

Glaser-667-C[®]

Un-Para-Lel

By

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A Sample Chapter

Un

OPORTO BAZARE

CHAPTER ONE:

The dream of traveling to star systems was forged by rocketeers a century ago. From space stations constructed in planetary orbits to permanent space colonies. A predilection that had led to the evolution into a whole new species from its progenitors: *Homo cosmicus*.

Technological advances made missions to far off 'lands' possible and revolutionized life on settled planets. A steep rise, an acceleration, in the pace and invention and basic research for whole new solutions to the problems of energy, food production, health, and more occurred.

Launching probes into Space to neighboring worlds, became planet-based astronomers' sensory organs, finding some worlds were too hot, some too cold; examining other celestial bodies that happened to be flying by discovered rare metals and minerals.

All efforts yielded excellent photos and huge amounts of data on magnetic fields, on compounds, learned a great deal about the native solar system and what dangers to expect from black suns, neutron storms, radiation, and the like. Every year new knowledge added to the collective information advancing space travel to the very edge.

Venturing beyond home planet to appease curiosity. Searching for the right combination of elements in a habitable zone environment in which stable life could safely develop, grow, and subsist. For the longest time, the universe had been silent.

The initial choices for astral immigration were not the most ideal, living out lives in greenhouses; paraterraforming sections with a sample of breathable biosphere inside pressure domes, caves, and underground caverns. Every other scientific matter took a backseat to finding more accommodating habitations, the search for the holiest grail of all was on. Reaching further in cosmic terms to a stone's throw distance to the most proximal star systems to green and watery planets spawning life familiar.

Bioengineers, environmental specialists, biochemists, geologists, miners were the first to go with the exploratory branch of the military. Pathfinders.

On some rocky worlds involved seeding the atmospheres with algae, which converted the ample supplies of water, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide into organic compounds, on other planets it meant transporting low albedo material and/or planting dark plants on the polar ice caps to ensure it absorbed more heat, melted, and converted the planet to more 'livable conditions' and still on others the introduction of greenhouse gases used to create a warmer, oxygen and ozone-rich atmosphere.

Developing terra-formed roadways necessary to allow civilians to follow. The advent of advanced propulsion technologies in the understanding of dark matter, dark

energy, and slipstream applied science shrunk travel time between planets from years down to months to weeks and, in some cases, days.

Those first colonists were selected for their unique balance of scientific achievement, emotional stability and pioneer resourcefulness. With a reduced round-trip time and a fleet of transport ships able to relocate the first 10,000 in less than six months, and the first 80,000 in less than four years had happened.

Despite the daily drumbeat of violence and war engendered in the progenitors' DNA, the modern era had become one of the most peaceful eras in a shared history. Over the centuries, the number of fatalities killed in battle had steadily dropped as civilization evolved.

With two horrible global wars in the past century, the following was even worse. In terms of deaths per 100,000 from war, genocide, and other factors, the settled part of the galaxy was relatively calm. On the other hand, major periods of scarcity and suffering loomed.

First driven by profit, then conquest, but eventually to be of one accord, the last century saw the inhabited parts of the galaxy population grow from less than two trillion to nearly seven trillion, projected to reach nine or ten trillion within the next twenty-six years. Predicting a 70% increase in food production by then, and at least that much more energy to sustain populations.

The triple star system, Glaser 667 had been initially explored and settled by greedy prospectors aboard hybrid fusion-antimatter spaceships. Glaser 667-A and -B orbited too close to each other to have any planetary bodies that could support corporeal life recognizable as sentient, only barren worlds rich in natural resources.

667-C, a red dwarf, had six planets within its fold. Three of them small enough to be called Super Planets swung at a distance that allowed liquid water to flow on each surface. That had opened the possibility for planetary colonization. Biomarkers such as methane, methylene chloride, nitric oxide produced by living organisms enriched in an atmosphere were identified on three planets within Glaser 667-C star group and the race was on for terra-mare development.

The first settlers had descended on innocent native hunter-gatherer peoples. To their delight, the basic bipedal model dominated not only the world of Un, but its two sister planets sharing this solar group's habitable zone. Each fully adapted for survival in three unique dominant environments: water, land, and air. Interspecies mixing of genes had commenced and been fruitful.

It was on the first habitable planet known natively as Un, that *Troodon sapiens* had evolved and thrived. Having larger relative brain size in terrestrial vertebrates through geologic time, and the energetic efficiency of an upright posture in slow-moving, bipedal animals.

The inhabitants of Un all had a large brain for their size, stereoscopic vision, resulting in a shortened facial region, reduced dentition, and the dexterity of a first digit evolved in one lineage or another. A big-brained head needed to be supported directly over the body, a short neck and vertical hominid-like posture evolved. The vertical posture meant goodbye to a tail, reduced to a stump, and the need to give birth to big-headed babies led to a broad, hominid-like pelvis. Being viviparous, equipped with a navel.

Convergences did occur in evolution. Body shapes as adaptations to a wholly aquatic lifestyle from plantigrade feet; four-toed, with nails rather than claws, with the two

medial toes smaller than the lateral ones. The 'best' body plan for a big-brained tetrapod. There was no goal or endpoint to the evolutionary process.

On the planet Un, the road curving down through the hills above the fishing village of Bazare seemed deserted in the bright sunlight, a cluster of white, cubed-shaped houses, with cobblestone streets cutting down the steep slope to the sea. The town was not actually all white, the house fronts gleamed with the high glaze of colored tiles—some with small floral patterns, others with geometric designs.

The town was not empty. Every resident was down on the beach, for the pilchard fishing fleet was in.

On the Bazare Beach, too, the scene was full of pattern and color, starting with the males themselves. There was an obvious love of plaids. Patched with other plaids, all faded from sunlight and salt air and water to soft tones, but still strong and lively of line. Barefooted, the males strode briskly across the sands or sat in clusters along the beachfront street, discussing affairs of the day; on their heads, above the geometric tangle of the plaids, they wore black stocking caps.

No less colorful were their boats, pulled far up on the beach in a jumbled maze of broad curves and pointed, up-swung prows. For their small size the boats were markedly sturdy in build, but gaudy and fanciful in decoration, often featuring lucky wide-open eyes on their prows to help in guiding them over the pathless seas.

Sturdiness was more important than grace in the fishing boats of Bazare, for the surf which rolled in on the beach came straight from the wild, cold global ocean. And the offshore swells were far from gentle.

Though the sea stretched calm and glittering this day, under the hot suns, by next day, it may be smashing rough. This was why the boats were pulled high on the beach, hauled there for safekeeping by teams of oxen who now laid placidly about on the sand.

The boats, like the fishing folk themselves, were said to date back to when the first colonists of seagoing tradesmen had landed. To gaze into the stern, dark faces of the seafaring villagers, hints of the wide tapestry from the known galaxy could be seen.

Unling females were busy at a dozen tasks—sorting fish, spreading some of the pilchards out in the shiny, salty ranks to dry, mending nets piling high their baskets with silvery harvest—these females were more somberly dressed than their check-trouser males. But all over Un, females managed a flourish of bright aprons and bright scarves over drab dresses and wore hoops of gold in their ears. Everywhere they walked with the grace born of balancing burdens on the head, be the burden a basket of fish, a tall clay water jug with an ancestry as old as that of the boats, a bundle of laundry, or a wide, shallow basket of vegetables topped with a bunch of fire-bright flowers.

Fiercest and most independent of Unling females were the 'varinas', the witty, vivacious fish-spouses. When they reached the marketplace with their baskets, the real fun began, for the Unling loved to bargain, and the great art was in knowing how much to overprice at the start and when, after lively banter, to relent and clinch the deal.

The market, of course, offered more than fish. Other provincial females had risen at dawn or before to bring in their vegetables.

Over the winding, hilly lanes they walked barefoot, with heavily laden broad baskets on their heads, clutching their shawls more snugly against the early morning chill. Out at the highway they waited for the rattle and chug of the Bazare-bound bus to sound around the curve.

Before the bus reached town each day, the roof was packed with baskets, the seats with chattering females. At the stop in town, the baskets were handed down, and the females, hoisting them briskly to their heads, started to jog trot for the market square, for first come often meant first sold.

At the beach, the greater part of the fleet's catch was sold at auction for canning and export. The Unling, who had a genius for doing things a little differently from other people, had their own individual auction technique. Instead of calling for bids, starting low and having bidders top each other until a batch went to the highest bidder, the Unling auctioneer started with a hundred and counted backward with astonishing speed. Thus, the first bid was always the highest; the trick, for the buyer, lay in outguessing competitors, getting a bid in ahead of others, yet not extravagantly early.

The pilchards, which were canned in excellent native olive oil, had won a worldwide market for themselves. Indeed, fishing was the planet's second most important industry with tunny, gadus, and shellfish helping to keep the fleets plying the year round.