



*The Alien
Intimacies*

by JIM CLEVELAND

The Alien Intimacies

By

James Cleveland

This book is a work of fiction. Places, events, and situations in this story are purely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

© 2003 by James Cleveland. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the author.

ISBN: 1-4107-3398-X(softcover)

ISBN: 1-4107-3399-8(electronic)

This book is printed on acid free paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	v
ONE: A Recent Arrival -1999 AD.....	1
TWO: A Woman Out of the Sky.....	13
THREE: An intimate integration	35
FOUR: Into Separate Realities.....	55
FIVE: A Few More Imaginative Interludes	77
SIX: The Serpents of Eden.....	103
SEVEN: Behold the Prehistoric Life!	129
EIGHT: Naked in the Storm	149
NINE: Oaks, Acorns, Infusions	165
TEN: To Struggle in Love	190
ELEVEN: Separate Ways	207
EPILOGUE: Flowers and Seeds	218
Update on the Planetary Rebellion.....	222

PROLOGUE

The Place: Urantia, planet no. 606 in the local universe of Nebadon of the superuniverse of Orvonton. Later to be known locally as Earth.

Anvil's eyes opened from the lightest of sleeps at the roar of the big cat. He gazed coldly into the night.

The beast wanted to return to the sanctuary stolen by the bedraggled band of surviving colonists. Anvil leaned forward, straining his eyes to see, rustling his furry cape, guarding the cave's entrance in the moonlight. His shaft was at hand, also the bow and quiver of steel arrows they had fashioned before their retreat from the gardens. He looked back into the darkness of the cave; all were asleep it seemed. The embers of the fire glowed faintly.

The predators and victims screeched and screamed all through the night here, an ever-repeating orgy of killing and dying that they had been plunged into. Such a twist of fate to be cast back into this wilderness of a planet, a doomsday misfortune of getting entangled in the blasphemous affairs of their planetary prince.

The cat might boldly venture forward tonight, all the better for him to put an end to this deadly game. It smelled them certainly, their sweat and their excrement, and the rotted carcass just down the embankment would also help lure the beast. Anvil would be ready.

He turned at the rustle behind him. Tara's bright eyes emerged from the cave's shadows into the moonlight and she eased herself beside him with gentle eyes and a look of affection that Anvil truly shared.

He greeted her only with a finger to the lips. Quietly, she edged even closer to snuggle into his furs. She looked into his eyes affectionately and kissed him on the cheek of his bearded and scarred face. Her small tender body felt good within the strength of his arms and he longed for her to remain here, but he knew they must pull away. He kissed her softly on the lips, gently pushed her away and turned again to peruse the landscape at the mouth of the cave. The cats moved silently, and were deadly.

"Will you get him tonight?" she asked in a whisper.

"It is a 'she,'" said Anvil. "The females do much of the hunting. They are killers, like much else on this truly God-forsaken place."

"What happened, Anvil?" she asked, pleadingly. "You have not told us all of it, have you? What really happened in Dalamatia? Did Lucifer really defy the other Celestials, the Ancients of Days? Is that why the primitives attacked the city? How could they have been so bold? I thought the Dalamatians were here to help the evolving tribes. I thought they were all supposed to have the God spark inside them and it would be developed?"

“You are full of questions, my gentle beauty. Now, whisper more quietly. For I must listen for our predator and prey.” He looked away, then back at her with the benevolence of an elder brother.

“I did not want to worry our beleaguered brothers and sisters with these horrors, Tara. They are gardeners; they can’t grasp it all. I can hardly grasp it myself. It’s too enormous. I had just as soon not talk about it. It does not matter any more.”

“Anvil, you must see that I am here with you in this calamity. We share each other’s fates and it is fair that I know the situation. Do not speak of enormities, other than the enormity of our plight. You must be honest with me. I want to understand where those monsters who destroyed the gardens and orchards came from. They are out of time here. The evolving tribes could not have done this. Dalamatia would hardly seek to destroy its own outposts with these beasts. And certainly we have proven loyal to the One God. It could not be the Celestials who would bring us misfortune. Yet, we are in despair. There is no force that does not now stand against us, the beasts, the tribes, the volcanoes, all of this dark place. It does not seem sometimes that we will ...

Anvil reached a finger to her lips. “Do not say ...” He stared into her soft eyes, pausing to reflect before speaking, darting his eyes now and again into the moonlit landscape.

“We will make it. I will see to that.” He looked at her with a new earnestness. She frowned deeply.

“Tara. I am just a soldier. I was here only to guard the gardens and the orchards. I was not involved with the botanical and institutional upliftment decisions, the planetary agreements, the management of the mission. I’ve never been part of the administrative scene over in Dalamatia. I don’t like big cities. I am only trained in killing wild animals. So I don’t have a lot of answers. And I surely never thought I would be trying to understand the intricacies of a rebellion against the One God. How could you expect it or prepare for it? We were only here to help the Dalamatians improve the lives of the evolving tribes, with foods from the earth, botanicals, irrigation, agriculture. Basic planetary ascension for our fellow mortals. That was all it ever was. And I do not think anyone had an idea that Prince Caligastia would get involved in something like this.”

“Like what? Do you mean he defied the laws, the Ancients of Days, the Creator Son?”

“It’s much bigger than that, Tara. There is a major celestial administrator involved, Lucifer, perhaps you have heard of him.”

“I’m afraid I did not keep up much with celestial politics, at least since we have been out here on Urantia. Since we cannot physically see many of the celestial personalities, I have not given them much thought. I have

gladly left all this to the Inspired Connectors among us to work with them on our behalf, and just stay with growing the fruits and vegetables that nurture us. I always thought it was a noble enough calling.”

“Yes, and I am as zealous a soldier as you are a botanist, and no politician, and hardly a leader. Who would believe we would lose so many others who were more qualified? I never wanted to be responsible for these lives. I am a trained destroyer, not a savior.”

“And what is the appeal of this Lucifer?”

“Freedom. Complete freedom. Sweeping reforms. He says the One God is a fabrication designed to keep the Ancients of Days in power. He questions the right of Creator Sons to rule the local universes; they have delegated much of the creation, after all. He is apparently a brilliant, magnetic and very persuasive leader. They say he has a hypnotic and charismatic energy. He has taken more than 30 planets with him on this, already.”

“It’s madness! What’s it about? What’s wrong with God’s plan? They’ve been successfully ascending mortals for a long time, have they not?”

“They question that premise. For whatever reasons, their audacity is amazing,” muttered Anvil bitterly, pulling back his long red hair roughly behind his shoulders and rubbing his fingers vigorously through his grizzly beard. He sighed. “And now we are caught up in what should have been seen as painfully inevitable, even for arrogant personalities like Caligastia, Daligastia and Satan, that whole pompous court in Dalamatia. Quarantine. Any fool should know that the Ancients would cut off all of the energy circuitry, every way, every expression. It took only a few minutes. There’s no way to get out of here now. There is no way. I have looked at every option.”

“We had nothing to do with the rebellion. They have to get us out. They can’t let us die here.”

Anvil looked at her anguished face and eyes. He felt deeply for her, for her more than himself. He could kill or be killed. He could even appreciate, in a way, the dark light that seemed to pervade this whole savage planetary landscape since the onslaught of the rebellion. It would be a worthy challenge for a soldier. He worried for her however. She was of peaceful demeanor.

“They can leave us here, sweet Tara,” he said gently, “and they will. It is evolution. That’s all. We are just caught up in it, my sister, always have been truly. We were just on the wrong planet at the wrong time. As I can determine, the whole sector has been quarantined. Each and all of these planets are in official rebellion against God. It is unprecedented, to be sure, but reality nonetheless. And they will not let it spread.”

“We are innocent,” said Tara, “innocent.” Her voice trailed away. “I love the One God. I always believed the One God loved me.”

“When we ascend from mortality, we can, at least, look back upon all this in reflection,” said Anvil. “Now, still as mortals, we have no choice but to deal with it in this time and space. We must be strong and bold for survival. Sometimes even cold killers. It is such an irony. I heard Lucifer on one of the last broadcasts. He called for individual liberty, freedom for the colonies, self-assertion, the inherent power and sanctity of the individual mind that allows us to choose for ourselves. He made it sound ... glorious! But it never did feel right. It sounded like liberation in a way, but from what ... order? We never have had to deal with questions like this in the Pleiades. At least I didn’t.”

“But in the Pleiades, we had earned the knowledge that was essential for full individual freedom,” said Tara. “We had turned it into commitment. They could not have begun to grasp these greater realities here on this primitive place. They would not be ready for it. And so is that the reason for the chaos?”

Anvil looked at her kindly. She was full of questions, and did not fully comprehend that there were no more answers here. There was no more Control to provide total order. From now on, the denizens of this planet would only be able to speculate. They would know nothing of interplanetary life. By now, there may be no surviving bank of knowledge summations. May God help them for what they may do and how they may evolve from the ruins of Dalamatia.

How, too, could this planet possibly be ready to officially receive the planetary Son and Daughter who would be scheduled for bestowal, to build and biologically uplift from the foundation of Dalamatia? There would be no foundation, and they, all of them, would have been dead for thousands of years. He did not even know if it would be a good idea for them to somehow survive and bring children into this time of turmoil and danger. They were out of their time too.

Anvil heard a low guttural growl and turned quickly to see the shining eyes — cold, angry and confident. It sent his heart racing. It even seemed like exhilaration. The dark light. He heard Tara gasp quietly and felt her shrink away. He relished the life-and-death challenge; his eyes sparkled.

Without turning, seemingly even without moving a muscle, Anvil’s arms flowed about him. He slipped an arrow from the quiver and loaded the bow.

The big cat sniffed cautiously at the carcass just below. Anvil eased himself lightly into a better position on the rock, to look down and get a clear stroke. The fur cape fell away softly, revealing his hairy, muscular arms.

The cat turned its huge head upward and lowered to a crouch, less than a hundred steps away but far enough for Anvil to fire the poised steel arrow. It was an eerie feeling to know that the cat's eyes were affixed on him. Maybe she would grab the smelly carcass and suddenly drag it off without a confrontation, the easier way. Probably.

No. Oh no. We must have a confrontation, thought Anvil, pulling the bow taut. He fired. We want the cave.

The missile split through the torso of the big cat with a rip. She unleashed a terrifying scream and leaped high, then fell hard and thrashed about on the bare ground, wallowing over the carcass, clawing desperately at the arrow, crying shrilly.

"Oh-h-h," he heard Tara wailing. "Kill her. Don't let her suffer."

Anvil had already re-loaded the bow, watching keenly as the big cat thrashed in pain below. But he had no such compassion any more. It was only in the cold, dark light that Lucifer unleashed here that they would survive at all now. Even gentle Tara would have to change to live, such a pity.

He held the arrow while the cat thrashed and suffered, the bloody shaft exposed at both ends through her chest, her tongue panting, blood coming from the mouth, struggling to drag herself away.

"Anvil, please ... "

He didn't give a damn. He wanted to conserve the arrow. He remembered the cats that had attacked them, the painful claw marks on his back, the infection and fever. Perhaps life would be a continuing stream of vengeance and righteous indignation, and it would propel them forward from now, from this savage place. A society that would develop from all of this might be ruthless indeed.

He fired the arrow. It struck the beast's heart and, with a final trembling shudder, it was dead. It was 'it' to Anvil now, not 'she.'

Anvil finally looked to his side. His eyes had been riveted upon the prey throughout the deadly encounter. He looked into Tara's wistful tears and hurting face now and winced to know that he still felt a smothering compassion for her.

"I am sorry, dear Tara," he said. "There is a new reality here. And it is as basic as it can be."

She melted into his arms limply and he held her with strength and assurance. The brothers and sisters had made their way into a huddled mass near the entrance of the cave, hoping to know for certain that the animals they had ousted from this cave would not be able to retake it.

"Go back to sleep," said Anvil without emotion. "We still have dominion here."

ONE: A Recent Arrival -1999 AD

Mega awakened to the soothing strands of his most favorable harmonic sound vibrations, letting them massage and focus his energies for the day. In a moment, he came forth with a joyful smile even before opening his eyes. He immediately thanked the One God for the new day and began to assimilate the new language implanted during the ...sleeping.

Mega pulled off the ... headset, they might call it. His expanded mind bank told him that English wasn't the most widely spoken language on the planet, but it was the most dominant. It was associated with successful creatures here, or at least those who got what they wanted. From now through the mission, it was designated for usage by ... what would be their word? We can call it ... Mission Control.

The tall, broad-shouldered Zenithian lay quietly in the sleepframe and got accustomed to thinking in English, reviewing for full mindal implantation the translations with their native language. His large hands massaged and energized the chakra circuits in his scalp, tousling his long white hair into freefall over his bare arms. In moments, he had massaged his head into its daily productivity as an energy conduit, while also stretching the muscles of his sinewy and hard male body to limberness after the ... transit sleep, we can say.

English was, as expected, simplistic, and that would be a handicap in communicating with the explorer team on the surface, but certainly that was often an important part of the challenge of these planetary visitations — getting it done in the native tongue.

As he relaxed with eyes closed, he could feel that the redirected mind circuitry was connecting ever-better, beginning to flow more fluidly with the translations he needed. The words emerged more easily into his genetically engineered mind as he needed them. Thoughts coalesced into new ways of expression.

After a few moments, Mega lifted himself gracefully from the deep cushion to do his morning exercises. They included stretching, flexing and three coordinated full body flips — forward, then backward, then to the side.

The word “cartwheel” slipped into the English layering of his mind as he deftly made a whirling circle around the sleepframe. The biology was all working well. His long white hair swirled in freeflight as his finely muscled and naked body activated itself rhythmically for the new day. He flipped up precisely onto his bare feet and breathed deeply several times.

Mega turned then to the control panels to order a morning meal, noticing that the menu had already been themed for the planet they were visiting. He ordered a Denver omelet and pancakes. After checking the

James Cleveland

composition of coffee, he decided on a hazelnut flavoring as well as the juice of what they called an orange. Ironically, it was also the name of the color. In a sidenote on the menu, he later noted that oranges were not, in fact, orange. It was a strange and deceptive planet. Things were often not what they seemed.

It was good to know that the lifedrives of the inhabitants seemed much the norm, however, the desire for wealth, power, intelligence, good food, and sexual love. And Mega knew from his mind bank that some of them loved adventure in the same spirit as did his people.

The spirit that brought them here.

Mega had loved adventure since he was a child, using his desire and talents to earn a position at the space academy. Now he was a Master Explorer, taking each adventure experience in stride and having enjoyed — he worked through his new mathematical programming — exactly 74 planetary visits, if he counted the abbreviated recycling stop on the Plus-2 moon of Grandfandalia.

Mega's experiences had mellowed him and expanded his mind up into the third layer of ... PeacePower. He had the peace of knowing the ascension time and space plan in much of its grandeur, as a series of learning and growing experiences in the direction of perfected being, worthiness to be in the presence of ... FatherGod ... or Universal One ... or First Source ... or Universal Father? What name would be most appropriate here? They had so many, and ironically fought fiercely about it. Mega put the discussion onto his mind bank's agenda for a discussion.

As he worked his mind through final English translations, Mega routinely recapped the implanted mission facts that the ship's near 3,000 population had received earlier, before sleep transit. He now recalled it into one of his mind's higher layers, thinking to himself that given all the vast ethnic diversity here, it was going to an exciting adventure.

Now that their ... mother ship (how quaint!) and ... lightdome was in cloaked station in Earth's system, sleep state had ended, and everyone was awakening in their quarters at about the same time as Mega. More information would be forthcoming at his team's first meeting.

The early screen briefing in Mega's quarters gave more tantalizing clues to the new mystery-adventure that lay before them. Mega watched it while he slipped on his white robe with the blue bird of peace emblem.

Greetings. We give you: Urantia — known locally as Earth. You are per AdventYour plan to discover most fully on your own initiative. Enjoy. Return with new perspectives and expanded knowledge if possible for Control. Minimal impact directed and anticipated. Caution urged. This is a dangerous planet.

Random Clues: Mammalian upgrade. Semi-primitive. Alienation abounds. Food unstable. Wealth strongly imbalanced. Violent views rampant. Oxygen breath base. Technology progress rapid to slow. Spirituality fragmented and quarrelsome, often deadly. Intellectual capacity not focused on perfection. Emotional fear-dominated. Do not breath the air this month in Mexico City. Previous impact: unacknowledged but suspicious. Venturian UFOs have been abusive and ordered to leave the sector, at least temporarily. Frequency of tour visits: seldom. Learn the culture and store via E-Volve.

Central Exploration Thread: Mystery trace the fortunes and misfortunes of one of our botanical colonies we lost in the Era of the Lucifer Rebellion. Timedrops scheduled as desired. Discover! Report your findings to DOMiNo.

Incidental freedom upon discretion to energetically inspire selected humans. Leave some love and insight and do no harm. PEACEQUEST

So a lost colony was the stimulus for coming way out here, Mega thought, and, as usual, his team would only have ... pieces to the puzzle, threads of the forever interweaving tapestry of these time and space worlds. And he understood why fully. After these many missions, he understood very well how invigorating it was that they were given only a part of the vast store of knowledge on the planet that Control actually possessed, with more trickling to them during the mission from their own initiatives. This allowed them to rediscover and discover on their own in time and space, an ultimately thrilling adventure, and finally, in the end, expanding, updating and broadening the base of knowledge they were building collectively. The adventure was on! The experience itself was the thing.

Mega did not know, however, if the lost colony was indeed a mystery to Control or whether it was devised as an adventure rediscovery for their enjoyment. Indeed, he supposed, this was part of the mystery.

He called onto his screen and scanned geological information, as well as the names and profiles of the personalities chosen as his four Associate Chief Investigators, especially configuring their subdivisions of responsibility that Control calculated to be optimum for the planet.

Control had chosen them all, of course, and the capacities in which they would serve. They trusted Control completely, for had they not personally and collectively stored within its intricate Divine Circuitry the knowledge of the universe.

In truth, Control did encompass extensive files and profiles of the ship's near 1,000 explorer personalities, considering their achievements, aptitudes, and abilities for dealing with this special kind of a planetary culture and, importantly, ways in which they could each best grow personally from the experience.

James Cleveland

For some planets, Mega had been in a leadership role, at others just part of the team. Over the years he had matched wits with paranoid religionists with laser weapons, debated with self-styled intellectuals across the Andromeda belt, and had helped annihilate several swarms of giant prehistoric predators with brains hardly worthy of mention. Of course, he had served on many less exciting assignments as well.

In this case, he was chosen as Investigator One, somehow ideally suited for Planet Earth, and he would be making many timely decisions involving the hundreds who would embark for the surface for their myriad adventures in coming days.

Mega thought how he was indeed partial to worlds in this state of development because of the fast-paced mental ferment that was moving things along at a dangerous pace. It would be a welcome change from reptile-infested Centrus, their last exploration, where he had seen duty as a frontal commander and had almost drowned in a hot quagmire while exploring the volcano region.

For this exploration Mega was part of, they might say, management. His legs had been fully regrafted in the cosmetics lab and the muscles were attuned. He felt finely tuned all over from the expanded morning harmonics and the special day-one celestial energies, in good spirits and focused, centered, and intent upon an exciting, mind-expanding experience. Earth was everything he would want it to be, and he was easing comfortably into the language. It only had to be slowed into a flow, coordinating mind with inner accessment to oral expression ... or something like that.

Mega walked lightly into the control center. The passage beam would trigger his associates to now join him.

The spacious control room for the Earth exploration expanded before him as a brightly lighted rock-floored dome of greenery and water, a garden with plants all about, a fountain and a pool of blue water in the center and a small, gentle waterfall and tropical plant setting on one side.

On the far side waited their five deeply cushioned, so very comfortable sensory expression seats and individual control boards, all with the newest upgrades. They lay in a half-circle, each with its own satellite screen, each facing a giant arched screen that would chronicle and master manage the mission.

The landscaping was a special touch for this particular investigation, produced overnight by the environmental team from the gleanings of their advance patrols. Mega looked up into the brightness of the simulated sundome and all around, feeling the sublime celestial energies of the scene.

On the huge screen, Earth information, true and speculative, would appear before them in the days ahead, as they searched through the history, current culture and likely fate of their host.

Mega turned to see a stream of smiling faces coming from the passageway to greet him, four statuesque, white-robed team members, three males, David, Atla and Jai and the feminine appellation, Blest, a known clairvoyant who was fresh from the academy and on her third mission, first time on the Top Team.

"Good morning," said Mega in good cheer. The four responded in near unison, and with friendly gusto. There were hugs and handshakes all around. Their bodies felt warm under the light robes as they shared their vibrational, loving energies and rejuvenated themselves even higher for the exciting new adventure.

"May we serve in love and glory," said Mega.

"Love and glory," they acclaimed in unison, as well they might, being cosmetically engineered to a near mortal material perfection in their advanced genetics laboratories.

Mega knew they would be among the more beautiful people on the planet. Yet hardly to be suspected as alien infiltrators for that reason. Certainly, it should prove an enticement for humans to communicate with them in their impending adventures here.

Most of the Earth people had been unduly influenced by the sporadic attentions of the neighborly but very curious Venturians as well, whose big-eyed, small-statured likenesses had even been emblazoned on shirt fronts and other material items on the planet. It had become a source of embarrassment for the Venturians, as had an unfortunate crash, and they had now been departed from the scene for a time.

It was interesting as well to Mega that the humans here and most other places did not know that they, themselves, represented the predominate pattern of animated biological matter in the time and space worlds. They might feel flattered to know this. The pattern, far and wide, is not dissimilar.

Mega led the team over to their work stations, feeling a mixture of humility and pride, a strong desire for a great performance here on behalf of their own learning and growing, but also for what they could leave behind. Even after all these years, he could still be as excited as a child. It was a gift of One God.

His master control panel was a cornucopia of numbers and symbols that covered every nuance of this planetary and system spectrum. "I suppose it is expected," said Mega, "that we will use these ... digital buttons, well, so be it. He accessed his mind bank, three fingers to his temple, pushing combinations of buttons with his other hand. "They have a saying," said Mega. "When in Rome ... do as the Romanians. Yes. I think that's it."

The room dimmed and the large screen brightened into an illustrious white, reaching a zenith of pure, richly filled brightness, with sparkling

James Cleveland

sparks vibrating all upon it. An harmonic drone of sound rose up to fill their ears and minds.

A symbol faded up brightly before them, their acknowledged, energized and harmonized symbol for the ultimate expression of the spiritual fervor that they truly lived. Now, before their eyes, their holy symbol melted and translated into the equivalent in English: LOVE.

They closed their eyes and prayed quietly to the One God Eternal and Divine Source for safety, clarity, and the moment-by-moment guidance of Love.

They were soon refreshed upon opening their eyes from this reverent mission ritual.

"The translation word is simple again," said Mega evenly. "One ... syllable, a very old word. But still apparently not understood or fully appreciated here," he said reflectively, still emerging from the moment of tranquillity within their worship.

"They are still unfortunately bloodthirsty, are not they however?" said Atla. Like them all, he was handsome, muscular, with bright blue eyes and thick masses of golden hair nestled about his strong neck and shoulders. He was in charge of biology investigations, and his studies would soon make him an expert on all parts of the working bodies here.

"I enjoyed serving with you at Cretan, Atla," said Mega. "Do you remember those giant bats we found in the deep caves?"

"I could not forget those beasts," said Atla with a grin. "I checked here upon this planet at arrival to find there are only miniaturized advertisements of them here, unthreatening and dark necessitated at that.

"Love to you, Atla. Yet, you had best work on that English."

"And my love to you also, Mega One. I have found so far that the humans living here are of variegated colorizations. They war against each other for various illogical reasonings, especially greed, and even the ... skin pigment factor seems to be a provocation itself. They often cover up their greed by cloaking it in religious differences, as if that were somehow a justification for war. They even have an incredible term, 'holy war.' Some of them will be dangerous if they feel threatened. We have a real, even a realistic, challenge here. We will, of course, accede ... ummm ... proceed."

Mega made a mental note to insist again on the remedial course.

"For their stage of evolutionary development, they are progressing much slower than the norm," Mega said, "but there are valid reasons. If you have not already, you will need to scan the history optical which will give you a time-sequence overview and summary of why they were quarantined from the celestial circuitry. Those circuits are even now being incrementally re-established. We will see why they were severed."

"Rebellious and arrogant leadership has invariably been the curse for them based on the history module," said Atla. "Their genetics are also kind of ... unarranged. Anyway. I've drained a life picture, here."

Under Atla's perhaps precarious command, the screen turned into a mass of numbers superimposed upon a flattened Earth perspective. "This shows the density of various life types at different stages of history. Absorb please." They studied the compact jungle of numbers for a few seconds.

"Like all of our other information, the numbers are taken from computer, television and radio transmissions. These were collected and synthesized over the years by the superfluous station on Saturn moon Arapahas, said Atla.

"The surface has stabilized a great deal since the last ship was here," Mega observed, "but the internal heat still blows now and then. There are some dangerous fault lines too, I understand. Perhaps we can help with this."

"A very imperfect world," said Atla, "but beautiful. A little too much water. There are things called mosquitoes that are truly nasty." He pressed a button to present a new picture.

"These are population distributions related to climate and pornography. Then here (the numbers recycled) are educational comparisons. They relate heavily to these environmental factors, of course. There is much more suffering, you can see, across the tropical areas."

"I understand they're instinctive biological reproducers."

"Well, maybe," Atla mused. "But they are intellectualizing it a lot more in some places ... here where you see these stabilized figures."

"Most of the children are being born where they aren't wanted or needed," said Blest.

"Well, there are a lot of peculiarities here," said David. "These people are pretty fragmented, after all. There are still lots of countries."

A button lighted on Mega's panel. He pulled on the sensory helmet to listen.

"A transmission from Control," he said, searching for the right button on the console. "The title is 2-com-DalamatiaArchive. 606. sat.neb. Umm. These ancient systems," he muttered. "Have to almost de-translate. It is ... retrogressive. Okay. Here it is," said Mega, finally.

It emerged as a typographic report only. Kind of disappointing. He had understood the gardens were a botanical splendor. This black and white inventory report hardly represented the planetary garden he had heard about.

"Center upon the mission thread," Mega advised them. "This is the lost botanical colony. Connect this to the thoughtstreams archive for sharing. This is noted to be a standard establishment report with a list of supplies on hand and on order."

The team perused it for clues with lightning speed.

James Cleveland

"It appears the colonists had considerable resources, at least for that time," said Mega. "How do you consider it, Jai?"

Jai was associate investigator for the material and institutional planet, soon to be proficient in geography, geology and botany, as well as the planet's governmental and social institutions and, hopefully, their most clandestine interactions, for that was of great importance on such a greedy and deceitful planet.

The young investigator was compellingly handsome too, but with his own distinctive differences, high cheekbones, wiry black hair and deep brown eyes that could focus into a penetrating, nearly mesmerizing stare. His nose was sharply angular and a little long. He replied to Mega in his unique variation of voice.

"They should have had ample resources to maintain a stable environment," Jai reasoned, "but the climate was highly unstable at the time. They could have been destroyed by a natural disaster. Or, maybe they are there, a part of the current population. It's also possible that others came here and interfered. Certainly, history records the celestial rebellion in this region at about that time. Are we being informed that this planet was a definite part of that? Or are they saying we should try to ... find out?"

"Is often as is the case," said Atla, "they say naught at all. We is on our own."

"Exactly," said David, with a wry smile.

"I could not have said it no better myself," said Blest, unsuccessful in submerging a splitting grin.

Good, thought Mega. There is gaiety about. "We don't know this yet. Are there any comparisons to other gardens or orchards in this sector?"

Jai selected a button to project an overview of other seedings and service missions of the period. "As you can see, there was only one other in this solar system and that's about the ... norman. There was so much garden to choose from out here that the most opportune environments were usually the only ones chosen."

Jai made another selection: "Here is a report of a brief ... fly-by here some years later. Giant reptile creatures were observed ... dinosaurs. The observed colony post was destroyed. No time for tracing, however. The ship had to leave quickly to obtain energy. That was more of a problem, you know, in 70 meterine."

"Well, we have, as they say, our work cut out for us," said David.

"It's too bad we can't travel materially ... physically through time," said Atla. "We could just go back and do it again, like they do in the ... cinnamon."

"The cinnamon?" asked David.

"That would surely be .. spicy," said Mega, "but also a great deal more hazardous than timedrop visualizations under direction of Control and the spirit world. We must consider also that matter-based time travel would defeat the whole purpose of time and space in the first place," said Mega, "thereby making it impossible for celestial approval. It is truly like abrogating God's plan. I am surprised how few, so-called advanced planets in the local universe understand this, but I believe I understand how this can become an alluring scenario to some of the more rebellious, sometime scoundrels in the superuniverse."

"Too ... lofty for me. I'll be content to just do a geographical overview," said Jai, pushing a button to reveal a new montage of illustrations on the giant screen. "Here are the date and time conversion tables. So 2zt converts to ... approximately eight Earth hours from now. That's when I'll depart for the surface, after I've studied and, I will say, mind-photographed all of the available data."

"Your cruiser will have to be fully covered," said Mega. "Do not underestimate their extensive military surveillance. They are quite paranoid and prepared to act upon their fears, and who could blame them with all the savagery we still see there, and will see more of, my brothers and sister as we descend upon this savage place."

"They can't trust each other," said Jai. "It's highly improbable they would trust us."

"I presume Control will not allow any revelation of us to them," said Mega. "Logic shows that it has been very disruptive and ... disorienting to such emotional creatures as these where it has been selectively tried. Perhaps you can tell us more about this after you've delved into the psychological components, Blest."

She sat to Mega's immediate right, her seemingly soft and beautifully sculpted face somewhat belied by the rippled muscles of her arms, shoulders and abdomen. Long, honey-colored hair cascaded upon her bare shoulders. Her strongly entrancing green eyes seemed to mirror a great depth of both passion and insight, as well as a tightly harnessed energy. This was her first mission as an associate investigator for she was young, but Mega had heard she was gifted in special ways.

"Well, we know already that they strive hard for material comforts and pleasures at the expense of both their individual and collective welfare," said Blest evenly. A constantly changing stream of pictures of many kinds of Earth humans flowed in front of them, infants, the aged, the poor and starving, the wealthy, many colors, many shapes, many costumes, in a continuing and rapid stream.

"They seem to have an unusually strong dependency on foodstuffs and apparently have even made them necessary for survival," said Blest. "There

James Cleveland

is little ability to receive energy from light, air or water, partly because of impurities in all related to the wealth struggle, but also from decreased genetical ability. They should be able to do better," Blest emphasized, pausing. "These pictures are from a magazine called 'National Geographic,' by the way, which is one of the few reliable ... periodicals."

She paused as more pictures flooded past before continuing: "They form and hold onto bad addictions and they have the disgusting custom of killing and eating their animals. This may be partly because of the rampant overpopulation — of humans anyway. They're beginning to tax and pollute and destroy their resources everywhere without any real idea of how they will be replaced. A bleak picture I suppose, but our explorers will not readily recognize it as such. It is a place thriving with activity, and, at this time, actually standing at the very threshold of some momentous changes. We don't know what, of course, but the celestials do."

"Well, they have virtually no planetary-wide infrastructure and only small hopes right now of ... international initiative," said Mega. "And, though I would not presume to guess what specific mission questions may emerge in the course of this exploration, surely one of them will be designed to alleviate the threat to their finite environmental resources and some possible guidance ... behind the scenes, as they say, to help clean up some of their toxins. That is the least we could do for the unknowing but nonetheless appreciated hospitality."

"That's a ... cool word," said Blest. "I like serendipity too. In fact, that is some of what we have here." She laughed at her own good humor.

"Males and females have not reached productive communion, of course," she continued. "They haven't even considered, I will say, eye-depth communications, and lust still overwhelms love in most relationships, though they are beginning to see the folly of that. But, overall, fear is still the strongest motivational force. Somehow they must get beyond that."

"How can they when they are so dangerous to themselves?" asked Atla.

"Another good question," said Mega. "And what of you, David? Is your inspiration level high?"

At his far right, the young explorer was striking. Long, plaited blonde ponytails caressing his broad shoulders. Colloquially, he might be called the mission's trouble-shooter on Earth, being in charge of the traffic flow generated by well over a thousand explorers who might soon be on the surface. If and when emergencies were encountered, his quick wits and decisions to mobilize a rescue team under his direction would be responsible for dealing with emergencies quickly and effectively — while avoiding others.

"I'm anxious to get underway," said David. "Here are the mission ... divisions. We will be headquartered in this area, a progressive English entity

called the United States of America. We have an estate where we can truly blend in — a place called Beverly Hills. You will like this place, Atla, it is surrounded by the cinnamon business.

“You are on a roll,” are you not, brother David?” said Atla. “I will heretofore call them movements. That is another term for the Cinema. We will go ... hang out at the movements.” More laughter.

“Movements can truly be multi-faceted here, Atla,” said David, turning again to the map. “Beyond Beverly, there will also be study cells here,” he gestured to the screen with a directional beam, “in these countries around the Mediterranean Sea ... also here in this large country called Russia, recently turmoiled into change by the Angelic Corps ... also here in the so-called People's Republic of China ... and this one in Europe ... here also in India ... here in Africa, watch out for this one ... and here in a country called Brazil. Catch the festival in a place called Rio. It is in imminent arrival and will be listed on your calendars if you can get a free day or more. Dangerous but recommended. We will be alert there with more perfection for our sojourners.

“Protection,” said Mega.

“Yes, protection ... done perfectly,” said David, rolling his eyes at his language foible and winking at Blest.

She laughed and massaged him with her eyes.

David continued: “We will also have a, I will say, quick run patrol on both the ice regions, north and south, but we don't expect to spend much time there, only drill probes to examine the, ummm, subterranean.”

For a moment, the group studied and mind photographed the flattened perspective of the planet. Mega spoke momentarily.

“We will go now to organize the teams,” said Mega. “Organize wisely. Contact your spiritual guides. Remember the corridors of safety parameters. Atla, do the remedial English. Each of you should also plan to intake a set of local encyclopedias called Britannica. A new version is being diverted to your mindbank holds from the, let me see, Roswell, New Mexico, Public Library.”

“Cute,” said David. “But the Venturians are not laughing.”

Mega stood quietly and they each responded in unison, disengaging their control panels for now. At Mega's initiative, they symbolically gathered in a circle and joined hands in front of the screen, which turned again into their Love symbol.

"May it be a glorious adventure," said Mega, "and may it serve PeacePower in every way." They shed their robes to nakedness and stood in silence, looking at and within each other, in sharing, then locking hands to wrists securely in a circle, in the communion ritual that melted together their minds and bodies and spirits.