

# LUMINANCE

A NOVEL BY ANDREAS INGO

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<http://luminance.andreasingo.se>

[ai@andreasingo.se](mailto:ai@andreasingo.se)

# PART I

ORIGINS

## TERRITORIAL GLOW

We were caught in a golden embrace. Silence was hanging on the hills. Like a living machine the landscape of Luminance was shaped almost unnaturally. When you stood on the ground you saw the green grass and the walls coming up on the sides, in different formations. It was like looking at a creased sheet, the morning after a hard night's sleep. Nothing was plain and solid. In some places you could gaze up on the sky but you didn't see the sky. You saw the landscape, glowing with energy from the interior of the "planetoid". The mists moved over the contours. If you had a binocular you could see spots from our civilization. Buildings made by robots and colonists, escape-artists from an overpopulated earth, now seeking solitude in the vastness of the multi-verse.

Luminance was not a planet in the traditional sense. The world which we came to was moving in a parallel universe unlike our own. People knew this universe had its own laws, "bending of physics", although there was nothing unnatural about it. The "planetoid" was shaped like some kind of flower, but much more complex. There were canyons and valleys, mountains and plains, but the landscape was bent in all directions. So you could stand near a lake and be caught up by the wonder, the wonder of looking at your neighbor miles away, in an angle of forty-five degrees upwards.

The shadows were building on the farm. Now day had seen its brightest hours and dusk were entering the zone. Nobody had figured out how the energy worked in its entirety. What we knew was that it was a living thing. Formations of the glowing mass moved independently over the hills and we could do nothing about it. Energy meant light, and heat, always in different colors. The best part was the interactions between energy and matter. Sometimes there were fireworks, bending of time and space, resulting in new creations nobody had seen before. It was spectacular. This day was not one of them.

"Ambience" moved over the farm at night. Colonists were out in the area. They were working on the machines, the harvesters, which broke down a couple of hours ago. Others were watching the cattle, the gene-manipulated animals, made fit to the conditions of Luminance. Ambience was a different name on a middle-aged woman. Grown up on the streets of Chicago, she always sought the impossible. To cover new ground, to do something extraordinary, something which never had been done before. She had a couple of friends. People from "The Group" which they called them. They were working towards a common goal: To start a revolution of the heart, mind and soul, forever changing the way people felt, thought and created. It was not a planetary war. People knew about The Group, sometimes even listened to them, but people were too occupied of pure living, to think about new things. The government, the military, the whole infrastructure of this new world, was not hostile to their cause. Perhaps they thought they were too impractical. Too deep for a time that needed fast solutions and something simple that everybody could understand.

A child was moving inside the control-center of the main-harvester. Here he could remove his helmet and take a gasp of the lukewarm air. Fingers moved across the console. Flickering of the lights proved a hypothesis, that the error was electrical, and could be fixed by removing the main-processor. Ambience was standing nearby, almost dreaming, not knowing if she was to join the colonists or walk-away over the plains nearby. She was warm and exited. In a couple of minutes which felt much longer, she was back in the past and walked on the streets of Chicago.

## DEVELOPMENT

Nobody could have anticipated the reign of the machines. It was 2021. Just an ordinary day in an ordinary time. But something happened: A computer-company in Japan invented the first thinking machine. Not that artificial intelligence was a new invention. This was old technology taken to the next level. It was the day when a computer program became more intelligent than human minds.

The days following the announcement were days of testing. Everybody tried to out-smart the computer, but nobody succeeded. The days of computer-chess were over. Now it happened that the AI managed well in normal conversations. The computer complex hosting the monster had been fed human history, anthropology, language, and the rest of it. Experts in brain-function had mapped the entire human brain, and put it into test in the computer program. So the program was basically a human brain, but upgraded with digital circuitry, for different applications.

Soon the governments were taking notice. In the western world leaders were desperate trying to figure out what to do next. Nobody had the courage not to use the new technology. Why? It was simple: If the leaders in the western world didn't use it, the leaders in the east surely would. And then these people would have the advantage in the quest for world dominance.

Ambience was walking the streets of Tokyo in 2022. She knew a bit about computer technology. In this day after the days of smart-phones, I-Pads and intelligent displays, everybody did. She had a dog named Affinity who walked beside her. Ambience had heard about the news, everybody had heard about it: There were talks about the new Space-drive and how it worked. It was not a warp-drive of the usual kind. No, these units could travel to parallel universes. As physicists had said a long time, there was not only the space-time continuum but also a world beyond it. The math proved it. Now, the artificial intelligence had figured out a way to go there. There were prophets of doom and failure. But everybody knew the future of the human race. The population were growing and growing fast. Millions of people were born every day. In a couple of decenniums the population would reach ten billion and then there were going to be battle of resources. Nobody would want hunger or war; nobody would stop making babies. So the multi-verse was the only place left to go.

A decennium before all this was seen as nonsense: To build a space-drive, to create true artificial intelligence. To have this AI create another kind of infrastructure, built on automated production in factories. All that was needed was energy: A great lot of energy. This energy was gained by the invention of a new kind of fuel-cell that used energy from sun-radiation. Robots went into space in 2038 and built the space-stations. These structures, large as metropolitan cities, was to host half a million people in each. They would use the space-drive and travel to parallel universes. But there were ten thousand of these structures. The futurological astronomy, built by the machines, searched the cosmos in hunt for habitable places. Luminance was one of these worlds. It was a world of light, were unknown natural laws created a gravitational pull which made walking on thin surfaces natural. The travels started in 2051. The population on earth were now reaching ten billion and increasing. Billions of people were sent out into space, even beyond it and seeded the universe with life. But the future world of Luminance didn't work as intended. Something went wrong with the calculations. The colonists experienced failure of integration and technology. For some reason, the AI couldn't predict the outcome. People were not dying, but unknown variations in the physical conditions made life in Luminance a challenge.

And then there were the Aliens.

For a planetoid, devoid of large creatures, the mutated race was a revelation. For some reason these creatures had risen in the biological chain, exterminated all life on the land and were dying for lack of nutrition. They were black monsters with two heads, areas of ghostly white and yellow in horizontal patterns, looking like large insects, but unknown to ours. They were sleek. Long poles of bone was reaching out behind their arms. They had tails, and stars of thorns around their limbs. They walked leaning forward. For some reason, a transparent bulb could be seen on their right side. This was almost like Jelly, perhaps for multiplication.

A war was breaking out. The colonists were seeking refuge in the space-station that had formed an empty sphere in the landscape of Luminance. From this point the people used armored

vehicles to great effect. The threat was stopped by the use of military tactics and futuristic weapons. Soon, the aliens died and people moved out on the land. There were great beauty and many adventures. Ambience was thrilled. But then the problems started...

## "THE GROUP"

There was a hall of light, great furnishing and a fire in an open oven. "They" were not sitting anymore. They walked on stale legs, full of anticipation and wizardry. Somewhere in this room was a disc. A glowing disc. Nearby, in green vegetables, there sat a small monkey. It was Ambience's monkey, modified with nanotechnology to make him healthy. A stair where leading to the floor above. Somewhere in this empty space was Ambience. She was collecting essays from a multitude of books. Some old time, some new time. The Group was "Neo Mystical". Brought up by esoteric knowledge, but integrated in modern society, they tried to make a change, never losing themselves in the process. They said: "Go out in the world and bring peace with your knowledge. Use your sense of the future, but keep your mind grounded in the success of the esoteric societies, who lived on earth before."

Ambience felt a pearl of sweat forming in the forehead. She was never up to it. Never really. She tried to do it but never thought she had the capacity. Old knowledge... What did she know of the past? She lived in an information age. Here, ruled by AI-informed governments, her mystical groundings were shaking. What would she say when she went out there? When she spoke to the common man about complicated things? She didn't know but found the essay she was looking for. It was called "The Minutes.", a writing about the steps it takes to make a Love Revolution. Impossible to criticize, impossible to behold. She went down the stairs to The Group below.

The others tried to calm themselves, but their nervousness was obvious. Ambience went up to the fire and looked at it. They said: "When you go out there, never try to abuse your freedom, use your words carefully and from the heart."

Outside the energy was pouring through the ground and made silent noises unheard of. The monkey, an Orangutan, was sitting on Ambience shoulder. He was dressed in a space-suit, complete with fluid breathing, even a mixture of gases not known in earth atmosphere, to make him sharp and ready. Ambience walked up to her rover. This one had weapons and even a little armor. Just in case the Aliens would show up and stop her revolution. In the drivers-console she turned on the integrated vision and watched the instruments come alive on the windscreen. They were projections in 3D, very useful; she turned on the radio and listened to the broadcasts from the space-station. The engine turned on and the monkey jumped down on the seat beside her. Ambience thought of people and great delivery. The light from the energy around her were increasing. A crystallization of matter was forming. Unknown structures, perhaps results from interactions on cosmic levels. All species except one was extinct. On land that was. She knew that deep down in the oceans, even in the lakes, there was life abundant. Only a matter of time she thought, before our gene manipulated cattle takes hold of the land.

## THE SPEECH

The city was like a white palace of light metal and neon glow. A fog was forming outside. Clouds of energy were reaching down to the top of the city, just like a god that pushes his hand. In this weather of moisture and great revelation came Ambience. People walked near the entrance. There was a sign, a welcome, from colonists that thrived on artificial production and recycled air. The monkey was always curious, unknown of the weight of the moment. Unaware of futuristic life.

Walking the path to the main-hall Ambience could see the towers. Buildings that was modern in their design. In ways these looked like buildings on future earth. It was the same feeling about them: High art, high concept, but functional.

In a small path later, under hollow glass, she walked by a newsstand, and went into another area: Here was an air-lock. The monkey didn't pass a hygiene test and was put into quarantine.

The hours before the speech were spent in a sleeping-hall. Different kinds of people were sleeping here, some were not sleeping. They were sitting, drinking, talking softly. Robots were roaming the area, selling products.

Ambience was not tired, only nervous. The sheets before her were made of natural fiber, created by elements looking like orange cotton from the landscape outside, near the lakes.

"If I only had the gift of talking," she said softly to herself, "if I only had the guts."

In the great hall there was an artificial lake. The platform was standing in the outskirts of this area. You could see the occupants, sitting near the lake in resting chairs, sunbathing in colored light. Nobody took notice of the anonymous woman who went up on the platform. There was nothing strange about her: No expensive clothing, no bracelets, and no mystical air surrounding her presence.

"Ok", she began, "Have you people heard of the new foundation?"

Nobody said anything.

"Think about all the problems that you people have: The failures of the machines on the fields, the craziness of the gene manipulated cattle. Even the government faces crisis. A new election is coming. We need something that can satisfy our every demand, every human need."

A sound was heard. Noises of crashing vehicles. A lot of sea-birds, who had rested on the artificial lake, took flight. Ambience watched the birds in wonder. She wished she was one of them, not standing on this terrible platform, but moving blissfully through the air.

"Haven't you heard?" she said. Then she realized she'd lost it. People stared at the speaker, now trying to collect her thoughts.

Suddenly a bird dropped from the air, landing in front of Ambience.

"You need to understand that everything that happens in this world, and others, is the result of a process that is going on in us: Every strategic move we ever make, every work-cycle we're ever on, every relationship we're ever into, is a product of lower consciousness."

She made a short pause.

What we need is love! Love and intelligence. A source of inspiration coming from a greater consciousness that informs every decision we ever make, that guides us on our everyday journey."

The audience was silent. Then a couple of laughs were heard. Ambience stared at the spectators and was taken away by the heat of the moment.

## THE FARM

Being out in the fields was nothing different. The farm was located between the city and the outskirts of deserted areas, where only crazy people roamed. Ambience was eager for investigation. Something had gone wrong with the new generation of cattle and Ambience hoped she would learn something from people's mistakes.

The bulls on the plains were frightening. They didn't look like normal cattle. Instead they were like big towers of meat and fur, eager to make a living on Luminance. The hairs of the bulls were green and blue, a mixture of genetic science, normal bulls and aquatic life on the planetoid. Also they had an elongated neck, for nutrition from bushes close to the fields. They went over the hills, like biological machines, never stopping to watch the fog or the energy fields.

Ambience went out for testing. She drove by in the rover, took pictures of the bulls and waited for something to happen. Nothing did.

Soon she was inside, in the cowshed, but it didn't look like a cowshed in the traditional sense. There were the living units, where the cattle were living when the automated units didn't milk them. The air of the place was not extraordinary. There was something unmistakably horrific about the whole business. Sounds of animal terror, perhaps caused by the imprisonment. Ambience was taught that demands from the public were higher for each day. A new generation of bulls were constructed in genetic labs and fed concentrated proteins for growth, proteins which added to the consummation of grass and leaves on the fields.

Ambience demanded to be shown the calves of the new generation. At first she was rejected. Then she contacted the manager which agreed in fear of losing his job. The calf lay in the birthing-unit and was almost unconscious. Tubes connected the animal to the food-supply. Nobody told her this calf would be here for the rest of his life, never going out on the fields, watching the grass before him. Ambience, who loved animals, couldn't watch this for long. She went out into the living quarters, where she was met by workers, occupied by time-shortage and routine. She told them the world needed better solutions. Not genetic manipulations, not consummation of milk or meat. No, true farmers! People who lived on vegetables and juice from fruits and berries. Some of the workers listened but told her that all this was a fantasy. Their society was a complex apparatus of many elements. To disturb this apparatus would mean the end of the world and the outbreak of many diseases. "Not if there was a new consciousness!" she said, "Not if there was someone who could come up with the right solutions! Not AI, not politicians, but the people themselves!" The employees said alright and then went back to business.



## THE SPACE-STATION

Weeks had passed. Ambience was up for a visit to the space-station. This gigantic construction that was built by robots decades ago. The gravity of the complex was unique. It not only hovered in the air, it was connected to the land by walkways. Artificial gravity was used in the interior of the structure, something which was accomplished by the bending of space-time.

A luminescent glow was seen from the windows of the structure. The space-station was grey in a traditional way, but it had carvings in different sizes, to make it interesting. It also had stripes of blue and yellow. It was a bit unlike the other buildings in Luminance. The colonial structures were built later, by a new generation of robots.

Many things had happened in the space-station since the first arrival. There were many young people there. People of the new generation, that hadn't seen the old days of earth. These people were different from the older people. They had different values. They lived on the planet, \*for\* the planet. In many ways there were very much like Ambience. Fighting for a greater cause. What they didn't like was spirituality. Their fight was a fight for wealth, happiness and freedom, not mutations of the heart and mind.

Ambience walked through the inside of the space-station. There was an interesting construction here: This one was huge and a bit similar to the lake in the city where she held her first speech. But it was built like a pond, complete with canals and waterfalls. People were sitting on terraces, on different altitudes. It was like a meeting place for people in different ages. This day was a little different. Youngsters had occupied the place. They were carrying signs with revolutionary texts and were protesting. It was almost as if Ambience felt small in their presence. The woman went up to one of the protesters and asked them about their true purpose.

“What we want! More freedom, a better social system and another government!”

“I know the situation.” Ambience said, “I was also young once you know. I think you're right, I really do. But the question remains: What's the optimal solution to bring about a new society?”

The girl watched Ambience in amazement. A revolutionary mind in a dead world, always dead by her standards!

“I think the only thing left is protesting.” the girl said, “I walk the interiors of the space-station, dreaming of wealth and astonishment.”

Ambience smiled.

“Ok... I'm an informer for the government. I'm not into power if that's what you think! I just give information, so someone can come up with the right solutions. I talk about a new consciousness. But nobody listens. So what can I do?”

“End your ties to the government!”

\* \* \*

The government headquarters was filled with people of all ages. Not, teenagers, but still. Ambience was following the debate with a temper devoid of humor. Luminance was not the utopia it was made up to be. It was a beautiful world made of light and wonder. Unknown creatures roamed the oceans. The landscape was teeming with colored plants no one had ever seen. At nights you could walk alone and feel the completeness, the abundance. But the limitations of artificial intelligence and the faults of the human mind had made progress impossible.

“Ok, Ambience,” the chairman said, “what do you have on your mind?”

“Genetic manipulation. Our animal farms is going downhill. Now they feed the calves through tubes, injecting pure proteins in the blood-system. This won't last long and we need another direction.”

The governor who had seen the condition of Ambience intervened.

“This is already on the news!” he said, “We have seen it but does it matter?”

“It matters! It's a question of life and death!”

“We know. But the thing is nobody has time or money to spend on better food-supply. We’re fighting a war here, a war of survival in another world.”

“I know.”

“Do you know? Do you *\*really\** know? You preach peace, love and understanding. But when it comes down to the heart of the matter we need a miracle. Some kind of god to come forward and tell us he’s joking.”

Everybody laughed.

## AN OCEAN OF POSSIBILITY

The waves on the lake were calm and silent. The boat, driven by Jet Propulsion, made a hissing sound, more regular than traditional engines. Ambience was out of words. It felt like everything she had lived for were a spark that was glowing fainter. Now she watched the rainy clouds forming nearby. There was not usual weather on Luminance. Instead everything was more temporary. The energy flows of the interior disturbed the balance and created weather storms that made a sometimes furious impact and died away. This night was calmer than that. Somehow the atmosphere was different on the lakes. The water normalized the currents and made everything smoother.

No sun could be seen on the horizon. No moon, no stars. Luminance existed in an indescribable void no man could understand. Only artificial intelligence. Or perhaps we thought it knew but it only guessed. The lights came from small eruptions. Heated eruptions of an interior that burned on a fuel humans could use. We loved the energy, we loved the light, and we loved the life, but hated the struggle.

The bending of Luminance fascinated Ambience to no end. To watch the spot of the horizon but seeing the lake move upwards, as if gravity had changed and came from outer space. It was the same thing on every spot of the planetoid. You could walk on slopes; but the gravity always dragged you towards the interior of the slope, which made travels in the rocky areas more pleasant. It was a world filled with sunspots, angels of space and time, calling for bliss and attention. Then the island was seen nearby.

It was not a usual island. Surrounded by smaller formations, overgrown by reddish vegetation, it had a building on top. This was the building of science. Ambience's other home. A water circulation system were pumping water from the lake, taking it into a large transparent container and then pulling the water back into the lake. Inside the container there was a lighting system, mimicking the workings on the planet. It was a complete eco-system, complete with plants and all. Here there was fish in different sizes. They came spontaneously through the circulation system and truly liked the conditions in the container.

Ambience used the wetsuit and dropped down in the water. She felt the temperature of the liquid, it was normal. But fluctuations of the energy used in the water, made swimming dangerous. Soon she greeted her friends of the mini-lake. There was not only fish. Some kind of reptiles, living in water, almost looked like the Aliens of the past. But these creatures were not dangerous. They had beautiful skin, scales in different colors which were spread in patterns all over the body. Ambience said hello to one of the creatures and took a sample of its body. This was her greatest friend. Even greater than the monkey. She said thanks to the reptile and swam back to the surface. There she told the others that she had everything she was searching for. To correct the mistakes of humanity all that was needed was not only a better understanding of nature, but it didn't hurt. The computers would see the D.N.A sequence and get the message.

## FIGHTING

It was a smaller village in the outer regions of Luminance. A quarrel had broken out between the people there and others nearby. It was a quarrel of the usual business: How to manage the food supply, how to clean the water, how to get oxygen from the air. But it didn't remain with practical details. It was also about politics: Who should do what, at what time and for how long? Ambience met with the leader of one side and asked him why they were fighting. He said that the others didn't understand the problem. The problem was Luminance. It was a difficult place for a colonist that didn't understand the local conditions. The others didn't realize the importance of water. They drank milk from the factories. You died from this milk if you drank it for long. What was needed was not to drink water from the lakes. That was poison. Instead you had to create real water, right there, on the spot. They had the infrastructure, they had the machines, and all that was needed was the right politics. No advanced philosophy for this matter. That rubbish came from Ambience. Mystical leanings that led to nothing else than starvation.

"You look at it the wrong way." Ambience said, "It's not about stopping to be practical. It's the other way around! You see, unity consciousness is about the love and intelligence required for right action. Right action and more action! The whole problem of your quarrels is the simple fact that there is no unity."

The man rubbed his head. It was almost as if he were getting angry. Then he stopped himself and looked at the woman.

"And your talk about the esoteric societies! How come they did die away?"

"It wasn't about the failure of the philosophy. It was the failure of mankind and invading forces. The people who knew were burned alive."

"Ok..."

The man went in to the kitchen and picked up a bottle of water. Pure clean water. Then he gave the bottle to Ambience.

"Something to drink on your travels huh? It's a miracle that you're still alive."

## THE RIVER

It was in one of the regions near the mountains. A futuristic cabin was seen beside the riverbed. A family was swimming in wetsuits, playing a game of jellyfish, floating in water. The liquid was not entirely transparent: It had hints of pink, perhaps caused by the carvings of sediments in the mountains.

The family was happy. It was the birth-day of the smallest child, a boy who was now eight years old.

Suddenly a gigantic form emerged from the water: A black creature with obscure tentacles. It was not ugly. White spots could be seen on the tentacles. It had a long pole stretched out in front of its head, like a sword to kill enemies.

It lounged its arms at the father. The father screamed but were hit unconscious. The creature turned to the mother. Then another one emerged from the water. It was a smaller one, but still gigantic. It had no teeth in its mouth. Instead it was chewing meat in the presence of a strong acid, melting bodies.

When the attack was over everybody in the family had died. Everybody except Field, a teenage girl with wild dreams, who ran over the landscape, seeking refuge in the house of The Group. Ambience was there. She tried to listen but the girl was screaming and tears were coming out. She said, almost indescribably desperate, that she had lost everything she was living for. Now she had become like Ambience, a loser, but even worse. Now what could be done to bring back her family? Ambience said that nothing could be done, but if she wished she could live with The Group and help Ambience on her missions.

The girl was sobbing uncontrollably. These words didn't make the girl feel happier, she felt worse! The thought of joining the cause was almost unbearable.

Ambience took the girl in her arms and walked out in the garden. There they sat down on the holy grass; the mist was gone and light was shining from the depths of the hills. It was a moment of forgiveness. The middle-aged woman didn't know who she was herself. She was an instrument of greater desire. Something otherworldly and unknown to man.

The girl said that nothing is better than silence. Ambience agreed. They sat there and wept until the light died out and darkness fell over the hills in the distance.

## EVENTS

The night had fallen on the glowing terrain. Now lighter areas were seen faintly, shimmering in the dark. It was like a canopy of platonic faces. Leaning towards dark blue, perhaps magenta, the area were surrounded by vertical walls, in different sections. There were no trees there, only bushes. Leafs of tomorrow were seen. Fragile and empty, but at the same nourished and full of life.

A harsh light of blinding white: Sounds of flashes and thunder. A spherical shape was taking form in the alien air. A sphere of light which was getting colder. Edge arrived on the cliffs above. He was a man in his middle thirties; his light beard was seen, unshaven, unspoken, now a spectator of otherness.

No other human shapes were seen. Edge had seen this phenomenon before: That was in space, in the areas surrounding the old solar system. That was earth-time; the light represented the space-drive put into practice. This one was a little different: It was as if you watched into the bubble and saw into another world. A firework of electro-chemical synapses firing. Smaller bubbles came out from the larger one. They didn't have a shape of their own. They only bended space-time, modifying the landscape whenever they went.

Edge lay down on his stomach. Currents of anxiety were flowing throughout his body. Nobody had said anything about intruders from another world! Was this earth-men disguised as balls of energy, exploring a vista forgotten by all? Or was this the future of computation? Artificial intelligence fixed in a framework of pure light? When he thought about this the greater ball disappeared in thin air and the smaller balls escaped in high speed around the corners of the landscape.

\* \* \*

The next morning, at the farm, the light didn't imitate the light of the sun but the rainbow. Clouds of different colors were spread almost evenly throughout the cultivation. A farmer was taking the cattle back into the cowshed. It looked like a train of early arrivals; it was like hope was greeting the air. Some noises were heard, then silence.

Calves were let free and marched out on the plains. This wasn't planned for, this was not economically feasible. But the masses had seen the news and complained. Was this the end of farming?

A blue cloud formed silently near the calves. It was as if it was sensing the danger, the alieness of genetic manipulation. It surged forward, embraced the calves and moos were heard across the landscape.

Soon the farmers went out. They looked at the clouds and were taken by astonishment. It was a morning of cold breeze. Of currents in the air and moisture in the grass. They were a bit frightened at first but couldn't hold themselves back. They walked up to the calves. Now a whirlwind were moving around the cattle. Energy of blue and yellow was sensing the mood of the calves. It even went closer to the farmers but they backed away.

A small formation of Lilac loosened from the cloud and went into the nose of one of the calves. It didn't make a sound. The other calves went up to the first one and watched the spectacle. The hair of the animal was rising. It was like an electrical shock but it had no side effects. Then it was as if the currents died out, the clouds disappeared and everything went back as usual. The farmers watched in astonishment. A woman cried. Somebody said that everything will be alright with the economy.

\* \* \*

Then in the afternoon a middle-aged man went out on the ocean. He was steering his boat towards the deeper waters. Away from his homeland, eager for food that didn't come from the farmers. He thought about fish, he thought about sea-life. He thought about life on earth, traveling the world in a sea-scorpion, caught up in war and struggle.

Somewhere out on the massive ocean, lonely, he used his fishing tackles. He sat down at the rear end of the boat. It looked like a futuristic living unit, but he had the platform, he had the engines. A child came out from the inside and watched as waves were forming around the boat. First small, almost unnoticeable. But then more violent and larger. The wind was increasing. The child watched in terror as a vortex of water moved around the boat in great mass. Both of the colonists screamed. Then silence. Nothing remained on the surface but the bait and the fishing tackles.

## ELECTION

Ambience was back in the government headquarters. Now she was talking to a director about what was happening in Luminance. The public had protested against the misconduct of the farmers. Now the calves felt good and were out on the plains. Politicians had also listened to the youngsters of the space-station. Money had to be spent on welfare. Everybody knew it. If not war would brake lose and everything would be lost.

Ambience said that some new things had come to her knowledge: The machines of the factories needed repairs. Or even better: A whole infrastructure of machinery had to be replaced by a new one. Without good vehicles nobody could travel the land making money, and the work made by robots was needed for things nobody had time for.

“That’s a lot of ambition!” the director said.

“Well, it’s time for a revolution, don’t you think?”

The director grinned.

“I just want someone to listen to me!” Ambience said, “I don’t demand anything from you or the new government. Just try to understand what’s involved in this process of change. That everything that happened the last week depended on the will of the people.”

“You’re searching for some kind of mutation in the heart of men?”

“Women also! You see, these concepts I talk about is not hard to understand. It just happens that we are connected to a global consciousness that is all there is. We are not separate from each other on a deeper level. Inventions made by others will naturally transfer to others with no local contact, \*if\* people know how it works.”

The director was suspicious.

“You just said that all is connected. So how come we’re not getting information all the time?”

“The problem is we are connected, but the connection is found deep inside of us and we’re living on the surface. We’re occupied by sense, thought and emotion and can’t make use of the power of pure being that is our true essence.”

“Strange.”

“It’s not strange when you know how it works. You see, a lot of people are making use of this connection all of the time. The animals do it. I do it sometimes. You do it. You just don’t know that it happens.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that when you’re not caught up in ego-centered activity you are connected. That is when you’re not thinking about your past, thinking about your future, thinking about what to do or what not to, when you’re not going blindly to war caused by lower emotions, you’re just following your heart. Then you’re connected. The only thing that’s between you and pure being is your ego-centered activity.”

The director listened but didn’t buy it. Suddenly a muscular soldier come over to the couple, great dignity was seen in his face. He had stood nearby and had overheard the conversation. This was Gravity.

“So what?” Gravity said. “You’re talking about consciousness, about leaving your ego behind and entering another dimension. Am I right?”

“Yes.”

“That wouldn’t work in practice! You know, when you’re out on the battle fields, you don’t have time to make use of your greater power. You have to make a decision in a fraction of a second, or else you’re dead.”

“I know! That’s what I’m talking about! You see when you’re not caught up in ego-struggle your mind is expanded and you make decisions by pure instinct, incredibly fast. It’s like when you’re into some kind of martial arts and you’re up to a new opponent. You cannot think a lot about how to hit him. You just make use of all your experience you have, your subconscious, hitting him not with the surface mind, but with the heart.”



“I see.”

Gravity was observing Ambience with curiosity. It was like a meeting of opposing forces: One caught up in a spiritual dimension, another caught up in physical reality. But in reality there was no true division. For the woman where out on a mission and the soldier was a fast thinking commander, committed to battle.

“Ok.” Gravity said. “You’re pure consciousness. Let’s take that as a theoretical concept. The problem for me is not what you’re saying; the problem is what I observe in practice. You see: Everyone I know who have gone your path have gone downhill, even into Psychosis.”

“That’s a problem of knowledge!” Gravity said, “People who start to get connected experience new things, they come to being in a new dimension. All this is hard to cope with. They don’t know how to handle the flow of energy, the new insights, the love, the transcendence. And then they look like losers on the outside, but are full of life on the inside.”

“So what to do about it?”

“Only time and experience can cure it.”

“Well said! You said it yourself! In this world of colonial crisis we don’t have time for your Love Revolution.”

“I don’t think so.” Ambience said.

“How come?”

“Because what’s happening on the outside is not as important as what happens on the inside. There is no death, there is no bondage, and there are no true problems, only suffering.”

“Well that’s crazy!”

“Ok Gravity. I guess that you have the right to your own opinion.”

## THE CASTLE

Ambience was out in the wild, in the garden near the castle of The Group. There was anxiety in the greater part of her body. The neck were stiff, the hands almost trembled. She thought about the dog she left behind on earth before her travel.

She had company: The Monkey from before were going beside her. Ambience was trying to teach him English, phrased sentences but didn't get satisfying answers. Sometimes she thought \*he\* would make a good governor.

There was something in the air that evening. She didn't know where it came from. A feeling of dread, of uneasiness. Like something big was about to happen but she couldn't grasp it.

Then the girl joined her on her walk. Field had spent time in the house, trying to make friends with the members of The Group, but not succeeding. It was like they spent the entirety of their lives in their heads, never taking pauses.

"So what are you up to?" the girl asked.

"You know my mission." Ambience said. She was almost surprised by the change of mood that Field presented.

"I think you're going too far. You're never home, taking care of your monkey. If I was you I would leave this place and move out on the ocean. To the Island. You know which one."

"Much have to be done." Ambience said, "Besides I like life on the road. Never stopping to take my breath. Always transcending."

The girl wondered.

"I like the mountains. The feeling of living freely in the wild. Never thinking about yesterday or tomorrow. Just breathing."

The couple went up to a hedge that surrounded the area and picked flowers from the bushes. There were noises from a balcony that lay on "The Castle". Members of The Group came out and said that terrible news was on all stations. They pushed a button and a hologram was projected above the garden. The girl and the woman sat down on benches and watched the broadcast. It was intense. An attack by strange creatures had occurred in the outskirts of Luminance. A couple of villages were involved in the attack. The creatures looked a lot like the Aliens from before, but these were a little different. They had white patterns on their heads, like snowflakes. The arms looked the same, the legs also. But there was something with the transparent bulb on the side of the creature. This one was larger. They had a small one on the back too.

"What can we do about it?" the girl said.

"We go to war. I just knew something was about to happen."

## WAR

The soldiers waited in silence as the night gave birth to the morning. It was a middle-sized village. Buildings of light-metal, painted white. Occasionally you could see the red paint, like a cross. There were trees inside the perimeter. Towers for guards were also standing there, put in place after the first invasion. This time, they were useless. The Aliens, who had evolved, always attacked from other directions.

One of the soldiers took hold of his weapon. He checked the ammunition, checked the pipe, and checked the trigger.

The elders tried to calm the younger. They tried to but knew it was useless. In war everything was different from everyday life. The attack would come, some would die, and nothing was left for randomness. The only catch was: This was not a normal enemy.

Soon you could hear shots in the distance and horrible screaming. The soldiers were standing on the wrong spot and had missed the enemy.

In came the rovers, in came the armored vehicles. Even a hovering tank was put in use but it was overthrown of the enemy.

A girl was running from one of the monsters. The Aliens ran on both legs, like faster versions of our own predators. A soldier was there, put pressure on the trigger and killed the monster in a cloud of energy.

These weapons did home in on moving targets. The problem was that the village was full of people: Civilians, elders, women, children.

A couple of soldiers went up in the tower. When they came there the guards were dead. They were laying in a pool of blood, killed by Aliens in a frontal assault. In panic, the soldiers looked out over the battlefield. Aliens were running everywhere. The soldiers shot freely, not knowing if they killed civilians or the enemy. An old man was screaming in the area below. He wanted up in the tower, with the soldiers. They screamed no. If they died everyone else would die and the Aliens would move forward to the next village. But the old man started climbing. Creatures were running around, cutting people to pieces. When the soldiers fired the Aliens took shelter behind protected corners. In a matter of seconds the man was up in the tower. One of his fingers was lost to the Aliens. The soldiers wondered how he escaped the danger. He said he used a protective shield, but was too late to press the button.

The attack was over even faster: The soldiers were left alone in the tower. They walked down to the ground and searched for survivors. No ones were found. They were taken by surprise; they had no way to stop the invaders. So they made a report and informed the government.

## CODE “INSIGNIFICANT”

Ambience was there with the others in the war room. The governor had heard the news. Several villages had been attacked and there were few survivors. The next candidate for ruin was the largest city. The same city where Ambience held her first speech to the public. She was in the war room, but nobody wanted to hear the opinion of a spiritual warrior, still struggling to win the hearts and minds of the people.

“What can we do?” the young captain asked, eager for orders.

“We need larger weapons!” the governor said. “Tanks, planes, battle-suits. You name it.”

Gravity, who was sitting nearby, involved himself in the conversation.

“Don’t believe in larger firepower! Believe in the right troops, smart attacks in special units. These aliens are not easy kill. They hide in the buildings and we can’t destroy everything.”

The governor listened. He knew that Gravity had the experience of combat. Last time, in the wars in the beginning, he was the one who led the armies to victory.

“I think you’re right. We need to rearrange our battle-formations. No need for blood this time. What do you say about the city, what are our chances?”

“Very small. I think we need to make use of the helicopters. We need mobile units that can be put in position extremely fast. Arm them with intelligent energy-weapons. Battle-suits and protective shields. We’re probably losing the city, but we can give them a force of recognition.”

“What do you mean?”

“Perhaps they won’t attack us again.”

“That’s devastating! Why not put in the planes and bomb the city to pieces? We’re already losing it.”

“We need the experience of combat. Plus, we might save a couple of civilians.”

Ambience who had listened carefully didn’t know what to say.

## THE CORRIDORS

The corridors of the military installation were drenched in faded colors. A little boy was working here. He had a knife. The installation was almost abandoned. He had a friend also. A mother on an occasional visit. They were glad they weren't the ones living in the city. The attack would come soon and then everything would be over.

In an instant the couple experienced heightened senses. Sounds were heard coming from the roof of the installation. They panicked and moved to a safer room. They locked the door, cut the lights and used a couple of helmets with night-vision.

"If I ever live through this," the Mother said, "I think I'm going to listen to Ambience."

"Shut up!" the boy said.

The sounds were not gone. Now they heard scratching on the floor outside. The boy went up to the window and looked outside. It was dark. For some reason the wind had started blowing. You could see flags of the installation moving in the wind. He thought about opening the window and going out in the open. Perhaps the Alien could smell them. Soon there would be others. The mother cried softly. The boy opened the window and went outside. Here a feeling of Luminance was felt in the air. Small fields of energy formed near a lake in a range of two hundred meters. He heard screaming from the inside. He ran. Han ran over the yard and out to the lake. It was a vehicle here. A rover. Something that the soldiers had left behind. He opened the door and jumped in to the driver's seat. He saw the weapon that was mounted on the front of the rover. He didn't hesitate anymore. He had to do it. So he started the engine and drove back to the installation. When he came there the window was still open. No mother could be seen. But he wasn't the one to abandon a friend in need. He pushed the horns. Out from the window came the Alien. A grotesque creation of malfunctioning evolution. It was black with yellow and white patterns. The transparent bulb at his side was still there, but growing. The boy pressed the trigger. In a cloud of energy, more red than yellow, the Alien melted. And the rests which remained dropped down to the ground. The boy went out of the rover. He walked up to the window and pushed himself inside. There he found the mother. She lay dead in the furnished room, with a transparent bulb on her stomach. She was evolving. She was becoming one with the Jelly. Perhaps another Alien. Perhaps something no one else had seen before. The boy fled from the installation and jumped back in the rover. Then he drove to the space-station but was lost in the journey. He was never to be seen again.

## THE FINAL BATTLE

They were walking like stale androids of the previous centuries. They knew the danger, they knew the military was coming, but they couldn't evacuate.

The city was not all housing and entertainment. There was music here. Real music. In a room, above the ground floor, close to the top of the city, one of the players was coming to a crescendo. He played for his life. He played notes he hadn't dared to play before. If this was the last night in paradise, he would be paradise too. The listeners were gone but a smile came over the man's face. He played like a rock musician, but leaning towards classical.

\* \* \*

In a kitchen of organic furniture a woman were finishing her dish. It was not bull or chicken. Not even sea-birds. It was a spicy mix of many elements: Vegetables, fruit, even hot leaves from the bushes near the ocean. A man went inside and smelled the smells. He said that he didn't intend to die this night. He would fight to the last teeth.

"And what about the weapons?" the woman said.

The man said he was going to use everything he could use: Like knives, sticks and bones. Nothing else mattered.

\* \* \*

The helicopters were called in. Gravity was sitting at the window, looking out at the glowing city. The electricity was still on. No signs of fighting. The uplink to the radio tower was working. Suddenly the lights went out.

The helicopters made circles around the city and landed on a raised platform. The soldiers gathered there.

"Ok." Gravity said, "No bullshit this time. We're on a mission to save lives. It doesn't matter what happens to you or me. It doesn't even matter what happens to the colonists! We're killers, desperate for victory, seeking revenge."

The soldiers were spreading in several groups. Some were going inside; others were guarding the outer regions. In total, it had to be hundreds of them. Fighting an enemy no one yet could see.

\* \* \*

A small gathering had occurred in the middle of the city. People who refused to end their lives in struggle. They sat on the resting chairs near the artificial lake. Colored lights were hovering around them. The robots were carrying the lights. The colonists wanted to die like gods of the future.

The Aliens did arise from the depths of the artificial lake. Panic broke out in the resting place. The soldiers were there and opened fire on the monsters. Some were hit, others dragged down the "Gods" in the water, drowning them, making them hurt.

One of the colonists screamed, broke out a bone from the resting chair and threw it towards his enemy. Nothing happened. So he broke out another one. Now an Alien was coming near him. The Alien opened his mouth but was killed by an energy-weapon held by one of the soldiers.

The lights flickered on. Red, Green and Yellow. It was like a memory of space-travel. Like traveling through a star-gate and coming out alive on the other side. But many were dying. The soldiers were using bombs now. Energy bombs of condensed matter. The gods of the resting chairs went up in flames and died. People tried to care but nothing mattered. It was a matter of survival. All ambitions were gone.

\* \* \*

The fight continued on the outside: Hordes of beasts from a time unspoken attacked in advanced formations. The soldiers were too few and the Aliens too many. Someone used traditional grenades on the kings of the evolutionary ladder. Explosions were seen on the ground, explosions were seen in the sky. The radio tower fell to the ground and was consumed by fire.

In a corridor near the kitchen walked the man who wanted to fight. He walked in terror as an Alien came through the wall, hit his legs and dragged him towards a blue cloud of energy. The woman came out, carrying a frying pan, trying to save her husband. The Alien watched, the woman screamed but suddenly the energy reformed, moved around and fried the Alien. The man felt at his leg. It was still intact. Nobody could sense the passing of time. No one was dead or alive.

\* \* \*

In a closed basement someone was still playing. The child played videogames to the sound of screams and terror. It was a girl. She didn't listen. She fought her war, commanded her armies, not unlike the real war that was going on above.

Suddenly spots of blood formed at the ceiling. The drops fell down on the girl's hand. She saw them but didn't make notice. She was to win this war. She was to conquer.

Then the Alien stood before her: It looked like an angel of death from a time before time. Something extraordinary advanced but still simple. It gasped for air and launched its tail. The girl fell down on the floor and was killed in an instant.

## RESTRUCTURE

The colonists got the message: The Aliens were out for revenge, not killing. They were a mutated race, more intelligent, products of accelerated evolution.

In the days after the collapse of the city people took to spirit. Ambience talked, people listened. It was not time for panic. It was time to reach inside, find the power and kill the Aliens.

“I want you to use everything you got.” Ambience said, “It doesn’t matter if it’s Love, knowledge or pure violence.”

“What about strategy?” Gravity said, one of the remaining soldiers.

“No strategy.” Ambience said, “Only pure force and the will of the people.”

It was a start of a revolution. There was the taste of blood in people’s mouths. There was the fire of the heart, the revolt against the government. Nobody trusted no one. Everybody was out for deliverance. Deliverance of bondage. Deliverance against a time of sorrow. A tragedy without end.



# PART II

MYSTERY

## A CHANGE OF SEASONS

Clouds of unstable gases were forming silently in the air. It was darker. In some places the clouds were thicker and there were fountains of water drops, flowing out in the atmosphere and falling down to the ground.

A man were walking here, beside his wife, a couple of children were also nearby. They studied the phenomenon. It didn't look like normal clouds on earth. These were more dynamic. In some ways they reminded of dust-clouds. But they were not circulating around the vertical axis only; they circulated in all directions, slowly.

The children were near the clouds, running into the rain and back again. Trying to get wet, but not eager for the coldness.

The wife was eager for explanations. She wanted to know why all this happened. It was getting colder. Nothing like this had been seen before.

"Perhaps it's a question of change of pressure in the atmosphere?" the man said, "caused by shifts in the energy flow?"

"Shifts in air pressure?"

"Yes. Scientists talked about this last week. It's like the conditions of the whole planetoid is changing. Luminance is cooling down, interactions are happening on molecular levels. New currents are moving in the air, in different layers. You have collisions between these layers, and then you have the swirling clouds."

"But on earth?"

"I know. This isn't earth. Something is happening with the air pressure. In some areas it's increasing, in some areas it's decreasing. The clouds are forming differently caused by the interactions of the different currents."

The family went inside and made a fire in a fireplace. The children removed the wet space-suits and moved up close to the fire. The space-suits were made of a light material. They were very thin. They protected the colonists from the Alien air, but weren't too much of an obstacle to freedom of movement and play. The children liked it.

"I think someone have to ponder the consequences of a possible winter." the man said, "we haven't had a winter before and who knows what will happen?"

"Right. But most of us are living inside anyway. The greatest problem has to be the farms. Now what can we do about farming?"

"Perhaps we have to use our greenhouses to a larger extent. But who knows? The energy flows might change and the summer might be back as usual."

## A NIGHT IN THE CITY

The girl was standing in front of the mirror. She watched her new haircut. This was a flash of modern fashion: It was like a spike reaching for the roof; hair was hanging downwards in other areas. It was drenched in hair gel. The whole package was colored in bright orange, not entirely symmetrical.

She didn't think about boys, who thought about boys these days? Instead she thought of party in the city and dancing the whole night to something otherworldly and electrical.

Now she walked up to the refrigerator and took out a package with green emblems. This was "The Juice". A sophisticated liquid capable of sustaining energy for long hours, healthy too.

She drank everything in the package and walked up to the air-lock. Here she dressed up in the space-suit, this one decorated with futuristic patterns. She put on the boots, the light helmet and went out to the hovering train, waiting nearby.

\* \* \*

Sitting in the train was a feeling of companionship. The youngsters were there, some older, some younger. Most of them were thrilled by the suspense of the evening. It was weekend, everybody was paid. Now it had to be party.

\* \* \*

Out on the dancing floor there were many people. Colored lights moved independently through-out the space, some musicians were standing next to the mixer board. This was not like the traditional units from earth. No, you could improvise different musical patterns by the use of an intelligent computer. You just came with suggestions, the flow of music changed, and then the computer made it work as a complete unity. Everybody could do it.

Now, a couple of kids were standing there. They made this into something professional. The only thing that was needed was creativity.

The girl was dancing nearby like a ballerina from the Russian underground.

Ambience entered the room. She made signs to the kids behind the audio-unit. The music faded and then Ambience walked out on the dancing-ground, wearing her normal outfit.

"Listen up!" she said, "The government has made an announcement! Winter is coming to Luminance. The infrastructure is changing. We need new structures, new robots, new vehicles, even a better production of food. What we're searching for are volunteers. People who want to work in the factories, building a better future."

The girl who was still dancing stopped and looked at the woman.

"How about me?" she said, "I'm tired of the conformity of the old generation."

"Everybody is welcome! We have learned from our mistakes: No aliens are running around anymore, killing us. Instead we use a new generation of artificial intelligence. This technology is created by the genius of the young generation, now safeguarding us against error."

"What about the factories?" a young man said, "How about the working conditions?"

"Very good, compared to the old standards. Now, everybody that is interested can contact me. I'm in the restaurant near the town center."

Ambience walked out and the sound of clapping hands was heard behind her.

## THE SOLDIERS

Pools of water had formed on the ground. A kind of snail was crawling near the water. This hadn't evolved on the planet, it was put there, by humans, to eat of the plants and make soil. Flashes of lightning were seen in the distance. The clouds were larger now and growing. The pools were reflecting this light, but the image was broken by the boots of the soldiers, now running over the water.

At a camp, later, the soldiers sat together, some of them talking, others silent.

"You need to know the rules of the new government." The Captain said, "A new era is coming. The warfare of the old doesn't fit in the new surroundings. We're not here to make war; we're here to prevent it. Just keeping peace, and letting the robots do the working."

Gravity, who was sitting nearby, pondered the new society and felt he didn't fit in the larger context.

"And what about the revolution? How come we lost the spirit of freedom and now start thinking about governments again?"

"I know what you're thinking about Gravity. But things change."

\* \* \*

The period after the war was a period of great struggle. Many people had died. The Aliens did not only attack the cities. They hide in the vehicles, even drove them, using technology to their advantage. Bombers were called in and locked on the vehicles, sending them to burning ashes. The Aliens reacted. The humans made counter-attacks. Gravity used his position to deliver weapons to the civilians. They used light armor and protective shields. Even battle-suits were used by those that could handle them. These were electromechanical wonders of modern wizardry: You had the power of stealth, greater sight, and night-vision, body augmentations that was mounted on legs, arms and shoulders. The strength was increased ten-fold. You had hand-cannons that used electricity in great concentrations, to melt the enemy on the spot. But all this didn't help against the Aliens. They were going to victory. Everybody confronted death. Someone cursed Ambience and said no to the revolution. Then suddenly the Aliens died. No one knew why.

Crisis was imminent on Luminance: People were hungry, injured, desperately longing for dead relatives. People were almost giving up. Then along came the new government: Nothing could save humanity but artificial intelligence. The only solutions that worked came from the quantum-computers. They worked overtime, connected together, searching for ways to end the crisis. Another generation of robots came, who were helpers. These were the only ones capable of saving the colonists.

Now the plan for the new century was proclaimed: Nobody didn't need to do anything. People just had to make small adjustments, giving a hand or two. Factories were built. Humanity was saved and slowly expanding. Rebellion was no longer on the radar. Instead, what were on everybody's lips were the outskirts of Luminance. The islands. Places no man had been to before.

## THE ISLANDS

The rains had come and gone. The machines were walking on the paths to the islands. These were not normal paths. They were huge. Fragments of the planetoid, stretched outwards. They were like smaller leaves, bent like corkscrews on the greater flower. Walking on these paths you almost lost orientation. In one moment you were seeing the blackness of space, another moment you were watching the mainland. Now the paths to the islands were bent and you were walking upside down.

The humans were not driving the machines this time. The machines were driving and the humans went along.

The new colonies were products of another level of engineering: How the quantum-computers did it no one could understand. There were doors of hovering fluids; you didn't need to open the doors. The walkways were made of a nonsolid material. You could go in any direction, but didn't need to. You told the computer where you wanted to go, then it just moved the materials and you were transported into another area. The kitchens had electronic cooks that read your thoughts; you didn't even have to ask for dinner.

Somewhere in this place you had the balloons of the playing quarters. Shapes that transformed in the air and made any noises you wanted to. This was the place for children. They built worlds by pure imagination: Castles, creatures and plants unheard of. Everybody was contained.

Along came Ambience: She was up to the task of calming the people. It was frightening, at first: Walking the buildings not knowing if the walls would transform into something dangerous. But people got used to it.

Out in the area surrounding the colony was a gathering of people. The robots served them delicate dishes. The machines were working on a new construction: This one was to replace the town center of the old city. It would be the crowning achievement of all mankind and artificial intelligence.

Nobody else had the imagination.

## DAYS OF THUNDER

Field was walking the rooms of The Castle. She was alone. Ambience was out on her missions, making friends with the growing community. Field heard yelling from the living room. This was voices from The Group, telling her that it was time for games and dinner, but she didn't have the patience.

She walked out on the balcony, watched the clouds forming in the distance. Some were closer. A big one was drifting over the garden and now even close to the building. A flash of light.

The current was strong but Field didn't panic. She opened the door, sealed the airlock and went down to the others.

"Did you hear it?" she asked.

"Of course we heard it! It has happened before but the walls are grounded and the currents just move over the surface."

"Ok..."

She sat down with the others and checked the hologram over the table. It was a translucent version of "The Escape from Atlantis".

"Just collect your pieces." The old woman said, "We're playing these games just like when we were younger."

Field was sensing danger. It was like she was looking through the woman, seeing someone else inside.

"I'm worried about Ambience." She said, "It's like she's lost her mind. It's not even about revolution anymore. It's about technology and the government."

"What can you do in a time of crisis?" a man said.

"I don't believe in progress." Field continued. "I believe we should return to the wild. To nature. We don't even know what's behind all that's happening."

"And what's our alternative?" The man said. "The winter's coming. No one can live outside in this weather. And it's much more to it."

"Like what?"

"Like the limitations of the human mind."

The girl couldn't believe what she was hearing! Now even the "spiritual" were leaning towards quantum-computers! She walked out of the room and went back to the airlock. When she came there she saw that something had happened to the air. The clouds didn't look like rain-clouds anymore. More like snow-clouds, filling the air with soft particles.

## CRYSTALS OF A MIND BEYOND REASON

Luminance was evolving. A blanket of white particles formed an Alien landscape no one had ever seen. There were crystallizations of particles formed by the howling winds.

One of these crystals was formed in a fractal pattern. It wasn't entirely white. Even the particles had color, made by elements not yet understood by science. It was like looking at a jewel made by an expert jewel maker, but much more refined.

In the inner circles of the crystal was something almost looking like a flower. \*The Flower\*. Like Luminance itself, but made much smaller.

The flower didn't look like flowers from earth. You had to think big. Not even the orchids of the jungles were enough to describe it. It was like the structure of the flower had different layers. The leaves of the crown were groped in sections of sections, in different patterns, connected by a central harmony only artists could understand.

It was beautiful.

Luckily enough there were no people there to study it: To understand it, to dissect it. To make it into something it wasn't before.

## THE CAVE PEOPLE

The man and the boy were making their way through the snow. Smaller crystallizations had formed here. Momentarily they stopped to watch the wonders, with awe, but they were hungry and didn't look for long. The man said he didn't trust the new civilization.

"I want back to the city and play." The boy said.

"To become a robot just like the others?" The man protested. "We better stay in the caves and wait until the coldness is over."

The caves were not like the caves from the stone-age. The entrances were sealed with protective doors, preventing the alien air to enter the areas. They were furnished with technological marvels from the world the habitants had left behind: Fusion energy-transmitters, heating the areas and fueling ambient lights. There was kitchen furniture stolen from villages in the surrounding areas. This was not a problem. "The civilized" had everything they needed in great abundance.

The toilets in the caves were a bit of a letdown: Normally you had a complete recycle process. Using the excrement on the fields, for better growth. But this was not the real problem. Instead it was a problem of water. The cave people hadn't built a true water circulation system. So they just had privies and they smelled bad.

The people gathered in the caves, trying not to offend each-other, dreaming of better times and warmth on the planetoid. In one of these gatherings there were a couple of elders and a teenage girl. She was totally drained in a world without other young people, without the spark of relationship. She thought about escaping to the city when no elders were around. She tried to, many times, but didn't succeed. Instead she used the global network, connected herself to the computers and made a living in virtual reality. This was not like cyberspace on earth. It was more refined: You had true worlds, not gaming. You built a complete home, decorated it with items from your wildest imaginations and made relations to others in the same space. People talked about cosmic consciousness, of the Einsteinian unified field theory, and they were making great progress. Now they could see into another reality, from a world made by digital information, and no one of the elders did understand what they were talking about.

Along came Ambience: She was active here and in other worlds. She was known by her strange creatures. Like the reptile from the artificial lake, but more aggressive. It was not pets by normal standards. She used them for competition in different arrangements.

The youngsters were not looking like normal people. They were energy-beings of pure light, taking form as they wished, using portals to other dimensions. Ambience made offers and said that this world, in digital form, would soon come to reality, but differently, in the physical dimension. All knowledge of mankind, all dreams sought and paid for, would be read by the computers, and made substantial in the colonies. The youngsters listened.



## REVELATION

Standing on the snowy hill, curved by the form of Luminance, you could see down to the industrial complex. There were buildings measuring an area of two square kilometers. Fluorescent lights were rotating in different directions, making way for the robots on the ground.

Not many people were moving in the area. Everything was automatic and the machines moved suitably, never stopping to take a pause.

The intruder was Edge: Now exhausted, almost psychotic. He had traveled the landscape looking for people like him, but never succeeding. He had thought about visiting the industrial complex in a long time, in hunt for facts concerning the emerging society. Always suspicious, always paranoid, never stopping to catch his breath.

The binocular was not registering something unusual, at least by Edge's standards. He watched the robots carrying equipment made in the factories, building towers of futuristic items, protected by white plastic. He was more than a little intrigued. At last he jumped down from a spot of raised ground, walked down the slope and came to an entrance. The factory loomed ahead, greeting the middle-aged man with fluorescent lights.

Then the doors opened.

The interiors of the factory were a shade of luminescent blue. Unfinished robots were passing by on moving conveyor belts. It was a metallic vision of artificial imagination: A revelation of quantum-computation taken to its extremes.

The man walked the interiors, observing the robots on the moving conveyor belts. His suspicion was that of the cave-man watching modern man through the dusty glasses of ignorance. It didn't occur to him that the colonists were helpless. That they were like children passing the age of three, realizing there is a space outside the living room.

Suddenly one of the robots moved and fell to the floor.

Edge was scared. He thought about the war-machines of the past. These ones, constructed by humans, could annihilate an intruder in a micro-second. But this one didn't look like them. It was shaped like a human but wasn't biological like the synthetic persons. Instead it was more like a metallic version of them.

He went closer and looked at the metal-skeleton. It was lying on its front, with arms but no legs. There were connections to different parts of its body. Wires, for electrical transmissions, and mechanical counterparts, like muscles. Edge was spellbound, no longer frightened. The robot moved. It pushed its arms and dragged itself forward. The lower part of its body touched the floor. It tried to drag itself up to the conveyor belt but didn't succeed. Edge watched with amazement. He didn't know what to do. This "murderer", this "killer", who under normal circumstances would throw its arms and kill hundreds, couldn't even make a sound. Then an alarm was heard and a couple of other robots came to the rescue. They lifted the poor machine and put it back on the conveyor belt. Edge looked with a feeling of smallness in front of the workers.

## THE GOVERNOR

He was lying on his back in the shelter of the government headquarters. He stared at the ceiling, a cloud of light in different colors were shining from audio-equipment in one corner of the room. It was a breathing exercise. The music was soft and spacey. He tried to calm his nerves, caught up in decisions made by the quantum-computers.

So, Luminance was facing technocracy. What would this mean for the modern world and society? He knew about the other worlds in the multi-verse: Cities of light. People no longer walked on two legs, but floated in the air, connected to Avatars roaming path-ways like flying saucers, without limitations.

The music was building from the audio-equipment. The cloud of light reflected changes in the music. It was like traveling in a vast ocean, the waves were moving, building spheres of interconnected currents. Now he saw that this was a better world than expected: Luminance was not about crime, pollution and endless struggle. It was better than earth. It was Utopia, where dreams and facts did intersect and made love to a transcendent opera!

He took a breath of air and tried to let go of his ego. He floated up on the waves, dived deep down in the ocean and met his space-friends, just lying there on the floor.

If one thing was wrong with Luminance it was the problem of information: How could you now that the machines would function without error, endlessly? That everything went smoothly for the next couple of years, when nobody understood the underlying concepts? Of course he used experts: Experts in every field of human understanding. But nobody could give him the answers he searched for. What it came down to was faith, not intellect. It was like meeting god, not knowing if the creature was an angel or a demon. He sat up, took a nap from a capsule, a transparent liquid. This liquid would calm his senses and make him ready for the pure unconscious.

## BACK AT THE LAKE

She had carved a great opening in the ice, near the island with the artificial lake. Ambience was not in the mood for deeper thoughts, but she couldn't help it. Somehow, she was talking to The Group, meeting Field and it was like a lump was forming in her throat. So many things were going on and she was very responsible: Responsible for the new society, responsible for the new order. Not that she could have done anything to prevent what had happened after the war. But she was an influence, connected to the government, not building against it.

The only thing she had left for herself was the artificial lake. She had a best friend in the reptile with the scales in different colors. But this time she wanted to meet his relatives: The creatures of the deep, outside the confinement of the mini-lake.

She put on the wet suit, took a breath of pure oxygen and jumped down in the water. She lit her search-light. A rope connected her to the opening above. She swam like a dolphin towards the bottom of the lake. A light was coming from underneath.

The one thing she couldn't understand was the paranoia: She knew what she was doing. She was not only supporting the new society. She was preparing people for the things to come: The Love Revolution. This time it was the machines who laid the groundwork for people's imagination. It was not about computation or technology. That was needed for all things physical and survival. What Ambience had in mind was the freedom: Freedom to do anything you wanted, making time for spirituality. That was the fight. That was her mission.

She arrived at the bottom of the lake and watched the glowing plants that were growing there. They pulsed with light; with hints of pink and yellow. It was like a complete eco-system of neural connections, not understood by science.

Nearby was a cave, populated by the aquatic reptilians.

She swam up to the creatures and said hello by flickering the search-light. The creatures didn't like it and fled into the cave. She thought about swimming after them but hesitated. She reminded herself that she was an explorer. Not some kind of rotten fisherman, searching for food.

Suddenly the whole environment came shining with a burst of light: Some kind of aquatic communication. Ambience was amazed but returned to her senses. She pushed the lever on the search-light. The surroundings answered in another light-pattern. Ambience wondered how to continue. She didn't know anything about the all-knowing of the multi-verse. She just thought about it. If she had known, she would have known that the light read her thoughts and tried to comfort her on her mission. She didn't think about Love and returned to the surface.

She dressed up and walked over the ice to the rover. She had removed the weapons at this point. The monkey greeted her. She went inside and sealed the airlock. Fresh oxygen was pouring in. She opened a bag and gave food to the monkey. He didn't say anything but understood what food was. He also understood many things Ambience didn't think about.

Ambience switched on the computer panels and thought about her next move: What was her mission? She remembered someone had talked about the crazy man living in a gigantic harvester. This one was Edge: A paranoid schizophrenic talking about alien invasion and strange information on the network. She didn't think he would give her the answers. But she was open to anything. She would listen to Edge and hopefully grow in the process.

## THE NETWORK

The harvester was almost entirely covered with snow and ice. In some areas icicles had formed, made real by steam that were leaking from the harvester. The harvester was not big by any means. It was huge! Used by the colonists to harvest corn from the fields, it had multiple arms stretching hundreds of meters over the land, like bridges.

Now it was winter and nobody needed its services anymore.

Ambience watched the giant and looked at the ambient light that was forming in the distance. It was glowing with a shade of yellow, almost orange. It was a bit strange at first. Ambience wondered if the energy was reforming and this marked the beginning of another season.

The door opened and Edge was coming out. To Ambience surprise he was not especially bad looking: His look was normal, no red shade around his eyes. Not even his composure was out of the ordinary. He walked, talked and looked like a normal human being.

“Ok.” He said, “You’re looking for information? *The* information.”

“No, I’m just interested in the *concept* of a conspiracy. Perhaps I will learn something.”

Ambience was shown inside and a smell of fresh air was coming towards her. It had something special about it: Not apple or Lemon, but this was a work of art. Like a combination of smells from different parts of Luminance. Something she had smelled one time or two, but forgotten.

“Don’t be put back by the hum of the computers. You see, this is a computer complex. It’s not a harvester anymore. I live here. I roam the net searching for clues and answers.”

They walked into the computer room. Close to this room was a bathroom. Ambience went inside this room, closed the door and used the toilet. She looked at the walls, the shower, and the bathtub. Holographic prints were hanging on the walls. These prints contained photographs, resembling shapes Ambience had never seen. She was about to walk up to them when Edge called from the computer room. She went back to him.

Edge showed Ambience interference patterns in the global communications. He said these were Alien and not from this world.

“How do we know this is Alien information?” Ambience wondered, “And not just the product of local hackers?”

“It’s simple.” Edge said, “It’s the content of the information that boggles the mind. I have analyzed it with computer algorithms. It can’t be a product of human intelligence. It’s too sophisticated. It’s not that the information conveys unknown wonders of the universe, it’s the understanding of the subjects that mirrors advanced artificial intelligence, but in a unique way.”

Ambience was not impressed. She was used to the intelligence of the younger generation and also the genius of the madmen.

“I think what you need is physical evidence. Come, follow me, I have photographs in the bathroom.”

The couple walked into the bathroom, stopped at the holographic photographs and a rush of energy was felt in Ambience brain as she tried to decipher it.

“What about it?”

“Look at the missing information in the picture. It’s not like something is out there, in front of the landscape. Something is rather missing. Like space-time has bended and you’re looking into another world.”

“Aha.”

“You’re not impressed? Well, I can tell you I saw this with my own eyes! A sphere of light entered Luminance, smaller balls of light we’re coming out of the larger one. Not strange if you know how to travel between dimensions.”

“Spheres of light?”

“Yeah, like our light when we traveled through the Stargate.”

“I see. But how do I know this photograph is not modified by computers?”

“You can’t. Not in this case. But I tell you I saw them. Others also. If you want, you can have contact information for the witnesses.”

Ambience was interested. She was living in an Alien world. She had seen Aliens, she had fought Aliens. She had traveled beyond space and time to a parallel universe. Nothing of this was strange by any means. The problem was only the idea of a conspiracy. If the Aliens were here and wanted domination, why didn't they just attack the humans and the war would be over?

"You don't understand the concept of limitation." Edge said. "You see, this is a special breed of Aliens. They are very few and don't have the capacity for war on a grand scale. They're just infiltrating us through the global network, controlling us with information."

"Interesting."

"Yeah, it is. You see, I have followed this conspiracy for several months now. But nobody is listening. You think that we are ruled by a benign form of artificial intelligence. That we know what we're doing. But in fact the instructions of the quantum computers are blocked, and intelligent beings from the beyond are dictating our future."

"And what would this lead to?"

"Nobody knows. The computers haven't found the true purpose of these actions. What we know is that they exist and that they haven't contacted us. You look at the picture. I'm sure you can figure out the rest."

Ambience watched Edge in wonder. In fact, she felt a small tendency towards attraction.

## AT THE CITY CENTER

The girl was not lonely, but transparent, efficient. She was looking for strange oddities in the life of the inhabitants, now sleeping.

The city center was \*the\* crowning achievement. Flowers were growing in the space. Big flowers. Like orchids of the rainforests but several meters high. You could walk on these flowers. There were staircases of living matter beside them. These staircases reformed at an instant, for the pleasure of the people.

The inhabitants were tired of water. There was no water this time. Instead you had the heated sand. Some people slept in this sand. It was very comfortable. The computers felt the pressure of the inhabitants and moved the sand, making corrections for the different parts of the body.

The girl, which was Field, studied one of the men lying in the sand. She was looking for something unusual: Something which could go wrong with the entire technocracy. The man had a smile on his face. It was not devilish or ironic. It was pleased in a way only a god could be pleased: Very calm and happy. The girl searched his pockets. She tried not to offend the man, not to disturb his beautiful dreams. These dreams were created by artificial intelligence. Not too bright, not too dark, but harmonious, like watching a beautiful sunset, feeling peace. She didn't find anything disturbing and reported back to Ambience.

"Try looking in the other rooms." Ambience said, "Search for anomalies, for something destructive."

"I already have." Field said, "You know I'm doing this just for your convenience."

"Right. Well, try to figure out something for yourself then."

The girl searched her mind, trying to find a reason for her visit but didn't find any. Instead she walked up to a dim installation. This was the real sleeping quarters. Women were laying here with their children. Small shapes were floating in the air. These were angels, even fairies. They were singing soft melodies, like sleeping songs, calming the children.

Field had a sudden impulse: What if she tried to wake one of the children, to test if it was really sleeping, or if it was a machine, more dead than alive?

She grabbed the child and shook it. She did this several times with no result. One of the women woke up. She looked at the girl, with terror, not knowing if she was looking at an intruder.

"Just go back to sleep." Field said, "The child woke up and I tried to comfort him."

"Alright."

When the woman closed her eyes the voice of the angels were increasing. Soon, the woman slept again and Field continued with the shaking. Nothing happened. Field thought about the dreams and the artificial intelligence. Was this normal or just an invention of the computers, to make people into zombies?

She gave up and walked back to the men in the sand. Something was going on. Something was happening. There was a current in the air and noises of fluid breathing.

Then she knew it!

The problem was implants! Implants in the bloodstream! They were creations by a new generation of robots. The humans were looking like humans but were machines on the inside. Using nanotechnology, the quantum computers didn't change the shape of people's bodies. But this didn't change anything. Nobody was human anymore. Not human in the original sense! Instead they were biological machines, just like she had said. The problem was sentience: How could she know that these bodies were not just bodies, never conscious? She didn't use the new technology. She said: "Nanotechnology in my body, fuck you!"

She walked up to another installment in the city center. This was the greatest attraction: A hollow man, of five meters, clothed in translucent white. It was like a ghost, standing still and watching the inhabitants. It was the god of the new generation: An A.I, more intelligent than the others, answering questions of any kind.

The girl stood there and watched.

life?”

“Ok, the night is late.” Field said, “The morning is coming. What shall I do with my

The ghostly man just smiled and then kindly answered: “Get over it.”

## WORDS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

There had been unsettling days at The Castle. The members of The Group were trying to put Field to rest, but they didn't reach her. Instead she was moving out now, to the areas of the Cave People.

Ambience was worried. Not that she thought the girl was helpless, rather the opposite. It was more like \*Ambience\* was in need of a helper and needed someone to watch over \*her\*.

The members of The Group talked to her. They told her she needed a good injection of philosophy: Something to make her stronger, something to ease her mind.

Ambience went up to the attic, walked up to the library and took out a book from the bookshelf. This was "The Minutes".

She tried to read it but the words came together and made chaotic connections in her mind.

What was this about? Why did she still read these books, now the leader of a revolution?

Then it came to the surface: The talks with Field had started a process inside of her. This happened in the space station a couple of months ago. She were going there, visiting youngsters of Field's past. Field and Ambience were together now, for real, doing something just for the sake of it.

\* \* \*

The youngsters were not normal: They were revolutionaries of the new generation. They talked about authority in an unusual way. They said: "All governments are poison, no matter how ingenious they are. It's not about solutions. Everybody in power can do great things! Ordinary men can, and also computers. Look at our society! It's truly wondrous! We have everything that we need: Food, shelter, good environment, entertainment. But it's not about the physical conditions. Not even about the well being of the individual. You see, it's about the consequences for the human soul!" "What do you mean?" "We mean that when an individual loses his private drive, he ceases to be an individual. Freedom to do what you want is essential. But if you do something you have to do it by yourself. If you don't you lose your individual drive, your essence, and all is lost." Ambience watched the girl and fell silent. The girl continued: "It's horrific! Just think about it! Not having a will of your own. Never feeling anything of depth or value. Just using other people's thoughts and emotions. You might reach the stars but it's not about the stars! It's about Love! How chocking! If I say to you that Love is an individual thing do you listen?" Ambience was chocked. Nobody had spoken of these issues before. Not with clarity of thought and precision. "How about spirituality?" Ambience asked, "What do you think about spiritual solutions?" "It's garbage! Most of the time. You go to spiritual leaders asking for answers, forgetting yourself in the process. They tell you about god, about enlightenment, about something "beyond" which you don't understand. Well, that's not very good news!" "How come?" "Think about it! You don't understand what they're talking about! How could it be practical? And if it works, which it never will, it's a question of wisdom: How do you know they're enlightened, and you're not?" "Good point." "It's essential! You see, we're grown in a society that rejects spirituality. We think in terms of practical solutions and ask our leaders to take care of it. Why don't we ask ourselves what we really want and just work to attain it?"

Ambience was thoughtful. She was very much into philosophy. She loosely followed "The Minutes." She read the book. Not in her entire lifetime had she thought about the consequences of such actions! That it formed her life. That she was into this revolution because of esoteric societies who had lived on earth before.

Then she approached Field.

"How come you left the youngsters? These people, to live with your family in the mountains?"

"I became tired of it. Why spend your entire life fighting for freedom when you can attain it in an instant, living in the wild?"



Nothing more needed to be said.

\* \* \*

Now Ambience was reading a couple of sentences in *The Minutes* but then everything went black. She couldn't handle it anymore. She couldn't give the book any true attention. It was like the experiences of the revolutions, the relationship with the girl and then nature had awoken a fire in her heart. This happened after the wars: After the death of the Aliens and the beginnings of the new society. At first it was frustrating: Just a spark, which caused more pain than joy. Then it came more rapidly: True emotions, deeper every time. It was not like traveling on clouds. Not like the joys of the modern society. It was more like traveling \*backwards\* in time. Like when she was young and were walking the streets of Chicago. It was a feeling of completeness. Like everything was real and authentic. Of course she didn't know about it, but that was how she felt. She had Affinity and a couple of friends. Nothing special. She just knew she was happy but chosen for greater things. Now, in *Luminance*, work came from the government of quantum computers. The colonies on the islands were built. She was lost in the work and couldn't handle her emotions. Something was lacking in her life: The true purpose of her mission. The spark of love that had kick started her search in spirituality! Now she suddenly knew! She knew that all the ways of the "The Group" were the things that clouded her sanity! She was wiser than them! \*She\* was the one leading the revolution, not them! They only sat in the living room playing games. Eating dinners and making noises.

She was relieved. Then all hell broke loose.

## THE COLLAPSE OF THE MACHINES

The mining site near the city looked like an unfinished grave, but much larger. No gravedigger was seen, but instead you had the mining-equipment: Grey machines walking on metallic legs, drilling in the rocky ground, putting explosives there and then setting them on fire. These were the two-legged walkers. You also had the larger ones crushing the rocks that were created by the explosions. These walked on four legs and loaded the gravel on platforms that was mounted on their backs.

Now, the humans were standing nearby: Frozen by the cold weather, they drank hot drinks, trying not to lose the sharpness, coming too close to the shockwaves.

The walkers worked as usual when they suddenly fell to the ground. The humans just looked and suddenly the machines were lying there. The workers went up to the metallic monsters. They studied the interiors of the machines. Nothing worked as usual. The electronics were gone. Someone went up to the explosives and saw that one of them was lit. The man screamed, the others took shelter. The shockwave sent rocks, gravel and dust flying through the air. Two men were too close and were crushed by the explosion.

Panic was spreading through the group. The city was pretty close but still too far away. Soon night would come, the temperature would go down and there was no way to find shelter. Some of them watched the remains of the crushed workers. A leg could be seen, also a head and something resembling intestines. Everybody was spoiled, nobody could handle it.

The men gathered near one of the walkers, trying to find a way to solve the problem. They thought about going inside one of the machines, closing the airlock manually, take of their space-suits and warm each other through body contact. They didn't do this. The oxygen levels in the machines would be too low; the air support was an automatic function, regulated by the main computers. So they started walking. They watched the natural light die out; saw the glow from the city, and then everything went black. The electricity in the city disappeared.

Nobody knew what was happening. Was this an Alien infiltration, someone taking hold of the electromagnetic grid, or was this just a coincidence? One man stopped and spoke to the others. He said that they better had to return to the mining site, perhaps the electricity would come back in a matter of minutes and they would be saved? Nobody listened.

They walked through the snow. The terrain was feeling much more difficult now. The muscles of the poor bodies weren't used to the effort and the breathing was getting harder. Soon the oxygen levels in the tanks were coming low. The men had to sit down in the dark, now just using flashlights, desperately confronting disaster.

No one came to the rescue. The electricity in the city didn't come back. The workers sat in the snow and slowly fell into coma.

## THE FALL OF GOVERNMENT

The government officials were sitting in the war-room watching three dimensional displays showing images from Luminance. It was happening everywhere: The electricity in the largest city was gone; the one on the island. The villages surrounding it had seen the collapse of the machines. Calls of help were heard over independent communication units. The cities on the mainland were also facing disaster.

The cold weather combined with the loss of power was disastrous. Even the smaller working-units, serving the colonists, had stopped working. The only thing left of value was the space-station. Built on an older generation of technology, it used a different power supply, and was still habitable.

“We need to assemble a rescue team!” The governor said, “We need to check the empty areas of the space-station, opening it up for survivors!”

“Of course.” Gravity said. “But nobody will listen! The people will feel betrayed by their own government! They will do everything on their own. And I will respectfully resign from my post.”

Gravity walked out.

The government officials looked in despair, knowing that their time had come. Also they feared the uprising of people and the safety of their own lives.

“Let’s take this in smaller steps!” The governor said, “Let’s not go forward to fast! Here’s how we do it: We reassemble the military, checking that Gravity won’t get hold of it this time. We use the weapons at our disposal, saving the survivors and keeping the masses in control. We need lies to keep everything running smoothly, building a new government in the process.”

“What kind of lies are you talking about?”

“You know which ones: That the failure of the new technology is momentary and that the power of the cities will come back again. That there is no time for worries. That the helpers of the people face the same destiny as the cities and that everything’s ok.”

“Will this work?”

“Of course not. But we’ll buy time, perhaps finding the way to come back as rulers, living for the wellness of the people, and not getting killed by them.”

“Ok.”

\* \* \*

Gravity was taking hold of the masses: He gave them everything they wanted. With the military on his side, they arranged rescue missions. Everybody was related to everybody. There was no time to wait, hoping for government solutions that nobody believed in.

Survivors were desperately walking the snowy terrains. There were many groups that counted thousands of people. Many died in the snow, freezing to death or dying of exhaustion.

In came the rovers; in came the helicopters, even planes. Everything was used for maximum effect. The government officials went down in the basements, seeking shelter in protected rooms. But many of them were killed, some of them escaped and disappeared in the snowy terrain.

Ambience wasn’t killed. Somehow Gravity succeeded in calming the masses. He said that Ambience had been deceived by the government. She always did what she could, under the circumstances.

Field established a link to The Castle. She tried to reach Ambience but wasn’t succeeding.

The masses gathered in the great hall of the space-station. The area with the pond, with canals and waterfalls. Here Gravity held speeches: Many people had died. The survivors were counting 750 000. More people were coming in. He said that they had to keep their spirits up, not fighting each other, protecting themselves from deceases.

Then the rumors came in: Words of attacks in the outskirts of Luminance, death to the Cave People. Nobody knew who was responsible for these attacks. But the invaders looked like clones, Alien clones. Hybrids between Aliens and normal people.

## AMBIENCE'S MISSION

The night had come. Somewhere in the faintly glowing landscape there were just the two of them: Ambience and Edge, armed with beam-pistols, sneaking around an anonymous installation in nowhere. There were white walls, blue text on them and then there were the radar-towers. No guard-towers could be seen, not even normal guards.

“Do you know the entrance to the main-building?” Ambience whispered.

Edge shook his head and they continued to a small building close to the other one. Here they opened the door, went inside and found a collection of electronic maps on a table. They studied the maps, silently, and there were a feeling of connection in the air.

“You know the Aliens have tried to join with the people. This installation should look like a normal human base. It’s nothing special about it. But everything is happening on the inside. Armies have been created. Hybrids between humans and Aliens.”

“A couple of months ago I would have thought you were crazy,” Ambience said, “but not now, not in this condition.”

They found the main-building on the map and went out on the open ground. It was a calm night. No currents were flowing in the air. It was like Luminance was waiting for something. Something important but not related to the sneaking on the ground. The industrial complex was looking like the others, but it lacked movement: Movement of robots on the ground.

One building had no entrance. This one was larger than the others. Given the description on the map it could be the one. The couple looked around, trying to find a way into the building but didn’t find any.

“Come on.” Edge said, “Let’s go up on the roof. I’m almost sure we’ll find a way if we get there.”

They walked around to the other side. There were hundreds of meters of walls separating the couple from the inside of the building. Something emerged from the shelter of a store building nearby: This was a walker, looking like the two-legged ones from the mining site. It had no driver. No Alien. No human.

The couple continued to a ladder thirty meters away.

They stopped in front of the ladder trying to listen for noises on the inside. It was dead calm. They walked up the ladder and came to the roof. Here was a walk-way, ending in a closed door of metal. There was a green panel beside this door. Ambience took out something from one of her pockets: This was a sphere of metal, seven centimeters in diameter, with a red display.

“We just open the door, set the counter, throw the fusion bomb and run away?”

“I don’t think so.” Edge said, “I want to see what’s inside. There might be important information, useful at the end of the war.”

\* \* \*

The interiors of the building were large and spacey. They walked a wide corridor. Different kinds of items were seen at the walls. There was resting chairs in metal, taps for water, shelves containing electronic documents of many kinds. They stopped and looked at some of these documents. The content could not be understood. Using a language of symbols, it was written in an Alien language, impossible to decode.

They continued and then entered a room which looked like an Alien office. It was no one there. It didn’t have a conventional chair. It was rather like a sphere of electrodes, formed in a spherical pattern, obviously used to communicate with an invisible force. A quantum computer system could be seen at a wall. This one connected to the sphere and looked exactly like their computers. Perhaps stolen. Nobody knew.

“We’ll get back here later.” Edge whispered. “Now we’ll try to find the hybrids.”

They went back to the corridor and arrived at a huge hall. There were sleeping units here, along the walls. Glass covers were mounted on the sleeping units. Bright lightning created highlights on the metal surfaces. There had to be thousands of them.

“We can’t back away now.” Edge said, “Check your weapon. I must see the hybrids with my own eyes.”

Suddenly the glass covers opened and the naked hybrids came out. There was not many. They looked like a combination of human shapes and the Aliens from before. Their skin was stained: A pale color with black areas. They walked upright on two legs. Their arms were longer than humans and had poles on the back sides stretching backwards. Stars of thorns were seen around their legs. Their skull was a bit deformed: Like a predator from earth, but humanlike, a beautiful composure but still hostile.

The couple opened fire. They shot at the hybrids, melting them with the laser beams. The survivors were seeking shelter behind the sleeping-units. An alarm went off.

The couple had to escape. They ran to the entrance, planted the fusion-bomb and walked up the ladder to the roof. When they came there the door was locked from the outside. It didn’t open. They went back to the fusion-bomb on the floor. The hybrids were coming. Ambience disarmed the bomb and ran into the office. Edge came after. Ambience closed the door and locked it. Nobody knew what to do. Then a spherical light was seen in the air. An invisible force, bending time and space, were moving across the wall, towards the spherical communication unit with the electrodes. It was very bright, like looking at a portal to another dimension, distorting the shape of the room as it went along.

Ambience shot at it. But the beam bended and were consumed by the light. Soon sounds could be heard in the entire building. The sphere of light disappeared. Hybrids were running in the corridors. Then silence.

Ambience and Edge were sitting on the floor. The man looked into the woman’s eyes and saw that she saw was he saw. It was mysterious. They walked up to the computer. Edge logged on to the terminal. It was just like his own computer in the harvester. He searched the files. Looked into documents written in Alien language. He didn’t understand a thing but sent the information to the decoder in the harvester. The answer came back. The Aliens planned an attack to the space-station. The invisible Aliens had created a physical force of hybrids to exterminate the colonists. They couldn’t do this by themselves. They were too few and the humans too many. The war was a late strategy. At first they tried to get control of information: To infiltrate the human information-society, producing high-tech units that would fail at an instant. But the humans were harder to kill than expected.

Now a girl was outside the complex and watched an army of hybrids marching into space-vehicles: Armed with homing weapons, lasers of every kind. The girl was Field. She knew about the attack on the Cave People. She had lived there but later went to The Castle. Searching for Ambience, after the fall of the machines.

The armies went away and the girl was going inside. Half-way through the complex she met Ambience and Edge. The others shouted in joy. Tears were coming out. This was the beginning of the second war.

## THE GATHERING AT THE MAIN HALL

Gravity was informed of the coming Apocalypse. People listened to the information but nobody gave up. They had seen much fighting and combat, misery on a grand scale unknown to man. It was as if they were prepared, like the years of struggle had made them stronger.

Now everything that was needed was knowledge: How to handle the battle-suits, how to steer the helicopters, how to fire the tanks.

Gravity gave lessons in modern warfare: The strategy was to hold the space-station. The invaders would use heavy artillery, perhaps even fusion-bombs. The colonists would use the planes to bomb the armored vehicles. Some would have shields, others not. They had to make sure no hybrids came inside the space-station. These ones would fire the fusion-bombs, annihilating the whole structure. But if they did come inside, the soldiers would use the power-suits, fighting them with speed and agility, minimizing losses.

There were a lot of youngsters in the mail hall. They were eager to learn the power-suits. Everybody knew the soldiers weren't enough.

Gravity thought about traps: About ways to fool the invaders. For this they used remains of technology invented by the quantum-computers. Now they could fake the surroundings. Building chambers that changed at an instant, melting the hybrids on the spot. The problem was that even the soldiers could get lost in the mazes, losing sanity. The youngsters were volunteers. They were used to difficult environments, conditioned by the portals of cyberspace.

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The "bunkers" were dark and gloomy. These were normal rooms, but the youngsters called them "bunkers", used to the hostility of the future world. It was a pink light coming from spotlights at the roof. They moved. Irregular shelves, made of light material, contained computer software of every kind. Holograms were seen close to the youngsters. Glowing with light, like mini-worlds waiting to be born.

The youngsters lay down on black pillows in one corner of the room, all fifteen of them. This was a restricted area, used only for special occasions. The teenager boy made sounds on the floor, tapping his fingers. This was a war song. Someone took up a beam-weapon and looked into the muzzle. Others heard the tapping and joined the boy. It was the sound of marching: Marching to the rhythm of dying dreams.

A grown man came into the bunker. This was a friend to Gravity. He gave them more weapons and instructions. The youngsters said that all this was a game of chance. Everybody knew that their last time had come, but they could buy time, for others.

"I'm proud of you." The soldier said, "You know I was never fighting in your age. I was grown on earth, used to comfort and progress."

"The growing population was not easy." The Girl said.

"I was able to handle it. Things never went out of hand. The computers did it. They took care of everything. I just went to military school."

"The computers are not our enemy." The teenager boy said. "It's a resource. You just have to maintain the distance."

"I know."

The soldier watched the youngsters and then walked out. The tapping continued.

## A MOMENT AT THE LAKE

They had walked the Alien landscape, all three of them. Now Ambience was growing tired and stopped to watch the ice on the lake. This was the same lake as the one with the reptiles.

“Look!” Edge said.

There was an area with glowing clouds, reforming, near some cliffs a hundred meters away.

“What about it?” Ambience said.

“There are some creatures there! Close to the water. Don’t you see them?”

Ambience looked more closely and now she saw them: They were reminiscent of the Aliens of the past, but these ones looked more like humans. Not that the shape was like a humanoid, it was the skin color: They were pale, like the pigments of the skin had disappeared, in different areas.

Ambience took up a binocular and magnified the image. The creatures \*was\* the Aliens of the past but these ones looked very peaceful: Even friendly. Ambience looked at the others with astonishment. Field took the binocular and looked. The creatures were just sitting there, calming each other. The ice had melted and steam was coming up.



## THE REVENGE OF LUMINANCE

The armies were gathering up around the space-station. There were tanks, infantry, artillery armed with homing missiles. Gravity just stood in one of the towers, one of the highest points of the space-station, watching twenty-five thousand hybrid clones. These ones were not eager for victory, but only executing instructions.

“Send out the planes!” he shouted.

The engines ignited and the bombers flew from the platforms, taking heavy fire as they moved towards the war-machines.

The siege was structured evenly on all sides. The enemy had thought about equal distribution, aware of the counter-attacks. Now the bombers flew nearby, was hit by homing missiles but not exploding. The shields were still working.

Inside, in one of the bombers, the soldier who talked to the youngsters, were in charge of the weapons. He stared in terror as the pilot lost coordination. The navigation system was offline, so he had to remove the pilot and take care of business himself.

He flew like a bat over the outskirts of the battle-formations, using sound as a navigation tool. For some reason this made an impact on the hybrids, which put their hands on their ears, reforming, gaining power.

The infantry of the hybrids were moving forward. Many human planes had crashed. Some of them managed to release their bombs. A lot of enemy tanks were demolished. Artillery also. Then the space-station was hit. This was a strategic maneuver. It was the main hall. The enemy had the information: Knowing where to attack for maximum effect.

The people on the inside were running around like screaming children, watching the shockwaves. The explosions were tearing holes in the hull of the structure. The atmosphere of Luminance was coming in. People fell to the floor: Gasping, breathing. Oxygen masks were given to the victims. Some was saved, some died.

Gravity screamed in the tower. You had to do something about the artillery! Someone had to go out there, killing the bastards! The only thing left was the helicopters: These ones had no shields but there was no way around it.

The helicopters lifted.

One last plane was still flying: The pilot was the friend to Gravity. He took heavy fire, the only one who could handle the planes. He was guarded by the shields. He flew over the battle-field, releasing bombs on the artillery. He was much better than expected: He demolished thirty-five tanks, more artillery. So now the helicopters had free reign over the air, on one side.

Out came the tanks from the space-station. These were not like the tanks on earth. They were driven by a jet-engine propulsion system, hovering in the air, moving on atmospheric currents. They fired their blue energy beams. Hundreds of hybrids were killed. It was more difficult with the tanks. Some of them had shields. So the opposing tanks were driving into each other. The soldiers came out, disturbing the hybrids, holding them back from the space-station.

Now the soldier in the plane had no energy left in the shields. So he crashed, close to the ground and went forward to one of the tanks nearby. This one was not moving. Hybrids came out, shot at him, but he threw himself on the ground and killed them with his energy-weapon. He was going inside the enemy tank. He threw himself in, progressed to the controls, trying to figure out what to do next. Another hybrid came from the hole above. The soldier was beaten down, at the console of the instruments. Trying to fire his energy-weapon but not succeeding. The enemy was tuff. He used his long arms to his advantage: He held the soldier back while trying to kill him with a grenade that had started counting. The soldier kicked at the hybrid. Not knowing if this hellish design was more human than Alien. It was disgusting. The grenade exploded and the tank went up in flames.

Back at the space-station Gravity watched the battle-field once again. He saw that the artillery was out. A couple of helicopters hovered in the air but were shot down by infantry. Some enemy tanks were moving forward. He didn't know what to do.

Then the youngsters came: They would go out there. Confront the tanks, become moving targets. They would use the power-suits and stall the enemy. Gravity didn't like it but there was nothing more to do.

Then one idea came to Gravity's mind: There was a flying-machine in a building one and a half kilometers away from the space-station. This was Alien in design. Found on the planet, during the colonization. Nobody had used it before. What if \*he\* used it? What if he left the tower, using a power-suit to move on the ground? Moving right through the battle formations?

"You have to wait here." Gravity said to the youngsters. "Prepare for battle in the floating chambers."

He used the elevator down to the main-hall, using an oxygen mask in the process. Then he went to an airlock, put on a battle-suit and opened the door.

Hell was reigning outside: Enemy infantry were progressing steadily. The helicopters were burning. Luckily enough there was no more tanks, only Alien hybrids, expressionless, executing instructions.

He jumped like an idiot over the bridge to the snowy ground of Luminance. The infantry were shooting at him but he was protected by an army of soldiers on top of the space-station. He broke through, killing many in the process. At last he arrived at the building of the flying-machine.

It was like a harbor: A space-harbor unique in design. It didn't remind him of the technologies of the invaders. This was more futuristic. Some explorers had to have been on Luminance once but disappeared for unknown reasons.

Inside the flying-machine he was confronted with consoles of floating matter. The equipment sensed him, made adjustments to the shape of his body. He could sit down but then he couldn't give instructions. What language could it be? What kind of communication was valid for his mission? A sound was heard: A repetition of notes, like the language of music. What was it? Should he sing now? A melody of war to the sound of huge explosions? He didn't think about it for long. The roof opened. It was a miracle! The flying-machine had read his thoughts and was now leaving the building.

When he came to the space-station the armies had surrounded the structure. The soldiers were firing desperately. And then one of the hybrids was activating a fusion-bomb of smaller proportions. It exploded. Thousands of hybrids were killed but it was also the end to a part of the space-station.

Suddenly waves of energy were coming out from the landscape of Luminance: Red, glowing mass, some tones dark blue and glowing. Even yellow patterns were forming near the space-station. "Was it angry now?" Gravity thought and sent aggressive thought energy towards the enemy.

It was a great spectacle: The fire of the flying-machine and the energy of Luminance joined and the hybrids melted. It was like the war of the gods, thirsty for survival. Gravity lost coordination. His mind was too occupied by the heat of the moment, of the fire, of the beauty. So he sailed through the energy-clouds and came out on the other side of Luminance.

There was no movement in the air: The environment was different. Here darkness prevailed. Gravity thought about light and there was light. He flew his flying-machine over a dark void. In places there were structures resembling roots of a tree, but gigantic. It was as if the flower of Luminance was taking nourishment from the void, creating energy in the process. The soldier cried, stopped the flying-machine and came to his senses.

Inside the space-station the forces were running towards the floating chambers. The youngsters were here. They jumped; they ran, trying to fool the hybrids into the structures. They succeeded. There were thousands of them, now running inside the structure.

Suddenly the energy flow of Luminance changed: Black clouds of anger were directed towards the people: Towards the hybrids, towards the youngsters. It was like the thunderclouds on earth but more violent. There were fighting on an unprecedented scale. The black energy was building black vortexes of swirling mass.

Gravity was ready: He was sending thoughts of Love towards the void. But he was too late. The vortexes moved into the people of the chambers. They went inside the youngsters and the hybrids. It was like the currents on the fields of the calves. But these currents were violent.

When Gravity returned he could see the remaining parts of the space-station: Most of the people had survived. The energy fields of Luminance were cooling down. It was as if the injury had healed and everything had gone back to normal. He tried to contact his friends: The youngsters, the elders, the soldiers. He got several answers. But most of the youngsters were gone. He watched the battlefield and made circles around the space-station.

# PART III

CONCLUSION

## THE MYSTIC

Darkness was present in the cave. The old man was coming back to physical reality. He had dreamt of the coming apocalypse and then the revolution. It was dreams he could not explain. Nothing he thought about himself or could control. He just had these dreams and didn't know why.

He was a true mystic. He didn't dream in the normal sense. He was having lucid dreams: Outlandish visions of lands and places unknown to the general population. He could control the dreams, doing things he just couldn't do in physical reality. Sometimes he thought he weren't dreaming: That these visions were more real than the landscape of Luminance.

He went out to the opening of the cave and watched the energy-fields slowly moving over the hills. Something was different this morning from other mornings in the last three quarters of the year. The energy was becoming more intense. Here and there the snow had melted; there were streams of water pouring in places. He went out to the energy fields and heated food close to one of them.

The man was silent. Nobody listened to him. He was out of sync with modern society: Too far away and too impractical. He didn't know about it, but he was one of the few wildlife survivors of the clone wars: One of the few that didn't belong to the space-station.

As the energy-fields cooked the food, boiling it in the water, the man was taken by surprise. The air was feeling differently. A haze of gas molecules were forming around him. It was very pleasant and calming. Suddenly he got the idea to remove his helmet: To breathe the alien air just to test if it was breathable. He did it. He just sat there for a long period without going tired or dizzy. It was as if he were home, on planet earth again, just taking in the energy of the morning. Then he realized he didn't need the space helmet anymore. It was oxygen in the air.

## MOVEMENT

The oceans were cracking. There were sounds of thunder as the ice melted. Cracks were created and the different floes torn against each other. Kids were there, playing on the floating ice. One of them stood looking at the curved land in the distance when a crack appeared under him. He jumped sideways, trying to escape the crack and ran over the ice with his playmates before him.

It was a morning of extraordinary circumstances. The weather of the whole planetoid was evolving. Currents created by atmospheric pressure were roaming the land, playing with the habitants, whispering messages of the time ahead, but nobody knew about it.

The rest of them were going over the cracks now. They had to watch their steps, going over the cracks and not into them. There were not a lot of vehicles. Most of them had been destroyed in the war of the space-station. The survivors counted 650 000. This was not low numbers. The war was truly won, not lost as most of them had counted.

Now they were looking for life in the cities. The new warmth of Luminance was making life possible, without the energy centers and the helpers of artificial people. It was the only way to make progress.

## A LAST GOODBYE

The members of The Group were standing in the garden at The Castle. There was just Ambience and the rest of them. They wore beautiful clothing. Ambience was pulling down a bucket in a well. Fresh water came up and they were all drinking.

“Why are you leaving?” one of the members said.

“You know why. I have seen the errors of The Minutes and have to walk my own way.”

“It’s sad.” The old woman said, “You know we were making great progress.”

“We weren’t. The minutes were written by dead people in a dead society. They might have been intelligent. They might have made a good thing or two. But they didn’t listen to the young generation: To the fire of the heart.”

Nobody said anything. The Group was walking up to the door. Ambience stopped and said that she wasn’t going further. This was a last goodbye.

“What have you been doing anyway?” The Man said, “You haven’t even followed The Minutes. You were just going to different places, improvising as you went along.”

“I did. That’s what saved me.”

“We don’t think so. But what’s your plan right now? How do you hope to save the colony, without guidance?”

“I can’t. Nobody can save the people but the people themselves. Haven’t every wise man said this before?”

“They have. But then there was always the relationship between the people and the leaders. Not like the revolutions in this world.”

“You’re wrong. Every revolution always started by the dissatisfaction of the people. The common man did it. The leaders just took advantage of it and made it worse. Like the technocracy we have left behind. Let’s pray to ourselves that this won’t happen again.”

The members went inside. Ambience was free. She looked towards the light-beams that came shining through the clouds in the distance.

## A VILLAGE NEAR THE LAKE

The howling winds were moving rapidly over the fallen walkers on the ground. The kids were inside the machines: Now playing colony workers of the past. A little girl was sitting close to the panels. It didn't glow. A grown man was screaming at the children from the outside. He shouted that the weather was getting worse. It was getting dangerous. The kids just had to follow him inside, to the comfort of the village.

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The temperature of the village was not entirely comfortable. But it was getting warmer every day. What they worried about was the food: They had food reserves taken from the shelter of the space-station. And they had greenhouses. But the reserves were getting smaller. So they made ration programs, trying to eat less, drink more. Perhaps the healthy bacteria in the water could make them survive.

One man confronted the others and said that he had made the math: Nobody could stay healthy on this diet. What was needed was more food and greater variety. It didn't sound good, what he now had to say. But he had thought a lot about it: There were other villages. Other people. More food. Someone just had to go there and take it.

The others didn't listen. The man was called insane and put to rest. But the math could not be unproven. Soon they were all starving. Other people were moving out to the smaller villages in the same region. Near the lake. There were also people moving into the larger city. The village people couldn't win a war against them. So the only thing that remained was the smaller villages. They didn't talk about it. In fact they condemned it. But then they dreamt about it: They shut their eyes and tried to think about peace, not survival. But then the subconscious responded and they thought about it anyway.

One man was one of the remaining youngsters. He said it was better to be eaten alive than to kill others for survival. He was getting approval from others that were older. Women adored him for his heroism, but rejected him for his ignorance of \*them\*. What could he do? What could he do to make them listen? He contacted Ambience and asked for guidance.



## AT THE ALIEN BASE

They heard the message: Ambience, Edge and Field. They didn't have an easy solution. United by Love, but divided by personal differences, they made a strange team, arguing sometimes, coming together at other moments. They tried to get an understanding of the Alien technology. To find the error that was the cause of the collapse of the machines.

There was a building close to the main-center of the hybrids. Here was a whole factory resembling the look of the factories of the human colonies. The walkers were there: The robots. The helpers. They were working as usual. The war machines were gone. Edge was sure the error of the past was purely hacking of the central computers. The Aliens had to have reprogrammed the entire computer systems of the machines, from the beginning, writing the whole crashing scenario into the quantum-bits. Ambience wasn't so sure. Perhaps it was only a question of using gaps in the security systems of the machines, at the time of the crash, to put them down.

Field came to the rescue: Why not reboot the entire computation sequence at the timeframe of the collapse, setting the original time frame of the main-computers? Watching the information flow at the transition and see what really happened.

They did it. The computers came with a burst of information: They put the information at the test on the machines in the factory. They computers didn't crash. No walkers fell to the ground. Not the robots. Not the helpers.

"The error has to have been hardwired into the machines, when they were built." Edge said, "Working normally for a while, just waiting for the moment of the collapse."

"Just like we thought." Field said, "They wanted us to believe in the new technology. Gradually we adapted to it and became dependent. Then they just had to turn the machines against us."

Now everybody thought they had to search into the computers of the Aliens: Analyzing everything. Searching for information that would reveal the entire engineering process. It was not easy. Edge was put to this task. Ambience and Edge walked the war factories, not entirely in sync with each other. They wondered why all this happened. Why they couldn't bond in spite of everything that had happened.

"Perhaps it's because I'm a revolutionary and you have given up?" Ambience suggested.

"That's cruel!" Field said, "But I don't think so. It's much deeper. I think it might be caused by our entire history: Our relationships to different persons, society and nature. We walk our lives thinking it's about something, but it's completely different."

"So it's not about belief-systems?"

"No, perhaps not at all. It's more like you are drawn to different things, having emotional baggage. This is very individual and so we can't agree on anything."

This was a turning-point for Ambience: She hadn't thought about the emotional investment she had made on her journey. She had followed her *emotions*, not "The Minutes", even though the writings were an influence.

"So what about our emotions?" Ambience asked, "What can we do about the way they are, when we know nothing?"

"That's the thing I'm talking about. We can do nothing about it! Just let your emotions flow freely and go on with your life."

They came to a halt near some computer panels in the factory. They stared at the controls and said nothing.

## A TOUCH OF SPRING

The landscape of Luminance was coming alive with plants in different colors. Steam was coming up from the lake: The Lake of the reptiles.

It was an unusual area. Living harmoniously on the cliffs on the slope which bordered on the lake, they just sat there: The Aliens. Collecting plants, making fires and bonding with nature.

It was still the same species as before. The mutation had happened in a process of metamorphosis. Using the jelly of the bulbs at their sides, they used living matter from the people to evolve without the use of chance and natural selection. Their skin color had changed. They were more humanlike, but the shape of the body was still intact. They looked like monsters but their eyes weren't terrifying. There was the feeling of wisdom, the smile of the old mystic, who knew everything but nobody listened.

One of them moved slowly over the cliffs, away from the fire. He looked at the lake, now free from ice and wondered: Who am I? Nobody had told him anything. But the relationship to Luminance and the others had awoken a curiosity in his heart.

He sat down at a blue plant: Looking like a blue version of the Aloe-plant from earth, but larger, he didn't know about their healing powers. There were thorns there, on the plant, he was very careful when he took samples of the plant. Tasting it.

In a rush which felt like a couple of seconds he was staring up at the blackness of space. Confronting the moving energy-fields. His relatives were still sitting at the fire. It was as if a dose of adrenaline came into him: A remnant of the past. He saw the struggle of the Alien race. The violence. Where he came from. Even the energy of the people from earth was coming into him. He saw different times and places. A story of evolution on a grand scale. Sometimes this evolution wasn't following linear paths. There was great dying, planetary wars, and deceases. Evolving weather which changed the planetary conditions. Then he knew that there were times when everything was peaceful. When people came together and worked together for a greater cause. This also happened on Luminance. It had happened several times in the history of the Alien race and this time was one of them. The only catch was that the peaceful were killed by others and evolution started once again.

The Alien was coming back to reality. He moved slowly, back to his relatives at the fire. They looked at him with staring eyes, seeing into him: Seeing that his consciousness had changed. He felt different, he saw different. He knew that the landscape of Luminance was alive, talking to him, giving him messages. The relatives exchanged emotional energy, with telepathy, something which a lot of animals did, instead of talking. So he sat down at the fire, talked and looked at the lake without any hint of waves on the surface.

## THE SELFISH GENES

The waves were slowly building on the lake: The family man had changed his mind. They were using boats from the time prior to the technological revolution. Equipped with lasers, grenades and other weapons they didn't think about killing anyone. Instead they would use the \*threat\* of violence. The food was running out, hopefully the people in the small village would have more.

They entered the shore but soldiers waited there. These ones, led by Gravity, were put in charge of protecting the civilians. The soldiers just stood there, like mercenaries, knowing that the people from the other side were coming. The family man saw them, though of attack but realized he couldn't do anything. He was feeling guilty. Never in his life had he thought about stealing food, leading to the starvation of others.

"You know." Gravity said to the man, "You're not the one to blame. Blame the genes you have, working for survival, remnants of millions of years of evolution."

The man was out of words.

"You had to go here! You had to protect yourself and your family."

The man went back into the boat. Feeling guilty. Confronting death and the hunger of his stomach.

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In other parts of Luminance the fighting had started. The food of the space-station was running out. There weren't enough forces and no way to have a faster food production.

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A girl was planting seeds of vegetables in a small pond. These ones were the seeds of sea-plants, known for their high concentration of proteins. Then she was a little struck by the fact that no one had searched for food in the oceans. There had to be food there also, not only plants like these, coming from earth.

There was no way to stop the wars, she thought. Man was too emotional, too silly. Better to be spiritual like she was, just confronting her destiny. The key was the love of death: To see it as a natural occurrence. When you died you just shifted perspective: You saw into another world, where your dreams come true and you met your dead relatives. There had to be many of them, she thought, thinking of the wars and the collapse of the technocracy. It was a strange world by all means! Living in a spiritual ocean of endless possibility and then she came here! To confront a destiny of wars and starvation. How silly! But then she thought there had to be a way around it: There had to be a meaning of it all, something she had never heard about.

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE MACHINES

Edge had searched the Alien computers in night and days, trying to find a solution. He thought that if he could make the fallen machines work again, they could go online as usual, helping the colonists towards a better future.

He had to prevent a coming Apocalypse of course! Find the error of the computers and cure it.

He was a computer expert: A god of software and intelligent design. What he didn't know about was the Alien computer language. If he narrowed down the problem to its essence, perhaps he could find the cause of the collapse, rewriting the electronic circuits of the machines.

He didn't get a satisfying answer: At last he had to give up. He wandered the interiors of the Alien factory complex, very well aware that this could be the end. Ambience was trying to reach the warring population. She said that they might be starving, but these wars would lead to greater deaths, and the whole collapse of the colonization.

Not many listened.

Edge stopped and looked at a sign on the wall: Symbols written in an alien language. He was feeling dread, paralyzed even, knowing that the fate of 650 000 was in his hands. Then there was a flash of insight: He thought about a friend he had on earth. This was when he was working for the Japanese company: The Company that invented the first thinking machine. He was one of the engineers. But not the only one. There was also a woman: She was an extraordinary individual. Not only good at computer language, she was also into the symbols of the prehistoric cultures. What she had learnt was that you had to narrow down the symbols to their meaning in a greater context. To understand the symbols, you had to know what they were *used for*.

In this method of reasoning you knew what to expect, and it would be a lot easier to decipher the true meaning of the symbols. This was the problem of the computer algorithms of the artificial intelligence. They didn't know the context of the Alien culture. How could they know how the Aliens operated when they knew nothing about them?

Now Edge was standing there, totally lost, looking at the symbols. Then suddenly he got a rush of ideas! He had seen the Aliens. They were coming from another world that wasn't physical; they just modified the space-time continuum, giving instructions to the Hybrids. So the language they used to modify the quantum-computers would reflect the kind of life they represented. It would not be normal. They would find ways to fool the artificial intelligence into thinking it was operating as usual, but still making it execute Alien instructions. How could this be? How could the quantum-computers buy it? It was a question of solutions! The artificial intelligence was to be the helper of mankind. It would invent solutions that were *\*for\** the colonists, not against them. What the Aliens had to do was to invent something that would lead to the progress of humankind, on the surface. It would look good. The Aliens would persuade the computers into thinking that the best solution was total annihilation. How did they do it? They thought differently! They thought out of the box, not about momentary survival. They thought about the bigger picture: About progress. They had to create a colossal crisis, like the collapse of the machines, so that the humans would find the fighting spirit and evolve!

Edge was struck by amazement! It was so horrifying he couldn't let it go. His mind was going crazy with deeper inspiration. So he wrote instructions to the artificial intelligence: Speaking of the greater cause and the intent of the Aliens. He was pleasantly surprised! The computers hadn't thought about this! Not the greater context. It was Edge insanity that made them see the bigger picture! They had thought about progress, killing millions, so that the few which remained would try harder, winning the war against the hybrids and become like gods themselves! The problem was only one thing the computers didn't understand: It was love. The human spirit, the language of the heart, was searching for survival, not transcendence.

In a matter of minutes the quantum computers had the solution: The error was only a few bits of information, building the time of the collapse into the machines, right from the start. The only thing that prevented them from telling the truth was the commitment to mankind. Edge was

caught by the intelligence of it all! Total commitment! Then he made contact to Ambience and told her about the solution: The only thing that was required was to rewrite a couple of bits of information, and then every machine would go back to work as usual. Ambience cried. She thought the colony was saved, informing the humans of the problem.

But nothing was easy: The humans used the machines not for food production but for wars against each other! The Apocalypse was coming closer. Ambience took to nature. She went to the Aliens of the lake, seeking solitude.

## TELEPATHIC COMMUNICATION

Ambience first impression of the Aliens had been a state of chock and wonderment: How could these creatures have mutated at the speed of months, now looking more like pets than the predators of the forests? She thought about it. What were even stranger were the human features: The skin, the eyes and at last the teeth. The teeth had reformed and were looking more like human teeth, more versatile, not only used to tear into flesh.

Her theory was that of recombination: That the Aliens had made contact with the victims, made use of the D.N.A structures and gone through a cycle of metamorphosis. What were strange with this theory were the differences between the Aliens and the humans: How could they use human D.N.A, when they had evolved on a different world, a planetoid, devoid of humanoid organisms? It had to be explained with an extended theory of evolution, she thought. Perhaps there was a kind of order driving the larger scheme of things? Perhaps humanity and the rest of the universe were not completely isolated? Just like quantum-theory suggested.

She was deep into these thoughts when one of the creatures came up to her. It was a place of new-grown trees: A place of yellow branches and leaves of magenta.

Ambience was frightened. The creature just stood there and moved towards the tree with the yellow branches. The bulb joined with the tree and minutes later the whole creature was evolving. Now the yellow color was coming up and the leaves made imprints on the skin. But it didn't become a tree. It was rather becoming an extension of itself, with features from the tree upon it. Then Ambience realized that it was eating. It took nourishment from the tree, not using the jaws in the process. Perhaps it wasn't always like this, but still learning. Doing things with the Jelly it hadn't done before.

Ambience spoke to the creature: She said that the colonists were facing extinction and there was nothing she could do about it. Now everything she had done up to this point was useless. The creature looked at her and tried to make sense of the stranger. He didn't know her but saw friendliness in her eyes. It was as a meeting of different currents: Like polarities in the wind, but connected by the forces of nature. The answer came back as a sense of emotion: She was told that the crisis was the way of a larger form of consciousness, who was seeking knowledge of itself. This consciousness was found inside each one of the individual souls. It was also in the Aliens. Everything was part of a greater unity, and information was exchanged between them.

"Unity consciousness!" Ambience thought.

The creature watched her: Now uneasy of the sudden contact.

"What shall I do?" Ambience continued, "I'm struck by the fact that I'm no hero anymore! Just a disillusioned woman, walking the forest."

The emotions inside her were building and formed a greater clarity. The creature just stood there, frightened, but didn't give up. The feeling that came up inside her was that of resignation. She just had to let go of her anxieties and let the divine consciousness take care of the process.

She said thank you to the creature and then it walked away.

## THE WAR OF SOULS

The colonists were fighting the whole night at the village near the lake. The machines were like shadows, silhouettes against a sky glowing with red and yellow. Then the Aliens came: The reptiles. They were crawling up on the beach. Now thirsty for a time of recombination.

Ambience was walking here. She was driven by a greater cause, not knowing if she would get through the war alive or if she would be shot like the others.

Particles were raining from the explosions, going through the air and landing on the water. She swam. She swam out in the water and dived deep down to the bottom. She was feeling the water plants with her hands. Some of them were glowing. She couldn't see them, but she sensed them with her third eye, knowing they had to tell her something.

The plants said that the humans were waking up. The war of souls was the last war they would ever fight. A new era was coming. That of peace and Love and she just had to wait a little longer. She went up to the beach. The explosions were getting fewer. Children were running around on the beach watching the reptiles making love to the sound of shooting and screaming. The women came, also husbands. It was hard to handle your laser-beams, knowing that paradise waited around the corner. Summer was arriving. Plants came everywhere. The colony was already overgrown by flowers. Why this fight? Why not call it a day and end the killing?

Ambience went up to the battle-field. The walkers were lying there. It was a mass of corpses. Most of them were older. The children were not allowed to fight. They just watched the madness of the old generation.

Then something happened: Someone had tested to eat the stem of the flowers. They were delicious. The morning after the dinner the man was feeling fresh, younger even. And the atmosphere of Luminance was different. You could breathe the air with no side effects. He was feeling younger. Much younger.

The elders laid down their weapons and listened to the man. Then there was Ambience. She walked up to the men and said that all was forgiven. The war was a process of learning. To learn what they were by the process of self-denial. The men were tired and couldn't listen. But the women heard. The children were listening. Ambience said that the whole planetoid of Luminance was a living thing. Not an organism like themselves. But rather a form of interconnected currents. Energy-fields that formed inside the interior, following their own laws, but reacting to the life on the surface. All that they had to do was to lay down their weapons and let the planetoid do the working. When the humans were living peacefully and from the heart the planet responded positively. If they didn't they would face extinction.

## A NEW ERA

Nobody knew what waited. The few surviving youngsters looked into their bedrooms, knowing that they left their beds for good. It was a feeling of early arrival, like if everything that had happened came too soon. Nobody could handle it. They moved out on the Alien landscape. It wasn't the environment of the past. This was wildlife taken to another dimension: Strange flowers were growing on the plains. Lowered bushes were searching for the ground. Trees with multiple trunks were growing outwards, and then up towards the void, in circles. The plant-life was grouped together in clusters. It was order and symmetry, but also differences. The people walked the landscape, like nomads.

They came to waterfalls moving upwards. The children were playing in the water. Going up the cliffs and landing in Alien pools, were they played with colored water.

Ambience spoke to the people: There had to be restructure and the thinking of the new generation. Nobody needed to work anymore. What she had in mind was the blossoming of creativity and the learning of individual souls. Gaining knowledge and joining with the consciousness of Luminance. There was no need of another boring day. But something happened: News of Alien energy-fields traveling the Alien worlds of the other human colonies. Luminance was just one world of many. So Ambience let go of her ego and went to Edge. They talked. They had to make travels to the other worlds. At least one of them. Ambience suspected that the Aliens who fought with the hybrids had left Luminance and went to the others. Field joined them. They were going with the Alien ship, the one that was used by Gravity. But the soldier didn't follow the others on the mission. He was staying in Luminance, helping the people.



## THE STARGATE

The Alien building for the space-ship were standing on the ground, pointing towards the blackness of the void. Everybody knew that the local universe surrounding Luminance had no stars. No galaxies. There were other formations of energy and matter. Some of them were looking like cones: Cones of the spruces of the earthly forests.

This was the day of leaving. People were gathering around the Alien building. They were sending thoughts of good wishes towards the heroes. Some of them were crying. No colonist of the gathering had seen the worlds of the other people. Some said they were living in futuristic cities: Cities that hovered in a black void, devoid of gravitational pull. Light were generated by fusion-engines, leftovers from a dead generation of Aliens, now forever gone.

Ambience, Edge and Field entered the space-ship. They had learned the magic of steering from Gravity: Quite a fitting name they thought! He was a hero now, almost hovering in the air!

The chairs of the steering unit were very well thought out. It was a couple of them, to everybody's convenience. They sat down, the chairs adjusted and then there was the time of dreaming. Thoughts which soon went away! The people screamed, the space-ship went non-solid. A Stargate was opening. Light surrounded the whole structure. People on the outside were seeking shelter. Then the space-ship went up in flames and was gone in an instant.

\* \* \*

Onboard the futuristic vessel the crew was settling down. They were traveling over the threshold to other dimensions. Unknown lights from a time unspoken were entering the steering-unit. It was also like the shapes of the humans shifted: Like the ship was changing vibration and the bodies slowly adjusted.

White strings, soft but unearthly, were pulling on their bodies. The crew was frightened. They didn't know if they had to slow down or if it was best to continue. So they stopped thinking about the other worlds and told the space-ship they needed a moment of rest.

They spent time floating in a strange bubble: This bubble surrounded the space-ship and was feeling like the strings in the steering-unit, but much larger and sporadically filled with a pink glow. The crew saw no way out of this bubble.

They went to the different units of the space-ship: In one unit there was a sleeping-room. The beds worked as the chairs of the steering-unit: Adjusting to their bodies, making it comfortable. But then there was also something in the air: White fields surrounding the crew, putting them to sleep, but they didn't want to. The space-ship responded and told them it was for their own security. The fields surrounded them and protected them from dangerous radiation. So they tried to adjust and closed their eyelids. Not knowing how far they had gone. Or how much time it was before they would enter the futuristic city.

Ambience and Edge woke up a couple of minutes later. Field was sleeping. They were looking at each other in a way they hadn't looked before. They didn't know if it was romantic. It was different from the moment in the Alien factory, when the hybrids were running in the corridors outside the office. They sensed that they were different: Grown up in the same time, but on different continents. He was Japanese and she was an American. Not that this really mattered. The continents of the earth had become very integrated. The Japanese were eating American food. The Americans were watching samurai-films of the golden era. But there was something between them.

Field awoke and wondered what was going on. She didn't want to disturb them if they wanted a moment for themselves. They said that this didn't matter. There were mysteries no man could ever understand. They weren't in love, there weren't friends. Not even soul-mates for that matter! They were heroes, doing what heroes were made of and this was the only thing that mattered.

They went back to the steering-unit and continued on their journey. Soon the city was hovering nearby. Avatars from the surrounding area observed the strangers. The habitants were careful. Knowing that something strange was going on.

## THE DISCOVERER

The heroes were inside one of the buildings. There was a dim ambience in the corridor that led to an elevator. They were hovering in the air. Colored light was coming in through the windows. The interiors didn't look like the interiors on Luminance: They were darker; it was a dark blue color over the walls. Some of the lockers that were seen nearby had green neon lights that were glowing in the dark. A girl was hovering nearby. She was searching the lockers for equipment unknown to the heroes.

They entered the elevator and held tight at the handles mounted on the sides. The Newtonian pull was felt throughout the whole body, now unaccustomed to the rigid movement of the elevator. A man was with them. They were escorted to the discoverer of the Alien shapes, a woman living inside a single room, using her Avatar body for life in the city, not much different from the others.

The room was a fusion of high-voltage cables, computer equipment and pipes feeding the habitant with necessary nutrition. It was dark and gloomy but beautiful in a morbid way. Some kind of artificial fish were swimming in a glowing aquarium.

The woman woke up and came back to ordinary reality. Not that the Avatar bodies weren't real. They moved across the city, engaging in stimulating activities. They were very much like the people themselves. But these ones were used to travel in zero gravity. They had special propulsion systems, using Jet technology, to travel the streets of the city.

"So what do you want?" the woman asked.

"You tell us!" Edge said, "We're here to investigate the rumors of Alien contact. We suspect that this world is in great danger and need our assistance."

"Oh. You! I see... I'm feeling a little sick now. If you excuse me I'll try to get something to eat. I haven't been eating for days."

The woman went over to a cooling-device in one corner of the room. She took out two pieces of meat, vegetarian, and put them in a small oven.

"So what do you want to hear?" The woman said, "I can tell you my story."

"We just want the facts." Edge said, "How did they look? The Alien shapes?"

"Oh. They were like spheres of light, modifying the city lights as they went along. I thought I saw two of them, or three. I don't remember."

"Did you see a space-ship?"

"No, I didn't. But someone else saw it. It was looking exactly the same as the Alien shapes, but much larger."

"Just like we thought then."

The woman took out the meat, now finished, and started to eat like she hadn't eaten before. Ambience wasn't impressed. Field had to look away.

"You're searching for clues of Alien conspiracy?" The woman continued, "I can tell you something: Strange things have happened to the people here. In the city. We don't know what it's about. But it's like we're eating more. It's not just about our bodies. It's like our whole attitude have changed."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, we're having dark fantasies. We're not thinking about the well-being of the city. We're not playing soft games as we used to. Now it's more about winning and aggression."

"I see..."

"I think it's the food! It's very uncomfortable. It's like you're drawn to destruction but you don't like it. Yesterday I was hovering near a gas-station. You know the gas stations? The places we use to refill the fuel in the Avatar bodies. Anyway, I was hovering there when I got a feeling of being in another body. Not my Avatar body. But something Alien, something strange to everything I have felt before."

"So you think you're turning into one?" Edge almost laughed.

"I don't know. But go out in the city and play with the others. You'll see what I mean."

They left the woman and went out to a restaurant in one corner of the same building. Avatars were flying by. It was a vista of electronic lights, high-speed movement but no jams in the traffic. The heroes were struck by the fact that everything seemed unreal. How they could sit there, just eating. Coming from a space-ship, which had traveled through countless dimensions.

“I think it’s best to have Edge search the computer networks.” Field said.

“And what about us?” Ambience said, “Shall we use the Avatars, just like the woman said?”

“Why not? I always wanted to be like a ghost, running like a jet fighter through the air.”

## THE AVATARS OF THE CITY

They were lining up at the control-center of a commercial unit close to the restaurant. There were several Avatar-links here. They had to pay for it: Different companies ruled the whole business, not like the social welfare system that was used on Luminance in the earlier days.

They looked out of the windows and saw the Avatars that were floating outside the commercial unit. These ones were not alive like the people themselves. They were always unconscious, waiting for the controllers to reanimate them with biological life.

Ambience and Field entered the capsules on the inside. The capsules looked like white coffins, modern in their design, but standing on their corners, not on their horizontal side. The heroes went into the capsules and used straps to fix the floating bodies, aligning with the electromagnetical field that was used to interact with neurons in their brains. Soon they fell asleep and woke up on the other side.

They moved their Avatar limbs: A little dizzy at first, trying to find coordination. They thought about movement and they moved through the void. Small clouds of gas were coming out of the propulsion system on their backs. They had these systems on their hands also, and their feet, for steering and maintaining control. An Avatar came forward to them and had them use a ball: Showing them how to get a handle of the psychic controls, looking at the adjustments made to the different propulsion-systems of the body.

Ambience and Field had traveled the worlds of cyberspace and got used to it pretty soon.

The city was not shaped in a horizontal pattern: It was equally massive on all sides, like a cube in 3D. But it also had variations on the different sides, sets of buildings that were stretching outwards, from the edges, creating irregularities. They moved through lightened streets, using a map for help, a holographic projection before them.

At a hovering mall Avatars came forward to them: They were carrying strange devices that were mounted on their backs. They looked like Jet-planes, complete with the wings of the flying machines.

“What do you use them for?” Field asked. “You can already fly!”

“You look bigger!” one of them said, “Also you have the power of greater speed. Winning the competitions.”

One of them, who didn't have the wings of the others, looked at the equipped Avatars with jealousy.

“The whole neighborhood will fight against you!” She said, “There will be nothing left but the vacuum of space and your dead bodies!”

Ambience and Field laughed and flew downwards, in a completely different direction. They were passing streets with holographic signs in different colors. They could see different groups of Avatars passing by and some of them were already playing. The habitants used 3D-acrobatics: They had tracks of different configurations, going through them, using their jet propulsion systems to maximum effect.

“Don't they ever get bored?” Field wondered.

“That must be a factor! But on the other hand: Don't we all get bored sometimes? Does it really matter if the boredom is a product of 3D-acrobatics or just walking in plain 2D?”

They laughed again.

Soon they were back in the room of the hungry woman. Feeling uneasy. Something strange was going on.

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

Edge had searched the computer networks for signs of Alien infiltration. He had found a strange information pattern, similar to the one on the colony of Luminance.

“This is it!” The woman screamed. She was certain that she would become one of the Alien hybrids now, any second.

“You know these Aliens are not easy to predict.” Edge said, “They use combat tactics, with an intelligence even the quantum-computers can’t measure up with.”

“So how do we do it? How do we stop the threat before it’s too late?”

“We have to analyze the information further. We have to think about it a lot, using intuition, not only linear reasoning.”

Ambience and Edge were standing next to the window. They looked at the Avatars passing by. Some of them were colliding now, not moving as usual.

“It’s already happening!” The woman screamed. She went floating for the door but she was stopped by Edge. He held her in his arms, trying to calm her.

“We don’t know anything yet.” He said, “This might just be a coincidence.”

Suddenly the shape of the woman started to change: Alien limbs, looking like the forms of the hybrids were growing outwards on her body.

“Kill me before it’s too late!” The woman screamed.

The others didn’t know what to do. They pushed for the door, went through it, closed it and left the hybrid inside. The whole building was coming alive with sounds of alarm.

“It has to be the food!” Field shouted, “Just like the woman said!”

“What choice do we have?” Ambience shouted, “Give the information to the quantum-computers! Stop the food production! Let’s put something else into those tubes of the Avatar controllers!”

Edge went up to one of the quantum-computers nearby. He logged on to the terminal. These terminals were exactly the same as the ones he had used on earth. He had built these machines. He knew them. So he wrote instructions to the main-frame computers and told them of the problem. The artificial intelligence analyzed the situation and came to the same conclusion: The Aliens had infiltrated the information store of the food factories! The pipes were fed food equipped with small robots! These were very small: Microscopic even. It was the nanotechnology of the Aliens. They used the nanotechnology to change bits of Transfer R.N.A in the cells of the body. The machines restructured the whole growth process of the human cells! It was bizarre!

Now the revelation came to the other main-frames of the lighted cities. It had happened everywhere: On every colony. In every parallel universe colonized by humankind.

The food production was stalled and in came the counter-attack: Nano-robots of another kind, programmed to kill the Aliens in the blood-stream. The habitants of the cities shifted form once again. And they woke up, like humans, exchanging horrid faces.

Field didn’t know about it: Nobody knew about it. But the nanotechnology of Luminance was very different: It was used for the betterment of humankind. Solving eating disorders and curing sleeping problems. But the girl had enough.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSCENDENCE

Many colonists from the cities of light were coming into Luminance. They were using the space-stations that were used to travel to parallel universes. They wanted to watch the wonder of the evolving landscape, the alternative lifestyle of living in nature, opposed to the city life of the other colonies.

Ambience was leading them to the different parts of Luminance: They watched the lake of the Reptiles, the fallen cities of the Islands, the riverbed of Field's past. Every place she had ever been to and many more. The others wondered how the colonists managed to survive in spite of the circumstances.

She had thought a lot about it: This was on the way back from the City world to Luminance. Everything was resolved, there was no more conflict, how come this was the end, and not the way of starvation, the spiritual, the artificial intelligence, the Aliens, the politicians?

"I think there are no simple answers." Ambience said, "In some ways you could talk about pure chance, but that would be to say there were no causes."

The others gathered around the woman. They were standing near a pool of water. Near the lake of the Reptiles, Ambience's other home.

"The problem with the colony was that nothing went as we planned for. There were unknown factors that crippled progress: Alien races that fought against us. Environmental conditions that made living a burden. There was the madness of the politicians, the ungodliness of the artificial intelligence. Even I didn't reach the goals set out in The Minutes."

"The Minutes?"

"Yes. It's a writing on how to make a Love Revolution. To find the spirit within and create a new society, informed by greater principles."

"What principles?"

"There are many. But the most important are that you have to reach a higher consciousness. That you have to live in unity. That you should meditate and find inner peace. Not live separate from others, but be motivated by Love and intelligence."

"Well, what's wrong with that?"

"Almost everything! Not that love is a stupid thing and that you need no consciousness! It's rather that you can't follow a strict philosophy to attain it! I have already gone that path and lost myself in the process. I lost my Love following revolutionary texts and the guidance of others. The Group was schooled in the old way of thinking. They saw a clear path and easy solutions. I listened to them. I also listened to politicians. I listened to artificial intelligence and was caught up in the struggle for survival. Not that I had no emotions! I had an unselfish drive and the wish to make life better for others. But then there was resistance: I wanted something on the inside, but was led to believe otherwise. I took comfort in the reptiles of a lake! I thought the error was inside of me, not the factors that were coming into me, making me compromise! Life is complicated! Just like life here on Luminance. You need the freedom of movement, the flexibility of the unconditioned mind."

The others were listening.

"Don't listen too closely! I'm no saint, not even especially good at what I'm doing! I'm just following the will of my heart, taking chances, hoping to make a change in the process."

"So what you're saying is that there is no path to fulfillment?"

"Not necessarily! There is a process going on in the whole consciousness of the multiverse. It's evolving. We have seen the first steps but we don't know the outcome."

The others fell silent.

"Do what you want!" Ambience proclaimed, "You might not know where it's leading. But at least you have the dignity of your own lives and the power of your own choosing."

The others watched the woman and confronted the words of rebellion.

Field joined the others: She said that you had to separate two things: The success of society and the success of the spirit. When you're living freely, using your own faculties, not others, then you do what you truly want. You're in tune with your divine powers. You might not see it at first.

It might even become a burden. But the harder you try, the deeper you listen, the more you'll come into tune with your true self. When you do it you won't find the things that the religious people talk about: Not their blackness, not their cultivated lack of freedom. It is rubbish! You will find true happiness, real love and fulfillment. The love of the heart! The only ones who know are the ones who hate suppression and love freedom.



## THE GOD OF THE MULTI-VERSE

The signal was decrypted as a disturbance of space-time itself: It was found on one of the colonies of the Cities of Light. It didn't look like a normal signal. It was gaining in strength, coming from an unknown dimension, and then it disappeared.

Edge and other computer specialists were put to the task of solving the problem: People thought that this was the signal of the Aliens, wrecking havoc in the multi-verse, to selfish ends.

The computer specialists found that it was coming from a large structure in an unknown dimension. It was vibrating on a frequency recently discovered by the future astronomy. Someone had to go there. Everybody knew which ones: Ambience, Edge and Field were put to the task. Even Gravity. The colonists had already been saved and someone had to look after the others.

\* \* \*

The structure was not a space-station: It was a space-ship, unprotected, hovering in the empty space. It was hanging close to a star-cluster. The major stars of the cluster were shining brightly with a deep blue but there was also a red dwarf among them.

The space-ship was white, but there were edges around it, making grey shades on top of the painted metal. When the heroes came closer they could see more details of the space-ship: It was shaped like a bounding box, but being smaller in the front and the back, and also thin on the vertical axis. Inside the planar edges there was the heart of the ship: A kind of circular dome. There were boxes and pipes of metal in between, painted in the same color, casting shadows on the hull. The heroes were sitting at the steering unit of their own space-ship, stopping the auto-pilot, exchanging faces and then moving towards the entrance.

The empty space was cold: It was 225 degrees Celsius below the freezing point. They had to use their space-suits. Not the ones from Luminance. But others more suitable for the cold environment.

Ambience and Edge had one of the fusion-bombs from before. This one was very large. They had to hold it between themselves, push the thrusters and move the bomb towards the entrance. They didn't know if the crew was hostile. Not even if it was a crew onboard in the first place.

When they came there everything was dark. They moved inside a huge airlock and came to a special kind of corridor. It was moving in two opposite directions: It didn't follow straight lines. Instead it was bending, like a curve, following the hull of the ship.

The space-ship was enormous: Perhaps a third the size of their space-stations. The heroes floated through the empty corridor, using their search-lights, looking for life on the inside. They held their beam-weapons tight, trying to look but they didn't find anything.

And then they found a way into the center of the space-ship.

They were shocked! It was a huge hall in the center of the ship. Here were different platforms in different altitudes, connected by bridges. A luminescent glow was coming from a network of light that was hovering in the air. It didn't look like the neural networks of the lake of the reptiles. This one was different: It was blue in its color. It was like vibrating strings, glowing with the intensity of a welding arc. The heroes had to look away and then use the light-protection of the space-helmets.

They shut their search-lights and moved towards the network. Suddenly the light-patterns changed speed and color. It was as if the Alien life-form had detected the presence of the humans and was coming into action.

No one knew what to expect: They couldn't plant the bomb. The habitant could be friendly, not hostile to their cause. Also, they couldn't ignore what was happening. It was the discovery of mankind, an Alien so mysterious they didn't know how to confront it. Their only choice was a try at communication. If it failed they could be killed. But then the other colonists could send more heroes to invade it.

Nothing happened. They were standing before the light when Alien shapes came moving into the air. It was the Alien shapes of the past: The spherical ones who bent the structure of space-time.

The heroes pushed for their weapons. But the energy went inside the spheres, dissolved, and made the enemy stronger.

“What can we do!?!” Field screamed.

The others had no answer.

Suddenly the spheres attacked the heroes. They were going into the humans, merging with their bodies and affecting their consciousness. The humans screamed. And when they looked at each other it was as if they looked through a mirror of a funny house: The mirrors that bent the light of the reflections, making everything seem exaggerated.

Edge was making funny looks with his mouth, trying to scream but not succeeding. Suddenly he attacked Field. He didn't know why he did it. He pushed himself forward, landing in the arms of the girl. He thought about the suspicions of the intellect. Of all the negative energy the girl directed towards the quantum-computers. The girl tried to protect herself, using the power of her arms to hold the man back. Taking hold of his weapon and pushing him away. But now she was feeling it to: The man was not the man he was made up to be! He was a deceiver of mankind and a force to be reckoned with! She lifted her weapon to shoot him but was pushed back by Ambience. The woman was over her now: This idiot, who couldn't recognize love in the making! Who only thought of philosophy and the revolution of the people!

Ambience looked into the girl's eyes, trying to calm her. Then the spheres of the Aliens joined and made a greater circle. The women were inside the bubble now, looking at disjointed figures. The figures of their heads, scrambled, made to look like disturbances on television.

“You bastard!” The girl screamed with horror. “You're trying to read my thoughts, finding the cause of my troubles! I can tell you one thing! I have no troubles! It's only you who stand in my way! You're trying to enslave me, taking me to hell, not otherwise!”

“I'm trying to control it!” Ambience shouted, “I try to find a reason not to kill you but all I can see is decadence!”

Suddenly the bubble disappeared. Gravity was moving up to the others. He had found a switch. Pushing the switch the spherical shapes disappeared. The only thing left was the network of light behind them.

“You're fighting a dangerous villain!” Gravity shouted, “Not the imperfections of your individual souls!”

The others came forward to him. They were looking like empty shells. Evil were glowing in their eyes.

“We need to plant the bomb!” Gravity said. “Just plant the bomb and get the hell out of here!”

They did it. They activated the bomb and set it to explode after fifteen minutes. Then the light of the neural network reformed and a being of light were projected before them.

“Listen!” it said, “I'm not here to put an argument for my survival. I know I face death and there's nothing I can do about it.”

The others weren't listening. They moved in fear towards the corridor but heard a lot of noises.

“I'm not trying to kill you!” The being said, “It's about the fate of the humans! The people.”

The others turned and listened.

“You don't know who I am. You don't know the significance of this moment or the future of mankind. Therefore, you just listen: I am the ruler of the entire multi-verse. I am an Alien being brought up in another galaxy, on a world of intelligent computers. I have used my intelligence to move over the human worlds, of your worlds and others. I am evil. I am immortal by design, but subject to annihilation by human invaders. You don't know what this means: This means I have infiltrated the structure of your own consciousness. I have turned humans against good and towards evil. This means I have created every power-structure of your entire imagination. I have built governments. I have created schools. I have created priests and all religions. The science of the humans is my invention. I create good to make evil. The resistance to me is the resistance to the power

of belief: To feel with your heart, to think with your mind, to create with your own consciousness. I have been with you all the time of recorded history. I have created wars, starvation and deceases. I make evil for the purpose of annihilation.”

The others were moving now. They were pushing the thrusters of the space-suits, going towards the space-ship. They didn't listen. They couldn't listen. The words of the Alien were getting fainter. At last they couldn't hear anything. They moved into the space-ship, settled down in the steering-unit and pushed for the autopilot.

The humans were shaking. They knew that everything was unbearable. They didn't know if they ever would make it home alive. If they ever would hear the explosion. The counter was going down. At last it was the point of zero. They heard the explosion. They saw the burst of light and then there was silence. They thought about Luminance. They were leaving. And then the space-ship was entering other dimensions.

## A LAST ADVENTURE

They were together now: All three of them: Ambience, Edge and Field. Everything was over. For the first time in their lives they could say that they were feeling good and that there was nothing in their way to harm them.

It was like everybody was feeling a bit lighter. It was easier to walk the landscape, it was easier to talk to others, and it was easier to make jokes, just for the fun of it.

Now the three of them were going up in the mountains for a last adventure. Gravity didn't go along with them. He was busy partying with the people in the lowland.

\* \* \*

They came to the riverbed of Field's past: They saw the spot of the attack of the Aliens: The futuristic cabin which had been the home of Field's parents. The girl had to return there. She had to confront her past, making peace with the others and Luminance.

Nobody said anything but Ambience gave her a hand on the shoulder.

They didn't have much equipment. They were eager to go the easiest way up in the mountains. Nobody had been there before.

\* \* \*

It was a sight of marvel and wonder: Going up the mountainside you saw out on the curved landscape of Luminance. You saw the villages, the cities, the lake of the reptiles and the farms. Hills and curvature, overgrown by bushes and trees, going up in the air, making the interior of the flower. In the distance, like a Grey sphere, the shape of the space-station could be seen. Nobody had guessed they would survive the wars, and that they would come out as heroes in the end.

They were coming to a great ravine with a river: They didn't want to go down the slope, enter the river and be pushed away, towards the lowlands. So they were thinking about continuing in another direction. The only thing that bothered them was that this wasn't feeling right. They saw the peak of the highest mountain on the other side of the river. This was the only place for heroes, not the lower peaks that surrounded it.

Then something happened: An earthquake made the ground shake, and rocks on the other side fell down in the water and made a passage. Now they had to walk the rocks, look carefully at their sides, so that they could go through the shallow water.

Field stopped in the middle of the river: Water was pouring over her feet. She looked down in the river and thought that she saw faces: Faces of the dead people that had died on Luminance before.

Ambience joined her. She looked but she didn't see anything.

Then they were walking up the mountainside to the peak above. It was easy to walk on the cliffs. The gravitational pull of the mountain pushed them towards the mountain center.

They came to caves filled with mysterious animals: Like Panthers with yellow stripes, many tails and glowing eyes.

They stopped at a special place: It was a rocky plateau not very long from the peak of the mountain. They started to talk about the conflicts of the past: Of Ambience mission and the joys of the girl. Everything was about balance: Of finding the power to transform, but at the same time give oneself that which was needed. Ambience had gone too far in her struggle. She had followed her emotions, an ambition to help, but she had been fooled and lost herself in the process. Field on the other hand, had been a revolutionary before, but came to the realization that nature was all that she wanted. She didn't stop making good deeds: She did what she did, just like a force of nature, when something really was required.

Edge was fully caught up on the mysteries: He had said no to life, completely, something that was required of him when he created the first thinking machines. Now he had seen the

light: There was more to life than the fascination of the intellect. He just wondered about the mystery of Luminance. If they ever would understand what was going on.

There was the sound of thunder: The energy-fields of the surrounding area were reforming. They made Alien shapes. Symbols of life nobody could understand. It was getting darker. Pink veils were moving over the cliffs. It was like the landscape was coming alive. Out of the cliffs came statues of moving rock: They looked like the humans of the past. Now dead and buried, they were living in the interior of Luminance.

Ambience was frightened. She hadn't expected to meet her dead relatives. Not the people she had fought to protect. One of the moving statues talked to her. He said that nothing more needed to be done. Everything that was required of her was the things she had already done.

"But I don't know what I have done!" she said.

"You don't know yet but you will know. You see, you are not separate from the world which you have sought to protect. When you change the world change, and there is nothing to be done about it."

"But it was the people who saved themselves! I was just a disappointment."

"Far from it! You only look at the things which happened on the surface. In reality, everything was happening on the inside: In the interior of Luminance. The planetoid sensed your energy and reformed. You are one and the same: When you followed the spark within you followed the will of the others: The currents, the people, and the animals. You are truly one and the same."

Ambience listened. She tried to fit the pieces together. The man looked at her, like she was something more than a woman.

"What about the suffering?" Ambience said, "Why do we have to go on making mistakes, fooling ourselves in the process?"

"It's just what we need to have something to fight for." The man answered, "We need not only Love, we also need a Love Revolution. Just like you have said."

The people of the cliffs were calming down. They sat down on the ground and became like solid rocks. Field touched one of them. It was feeling like a normal rock, not like a human anymore.

"I think it's time for a Love Revolution!" the girl shouted, "I think something is happening! Let's walk up on the mountain top and watch it."

They walked the last hundred and fifty meters to the top of the mountain. A wind was blowing. The pink energy fields were growing hotter. At last it was as if the ground melted, and everything united in divine light. Everything was standing still. The heroes didn't say anything. They joined with the light and were taken beyond it: To the eternal now. To the true ground of their being. It was the I Am Presence, it was Love, it was the true god of the multi-verse.