

ISBN 13# 978-0-9790356-1-6

*The Impartation* is a work of fiction and while drawing on many events and personalities for its inspiration, is not meant to portray any person or event in real life in a recognizable fashion.

**To Spencer:** whose enthusiasm and encouragement were good for at least three more chapters...

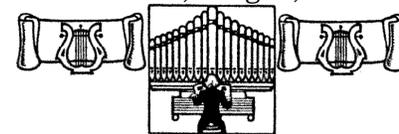
An adventure in space, just a few years into our future.  
Everything is going according to plan—almost.

*You are cordially invited...*

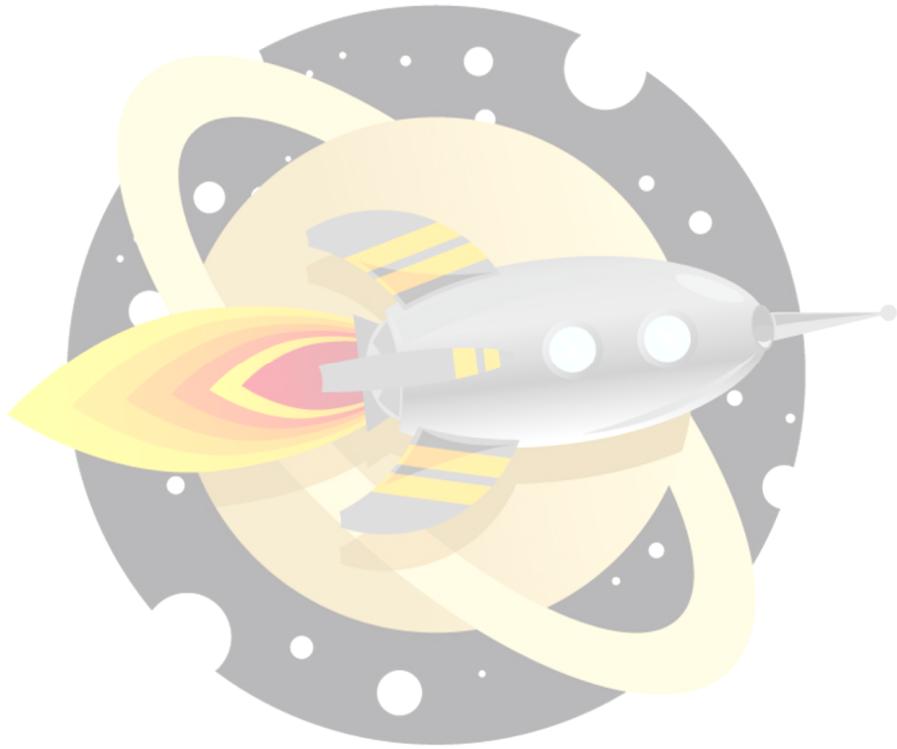
A follow up, but not necessarily a sequel to *Alyen*



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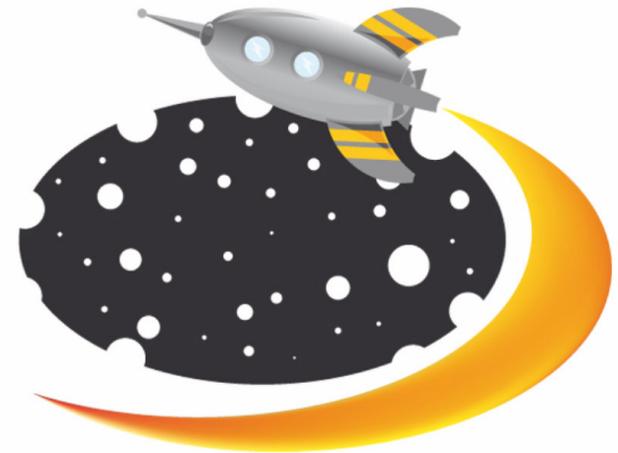


*Welcome Aboard...*

### Explanatory:

Long ago a boy named Alyen found himself stranded on a ship with a group of people who challenged everything he tried to live for. As the inevitable conflicts unfolded, he realized his world was set to destroy him. In his struggles, he made the acquaintance of a man named Nateeka, an ageless being who had been around just about forever.

Before passing from the scene, Nateeka gave Alyen many things, aside from the instruction and guidance a boy needs to grow into a man of courage and destiny. There was a computerized book that was ancient when the boy received it, with a mind and will of its own just short of magical. There was a tiny world existing only for beauty and refuge, and when that world was destroyed there was a stone castle on a planet of gardens. And there were friends who stuck together right down to the end.



Alyen has gone to his reward, and no one in the universe remembers his civilization, much less his name. But, legacies have a way of turning up when one least expects them...

## **Chapter 1: The Castle**

Major Jennings stared out the open hatch. “For a planet nobody knew was here there’s a lot here.” Lush vegetation surrounded the meadow where the small craft landed.

“This is the Garden of Eden.” Corporal Brandon peered over his shoulder, “Whadd’ya bet we make a mess before we’re done?”

“Seems to be our job,” replied Jennings. Smiling lit his face with a boyish charm that left a trail of broken hearts, one of which was his. He stood halfway between five and six feet with dark hair and a sparkle to his eyes. Failing to find excitement, he would be quick to stir some up. The knuckles on his right hand were crooked and a scar on his cheek suggested a story. Not all of his teeth were original, but they looked good.

Brandon stood a head taller with sandy hair and freckles. About ten years separated him and Jennings, which placed Brandon in his early twenties. He was as thin as



Jennings, but lacked the energy he infused into life. The Corporal was good-natured and well liked.

“Come on guys, we’re not sight-seeing.” Sergeant Jackson stood farther back in the craft. He was late thirties and weighed about as much as the first two put together. An army lifer and incorrigible bachelor, he was along for the head count wherever he went. Everyone knew him, but one could look long to find anyone who was his friend, or even a drinking buddy.

“My God, it’s Sleeping Beauty’s castle!” Jennings stood at the foot of the ramp and stared in another direction. “There’s towers, looks like a drawbridge, probably has a moat and everything.”

“Doreen should see this.” Brandon craned his neck and let his mouth hang open. “Looks like the cover of one of those romance books she reads.”

“I smell a wine-cellar.” The sergeant nodded, “I could live happily ever after.” His laugh grated like rusty machinery.

What may have once been a road was now grassy and overgrown, but walking brought them to the edge of the drawbridge. Trailing vines followed it over the water.



“Is it safe?” Major Jennings stared back at the sergeant, “Nothing’s been disturbed in ages.”

Jackson cleared vines from a section and electronically scanned the wood beams. “They’ll hold our weight. I wouldn’t drive a truck over them. I think the age scan is broken—it goes off the scale.”

“Same old feeling?” Jennings smirked, “Going off the scale that is. Well damn, the key’s in the lock!”

They stared at the massive doors and rusty iron knocker. All other hardware had a rich bronze color.

“Gold!” said Jackson. “Some oxidation, but not much. Give me two weeks and a couple of dump trucks. I’d retire.”

Jennings stared at the entryway and the stone arch over the doors. The lock grated but the key turned. “Do we dare? Comments?”

“Age is still off the scale,” said Jackson, “but it seems solid.”

“I won’t sleep tonight if I don’t see what’s in there,” replied Brandon.

“I never saw you pass up a chance to risk your neck,” said Jackson. “Dibs on the wine cellar.”

Jennings turned the knob. The door was sluggish and grated but swung open.



The three stepped into a dimly lit entry. Brandon found a switch and lights clicked on. They stared at an interior that belonged on a magazine cover. Room led to room, panels, carpets, ceilings and chandeliers all magnificent. Flowers in vases were dried wisps, otherwise the house looked ready for a tour group or party.

Major Jennings stood in the main hall at the foot of an ornate stairway. A settee nestled into the curve of the stair, tempting him to sit a spell. For all its size, the castle was homey. A person could live here.

From an adjoining room he heard *Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater* played on a pipe organ. That would be Brandon. In the other direction Jackson unhooked a prism from a wall sconce and slipped it into his pocket.

“These things are diamonds! Every damn one of ‘em!”

Jennings frowned, “We’re not supposed to be looting, Sergeant.”

“Who the hell’s gonna know? You know what the orders are. We gotta blow this thing up!”

Jennings caught his breath and glanced longingly around, “Seems a shame, doesn’t it.”

“Cryin’ shame, but that’s orders. I’m still looking for the wine cellar.”



"I'll see what's upstairs. We won't even get a good look around before we level the place."

Opening one door assaulted his ears. Brandon still puttered on the organ, and this was a pipe chamber. A rack in the shadows caught his eye. The pipe mouths glowed blue. There were only twelve in this rank.

As he reached for the nearest pipe, several in the rack sounded. The room spun and the floor heaved beneath his feet. A lone pipe blew and he saw beyond the back wall of the room. It was a garden and he smelled roses. The glowing pipes stopped speaking and the room went normal again.

"Brandon! Go check out something else!" Barking through the pipe grill made him chuckle. The corporal must have felt like he was hearing from God.

Entering another room, Jennings found a desk and several stacks of papers. He saw some handwritten English, and a lot of strange symbols. There was a book with an elaborate, gold-hinged cover.

The book was sealed tight. It chirped and the cover fell open. He saw the same unknown alphabet, then the pages re-wrote themselves into English. The last page flipped up. He almost dropped the book.



For lunch they brought their rations back to the small dining room. Jennings and Brandon got out gold-rimmed china and crystal stemware. Jackson tossed his mess kit on the table, grinning at the damage it did.

"This is disgusting, fellows. Whoever left us this shack was a blasted teetotaler!"

"Baby wants his bottle," laughed Brandon. "For me it's enough to have seen this place."

"You got your souvenirs," grumbled the sergeant. "Every time I pass a light fixture something's missing!"

Brandon chuckled, "Jennings is more a literary collector. What made you drop the book, Butterfingers?"

"I thought I saw my name," he replied. "Just one of those fleeting glances. I took an organ pipe too."

"That's you high toned, college boys," said Jackson. "I'll stick with market value every time."

"So are the charges placed?" asked Jennings. The other two nodded. "Soon as we've eaten we'll arm them and get out of here." His eyes swept the room again.

"Don't cry over it," Jackson growled, "it's just a great big house."

"It feels like home," said Brandon. "Feels like I could just move in and stay."



The major nodded, "I haven't had that feeling for ... way too long. Whoever lived here must have been special. Wish I could meet him."

"Is that why you took the book?" asked Brandon.

"Must be," said Jennings.

"You rich boys!" said Jackson. "I never lived in anything like this before."

"I was never rich," Jennings replied, "but I remember what home felt like. It's been way too long."

The three peered over a ridge about a half-mile away. Jennings held the remote detonator. "We may need to scramble, depending on how high the stones fly."

"Aren't we too close then?" asked Brandon.

"Live a little!" Jennings pressed the button. The blast took out doors and windows but did little to the physical structure.

"That's one on you, pretty boy," chided Jackson. You're supposed to be *Mr. Demolition Man* and you hardly fazed it."

"I figured the charge and doubled it," said the major.

"Maybe we need to go back for dinner. I'll bet you didn't even break the china."



"I guarantee the glassware's gone," chuckled Jennings. "And you'd be hard pressed to find another chandelier to pilfer. But if you want to check it out I'll let you set the next charges."

"What would you be doing?"

"Watching. We took a big enough chance going into that place the first time. For my money, it's a missile job now."

"The ultimate daredevil just played it safe," said Brandon. "The times they are a' changing."

It took two missile strikes to collapse the structure. The second was from space so they could use the heavy stuff. Jennings sat lost in thought as the ship headed back to base.

"It affected you too," Brandon commented. "Feels like leaving home all over again." He sat in the co-pilot's chair near the front of the craft. Lights were dim and the glow from the instrument panel lit their faces.

"Can't have been that long for you."

"When I turned eighteen. The folks split some time back and mom's new guy was ready for me to be out. So home was gone before that."



Jennings nodded, “My dad died. He was sick for several years, and then he died. Mom loved me, but it wasn’t the same. I spent years trying to figure out why it had to happen. Sometimes I still do.”

“Like tonight?”

“Yeah. I could try to drink it away like Jackson, but that doesn’t fix anything. A woman helps, but it’s painful when things break down.”

Brandon stared toward the back as snoring began, “I think I smell some of that beer we’re not allowed to bring on board.”

“He’s got to make up for the missing wine cellar. Although I thought he had plenty of *whine* today.”

“And precious little work. All he did was fill his pockets with trinkets.”

“Wasn’t my choice to bring him. I’m just obeying orders.”

“Sounds like a personal problem,” said Brandon. “Mine is getting a few winks so I can take the next watch. I’m thinking about things I thought I’d forgotten.”

Jennings nodded, “This is unexpected. Something’s stirring in my life that’s been missing a long time. May you win



whatever battle you’re fighting. I’ll write you a good report for today.”

“Thanks, Major.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Back on earth, in the Executive Palace in Brussels, The Prince sat in his gloom-shrouded office. A tapping knock sounded at the door. “Come in!”

A sliver of light split open to frame the doorway and a man stepped through, closing the door behind him. Jacob Freiling stood before his master. His ramrod straight, crew-cut appearance would have made a good sergeant, but he preferred the soft-spoken, iron fist in velvet glove approach of being The Prince’s chief of staff. Not only that, it paid better. Lights remained out. “You sent for me?”

The Prince’s eyes were points of hate as they glittered in the darkness. “Something’s going on in sector four point six of space. I haven’t been able to localize it, but there’s a disturbance in the equilibrium. Balances of power are trying to shift.”

“Without your consent?”

Pointed teeth flashed in the gloom as The Prince chuckled, “Exactly, my dear Jacob, exactly. My enemies continue



to weave their webs. But they shall not prevail. I am master of the earth. I make the nations tremble!”

“So, what do you need from me?”

“Find out what’s happening, what’s been discovered, what’s being explored. There’ll be something.”

“Okay,” Jacob nodded. “Anything else?”

The Prince growled and let his breath hiss, “Keep a special eye out for ... believers!”

The word hung in the air as Jacob hurried down the marble hallway. The chill he felt as The Prince spoke it lingered and soaked beneath the skin, freezing Jacob’s bones and making him shiver. He’d need to thaw out in the shower before he could even start to carry out his master’s wishes. Didn’t that guy ever rest?



## **Chapter 2: The Conference**

Major Jennings stared into the timeless field of space. Here was neither day nor night, it just was. That was how he felt as his mind went back half a lifetime. He’d just gotten his driver’s license...

“David, are you ready?” his mother called. “Pastor Jeff is here. They’re waiting on you.”

“I’m coming,” he snapped. His athletic shoes dragged on the carpet and he stopped at the bathroom for a half-hearted straightening of his hair.

“Here’s your arm-band. Put it on now so you don’t lose it.”

“I won’t lose it,” he mumbled. Reluctantly, he allowed his mother to wrap the band around his wrist.

“Don’t make everyone late. Last year they had an overflow room. You don’t want to go there.”

“Sounds like you’re talking about Hell.”

“Some of you thought it was. You know you always go for the action.”



David shuffled out the door.

The van was crowded but Jeff, the youth pastor, reserved him the front seat. "How's your dad doing?"

"Not good." Dave looked away.

"We've been praying for him, and you too."

Adventure began with parking. Attendants with red cones over their flashlights directed the van through the carnival setting. Vans and busses from all over the Northwest packed the space. Many were local from Portland, Oregon, but names on the sides included Salem, The Dalles, Seattle, Boise, Missoula, and Roseburg; Vancouver, Washington and Vancouver B.C.; Redmond, Oregon and Redding, California; Walla-Walla, Twin Falls, and Las Vegas.

The church was built for about three thousand people and folding chairs were being added to the auditorium. The numbers themselves ramped up the kids' emotions. They'd been sitting in a group of six to twelve the last months feeling like the only ones.

Lines stretched out the door from registration tables, but their armbands got them straight in. The lobby was its own event, packed full and then some. Many groups held together within it, so there was no clear path anywhere.



Hair appeared in every size, shape and color, from crew-cut girls to guys with bicycle mohawks. A man with face rings and dreadlocks turned to reveal the word *Pastor* embroidered on the back of his cycle jacket. Some boys wore white shirts with neckties—a definite minority, soon lost in the crowd.

Girls waved and shouted to one another, chewing gum and talking on cell-phones. One could not go anywhere without bumping and jostling within the surging tide, navigating a shifting, zigzag path as everyone went everywhere, all at once, and loving it.

Guys tried to be cool as they kept tabs on the women, but very few had the courage to strike up a conversation. Almost two days was painfully short and frustratingly busy.

Dave's group arrived in time to escape the dreaded overflow room, but seating was tight and they didn't find eight seats together. David took a spot in the shadows off by himself. With a shout and a light show the meeting began.

The auditorium went dark, the bass throbbed, and guitars and keyboards held one sustained chord. Gobo spots threw light patterns around the building and the emcee declared the conference open. Cymbals crashed and kids leapt to their feet to dance, clap, sing, and shout. Words appeared



on projector screens and songs were introduced that would echo in their home churches for months and years to come. Fog drifted over the stage and excitement rose.

The music was loud enough to hold kids' attention, but it took more than that to make them weep, pray, and examine their lives. There was a presence in the room, something most felt as they entered the building and many tried to carry with them for as long after the conference as they could. Across the dimly lit auditorium teens by the thousands raised their hands and bared their hearts, releasing the failures and betrayals of the past and embracing the hope of something new.

David sat in his world of pain and heard little. Before he could give himself to the evening he needed resolution. How could a God who could do anything not heal the most wonderful man in the world?

His dad, loving, faithful and fun, had been stricken and suffering for years. He went from a wheelchair to a deathbed. Everyone prayed for him. David prayed with tears. What was the point?

The message came and went in a blur. He joined the flow toward the front and knelt. Tears poured from his eyes,



but no peace came to his heart—too many questions; too big a contradiction.

Pastor Earnest Dinmont picked his way through the pile up of young seekers. He was senior man in the big church, and in demand worldwide as a speaker and counselor of pastors. His gray hair set off the aggressive set of his jaw and he moved with a gentle confidence that never lost sight of the wonder of life itself. He laid his hand on David's head.

“Lord, you called this man as a gift to his generation. He shall break chains and set captives free. Let him stand even as David and cast the stone that breaks bondage. And heal his broken heart...”

The pastor took a breath, discerning the hurt residing in the soul he was praying over. A tug on his sleeve made him aware of Daniel, his youth pastor and disciple. A few whispered words in Earnest's ear and he knew why Daniel found it necessary to break in. Pastor Dinmont left to resolve a confrontation, with a longing look and a whispered prayer in David's direction. He thought of the priest or Levite in the *Good Samaritan* story. Perhaps he'd been too hard on them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix one for the *Good Samaritan* story.



David heard only what was spoken. He was being given as a gift when he needed a gift! “Don’t I have a choice in all this?”

Young people had breakthroughs on all sides. He was jostled by the fervent crowd and next to him two young men locked arms and allowed their prayers to rise as a great shout. The ladies tended to be quieter, but just as intense. David was utterly alone, drawing into himself. He knew there should be healing, but couldn’t connect with it.

The house was dark when he returned. He went straight to his room.

“David?” His mother came to the door, “Your father went to be with Jesus this evening. It’s over.”

David stared at her, then flung himself on the bed, facing the wall. After a long pause, the door behind him closed.

The next memory was a month later. Things must have happened in between, but it was a blur for David. He came from school to find Pastor Jeff there along with Pastor John, the main leader of their small church. They were waiting for him.



“David, we want to stand with you in your time of mourning,” said Pastor John, “but sometimes my responsibilities conflict. Things can become very difficult. I want you to know I initiated this meeting. Your mother didn’t come to me. I asked her some very direct questions about where that bruise on her arm came from.”

David stared at the carpet. He loved his mother, but hadn’t treated her well. It was a tearful scene, but only one issue was resolved. He joined the army.

Another memory was recent: his first leave in a month. A couple games of pool left him vindicated and somewhat richer. Time to seek a quieter conquest.

She sat alone at a table staring at him through the smoke of her cigarette, blonde hair cascading over bare shoulders. Dave’s hand trembled, sending ripples through his mixed drink.

“Are you by yourself?”

She smiled, “I was until you got here.”

“What if another friend shows up?”

“Sit down. The seat’s taken.”

“Dave Jennings. I’m a major.”



“Sherry Phillips. I’m a secretary/bookkeeper. I count other people’s money.” Her eyes washed over his heart and reached deeper. They had a slight Asian cast that made them devastating.

“Got any plans?”

“I’m open to make a few.”

A hand on Dave’s shoulder made him look up. It was Steptoe, an MP. “Sorry Major, but your leave’s cancelled. I need to get you right back to the base. Goodnight, Sherry.

“How you commissioned party animals get away with running down the batteries in your pagers is beyond me. I have to get out and track you guys down!”

The night air had a bracing tang as they walked to Steptoe’s vehicle. “Your timing’s freaking perfect!” Jennings still held his drink. He wound up and pitched the glass with a curse. From across the street came the tinkle of broken pieces.

“Save your tantrums.” Steptoe grinned, “Tonight I’m your God-blessed guardian angel. That was Typhoid Mary I pulled you away from. And by the way, you weren’t picking her up. You don’t get that far with Sherry unless she already has your name on a file folder back home.”



“What?” Dave’s mouth hung open as the car pulled out of the lot.

“Oh come on, you’ve never heard of the *Lynchtown Lez-zies*? Just a handful of girls, but they’re smarter than most men. Sherry makes the contact and the rest go to work.

“In a day or two a midnight knock comes and Security hauls you away. Usually it’s over some smart-alec boast made to Sherry in a suitably macho moment. Sergeant Zirkle tends to get involved—she’s one of the group. You try to hire a lawyer and discover all your accounts drained and your credit cards max’d.

“In a couple months the cards come looking for payback and take anything the girls overlooked. Not much you can do from jail. Oh, and don’t expect sympathy from the judge. She’s another one. Somehow, all the victims go to her courtroom.”

“That really happens?”

“What do you think happened to Smith, Jack Borden, and that Rheinland fellow? Most of those girls haven’t worked an honest day in years, but they live like royalty.”

Jennings shook his head, “Hey, it would have been just one night. Here and then gone!”



Step toe chuckled, “You’re talking like the rest of ‘em. You know what the m/o is? First Sherry lays a little cash on the local pool sharks. By the time you meet her you feel real lucky.”

Jennings was silent.

“But you’re pretty sharp. Let’s say you got out without them getting their hooks in too deep. Most of her victims develop herpes. You want that?”

“So what happened to my leave?”

“Somebody needs to set up an outpost on that new little planet they discovered. After much deliberation it was decided only you could head such a mission. I think it’s your gift for working with difficult people.”

“Sergeant Jackson!”

Step toe chuckled. “I can’t help it if you jump to conclusions. His current baby sitter is due for relief. But don’t quote me, I’ll deny it. Brandon got into a little trouble too. He’ll be a corporal for a while again, and your go-fer.”

“Him, I can handle. At least he’s a human being, a big, good-hearted kid.”

The MP pulled up in front of headquarters. “Doorstep service, and exit your guardian angel. Somebody up there really likes you!”



David stared at the taillights. He wondered whether Step toe had thought much about his last comment. It hung in Jennings ear for a long time.

On the spacecraft, the console beeped: time for a log entry. *Two o’clock and all’s well*, or something to that effect. There would be reports to write—suitability of planet, location of settlement, ordnance log, samples taken... So what was he bringing back? Documents so old they couldn’t track them, written in English? What were the odds?

The book was alien. It appeared to be a glorified diary, intermittently kept. The first part was a baby book: family photos and school report cards. Farther on it spoke of frustration and upheaval, a very adolescent picture. Some writing was by a father figure, not a blood relation. At one point, a heart change. The kid got saved.

A season of growth and establishment, battles with loneliness. The rest of the entries, very sporadic, looked like a minister’s notes. Births, deaths, key counseling sessions, an occasional marriage.

The last page contained the outrage—*Hello Dave*. Did it really mean him? Dave’s mind said no, but something deeper down wasn’t sure. The aura of welcome, as though the



the castle had been waiting for him, was unsettling. Brandon sensed it too. Sergeant Jackson ... didn't appear to have feelings, just attitudes.

Next to the book had been stacks of loose paper. Most were in the strange symbols Dave had first seen in the book. One was in English, handwritten, but legible. He'd brought that along too, just a bit curious. He reached for the pile and settled further into his seat.

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"Still reading?" Brandon was back.

Jennings looked at his wrist-piece. "Fascinating stuff. Ready to take your watch?"

Brandon nodded. "I slept a little—really different dreams. Yesterday left its mark. I dreamt I lived at the castle. Walking out, I saw a horrible giant coming. A little guy ran past me and bounced a rock off its head. Just like the old story we used to hear at, uh ... you know where."

Jennings nodded, "We do well to maintain our shell of *pc*. Loose lips sink ships—even in outer space."<sup>2</sup>

"So what's in the book?"

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<sup>2</sup> *pc*—political correctitude or politically correct: the hoof and mouth disease of overgrown and inbred organizations.



"I'm not sure how much I should share, as it might become very classified. It purports to be a civilization before ours. They developed the same computerized mind control we're perfecting, and it all came crashing down. One book did it."

Brandon's eyes got very round, "That was another dream. I saw an old man seated at a computer terminal and as he read, the book scanned into the whole system. Their society came unglued. Nobody knew how to do anything by that time."

"Sounds like we might be there already."

"There's been days," Brandon muttered. "All you need do is tell the truth to the wrong person. No good deed goes unpunished."

"The voice of bitter experience?"

"Someday I might tell you how I got my rank busted. But that names some pretty big names. I'm happy just to be alive."

Jennings looked troubled, "United World Federation. We serve The Prince."

"We serve The Prince," echoed Brandon. His eyes glanced uneasily toward the rear of the craft. It was some time since snoring had been heard.

