the city," Jill explains. She points towards the meadow.

"Then you're from the coast, from Virtus," he says.

We didn't answer.

I notice a man coming towards us, surrounded by the children who had called him. He appeared to be the man Reuel.

"These people have come from Virtus to honor our village with their presence at the festival," Mahesh introduces us in a gentle manner, bowing slightly. His hair blew loosely in the morning wind while he was speaking, which he brushed aside with his hands.

Reuel blushed.

"Our village chief is honored," Mahesh says ceremoniously. "There are few festivals left, and fewer people who know about them."

The captain, and most people of our company went towards the village with Reuel. He was a tall man, blond, with baby eyes, and with his main features surprisingly human. He took an interest in the captain. The two appeared to be one of a kind.

Mahesh invites Jill and me to his house. On the way towards the house we notice Reuel in the distance trying to ride the captain's bike.

"We are not from Virtus," Jill explains to Mahesh inside the house. "I am from Thailand, a country far away on a planet of a different solar system."

"No, you are from Virtus!" He blinks his eyes as he says this.

Jill nods.

We had been invited to the main room, which was located on the ground floor. The room looked like a farmer's kitchen of ages past.

"Anything is possible in Virtus," Mahesh says to Jill, in a flat sounding dialect of Gamma language. "Do you understand what I mean? You must never, under any circumstance deviate from insisting that you have come from Virtus! Regardless of who may ask you," he adds. "Always insist that you are from Virtus!" He takes Jill's hand.

She says she understands and hugs him. I do so likewise.

Mahesh's family comes to join us, perhaps curious what the hugging was about. He introduces them to us. "This is Cira," he says proudly in a soft tone. "Cira had been married to our village chief before he died." Then he points to his wife and says merely, "Alenaah," in a slow and drawn out speech. He takes a deep breath and turns to me with some apprehension. "How far is your planet?"

I am lost for a term of reference that he might understand. Finally I hold my hand out somewhere four feet of the ground.

"As far as it takes a child to grow up to here."

Mahesh nods and sighs. "We have been forced to live here for this long." He shows me his hands, scarred with deep cuts. He explains that he was a musician once and a nuclear engineer, before.... His hands start to shake. I calm him.

Jill assures him that we understood.

Jill was a dream to be with, on this planet. I had never known anyone as sensitive to things as she was, especially to those little things that are so often conveniently overlooked as insignificant. The house must have seemed like a gold mine to Jill, to judge by her smiles, an open door to a culture that she felt had something rich in it. It wasn't the primitiveness that she liked, but the little art objects that Alenaah and Mahesh were only too glad to show her, and explain their origin.

After a meal had been served, evidently in our honor, Cira showed me a room on the upper floor where, as she explains, that I could stay overnight. She says that I would honor her if I did, and more so if I allowed her to stay with me. She didn't say, "I want you!" Maybe it was implied.

My night with Odessa on Bohr's planet came to mind. If I could reach the same state of mind again....

The thought was suppressed, as impractical. Still, I told Cira that I would love her to remain with me. Indeed, why shouldn't she? The room was obviously her own. I looked at Cira and felt that the threshold might yet be crossed to where closeness is no longer a valid concept in one's experience, as it related to distance, the opposite to closeness. Both were evidently invalid concepts, having the same root so that feeling close is related to distance. Yes, even feeling close to another, is in Bohr's Universe, nothing more than a myth, where distance is no longer a reality. I try to explain the concept to Cira in as simple terms as I could, and how the Bohr/Miller effect works, which I hardly understood myself.

As if it were in response, she begins to undress herself by the window against the orange glow of the Beta Sun that stood low on the sky. The oneness that I feel with her, a feeling that reflects the superabundance of being in which clothing is without significance, must have touched her.

Moment's later something caused her to stop getting undressed.

We didn't speak to each other in those moments. Speech appeared to be too crude. Only now and then, a few questions were asked. How many children she had, and why she hadn't re-married.

She told me that she could have had three children as the wife of a village chief. But they never had any. There were always some reasons why he didn't want to have children. Then he died. Now she couldn't have any at all, she said. People on "Latush," as she called her planet or country, were allowed to marry only once. She could re-marry only someone who had lost his wife, and have children only if he had none in his previous marriage. Any unauthorized children would be taken away by the state to be raised as laborers, "to become feed stock for labor camps." The control process was intended to keep the population small. She told me that she could not live through a thing like that, having her child taken away to labor camps. She told me that consequently no more thoughts about marriage were entertained.

I hugged her for the longest time after her story brought tears to her eyes. I couldn't think of a time when I felt more sorry for anyone. But soon I could only feel her presence again that contrasted with the story. I felt an intelligence that reached far beyond this miasma of misery. The intelligence linked her unmistakably to the Spirit of the Universe, the central 'sun' reflected in universal principles that are the center of everything, even at this far away place. Suddenly, in this fog, a ray of light appeared

as if a burst of sunshine had cut through an overcast sky. She began to smile. She came close, very close, then a kiss happened, softly, the softest, most wonderful hello -- a kiss that seemed inevitable, that couldn't be avoided, so it seemed. She pulled back after a few moments, but only slightly. Her lips remained just a fraction of an inch from mine, her deep blue eyes were mysteriously out of focus at this close distance, graced by long dark lashes. Her hands reached up to gently stroke my arms. I reciprocated. I let my fingers 'bathe' in the angel-softness of her hair. The kiss became repeated soon, more deeply, more passionately, longer in duration, endless seeming. In the course of it she continued getting undressed, we both did.

A long while later, after a world of unspeakable colors had come into view and then had drifted away, giving way to other colors and us 'melting' into one, she told me with the brightest smile that Mahesh, her father, has developed a long standing theory. "His theory is," she says, "that all the higher forms of life in the Universe converge towards a single model. His take is that perfection is singular by nature, notwithstanding individual expressions. He told me when I was little, in bedtime stories, that all the people in the Universe are similar in nature, whereby all the worlds in the Universe are united. I loved his tales. But now I think, at least to some degree, that he has been right, amazingly right. We are similar, almost to the last detail."

"I can agree with that," I say, holding her close to me. "Your eyes, your hair, your lips, are all identical with those on earth."

"All six lips?" she says and begins to grin.

"Oh yes, and our responses that are related to them are the same, including the sense of intimacy that is developing," I say softly.

"In this case, let me give you my own special name," she says and places my hands onto her breast. "From my heart, I name you, Haniat. "It will take time for you to know its meaning."

"Time doesn't matter, we are close now," I say and add a kiss.

"One would never know that our worlds are four light years apart," she replies.

"Of course, in the universal sense, we are each other's closest neighbor," I say with a grin.

"Why then wouldn't our natures be as closely identical as the are, with us being such close neighbors," she says and laughs.

"I just wonder how Mahesh came to recognize that..."

While I spoke, suddenly, a flash of fear entered my mind, fear for Natalia. I had seen her walking off with the captain in conversation with a young man, who had accompanied the village chief Reuel. In this repressive environment there might be immense pressures lurking in the background for sexual adventures, especially if the village chief condoned them, who might have been the young man's friend. Since imaginary purity was the captain's

ideal of morality, in the same manner masculine dominance might be the highest ideal of morality in this fascist-based state-culture. Fascism seemed to rule on this planet as it has come to rule on earth after the gentle and intelligent nature of mankind had been pushed into the background for imperial objectives.

Before I could question Cira on how her people might respond, I thought I heard Natalia's voice coming thinly through the open window. Her voice sounded like a scream.

Indeed, the voice was Natalia's. She screams something about murder. I see her running towards the house.

We get dressed, hastily.

I rush down to open the door. She bursts through the door, totally out of breath, and instantly begins to block the door from within.

"They have killed the captain, we must get out of here!" she cries.

"Why!"

"They know we're not from this planet. We are spies to them."

I told her to run upstairs. I got Mahesh and his wife to follow her. I knew the upstairs door could be locked at the top of the stairway.

While Natalia related what had happened I heard the irate masses break down the door below. I heard them enter like animals. I heard them smashing things, probably the treasures we had seen earlier. By all appearances they were boldened by the fast falling darkness. The night was their time.

While Cira protected her parents, and Natalia shouted at Jill and began to cry, I heard Cira yelling something about yrock, yrock, the word for straw.

Those animals never even tried to break the upstairs door. By all appearances, they were going to burn us alive. The grounds around the house were now swarming with these people. I turned the camera on for one last time and propped it up onto the windowsill.

"The ship can't do a thing for us," shouts Natalia as she sees me.

"No, Natalia, but I can, I think. And you must help me."

I call everyone together. "We must embrace each other, tightly. Natalia, Jill, you must help me with the Bohr/Miller effect!"

We had aimed for the ship's control center.

No one there was more surprised than I was that we made it back to the ship without Martin's help, or Bohr's. And did things get moving after that aboard ship! After merely a second had elapsed there was no doubt in anyone's mind who was in charge of the ship now. It was Natalia. For the first time in my life I realized that there was some justice in giving female names to hurricanes. She was more dynamic now than the fastest whirlwind.

"The whole damn lousy mission is dead!" she shouted. "Our entire landing team has been murdered, including the captain. Bring the shuttle

back up!" she shouted at the first officer, who tried to hide behind standing orders. "The captain is dead, you hear! Everyone has been killed! No one survived, but us."

Reluctantly the officer gave in to her demand and brought the empty shuttle back to the ship. The video transmission from Mahesh's place amply supported her story. The six of us, Natalia, Jill, and I, and Mahesh, Cira, and Alenaah, together with the control center crew, watched the video projection in utter disbelief, wondering how in heavens we had made it out of this hell ourselves. We watched the screen in this stunned state until the camera was consumed by the flames and stopped sending pictures.

Once the transmission stopped, Natalia ordered the ship to be placed into a higher orbit. Mahesh, Cira, and Alenaah were put up at the captain's quarters. There was little space on the ship for as long as the reconstruction after gravity change was still in progress.

Natalia and Jill and I took turns at the bridge.

A full crew conference was set up for the same night, and an alert was issued that we were to be notified whenever the space travelers reappeared who had previously visited the ship. At the conference all the video images were shown. Natalia related once more what had happened. Especially telling were the images recorded from Cira's window with the crowd yelling below smashing our bicycles to pieces as though they were evil demons that threatened their civilization. They smashed them onto the ground until the spokes broke and the frames splintered and could be twisted into a grottesque mess.

Against this terrible madness as a background a group memorial was held for the people who were killed in this atmosphere of horror. Against the darkness of this background even the captain stood out like a gentle saint and was remembered as such.

The memorial was designed by Jill to quickly become a celebration of our humanity, a celebration of great riches that we all shared in the sphere of our hearts of unspeakable beauty and an endless Soul.

Bohr appeared promptly the next morning. Actually, I should call him Olaf from here on, according to his real name. He appeared with precise timing just as breakfast was being served. He wasn't shocked at the captain's demise, nor at the death of the others.

"It was their choice to follow this path," he replies when I press him for a statement. He says that he had warned them about what would happen.

He didn't have to say more than this. Everyone had been at the conference in the great auditorium during gravity change when he gave his warning. Everyone knew what he had said.

I respected Olaf for not mentioning the captain's fault for the tragedy. I took it as a sign of compassion, even though normally he wouldn't

bother wasting any breath over what he knew we would be aware of already. It also might have been, as he once told me, that the concept of a future or of a past held no validity with him. It was no longer a part of his experience, but a measure that pertained to a Universe of limits that he had withdrawn himself from. He did though, speak at great length of the prospects ahead of us, of our exploring with him the secrets of the planet 'O'. He spoke of the 'O' people as a civilization that has been remarkably successful, that also had become gentle, caring, even to the point that the very concept of peace no longer seemed to apply. It didn't apply, since the opposite, apparently, was inconceivable by them.

Olaf explained that the ship would be put in orbit over planet 'O' and become mankind's base of operations for a real first contact. He offered that his own home planet, Bohr's planet, should be used to serve as a logistical base and as a base for resting and learning the language that was spoken on 'O'. He suggested that there could be a daily shuttle service set up between the two planets, and of course an hourly shuttle between the orbiting ship and the planet surface of 'O'. There would, of course, be a constant interchange with the people from 'O' and those in the ship, where he himself would become one of us for the duration of the exploration project.

He spoke a fascinating language, like a science fiction writer might speak, whose story fires on the imagination. Only once in a while we got jolted back to the incomprehensible awareness that this was actually real what he talked about.

At one point a mathematics genius asked how he intended to get us across three galaxy clusters in the space of a lifetime, and back to Earth.

I still remember his smile. Olaf just sat there and smiled. "Go to the planetarium," he says to the man. "You will discover that we are already there."

The only explanation as to how this was possible, that he was able to give, was based on revealing the secret behind the nose cone of the ship that had allowed them to make their journey to Alpha Centauri in the first place.

"Now Bohr would have his chance!" I said to myself. As far as I could tell, I was not alone with this assessment. As far as I could tell Olaf was truly his old self again, the old Bohr coming to life. We all had a chance now to make discoveries, of ourselves and a of a new world, beyond anything we ever hoped for or had dreamed of.

Chapter 4 - The Plan Changed

Apart from the fact that nobody understood how the ship had arrived at the distant planet that had become our new object for exploration, life hadn't changed much on the ship. Most people had barely realized that a new rule on the bridge had been ushered in that day. The shock of the tragedy, like a gray mist, continued to pervade everything. Outside of this, for most of the crew it was business as usual.

Perhaps the disaster had been expected by the crew, and since it hadn't been avoided by anyone's own action, nobody cared to talk about as if they were all moved by some hidden shame. Or maybe it was Olaf's presence in the midst of all that, which took the brunt off the effect of the tragedy. And so, what could have become a far more crushing emotional defeat, resulting in an unimaginable demoralization of the crew at the end of its now six-year struggle that suddenly seemed all in vain, was completely avoided. Nobody talked about what it would have meant turning the ship around empty handed, facing another six year struggle going home with nothing to show for it at the end. Instead, the opposite happened. Everyone that I talked with was excited about the prospects at hand, which Olaf had described in such glowing terms. The feeling emerged out of the mist, and became stronger, that the new prospect might redeem the failure. The reason for the growing optimism was based on the simple fact that Olaf had gained such a huge credibility, with his previous forecast, as gloomy as it had been, that they now trusted him completely.

Olaf saw this as a problem. The problem was that nothing should ever be taken by faith. "Science and blind faith don't mix," he said repeatedly. In order to avert this "crisis" as he saw it, he staged a lecture series in the great Auditorium to explain in detail why the 'O' people could be trusted not to cause another tragedy, and why a great deal could be gained from them for humanity by exploring their history as a highly successful and advanced society.

Olaf addressed the crew as fellow explorers. He invited them all to go to the ship's observatory and look at the planet, although there was little to see, and then look at the planet with their mind's eye by interpreting the new streams of data that a few sensory sweeps around the planet would gather. He promised a "treasure" they couldn't imagine yet. He also promised that in the process of this exploration they would make profound discoveries about themselves, discovering aspects of our humanity that had remained hidden, but was reflected in the spirituality of the 'O' people and in their culture, by which they had evidently succeeded, and had even exceeded what mankind would presently measure as success.

Nobody seemed surprised therefore, after this lecture, when planet 'O' revealed its secrets in about the same fashion as Gamma .8 had. The

main differences were, which became the general topic of conversation and questions even during the lecture, that planet 'O' was a significantly larger planet, much heavier than Gamma .8, with a 70% cloud cover that effectively prohibits visual observation. Its relative gravity measured 1.319G. A 170-pound person would weigh 224 pounds on the planet surface. The biology officer had assured Captain Natalia Ostropovitch and the ship's crew during the lecture, that this large increase in relative weight is still within the range of variations that a human body is able to tolerate. Consequently she allowed the Mission Control Officer to go ahead with making plans for a landing. All this happened in front of the whole crew, even before Olaf's lecture series concluded. Nothing was hidden anymore. Nothing was kept secret. By the time Olaf was finished there wasn't a trace of despondency left about the previous failure that had ended in tragedy. To the contrary, everyone's eyes 'sparkled' again with excitement. People felt privileged to be at the forefront of the greatest event in human history that was about to unfold. Some had tears in their eyes.

The mapping operation, this time, proved to be more difficult than it had been at Alpha Centauri. For one thing, we lacked the advance data that the scout probes had provided about Alpha Centauri. It had allowed us to make detailed plans before we could even see the planet. All of this was not available this time. In addition the cloud cover of Planet 'O' made visual observation of the surface impossible. The mapping had to be performed entirely with infrared interference spectroscopy; a computer assisted mapping process that in the end reveals more details than any common light spectrum mapping would. Input to the infrared mapping system was derived from two groups of sensors, spaced 1500 feet apart at opposite ends of the ship. In a single sweep, using this wide angle stereoscopic mapping process, we were not only able to distinguish between rivers, highways and rail lines; but also measure altitudes, determine the temperatures of its oceans and land formations. We were even able to do a limited mapping on the planet's mineral makeup and resource distribution. One of the surprises that came out of this mapping process was an unusually high temperature indicated for one the planet's two oceans.

The lack of any direct visual contact with the planet surface was more than offset by the volume of television input from the planet itself, which can only be described with one word; a flood! The ship's image analysis system was capable of processing a hundred TV channels simultaneously. Except, this proved to be not enough. The input was so rich that the voice/video accumulation of a single orbit would have been sufficient to keep the language decoder busy for a week. With this influx of information, everyone on board who could be spared from the ship's logistical duties was put to the task of watching TV. We could have used a crew three times the size we had.

One of the purposes in watching TV was to determine if there was any response on the planet to our presence.

Naturally, there was a response. Before the third orbit was completed a newscast showed our position in space; an artist's rendering of the shape of our ship; and an exact map of the orbits we had made. This in itself wasn't anything to worry about, but by watching their faces as they talked about us, we recognized signs of a great fear. It turned out that they were more afraid of us than we had been of them. This fear was not apparent in any of their earlier broadcasts.

Before this particular newscast had fully finished, all screens went blank. We looked at each other. Within moments Captain Natalia's voice came over the intercom.

"I have asked our friend to take to ship out of orbit to a distant, but stationary point in space, still near the planet 'O,' but far enough that we can't be easily detected. We will remain there until we are properly prepared for making contact with the people on the planet," she added calmly.

After the captain was finished speaking, Jill came onto the intercom and video screen in her new role as a member of the Mission Control Committee. She explained that we had frightened the people with our presence, and that it was generally agreed by everyone on the bridge that the 'O' people might be engaged in some form of interplanetary conflict, and might have recognized us as part of an attacking fleet. She explained that it could have been unwise for us to remain in close orbit.

After Jill, Olaf came on and announced a daily shuttle service from the ship to his planet, where the crew would be able to relax and enjoy some sunshine, until the landing would proceed. "The captain informed everyone that enough information has been gathered during the ship's three orbits to completely decode their languages, possibly to a greater extent than what had been achieved at Alpha Centauri. Also, there is enough information available from the mapping input to construct a precise model of the planet."

"All of this will take several weeks to complete," interjects Jill.

"Until this work is done," says Olaf, "I have been authorized by the captain to extend to the crew a warm welcome to visit my planet. It's yours to enjoy," he adds. "Take advantage of this holiday. The rivers are save to swim in, and some of the lakes are warm. Also there are no harmful aspects on the planet that I am aware of. You will encounter no dangers to your persons. And please do enjoy the fruits of this land. A friend of mine, named Odessa, will advice you upon arrival, which of the fruits are the best, and where they may be found. So get ready, the first shuttle leaves in an hour. Over and out!"

Being part of the bridge crew, I stayed on board with Olaf and Jill, and Natalia of course. Our meals now, came by shuttle from Bohr's planet, and to some degree was supplied by the agro plant that had to remain functional. Mahesh also stayed with us, and Cira, and a good portion of the

Mission Control Committee. As far as I was concerned, there was no other place in the Universe that I would have rather been at this time, than on this ship. These were exciting times.

The first shuttle had barely left when the language decoding system was able to do some crude translation of 'O' talk into English. Another system had already cataloged all the various shows we had recorded. Newscasts, of course, were the most profitable for understanding the current situation on the planet. Through it we learned about their structure of government, which appeared to be a form of independent democracies that were linked to one-another via a planet wide sovereign constitution akin to the structure that now governed our ship.

The planet itself appeared to be a high tech world of fast moving trains, air transportation, immensely huge cities that were often integrated into a single gigantic building in order to escape the effects of the weather. The weather, as far as we could see, was constantly wet and dark. Large indoors agricultural complexes supplied all the foodstuffs. Power was derived from nuclear fusion. Mahesh was delighted about that. He understood the concept, but had never seen it implemented.

Hardly a day had gone by when Jill jumped off her seat and announced yet another great discovery about "their way of life" that bordered on the miraculous. None-the-less, when all available information was analyzed, we were surprised to learn that the 'O' people were no more advanced in technological development that we had been on Earth.

"The only difference is," said Jill in one of her reports from the Mission Control Committee, "that the 'O' people have utilized every available technology they have created, in order to increase the productivity of their society, which became greatly enriched thereby. In other words, these people had actually used the technologies they developed, to enrich their common life and culture," said Jill. "She said that their technologies were by and large the same technologies that we on Earth had thrown away for a long time until the economies on earth had collapsed under the weight of the ensuing insanity that became self-imposed poverty. The point is, these 'O' people had done nothing unique that we couldn't have done, that we had actually prevented ourselves from doing."

Olaf added in his usual dry and coarse voice. "The difference between them and humanity lies in their mental technology that allows their physical technological wonders to become useful to the fullest possible extent." Olaf gave many lectures on these and related subjects.

Politically, too, the 'O' society appeared like a great puzzle to people, when judged against earthly standards. There appeared to be a central government all right, but one that had no authority over anyone except in a limited scope that pertained to specific areas of business concerned with providing planet wide-services.

Natalia and I could understand their planetary government perfectly, from our own experience with the captain, that had made us look more deeply into universal principles. If we hadn't grown up that way over the

past few years, pondering our own constitution, and living by it, the 'O' people's well functioning world of independent democracies, which were as numerous as grains of sand on a sea shore, would have been incomprehensible to us from a functional standpoint. There was no interference accepted, by law, between those sovereign democracies, regardless of their size or power, so it seemed. What magic made the thing work? We were puzzled until someone mentioned our own historic "Treaty of Westphalia" from 1648, which had been trashed by Napoleon at the desire of the empire that had controlled him. Someone also pointed out that the great Treaty of Westphalia was destroyed by the same oligarchic forces of empire that had repeatedly destroyed the Credit Society Principle that was discovered in this timeframe, and had been implemented for the first time in human history in the American Bay Colony of Massachusetts, which the English King had promptly outlawed, which had been re-instated when the King's rule was abolished, but had become lost again through imperial interventions.

Jill suggested that the 'O' people had probably come to the same point where we mankind stood in 1648, and had simply carried on, always protecting and cherishing what they had created, and searching for opportunities to create more, and to move forward. Jill announced that as far as could be determined the economy of the entire planet was built on a novel form of the National Credit Society Principle, rather than on the private monetarist platform that ruled mankind back home. She told us that no traces have been discovered of the existence of a private banking system, nor any forms of imperial monetarism. Against the background of these revelations many people on board began to gain a dawning awareness, that the reason why the same progressive process hadn't worked on Earth, was that mankind had allowed the private monetarist forces to gain control over the world and trash mankind's many treasures of its sciences and industries almost as soon as they had been created. Natalia pointed out during one of the lectures that the same system certainly hadn't worked too well for us on the ship under the rule of the captain, until she and I had discovered the imperative of the principles that superseded the authority the captain had wrongly assumed. She suggested that the 'O' people might have simply followed the same thought processes and had been building on it.

Mahesh took me aside one day and said that a similar system had once been tried on his planet, but had ended in a dismal failure there.

"Ah, so it's again the mental technology that makes the difference," Olaf replied to Mahesh during that discussion on the bridge.

Still another thing became apparent near the end of the seventh day, after our political research began. The planet was unmistakably at war with an interplanetary enemy. A great force, which appeared like a pirate fleet of blundering invaders, was terrorizing the 'O' people, though none had ever seen a trace of that fleet. According to information they had decoded

from other worlds that their astronomical teams had come across via long-distance communications, the 'O' people became aware that a large fleet of war ships had routinely held other worlds at ransom and had destroyed whatever societies had not bowed to their demands. The demands had been nothing less than submission to the marauder's slavery. It was said in the communications, that the planetary raiders would accept nothing less than absolute control over whomever they had conquered. Some of the long-distance communications were also cries for help, and a warning to others.

In order to deal with the impending threat, a think tank had been in session on planet 'O', apparently for some years already, to come up with ways of dealing with such an attack, if it ever came upon them.

Olaf withdrew himself to his planet, after we recognized the 'O' people's dilemma, "to puzzle this thing out" as he put it. He told us that he was best able to concentrate on complex issues when sitting in his museum at home. However, as soon as the ship's language translation system was up to speed to provide real time two way translation, he returned to the ship. He explained to Captain Natalia Ostropovitch that in his estimation the ship was at a safe distance where it was, but close enough for a two-way communication if we focused our antennas onto their deep space radio facility that had been discovered as a by-product of the mapping process. He calculated that there would be a six-second-response delay because of the distance between the ship and the planet, which he said, is quite acceptable for initial conversation.

As no one on the bridge could show any reason why this was unfeasible, the captain gives orders to make the preparation. The transmission is scheduled for ten in the morning on the next day.

Olaf returns to the ship in his gold suit for the occasion.

He introduces himself into the microphone, and half a second later, the computer spews out a sequence of garbled sounds that are transmitted down to the planet. After the transmission there is silence on the bridge. Fifteen minutes later a garbled response comes back.

"Hello, people from Earth," our computer translates.

"Hello, people on planet 'O'!" I reply into my microphone that was also connected to the language translation system. We all had microphones on the bridge, built into our uniforms.

"We are glad you are able to hear us," Olaf adds to my message. Six seconds of silence go by, seven, eight...

"Can we meet at some place," the monotone voice of the speech synthesizer translates their response.

"We would be glad to meet you on your planet, at any place that you can extend this communications link to. Without our ship's services, in translating your language, we cannot communicate with you," says Olaf into the microphone.

"I would prefer if we could meet on some neutral territory," Natalia adds, identifying herself as the captain of the ship. "But this isn't possible, I know," she adds.

"We don't understand your meaning of the term 'neutral territory'" their reply comes back. "We assume that you mean a place outside of our cities. If this is correct, would an ocean resort suit you?"

"This would do," Natalia replies and identified herself once more as the captain of the ship, which she says, is an exploration ship.

"Would you please describe the location," Olaf adds. He reveals to them the extent of our mapping information.

"Come to the point of the spit where the two oceans almost meet, we will have a communications link installed by tomorrow. We expect you at the identical time. Also, please limit your delegation to six people. We will select six delegates of our people to meet with you...."

One of the reasons of the planet's dense cloud cover, we had determined, was the high temperature of the larger of its two oceans. The temperature was slightly lower than in a Jacuzzi. The entire ocean therefore resembled a giant hot pool. I couldn't help wonder what kind of a seaside resort this would turn out to be.

Olaf ordered a gift for the 'O' people to be brought from his garden, consisting of five dozen red roses arranged in a modern vase purchased from Earth! And from the ship's kitchen he ordered a picnic package as an emergency reserve, enough to supply six people for two days. Captain Natalia suggested that only those should go on this mission who were familiar with the Bohr/Miller effect.

Olaf shakes his head while she is still speaking. "That won't be necessary!" he interrupts her.

"But it won't hurt," she insists.

Olaf nods, but doesn't say anything in reply.

Olaf was well aware of our last moments on Gamma .8 and the panic of the massacre that had taken the life of so many of our fellow ship-mates. How could he have denied any captain the right, or even suggested, that she not be as cautious and protective of her people as her understanding of the situation moved her?

The landing party therefore consisted of the captain, Olaf, Jill, Odessa, Olaf's friend, Miller, who called himself Werner Heisenberg, and myself. And so, once again, this time precisely at 09:15 A.M. of the 28.3 hour day of the 'O' planet, one of our landing shuttles dropped through the trap door and floated away from the ship towards an alien world. This time too, the majestic Waltz of Richard Strauss came to mind as it did over Gamma .8. There were differences, however, that set this flight apart from the earlier landing. Olaf was on board with us, and he was totally relaxed. He had his feet on the flight control console and leaned comfortably back

into his chair.

"Fifteen minutes!" he says and grins, pointing to his watch. "We will be on the ground within two seconds of the appointed time. We'll impress the hell out of them!"

I suppose he couldn't have done anything more effective to put me at ease, than putting his feet on the console. Natalia and Jill might have felt the same way.

Jill took control of the ship during the final ten thousand feet of descend. She was the most familiar of the landing party, with the mapping details and landmarks that we were told we would see.

She brought the shuttle down on what looked like a parking plot, which we promptly melted into a sea of boiling tar that began to burn once we turned the engines off. But the tar was quickly flooded with water. Moments later a welcoming committee met us, standing in a group. It consisted of three fat persons in black suits wearing a red cummerbund around their waist, each with a different design or crest stitched into them. The design of their crests was as different as our clothing was. Olaf wore his golden suit; Odessa a red dress that matched to color of the roses she presented to the three men; while the rest of us were more conventionally dressed. Jill wore black. Natalia and I wore the ship's light-blue uniform, and our friend Miller looked like he was ready for Hawaii. He arrived in white pants, wearing a Aloha shirt of brilliant colors.

The atmosphere on the planet surface was that of a steam bath. Inside the building, though, the air was dry. We were ushered into a large hall, a dance hall perhaps, or a dining room where a table had been set up with a thousand kinds of fruit and snacks on it, and three glasses per setting. Odessa was given the honor to sit at the head of the table, opposite to the tallest of the 'O' people. The rest of the hall was filled with cameras, lights, cables, and microphones. Evidently we were seen by billions of people via planet-wide television!

The roses were given a prominent place on the table, which was quickly rearranged to make room for them. They also received the appropriate attention from the television cameras. It suddenly occurred to me that Olaf had once brought the same kind of roses to the ship, saying that they had come from planet 'O'. This meant that the people were familiar with these flowers, which provided a common ground to build on.

"One thing has puzzled me about your society," Olaf starts the conversation, looking at one of the 'O' people beside him. "How were you able to prevent your society from folding into itself. Often societies decay from a certain level, into a primitive culture, which rarely supports more than 10% of the original population. But instead of decaying, you have blossomed to a very great prosperity. Can you share with us your secret?"

None of their faces moved. Nor did they answer. The 'eternity' lasted for at least eight seconds. Then there was a universal smile and a puzzled look as the translation came back from our ship. They looked at each other. One of the people shrugged his shoulders. There was a discussion among them. The man at the head of the table answered, while the others nodded in agreement.

Now, once again, eight seconds went by before the synthesized voice of our translation system came through the intercom.

"We don't know what to tell you. We had no idea we succeeded where others have failed. Thank you for telling us."

Olaf smiles and waves his hand. I wondered if he knew that this gesture would likely be seen by several billions of the planet's inhabitants and would be imitated from this day forward.

The headman of their delegation, sitting across from Odessa repeats the gesture.

"You are welcome to research our history and our way of living," he says to Olaf, then smiles, apparently, and adds. "We would appreciate to know what you find out."

I judged the meeting a great success. The meeting was most remarkable for the mutual respect it had generated in so short a time. A banquet was served in due course, viewed by billions no doubt. We were assured that the food was totally free of any toxic substances or microorganisms that could possibly be harmful to the most sensitive organic creature.

"It's baby food," Heisenberg jokes in what he understood of the 'O' language, which brings a jolly laughter to this festive atmosphere.

"A very good analogy," the headman approves.

It was some kind of roasted ham, garnished with sweet marinated fruits instead of vegetables.

Of course, since the place was also a seaside resort, we were invited to enjoy the pleasures of the sea. Bathing suits, suntan lotion, none were needed there. Outside the 'dressing rooms,' which were only for undressing, was a steam bath in which enormous breakers of hot briny soup were crushing down unto a beach of fine sand. Fighting your way through the waves intermixed with sand, was like being inside a pressure washer. Thank God we wore no bathing suits. They would have been filled with sand in no time. It required a certain skill just to remain standing. The fun part apparently was in the body surfing. Those who were skillful enough could achieve several hundred yards. Olaf of course, as a joke, went three hundred yards further without ever touching the water. He was instantly declared, 'Beach Hero, Deluxe,' and honored with a kiss from a fat lady who later embraced him after their pictures were taken. It was all in good fun.

We stayed three days at the resort, during which the ground rules were established that would govern our subsequent visits, as well as their visits to the ship, and to Bohr's planet, which Olaf had offered them.

A standing team of tour guides was arranged by them, who would take us to any place of our choosing, answer any question we would care to ask; in return we would hold a news conference once a week and share our discoveries. It was an easy bargain for us, and a rich one for them, as they assured us. Their visiting teams, of course, were afforded the same hospitality. The plan was ideal, almost too good to be true, or rather, too good to come true. Unfortunately the dream didn't last for the length of the time we had envisioned.

The first ten weeks went fine, until one day; the ship's deep space sensors recognized the approach of a substantial fleet of space vehicles. The sighting was shared with our friends on the planet after Martin and I had gone out to the fleet to confirm what we had suspected. The news, understandingly, initiated a great scare among them.

The planet had no defenses against a fleet of the kind that Martin and I had seen, a fleet of slow moving battle wagons, bristling with gun-like objects on all sides, which were potentially capable of firing nuclear weapons. Fortunately, their approach was slow. The 'O' people had at least six weeks to prepare a reception for the fleet.

In a sense, we were most fortunate to have come at the time we came. In times of crisis, the true color of a people becomes much more apparent than it normally would. It came as a great surprise to all of us that we were permitted to take an active part in the discussions about the planet's defense. We were limited only to the extent that our electronic translation system was able to keep up with the flow of the 'O' people's fast language, especially when they were speaking emotionally in the heat of the most crucial debate that likely ever took place on this planet. Nuclear weapons were mentioned. They said they had plenty of them, and beam weapons, and all sorts of high velocity rail guns. They had prepared themselves so thoroughly for this encounter that I couldn't see what the great excitement was about.

I soon found out the reason.

In spite of their immense stockpile of armaments that could have destroyed the fleet many times over, they were afraid. They had a deep-seated reluctance to deploy any weapon that would harm or even kill living beings. The very idea of having to destroy other people, even just to stop the threatening ships, appeared to churn their stomachs. It was as if the 'O' people were at war with themselves rather than with the fleet.

One of the moderators of the discussion panel commented to us that their civilization would much more likely withstand the onslaught of violence, even the enormous destruction the fleet would most certainly cause, than it would be able to survive the introduction of violence into their own culture. Thus, they couldn't allow it, not even if it was vital for

their physical defense. In a very real sense, these people were fighting for their survival, before the war had even begun. They were sitting on an arms cache so huge, that a fraction of a percent of it, could have obliterated the oncoming fleet in deep space, with complete safety for them, and this long before the fleet came into range to harm them. But they couldn't use any of it. They felt they were doomed, no matter what they did.

Werner Heisenberg told the man not to worry. He told him that Olaf would think of something. He always had in the past.

"No, no, Heisenberg!" I interrupt him, "Olaf isn't Merlin, the magician!"

Werner just smiles. "Just you wait and see!"

I suppose I should have realized by then, that whenever Olaf gets into the act, the most exotic ideas come to light. Maybe his genius could outshine that of the 'O' people. After all, the 'O' people hadn't developed the Bohr/Miller effect yet, but he had.

One of the options Heisenberg suggested, was a rather crude one. He proposed that he transpose the entire planet 'O' into a different galaxy, or transpose the marauding fleet to some distant space.

Olaf shook his head. He wasn't sure if the planet would stay together in one piece. Also, transposing the fleet was out of a question. We couldn't be certain that we would be able to find an environment for them in which they would survive. Since killing them wasn't an option, that door was closed. Nor was it needed, so it seemed. It turned out that Olaf had a better idea with a simpler solution. His suggestion was that we could temporarily evacuate every man woman and child off the planet, to a suitable new planet, to let the war pass by them, and then bring them back. Olaf liked the idea, because as he reminded me, Natalia and I, had successfully proven this principle in our war with the captain. He reminded us that we had simply pulled ourselves out of this war and let the captain fight this war by himself, which was largely against himself anyway, against his own humanity.

Olaf's suggestion and explanation caused a great uproar among the 'O' people. Many liked the idea. Some could understand the principle involved. Nevertheless, Olaf's offer was eventually rejected. They told us that it had taken thousands of years of hard labor to build their civilization, and to create an environment that made life tolerable on this wet planet, even easy and comfortable. They wanted to know by what reasoning we could possibly propose that they surrender all this to a bunch of thieves? The 'O' people suggested that there should to be a better solution possible that causes no harm to anyone, or any loss.

I watched Olaf with great interest, to see how he would take such a rejection. I had never seen him take a rejection before.

He listened intently. His eyes sparkled even then, as they always sparkled when he was defining the leading edge, thinking in an arena of

complex problems. At one point he was about to grin, I could see it, but he suppressed it. Obviously he knew he was right.

"Your life isn't located in houses and factories, and in machines," he says to the 'O' people. "Your life is bound up in building your civilization, not in dead things. It is bound up in using your intelligence, in extending yourselves beyond the point where you merely live. You would in no wise die, should you ever lose your cities and machines, even if the fleet would totally destroy them. But I can promise you this: You will most certainly die as a people if you ever stopped building them!"

They looked at him as though he was either totally stupid or inexplicably, totally on the mark. Since they couldn't figure out which it was, his suggestion was dropped once more from the agenda. However, it wasn't dropped from Olaf's consciousness. I have long ago realized that it is quite impossible to exile a genie back into its bottle, especially not one that Olaf had let escape.

Since they had stated their standpoint, Olaf promptly retired to his planet. On planet 'O' not another word was spoken, to my knowledge, on the subject, as if an idea of this magnitude needed to ferment in the mind before it could ripen into something digestible. Maybe Olaf needed a breather himself. Or maybe he hadn't thought the thing through to its final solution. How does one move seven billion people, and turn one of the most industrious planets in the Universe, into a ghost town? This must have posed quite a challenge, even for Olaf, though he never spoke of it.

It was Mahesh who gave him the answer that he needed for a breakthrough, though Olaf never actually said so. It isn't that he is too proud to ever admit that he needs to be helped at times. He just doesn't seem to worry about insignificant details like that. That's how he was. The important thing for him was that a breakthrough was made.

Mahesh had returned from the planet one evening with Heisenberg's shuttle service. He had asked immediately to be taken to Olaf's place, "as fast as possible, please," as he put it. He spoke carefully, in his best English, which he had become more and more proud of, and rightfully so.

I was with him at the shuttle's landing when he made the request. Without thinking much about the unusual request, I escorted him to the museum. "If Olaf is on his planet, he will be easy to find," I say to Mahesh. "He'll be in his museum."

"You come too," Mahesh insisted at the entrance to the dome.

Expecting nothing of any consequence, I trotted along and assisted Mahesh with the difficulty of walking on Martin's metal that formed the floor of the museum. Olaf was at his usual place, stretched out in a lounge in the middle of his work area, deep in thought.

Mahesh drew a chair up beside him and started to tell him about a place on the lower level of the main city where he had his rheumatic hip joint healed.

"It was a process of mental surgery," he says to Olaf.

Olaf shows no great interest.

Mahesh tells him that the process he proposed is quite commonly used. He says that it was explained to him that health could not be accurately defined or be understood on a strictly material basis. He was told that health had essentially nothing to do with material conditions, that it was a concept that belongs to a different sphere, together with life, love, truth and the like.

Here, he gets Olaf's attention. "What did you say? Repeat that please! They told you that health belongs to a different subset of reality, that it is an entity of its own, not conditional upon anything! Is this what they told you? If so, do you realize what this means? This means, that they know about the existence of multiple subsets of reality and have experienced the effect of this knowledge to some degree, which is the very basis for understanding the Bohr/Miller effect. My God, do you realize what this means in terms of saving their existence? It means that the fundamental knowledge of the Bohr/Miller effect that we discovered is also imbedded in these people's cultural heritage? It's already there. It only needs to be brought out."

Mahesh affirms every statement.

Olaf jumps out of his lounge. He was alive again! "Come, we have work to do," he says to Mahesh.

With this said, both men disappear out of sight into the direction of the lab area.

I just remained standing there, speechless.

I remembered Mahesh telling me earlier that he had not been able to walk without pain for over fifteen years, but had been healed.

"All that the 'O' people need to do now," says Odessa, who had overheard the conversation, "is to give some focus to what is already within their innermost awareness. They only need to give it a different form, quite a different form indeed, a new kind of concrete definition, a scientific interpretation that will start their own logical progression..."

"They have a week, don't they?" I interrupt.

"What if it doesn't work?" says Natalia, who had come with me from the planet, who was already at the museum when we arrived.

Heisenberg interrupts Natalia with an 'urgent' gesture. "They have exactly nine days!" he says.

"It better not be like our infamous Leipzig affair all over again," says Odessa, joking, and punches him gently for interrupting.

"Are you suggesting that the entire population of the planet 'O' might end up in the middle of the Amazon forest?" I ask, and grin.

Heisenberg starts to laugh. "They would find the Amazon forest too dry!"

As Heisenberg realizes that Olaf's plan was about to be executed, whether the 'O' people liked the idea or not, he begins to shake his head.

"And what if it doesn't work?" Natalia says again?

Heisenberg agrees with her. He figures that it isn't quite right to put so many people through such a risky process.

He turns to me and suggests that we should instead pay "these Gorans," as he now called them, another visit. He emphasizes the term, Goran. He seems to like the term. "Maybe we can find a way to sabotage the Gorans' ships, disable their guns, disrupt their weapons systems, or do something else to render their entire fleet harmless, which would force the fleet to turn back home for repairs. They might then think twice about coming this way again."

"The challenge that the 'O' people face is the same as what humanity on Earth is facing," I say to Olaf. "Except our people on Earth don't have this option that you propose, not even the one that you are proposing, to just pack up and leave the planet, when the going gets rough."

Heisenberg shakes his head. "That's what I said, didn't I? I agree that sabotaging the offensive forces isn't an option that our people on Earth have. I wish I had a better idea. Do you know of a better way? If you do, I want to hear about it."

"They are facing nuclear war at home," I say to Heisenberg.

"Indeed they do, but this is not what is killing them," says Heisenberg in return. "That's secondary."

"Maybe in the end it will kill them," I say.

"Well, what is really killing them, is their mental stagnation," says Heisenberg. "Those 'O' people have correctly reasoned that their civilization would more easily survive the destruction of everything they have built, than they would survive the introduction of violence into the fabric of their mentality. Humanity is facing the same issue, and for all we know, and it may be facing the same urgency to solve it. It must be possible to find a way to 'sabotage' the driving force behind their dilemma. That's what I propose."

"How do you sabotage small-minded thinking?" I say.

Bohr explains to Heisenberg that humanity has been dead for so long that they stopped recognizing the mental technology that can pull them through. "They need our help! If we can save the 'O' people, we can save mankind in the same manner."

Heisenberg shakes his head. "They need our sabotage of the invading fleet. We need to sabotage the Goran's dream, so that they can't prosper by stealing and enslaving. What else can we do?"

"Let's go to the Goran fleet then and see if we can do something to help the 'O' people," I reply to Werner.

Bohr seems shocked for a moment.

"Yes, let's look for a way to do some sabotage to violence, of a

kind that we might duplicate in principle back home on Earth," replies Werner excitedly.

"OK, let's go," I add. I knew that Werner Heisenberg never liked to be called Werner. There was something about this name. So, I didn't use it, but this time I did, perhaps I did it to emphasize that he seemed to agree with me that the Earth's and the 'O's people's struggles were the same, and of the same urgency.

Odessa shakes her head. "Go if you must, but let me tell you, you're wasting your time."

"We must go," says Heisenberg. "Come," he says to me, "let's go. Maybe we can stall them for an extra week, though I hope for much more than this."

We counted fifty six of these menacing looking, flying battle tanks, everyone of them painted black and formed with smooth curved edges to deflect radar, each one sporting a white racing stripe that extended over the full length of the ship.

"Every one of the ships has an array of fifteen gun turrets," Heisenberg points out as we look them over, closely, "did you notice that? Five mounted under the ship, four on each side, six of them topside, and three more over the six main engines. How can we possibly disable them all?"

We slipped through the hull of the lead ship while Heisenberg spoke. We entered the ship in much the same manner as Martin had introduced me to the Bohr/Miller effect on the first day we met.

The ship we entered was of an older technology. Its interior was a maze of tunnels, tiny rooms; hallways lined with endless miles of pipes, wires, pull-cords, and mechanical shafts. The thing was certainly pre-light-pipe, pre-fiber-optics, and pre-LSI computer technology. Its walls and ceilings were painted, and the whole ship was dimly lit. The distinct coloring system that we noticed throughout the ship was indicative of an early age of color-coded orientation that had once been used in complex mazes.

Occasionally we came upon a water fountain in one of the hallways, that was dripping, which made the hallway appear like a shower in zero gravity. The ship's environment lacked the means of pulling the water droplets to the ground. The people, themselves, moved about ship with the use of magnetic shoes.

"Isn't that a beauty, this old crate?" says Heisenberg.

The ship also was ruled by an equally antiquated governmental system. The whip enforced a rule of law that was determined solely by the captain, producing a kind of order, which was likewise determined by him. The captain, who we figured the most brightly uniformed individual to be,

actually carried the whip with him. I couldn't believe what I saw, a real whip. We seemed to have strayed into the dark ages. And we saw the whip used. A soldier was brought before the 'king.' Apparently he was accused of something. There were arguments, limbs being waved into the air. Then the soldier bowed. His shirt was unzipped at the back. The 'king' added five lashes personally, to the man's many previous stripes. I could almost feel the pain, watching the soldier's face. "That bastard!" was all I could say when Heisenberg hushed me.

"No, the guy was lucky," Heisenberg whispered, and grinned. "Those Goran," and he emphasized Goran, "may be more human than you think. Under Hitler, a captain like this would likely have killed that man, and probably for much less."

"Why are you calling them Gorans?" I ask Heisenberg later.

"They remind me of Herman Goering and Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's buddies, and the gore that had become their trademark, the color of fascism."

"The fascism that the British Empire had hired Hitler for, to destroy Russia," I interrupt Heisenberg.

I sort of knew what he meant by focusing on fascism. I had seen the gore. When a people are drained of their humanity by cultured insanity, fascism unfolds in the minds of those emptied people. The gore on earth had no longer hurt them, but it had hurt me more than the victims. I had felt the hurt. The people on earth had gone too far that way. It was as if society had moved backwards in time, back to the time of the fascist state of Hitler, followed by those worse times that came after Hitler, where torture became the rule in the 'civilized' world, and murder, lies, and destruction, trailing out into endless wars. Maybe, time, wasn't the right term to use as a reference, with time being an invalid concept and all, in the way Heisenberg understood things. Nonetheless the entire scene of the Goran's fleet before us appeared as if it were a page taken out of Earth's history, re-edited into a galactic setting.

By seeing their ships, by observing one of them close up in operation, I hoped that we might find a weak flank, to do something to prevent their attack. But there was no open flank. I could see no hope that their invasion of the planet 'O' could be averted by us. There existed no central control that we could disable and thereby cripple an entire ship, much less the entire fleet. Each gunner was operating on his own. Each gun station had its own missiles, and its own guidance system for the missiles. The guidance systems were crude. They were based on some primitive computer assisted video feedback process. Every gun station that we inspected had its own independent targeting system. They all looked the same, but they weren't interlocked. There was a certain beauty in building battle-wagons with this multiple redundancy that seemed to make them immune to any form of sabotage. Our own ship's power plant had zero redundancy compared to

that. Therefore it had failed and had endangered us all.

"Can't these people see us?" I ask Heisenberg as we search through the ship for a central weapons cache. "Are we invisible to them?"

"Of course not!" he laughs. "You can see me, can't you? But that's because of the Bohr Miller effect. A primitive person can align its perception only to a single subset of reality at one time. They can't be on both sides of the threshold and multiplex themselves into many different, sometimes opposite spheres of experience. For them, this can't be done, at least not by any process that they seem to have within their grasp. Nevertheless, they can see us. They just can't recognize what it is that they see. We might be just an imaginary shadow to them, or a thought, or a dream, something for which they have no reference in their 'real' world."

"So, they can't see us then, can they?" I ask again.

Heisenberg just nods and lets it be with that.

Since we couldn't find a central weapons cache that we might sabotage, we kept looking around for a way to disable the ship itself. That too, seemed futile. Every engine was a completely self-contained unit with its own individual power and control cable going to the bridge, and even those cables were doubled up for every engine. There was simply nothing we could do to stop those ships. The only remaining option that we had, was to disable the crew, to take the crew away from the ship as a diversion, to some nice, comfortable place that will get them to take their minds off their planned deeds.

"These guys need a holiday, anyway," I joke. Those words a kind of slipped from my lips as we entered the common room that apparently doubled as a mess hall. "A week in Hawaii would do wonders for them," I say jokingly. Everyone that we saw looked glum. They slouched in plastic seats at metal tables. Some were playing a game akin to checkers. Others just sat around and stared. One person was asleep. He slept in the same room, stretched out on the floor, making loud snuffing noises.

The people that we saw were without exception bald headed, with ears like ours, only smaller.

"Hawaii!" Heisenberg repeats. His face lights up. "I know just such a place for them, where they would be delighted to be."

I follow Heisenberg to the bridge.

We were hardly on the bridge for a minute when a great commotion broke out. A planet appeared in the distance, it grew larger rapidly. It was right in front of us.

Heisenberg grins.

"A vacation?" I ask.

Heisenberg nods and keeps on grinning. "Watch this!" he says.

The person, who appeared to be the captain of the ship we were in, turned into a fountain of short bursts of commands, bellowed into a microphone that was mounted over his chair. He sounded like a sports announcer during a last minute effort by an opposing team to swing a game to victory from a standoff. The old flying battle tank was racing towards the planet. A siren sounded. All personnel on the bridge scrambled to their seats. The call to battle stations was relayed throughout the ship. One could hear the shrill over the monotone wail that erupted the engines ere being ignited. With the most fearsome creaking noise coming from all joints of its hull the ship veered off barely above the blue haze of the planet's atmosphere.

"Look!" shouts Heisenberg, pointing to the right.

A small fighter craft appears from under the horizon.

"This isn't small..." I comment.

Silently it passes over us.

Again our hull creaks as the ship turns up, sharply, and at the same time veers ninety degrees to the left. The fighter craft comes into sight again. It turns skyward. We are chasing it upside down, turning skyward all in the same maneuver. The fighter changes course immediately, executing a tight loop away from us, than back towards us as though he intends a midair collision. We snap into a roll to avoid him. The fighter misses us by a hair.

"They are playing a game!" Heisenberg comments.

Moments later our ship repeats the same maneuver against the fighter craft.

I glance at the captain with one eye. He holds his rudder, or control stick, or whatever it is, with both hands and plays it with the agility of a teen aged youngster playing a fast moving video game. He practically jumps out of his seat for excitement.

As a second fighter appears from below the horizon. There appears a fireball to the right of it. Our ship scores the first hit! Cheers echo through the hall behind us. Some of the ship personnel get off their seat and embrace the captain, and then each other. Instantly they run back to their places as much as this is possible with the ship being banked towards the oncoming fighters.

A streak of light! A crash! The sound of twisting metal! The ship banks steeper. Then another flash of fire fills the sky. We had scored two, to nothing. Ah, but not yet! The smoking fighter turns back, still burning, but veers off towards the planet as four others take its place.

"Let's get out of here!" I urge Heisenberg.

When I came to, we were watching the fight from the top of a mountain.

I was amazed at the agility of those giant battle-wagons. How could

they do these maneuvers that our best jet fighters were barely able to do, and do them in space? Streaks of lightening filled the sky. Those people were capable of instant reactions. Then, three more flashes could be seen, but no explosions. I could almost hear their cheers each time they scored.

"The captain of the Gorans sure is good in outwitting them," says Heisenberg in a tone of honest admiration.

Indeed he was good. Miraculously the black ship wound and twisted itself out of a triple pursuit, then turned steeply towards the pursuers in a power dive with all its guns blazing. Another flash, but this time the trail of smoke came from the left pod of our ship that carried one of the three stabilizer engines, mounted on gimbals veering off the ship. The black ship began to roll, twist, but couldn't pull itself out of the power dive. It glowed a bright red in the atmosphere, for nearly a second, than exploded on impact.

The defending fighters, some trailing smoke themselves, wiggled their wings, dipped their noses; they were literally dancing for joy. Moments later, all of them drew together into a tight diamond formation that stayed together through one and a half loops. Coming out of the loop, the formation shot skyward and burst apart into four different directions, trailing green smoke behind them into the emptiness of space. They were ending their battle with a high precision Air Show.

"Can you believe that?" I say to Heisenberg.

He shakes his head and grins.

The fighter craft all re-appear, seemingly out of nowhere, and perform a four point cross over. Eventually they recombine into formation and dive below the blue haze for a landing.

"I must see this," says Heisenberg.

We zip down to the runway.

Another amazing show unfolds before us, as we watch them land.

The fighter craft all come in together in tight formation, smoke pouring from so many trimming nozzles and from torn-open gaping holes where a craft had been hit. We hear the tires screeching as they touch down. Every one of the craft appears several times larger than the largest airliner on earth.

On the taxiway the formation separates and forms a single line. Eventually all of the flying colossuses turn off to the right, all of them simultaneously facing a field of grass. They all stop in exact unison as if a conductor of an orchestra had lowered the baton. Even their hatches open precisely at the same time. The men jump out and walk a hundred yards forward. Every one of them do so in what looks like a formal drill step. They turn and salute each other, then salute their officers standing in the field.

This final precision show seemed to have closed the formalities. Hats were flying. The men were embracing each other. They, too, looked amazingly similar to human beings. They were carrying some of their buddies on their shoulders, and in this fashion posed for pictures in front of their ships.

One of the crews had brought out a pot of red paint and marked stripes on their ship according to the various entry and exit holes from missiles that had evidently not exploded, at least not until after they had passed through their ships.

They passed the red paint pot from ship to ship. One of the ships ended up quite red when they were finished.

"It appears that the entire battle has been a game to them!" says Heisenberg as though he was responding to my earlier observation.

"And a most exciting one!" I add. "But at what cost?"

One of the ships caught fire while pictures were being taken. Nobody bothered to put the fire out. The thing went up in flames while they march off, happily, hooting and cheering. In time the second ship caught fire, and then the third.

"I don't think we should have done this," I say to Heisenberg. "Six ships have been destroyed. Three crews are dead."

"Ah," he waves me off, while we were still watching this incredible scene. One of the ships that had caught fire suddenly explodes while the crewmen were still marching away. Nobody even bothers to look back. "Just think of the fun they had!" says Heisenberg. "Did you watch the Gorans, how they came alive during the battle?"

"Yes, for ten minutes."

"No, they had lived for this moment, James. This game was their life. It ended in ecstasy! Why must you insist on measuring life against time? I'm certain that countless people who have lived out their full lifetime have never been as alive as these fellows were, not even for a second. But those guys were as alive as they possibly could be, and they spent their life in a way they liked best, and went out of it in a blaze of glory like some super nova in the sky."

"You call this being alive?" I ask. "They weren't alive. They were in a frenzy that was engineered for them. They were carefully trained to react that way, to throw their life away in a celebration that involves suicide. They've been caught up in a conspiracy that unfolds in ecstasy."

"Aren't you a bit overreacting?" Heisenberg asks. "A conspiracy! That's stretching it a lot."

"Not at all," I protest. "What they lived for, that is, what they threw their life away for, wasn't life. Those were responses trained into them with lies that elevate poverty, violence, destruction, and death into ecstasy I don't think they ever knew what it means to live. I pity them. Their exciting tragedy is nothing compared to what unfolds in the world of

universal love, which they knew nothing about. They lived the life of gladiators who were trained to find glory in killing or being killed. Their thrill is found in having survived for another day."

"I didn't invent this game," says Heisenberg.

I agree. "But we have used their game for our purposes, just like the Romans had done, didn't we? What these people died for has nothing to do with advancing civilization, uplifting their world, and creating a brighter future for their posterity. They lived in a trance like our own youth once did years ago in the age of LSD, pot, grass, speed, sex, and heavy metal music. That's being dead as a person, while being still alive, Werner. We had three generations trained like that in America. Werner, they had been trained in committing suicide. And they did succeed. The end result was that there was no sanity left in the country, not in politics, not in finance, and not in the economy. The whole country began to collapse. We lost industry after industry. The final blow hit like a nuclear strike, as you probably know, which caused America to shut its nuclear power development down. It was an engineered accident that got the ball rolling, and an honest accident that nailed the coffin shut. America never recovered from that, but kept riding this train until it had no industries left. No war has ever devastated America so deeply as our own insanity has, and our people's indifference that let the insanity happen. Now we are playing this game here again," I say. "We shouldn't have done what we did to the Gorans," I say cautiously. "We can't help humanity with what we did to the Gorans. Our people back home have gone through this nonsense already, and on a much bigger scale."

"I have only set the stage for them," says Heisenberg. "They had the option to leave the scene. Both parties had that option."

"You're dreaming," I counter him. "Yes I agree, the youth in America had an option to save the continent, but with what? They had no education, no productive skills, and no humanity. Violence was the game, laced with killing, destroying and stealing. That was their game. That game was their entertainment, their life, and their politics. They have been trapped by a conspiracy, and have thereby been deprived of their ability to survive. And so, they didn't survive. You talk about options. What options were open to them? No society can survive long on such a wasteful platform that destroys its people," I added. "That is why the 'O' people are so scared to defend themselves with violence. They try to stay away from this trap, which they feel they would probably not survive in the long run."

Heisenberg doesn't answer me.

Moments later, we re-joined the Gorans' fleet. He looked at me and shook his head. That huge fleet appeared more and more like a parasite on a galactic scale, like a swarm of locust that no land could withstand or defend itself against.

"One's gone!" says Heisenberg quietly.

"What options have we got left?" I ask.

"Just look at them," says Heisenberg. "What you see is what I saw in America in its last years. America had the same kind of super-fortresses dropping thousand pound bombs on a defenseless people from 40,000 feet in the sky. In its last years, America never attacked any highly developed people who had the ability to shoot back. They only attacked defenseless nations, as did Israel in its last years. They were attacking children who threw stones at them in disgust, and they killed them with tank shells that ripped their bodies to pieces. They called this self-defense. When anybody dared to strike back they called them terrorists, bulldozed down their houses, burned their crops, uprooted their orchards, and confiscated their lands. That is what the 'O' people face if we don't succeed. They don't have any idea what is coming their way. Olaf, too, is dreaming. He was never interested in what was happening back home on Earth, but I've been there, I've seen it, and I'm scared for the 'O' people with their gentle nature."

I shrug my shoulders. "Still, we can't use the Gorans up the way we have," I reply. "We can't win that way, nor would we be any better in the end than they. We need another approach."

Heisenberg nods and suggests that we should return to the planet and find out what Olaf has to say to that.

Chapter 5 - Victory Without Shame

We found Olaf in the middle of preparing for a planet wide education broadcast when we returned.

Heisenberg briefs him about our adventure.

"It didn't seem right," I add.

"But neither does it seem right to let the Gorans come here and destroy those people's world," says Heisenberg.

Olaf grins. "Let them come. They won't destroy anything. I guarantee that they will cause almost no damage. When they find the entire planet a ghost town, what will they do with it? They are obviously too stupid to operate its complex transportation networks and factories. They may steal some food, a bit of fuel maybe. Eventually they will get bored and leave. A lifeless planet is quite useless to them."

Olaf looks at me, and smiles. "You see, technology is something quite personal. It's an extension of a people. The technology of one civilization, rarely fits the mentality or the needs of another."

"If this is so, why have we come here to learn from them?" Heisenberg remarks.

Olaf shrugs his shoulders, and threw his hands up in disgust. "I don't have all the answers either!" he says sharply. "So leave me alone, please!"

He devotes himself to his broadcast again. One could see the stress he is under.

"Let's talk to Mahesh about our problem," I suggest. In the last moment, however, we decide against that, and to go back to the battle cruisers.

"Maybe if we transposed them all to some virgin planet in space," Heisenberg suggests. "They wouldn't be harmed there. They would be forced to build a new life for themselves, which would keep them too busy to harm others."

"Let's try it!" I suggest.

"Yes, let's give it a try," says Heisenberg. Heisenberg plugs three of the approaching metal colossuses out of the fleet and transposes them onto a vast sea of grass, on a still developing planet in a different galaxy. We watch them climb out of their ships, walk around them in a dazed bewilderment, wondering what has happened.

I feel rather sorry for the poor Gorans, watching them. They look so terribly helpless, so totally lost, so hopelessly out of place in this vast empty land. It certainly was an odd sight, seeing the three giant gun ships grounded on an endless seeming expanse of grass and gentle winds. What good were missiles for hunting grasshoppers and gophers, which they soon

would have to catch in order to stay alive?

I say to Heisenberg that it wasn't right for us to do this to them.

"They'll survive," says Werner Heisenberg. "They're not stupid. They'll just have to change their lifestyle a little. They can no longer live by stealing and looting, killing and plundering. They'll have to learn to live by creating and building and developing a civilization of their own. They may some day populate this planet and build a great civilization here."

"They may also fail, and not survive," I reply. "That's why it isn't right to do this to them."

Werner looks at me surprised. "You didn't approve of what happened last time, how they ended up dead. This time I'm saving their life! But don't worry, we'll come back in a few months and see how they are doing."

"Sure we are!" I say in a sad tone of voice.

"No, I really mean it. We'll come back! But for now they stay," he says. "Did you ever think of what might happen if Olaf's project won't work, and the 'O' people would really have to defend themselves after all? Then none of the Gorans will survive."

"I never thought of that," I say.

"We do what we can," he says.

"Yes, but would we still respond in the same way if the Gorans had asked for our assistance, rather than the 'O' people?"

Well, I had Werner Heisenberg stumped on this one.

We left the Gorans' ships on the planet and returned for one last visit with the fleet. The bridge of the first ship we visited was alive with excitement. Apparently they had just noticed that some of their ships had vanished. They were furious, puzzled, and frightened all at the same time. They didn't exactly know how to react to such a disaster. And to make matters worse, they were drawing close to attack range. They must have been doubly uncertain and scared, wondering if this was a form of counter attack or a warning.

We went back to Olaf. We found him still with the 'O' people, overseeing the broadcasting of his lecture. He remained there until our own ship would have to be withdrawn to get it out of the way of the attacking fleet of the Gorans. Heisenberg and I traded places with him at this point. By then, his lecture on the Bohr/Miller effect had been translated by the ship's translation facilities and was being continuously repeated over every station on the planet.

Olaf never asked why we hadn't been successful. It seemed immaterial to him.

"You wanted a solution that you can take to Earth as an example of how to save humanity," he says to me, and he wasn't smiling when he said it. "All you have to do is keep your eyes open and observe. What you

will see will illustrate to you the only option humanity has to free itself from oligarchism that has trapped mankind into the deadliest games ever devised. And let me warn you. Don't be surprised when you find yourself mirrored in all of this." With this said, he leaves, without waiting for an answer.

Heisenberg's answer was that he would keep me company.

Neither Heisenberg nor I could tell if all the 'O' people got off the planet before the Gorans arrived. The airport certainly seemed totally deserted. The TV studio was totally empty. From the control tower the nearby city looked like a ghost town. Heisenberg and I looked out of the window and watched for the Gorans. The sky was gray, misty and dark. It was early evening. The people that left had turned off most of the lights of the city. From the control tower we had a view across the entire airport where everything that used to move had come to a standstill, except for a few birds. It appeared that the birds welcomed the quiet. A small flock of them came and settled on the grass, for what seemed like a rich meal.

The Gorans arrived as expected. The first of the gun ships emerged out of the mist on the horizon within the hour. It must have seemed weird to the great attacking fleet that no one defended the city. They came in on an attack run, but there was no battle. No one shot at them. They fired at a tanker truck and blew it up, but no one came and put the fire out. Three times the lead ship approached while the rest kept circling. Eventually five other ships joined in attack formation, all guns blazing. They blew up some of the airliners that were parked at the gates and veered off. Seconds later, they came again and repeated the process. They shot at the planes repeatedly, which they had already destroyed. They circled back three times that way. Finally, as they still hadn't drawn fire, one of the 'heroic' attacker ships landed.

The ship came to a halt at the end of the runway. It just stood there. It remained motionless for the longest time. Its engines appeared to be still powered. Finally the engines were powered off. Fifteen more ships joined the lead ship to claim victory.

In time the boarding ramps were lowered. The lead ship was first to lower its ramp. Out marched the Gorans; gun in hand, wearing shiny green helmets. Then, when nothing happened to them, more swarmed out of the rest of the ships. They spread out like swarms of little green ants. Within minutes they had spread over the entire airport. I watched a couple of them attempting to get a supply service vehicle moving, with no result. They were arguing with each other, then traded places, and eventually started to fight each other before they gave up and walked off.

It was quite a lot of fun, watching them. They had a great time. As it was, they didn't need the 'O' people's trucks. They had brought their own vehicles in their ships, light vehicles that carried them, load after load, to

the nearby city to 'conquer' it!

Heisenberg and I left the control tower at this point. We watched them in the city as they scurried through shops, made a mess of things, stole everything they could to their heart's delight. But there was only so much that they could carry away.

The funniest scene we witnessed was in a hotel. One of the Gorans had decided that he would take a bath, or a shower. He was undressed, but couldn't get any water to come on. He tried every knob, lever, and fixture. He pulled, pushed, kicked the bathtub twice, and got exceedingly furious. Finally he had enough, pulled his gun from his clothes on the floor and shot the bathtub out of sheer frustration and then walked off, his clothes in hand.

Heisenberg and I returned to planet 'O' a week later. The entire fleet had moved on by then. The damage they had caused was minimal, especially when considering the destruction a full-scale war might have caused. Most of what they had looted was left behind on the way, or in piles at the airport. Some of the 'O' people had already returned, clearing the runway of furniture, computers, blankets, bicycles, canned food, anything one cares to name that they couldn't find space for on their gun ships.

In time, most of the 'O' people moved back to their beloved planet, as Olaf had assured them they would. Some, obviously stayed behind at their new places, even if there weren't any hot oceans there, which appeared to be rare in the Universe, and those nice clammy, cloudy, gray days that they seemed to love. Some people, probably also moved on in search of still other new planets, possibly founding whole new civilizations throughout the Universe. We wished all of them well.

In the end, we had no way of knowing what exactly the final result was, of Olaf's conducting an interplanetary war. But what did it matter? We were satisfied that the 'O' people could be relied upon not to misuse the Bohr/Miller technology that had saved their civilization. Olaf and I felt that we could trust them, since the basis for it had already been contained in their own culture. We were also satisfied that the Gorans' fleet had been too primitively equipped to have monitored Olaf's lecture. And even if they had seen it they wouldn't have been able to make any use of it, not knowing the language for one part, nor understanding anything of the underlying principle. Thus the galaxies remained safe.

One thing appeared to be certain, the galaxies would never have been safe had the Bohr/Miller technology fallen into the Gorans' hands.

But what about me, I thought. I had seen Olaf's lecture at the studio. I had watched it three times from beginning to end, before the war started. Could I be trusted? Would I carry this volatile knowledge back to the Earth in a weak moment? In fact, could anyone of the ship who has been on this voyage return to Earth and not sow the seeds in the minds of humanity towards the ultimate destruction of the Universe? I suggested

to Olaf, if this were the case, we could never allow the ship to return. Its effect would be worse than if it carried a deadly virus. How much more lethal than the most deadly disease would be a technology that provides total freedom of movement, if it fell into the hands of a decaying, fascist civilization? This question was widely discussed on Bohr's planet.

The discussion generated a growing respect for the natural order of the Universe that we felt should never be tempered with. As a decaying civilization collapses within itself, it loses its technological capabilities. The result is that its range of influence becomes progressively restricted to the point where it completely isolates itself from the Universe. In this way, no damage can be done outside itself. The process of collapse assures that the insanity that led to it becomes self-quarantined.

"But if this quarantine were to be broken," I say during the discussions.

"God help the Universe!" Odessa replies.

We all agree with her.

"Us letting this happen, would be insanity itself," Jill suggests.

Heisenberg suggests that such a thing might, at one point, have happened to the civilization of the Gorans.

As it was, we all had something to say on the issue, though none of us dared to address what really lay at our hearts, what we were thinking about every waking moment from the time this question was raised. Would there ever be a chance for us to get together again with our families? Would it be possible to start a new life on earth, perhaps under a new name, in a new country where one would never ever be tempted to even once take advantage of the technology we had learned to use? If one person found out about us, the whole secret could become unraveled. Going back simply appeared too risky. We had become too sensitive to allow this to happen.

Cira and Mahesh swore they would never go back to their Gamma planet.

Another question was frequently asked. "Could mankind benefit at all from the new knowledge that we have gained?"

"Suppose we would return to planet 'O' and continue our in-depth investigation," says Olaf, "would anyone on Earth be able to use this knowledge? Certainly we could tell them about the vast networks of nuclear power plants that we have seen, which breed their own fuel, and about hydrogen fusion applications in mineral reduction plants that use nothing but ordinary rock as feed-stock to produce any base element one cares to name. We could also tell them about the 'O' people's advances in nuclear biology and medicine, and laser applications in surgery that we have seen. We could tell humanity also about the 'O' people's bacteriological technologies, and their engineering technologies for the construction of special vi-

ruses for healing. We could tell them about all these things, even about their political systems of local democracies that are operating without coercion and bickering. We could tell them also about the 'O' people's use of the National Credit Society Principle, which America had likewise developed, but which America had then scrapped at the bidding of empire. We could tell them also about their moral attitudes in which dignity, the protection and the respect for the needs of individual people are of central importance."

He turns to me, "You could tell them wondrous tales back home, but would you tell them anything they didn't already know? The fact is, every technology the 'O' people have, is known on Earth. The difference is that on Earth most technologies have been filed away as impractical, too costly, or too dangerous to imperial domination.

"What could they profit if we gave them what they already have?" Olaf asks. "Even if we told them that those technologies had been profitably applied, they would laugh at us. They might tell us that you can't compare planet 'O' with the Earth, and they would be right! Just try it!" he says to me. "Go to Berlin, go to the great university there and register a lecture of how to defeat oligarchism. You'll be lucky if you get a half a dozen signing up. Then tell them that oligarchism is the only disease they need to worry about, and tell them how this kind of disease was defeated on planet 'O' when the people there faced a mortal crisis which they might not have survived otherwise. Tell them also about your fight with the captain, which you didn't quite win, but were on the right track towards an eventual victory. If you taught this at the university, you wouldn't have a single student left after two weeks. Do you understand what I am saying?"

I nod. Olaf certainly was talented in leaving one speechless.

When asked to explain why such an approach would be illogical, he shrugs his shoulders and answers, "You tell me! I don't say it's illogical. To the contrary, that's the only logical thing that I could tell them, but they can't hear it. They've closed their eyes, their ears, their minds, and their heart. They've shut down their very Soul. The Chinese were once smothered by Mao's insane Cultural Revolution. Eventually they won their freedom from it. The West has not. It is more tightly entrapped than ever, but they can't see the foe. They just can't see."

Olaf's comment that our breakthrough achievements wouldn't work on Earth caused a great deal of speculation among us.

Mahesh came closest to a useful answer. He referred to distorted points of reference. He told us that he had seen lots of examples on his planet. At the height of its prosperity, everything began to be measured by cost rather than by its potential value or by its significance in promoting the welfare of society. On this basis the very best the people had to offer out of the depth of their common Soul, invariably appeared as too expensive, because it demanded the best from them.

"If you look for the cheapest," he says, "you certainly don't look for the best, and the cheapest is what you will get. By this measure, you'll invest into poverty! Poverty always looks cheap, while in reality it is the most potent drain on the wealth of a society ever invented. The logic behind this is, that you don't measure correctly if you don't measure the right thing."

Mahesh says that when society measures cost, it doesn't measure the substance of life; it doesn't measure its technologies that open doors: it doesn't measure its strengths that push back frontiers, or its dynamics that open new horizons. "How can you talk about costs," he asks, "when it comes to investing into life itself, without which you are dead, out of which wealth is derived in the first place?"

Here, he begins to laugh. As far as I could recall, I had never heard Mahesh laugh before. "In measuring costs, you measure poverty," he says, "and poverty is always 'cost' effective! It is highly effective in costing a lot for what you get in return. Its cheapness can collapse whole civilizations," he says. He isn't joking. He suggests that this seems to be a fundamental law, which he suspects, sets the Earth apart from planet 'O,' just as it had been the case on his own planet where the real law of universal love and the general welfare has become increasingly trampled under foot.

"As a consequence our world began to collapse," says Mahesh. "As the people's spirit began to die, the economy began to die too, civilization began to disintegrate; the physical support-structures were no longer maintained. Nobody, but a very few, could see that it wasn't the outcome of certain ensuing events that caused the collapse phenomenon on our planet, that it was instead the collapse phenomenon that had been driving the events, and that the phenomenon itself was driven by the collapse of the people's spirit. They lost their beautiful soul, and as a consequence they could no longer see it in each other. The collapse phenomenon soon reached a point that life itself was deemed to be too expensive to be maintained. Our society literally fell apart from within. As if someone had flicked a switch, our civilization turned itself off, or was turned off by external intervention that no one could see. The people on the Earth may be in the same situation. But would they listen to a warning? There had been warnings voiced on our planet, but people's ears had been too dull to hear them."

We decided on Bohr's planet to let mankind's research ship return home, but enriched with the lessons that we had learned by observing the civilizations we had encountered, and their stories. Olaf said that he didn't need it anymore. The 'O' people's language had been decoded. Also, he wouldn't want to keep it any longer if humanity couldn't profit from the result of his work in keeping the ship utilized, as seemed to be the case. Nor could we see a safety exposure in letting the ship go. None of its crew had been exposed to Olaf's lecture on the BME. On the positive side, the ship's archives of films and broadcasts were rich with information that could aid mankind to end its struggle against itself if it cared to make the

effort to become human again. Olaf assured us that we would know when this awakening begins, if it ever would. He suggested that we would sense the light of it right across the galaxies.

So it was, that one of the last orders issued by Captain Natalia Ostropovitch, was a call to the crew to return to the ship. Her last official entry in the captain's log contained the names of those who were staying behind on planet 'O' and on Bohr's planet, and the reasons for staying. Her final duty after that was to appoint a successor. With that duty completed she withdrew herself from the ship. Moments later the ship was transposed into a close trajectory to earth, a homeward bound trajectory at a velocity suitable for orbit insertion within three months. We all felt that the crew needed a few months to prepare the ship and itself for their arrival on Earth. Its arrival would be five years ahead of time.

Natalia herself was most deeply affected by this farewell to a place that had been our home where so much personal development had taken place, and profound discoveries had been made. She also felt that because of all the archives the ship now contained that it would keep humanity busy for decades, though it was a shame to send the ship back so 'empty' handed.

"I wouldn't exactly call it that," I counter her. "The ship has had a successful mission. It has reached its original destination. The researchers had a first hand look at what a civilization can become when its society fails to maintain its development. Then the crew has had a chance to explore a highly developed society at a period of time when it was fighting for its very existence. The crew also has explored Bohr's planet. I would say this is infinitely more than what we all had hoped for when the ship was launched. We would have been happy if Gamma .8 would have been at a primitive plant-life stage, with nothing bigger inhabiting it than frogs. The crew would have explored the life cycle of these frogs for something to do. Instead, the ship is going home richly loaded with treasures that no one on Earth ever imagined to even exist. The very fact that the people on the ship have witnessed and experienced the Bohr/Miller effect, even if they can't replicate it, should make the mission a success."

"Still, there remains so much more for mankind to explore and to see," Natalia sighs.

"Maybe, some day mankind will open its heart and discover its universal Soul as human beings that reflects the Spirit of the Universe," I reply. "Maybe we will find the ship in orbit over Bohr's planet one day, or a more advanced ship, and they will be inviting us to join them."

I recall that we let it be with that hope. It seemed that we were all happy with that thought for a bright future for mankind that is still possible. In real terms we had only one more problem to solve.

For the time being, Martin and Odessa had made room for us in their home. They didn't say that this would be temporary until we had a chance to build our own home. They simply extended their place a bit for this purpose. They said it wouldn't take long until we "ached" to have our own castles built.

Mahesh was the first to stir in that direction. He had always wanted to live in the mountains. The mountains reminded him of his childhood home. Within a month he had built a fine place at a most spectacular spot, on top of a tall cliff by the sea, where he could observe the sea birds. His place was constructed entirely of wood, similar to his last house, only larger. He told us that he had plans to devote himself to his music again, and that he also planned to set up a practice for healing on the principle he had discovered on planet 'O,' where he himself had been healed. He felt that since health is an idea that belongs to a different subset of reality, then he would certainly be qualified for such a practice. He felt that we were all in error by regarding health as a condition of material structure, subject to material manipulation. He could see it in the context of the Bohr/Miller effect. He said that he could see health as an idea that reflects the harmony and perfection of the Universe. He suggested that he had possibly gained a more thorough understanding of the concept of the Bohr/Miller effect, by applying it to healing, than the people on planet 'O' had developed. Thus he understood the phenomenon of healing better than they could themselves. He suggested that he might have a long career ahead of him as a highly efficient healer with a continuing clientele from planet 'O' and possibly from anywhere in the Universe.

I, on the other hand, wanted a spot right at the sea, at a beach. Or rather Natalia did so, with Cira, Jill and I agreeing. I felt closer to them than to anyone else, which Olaf said was good, but not good enough.

"Love is universal," says Olaf. He let it be with that.

It took some time to realize that Olaf was right. There remained a tight bond between Natalia, Jill, Cira, and I, which caused us all to share the same home, just as we had come to share our life during the mission. Considering the deep changes that we all had experienced, few people had more in common than the four of us had. I, certainly, was delighted that we would go on living together, and so were the others.

We immediately sat down and made plans for our house. It was to be the finest that could possibly be built; made out of the best materials, furnished with the richest furnishings the Universe could provide. For its structure, nothing less than Martin's Metal would do, and for its design, nothing would suffice but a price winning creation by the most renowned architects known to us.

Three firms were chosen as contenders, one in New York, one in Tel Aviv, and one in Singapore.

"How will you pay them?" asks Olaf, surprised.

Naturally we tell Olaf about our plans for payment.

"We'll pay then with diamonds, of course," Jill snickers.

I explain to Olaf that we located a planet that is littered with them.

Olaf responds with great excitement.

"The entire planet is one gigantic diamond," I say jokingly. "All we had to do, is look for a good-sized meteor crater. We could have brought back diamonds as big as a house," I say.

"Actually, we won't need more than a few clean rocks the size of a fist," says Natalia and grins. "Surely you remember how the people on Earth sell their soul for a few diamonds."

"Indeed," Olaf grins. He doesn't attempt to change our mind.

Martin suggests that we would only bring to the Earth what humanity always had the capacity to create for itself, and might be inspired now to create, including artificial diamonds.

Our house was built like a temple. Sixteen pillars supported it. "Four times four!" I explained to the architect that the four sides of the house were representing four states of consciousness: Night, Evening, Morning, and Day; or from a different perspective: the dimensions of Love, Truth reflected in Science, Soul that binds all mankind in joyous oneness, and the great dawn of the principles of the Universe coming to light in our experience that brought us a kind of individual healing.

The architect was happy with this demand. The struggle to build our new world on a high platform, he said, symbolizes mankind's ageless warfare with itself, and its determination to win. And when our building is done, he promised, the prophets of old would be justified who had suggested that the gates of it should not be opened until the sun is up. This is for the protection of the human family everywhere. For this symbolism, we loved his design. A home isn't a home unless it embraces all the best that humanity is and closes the door to anything that is false. That was what Natalia had focused on while we selected his plan.

"We need a focus that makes us proud to be human beings," Jill had said when supporting our choice.

"We need something that makes us proud to be alive and free," had been Cira's reason for her own vote in support of it..

The house fitted perfectly into its surroundings. Its beauty mirrored the sea, the gentle air of Bohr's planet, and the flowering trees alive with birds. It fulfilled everyone's dream. All aspects blended into one design that supported the reality on which the Bohr/Miller effect was founded. That reality contains no basis for separation between people, nor time split apart into a past, present, and future; nor distance that would let the Earth recede from our view, or hinder Gamma .8 from remaining imbedded in Cira's being. Our hope was that our light might cause a new epoch in both

of our home world's, once we would be wise enough to let this light shine onto them, resplendent in Love, rich in Truth, and alive in the atmosphere of Soul that nurtures our universal humanity.

Chapter 6 - Bridge to the Past

We all loved our respective home-planet and what it stood for. Naturally, the best of it was reflected in our new house. We loved our home from the moment we begun building it. Natalia and Jill and I loved it especially as a reminder of the history, where we had come from, and all the precious aspects that were connected with that history. Jill called our home, heaven, harmony, the reign of Spirit. Natalia saw in it the reflection of the principles of the Universe, the root of joy and power. Cira called it a place of spirituality coming into bliss. I preferred to see our home as the atmosphere of Soul, where Love is supreme.

All the modules for the house were prefabricated on Earth, except for the parts made of Martin's metal, which were forged in Martin's own shop. We merely assembled the parts. Our new house became a symbol that combined the best; the Earth; our humanity; the riches of the Universe; and what we had become. We paid the architect and builders with a few buckets full of industrial grade diamonds of a quality that were rare on Earth. It was a fair trade, meeting everyone's need.

Our house was exceedingly special by the ideas that we ourselves had invested in it. In its atmosphere nothing was lost. Everything had its place. It brought to light even those long-past days in which I first fell in love with Jill at the sewer station, surrounded by blooms of water hyacinths. Some of the color of those days appeared to be reflected in the color of the marble. Likewise, how special were the adventures that I had shared with Natalia, when I first relished her soft, warm, well-endowed female body, as a most precious gem of our humanity, when we faced the endless void of space. How much had grown out of this amazing beginning? Still, we all knew that in spite of the distance we had all traveled individually, we hadn't reached the end of the road of growing up personally. None of us had. We all saw our new life that was now unfolding, as just another beginning. In this atmosphere of living together and supporting one-another, I felt that we had come full circle together. I could even see a way on the near horizon to include my family back home, into this unfolding life of light that seemed to become ever new.

I wasn't thinking of going back, of course. Olaf was right, that this wouldn't be possible.

"But this doesn't close the door to you inviting them to come here, and take a step forward into our New World and its brightness," says Olaf, while we explored the challenge.

I reasoned that it should be possible to find ways to accomplish that. We had helped save an entire civilization. Bringing my family to our planet, those who wished to come, seemed to be just another small step

compared to that.

Fortunately I had always been a fast learner. If I hadn't, I might have despaired at the challenge of adding two more children to our already large family. Adding an entire family appeared to be not as easy as it had been back at the ship when Jill gave birth to our son, which the whole crew admired, which had even enriched my association with Natalia. The event increased our happy feelings for each other. Natalia never referred to the child as Jill's son, or as my son, but as the son of the humanity that we were all a part of and reflect in our living. And after we had brought Cira on board who had never been privileged to carry a child, Jill and Natalia suggested that this could be easily changed. So, once again, an additional feature of our association didn't destroy or dampen what had been established before. Cira had a child and nobody really cared to know whose it was. It was human in that it reflected the Soul of our humanity. That seemed to be enough. Now the challenge was extended by the potential of bringing an old love into this advanced new sphere. How could one correlate the rich and new, that was won with many struggles and with daring steps forward, with those Earth-bound traditions that were cemented in centuries of emotional isolation between people that my wife Wendy represented, and still lived by?

"Be cautious, James, bringing your previous family into this advanced environment is bound to have serious repercussions!" Olaf warns me.

"Yes, but on the backside of the coin all mankind has one Soul, and one humanity, that is a uniting reality that we cannot ignore," I counter him.

Olaf had been serious. I could see then why. He told me that what I needed to consider had been said a long time ago. I remembered that Olaf had never been a great authority on the dimensions of love, except to insist that love could only unfold on a universal platform as a universal principle, and that this principle was as distant to the people on the Earth as was Gamma .8 or any other solar system. He had once said that everything that is built on a lesser foundation, would be illogical, a self-delusion, and would be destructive. I had agreed with him in a dry, hypothetical way, but oh, how little did he know about human dreams, enduring obligations, investments of a lifetime, shared treasures born in trials, hopes, and affections, which were all intimately special, rather than being universal. One couldn't just throw all this away onto the ash heap of scientific and technological progress, as one might discard an outdated car.

It didn't take long to draw Jill, Cira, and Natalia into this unfolding exploration process.

"How does one solve such a problem?" I ask. "Where does one start? Would their coming here enrich our family further? How would you like it if our family increased by three more people?"

I asked each one separately, Jill, Cira and Natalia, posing all of these questions. I explained that I wanted to try bringing Wendy and the children to our planet, to Bohr's planet, and into our house. I suggested that this was the logical thing to do, but...

"That's wonderful!" answers Cira, while I was still speaking. She begins to smile as if the greatest miracle in the entire world is unfolding before us.

Jill asks Cira later, why she feels that way.

"If you knew what it means to me to have my parents with me on this planet, you wouldn't ask," she replies to Jill, still smiling. "Could I be less happy, then, when the same might come true for Haniat? I only wonder why our courageous scientific pioneer had waited that long. I also wonder why he hasn't yet invited Martin and Werner to live with us, as a part of our family. Aren't they a part of our family, too. Don't we all share a deep love for each other, a love that unites us? We share our dreams, hopes, struggles, challenges and trials. We are all married to each other by this love, and this more deeply than any of us ever were married in our Old World. We have stepped away from the Old World. Let's not drag it behind us. Why shouldn't an advancing sense be unfolding here, of a reality that we cannot escape anyway, which needs to be acknowledged by us, rather than being denied by bringing sex into the equation, which actually isn't an isolating factor at all in the real Universe, as we have all discovered in our own way. Should we not try to live in the real Universe?"

Natalia nods. She hugs Cira. "That's how I feel, too," she adds.

Jill says nothing more. She just squeezes my hand and gently nods. She embraces me, followed by kisses instead of words. I see tears in her eyes, happy tears. She embraces Cira and Natalia as well.

"Do you know what this means," says Natalia.

"What could it mean?" I ask.

"What could it possibly mean?" says Cira. "What is unfolding here won't diminish anything between us, but will make it richer."

Natalia begins to grin. "You are wrong," she says. "It means something. It means that we have to make the house bigger, before it is even finished, both mentally and physically. It means that the architect may quit on us out of sheer frustration."

"What has this got to do with anything?" I ask. "Why shouldn't a house be designed to grow?"

"Why should our sense of home be growing too? It being the center of something immensely profound, it is bound to grow," said Jill.

"Why should everything be finite and terminal?" said Cira.

"We are giving the architect a chance to design a real house, the way houses should be built that grow with life," I add. "We are opening for the architect a door to the future. That's how I see it. I don't think the way humanity lives right now in its tiny, finite enclaves, where everything is

fixed and rigidly terminal, will be humanity's future, because on that small and narrow platform it won't have a future. I think we are setting a new standard for this future. We may not be able to go back to the Earth again, to a world that we have outgrown, but I cannot believe that we will not have an effect on this world and uplift it in many ways and drag it out of its narrow, pathetic doldrums, where nothing moves forward anymore. I think when the ship arrives back on Earth it will hit this tired world like a whirlwind. This world will change. We are just putting a challenge before the architect to be ahead of the game. In the same manner we are putting a challenge before us to further explore the universality of love, which defines our own future by the imperative of its principle that we can never escape from, even if we tried."

In the end we also agreed to invite Olaf and Odessa. Our plan actually involved Martin in also a somewhat special way. We told him about my challenge of bringing my family from the Earth to Bohr's planet. We talked about it during one of our daily walks along the beach. Martin referred to the long outdated theory of the astrophysical phenomenon of a black hole. He linked it with something that we had dealt with long ago and had considered from every angle in the early days, especially metaphorically.

"From inside a black hole, an observer can't see the Universe that we see," says Martin. "Our Universe appears totally black to those living within that isolated part of space," he says. "The black hole creates this isolating confinement with its immense gravity that pulls everything into itself, even the latent energy that pervades all space, so that all light is blocked. One can't project ripples across a lake that has no water in it, that has run dry. That's the model of a black hole. Is this mankind's lot on Earth? In reality there is no such thing as a black hole. It is a theory without substance. The gravity behind a black hole is a myth. Why shouldn't people from the Earth be able to step away from the gravity of a myth?"

I nod quietly.

"There is your answer," says Martin and adds that it is likewise impossible for us to see the world that exists inside a black hole, a world with the black hole mentality. But this model too, is false. It doesn't describe mankind as I know it. That is why hope remains. When one brings light into the myth, the myth disappears."

"Don't you think that this black-hole isolation that makes everything appear black, is how our world on Bohr's planet must appear to my family on Earth, which lacks the mental technology that we have acquired?" I counter Martin.

"If that is what you think, what will you tell them then?" he asks. "Whatever you will say to them will never be more than a fairy tale then. Sure, they live in a mental environment that hasn't seen any significant movements for decades. But this can change. You have moved. You're miles

ahead in many ways, at least to them you are, but you are still a human being. Your role therefore is that of an Exemplar."

Martin reminded me not to forget that the Earth has a history of conflicts between the old and stagnant, and the advancing ideas and technologies. "So, what's one more step in advancement? Many within society that have been put to sleep mentally are afraid of advanced ideas and discoveries. You wouldn't add much to it. Entire strata of society are affected by this disease. With that in mind you must answer yourself one important question: On which side does your Wendy stand? Is she part of the sleeping strata? Or is she open to advancing ideas? If she is rooted in narrow-minded concepts and traditions that imprison people, you'll face a big challenge, but not an impossible challenge."

Olaf suggests that even under the best of circumstances, I will be facing a great challenge. Still, Olaf offers to help. "Let's find out where she stands," he suggests.

Olaf selects a place on the Hawaiian Islands that he remembers, a quiet place on a beach, and suggests that Martin bring my family there. He suggests that this should be done just day's prior to the ship's arrival on Earth, so that I could talk with them in peace, and save them the shock of finding out that I would not be on the ship with the others.

Martin offered that he would help by briefing them on the relevant details, especially on the dangers that someone familiar with the Bohr/Miller effect would pose to humanity, if he were to live on the Earth again.

Our reunion unfolded as expected. There were tears in both of our eyes, amidst embraces that lasted longer than it took for the tears to dry. The gentleness between us was the same as it had always been. There was no distance that I could sense, in respect to our feelings for each other. The children hadn't come for this first-contact reunion.

"No, I can't come to your New World," Wendy says the next day at dinner through a shower of tears. "It is not your New World that I am afraid of. I just can't cope with the prospect of sharing your love with three other wives. I just can't, so I won't... Please forgive me!"

"What wives?" I said. "The concept of wife or wives is unthinkable on Bohr's planet," I say. Immediately I remember Martin's warning. I want to add that we regard each other as human beings, with human needs, and respect each other in a way that these needs are being met in the most gentle and honest manner. But I couldn't say it, because I had said already too much. And then there was the matter of Martin and Werner living with us, whom we had invited, who loved the idea as everyone else did. I tried to explain, but how could I?

"No wives!" she repeats. "You must be running a commune then?"

"A commune? No!" I say. "In a commune an individual has few rights, if any, while on Bohr's planet the very concept of rights is invalid. Nobody talks about rights, but about life and living. Rights are related to

poverty-bound situations and privatized love. The concept becomes invalid when one steps outside the sphere of this poverty and its related looting and dominating."

I stop. Oh my God! How could she possibly understand a single word of what I said?

"You mean, I wouldn't even have the right to protect myself?" she asks.

Oh how could I ever explain to her, that on Bohr's planet, no one assumes any right over any other person? The thought is unthinkable. No one ever would. The concept of protecting is therefore invalid, because it is redundant when there is no 'distance' between people that causes conflicts and harm. I explained this as best as I could. There was no way she could grasp what I meant. I could see that she was making every effort to come to terms with what I was trying to tell her. In the end it was to no avail. A person simply can't deal with what the 'rational' mind won't accept, or can't. She seemed to live in a black hole in that respect.

We came to an arrangement that day. I proposed that instead of her coming to Bohr's planet, I would visit her twice a month. We would meet in Hawaii or at any other place on the globe that she would care to choose.

Her face lit up. She gladly agreed to that. I must admit, I was glad too. I could see no other option. Also, the project had all the potential of becoming a long drawn-out sequence of very special meetings and adventures that we would otherwise never have. As Martin had suggested, the black hole hadn't been fully established yet, and its myth had not yet closed itself around her. Some light was still coming through.

"I'm becoming the talk of the town," she says to me one day in Bangkok. "My friends back home are turning green with envy over that secret lover they insist I must have; and a rich diamond dealer at that, they say!"

At another visit, in Cairo, she says to me with the biggest smile she had ever produced, that she is the happiest person alive and doesn't really care that I live quintillions of miles away in another galaxy with four other ladies, a son, and a baby on its way.

When visiting Madrid, she embraces me with a kiss. "Do you realize that there isn't another woman on the entire Earth who can boast of having greater riches than I have, being with you?"

Oh, these words are music to my ears.

"Does my association with 'other women' bother you when we sleep together?" I ask her in a ski hut in Austria.

"Bother me? It's exciting to realize that I still measure up to the best of the Universe!" she replies in Cuzco, Peru, after thinking it over for a week.

"If you had a choice to start all over again," I ask her in Mazatlan

on the beach, "would you still marry me as you did, even if you knew that all this would happen?"

She nodded and answered yes, and replied the same way again in Istanbul after a thorough consideration. She squeezes my hand while answering. "I would most certainly marry you gain, and I would do it because of what has happened, rather than in spite of it."

At times Werner would join us for an hour or two, or Martin, or both of them together, especially when there was a chance to stage a lavish dinner. Martin loves Paris. Sometimes even Mahesh joined us, together with Cira. They came with Olaf and Odessa one day, when a great symphony concert was on the agenda. On this occasion Mahesh brought his own instrument along, a rare instrument from Virtus on Gamma Point Eight, a folk-music instrument, which he called the "Pragoa." He explains that the Pragoa was the first twelve-string instrument ever created on his planet and that its unique echo chamber had never been duplicated anywhere in the Universe. It is played with a bow, similar to a violin, which also makes it one of the most difficult instruments to play.

Mahesh persuaded the music director of the all-Bach concert that we came for, to allow him to demonstrate the instrument as a part of the concert. He performed a Bach fugue, playing solo, during the intermission, and he performed it with his own personal 'enrichments' added. He explains to the audience that Bach is too easy to play, so that he added two additional voices to the fugue without changing the principle of the composition. He says that Bach himself had done this kind of thing when he re-composed the old hymn, Jesu Meine Freude.

Mahesh's recital became as sensational as Odessa's floating car had been to the people of Leipzig. Mahesh, Olaf, Alenaah, Cira, and Odessa had arrived 'in style' for the pre-concert dinner in the floating car. Martin and Werner had arranged an exceedingly special dinner for us all, for the occasion, at one of the finest "hole in the wall eatery" that he could find, as he said.

The entire evening became one of great fun and excitement, it even became comical when we discovered the frustration that a would-be thief had endured who had tried to steal Odessa's car and could not make it work. Even more comical was his expression when Natalia and Jill, who had joined us for the dinner, took over from the thief and zipped away in the car, just for the fun of it.

Olaf and Mahesh, of course, invited everyone for a drink and dessert after the concert. There, Mahesh gave us all another private recital before he and all the others said good night and took off in Odessa's floating automobile bound for Bohr's planet.

"It seems that since you don't want to join us, we'll have to join you," I comment to Wendy after everyone was gone back home.

She just smiles and shakes her head.

In Vienna, a month later, I venture to ask her again if she might not want to consider a visit to Bohr's planet. She shrugs her shoulders.

In Calcutta, she tells me that she really has to think about this offer some more.

"I don't think I ever told you how we met. Maybe you want to consider this," I say to her.

"I know how we met," she replies. "We met on the pier at Malibu Beach. Yes, those were nice days."

"Except this isn't how we really met," I interject. "It started a day earlier in the evening in the rain. I had just poured myself a drink and had turned the CD player on, sitting alone in my seaside cabin, when I heard the door knocker. Someone had knocked three times. It was after ten. I didn't expect anybody. Curious about who it might be, I opened the door. What a shock! What an amazingly wonderful shock. Before me stood a woman drenched to the skin by the rain, but with a beautiful face. In the driveway stood a silver-blue Mercedes convertible, but with the top up. Without saying a word I invited her in. She responded with a kiss on the lips. I pushed the door closed without breaking the kiss. When the kiss ended, I was at a loss for something appropriate to say. All that I could manage at the moment, was to say, 'there is a clothes dryer in the cabin.' Without the slightest hesitation she started to undress. Everything went into the dryer, except for the shoes. 'There is a hair dryer in the bathroom,' I added. Many long minutes passed before she reappeared, and did so twice as beautiful. At this point I had undressed myself likewise, to equal the playing field. I was so stunned by her looks as she came out of the bathroom, that I embraced her tightly, and fully, before we even made it to the bed. The hours that followed were a delight from heaven, in so many ways, too many to count, ending with a satisfaction by which sleep eventually came. When I awoke, she was no longer with me. Her side of the bed was cold. I checked the dryer. The dryer was empty. No trace of her had remained. Tears started to come. I opened the door to the driveway. I hesitated. As I had expected, the Mercedes was no longer there. Strangely, there were no tire marks in the mud. There should have been tire marks. The rain of the night before had softened the ground. That's why I hadn't used the driveway myself. I asked the gatekeeper of the complex about a silver-blue Mercedes coming and leaving. No log entries were found as if the car and the woman never existed. But she did exist. I did see her again the next morning on the pier. There she was, smiling at me, walking towards me. That is how I met you; and you responded with the same greeting; a smile that's as bright as the heavens, followed by a kiss without a word to mar the occasion. That's how our days together started."

"Not quite so," says Wendy. "The pier had been my favorite place, you know, and yours too as it seemed, in the mornings. I noticed you several times before, except you didn't notice me. When I saw your car

pull into the parking lot, I knew something had to happen. I wanted you. I couldn't get you out of my mind. I decided to let it happen; caution be damned. And it did happen. As soon as you came onto the pier I saw you smile. You were smiling at me. We were home free! You weren't surprised by the kiss at all. You seemed to have expected it. 'Where do we go from here?' you asked. 'It's too early for lunch,' you had added. Do you remember what happened after that? I had made the choice for you. I had opened the passenger door on my car. You took the hint."

"And we both know what happened after that," I say, and I immediately repeat this amazing greeting with which we had greeted each other for the first time.

We met again in Djakarta a month later. I asked her again if she wouldn't consider coming to live with us on Bohr's planet. This time her answer was a "definite maybe." She added sadly that there are far too few places left on the Earth, where one can feel safe to meet, as we had met.

"Safe from a nuclear war?" I ask.

She shakes her head. "Safe from people!"

I knew what she meant. We met twice more after Djakarta. Once in Rio de Janeiro, where we got robbed twice, were shot at by mistake, and had been propositioned by a pair of sex seekers, all in the same day.

"A person can't even dress up excitingly anymore," she says and grins.

I am sure her comment that day didn't reflect that these things hadn't happened before. We had been shot at in Cairo too, and had been robbed in Rome. We had also been propositioned before, once right in our hotel in Mexico City, both of us together. But it had never happened before, that all of these things had happened on the same day between breakfast and lunch.

"The trouble is, one never gets used to being treated like dirt," she says to me.

Our visiting Budapest, the next time we met, appeared to be safer. In a way it had been. We were merely arrested there, under suspicion of espionage. We were dragged into a police cellar and questioned by 'revolutionary' guards. Some holiday this turned out to be. It became a trip back into history, to the mentality of the Third Reich!

During the interrogation I manage to get near to Wendy, staging a sobbing, emotional embrace.

"Close your eyes!" I whisper into her ear.

I held her as tightly as I could. Then.... Zip!

"You may open your eyes now!" I say to her on Bohr's planet.

She blinks twice. "Hey is this place real, or am I dead? Am I dreaming this?"

I offer her a glass of wine from a bottle that I had kept on our balcony for this very occasion.

"What do you think?" I ask her. "Is the wine real?"

She stands in a daze, sips some of the wine, looks at me and smiles; "That's out of this world!" she says.

"It's an Ehrenfeller from the Rheinland!" I say.

"It's real all right," she replies and grins.

She remained standing on the spot for the longest time, as if any movement would end the 'magic' and the Old World would return. She just stood there and scanned the horizon. The beach always glowed in the afternoons. A golden yellow filled the sky, the normal color of the late afternoon sun.

"Would you like to join me for a swim?" I ask her.

"Right now?"

"This very minute!"

"I've got no bathing suit with me. I left it behind at the hotel!"

"No problem, I've got an assortment of them in the bedroom. But you don't need to use them, unless you want to!"

She doesn't answer. Instead, she makes herself comfortable in a lounge chair and closes her eyes.

Ah, this is my opportunity! Zip, splash!!! I relocate us right as we are, into the ocean, in our Sunday finery.

"You fiend!" she shrieks and splashes me, as fiercely as she is able.

Out of this develops a marvelous water fight!

Eventually we do take our clothes off and go swimming the proper way.

Suddenly she blushes. "What shall your three wives think if they saw us like that?" she says.

"Wives?" I repeat. "You have already met them. You met Jill, Natalia, Cira. You had dinner with everyone on the day of the concert, when Mahesh performed his special version of Bach.

She begins to laugh.

"Friends, then," she adds.

"I wouldn't call them friends, either," I said. "The term is so loaded with implied meanings and obligations."

She nodded slightly.

I had the feeling that she was beginning to understand something. The only obligation that we found ourselves bound to, was the obligation to support each other in any way possible. That wasn't just friendship. It was an outpouring of love.

After we showered and dressed, we walked a long way down the beach and back again. Cira had dinner ready when we returned. Jill was home by then, and Natalia had gone and brought Mahesh and Alenaah. Even Olaf and Odessa were at our house when we returned. It was a surprise party, hastily arranged. I had a slight hunch that something was going on when I noticed Odessa's floating automobile that she was so fond of. It had been 'parked' out of the way behind the back of the house.

"What better reason could one invent for having a party than honoring a visitor who has traveled quintillions of miles in more ways than one?" announces Martin as we enter.

We celebrated Wendy's arrival in style, that is, in our style, until the sun came up.

"Excuse me for being so nosy, but what had changed your mind about coming?" Olaf asks Wendy before leaving.

Wendy hesitates. The glare of the morning sun had made her eyelids heavy.

"We escaped from the Gestapo," I reply on her behalf and tell Olaf how we were arrested, dragged into a cellar, and then brutally interrogated.

"No, no, I had thought about that earlier," says Wendy. "My mind was made up when we were propositioned in Rio. I had enough of the Old World then, when the abundance of prostitutes everywhere had made it impossible for one to dress up a bit daring and exciting, without being propositioned for it. That was worse than getting arrested. But if I had known what your world is like, I would have had much better reasons to come."

"I can see that," remarks Heisenberg, "except you couldn't have known, then."

Olaf smiles and scratches his head.

"Don't knock the prostitutes," said Heisenberg moments later. "What people can buy, they don't need to take by force. Not every person lives in the same sphere. Different perceptions generate different needs, and those needs must be supplied one way or another, or else a person withers away emotionally."

"What sphere?" asks Wendy, surprised.

"Mental spheres; subsets of reality; you know what I mean, different mentalities, in which love or sex mean different things in a narrow-focused way," says Heisenberg, "ranging from the grossest form of passion to the most esoteric experiences imaginable. The range is wide. Prostitution has a place somewhere in this world of unmet needs, and so has the advanced sexuality that can't be measured with the yardstick of material convention. It might even prevent rape. Of course, it doesn't really satisfy,

but it takes the edge off the frustrations before they build up."

Wendy nods and smiles.

"Hey, when did you ever get involved with that subject?" says Martin, grinning at Heisenberg. "You're a physicist, not a..."

"Heisenberg isn't really his name," Olaf interrupts Martin, looking at Wendy with a grin. "His real name is Miller!" He begins to laugh.

"The Miller, as in the Bohr/Miller?" I ask surprised.

Olaf nods.

"I always thought it was you, who invented the breakthrough technology that got all of this started," I say to Olaf, who had admired Bohr and had emulated him, to the point of naming our planet after him. "Well, in this case I'm not surprised," I say to Miller, who had adopted the name Heisenberg. "A scientific technologist can't be blind to what's happening around him. He must be sensitive to all facets of reality. If he wasn't, he would be merely a technician."

"Thanks, buddy!" Heisenberg replies. "See Martin!" he says, "I have friends!" Heisenberg grins at Martin with a self-satisfied grin.

"He is right," Olaf says to Wendy. "He is right on the subject of prostitution. "I don't see it as a crime that some people don't grow up as fast as others do, or never grow up at all. It is sad, for them to have to rely on physical sex. But that's not the point, is it? My point is that when people become drawn away from the real Universe, by debating these trivial issues, they loose their grasp on reality. They loose their grasp on what really counts. This loss can destroy entire societies in the space of days. I have seen this time and time again. I have seen such types of silly cultures with my own eyes, that never get anywhere. They remain locked into a sphere of conflict, having lost their native inner strength to get out of. Their strength has been drained out of them by de-education, carried on for decades upon decades. They've become babies!"

Wendy looks perplexed, puzzled, stunned. "Well, I've never met a man who hasn't started as a baby and developed from this point on," she counters Olaf.

"Some haven't moved from this stage," Olaf explains, "and many who did, found themselves mentally murdered, and reverted back to being babies. No doubt, you have seen many of them."

She shrugs her shoulders. "How can a person grow up under these circumstances, if everything about reality is shrouded in mystery, hidden behind taboos, subjected simultaneously to ridicule and false promotion? Is it this, what you meant?"

"Olaf nods. "To blame it all on the prostitutes is like blaming the military for inventing the nuclear bomb."

"It's the artificially created klutz that society nourishes, who's the real culprit in both cases," says Olaf to Heisenberg. "For more than a millennium now, the human society has had no real compassion for its own offspring," he adds in a rather sad voice.

"I should have warned you about Olaf," I say to Wendy.

She shakes her head. "No, don't say that! You should have warned him about me!"

"Has it ever occurred to you that you could have felt proud to have been propositioned for our exciting appearance?" says Olaf to both of us, and grins.

"Oh you!" Wendy grins back and punches him gently.

"Some consolation that is!" I reply.

Wendy keeps on grinning all night, even after everyone was gone, and gives me a great big bear hug, when we were suddenly alone. "Your friends are certainly interesting people!" she says.

"Unpredictable and interesting?" I say, and begin to grin too.

"So, you don't mind staying here, then?"

"Mind? Why should I mind? It's fascinating here! We had never talked about things like that at home. And here, a few words and a joke, can change a mental position that one has held for a lifetime."

"Oh, you haven't seen anything yet!" I said. "Just wait a few days!"

We slept until late into the afternoon.

"To be honest, I can't imagine now why I've been so hard-headed about coming here," she says. "It's a lovely place to be."

"You couldn't have acted any different than you had," I reply.

We went back to the Earth several times after that, to talk with our two sons. I offered them the same option, to join us on Bohr's planet. Initially they were excited about it, but then both turned the offer down. They told us that they had no option but to remain on the Earth and dedicate their life to the survival of humanity. I was disappointed of course, but I could understand their reason, as it had been the same reason for which I had lobbied for the space mission and had joined up for it.

On our next visit, I brought a crate of diamonds along, a war chest to see them through.

"People sell their souls for these rocks," I comment, as they examine them.

Peter, the younger one, smiles. His face radiates. He must have been captivated by their sparkle, or perhaps by the realization of the fantastic riches these rocks represent. But he bites his lips together, shakes his head, and declares that this is the very reason he can't accept them. He says it isn't right to induce others to sell their soul for a bunch of rocks!

I felt that Olaf would have been proud of them, had he heard them.

"To sell these diamonds is like selling our own soul," says Peter to the older son. "It is like cutting off the very hand that one needs to fight with, for the continued existence of the world."

He closes the lid of the crate and gives it back to me. "Take them home with you," he says and starts to cry, "they are too costly for us to have. They are too costly as jewels and too precious for industrial uses."

I take the elder son, Ian, aside. "Peter's problem is easily solved," I say to him. "Just take a hammer and smash the diamonds into dust, until they become industrial-grade diamonds, useful only for making tools."

He looks at me perplexed. "Smash these up?"

"How else can you make them useful to humanity, without causing any harm?" I ask.

His face lights up. He says that they can accept them now. "We also need more gold on the planet, iron, copper, magnesium, platinum, and..."

"No you don't!" I interrupt him. "The Earth has more of these than mankind could ever use. You only have to learn to separate the available minerals and metals from the silicates of the rocks of the Earth where they exist in great abundance. Take magnesium, for instance. The entire mantle of the Earth is made up magnesium and nickel orthosilicates, in a layer that is four thousand kilometers deep. Why would you want more? All that you need to do, is develop nuclear fusion power to separate the molecular bonds. I have seen it being done on planet 'O'. I can take you there to show you the process. They've created a vast civilization on this basis. And if they can do it, so can you."

"Some day, perhaps," says Peter.

"Just say the word, and I'll take you to planet 'O' for a technology visit," I reply. "The fact is, you have not seen anything yet. One day you will want to see these things, and learn, and discover, and use your discoveries to enrich the Earth and humanity with it. If you don't move in this direction, your generation has no future. If you are prepared to do this, just let me know the next time I come for a visit. However, if you do what I suggest, and consider what the 'O' people have already done, then be prepared for a whirlwind of superlatives that you cannot even imagine."

The boy promised to think about what I said. They both did.

Chapter 7 - Swimming in Mud

It took the best of Olaf's dry humor and mental magic to help Wendy overcome her sadness that day when we left our boys behind us. The door, of course, remained open as I had promised, for them to join us. But mostly, our parting had a much more profound effect on me than it had on Wendy. Never throughout the entire mission had I felt so impelled to assist humanity in its struggle than I felt from this moment on when I was taught a lesson by our two boys. There wasn't an option left that allowed us to step away from this responsibility.

The boys' response gave me hope, a kind of hope that not the tallest of Olaf's wisdom could have overturned. I could feel it in my bones that my real job had just begun. Everything up to this point appeared to have been merely a preparation. Wendy agreed, and so did the others, except Olaf. I pressed Olaf hard for advice and assistance.

"Maybe I should take you to planet Monar Aquilae," Olaf answers in response to my incessant prodding. "What was that chap's name?" says Olaf, turning to Martin over lunch the next day.

"You mean the fat guy whom you had hired as counsel to help the Gribbork people save their civilization?"

Olaf nods.

"Zaho!" says Werner Heisenberg.

"No, no, his name is Ziyanho," says Martin. "You'll be interested in this story," he says to Wendy.

"Ziyanho is the foremost authority in the Universe on the life cycle of civilizations," Olaf explains. He grins as he says it.

Somehow the grin didn't fit the seriousness of the matter. "Do you know him well?" I ask Olaf.

"All too well," Olaf replies. "He is a very fine scholar, originally from India." Olaf says they had both studied in Oxford together, but had never actually met there. "We met him in Oslo for the first time, long before the Gribbork project came about," he says.

He had me wonder now. He had never mentioned a Gribbork project before.

"We should pay him a visit," Martin suggests.

Olaf nods.

As it was, we didn't leave right away. We stopped for a holiday on the way, visiting the Steam Ocean, as Bohr called the hot-water ocean that

had become his favorite resort on planet 'O'.

It wasn't until a week later that we traveled to Monar Aquilae, where Ziyanho had last made his home. Olaf was certain that we could still find him there. We went to the great city above the swamp where the two men had spent much time together. Olaf still knew a few people by name and started asking questions about Ziyanho's whereabouts.

The city itself was an enormous steel structure that resembled a cube standing on edge, rising out of the swamp of sweet smelling swamp plants that were covered with red and yellow blossoms in the shape of orchids. We were told Ziyanho might be at the debating center that Olaf says, he and Ziyanho had set up for the Gribbork project. It was a place where people of all ages, sex, or profession stood up and voiced their opinions to whoever would listen. Olaf told us that one usually finds many assembled there, and that in the olden days Ziyanho had practically lived at this place.

As it was, Ziyanho wasn't there. This time we were told we might find him below in the swamp at some distance from the city where the swamp had been converted into a health center mud bath complex.

Olaf shook his head when we entered the park-like compound dotted with hot mineral pools. Some of the hot pools contained homogenized mineral-rich mud.

Ziyanho recognizes Olaf immediately. "Hey buddy!" he shouts out from one of the mud holes, "What brings you to Monar Aquilae?"

"My dearest friend Ziyanho, you are the attraction!" Olaf grins, and climbed straight away into the steaming mud hole, where he embraces Ziyanho.

He motions us to follow and introduces us, as we climb into the mud.

"Our lady here is from Earth," he says to him. "She likes to hear about your great experiment..."

"The Quian affair?" his face becomes lifeless.

"You don't want to hear about what we did to Quian planet and Gribbork," he says to Wendy, as she is last to enter the mud bath.

"No Mr. Ziyanho," I reply, "my wife and I would love to hear whatever you have to tell us."

"Wife?" He replies.

I was rather shocked at myself when I realized that I had replied in Wendy's stead, as though she couldn't speak for herself. This had never been my way. I immediately apologize, but before I could say too much, Olaf came to the rescue. "Wendy and James must hear your story," he repeats. "They feel they must help the people on Earth save the planet from a potential nuclear war. They've been struggling with this thing for more than half a century. It's become worse instead of better, much worse, as you may know. They fear for their children that still live there."

"My friends, you may call me Zy," Ziyanho says as if this would

take the seriousness away of a subject he didn't want to deal with anymore. He turns to Wendy, shaking his head, "Believe me, you don't want to hear that story." He says nothing more after that, but lets himself slide deeper into the mud.

"These two have been pressuring us to intervene at the Earth and save humanity from itself," Olaf replies to Zy's silence. He speaks in a serious manner.

Zy shakes his head, looking at Olaf. "It's always the same, isn't it?" he says to Olaf. Then he turns to Wendy and myself. "It was like that with us too," he says. "I wish to God that somebody had stood up against us back then, and made us stop and think."

"The Earth is in a much more terrible mess today," I say to him, "then it had ever been. Somebody must help. If you have any experience in this sort of thing, you've got to tell us. Something needs to be done!"

Olaf looks at Zy and shakes his head, still without the slightest sign of any smile or a grin. "Yes, we have experience," he sighs. "It's another type G situation, a bit more advanced than the one we had at Quian, or on Gribbork."

"Please sir!" says Wendy; "our children are still there. They have chosen to remain on Earth, aiming to sort things out. What is a mother to do in such a case, but to help them," adds Wendy.

"What do you mean by, our, children?" replies Zy. He emphasizes the word 'our.'

I stood perplexed in the hot mud and couldn't say a thing, ashamed to the core of my being for what she had said. I knew that I would have spoken the same words myself, in the same way as she had.

"If you feel responsible for them then you had better get 'your' children out of there," says Zy, "that's the only responsible thing you can do if you feel you must control them."

"We would bring them out, except they refuse to leave," I say to him. I explain to him again that they wanted to stay and help save their civilization.

"The children have noble motives, no doubt!" he says to Wendy, "and so have you, but are you not wrong?" Zy sits up now. Great gobs of mud drip from his shoulders. "Noble motives won't change anything if the children don't have the scientific foundation to confront the root of the problem with which they can change the political platform for creating the necessary policies. Hitler, too, had noble motives, and so had we when a fellow scientist from Quian asked us to help his civilization to survive. The rest, you may guess." Zy says that he had told us already much more than we wanted to hear.

"No you haven't," Wendy assures him.

"All right!" he says, and stands up in his mud hole. "Remember..."

"Yes, I know, we asked for it!" I interrupt him.

He sits down again and starts by explaining that every civilization goes through a typical sequence of stages. "Very early they discover that two and two equals four. Then they put other facts together. Eventually they discover that heavy atoms are very unstable, and reason from this, that if one were able to poke at them, they would fall apart with a big bang! Suddenly, the nuclear bomb is born. They also realize that the sun has a different nuclear furnace that burns only light atoms, those of hydrogen. So once again, they put some facts together and reason this thing out, by which they discover that the sun's furnace might be replicated. And it will work, because the lightest elements also have an extremely weak atomic structure which can be penetrated, if one bangs these atoms together violently enough that their structures fuse into each other. By this process a heavier structure is created, but the process also sheds off a lot of left over, free energy that has no place in the resulting structure. And so, with another bang, the hydrogen bomb is born. This bomb gives them for the first time in their history the capability to erase their civilization."

He told us that every intelligent civilization reaches this stage at some point in its development, and it frightens the people. He told us that most civilizations find it extremely difficult to deal with this newly found capability to blow up their entire world. There are those that deal with the capability intelligently and make it the basis for their rapidly advancing self-development. And there are others who stop developing out of fear and shut themselves down, technologically, or they blow themselves up. In either case, their civilization disappears. And then there are those other civilization that chase after the dream of empires. Empires are created to steal from society. Empire's steal their existence from them. They put them into poverty, subject them to endless wars, demand depopulation, and so bit by bit they take away society's humanity, the people's very core and very life. At this point civilization is but an empty shell. When the nuclear bomb gets built in this development everything becomes extremely precarious. The people on Earth are at this point and have played with matches for over sixty years. That is the stage the Earth has reached.

"Are you telling me that this is what your children want to protect?" he says to Wendy and me. "They want to protect what is killing mankind. They focus on the atomic bomb. They think the atomic bomb is their greatest threat to existence. They don't even know what the real threat is. The threat is empire, and empire is the process of the relentless privatization of wealth, power, money, even love. When they discover that their real disease is empire, then, and only then, will they have a glimmer of hope for survival. Fighting the nuclear demon is a diversion that hides from their vision the real disease."

"Is this is what happened on Quian?" I interrupt.

Zy nods and let himself sink back into the ooze, relishing his mud bath. "But it doesn't have to be that way," he continues. "The collapse

situation is usually created by some form of greed, which tends to be encouraged, if not induced conspiratorially, as it was on Earth. The ruling empires need to create this conspiracy to maintain themselves. Stealing is their basis for existence. In such a situation everything that is vital for the development of a real civilization becomes sabotaged, diminished, blocked, underfunded, and the people that live in the sphere are worked to death or starved to death, or worse. This type of society, a society that embraces or tolerates oligarchic systems, cannot long survive, especially when it gets into the nuclear age, because oligarchic systems are inherently fascist by nature. Fascism and nuclear weapons add up to an end-game that dooms all. All oligarchic systems are that way. They are fascist by nature. It's as simple as that. The Earth has suffered the oligarchy disease for 4000 years. The Brahmins might have been first. They nearly destroyed the budding civilization in India. India has never recovered from that. The Roman Empire nearly did the same thing. The British Empire was educated in India by the Brahmins. The British Empire started doing the same thing and became the latest world empire. The people on the Earth have lived under this kind of system for over 4000 years. If it hadn't been for mankind's tolerance of oligarchism, mankind would have stood on the moon in 500 AD or sooner, and would be more advanced today than the people on planet 'O' are. Instead, they've created a classical sewer society. The only hope for their survival lies in eradicating the oligarchism that manifests itself in the disease of empire building. If your children want to combat this thragic development they must unravel the entire historic mess and overturn the mistakes that were made. Nothing else will save mankind and the Earth in the age of nuclear weapons. This means that the people's humanity must rout out all oligarchic structures, beginning in their own consciousness, then in their economies and political institutions and the related institutions, ideologies, practices, axioms, and beliefs, from the very top to the very grass roots level. Not a thought, hint, or tradition rooted in oligarchism must be allowed to remain. And here it becomes difficult. That process has to begin with you."

"With me?" says Wendy surprised.

"With you and everyone who grew up in an oligarchic background," says Zy. "You see yourself as someone's wife and the owner of children. These are oligarchic concepts, gold-plated with the noblest intentions. But look what stands behind them. You want to rule your children, and thereby you negate their humanity, which you should have helped develop. That's the root of every Hobbesian type philosophy. Out of it came the Thirty Years War that killed half the population of Europe. Out of this root also came Ortes, Malthus, Darwinism, the Eugenics movement, fascism, Martinism, the Jacobin terror, synarchism, and the oligarchic clamoring for the atomic bomb as a super-terror weapon, with which to terrorize and rule the whole world. The whole stinking sewer that was created, needs to be taken back to its core-root, and that must be dealt with. That is where you fail, where the people on Earth fail, and where we have failed on Quian. If only we

had been aware of this sooner, things would have been different for many people. But we weren't aware. We fell into the same trap. We helped destroy an entire civilization with the best intentions, and the most honest desire to help them. They came to us for help. They pleaded with us to do something! We heard the same words that you speak now. We struggled with them almost day and night, but we did the wrong thing. They came to us, and we told them that we could help, because the people on Earth had managed to live with nuclear weapons for a long time, and have survived. We told them we would reveal to them how mankind had accomplished that feat of surviving in the face of 65,000 nuclear bombs that once sat ready to be launched at a moment's notice. And we kept our promise. That was our mistake. It was the biggest error we ever made. We didn't have the time to unravel the whole train of mistakes that the people on Earth had made that had created for them their own hypercritical situation. We tried to deal with the symptoms rather than with the deep causes for the symptoms. What we got into requires extreme vigilance. It requires turning back history. This is something that is extremely difficult. But we just charged ahead without thinking."

Zy turns to Wendy and me. "Do you still believe that this enormous task of overturning history can be accomplished by children? We once thought we could fix such situations easily with our special capabilities, zipping back to Earth and replicating on Quian what was done on Earth. Yes, we obliged them. 'Zy, come and help us!' That's what they said. They said it until we broke down. 'You can do it, you are wise men, you and your friends.' They kept insisting, but we failed, because we didn't realize that the Earth was in a more precarious state than they were. We failed them. We failed twice, and we failed miserably. You have no idea how hard it is to live with the terrible knowledge of such failures. Please don't ask us to become involved once more."

Olaf nods in agreement. "You really don't want to hear the rest of it," he says.

I protest. "We need to know. We are not asking you to become involved again. We merely need to understand what you have experienced. Perhaps, by knowing why you have failed, the same mistakes can be avoided."

"When has it ever happened that our society has learned anything from its historic mistakes?" says Zy. "Has it happened even once? Why would it be any different this time?"

Olaf nods. He seems to agree.

He turns to me. "How can you possibly understand what you need to understand? You talk about 'your' children as if you owned their life. This type of thinking is oligarchic thinking. Are you prepared to make the required deep fundamental changes? Those children that you refer to are a part of the whole of humanity. None of us stands apart from this universal oneness that exists without separation, though we have no right to dictate to their consciousness. You should have called them the children of human-

ity that you care for, instead of 'my children.' Did you create them? Your part in their being born is so minuscule that it doesn't warrant taking possession of them. You did your little part and the rest unfolded according to the principles of our humanity. And that was way beyond your doing, bordering on the miraculous. Are you prepared to regard all mankind in this manner? Oligarchism will cease if you do."

Olaf turns to Zy, "What shall we do with such shallow minded people? Shall we tell them about our experiences? Can they benefit from them?"

Zy nods. "We have no choice Olaf. Remember it was you who entered the Gribbork affair, and what preceded it, into their ship's logbook. It's public record now. You can't keep it a secret any longer.

"I suppose you are right," Olaf replies. "If they are sensitive enough to what we are saying, they may glean something of the fundamental principles that we believe to understand, finally. And if not..."

Here I interrupt Olaf with a protest. "You are not being fair," I say sharply and almost raised my voice, but lower it instead. "You know that we have moved miles ahead. Look at my association with Natalia, then Jill, then Cira. Do you have any idea what stands behind that in terms of breaking with tradition and looking at one-another honestly as human beings? You speak of agonies. There were great agonies involved in facing the dimensions of universal principles, with fears in the back of the mind that irreparable harm might be done towards one-another. This happened time and time again. Do you think that any of that would have been possible without tremendously daring, agonizing, and deeply honest steps, very deep-searching steps along the way? And then just look at Wendy. I can't even begin to imagine by what miraculous moves in consciousness she has been able to move with us to the leading edge of where we are now. But she did it. All of this is unprecedented, Olaf. Tell me where you've seen the likes of it before? It has to count for something. We are certainly not like the little children anymore that you feel you have to protect from facing the still deeper challenges."

"All right then," Zy interrupts me. He turns to Olaf and nods, then turns to me, "I just want you to be aware of the price you may have to pay. There is always a steep price involved with screwing up. It appears you are aware of that."

"Actually it started quite innocently," says Olaf. "One day, one of the most advanced scientists from the planet Quian arrived on Monar Aquilae, where Zy and I had come from different parts of the Universe for a science fair. Somehow the chap found out how we got there." Olaf explains that this wasn't difficult, since he and Zy had made a great ado about it. He says they had both been boasting how they had become 'masters of the Universe.' "That's when one of their top scientists implored Zy to help his people," says Olaf. Olaf turned to Zy. "I think we were in a bar, when it all began."

Zy nods. He lifts himself out of the mud again. "Well, what did you expect of a bunch of greenhorns who had the Universe in their pocket? We told him it would be a piece of cake. We jumped to the chance of putting our new mental technology to work. We felt, as though we could do anything. We told the chap that we knew exactly how to handle a budding nuclear civilization, how to prevent the confrontation, how to put the people on the right track. We simply called all the great minds together that we knew, and formed a think tank. We did this right here. We built the conference center for that."

Zy tells us how he personally assembled two dozen men at his own place in the mountains. Initially it was for strategy sessions, a vigorous brain storming. Then came the task force assignments.

"God those were exciting days," Zy intersperses repeatedly, while Olaf tells us about these sessions. Zy had suddenly lost all his seriousness, Olaf, too. They grin like a couple of twelve-year-olds telling each other of their naughty tricks.

"It was fun only at first," says Olaf, correcting Zy when he mentioned again that those were exciting days.

"If I had only listened to you," Zy replies. He turns to Wendy and me. "Olaf told us right from the beginning that our project would never work. But who took Olaf seriously? You should have seen Olaf in those days, he was so frail, so little, so round in the face, like a baby, and so funny at times. No one took him seriously. We didn't even take ourselves seriously. We thought we were the wisest of the wise! We didn't need any counsel. Not us! No!"

Zy turns to Olaf again. "You did the right thing when you quit."

He told us, that ironically, it was Olaf's idea that got the thing going. Zy told us, that since they had no military force at their disposal on Gribbork, and scientific reasoning with the people seemed hopeless, their think tank had to find a clever way to do what needed to be done to make the hard choices.

"In this department," says Zy, "Olaf excelled."

Zy says that the scientists on Quian had already attempted to use reason as a means to get their people to scrap all the nuclear weapons they had created, but they had failed miserably. In response to that, as Zy told us, Olaf had reminded the think-tank-people of an ancient principle in the martial arts, a technique that is used which re-directs an opponents strength against himself. Zy says, this is how the idea was born to employ the people's own resources against their nuclear war capabilities. Nothing needed to be brought in from outside the planet. No one needed to be forced to do anything. It seemed like an ideal plan, it shouldn't have failed!

"What did go wrong?" Wendy asks moments later.

"Everything!" Zy replies. "For starters, we had become the oligarchy. We thought like an oligarchy, we behaved like an oligarchy, and we acted like one. By this, everything was doomed. Everything we touched turned to dust."

Zy told us that their plan provided for a three tiered approach. The challenge was correctly recognized, as something tremendously tricky and not totally certain. A grand approach was called for. The first priority was to discredit the nature of their weapons technology. This was accomplished by distorting it as something evil and dangerous to life and happiness.

"Surely, that's what it was," Wendy interjects. "wasn't it?"

Zy sighs, "that's what we thought, too. We failed to realize that technologies are an outcome of intelligent awareness of fundamental principles. If one discredits this, one discredits the very soul of an intelligent people. One destroys their identity from within. Then, what has one got left with which to counter the force of nuclear weapons?"

"The discrediting part wasn't hard, even though it was wrong," Olaf interjects. "Their military had insisted that nuclear weapons technology was essential, that it was stupid wanting to disarm. If anyone had cheated in the process, that person would instantly become ruler over the others - a fate worse than death, as the people saw it. And so the people were easily convinced to fear their technology, since they couldn't be convinced to instead fear the power structures that would abuse their technological capabilities. Attacking technology in such a setting was like feeding milk to babies. They cheered! They destroyed all of their nuclear technologies. They destroyed nuclear power too. They demonized everything nuclear. They feared the nuclear technology like the plague. We had won! Almost, we had. By the time the deed was done, only the nuclear weapons had remained. That's how we failed."

"Discrediting technology wasn't the only stupid thing we did," says Zy.

Zy told us that the Quian military insisted that nuclear weapons would have to remain.

"They were needed," he says. "Their situation had become so urgent," says Zy, "that if a single person had as much as sneezed, the entire planet would have been incinerated. The military says that they needed the deterrent effect that these unacceptable weapons had."

"For this reason," says Olaf, "a second front was required. The logic was simple," he says. "If the military didn't want to give up its weapons voluntarily, then we thought that the physical economy needed to be destroyed that supported these weapons." Olaf pauses and shakes his head.

"This was an awesome task," he says softly. "We were to kill this giant economy?" He pauses again. "But we did it by discrediting technologies, science, education, love, honor, culture, and so on," Olaf continues. "When we were finished they had nothing left. They had no pride, no functional infrastructures, and no functional development platforms that could have rebuilt their economies. Everything had been destroyed, by shifting the focus from physical production for the support of society onto individual financial gain, and onto greed by which the wealth of society was drained away, like into a bottomless pit. We introduced greed-based economics. We had learned this from Adam Smith. The process had been used successfully on Earth to destroy the American economy. We felt that since it worked so spectacularly on Earth, we could rely on it to work just as well on Quian, and it did. We gave the people dreams of wealth, enticed with a few trinkets of property that were derived from looting the productive society to its deepest levels. All that they had left after we were done, were their nuclear weapons and a whole range of terrible conflicts that nobody possessed the means to confront with any kind of sense of reality."

"We failed," says Zy. "We destroyed everything except the nuclear weapons that we had intended to destroy."

He turns to Olaf. "We've killed those people. We've destroyed everything they needed to survive. We've taken it upon ourselves to protect them, when our goal should have been to develop them further and to create a renaissance on their planet that would have made all weapons obsolete, and with it obsoleted the very notion of war and violence. We should have created a cultural breakthrough with profound ideas like the Golden Renaissance on Earth in the 15th Century. If we had done this their civilization would still be intact and be infinitely richer. The conflicts would have vanished in this atmosphere."

Olaf turns to me. "There were three power blocks on Quian planet, each with a high level economy comparable to what we've seen on planet 'O'."

"Oh my God!" says Wendy. "You mean you went in and wrecked all that?"

He nods. "We thought it had to be done. We called it the 'hard choice!' We thought this was necessary to disable the powder keg."

"Let me assure you, this was no longer fun," says Olaf. "It hurt deeply to do these treacherous things. Unfortunately, that's what is still being done on Earth in the service of empires."

"That's when Olaf quit," says Zy.

"Not only did it hurt," says Olaf. "It wasn't easy either. It was like administering a slow death. We had to destroy what supports an economy, which are two things: Faith in the system, and a ready pool of investment funds for maintaining a productive environment. Once this pool was drained, and it was easily drained by introducing speculation into their world that had been totally foreign to them, their faith in their system had been shattered and things went from bad to worse after that until one morning

all hell broke loose. Now, there is no a single person living on this planet anymore, and won't be for a long time to come."

"Peace has been restored," says Zy sarcastically. "Before this happened," Zy adds with a long sigh, "every continent on Quian had been reduced to the state that Russia had been in at the end of the second millennium, which had been looted to the bone by speculators to the point that nothing worked anymore. Everyone thought that nuclear weapons were not a threat anymore. They told the whole of humanity that the Cold War is over. People believed that. That's what they wanted to hear. They rejoiced, and they reacted accordingly. They even talked about disarmament. That was the situation we had hoped to create on Quian. But they didn't disarm. We didn't realize that the economic destruction that we unleashed would also destroy their armed forces, which can only be supported by a healthy economy. This meant that the people on Quian had no means left to defend themselves in their evermore-tense situation amidst a global economic collapse. They had no options left but to resort to nuclear strikes. They had no other capability left. We practically forced them to resort to nuclear weapons. How stupid of us!"

"It is widely believed that the final conflict that ignited their world started at mid morning in one of the capitals," says Olaf. "By noon their entire world was destroyed and the sky was filled with ashes that might take a decade to settle to the ground, which is still ongoing. No one survived that day to tell us what specifically had set off the firestorm."

Olaf turns to Wendy. "Get the children away from Earth. Bring them here. Educate them. What do they know about the scientific principles that support civilizations? They may become misguided environmentalists and do the same thing that we did, except they may do it with a green pencil instead. What do they know about the structures of oligarchies? What do they know about the necessary development processes that can cause the kind of cleansing that is required to dissolve the oligarchies? What do they know about the awakening of civilization to great periods of renaissance, cultural optimism, economic freedom, freedom to create, explore, build, surge ahead in every field? What do they know about a world powered by a global cultural renaissance as boundless energy resources can enable? Do they even know how many nuclear power complexes still exist on the Earth that have not yet been shut down, and at what day the lights will go out when the remaining ones become demolished in the way America demolished its automobile industry and aviation and space industry? Do they know what happens then? Do they know what happens when the nations have no economies left, and no defenses except for those tens of thousands of nuclear weapons that they still maintain? I do respect their noble motives in their nuclear fight. We had noble motives, too. But they need much more than that. They need the kind of scientific understanding of the underlying principles of civilization that we didn't have."

Zy interrupts Olaf and turns to Wendy and me. "Bring the children here," he pleads with a passionate voice. "Let me show them the ruins of

Quian. Afterwards, take the children to planet 'O' for a real education to let them learn what a civilization is. I would never presume to be able to instruct them, but the 'O' people might. They are a living proof of what can be accomplished, and you won't find even the slightest trace of oligarchism there, which is an education in itself. We had tried to help the people of Quian with our narrow-minded Earth mentality. The Quian people couldn't have done anything more stupid than asking us for help."

"We helped them all right," says Olaf in a sarcastic kind of voice. "We gave them the best the oligarchy has developed on Earth to destroy the physical support structures of society. We gave them liberalism, we thought it was good. We didn't realize then that liberalism was created to destroy society. It's a cleverly created form of insanity that solved the problem of the oligarchy. Liberalism really started with the Venetian Empire. They needed ships. They needed scientific progress to create superior technologies, but they couldn't allow a general scientific development in society to happen, as this development would have overturned the empire's foundation, its oligarchic power, the rule of the rich. So, they created an ideology of insanity, called Liberalism. Even now, people think that being Liberal is good, because you're open, you're democratic, but it really means that you have no principles! Liberalism is the name of the 'my idea,' 'my money,' 'my right to do as I please,' cult. That's what the Venetian oligarchy had brought into England. They had infiltrated the Netherlands, and when William of Orange invaded England, and had made himself the ruler, England had ceased to be a kingdom. It became an oligarchy, a nation ruled by private power, for private wealth, in total opposition to the general welfare principle. Liberalism, which denies the rule of principle or even the existence of principles, and enthrones the rule of private power, became the foundation of the new empire that became eventually the British Empire, a private empire that was at first operated by the East India Trading Company. That is where the root of war lies, in the rule of empire in the quest of ever greater power to loot society across the world. Those who lobbied for the creation of the atomic bomb, came from this background. They wanted a weapon so terrible that its terror would force all nations on Earth to surrender their sovereignty into the hands of a liberalist world empire. It would have worked, had Russia not intervened and countered the imperial terror. The atomic bomb was never meant to eradicate nations. It was meant to stage a rule of terror and maintain this terror while in the background the nations are looted into impotence and made irrational by the liberal rule of living without principles, resulting into incompetence, greed, hate, racism, and a shift away from scientific and economic progress into ever wider forms of criminality. That's what we brought to the people of the planet Quian and convinced them that it worked to prevent nuclear war since it had done so on the Earth."

"You should have brought to them the principles of the Golden Renaissance," says Natalia. "I don't blame you that you didn't understand their value, since that was trashed ever since the Venetian set out to

destroy the Golden Renaissance that nearly eradicated the Venetian Empire. This war, to trash the value of humanist principles, and science, that are needed for a renaissance discovery, is still going on. We were lucky in Russia to have glimpsed some of that value. It was the great revival of those principles in America that gave us a glimpse of their value. When the Peace of Westphalia overturned the Thirty Years War, by the revival of these principles, the seeds for a New World in America were sown, for a society that would be free from oligarchic rule. When America prospered thereby, those principles also inspired Russia. We were about to launch a New World too, but that was stopped when the British Empire had invented communism, and had handed it on a silver platter to Russia, through the back door, like a new Trojan Horse. If you had been wise, you would have brought the Renaissance Principles to Quian. The people of the planet 'O' seemed to have discovered these principles on their own. They developed a society that has nuclear bombs, and the knowledge to build as many as they wish, but has no use for them. The moment you open the door to humanist principles you close the door to war and all the weapons of war become obsolete. On that basis you could have saved the people of Quian."

"We used the oligarchic liberal model instead and gave it to Quian," says Olaf quietly. "We thought we were really clever. We thought that if we can eradicate the economic support structures necessary for war, war would be avoided by default."

"In real terms the opposite is true," says Natalia. "Large scale economic development is the only war-avoidance policy there is, because that development cannot proceed without the renaissance principles that give humanity its Spirit back, and invariably disable oligarchism."

"So we did everything wrong," says Olaf. "Still, we did everything right according to the book, and things went fast. The global investment pool on Quian had been drained in three years and poured into the gambling casinos of the vulture funds that wrecked industry after industry. They took their money assets and scrapped the rest, and shut down production. Their own financial organizations did the wrecking-job themselves. We did the same on Earth. It took a bit longer on Earth, except they turned on the printing presses on Earth, at the end, to satisfy the speculative needs a little longer, that the system created, even while it was already bankrupt. They didn't have to do that on Quian. They didn't have time."

Zy interrupted and says that his collaborators on the planet had introduced the same new security instrument that had been pioneered on Earth with great success. But it was all a scam, without backing of anything real, but it offered huge returns. When the physical economy is collapsing, the collateral vanishes, and thereby the securities become valueless. People lost big time that way. They went into debt in order to keep going. The banks loved that. They sold people's debt to other investors as assets, but the debts could never be repaid in a collapsing economy, whereby the assets became worthless. They soon discovered that the entire mass of paper assets was worthless too, and there were few other real assets left.

Eventually the entire value system disintegrated. The entire financial system blew away, but with it the specter of war was brought back to the foreground. Before empires fall, they bring out the sword, in a last attempt to save themselves."

"We are close to that on Earth," says Wendy, "and that includes collapsing cultural values."

Olaf nods. "When liberalism rises cultural values vanish. It was a two edged sword that we unleashed on Quian," says Olaf. "Not only did this system bleed the productive economy dry, it also turned the looted funds into a battering ram for the destruction of the planet's most successful industries, even its necessary infrastructures, like farming." He turns to Wendy. "You must have seen some of that too. I hear that they now take vast tracts of farmland out of food production on the Earth, and grow corn for making ethanol as a motor fuel. The insanity is that it takes more energy to produce the ethanol than the ethanol gives back by burning it in cars. However, the process is highly efficient in destroying the food supply system on Earth. I take it that it is infinitely more difficult to defeat this trap, that the people on Earth have sprung on themselves, than it was for the two children in your home to refuse the diamonds you had brought them. They gave the diamonds back, because they recognized that it wasn't right to keep them. They probably felt that it was a kind of stealing to ask money for them. Making ethanol is stealing the food from people's dinner table, but everybody loves the ethanol scam. They believe the lies that it is a pollution free alternate fuel. That's how it was on Quian. Everybody bought into the lies that the scams promoted, even though they were beginning to see the lies. In response they simply closed their eyes. Stealing from one-another to get rich, was the glorious way to live. That was the watchword. The most successful thieves, who had the greatest wealth amassed, were celebrated by society as heroes, and paraded in public as role models to be emulated."

"It's not that much different on Earth," says Wendy. "Even I can see that."

"Another destructive tool that we applied on Quian, was debt management," says Zy. "The game was designed in such a manner that the weaker people, who were less enthusiastic in the game of global stealing, were strangled to death by the stealing. They were forced into debt just to stay alive. They were driven into debt so deep that they had to sell their products at rock bottom prices, in order to pay on the debt, so that they had nothing left to survive on. It became so bad that the most severely beaten, rebelled. But they were crushed. Our debt management scheme unleashed the worst fascist looting and repression you can imagine, because in a dying economy there are no buyers, even for the cheap products. The game that we created became a time bomb that killed the stronger economies when they were forced to absorb the cheap imports; and it killed the suppliers too. The once productive economies had become so focused on the cheap that they let their own industries collapse, and the suppliers of

the cheap products let their people collapse."

"This had a worse effects on the global society than slavery," says Olaf.

Zy told us that this two pronged game became so successful that it inadvertently helped him with the third phase of their project to collapse the capacity to fight wars. He told us that as the economies collapsed, the food industries lost ground and simply disintegrated for the lack of funding, the lack of revenue, and for the lack of infrastructures in the terms of fertilizers, fuel, and transportation, which also collapsed. "We thought that was good, because under semi-starvation conditions people become weak and develop diseases and die. It's physically impossible to fight wars with a sick and dying population."

"We really thought at one point that this would prevent them from fighting wars," says Olaf. "We celebrated. This was to be the final clincher according to the most advanced liberal doctrine that we could find on the Earth. Everything we read, everyone we talked to, assured us that this painful reversion towards depopulation would bring the society back to the kind of primitive ages in which nuclear weapons have no place because they are too difficult to maintain."

"The cultural reversion should have rendered all of their nuclear weapons systems impotent by neglect. That is what we were told by all of the think-tank-people that we spoke to," says Zy. "But it didn't work on Quian. It worked on Gribbork where seven percent of the people survived."

"Not only were the sick unable to work," says Olaf, "but the necessary care for them had added such a huge load on the dying economies that the very notion of care was simply abandoned. Depopulation was said to be good for the planet, and the people believed that. We believed this crap ourselves."

"Everything went according to plan," says Zy. "Except we hadn't realized that the plan itself was a conspiracy. It was a plan designed to fail. We, like all simple-minded people, fell for it. The plan was quietly pushed into our arena like a Trojan Horse. We didn't see it. It was standard stuff in imperial textbooks. It was designed to produce this end, and it did. However, on Quian the process didn't stop at the desired end. When the ejaculation of madness begins it cannot be stopped at will."

"Every oligarchic doctrine is a conspiracy," says Olaf.

"We realized this too late," says Zy. "We began to notice the stench behind this trap, when the nuclear weapons systems on Quian were not shut down by the wave of collapse that we set in motion, as we had been assured, would happen," adds Zy. "The nuclear weapons were not neglected, but were protected to the very end by the oligarchic society that we had created on Quian. Oligarchism is just another term for fascism. This means that the nuclear bomb fits the game. On Earth it was the great 'humanitarian' Russell, who had lobbied for the nuclear bomb, and Russell had his roots in the oligarchy. So the two go together hand in hand."

"That's what we learned too late," says Olaf. "The Mutually Assured

Destruction doctrine that we had brought to Quian right in the beginning, as a platform for defense, came directly from the oligarchy on Earth. We gave it to them. It instilled confidence in us. We believed in this doctrine ourselves, because it had evidently worked on Earth. But this doctrine never worked, has it? What had saved mankind on Earth during the nuclear age was the background of mankind's humanity that was still a factor lingering from the Franklin Roosevelt years, though everything connected with his revival of a humanist values was under attack from the day he died. We didn't know that. We gave the people of Quian the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, the very opposite of Roosevelt's doctrine of Mutually Supported Development, to be applied around the world. The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction that we brought to Quian, played itself out to the bitter end. The nuclear weapons that they had built protected to their last breath, were used in great masses on the morning of the firestorm."

"You bastard!" I hear myself say to him.

"Bastard is right!" he replies.

Olaf and Zy were no longer just telling their story. They were acting it out. Each sentence was like a death sentence against those people who had enlisted their aid.

"We were totally convinced that all of this should have worked," Olaf defends himself.

"But it didn't," says Zy. "The plain fact is, we didn't know what we were doing, compared to what we know now, and what we know now prevents us from ever becoming involved again as manipulators of nations and civilizations."

"Actually everything worked far too well for us, right from the beginning," says Olaf.

He turned to Wendy and me. "Even the anti-technology campaign worked wonders. We staged an environmental movement, like they did on Earth, which supposedly targeted the entire nuclear sector. But it didn't. It only kicked the nuclear power industry in the teeth, but left the nuclear weapons in place. The anti-technology campaign was so effective that the people actually forced their respective governments to dismantle all of their nation's nuclear power facilities. Some nations were in competition with each other on that score. Only this anti-technology madness didn't effect their nuclear weapons programs that the oligarchs had lobbied for, and had kept protected. We should have smelled something foul right there. Which-ever country on Quian was the first to complete the destruction of its nuclear power sector, congratulated itself as if it were some kind of a hero, and was admired for this 'strength' of will. The goal was set, that within a few years the entire planet would become a nuclear power free world, one way or another, no matter what it would take. But it was not made nuclear-weapons-free."

Zy says that it was painful watching them as they destroyed their most advanced technological infrastructure and research institutions on which

their livelihood and future livelihood depended. "Except we believed as they did, that this destruction would help them. That's how bad things became. We should have stopped the game right then, and turned the clock back."

"Not only didn't we stop. We made it worse for them," says Olaf.

"We helped them arrange one single nuclear accident that was totally harmless, like the Three Mile Island accident on Earth," says Zy. "That thing mushroomed out of all proportion on Quian until every nuclear power plant was shut down. How does one stop an avalanche like that once it gets going? It was too late to go the other way."

Olaf says sadly that nobody listened to those who predicted that the unemployment lines in an energy-starved economy would be thousands of times more deadly than the worst nuclear power disaster. But who listened to those predictors of doom? We too, didn't listen. But they were right. Once the disintegration began the employment lines grew, homelessness became epidemic, and the graveyards became crowded."

Zy speaks about a cartoon he had seen. It showed an unemployment line trailing in the distance into a grave.

The intensity of Zy and Olaf's talking had the strangest effect on me. Time and time again the Gorans came to mind that Werner and I had caused to be destroyed by our own intervention in the galactic struggles.

"We had the best intentions in mind," says Werner, when I brought the subject up.

In response to the way Olaf had reacted and I had tormented myself with this incidence, I asked Olaf what he would have done. Would he have done the same thing as Werner and I had done? I could still see the Gorans' ship in its final power dive. We could have zipped it back to the fleet, before it exploded on impact.

Olaf shrugs his shoulders. "I wasn't there. You must search for the principles involved. I might have relocated the entire fleet to a different galaxy. But what we did in the end of the 'O' people was better. We elevated the 'O' people to a higher state of living. We might have even taught the Gorans that they are not all powerful, that in fact their chosen way of life is a rather stupid way to live. I knew that the 'O' people's demand on themselves to find a victory without violence and destruction of anyone, was the only option they had," says Olaf. "I think I was the only one of us who understood at the time that what they were searching for was the only option that would actually work. This conviction came out of our failure before."

I tried to listen to Olaf and Zy as intently as I could, especially when they compared the episode of the Gorans to their earlier experi-

ences. Also, I had insisted that their story be told. Now its essence was almost escaping me under a burden of emotions that seemed too immense to grasp. Nevertheless, the agony seemed to have put their story into the kind of perspective in which it must be seen. But how does one draw such a perspective? Two civilizations have been destroyed with the intention to save them. Quian was destroyed totally, and Gribbork by 93%. Was that also an echo of the future on Earth? I suddenly realized that Olaf and Zy, with their brutal intervention, might have actually saved Gribbork, so that it faced a better future than the Earth might. The Gribbork planet had remained pristine, clean, and unpolluted. The Earth has already been pushed past that threshold, being globally polluted with nanometer sized particles of alpha radiation emitters that have a half-life of 4.5 billion years. Millions of kilograms of uranium had already been vaporized in a new form of gas warfare and ejected into the global atmosphere, with fifty times more to come. Those minuscule gasified radiation emitters were already killing people by the millions all over the world, while the door for more remained open. They were the byproduct of DU bombs, bullets, and shells, that had been created to penetrate armor, like a hot knife cutting through butter. The people on Earth were told that DU stands for depleted uranium, but description involves a lye. The weapons uranium is only depleted of a minuscule isotope that is needed for making atom bombs, while the remaining uranium keeps on emitting alpha radiation that people were now inhaling with their every breath. Being gas-like, the tiny radiation emitters get into every part of the human body, even into the reproductive cells, where they shoot off their cannons of nucleonic particles that wreck DNA chains and cause numerous types of cancer, horrible birth defects, and a wide range of diseases including diabetes. The Gribbork people had been spared that exposure, while the people on Earth faced fifty times more to come, war after war.

When World War II ended and the guns fell silent the dying from war stopped. That was the salvation on Gribbork, but on Earth, when the wars stop, the dying continues and will likely go on forever, to some degree, slowly wreaking havoc on the human DNA, perhaps distorting it over the ages to come. The people on Gribbork were lucky in this sense. I realized that in a few generations the remaining society on Gribbork would likely recover itself and create a new civilization that will become rich and viable once more. Earth might not be so lucky unless its oligarchic liberal system is shut down that is strangling society and demanding evermore wars, destruction, death, and depopulation, which the DU weapon serves efficiently for all times to come.

With this sudden realization, my dark perception of Olaf as a heartless, monster drained away. His motive was noble. He missed his mark, because he wasn't smart enough, but in his awful fumbling he might have done some good after all, though infinitely more good could have been done had he done things right for those who sought his help. He might have elevated the people with the best principles that mankind once knew, like

those that the 'O' people had discovered for themselves.

As my perception of Olaf changed, so did my perception of Zy change.

Zy, unlike Olaf, was a simple fellow, like most other men. He, apparently, had been drawn into the game of helping civilizations by the same emotional strains that I was drawn into when I and Werner Heisenberg went after the Goran fleet to help the 'O' people. If we had been 'successful' in our dark quest of using force we might have destroyed the 'O' people too. I could understand Zy now. Under normal circumstances Zy might have looked even cute at times sitting in his mud pond, especially after he had submerged into the hot mud and then stood up with globs of it sliding from his face.

The unfolding nightmare of the two men telling their stories appeared to have had all in all a deadening effect on Wendy. In spite of the comical situation with the sliding mud on their faces and hair, and whatever, Wendy never smiled. It seems we all paid our price of having that story told to us that Olaf had warned us against at the beginning.

The setting in which the story was told seemed quite appropriate now. The mud clung to us mentally, as it did physically. It would likely take some time of deep reasoning to cleanse the mud away, the mud that we had been wallowing in.

There were numerous mud pools in operation in this park that was advertised as a health center. Not all of the ponds were occupied. Ours was somewhat remote from most of the others. Zy said that the mud was 'cleaner' there, although it was everywhere artificially circulated and constantly 'washed and filtered.'

Sitting in such a mud hole, one feels like one is floating in air, surrounded by this constantly up-welling, bubbling ooze. As to its supposed medicinal effects, neither Zy nor Olaf could actually vouch for any. Strangely I like the smell of the place. The entire complex smells faintly like a sulfur pot. The smell reminds me of the swamps of the Everglades. A few sparse plants somehow manage to grow between the pools of mud. They look as strangely foreign to the place as did the towering great city of Monar Aquilae in the distance, which is regarded as some kind of national monument of this well-functioning and culturally rich nation-state planet.

Zy didn't fit the environment. He often stands up in the mud pool lecturing us, as if standing before a class of students.

I am surprised however, by Martin's reaction, or rather his lack of reaction. Something was missing in this doom and gloom atmosphere. Martin's presence had always brought light to a situation, a super-nova type light. Maybe he was waiting for me. But what could he be waiting for? Martin always spoke about the principles of the Universe that reflect its all-

pervading Spirit.

"The principles of the Universe are error-free," I interject into the still unfolding discourse on the doom of civilizations. "The principles of the Universe are not antagonistic to one another, if they were the Universe would not exist. Even if a single principle of the complex array of principles that construct an atom, for example, that make it functioning for countless billions of years, was to be altered and be made antagonistic instead of harmonizing, then every atomic structure would collapse; and with it the Universe would collapse. There are evidently no errors incorporated into the design of the Universe."

I threw this up for Martin to pick on.

Olaf responds instead. He nods. "Every civilization that fails itself is by its own conditioning doomed to collapse. It errs, and thereby lacks the ability to survive. That's elementary, isn't it?"

"But the principles of the Universe are error-free," I repeat. "Change one iota and chaos results. The living world of biological profusion is likewise designed error-free. Shouldn't that reflect itself on mankind? Shouldn't mankind operate error-free? Isn't that the Spirit of the Universe, to unfold error-free?"

Martin shakes his head. "Mankind IS unfolding error-free," he says. "The Spirit of the Universe is the central sun, reflected by its principles. The principle of gravity, for example, will never change. But mankind has learned to deal with it, and is now able to fly, regardless of the principle of gravity. We became antagonistic to it and found freedom in the process. However, that freedom rests on mankind's discovery of higher level principle that harmonize with the rudimental Principle. The end result is that there is no error involved. But is there an error involved when we fail and our plane falls out of the sky? World War II was a monumental error by mankind. Did this war upset the design of the Universe, by its happening as it did? Fifty million people from over fifty countries have fought each other for six years in an orgy of killing that wiped out more than fifty million human beings. And it was all done by the hands of mankind, in many cases one person at a time. That's history, a history of a monumental error. Still, James is evidently right in saying the principles of the Universe are error-free. So how does one resolve the paradox? Can you resolve the paradox, Natalia?"

"Since the Spirit of the Universe is its central 'Sun,' and the Principle of the Universe reflects the nature of this harmonizing Spirit," Martin continues, "then like a fully powered sun, the Universe is in a state of precisely organized harmony. If a civilization chooses to withdraw itself from this 'Sun' and chooses to play the role of a mythological black hole in its thinking, then it isolates itself from the Universe with self-focused gravity, while the Universe itself remains in harmony. The self-withdrawing civilization may collapse by its emptiness as it loses the foundation for its existence. Of course, in doing so it does not change the principles of

civilization that are as unalterable as the Universe itself. A civilization isn't an arbitrary thing. It is a construct of Principle. The Spirit of the Universe remains forever error-free. There is no such thing as a history of error in the Universe. There never was a time when an error was true and therefore had a history. Likewise there never was a time in which a civilization that withdraws itself from the principles of civilization did not fade into oblivion, like we saw it on Quian, or on Gribbork, almost."

"I don't know about that," says Zy. "I am not a philosopher. All I know is what I saw, and that wasn't pretty, and it looked pretty real. As I said," Zy continues after he took a dip in the mud as the mud on his skin was beginning to dry and cake up. Also he had to clean his face off so that he could speak again. The dry mud seemed to be irritating. "As I said, the anti-technology hype we had cooked up on Quian had no impact on their nuclear weapons programs. It only destroyed the civilian technologies," he says. "We erred. We screwed up."

"I don't think so," says Natalia. "I don't think you ever were in tune with the principles of the Universe. At least you weren't then. You lived in darkness. You lived in a world of your own make believe, a black-hole world. That is why you think you erred."

Zy told us that the nuclear weapons were the most protected price the Quian people had, because the oligarchy needed them. It needed them to protect their empires. He said that the weapons were not only protected, but were continuously being modernized, and new ones were added in increasing numbers, even while the economies were disintegrating.

"Yes, they lived in a mental black hole," Zy says. "I can see this now. We were like them. That's when we thought of this new plan. It was another black-hole plan. This was also the time when the Gribbork people came to us, for help," he sighs, "because of the great 'success' we had wrought at Quian, as they saw it. We developed a new angle, when the Gribbork people came to us, something that we felt could be implemented quickly on both planets. Time was running out fast for both Quian and Gribbork."

"The black-hole type isolation from the real world of the principles of the Universe, and from our humanity, applies not only to civilizations," says Jill. "It applies to individuals too, or primarily to individuals since individuals make up society and collectively shoulder the task of creating a civilization. Society reflects the state of the individual. If that state is in darkness, the outcome isn't anything bright. Its been called the Dark Age in the past, a collective dark age, a cultural Black Hole."

"That may be so," says Zy.

Zy told us that the Biological Task Force on Gribbork had discovered the emergence of pools of diseases in the most impoverished areas, and discovered that these diseases could be harvested and be artificially

spread relatively quickly, which they did. However, the spread appeared to be much too slow in the end to seriously affect the war-drive and the nuclear weapons game. Zy also told us that one of the chief researchers had come upon a cult that practiced a blood rite that had been forbidden for centuries, but was coming back. Zy said that the researcher suggested that the rite could be promoted and utilized as a fast track channel, like a highway, to extend the unfolding pool of diseases to every major population center on their planet, which he said would assure effective depopulation. Zy told us that the researcher called this plan, their Super-Malthusian project, according to what I told him about Thomas Malthus on Earth. He said that one of them had questioned him on how population control had been applied on Earth so successfully by the Earth's oligarchy, that society allowed itself to be quietly killed off, through poverty. That's how he became aware of how parson Thomas Malthus started a movement for the oligarchy that was designed to kill off the poor by making their living conditions so terribly unsanitary that many would simply die, even the young, at an early age. The researcher figured that once this was done on Gribbork, by utilizing the blood-rite, it could spread disease almost immediately across the general population. Zy also told us that this had been intended to weaken their entire civilization to such a low level that any thought about physical support for the maintenance of complex weapons systems would become unthinkable.

Zy leans back into his mud hole after he finished telling us all this. He leans back, deep, as if out of shame, so that his hair and much of his head became covered with the brown ooze that fills the mud pond.

"Why do we even try to find any rationality in the insane processes that go on in the darkness of a black hole?" interjects Jill. "What is devoid of principles is irrational. We are exploring a lye, not the face of mankind. A lye is not the truth! So, why do we bother?"

"I think we bother, because what happened on Gribbork planet could have been avoided," says Wendy. "Nobody needs to live in a black hole, individually or collectively. Gribbork evidently came to you quite late. It was already collapsing, wasn't it? In this case you haven't actually destroyed two worlds at all, have you? You only failed to bring light into their world, because you lived in darkness yourself."

Zy nods. His head barely stands above the mud.

"The Gribbork people were better at destroying their civilization than we were. We just helped them to do it more efficiently by interjecting processes that have been applied on Earth increasingly for thousands of years," Zy says sarcastically. "I agree, on Gribbork, the people themselves were the driving force for their own destruction. Their leaders understood Malthus better than anyone did on Earth. They understood his madness. Poverty, at the time of Malthus, became an excuse for killing people. They were simply worked to death. Hitler had once advanced this kind of process into civil law, with his declaration that certain people are unworthy of

life, such as the elderly or the chronically ill, or those who didn't fit the design of his Third Reich. On Gribbork a similar kind of Malthusian idea had become a cult fad. Primitive living became glorified. Death rituals became sanctified. The killing of the unwanted became quite normal for a time in Brahmanic India. Stupidity became honored as it now is in the West. It wasn't a new game for the people of Gribbork. They had started the ball rolling along the same line ages ago, probably a long time before the atomic bomb was created. Once the ball was rolling it could no longer be stopped."

"I don't believe this," says Jill. "Once one recognizes the darkness one can step back into the light. Thought has no inertia. A person can be where it wants to be, in darkness or in light. A single moment of responding to a right idea can change a person's life. I found this out when working on the sewer station of the ship."

I shake my head in disbelief.

Jill smiles. "This simple step of stepping into the light changed my life. There was light from then on," she says. She looks to Olaf. "Why didn't you bring light to the Quian world? A renaissance would have stopped their madness. Instead of addressing their fears, you could have addressed what they didn't have focused on, the darkness that caused their fears."

"We tried to reason," says Olaf, "but not for a renaissance. We tried to break their poison with a lesson drawn from the effects of another poison that we had brought from Earth. Zy and I, we both understood the Malthusian idea to be a poison concocted by the British Empire. Malthus actually stole the idea from a Venetian monk. Darwin picked it up from Malthus, and his cousin Galton concocted the Eugenics movement out of that plagiarism by Malthus that Darwin had build on. I think the whole black ideology movement came out of this mess, like the Martinists that stood behind the Jacobin terror in France, and later Heidegger and Nietzsche that Hitler found his footing in. The whole black mess came out of this root that was thrown into the field to counter the American Revolution that stood for freedom, principles, and scientific and technological progress. They had a similar mess on Gribbork. I had tried to tell them what the imperials did to mankind, to get them to abhor their mess. But they learned the wrong way. They emulated what mankind had failed to eradicate. I had warned them of the oligarchic tradition that Hitler was grounded in. The oligarchy on Earth had hired Hitler. They had financed him into power. They had praised him. They had made him a hero until the ball started rolling, and could no longer be stopped, and the world became a blood bath. The people on Gribbork had their own Hitler. Maybe they thought I approved of the resulting madness. Their language is difficult. We had poor communication."

Zy shakes his head, "That's madness, right? I should have stayed away. Instead I walked right into this, almost blindfolded and so innocent, just like you did when you landed there on Gribbork. You were as blind to see the truth before your eyes, even while Olaf was telling you the truth

and warning you about the trap before you, that you couldn't see."

"Standing in the light of the truth is an individual's own responsibility," Jill interjects. "But there is a place for leadership. I was beckoned by this kind of leadership. I was fascinated by the light that I saw."

"You didn't warn us that we would face a Jacobin mob on Gamma Point Eight," Natalia interjects, scolding Olaf.

"I warned you, perhaps not by name, but I warned you," says Olaf. "Gribbork is the planet you called Gamma Point Eight. I didn't see the Jacobin terror first hand, but suspected it. I knew from experience that nothing positive comes out of a dying civilization; nothing that is worth studying. Apparently after most people had died, things got still worse. Inside a black hole, like Gribbork had become, nothing is predictable, and any fascist thing is possible. On Earth the Jacobin terror was sprung as a surprise on the French cultural elite. The Jacobin mob had been organized in France by agents of the British Empire, with the task to eradicate the French intellectual elite in order to make the French society pliable to the rule by the Empire and to prevent another American Revolution from happening anywhere in Europe, which would have ended the British Empire for all times. That's how empires work. Their masters conspire. They lie. They seek protection by unleashing war that destroys their opponents. And they betray their own helpers, when they are no longer of use to them. Many of those who helped the British Empire to start the French Revolution, lost their head in the end, at the guillotine. It's the same with war. Society is so easily induced to cry for war, but look at what war does to a society."

Olaf turns to me, "You told me that for many centuries the numerous wars on Earth had drained off the nations' best people. The best men were chosen to become the officers, the second best were next in line. This meant that the best were always the first to be killed. They lead the charge into battle. The second best stayed behind them. Then they too are ordered to follow their leader to a certain death. It will always be that way. The very best people are slaughtered first in any war. It's the same with oligarchic population management. The Jacobin terror for which the French Revolution was staged and financed by the British Empire, is a good example. Napoleon spread this process throughout Europe. Napoleon was hailed for his deeds. He became a great man. The people who started this mess, who organized the French Revolution for this purpose, were honored. They are still honored. The imperials write the history books in which they celebrate their victory over humanity. The Gribbork leaders must have understood this algorithm. I tried to deter them. But they believed a population control process was needed on Gribbork planet. They did better than the Jacobins as you have experienced yourself."

Zy takes over. Zy compares the process to that of a gardener who in the process of cultivating his flowers is pulling out the very best and strongest plants, while keeping the weakest to produce the next generation. "No sane gardener would ever do that unless he wanted a weak crop!" he said. "But this is exactly what the people of Gribbork did and apparently

wanted. All we thought we needed to do, to rescue them from themselves, was to channel this process into the military domain, to disable it. We saw it as a type of 'chemotherapy' that is used to kill cancer, which kills a lot of good things along with it, but which saves the patient in the end. In the end the Gribbork governments started to kill their own people, when they felt that war hadn't killed enough. They revamped the healthcare system as Hitler had done, to eliminate the weak and unwanted, and those that pose a burden. They said that selective genocide builds a stronger society. But those were just words. The selective gave way to the universal. All people became the enemy. They killed nearly everybody in the end."

"But what has this got to do with anything real, with the light of civilization?" Jill interjects. "These are spooks of the night. They are totally irrelevant. They happen, but they have no history that is written in the light. There is no such thing in real terms as a history of errors, since errors never were true. History begins with the development of light; the development of mankind's freedom, of power over limitation, and dedication to a new renaissance of human worth and real culture."

"I used that kind of reason once to solve the 'O' people's military crisis," says Olaf. "I succeeded. So it can be done. However, we had excellent communication for this with the 'O' people, thanks to the ship and its translation system."

"The reason why Olaf succeeded," I interject, "was the simple fact that there was no oligarchy on planet 'O'. On Earth the oligarchy had eliminated all humanist education around the planet. They wanted to make sure on Earth that nobody succeeds in protecting civilization, much less building an advanced civilization. They smothered mankind with irrational ideologies in order to squash reason. They taught a concoction of empty philosophy, empty science, empty ideology, and history turned upside down and so forth, and flooded the universities with this empty irrational stuff in order to destroy the budding generation's humanity. Are you surprised that no one had been able to solve mankind's nuclear weapons problem for more than half a century? The problem was designed, not to be solved. How else would the ruling oligarchy maintain its power, which depends on latent terror that keeps society compliant to the looting by its empire? This can only be done by turning society into mindless impotent automatons that have their humanity drained out of them? The imperials invented cultural warfare, which they employed even against their own people. Thus, they made sure that the problem of endless warfare would never be solved."

"This does not mean that it cannot be solved," says Jill. "The Gribbork people could have been elevated to discovering and developing their humanity or equivalent. I think that could have worked. It could have worked along the pattern by which the Golden Renaissance was created out of the ashes of the great collapse of the Lombard Banking Empire that brought the entire economy of the 14th Century down and prepared the ground for the Black Plague. In this darkness, the first rays of light apparently came from the writings of Plato that had been preserved during the

Islamic Renaissance."

Olaf just laughs. "It took a hundred years on Earth to create the Golden Renaissance out of a black hole. Sure, the Gribbork could have been inspired to reach that high too, theoretically anyway," he said sarcastically. "But they didn't have a hundred years. And why haven't the people on Earth done this to solve their own breakdown crisis today?"

"I don't accept this," says Jill. "There is no inertia to thought. Once an error is recognized as being untrue, it loses its validity and claim to history. It ceases to be."

Zy told me that the thought-control on Quian was so deep reaching, under the name of public opinion, that he could have convinced the people of Quian to kill their own mothers to save civilization. He said that they had developed a death-culture rather than a life-culture. They were dead in real terms, before they destroyed their world physically and killed one another. But it wasn't their own culture that became tragically terminal. The people had their thinking supplied to them, and their hopes and dreams, and their right and wrong -- all finely tailored to shut down their viability as a society, quietly from within. That's how dead people can become. They had lost their life in real terms, before the war had actually happened that turned the lights out one morning.

Olaf laughs. "We saved the Gribbork's from that," he says sarcastically. He agrees however that the Gribbork's extension of the Earth's oligarchic policy, hadn't really killed anyone on Gribbork, since much of the Gribbork's population had likewise been already dead from the neck up. "They had literally become unfit to survive," he says. "Their insanity had become so great that a single spark would have turned their planet into an ash heap, as it happened on Quian. But it didn't happen on Gribbork. The society collapsed before it came to that. We may have helped them with this. Our intervention had made their nuclear weapons less than useless to them. It gave thirty million people on Gribbork planet a second chance."

"Some chance!" says Zy. "We should have walked away when the Gribbork came to us for help. We aided their oligarchism. Some gift!"

I shake my head.

"Admit it," says Olaf to me, "That's a better chance than that civilization might have had without our involvement. On Quian everyone is dead. On Gribbork, seven percent are still alive. Both were exposed to the same oligarchism, which also happens to be the most widely adapted deadly force that has been developed on Earth for controlling the masses there. Now tell me, which of the two models reflects mankind's future the best?"

"That remains to be seen?" interjects Zy.

I shake my head again. It seems monstrous to talk in these terms. I tell him so.

"Why must you measure a civilization by its physical size?" Zy adds. "You should rather measure a civilization by its ability to survive and

increase its potential population density by means of scientific, spiritual, and technological progress. What good is a ten billion people civilization when it is so rotten inside that it is willing to wipe itself out in the space of a few hours? We didn't kill the Quian people. They did this themselves. Sure, by us introducing to them the Earth's special brand of oligarchism, we helped them along towards their destruction, but it was they who bought it all, lock, stock, and barrel. If they had been a civilization of substance that would have made no difference. They bought this crap just like mankind has bought it. Mankind had sixty thousand nuclear bombs, so did the people on Quian. For the Gribbork, we saved whatever of their civilization was salvageable, and probably more by luck."

"I must disagree," says Natalia. "A civilization needs to be measured by its size. An advancing civilization reflects large strides in scientific and technological progress. It creates powerful technologies such as nuclear fusion that enables many more people to live, and to live in a freer and richer manner. However, an advancing technological culture requires many more people to create it, and to maintain it. When we stepped from wood to coal, then to oil, then to nuclear power, ever-larger infrastructures were required at each step along the way. It takes a lot of people to build and operate these. On Gribbork, it seems they were gone back to burning wood."

"The Gribbork people fought the same kind of war that Europe fought in the 1600s," I interject. "They probably were in a Thirty Years War mentality, by which all of Europe was mired in poverty. The Principle of Universal Love didn't exist for them, which had ended the Thirty Years War in Europe. The principle didn't exist in Europe either. The rediscovery of the Principle of Universal Love was forged out of what was left of the light of the Renaissance. It caused people to rediscover their inner light, and thereby to focus on what is of advantage of the other, and to promote this advantage as a platform for peace."

"The foundation for recognizing that principle didn't exist on Gribbork," says Olaf, "nor does it exist on the Earth today. Mankind had a thousand times more intelligent awareness of universal principles in the 1600s than it has now. The Gribbork people were like mankind is today. This means we had no options left but to reduce them to a state of existence where they could fight their Thirty Years War without wiping themselves off the map, which they would have done eventually, like the Quian people had."

Olaf, with his head barely poking out of the mud said that he didn't agree. He suggested that there might have been pockets of renaissance remained still alive that a few individuals had kept in their heart, adding that when this light is not maintained, any renaissance vanishes quickly; it becomes crushed with irrationalism. He pointed out in a long speech that the Venetian Empire had fought for a hundred years a string of subversive wars to wipe the Golden Renaissance out, and that they did it in the end.

Olaf suggested that the equivalent of the Golden Renaissance was probably torn down faster on Gribbork. He argued with Zy, who said that the nuclear-weapons era on Gribbork had been one without major wars, which meant that the self-collapsing algorithm had not been in effect for as many generations, as on Earth.

"People were beginning to become alive again, before we moved in," says Olaf to Zy.

"Bull shit!" Olaf interjects. "They were not anywhere near becoming alive again. War isn't the only factor of a self-collapsing algorithm. Just look at the Earth. Look at the sorry mess that people there are in. Religion has smothered their best minds, and is still doing this. Just look at the ecological religions that have made it their goal to depopulate the Earth to about the same degree that Gribbork planet became depopulated. Depopulation is still an unofficial U.N. goal. It isn't much talked about, but the policy still lingers, and the stated goal is to bring the Earth's population down to the five-percent range. That's what the ruling oligarchy got the U.N. to put its weight behind. The policy is already being implemented under different disguises, but for the same effect. The Gribbork people were waking up all right. They were waking up to a new form of fascism. Oligarchism was in their heart, probably also in their cultural background. We didn't realize that then. We merely changed the flavor. They seemed to love it. That is why they agreed. We should have done the opposite. We should have pulled them out of their oligarchism, but we didn't even know that this was the greatest danger they faced. We were like most people on Earth, who grew up under the rule of oligarchism, who lived under privatized banking, privatized power, privatized infrastructures, privatized resources, even privatized government by corruption, and as of late privatized military contractors. We thought this was the normal way to live on Earth. We were slavishly obedient to this normality, which was totally artificial, and was created for a single purpose, to bring the house down over our head."

"Eh, I don't blame you," I say to Zy, telling him about Johnny, our captain. "It's not easy for a person to step away from oligarchism. It's not easy to even detect it. Natalia and I were lucky. We had our Captain Johnny to guide us. We should be grateful to him. If he hadn't been such a particularly obnoxious priest of the order of oligarchism, and had literally forced us to wake up, we would still be trapped by the same narrow mentality, as most of humanity presently is. Johnny the oligarch was our savior from oligarchism. He wasn't refined enough to hide his dark and empty heart. Unfortunately most of humanity still remains trapped in the prison of stupefying illusions, dished out by a professional elite, paid for by the oligarchy."

"You're getting close," says Zy. "Look at drugs, and this music they call Heavy Metal Rock, and stuff like that. It is all a slick attack on society, by means of stupefying illusions. And the stuff is effective like you've never seen before. One can see the outcome already in the world of finance

where the rot is coming through the gilded facade. Remember that the oligarchy created this stupefying crap. They created the Drug-Sex-Rock Counter-Culture when the Vietnam War was winding down. They did it in order to keep the dehumanization process alive. This second stage attack destroyed whatever sense of humanity remained in the American society, which the gore on the battlefield hadn't destroyed in their hearts and minds. That's oligarchism in its most efficient garment! People were told to love it, and they loved it. Except they had been blind to realize what it was they were told to love. They believed the whole thing to be a peace process, as it was advertised."

Zy looks at Wendy. "That was probably before your time," he says.

"You shouldn't have included sex," Olaf says to Zy.

"Oh no!" I reply. "Zy is correct. Sex can be a deadening game if it is used to control and manipulate people. I would be surprised if the oligarchy hadn't exploited this option. I think it is still being used. Sex can also have the very opposite effect, a harmonizing effect," I say to him. "The human being isn't primarily a breeding machine that sex facilitates. The sexual impulses that humanity has developed, that are rooted in its identity, have been denied, ridiculed, suppressed, exploited, strangled, twisted and abused for ages. But they have all survived for one reason or another, and not just for the process of breeding. These impulses go deeper than physical sensuality. Our identity is more deeply rooted than animal instincts. If one is sensitive enough to them, they can overturn all sorts of erroneous perceptions about the substance of one's very identity and of humanity as a human being. Such an overturning can be a source of life and light if it happens totally honestly. People who live in darkness are looking for light."

"It can be a factor in overturning oligarchic control over society," says Natalia. "Oligarchism is not a physical force, primarily. Its force is derived ninety-eight percent from mental domination. You said yourself that the Gribbork people became their own worst enemies. That can only be achieved through mental domination, a kind of privatization of a people's mentality into the rulers' hands. You admitted yourself that this is the process that you aided, because you saw no other way out of the people's dilemma, except by controlling them even more deeply. Are you surprised that their society collapsed? But there might have been another way. Am I not right Jill?" says Natalia. "We have developed a way out of the whole mess, Jill, James, and me. We had struggled for years to do the very opposite to what the Gribbork had done. We broke out of the stranglehold of oligarchism, and we did come to life again. With that the brighter days began."

"As James says, sex was a big factor in this process," says Jill. "It had to be. The sexual isolation of society under religious dogma, which was created and imposed by an oligarchy in almost every case, goes back a long way, threaded especially through the churches that also functioned in many cases like empires or in compliance with empires. We didn't know how deeply we had been trapped into this isolating, controlling imposition,

until we got out of it. In ancient days the people were so afraid that someone might jar the trap open, that they imposed the death penalty for that offense. Captain Johnny would have loved to impose it, if he could have. I also hear that this sort of thing is still going on in countless different ways."

Jill turns to Olaf. "If you ever want to make humanity human again, you have to go to the core of the oligarchic game of despotic control over society by mental imposition, even though that's very difficult to wiggle out of and much more difficult to overturn."

"It's extremely agonizing at times," says Natalia to Olaf. "But you can't imagine the freedom that unfolds when one becomes oneself again, when one looks for universal principles rather than imposed axioms. This path may appear to be miles away from winning the war against nuclear war, but in real terms it appears to be the key element without which nothing might be achieved. This may be the reason why no progress has been made so far on Earth. Sex has not been liberated from its low-level signification that has become its prison."

"You're dreaming," says Zy in reply.

"No," says Jill. "But have you ever dared to step out of the oligarchic mud hole that has been set up ages ago for manipulating society into poverty and impotence? If you think that's easy and isn't scary, ask James. When he first met me at the sewer station, he was scared. All the rules of the captain, of tradition, of social axioms, of interpersonal myths, stood in the way. One by one he conquered them. Martin had showed him how empty the Universe is, and how infinitely precious humanity is in comparison. That's what he saw, but it was all still blocked. He saw a light and didn't dare step into it. But then, what he saw in me seemed far too precious to let go, so he dared to break the barriers. We decided that day that it would likely take us a century to really break free. We decided that it would become a new discipline of science. Yes, sex stood at the core of it, but we raised it into the complex domain where it came to life as an element of the precious dimension of our humanity. We started to develop a new language to define it and explore it, like Homer did way back in 800 BC. Homer created a high-level language that gave rise to one of the brightest eras in civilization, as it broke society free from its low-level state of perception that had kept it imprisoned with limits and poverty. Dante did the same thing much later, which might have helped the Renaissance. We decided we needed to do something similar to explore ourselves as the most precious jewel in the Universe. We developed a language of metaphors, especially those focused on sex, which the oligarchy had tried to keep under wraps for millennia. It became the most wonderful, fun-filled, scientific process to develop that language of metaphors and use it to advance our process of deoligarchization."

Wendy looks at me. Her face lights up. "Now I know what made our get-togethers on Earth so wonderfully exciting. And I didn't even have to struggle for it." She begins to grin. "Deoligarchization?" she repeats. "Oh

you fiend!" she adds.

Jill turns to me. "Did I say this right? Deoligarchization!" She begins to grin.

Then Jill begins to laugh, looking at Zy. "That deoligarchization project became quite popular soon," she says. "Cira loved it, and so did Werner and Martin later on. We got more fun out of this project than any of us ever had before."

She turns to me. "Do you remember when Martin tried to offset the centrifugal gravity in the ship by sprinting in the opposite direction alongside the pool? Do you remember how he began to float way up high and came back down in a slow motion fifteen meter dive? His gravity experiment soon affected half the ship. People called it the Martinic Jump."

She turns to Olaf. "That term, the Martinic Jump, became a private metaphor for us, for quite a few acrobatics, especially those that one could do well at zero gravity. I think we invented acrobatics which even the Chinese Acrobats would never attempted on a stage, and some of those also related to certain aspects of sex which had been sadly abused, distorted, made small, or dragged into the dirt for thousands of years. I think a lot of barriers were eradicated through our deoligarchization project. And it was all done by lifting ourselves out of the quagmire, into the complex domain where humanity comes to light as the most precious gem in the Universe."

"On this platform, we probably could have saved the civilizations of Quian and Gribbork," says Olaf.

"Just imagine, fifteen billion people would be still alive then, which are now dead," says Zy.

Olaf nods. "All of this points to the existence of some deep light inside the human being that should never be allowed to go out, which, when developed, cannot be made subject to any self-collapsing algorithm," says Olaf, "which would thereby defeat it."

"I have suggested something like that to Zy," adds Olaf. "I believed at the time that the people of Gribbork would find the needed strength on this kind of platform, to overcome their nuclear weapons...."

"But only if they had made the effort," Zy interrupts.

"Maybe they did try, until you came in and squashed that!" Olaf replies.

"Try! God they didn't make the least effort. A hand full of people, maybe. A few pioneers, might have. I grand you that much. But this happened not at the universal grass roots level where it had to begin. The universal grass roots were dead, I tell you!" Zy almost yells at Olaf.

"No, they were not!" says Olaf. "We could have turned this thing around if we knew then what we know now."

"Could we have?" Zy turns to me, "Tell me James, what kind of response did Olaf get on your ship when he offered to take the ship to planet 'O' instead of to this Gamma planet that he told you would be an act of suicide to visit? And let me tell you I'm not talking about the

captain's reaction. That ass hole had no brains. He was an oligarchic priest, as you pointed out yourself. I am talking about the rest of the people on the ship. How did they react? Did even a single one of the whole lot make the slightest effort to change the captain's determination to commit suicide? Did you make an effort yourself?"

Zy argues feverishly, standing upright in his mud hole. "I'm talking about the crew, the grass roots level people. They have all heard Olaf tell them what they would find on this suicide mission, and why! But did anyone support Olaf even with applause, even one person? The whole damn lot sat on their asses and let the suicide proceed. I tell you, it wasn't any damned different on Gribbork planet when we became involved, I tell you, not one bit! The grass roots were dead."

"That's not the same thing," says Olaf and stands up, facing Zy.

"Now, now, look at you two," says Wendy and stands up between Zy and Olaf. "You are fighting each other now."

"Yes, so we are! How stupid of us?" says Olaf and submerges his entire body totally into the mud. Zy does so likewise as if this ritual would cleanse the soul.

"Ah that felt good," Olaf grins after he wiped his face clean when he came out again.

"Have you ever been on the slide?" Zy asks.

Olaf shook his head. "The mud slide?"

"You'll go like greased lightening. Really, you will!"

Olaf smiles.

"Shall we go then?" says Zy and starts to climb out of the mud hole. We all go with him.

Oh my God, indeed, we went like greased lightening. The slide was a ten-stage multi-arm slide that went in every direction and twisted in every possible way, ending with a 360-degree loop at the bottom. The slide was constantly lubricated with a thin film of brown ooze that felt like soap to the touch. I had never thought that mud sliding could be fun. But it was more than that, it was invigorating.

"I wish you were right about what you had said," says Zy to Jill while we were waiting for our turn at the slide, "I mean, concerning Quian and Gribbork. Looking back, I still think they were too far-gone for that kind of reversal to be possible that you think we should have accomplished. I think they crossed the point of no return before we became involved. But what about mankind back on Earth? What do you think? Is it too late for a reversal there, of the same kind of process that had trapped the people of Gribbork. The problem on Earth started four thousand years ago? What do you think would happen if you were to go to Earth today and start a deoligarchization project? If they wouldn't kill you right away, would you find anyone to listen to you?"

"Probably not," says Wendy, before Jill could answer.

"Of course not," says Natalia and begins to laugh. "They couldn't risk it. Just imagine, if they did, it would become so bright on Earth that everybody would have to wear sunglasses. There aren't enough sunglasses to go around. That's why they want to keep the whole planet nice and dim and dark."

We all begin to laugh.

"Would you ever have thought that the term, sunglasses, could be a metaphor for sex?" says Natalia to Zy.

"Would you ever have thought that the term, civilization, could be a metaphor for sex?" adds Jill.

"If that new language of your metaphors ever finds a fertile reception on the Earth," says Wendy, "which it might, since we are all human beings, the deoligarchization of mankind might yet happen. In that kind of light the nuclear arsenals wouldn't long endure. The nukes simply wouldn't be tolerated, nor would they be needed; nor would the oligarchy itself endure as it would no longer find a fertile ground.

"Did they ever destroy their nuclear weapons on Gribbork?" asks Jill.

Zy described how the three power blocks had been destroying one-another from within, until they were totally vulnerable to the viruses and the bacteria they had put on the fast track.

"No, their nuclear weapons were never actually scrapped," says Zy. "They didn't have the strength and the resources left to do that. The explosives that are needed for triggering the plutonium in the bombs slowly decayed into a useless state. The bombs still exist, but the technology is now way out of their reach to trigger them."

Olaf described a recent visit to the planet where he saw one of the great missiles from that era set up like a monument. He said that it had an inscription painted on it that he thinks described the monster rocket as a relic of their 'most glorious epoch.'

"You have no idea, how the sight of this monument and its inscription has caused me pain," says Olaf.

"One will never be able to measure a civilization apart from its technology," Martin adds. "The two are one."

"That's what I mean," says Olaf.

"The bottom line is," says Zy, "that I have helped destroy a civilization. I have destroyed it, even while I have saved it. This civilization will not rise again for a very long time, possibly for ten to twenty generations. The creation of advanced technologies requires a huge and well functioning infrastructure, together with a large population to support the infrastructure. Most likely a new civilization will rise on Gribbork long after I am gone, and many generations later the whole sad episode will be forgot-

ten, as a new foundation for a new and powerful economic process will be built that richly supports an advancing civilization. Hopefully, along that way, this monument that the people now cherish, will point to a lesson that they had refused to learn before. As for Quian, its future is cloudy. That planet may never recover and bear a civilization again."

"We should invite the children to visit Gribbork and its monument," I say to Wendy. "Maybe they can learn something from that."

Natalia shakes her head. "Why would you take them to visit a dying civilization?" she counters me.

"Don't do it!" says Olaf to me. "It's too dangerous there. You of all people should know that. You have all been there. Your precious Gamma .8 planet is Gribbork planet. The two are the same."

"Gribbork isn't the real name," Zy interjects. "Olaf invented the term Gribbork. That's what came to his lips the moment he discovered the mess the people had created themselves. The planet doesn't seem to have a name as such. The term Virtus came closest to a name for it, but it pertained more to a region of it than to the whole. Olaf is right though, the term Virtus didn't fit what we saw, nor does it fit the present scene. There is no virtue left there. Gribbork is a better term."

"Ah, but the term Virtus was still known to the people there," says Natalia. "Our friend Mahesh, who is a musician of great stature, is proof that they had a profound renaissance on Gribbork not too long ago. That planet must have been a planet of light in fairly recent times."

She turns to Olaf, "You just didn't know what to look for, Olaf."

I was about to scold Olaf that he didn't warn us before we landed on Gribbork, but had to bite my tongue. I remembered that he had warned us several times indeed in the most insistent manner and nobody had listened.

Olaf nods as if he was reading my thoughts. "Your captain Johnny had his agenda fixed," he says. "You all had. People with an agenda in their mind tend not to listen."

After Zy said this, he slid head first down the steep slope of the tube, the one with the vertical loop at the end, and a tight 180 degree turn that deposits one head first into the receiver pond; splork! As soon as Zy had 'landed' he was hauled to the edge by an attendee with a pole, who then signaled the next of us to come.

We stayed in the receiving pond until the last of us had come through the loop. After we had all gone through the same process three more times Zy invited us to his home.

Before we left the 'health' center behind us, both Olaf and I apologized to Zy.

"Hell, what for?" is his reply.

"For implying that you are a monster!" I say and grin now.

"Me a monster!" He starts to laugh. "Is this what you thought? If you only knew the deep hurt these projects have caused me, you would never dream of calling me a monster. The trouble is that I have come to see myself that way. I keep telling myself over and over that there must have been another option. Maybe one day I will discover that there really wasn't another option, and I will find my rest."

Chapter 8 - A Jewel at the Edge of the Universe

When we arrived at Zy's place I felt totally drained, both physically by the mud bath that had zapped all of my strength, and emotionally by the tragic stories. In this state we made ourselves comfortable in luxurious recliners on Zy's glassed-in balcony. Nor was I alone in this state of sleepiness. Jill fell asleep before me.

Zy's place was a jewel, set in a winter wonderland of snow covered peaks, solitary trees sculptured in snow, located high up on a mountain. Tired as I was, I hardly took note of the beauty of the place and the surrounding area, at least not until the next day.

Zy served up a large pot of soup after we got up, which he said was excellent brew for recovering from a mud bath on the previous day. I just drank it down. It tasted all right. I couldn't forget the ninety-three percent of the population that had died on Gribbork, under his care. Some of us must have been thinking along these lines, for no one spoke up this morning.

"The Earth has a type G civilization, or a type H," Olaf breaks the silence.

"I see the same damn pattern developing on Earth that we encountered on Quian and on Gribbork," answers Zy. "Someone might be orchestrating the same process on Earth, because a process without a principle that is rooted in the Spirit of the Universe, isn't natural. Such a failure may happen on one planet by chance, but not on three planets simultaneously. The fact that this is happening tells me that what we see was artificially created. Oligarchism may have been 'imported' to all three planets from the same source as a pre-invasion measure to soften up the resistance. There certainly isn't anything natural about it. As far as I can see things, there exists nothing in the universe of life that is inherently self-destructive."

"The Spirit of the Universe isn't destructive against itself," I interject as a confirmation. "The harmonizing Spirit of the Principle of the Universe causes nothing that is self-contradictory. All aspects of the Principle of the Universe are inherently harmonizing with each other, or else the Universe would not exist. As I see it, all expressions of Life, especially the highest form of it that we know, which on Earth, is mankind, naturally reflect the harmonizing Spirit that is expressed throughout the Universe. Nothing is excepted from that. The Spirit of the Universe is like a central sun, sending out rays of light, not darkness. There are no such phenomena in the Universe, as rays of darkness. Darkness is a negation. A negation is never natural. It is always artificial. What collapses a society is artificial, always. If we see a lot of identical pattern of failure, then someone is playing with

the societies, including ours on Earth, or else someone like you guys has exported the failures experienced on Earth and has spread them around."

"My hands are clean. Don't look at me," says Zy.

"Maybe someone is doing on Earth what we did on Quian," says Olaf. "They may do it for different reasons, perhaps. I agree, what is happening on Earth isn't natural. Its artificial through and through, and nobody cares. That's not natural either. In fact, on the Earth, as we found it on Gribbork, the vast majority of the people are aiding the perpetrators in complete denial of the principles of the Universe and their own 'humanity' that should reflect those principles. The only thing that troubles me about this, is that oligarchism on Earth has a four thousand year history. The train of empires goes that far back. The thought troubles me that we may have been infected with the 'virus' of empire and have spread it around inadvertently, while trying to help other civilizations."

As I look at him, it becomes plain what he meant to say, and that he is right.

"No, don't look at me! I told you I had nothing to do with the planet Earth," Zy defends himself.

"I'm not saying this," I reply. "Mankind screwed up and dug a trap for itself and became imprisoned by it without knowing it. Evidently you weren't aware of it."

Olaf intervenes. "We can't rule out the possibility that someone similar to the Gorans might be sitting behind a desk, somewhere, maybe on the Earth, orchestrating the same cycles of collapse that we have exported and set in motion on Quian and then on Gribbork in an accelerated form."

"Why not? Maybe you used these Goran's script!" says Wendy. "If the collapse had happened naturally in these places, you would have come across the same phenomenon in many places in the galaxy," she adds. "But you didn't come across any. I bet, most civilizations don't blow themselves up as the Quian people were about to, when you got involved, or the Gribbork, when they reached the nuclear stage. I suspect most civilizations dig very deep into themselves, into their soul, like the 'O' people had done, and come up with the technologies that allow them to deal safely with one-another in the shadow of their nuclear capabilities, whatever their forms might be. It isn't natural to see civilizations to force themselves voluntarily into a suicidal regression and then their total collapse. When these things happen, I bet one will always be able to detect an oligarchic force in the background that has poisoned the people's thinking. The Universe isn't self-contradictory and self-destructive, and therefore neither is mankind or any other civilization. I am convinced by this fact that what we see on Earth is artificially imposed. A lot of myths are found in deep historic records of alien beings visiting the Earth. Especially in modern times the world is flooded with UFO stories of strange sightings being reported from every continent and almost every country, and other strange phenomena, like crop circles. Something is fishy here, unnatural, and artificial. If this goes back 4000 years, it is not unreasonable to assume that the poison of

empire was created 4000 years ago or for however long the resulting tragedy existed. My point is that we've become so long wrapped up in this mysticism that we can't see what is natural anymore. Historians point to the mystic cult of Delphi, for example, headed by the Oracles of Delphi, that have set up the stage of monetarism as the platform for the poison of empire. Hasn't every empire in history been rooted in monetarism and mysticism, such as the mysticism of the right of kings?"

"Mysticism is a void," says Natalia. "Mysticism has no substance and no aspects of Principle. It is not a thing. It has no history, no matter how real its mystery may seem. Mysticism is a shadow in the land of sanity. Society can step away from the shadow, which exists only in its imagination anyway."

"Nevertheless, a void in the reflection of the principles of the Universe has no history," says Jill. "Like an error or a lye, it has no truth. Whatever doesn't reflect the principles of the Universe has no truth, because those principles alone, are truth. And since a void has no truth, it has no history either. So why would we even explore it? Shouldn't we rather explore things of substance and move with their imperative? Truth makes the world go round."

"What about AIDS?" says Natalia. "It has killed 35 million people. That's a part of mankind's history, isn't it? It was artificially induced. It came out of the background of oligarchism. We can't just shrug it off. It still keeps on killing people."

"In spite of it all, it doesn't reflect the principles of the Universe," says Jill. "Therefore, whatever history it seems to have, doesn't reflect truth. Being devoid of truth, it has no real history. It seems logical from that universal standpoint that the entire black circus of AIDS and its horror can be turned off and be peeled away from the face of mankind into oblivion."

"You can't repeal history," Natalia protests. "What has happened has happened. The 35 million people that AIDS has killed, are dead. Nothing will bring them back."

Martin nods and grins. "Those 35 million didn't have to die," he says. "They perished not from AIDS, but from society living in darkness. AIDS isn't natural. It is an artificially created weapon to eradicate the undesirables. The first strain was developed to hit the homosexual society in America. It's a special strain that is tailored primarily to the homosexual intercourse for its propagation. The second strain is similar. It was developed a year later to hit the general population in Africa for the purpose of depopulation, in order to preserve the raw materials on that continent, as outlined in the American National Security Study Memorandum 200. The second strain is different in that it is tailored to primarily utilize the heterosexual intercourse for its propagation. Each of the strains was flooded into its specific target area, almost a year apart. It all happened when the biological warfare craze was in high gear, when imperialism became the New Order, when society had drifted out of touch with reality and let it

happen, and when the people themselves blocked almost every effort to prevent the spread of the AIDS virus. Society had put itself into a black-hole environment. It had separated itself from the Principle of the Universe, and then experienced the consequences. But that's not a part of human history is it. When society steps away from its humanist principles forged by intelligence, it steps away from its humanity and is no longer a part of the human scene, and by the same token a part of the Universe. As a consequence society dies. It transforms itself into a mythological black-hole star that has isolated itself from the general Universe by its gravity, so that it can no longer be seen. However, while the phenomenon of a black-hole star exists only in the thinking of a few narrow-minded so-called scientists who refuse to open their eyes to the real world, the black-hole concept is useful as a model that describes all those who have isolated themselves from reality by the gravity of their insanity. Empire fits this category, and AIDS is a creation of empire. One cannot understand AIDS, unless one understands empire, and for this one has to understand a whole lot of other things."

"The masters of empire, of the financial oligarchy of the world, have staged their game in such a hidden manner that nobody even believes in the existence of empire anymore," interjects Olaf. "Empire is the most deadly foe that society has, and it is one that no one can see. It has no name, no address, no face, it remains in its hidden state for as long as it continues to exist, because it cannot exist in the open. It will cease to exist only at the moment when mankind's self-isolation is reversed. The entire train of error that has caused it to come into being, with its beginning in ancient times, can be stopped, and the modern empire, once called the British Empire, which still runs this train to hell, can be scrapped, and be blown into oblivion. This is all possible once society puts itself back into the sunlight of the Spirit of the Universe and its manifest principles. When society recognizes the power of its humanity, the entire world will change, and the movement of this revolution will spread like wildfire. Revolutionary advances are natural. That's where real history unfolds. What happens in darkness is not a part of the history of light."

"Nevertheless the AIDS virus remains a problem," says Natalia.

"If it has no history, it has no future," Jill interrupts her. "In a bright humanist world the AIDS virus won't last more than a generation. The Principle of Universal Love will block AIDS at every stage, whereby it will become extinct. It will be forgotten, as if it never had existed."

"Will we see that day?" says Wendy.

"Doesn't the answer also depend on us?" says Jill. "The answer is not a political one. It is located in the Principle of Universal Love. Sex is a part of it, but it doesn't have to be intrusively physical. It can be raised to a higher level, and it will be. The whole Earth can be upgraded once society rediscovers its humanity and its principles."

Zy said a while later, before lunch, as he set the table for it in a

large room with windows towards the mountains, saying that the Earth people, in this regard, were a puzzle to him.

"The Earth's people have demonstrated a much greater vitality than the people of Quian, and those on Gribbork," he says. "Humanity also has greater technological resources, which the people could mobilize to deal with the numerous threats that have eroded their civilization to very low levels, such as the nuclear threat, the collapsing economies, food scarcity, slavery, violence, insanity, and also AIDS. An attempt had been made on Earth to eradicate the threat of nuclear war with the SDI system, that had been proposed in America by Lyndon LaRouche. The proposal was, to develop a worldwide missile defense system built on new physical principles. America had invited all nations to participate on the project as a stepping stone towards building a New World. The imperial crowd has squashed this proposal before it got under way. The proposal would have been the most natural response to the nuclear weapons crisis. It would have advanced the unity of all nations, by the nations developing together their technological power. Good is natural, insanity is not. Insanity is artificial. It is not natural for mankind to be living in a black-hole environment."

"I think the idea can still be brought to fruition, by mankind," said Martin. "Mankind has the potential to supercede what the 'O' people have accomplished, and to do this in half a century. Once the mental steps are made, which do not depend on time, the physical steps can proceed. It might take mankind fifty years to supercede the 'O' people's achievements. The future on Earth has the potential to be that bright. Right now this potential is recognized only spasmodically, but it could be dynamically explosive. The potential is there, and will always be there. The utilization of it could start today. There is no inertia to overcome for the movement of thought."

Zy shook his head. He said that he simply couldn't figure out why humanity embraced the course of regression and the collapse of its civilization. He said that the only possible answer is that somebody has to be steering the process intentionally towards a calculated universal doom. He added that he just couldn't figure out who this might be.

Olaf suggested that the culprit might not be a person, but a failure in science that caused the downturn. He brought up the example of the second law of thermodynamics that is deemed an expression of universal principle of increasing entropy, explaining what this means. He told us that the law is stating that the entropy of an isolated system will tend to increase over time. In other words, the Universe is winding down. It's energy is being used up. Everything is winding down, and like a wind-up toy comes to a stop. This notion, being applied to the Universe, spawns the belief that the universe becomes less ordered over time, including mankind, so that the self-collapse of society is therefore deemed a natural process. This lunacy has crippled science and the way society looks at itself. It

spreads the notion that creative fundamental progress is impossible. It says in essence that it is not possible to discover anything new. That is why the nations are fighting over scarce resources, instead of creating new ones. The mentality has collapsed so deeply on Earth that the ship that you came with can no longer be reproduced. The entire planet is winding down to successively lower levels of creative energy, even to the point that living is deemed to be too expensive, resulting in ever-bigger waves of genocide.

"The people on Earth appear to be asleep with their eyes open," says Wendy. "They are not caring that someone is blocking their very Soul and stealing their substance, their humanity, while they are asleep."

Olaf smiles at her. "Wendy is right," says Olaf. "Maybe somebody should go back to the Earth and awaken humanity, and urge people to keep their eyes peeled for who is promoting this nonsense. It might be the imperial oligarchic crowd. But they can't be that stupid, because they are doomed themselves, when society is doomed. Maybe we should poke around on Earth to discover where the gravity center of this mental black hole is."

"Fat chance!" says Zy. "You'll be arrested so fast..."

"I know what you mean," says Wendy.

"No, you don't know," says Zy. "Somebody is orchestrating that global suicide with long-established false axioms, and they will see to it that this train to hell won't get stalled, or even be held back. Still, the people on Earth are resourceful. Their humanity makes them extremely resourceful, even the little that's left. If the right effort is expended, some people might wake up. If this happens others might wake up on their own. Then great things become possible. When the sleeping giant awakes, wonderful movements will happen all over this wonderful planet. Once people get to this stage there won't be an oligarchy existing with the power to stop the resulting renaissance."

Zy turns to Martin and Wendy. "I don't think you would get arrested if you kept your head low to the ground, to the grass roots level were some strong movement may already be in progress."

"Then, why don't you come back with me to the Earth?" says Martin to Zy. "With your knowledge, we could start such a movement, even if nothing of this sort exists, or has ever existed. Then, if this was to succeed, the sacrifice of Quian and Gribbork would not have been in vain."

Zy shakes his head. "Never again!"

"Don't you go either!" says Olaf to me. "Their only hope lies in themselves. If you went back to do their work for them, you would deny the very substance of your hope. You would come as a guru. How, then, would you be able to tell them that they already have what it takes, rooted within themselves? You would kill your dream. You would in fact finish their suicide. Then you would be the monster. Besides, neither Zy, nor I, have ever claimed to be someone of superior intelligence to anyone, which we have amply demonstrated."

Olaf looks at Zy, and nods. Zy nods back. "I hate to tell you this,"

Olaf says to me. "The fact is, that humanity has far greater resources within itself than the whole lot of us combined. To say that this isn't so is an insult to them. Their suffering, as tragic as it is, will eventually force them to accept what best promotes their growth as a people. When this happens, watch out! When the giant awakens there will be a surge in humanity and technology on a scale you have never seen or even dreamed of."

Olaf turns to Zy. "That's why we haven't found any type H societies in the galaxies, except the ones we've artificially created. The type H stage tends to be very short, a transient moment, a mere birth pain out of which evolves a great civilization, a type G civilization, G standing for Great like the Universe itself..."

"Mankind might also suffer a total bust," I say sharply, interrupting Olaf. "I can't understand how you can live with yourselves, sitting idly in your mud hole at the health center, with all the knowledge you have, while doing nothing to assist the world you came from, especially at the most crucial moment in its entire history? Maybe there are things I don't understand, or I'm too stupid to ever understand, but I can't sit here on my ass while every day brings our home world closer to a nuclear war and its eventual destruction! Why shouldn't the awaking of the giant begin here with us? We are traitors to mankind if we don't utilize what we are capable of, to start the needed renaissance."

With this said, I stood up and went outside on the balcony and slammed the door shut behind me.

This was the first time, as far as I could remember, that I had been rude to any of them. It hurt to realize this. I wasn't like that. I never swore. The thing that hurt me the most was that they left me out there in the cold, as if nothing had happened. Neither did I have the courage to go back in and face them after this uncalled-for show of bad temper.

Eventually Zy came onto the balcony and spoke to me like a friend.

"You cannot fight against nuclear war," he says to me. "It cannot be done. That is why we failed. Nuclear war is a symptom. The cause for it is empire. This is what we had failed to recognize. We have learned a lot of things through our failure, and we are making progress. We have started the greatest experiment in social engineering that you can imagine. Olaf and I have located a virgin planet that is similar to the Earth. We have built a conference center there where we have brought the brightest minds together to research what a human society is. We felt that before we can help anybody ever again, we need to discover what a human society basically is. A lot of what we have discovered is reflected in the way the 'O' people operate. Our new project wasn't designed to solve a problem, but to search for the principles of the Universe that we are all a part of, and to search for the harmonizing features that we embody as intelligent beings. We have created a small civilization there of volunteers from several worlds,

primarily from Earth, Gribbork, and Quian. Amazing things are being done there. The answers that you seek for saving the Earth may come from this background. The project has already succeeded far beyond our expectations. They are also researching AIDS. Natalia is right. AIDS is one of the problems that need to be addressed. It needs to be addressed as a part of the larger problem. In fact, AIDS poses a much greater challenge than nuclear war. It's much more immediate. The nuclear weapons mania is easy to stop in comparison. It wouldn't take a week to scrap all nuclear weapons on the Earth once society begins to realize that this standoff is artificially created for political intentions of empire. But AIDS cannot be stopped that quickly, even if all the world would want to do this. For a quick fix, its already too late."

"Perhaps, that is what's eating me," I say to him, without looking up. "Theoretically AIDS has no history, but to a sleeping society it has that, as it is still dying of it."

Zy puts his big arm around me and hugs me. "I have an address for you. I know somebody who is already working on the problem, someone who might help you to deal with your concern. He is already getting the ball rolling," Zy says. "I don't know if he would agree that AIDS is not a part of human history, but is, as we have said, a part of the history of empire, which has no history either other than that of an error, which itself has no history since there never was a moment in which an error was true."

Zy gave me the man's 'address,' a certain Nahor Qhydte. He told me that the man is an 'exotic' scientist who had warned the Biological Holocaust Team during the Gribbork affair. He had been adamant that the team wasn't addressing the core issue, and was therefore moving in the wrong direction. Zy told me that the man had done a great deal of research into the dynamics of slow virus infections, especially that of the mental virus named empire. He remains totally committed to develop a healing platform to stop both, empire and AIDS, since both are related in the form of, cause and effect, root and its holocaust, which he thinks can be addressed with the mobilization of mankind's own built-in resources.

"He is an interesting fellow with a great potential, just like yourself, and some amazing achievements to his credit," says Zy. "You would benefit from paying him a visit. He lives in the first cluster on the way to the Earth, from here that is, and in the outermost galaxy. You can't miss it," Zy said. "Just keep your 'ear' tuned. His planet is near the end of the shortest spiral arm..."

I nod.

By the time I had written the address down, nearly a page was filled. The planet was identified as the third one of a system; and the system was identified by its distance from the galaxy center; and by its spiral 'angle,' and its distance from the galactic plane; and so forth.

Zy's directions turned out to be good. Werner had no problem finding the planet for us. Our entire family had come with me on this exploration quest. Odessa and Olaf had graciously remained behind as babysitters. The care of the children had remained one of those natural tasks that technology cannot fulfill.

Nahor's planet turned out to be no less a gem than Bohr's planet, a place of perpetual springtime, so it seemed, and of perpetual light. It was moving in a gravitational confinement of a four-sun system, having twelve moons that stood like stars in the noonday sky. Zy had warned us that there were no cities on this planet, because the housing had been made modular, portable, and totally self-contained, so that they could be relocated as needed. He had said that in some places the 'houses' were bunched together into social clusters, and in other places were scattered along beaches, across meadows, or perched on high mountain ledges. He had added that to locate a person in this disorganized form of living would be a greater task than finding the correct planet, were it not for an institution called the Finding Center, where a person's name could be translated into a machine intelligent code that would schedule an instant real-time search and guide the planet wide air bus/taxi service to the recognized location. Zy told us that there was a code established on the planet by which any person on the planet would assist a traveler to interface with the Finding Center.

So it was that in the greatest of comforts our expedition group was delivered to Nahor's front door with an automated type taxi service.

Nahor's 'house' was a part of a seaside resort community. A manufacturing complex, so the transport service told us as an information message, was located forty miles inland, and the community that works at the center was scattered over a hundred-mile range.

Nahor's place was huge by Earth's standard, an eighteen-module unit surrounding a courtyard and garden. It was located right at the beach facing the sea and its strong onshore wind. Small piles of sand had blown into his study through the partially open door where Nahor awaited us. The air was clear, moist, and bright. The sea sparkled in the sunshine. As out of nowhere came soft music. A Mozart piano concerto could be heard. Nahor told us later that he chose Mozart as his favorite from all the music in the Universe.

"Would you like something to eat?" asks Nahor while we introduce ourselves and convey Zy's greeting and the purpose for our coming.

Nahor offers a type of tropical fruit with his greeting, which had been cut into slices and is being served with some kind of bitter tasting ice water. To my surprise, I find Nahor a most gentle and likable man. I had expected to meet a tough, hard looking person, considering his involvement with the infamous Biological Holocaust Task Force on Gribbork. Apparently that history had ended, as if it never was.

The refreshments are offered by three women standing at his side. He introduces them as his research assistants; Camille, who had come from Earth; Hammett, whom he had met on Gribbork planet before the people there had shut their civilization down; and Lositaa, from Quian.

"You've certainly come to the right place," he says to me, stating what he perceives our interests to be, while he made himself comfortable in some kind of a chesterfield covered in soft leather. "But are you sure you really want to know the answer?"

"There we go again," I say to myself.

"I have to know," says Wendy to him. She tells him why.

"Let me draw you a graph," he says. He draws a curve with steeply rising and falling lines, a curve resembling a sharply pointed capital 'A.'

"This represents the infectiousness of a fast-virus disease like the flu," he says. "The virus proliferates rapidly, makes a lot of people sick; but dissipates just as rapidly as people respond with preventive measures, and all is well again." He explains that the dynamic pattern of a slow-virus infection is fundamentally different. He says that a slow virus disease, like AIDS, doesn't flair up, nor does it ever dissipate on its own once the infection has taken place. He draws a curve that rises slowly and levels off near the 100% level.

"With a slow virus," he says, "people have no way of knowing whether they are infected. Without being aware of it, they infect others, who infect still others in turn. In a typical slow virus outbreak, millions become infected before the first case of the disease breaks into the open with visible symptoms."

Then he draws a second graph beneath the first, which he says represents the typical percentage of deaths within a population. The graph is an identical graph, but offset to the right by seven years, which he says represents the lengthy incubation period of a slow virus. He says that the graphs represent the natural dynamic growth of a slow virus infection, like that in which 50% of the AIDS infested population dies within 15 years.

"The natural growth pattern, of course, can be accelerated or be retarded," he says.

"Of course!" I agree.

"If you superimpose poor nutrition," he says, "and coincidental diseases...."

"...I know, then the same result can be achieved in five years," I interrupt him.

He nods. "That's how it had been done on Gribbork," he says. "Yes," he adds quietly, his head bowed. "It also works the other way around."

He says that if it is socially possible to identify and isolate all the carriers of the virus, so that cross infection can become universally halted, the graph would then rise no higher, but would slowly taper off with the deaths of the individuals already infected. And so the disease can end. But this won't happen, will it? It won't happen, because AIDS isn't a biological

disease, primarily. It's a manmade disease that is rooted in empire, which itself is a dark smudge on the face of mankind that goes back much farther than the disease itself."

"That's a paradox," I interject.

"No it isn't," he says. "The real beginning of anything is the intention behind it. For AIDS, this takes us back to the year when the American Constitution was enacted as the foundation of an intended New Renaissance in America outside of the sphere of the old European empire, the extended British Empire. In this context the masters of the Earth's oligarchy hired one of their scribblers to launch an offensive against the threatening new renaissance. As the result, in the very same year in which the American Constitution was enacted, the hired scribbler stood up and blew his devils trumpet. He published a book on population that very year, in which he compared mankind to cattle that outgrow their pasture. He argued for culling the herd, meaning human depopulation. He didn't argue that the purpose for the depopulation was to protect empire from the advancing human spirit. He evidently knew that mankind is not a herd of cattle, since the founding of the USA was proof of that. He sang the depopulation song for the masters of empire, which makes it a virtue for them to kill human beings. The masters of empire saw themselves so severely threatened by the human spirit in those days, that many a hired hand would blow the devil's trumpet of depopulation for them. The name of the stooge who created the trumpet is Giammaria Ortes. A long list of virtuoso of the trumpet, who made their name in later years, are now honored in the halls of infamy. The first was Thomas Malthus, the conceptual architect of the British Poor Laws and the Work Houses. Charles Darwin blew the trumpet next, proclaiming that mankind is not only basically an animal, but is a freak resulting from an accident. Out of it came the dog-eat-dog world of social Darwinism. Life thereby becomes a battle in with the strongest win, justifying those with the biggest guns. Then Charles' cousin, Francis Galton, took up the depopulation trumpet and played on it the Eugenics song that justified the eradication of unwanted populations. Adolf Hitler loved this song. Only the masters of empire thought that the song wasn't radical enough. And so, the pacifist of empire, Bertrand Russell took up the trumpet and blew it louder than anyone had dared before. He said that wars don't kill enough people, even big wars. He suggested that a biological holocaust should be unleashed once in every generation to keep mankind small and impotent. He soon started to play 'duets' with a certain prince of high standing in empire, who put himself on record as one with a wish to become incarnated as a particularly deadly virus to facilitate a big splash in the depopulation arena. His goal was to kill mankind back to less than two billion people. Others like him, wanted more radical action. As the implementation became more intensely pursued, the lyrics of the tune were changed, from depopulation or genocide, to 'demographic adjustment' as it is now called. The biological holocaust concept was further implemented by a knighted royal agent working out of the Brown House in Washington. Brown

is the color that became infamous in the Nazi-world of Germany, as the color of fascism."

"So you agree that AIDS has no history and no future," Jill interjects. "It is a blob on the horizon that is not rooted in the Principle of the Universe that is reflected in the principles of our humanity. If it was artificially created, it can therefore be intelligently turned back into oblivion, can't it?"

Nahor hesitates for a moment. He begins to smile and nod. "On the standard platform of public health measures, what you suggest, appears to be not a practical possibility," he replies. "One can't quarantine tens of millions of otherwise healthy people for the rest of their life. That's morally, economically, and politically unfeasible. It can't be done that way. But this is not the only way."

"In other words, a solution is possible," Jill interjects.

"Of course a solution is possible," he replies. Then he raises his head up and turns to me and smiles. "It's totally clear that it can't be done under the kind of draconian fashion that we have prevailing on the planet Earth right now. But it can be done on a higher level platform. However, I see no one willing to move onto this platform."

"Still something must be done to stop AIDS on Earth!" I say. "The bigger the problem is, the bigger the solution needs to be. It's just a case of impedance matching, as in the realm of electronics."

"Oh indeed, something must be done," he says, "and it can be done. You seem to have a faint comprehension of how rich the human platform is in terms of its renaissance potential. I can see no limit for what can be done. But are you willing to take a simple step into the direction where a solution is possible? This involves preventative measures and curative measures. Let me warn you, you won't like my answer. The answer may shock you. You will likely spit at me and run away, as I have seen it before. Do you want to go on with this exploration?"

Jill smiles at him and nods.

Wendy looks puzzled, but eventually nods also.

"Alright," says Nahor. "But remember, you asked for it. Imagine a great bridge spanning a canyon. It is a sturdy bridge, made of the finest steel, and is well constructed. The bridge stood in its place for fifty years. Nothing has affected it, neither the strongest wind, the fiercest rain, or lightning, or thunder, or ice or snow. But the bridge is in danger. Something is about to happen that has never happened before. Think of the worst imaginable conditions coming together all at once, like four strong storms coming together simultaneously from four different directions, and all the rest added. This is what mankind is facing on Earth, even as we speak. AIDS is just one aspect of a single storm that has itself many facets. Another storm is the now ongoing total economic and financial breakdown crisis that is happening right across the world. This one is so huge in its fury that it has the potential to tear the world down all by itself. The third storm is biological war. This one too, is immense. It has the potential to

destroy the global civilization and much of mankind with it. The fourth storm, of course, is nuclear war. It is a fully prepared automated process of global mass-annihilation that can be triggered by many causes, with no one having a chance to stop it once it starts. The fifth, almost perfect storm is the currently impending threat of the return of the Ice Age that has the potential to wreck global agriculture with its radically colder climates. All of these are elements of the war of empire against mankind, including the Ice Age, because empire actively prevents the building of the needed infrastructures for coping with the loss of open-air agriculture in an Ice Age environment. The blocking of the needed infrastructures could eradicate entire nations. And there is one more, a somewhat hidden perfect storm. Count it as the sixth storm. This is also a part of the war of empire against mankind. At its center is the longest war of them all, the war against mankind's sex. And there is a seventh storm that intermingles with all that. It is the war against science and truth. Right now the people on Earth are loosing badly on all seven fronts simultaneously. On Quian we had only two storms brewing, and a little one on another front. When these came together everything blew up, and life ended on Quian. On Gribbork we had three major storms going. Those, too, proved to be enough to bring the house down. On Earth we have all seven of these storms in progress. Ironically, the final storm that brought the house down on Quian is actually the easiest to prevent, if society cares to do so. The potential for nuclear war can be eradicated over night. The locations of the nuclear bombs is known. It wouldn't take more than a day to disable them all. The rest of the storms are much harder to deal with, and they are of a kind that prevents the takedown of the nuclear bombs."

"They didn't have AIDS on Quian," interjects Wendy.

"No, they didn't have AIDS there. They had relied on economic collapse to cause depopulation. Economic collapse has that effect, but it is not a depopulation weapon by design. AIDS, on the other hand, is definitely a depopulation weapon by design," says Nahor. "It was created in the immediate shadow of America's National Security Memorandum 200 that called for the radical depopulation of Third World countries, in order to preserve their raw materials for the later use by the empire. The project appears to have failed, as its 'progress' is apparently deemed too slow. It only caused a few tens of millions of death in the space of decades. The DDT ban that protected malaria had caused several times as many deaths. Then came the bio-fuels hoax for which vast quantities of food were burnt in cars. Its killing stream was the most efficient, causing in the order of fifty million deaths per year by means of artificial starvation. This was apparently also deemed a failure, because a new depopulation weapon has since been added in the form of crippling vaccines that have long delayed debilitating effects, measured in years, to be massively used in conjunction with artificial pandemics. A near 100% saturation rate had been expected. Some whistle blowers had prevented this genocide from being carried out, but it remains nevertheless a policy option for the masters of empire, to

be used in the background of a great crisis, such as the global financial collapse. The toughest storm, however, is that of the war on sex."

"The war on sex?" Jill repeats.

Nahor turns to his female assistants and motions with his hands. "You tell them," he says and slightly shakes his head.

Camille turns towards Jill, Natalia, Wendy, and Cira, and then blushes. She pauses. "Nahor wants me to ask you a question," she says moments later. "The question is, have you girls ever had sex with each other, or any other women?"

Nahor begins to grin. "I warned you!" he says. Then he becomes serious. "This is not a trick question," he says. "It goes to the very core of the failure out of which the movements of empire developed. For the development of empire to be possible a link in the chain of human development has to be broken, and it was broken. I think your answers will reveal this."

"Are you using us as a part of your research?" Jill interjects.

"Using, isn't the right term," Nahor says gently. "I am guiding you towards the answers that you had said to Ziyanho, you must have. Zy had dropped by here and had warned us that you wouldn't take no for an answer. Some of the answers to the question you have raised, are difficult to perceive, since they lay in yourself. Camille's question is not designed to embarrass you. So be honest in answering. Have you had sexual affairs with other women?"

Jill nods reluctantly. "It happened largely by default. I had married this beautiful man. He is dynamic, capable, respected in his firm, and is respected by almost everyone else. People look up to him. It was a good feeling to be with him. But I also wanted respect for myself. I wanted to be acknowledged as someone worthy just for being myself, rather than being a trophy. I am fascinated by men, but I am also shy. I felt that something was missing in being boxed in by this one-man relationship, for the rest of my life. Being boxed in, I also felt old and unattractive, suddenly. One day, on one of those many days when he was out of town I went out for a beer with my friend Jean. She is ten years older, and looks it too. It turned out that there was a band playing that night at the bar. Before long she got up to dance. She too really loves her husband, but nevertheless, here she was full of life. Rather than waiting to be asked to dance, she just went onto the floor and danced. She asked some of the men. Only a few declined the offer, while I sat lonely in my corner and felt old. In time I literally forced myself to follow her lead. I stood up and walked towards the dance floor with a scary feeling in my chest, as if I was about to do something terribly wrong, like robbing a bank. I asked the first decent looking man I saw. He turned and smiled, and without a word he stood up and moved with the music even before we reached the floor. I admired his moves. He invited me for a drink at the bar. We talked, and talked, and giggled, even touched. We wanted each other. There

was something happening. We went to his room in the same hotel where the bar was. There the conversation continued till three in the morning. We cuddled and made love, twice even, until we just lay there, both of us satisfied. I didn't forget him for a long time.

"But this never happened again," Jill continues. "Not that I didn't meet other men. It just never worked out. One was looking for a mother for his children. The others were mostly the slam-bam thank-you-mam type, if they said thank you at all. They didn't want me as a person. They wanted me as a utility. I quickly discovered why this was," says Jill, glancing at Lositaa and Hammet. "It was Jean who suggested to me why this was so. With her being a family doctor, she told me that most men in America have been sexually mutilated at birth in a surgical procedure called the circumcision, which is a deep reaching form of amputation. In the procedure the victim's foreskin of the penis, where the majority of a man's sexual sensitivity is located, becomes amputated. My friend Jean, the doctor, told me the inflicted amputation has an enormous impact on how the victims look at themselves, and how they live and relate to other people, especially women. She said that most affected men aren't aware of their disabilities, but they behave differently in a readily noticeable way, as one might expect of people who have become sexually blinded, like having to live in a world without color. She said that she, as a professional, could tell the amputees apart from the normal men, but she also said that it is hard to find a man who isn't amputated. She told me that back home in the USA 100 million men are living as amputees, and that those were unfortunately concentrated in her own age bracket. She said that nevertheless she loves men, and needs to be with them, even if there is no point in having a sexual affair with a sexual amputee. She told me that it is well documented by research that the effects of the sexual mutilation go actually much deeper than the physical sphere. They create a psychological void that the victims aim to fill with power plays, or financial pursuits, or dominating postures and acts. The inflicted sexual mutilation forces the men into these kinds of empty back-alleys, in their pursuit of the recognition of themselves that every person seems to need. Except these empty substitutes never really seem to satisfy. They become a trap for the men. And the trap is deep. There are seven hundred million sexually amputated men in the world. In areas where the concentration is the highest, economic development is the lowest, and inhumanity and crime top the scale. That's not a good foundation for having affairs with them, or any relationships at all, especially politically. They live in a different world. Jean told me that she merely flirted with the men, in most cases, in the hope of finding one among them, who is a normal human being. When she told me this, she also invited me to come to dinner one night to her friend Sara, who she said, has the same take on things.

"What unfolded that night after dinner," Jill continues, "became reminiscent of my first date, with the man that I hadn't forgotten for a long time, and still remembered fondly. Having sexual intimacies with Jean and

Sara became a normal thing from then on. Sometimes three other women would come for a visit, Cindy, Claudia, and Darlene. Each came for her own reason, though seldom all at the same time. Mostly we came together to fulfill each other's needs, and thereby had our own needs fulfilled. All of them had a family of their own. Coming together as women also seemed to be far less risky in terms of damaging our marital relationships, even though on rare occasions our getting together also included a man, a normal man. There were three men who occasionally came to Sara's place, or we got together with them individually. Only one of these was an amputee, an interesting man, who had recognized his disability and had discovered ways around it. Those apparently are even more rare. Having relationships with several great women takes the edge of marital shortcomings and the tragedy of the mutilated men, and so it fulfills many emotional needs that would remain otherwise unfulfilled. However, the crowning touch for me, in my affairs, is always in the arms of a man. I joined the space mission on behalf of all of the men and women that I had come to treasure. Devoting my life to protecting our world, became my gift to everyone of them, and an act of honoring our bonds that love has forged. I saw joining the mission as a sacrifice that was to last for only a dozen years, a small price to pay, I thought, for so much to protect. Of course, now, instead of it being a sacrifice, it became an open door."

Nahor nods. He turns to Natalia. Before you answer, let me take you all back in time into the primitive world of the Ice Age on the Earth. The Ice Age has evidently played a major role in human development, simply because more than 75% of mankind's development occurred under Ice Age conditions. During such times coastal fisheries supplied most of the people's food. A number of submerged villages have been located that used to be at the coastline, as the oceans were lower during those times when large masses of water were stored on land in the form of ice. When the men were away tracking down the fish and catching them, the women may have been alone for extended periods, looking after the children. Sexual intimacies between woman may have been the norm in those days, perhaps for psychological needs. Sex might also have been sought as a form of pain relief. As you may know, sexual engagement does have this effect. And with the men being away, they had their own biological imperatives to contend with, which often have a powerful impact. In order for a woman's egg cell to be fertilized, the sperm requires a transport media to get there, and nourishment along the way. This is provided by the man's prostate gland. To be able to fulfill its function, the produced transport medium and nourishment needs to be kept fresh. For this to happen, biological impulses assure that the old stuff gets periodically ejected through the ejaculation process. The body is designed with powerful impulses that assure that these cleaning cycles are carried out. For this need, the long isolated men would likely have engaged in sexual interactions to aid each other to fulfill those needs. Of course, when the men returned with their load of fish, their sexual interaction would then be with the women. A highly successful, mutually

supportive sexual environment appears to have resulted from this completely natural platform for meeting each other's needs in the most efficient manner. This process appears to have been wrecked by the masters of the religions who gained their power by controlling society. They forbade most of the natural sexual bonds, and narrowed the scene to just one partner for life, in what is termed marriage, but which is really an isolation of the individual from the rest of society. Some religions even imposed the death penalty for infractions. Since this apparently wasn't successful, the masters of the religions added the circumcision to the scene. They amputated a large portion of the sexually sensitive parts of a man's penis. This apparently was so highly disruptive to the social intimacies that the modern masters of empire recruited their agents largely from this group. A sexually deprived man, lacking the normal human bonds, is easily corrupted into becoming a slave to would-be masters. But this too, apparently wasn't disruptive enough to satisfy the masters of empire, who aimed to remove the social conscience and the social bonds in society. In addressing this, they took another step and invented a near 100% fatal disease that is sexually transmitted, which became AIDS. With this three-pronged attack on human sexual intimacy -- the marriage isolation, the sexual amputation, and now AIDS that scares the hell out of people and further isolates them -- the entire political landscape of the world has been turned into a mess. It has dehumanized the landscape. It really has become the determining factor for which humanity of Earth is now in mortal danger. The one thing that unites the Gribbork world, and the world of Quian, and the world on Earth is this three-pronged attack against the natural bonds unfolding with the people's intimacies with each other. All three planets have the same screwed up social landscape, and all three are reeling under the rule of empire. The interesting part is, when Odessa looked for similarities on the planet 'O,' they found none. They found a wide-open marriage system that supports far-flung networks of affairs of all sorts, and no amputations, and no biological warfare agents directed against sex. This, apparently, is the key thing that sets the 'O' people apart."

"If this is so, then Olaf and Zy are innocent," interjects Jill.

Nahor applauds. "Indeed they are," says Nahor. "Whatever they thought they had done, had merely touched the periphery and inflicted some cosmetic damages, but their interventions didn't touch the core issue. In other words, whatever has happened on Quian, would have happened anyway, because nothing had altered the core issue that was driving the collapse process. The same happened on Gribbork, just as it is now in progress happening on Earth. It's almost the identical process. A three-pronged attack is driving the process. We didn't know this before we were able to explore the 'O' people's social landscape and make comparisons. And the difference is empire. It is impossible for me to imagine the 'O' people being ruled by an empire. What they have built for themselves is far too precious for an empire ever to have a chance to take roots."

"This makes rescuing the Earth from the same doom a horrendous

challenge," interjects Jill. "On Earth, empire is everywhere. Everything is subservient to it. Wars are instigated to assure that no sovereign people would emerge as nations and overthrow the monetarist looting system that is the power of empire, the enemy of mankind. Mankind has tried to get out of this trap; we almost succeeded in America. America was founded on the Credit Society Principle. We had created a nation that owned a debt to itself by issuing itself financial credits directed towards building itself efficient infrastructures and powerfully productive industries. The ultimate goal had been to shut empire down globally, to dissolve it in bankruptcy, and thereby to give the rest of the world the same chance to organize itself on the Credit Society Principle. A global bankruptcy reorganization would have done this. People would have been able to live free and to be free to develop their productive powers. The world owed nothing to the financier swindlers of the Monetarist Empire. It certainly didn't owe its life to them. But America failed itself on this account. Instead of defeating empire as the enemy of mankind, the masters of empire hacked away at us for over 130 years until we surrendered and gave the store away to them at Christmas time in 1913 with the Federal Reserve Act. The very next year World War I was started to destroy the only remaining danger in the world to empire, namely the cooperative economic development of Russia, Germany, and the Middle East. We came that close to the grandest renaissance ever, but empire wouldn't allow it, it destroyed the entire continent with an instigated war. If we hadn't failed at this critical moment in time, we might have achieved the same that the 'O' people have achieved. But to get to this point from where things stand today seems quite impossible. The world is in a much deeper mess now, with empire being firmly in control. The only hope we have in America is to fall back to our founding platform, the platform of sovereignty, the platform of 'We the People!' Our hope is grounded in the fact that in real terms every form of error has no history, as there is no truth in error, and therefore there is no substance, power, nor legitimacy in empire. I just don't know if there is anyone on Earth who can recognize this."

"Ah, I see you are getting the idea of what needs to be done," says Nahor. "You suggest that the task before you, means repairing the roots. No political machinations will offer a permanent solution, that's for sure." Nahor reaches his hand out to Jill. "Congratulation, you are a pioneer in an uncharted land, and you are on the right track by what you just told us. That's not a paradox."

Nahor turns to Natalia. "What about you? Are you on track too? Do you have anything in your past that matches the 'O' people's landscape. I've been told their social landscape is pervaded with networks of affairs of all sorts, some quite extensive, and most of them with a form of marriage standing in the middle as a central hub, like a sun?"

Natalia shakes her head. "A few distant stars might qualify, perhaps," says Natalia. "During the fundraising days for the mission, a few things began to move. James sparked an interest in affairs. As soon as it became

certain that the mission was going to go ahead, and I had been accepted to be a part of it, my husband Carl asked for a divorce. He could tolerate a lot of things, but not the prospect of losing his little slave. I should have suggested that he branch out and have a few affairs, and stand on his own ground. Except he can't get slaves that way. Besides, the kind of affairs that he should have been seeking as a means for growing up as an intelligent human being are hard to come by. Most women, when they realize that they have a lot more to offer than just sex, and a lot to gain in return, are open to having affairs, but they are nevertheless scared to come out of their marriage shell that rules their very being. The thought of having an affair makes them feel ashamed, but they also want to feel loved just for themselves, to feel worthy standing on their own merits as individual women, and to be loved just for that. And so, most never test the waters and wither away. Of course, where would they go if they did peck open their shell? The male field is saturated with amputees."

"It's almost 100% saturated in some age brackets in America," Jill interjects. "Affairs used to be fun, some of the older women told me. It's different now. The amputees are different men."

Natalia begins to laugh. "The men have become the real slaves in society, without knowing it, slaves to stocks and bonds and market indexes, and profit margins, as if these are elements of life. They have their head stuffed full of senseless clatter. One of the older women told me that men used to be proud of their achievements and contributions. She said that one of them took her on a thousand mile trip to show her the bridge that he had helped to build, and talked proudly about the difficulties that had been overcome to get it done. Now the men are scared. They are scared that the indexes won't go the way they had bet they would go. Who wants to have an affair with a scared and disassociated person? One woman told me that once the world of men began to shift from being proud to being scared, the men became evermore brutal, or failing this, many simply became 'ingrown' and uninteresting, even 'dead,' and thereby rather crude and often drunk, rather than being alive and vibrant and fun to be with. And I don't blame them. When a person loses the color of life, what has he got left? He's got nothing remaining, but empty pursuits. I also experienced that this tragedy affected not only the men. It left many a woman high and dry. It ruined their social scene. The older woman that I had talked to first, hadn't recognized at first that the social tragedy resulted from the amputation that cut away what makes men sexually sensitive and open to deep intimacies. She lamented that people say the times have changed. But this wasn't at the root of it. She said that people often comment that the times have changed. But time doesn't change anything. The changes have been engineered. The intention is shining through. The intention is to create the very effect that we now see, with the deeper intention being focused on protecting the empire.

"After Carl divorced me," Natalia continues, "I tested the waters in various places in Western Europe, where I needed to be frequently during

the fundraising days. I have developed a few good affairs there. One fellow in Spain saw me more often than he saw his wife. It appears that affairs are a safety valve when marriage becomes problematic for people. Most of the men that I became involved with were married, and most of them had their first affair quite early in their marriage. They spoke of unfulfilled needs. Of course I had my own needs. I needed to have men around. The human being isn't meant to be solitary. Our entire civilization is built on universal cooperation, and on the caring for one another as a society on a wide basis. For me, this includes women too. Of course the inner development towards this begins at the home ground, at the center of affection. Sadly, however, we have turned this center into a boundary. We have turned our back to the principle on which our civilization stands, and then we complain that nothing works anymore. Obviously, we can only get out of life what we put into it. If the center of our life becomes a boundary, nothing is moving, and all the joys and passions wither away. The opposite should be happening. The center of our life should become enriched. This means we should live life more fully, and bring into it the experiences and joys, and riches, that we find in others, to enrich our center with them, where our home is. Those are the ground rules that I have laid down for myself in all of my affairs. Sex sometimes comes into the flow of it, though I never allowed it to come up front, and definitely not on the first date. If a man doesn't come back to me just for myself as a person and what I have to offer as an intelligent human being, then I let him go and grow up on his own. Those few who do come back to me, do so many times. Often the resulting affairs stretched out for months, even years in some cases. Some men told me that my influence on them has made their marriage more precious. Many started out feeling guilty at first, and ended up being grateful that I came into their life, and I felt the same about them. Naturally the expanding process of affairs includes women too. I met some really great women that way, and not as a default option, but for the joy they quietly radiated. If a person is joyous, where most are drab and glum, I want to find out what stands behind it and become a part of this joy. Can you believe that I had twenty-three people coming to see me off when our space voyage departed? Some day I'll go back and visit them, or some of them. It appears that some of my lovers had even brought their spouses along for the departure event. I think that by the time the ship lifted off, I had already discovered the answer to what the mission had been launched for in the first place, to find in outer space."

"I always believed that life is dynamic," interjects Cira. "Mahesh taught this to me. As a nuclear scientist he understands the Universe far better than I ever will. And so, for me to be living dynamically, meant taking chances. I grew up in Virgo, the most open of all the societies that I knew. But even Virgo was tightly controlled. Affairs were unthinkable. The rules were that tight. Transgressions were punished in many frightening ways, and one never knew what the penalties would be, since they were arbitrary. Public shame was one of them. But worse than that was the disease. We

had a sexual disease on our planet that supposedly came from the blood ritual of ancient mysticism, similar to Satanism. The blood rite had been banned, but continued nevertheless. As you can see, taking chances was not a casual thing for me. Since it was widely believed that the disease was artificially created in order that the elite could keep their intended social isolation intact, as a means to prevent the normal development of society, I saw in that a double incentive to take chances. I saw a lot of things with different eyes suddenly, especially things one isn't supposed to discover. But this wasn't me. I was discovering things, hidden things, dangerous things, and dangerous affairs too. Friends covered for me. Even my parents covered for me, who soon began to take chances themselves. We became very close that way, my parents and I. In those days, for us having affairs meant risking death. That's taking chances. Also, no cures for the disease were said to exist, or to be possible. This means that the intimacies were amazing, that came out of taking chances.

"Of course, ultimately it wasn't about taking chances," Ciria continues. "It was about living intelligently. My affairs became subject to my unwritten rule that before sexual intercourse could happen, my partner would have to have a clean bill of health, certified by the doctor of our group. Naturally, we didn't 'exile' those who didn't qualify, but exercised extreme caution and imposed limits. With our affairs being not hidden in secrecy, among ourselves, the resulting mutual protection became a sure thing, a thing of justified trust. We also felt that we had developed a model by which the disease could be eradicated on our planet, whereby the goals of empire would be foiled. By us not forcing the intimacy that we all need, to become scrapped out of fear, according to the wishes of empire, we experienced the essence of a world that is free of empire.

"As you might realize, we didn't know in those days that the war against intimacy is a universal phenomenon wherever empire rules the day," Ciria continues. "Of course we didn't know that on the Earth the same disease had been massively introduced with vaccinations, and had been spread massively to the point that it was killing many tens of millions of people in its path. Evidently people on Earth were moved like us, by their need for sexual intimacy, to take these incredible risks. I am sure it wasn't the excitement that comes with taking risks that moved us, and them likewise, to take deadly chances. One doesn't take chances with a disease, as the people on Earth do with AIDS that has killed fifty million people, for which no cure exists, unless there stands a hugely powerful motivator behind the scene that impels people to play such deadly games with their life.

"Mahesh tells me that the AIDS tragedy on Earth is proof for his theory that sexual intimacy is an immensely powerful factor, and that this factor didn't exist with the intensity that it does, if it didn't fulfill an equally powerful harmonizing intention in the Universe's design of intelligent beings. He calls sexual intimacy a link in the chain of advancing intelligent life. He says that all the higher-level civilizations are latched onto this. He

regards sexual intimacy as one of the vital factors that set us apart as an intelligent species, from the animal species. Mahesh says that we need to explore this dimension and utilize its profound principles, rather than trash it, and smother its unfolding with the countless religious dogmas that have been created for this purpose. He says that affairs are just as vital to a high-level civilization, if not more so, than are the various types of education in the sciences. He even says that empires are the mark of society's failing grade in the sphere of its self-development, which has at its root a fundamental failure. He laughs at the notion that Zy and Olaf had anything to do with the collapse of our home world."

"Why don't you call Mahesh up, who may be still on the planet," interjects Nahor, speaking to Hammet, the Gribbork woman of his assistants. "We should hear him on this issue."

We were in luck. Mahesh was quickly located.

"Mahesh has brought many of the people of his group here," says Nahor to us. "It took some doing, but they are all here." Then he turns to Cira. "Your friends are invited to come here too. The future isn't bright on Gribbork, as you know. You may bring them here and continue your affairs, and expand on them. I can arrange for help, to bring them across."

Mahesh walks through the door just minutes later.

"Tell them why Zy and Olaf were not responsible for the collapse on Gribbork," says Nahor to Mahesh almost like a greeting.

Mahesh nods. "The collapse on Gribbork began when the masters of empire had unleashed a pandemic with one of the cooked up biological weapons that had been developed in great abundance over some decades. They used a strain of virus for which they had also developed a vaccine they could sell. They saw huge profits in that. The masters of the empire on Gribbork added their own objective to the mix. They persuaded the vaccine makers to add an element to the vaccine that would over the space of a year destroy the targeted people's immune system from within. The vaccine maker complied. They had the requested element already sitting on the shelf, fully tested on the military. In the test, it had disabled half a million soldiers, a full 70% of those injected. While they never admitted to the crime, secretly they may have deemed it a great success. The added element had been tested on lab rodents. It had killed 39 out of 40. They repeated the test. The results were the same. Then they tested it on the military. They were apparently satisfied by its effectiveness, because they ordered the stuff to be included into a pandemic vaccine with a 10,000-times larger concentration. The element is a synthetic version of an oil-like molecule that is vital for the functioning of the immune system and of the nervous system of a person. The immune system responds to the synthetic molecule, creates antibodies for it, but the antibodies cannot tell the synthetic molecules apart from the natural ones. They simply destroy them all. When the criminal vaccine was injected into the population, it

triggered a slow acting immune response against all natural molecules of that type that are critically important to the functioning of a person's body. The antibodies attacked and destroyed these vital molecules anywhere in the body. The vaccine became an effective killer, because the debilitating process rarely ever ends. The naturally occurring vital molecules are constantly being created, drawn from the food source, which causes the immune system to keep on making antibodies. The destructive immune response is thereby maintained without end. The destructive antibodies are constantly being created anew. The body keeps on producing its needed vital oily molecules, and the antibodies hunt them down and destroy them. It becomes a vicious circle that never ends until the person dies."

"Our masters of empire on Earth had attempted the very same thing a while back," interjects Jill. "Except, on Earth, it failed. The population got wise to what the project had been intended for, and stopped it almost in the last moment. It might have had the same effect as on Gribbork. It probably would have worked had the empire not been so pushy. Like on Gribbork, they had tested their artificial molecule on the military. Except on Earth they had increased the doping of the pandemic vaccine 100,000 times over the version tested on the military, and in some cases a million times. It had raised a few eyebrows. When the scam became recognized by evermore people, and people became scared, a wave of investigations began that led to a trail of corpses of microbiologists, some in high-level positions, who had all been mysteriously murdered. Over eighty people were killed, who might have been potential whistleblowers, which are routinely killed. That's a normal pattern in a fascist world, like ours had become. Of course, not a single suspect was ever brought to trial to answer for the crime. It too, raised a few eyebrows. This kind of sanctioned immunity doesn't happen, unless it is an element of the system. People began to recognize that something was fishy. At the same time the government then tried to bring in a law that would have put the entire healthcare process in to the private hands of an appointed commission that is itself immune to the law, with sweeping euthanasia provisions added. When the government tried to promote this, many people suddenly began to wake up and started to revolt. It started a 'firestorm.' The population started to hate its government. It wanted the entire gang of traitors replaced, from the Congress all the way up to the President. The population went on a mass strike. In the shadow of the mass strike the intended universal vaccination became impossible to implement and was dropped. The pandemic that had already been started by then, was eventually taken care of by natural means. Obviously, this didn't happen on Gribbork. It may be that the empire on Gribbork had found out why this type of process had failed on Earth and had avoided the parts that had tipped the balance on Earth. Apart from that, what we saw on Gribbork was a perfect copy."

"Are you suggesting that the Gribbork empire had copied that entire process from Earth, that had nearly succeeded there, except for the mistakes that they omitted?" says Natalia.

Mahesh nods, but then shakes his head. "They copied empire. The rest follows. Nor did they really, copy, empire. When children begin to learn to walk, they tend to fall. Empire is the result of 'children' taking the wrong step. This doesn't mean that the Universe is poorly designed. To the contrary, its design is extremely efficient. It enables progress that would otherwise not be possible. By falling, the children learn to pay attention. Soon, they are able to run flawless. Indifference in society is a state of not paying attention. And so, societies fall. Empires rise and rule until society resumes paying attention. It is an efficient process."

"If life was a cakewalk, what would inspire progress?" interjects Nahor.

"Maybe this is the reason why the development of mankind as a highly intelligent species didn't happen prior to the great Ice Age," Martin interjects. "I am referring to the Pleistocene Epoch, where it all happened, which is still upon us. The climatic and environmental conditions appear to have been almost perfect for the development of new species ever since the end of the Cretaceous Period 65 million years ago. But the development of mankind didn't start until the Ice Age Period began. We came to be what we now are, by having been faced with a great challenge for two million years. Since the Ice Age cycles are roughly 100,000 years long, we grew up against the background of 20 Ice Age cycles. The conditions for efficient development may not have existed prior to the Ice Age cycles. For all we know, Gribbork and Quian might have had a similar past. The 'O' people certainly had difficult challenges to master in their steamy environment. I doubt that they had time for the luxury of indifference."

"On Gribbork indifference was strong," Nahor interjects. "The scourge of empire develops in the background to indifference, and all the tragedies that flow out of it. When the people from Quian came to us for help, fearing a nuclear war, we didn't know that we were dealing with but a symptom of a disease that had itself a deeper cause. We saw the nuclear war challenge as a technical issue, and applied a technical solution, without realizing that the nuclear war threat was but a symptom of empire, and empire was but a symptom of indifference. I had a hunch then that we were merely treating a symptom, but Zy and Olaf wouldn't listen. Obviously one can't cure a disease by treating just the symptoms. Of course, one has to treat the symptoms too, but it has to be done in the context of what they are."

"The danger that the biological warfare potential was posing to the civilian population had been known to many people on Gribbork, before the tragedy happened," interjects Mahesh. "Nahor is right; indifference ruled the scene as it had for as long as anyone could remember. It had become a disease that nobody had bothered to cure. Warnings about a biological holocaust had been given by many concerned individuals in the scientific and investigative community, especially in the latter days, but who would hear them? In a world that is saturated with secrecy and lies that everybody tolerates, the truth becomes illusive. Those, whose warnings were

heard, had their voice drowned out with slanders. The alarm bells should have been ringing loud and clear by then, but didn't. The pioneers who had voiced those warnings were labeled, conspiracy theorists, and were laughed at, notwithstanding the fact that empire itself, by having no natural basis to exist, exists itself exclusively on layers upon layers of conspiracies. The truth was termed a lye under the mantle of conspiracies. Consequently, the tragedy that could have been avoided was allowed to happen. In the resulting crazy world of ours, a world turned upside down, almost the entire population of the planet became injected with the anti-pandemic vaccine. That's the face of indifference. That's how the point of no return was crossed. From this point on the poison that had been injected into people could not be removed by any means known. It went to work quietly, almost imperceptibly, and started its deadly process for which no remedy was possible. In most cases the injections were repeated before the first signs of the disabilities began to appear. The repeat-vaccination was said to provide a 'safe' dose, a dose that was said to be necessary. Even a triple dose was applied to some categories of people. Oh, yes, there had been testing done on Gribbork. Some minimal, superficial, short term testing, had been carried out on children, with the subjects having been monitored for a month, which was said to have 'proved' the vaccine to be safe. The children were coerced into this with money for toys. By this method the genocidal vaccine was certified. Once it was certified, people began lining up in great numbers to be injected. The few concerned scientists who had voiced their warning right at the beginning, were laughed at again, for their 'silly conspiracy theories,' and in the shadow of this laughter the mass injection began and became mandatory. Two years later, those who had laughed, laughed no more. Most became disabled. That's how our society died. A society that has the majority of its people disabled, is not able to physically maintain itself. The end result on Gribbork was that only seven percent of the population remained alive after the dust settled. Those who emerged from this tragedy remain to the present day mired in poverty, living under the thumb of the old empire, if one can call this living. The people of our group, who understood the truth, as anyone else should have understood it, had found a way to escape the mass vaccination. We used a loophole in the vaccination law that the masters of this madness had created for themselves. The masters, of course, are safe and happy now. They got what they had always wanted. They now rule with an iron fist over a largely empty planet, forcing their coveted poverty onto a dying civilization, whereby the survival of their empty system of empire is assured for a long time to come."

Nahor stands up as Mahesh stops speaking. He walks towards the door and slides back the glass pannels facing the beach. He steps outside and motions us to follow. He points to an island not far from shore, close enough for us to see its hills dotted with houses nestled between stands of trees. "Many people have come to live here," he says.

Next he points to a plateau in front of a mountain across a bay near his beach. "That's were one of the local manufacturing centers is located," he says. "There exist many such centers on this planet. None of what you see here existed at the time of what Zy calls the Gribbork affair. Everything that you see was built within the last twenty years, and it was all built here."

Wendy's mouth drops open with astonishment. "Who provided the money for this?" she says after moments of silence.

"What money?" says Nahor and begins to grin, and puts a hand on Wendy's shoulder. "My dear, you have touched on the key point that I was trying to make. The point is that this place wasn't built with money. Money doesn't build anything; people do! We have learned this from Earth's history. As Jill has already pointed out, the principle was discovered in America and was first applied there. Way back before the American Revolution was even thought of, the leaders of the Bay Colony of Massachusetts said to themselves, we don't need the king's money to build ourselves an iron works that we need to support our farming community with, which needs equipment. So the colonists issued to themselves scrip that they used instead of money. The purpose of the scrip was to define the value of work done, in terms of the value of the products that came out of the process. On this basis a great ironworks had been built in Massachusetts that became world famous for its capability and efficiency. With its product the whole region became uplifted. The region became rich. Of course the king didn't like the competition to his monetarist rule, that the scrip became. Consequently he shut the scrip down. However, the scrip was far different than the king's money. The scrip was primarily a commitment by the people to themselves, a note of credit, an instrument that gave people the freedom to create a New World for themselves. The colony had thereby become a credit society, not a monetarist society. This, the king couldn't shut down. He tried, but instead of submitting themselves again to the slavery of the king's monetarism, the people shut the king's rule down with what became the American Revolution."

"We discovered this part of our history, when we got together here after the Gribbork disaster," interjects Camille. "Nahor brought me here to help build a society based entirely on humanist principles. That's when the real research began. We soon discovered that we didn't need the formal scrip at all. We rediscovered the principle of the Peace of Westphalia where the pioneers of this age had developed a recognition that it is to everyone's advantage to promote what is to the advantage of all the others. It had been coined, the Principle of the Advantage of the Other. This principle became the foundation for the Peace of Westphalia, the greatest peace treaty in human history. That discovery meant for us that everyone who signed on with our credit society system, did so on the basis of the Principle of the Advantage of the Other. We brought together people from several worlds who were committed to work for the common good. Everything that you see was created voluntarily in its entirety. Not a penny was

paid. We built this place up exclusively on the Westphalian principle, and we did this on a very large scale, utilizing the most advanced technological platform we could find. Most people came here, because they were eager to implement the advanced technologies that had been created, but had been shelved as too expensive on other worlds. Some people brought with them the knowledge of fusion power and all sorts of advanced discoveries in science. With these, the people who came here started to build, all supporting one another. We soon realized that we didn't need the scrip system at all. We recognized that we could rely on the principles alone that had stood behind the original scrip. We created miracles on this basis. We created housing with a quality that most people would never dream of. We began to mass-produce them in automated high-powered facilities. All the houses you see on this planet now, are machine-made, made of molten basalt, cast into molds. Basalt melts at a slightly lower temperature than glass. The heating is easily done with high temperature nuclear power that is subsequently increased with heat pumps to the required intensity. Liquid basalt is an ideal material for many products. It can be molded into anything. It lends itself perfectly to automated industrial processes. For housing production, basalt is definitely the most ideal building material in the Universe. It is so finely grained that it can be extruded into micro fibers of great strength, which makes basalt products nine times stronger than steel, by weight, and three times more efficient in thermal insulation than asbestos. And on top of it, it is non-corrosive and is almost as hard as a diamond. Nor does it need to be processed before it can be used. It sits on the ground, ready made and in great quantities. All the buildings on this planet are made of basalt. There is no shortage of housing or industrial workspace. Of course, since we have no money, we give the houses away to each other as fast as we make them, whereby living becomes richer and more spacious."

Werner begins to laugh, looking at me, while Camille is still talking about basalt. "Guess what Martin's Metal is based on," he says to me. "It's an alloy of basalt. It was Martin's special brand of it that you saw on the ship. It's basically basalt that Olaf's museum is made of. Martin's Metal is a technologically improved version of basalt. A more practical version of Martin's Metal is being routinely utilized on this planet for some of the more exotic constructions that you may have seen."

"I simply passed my formula on," says Martin and grins. "The people here did wonders with it. That's how the process works. People bring their riches into it. The result is astonishing."

"The outcome is supernova time," I interject.

"The entire planet is run by volunteers?" says Wendy astonished.

"Its run by the principle of universal love, the root of the Westphalia principle," says Nahor. "What you see here is not the result of volunteering in the standard sense. It is the outcome of being human. That's the greatest freedom a person can claim. It's the principles of the Universe in action,

reflected in people's humanity. Efficient housing, of course, has put us only at the starting gate. A society has got to have a quality place to live to start a quality self-development of its people. We really don't know where the limits are, if there are any. A person needs space to grow as a human being and to engage in cultural pursuits, scientific discovery, mental development, and so forth. Quality housing is key to all of that."

Nahor turns to Wendy. "You cannot imagine the riches that came out of this development. Society became intensely human on this planet as nowhere else in the Universe. And the quality of the culture would surprise you if you gave yourself the time to explore it."

"It seems you would fit perfectly into this place," I say to Wendy. "You could bring Jeffry here. I'm sure he would love it here too."

"I think Jeffry would love to sink his teeth into big projects again," says Wendy.

I turn to Nahor. "Jeffry is the center of Wendy's affair from way back, from long before we got married. Their affair never stopped. I'm glad for it now, that it hasn't stopped. If you can believe this, their affair made me proud of myself. Wendy never hid the affair, nor did she hide that it was more than just a fling, nevertheless she chose me above all that. Wow! What a boost this gave to my self-esteem. Jeffry was a lawyer at the time, with his own practice, and a wonderful man to boot, and she chose me, little old me, a mere metallurgist holding down a nine to five job. Whatever she saw in me, I didn't even see myself. Boy, did I ever get busy afterwards to figure this thing out and then build on it. I moved from dull-street to the leading edge to keep myself fit for measuring up to her. I never dreamed of breaking her affair up, with Jeffry. My hopes were that I would never tire of the challenge to remain to be the center in her life, in spite of what Jeffry brought into her life. The first thing that I noticed after I met Wendy was that my clothing was too shabby. It was as if she had set a new standard for me all of a sudden. The next thing that I noticed was that my life had been much to 'thin.' One can't pull ones riches out of thin air. When she introduced Jeffry and spoke of wider horizons, looking at me with a wink, I knew that I owed her treasures that can't be found on the narrow horizon. I knew that I had to capture the gold and let it enrich the center we had built together. I was jolted to the realization that life wasn't static, and that marriage wasn't an end game, but the starting gate for an endless run, and that the footsteps in this running were increasingly measured by a growing respect for myself, which Wendy found fascinating. Nor was this advance given to me by anyone; it was all assiduously earned and presented to her with a great joy. Oh yes, I had affairs. Each had made me richer. When people meet with joy and love, the outcome is bound to be bigger than its parts, rich with blessings that bring new life to whatever one is associated with, including the center of one's life so that that will never be a time when the flame of love and passion dies. It was against this background that I fought for the mission. Without Wendy I wouldn't be here today. The goal of the mission reflected

to some degree my own goal. The mission was to rekindle the fire of passion for life that was fast going out on Earth. Wendy's take was that on this basis we would never part. She reminded me on the day of departure that we had convinced the preacher on our wedding day to omit the phrase, till death do us part, from our wedding vows. It became a commitment on our part to let the fire of the passion of life never go out, so that the phrase wasn't needed. The phrase, 'till death do us part,' applies all too often to the 'death' that so easily creeps into a marriage when the fire goes out, for which people have parted in so many divorces, and this often in agony. We knew this would never be our death, far from it. On this note the mission was celebrated. When the day of departure came, Jeffry had taken a special holiday from work and had come to our private departure celebration. We have had many holidays together in the past. But this time he had come with a gift for me, a note of thanks. He thanked me for having changed his life by raising the bar for him in evaluating Wendy. He added, 'whatever you do out there in space, be sure to come back to us, we need you to keep us all on high ground. We need each other.'

"That's Jeffry, Nahor," I say to him, to put Wendy into perspective. "I'm sure you'll find a place for him on this planet, if he will come, and I think he will."

"We have no need for lawyers," said Nahor.

"Oh, you'll need this one," says Wendy and laughs. "Jeffry was the one who discovered way back that the new swine flu vaccine that was being produced by the billions of doses had a patent registered for it by its originator, and that the patent had been registered more than a year before the virus was first seen on the planet. Jeffrey may have been the one who got the ball rolling that ended up saving mankind. The moment he recognized the terrible danger lurking in the background, Jeffrey closed his office down and lobbied for the immediate suspension of all forms of related institutions of government in America for their immediate reorganization under a limited purview. His take was that when a vaccine is injected with potentially deadly results that are showing up only two years down the line, any government official who promotes or condones this potential crime should be immediately removed from office. Jeffrey stood up against the whole world on this ground, even in the face of persecution. He poked his hands into the deepest and blackest nest of empire, and raised hell there. He exposed the conspirators' world of biological weaponry. It was Jeffrey who published the names of the more than 80 leading experts who were murdered in mysterious ways, which Jill had referred to earlier. He explained why the murdered scientists couldn't have been trusted by the empire, to maintain their secrecy that the empire needed to protect the workings in the sewer. They had threatened to expose the dirt in the sewer. Jeffrey understood this and made sure that everyone understood this too, and with it he exposed the emerging flu-vaccine danger. He was scared of it on this account. He saw it as a threat against the whole of mankind

and stuck his neck out to block it. That's Jeffry. You need a man like that on your team. He's a human being. He is presently orchestrating the same kind of intervention against the greatest financial and economic collapse that has ever been unleashed on the Earth. He is fighting against this with all his might. Our American government has given away the country's money in huge bundles, for nothing more than to bail out the financier gangsters that still call themselves banks. They have come with sharp knives and threatened the government, and as you might guess they walked away with a bailout pile that's equal to ten years of the country's national budget. That's a wad of thousand dollars bills so big, that when laid face to face, would stretch from coast to coast all across America and out to sea on both ends. This huge wad had been given away as a gift to the gangsters in less than a year while unemployment has become epidemic, food is being burned in automobiles, and over eight million families have been kicked out of their home in mortgage foreclosure actions. Jeffrey is fighting against all this. He calls for an immediate bankruptcy reorganization of the entire financial world to rescue America, to take back the bailout, to replace the monetarism of empire with a sovereign national credit system as a platform for rebuilding the country. That's Jeffry too. He's a fighting dynamo. And he's scared. He told me before I came here that the greatest danger on planet Earth is its empire's monetarism. He is scared that the financial collapse will reach a point at which the value of currencies comes into doubt, so that the entire system begins to cease up within hours. He says that when the currencies can no longer be trusted to have any value, the financial markets shut down, then the banks shut down right after, and before the day is out all the stores will be closed. Nothing will be sold when the currencies are recognized to have no value. The gas stations shut down, the electricity supply stops, suddenly people have nothing to eat. The way Jeffry describes the potential catastrophe, the tragedy on Earth could become worse than what has been experienced on Gribbork. Jeffry is trying to shut down the current development towards this, before it reaches the point of no return."

"Something like that may have triggered the nuclear firestorm on Quian that morning, when all life on the planet came to an end," interjects Nahor.

"Why do you want to bring the man here who wants to prevent this on Earth, and spoil all his fun?" Mahesh interjects and begins to smile. "Can't you see that he is needed the most right where he is? It appears that he has found his mission in life."

Mahesh turns to Wendy and me. "You have both prepared the man for this. You have laid the groundwork. You are in this together with him, up to your neck, I would say. You owe a debt to yourself to see this through together. Jeffry is needed right where he is. Bringing him here would be a crime against humanity. But he needs your support. Maybe we can all help in some way. If we have had someone like Jeffry on Gribbork, maybe their civilization could have been saved. Still you might bring him here for

lunch one day, so that we can discuss how we might help him."

"Oh, has it already begun again," interjects Nahor. "I was afraid that this might happen. Why would you bring this man here. Jeffrey is already on the right track. As far as I can see, his strategy is to pursue a natural universal principle. One can't go further than that. He would laugh if we told him about our feeble attempt at the great debating center on Monar Aquilae. Our debates were celebrations of mediocrity. That's all that one ever gets out of debates, mediocrity. Real progress is built on individual discoveries of universal principles. Jeffrey appears to be on this path. Still, I am surprised at what you are telling me. I thought we had more time to sort things out on Earth. I should have known that the urgency was far greater than what appears of it on the surface. As I recall it was like that on Gribbork too. Things snowballed in the end, almost explosively, to the point that nobody was in control of anything anymore. You are saying that this is potentially happening again on the Earth."

"Let's not forget that the people on the Earth got out of a deadly crisis once before," interjects Natalia, "when they had put too much trust in vaccines that would have done infinitely more damage than they would have prevented. The vaccines are so easily abused for political purposes, as for example with the introduction of AIDS that had been added to vaccines that were given to the most undesired segments of the population, like the homosexuals, and then the populations of Africa."

"Looking back to our Gribbork affair, we saw the same process unfolding there, but we didn't try to stop it," says Nahor. "We had been focused on a sideline issue. We had been trying to prevent a nuclear war. I, Zy, Olaf, and some others, we had been blind to the much greater danger. Besides, we wouldn't have known how to stop the big privately run pharmas anyway, that were working for the empire in pursuit of biological weapons development. I bet it was the same on Earth when they did this thing there. When the game is for imperial purposes, which the governments themselves are funding, but never control, where does one start to lay the axe to the problem?"

"That's the kind of obscurity that corporatism accomplishes," I interject. "Corporatism creates private empires outside the reach of public oversight, which function as parts of the global world empire. What would prevent these gangsters from 'testing' their creations on the public, causing worldwide pandemics of the kind that they just happen to have a preventive vaccine for, sitting ready-made on the shelf, complete with commercially protected patents that had been registered before the virus was even seen?"

"I can well imagine the profit potential that they had thereby in their hands," says Nahor. "Of course, with this capability also comes the blackmail potential. It's obvious that these gangster corporations would then be in a position to demand worldwide immunity from damage claims, for whatever horrors their vaccine might unleash. And to take this one step further, I can also imagine the additional profits that can be earned when

the potential for a worldwide biological attack is offered to the world empire, whose masters have stated like a broken record, for decades on end, that they want 80% to 90% of all people of the planet eliminated so that their empire won't be challenged by an advancing society for a long time to come. I am aware of what had happened on Earth in those days. I just hadn't been aware of it when we saw it happening on Gribbork. On Gribbork the gangsters were apparently more clever and more able to hide their intentions. As Mahesh had already recognized, they had created what looked like an honest vaccine that was actually effective against the pandemic that was blowing up like wildfire, which of course they had created in the first place. But they managed to keep the fact quiet that they had included this adjuvant that was designed to stimulate the formation of antibodies against one of the most vital natural molecules needed by the nervous system and the immune system. Zy and I didn't get wise to this thing happening on Gribbork until the tragedy started two years down the line. As Mahesh said, a large portion of the population became disabled. Zy and Olaf thought they had been responsible for it. They were devastated, watching the resulting chaos in which the entire civilization became destroyed. They saw it as an act of their own insanity, of their having interfered. They still see it that way. As Mahesh said, after a major portion of the population had become disabled, the economies collapsed. Food production ceased. People died of starvation. Mahesh was one of the few who survived, who had been able to prepare themselves for the New World of hell, but even he hadn't escaped the consequences until he was rescued by you. You are saying that this nearly happened on the Earth, but was prevented in the last moment. And you are also saying that a potentially much more devastating economic collapse is now being staged, built on the ongoing collapse of the world-financial system. Are you suggesting that the whole universe been infected with a type of progressing madness?"

"It's monstrous to suggest such a thing," interjects Jill. "But this is what Wendy's friend Jeffry, warns us about.

Wendy nods. "Yes, it is monstrous what's now happening on the Earth," she says quietly. "But remember, we've been there and survived. The deadly adjuvant that had been put into vaccine, was real, it had a name and code ID. It was called squalene. Its code ID was MF-59. All this was real. The pandemic virus was a recombinant slow virus of bird flu, pig flu, and human flue of strains common in Asia. The test run for the adjuvant was done through the vaccination of soldiers during the Iraq Wars. All of this happened. The resulting debilities became known as the Gulf War Syndrome. The same process was to be applied globally. Jeffry was at the forefront of stopping it. This too, happened. Mankind had successfully protected itself on Earth with the mass strike that Jeffry set into motion. All this happened. Why shouldn't mankind then be able to save itself again?"

"Nevertheless, everybody should be worried," Nahor interjects.

"It could also happen the way it happened on Quian," says Wendy. "It's all too easy to cross the point of no return when too few stand up

to block the process. Jeffry may have succeeded once by standing up, but will he succeed again?"

Nahor nods. "The dangers were grave when Jeffry succeeded in shutting the empire's plan down. By his own admission, the prince of the empire on Earth had issued his orders to depopulate the planet already several decades earlier," says Nahor.

"I remember that," says Jill. "I remember the prince saying loud and clear, decades ago, that he wants a particularly deadly virus to be developed as a means for depopulating the planet. He had wrapped the request up in a joke, by saying he wished to become reincarnated as such a virus. Anyone who can read the intention behind those words, can easily see this as a development request. It's like saying to the world's biological warfare labs, 'do it and I will pay the price; do it in a way that it causes a big splash, and I will pay you double.'"

Nahor raises his hand to intervene. "In considering how the private imperial system works anywhere," he says, "where nobody can be held accountable to the public for anything, the prince's long-stated development request may have been fulfilled with the created virus and vaccine, and with the payment for it rendered in the full, and with contracts already sealed for the staging of the splashy event to commence in the background to the global collapse of the empire's world-financial system, which is its looting financial system. With Jeffry preventing their biological attack, he may have forced the empire to keep its dying financial system alive a bit longer, that America was coerced into footing the bill for. The collapse of its monetarism is a built-in feature of the nature of empire. The empire has historically started wars as a means for channeling the collapse process to its advantage. Jeffry spoiled one of those. With the global collapse about to happen, a new phase of the war of empire against mankind will likely be unleashed. Maybe they'll start their worldwide vaccination campaign once more. Biological war is the modern weapon of choice. It's less risky than nuclear war. Still, nuclear war should worry you nevertheless, because this thing is so easily done, and it has the potential to be going big."

"Jeffry is right," says Wendy. "The empire's war against mankind won't be won until empire ceases to exist."

"This is why we have come to this planet," interjects Lositaa. "We have come here for the double purpose of creating a sanctuary for keeping a portion of mankind alive, and for creating an oasis for developing a solution that may yet rescue mankind from a fate that it has stupidly allowed to come upon it. Nahor thinks that either way, we will win. Of course we also face the task of restoring the civilization on Gribbork onto a higher-level platform it ever stood on."

"For this we are going back to the most basic absolute rock bottom of our 'humanity,' even while we are surging forward on the scientific and technological front," says Hammet, the Gribbork woman of Nahor's assistants. "I am here, because Nahor needs me here, and because what we must achieve here is not really a technical issue, or a political issue, but

is a spiritual issue, and an issue of self-perception. The factors that are involved here are all known. It appears Wendy's friend Jeffrey is addressing what he may have recognized to be spiritual issues. The correct technical solutions that he pursues are themselves built on natural universal principles that alone offer powerful solutions. This means that the key issue is always a spiritual one. Without deep reaching spiritual processes, little is healed. Jeffrey may have recognized this in his efforts. Without building on a spiritual foundation the world is careening to hell. This tells me that the breakthrough that enables the technical solutions to become accepted and implemented, can only be achieved on a higher level platform that stands completely above the technical platforms. I am sure this man Jeffrey, on Earth, would agree that there is an urgent need for a spiritual renaissance in people's self-perception, a psychological renaissance, a kind of spiritual awakening that uplifts the emotional into the realm of the spiritual, to where people become primarily spiritual and intelligent beings in the highest sense. This was the direction I had been moving in before Gribbork blew apart. Unfortunately the small movement that I had been a part of had been too little and come too late. As a beginning, though, it was a significant step forward. But one step is not enough. Let's face it; nuclear war, empire, poverty, slavery, death threats, genocide, are all results of people failing themselves on the level of spiritual issues. These are the issues of people relating to people, and the best way, according to my experience, to develop productive relationships between people, is the training ground of the building of harmonizing affairs. Affairs are exclusively about people relating to one another as people, developing respect, getting recognition, intimacy, acknowledgement, and of course love. Indifference doesn't exist there. It is unthinkable there."

Hammet pauses. "I for one, need to be loved," she continues. "The sensing of love gives me the assurance that I am a valuable person. If I don't feel loved, I feel tired, often depressed. I feel a hundred years old. I realized however, through my affairs, that I had been indifferent to myself, that the lack of sensing love has been to a large degree my own fault. I hadn't opened my mind wide enough and become sensitive enough. If this indifference to oneself becomes the platform for society, empire has a free run. I don't need a lot of attention, but I need to sense in the company of people an unmistakable assurance that I'm regarded as an ok person. In marriage this is assumed, as it is written into the script. The incentive isn't there to nourish what should be nourished, and to experience love fresh and new, as it should always be experienced. And so, we drift into a rut. Sex, of course, becomes as part of the package. It is one of the most powerful motivators for intimacies that we have as a people. I'm sure that this powerful motivator wouldn't exist if it didn't have an equally powerful purpose. The drive for sexual intimacy certainly goes far beyond what is needed for procreation to happen. The evidence for where the power is located is found in what is lost when the motivator is blocked. Living then becomes dull, drab, and people become indifferent. On Gribbork

planet we lost 97% of our people to the consequences of indifference. I think it was indifference that killed the people of Gribbork. It was apparently the same on Quian where the entire civilization became lost. It wasn't the twenty minute automated total war that destroyed life on Quian, it was the indifference that went on before. That's the scope of what we are dealing with here, the scope of indifference. And that is where having affairs come into play. I never had an affair in my entire life that was marked by indifference. I had heard about bad experiences from others. I avoided them by recognizing that love is the opposite of indifference. Some say that the opposite to love is hate. It isn't. The opposite to love is indifference. When love is one of the highlights in life, life is rich. That's my life now. I feel fantastic, being in love. I feel like living on top of the world. I feel alive. My world becomes brighter where there is love flowing. Love brings the best out in me. I relish that. And, boy, does it feel good facing another person, being so rich within. The affair is far then from a beggar meeting a beggar, a celebration of emptiness. Love inspires passion in me. I want to give my all, and in most cases I meet a response in kind that flows back to me and makes the days and the nights sparkle.

"Of course, I'm not having affairs to uplift the world," Hammet continues, "but the world becomes a brighter place nevertheless. I work better in this environment; I am more caring, less complaining, less irritable, less envious, less lonely, less afraid. What I get out of my affairs benefits everybody, especially everyone in my home, the center of my affection that must always be nourished. Life doesn't remain dynamic for long, without it being nourished. Why do we expect our civilizations to flourish without them being constantly nourished? The man Jeffrey is fighting a battle on Earth that he cannot win on a purely political platform. He is fighting the scourge of monetarism, which is a desert in terms of love. My experience has been that happiness is the end product of a two-way process that brings light into the world, but it doesn't happen on its own or as a political policy. However, when it happens, it's fantastic, there is nothing like it. Can you imagine an entire world moving that way? Jeffrey shouldn't be fighting monetarism and empire. He should be fighting for the Credit Society Principle that reflects the Principle of Universal Love as his chief cornerstone. Then he might have a chance to win. The tragedies that destroy civilization just don't happen on the stage of these principles. Love is an active quality. The purely political fights are all passive fights. Nothing is ever resolved in a passive fight. Sure, it is corny to say that love makes the world go round, but the reality is, that when love doesn't happen, civilization disintegrates. That's passive living. That's indifference. With indifference civilization disintegrates. Nahor thinks that Gribbork and Quian disintegrated because empire ruled the societies on these planets. He doesn't like to be reminded that empire is itself the product of indifference in society. Of course he needs to be reminded that the worst devil in the Universe is indifference. I think he invited me to join his team so that he'll never forget, and fall into the trap of indifference himself. I remind him of

the deep reality that empire rules whenever love doesn't rule. Where love rules, empire has no place."

"What is empire anyway?" interjects Nahor. "Empire is not a nation, a government, a people, a kingdom, or a military giant. Empire is a private, financial, dominating and looting force. It exists for the purpose of looting a world as much as possible, and to subjugate its people, to steal their resources, and to diminish the people's cognitive capability. In order to maintain its power empire must impede science and hinder the recognition of truth, and above all prevent the development of intimacy in society and love. In most cases empire subjugated governments to its purposes, and dictated to kings, and queens, and emperors. Empire thereby gains economic muscle and military might, the might that has been used throughout history to enforce debt slavery and debt collection. The Earth is a world ruled by empire. I can't ignore this fact. Every nation on Earth bows to empire and pays homage to its monetarism. Empire is like a bad relationship between people, governed by fear, greed, force, lies, deception, subversion, wars, genocide, and so on. And above all hovers the golden game of monetarism that everyone on Earth is latched to. When this game breaks down, everything else breaks down too. As kings once wielded the sword, empire wields its moneybags, and with them it owns the law and the nations. Monetarism is a tool for stealing."

"But it is indifference in society that keeps the game going," interjects Hammet. "If love would rule, none of what Nahor has just said would be possible."

Nahor nods. "The case of Egypt comes to mind," he continues. "During the American Civil War the flow of cotton was cut off. The price for cotton was driven up ten-fold. Against this background, massive international loans flowed into Egypt to create a cotton industry there. The entire Egyptian agriculture was diverted to cotton. But when the Civil War ended in America, the cotton production resumed and the price of cotton returned to normal. Egypt couldn't compete, and without an income it was unable to repay the loans. Consequently the loans were refinanced with exorbitant interest rates attached. To 'help' Egypt to recover, more loans flowed in from Europe to convert Egypt's agriculture once more, this time to the cultivation of sugar cane. Infrastructures needed to be built for that, and factories to extract the sugar. Of course, since the now increased supply enabled the traders to lower the price of sugar, the new loans couldn't be repaid either. So they were refinanced again and again. In this manner Egypt's national debt increased from three million pounds over a dozen years into ninety million pounds. In the end the gunboats were brought in. Meeting no resistance the empire promptly occupied all of Egypt, sending in armies of debt collectors. And guess who paid for the debt with their life, the peasants did. Everything was liquidated and confiscated -- every tract of land, every product of labor, every amount of accruing state taxes. All of it flowed back into the coffers of the European capital where it

accumulated and was consumed, while Egypt collapsed so deeply that it never really recovered. That's the nature of empire. Hammet is right; there is not a shred of love in it."

"This is the process that mankind is facing on Earth, planet wide," interjects Wendy. "Except it may be already worse. Jeffrey warns that our world is facing a breakdown crisis of its entire financial and economic system, a breakdown that goes so deep that the value of currencies can no longer be trusted. At first the financial papers lost their value. The losses were bailed out. But Jeffrey warns that the same collapse is immanent for the currencies themselves, and that there is nothing left then that can bail anything out. The whole world falls apart then."

"Do you want to tell Jeffrey that what he fears may have already happened on Quian," says Nahor. "Of course we don't know for sure what happened that morning when the lights went out on Quian. It all happened fast. There were no survivors left to tell us. One thing is certain, though. Zy and Olaf didn't cause this to happen. I know they feel terribly guilty about it. What we saw was the outcome of an imperial process running wild, with no one standing up to stop it. Hammet is right, it was their indifference that killed them. We could show Jeffrey what a world without universal love ultimately looks like."

"Don't bother," interjects Mahesh. "What would we gain from seeing the result of madness? The whole thing careened towards a total madness on Gribbork. It escalated from the absurd to the insane. On Gribbork the insane was the killer vaccine. On Quian it was nuclear war. Sure, we really don't know what triggered it, but are these missing details important? We understand the overriding cause now. On Earth the potential exists for both types of tragedies to happen. The potential also exists for the tragedy to be blocked, before it is too late." He turns to Nahor. "If you want to help Jeffrey, send him Hammet as an advisor."

"I think Mahesh suggests that there is a way out of this crisis," says Jill.

"There is a way out of every crisis," says Nahor. "There is a solution possible, even for something as stubborn as the AIDS crisis."

"The solution is simple," says Cira. "The solution requires nothing more than that one close the door on narcotics, raise the standard of living, create quality food for the population, and uplift sex to the beautiful complex domain that lies above the level of mere physical sensuality. If the people on Earth do all of this, the current fast-track proliferation of hell can be shut down."

Nahor raises his hand. "The whole thing that goes with it will be shut down; not just AIDS, but also empire, and genocide, including their history."

I shake my head. "You're expecting the impossible. You are expecting miracles!"

"You've met Odessa, haven't you?" says Nahor to me. "Did you ever have physical sex with her? Most likely you haven't. Most likely you

had a much more satisfying association with her, something that physical sex would in fact have prevented...."

"You are right, it wasn't a denial of her sexuality in any way," I say, before he even finished his sentence. "It developed into an intimacy I will never forget."

"Did all of this arise out of the Bohr/Miller effect?" says Wendy quietly.

"No it didn't," says Nahor. "It arose from something you all have always had in your heart. A glimpse of the real human history came to light for James that day."

Nahor turns to Jill and makes a wide sweep with his hands towards the sea, the island, and towards the bay with the mountain in the background and the manufacturing center on its plateau. "What you see here didn't exist twenty years ago," he says. "Nevertheless it all has a long history behind it that might have had its beginning in the beginning of life on Earth, if not all life in the Universe. In this real history love is a factor, because love is a factor in the real world. The real world is merely brought to the foreground by us on this planet. By our efforts it is becoming brighter and is beginning to blossom. As you have noticed already, it is a light that is being felt."

"The Principle of Universal Love is one of the most difficult factors to deal with," says Lositaa, from Quian, the oldest of Nahor's three assistants. "The Principle of Universal Love is such an easy one, on paper, but it's almost impossible to implement in practice. Nevertheless it is the one factor that could have saved those two civilizations that have destroyed themselves. It is easy to blame empire, as you gentlemen do, but as Hammet said so many times, the real fault lies with society. The development of universal love is evidently one of the hardest challenges mankind on Earth has ever faced. Universal love might have been practiced in the primitive times of the Ice Age on Earth that Nahor told me about, where the harmonizing effect of this principle might have been the keystone for the people's physical survival in a difficult existential environment. The sexual scene would have been included. But it also appears that huge challenges arose in later times, which the people couldn't deal with. Universal love in the sexual domain would have led to deadly consequences with the onset of venereal diseases, such as syphilis, which is a killer, untreated, and is highly infectious in the early stages with ravishing effects on a community. Nahor tells me that syphilis is now easily dealt with, with a medicine called penicillin, though it remains 30% fatal if it is left untreated. This might have been the reason why the practice was developed in early times to prohibit all sexual intercourse between more than two people and to bind them as partners for life, resulting into the marriage principle. Religion then got itself into the act as the enforcer, in some cases with the severest penalties attached, like the death penalty through stoning the offenders to death. This consequence seems terribly cruel today, as a public health measure, but considering how little was known about these

sexually transmitted diseases, and the lifelong consequences in people, the radical measures that were implemented may have prevented the eventual collapse of society. Nahor told me that untreated gonorrhea, for example, causes numerous crippling diseases, and for certain types of herpes there exists no cure at all to the present day. On the other hand one cannot close the door on sex. I, personally, would go nuts without it, and men of course, need to ejaculate to flush out their system. Affairs, and fantasies about affairs, appear to be a psychological requirement for many people, and become a balancing factor in their life. However, above all that, the sexual intimacy that flows from these affairs appears to be a harmonizing element for social interaction on a wide scale, becoming reflected in economic intimacy, national intimacy, and even political intimacy. It appears that the reason why some societies have so little of either may be traced to the difficulty of developing affairs on an increasingly higher level of universal love, if they develop them at all.

"Often we ourselves don't seem to realize in our narrow living that intimate relationships, even if they are not always euphoric and immediately fulfilling, are never lost or not worthwhile," Lositaa continues. "The loving impact that one has on another person's life does have a healing effect in the larger sphere of society that can never be directly measured, but which is often flowing back to one in some way, so that one finds that there is something empty and missing in life when the process stops. Marriages often become that way. In such cases affairs fill the void. Affairs are healthy in that they take the pressure of the marriage partner to be what the individual is not inclined to be, or cannot be. In such environments, the wings on which love had once soared, begin to droop and fail. They need to be renewed with widening horizons, instead of being crippled by dramas. Looking back at my associations that I had with other people, and the opportunities of being touched by new aspirations and new forms of caring, I wouldn't sell a minute of them for any price, even the tough ones where I made mistakes. We need to learn and grow, and feel satisfied and worthwhile, and to be acknowledged as someone precious. This kind of growing up is not trivial. Passion comes from the heart. Nahor tells me that there are two words in the English language that block the flow of it. The words are, I, and, me, two simple words. The 'I' destroys love; it makes it to flow backwards, which isn't really possible. Love is caring, giving, uplifting, enriching. It's out-flowing. If sex is brought into this flow, the parameters don't change, but become more intense. I won't have an affair if these factors are not glaringly evident from the start, especially considering the dangers of sexual diseases. I don't put public health into the public domain. I put it into my own court. If the factors of love are glaringly evident than I begin to consider further steps. After a few reassuring steps I may allow the intimacy of love to also have a physical sexual expression.

"In this same mindset I became intensely concerned about the vaccination program on the Earth that Nahor told me, had been once set

up there, to be applied against an engineered flu pandemic, and may yet be applied again. What Nahor told me about this didn't fit the parameters of love that I had established for my self-defense. He told me about a cleverly designed virus that was too complex to be natural. Nahor had found no evidence of credible scientists having stepped forward in those days of the program, saying to society, look people, the vaccine is safe, its on the level, you can trust it. Nahor had only found warnings, including the warning that over eighty microbiologists have been murdered, who had been working in leading edge positions in their field. This raised another caution flag for me, because Nahor also told me that a few healthcare professionals had raised their own caution flag about the vaccine against the new virus, because it had included an adjuvant that evidence suggested had in previous years disabled 70% of a group of soldiers who had been inoculated with an experimental vaccine to protect them against a potential biological warfare agent. Nahor found no one in a leading position in the field who stated that the suspect adjuvant would be harmless."

"That's right," interjects Wendy. "I found no one in the circles of empire either, who had stated in those days, or afterwards, that depopulation wasn't their policy anymore, and that they have no interest in instigating war in times of a financial breakdown crisis. Nor did I find anyone of the rulers of empire publicly stating that they had no interest in biological warfare anymore, and in world depopulation. Instead I found out that the makers of the pandemic vaccine on Earth had demanded immunity from prosecution for any potential adverse effects, and that they got it. While we had defeated this game, before it had a chance to wipe out much of mankind, we can't be certain that it won't be repeated on an even bigger scale."

"Nahor also found out that no short term safety tests of the vaccine were possible," Lositaa continued. "In the previous disaster the resulting disabilities took some years to become manifested and then resulted in a hundred different types of diseases. And here again, Nahor found no evidence on Earth for any scientist with a respected professional standing, stating emphatically to society that it is safe to inject the entire population with a vaccine that contains the same, potentially dangerous adjuvant. Against the standard I had developed for myself, as a protection against the typical diseases in sexual affairs, a whole lot of warning flags arose in my mind against the vaccine that had been stopped in its tracks on Earth, but may be still sitting in the shelf, waiting for the right moment."

"That's right, the caution that you applied to protect yourself should have been universally applied," interjects Hammet. "I, personally, wouldn't have allowed this stuff to be injected into me that almost everyone was subjected to on our planet. I had tried to alert other people of the potential danger, but nobody was interested. And why was I surprised, considering how few people had actually been concerned that venereal diseases can be just as dangerous, which we had on Gribbork for a long time? People just charged ahead by impulse in both cases. Nahor was the

only person that I found who cared, and who was interested in what I had discovered. I don't know how he found me, but he did, and he invited me to this place to help him to create a safe platform for universal love."

"On Earth, the vaccination scenario was shut down before it was implemented," says Wendy. "We will never know if it would have unleashed the biggest genocide of all times, that it had the potential for. Nevertheless it raises an important question, namely whether the key factor in public health is ultimately rooted in individual responsibility. If what blocks love enables the development of sexual and social intimacies on which so much depends, then it is everybody's responsibility to eradicate the blocking factor."

"In my life, the few affairs that I had," interjects Hammet, "provided great incentives to develop the sensitivity to love universally. That would have saved me from the vaccine had Nahor not pulled me away from Gribbork. Unfortunately, there were few like me on our planet. Nahor has brought me here to develop with him a new social platform, so that the failure won't be repeated. He thinks it may be too late for that on Earth. I keep telling him that we still have a chance."

"Hammet is right, the new social project is one of the pioneering projects that we are doing here," says Nahor. "She is right, we do have a chance to develop something that may help to save the Earth. She is too modest, however, to point out that we have pulled all the stops out. If we succeed, it might well be that you guys haven't seen anything yet. We are succeeding phenomenally with our other projects. Our housing revolution, for example, is already being replicated on some planets in distant places. Our scientific culture is also being valued by evermore people in far off places. Our light is shining. So far the Earth has kept itself isolated from this light, but the people there do like our special wines, which we contribute under a local label. Maybe the time is near that mankind becomes interested also in our special Spirit that is the Spirit of the Universe in its clearest form. And indeed, why shouldn't the people on Earth be interested in what we have to offer? Don't they have the same universal quality in their heart, that love is, which is already anchored in their very history as human beings? Love is in their soul, and is central in their sexual affairs. It is in their spirit so to speak. This means that they have the basis already within them, haven't they? I am proposing that we start an honest affair with them."

I didn't answer Hammet for a long time. I watched some children playing outside on the beach while we spoke. The children were so precious, innocent, clean, save....

"What makes you believe that all of this could work on Earth?" I ask Hammet, breaking the silence.

"Research indicates that natural universal principles will work everywhere," says Nahor, in answering the question. "We have people from many

worlds here, and not just human beings. He turns to his three research assistants. "Please tell our visitors how well we have already succeeded with our social intimacy project."

Lositaa smiles in reply. "Nahor had posted a question on our planet wide personal interest information interchange system," says Lositaa. "He had simply asked if anyone was interested in forming a close sexual association based on a new mental technology that he had proposed. He hadn't indicated that it was related to research for saving an entire civilization."

"And what was the result?" Jill asks.

"We had more responses than we could handle," says Camille. She spoke gently and smiled, like Odessa had. "We have all participated in the project," she says. "It requires a great deal of wisdom at times, and dedication to the principle involved, and a great deal of honesty with oneself."

"It has opened a whole New World for all of us," says Hammet.

"The human being is perfect," says Nahor. "Why shouldn't there be countless compatible types of people in the Universe? Why should the principles of the Universe only be reflected on a single planet?"

I look at Hammet, who had come from Gribbork planet. She is standing beside me like Cira was on the day of our contact after the landing. She simply nods and smiles. As our eyes meet, I was certain that neither of three ladies had exaggerated.

"But will it work on Earth?" I ask them. "Can the project be reproduced there, and can it succeed on the large scale that is needed? Do we need to take the entire workshop there?"

"I will never live on the Earth again," says Nahor. "I will merely pass my findings on. The people on Earth have the capability to do this work for themselves, and they will do it, because they are a part of the universal history of all mankind. This history will continue, and will continue to unfold."

We stayed on the beach for a long while. I continued to play ball with the children occasionally.

"I didn't mean to suggest that you shouldn't go back to Earth from time to time and convey to them what we have discussed today," says Nahor to me. "Mankind may need many a prodding. If you succeed you might not only save millions of people the fate of Quian and Gribbork, but you might also emulate what you see here and turn the Earth into the paradise it has the potential to be."

"Millions!" I say, and pass the ball on that had been thrown to me by a little boy. "The First World War caused five million deaths," I say. "The great flu epidemic that came out of it, killed ten times more, almost fifty million, and World War II killed twice that again. If my calculations are correct, preventing World War I might have prevented all that, and also what followed, which adds up to two and a half billion deaths."

"I think you might be able to steal nearly as many people away

from AIDS," Nahor interjects. "It is possible to do this so efficiently that most people will never know it existed. Of course if you do nothing and mankind continues on its dreary course, the Earth might become depopulated by nuclear war, or biological war, or unfolding poverty. If you don't actively prevent this, another civilization will bite the dust."

"Maybe the potential is great enough now for some volunteer work, towards saving the Earth, to become implemented," I say, looking at Lositaa.

"No you should have said human work," Nahor corrects me. "In this case, you yourself should go and get involved, and if you do, please keep me informed of your successes."

"The whole point in having affairs is for them to be successful," says Lositaa.

I love her approach.

"Maybe we should copy the research material and add it to the archives of the ship," I say to Natalia.

Jill suggests the same thing. "Couldn't we do this as a starting endeavor? Couldn't we help them just a little that way?"

Nahor shakes his head. "They have no need of that, but...." He begins to nod.

"All right! If it makes you happy, I'll let you have a copy to send home of all that we have got. You should add, of course, everything that we said today. It makes good reading, even if nothing comes out of it. Besides, it is any author's dream to share with the world his vision and his work."

Olaf nodded, when Jill told him about it the minute we arrived back on Zy's planet.

Zy shook his head again. "Well, if it makes you happy, why not! It's a waste of time, though. Deeds would do more. You've got to live the spirit that you want to let shine."

He looks at me and grins. "It's funny," he says. "Most human needs are rather easily met, don't you think, whether they are real or just imagined?"

"What did Nahor's research tell you," Zy asked Jill. "Did it reveal anything in terms of a solution that you didn't already know in your heart and soul?"

Jill hesitates, thinking about it, and then with a look of surprise says, "no."

"There is your answer," says Zy to Jill. "What you developed out of your own resources hit the truth. The Bohr Miller Effect can't give you anything more than that, nor can any report that you may place into the ship's log. Now, since this is so, as I said, can you honestly say that no one of mankind does not have the same resources to discover the truth that you have found in yourself and have developed? This is the reason why I refuse to go on anymore civilization-rescuing missions. From what I know

now, I can see no point in it anymore. It would be a denial of what I recognize to be the truth. That's the message that I'll gladly allow captain Natalia to take back to the ship for humanity to ponder. If they do that, and I am confident that they will, it might save humanity from a nuclear war. It might end oligarchism and all wars forever. I am confident that this will happen. And Nahor is right, AIDS will be eradicated along the way if this happens, together with an uplifted sense of sex."

Zy's comment brought to mind what Natalia had once said in the beginning, about our sexual needs. It brought to mind the explosive intensity of feeling that came like a joy for being alive. Was it this awakening to life that had opened the door to us to the Universe? That's what had attracted Martin's first visit to the ship, by his own saying? Then, afterwards, had't Martin's widow to the Universe been the key factor in all of our profound self-discovery? If it had been, Nahor's message to humanity might indeed contain the key that mankind needs so desperately to consider in order to discover itself, and in order to pull itself away from the grave that it is digging? Perhaps mankind needs this key, just as we had needed it, only to discover that it had this key within reach all along.

The days that followed, that we spent at Zy's winter resort mansion, were all beautifully calm and wonderful days. We never talked about politics again, or about the Earth's problems that needed to be solved. The subject was closed, so it seemed. Instead of politicking and worrying, we went on a three-day cross-country ski trail, traversing an icy sun filled world at the outer edge of the planet Monar Aquilae.

A week later, Natalia and I returned to the ship and donated a copy of Nahor's and Zy's research work, together with Zy's summary addition. Our contribution was added to the ship's archives, registered and sealed. Natalia, herself, entered an appropriate message into the ship's log in her official capacity of having been once the captain of the ship, which she said was still the Earth's finest intergalactic research vessel that was ever built. The sealed material was relayed down to Earth with the first available shuttle, since the ship was now in a high orbit.

Natalia and Olaf and I remained on board for a few days, just for old time's sake. Natalia said that it felt good looking back, realizing what worlds upon worlds we had crossed since the day the mission had been launched. It also felt good visiting the old quarters again, the atrium, the pool, the observatory, and the sewer station. I also felt a great sadness at the sewer station, realizing that the most important message that the ship could have brought home could never be written into any log in a way that might be understood. For such a communication, we still lacked the required technology.

Ah, but I hadn't counted on Olaf always coming up with something new. That's what he did that day, to push back the limits. Olaf and Jill had offered their services as counselor and facilitator.

"It would be a crime to let go of this ship," says Olaf to us privately. "This ship is a tool for the exploration of the Universe. This is what it must be used for."

At the time of our arrival the ship had been parked in a synchronous Earth orbit as a military observation platform. It wasn't even used to explore the solar system. It now served the military, whereby it served oligarchy, it served empire. The ship still had a full crew complement, many of which were military officers, but it no longer accomplished anything useful for humanity. Naturally, the atmosphere appeared to be rather dull on board, in comparison with what it had been.

"Let's fix that," says Olaf.

He placed a notice on the bulletin board and invited everyone to a conference, authorized by ex-captain Natalia. At the conference he offered the crew that he would take them to the most interesting places they can imagine. He said that he has seen research facilities and institutions for learning, the finest on other worlds, some of which would surely challenge the most advanced mind. He suggested that gaining access to them would open up a whole new dimension for the self-development of mankind, and would help it to get itself out of the rut by its own resources, as it would truly discover its humanity. Olaf offered the crew that he would take the ship to one of these places. He also offered to set up a monthly shuttle service between the ship and the Earth, for taking information back and forth, and to take the crew home for vacation or for replacement. He suggested that the ship could also serve as a base to give the most advanced thinkers from Earth, access to the most distant places in the Universe. "If this doesn't help solve humanity's problems," he sighed, "nothing will."

"In time, we may even teach the most trustworthy of the ship's people the secrets of the Bohr/Miller effect," Olaf confides to me quietly during one of the intermissions. "The fact is," he almost whispers, "humanity is perfectly capable to invalidate the distance between itself and the Universe, and to one-another. No natural barrier exists that would hinder them, should they ever put their mind to it."

Most people that came to the conference smiled at us and thought that Olaf was a teller of dreams. Nobody took him seriously. They listened politely.

"What I have proposed to you," says Olaf to the crew at one point, "is the modern equivalent to the voyage of captain Maui. Captain Maui and his crew undertook the first transoceanic voyage across the Pacific

from Egypt to Peru in the year 232 BC. That voyage was made seventeen centuries before Columbus discovered America. Nevertheless, what Columbus did had changed the world. However, this change should have come seventeen centuries earlier. If it had, it would have ended oligarchism. The Roman Empire would then not have happened, and would not have intervened and destroyed the human civilization so deeply that it took mankind seventeen centuries to recover itself and regain its humanity to the point it had attained when Captain Maui departed on the Red Sea.

"Today, we stand at the same kind of threshold once again," Olaf says solemnly. "With this miraculous ship as a research center for exploring the galaxies, we can usher in a whole new era for mankind. You can also sit back and close your eyes and fold your hands, and watch your remarkable civilization destroy itself. Then, after you are gone, and one or two ice ages later, a few hundred thousand years from now, a new human civilization will surely emerge again in some form and in some way, that will accomplish what I am offering you today.

"What I say could happen, since mankind is presently facing the gravest crisis in its history. But it is also facing the greatest frontier that it will ever discover, which is its real identity as humanity," Olaf continues. "If we recognize today that it is not in our interest to destroy our civilization and to wait a few hundred thousand years for a new civilization to emerge, and to carry on, then I suggest that we utilize this ship together to its fullest potential to which it has already been used once before, for a brief period, to explore the Universe. It isn't that you will find solutions out there in the Universe that you don't already have the answers for in your heart. The purpose for the research would be that you find yourself, your humanity, as you begin searching for the majesty of the human being that you all embody, and the precious treasure that you are in the Universe.

"This has been the greatest achievement so far that came out of the previous voyage of this research ship, according to our experience," says Olaf. "The ship's greatest achievement has not been its research compilation of the history, and of the magnificent culture, of the society on planet 'O', which is one of the advanced societies in the Universe. Nor has the ship's greatest achievement been its exploration of failed cultures, the worst of which this ship has not yet seen. No was the greatest achievement that came out of the last voyage found in the research accomplishments that it brought back. The greatest achievement is an achievement that is also the least recognized. Out of the ship's huge compliment of people, three individuals had dared to look at themselves and the Universe honestly. They have looked at the vast, harsh, emptiness of space and saw in contrast to it the incomparable riches that a human being brings to it. With that they began to explore and develop those riches that they found in themselves and in one-another. In the course of this development they began to put aside all the oligarchic structures and conditions that have encumbered humanity for millennia. They have achieved in this way what no one has achieved before.

"For thousands of years humanity has suffered from the heavy hand of oligarchism that has condemned every rising renaissance to death, and continues to do so," says Olaf. "Even I, and my associates, had once embraced the oligarchic doctrines that are foisted on humanity, which humanity accepts almost fully and celebrates. We have introduced these doctrines to other civilizations on other planets in order to help them. In essence, we came empty handed. As a consequence we afforded no help. Tragically, these civilizations became destroyed in the course of their folly by the weight of their own unresolved problems, which incidently are of a type that are also found on Earth. They suffered the same failures that humanity has suffered and still does so. However, those three individuals from this ship, in their own private lives, have overturned the fundamental axioms of those oligarchic doctrines courageously and profoundly, which is extremely rare. Nor does it matter what precisely they did. It is more important that they did this, and that by doing it, they have raised a banner as a rallying point for all to follow in their own flight without limits. Oligarchism is a doctrine of limits, even fascist limits in many ways. If these can be overcome, humanity will face freedom and a boundless future in peace and prosperity. If these are not addressed and overcome, humanity will die under the weight of its oligarchy and its remaining future will be brief.

"Swinging the pivot of society from doom to a bright future has been demonstrated in this ship as a possibility," Olaf continues. "I propose that the time has now come to finish the job, to realize the possibility, and I am certain that this ship as a laboratory for a flight of this type without limits can help. If you are seriously interested to work on this level, let me know. The Universe is at your doorstep. As a matter of fact, our journey has already begun. Just go to the observatory and you will see that you are already in orbit around a planet that you have never known to exist, which has no name as yet, but which promises the discovery of your dreams, a New World of life. I also promise you that in three months, you will have the privilege to be back home, together with this ship. So utilize your opportunity wisely."

Olaf always loved making big speeches whenever he could. It was wonderful seeing him excited again, especially after that nightmare session with Zy in the mud pools on Monar Aquilae. Olaf was in many ways behaving like a symphony conductor, speaking to the crew, gesturing about the possibilities, standing at the podium of the great hall where everyone was assembled. Soon a whole lot of people were asking questions, surrounding him. I never saw him as alive as then. The opportunity to be useful again, evidently, was closer to a state of paradise for him than anything else. There was no doubt in my mind that we would all become caught up soon again, in the flow of this new momentous development that would likely involve us all regularly, whenever we could spare the time between mud baths and visits to the steam oceans of planet 'O', and those treas-

ured ski excursions in Zy's winter wonderland, and the interesting journeys to Nahor's paradise of human culture.

The end

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