

***The future –  
the way it used to be!***

**Volume 2: A look at *Descent Into Europa*  
and *The Lost Race of Mars***

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# THE STARMAN SERIES

*by Michael D. Cooper*

ASSAULT ON MARS  
THE RUNAWAY ASTEROID  
JOURNEY TO THE TENTH PLANET  
DESCENT INTO EUROPA  
THE LOST RACE OF MARS  
DOOMSDAY HORIZON  
THE HEART OF DANGER  
THE LAST COMMAND

The short stories—  
*The Flight of the Olympia,*  
*The City of Dust,*  
*SETI,*  
*A Matter of Time,*  
and *Return to Europa*—  
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A novelette outside the main storyline,  
*The Lost Tomorrow,*  
is serialized in “The Starman Chronicles.”

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*The Starman Team gratefully dedicates this book  
to all of our great Starman fans, without whom this  
series would never have been possible.*

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Book Four: Descent Into Europa .....	7
Plot Summary .....	8
Plot Summary Version 1.0.....	8
Plot Summary Version 2.0.....	17
Plot Summary Version 3.0.....	27
Letters .....	40
Writer’s Notes.....	154
Book Five: The Lost Race of Mars.....	159
Introduction.....	160
Plot Summary .....	161
Letters .....	237
Writer’s Notes.....	348

# Introduction

This book is a continuation of Volume 1 of the Starman Archives. Before you begin reading it, let me say that if you haven't read the first five Starman books, lay this aside and read them! This volume contains information that would spoil the really cool surprises that are revealed in the first five Starman books (and in the fifth one especially): you have been warned.

I<sup>1</sup> really enjoyed putting together Volume 1 of the Starman Archives, and after releasing it I could hardly wait to begin work on Volume 2. The first volume focused on the first three Starman books, and this one focuses on the fourth and fifth Starman book. Like the previous volume, this book contains plot summaries, our writer's notes, and many of the more interesting letters written by the Starman Team<sup>2</sup> about these books.

Putting together these books has been a labor of love for me. It has been a lot of fun to go through the thousands of e-mails I have exchanged with David and Mike over the past five years to find material for the Archives: it brings back a great many memories. Writing these books has really been a lot of fun, and it is a privilege to be able to share that process with our readers. A number of our e-mails are pretty mundane and boring,<sup>3</sup> but some of them are pretty interesting – and those are the ones we include.

This book has been put together to offer our readers a behind-the-scenes look at the Starman books. If you are curious about how we wrote the books, where our ideas came from, and what problems we encountered, you have come to the right place! Pull up a chair, get some crackers and Jalapeno jelly,<sup>4</sup> and sit down for a spell to see what it took to produce the Starman Series. There's a *lot* of material in these volumes and there's no hurry to go through it – just relax and take your time.

The Archives volumes are gifts to our readers – a way of saying thank you for all your support and aid over the past five years. We're looking forward to seeing what the next five years bring! We hope you enjoy this glimpse at the future – the way it used to be!

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Cooper, the plotter of the Starman Team

<sup>2</sup> The Starman Team consists of David Baumann, Mike Dodd, and Jonathan Cooper.

<sup>3</sup> Trust me on this.

<sup>4</sup> See the last line on page 50 of *The Lost Race of Mars*

# **Book Four: Descent Into Europa**

*I will give you the treasures of darkness,*

*Riches stored in secret places.*

*Isaiah 45:3a*

## Plot Summary

The plot of the fourth Starman book has an interesting history. The original plot summary for the book (which we drafted before writing *Assault on Mars*) was this:

A probe to Jupiter's moon Europa reveals that a substance found on Europa is useful for forming the hybrid multidimensional materials necessary to create the interstellar drive discovered on the Tenth Planet. Starlight Enterprise is very interested, and so dispatch an experimental high-tech spaceship, capable of acting as an undersea submarine to explore and perhaps colonize this dangerous underwater region. The three Starmen, accompanied by a small gathering of experts, explore the area and try to learn what happened to the vanished crew members of a prior expedition that landed many decades ago. They also try to get to the bottom of rumors that there is life on Europa, and none of it is hospitable...

As you can see, the book we ended up with bears only a vague resemblance to our original plan (and that is usually the case). We ended up with a good book, but it definitely took us some work to get there. For a long time I was not at all pleased with the plots I was inventing for this book: it didn't connect to the previous books, it didn't fit in with the rest of the saga, and it wasn't very interesting. All of these things were eventually fixed, but it took more than one plot summary to do it.

As I was going through my notes to prepare this book I discovered not one but *three* plot summaries for this book, each of which are different. Since this is an e-text and not a printed book I decided to enclose all three of them in this volume. These three plot summaries show how we shaped the plot from the single paragraph above to the story we eventually released.

So, without further ado, here is the original:

### Plot Summary Version 1.0

[Chapter titles are off the top of my head; I'm just placing them there for lack of anything better. Your last chapter titles were great, David - I'm counting on you to think of good ones for DIE!]<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Any editing marks or notes like this through the summary were in the original; I just left them there.



## CHAPTER ONE: First Contact

\*The chapter begins out in deep space, with a large, complex SE satellite [roughly the size of a school bus] flying toward Jupiter. The satellite carefully steers itself into a close orbit around Jupiter, using aerobreaking to slow itself down. Then, carefully, the satellite goes into an orbit around Europa.

Once in orbit, the satellite begins scanning it carefully, using radar to map both its surface and the region underneath the ice. Using special instruments it takes measures of temperatures, ore and mineral deposits, magnetic fields, atmosphere, and so forth. The satellite is in constant contact with the Moon via a relay in the Asteroid Belt, which relays the signal to Mars, which then sends it to Earth.

\*Back at base, the data is coming in. Normally, it would take hours for the signal to travel from Europa to the Moon. However, on this satellite (the third to be sent to Europa) the technicians installed a very special communications system that uses real-time tachyon transmission (RTT). This system had been in its experimental stage in AOM. It had now been miniaturized; the Europa satellite was the first to use the 'smaller' version. The equipment was still very bulky and large (thus explaining the huge size of the satellite), but it was vastly smaller than what Dr. Seaton<sup>6</sup> had originally used in AOM.

Dr. Seaton and a few others involved in this project are in the control center for the Europa project. The data is coming in fine, but the people are somewhat nervous nonetheless. So far so good, but the real test was yet to come...

Dr. Seaton gave the order, and technicians sent a request to the satellite asking it to land and take a core sample of the ice. They watch on the screens as the satellite makes a perfect landing on the moon. After a few moments it starts drilling — then there is a crashing sound and the satellite is gone. All contact is lost; the transmission is cut short.

Technicians desperately try to raise the satellite, but to no avail. Dr. Seaton sighs; it had happened yet again...

## CHAPTER 2: Mission To Europa

\*It's a couple days later. The Starmen have been on Earth for the last few days on a well-deserved location. A few weeks ago they returned triumphant from the 10th planet, and SE gave them a break, which they spent relaxing and visiting their families. Now they were on SE's Earth headquarters, walking inside the huge complex to get their next mission.

Once inside they are lead to the research and exploration division, where they walk into Dr. Seaton's office. He invites them to have a seat, and then he starts talking.

Dr. Seaton quizzes them about what they know about Europa. He then fills them in on the latest research: SE has been very interested in the satellite for decades. It has long been known to have vast quantities of ice on it, with a liquid ocean just underneath the surface. No manned group had ever landed on the surface, but SE had sent three different satellites to investigate. The satellites had mapped out the moon and given back much valuable data — but once they landed contact was lost with every one of them. It was thought that the satellites were de-

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<sup>6</sup> Starman Mark Seaton's father

stroyed, and no one knows why. The moon had no natural forces that would destroy satellites like that, and they had found no trace of life on the moon, intelligent or otherwise.

What SE has found is vast deposits of beta hyperoxene [or whatever we decide to call it], a special material that SE badly needs in its hyperdrive research project. As everyone knew, SE had been researching a faster-than-light drive system for some time. Recently they had begun to make some breakthroughs, but to build their drive they needed a material with some highly unusual properties — and the only material they found that they could modify to have these properties was beta hyperoxene.

Beta hyperoxene, however, was very rare; sunlight or radiation of any kind caused it to disintegrate and change form. It was only located in very dark, cold, out-of-the-way places — and Europa seemed to have a lot of it, down at the bottom of its ocean. SE wanted to set up a base to mine it and bring it back to Earth; at the same time they wanted to explore Europa and find out what happened to the satellites.

Their mission, then, would be threefold: they were to find out what happened to the satellites, set up a base, and do some exploring.

### **CHAPTER 3: Atom City**

The Starmen were scheduled to spend the next few days preparing for the journey. Since they were going to spend most of their time in Europa under water, they needed to be trained how to work in an aquatic environment. The best place to learn was at the bottom of the oceans on Earth, so they left for Atom City<sup>7</sup> [sound familiar?].

Atom City was a sprawling metropolis of roughly a quarter million people, located on the continental shelf off the coast of Florida. It was at the bottom of the ocean [how deep is the continental shelf off the coast of Florida?]; one of the great wonders of the world. Huge machines built by SE repelled the water and kept it at bay<sup>8</sup> [sound familiar?]; there were domes but they were mainly to keep the atmosphere inside livable and not too humid (they didn't have the strength needed to actually keep out the water). The city was a fantastic sight, with ships and submarines constantly arriving and leaving, people walking all about... the city was underwater but was not too deep; the water around was a rich blue color and light did filter down through the water. The city was located near vast coral reefs with tropical fish. It was a large tourist attraction, a resort, a model city: but it also housed some of the finest brains in the world and was one of the world's leading producers of electronic equipment — perhaps because the city depended upon such equipment for its very existence.

Once they landed at Atom City, they went to the SE base located there and were briefed by an old, experienced aquanaut on things they would need to know, and on their equipment. The man introduced them to the 3-man ship they would be using. SE had been working on a special triphibian vessel that could travel under water, through the air, and for limited distances in space; it had been chosen for the Europa mission. While at Atom City they were to be given

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<sup>7</sup> A nod to the Tom Corbett series. Since David thought the name was just too similar to the name used in the Tom Corbett series, we changed it to the Aquapolis.

<sup>8</sup> Shades of a repelatron! I think we took this out too; we didn't want to copy anything from the Tom Swift series.

some diving lessons as well as a chance to work with the vessel in the seas of Earth before risking it at Europa.

#### **CHAPTER 4<sup>9</sup>**

Starmen get experience and fall into some trouble.<sup>10</sup> They make a run to the cold Arctic waters. Perhaps they have a harrowing equipment failure, or maybe the ice shifts. Something. The Starmen, then, get some experience. Once they are ready they drive the vessel out into space to Space Station L5.]

#### **CHAPTER 5: Departure from L5**

The Starmen are introduced to the L5 station. It's pretty incredible; a huge habitat in space... Their ship (a huge modified cargo freighter) is in the docking bay. The idea is to use the ship itself as a base once they get there. They would use it as a base to do some exploration; once they had a report and could tell SE what the environment required another group of ships carrying the necessary materials for a permanent settlement would follow them. They are also given some rather large and bulky RTT equipment.

So everything is loaded, and the crew flies off to Europa.

[Description of L5; perhaps hint of danger lurking in the background.]

#### **CHAPTER 6: Landing at Europa.**

The ship flies through space with very little trouble. They have some trouble with their RTT equipment; sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It is obvious that it isn't quite perfected yet, but when it fails they can always go back to the old-fashioned way. Mark speculates that the nuclear fusion drive at times throws the RTT equipment off, but he's not sure.

Once they reach Europa, they orbit it carefully. After not seeing anything spectacular or dangerous — and without seeing any sign of the lost satellites — they land. They are tense and worried, but they land without a hint of trouble; nothing goes wrong.

Base is established; some equipment is brought outside and set up. Their little triphibian ship is unloaded. So far, no trouble.

[Elsewhere a robot ship touches down and begins work. Just a mild hint of danger, but a real hint all the same.]

#### **CHAPTER 7: Divers Down!**

The next day dawns without a hint of trouble. Powerful radar beams fail to find any signs of life or tectonic activity in the region of the ship. There seems to be no danger; it looks like the moon is deserted.

Feeling somewhat more confident, the Starmen get out a powerful heat ray / laser and drill a huge hole in the ice so they can go below. After being wished the best of luck, the Starmen (with others?) get into the ship and dive below.

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<sup>9</sup> I have a very hard time thinking up good chapter titles. Sometimes I couldn't think of anything at all and so I just left it blank, knowing David would think up something good.

<sup>10</sup> I tend to leave things like this to David's imagination — he's good at building action sequences!

At first everything goes well. The water is cold but clear; there are no signs of life anywhere. Joe or Zip notices that the water is very high in a special nutrient; they wonder why. The water also has an odd chemical in it that has a strange structure.

The ship plows deeper, heading down vaguely toward the beta hyperoxene deposit. As they go down they pass by some huge deep-sea vents and get their first surprise: they find life.

What they found was huge masses of some kind of thick plant; it's a huge mass of floating, nasty plants. Zip didn't notice it until he was right upon it; the ship was going too fast for him to stop and he plowed right into it. He tried to keep going but it clogged the intake valves of the jet system.

The Starmen are forced to don suits and go outside to try to fix the problem. They go out and after much work clean it all out. They move on, but more carefully.

## **CHAPTER 8: First Contact**

The ship goes down deeper, skimming the ocean bottom. They are slowly working their way toward the beta hyperoxene deposit; it is still a hundred miles away or so.

As they go deeper they are surprised to find that life gets denser. They start to see more fish, more plants, some squiggly things on the ocean floor. It all darts away when it sees them.

Soon they discover more fish, and larger fish; some the size of large sharks. The sharks are surprisingly aggressive; they attack the ship and ram against it. Soon the sharks are joined by a whole school of other large sharks.

Zip begins to get worried. All of these fish could damage the ship. He could disperse them with his electronic equipment, but he doesn't want to just yet. It was approaching time for them to head back, so he decides to just run away and return to base.

The ship quickly outpaces the sharks, and they make it back to base without a hitch. Up above, however, they find the camp in a panic: they are desperately trying to battle against a strange bacteria that eats through metal. They managed to save the ship, but much of the equipment outside the ship was lost.

Zip manages to raise SE on the RTT and tells them all the events. SE tells them to go ahead and explore but to be careful and not take any chances.

That evening, Joe examines footage and data taken of the shark creatures. Joe figured out that a special electronic charge would repel the sharks; he fixed up a gizmo to drive them away if they should come across any again. There is some speculation as to whether they are intelligent or not.

## **CHAPTER 9: Flight**

The next day the Starmen once again dive into the ocean of Europa. This time almost immediately after getting below the water they are met by a huge group of the vicious sharks. Joe's gizmo drives them away, giving the Starmen a boost of confidence that they can handle the planet. They press on, closer to the beta hyperoxene deposit.

When they are within 50 miles of it they notice a very large object on their radar — something that is moving rapidly in their direction. Zip estimates that it's about a mile long and is moving at 100 knots. He wonders idly what it was.

Soon they find out: it is a fish — a \*huge\* fish. And it wanted the ship for dinner. It was clearly large enough to eat the ship in one bite. Zip, startled, turns the ship and runs for it.

He tries to run for it, but the huge fish manages to keep up. Soon the huge fish is joined by another one. The two are obviously intelligent and act as a team. They can't catch Zip but they seem to be driving him somewhere. Zip is worried... and then he notices that more huge fish are on the way.

Mark looks up on the map and points out that, under the floor in an area up ahead, there was a huge network of caves. Perhaps Zip could hide in these caves until the big fish left; they were certainly too large to make it inside.

Zip decides to do that; he desperately runs for the cave and dives into it. A big fish tries to cut him off but he races through just barely in time. Some of the sharks try to follow but are driven off by the electrostatic field.

[Back above, the robot ship breaks through the ice and robots, etc. begin to pour into the water. There is a foreboding air.]

## **CHAPTER 10: Danger Below!**

Zip takes stock of the situation. The ship is a bit damaged, but so far everything is ok. They decide to explore the underwater cave and hunt for another exit.

After progressing a while alien fish come out - something like octopi but with much thinner tentacles. They are also very intelligent and evidently civilized. The fish make an attack on the ship - not with their teeth but with some sort of weapon, maybe a sonic shockwave. The ship is battered but it keeps on. Soon the cave itself begins to shake; as they go deeper the cave collapses behind them. They are lost in the dark - but the octopi creatures are still there after them.

As they flee deeper they see that little ships are following them, this time beaming them with some sort of EMP weapon. They begin to lose control of their ship; the reactor starts to overheat. They are being chased, driven down, down, down...

[Above, the robot ships head toward the beta hyperoxene deposit. The big fish notice and send out a wailing call, evidently asking all comers to help.]

## **CHAPTER 11: In trouble**

Zip is in trouble; his ship is on its last legs. The cave suddenly fills with a deep wailing sound. The pursuing fish stop and listen. They then fire one last bolt at Zip's ship that freezes it cold, then the fish leave toward the surface. Zip's ship slowly sinks to the bottom and is immobile.

Outside, a standoff is going on. The robots are trying to make it to the beta hyperoxene deposit, but the fish are keeping them at bay. The robots make a few attempts to dash through, but the ones that try get eaten. The robots back off a bit, perhaps to regroup and figure something out.

Down in the cavern, the ship has settled onto the bottom of the cave. The crewmembers get out of the ship and try to figure out what went wrong. Mark remembers that they had a similar problem back on Earth when they were testing the ship; he fiddles with it and eventually gets the ship to work. It isn't in great shape and it isn't up to full power, but they can go places again.

But where to go? Zip consults the maps and plays back the navigation, and manages to figure out where they are. He examines the map of the caves that was on hand and figures out that if he lasers through a certain wall he can make it back outside. The crewmembers decide to make a break for it; to go through the wall and back to the surface. Their ship is in need of repairs...

They proceed according to plan and manage to make it outside - just as the robots draw into battle. Zip recognizes them instantly: they're from the Merkatriod Corporation [or whatever they're called], the leach that tries to pirate SE inventions and generally causes a mess.

Zip and the robots get into something of a pitched battle; the robots turn away from the fish to try to destroy him. Things begin to look desperate...

On the surface, the RTT radio has quit working again soon after restarting the ship's fusion reactor. The crew decides that perhaps Mark was right and maybe the reactor did play a role. They carefully hauled it outside and, with everyone outside working on it, they haul it off a mile away or so and try to set it up. A few other crewmembers haul over a portable nuclear reactor to power it. By this point they are concerned about Zip; he should have contacted them by now and return to base. They are uneasy.

Someone hears a gigantic cracking sound; they turn around just in time to see a tremendously large fish break through the ice and eat their ship whole. The fish then sinks below the ocean, leaving a tremendous break in the ice. The men are horrified. Now they have no way to get back to Earth... and all their supplies and habitat were in the ship! They only have a limited amount of oxygen and food; even if they can call Earth it will take weeks and perhaps months before a rescue ship can come. They are in trouble...

## **CHAPTER 12: The Lost City**

Down near the bottom of the sea, Zip is trying to fight past the robots. He has drawn the robots away from the fish; curiously, they're not attacking Zip anymore. Zip manages to evade the robots and make a break for the hyperoxene deposit.

Zip manages to elude them, and soon they are alone again. Zip makes for the deposit, looking for a place to park the ship while they work on some repairs. While getting closer to the deposit, he notices strange cities, obviously not built for humans [i.e. the fish built them]. Oddly, they are all deserted; Zip is not sure why.

Zip glides the ship into one of the larger buildings and settles it down. They get out in their suits and walk around. They find that the building has an airlock control; they turn it on and set it to their standards and soon the area is dry and has an Earth-like atmosphere. Zip wonders who built it; it looks lived-in and well preserved but it is empty.

The work progresses on their ship; they manage to repair some of the damage. The reactor has to be reset, though, and it will take a couple hours to do that. Zip decides to take the extra time to explore this city.

Above, the robots have spread out and are proceeding slowly. They have managed to track Zip's ship by traces it has left behind in the water. They want to find him... They are quickly closing in.

## **CHAPTER 13: Explorations**

Zip and co. walk through the huge deserted halls, wondering who built them and why. No one is here; they don't understand. Zip manages to find a map, and he locates an old mine there. The city seems to be built around it. The old mine is quite different from the city itself; the architecture and building material are different. Zip notices that they look familiar but he can't quite place them.

They start hiking toward it.

Back above them, the robot fleet finally located the bay where Zip's ship was located. Part of the robot ships stay prowling around, guarding, while a section of them flies toward the bay. They find the airlock controls and are soon inside the Earth-environment.

The robots get out of their ships and form detachments. Part of them stay to guard Zip's ship; the other part spreads out to search the city for the space explorers. They are soon dispersed.

Oblivious to all this, Zip and co. continue to work toward the mine. Soon they make the way to the huge airlock entrance - and see the same symbol on its doors that was present on the pirate's asteroid!

Zip is astonished. What does it mean? Obviously, that race had an outpost here; they must have mined the hyperoxene. They must have had some contact with the natives on this planet; but who were the natives? Were this lost race still living on the bottom of Europa?

Zip opens the airlock door and walks inside. The door closes - but not before a laser beam flies overhead and smacks into the wall. Zip whirls - and sees a troop of robots!

## **CHAPTER 14: The Lost Mine**

Mark turns to the airlock controls and manages to lock it. He doesn't know how long it will hold, but it should give them some time.

[They explore the mine, get into a fight with robots. Figure out that the inhabitants abandoned the mine a long time ago. The battle turns desperate but then the fish come - kind of amphibious creatures resembling octopi. The octopi help them drive off the robots and bring them to their base.

At their base, they manage to communicate to some degree. The octopi know almost nothing about English, but they have picked up some from their contact with 'outside' - they don't elaborate but Zip guesses that every now and then they leave Europa to keep tabs on the outside world.

The octopi explain the civilization on this planet, how the fish are intelligent. There are different classes of fish with different jobs. The octopi with their tentacles do delicate hands-on work. The real think tanks of their world are the huge whale-like fish. There are also fish that can extract minerals out of the water and secrete it; that is how their cities were built.

Zip manages to understand that the fish are a genetic engineering project of the 'lost race'. The fish were already smart, but the lost race, through a combination of genetic engineering and technology transfer, helped them enormously.

The octopi explain that they are not a hostile race. They enjoyed the company of the lost race. Then one day there was a battle that drove the lost race off their planet, and they never came back. Ever since then they have been guarding the relics and bases of the lost race, main-

taining them in the hopes that they will come back one day. Whenever an intruder came, they drove them away, so when Zip first came they tried to get rid of them, thinking they were of the race that drove away the lost race. When Zip turned on the robots and attacked them they realized that they had made a mistake.

Zip and the octopi strike a deal and agree to help get rid of the robots. They form a plan.

## **CHAPTER 15: The battle for Europa**

[The fish flood their base with water, washing the robots out. Then the fish are released to chase them. Zip manages to drive them off; they chase him then this scene takes place.]

He knows something of how the robots work; they are simply pirated SE equipment modified for battle. He thinks he has an idea. The robots aren't very smart; he can take advantage of this.

Zip throws the ship into high gear and flees toward the surface of Europa. Carefully dodging the robots and robotic ships, he steers toward a huge gas deposit under the ice that he had seen before.

The gas deposit was an area of nitrogen gas trapped between a hole in the ice and the water of Europa. There were several cubic miles of space in this region; it was several thousand feet high. The gas was under high pressure.

Zip blasted out of the water into the air; the robots followed him. Zip quit shooting his lasers and just continued to dodge the robotic beams - all the while keeping careful tabs on the ice. The robotic laser beams were piercing the ice, weakening it - if they kept it up they would eventually break through the ice. The gas would then rush out and explode like a volcano; all the ships inside the gas pocket would be blown into the sky and destroyed. He had to stay in just long enough and then leave...

At precisely the right moment, Zip turned the ship, threw it into overdrive and dived below the ocean. A split second later the trapped gas exploded, and with it the robot fleet flew into the air and was crushed. There was some serious turbulence, but Zip managed to survive.

## **CHAPTER 16**

Zip finally returns to base, finds it gone: eaten by the fish. He picks up the crewmembers and ferries them down to the fish's city. They manage to get the RTT device to work and radio for more supplies and a ship to return home in.

With the aid of the fish, Zip revives the Martian's base and sets up mining and extraction operations again. By the time the relief ship comes, everything is ready for the personnel. Zip then says goodbye and the Starmen head back home.



## Plot Summary Version 2.0<sup>11</sup>

- Note that this time the Starmen decide to go on the expedition — they aren't sent.<sup>12</sup> This is the first time in the series that the Starmen make a decision to go do something: before they were responding to orders given them from higher-up. In this book, they are intrigued by the mystery of Tharsos and decide to follow up on it. Their quest carries over to LROM, where they finally get the answer they're looking for.
- One problem, once again, is that there isn't a lot of excitement in the first part of the book.<sup>13</sup> We need to think of something to add a little excitement — something that will keep the reader flipping the pages. I've added a little bit with the NME thing, but it needs more than that. Suggestions?

### CHAPTER ONE

The Starmen have returned from JTP and are resting on the Moon. Now that they're home, they have decided to examine Tharsos and find out its origin. They're intrigued by the things they found on it and the information they uncovered on the abandoned base on Nyx. They want to solve the secret of Tharsos:<sup>14</sup> Zip especially wants to know why was the alien was worried. The Starmen believe that this race is still around, somewhere: the aliens they saw on Tharsos were proof of that. The question is, where are they living? Where are they from? What are they worried about? Why are their bases abandoned?

The data SE gleaned from their studies of Tharsos showed that it was more than just a spaceship: it was a starship. Information gleaned from the engines, the ship's computers, and slight irregularities in the ship itself (i.e. atomic distortions that could only be caused by jumps through hyperspace) conclusively show that Tharsos has traveled very long distances through hyperspace. Data from the computers on Tharsos indicates that the asteroid had stored in it the computations necessary to make large jumps through hyperspace. (However, SE could not acti-

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<sup>11</sup> All notes in the text were part of the original summary. This summary is very similar to version 1.0, but I made a number of significant changes based on discussions with the rest of the Team.

<sup>12</sup> This was important. In the Dig Allen series, the Space Explorers were completely autonomous: they explored what they wanted to explore and did what they wanted to do. In the Starman Series, the Starmen were on assignment: they were assigned to Mars, they were assigned to the Tenth Planet, and so forth. This is the first time in the series that the Starmen went out and did something on their own, thus starting to act a little bit more like Space Explorers.

<sup>13</sup> I always had trouble making the beginnings of each book exciting, and that bothered me. Normally it took a while for the plot to build and become exciting — the action in *The Lost Race of Mars*, for instance, didn't start until around Chapter 9. I wasn't able to find a way to make the book gripping from the very first page until we wrote *Doomsday Horizon*.

<sup>14</sup> We invented the name Tharsos before book one was even released, and that is how we referred to the asteroid in our internal notes — even though we had not yet released that name publicly.

vate those systems: it seems that some crucial part — a certain control mechanism — was missing. The Key to Tharsos was gone.)

As the Starmen analyzed the data they begin to form a few conclusions. Zip speculated that the alien civilization originated from a neighboring star system. Data the Starmen gathered from the base on Nyx showed that this race had many bases on other stars, so they were clearly an interstellar civilization, and since no trace of them had been found here they must have originated from somewhere else. The logo, Zip pointed out, supported this conclusion: there were no Earth-type planets in this solar system that had 3 moons — in fact, there weren't ANY planets that had 3 moons.

Zip thought that perhaps the aliens had a civilization spanning many star systems (as the data seemed to indicate) and that Nyx was a fueling station on the outer fringe of their civilization. Tharsos, he said, had probably been used to transport the Titanians to Titan.

Then as time went on, something happened. Something caused Tharsos to be abandoned in the Belt, left to decay with only a few aliens on board to watch over it. Nyx fell into disuse and was abandoned. The only clue was the fear of the aliens that Mark saw: some hostile power had them scared. But what had happened? What would cause the aliens to withdraw and abandon Tharsos?

The answer, Joe said, probably was among distant stars: the aliens were probably out there, if we could only travel through hyperspace to get there. But here, we seem to be up against a wall. They all needed more information — and the only place to get it was from within the oceans of Europa!

## CHAPTER 2

The Starmen don't know if there is actually a base on Europa or not. The data they gathered from Nyx indicated that Europa had been a supply station of a certain raw material used in the manufacturing of an element used in hyperspatial travel. Zip guessed that there was a mining operation there: unless the aliens simply sent in freighters to scoop the mineral off the ocean bottom, they must have set up some sort of base to mine the material. There might be a base there — and it might have the clues they needed.

It might also have the secret to interstellar travel! Perhaps at the base they'd find information on using the mined material in a hyperdrive, or maybe a functioning hyperdrive (one that wasn't "locked" like the one on Tharsos). Also, perhaps there would be information on how to unlock Tharsos and get it to work again.

So the Starmen decide to descend into the icy waters of Europa. They can't go in their Star Ranger: they'll need special equipment to make the voyage. So they head over to Space Research (and the Q-like character)<sup>15</sup> and see what they've got that could be modified to do the job. It turns out that SE did have a basic ship that could travel in space and then travel underwater. It would need some modifications for travel in Europa (for example, good lasers and drilling equipment to get beneath the ice — even if they go down the huge canyons, they'll still need to drill the final hole) but it would work.

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<sup>15</sup> Mike suggested we add a Q-like character to the series, and we did! It was a good idea.

The Starmen, then, mount an expedition. They're not going alone: they decide to form a small team. They'll take two ships: a large mothership with supplies, radio gear, fuel, etc. and then the ship that will actually descend into Europa (this will be carried on board the huge freighter/mothership). Since the large freighter is too large to manage with just three people, and since making an expedition like this is a little dangerous with just three people, they take along a small crew. (Perhaps some of the same people who went along on JTP?)<sup>16</sup>

The Starmen, then, form their expedition and get ready for the descent!

Meanwhile, at NME, things are humming. Robert Nolan found out about the Starmen's expedition and decided that he wanted to corner the market on that hyperspatial material. If the Starmen found it, SE would get it and would undoubtedly use it to create a FTL ship. So, Nolan decides to sabotage the Starmen's expedition and send an expedition of his own! He doesn't think it will be too hard: a well-placed accident should wipe them out.

### **CHAPTER 3: Aquaville** (or whatever city name sounds good)

The Starmen were scheduled to spend the next few days preparing for the journey. Since they were going to spend most of their time in Europa under water, they needed to be trained how to use that equipment in an aquatic environment. The best place to learn was at the bottom of the oceans on Earth, so they left for the Aquapolis.

The Aquapolis was a sprawling metropolis of roughly a quarter million people, located on the continental shelf off the coast of Florida. It was at the bottom of the ocean [how deep is the continental shelf off the cost of Florida?]; one of the great wonders of the world. Huge machines built by SE repelled the water and kept it at bay; there were domes but they were mainly to keep the atmosphere inside livable and not too humid. The city was a fantastic sight, with ships and submarines constantly arriving and leaving, people walking all about... the city was underwater but was not too deep; the water around was a rich blue color and light did filter down through the water. The city was located near vast coral reefs with tropical fish. It was a large tourist attraction, a resort, a model city: but it also housed some of the finest brains in the world and was one of the world's leading producers of electronic equipment — perhaps because the city depended upon such equipment for its very existence.

Once they landed at Aquapolis, they went to the SE base located there and were briefed by the Q character on things they would need to know, and on their equipment. The man introduced them to the 3-man ship they would be using. SE had been working on a special triphibian vessel that could travel under water, through the air, and for limited distances in space; it was the vehicle the Starmen chose for the Europa mission. While at Aquaville they were to be given some diving lessons as well as a chance to work with the vessel in the seas of Earth before risking it at Europa.

Meanwhile, in the background, an NME operative does something that will create trouble for the Starmen when they operate their ship. Perhaps he loads a computer program onto the

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<sup>16</sup> I was always trying to find a way to reuse characters that had appeared in previous books.

Starmen's 3-man aquaship that will cut off the ship's communication system — after which he'll arrange a suitable accident. The Starmen won't be able to call for help: it will just be too bad...

#### **CHAPTER 4**

The Starmen take the ship and fly it over the ocean to the North Pole (they wanted cold waters) where they descend and start testing the ship. It goes well, until the computer program the NME fellow loaded takes effect and their communications system goes dead. Then, the NME fellow shows up and gives the Starmen trouble. [I'm a little hazy here: I can't think of any good ideas at the moment. It would be nice if the Starmen never knew that an enemy agent was giving them trouble: maybe they thought it was some natural occurrence. David, do you have any ideas?]

The Starmen eventually get out of the problem and return to base. Then they gather the expedition and fly the vessel out into space to Space Station L5.

#### **CHAPTER 5: Departure from L5**

The Starmen are introduced to the L5 station. It's pretty incredible; a huge habitat in space... Their ship (a huge modified cargo freighter) is in the docking bay. The idea is to use the ship itself as a base once they get there. They would use it as a base to do some exploration; once they had a report and could tell SE what the environment required another group of ships carrying the necessary materials for a permanent settlement would follow them. They are also given some rather large and bulky RTT equipment.

So everything is loaded, and the crew flies off to Europa.

Robert Nolan, in the background, is not happy. The Starmen haven't been stopped: they're steaming off toward Europa at full speed — but on a slow freighter. Nolan decides that he still has a chance: he'll send an expedition of his own and give the Starmen a warm greeting when they arrive...

#### **CHAPTER 6: Landing at Europa.**

The ship flies through space with very little trouble. They have some trouble with their RTT equipment; sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It is obvious that it isn't quite perfected yet, but when it fails they can always go back to the old-fashioned way. Mark speculates that the nuclear fusion drive at times throws the RTT equipment off, but he's not sure.

Once they reach Europa, they orbit it carefully. After not seeing anything spectacular or dangerous — and without seeing any sign of the Martian base — they land. They are tense and worried, but they land without a hint of trouble; nothing goes wrong.

Base is established; some equipment is brought outside and set up. Their little triphibian ship is unloaded. So far, no trouble.

[Elsewhere an NME robot ship touches down and begins work.]

## **CHAPTER 7: Divers Down!**

The next day dawns without a hint of trouble. Powerful radar beams fail to find any signs of life or tectonic activity in the region of the ship. There seems to be no danger; it looks like the moon is deserted.

Feeling somewhat more confident, the Starmen start searching Europa for a good ice canyon to descend into. From radar data they studied on Earth they found a few possibilities, and today they flew over them to find the right one. They eventually found one they thought would do: it didn't look particularly safe, but it was safer than the others.

Once the canyon was chosen, the Starmen loaded enough supplies onto their ship to last for a couple days (in case something went wrong) then bid their crew on the surface farewell and they flew their aquaship down the canyon. When they had gone a few miles down (the ice sheet was many miles thick) the windshield started fogging.

It turns out that, deep in the cracks of Europa, there lived some one-celled bioluminescent fungi. These fungi naturally clump together on any smooth, warm surface — and the ship happens to be an excellent smooth, warm surface. When the Starmen start approaching the bottom of the canyon, their ship is covered with these fungi, completely obscuring the view. The coverage happens all at once: within seconds they're flying blind. The Starmen then find themselves at the bottom of a deep canyon, flying at a high speed, completely blind!

## **CHAPTER 8: First Contact**

Mark, thinking fast, gets an idea. He moves a few wires around and starts transferring energy into the ship's metallic hull. This heats the hull up rapidly to a very high temperature. Soon the little bacteria are fried and fall off the ship. The Starmen keep the hull warm as they begin cutting a hole to enter the European sea.

At the bottom of the steep canyon, the Starmen start cutting huge swaths in the ice with some powerful laser beams. Eventually the Starmen are able to melt their way inside, and they then plunge their ship into the icy waters.

The ship goes down deeper, skimming the ocean bottom. They are slowly working their way toward the beta hyperoxene deposit; it is still a hundred miles away or so.

As they go deeper they are surprised to find that life gets denser. They start to see plants, then more plants, some squiggly things on the ocean floor. The squiggles all dart away when it sees them.

Soon they discover more fish, and larger fish; some the size of large sharks. The sharks are surprisingly aggressive; they attack the ship and ram against it. Soon the sharks are joined by a whole school of other large sharks.

Zip begins to get worried. All of these fish could damage the ship. He could disperse them with his electronic equipment, but he doesn't want to just yet. It was approaching time for them to head back, so he decides to just run away and return to base.

The ship quickly outpaces the sharks, and they make it back to base without a hitch. Up above, however, they find the camp in a panic: they are desperately trying to battle against a strange bacteria that eats through metal. They managed to save the ship, but much of the equipment outside the ship was lost.

Zip manages to raise SE on the RTT and tells them all the events. SE tells them to go ahead and explore but to be careful and not take any chances.

That evening, Joe examines footage and data taken of the shark creatures. Joe figured out that a special electronic charge would repel the sharks; he fixed up a gizmo to drive them away if they should come across any again. There is some speculation as to whether they are intelligent or not.

## **CHAPTER 9: Flight**

The next day the Starmen once again dive into the ocean of Europa. This time almost immediately after getting below the water they are met by a huge group of the vicious sharks. Joe's gizmo drives them away, giving the Starmen a boost of confidence that they can handle the planet. They press on, closer to the beta hyperoxene deposit.

When they are within 50 miles of it they notice a very large object on their radar — something that is moving rapidly in their direction. Zip estimates that it's about a mile long and is moving at 100 knots. He wonders idly what it was.

Soon they find out: it is a fish — a *\*huge\** fish. And it wanted the ship for dinner. It was clearly large enough to eat the ship in one bite. Zip, startled, turns the ship and runs for it.

He tries to run for it, but the huge fish manages to keep up. Soon the huge fish is joined by another one. The two are obviously intelligent and act as a team. They can't catch Zip but they seem to be driving him somewhere. Zip is worried... and then he notices that more huge fish are on the way.

Mark looks up on the map and points out that, under the floor in an area up ahead, there was a huge network of caves. Perhaps Zip could hide in these caves until the big fish left; they were certainly too large to make it inside.

Zip decides to do that; he desperately runs for the cave and dives into it. A big fish tries to cut him off but he races through just barely in time. Some of the sharks try to follow but are driven off by the electrostatic field.

[Back above, the robot ship breaks through the ice and robots, etc. begin to pour into the water. There is a foreboding air.]<sup>17</sup>

## **CHAPTER 10: Danger Below!**

Zip takes stock of the situation. The ship is a bit damaged, but so far everything is ok. They decide to explore the underwater cave and hunt for another exit.

After progressing a while alien fish come out - something like octopi but with much thinner tentacles. They are also very intelligent and evidently civilized. The fish make an attack on the ship - not with their teeth but with some sort of weapon, maybe a sonic shockwave. The ship is battered but it keeps on. Soon the cave itself begins to shake; as they go deeper the cave collapses behind them. They are lost in the dark - but the octopi creatures are still there after them.

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<sup>17</sup> I liked to insert notes like this from time to time to give David an idea of what sort of atmosphere the chapter should have.

As they flee deeper they see that little ships are following them, this time beaming them with some sort of EMP weapon. They begin to lose control of their ship; the reactor starts to overheat. They are being chased, driven down, down, down...

[Above, the robot ships head toward the beta hyperoxene deposit. The big fish notice and send out a wailing call, evidently asking all comers to help.]

## **CHAPTER 11: In trouble**

Zip is in trouble; his ship is on its last legs. The cave suddenly fills with a deep wailing sound. The pursuing fish stop and listen. They then fire one last bolt at Zip's ship that freezes it cold, then the fish leave toward the surface. Zip's ship slowly sinks to the bottom and is immobile.

Outside, a standoff is going on. The robots are trying to make it to the beta hyperoxene deposit, but the fish are keeping them at bay. The robots make a few attempts to dash through, but the ones that try get eaten. The robots back off a bit, perhaps to regroup and figure something out.

Down in the cavern, the ship has settled onto the bottom of the cave. The crewmembers get out of the ship and try to figure out what went wrong. Mark remembers that they had a similar problem back on Earth when they were testing the ship; he fiddles with it and eventually gets the ship to work. It isn't in great shape and it isn't up to full power, but they can go places again.

But where to go? Zip consults the maps and plays back the navigation, and manages to figure out where they are. He examines the map of the caves that was on hand and figures out that if he lasers through a certain wall he can make it back outside. The crewmembers decide to make a break for it; to go through the wall and back to the surface. Their ship is in need of repairs...

They proceed according to plan and manage to make it outside - just as the robots draw into battle. Zip recognizes them instantly: they're from the Merkatriod Corporation [or whatever they're called], the leach that tries to pirate SE inventions and generally causes a mess.

Zip and the robots get into something of a pitched battle; the robots turn away from the fish to try to destroy him. Things begin to look desperate...

On the surface, the RTT radio has quit working again soon after restarting the ship's fusion reactor. The crew decides that perhaps Mark was right and maybe the reactor did play a role. They carefully hauled it outside and, with everyone outside working on it, they haul it off a mile away or so and try to set it up. A few other crewmembers haul over a portable nuclear reactor to power it. By this point they are concerned about Zip; he should have contacted them by now and return to base. They are uneasy.

Someone hears a gigantic cracking sound; they turn around just in time to see a tremendously large fish break through the ice and eat their ship whole. The fish then sinks below the ocean, leaving a tremendous break in the ice. The men are horrified. Now they have no way to get back to Earth... and all their supplies and habitat were in the ship! They only have a limited amount of oxygen and food; even if they can call Earth it will take weeks and perhaps months before a rescue ship can come. They are in trouble...

## **CHAPTER 12: The Lost City**

Down near the bottom of the sea, Zip is trying to fight past the robots. He has drawn the robots away from the fish; curiously, they're not attacking Zip anymore. Zip manages to evade the robots and make a break for the hyperoxene deposit.

Zip manages to elude them, and soon they are alone again. Zip makes for the deposit, looking for a place to park the ship while they work on some repairs. While getting closer to the deposit, he notices strange cities, obviously not built for humans [i.e. the fish built them]. Oddly, they are all deserted; Zip is not sure why.

Zip glides the ship into one of the larger buildings and settles it down. They get out in their suits and walk around. They find that the building has an airlock control; they turn it on and set it to their standards and soon the area is dry and has an Earth-like atmosphere. Zip wonders who built it; it looks lived-in and well preserved but it is empty.

The work progresses on their ship; they manage to repair some of the damage. The reactor has to be reset, though, and it will take a couple hours to do that. Zip decides to take the extra time to explore this city.

Above, the robots have spread out and are proceeding slowly. They have managed to track Zip's ship by traces it has left behind in the water. They want to find him... They are quickly closing in.

## **CHAPTER 13: Explorations**

Zip and co. walk through the huge deserted halls, wondering who built them and why. No one is here; they don't understand. Zip manages to find a map, and he locates an old mine there. The city seems to be built around it. The old mine is quite different from the city itself; the architecture and building material are different. Zip notices that they look familiar but he can't quite place them.

They start hiking toward it.

Back above them, the robot fleet finally located the bay where Zip's ship was located. Part of the robot ships stay prowling around, guarding, while a section of them flies toward the bay. They find the airlock controls and are soon inside the Earth-environment.

The robots get out of their ships and form detachments. Part of them stay to guard Zip's ship; the other part spreads out to search the city for the space explorers. They are soon dispersed.

Oblivious to all this, Zip and co. continue to work toward the mine. Soon they make the way to the huge airlock entrance - and see the same symbol on its doors that was present on the pirate's asteroid!

Zip is astonished. What does it mean? Obviously, that race had an outpost here; they must have mined the hyperoxene. They must have had some contact with the natives on this planet; but who were the natives? Were this lost race still living on the bottom of Europa?

Zip opens the airlock door and walks inside. The door closes - but not before a laser beam flies overhead and smacks into the wall. Zip whirls - and sees a troop of robots!



## **CHAPTER 14: The Lost Mine**

Mark turns to the airlock controls and manages to lock it. He doesn't know how long it will hold, but it should give them some time.

[They explore the mine, get into a fight with robots. Figure out that the inhabitants abandoned the mine a long time ago. The battle turns desperate but then the fish come - kind of amphibious creatures resembling octopi. The octopi help them drive off the robots and bring them to their base.

At their base, they manage to communicate to some degree. The octopi know almost nothing about English, but they have picked up some from their contact with 'outside' - they don't elaborate but Zip guesses that every now and then they leave Europa to keep tabs on the outside world.

The octopi explain the civilization on this planet, how the fish are intelligent. There are different classes of fish with different jobs. The octopi with their tentacles do delicate hands-on work. The real think tanks of their world are the huge whale-like fish. There are also fish that can extract minerals out of the water and secrete it; that is how their cities were built.

Zip manages to understand that the fish are a genetic engineering project of the 'lost race'. The fish were already smart, but the lost race, through a combination of genetic engineering and technology transfer, helped them enormously.

The octopi explain that they are not a hostile race. They enjoyed the company of the lost race. Then one day there was a battle that drove the lost race off their planet, and they never came back. Ever since then they have been guarding the relics and bases of the lost race, maintaining them in the hopes that they will come back one day. Whenever an intruder came, they drove them away, so when Zip first came they tried to get rid of them, thinking they were of the race that drove away the lost race. When Zip turned on the robots and attacked them they realized that they had made a mistake.

Zip and the octopi strike a deal and agree to help get rid of the robots. They form a plan.

## **CHAPTER 15: The battle for Europa**

[The fish flood their base with water, washing the robots out. Then the fish are released to chase them. Zip manages to drive them off; they chase him then this scene takes place.]

He knows something of how the robots work; they are simply pirated SE equipment modified for battle. He thinks he has an idea. The robots aren't very smart; he can take advantage of this.

Zip throws the ship into high gear and flees toward the surface of Europa. Carefully dodging the robots and robotic ships, he steers toward a huge gas deposit under the ice that he had seen before.

The gas deposit was an area of nitrogen gas trapped between a hole in the ice and the water of Europa. There were several cubic miles of space in this region; it was several thousand feet high. The gas was under high pressure.

Zip blasted out of the water into the air; the robots followed him. Zip quit shooting his lasers and just continued to dodge the robotic beams - all the while keeping careful tabs on the ice. The robotic laser beams were piercing the ice, weakening it - if they kept it up they would eventually break through the ice. The gas would then rush out and explode like a volcano; all

the ships inside the gas pocket would be blown into the sky and destroyed. He had to stay in just long enough and then leave...

At precisely the right moment, Zip turned the ship, threw it into overdrive and dived below the ocean. A split second later the trapped gas exploded, and with it the robot fleet flew into the air and was crushed. There was some serious turbulence, but Zip managed to survive.

## **CHAPTER 16:**

Zip finally returns to base, finds it gone: eaten by the fish. He picks up the crewmembers and ferries them down to the fish's city. They manage to get the RTT device to work and radio for more supplies and a ship to return home in.

With the aid of the fish, Zip revives the Martian's base and sets up mining and extraction operations again. By the time the relief ship comes, everything is ready for the personnel. Zip then says goodbye and the Starmen head back home.

## Plot Summary Version 3.0<sup>18</sup>

### PRELIMINARY NOTES

\* In the previous book, JOURNEY TO THE TENTH PLANET, the three Starmen met Earth's enemy - the "Superiors." David realized that the Superiors were a tremendous threat: Earth just simply did not have the means to resist an enemy as powerful and technologically advanced as these hostile alien beings. What Earth needs is an ally - and Zip knows where to get it.

The aliens who built the asteroid the pirates took over were very advanced: if that asteroid was any indication, they had a much larger chance of resisting the Superiors. These aliens also seemed to know a great deal more about the Superiors than Zip did: perhaps they could be of service. They certainly had technology that was light-years ahead of Earth.

The question is, where were they? Where were these strange aliens based? SE was unable to find any more aliens on Tharsos - but Zip knew they were there. The aliens seemed to be hiding - but where, and why? Zip had to find out, and he knows that the fate of the solar system is hanging in the balance.

This book, then, is about finding these aliens. The search is intense and urgent: Zip doesn't think that Earth has much time. On the Tenth Planet, Zip found a piece of information to the effect that the aliens had an extensive base on Europa. Zip, then, decided to go to Europa and find that base, in hopes of either finding the aliens or discovering where to go next.

\* In the previous book, Nolan Mining Enterprises and Starlight Enterprises suffered enormously thanks to the terrible disaster that happened in route to the Tenth Planet.<sup>19</sup> Richard Starlight managed to weather the blast, but Robert Nolan - always unstable - did not; the two companies survived but the incident pushed Robert over the edge. In the prelude, Robert joins the enemy and Nolan Mining Enterprises (NME) becomes the arch rival of SE. SE doesn't realize this for quite some time...

\* Finally, don't forget to work in a visit to Montezuma Vly! This should be done in the early section of the book.

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<sup>18</sup> This is the version of the summary we used to actually write the book.

<sup>19</sup> One of the biggest reasons we had the active shielding fail in *Journey to the Tenth Planet* was to push Robert Nolan over the edge, so that he could then oppose Starlight Enterprise in *Descent Into Europa*. This is why I always try to write one to two summaries ahead of the current book we are working on: sometimes it is necessary to place an event in an earlier book to set up something that happens in a later book.

## **PRELUDE ('Chapter 0'): Descent Into Evil**

Robert Nolan was sitting in his office in the Asteroid Belt, holding his head in his hands. His firm, Nolan Mining Enterprises, was in shambles: when the story of the near-fatal radiation shield failure on board the Nyx ship hit the papers, NME took a terrific beating in the press. The Starmen had not yet returned from Nyx (it would be several months before they got back), but already they were seen as heroes who triumphed - not only over the vicious aliens and the pirates, but also over the stupidity of NME. Richard Starlight had tried to comfort him and stand up for him in the papers, but it had done little good.

A knock sounded on his office door. Robert looked up. 'Come in.'

Dr. Beowulf Denn, Robert's chief assistant, walked into his office. 'Oh, good afternoon, Dr. Denn. What can I do for you?'

At this point, Dr. Denn and Robert begin having a discussion about his recent troubles. Dr. Denn lays the blame on SE: SE is clearly on a campaign to drive Robert out of business. Denn told Robert that there are forces more powerful than SE in the universe: much, much more powerful.

Robert asked Denn what he was talking about. Denn stated that he had been looking over the records left behind on Tharsos and had found evidence that the builders of the asteroid had been destroyed nearly overnight by a band of powerful aliens. In a single day, these aliens vaporized their home planet and destroyed their entire civilization. Denn stated that those creatures were still around today — and that he had come into contact with them.

Denn said that he had an offer to make Robert. If Robert stayed partners with SE, all he could expect was more mockery: look what they had already done. SE would eventually put NME out of business. But, if Robert joined these alien forces, he would have access to power beyond anything SE could even dream of. He, Robert Nolan, could become far more powerful and famous than Richard Starlight; he could be the one who wielded power in the solar system.

Robert, wounded and angered over the bad press and hungry for power, made the decision to throw his lot in with Dr. Denn and the alien race...<sup>20</sup>

## **CHAPTER ONE: Sea Gold?<sup>21</sup>**

(Title is a play on words: the Starmen are asking, is there gold in the European sea? gold being, of course, the Lost Race, the special hyperspatial material, etc.)

The Starmen have returned from JTP and are resting on the Moon. Now that they're home, they have decided to examine Tharsos, the alien asteroid, and find out its origin. They're intrigued by the things they found on it and the information they uncovered on the abandoned base on Nyx. They want to solve the secret of Tharsos: Zip especially wants to know why was the alien was worried. The Starmen believe that this race is still around, somewhere: the aliens

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<sup>20</sup> This was an interesting way to start the book, but David had a much better idea. I really like what we ended up using! I think it works much better than what I originally plotted.

<sup>21</sup> By now we had decided to use only titles of Hal Goodwin books for chapter titles, and this was my first attempt at making that happen.

they saw on Tharsos were proof of that. The question is, where are they living? Where are they from? What are they worried about? Why are their bases abandoned?

The data SE gleaned from their studies of Tharsos showed that it was more than just a spaceship: it was a starship. Information gleaned from the engines, the ship's computers, and slight irregularities in the ship itself (i.e. atomic distortions that could only be caused by jumps through hyperspace) conclusively show that Tharsos has traveled very long distances through hyperspace. Data from the computers on Tharsos indicates that the asteroid had stored in it the computations necessary to make large jumps through hyperspace. (However, SE could not activate those systems: it seems that some crucial part — a certain control mechanism — was missing. The Key to Tharsos was gone.)

As the Starmen analyzed the data they begin to form a few conclusions. Zip speculated that the alien civilization originated from a neighboring star system. Data the Starmen gathered from the base on Nyx showed that this race had many bases on other stars, so they were clearly an interstellar civilization, and since no trace of them had been found here they must have originated from somewhere else. The logo, Zip pointed out, supported this conclusion: there were no Earth-type planets in this solar system that had 3 moons — in fact, there weren't ANY planets that had 3 moons.

Zip thought that perhaps the aliens had a civilization spanning many star systems (as the data seemed to indicate) and that Nyx was a fueling station on the outer fringe of their civilization. Tharsos, he said, had probably been used to transport the Titanians to Titan.

Then as time went on, something happened. Something caused Tharsos to be abandoned in the Belt, left to decay with only a few aliens on board to watch over it. Nyx fell into disuse and was abandoned. The only clue was the fear of the aliens that Mark saw: some hostile power had them scared. But what had happened? What would cause the aliens to withdraw and abandon Tharsos?

The answer, Joe said, probably was among distant stars: the aliens were probably out there, if we could only travel through hyperspace to get there. But here, we seem to be up against a wall. They all needed more information — and the only place to get it was from within the oceans of Europa!

The Starmen don't know if there is actually a base on Europa or not. The data they gathered from Nyx indicated that Europa had been a supply station of a certain raw material used in the manufacturing of an element used in hyperspatial travel. Zip guessed that there was a mining operation there: unless the aliens simply sent in freighters to scoop the mineral off the ocean bottom, they must have set up some sort of base to mine the material. There might be a base there — and it might have the clues they needed.

It might also have the secret to interstellar travel! Perhaps at the base they'd find information on using the mined material in a hyperdrive, or maybe a functioning hyperdrive (one that wasn't "locked" like the one on Tharsos). Also, perhaps there would be information on how to unlock the drive on Tharsos and get it to work again.

So the Starmen decide to descend into the icy waters of Europa. They can't go in their Star Ranger: they'll need special equipment to make the voyage. So they head over to Space

Research (and the Q-like character) and see what they've got that could be modified to do the job. It turns out that SE did have a basic ship that could travel in space and then travel underwater. It would need some modifications for travel in Europa (for example, good lasers and drilling equipment to get beneath the ice — even if they go down the huge canyons, they'll still need to drill the final hole) but it would work.

The Starmen, then, mount an expedition. They're not going alone: they decide to form a small team. They'll take two ships: a large mothership with supplies, radio gear, fuel, etc. and then the ship that will actually descend into Europa (this will be carried on board the huge freighter/mothership). Since the large freighter is too large to manage with just three people, and since making an expedition like this is a little dangerous with just three people, they take along a small crew. (Perhaps some of the same people who went along on JTP?)

The Starmen, then, form their expedition and get ready for the descent!

Meanwhile, at NME, things are humming. Robert Nolan found out about the Starmen's expedition and decided that he wanted to corner the market on that hyperspatial material. If the Starmen found it, SE would get it and would undoubtedly use it to create a faster-than-light ship. So, Nolan decides to sabotage the Starmen's expedition and send an expedition of his own! He doesn't think it will be too hard: a well-placed accident should wipe them out.

[I know that Chapter 1 looks long, but it's not really: almost no events happen — this is all discussion. Aslo, if Chapter 1 is a little long it won't hurt anything.]

## **CHAPTER 2: 100 Fathoms Under**

[i.e. the Aquapolis is located 100 fathoms under the Ocean Surface off the coast of Florida.]

The Starmen decided to spend the next few days preparing for the journey. Since they were going to spend most of their time in Europa under water, they needed to be trained how to use that equipment in an aquatic environment. The best place to learn was at the bottom of the oceans on Earth, so they left for the Aquapolis.

The Aquapolis was a sprawling metropolis of roughly a quarter million people, located on the continental shelf off the coast of Florida. It was at the bottom of the ocean [how deep is the continental shelf off the cost of Florida?] and was one of the great wonders of the world. Huge machines built by SE repelled the water and kept it at bay; there were domes but they were mainly to keep the atmosphere inside livable and not too humid. The city was a fantastic sight, with ships and submarines constantly arriving and leaving, people walking all about. The city was underwater but was not too deep; the water around was a rich blue color and light did filter down through the water. The city was located near vast coral reefs with tropical fish. It was a large tourist attraction, a resort, and a model city, but it also housed some of the finest brains in the world and was one of the world's leading producers of electronic equipment — perhaps because the city depended upon such equipment for its very existence.

Once they landed at Aquapolis, they went to the SE base located there and were briefed by the Q character on things they would need to know, and on their equipment. The man introduced them to the 3-man ship they would be using. SE had been working on a special triphibian vessel that could travel under water, through the air, and for limited distances in space; it was

the vehicle the Starmen had chosen for the Europa mission. While at Aquaville they were to be given some diving lessons (they had already had some training at the Academy but needed another course) as well as a chance to work with the vessel in the seas of Earth before risking it at Europa.

Meanwhile, in the background, an NME operative does something that will create trouble for the Starmen when they operate their ship. Perhaps he loads a computer program onto the Starmen's 3-man aquaship that will cut off the ship's communication system — after which he'll arrange a suitable accident. The Starmen won't be able to call for help: it will just be too bad...

### **CHAPTER 3: Flight of the Stingaree**

[referring to the flight of the Starmen's ship, which resembles a stingray.]

The Starmen take the ship and fly it over the ocean to the north pole (they wanted cold waters to resemble the environment they'd find on Europa) where they descend and start testing the ship. It goes well, until the computer program the NME fellow loaded takes effect and their communications system goes dead. Then, the NME fellow shows up and gives the Starmen trouble. [I'm a little hazy here: I can't think of any good ideas at the moment. It would be nice if the Starmen never knew that an enemy agent was giving them trouble: maybe they thought it was some natural occurrence. David, do you have any ideas?]

The Starmen eventually get out of the problem and return to base. Then they gather the expedition and fly the vessel out into space to Space Station L5.

### **CHAPTER 4: The Unknown Danger**

[Title is a chapter title in *The Deadly Dutchman*; it is referring to Robert Nolan.]

The Starmen are introduced to the L5 station. It's pretty incredible; it's a huge habitat in space, home to more than 50,000 people. The L5 station has manufacturing centers, docking bays, research labs, and more: it's a central hub for traffic between Earth and the Moon.

The Starmen's ship (a huge modified SE cargo freighter) is in the docking bay. The idea is to use the ship itself as a base once they get there. They would use it as a base to do some exploration; once they had a report and could tell SE what the environment required another group of ships carrying the necessary materials for a permanent settlement would follow them. They are also given some rather large and bulky RTT equipment so they could talk via tachyons in realtime, without the long delay.

So everything is loaded, and the crew flies off to Europa.

Robert Nolan, in the background, is not happy. The Starmen haven't been stopped: they're steaming off toward Europa at full speed — but on a slow freighter. Nolan decides that he still has a chance: he'll send an expedition of his own and give the Starmen a warm greeting when they arrive.

### **CHAPTER 5: A Calm Precedes A Storm**

[Title is a chapter title in *Electronic Mind Reader*]

The ship flies through space with very little trouble. They have some trouble with their RTT equipment; sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It is obvious that it isn't quite perfected yet, but when it fails they can always go back to the old-fashioned way. Mark speculates that the nuclear fusion drive used to propel the ship through space throws the RTT equipment off sometimes, but he isn't sure.

Once they reach Europa, they orbit it carefully. After not seeing anything spectacular or dangerous — and without seeing any sign of the Martian base — they land. They are tense and worried, but they land without a hint of trouble; nothing goes wrong.

Base is established; some equipment is brought outside and set up. Their little triphibian ship is unloaded. So far, no trouble.

[Elsewhere an NME robot ship touches down and begins work.]

## **CHAPTER 6: Divers Down!**

The next day dawns without a hint of trouble. Powerful radar beams fail to find any signs of life or tectonic activity in the region of the ship. There seems to be no danger; it looks like the moon is deserted.

Feeling somewhat more confident, the Starmen start searching Europa for a good ice canyon to descend into. From radar data they studied on Earth they found a few possibilities, and today they flew over them to find the right one. They eventually found one they thought would do: it didn't look particularly safe, but it was safer than the others.

Once the canyon was chosen, the Starmen loaded enough supplies onto their ship to last for a couple days (in case something went wrong) then bid their crew on the surface farewell and they flew their aquaship down the canyon. When they had gone a few miles down (the ice sheet was many miles thick) the windshield started fogging dangerously.

It turns out that, deep in the cracks of Europa, there lived some one-celled bioluminescent fungi. These fungi naturally clump together on any smooth, warm surface — and the ship happens to be an excellent smooth, warm surface. When the Starmen start approaching the bottom of the canyon, their ship is covered with these fungi, completely obscuring the view and messing with the instruments. The coverage happens all at once: within seconds they're flying blind. The Starmen then find themselves at the bottom of a deep canyon, flying at a high speed, completely blind!

## **CHAPTER 7: Search the Wide Seas**

[Title is a chapter title in *Pirates of Shan*]

Mark, thinking fast, gets an idea. He moves a few wires around and starts transferring energy from the ship's nuclear pile into the ship's metallic hull. This heats the hull up rapidly to a very high temperature. Soon the little bacteria are fried and fall off the ship. The Starmen keep the hull warm to prevent another buildup as they begin cutting a hole to enter the European sea.

At the bottom of the steep canyon, the Starmen start cutting huge swaths in the ice with some powerful laser beams. Eventually the Starmen are able to melt their way inside, and they then plunge their ship into the icy waters.



[Editor's note: should the Starmen instead build an airlock? Otherwise, wouldn't the water — since it's under intense pressure — spurt out of the hole at high speeds? An airlock of sorts could be used to equalize pressure and give the Starmen an easier way into the sea.]

The ship goes down deeper, skimming the ocean bottom. They are slowly working their way toward the beta hyperoxene deposit; it is still a hundred miles away or so.

As they go deeper they are surprised to find that life gets denser. They start to see plants, then more plants, some squiggly things on the ocean floor. The squiggles all dart away when it sees them.

Soon they discover more fish, and larger fish; some the size of large sharks. The sharks are surprisingly aggressive; they attack the ship and ram against it. Soon the sharks are joined by a whole school of other large sharks.

Zip begins to get worried; all of these fish could damage the ship, and he doesn't have any way to dispel them. Since it was approaching time for them to head back, so he decides to just run away and return to base.

The ship quickly outpaces the sharks, and they make it back to base without a hitch. Up above, however, they find the camp in a panic: they are desperately trying to battle against a strange bacteria that eats through metal. They managed to save the ship, but much of the equipment outside the ship was lost. [Editor's note: This metal-eating bacteria scene can be removed if desired; I'm really not sure what it is doing here and have no idea what I was thinking when I wrote it.]

Zip manages to raise SE on the RTT and tells them all the events. SE tells them to go ahead and explore but to be careful and not take any chances.

That evening, Joe examines footage and data taken of the shark creatures. Joe figured out that a special electronic charge would repel the sharks; he fixed up a gizmo to drive them away if they should come across any again. There is some speculation as to whether or not they are intelligent.

## **CHAPTER 8: Danger Below!**

The next day the Starmen once again dive into the ocean of Europa. This time almost immediately after getting below the water they are met by a huge group of the vicious sharks. Joe's gizmo drives them away, giving the Starmen a boost of confidence that they can handle the planet. They press on, closer to the beta hyperoxene deposit.

When they are within 50 miles of it they notice a very large object on their radar — something that is moving rapidly in their direction. Zip estimates that it's about a mile long and is moving at 100 knots. He wonders idly what it was.

Soon they find out: it is a fish — a *\*huge\** fish. And it wanted the ship for dinner. It was clearly large enough to eat the ship whole. Zip, startled, turns the ship and runs for it.

That is, he tries to run for it, but the huge fish manages to keep up. Soon the huge fish is joined by another one. The two are obviously highly intelligent and act as a team. They can't catch Zip but they seem to be driving him somewhere. Zip is worried... and then he notices that more huge fish are on the way.

Mark looks up on the map (which had been made earlier, on previous unmanned SE expeditions to Eurpoa) and points out that, under the floor in an area up ahead there was a huge network of caves. Perhaps Zip could hide in these caves until the big fish left; they were certainly far too large to make it inside.

Zip decides to do that; he desperately runs for the cave and dives into it. A big fish tries to cut him off but he races through just barely in time. Some of the sharks try to follow but are driven off by Joe's gizmo.

Back above, the robot ship breaks through the ice and robots, etc. begin to pour into the water. The chapter ends on a foreboding note.

## **CHAPTER 9: The Caves of Fear**

[referring to the caves the Starmen are trapped in!]

[Editor's note: if we wanted to avoid yet another cave scene, we could remove this scene and replace it with a similar one where the Starmen were trapped at the bottom of a narrow canyon. Zip dove into this canyon to get away from the large fish, as the canyon was too narrow to allow the big fish to get in. Instead, the smaller fish followed. There would, of course, be no searching for an exit or anything — they could just fly out the top of the canyon — but the scene would be basically the same. However, it must be pointed out that removing this cave scene ruins the excellent chapter title!]

Zip takes stock of the situation. The ship is a bit damaged, but so far everything is ok. They decide to explore the underwater cave and hunt for another exit.

After progressing a while, alien fish come out - something like octopi but with thinner, shorter tentacles. They are also very intelligent and evidently civilized. The fish make an attack on the ship - not with their teeth but with some sort of weapon, something akin to a sonic shockwave. The ship is battered but it keeps on. Soon the cave itself begins to shake, possibly from damage done by the sonic shockwaves; as they go deeper the cave collapses behind them. They are lost in the dark with their exit cut off behind them - but the octopi creatures are still there after them.

As they flee deeper they see that little ships are following them, this time beaming them with some sort of EMP weapon. They begin to lose control of their ship; the reactor starts to overheat. They are being chased, driven down, down, down...

Above, the robot ships head toward the beta hyperoxene deposit. The big fish notice and send out a wailing call, evidently asking all comers to help.

## **CHAPTER 10: The Wailing Octopi**

[referring to the wails made by the octopi that call them off from chasing the Starmen.]

Zip is in trouble; his ship is on its last legs. Then, suddenly, the cave suddenly fills with a deep wailing sound. The pursuing fish stop and listen. They then fire one last bolt at Zip's ship that freezes it cold, then the fish leave toward the surface. Zip's ship slowly sinks to the bottom and is immobile.

Outside, a standoff is going on. The robots are trying to make it to the beta hyperoxene deposit, but the fish are keeping them at bay. The robots make a few attempts to dash through, but the ones that tries gets eaten. The robots back off a bit, perhaps to regroup and figure something out.

Down in the cavern, the ship has settled onto the bottom of the cave. The three Starmen get out of the ship in specially designed deep sea suits and try to figure out what went wrong. Mark remembers that they had a similar problem back on Earth when they were testing the ship; he fiddles with it and eventually gets the ship to work. It isn't in great shape and it isn't up to full power, but they can go places again.

But where to go? Zip consults the maps and plays back the navigation tapes that explains how they got to where they were, and manages to figure out where they are. He examines the map of the caves that was on hand and figures out that if he lasers through a certain wall he can make it back outside. The crewmembers decide to make a break for it; to go through the wall and back to the surface and back to base. Their ship is in need of repairs.

They proceed according to plan and manage to make it outside - just as the robots draw into battle. Zip and the robots get into something of a pitched battle; the robots turn away from the fish to try to destroy him. Things begin to look desperate.

On the surface, the RTT radio has quit working again soon after restarting the ship's fusion reactor. The crew decides that perhaps Mark was right and maybe the reactor did play a role. They carefully hauled it outside to get it away from the reactor and, with everyone outside working on it, they haul it off a mile away or so and try to set it up. A few other crewmembers haul over a portable electric (non-nuclear) generator to power it. By this point they are concerned about Zip; he should have contacted them by now and return to base. They are uneasy.

At this point, an NME robotic fighter ship flies overhead - the first time the crew ever saw anything but themselves on Europa. The robotic fighter dives low and fires two missiles at the mothership. The missiles hit the mothership and blow it into fragments; there is now only a gaping hole where the ship used to be. The ship then flies off into the horizon.

The men, of course, are horrified. Now they have no way to get back to Earth, and all their supplies and habitat were in the ship! They only have a limited amount of oxygen and food; even if they can call Earth it will take weeks and perhaps months before a rescue ship can come. They are in trouble.

## **CHAPTER 11: The Lost City**

Down near the bottom of the sea, Zip is trying to fight past the robots. He has drawn the robots away from the fish; curiously, they're not attacking Zip anymore. Zip manages to evade the robots and make a break for the hyperoxene deposit.

Zip manages to elude them, and soon they are alone again. Zip makes for the deposit (located at the bottom of what appears to be a deep crater), looking for a place to park the ship while they work on some repairs. While getting closer to the deposit, he notices some strange cities, obviously not built for humans [i.e. the fish built them]. Oddly, they are all deserted; Zip is not sure why.

Zip glides the ship into one of the larger "fishy" buildings and settles it down. They get out in their suits and walk around. They find that the building has an airlock control; they turn it

on and set it to their standard atmosphere (that is, they configure the atmospheric controls so the building has an Earth atmosphere) and soon the area is dry and has an Earth-like atmosphere. Zip wonders who built it; it looks lived-in and well preserved but it is empty.

The work progresses on their ship; they manage to repair some of the damage with spare parts they brought along on board in case of emergencies. The reactor has to be powered back up, though, and it will take a couple hours to do that. Zip decides to take the extra time to explore this city.

Above, the robots have spread out and are proceeding slowly. They have managed to track Zip's ship by traces it has left behind in the water. They want to find him, and they are quickly closing in.

## **CHAPTER 12: Stairway to Danger**

[referring to the long flight of stairs, leading to the abandoned city, that the Starmen only climb and head toward after much trepidation.]

[If we wanted to take out the Martian base, this scene could be altered as well. Instead of having a Martian base, we would instead have a large city built by the fishes, with equipment, built to suit the fishes, that would be used to work the mine. The mine is not being worked right now because the Martians are gone, and so the fish have shut it down but are still preserving the area. We could keep or remove the Martian logo; it doesn't really matter.]

The Starmen walk through the huge deserted halls, wondering who built them and why. No one is here; they don't understand. Zip manages to find a map (perhaps a diagram on the wall?), and he locates an old mine there. The city seems to be built around it. The old mine is quite different from the city itself; the architecture and building material are different. Zip notices that they look familiar but he can't quite place them.

They march up a long flight of stairs and start hiking toward the mine.

Back above them, the robot fleet finally located the bay where Zip's ship was located. Part of the robot ships stay prowling around, guarding, while a section of them flies toward the bay. They find the airlock controls and are soon inside the Earth-environment.

The robots get out of their ships and form detachments. Part of them stay to guard Zip's ship; the other part spreads out to search the city for the space explorers. They are soon dispersed.

Oblivious to all this, the Starmen continue to work toward the mine. Soon they make the way to the huge airlock entrance - and see the same symbol on its doors that was present on the pirate's asteroid!

The Starman are pleased: they found the alien's city! At least, it appears that the alien's city lay just behind those doors - but what was the city they just walked through? It didn't at all resemble the architecture they found on the Tenth Planet or on Tharsos. It looked like the aliens built a central city, and then the natives of Europa built a city around it, but who were the natives? Was this lost race still living on the bottom of Europa?

Zip opens the airlock door and walks inside. The door closes - but not before a laser beam flies overhead and smacks into the wall. Zip whirls - and sees a troop of robots!

## **CHAPTER 13: Plan of Attack**

[Title is a chapter title in Blue Ghost Mystery]

Mark turns to the airlock controls and manages to lock it. He doesn't know how long it will hold, but it should give them some time.

They explore the mine, get into a fight with robots. Figure out that the inhabitants abandoned the mine a long time ago. The battle turns desperate but then the fish come - kind of amphibious creatures resembling octopi. The octopi help them drive off the robots and bring them to their base.

At their base, they manage to communicate to some degree. [Editor's note: I'm not sure how they manage to communicate; this will take some thought.] The octopi know almost nothing about English, but they have picked up some from their contact with 'outside' - they don't elaborate but Zip guesses that every now and then they leave Europa to keep tabs on the outside world.

The octopi explain the civilization on this planet, how the fish are intelligent. There are different classes of fish with different jobs. The octopi with their tentacles do delicate hands-on work. The real think tanks of their world are the huge whale-like fish. There are also fish that can extract minerals out of the water and secrete it; that is how their cities were built.

Zip finally realizes that the fish are a genetic engineering project of the 'lost race'. The fish were already smart, but the lost race, through a combination of genetic engineering and technology transfer, helped them enormously by enabling them to better interact with their environment.

The octopi explain that they are not a hostile race. They enjoyed the company of the lost race. However, one day there was a fierce battle that drove the lost race off of Europa, and they never came back. Ever since then the residents of Europa have been guarding the relics and bases of the lost race, maintaining them in the hopes that they will come back one day. Whenever an intruder came, they drove them away, so when Zip first came they tried to get rid of them, thinking they were of the race that drove away the lost race. When Zip turned on the robots and attacked them they realized that they had made a mistake and that Zip was on their side: the real intruder were the robots.

Zip and the octopi strike a deal and agree to help get rid of the robots. They form a plan.

## **CHAPTER 14: The Old One Yields**

[Title is a chapter title in The Flaming Mountain]

First, the fish flood their base with water, washing the robots out. Then the fish are released to chase them. Zip and the Starmen recapture the ship and use it to help drive the robots off; they chase him then this scene takes place.

Zip knows something of how the robots work; they are simply pirated SE equipment modified for battle. He thinks he has an idea. The robots aren't very smart; he can take advantage of this.

Zip throws the ship into high gear and flees toward the surface of Europa. Carefully dodging the robots and robotic ships, he steers toward a huge glowing gas deposit under the ice that he had seen before.

The gas deposit was an area of nitrogen gas trapped between a hole in the ice and the water of Europa. There were several cubic miles of space in this region; it was several thousand feet high. The gas was under high pressure. This area is something like a cave; above it is miles upon miles of ice.

Zip blasted out of the water into the air; the robots followed him. Zip quit shooting his lasers and just continued to dodge the robotic beams - all the while keeping careful tabs on the ice. The robotic laser beams were piercing the ice, weakening it. If the ice were to crack — if it were to become unstable — then tons of ice would fall, smashing all the robot ships... all Zip had to do is get all the robot ships under the portion of ice that was unstable and about to fall at just the right moment — while taking care that the ice didn't fall on him. It was a highly dangerous game, but Zip's ship simply didn't have near the weaponry needed to destroy all those ships.

At precisely the right moment, Zip turned the ship, threw it into overdrive and dived below the ocean. A split second later the ice pocket collapsed, and with it the robot fleet was crushed. There was some serious turbulence, but Zip managed to survive.

## **CHAPTER 15: The Midnight Call**

[Title is a chapter title in Ruby Ray Mystery; it's referring to the call the Starmen make at midnight back to Earth to let them know they're ok and to tell them to send a relief ship to pick them up.]

Zip finally returns to his base on the surface of the planet and finds it gone: fried, of course, by the robot attackers. He picks up the panicked crewmembers and ferries them down to the fish's city. They manage to get the RTT device to work and radio for more supplies and a ship to return home in.

With the aid of the fish, Zip revives the Martian's base and sets up mining and extraction operations again — with the fish manning the operations. By the time the relief ship comes, everything is ready for the human SE personnel to take over. Zip then says goodbye and the Starmen head back home.

The Starmen are returning to Earth with a lot of information. It looks like that the Lost Race and the Xenobots got involved in a heavy war, and while the Xenobots lost, the Lost Race lost as well and were hit hard. The war destroyed both parties, and the Lost Race was beaten back and abandoned all their bases. Instead of recovering after defeating the Xenobots, the Lost Race had fragmented and apparently died: the aliens they saw on Tharsos could be the only remnants left of the Lost Race.

The mine they found on Tharsos was clearly going to be very beneficial. SE was making an FTL drive a top priority now that the Xenobot menace was clear, and the special mineral found on Europa would be very valuable. The fact that there was already a function base on Europa was very helpful: mining operations — and hence experiments with the mineral — could proceed without delay. The next step on the FTL process would be to perform a series of high-energy experiments — and those would be done in boko #7, The Fight for Uranus.

The new alien fish culture was also a terrific discovery, and they became the first alien race known to be native to the Solar System. They seemed to be highly intelligent, and scientists would doubtless spend years studying them.

The Starmen, of course, still had to find the lost alien race. It looked like they were no longer on Nyx, or Titan, or Europa. They might be somewhere on other stars, but it would be a good many years before the Starmen could hop on board an FTL ship and go find out.

The next step, clearly, was to return to Tharsos — the only place where the aliens had ever been seen — and conduct a thorough investigation. The aliens seem to have deliberately revealed themselves to the Starmen, so perhaps if they went back they could make contact with the aliens.

At least they had an idea, now, what had happened to them.

Thus it was that the Starmen headed off to Tharsos (which was working its way toward a stable orbit around Earth), where they were found at the beginning of LROM, going over Tharsos with a fine-tooth comb. Then in LROM Zip discovered the secret of the logo, and they zipped off to Mars...

## Letters

Here are a few of the letters we exchanged about the plot for *Descent Into Europa*...

*DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2000 9:55 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Just took a curious glance at what Dig Allen books are available now through alibris and was AMAZED! They're all there—but at stupendous prices! Lost City of Uranus is over \$200, Journey to Jupiter is \$156, etc. And to think I squawked a little at paying \$35 for Lost City less than two years ago.

Jon: regarding your mother's list of typos. Two of them had not been caught! They're fixed now. Thanks!

Took a very quick glance through DIE and noted your clever chapter titles. Very funny!<sup>22</sup>

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2000 2:17 PM*

Dear Chris<sup>23</sup>,

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<sup>22</sup> I have immense trouble trying to invent good chapter titles. Eventually I just stopped altogether and left the chapter titles up to David, who is very good at creating good ones. For this book I grew desperate and thought hey, why not throw in a few Rick Brant chapter titles? It was just a joke, but to my surprise David liked it and we ended up using the titles of books by Hal Goodwin for every chapter title in the book. This is the only book for which I am responsible in any way for the chapter titles we ended up using.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Goodwin, the son of Hal Goodwin. We wanted to get the permission of the Goodwin estate before using the titles of Hal Goodwin's books as chapter titles in our book. He graciously gave us permission.



Greetings! ...

I think you are aware that I've been working with a couple of guys to write a new series, which we call the Starman series. If not, the web site is up at:

<http://www.smart1.net/scooper/dfoster.html>

We've already planned 23 books in the series.<sup>24</sup> The first book will be out about the end of June, and the next three have been thoroughly summarized. Jon Cooper, who plots the books, has tentatively given a few<sup>25</sup> of the chapters in the fourth book titles of a few books your father wrote, namely *Danger Below!*, *Divers Down!*, and *The Lost City*.<sup>26</sup> These are just working titles for our own internal exchanges and are not intended to be used in the final draft, but it occurred to me that actually using the titles in the final draft could be a not-so-subtle tribute to your father. So I'm writing to see if that would be acceptable to you.

If you'd like to see what we've done so far before answering, I'd be happy to send you our first manuscript and summaries of the next three books.

Best wishes!

*David Baumann*

*DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2000 9:11 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

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<sup>24</sup> For a long time we planned on producing 23 books and sticking very close to the title listing we released in the first edition of *Assault on Mars*. It wasn't until after book five was released and the plot for *Doomsday Horizon* was developed that we dramatically changed the way the series was going, altered the title listing, and committed to making book 10 the last one in the series. We still want to write all 23, but we thought it would be better to finish off the series with book 10 and then go back and fill in the gaps – we thought we had a greater chance of actually making it to the last book that way. Think of it as skipping over many volumes in that 23-book listing in order to get to the last one quicker.

<sup>25</sup> At first we were just going to use a couple as chapter titles, but then we decided to use *only* titles of Hal Goodwin books for chapter titles. Made things more interesting!

<sup>26</sup> My favorite one, which we ended up not using, was *Rocket Muncher*, a terrible pun off the Rick Brant book *Rocket Jumper*. The original plot for *Descent Into Europa* involved one of the fish eating the Star-men's craft, and I thought that would be a terrific title for that chapter.

...

3)About David's question re big fish<sup>27</sup> on a "small" planet (actually a moon).....

The important factor controlling animal size is food availability (and perhaps environmental temp) ....we will just have to make sure the ocean of Europa is teeming with alien krill! Not sure, but I think Europa has more water than Earth! (Deep as 60 miles on Europa!)

Mike

DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2000 10:32 PM

Dear Mike and Jon,

Response was as I hoped!

> *Howdy, Dave. Thanks for the update. We would have no objection to your*  
> *using the three Rick Brant book titles as Chapter headings, with the only*  
> *caveat that somewhere appropriate in the manuscript/book, proper attribution*  
> *should be given, to wit, "Used with permission of the Rick Brant/John Blaine*  
> *Trust and the Estate of Harold L. Goodwin." This could be a footnote, or in*  
> *a frontispiece where you list any other acknowledgements. Thanks for asking,*  
> *and please keep me posted. I'll check out the website. Best regards, Chris*  
> *Goodwin*

Dear Chris,

Thanks so much. I will definitely put the proper attribution. This particular book, #4 in our series, will likely not appear for about a year, but we'll get it right as far as the Rick Brant/John Blaine Trust is concerned.

Best wishes!

David Baumann

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<sup>27</sup> The summary called for fish several miles long, and we weren't at all sure if Europa could support fish that large.

*DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2000 7:20 PM*

Dear David and Mike,

> *I think Europa has more water than Earth! (Deep as 60 miles on Europa!)*

>

> *Sixty miles!!! Why, that changes the whole story — that's fantastic...*

> *what enormous pressures that must be! And so dark... what a variety of*

> *ecosystems! The shallow life, the deep life, the ocean bottom life... it*

> *makes for a fascinating world! I'll have to think about all this...*

Ten times deeper than Earth's deepest place!! I can hardly imagine... What a story it'll be.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2000 10:08 AM*

Dear David and Jon,

About Europa and its thick ice layer<sup>28</sup>.....worry not, Jon.....while it IS very thick by Earth standards (probably many 10s of kilometers thick) it is highly fragmented.....sort of like thousands of tectonic plates, with lots of rubbing friction causing heat which probably means melted ice for much of the area in between the plates.....so easiest access to the interior would probably be by taking the risky route through one of these cracks (highly selected, of course!) And since at least one scientist theorizes that the colored matter dumped out onto the surface of Europa at these cracks is organic material, WE can have the sub meet some trouble almost right away (how about the single cell bioluminescent creatures that like to clump on the any smooth surface/ warm surface and thereby cover up the viewports/ camera lenses.....leaving our heroes "flying blind")<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> I had no idea the ice layer was so thick when I first plotted the summary, and in the summary I had one of the huge fish break through the ice and eat the Starmen's ship. I had to take that out when I found out how thick the ice layer was! Oh well...

<sup>29</sup> I'm sure I put this in the summary, but I don't remember what happened to that scene...

Into your "G" seats!,

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 07, 2000 12:25 AM*

> *About Europa and its thick ice layer.....worry not,*

> *Jon...*

This is such a cool situation! We can work this into a story with incredible excitement. I almost wish I could just read our stories cold so I can enjoy them like everyone else.<sup>30</sup>

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2000 5:36 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

I received the 2nd draft of TRA yesterday and am going over it "in toto". As I was reading it, I was impressed by just how riveting it was. I like it a lot. Thanks, David.

Dan Henton's comments are correct (however, I did think that David's use of the word Fission was intentional)....he is a great asset and his earlier description of the short lived snow on Titan is accurate.....I busted my brains trying to figure out a way that he might be wrong and that the temperature range for the methane rain/snow would be

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<sup>30</sup> This is the bane of being a writer! David is very close to the story, and since he is so close he can't really enjoy the books the way the average reader can. When David looks at the story he sees his thought processes, the paragraphs that might have been, possible superior grammatical arrangements, perhaps some plot points that didn't work as well as we hoped, etc. It's the exact same with me: since I drafted the plot to such detail I can't really just sit back and enjoy it as a book: I know it too well. The Starman Team has a lot of fun working on the books, but we're really too close to them to enjoy them the way our readers do. C S Lewis once said that he had little respect for his own works because when he looked at his books he saw the "inky manuscript," and the same could be said for us.

broader, but I could not<sup>31</sup> .....so we just might be left with the hard science of "evaporated methane rain before it reaches the surface". (Hmmmm, perhaps Deuterium hydrogen can form bonds with Carbon which would result in "heavy methane" ..its sublimation temp would almost certainly be higher.....)

I am for running things past him! Perhaps we can name/model a character after him.

The possessive form of Europa is indeed European as David says. I left out a detail about the possible radiation link to European life. The surface cracks spew out sulfur compounds...these compounds are then cooked into higher energy states by the radiation.....these compounds are eventually churned back into the liquid layer as a food source for any "bacteria" that might live there.....the radiation itself does not penetrate very far into the ice...so the actual liquid environment is probably not all that dangerous.

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2001 10:25 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

It sounds as if Jon is doing a great job of trying to design a credible timetable for the projected series plot milestones. He stated that DIE<sup>32</sup> is sort of a "no fit" right now<sup>33</sup>....I see what he means, however my initial response is that it is not a problem.....I doubt it is unknown in series books to make a superplot departure (hmmmmm, I wonder if that's a real literature class term!) So what if we give the readers a chance to catch their breath and go diving into a different ocean. However, if we decide it is important to retain momentum and continuity, then we will invent a reason to go to Eu-

---

<sup>31</sup> We were hoping to have slow-falling methane rain and snow on Titan, but Dan Henton (a chemist and a fan of the series) told us that the reality on Titan probably wouldn't allow that to happen. It's a pity: it would have made a good scene!

<sup>32</sup> Our internal acronym for *Descent Into Europa*.

<sup>33</sup> When we plotted out the 23 books of the series we placed *Descent Into Europa* into the listing with only a vague idea as to how it fits into the overall story the 23 books were telling. I was able to write a plot for the book, but I had a lot of trouble finding a way to fit it into the grander story we were telling. Sure, the Starmen had an adventure on Europa, but why? Why go there? What could they do there that would lead into the next book? The book just seemed out-of-place. Eventually we solved these problems and made the book integral to the series: it now leads very nicely into *The Lost Race of Mars*. It was a struggle to do that, though!

ropa.....as I recall, Jon has a nice big city waiting there at the bottom, perhaps this city will hold a clue that the Starmen need.

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2001 12:08 PM*

*> [Jon] Right now the only weak link I see is Descent Into Europa: JTP has some highly  
> dramatic and important moments, and LROM really takes the cake. DIE, though,  
> kind of seems extra: I haven't been able to figure out what to do with it.  
> [Mike} I doubt it is unknown in  
> series books to make a superplot departure (hmmmmm, I wonder if that's a  
> real literature class term!) So what if we give the readers a chance to catch  
> their breath and go diving into a different ocean. However, if we decide it  
> is important to retain momentum and continuity, then we will invent a reason  
> to go to Europa.....as I recall, Jon has a nice big city waiting there at  
> the bottom, perhaps this city will hold a clue that the Starmen need.*

It'll be ready when we get to it, I'm sure. It won't be bad to have a "quieter" book, anyway. We can use it to build tension for LROM. It's also our "tribute book" for Hal Goodwin, with the chapter titles being from his books.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 05, 2001 5:02 PM*

On the front page of the Los Angeles Times yesterday was a fascinating article about Lake Vostok. Have you heard about it? It was discovered in 1996. It is a FRESH WATER LAKE, UNFROZEN, LOCATED IN ANTARCTICA TWO MILES BELOW THE COLDEST SPOT ON EARTH!! Most scientists believe that the water has not been disturbed for millions of years and may contain primordial life. Of course I cut the

article out. It will be IDEAL for the time we begin to turn serious attention to DIE. Could give us some plot ideas for sure!<sup>34</sup>

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 05, 2001 9:02 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Thanks for the Space news site Jon! David, good reference about Lake Vostok....it is a story I have paid attention to last couple of years.....and yes it does DIRECTLY affect the science and plotting of the Starman series. For one, if microbes can survive there, then the chances of extant underground life on Mars and Europa are greatly improved. I love unexpected stuff like this...and it ain't over yet!

I bet deep underground and deep in the ocean are some very interesting surprises awaiting us who live in the "near vacuum" of this gaseous realm we call a biosphere.

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 06, 2001 10:50 AM*

> Kevin Anetsberger has started drawing studies of the three Starmen, so  
> when DIE rolls around he can include sketches of the characters. I've  
> attached his preliminary sketch of Zip; what do you think?

Very fine! We do need some visualizations of the characters.<sup>35</sup> Someone noted that our dust jackets have not shown the characters, and that's right. Even AOM only had them

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<sup>34</sup> Of course, after reading that article and thinking about the cool possibilities it offered I knew we just had to work it into the plot! So we did: I went back through the plot, found a place for it, and dropped it in. I do that all the time: while I generally develop the plots at least a year before we need them (which generally means I'm working two or three books ahead), we are always coming up with cool new ideas that we just *have* to use in the story. This means going back over the plot and reworking it a bit to make it fit, but it's always worth the effort!

in space suits. We really don't have a picture of them even in our own files. Although most of the characters in the series are based on real people (which makes descriptions easier), our heroes are completely imaginary—hence, no visuals.<sup>36</sup>

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2001 9:11 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

About DIE....I was thinking that the SE sub could be named the UNDERBIRD to inject a little humor to a dangerous situation. This would be especially appropriate if the sub used flapping fins or membranes for propulsion...as some researchers are already checking into. [OK, OK..I was at a traffic light and the car in from of me had the T and the H knocked off the name!!!! An idea is an idea, regardless of how one got it!<sup>37</sup>  
:o) ]

*Mike*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2001 12:58 AM*

> > *About DIE....I was thinking that the SE sub could be named the*  
> > *UNDERBIRD to inject a little humor to a dangerous situation...*

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<sup>35</sup> Up to this point we had vague ideas in our heads what the Starmen and other major characters ought to look like, but that was about it. It wasn't until we started writing book four that we finally nailed down the exact physical appearances of the Starmen. David actually is the one responsible for this: he went out, found people who looked just as he imagined the major characters looked, and took pictures of them and sent them to us. I learned what the Starmen looked like for the first time when I received the pictures David took! (These photographs are available on the Starman website.)

<sup>36</sup> The characters David is talking about here that are not based on real-life people are the three Starmen and their families, Richard Starlight, Steve Cliff, and Robert Nolan. The reason they are completely artificial this is that when the Team first started work writing books we were writing the seventh Dig Allen book, and of course we took the characters from the previous Dig Allen stories (the three Space Explorers, Con Krags, etc.) and put them in Dig Allen #7. *That* is where these characters find their origin.

<sup>37</sup> Some of our best ideas have very strange origins! I developed the Ahmanyen three-moon logo (and from that the meaning behind it) while doodling on a piece of paper in the halls of the Science Building at Marshall University, waiting for my morning geology class to begin. You never know where you might get an idea!



>  
> <grin> *That would be pretty funny! Perhaps we could go even further: it*  
> *might be named Thunderbird, but when the three Starmen got it the first two*  
> *letters had been knocked off, so they christened it the Underbird and went*  
> *with that. Very unique!*

That could be funny. Remember this is also the book in which the chapters are named after books by Hal Goodwin. The whole book can be kind of funny.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2001 9:02 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I considered using "Rocket Munchers" for the chapter title of the*  
> *chapter where the Starmen flee from the gigantic fish that try to eat their*  
> *spaceship, but I decided against it: that is a pretty awful pun of "Rocket*  
> *Jumper." So I didn't do it.*

With a bit of imagination, maybe we can even make Rocket Jumper fit.

*David*

*DATE: THU, 19 APR 2001 17:05:29 -0700*

I had an idea or two about DIE also—how about if we have the Starmen stop over at Montezuma's Castle on the way out? He's<sup>38</sup> become a popular character with several readers of TRA and we've included an invitation from MV to them in JTP.<sup>39</sup>

*David*

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<sup>38</sup> Montezuma Vly

<sup>39</sup> Another example of how the team works! Someone gets an idea and I open up the summary and find a way to get it to fit. I can pretty much always find a way to get things to fit into the plots – it's just a matter of finding the right place to put them.

DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2001 10:09 PM

Dear Jon and David,

I agree wholeheartedly that a stopover at Vly's place is "de rigueur"! Vly is one of my favorite characters in all fiction. I like his eccentricity, his love for craftsmanship, his appreciation for beauty, his civil, yet not overbearing ways.

Mike

DATE: SAT, 05 MAY 2001 06:23:01 -0700

Dear Jon and Mike,

...

And the way things are going, I think we'll probably be able to produce authors' copies of DIE in time for my visit in October.<sup>40</sup>

David

DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 01, 2001 10:52 AM

> *One thing that occurred to me recently is that we haven't had any  
> surprise endings or big plot twists.*<sup>41</sup> *As one of our fans said, our stories  
> are fairly simple and straightforward. I know that, in terms of the overall  
> superplot, we have some nice twists, but on a story-by-story basis we don't.*

---

<sup>40</sup> This was hopelessly optimistic, but then our estimates of completion dates for the manuscript or release dates for the book generally are.

<sup>41</sup> I'd been reading a lot of Agatha Christie books recently and she had made an impression on me! I liked the way she could *always* surprise me, even when I knew she was somehow going to surprise me. I was able to work a few good twists into *The Lost Race of Mars*, but I didn't really achieve what I was after until *Doomsday Horizon*. Then I was content.

> *Maybe plot twists just aren't my thing, but it would be nice to have something to liven up the tales a bit.*

Well, maybe DIE can work out that way. It is almost a hiatus novel, unrelated to the others. We can work with it without disturbing the flow of the overall saga.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 01, 2001 2:32 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *Here is the final, revised summary for DIE. I didn't change it very much at all from the last one I sent you: I just clarified the ending and made a change here and there. This is about as good as I can make it! ...This book does indeed link strongly into the first 5: as you can see from the preliminary notes, it isn't just an extra book amongst the first 5.*

Actually, it has been some time since I read the summary, so it'll about strike me as new.<sup>42</sup> Looking forward to it, and don't feel I'll need too much break between books this time. I'd like to have DIE finished in time to get a preliminary copy to Chris Goodwin.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 01, 2001 9:12 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *Here is the final, revised summary for DIE.*

---

<sup>42</sup> When David receives the summaries I write, he scans them quickly and then sets them aside. He does not read them in detail until he's ready to start writing the book. This is so that he can get into the writing with a sense that they are fresh and new stories.

Haven't read it yet, but when I copied it to put in my Starman files, I realized that I did not have any file for DIE at all. I'm sure you sent me a previous version of the summary, Jon, but my cyberdog must have eaten it—so this time it really WILL be reading it for the first time!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 03, 2001 7:25 PM*

I had not seen this before, but will treasure this wonderful spoof. I think Harry Tanwick deserves his \$100 now for sure.<sup>43</sup> He ought to get it in a Starman book.<sup>44</sup>

*David*

*Editor's note: Here is the spoof itself!*

#### THE DISAPPEARING FLOOR

(and why, after 60 years, it still won't disappear)

by Mike Humbert

The Disappearing Floor (unrevised edition) holds a special infamy among Hardy Boys fans. Ghostwritten by Dr. John Button in 1940, it has all the literary style of a car wreck; and like a car wreck, you want to look away, but somehow just can't. While admittedly there are Hardys stories that aren't that great, Floor is in a league of its own for sheer weirdness. The plot is almost nonexistent. Bizarre sci-fi gadgetry is prominently featured, along with a Fenton Hardy who seems to appear at will. This is all the more amazing since Mr. Hardy is seriously injured twice during the book. Of course, the oddest thing of all is that this book was ever published in the first place!

It would be easy to put all of the blame on the good Dr. Button, but, in his defense, he apparently closely followed the plot outline provided to him by the Strate-

---

<sup>43</sup> In the beginning of the Hardy Boy book *The Disappearing Floor*, the Hardy Boys find an envelope with \$100 in it marked "Harry Tanwick." At the end of the book the Hardy Boys remarked that they still had the envelope but they weren't able to find Harry Tanwick – and he was never mentioned again anywhere in the series. The whole episode was a meaningless loose end: I have no idea what possessed the author to include that episode in the story.

<sup>44</sup> He did, right there in *Descent Into Europa*! At least that's one loose end we've tied up.

meyer Syndicate. Unlike Leslie McFarlane (the first and best "Franklin W. Dixon"), when Button was told to write junk, he replied: "Yes Sir! How junky would you like it?"

So, having said that, let's move on to my highly condensed recap of the story, which reads like a spoof, but isn't; I haven't exaggerated a single plot point, not even the contents of the canvas bag. I have, however, reworked the narration and dialogue to reflect my own take on the story.

=====

Dark-haired Frank Hardy and his blond brother Joe sat around the campfire, along with their chubby friend Chet.

"Enough camping, fellows," groaned Chet. "When do we eat?"

Frank and Joe exchanged amused glances. Chet's tragic eating disorder and the resulting morbid obesity were a reliable source of humor for the two brothers.

"Say, look at this, fellows," Joe interjected. "I just found this old envelope with the name 'Harry Tanwick' written on it. And there's a hundred dollar bill inside!"

"I wonder who Harry Tanwick could be," pondered Frank.

"Maybe that's him over there!" shrieked Chet, and the three ran into the darkness after a shadowy figure.

=====

As the trio charged into the pitch-black wilderness, they suddenly fell headlong through a hole into an equally dark cave. They were now trapped!

"Well, this is quite a pickle, I must say," observed Joe.

"Still, we seem remarkably fit for having fallen twenty feet onto solid rock," countered Frank.

"I'm still hungry," grumbled Chet.

"Hello, boys," greeted Fenton Hardy, the boys' famous father. "I figured I might run into you here in this desolate cave in the middle of nowhere at four in the morning. By the way, you haven't seen Duke Beeson, the bank robber, have you?"

"No," replied Frank. "But I just noticed that's there's a canvas bag with \$82,000 in coins sitting here at my feet!"

"Well, bring it along," directed Mr. Hardy. "After all, how much could \$82,000 in coins weigh? I want you boys to take his bag cross-country to the Wayne County Bank. I realize you have no transportation, and are completely unfamiliar with the area, not to mention the fact that desperate criminals will be tracking you down, but what could go wrong?"

(EDITOR'S NOTE: \$82,000 in silver coins weighs almost 4,800 pounds. In silver dollars, it would form a stack about 550 feet tall. If those dollars were laid edge to edge, they would form a line about 2 miles long.)

=====

"Say, Frank," whispered Joe, "isn't this taxi driver driving a bit erratically?"

"I should say so!" confirmed Frank.

Thoroughly familiar with what to do in this situation, Frank suddenly lunged forward and threw a chokehold on the vehicle's driver. Despite this prudent measure, the taxi swerved out of control and plunged into the dark, icy water. Frank, Joe and Chet narrowly escaped a watery death, swimming to the surface, while clutching the canvas bag containing \$82,000 in coins.

=====

"You boys did a fine job," congratulated Fenton Hardy, after his sons had once again randomly stumbled upon him. "The whole operation went off without a hitch."

"Except for our sending a taxi off a bridge and almost drowning," added Joe.

"Well, yes," agreed the detective.

"And that crazed mob that attacked us," offered Frank. "And that we had to resort to a railroad handcar for transportation," mentioned Chet. "And then—"

"In any case," interrupted Mr. Hardy, "I want you to return to Beeson's cave hideout yet again."

"But we've recovered the money already," Joe pointed out.

"And Beeson's men have already caught us in there—twice—and threatened us each time," recounted Frank.

"Yes, boys, but did you realize that one of Beeson's men is named Louie Butt?"

Frank and Joe exchanged meaningful looks. Their father had a good point. Someone with a name like that had to be up to no good. No butts about it.

=====

The next time that the boys randomly bumped into their father, he was moving at high speed, since an escaped tiger was pursuing him. Fortunately, Joe knew well that the surest way to fell a charging tiger was to bounce a sharp rock off its head.

Quickly abandoning their badly mauled father to the medical authorities, Frank and Joe continued to pursue Duke Beeson. Soon they caught up with him, at which point he effortlessly captured the two brothers.

"Where we takin' these two punks, Boss?" inquired the gruff henchman.

"To Eban Adar's house," grunted Beeson, who was now dressed as an Indian prince, for reasons we need not go into.

Frank and Joe exchanged glances again. Eban Adar was Aunt Gertrude's oddball acquaintance from her school days.

"Thank goodness," thought Frank. "We'd gone almost ten minutes without a fantastic coincidence."

=====

"Okay," moaned Frank, rubbing his aching head. "Tell it to me one more time. How did we end up in this rowboat?"

"When we arrived at Adar's house," Joe explained, "ice immediately started forming on us. It quickly enveloped us. Then we blacked out. Then we woke up adrift in this rowboat."

"Ice," repeated Frank.

"Yes," Joe mumbled sheepishly. "I think we were frozen solid."

"Frozen solid. And now, shortly after, we're fine. Honestly, Joe! You have to admit it's pretty farfetched," commented Frank.

"If you won't like the answer, then don't ask the question," snorted Joe.

"Encased in ice," muttered Frank, shaking his head in bewilderment. "And now we're in a rowboat. Makes perfect sense."

=====

Joe picked up Adar's telephone receiver and engaged the operator.

"Hello, operator? Bayport 6132, please. Hello, Aunt Gertrude? It's Joe. No, we're not dead. No, really. We're up at Eban Adar's house. Right. The strange duck from your school. Always hated his guts, yes, I remember. Listen, Auntie, we've been scrap-ping with some dangerous criminals, and they're running loose around here somewhere, so we were thinking this would be an ideal time for you to come up here for a visit with Mr. Adar and catch up on old times. What do you say? You'd love to? All right then, we'll see you when you get here. Good bye."

And Joe then replaced the instrument in its cradle.

=====

"So you see," Joe announced triumphantly, "Beeson's cave has a disappearable floor! Just turn that switch and the floor lowers to reveal additional rooms below where the remaining loot is stashed!"

"Amazing!" Frank gushed. "And no one knew about it except Beeson, his gang, the team of engineers who designed and manufactured the hydraulics, the contractors who installed them, the electric company who ran out the high voltage power lines to a cave, miles out in the woods..."

"Yes," Joe chimed in, "it was well-kept secret."

Just then, a grubby-looking man in a dark ragged jacket approached the boys.

"Are you Joe Hardy?" he snarled.

"Why, yes, I am," Joe acknowledged.

Without warning, the stranger delivered a powerful blow to Joe's midsection. Caught unawares, Joe crumpled to the ground in blinding pain, as Frank watched in stunned disbelief.

"I'm Harry Tanwick," spat the shabby man. "Now where's my hundred dollars?"

(Okay, I made up that last bit; Harry Tanwick is still at large after 60 years. Think what the compounded interest on that \$100.00 must be by now!)

=====

There you have the plot, such as it is, of the most surreal Hardys episode ever. Inexplicably, Dr. Button was then allowed to helm the next volume: *The Mystery of the Flying Express*, infamous in its own way for its blatant errors, such as Laura Hardy being called "Mildred." The only possible explanation I can give for Button's continued employment was that perhaps Leslie McFarlane had his leg caught in a bear trap, somewhere in the Canadian wilderness.

Be that as it may, *The Disappearing Floor* continues to hold a special place in the hearts of Hardy Boys fans, in the same way *Plan Nine from Outer Space* holds a place in the hearts of sci-fi fans. Sometimes if you go far enough into bad, you reach good.

*DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 03, 2001 8:16 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

I just read the summary of *DIE*, Jon. I think it's got some good stuff in it and should make a good story. I really like the part that makes it a deliberate search for the Bene-



factors, and the clues that point toward Europa. It makes book 4 a vital part of our quintology.

It is almost too bad that we titled the fifth book *The Lost Race of Mars*. Thinking readers will be able to piece together that the Benefactors are Martians. It is good that we are throwing them several red herrings in *DIE*, and we must make sure never to call this race the Lost Race—or the identification will be too easy and we'll lose the shock value of LROM.<sup>45</sup> This is why I have gradually introduced the term "The Benefactors" in *JTP*. (I think we agreed many months ago to refer to the ancient Martians as The Benefactors. Am I right?)

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 04, 2001 12:26 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

I really like the Harry whatshisname idea from the Hardy Boys.....really clever little inside joke...I am all for it! Remember that Zip might mention that he had an ancestor that wrote Sci-fi in the 20th and 21st centuries (a reference to Alan Dean Foster).

*Mike*

*DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 04, 2001 3:59 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *I really like the Harry whatshisname*  
> *idea from the Hardy Boys.....really clever little inside joke.*

I've given this some thought, trying to come up with a scenario that is plausible and yet still is very tongue-in-cheek. Suppose we have a financial backer for SE whose name is

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<sup>45</sup> We went through great pains to keep the Benefactors=Martians relationship a surprise: we really wanted to catch our readers off-guard. In order to do this we were very careful about how we referred to the Benefactors and we tried to throw out a number of very convincing red herrings. It worked very well!

Harry Tanwick VII. He became wealthy overnight when he discovered that he had a long-lost bank account which had accrued interest for two centuries, which came from a deposit of \$100 made by a person or persons unknown in 1940 (the year The Disappearing Floor came out).<sup>46</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 07, 2001 9:11 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

I am pretty sure I brought up the radiation problem a long time ago. A lot of writers do not consider such things, but the radiation about Jupiter is VERY intense.....however, it is no more intense than the nuclear reactors we are putting aboard our fictional spacecraft. I am sure that "active shielding" can work to keep EXTERNAL radiation out as well. We just need to make sure the Europa visiting ships are made with this type option.

About that "newsflash" that David Baumann (as opposed to David Bowman\*)<sup>47</sup> sent in which the Artemis group claimed to have "at least provided a new arena for sci-fi writers"....well they are LATE! :o)

*Mike*

\* Jon and I noticed this "name" coincidence a LONG time ago!

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 08, 2001 12:08 AM*

> *I guess if we really had to, we could go with the refrigeration plant*  
> *idea: perhaps on Callisto is a plant capable of making lots of ice, and*  
> *perhaps the cargo freighter is double-hulled. When the ship got near*  
> *Jupiter, the ship's hull was packed with several feet of ice, and the ship*

---

<sup>46</sup> That's what we did! It was so much fun adding that bit to the story.

<sup>47</sup> of 2001: A Space Odyssey fame

- > *then lumbered along to Europa, where it landed. A whole was then dug into*
- > *the ice, and the smaller ship was released...*
- > *There's got to be a more elegant solution than that, though! I guess*
- > *I'll think about it for a while...*

Actually I think that's ingenious!<sup>48</sup>

- > *A lot of writers do not consider such*
- > *things, but the radiation about Jupiter is VERY intense.....however, it is no*
- > *more intense than the nuclear reactors we are putting aboard our fictional*
- > *spacecraft. I am sure that "active shielding" can work to keep EXTERNAL*
- > *radiation out as well. We just need to make sure the Europa visiting ships*
- > *are made with this type option.*

Sounds great!!

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 03, 2001 10:11 AM*

Here's another idea. If DIE is likely to be short, how about putting the two short stories in that book as a bonus?<sup>49</sup> So far, we've distributed fewer than 50 I\*S #1. That means only about one fourth of our constituency has it. Who knows what sales of the second I\*S will be, but if we put the short stories in DIE, just about all customers will have them. And it would be no effort to do so.<sup>50</sup>

*David*

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<sup>48</sup> I was fond of this idea, but it was a little tedious. What we ended up using in the book was much better.

<sup>49</sup> The original plot for *Descent Into Europa* called for only 16 chapters, leading us to believe that this book would be fairly short. As time went on and we tinkered with the plot the book grew out to normal length, but by then we liked like short story idea and so added them to the end of the book anyway!

<sup>50</sup> One thing we didn't think about at the time is the extra cost this would add to the book. Adding both short stories had a definite impact on how much the book cost to print!

DATE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 04, 2001 10:53 AM

- > *I really hesitate to put something on*
- > *the Internet for free when other people paid money to have it. It seems*
- > *kind of mean: here we made so-and-so pay for the product, while others can*
- > *download it absolutely free. If we do try this, I'd recommend posting*
- > *something new. Perhaps we could write a story (a shorter story) sort of as a*
- > *gift to our supporters, then post it online and see what happens.*

That makes sense.<sup>51</sup>

- > > *Here's another idea. If DIE is likely to be short, how about putting the*
- > > *two short stories in that book as a bonus?*
- >
- > *I think that's a good idea, but it doesn't seem fair to our*
- > *Inter\*Stellar customers: they paid money aside from the cost of the books to*
- > *get those stories, and then we go and give the stories to everyone else. I*
- > *think that doing that would sort of dampen interest in the I\*S and possibly*
- > *cause some frustration on the part of our readers.*

That could be, but the I\*S has a lot more than the short stories. But you raise a good point.

- > *One thing to keep in mind was that JTP was intended to be short! I*
- > *didn't plan on it being a long or involved story at all, and yet somehow it*
- > *found a way to grow well beyond the normal 40,000 word length. I wouldn't*
- > *count on DIE being short just yet: our books have a way of expanding!*

That's true too! Like everything else we're thinking of, let's see what DIE looks like when we get there! If it's 170 pages, it can stand alone. If it's 140 pages, we may need to add something to it and there are lots of possibilities.

*David*

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<sup>51</sup> I still like this idea and we talked about this at great length, but nothing ever came of it. I think I have a few plot outlines for such a short story lying around in my "Lost Adventures" folder in my "David Foster" directory. There are all sorts of cool ideas and outlines that we may never use: *The Secret of the Dark Planet*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Fall of Night*, *Sons of the Starmen*, *The Rogue Planet*, *The Stones of Juno*, *Flight of the Titan*, and more. Some outlines don't even have titles.

*DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2001 12:52 AM*

Dear Jon,

> *Is it just me, or is this an exact copy of a message you sent a few seconds ago?*

I checked my files, and I sent this message only once, so if you got two, it doubled somewhere along the line. What an exciting system! Some messages get sent and vanish, and others get doubled.<sup>52</sup>

Maybe in DIE we ought to include some serious computer breakdowns, just to approach verisimilitude a bit better.<sup>53</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2001 10:48 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

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<sup>52</sup> I did not include nearly all of the e-mails we exchanged that dealt with the myriad of computer problems we faced, but I wanted to include this one just to mention the subject. We have had *huge* amounts of trouble over the past five years: lost e-mails, duplicated e-mails, system crashes, disappearing files, and so forth. DIE was delayed for about six weeks when David's computer melted down and all the king's horses and all the king's men weren't able to put it together again.

<sup>53</sup> What we did instead is add a line to *The Lost Race of Mars* in which Starman Mark Seaton expressed incredulity at the very idea that a computer could have problems. To us that was just hilarious: we have had no end of trouble with our machines. The scene in which Mark expresses incredulity can be found on pages 82 and 83 of the book, and the scene runs like this:

"How're the repairs coming?" asked Mark.

"Okay. We ran into a little problem. The mascarian simulator is cracked. I didn't notice it before and they don't have one in stock here. If you can believe it, they say that their computer system is broken down and they can't check the inventory in the warehouses! I've had to send someone into town on foot to survey as many as five warehouses!"

Mark scowled. "Computer system broken down? Whoever heard of a computer system breaking down? Sounds to me like we're getting the runaround!"

"That was my reaction too, but believe me, they can't do enough for us here! Five people volunteered to go after the part, and I've been plied with sandwiches and coffee since you guys left."

My method of writing a Starman book now is to familiarize myself with the summary Jon provides, then simplify it to a few sentences per chapter and work from that simplified summary while referring frequently to the original summary.

Since we're using chapter titles from the books of Hal Goodwin, I thought I'd share my simplified version of the summary with you two before getting to the writing. These are all books by Hal, but not all are Rick Brant books. Jon, I know you went to a bunch of trouble to find chapter titles,<sup>54</sup> when necessary using chapter titles from a Rick Brant book. It seemed to me that it would be more recognizable to all readers and therefore a more obvious tribute, if we stuck to book titles. Let me know what you think about the result. I've retained most of what you sent in, added a couple, and reordered a bunch, but didn't use the chapter titles that were not book titles.

I've also added a few things to the summary but I don't think I've taken anything out. Of course, not everything is mentioned. It's a reduction of 11 pages to one. Let me know what you think.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 20, 2001 11:11 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> Your summary really looks great: I like the things you added (such  
> as the Wind People). ...I'm amazed that you were able to use all book titles: that's  
> great. I really like what you have! I wonder if any of our fans will notice — and if  
> they do, I wonder what they'll think?*

Oh, they'll notice for sure!<sup>55</sup> For one thing, Chris Goodwin says we have to write that the titles are used by permission of the John Blaine Trust.

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<sup>54</sup> I couldn't make the events in DIE match up with Hal Goodwin books so I instead used some chapter titles from Hal Goodwin books. David, though, was able to make things fit with just the titles – something I was glad to see!

<sup>55</sup> Well, maybe not. We thought they would, but I believe that from the time that DIE was released to the present (September 2003), only one person has commented on this facet of DIE. It did not attract attention or generate a discussion; it really seemed to have slipped by with hardly a notice at all.

*> It looks like DIE will be a lot of fun! I hope our readers enjoy it.*

I'm sure they will. Yes, it's really shaping up. If all goes well, I can get started on it within a week.<sup>56</sup> Sunday afternoon through Wednesday morning is our annual karate camp. I take students and their families to the mountains during that time. I'll take the laptop and try to get a chapter or two cranked out. My goal is to have the authors' copies done in time to bring them on my October trip. That's a little less than three months.

Nice post about I\*S#2 from Steve Servello on the web site!<sup>57</sup>

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2001 8:28 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> Here's an idea! I have no idea how long DIE will turn out to be. Experience  
> seems to indicate that Starman books always grow when they are written. ... I don't  
> know if DIE really will be short, or what; it's impossible to say at this point.*

Right. There are 19 chapters if I counted correctly in the simplified summary, but a number of these will be rather short. They are in there so we can take advantage of another RB title. I would estimate that DIE will be between 30,000 and 35,000 words. But as you say, we won't know until we get there.

*> However, if DIE is short (or if it's just 'shorter'), what would you think  
> about having a chapter or two at the end that would sort of be a 'Prelude to*

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<sup>56</sup> Yes, that's right: all the e-mails previous to these were exchanged before we even started on the book. As you can see, we discuss the book quite extensively before we begin writing it! Compare the dates on these e-mails with dates on e-mails in other volumes of the Archives and you will start to get a picture of all the stuff we had going on at once. (You may even find the other half of e-mails quoted; I only placed into each Archives volume the part of the e-mail that pertained to the subject of that volume.)

<sup>57</sup> We get very little feedback on the Starman books: generally it amounts to two or three e-mails out of our hundreds of readers. This is fine: we know the books are enjoyed and realize that this is actually better than the industry average. It does mean, though, that we pay a lot of attention to the feedback we get and we treasure it. The Inter\*Stellars were especially poor feedback generators: I think we may have gotten three e-mail reviews from all five of them.

> *LROM*? Think of it as a mini-prequel: we could show the Banjoman getting  
> ready, the mysterious aliens getting ready, and so forth.

That a good idea!! We can have a REAL teaser into LROM. In fact, the aliens' discussion in the beginning of LROM would be EXCELLENT as a postlude to DIE! The Starmen would just have located the Benefactors' base in the Solar System, and suddenly we show that the Benefactors are really out there somewhere. GREAT!

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2001 10:54 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

I recently saw a science article that featured the discovery of fish with "pop - out" headlights...these live in the very dark deep ocean and they apparently use these headlights for mate attraction AND as a source of light for seeing.....REAL biological flashlights. These lights can be folded away for protection (probably because they won't dim fast enough, and the fish might want to "go dark" very quickly when a predator is around, but that is just a guess on my part.) We can certainly have fun designing similar creatures for DIE.

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2001 10:32 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Descent Into Europa has begun! Here are the first two sentences of chapter one, A Microphone for David:

STARS shot their white flames through the clear sky like a fragile dusting of glass. Their light fell down through the great floor-to-ceiling window of the spacecraft Starventure, covering Starman David Foster in a soft spray of silver.



It took five minutes just to write those 40 words, but I like it! The last part of the second sentence has seven "S" sounds in it, to convey softness.<sup>58</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2001 9:05 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

...  
However, I am not sure that we ought to have a combination Spaceship/sub entering into Europa. I suggest that a sub gets delivered to the surface, then hoisted down into a suitable crack or drilling.<sup>59</sup>

I like Kevin's original sub drawing.....The Manta (stingray) type image we could save for something else.

*Mike*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2001 10:09 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *I am not sure that we ought to have a combination*

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<sup>58</sup> If you open up your copy of *Descent Into Europa*, turn to page 13 (which is the first page of Chapter 1), and read the first sentence, you will see that this is definitely *not* the first sentence of the book. What happened? Well, the sentence David quotes here was actually the first sentence all the way up to the point where we finished the first draft of the manuscript and were adding the finishing touches. At this point we looked back at the book and started thinking that the beginning just wasn't exciting enough: the book was starting on too quiet a note, and after it started it took a long time to build up any suspense. We wanted to add a note of suspense at the very beginning, so I wrote what is now on page 13-15 and e-mailed it to David and Mike. They liked it, so David took it, edited it a little bit, and placed it in the story. This is one of the very few portions of the Starmen books I wrote: I normally stay *far* away from any actual writing.

<sup>59</sup> The original plan for the *Underbird* (which I confess I wrote) had it actually flying through space to Europa, drilling through the surface, and then entering the ocean. The craft, then, was a combination spaceship/airplane/submersible. Mike thought that this would pose some severe problems, and so we altered the ship to become just a submersible and had it carried to Europa on board the *Silverfire*. The book was definitely much better this way!

> *Spaceship/sub entering into Europa. I suggest that a sub gets delivered to  
> the surface, then hoisted down into a suitable crack or drilling.*

Much better idea, more realistic, and better for the story line!

> *I like Kevin's original sub drawing.....The Manta (stingray) type image  
> we could save for something else.*

The reason I chose a manta ray design is so that it will fit the chapter title, "The Flying Stingaree." Remember, every chapter title will also be a title of a book by Hal Goodwin.<sup>60</sup> However, if the manta ray design is scientifically inappropriate, then we can certainly change the chapter title. I'd forgotten about Kevin's sub design. That chapter could always become "Rocket Jumper." Let me know if I should change the design or keep it.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 28, 2001 12:37 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

I spent this afternoon at the botanical gardens and just loved all the beauty...many inspiring plant designs....especially a tropical tree called a "pony-tail"....must have stuff like that in a STARMAN painting or drawing!

This evening was spent landsailing across the beach (the wind was uncharacteristically perfect for this time of year). We had nothing but awesome ride after awesome ride! Just had to dodge some joggers and people walking their dogs. Speeds in the 35 to 40 mph range.

About the sub....I am Ok with "manta" style because it is in keeping with the chapter title scheme. About the "action" cover....I like David's suggestion of a giant fish chasing it. We must find a way of avoiding any similarities to underwater scenes in "Phantom Menace". (Which also featured "manta" type sub being chased by large fish.)

*Mike*

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<sup>60</sup> At times we did have to adjust the events that occurred in the chapter in order to make the chapter title fit the chapter!

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 28, 2001 9:29 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

What if the sub not only looked like a Manta Ray, but also swam like one!? This technology is conceivable by the mid 22nd century....."electroflex material" and such. This way we really could stick with the UNDERBIRD name for the vessel. And I think the cover could be very striking if we used the flattened, sculpted cockpit of the B-2 flying wing as a starting point for the design. A lot of people find that shape the most alluring aspect of the B-2. I am suggesting here that only the cockpit be derived from the B-2, the rest of the sub can closely follow the form/function of Manta Rays and Stingrays. (The designer of which I am in no position to argue with!!)<sup>61</sup>

*Mike*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 28, 2001 9:33 PM*

> *About the sub....I am Ok with "manta" style because it is in keeping*  
> *with the chapter title scheme.*

Terrific. You mention a flexible skin so that it could actually swim like a manta—that's what I had in mind!! We're all together on this already!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, JULY 30, 2001 10:27 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

The second item was an article in which The Navy was paying some professor a lot of money to research the development of a robot-sub patterned on a boxfish. These

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<sup>61</sup> If you see a cool idea like this in the books, you can almost guarantee that its conception can be traced back to Mike Dodd! He comes up with the most amazing ideas.

little fish are very nimble and stable....the Navy wants some little remote vehicles similar to them. This research is independent from the previously discussed ROBOTUNA work. (MIT) We remain cutting edge!<sup>62</sup>

I suggest that we go ahead and write in the use of little probes like this somewhere in DIE.....they can be dropped out of the UNDERBIRD (or whatever we call it) Or maybe they can be "bad guy" probes.

Mike

DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 31, 2001 12:18 AM

> > *The second item was an article in which The Navy was paying some  
> > professor a lot of money to research the development of a robot-sub  
> > patterned on a boxfish. These little fish are very nimble and stable...  
> > I suggest that we go ahead and write in the use of little probes like  
> > this somewhere in DIE.....they can be dropped out of the UNDERBIRD (or  
> > whatever we call it) Or maybe they can be "bad guy" probes.*

>

> *That would be cool! I could see the robotic enemy drones (the ones launched  
> by Robert Nolan) being designed as these boxfish. There could even be  
> several classes: perhaps larger drones could hold a multitude of smaller  
> drones, and the smaller drones could be the expendable "hunter-seeker"  
> vessels that go looking for the Starman's ship; once they find it they could  
> call the bigger motherships to come in and blow them out of the water...  
> shades of TRA! I think that would work great, and be very cutting-edge.*

Really neat. DIE may turn out to be an exciting book after all.

I worked about an hour on the first chapter today, but my creative pipes are clogged. It was really sluggish. I can save what I did and use it somewhere, but I stopped after a while since I think it would put our readers to sleep. I think that being on vacation has

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<sup>62</sup> This has always been a big concern of ours! We want the Starman Series to have the very latest science and incorporate the very latest discoveries. It's important to us.

stunted my imagination. After working so hard for so long with so little time off, I hardly know what to do. No doubt I'll be fine in a day or two.<sup>63</sup>

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2001 9:31 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

In the meantime, I FINISHED THE FIRST PART OF CHAPTER ONE OF DIE!!! And I like it. I had two one-hour sessions this morning and whipped it out. It came very quickly and I hope to have similar momentum this coming week. I am on vacation and want to achieve what I'd HOPED to achieve two weeks ago: a chapter a day AT LEAST. So tomorrow I'll send you chapter one and maybe more.

Blessings!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2001 10:20 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

Recently when I was gathered with a bunch of people for prayer, one person prayed, "In thanksgiving that Zip Foster rides again." (This was Micah, the model for Mark Seaton.)

Well, here you go—ZF rides again: Descent Into Europa, draft of chapter one.

---

<sup>63</sup> Sometimes things flow and sometimes they don't, and when you force them they usually don't turn out very well. The most difficult plot I worked with was the one for *Doomsday Horizon*: it took me well over a year to get it right, and I went through all sorts of permutations before I found the one that I thought worked the best. That plot was *tough*.

I had an idea. The DIE plot summary calls for the Starmen to make a practice run in the Underbird at the North Pole. How about if we have them go to Antarctica for their practice run instead, and pass through the two miles of ice to the fresh water Lake Vostok? We'd have to handle the environmental concerns, of course, but that could be done.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2001 12:09 AM*

Dear David and Jon,

I was thinking that we might want to have a tension-filled finale in DIE...in which the UNDERBIRD is partially disabled and makes it back to a mile from the recovery point in the ice...the Starmen have to make a brave and untested cold SCUBA swim to safety.<sup>64</sup>

I have been reading about artificial muscle tissue called "Biopolymers" (SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, JAN '95)...they seem like a likely candidate for powering the "wings" of the UNDERBIRD. I suggest we include a little dialogue in which the higher efficiency of these type subs is discussed.

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2001 12:19 PM*

*> I have been reading about artificial muscle tissue called  
> "Biopolymers" ( SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, JAN '95)...they seem like a likely  
> candidate for powering the "wings" of the UNDERBIRD. I suggest we include a  
> little dialogue in which the higher efficiency of these type subs is discussed.*

Case in point—plus the article you sent us Mike on the boxfish. In the next couple of DIE chapters I will take all this stuff and get the Underbird pretty well described. It'll be great!

---

<sup>64</sup> This is extremely close to how we ended the book!

> > *Well, here you go—ZF rides again: Descent Into Europa, draft of chapter one.*

>

> *Wow! It's beautiful: very beautiful. I love the imagery you worked into the story, David: phrases like "STARS shot their white flames through the clear sky like a fragile dusting of glass" and "His voice sounded like dry leaves moving together in a dark autumn breeze" really helped me visualize the scenes you wrote. It's very good, David: I really enjoyed reading it and think it's a fine first chapter.*

I liked it a lot too. I've tinkered with it a little more since last night and I think honed it somewhat more. I really think that we're hitting our stride in these books now. This'll be a fine book—and (as usual) probably longer than I first estimated.

> *What I am curious about is this: just what day does this conversation take place? that is, how far away is August 22? I know that I could probably figure it out if I went back and did some research from JTP, but it would be nice if it was mentioned in the story.*

I think it IS mentioned in the story, but I'll check—the conversation takes place fifteen days before touchdown. It's August 7.

> *Second, a little alarm bell went off in my head when Zip said this:*

> > *"For the location of a base that would permit relatively easy access both to the inner and outer Solar System, that leaves only the moons of the giant planets."*

>

> *Beyond all this though is the fact that a halfway point may not be necessary at all, especially for a race as advanced as the Martians. These people, as Zip saw, could build ships miles wide and get them to move at hundreds of thousands of miles per hour — and even that speed was achieved while only using a fraction of a percent of the total energy provided by Tharsos....<sup>65</sup> I think that, from Zip's perspective, the best reason to have a base on Europa would be for the second reason you mentioned — the fact that it makes a great hiding place.*

---

<sup>65</sup> It wasn't until much later that we started developing the idea of wormhole transporters, which would further reinforce this point.

Ah yes, I had forgotten. I've already rewritten that part of the chapter to emphasize that Europa is the most likely choice, not because of its position, but because it is easy to hide there.

More later!

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2001 4:36 PM*

> *Wow! That is amazing: completing a Starman book in 2 months is*  
> *unheard-of. If you can do it, David, you will really be moving along! Wow.*

Well, we'll see. Fortunately I have this week off and the next two weeks for study leave. Hal Goodwin said he wrote Wailing Octopus in a month. I hope to get chapter 2 done today. My goal is a chapter a day for as long as I can keep it up. I imagine I'll miss one here and there, but I hope that when I get back to work the day after Labor Day the book will be very, very far along.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2001 10:36 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

It looks as if DIE is going to be a fairly straightforward book without too much action. Even the bad guys, compared to the previous three books, are pretty tame. That's okay. It is still a vital part in the story line, and leads us to LROM.

The chapters so far seem to be coming in shorter than usual, so maybe DIE will be a shorter story overall than the others.

Mike, in JTP I put in a character named Martin Caidin (I think that was his name), and in this chapter you've got Scott Crossfield and Kraft Ericke (turned into Erica Kraft).



These are the names of early astronauts, right? I took down the list you sent us a while back, and want to make sure they are right.<sup>66</sup>

So far I'm on target, getting a chapter a day done.<sup>67</sup> If I can keep this up, we'll be done with this book by the middle of September.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 2001 12:51 PM*

Dear David and Mike,

The writing on DIE is really progressing very well. It was slow starting, but as I guessed once it got started it's really cranking out. Chapter 4 is almost finished and I will be able to get it to you this evening.

In fact, it's going so fast that sometimes I forget to check the detailed summary Jon provided. When I do, then I have to go back to the text and make some changes. I did notice, Jon, that you have the population of Aquapolis set at 250,000, and described it as a normal city like any other. But when I got to that part of the story, I began to wonder about the nature of the city. Is it fact a regular city with homes, stores, work places, etc.? If so, 250,000 will work. Before I checked the official summary, I had imagined it as a research city, populated mostly by scientists—somewhat like a military base with housing, shops, etc, but not your normal community. I can go either way. Now we're at that point in the story, what do you two think? I've written it in the latter scenario with a population of 50,000—adding resorts, etc. so that it is a tourist attraction. But if people live there as in a normal city, what do they do? It would be kind of like that city in a bottle in Superman's Fortress of Solitude—unless we make it very easy for people to commute with the mainland—which is also quite possible. Your thoughts? If you can let me know before the end of the day, that'll make the writing easier, since I'm at the point where the Starmen make the descent and see Aquapolis for the first time, and that's what's getting written tonight.

---

<sup>66</sup> Mike has frequently suggested names of characters that are intended to honor astronauts and astronomers. The Titanians' name for themselves—"Varlicept"—is a palindrome of Percival Lowell. [Note: note sure if palindrome is the right word. Also you might explain who Lowell is. I'm not as clear on that as you probably could be.]

<sup>67</sup> This was very unusual! Normally David averages one to two chapters a week.

Blessings!

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 2001 10:13 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *Just wanted to write a few comments on Chapter 3! I read it over earlier,*
- > *and I enjoyed reading it. I really liked the part where Jonathan Blaine*
- > *asked for an autograph! The part that reads:*
- >
- > *Mark wrote, "To Jonathan, best wishes, Starman Mark Seaton."*
- >
- > *is really going to get the attention of Rick Brant fans. It has a splendid*
- > *double meaning: it's really a dedication.*

Nice observation. I didn't see that double meaning myself. Jonathan Blaine is the lead character in the Goodwin book, *The Feathered Cape* (1947—right before the first Rick Brant), and (of course) led to the pseudonym of John Blaine.

- > *The bit where the Starmen were offered a ride to the city was a nice touch,*

I don't know if those two people will be significant or not,<sup>68</sup> but when the Starmen got to the restaurant, they were waiting for them—so of course I had to write them in. Chapter 4 explains a lot more about them.

- > *One thing that wasn't completely clear was why the Starmen were taking some*
- > *sort of other craft besides their Star Ranger down to Earth. I don't object*
- > *or anything; I was just wondering.*

---

<sup>68</sup> It's often hard for us to tell what is going to be very important! Sometimes it's obvious, but there are occasions (like the letter "R" that was mentioned in *The Runaway Asteroid* as being the original surname of Thomas Starlight) when a trifle becomes immensely important.

Because I was a blockhead and forgot. They come down in the Star Ranger now—I fixed it.

> *From what we have said in books 2 and 3, Robert Nolan*  
> *and Richard Starlight are old friends — trusted allies, really. What Robert*  
> *is doing is treason: he's become a traitor and is betraying his old friend.*

That needs to be brought out more. You're right. Robert really has been falling for some time, but we can't make it too easy for him to shift over to being thoroughly bad. That's not realistic. I'm sure the scenes will come that show his wavering. His fall is really going to be a fascinating part of this book.

I kind of suspect that having Mark's temptation<sup>69</sup> in there too could be a distraction. When we get that far, I'm sure we'll be able to get the feel of it. Maybe it could work very well, but I really don't see any of the Starmen being subject to that kind of temptation. I think that if Mark were offered a FTL ship, he'd go right back to the others and tell them. That is, disloyalty is not a temptation that any of the Starmen would be subject to. Each of them would be subject to another temptation: Zip, probably, to feeling not good enough (in his father's shadow) and always having to be the best. Joe would be tempted to shy away from deep personal relationships—he's the one who made fun of Zip's kissing Kristina, and he makes jokes all the time, even in serious moments. Mark would be tempted to move into spiritual experimentation—he's open to mystical experiences and that leaves him open to bad spirituality.<sup>70</sup>

> > *I've already got the photos of Richard*  
> > *Starlight and Steve Cliff (boy, are they RIGHT ON*  
> > *TARGET!!)...*

Got photos today of Kathy Foster, Mark Seaton, and a new character whom I haven't introduced yet. He's a great one! His first name is Yancy, but I don't have a last name yet—needs to be something French, I think. He'll probably be the captain of the SE<sup>71</sup> ship that accompanies the Starmen to Europa. An absolutely four-star man!

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<sup>69</sup> We did consider the idea of having one or more of the Starman tempted with the idea of going over to the Dark Side. As you can see we decided against it, and this is why.

<sup>70</sup> David puts a lot of effort into developing the personalities of the three Starmen and other major characters. Read the detailed characterization of Robert Nolan on the next page.

<sup>71</sup> Our internal abbreviation for Starlight Enterprise.

Your thoughts on Aquapolis, Jon, are outstanding!! That's a terrific vision. Another sign of the great teamwork we have. I wouldn't have thought of such a grand sweep. Wonderful. I've already made the changes in the text that will make that vision part of DIE.

Now I'll send this and get busy on the rest of chapter 4 right away.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2001 12:09 PM*

- > > *I kind of suspect that having Mark's temptation in there too could be a*
- > *distraction...*
- >
- > *Right, I see your point: what you are saying makes a lot of sense. I have a*
- > *tendency to plot a parallel to everything: take JTP and fear, for instance.*
- > *The Starmen, though, are indeed prey to a different sort of temptations, and*
- > *it is along those lines that they will be tempted. Sounds good to me. It's*
- > *amazing, David, how you are developing the characters!*

This kind of thing is where my own expertise comes into play. I have spent my entire ministry as pastor of a church working through people's spiritual lives, including the things to which they are tempted. People are subject to different temptations, and most people have what is called a "besetting sin"—the one to which they are most subject. It is usually a shadow of their strength. A person who is passionate for justice usually has a besetting sin of anger, etc. So it was not difficult to discern what the besetting sins of our Starmen would be. E.g. Mark's spiritual questing makes him subject to "falling for anything mystical."

Robert Nolan's besetting sin would come from always being in Richard's shadow, no matter the reality of his own success and wealth—hence, jealousy and envy. Addressed properly, that would lead him to growth in charity and true rejoicing in his own impressive achievements and Richard's with equal joy. But if he gives in to the temptation, it would lead, as it does in DIE, to treachery, deceit, and smoldering secret anger and hatred. Nolan wants control as a way of making himself "feel good about himself." That's why he blew up, even at the President, in TRA. When his objection wasn't followed he felt personally rejected and humiliated, especially when he was later proven wrong. Then he tried to make up for it with an apology and the generous act of donating the

decoy freighters. That helped him a lot to move in the right direction. Then his REALLY BIG PLOY for fame and FINALLY COMING OUT ON TOP AND LOOKING GOOD was the active shielding in TRA—his own personal invention. When that failed so publicly and when the public was already against him, he was tottering on the edge of the abyss. Then when Allen Foster blew his stack on live, public television, Robert collapsed. He was ripe for the little nudge over the edge from Beowulf Denn. That's why Denn's words summarized ALL OF THESE THINGS, twisted the truth about Richard Starlight, and offered the ANSWER to Nolan's deepest fears and angers: power, supremacy over Richard, revenge, and a way to look good publicly, all at the same time. Nolan's decision to choose evil was an easy one at that point—but a decision he would never have made at any other time. Beowulf Denn's timing and method were perfect.

> *There's no way you*  
> *could have a serious conversation regarding the temptations that might face,*  
> *say, Tom Swift and Bud Barclay: there just isn't enough material in those*  
> *characters to allow it. It's fascinating.*

Tom could be secretly proud. He's never been challenged by anyone who is really an ally—no corporation head has ever said, "Sorry, Tom, but we can't help you." All doors open for Tom. If his reputation went sour, he could be devastated. Bud probably has an "I'm so stupid" attitude, so that his besetting sin is a form of sloth—i.e. indifference to spiritual things, not interested in self-improvement or personal growth. Just a guess, but you can see what I mean.

Hmmm. These things might be a good topic in I\*S#3.

> *I know that we don't have*  
> *any books planned on this [Aquapolis] , but it might be interesting somewhere down*  
> *the line to write a book that takes place in this underwater network of cities:*  
> *I'm sure they could offer us a story! It's something I'll keep in the back*  
> *of my head and think about.*

I've always assumed that the underwater city you designed (and put on the mouse pad) was the Benefactors' city under the surface of Europa, but it makes much more sense to

see it as Aquapolis! The Benefactors' city would, of course, be in complete darkness, but Aquapolis would have the sea-colored sunlight on it.<sup>72</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2001 10:47 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

I like the idea of using Lake Vostock....super idea.

I would like to suggest including another sub called the TUNA SUB in the story...perhaps as a "chase sub" for the initial sea trials of the UNDERBIRD. I just like the name! It could be the original "flapping membrane" sub built by SE.

The UNDERBIRD might need to be "rolled up" in order to fit through the ice....(i.e. it is kinda flat, requiring either a large round hole, a long slit hole or a "curled up" shape when inserted into a smaller type hole in the European ice.) Some rolling of the wings would make cutting through all that ice much easier for the advance crew.

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 2001 12:42 AM*

> *The UNDERBIRD might need to be "rolled up" in order to fit through the*  
> *ice....(i.e. it is kinda flat, requiring either a large round hole, a long slit*  
> *hole or a "curled up" shape when inserted into a smaller type hole in the*  
> *European ice.) Some rolling of the wings would make cutting through all that*  
> *ice much easier for the advance crew.*

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<sup>72</sup> The picture on the mousepad is actually a modified image from a computer game I wrote called *The Key*. In this game you find yourself on a flooded planet that goes by the name of Arcadia; the glowing city is simply one of the planet's flooded cities that was protected by a shield of some kind. All I did was take the model, modify it a bit, and render a picture, and it turned out to have matched what we needed for book four very closely. Kevin took that image, modified it still further, and turned it into the cover art for the fourth Starman book. It's amazing how these things turn out! I never dreamed, when I was building that model, that a modification of it would wind up on the cover of a Starman book. That is the closest I have ever come to having some of my artwork appear on the cover of a Starman book. I have done one internal, come to think of it: the image of the three-moon logo that appears in *Assault on Mars* was an image of mine, which I built in Bryce 3D.

I had been thinking about that myself, and pictured the wings rolling up around the body. Not sure how to penetrate the ice—heat? That'll produce steam that'll quickly rise and melt the tunnel and close it off behind the Underbird—which may be okay. Or something like the Atomic Earth Blaster,<sup>73</sup> which will leave debris and also effectively block the tunnel behind them. Vaporizing altogether doesn't sound practical—the matter has to go SOMEWHERE. Any ideas?

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 2001 9:24 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Excellent information, Jon. David asked for ideas and I suggest that we have an advance team drill a hole for the sub. As a matter of fact, I think we can assume that some sort of research drilling has already been done. You know, for robot probes and bathyspheres...probably an SE related project. The technique outlined by Jon<sup>74</sup> sounds just right for the job. This hole can be the same area that the Starmen need to return to when they exit the ocean and ice. As David suggested, the wings of the Underbird can be somewhat rolled about the body. Or at least folded back once as not to make such a broad "footprint".

In that video I sent there is a neat animation sequence from JPL<sup>75</sup>, it features an imaginary overflight of Mars.....and did you notice that the music was none other than Holtz' Mars sequence from The Planets?

*Mike*

*DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 2001 1:49 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I've had a few ideas about subplots and a secondary character for DIE. How about if the pilot for the ship that takes the Starmen and the Underbird to Europa be a highly-

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<sup>73</sup> From the legendary book *Tom Swift and His Atomic Earth Blaster*.

<sup>74</sup> I proposed using lasers to drill the hole.

<sup>75</sup> Jet Propulsion Laboratories

esteemed pilot for SE. The name I suggest is Yancy Dufaure. I have a fantastic character description for him and have actually taken the photograph of the fellow who can serve as his model.<sup>76</sup> You've probably met him, Jon<sup>77</sup>—he's now a black belt in the karate class<sup>78</sup>, although he wore a red belt when you were here. I can imagine him leading the SE non-Starman crew of the European mission, and serving heroically in the assault by the NME forces. Perhaps he could be an Academy graduate, and Richard could offer him the position of Starman at the close of DIE.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding the base on Europa, we had talked about having the SE ship orbit Jupiter in conjunction with Europa, but outside the influence of the radiation—I don't remember the details right now, but I think it was something like that. Instead, how about if they build a huge igloo on the surface of Europa as a shield against the radiation, and lower the Underbird from a spot nearby but not in it? We could even have an Eskimo aboard who is a construction engineer, or something like that.

Let me know what you think of these ideas. I'll be finishing up the draft of my sabbatical book this week,<sup>80</sup> and also charging ahead on a chapter or two, maybe three, of DIE. The first DIE reading group is scheduled for September 8—less than two weeks from now.

More tomorrow.

*David*

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<sup>76</sup> This is one of the rare occasions when we had a good character developed before we had a use for the character in the series! As you can see, David rose to the task and found a fantastic role for him to fill.

<sup>77</sup> I did, when I was out in California, and I remembered him!

<sup>78</sup> David Baumann is a third-degree black belt and teaches a karate class at his church. I will never forget the time in the summer of 2002 when I went out to see David and finish up the manuscript for the fifth Starman book. David had been ill for the past few weeks, but in spite of that he still had his exam to get his fourth-degree black belt while I was out there. During the exam David (a man in his 50s) stacked up eight bricks, raised his hand, and with his bare hand broke six of them with a single blow – *and then looked severely disappointed that he had not broken more*. He really expected to break all eight of them and blamed his failure to do so on his recent illness. I will never forget his disappointment at breaking *only* six bricks with a single blow – wow. I'd break my hand if I tried to break even one!

<sup>79</sup> This is the first time that we talked about what it takes to become a Starman. Up to this point we really had only vague ideas about the process.

<sup>80</sup> David does a great deal of writing outside the Starman Series. The Starman books are not the only books he has written, and the articles in the Inter\*Stellars are not the only articles he writes. I have no idea how he finds time to do everything.



*DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 2001 10:04 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Today I received the final product JTP and it is very nice! The DJ turned out better than the first pre-production DJ, just like David said it would.

About Kevin's latest drawing of the UB cracking through the ice on Europa.....it certainly is dramatic!<sup>81</sup> However, it is not the way I think it should be done. My views on this are pretty certain.

Firstly, "breaking through the ice" is not realistic unless you want to stick the guys in CFC tanks again! Secondly, the UB is not completely "hardened" ...the hull might be superhard, but the "wings" are going to need to be flexible material.

My recommendation here is that we assume a base or two already exists and we ought to assume that some sort of hole has already been drilled (Jon's methods will do best). I think it best to assume quite a few robot probes have been down and perhaps a Bathysphere or two.

The ice surface of Europa is riddled with cracks....not unlike the Tectonic plates of the Earth...complete with subduction processes....the ice is probably 10 to 60 miles thick (or deep). I am sure that there are a few thinner spots over thermal activity at the seabed....these areas are where intelligent, well planned scientific research would take place....just look for a crack at the thinnest point and set up the drill rig. The hole will eventually be widened to accommodate the UB (in rolled or partially assembled configuration)

About the radiation.....I am guessing that about 50 ft of ice is the minimum for shielding (Dan<sup>82</sup> may have some better info on this).....so that means that we will need to install some kind of shielding from 50 ft to the surface( for those SCUBA type rescues when people don't come up WITH their sub!) The shielding can be lead or Active, similar to the engine active shielding already used.

I would recommend a nice bubble or hut or enclosure over the hole.....I would recommend hoisting the sub down by cable...retrieving it the same way.

Whereas I DO like the UB having some ice melting and/or cutting options...I don't think it realistic to have it be able to cut all the way to the surface. (THAT would require a HUGE amount of energy in a small package!) If the story can at all endure the limitation of entry AND exit from the original bore hole, then I strongly urge we go that route. (Escaping from a second bore hole is also a possibility.....you know...the one that

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<sup>81</sup> This was how it was done in my original summary, before I learned how thick the ice on Europa was. We obviously changed it, just as Mike said.

<sup>82</sup> Dan Henton

some other nation or company drilled, but that we only found out about at the last minute. :o)

We have already written ACTIVE SHEILDING into the world of the STARMEN, why don't we employ it instead of the Iceshell currently being discussed? Using the ice is certainly elegant, but it is just so "massy" and it costs so much to move back and forth. Using ice to fill a giant igloo on the surface is a great idea...but not to fill up a spaceship which then descends into the radiation belt.

We could also entertain drilling some of the ice into open chambers for bases and research compounds. (Ice deeper than 50 ft or so.)

About the [Starman] T-shirts.....can we eventually incorporate a larger font for the website address?...I want people to be able to read it from across the mall! It's barely noticeable right now.

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2001 8:34 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

How do you guys feel about the shape of UB as Kevin has rendered it.....I prefer a little more "wingspan" and perhaps a bit more of a stinger sticking out the stern, but am happy with whatever you guys want. (I MUST get my scanner going again so I can send an image to Kevin.)

Yes, I think we can have the Starmen be the first humans to actually go into the European Ocean.

I think that the radiation belt around Jupiter is really just charged particles caught in it's very strong magnetic field. The ice physically blocks these particles, thus the shielding effect.

Finding a suspected city or complex at the bottom of the European Sea would be possible with supersensitive sonar/listening technology.....especially if the UB had a remotely piloted helper or two. (Triangulation)

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2001 2:08 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

All the exchanges, theories, and suggestions about shielding, drilling, and sheltering sound good. I think I've got the picture. Let's see if I can summarize for us. Mike suggests the use of active shielding instead of ice. That adds another great plot angle—SE perfects the active shielding, which just twists the knife in Robert Nolan! We can show him wavering in his decision to join Beowulf Denn, but when SE perfects the active shielding, that tips him over the edge and he is lock, stock, and barrel on the evil side. Like it?

The igloo can be built by robots with walls 50 feet thick, and there can be rooms below the ice too. This will change what NME does to destroy the ship, maybe, but we can work that out without trouble. The cost of building ships in the 22nd century is low.

The UB will be dropped by cables into a hole drilled by melting the ice, and the steam will be vented into outer space. The UB can be "rolled up" as it goes through the hole. The ocean will already have been plumbed by unmanned probes; the Starmen will be the first humans to enter the ocean, but they will not be the first entry of all. The hole will remain but the tectonic ice plates might be a cause for some alarm. The UB will have some ice melting mechanism, but will NOT be responsible for cutting a hole all the way through the ice.

The igloo will be built over a thin spot in the ice, which is over a hot spot in the ocean. Somehow we have to have the Starmen and team guess where the lost city is, too—we can't just have them drop down and start wandering around hoping to find it. The ocean on Europa is bigger than all of Earth's oceans combined.

Is this our picture? Are we agreed?

I agree that Kevin's artwork needs some revision. It has to match what we're now planning. If he wants to keep all the work he's put into it, maybe he can alter the scene somewhat so that it shows the UB scooting along under the ice—that is, maybe he can adapt the scene so that it is an underwater scene. Or perhaps it could illustrate the Antarctica mission, in which case he could add a derrick or something and show the entry hole.

...

- > *One thing we will need to be careful of in the future is how many*
- > *characters we introduce. I know that we're introducing lots of them in DIE*
- > *and lots more in LROM (and we will need them, too), but after that we will*
- > *REALLY need to tone it down.*

True, but I think it is okay to have a number of characters who exist in only one book. We aren't really planning any new major characters. Look at the glossary of the Hardy Boys and you'll find many pages of characters just in the first 38 original text stories—nearly all of them appearing only once.

- > *Often, the Starman fade into the background under the pressure of all the*
- > *other characters.*

Not likely to be the case in JTP or certainly DIE. The Starmen are somewhat overshadowed in TRA, but this was necessary and also seen as a good thing by one of our readers—he commented that it was good that the Earth was saved by a team of people and not just the Starmen. TRA had many characters, but I think we're not going to be subject to that criticism from here on out. In DIE we have only recurring characters except for the pilot of the ship that takes the Starmen and the UB to Europa. He needs to be an SE employee rather than an NME employee, so we can't use Derf Bors again. Yancy Dufaire can be Derf Bors' opposite number, both of them good guys. Maybe Derf will appear again, who knows? What will a good guy like him do when NME goes bad?? Maybe go to work for SE, or maybe disappear...

- > *I was thinking over DIE over the past few days, and I have hit upon a*
- > *subtle mistake. In DIE, Zip says this:*
- >
- > =====
- > *Zip smiled. "I know when all this happened. I know when the Benefactors were*
- > *actively present in the Solar System. Their charts of the System show the*
- > *planets as they were in their time—precisely 12,237 years ago."*
- > =====
- >
- > *Actually, all Zip could find out from the charts was that the last time the*
- > *planets were in those positions was 12,237 years ago! The positions the*
- > *planets are in today also occurred long, long ago, and it will occur again*
- > *long in the future ...*

Good point. I think it is so subtle, though, that we don't have to do too much about it, except maybe point out that what Zip sees is the last time the planets were in that position. He could hypothesize that the map points to some other time, but I'll bet the cycle is so long that no other possibility has a realistic chance. Or maybe we could add the stars to the chart and really nail the time down. What do you think?<sup>83</sup>

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2001 9:29 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Wow! A lot of e-mails and exciting "this just ins".

The possible large Christian school order is very exciting.

William is making a Starman fan website! I like that a lot. He says he likes the cover for #3.....tell him he can see the original painting<sup>84</sup> if he comes to the October BOOK FAIR.

About water pressure on Europa.....there is none, otherwise water would be squeezed up somewhere through the myriad cracks.<sup>85</sup>

The photocopied article on Europa that I sent you has a little bit of info on the radiation situation at Europa. The ice (or water) makes a good physical block for the radioactive particles trapped in the radiation belt. But actually RADIATION is a term that includes several sub-categories.

1) particulate radiation...alpha particles....basically Helium nuclei...a sheet of paper is usually enough to stop alphas

2) electromagnetic radiation.....radio waves, visible light, infra-red, UV, x-rays, gamma rays

3) ionizing radiation.....usually strong electromagnetic radiation that can enter matter and wreak havoc with the atoms inside.....x-rays ruining photographic film is an example...sunburn is another, dangerous stuff.

4) fallout.....little pieces of Uranium or Plutonium isotopes that are scattered about after a nuclear explosion...like dust

---

<sup>83</sup> I think that in the end we decided this wasn't important enough to bother about.

<sup>84</sup> Mike Dodd drew the cover and internals for the third Starman book, *Journey to the Tenth Planet*.

<sup>85</sup> This is a point we debated to great length: would the water be pressurized or not? It was an important point and we weren't sure.

5) Cosmic rays....atomic nuclei that have been magnetically bounced about the universe from star to star....each bounce giving it more speed until it is a miniature cannonball with so much speed energy that they can do damage ( like rearrange DNA on the odd unlucky Chromosome )

6) Neutrinos....exotic sub-atomic particles, can be stopped by enough matter, such as 100s of feet of earth.

The radiation at Europa is mostly charged particles, but Jupiter itself is a huge radio source.....and some of that radiation is in the x-ray range I think. Will check.

Mike

*DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 01, 2001 1:07 AM*

We've had so many exchanges about the ice, the shielding, the way the UB gets under the ice, that I'm a little confused. Please correct me where I am wrong:

The SE base will use active shielding, backed up by ice, to protect itself from the Jovian radiation. The ice will be taken from under the surface so it is not radioactive itself. The base can be built inside a crevice, with an igloo on top and the SE spacecraft in evidence where it will later be blasted by the NME forces. Active shielding will be perfected by SE, thus tipping Nolan's fall over the edge. Kevin's artwork will be altered so that it shows the UB on Antarctica.

This is what I wrote before, with the above coming later.

*> > All the exchanges, theories, and suggestions about shielding, drilling, and sheltering*

*> > sound good. I think I've got the picture. Let's see if I can summarize for us. Mike*

*> > suggests the use of active shielding instead of ice. That adds another great plot*

*> > angle—SE perfects the active shielding, which just twists the knife in Robert Nolan!*

*> > We can show him wavering in his decision to join Beowulf Denn, but when SE perfects the*

*> > active shielding, that tips him over the edge and he is lock, stock, and barrel on the*

*> > evil side. Like it?*

*> >*

> > *The igloo can be built by robots with walls 50 feet thick, and there can be rooms below*  
 > > *the ice too. ... The cost of building ships in the 22nd century is low.*  
 > >  
 > > *The UB will be dropped by cables into a hole drilled by melting the ice, and the steam*  
 > > *will be vented into outer space. The UB can be "rolled up" as it goes through the hole.*  
 > > *The ocean will already have been plumbed by unmanned probes; the Starmen will be the*  
 > > *first humans to enter the ocean, but they will not be the first entry of all. The hole*  
 > > *will remain but the tectonic ice plates might be a cause for some alarm. The UB will*  
 > > *have some ice melting mechanism, but will NOT be responsible for cutting a hole all the*  
 > > *way through the ice.*  
 > >  
 > > *The igloo will be built over a thin spot in the ice, which is over a hot spot in the*  
 > > *ocean. Somehow we have to have the Starmen and team guess where the lost city is,*  
 > > *too—we can't just have them drop down and start wandering around hoping to find it.*  
 > > *The ocean on Europa is bigger than all of Earth's oceans combined. [Mike says]*  
 > > *Finding a*  
 > > *suspected city or complex at the bottom of the European Sea*  
 > > *would be possible with supersensitive sonar/listening*  
 > > *technology.....especially if the UB had a remotely piloted helper or two. ( triangulation)*  
 > >  
 > > *Is this our picture? Are we agreed?*

If there's something I'm missing or got wrong, please correct me so that I can have a concise list of our decision from which I can write the text. This is becoming rather complicated for what we anticipated would be a simple book. I think it probably still IS rather simple, but our process of getting there has been complex.

Mike, if I miss something you've put into the discussion when the texts begin to flow again, it's only because I've missed it. Keep me on track here!

- > *In the original story, the Starmen*
- > *didn't have any trouble finding it because the whole*
- > *reason they went to Europa was because they found maps*
- > *with a base specifically pointed out. We could still*
- > *do something along this angle: perhaps at the*
- > *settlement on Mars (New Ilein, was it?) they found a*
- > *carving or some sort that gave them a clue as to the*
- > *location of a base. Perhaps it was just a fragment of*
- > *a map of the undersea terrain on an old stone, but the*
- > *Starmen were able to scan the stone, import it to a*
- > *computer, and compare the map to the map of Europa and*
- > *locate the base that way. The map would just give them*
- > *a broad area to search; the exact location could be*
- > *pinpointed by the methods Mike mentioned. It's a*
- > *thought: at the very least it gives some plot*
- > *justification for their journey to Mars.*
- > *What do you think?*

That sounds very workable. They'll get to Final Ilie before too long—right after Antarctica.

- > *Maybe we are getting too nit-picky here, but*
- > *something just occurred to me. If an alien went down*
- > *to Wal-Mart, bought a map of the planets, and examined*
- > *it, would the position of the planets tell him when*
- > *the map was made? Absolutely not! Our maps aren't even*
- > *to scale; there is absolutely no information on the*
- > *map at all concerning where the planets actually were*
- > *when the map was made. Printed maps aren't made to*
- > *show that sort of thing at all.*

I'd suggest that we just write the book that says that the chart tells the positions of the stars and planets—that is, leave it as it is. I don't think anyone will object and we kind of need the scene, don't we? It opens up a little more of the ultimate information the Starmen need to find out what's going on with the Benefactors and Xenobots. We don't want the process to be too complicated, because that will become a sidetrack in the storyline.

- > *We could mention that fact in an Inter\*Stellar, or —*



> better yet — perhaps on the dustjacket flap! We could  
> just put on a little notice: "Cover art was inspired  
> by such-and-such." That ought to do it.

Good idea.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 03, 2001 10:15 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Excellent, Excellent, Excellent. I love it, love it, love it!

The introduction and description of the Mantaships (great name!) outside and in is great. As is the description of the test mission to Lake Vostok.

The "bicycle seat" seems a little flimsy (what if they encounter a lot of turbulence...perhaps a similar but more robust seat is in order)...the VR headset coming down from the ceiling is perfect. This is all some good sci-fi!

*Mike*

*DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 04, 2001 9:49 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

I will make the seat a bit more substantial. I was thinking that the pilot would need a lot of freedom of movement. I also wonder if piloting this thing for extended periods of time could get pretty uncomfortable, but maybe fixing the seat problem will take care of that too.

> I did notice one small flaw:

>

> "The curious ship floated on the water in the hangar with several others

> like it. The slips were set side by side in a spacious dome..."

>

> Should that perhaps instead read "The ships" instead of "The slips"? It's a

> *small thing, but I thought I would mention it.*

Actually I WAS thinking slips—i.e. the places where boats are "parked" while at a dock. I'll say "the curious ship floated on the water in its slip..."

I'm glad you both liked it!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 05, 2001 8:17 PM*

If all goes well, I'll get the Starmen to Lake Vostok tonight. I've thought about it a lot and there are some logistical problems they'll have to overcome! The UB has to be lowered on cables TWO MILES LONG, and the UB itself has no way to get back to the surface if anything goes wrong. If the tunnel closes up or something like that, SE will have to clear the tunnel or sink another one before the Starmen's life-support systems are depleted. Should make for some exciting reading!

More later.

*David*

*DATE: THU, 06 SEP 2001 21:01:12 -0700*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Well, here it is. This makes chapter 5 a very long chapter, but that's okay. I think chapter 6 will be short, and I believe we agree that chapters can be as long—or short—as they need to be.<sup>86</sup> As you read this, you'll see how I propose that we address the logistical problems involved in descending to Lake Vostok. Let me know what you think!

I also checked the notes in the summary, and noted that Jon suggested originally that the Underbird be triphibial—that is, it can fly and move on the ground as well as travel on

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<sup>86</sup> This was one of our guiding philosophies: books and chapters needed to be as long as was necessary to get the point across. Sometimes a chapter had more material in it and so was made longer, and sometimes it didn't have as much material in it and so was made shorter. We never had any strict word limits – it's one of the advantages of being self-published!

and in water. However, as we've designed it in the text, it is only for underwater use. It can get through ice somewhat, but that's not its normal M.O. Is this okay, or do we want to give the UB the capability of flying and traveling on ground too?

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 07, 2001 10:50 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Excellent! I really like the way the story is going...and I believe that there is something different about DIE.....it is definitely the best one so far. We have the realism of a credible test dive, the realism of Joe's crack about " That's one big drop..."( which I love...it's pure genius), the nervousness and tension of all concerned ( "You've got a bunch of people about to turn blue UP here" is an excellent paraphrase of Apollo 11 CAPCOM Charlie Duke's response to "The Eagle has landed"....should we run with the idea and have the line " the Underbird has wings" or something?) (or how about, " I just hope no one turns BLUE down HERE!"?)

The whole Lake Vostok concept is great....it beats a lot of sci-fi and has the added benefit of being REAL! I love this stuff. I like the brief description of the original Russian science base and how the lake was discovered. I am sure you guys know that "Vostok" is Russian for East AND that it was the name given to the first series of Russian manned spacecraft (their "mercury" program )...I wonder which meaning was intended when the lake was named?

About the Star Ranger landing on it's tail on the ice. I agree with Jon that that is problematic for a couple of reasons. I have been leaning toward the idea that tail sitting landings should be reserved for airless, lower gravity situations. If we want tail sitter landings on ice, we could have "melters" built into the fin pods to allow the ship back up off the ice. Or we could have a cement landing pad built at Vostok. However, a horizontal landing would also require some care in that the Star Ranger would be every bit as hard as landing a Space Shuttle on the ice in Antarctica. A long smooth runway would have to be cleared. Star Ranger may need to be fitted with skis. Is it possible to have the guys land elsewhere on Earth and then transport to Vostok via an SE "com-mandojet" or something?

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 07, 2001 11:12 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

I'm glad you guys like the Vostok scene. I had a reservation or two myself about the tail-fin landing scenario as I was writing it, then let the concern slip by without addressing it. How about if we have the engineers at Vostok prepare a landing pad? It would be a lot easier than preparing a long runway for a horizontal landing. They can take some prefabricated, interlocking squares and place them on a spot they've leveled out. The squares could be heat-absorbing, and then removed when the Star Ranger departs.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 07, 2001 9:05 PM*

PS....the more I think about it, the more I like the idea of the cover of DIE featuring the UB just entering the ocean under the ice...sort of swooping down and away from the entry hole. The scene could feature the dimly lit ice ceiling above, real spooky.<sup>87</sup>

*Mike*

*DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 09, 2001 12:09 AM*

Alex Parfitt, our Kathy, joined the reading group today. As I was reading, she crawled up into my lap, nodded off, and pressed a few keys on the keyboard with her forehead, thus providing some unexpected editing. After I corrected that, I turned her sideways and kept reading. Her feet then played with various items down below the chair and inadvertently unplugged the computer from the wall. I was reading an exciting part to a

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<sup>87</sup> Mike really wanted to see the mantaship featured in a major illustration in this book, but the illustrator never saw a way to do it. I think we all still feel this loss, and hope that we can find a place in future books for a scene like this.

roomful of eager people, and the screen suddenly went dark. After I booted up again, she lay down on the floor and went to sleep. Maybe that'll find a place in a future book—or maybe the next chapter of DIE.<sup>88</sup>

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 09, 2001 6:46 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

*> I found my sketches of possible Mantaship designs...will try to  
> scan them in soon.*

Mike, I noticed that your drawing has a single, wide front windshield, but Kevin's rendering has two triangular windows, like eyes. In the text, before I noticed the difference, I described the two triangular eyes. Which way do we want to go?

*> [Mike] the more I think about it, the more I like the idea of the cover of DIE  
> featuring the UB just entering the ocean under the ice...sort of swooping  
> down and away from the entry hole. The scene could feature the dimly lit ice  
> ceiling above, real spooky.... [Jon] That might work, but I just have one big  
> caution: whatever we do, we don't  
> want the cover of this book to be black! We've already had two black covers.  
> I haven't thought a lot about what cover art we want for this book, but we  
> do need to find something.*

Yes, that would be very, very cool!! The descent from the ice into the sea could be gray ice and sea illuminated blue through the hole, with dark gradations in the sea the farther from the light it gets. I can see it in my mind's eye—very nice! I also REALLY like the design which is on the mouse pad—the approach to Aquapolis. The blue shading is especially terrific. Either way, we definitely don't want a black cover. Mike's idea has the advantage of showing the mantaship on the cover. If we don't use the Aquapolis scene on the cover, I'd sure like to see it as the frontispiece. It would still look good in black and white.

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<sup>88</sup> It did! It became the part in the book where Zip's little sister crawled into his lap and fell asleep while he was working at the computer, which can be found on page 75 of the book.

...

- > *A concrete heat-absorbing landing pad should do*
- > *the trick just fine.*

I added a line about a prefab pad made of heat-absorbent interlocking squares, but didn't specify that they were concrete.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 09, 2001 10:54 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Another idea. What about Robert Nolan? Do we really want him to become an irredeemable bad guy? We had the five pirates who accompanied Lurton Zimbardo turn back from total evil, although we can't really say that they repented. Only Zimbardo went into the darkness.

What about Nolan? I suggest that we have him and Denn come up with a plan to sabotage the descent into Europa. The UB fails on its way out of the sea, and the Starmen have to abandon ship and return to the surface via space suits—Mike's suggestion of a few weeks back. But we could have Denn make the sabotage **WORSE** than planned, with the intention of doing two things at once: destroying the Starmen while hurting SE big time, and also achieving the final destruction of Nolan since Denn leaves him with the blame. Nolan has no intention of committing murder—only sabotage. Denn seeks to kill, but the Starmen catch the plot and save themselves but not the ship. We could have Nolan wrench himself back from the brink at the very end, with a magnificent scene in which he turns to the Light and finally becomes Healthy. Denn, in frustration, then tries to flee but is really captured: that is, the SPY is finally ferreted out and taken into custody. Rwakatare could even be the arresting personage. What do you think?? That would make **DIE** into a real thriller. The Nolan plot, which is introduced in the first

chapter, could gradually mount into a real cliff-hanger, with the reader guessing all the way to the end what will happen to Nolan.<sup>89</sup>

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2001 9:00 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

David's suggestions about a redeemed Nolan do make for more excitement/intrigue in DIE, however, I was under the impression that NME would be a fairly constant rival and nemesis to SE during the length of the of the series. If we change this relationship, we might lose a necessary component.

Perhaps there is a way to have Nolan redeem himself in DIE, but to still have OTHER players in NME do the badguy stuff.

Part of the premise in the series is that mid-22 century rivalries are not so much between nations as they are between corporations.<sup>90</sup> I think it best to keep things that way. We could achieve this tension by using some other corporation(s) as the bad guy(s).....but NME is such a good acronym!<sup>91</sup> ( HMMM...perhaps NOLAN could redeem himself, LEAVE NME, join STARLIGHT, and someone else could assume command of the evil NME!)

*Mike*

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<sup>89</sup> It even had us guessing, right up to the end, what we were going to do with him! David's suggestion was very good, and that's what we did. I think it worked out pretty well!

<sup>90</sup> One of the unfortunate things about the Xenobot threat (which itself was another one of Mike's brainstorms) is that it drowns out things like this. There really isn't space to have plots that involve company A slinging it out against company B – it would just get in the way of the overarching Xenobot menace idea. I really liked this idea and have constantly tried to find a way to work it into the series but so far have failed: it just entangles the plots. I haven't given up though! You at least get a taste of it here in book four, and who knows what Starman tales will be told after book ten is completed...

<sup>91</sup> The letters NME, when read aloud, sound exactly like "enemy" – and all along NME (which supposedly stands for "Nolan Mining Enterprises" or something like that) was to be the enemy of Starlight Enterprise. Mike set all this up and I think it's pretty cool!

DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2001 9:22 AM

Dear Jon and David,

About the cover of DIE.....I also like the approach to Aquapolis scene...we have a choice to make here. If I remember correctly, Aquapolis is on Earth and might not make the most logical cover subject for DIE. However, if the underwater city on Europa was equally beautiful, then it would indeed make an appropriate cover.

Another thing to consider is this: Is it wise to use computer-generated art on the cover of a book that is meant to reflect the retro-genre of the 50s and 60s? Don't get me wrong...I agree that it would make a beautiful cover...I just wanted to point out a couple of things.

About the "portable" landing pad for the STAR RANGER....it passes credibility for me.....good job , David!

Perhaps we can assume for the sake of future stories that the STAR RANGER generally lands horizontally on a strip when visiting Earth (perhaps there are legal concerns when the ship is landing in inhabited areas...you know ....noise, down thrust, hot gases, not to mention the fuel usage).

The landing at Vostok is a departure from the norm and is a rare "tail sitter" landing in 1G...(most are done in 1/3 G or less)...could make for a little excitement in the description! (There is, of course, no landing strip long enough at Vostok.)

About the "windshield" on the UB...I think I prefer the strip type.....that one captures more of the B-2 look that I was inspired by, but either way is OK with me

Mike

DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2001 11:25 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > [Mike] David's suggestions about a redeemed
- > Nolan do make for more excitement/intrigue in DIE, however, I was under the
- > impression that NME would be a fairly constant rival and nemesis to SE during
- > the length of the of the series. If we change this relationship, we might
- > lose a necessary component....
- > Part of the premise in the series is that mid-22 century rivalries are
- > not so much between nations as they are between corporations. I think it best



> *to keep things that way. We could achieve this tension by using some other corporation(s) as the bad guy(s).....but NME is such a good acronym! (*  
 > *HMMM...perhaps NOLAN could redeem himself, LEAVE NME, join STARLIGHT, and*  
 > *someone else could assume command of the evil NME!)*

> *[Jon] now that Nolan is going to be in with Starlight, what will we do*  
 > *with their company? We obviously want to differentiate them enough from SE*  
 > *so that they're not just another SE clone. They need to attack a different*  
 > *market segment so that they will have a clear, independent existence in the*  
 > *reader's mind. There really isn't a need for two companies exactly like SE.*

Hmmm, I see the complications with having Nolan repent. NME IS such a great acronym—one of Mike's brilliant ideas. Maybe we could have Denn point out that NME reads "enemy," and this is one of the factors that bothers Nolan. Maybe after his repentance and Denn's capture, Nolan could change the name of his company. That would change the acronym, but once we point out that NME is "enemy," we still gain the benefit of it.

Or we could have NME split after Nolan's repentance. He changes the name of the part he keeps, and the other part also changes its name but retains the acronym.

I can't envision Nolan leaving the company that is his entire life's work and joining SE. His big failing from the beginning has been making an idol of his company. Maybe when he repents, he turns his company into a right company as well. NME and SE can remain friendly rivals, occasionally partnering up, but generally being independent.

> *when does the Underbird fail — is it in Antarctica or on Europa?*

On Europa. I've already written part of chapter 6 in which the UB completes its test in Antarctica. (I'll finish that chapter today and get it off to you both tonight.) Denn would not want it to fail during its test in order to give the Starmen false security. I think it needs to fail in the European ocean but appear to be completely trustworthy before that. Hints throughout the book indicate that Denn has something cooking that will cause the UB to fail—the reader will know it's coming, but of course the Starmen don't.

> *...That would leave the story pretty much intact, except*  
 > *it adds an element of "What is Nolan going to do?" and leaves him redeemed*  
 > *instead of a dangerous fugitive. Is this the picture?*

Exactly!

...

Regarding the windshield for the UB, I could go either way, but I lean toward the single, broad window because it's Mike's design and he prefers it that way. Also, it gives the crew a better view. Let's tell Kevin that he ought to go with that version of the window and I'll change the text.

> *About the cover of DIE.....*

Well, how about making the "Aquapolis approach" the frontispiece and the "break through the ice" the cover. That scene couldn't be more accurate to the title! Let's suggest to Kevin that he really make good use of color on the cover. What I like, and the reading group really liked, is the soft, mystical blues of the Aquapolis scene. When I read that part of the text, I held up my mousepad<sup>92</sup> and they were "ooohing" and "aaaahing." If we can retain a similar impact with the "descent through the ice" scene, we can get the best of both worlds.

I know we have the black and white version of Aquapolis in existence, but it will need to be revised a bit to fit the dimensions of the frontispiece. Those dimensions are 4.5 x 3.5 inches, and the scene must be vertical.

Have we decided also to go ahead for sure with 3-D endpapers? I do like that idea very much. If so, I don't think we've selected a scene for that. Maybe Kevin could suggest something.

> *Another thing to consider is this: Is it wise to use computer generated  
> art on the cover of a book that is meant to reflect the retro-genre of the  
> 50s and 60s? Don't get me wrong...I agree that it would make a beautiful  
> cover...I just wanted to point out a couple of things.*

You're right, Mike. It's a good point. My own opinion is that the beauty of the scene will be worth it. Also, we've already got Kevin working on the cover and internals, and we don't want to yank the cover assignment from him at this point. I think it's worth a

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<sup>92</sup> Which had the image of the cover scene on it – we produced some mousepads with my rendering of this scene on them, and in fact I have one at the very computer I'm typing this at!

try and see how our customers like it. If we get a lot of complaints that "this doesn't look like the 50s," we'll get the message.

- > *Perhaps we can assume for the sake of future stories that the STAR RANGER*
- > *generally lands horizontally on a strip when visiting Earth (perhaps their*
- > *are legal concerns when the ship is landing in inhabited areas...you know*
- > *....noise, down thrust, hot gases, not to mention the fuel usage).*
- > *The landing at Vostok is a departure from the norm and is a rare "tail*
- > *sitter" landing in 1G...(most are done in 1/3 G or less)...could make for a*
- > *little excitement in the description! (there is ,of course, no landing strip*
- > *long enough at Vostok)*

Sounds good to me!

More later!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2001 7:28 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

About Jon's suggestions of a renegade NME.....YES!,YES!,YES!.....I really like it. The Xenobots work through NME.....A rouge NME is out there....the Xenobots supply NME with occasional incentives of "alien hi-tech" ....these make it to market.....causing SE and other tech-watchers to scratch their heads.

Really good thinking Jon.....AND we get to have our redeemed Robert Nolan....AND he has a personal quest now! (To get his company back.) Great stuff.<sup>93</sup>

*Mike*

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<sup>93</sup> As you can see, this allowed us to have our cake and eat it too! So, in *Descent Into Europa* Nolan drew back from the abyss at the last moment, but his company was already gone: his space station was destroyed at the end of this book and many of his employees had become traitors. Nolan was redeemed, but his company was shattered. What happened to Nolan and his company during the three years between this book and the beginning of *Doomsday Horizon*? Ah, well, that is for us to know and you, my friend, to find out...

DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 10:03 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I just finished reading this chapter, and I think it is great!*

I'm glad you like it.

> *the discussion of Tharsos was great (it all matched  
> exactly what we had talked about before),*

I hope so, since I copied it exactly from your notes, Jon, and just tinkered with it to make it sound like a report!<sup>94</sup>

> *Robert was doing well, but then when SE discovered the  
> flaw in the active shielding he lost it again*

Except this time he resolves to take action rather than collapses. Evil at first makes him stronger. My plan is that these short passages with Nolan will gradually build suspense in the readers until they realize that Nolan could become a very real threat. He's been presented (as one reader said about him in TRA) as a friendly but highly unpredictable, unstable person. Now, very gradually, he'll be seen as someone to be reckoned with, on the evil side. He has to have enormous gifts, or he couldn't have built NME into a formidable company.

I like your idea, Jon, of having the company TAKEN from him! That does give us, as Mike pointed out, a redeemed Nolan AND an evil NME. Brilliant, brilliant!!

*David*

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<sup>94</sup> I have lost track of how many times this has happened! David will write something, I will read it, I will write to David and say it was exactly what I had in mind, and then David will tell me the passage was almost an exact copy from the summary – a passage I had completely forgotten about. It's kind of funny.

DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2001 8:21 PM

Mary Doman, who suggested the Chinese name to explain the name Banjoman,<sup>95</sup> has suggested a reason why a future character is called Folding Jim—the name I came up with a while back with no reason, no character, and no part in a plot yet—just the name. She suggested that he be a huge, thin man, maybe 7+ feet tall, who likes to fly a small, single-seater ship. Everyone marvels that he can get into the thing, so they call him Folding Jim because he appears to "fold" himself up when he gets it. He can be a minor, colorful character like Uneven Stephen—maybe a rocket jockey at Eagle City when the Starmen land there to check out Final Ilien. What do you think?

David

DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2001 11:45 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

Folding Jim—great, Jon, that this title also applies to our origamist!<sup>96</sup> I wonder that I never noticed that. It'll be a good tribute to him.<sup>97</sup>

David

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<sup>95</sup> Which we placed into *The Runaway Asteroid* on a whim, having absolutely no idea who this man was, what he did, or how we were going to work him out. This became a problem when *The Lost Race of Mars* approached: here we had this important-sounding character that we suddenly had to find a place for! What on earth did his name mean? We had no idea and were thrilled when someone rode to our rescue and suggested that the name Banjoman was a corruption of a Chinese phrase. Did this experience teach us not to drop wild things like that in the books – things for which we have no explanation? Well, um, maybe not...

<sup>96</sup> Jim Adams, a Starman fan, started sending us origami models he had made of Starman vehicles a few years ago. We all thought this was *really* cool – what other series has origami fan out?

<sup>97</sup> Folding Jim became a character in the fourth Starman book – a direct tribute to Jim Adams. (I think we may have also placed him in book five and six, but I'm not completely sure of that.) Thanks for all the great origami fan art, Jim!

DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2001 6:26 PM

Dear Jon and David,

I see DIE as a likely antidote to the criticism that the books have not been exciting enough.<sup>98</sup> What could be more exciting than dunking three young men into a dark and cold under-ice sea! As for the science part...we could play up the principles by which things operate. (ex: "the wings of this sub provide propulsion the same way nature does in Birds and Rays. They closely follow the same flapping and angle of attack patterns that we see in animal that fly or swim.")

Also, we have a couple of very knowledgeable and trustworthy guys on our side. Ed Pippin, Fred,<sup>99</sup> .....maybe even Jeff Berkwitz, etc. We could ask these guys what they think about our "hitting the mark". I forget names here, but don't we know some insider series books people?

Mike

DATE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2001 9:25 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

Your comments on the four chapters, Jon, show how necessary it is that we are a team.<sup>100</sup> Everything you raised is a great point and I will make the changes. Some of

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<sup>98</sup> This was a fairly frequent criticism we received. We thought that the Starman books were fairly exciting but not everyone did. Some told us that we needed more action, more adventure, more sense of wonder, and we tried to comply. That is partly why *The Lost Race of Mars* was so intense: we wanted to at last lay that criticism to rest. Just in case that book wasn't exciting enough, I spent a great deal of time tweaking *Doomsday Horizon* in order to make it exciting from the very first page: the suspense starts to build in the prologue – it doesn't even wait until Chapter 1. Book six was *fun* to plot – work, but definitely fun.

<sup>99</sup> Fred Woodworth, the individual who spent an incredible amount of time printing the first Starman book for us and doing a fine job on it, too.

<sup>100</sup> This is a critical point: no member of the Starman team could write the books on his own. If David Baumann got hit by a truck and could no longer write the books, the series would be over: no one else could write them the way he does. The Starman Series is not a one-man team: it takes the three of us, and it always will. The good news is that the three of us love writing these books and have no plans to stop even after book 10 is released (though we might not always write two books a year or even one a year – that's a lot of work), so as long as we are here there is a good chance that Zip Foster will ride again.

them I had noticed as I was writing but didn't think of a way to fix them—just a nagging kind of feeling that things weren't smooth. And now I FINALLY understand what William is talking about when he mentions the jarring switches! Thanks!

The reading group is coming over this Saturday to get caught up on these chapters. (It should really be called the Listening Group, but we know what we mean.)<sup>101</sup> I'll make the changes before then.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 02, 2001 9:19 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

It is probably my fault here, but we has better correct the sentence that says that Jupiter itself is a huge source of radiation.....I once wrote to you guys that was.....including x-rays....well I was wrong (and I even corrected myself once) .....it is the radiation belts around Jupiter that are so bad. The planet itself just radiates some Infrared....and has a strong magnetic field.....but the really bad stuff resides in the belts. Sorry for this error a while back.

*Mike*

PS please check out spacedaily.com.....there is a fairly intriguing article on imaging of Ceres....I really feel that this little planetoid has been underprobed and understudied. In many ways it is the last planet.....even distant Pluto has been imaged better than Ce-

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<sup>101</sup> As David wrote the manuscript for the Starman books he periodically got together a select group of people (most of whom were from the karate class he teaches) and read the manuscript aloud to them. This proved to be very beneficial: reading the manuscript aloud helped David to fine-tune it, make it sound better, uncover typos and awkward phrases, and so forth. The group, which we always call the reading group even though they just sit and listen, are also very good at catching plot holes, passages that aren't clear, and things like that. Even though the reading group gets to hear the story long before the rest of our readers do they don't always have it easy: they have to wait longer than anyone else to get another Starman story, they hear a very rough and unpolished version of the manuscript, and since they only hear a few chapters at a time they often find themselves left hanging during an intense part of the book and left wondering for weeks what was going to happen next.

res.....it sounds as if we are just starting on this long ignored mystery! And we MUST mention the Piazzzi Base in the series!!!! Boy are we ahead of the curve!

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 07, 2001 7:44 PM*

It occurred to me that the scene in which Joe sends the water ball flying down the table to Zip is the first and (so far) only scene that was written by the three of us in real time—no emails. Each of the three of us contributed our expertise to the scene as we put it together in Mike's parents' back yard. That makes the scene special to me.<sup>102</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2001 3:20 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I just took a quick read-through of the summary of DIE Jon wrote, to make sure I haven't strayed too far from the plot. I noticed that I have not mentioned these four items:

L5: Jon had the Starmen stop at a large space station at this point. I really like this scene and want to use it, but I think that the quick jaunt to Final Ilien renders this extraneous. Can we save it for another book?

Beta hyperoxene: I had forgotten all about this, but have hinted that the Benefactors were mining a very heavy element on Europa. I got this idea—stole it, actually—from a book I read a few months ago called *The Ice Something-or-other*. It is about an asteroid-hunter who finds a huge asteroid in an ice-bound island in Tierra del Fuego, and determines that it has an atomic number higher than any known element. (It was a great read, but the ending was a let-down.) Where do we want to go with this? I'm implying that this element on Europa is used for hypertravel. I've forgotten what the beta hyperoxene is.

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<sup>102</sup> DIE pages 106-109



RTT: This slipped my mind entirely. Should we put this in? It is kind of a connection with AOM. I think we ought at least to mention it. Maybe the crew of the Silverfire can take an RTT set along, but it can fail partway through. Or it could remain operational all the way.

The fungi: Jon wrote that the descent was made through a crevasse rather than a hole drilled through the ice, and that fungi was at the bottom of it and obscured the window of the UB. After the hole-drilling scene in Antarctica, I forgot about the crevasse plan and on Europa just duplicated the hole-drilling. I didn't think of the fungi because I thought that at that depth, everything would be completely black and having fungi on the window wouldn't bother the Starmen at all.

What do you think?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2001 4:33 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I think—for the reasons you mentioned, Jon—that we need to mention L5 in DIE even if the Starmen don't actually visit it.<sup>103</sup> Maybe when the first draft is finished and we get to the cutting/editing task, we can put it in.

I'll put in the RTT too; that can be done right away.

> *Overall, I would say that this book is fairly average.*<sup>104</sup> *as expected, it has*  
> *diverged remarkably from the summary and is taking an entirely different track.*

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<sup>103</sup> I think that the reason I mentioned here had to do with a book entitled *Danger on L5* that was at the time slated to be Starman #13: I wanted to have the station mentioned in earlier books so that when we did a book on this station it wouldn't appear to have suddenly sprung out of nothingness. Once we rearranged the titles this book (even though we had a mini-summary for it) got dropped, but at the time we didn't know that was going to happen.

<sup>104</sup> By that I mean that nearly all of our books diverge significantly from the plot summaries! That's not a bad thing: the books we end up with are always better than the original plot summaries.

Well, only in the details, I hope. If our strength, or one of them, is human relationships and moral/spiritual choices, those develop in the course of the story. I don't see how we can anticipate them too much early in the process. The way the Wulf/Nolan implications are developing, for example, can only be done as we craft the book, unless we put a WHOLE lot more effort into planning and writing. As far as the overall plot, I hope we're not moving too far away from the summary. When you pointed out, Jon, that in JTP I had eliminated a LOT of the action scenes, I was horrified. I really don't intend to deviate from the summary that much.<sup>105</sup>

More later!

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2001 4:38 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> What can I say? Wow!! It's really great: I like the descent into the ocean  
> and the part with Nolan and Wulf -very- much. You did a fine job! The  
> nuances are terrific. The Starmen are really in trouble now! Our readers are  
> going to be on the edge of their seats! It is great. I didn't spot any  
> problems with it at all! I think we're in good shape and can steam ahead.  
> This story really has a great feel to it. We are getting a great sense of  
> adventure and discovery: it's amazing.*

I'm glad you like it! I'm finding that if I write too much at one time—like the four chapters in ten days while I was in Virginia—then I have to go back and fix too many things. One or two chapters per week is a good pace. I can concentrate on what is going on and keep most of the details in mind. I'm really pressing to have this done by the end of the year.

*David*

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<sup>105</sup> I have a tendency to place a lot of action sequences in the plot, and David has a tendency to take them all out. David removed nearly every action sequence I placed into the plot for JTP, but looking back on the book I don't think that was a bad thing: the book has a fantastic atmosphere that I really enjoy. Still, I do like my action sequences, and I enjoyed seeing so many of them survive in *The Lost Race of Mars* and *Doomsday Horizon*.

DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2001 8:22 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > \* Chapter 12 is great — I'll comment more on it later — but one issue we
- > badly need to address is the credibility of fish that huge. I would suggest
- > modifying the chapter a little bit in a couple ways...

Great idea. I can make those changes easily. In fact, I can make them tonight. I had the reservation myself about the credibility of fish that size, and this suggestion fixes that. Great!

- > \* Second, David, remember the scene with the Starmen walking across that
- > brick wall?<sup>106</sup> Well, I know where we can place it. There is one place, and only
- > one place, where it can be put into the story easily...

Also sounds good. I haven't read the summary since I first got it months ago, but I do remember that scene and the fence scene works into it just fine. When I write it as a teaser to include in DIE, I can have that context in mind, then.

Sound good to you, Mike?

It looks as if the flurry of postings on the message board has stopped—rather suddenly, too! It was fun while it lasted.

*David*

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<sup>106</sup> This is a reference to a scene that is in *The Lost Race of Mars* – specifically, the part of that book that was placed as a teaser in the back of *Descent Into Europa*. The brick wall that was mentioned actually exists in Virginia and the three of us actually walked down it, and we knew we just had to put that in the book somewhere. The only question was where, and I found a home for it! The old building mentioned in that chapter exists too, as does the hole and the rickety ladder and the mud leading out to the stream (in fact, the illustration for that scene was based on a photograph we took, which is available on the Starman website). How did we know that you could see the stream from the bottom of that pit? Let's just say we did a bit of in-depth research...

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2001 11:45 PM*

Dear David and Jon,

I like the new sketch...David's suggestion of legs for the seat is right on target.

About the giant fish...I am not sure if "engineered" means genetically modified or if it means mechanical. (The short of it is that really large ORGANIC fish are going to have to eat HUGE amounts of food...not a likely thing to have in Europa.) Perhaps this would be a good point at which to introduce a new concept.....one in which the fish are indeed put together from organically grown sheets of tissue or something like that...not genetics or cybernetics....something new and maybe a little bit disgusting. The fuel source for these "biofabricated" fish could be some artificial form of ATP or something. Just thinking out loud. Back to studying!

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2001 12:41 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

The giant fish are becoming problematic. Do they actually have to be so large? Suppose they are only 100 yards long? That's still enormous, able to threaten enemy ships and certainly threaten the Underbird, can still have the same configuration Jon suggested—nuclear powered fish—and maybe could live off of the microbes. I've intentionally described the microbes as incredibly plentiful and nutritional, and hinted at whales on Earth that eat plankton (am I right on this?). I anticipate finding huge areas like "kelp beds" that could sustain these things as well as be a home base for the microbes. I don't think we want to get too close to engineering life here, or suggest cloning or manipulation of existing species or anything like that. It becomes a moral issue after a while.

Are we zeroing in on a target here? We need to come to a common vision here before I get too much farther into the writing.

Two of the reading group will be hearing chapters 11 and 12 tomorrow night, and their reaction will be helpful.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2001 6:47 AM*

Dear David and Jon,

If Europa has lots of microbes, then yes, the Giant Fish could live off them just like some whales do on Earth. The problem here is that as length doubles, mass cubes. A fish-shaped creature thousands of feet long would have to eat a LOT of stuff. A move toward the more realistic side would be to have the things be as wide as a whale, but really long....kind of like a giant eel. But I am happy with whatever fits well into the story.

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2001 9:23 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *If Europa has lots of microbes, then yes, the Giant Fish*  
> *could live off them just like some whales do on Earth.*

In a recent edition of the national geographic, there are a number of photos of fish. One is a long, eel-like number that I had in mind as I wrote. It's not giant, but could be a model for our giants.

How about if we have a long, eel-like fish, about 100 yards long, nuclear-powered, that feeds off the microbes? The microbes can be plants which have been genetically-altered by the benefactors, and the mechanics in the fish can be described as similar to a pace-maker that aids life rather than exploits it—so we avoid the moral issue of twisting the natural fish-life of Europa? The octopi can be the symbiotic support system as Jon described.

Are we there yet?

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2001 9:34 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I think we're getting there, Jon. I like everything you said, and lean more toward a living organism rather than an artificial one. For one thing, we want the concept to be discoverable by the Starmen without bogging the story down in too much explanation. In my opinion, we can go with your first scenario.<sup>107</sup>

If we're close to a solution, only one big question remains: if these fish were the guardians of the base, why did the Starmen make it inside? Wouldn't the fish have actually destroyed them?

Possible solutions: (1) the fish were programmed only to attack Xenobots, not all non-Martian ships. (2) The Martians were waiting for people from Earth to develop space travel and programmed the fish to allow earthlings, with human DNA, through the net. (3) The UB<sup>108</sup> was way too small to register on the fish's sensors until it was through the level of the microbes. (4) Some other smart thing one of you guys comes up with.

Regardless of how we answer this situation, how do the Starmen avoid the fish when they return to the surface?

Over to you, Jon. I think it's moving into a workable and plausible position.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2001 5:32 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Jon made a very good case for keeping the fish large.....his reference to Herbert's DUNE was correct...few questioned the sandworms (actually, I never was able to "overlook" the dietary requirement thing...but then I am neurotic!)

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<sup>107</sup> I only have very vague ideas about what it was I suggested. I wish I could comment more here but I have simply forgotten my end of this discussion...

<sup>108</sup> Underbird

The "spice" thing bothered me a bit and the Spacer Guild with their "psychic" space bending does put the Dune series into the fantasy category today. (I think that the psychic stuff was a bit more scientifically credible back in the 60s)

Anyway, Jon has convinced me that we can get away with these very large fish in a nutrient limited ocean. If challenged, we can point right to DUNE and state that our fish are no more than "wet" sandworms. I kind of like the boldness of the concept.

And as for the nuclear powered aspect.....Jon did a great job of bringing in the Andromeda Strain reference.(Written while Chrichton was still in med school....he needed the money). The image of these GIANT things certainly is awe-inspiring!

So, I am OK with Giant Fish Stories.

*Mike*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 01, 2001 8:21 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Great! We've got our solution, then, to all the questions. Very plausible, fits into our overall scenario of the Martians, etc.

The reading group enjoyed the two chapters and had no problem with the giant fish—I was surprised. I caught a number of typographical errors and a few inconsistencies, which are all easy to fix.

Jonathan Parfitt noted that in Kevins' sketch, Zip (presumably the pilot) should have red hair!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2001 9:54 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

It suddenly occurred to me that we have not indicated anywhere that when the Underbird descended to Lake Vostok, it didn't do any harm to the environment. How can we

show that? One of our readers suggested something like "organic teflon"—some kind of coating that really kept the UB from coming into contact with the water. What can we do about this? Do we want to?

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2001 11:57 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Mary Doman sends me about a half dozen of these articles each week. Some of them are so fitting for our writing that it is scary. This one especially needs to be shared.<sup>109</sup>

Unfortunately it points out a flaw in DIE—one I had actually wondered about—but I don't think it's worth worrying about. Do you agree? Basically it says that the surface of Europa is all water and that the upper layer of ice slides around the surface. That means that a key point in our plot—that the thin portion of the ice is over the Benefactors' base—won't work. It's been a few thousand years since the Benefactors were there, so the ice would certainly have shifted far off the site. I suppose we could make a few changes and make the story fit the facts better, but is it worth the effort?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 06, 2001 12:24 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Excellent article, David. Perhaps we can just have the underwater base located at the equator, where the ice tends to get thin from the increased heat in that area. To increase the plausibility factor, we can have the Starmen look for the thinnest part within reasonable vicinity to the underwater base.

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<sup>109</sup> An attachment



I imagine that the drift takes years to get significant. David, you think like a good investigative scientist.

*Mike*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 06, 2001 12:32 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Interesting point about not polluting Lake Vostok. I don't think that we have much to worry about if we have the UB run off of electrochemical actuators or nuclear bionics...no chemical exhaust...maybe just a little bit of heat. The surface can be synthetic rubberlike compound and I doubt there would be much leaching of chemicals. I guess a flexible teflon is possible...but I doubt we need bother.

Those guys that explore the exotic caves have to basically swim naked to avoid polluting the pristine aquifers they encounter. But Lake Vostok has a HUGE volume.....and the UB will not be as "surface dirty" as a human being OR a human being's clothes.

*Mike*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 06, 2001 7:16 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Okay, everything about the large fish makes sense, is plausible, and I can put all that somehow into the story. We're on! Also about the moving ice cover on Europa. No problem. A little rewriting here and there and we're in. The book is shaping up nicely. Same with Lake Vostok.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 08, 2001 8:14 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Yes, we're really whipping along here. Here is the first draft of chapter 16. As you will see, it raises some plot issues, but rather than tip you off, I'll let you read the chapter, then I'll make comments at the end.

...

So here are the plot issues raised in this chapter. As you know, some of the details in the story don't come out until we're at this level of writing. We had originally said that the rescue ship had to come from Earth or the Moon, and would therefore take a few weeks to arrive. When I got to that point in the writing, I suddenly realized that SE has resources on Ceres, and there is actually a base on Ganymede—another moon of Jupiter. There was even a Starman there for several months, Katherine Mullaney. In an emergency like this, wouldn't Richard draw on these resources? Also, we never answered the question of what the NME attack ship is going to do after it destroyed the igloo (or if we did, I've forgotten it). Further, we hadn't decided what Denn would do after Nolan escaped. So I've suggested a few things in this chapter:

The Iron Maiden should find out, perhaps from a message from Denn, that the SE base is under the ice and hasn't been destroyed after all. The ship returns to finish the job. In the meantime, Dufaire arranges an effective defense. This is where his heroism comes in that leads to his being made a Starman at the end. Finally, three ships from Ganymede arrive and finish off the Iron Maiden. Its crew is captured.

Denn, as I've suggested, now that he knows that Robert has escaped, steals the whole NME satellite. His plan is to send it on a headlong course somewhere, anywhere, and then he and his cronies escape in several large NME ships. Robert and Richard chase the NME satellite and either capture it and restore it to orbit (in which case Robert has NME back again) or Denn blows it up when he and his cronies escape (in which case Robert has to rebuild). Take your pick.

Denn and his ships, in my opinion, should be captured. We don't want another "last page escape" as we had in *Zimbardo's* case at the end of *TRA*. Our fans don't like it too much and, frankly, I think we need to finish Denn off. He's a villain, all right, but doesn't have the staying power of *Zimbardo*. This is his third book as it is.

Finally, I'm suggesting that the octopi look into the mantaship after it was grounded and saw the Starmen. The octopi think that they are Benefactors! Same body type, etc. So they rescue the Starmen and bring them to the city. When they wake up, there is some confusion for a time. The octopi try to communicate with the Starmen in the language of the Benefactors, using a machine the Benefactors made for that purpose. When it doesn't work, the Starmen talk among themselves, and the machine picks up some of the language and translates it for the octopi. The octopi then realize they've made a mistake. The machine, on its own, requests that the Starmen continue to talk so it can pick up their language. It then translates the exchanges between the octopi and the Earthmen. The story goes on from there as we have planned.

What do you think??

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 08, 2001 9:04 PM*

- > Chapter 16 is great.....I really liked the name*
- > "IRON MAIDEN" ....great for a spaceship!*

Thanks. I thought of it way back when TRA was coming into being, and saved it for just such an occasion.

- > The description of a fanlike object projecting from one*
- > end of the "barrel-like device" might need a little*
- > clarification...is it a fan like a rotary or a fan*
- > like a hand-fan.....some modern readers might have*
- > a bit of trouble with this....or perhaps I am being picky!*

After I sent this chapter to you guys, I noted the confusing terminology and changed the word "fan" to "propeller."

*David*

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2001 7:39 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *Wow! We seem to be in overdrive. I wasn't expecting another chapter this soon, but it's really great! April and I have really been on the edge of our seats, waiting to see what happens next.*

Well, I'm going to get onto 17 tomorrow, and I thought of a neat scene to close the book! Funny how things that are waiting there all along don't come to the surface until you get to the details. Hint: what is Zip's reaction going to be to everything that happens on Europa? There's really only one logical possibility...

> *I would suggest one clarification: just where is the crew of the Silverfire when the disaster strikes? It sounds like, from the previous chapter, that the entire complex was vaporized, yet the crew seems untouched. It sounds like the explosion was bad, but it didn't reach down as far as where the hole into the ice was, and that was where the crew was at the time.*

Right. The crew of the Iron Maiden assumed that the entire base was under the igloo, not carved into the ice underneath the igloo. The unsmiling captain thought he'd destroyed the entire base, so now he's gone back to his original site to begin to find a way into the ocean. In reality, as we know, he only blew away the surface. The SE crew were on the third or deepest level, where the living and dining quarters had been set up. The slamming down of the igloo shook them up badly but didn't do irreparable harm. Sound okay, or do I need to make it more specific?

Another suggestion: in the previous text I wrote that Yancy had a B grade in academics. I'd rather make that a B grade in citizenship or character or whatever that category was. The problem becomes that he clutched during a class project and failed to support his crew at a dangerous time, so the authorities didn't know how dependable he would be in a crisis. That's the only blot on his record. This way his act of courage on Europa (and I've got a neat idea about that) will cancel that out—at least that will be the Starmen's rationale. It's a rough parallel to Dig Allen and Jim and Ken becoming Space Explorers at the end of Forgotten Star.

> *If it took a week to get from Earth to Mars, it is surely going to take a lot longer than that to get from Ceres to Jupiter. I would say that it would*

- > *take at least two weeks — possibly more like 3 would be a more reasonable*
- > *number given 22nd century technology. Perhaps a better way to rescue them*
- > *would be to send a ship from Ganymede over to Europa, have them pick up the*
- > *men, and then carry them back to Ganymede. A ship leaves Ceres at the same*
- > *time, and it goes to Ganymede to pick up the men there.*

Sounds good.

- > *I am a big fan of explosions, so I would like to see the NME space station*
- > *blown to pieces.<sup>110</sup> ... Denn knows that if he wants to escape from the space*
- > *station while being unseen, he has to rig a diversion.*

How about this? Rather than an explosion, suppose Denn sets the control jets on the satellite, which keep it rotating and in balance, on full? The wheel begins to spin faster and faster, and then begins to wobble. The SE people with Robert watch the thing go through its pervulsions while they race to get to it to slow it down, but they fail. They see pieces fly off, which makes it even more out of balance, and then it whirls itself into space junk. It's kind of slow, visible explosion. It can be a kind of second test for Robert: he doesn't just lose it all at once in a bang, he sees it gradually destroy itself. Of course, he passes the test, and determines to rebuild.

- > *Sounds like a good idea! The only part I am not sure about is the*
- > *translating machine. How on earth could it know the Starmen's language?*

I'm figuring that the five-mile diameter hollow, half filled with water and half with air, is where the Benefactors and octopi lived symbiotically. The octopi live in the water, the Benefactors in the air. The translator machines were invented by the Benefactors so the two races could communicate, and the languages programmed into the machines are those two languages. However, the machine can "download" new information and add other languages. By overhearing the Starmen talk, it can decipher the basics of English and then add that to its translation abilities—the more it hears, the better it can translate. This had the added benefit of providing a translation between ancient Martian and English.

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<sup>110</sup> This was not a hard question at all for me to answer! Which is more exciting: keeping the station in one piece or having it disintegrate? To phrase it differently, why do without an explosion when you can use an explosion? (Fortunately, David was always there to provide a semblance of sanity.) You can trace nearly every explosion in the Starman books back to me. I'm still a fan of explosions, but I'm starting to move away from that into suspense: *Doomsday Horizon* is a good example. It may not have the nuclear weapons of *The Lost Race of Mars* but it sure isn't lacking because of that!

> *What if Mark realizes that the octopi are trying to talk to him in the Benefactors language, so he talks to the octopi in TITANIAN!! The Benefactors knew Titanian and programmed the machine to understand it. The conversation, then, is not octopi-English but octopi-Titanian. That is a much more reasonable assumption than assuming that the machine could understand English. (The good thing is that, in this book, we have already shown that that technology exists in the 22nd century: remember the scene when they talk English to the Starman who only knows Portuguese and the computer then translates it? Perhaps we could reference that scene at this part so we won't lose our readers.)*

This is a brilliant idea. I could go either way. Let me know which you prefer! Fortunately we've set the stage by having Mark know a little Titanian. We could even link Kristina Bethany, who is fluent in Titanian. That can't happen right away since the Starmen can't communicate with anyone while they're inside the mountain, but it could be a future possibility.

> *Another thing. A big plot point in the book is that the octopi are first highly suspicious of the Starmen, and only realize they are friends when the robots begin a vicious attack and the Starmen work to fight off the robots and protect Europa. That is when the octopi believe them. This is why, in the original outline, I did not have the Starmen meet the octopi until after they had battled the robot ships to protect the fish — that way when they met they had already 'established their credentials'. Somehow, the Starmen are going to have to convince the octopi that they are friends and want to help them. It shouldn't be too hard, I think.*

Right—however, now that the Starmen are inside the "lost city," the robots will have a hard time finding them. Suppose the mantaship is put in "dry dock" in the "lost city," and that that disconnects the locator chip, which can radiate only through water. Either that or the lost city is suddenly going to be invaded by robots and the fight will take place there. In such a case, the UB is a sitting duck and would easily be blown up, unless the have the octopi or great fish or both do most of the defending. That would make it difficult to transfer the fight, or some of it, to the underice setting we had at first envisioned. What do you think?

*David*

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2001 11:02 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *I would rather stick with Martian-Titanian — that shouldn't*
- > *give anyone any doubts as to the plausibility of the technology.*

Sounds good. A very nice tie-in with the previous books, too.

- > *Suppose the octopi tell the Starmen that the*
- > *robots are coming and are being very destructive, and the Starmen then go*
- > *out and battle them in the water (as per the script) and ultimately save the*
- > *day. Perhaps for some reason the robots pose a real threat, and when the*
- > *octopi see that the Starmen side with them instead of with the robots and*
- > *risk their lives to go out and fight them, they are convinced and "spill the*
- > *beans". Does that sound reasonable?*

Sure. I'll see if I can finish the book this week. Chapter 17 at least is scheduled for tomorrow.

*David*

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2001 11:31 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

How's this for a bit more detail?

The octopi and Starmen communicate via the translator machines through Titanian-Martian. An inkling of the mining procedure is provided and the octopi prepare to take the Starmen to the mine. The Starmen, therefore, get into the UB and are ready to follow the octopi to the mine.

Suddenly the robots zoom into the area between the microbial layer and the huge mountain. Since no radiation can escape the mountain, the robots had been unable to locate the UB during the 2 or 3 hours since they were launched. Therefore they cruised around

until a faint signal came to them when one or two of them were on a line with the long tunnel. Now they are making a beeline for the tunnel entrance.

The giant fish, still waiting outside, see them and go into defense mode, destroying some of the robots. Others zoom into the entrance—maybe ten or twelve—heading for the mantaship. The giant fish are able to communicate with the octopi by some unexplainable method and warn them. The octopi in turn warn the Starmen. The Starmen immediately recognize the weapons and realize that there must be a locator chip aboard the UB. They determine to fight, believing they have no other choice. Joe muses that the only part of the ship not built by SE was the communicator system, and concludes that the locator chip is probably hidden there. He suddenly realizes that Denn has to be the spy and remembers that all the traitors aboard the Starventure in JTP were chosen by Denn. He sees the pattern of Denn's treachery, but can't stop now to look for the chip. The Starmen, not being aware that Denn's treachery is already known, determine that they MUST reach the surface to warn SE, etc. of Denn's treachery.

Meanwhile, the octopi offer to show the Starmen another exit—one of the other green dots. There is an exciting chase scene, with the UB shooting through the Benefactors' tunnels and the robots following. Octopi accompany the UB, providing guidance. In order to get to the exit, the UB can only go as fast as the octopi can swim since the octopi have to show them the way out. Meanwhile the robots are gaining on them. When the robots pass through the major concentration of the octopi, the octopi are able to blow one or two of the robots to pieces with a sonic weapon similar to the one that immobilized the UB, but eight or nine robots survive.

The UB finally bursts into the open and heads for the surface. Minutes later, the remaining robots shoot through and begin to gain on the UB. The UB makes contact with the base. The base informs them of the attack they have sustained but are overjoyed to know the Starmen are alive, then alarmed that they are being pursued by robots. The Starmen learn that Denn has already been identified.

The UB manages to destroy one or two robots with lasers, but the rest continue the pursuit. The octopi are left far behind, and Zip finally destroys the remaining robots by collapsing the ice ceiling on them per the summary. The UB is damaged, however, by robotic attacks and maybe the ice collapse too. Starmen have to abandon ship and are pulled to the surface by hanging onto the cables. Jim Zeavin rigs up a makeshift winch since the actual crane was destroyed by the Iron Maiden. At last Starmen and Silverfire crew are reunited.



If you like it, let me know asap so I can start writing!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2001 12:05 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Have you guys noticed the irony of "mollusk vs. mollusk" here in the conflict of octopi against Xenobots?<sup>111</sup>

I recommend changing the term "locator chip" to "locator unit/device/transponder/box/beacon....whatever.....a chip is only ONE required component of such a system.

Jon mentioned that he had difficulty in imagining an automatic language learning translator<sup>112</sup>...he said that the programming would be a nightmare....well ,he is right.....given the present state of computers.....I suggest strongly that in the near future this will not be a problem....computers are on the verge of being able to self program (at least as I understand it, I DO concede to Jon's expertise here). Tasks such as developing a baseline database on an alien language are right up the alley of a computer device. I say go with the translator.

*Mike*

*DATE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2001 10:44 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

Okay, men, we've got our ending. I'm glad you like the refinement. I thought, Jon, about how the Starmen could fight the robots at risk to themselves thus gaining the octopi's

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<sup>111</sup> I certainly had not! I see it now, but I might never have noticed it if it hadn't been for Mike. It was certainly not intentional!

<sup>112</sup> I have seen a number of sci-fi shows in which the heroes can understand a completely alien language thanks to a little gizmo that can translate it into perfect English instantaneously, and I have always objected. How on earth could a translator take a ten-second alien audio stream and attach a meaning to it? It's just not possible: you can't do that. If you know both languages you can definitely make a translator (which is what we use in the Starman Series), but don't expect me to believe that it can instantly understand something it never encountered before, especially with only a ten-second sample. How does it know they're not talking meaningless gibberish?

trust so that the octopi would "spill the beans," but it seems as if once the robots are on the scene it's a desperate fight to the finish, and the finish can't come before the ice ceiling collapses. At that point the UB has left the octopi far behind.

Then, of course, they can't go back down because the UB is unusable. The octopi will be left wondering who won the battle. Maybe we ought to have the octopi show up at the point the Starmen are about to get pulled up the shaft. That way the octopi will know who won and the Starmen will have a chance to say "goodbye." I'll throw that touching scene in too.<sup>113</sup>

And I'll replace "locator chip" with one of Mike's suggestions. Thanks, Mike!

Also, I kind of suspect too that a computer, especially one built by the Benefactors, will be able to self-program for language learning, but I think that Jon's idea of going through Titanian works well because 1) that can be an indication to the octopi that the Starmen are genuine, 2) it gives Mark a bit more prominence, 3) it ties into earlier books, 4) it doesn't look like a "science wins all" kind of scenario, and 5) it means we can re-introduce Kristina Bethany, fluent in Titanian, at some point. Sound okay, Mike?

Chapter 17 this evening.

Blessings!!

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2001 9:46 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *One question: how did Denn*
- > *know that the attack probably didn't destroy the base? It's obvious that he*
- > *should know that, but how did he find out?*

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<sup>113</sup> As the story unfolded, this scene came to occur on Christmas Day. David took advantage of that to write the scene on pages 218-219.

I rewrote the initial part of the conversation between Denn and Nolan, as follows:

"What?" exclaimed Denn with mock surprise. "You don't want it? Of course you do! And I've got it for you!"

"No!" Nolan tried to shout, but his voice was weak. "Tell them not to do it! Disable the robots! Stop them! Call Richard Starlight! Warn them, warn the Starmen!"

Denn laughed. "No, Robert. It's too late for that."

"It's not too late! You may not have destroyed the base-the Iron Maiden only destroyed the portion on the surface! The rest of the base was under the ice! There's still a chance!"

Denn's lips tightened and his forehead creased. "I'll have to radio the Maiden and tell them to go finish the job."

"No! I order you!" cried Nolan, standing up. "I'm in charge here! I order you to stop them!"

As later chapters are written I have gone back to previous chapters and added or changed parts so that the texts are harmonious. There are probably still a few glitches, but a final read-through should catch most of them.

I'm glad you liked the chapter. Many blessings on your exams today Jon!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 2:07 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

Very cool web sites, Mike! They certainly fit right in with what we're doing. In fact, I remember reading an article in our local paper about the Navy's building ships on the principle of fish, and I used that idea in designing the UB. It may have been an idea you mentioned in the first place.

The reading group is confirmed for December 22. On that day, our readers will hear the end of DIE.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 8:45 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

The problem of the "spaces" between the ice and liquid water on Europa did not escape me.....Kevin also noticed it, which tells me that we must address this one. At one point I thought we had decided that these spaces would be filled with some sort of gas at a reasonable pressure (probably several atmospheres pressure.) The gas could be any of the basics (CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, A, O<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, NH<sub>4</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>) or any mixture thereof. I would recommend that we find a way to make at least some of them breathable for the Star-men/others. Nature does indeed abhor a vacuum.....the ice is likely not have the structural strength to maintain one for long....and the water itself will evaporate off into the space (up to some pressure).

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 10:51 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Just time for a quick response before heading out the door.

Regarding a return to Europa—Yes, we left some loose ends.<sup>114</sup> Do you think we could do what is needed in a short story? I'm thinking that after we finish DIE, we could move right into I\*S#3. That way the readers could get DIE and I\*S#3 at about the same time—the sequel could be issued simultaneously! I know we planned to put in a short story about the discovery of the Titanians, but that can wait until #4. Maybe Kristina Bethany can come to Europa as translator, or even be reassigned there when SE establishes a base. It could be a short story about Zip and Bethany in the return to Europa to

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<sup>114</sup> After taking all that time to get to Europa the Star-men really didn't get to do very much while they were there! They weren't able to explore the base very much (the original manuscript didn't even have them getting out and seeing the base!) or take the time to see what there was to be seen. We thought that it might be wise to write a short story to give the Star-men some more time to accomplish on Europa what they set out to do.

establish the SE contact. Seems a natural—they certainly need someone fluent in Titanian on site. Or maybe a Titanian!!

My theory that the space between the surface of the water and the ice ceiling in Europa was sheer guesswork. If it doesn't work in actuality, then I'll need to know what is really there. I'm afraid the science is beyond me, so someone else will have to tell me what to write.

More thorough responses later.

DIE 18 tomorrow.

Blessings!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 7:35 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I suddenly realized that the chapter we had called "Stairway to Danger" no longer included the stairway! So I had the Benefactors' language a "soft, sibilant tongue..." and retitled the chapter "The Whispering Box Mystery." I'm glad you like the idea, Jon, of a short story in I\*S#3 as a sequel to DIE. Maybe the short story could be called "Stairway to Danger."

Also, did you notice that in the exchange of the Titanian language I put in a form of the word "varlicept"? Our word in Assault On Mars for the Titanian people in their own language?

Putting in an airlock for the shaft into the European ocean is fine with me. Shall the have the bad guys do the same when they drop their robots? I'd suggest that they just blow the hole and find out what water does. It'll make SE look better.

Regarding drilling with superheated water and turning it into a laser, that's fine too, but remember that in Antarctica we had them use superheated water based on reality. I

guess that Europa has a little different weather system from Antarctica, though. <yes, it's a subtle joke>

- > *It looks like it could be a while before we get the revised cover from*
- > *Kevin. Any objections to going ahead and posting the passage?*

How about posting it with the original artwork you did, which is already on the web site—the blue, domed city we later changed to become Aquapolis? Call it a first draft upon which the cover artwork will be based. Then go with it!

- > *[Mike] The problem of the "spaces" between the ice and liquid water on*
- > *Europa did not escape me.....Kevin also noticed it, which tells me that we*
- > *must address this one. At one point I thought we had decided that these*
- > *spaces would be filled with some sort of gas at a reasonable pressure (*
- > *probably several atmospheres pressure.) The gas could be any of the basics*
- > *( CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>,A,O<sub>2</sub>,H<sub>2</sub>,NH<sub>4</sub>,C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>) or any mixture thereof. I would recommend that*
- > *we find a way to make at least some of them breathable for the*
- > *Starmen/others. Nature does indeed abhor a vacuum.....the ice is likely not*
- > *have the structural strength to maintain one for long....and the water*
- > *itself will evaporate off into the space(up to some pressure).*

Did I send you guys the space.com article on the shifting ice of the European surface? It also indicated that there were ice continents that subducted, and the occasional open ocean that quickly froze. Here is what I'm hearing from everybody:

- 1) Make an airlock for the shaft the Starmen use
- 2) Have the NME people NOT make an airlock, and the water explode when their drill first breaks through. They have to drop their robots down the shaft with lasers blasting at the end of the drop so that they blast through the last barrier fresh each time.
- 3) There will be some sort of gas in the space between the surface of the ocean and the ice ceiling—I'm not sure what kind of gas right now, so somebody please pick one. Mike gave us some possibilities above. In the ocean we have fresh water and some microbial life and some plant life (not yet mentioned in the story); all of this would produce some kind of gas as a by-product. What's reasonable?
- 4) Some gas will be flammable (methane?) which Zip uses the blow in the ice ceiling on the pursuing robots.

> *What do you think? I'm sure that we can come up with something exciting for  
> the next segment!*

I like your outline of the next Starman segment, Jon.<sup>115</sup> Does it depend on the fish in Europa being advanced beings—since you're depending on their large brains?<sup>116</sup> In DIE as it stands, I've described them as being "high animals"—maybe like dogs or something. If they need to be "beings with souls," then that'll take some rethinking and re-writing. And are you implying that the larger the brain the faster and better it works? There's some truth there, but not completely. Think of electronic computers. What once filled a room can now be put into the palm of your hand. Of course, we don't need to put details in now, but we do need to set the stage appropriately with what is about to appear in print in DIE.

I like Kevin's sketch. He does very well with human figures, and that's just about how I pictured their suits. I'm impressed with his ability to render humans. I think the gloves need to be a bit smaller and thinner, so that they can pick small things up. I like the sketch he did of a Starman piloting the UB, too.

> *I was eating supper this evening when something hit me. The octopi know  
> exactly how long it has been since the Martians left and they measure time  
> on the basis of how long it takes Jupiter to rotate around the sun!!  
> Think about it for a minute! The Octopi live at the bottom of a pitch-black  
> ocean on a moon. How on earth would they know anything about Jupiter or the  
> stars or the sun or anything? ...*

Good point! Excellent observation. Maybe it would better to say that the Benefactors disappeared many, many lifetimes of their people ago.

One glitch: I'll bet the Europeans know that the Benefactors come from the fourth planet. We have to make sure that that is never voiced. (This follows up on your exchanged on the RB message board, Jon, about the fact that the author can write whatever he wants

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<sup>115</sup> The funny thing is that we ended up not using it! I had planned an entire segment (complete with book summaries) focused on the Asteroid Belt, with titles like *The Fog of Doom*, *The Riddle of the Stone Men*, *The Lost Mine of the Lucians*, and *The Stones of Juno*. It was going to be good, but we ended up taking the series in a different direction (we wanted to finish off the series with 10 books) and so all of this was shelved. A pity!

<sup>116</sup> This was an exciting potential plot point that we never did anything with. I thought that mile-long fish might have huge brains, and huge brains could offer fantastic computing power, and that perhaps that could be useful. Nothing came of it, but it was an interesting idea.

within the parameters of his own world.) We don't want a reader to say, "Hey! If Zip is so eager to find out where the Benefactors come from, why doesn't he just ask the Europeans?" A small point maybe best ignored.

More later.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 7:51 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

WOW! What a very expansive plot imagination you have, Jon!

About the "return to Europa'.....I agree.....the Starmen did not stay long enough this adventure .....and Europa is turning out to be such an interesting place. Jon asked for title suggestions for the second European book.....I tried hard to come up with a good one....but I cannot beat RETURN TO EUROPA for alliterative and meter qualities (it's perfect). If I think of one, I will suggest it.

About the tracking of the Xenobots by their community radio signals.....it would work, but we must remember the time lag for great distances. (not all Xenos will be "co-spontaneous.")

About the Giant whale brain used as a computer.....very nice touch...very retro...we must emphasize that it is WITH their cooperation!

About Xenos using Uranus as a secret base<sup>117</sup> .....again very retro.....heavy gravity with crushing atmosphere.....high winds. Makes me crazy just trying to picture it....but it is good sci-fi. (If not HARD sci-fi)

I assume here that the reason for the return to Europa will involve the use of the large whale brain(s). Yes, I can see a lot of neat action...perhaps the UB battling some cyber-sub...tailflapping cyber-sub! Perhaps there is a second lost city.....perhaps this one is imbedded in the ice or something. (An atmo-bubble in the ice.).

*Mike*

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<sup>117</sup> A plot point in the now-abandoned "second segment" of the Starman Series. We were going to have a great adventure centered almost entirely around Uranus. It would have been great...



*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 7:51 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

I also like Return to Europa. It's really better than Stairway to Danger, even if we put the "return" into short story format. That certainly doesn't keep us from returning to Europa again if we want it for another full-length book. How about if we just write a short story called "Return to Europa" for I\*S#3?

Mike's right; if we use the giant fishes' brains, it must be with their cooperation. Could this be done even if they are merely "high animals"?

Mike, you also have a neat imagination! Great story layout from Jon, great spicy ideas from you. Tail-flapping cyber-subs, a base hidden in the ice in an atmo-bubble, etc. Yes, we can do a lot with Europa. And a fight on Uranus can make for a terrific book. Reminds me a little bit of a "Doc" Smith story in which some drug is taken from some planet with unbelievable winds, and the harvesters have to come down during the "lull" that only lasts a few minutes—in which the winds die down to hurricane force.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 8:07 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Excellent observation, Jon. The octopi would indeed have to measure time differently. The first possible solution that occurred to me are the recently mentioned surface ice movements (they are linked to polar cold and equatorial warmth....the pole ice builds up thick.....then they "spin" out to the equator due to centrifugal force) I am not sure, but I imagine that this is both a "regular" and noticeable process. The octopi might observe this as the cracks in the ice moving overhead with predictable cycles.

*Mike*

PS Alternatively.....perhaps the hydrothermal vent output could wax and wane with the distance from Jupiter and the Sun.

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 9:41 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Great cover from Kevin.....what is that craft on the left hand side? I really like the look of the scene, but I want to see the UB on the front side somewhere.

Another thought on the octopi.....might be interesting to have them have NO sense of time.....

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 9:52 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Yes, methane would be a possible gas.....but in order for Zip to use it as an explosive...he would need Oxygen as well. I prefer the idea of having different gases in different pockets. (Example...the pocket over a vent might be Methane or CO<sub>2</sub>...the pocket over a bacteria zone might be Oxygen.)

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001 9:56 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> Great cover from Kevin.....what is that craft on the left  
> hand side? I really like the look of the scene, but I want  
> to see the UB on the front side somewhere.

It's the Molly—the shuttlecraft the Starman take from Florida to Aquapolis. The cover illustrates the scene at the end of Chapter 4—the approach to the undersea city. At that point, the Starmen haven't seen the UB yet. I agree that we need a really good representation of the UB, and hope we can get it for the frontispiece or an internal.

- > *Another thought on the octopi.....might be interesting*
- > *to have them have NO sense of time.....*

I like it. Mark could ask them how long it has been since the Benefactors left the city, and the answer could be unclear.

- > *Yes, methane would be a possible gas.....but in order*
- > *for Zip to use it as an explosive...he would need Oxygen*
- > *as well. I prefer the idea of having different gases in*
- > *different pockets. ( example...the pocket over a vent*
- > *might be Methane or CO<sub>2</sub>...the pocket over a bacteria*
- > *zone might be Oxygen)*

What would be the best way for Zip to get the ice ceiling to collapse when he wants it to? Combustable gas? In the UB, Zip will be able to create a moderate EMP and he has laser capabilities, as well as the ability to create a huge electric charge all over the ship. Hey, can he do that if the ship is covered with "flexible teflon"—the plan we came up with a few days ago to preserve Vostok and the European sea from contamination?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001 2:58 PM*

On to chapter 18. Putting the airlock in the shaft the Starmen use is obviously necessary, but it does complicate the story. It can even be a blessing, however. For example, what happens to the cables holding the UB after they build the barrier? I've got some ideas and after I write 18 I'll work on our revisions and send you the changed text for comments.

More later!

*David*

DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001 3:23 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

Very nice exchanges on what happens to water in sudden exposure to outer space. A lot of confusion, though, and it can easily become so scientific that the story line gets lost. So here's what I suggest: the NME people are scientists, not pirates. They probably anticipate the same stuff that SE does. They have a much narrower shaft to cut, so they get their drill down to within twenty feet or so of the bottom. Then they deploy their robots in a packet of twenty, stacked up like sausages. At the tail end is an instrument that creates an airtight barrier. At the right place, they activate it. Then they reactivate the drill to finish off the last twenty feet. It crashes through and drops irretrievably to the bottom, miles down. Then the robots are released.

Sound okay? That way we don't have to guess what happens to the ocean when it hits the vacuum. We might be able to guess that the reaction would be somewhat serene, since it appears that the surface of the ocean occasionally appears on the surface of the planet when the ice continents shift around. Then the surface just freezes to make more ice.

> > *there will be some sort of gas in the space between the surface of the*  
> > *ocean and the ice ceiling—I'm not sure what kind of gas right now, so*  
> > *somebody please pick one. Mike gave us some possibilities above. In the*  
> > *ocean we have fresh water and some microbial life and some plant life (not*  
> > *yet mentioned in the story); all of this would produce some kind of gas as*  
> > *a by-product. What's reasonable?*  
>  
> *Sounds good! What about hydrogen? Water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen;*  
> *it may be possible that some microbe is chemically taking apart water to*  
> *absorb the oxygen and release the hydrogen. Or it could just be oxygen —*  
> *that would be cool too! Methane might work — it could have been released*  
> *from the ocean floor and bubbled its way to the top. Just pick a gas and run*  
> *with it: it's not like anyone actually knows! I bet they won't know that for*  
> *a hundred years. No one will mind.*

Sounds good. Mike has suggested different gases in different places. Methane over a hot vent, oxygen over a field of plants. That works. If they hit a methane pocket, could

the UB shoot out an oxygen tank like a torpedo, then laser it to cause the methane to blow?

> > *About the "return to Europa".....I agree.....the Starmen did*  
> > *not stay long enough this adventure .....and Europa is turning*  
> > *out to be such an interesting place.*

For the short story, though, there needs to be something more than just a return to Europa and the beginning of communications with the Europeans and the investigation of the mine and the city. There needs to be something thrilling about it. It'll take some thought. We have to keep in mind that this will appear between DIE and LROM, too. We don't want to give anything away, and we don't want to drag out the tension. How about this instead? We keep to the plan of writing about the discovery of the Titanians in I\*S#3, and put Return to Europa into I\*S#4—which can appear after LROM appears. That way the readers will know all about the Benefactors and we can work much more into Return to Europa. Maybe we can have our Titanians and even Jogren or another Martian come to Europa. What a scene! The Martians return after 12,000 years. No Martian has ever seen the magnificent city they built on Europa. No European has ever seen a Martian. And for the first time, the four "ensouled" inhabitants of the Solar System meet: Human, European, Martian, and Titanian.

> *BUT WAIT A MINUTE! This battle can't possibly take place in the gas pocket*  
> *because the Underbird \*can't fly\*. It is strictly a submersible craft.*

I never imagined the battle taking place in the air—always in the ocean. Maybe I missed something in the summary, but I anticipated writing it as a water battle.

On to 18.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001 7:31 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

The battle is in the sea....GOOD!

The drilling can be capped so we don't have to worry about whether the water evaporates or not. The gas that is used in the drilling space/airlock can be air or hyperbaric mixed gases for safety's sake.

The gas found in most ice spaces ought to be CO<sub>2</sub> or Argon. (To make things interesting, we will eventually have to find SOME breathable pockets or spaces...but we can worry about it later.)

All the science stuff was interesting....but no one mentioned the "triple point"....where water can be a gas, liquid and solid all at the same time and space.

Jon mentioned a really dense gas pocket that would allow the UB to fly.....VERY interesting suggestion.....but the point is moot as David had intended to write it as a sea battle. We can save the scenario for a future mission. (I love the challenge of dense gases under pressure.....just where does liquid buoyancy stop and aerobouyancy begin?.....very interesting area to a physicist type!...liquid hydrogen is 14 times lighter than water....there are GASES that come close to that number.....IOW , there are some gases that offer as much buoyancy as a liquid!)

What is that thing on the left had side of Kevin's dj for DIE?

Mike

DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001 10:14 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *The drilling can be capped so we don't have to worry about*
- > *whether the water evaporates or not. The gas that is used*
- > *in the drilling space/airlock can be air or hyperbaric*
- > *mixed gases for safety's sake.*
- >
- > *The gas found in most ice spaces ought to be CO<sub>2</sub> or*
- > *Argon. ( to make things interesting, we will eventually*
- > *have to find SOME breathable pockets or spaces...but we*
- > *can worry about it later.)*

As you will see when you read chapter 18, I didn't need to mention any kind of gas at all. It occurred to me that Joe couldn't tell whether there was gas in the pocket or not. All he could see was the pocket. He's desperately speeding and doesn't have time to figure out whether there is gas or not in there, and gas isn't visible usually anyway, right?

Even if it is, the sonarvision the Starmen use on the UB can't analyze it or give it true color. So I just had Joe note the pocket. I actually wrote a few paragraphs in which Mark leaps to his computer and tries to analyze the gas and finds out that it's methane from the heat vent and oxygen from the kelp bed, but when I got to the actual battle scene, I just had them use the EMP to blow the ceiling down. Will that work?

...

More later. Lots to do. I probably won't get to the last chapter until Monday, but it should be easy then. Then I have to go back and make all the revisions we've talked about. I've got a list of them but haven't made all the changes yet. Then I can send both of you the entire text for your editorial observations! Whew! Another book almost done.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2001 5:57 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

Mike, I've suggested to Kevin that he produce 3D endpapers for the DIE, with a scene of the UB descending through the ice ceiling and entering the water for the first time. He said he can do that. I believe the scene was your suggestion in the first place a few weeks ago. I've also suggested that he confer with you on the project and that you design it as you want. I think it would also be good to have at least one or two other scenes of the UB in the book, with probably the frontispiece especially. Since you've designed the UB, I think you ought to have complete say over these illustrations.

He's finished the artwork on the cover. It looks VERY nice!

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2001 6:11 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> I just reread through Chapter 18 again and I have to say that it looks very*

> *good! It is a great climax.*

I'm glad you like it.

> *\* Destruction of NME: this was very good! I like the emotional touch to it  
> and the actions of Nolan and Richard. The capture, the disintegration, etc.  
> was all done very well as usual! I too have two comments on this section.  
> First, NME was always intended to be the "enemy" — the anti-Starlight  
> Enterprise.... So, then, perhaps this section:  
> ... a little narrative added along the lines of "but little did  
> Robert know the full consequences of his actions and Denn's treachery and  
> that rebuilding would not be as easy as he thought." — or something like  
> that.*

I wonder if that would be the kind of interlude or "informational transition" that William, for example, rightly objects to. Robert, of course, would not know that there were bad things in the offing for NME. I'd suggest we leave it as it is in DIE and then reopen the issue in LROM after we've sat on it awhile. Is that okay?

> *The second comment was with this line:  
> "The station separated on the side opposite the first fracture and the two  
> parts of the silver wheel spun off in two directions, scattering debris  
> across an ever-widening field in space. They would continue to tumble for  
> uncountable eons, growing steadily farther and farther apart."  
>  
> That isn't quite true....*

How about, "...continue to tumble for many human lifetimes, until they fell into the sun."

> *(Every year NASA spends millions of dollars tracking nuts  
> and bolts and other tiny pieces of metal that orbit the Earth because any  
> one of those pieces could easily cause serious damage.)*

I didn't know that!

> *\* The scene with Yancy was great! I don't have any suggestions here at all.  
> The details and execution are great and it's very well done. I'm sure our  
> female readers will like the introduction of Miss Pletcher!*



She is a real person, with that name, too! I hope she likes it! Matthew H., and Adam Snell are real names too.

I'd really like to get jumping on the rest of the chapter, but I have so much to do to get the house and church ready for Christmas I can hardly pause. Monday will be a quiet day, and I can certainly get the last chapter done then, and probably most of the necessary revisions, too. I expect to send you the chapter in late morning, and the entire revised text by the evening.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2001 4:47 PM*

Dear Jon,

Sarah Pletcher, Adam Snell, and Matthew Herchenroeder are some of the people who have helped bind AOM for us. Putting their names in[to DIE] seems to be a nice tribute. Katie Essington is also a real person—the new wife of Dan Peckham, our model for Zip. Her name used to be Katie Essington Grider. I used her face as the model for Kristina Bethany's face in JTP.

In my solution for the airlock in the European shaft (which you have yet to read), I've brought on a mechanic character named Gray Bennick. Gray is my older son's middle name, and Bennick is my boys' two names: Ben and Nick. Sometimes names are easy to come by, with just a small touch of imagination.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2001 5:18 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Thanks for the good review of DIE 19, Jon. Maybe I'll make Zip's reaction a bit more positive. At first I envisioned him writing a message to Kristina Bethany with tears

streaming down his face, but thought that would be too much of a downer. Besides, I just had the weeping scene with Yancy Dufaire.

I did change Robert Nolan's initial reaction to the disintegration of NME to make it a bit more realistic. He and Zip both see the disintegration of dreams in this book, although in very different ways.

I'll pass on now to the rewrite of several passages that came up in our previous exchanges, then send the entire first draft off to you two. Watch for it later today!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2001 7:06 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Attached is the first complete draft of DIE. I have made all the revisions we talked about so that the text ought to be internally consistent. Now it is over to you two guys to read. I've had my eyes glued onto it for so long that I probably can't see it any more. I hope you will find whatever problems are still there. Should I send a copy to Kevin as well?

For statistical information,

AOM has 47,858 words.

TRA has 58,975 words.

JTP has 51,284 words.

DIE has 48,200 words, pre-editing.

Now back to normal life for a few days.

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2001 8:20 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *\* The Silverfire is landed \*twice\* on Europa in the same chapter. ...*

Wow! I never noticed. It's been fixed now.

> *\* This isn't really a correction but more of a suggestion. A unique heavy  
> atomic element was found on Europa, but the Starmen were never able to get a  
> sample of it (for obvious reasons). What if we inserted a line in the last  
> chapter to the effect that right before they left they took a small robotic  
> probe that had been sent in from Ganymede and used it to get a quick sample  
> of the material before they left for home? This sample could be analyzed  
> over the next few months and could provide the motive for going back to  
> Europa in our short story: SE is intrigued and decides to send the Starmen back.  
> I think that at the very least we should mention this element later on —  
> even if they don't get a sample they should mention that they will have to  
> go back someday soon and find out what it was that the Benefactors wanted so badly.*

Yes, that could be entered into the last chapter without any trouble.

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2001 8:34 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

As I was writing the section about the probe to pick up a sample of the substance the Benefactors were mining, I realized that they couldn't do it! The guardian fish would destroy it! (Maybe that's what happened to the two probes that Earth had sent a dozen or so years earlier.) Can we get around this? In fact, we haven't solved the problem of how the Starmen or anyone ELSE gets back to the Europeans safely. Those guardian fish are still around. Probably they can only return in a mantaship, the only shape both the Europeans and guardian fish recognize so far.

Your thoughts?

*David*

P.S. Reading Group tomorrow afternoon—to finish off DIE.

*DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2001 9:32 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I mailed you, David, the corrected DIE manuscript this morning; it should  
> get there in 2 business days*

I'll watch for it and expect to have time to put in all the revisions on Thursday. Your comments sound fine and I'm sure that, as usual, they will be very helpful. The reading group's suggestions are also brilliant.

Regarding the probes that Katie Essington sent down safely: I suppose the safest thing to do at this point is simply say that they were too small to be noticed by the fish. This is the first "invasion" of Europa in thousands of years, so the fish were caught unready. This is the first time these particular fish have faced such a thing. Like the Martians, they have been guardians of something for generations; the actual individuals alive today have never had to deal with anything concrete. Once the mantaship came down, though, the fish were on the alert for anything. I like the idea of voice-recognition. Maybe Zip should send his probe down to get a sample of the substance the Benefactors mined, and put a voice-message on it asking the octopi to permit it to do its work. Mark should speak a message in Titanian on it that plays over and over. Zip just hopes it'll return okay. The octopi hear the message and clear it with the fish. And so it does come back okay. How's that?

*David*

*DATE: SAT, 22 DEC 2001 16:07:43 -0800*

Dear Jon and Mike,

The reading group just left, after 2 1/2 hours of listening to me read. They absolutely loved the book! They made a lot of very helpful suggestions.

One made an observation when it became clear that NME implied enemy. "En ami" in French means something like "my friend." Might be worth getting an accurate translation and working it into the saga in some way, some time.

Not enough time to respond in detail to your email right now, Jon, other than to say that your suggestions look fine.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2001 10:39 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

The pattern of starting each book with an enemy scene is an excellent one! And I am very happy if we continue it....it is one of the little subtleties that separates STARMAN from others series. It kind of adds an element of "Saturday morning matinee" to things.

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2001 9:44 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *The pattern of starting each book with an enemy scene is an*  
> *excellent one! And I am very happy if we continue it....it*  
> *is one of the little subtleties that separates STARMAN from*

> *others series. It kind of adds an element of "Saturday morning  
> matinee" to things.*

Good description. Let's go for it then. By the way, Mike, the first episode in the Superman animation you sent me is about Japanese saboteurs (1940s, obviously) stowing away on a large bomber, then hijacking it and flying it to Tokyo. When Superman arrives on the scene, they try to crash it in a suicide dive into a big city. Does this sound familiar??

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2001 10:37 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I'm glad you like it, Jon. The biggest change from what you drafted is that I had the Xenos deliver only circuit boards to BD rather than entire robotic attack drones. I figured that Denn had the drones and could just use the improved circuits. More realistic. I also made sure that the ship came through hyperspace, which is what we had such ships do in *The Flight of the Olympia*.

It does raise the question though: why did the Xenos not use hyperspace when they visited Nyx? Will they use hyperdrive all the time? If not, why not? Perhaps they don't know how to send living tissue through hyperspace—only inanimate objects.

I've now made all the changes in the MS that have been suggested by you, Kevin, and the reading group. I'm still waiting for the MS you sent through the mail. When I get that done and the artwork has been received, the book will be finished.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2001 9:10 PM*

Dear Jon,

The MS didn't arrive today, nor did the package from Canada.<sup>118</sup> Soon, I hope.

I understand about the circuit boards, now that you have explained it. It just seems difficult also for Denn to receive a batch of fighter drones and have to load them up on the Iron Maiden. Maybe it would be easier than redesigning the system to match alien circuits. However, keep in mind that the Starmen have to recognize what it is that is chasing them so they know that they have to flee; they need to be at least somewhat familiar with the fighter drone concept. Maybe the Iron Maiden can make a stopover in the Belt and just pick up the drones there—but if that happens, Denn will never see the drones personally. Also in that case, Denn will have to make sure that they are configured on the locator beacon he has already placed aboard the UB. It can get complicated if we think about it too much. What do you think we ought to do? I'll write it any way you like. Changes will be easy.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2001 11:27 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Good thinking Jon. Drones arrive in belt, are sent via human channels to Denn at NME. He loads them onto the Iron Maiden. That's it. The drones don't even have to have a history or legend. Drones, after all, are drones no matter who makes them. They sound like thinking torpedoes when the Europeans describe what happened to the guardian fish—it's an easy conclusion to make: "robotic attack drones drawn by a locator beacon." No doubt Earthpeople have similar drones, but the Xenobot drones are more deadly, etc. Denn knows they're from the Xenobots, but the Starmen can conclude that they are merely Earth-based drones. They won't know how lucky they were, since none of the drones survived.

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<sup>118</sup> Information from Friesens, the publishers of books four and five.

If you're both happy with that scenario, I'll put it in that way.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2001 11:07 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

There have been quite a few e-mails recently.....and I know several from you two included questions that I have left hanging. (I went back and tried to find them.....a little harder than I thought it would be!)

About the plot changes...I am all for them.

About the circuit board vs whole drone question (a very interesting one!).....Jon stated correctly that one cannot realistically expect alien technologies to be readily "insertable" to our own.....HOWEVER.....I hold a slight reservation here.....Let me give you an example.....in the late 30s both Robert Goddard and the German Peenemunde group were secretly and separately working on liquid fueled rockets.....the end results were remarkably similar.....to which General Dornberger responded "there is really only one way to make a rocket!"

I pride Jon in his quest for realism here....I just want to point out that we have already taken the "story convenience" route several times with the series (it sometimes seems to be a HALLMARK of the genre.....my point being that IF we wanted to use the "circuit board only " route, we could certainly get away with it! especially if we could hint that the Xenos had purposely built their boards to work with the "native" technologies. (NME connections and all) I am happy with either scenario.

About the "correspondence book", ..I am OK with all of that.<sup>119</sup>

*Mike*

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<sup>119</sup> The idea of publishing a book that consisted mostly of the letters the Starman Team had exchanged was an idea that we had kicked around for some time. It took us quite some time to make it actually happen.



*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2001 9:15 PM*

I spent an hour and a half editing DIE following up on your notes, Jon. As usual, I'm taking about 98% of your suggestions. I'm about 1/4 of the way through and expect to finish it tomorrow or Monday at the latest.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2001 10:37 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

In the very beginning of chapter 10 of DIE, I had Zip tell Folding Jim to use sonar to probe the interior of the undersea mountain. Jim had already made a topographical map, presumably using radar to penetrate the ice and the water. Zip now wants a map of the interior of the mountain to see if there are any caves. Jon's editorial comments point out that sonar is not correct. What should I use instead?

About halfway through your notes now Jon!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2001 9:17 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Very tough problem here! There are some sub-atomic particles that could cut right through the ice and some others that could mostly cut through the ice. I will have to check, but I think that neutrinos can do a pretty good job. The next problem is that I doubt one could expect the neutrinos to "bounce back" for a RADAR-like "picture". To solve this part we may need the help of a small probe in orbit around Europa and on the back side. Or maybe even a submerged helper probe on the opposite side of the areas needing to be scanned. The idea here is for the sub-atomic particles to be partially reduced in number ....allowing for an "X-ray" type scan.

Great improvements have been made in sonar type technology....but to map large complexes at 7 miles or more would require many earthquake type sound explosions to get a good reading.

We could of course "invent" our own " naturally occurring " particle or wave and just use that for scanning purposes. Perhaps a Supersensitive type receiver could "see" the natural waves coming through Europa and therefore any slight perturbations made by the matter in-between. May I offer the " Harrison's fluxon" as the name of such a particle....."I am talking about the space between us all" (Sgt. Pepper)

*Mike*

*DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2001 5:03 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *[Jon] Could we kind of punt on this and have Zip tell Jim to first "make a  
> topographical map" and then later "make a subsurface map" without specifying  
> how to do it or what radiation to use?*

> *[Mike] We could of course "invent" our own " naturally occurring "  
> particle or wave and just use that for scanning purposes. Perhaps  
> a Supersensitive type receiver could "see" the natural waves coming  
> through Europa and therefore any slight perturbations made by the  
> matter in-between. May I offer the " Harrison's fluxon" as the name  
> of such a particle....."I am talking about the space between us  
> all"( Sgt. Pepper)*

BRILLIANT! I'll do it! I'll combine your ideas so that we just have Zip ask Jim to make a subsurface map, and Jim will respond, "Okay, Zip, I'll use the Harrison's fluxon detector..."

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2001 6:55 PM*

Okay men, I've now finished going through Jon's notes and made all the changes. Text is 50,118 words long. There still may be a little tweaking depending on what you think of the three paragraphs I submitted to you and anything else I might catch as I go through the text myself, but we're essentially done. I had hoped to have it completed by year's end, and I've got a day to spare! Now all I need are the illustrations from Kevin and I can get going on making the authors' copies and getting the package off to Canada<sup>120</sup> for printing.<sup>121</sup> Hooray!

*David*

*DATE: SAT, 9 FEB 2002 22:27:26 EST*

Dear Jon and David,

Did the upside-down ceiling walking crabs make into DIE?

I will try to research the name of the European ocean.....I doubt it has been officially accepted yet....but we sure can use it!

*Mike*

*DATE: SAT, 09 FEB 2002 20:53:44 -0800*

Dear Mike,

> *Did the upside-down ceiling walking crabs make into DIE?*

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<sup>120</sup> To Friesens, the printer we used to print Starman books four and five.

<sup>121</sup> Getting a Starman book printed was never easy. Something always went wrong, and we could always count on encountering unexpected complications: formatting problems, printing problems, communication problems, etc. Instead of putting all the letters related to our printing troubles in this book, I've filed them away in another document that we may one day edit and release. Just getting the books printed is quite a story!

Nope, sorry. They ought to have been included in the penultimate chapter, The Flaming Mountain. The action went so quickly that there wasn't the right "flow" for a discovery like that. Instead I put in the octopi finding the swimming Starmen and surrounding them with light.

The crabs should make it into the short story, Return to Europa!<sup>122</sup>

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2002 7:40 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Say, Jon, wouldn't it be a good idea to repost the notice now about a "mysterious puzzle" or something in DIE—namely the Harry Tanwick VII ploy? And the promise that the first person to point it out gets to be a minor character in LROM?<sup>123</sup>

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 04, 2002 2:25 PM*

Dear Valerie,

> Pg. 130 - I just noticed NME (Nolan Mining Enterprise) is phonetic for  
> Enemy. I think someone else may have mentioned this earlier but it just  
> struck me now.

---

<sup>122</sup> They did.

<sup>123</sup> This was fun! We inserted the Harry Tanwick bit that I mentioned earlier in this book into *Descent Into Europa* and then announced to our readers that whoever found the hidden series-book reference we placed into the book would be placed into *The Lost Race of Mars* as a minor character. We thought it might be difficult to spot, and it was – the Harry Tanwick reference is pretty obscure. Our readers managed to find a lot of other interesting references in the books, but Mark Johnson was the person who found the reference! We were glad that someone found it, and Mark Johnson was placed into the fifth Starman book.

This is true. It was a deliberate item put in there by Mike Dodd several books ago, but only made clear in this volume.

> *Also Pg. 130 - "...the darkness closed in like an invisible enemy." - "The Mystery of the Invisible Enemy" is the title of one of the Ken Holt books.*

Also true! Good work! You will also find the term "galloping horse" on page 210. In *Lost Race of Mars* you will find the term "long shadow" as a tribute to Rick Brant (Caves of Fear). Seems to me I put in another item like that in a previous *Starman* book, but I don't recall which just now.

There are lots of little things like this in the *Starman* series and I do have a list of them all. Maybe they should appear in a future *Inter\*Stellar*.<sup>124</sup>

BUT none of them is the answer to the riddle we put into *DIE*. You're obviously going through *DIE* with a fine-tooth comb, which makes me suspect that you may not be familiar with the story from which our item is taken. It is really quite blatant, but is only recognizable if one is familiar with... well, check out my posting on the *Starman* message board.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 05, 2002 9:48 PM*

> *You're right: the response to DIE is much more positive than I had expected. I saw it as one of the weaker books of the series: an extra book that really didn't belong. I think we all saw it that way. It looks like our readers are enjoying it though!*

Yes, that's unexpected and very welcome.

*David*

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<sup>124</sup> We actually don't have a list of them all, but the letters in the Archives reveal many things like this that aren't included in the Writer's Notes.

DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 09, 2002 1:05 AM

So the puzzle has been solved! Mark Johnson got it! Great. I assume you'll make the announcement, Jon.

David

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2002 9:31 AM

Dear Jon, Mike, and Mark,<sup>125</sup>

- > *Just a question about chapter three of DIE. On pages 35-36 it appears that*
- > *the earth is spinning in the wrong direction— the sun rising in the west*
- > *and setting in the east.*
- >
- > *As Star Ranger enters earth orbit it is middle of night over Indian Ocean*
- > *with day/night line over Atlantic. As Star Ranger makes orbit around earth*
- > *it enters shadow of evening over Siberia (should be morning?) and passes*
- > *over Europe as it greeted day (should be greeted night?) It appears that the*
- > *earth is spinning east to west rather than west to east.*
- > *What should we tell him?*

Whoops, he's right!!!

The Star Ranger circles the globe in a short time. I didn't specify precisely how long it took, but I imagined that it took them about an hour. To the Starmen, then, the rotation of the Earth can be functionally ignored.

I actually got out a map when I wrote the scene but don't have it in front of me now; my intention was to have the Star Ranger touch down in Florida in mid-morning—which is how I wrote the conclusion of that scene. As the Starmen made their approach, it was midnight in India. Therefore evening is mid-Atlantic and morning is somewhere in the

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<sup>125</sup> Mark McSherry. I am still amazed that after all our care in getting tiny scientific details correct we described Earth as rotating the wrong way! It's amazing how something always slips by.

Pacific. When I wrote that Japan is entering evening, it should have been morning, and when I wrote that Europe is greeting the day it ought to have been entering the evening—therefore, for the Starmen to have touched down in mid-morning, I should have made it midnight in Hawaii. If that happens, it can be midday in India, evening in Siberia, and morning in Florida.

I think that's a pretty cool mistake to have made! Congratulations to Mark for finding it!! I'll fix the text for the second edition.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002 8:09 PM*

Dear Mark,<sup>126</sup>

- > I am a little curious about something.*
- > In DIE you mention the high radiation there. Early on*
- > you say that ships have landed but no one gets out*
- > because normal suits can't fend off the radiation.*

This was before active shielding.

- > Then when the Starmen arrive you talk about how the*
- > ships "active shield" protects them but that an igloo*
- > will be built for better protection. The igloo has 50*
- > foot walls etc.*
- >*
- > Yet, the Starmen go out in shuttlecraft without*
- > mention of radiation protection measures AND the*
- > Starmen even get out and walk around while installing*
- > equipment at the various points. Finally the workers*
- > building the igloo would also seem to be at risk.*
- >*
- > I am confused by this seeming contradiction.*

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<sup>126</sup> Mark Johnson

I don't think it was spelled out, but it is assumed that the shuttlecraft are equipped with active shielding like the mothership, and that the effective radius extends beyond the shuttlecraft for a small space to allow for work on the surface. The giant igloo was constructed so that the active shielding wouldn't have to be operating all the time. During construction, the ship's active shielding was in place.

The REAL glitch was in having the crew under Yancy's leadership on the surface as they awaited the second attack from the Iron Maiden! At that point, there was no active shielding working anywhere!

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002 9:01 PM*

- > *But I think even this could be explained away! The radiation that comes*
- > *from Jupiter is particle radiation (or so I understand). If that side of*
- > *Europa was rotated away from Jupiter when the battle took place then the*
- > *fight could happen out of doors with little radiation exposure.*

Fortunately, this is indeed the case in the story. I made it clear (I hope) that the Iron Maiden approached Europa from the Jupiter side of the moon so as to be near-undetectable to our heroes, and that the igloo was on the side facing away from the Planet at the time of the attack. I did not, however, at any time, check the rotation speed of Europa.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002 11:53 PM*

- > *Um, I hate to mention it, but according to this paper:...*
- > *Europa does rotate — once every quarter million years...*

Um, how long did we say Yancy et al would be on Europa? We haven't made another blunder, have we?

*David*



*DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2002 11:43 PM*

Dear Jon,

Leslie Owens pointed out that on page 241 in DIE it reads "Jan" where it should say "Sandra." It reads Sandra everywhere else, so obviously only this one place got missed. My version of the text is correct so yours must be an older version. Attached is the final version, if you need it.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2002 3:46 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

The day after the Charlottesville convention ended, the Owenses and I went to Washington DC to see the sites. We went to Arlington National Cemetery and I visited the burial site of Hal Goodwin and took a photograph of the marker where his ashes are buried.

It suddenly hit me that we have his birth year incorrect in the dedication in DIE. For some reason (I can't remember where now) I had thought he was born in 1918 and that's how DIE reads. In fact he was born in 1914.

I've made the correction in my master file for future editions, but you two may want to make the correction in your files too.

*David*

## Writer's Notes

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WRITING OF *DESCENT INTO EUROPA*

#### Character Names

Coxhead, Ralph Q.	Named for the inventor of the VariTyper, Ralph C. Coxhead (June 1, 1892-February 7, 1951). The “Q” is reminiscent of the character Q in the James Bond stories, who supplied highly-advanced technological items
Blaine, Jonathan	Named for the protagonist in Harold Goodwin’s book, <i>The Feathered Cape</i> , and source of the pseudonym “John Blaine.”
Tanwick, VII, Harry	Named after Harry Tanwick, who lost \$100 in the original text version of volume 19 in the Hardy Boys series, <i>The Disappearing Floor</i> , pages 6 and 218
Crossfield, Scott	Early American astronaut
Krafft, Erica	Based on Krafft Ericke, early American Astronaut
Avery, Stephen	Teenage reader who coined the word “greegles”
Torrez, Cathy	Young Placentia woman murdered in 1994, and much loved in the city
Herchenroeder, Matthew	College student who helped bind the last copies of <i>Assault On Mars</i>
Pletcher, Sarah	Member of my <sup>127</sup> church, who helped bind the last copies of <i>Assault On Mars</i>
Snell, Adam	Member of my church who organized the college students who helped bind the last copies of <i>Assault On Mars</i> ; brother of Micah, the model for Mark Seaton
Bennick, Gray	Combination of my sons’ names, Ben and Nick
Essington, Katie	First and middle names of a member of my church who has helped with the binding; married name is Katie Peckham; husband is Dan, model for Zip Foster
<i>Michael Adams</i>	Named for a pilot of an X-15 who died re-entering from space; first person to die that way

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<sup>127</sup> All the “my’s” in the Writer’s Notes refer to David Baumann

### Special Notes of Interest

Mark's autograph for Jonathan Blaine is the Starman Team's "thank you" to Hal Goodwin; Jonathan Blaine is the main character in his book *The Feathered Cape* and the source of the pseudonym John Blaine

Reference to "invisible enemy" on page \_\_\_\_ is a tribute to Ken Holt; see Ken Holt book 14

### Christian Symbols

1. Robert Nolan is described as a "fallen man" in chapter one.
2. The line "The wind wrapped them in its wings" in chapter 7 is taken from Hosea 4:19.
3. The account of the abyss uses Biblical images to present the boundary of damnation—a bottomless pit, a sun the color of blood.
4. "He swerved neither to right nor left" is reminiscent of Isaiah 30:21.
5. The battle between Nolan and Denn is a loose parallel to David and Goliath.

### Glossary

Aquapolis	Undersea city off the southern coast of Florida, dedicated to research
Avery, Stephen	Asteroid miner who discovered the greegles on Adamant
Bennick, Gray	Mechanical engineer on the <i>Silverfire</i>
Blaine, Jonathan	Six-year-old boy who asks the Starmen for their autographs in Flamingo spaceport
Boone, Emily	Inhabitant of Final Ilien; married to Gabriel
Boone, Gabriel	Inhabitant of Final Ilien; married to Emily
Coxhead, Ralph Q.	Executive Director of Aquapolis
Crossfield, Scott	Scientist in Aquapolis
Dufaure, Yancy	Top space pilot for SE; pilot of <i>Silverfire</i>
Essington, Katie	Celestial biologist aboard the <i>Silverfire</i>
Final Ilien	Oldest settlement of the Wind People
Folding Jim	see <i>Zeavin, James</i>
Herchenroeder, Matthew	Physician aboard the <i>Silverfire</i>
<i>Iron Maiden</i>	The NME space craft that secretly followed the <i>Silverfire</i> to Europa
Kitsualuk, Noah	Eskimo crewman aboard the <i>Silverfire</i>
Krafft, Erica	Scientist in Aquapolis

Kristin	Waitress at “The Everglades” restaurant in Flamingo, Florida
Locomotors	Small, self-contained propellers for underwater travel
<i>Michael Adams</i>	SE space craft from Ganymede
<i>Molly</i>	Shuttlecraft belonging to Aquapolis
Pletcher, Sarah	Navigator aboard the <i>Silverfire</i>
<i>Silverfire</i>	SE spacecraft for Europa mission
Snell, Adam	SE planetary geologist
Sonarvision	Instrument that allows crew on a ship to see their surroundings in the dark
Tanwick VII, Harry	Huge donor to Richard Starlight’s Special Projects Discretionary Account
Torrez, Cathy	Cook aboard the <i>Silverfire</i>
<i>Underbird</i>	Starmen’s name for their mantaship
Veloso, Monica	Space traffic controller in Eagle City
Zeavin, James	Planetary geologist aboard the <i>Silverfire</i> ; nicknamed “Folding Jim”

## **TIMELINE**

Note: The World Calendar is used in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

Day 1 [August 7, 2152]

Zip ruminates in the *Starventure*.

Beowulf Denn meets privately with Robert Nolan.

Day 15 [August 22, 2152]

*Starventure* returns to the Moon.

Day 22 [August 29, 2152]

Starmen meet with Richard Starlight to discuss journey to Europa.

Day 27 [September 4, 2152]

Starmen visit Aquapolis.

Day 34 [September 11, 2152]

Starmen return to the Moon.

Day 40[September 17, 2152]

Joe Taylor's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (not mentioned in story)

Day 62 [October 9, 2152]

Starmen test the *Underbird* in Antarctica.

Day 65 [October 12, 2152]

Zip reads through secret files.

Robert Nolan learns that SE has perfected active shielding.

Day 76 [October 23, 2152]

Oritz Konig contacts Zip about his find on Final Ilien.

Day 78 [October 25, 2152]

Zip turns final preparations for journey over to Yancy Dufaure.

Starmen begin journey to Mars in the *Star Ranger*.

Day 80 [October 27, 2152]

*Silverfire* launches from Moon.

Day 96 [November 12, 2152]

Starmen visit Final Ilien; spend night in Eagle City.

Day 97 [November 13, 2152]

*Silverfire* launches from Eagle City en route to Europa.

Day 102 [November 18, 2152]

Starmen visit Montezuma Vly.

Day 108 [November 24, 2152]

Thanksgiving Day (not mentioned in story).

Day 118 [December 4, 2152]

*Silverfire* enters orbit around Jupiter.

Interceptor ship, the *Iron Maiden*, is launched from NME.

Day 119 [December 5, 2152]

*Silverfire* lands on Europa.

Day 121 [December 7, 2152]

Noah Kitsualuk finishes large igloo.

Day 125 [December 11, 2152]

Noah Kitsualuk finishes Europa base.

Day 128 [December 14, 2152]

Hole through ice cover in completed.

Day 129 [December 15, 2152]

*Underbird* makes first descent into European ocean.

Day 133 [December 19, 2152]

Katie Essington sends the first probe into the ocean.

Day 135 [December 21, 2152]

Katie sends the second probe down.

Day 138 [December 24, 2152]

In the morning, *Underbird* begins second descent; chased by huge fish, enter tunnel' attacked by octopi. In afternoon, *Iron Maiden* reaches Europa, deploys robotic fighters, destroys igloo.

Robert Nolan flees from NME. Denn flees in NME satellite.

Late at night, *Iron Maiden* renews attack on SE base.

Day 139 [December 25, 2152]

Just past midnight, Ganymede ships arrive at SE base.

NME satellite is destroyed; Denn and his cronies are captured.

In morning, Starmen make contact with octopi-Europans; robotic fighters locate UB, begin attack; Starmen flee and almost make it back to base when *Underbird* is disabled; abandon ship and swim to shaft; return to base in afternoon.

Day 142 [December 28, 2152]

The SE crew leaves Europa aboard the *Michael Adams*.

Day 184 [February 8, 2153]

*Michael Adams* lands at Amundsen City.

# **Book Five: The Lost Race of Mars**

*Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past...  
In a desert land he found him, in a barren land and howling waste.*

*The Most High shielded him and cared for him;  
he guarded him as the apple of his eye.*

*Deuteronomy 32:7a, 10*

## Introduction

*The Lost Race of Mars* is the most anticipated book in the series for the Starman Team. When we began work on *Assault on Mars* we realized that the first five books of the series would be centered around finding the Benefactors and discovering what had happened to them. For the first four books, our readers would uncover the mystery along with Zip, Mark and Joe and would learn the history of the war between the Benefactors and the Xenobots – but the final revelation that Ahmanya was Mars would not be revealed until the fifth Starman book was released.

That book, we knew, would reveal the secrets we had so painstakingly laid down. We would tell our readers what the Xenobots had done to Ahmanya. We would at last reveal that the pirate's asteroid was a moon of Mars and played a critical role in a battle ages ago. We would have the Starmen find the bases of the Benefactors on Mars and meet them face-to-face. We would reveal the identity of Jogren at last, and allow our readers to see what had really been going on in *Assault on Mars*. We knew that it was going to be good.

In fact, we were so excited about the book that we wrote several passages from it before the first Starman book was even released. The scene when Zip discovers that Ahmanya was Mars was one of the first passages of the series to be written, and was placed into book five with only a few changes. We could hardly contain our excitement about this book: while working on the four books that came before it we always had an eye on book five.

One would think, then, that the plot for book five would come easy, but it didn't. We knew that we wanted to reveal all of these surprises in book five but we only had a very vague idea about the plot that would accompany all these revelations. I'll save the discussion of the plot for the plot segment of this book, but I will say that it took a good long time to put together an epic plot for this book.

In the end, I think that the book actually turned out better than we had hoped. The story was every bit as good as we had hoped it would be, and the revelations worked out well – as we had hoped, all our revelations caught our readers completely off-guard. On top of it all, Friesens did a magnificent job of printing the book, David did a magnificent job with the internals, and Bill Baumann did an outstanding job with the cover art. *The Lost Race of Mars* is a book that the Starman Team is very proud of – it is our masterpiece.



## Plot Summary

There are few plots in the Starman Series that came easily, but *The Lost Race of Mars* was one of the more difficult ones. We wanted to make this a truly epic book, and on top of that we wanted it to be a book with nonstop excitement – the sort of book that grabs you and doesn’t let go until the end. That was a tall order, but we were very motivated to rise to the occasion.

The original plot summary for this book, which we wrote before we released the first Starman book, is this:

After examining the ancient ruins on the Moon, Starlight has decided to send another expedition to Mars. SE Labs finally remembered that the three Starmen came across a mysterious old man while trekking across the desert in *Assault on Mars*. Could the ancient race still be alive?

The new expedition quickly gets into trouble when it accidentally comes across a vast illegal operation that is engaged in the production of a highly illegal hallucinogen more dangerous and deadly than cocaine. The operators of the syndicate have a huge interest in seeing that the [Starman] Trio never returns to tell their story. The chances of the Trio are slim — or are they? The Trio engages in a race against time to find the lost race of Mars before the Syndicate finds them!

As you can see, this does sort of resemble the plot for *The Lost Race of Mars*, but it leaves a great deal out. Turning those two paragraphs into the plot we ended up with took about two years of work, as I cranked out one summary after another.

After a number of month’s work, I came up with a summary that was 19 chapters long. It was pretty decent and would have made a good book, but as I looked at it I got to thinking: just how long a summary could I write if I really pushed myself? Book five is supposed to be an epic book, I thought: could I write a *really long* plot for it? It sounded like fun to me, so I set back to work. It took some time, but I eventually ended up with a summary that was 33 chapters long, and I found out that I could push it no further. It was a good 33 chapters, though: the length was not just padding but was story, and the book held together well. It would take a lot more polishing and tweaking to get it right, but I had a feeling that it was going to be a good story.

The plot summary that is on the next page is the plot summary that we used to write the fifth Starman book. I do have the original 19-chapter summary, but the only

real difference between it and the one we decided to use is that it's shorter – it doesn't tell a different story. Since this is the case I'm just including the 33-chapter summary.

One other note: the footnotes included in this summary are all part of the original document (yes, every one of them!). The fonts and layout is also exactly identical to the original: I changed nothing. I normally don't footnote my summaries but I wanted David to see where some of the items in the summary were coming from. Unlike other summaries, I put a lot of "Easter eggs" into this story and I didn't want David to miss them!

# The Lost Race of Mars

On the blank page before the actual text are written these words:<sup>128</sup>

*"He who digs a pit shall fall therein,  
and he who rolls a stone  
will see it roll back on him."*<sup>129</sup>

## PART I: The Stone<sup>130</sup>

### CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE

<begin actual text><sup>131</sup>

*On an unlocated room on an unlocated planet<sup>132</sup>, three creatures sat around an ancient stone table in an ancient stone room. The creatures talked in an old tongue, forgotten by all but their race. To Starman Mark Seaton, the creatures and language would have been familiar: he saw two of these creatures and heard them converse months before, in an asteroid commandeered by Lurton Zimbardo. Starman David Foster had christened them the Benefactors when he discovered the way they saved the Titanians, a race of small intelligent creatures which now inhabited Titan.*

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<sup>128</sup> I thought that this verse summed up the book pretty well! The Banjoman's grand plan to destroy Joe ended up destroying him, and Jerry's grand plan to arrest the Starmen ended up getting himself arrested. I just thought it would add character to the book to have that verse on a blank page right before the book starts, to help set the tone of the book. It's got a nice mysterious air to it.

<sup>129</sup> Proverbs 26:27

<sup>130</sup> Due to the length of the book, I've divided it into three parts for the ease of the reader. The first part deals with the Starmen going to Mars and becoming outcasts. The second part deals with them searching for (and at last finding) the Martians, and coming back with weapons that they can use to fight against the Banjoman. The third part wraps everything up. It doesn't matter to me what the headings of the parts are: just use whatever you think best.

<sup>131</sup> These brackets mean that, what follows is meant to represent actual text of the book, and not summary. It doesn't mean it can't be edited or appended to: it just means that I took a crack at writing the scene.

<sup>132</sup> This is a tribute to Isaac Asimov's Foundation series: in the last book of the trilogy, in the last chapter, the first line was "In an unlocated room on an unlocated planet!" It was a terrific, unforgettable chapter, and caught me totally by surprise. I loved the trilogy, as did my father, and I thought a small tribute such as this would be appropriate.

*The Benefactors were deep in a council meeting. The three aliens represented the head of their society and were about to decide on a course of action that would determine the fate of their dying civilization.*

“It worked!” the tallest alien exclaimed. “Your gamble paid off, Saadervo<sup>133</sup>: the Xenobots have been thrown off our track completely.”

The alien addressed as Saadervo nodded. “It was a desperate risk, but the Xenobots were getting too close and we were not yet ready to combat them. We nearly lost everything when the engines on our cruiser gave out and our ship crashed into the desert<sup>134</sup>. As it was, the Maker blessed our efforts with success.”

“Success indeed! We have thrown the Xenobots off completely, have we not, Elder?” The tallest alien was exuberant.

“Yes, we have, and that is our greatest danger.” The Elder sat and thought a moment before speaking. “The Xenobots must not think that our civilization is dead, for if they do they will cease from searching for us and turn their attention to Earth – and Earth is our last hope.”

“The Xenobots are a strong race. At one time, we could have defeated them, but that time is long past. To overcome them, we must reawaken and rebuild – but we do not have the resources to rebuild alone, and even if we tried the Xenobots would catch us. Earth, as you know, is the only sizeable civilization around for thousands of light-years: they are the only ones who could possibly assist us.”

Saadervo spoke up with concern in his voice. “But will they be willing to help us – and if they are, how could they assist us without alerting the Xenobots? It was a delicate game to throw them off our track: if someone slips and we are discovered, all will be lost and Earth will die as well.”

“It is risky,” the Elder agreed, “but it is a risk we must take, for we cannot assume that we can remain hidden forever. If the Xenobots become convinced we are dead, they will turn their resources to Earth and pulverize it effortlessly. Eventually, they will expand and find us, and we will be helpless – as we are now – to resist them. I am convinced that the Xenobots are in their last days, and they will be destroyed in the end – but there is no guarantee that our race will survive to see it.”

“What is your plan, then, Elder?” Saadervo asked.

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<sup>133</sup> This name is a small tribute to the computer game *Myst III: Exile*, which is my favorite computer game. It’s an outstanding tale: the *Myst/Riven/Exile* series has been incredible. One of the characters in *Myst III* was a person by the name of Saavedro – hence the name Saadervo.

<sup>134</sup> This would make a great short story for the *Inter\*Stellar!* This was added to show that the Xenobots were getting very close to finding the Martians, and that the Martians had to be extremely careful and stay well hidden.

“We must send for the there Starmen. The one called Mark Seaton already knows of us, and we know the Starmen to be the best Earth has to offer: their actions will mirror the actions of their race. We must lead them here and reveal the problem to them without revealing ourselves, and see how they react. We have been lax; our preoccupation with events in the galactic core has blinded us to activities going on at our own doorstep. The plants must be saved if – ”

“The plants!” the tall alien broke in. “But the coalition against them is a strong one: even we have been unable to dislodge it. How could three Starmen hope to succeed?”

“They must succeed,” the Elder said soberly. “We cannot rise<sup>135</sup> without the plants, but we cannot protect them: they *must* save them or we have little hope. Besides, the real enemies we have to face are much greater and more fierce than that coalition: if Earth cannot save the plants, then what hope do they have against the other?”

<end actual text>

**Editor’s explanation of the passage:** These three aliens are meeting on Mars to discuss the next step. They recently went on a harrowing mission to mislead the Xenobots, and it succeeded: the Xenos were getting close but they were thrown completely off track. The plants they are referring to is a reference to the fungi: the Banjoman is harvesting and destroying it, and the Martians need the fungi in order to revive all their kinsmen in suspended animation (the fungi has a certain highly complex chemical they need).

The Martians can’t defend the fungi because the Xenobots are helping the Banjoman. The Xenobots can’t enter the solar system in force because all of their starships except for some old, weak ones depend on energy mined from the sun (this idea was taken from our files). However, to mine energy from the sun, there has to be a large, complex solar station in close orbit around the sun. It would be very difficult to erect one in the solar system, so, since the Xenos want to concentrate their resources on finding Mars instead of conquering an unimportant planet, they decided to conquer Earth by working through middlemen.

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<sup>135</sup> A nod to “The Rise of Mars”!

Hence, after Zimbardo fell, the Xenos switched alliances to the Banjoman and begin helping him.

The Martians didn't dare drive off the Banjoman because the Xenobots would notice, and that would be fatal. However, the Martians couldn't just let all their fungi die either, so what they decided to do was bring in the Starmen and have them take care of the Banjoman. It was dangerous, but nothing nearly as dangerous as facing the Xenobot civilization in all its power.

## CHAPTER 2

The three Starmen returned from Europa a few weeks ago, and went to the Moon to spend some time with their families. Now that they are rested and have briefed Richard on their adventures on Europa, they have left for Tharsos.

Tharsos, thanks to the efforts of SE's engineers<sup>136</sup>, is now orbiting Earth inside the Moon's orbit. The asteroid is a valuable piece of property, and SE has filled it with offices, laboratories, and hordes of scientists and engineers who are trying to learn its every secret<sup>137</sup>. The rock is a piece of very restricted property, and is heavily guarded: only people with the proper access can even get near it. The Starmen, since they are Starmen, have clearance and have no trouble landing.

As the Starmen explained to Richard, what they want to do is search the asteroid for clues. They have searched the fortress on Nyx and the colony on the bottom of Europa and gleaned a few clues, but they have still not been able to discover where the aliens came from and where they are now. More importantly, they have not seen any more living aliens. The only place they have actually see a Benefactor is on Tharsos – and hence that is where they want to search next.

Richard told them that his men have searched the rock from top to bottom and haven't seen any signs of life: if there is anyone there, they are very well hidden<sup>138</sup>. Zip is eager to find them, because he knows that the Benefactors are their only hope of resisting the Xenobots. On Nyx, one of the Xenobots expressed a desire to conquer Earth, and that desire could very well still exist. The Benefactors are the key to defending Earth, and they must be found as quickly as possible.

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<sup>136</sup> It's now been a few years since TRA happened — ample time for them to achieve an Earth orbit with Tharsos, especially with the asteroid's engines working again and its power supply up and running.

<sup>137</sup> A nod to Captives in Space! Eros, too, was besieged by scientists, some of whom even took up residence there.

<sup>138</sup> This fact was mentioned at the end of TRA, when the book said that SE wasn't going to find anything.

After talking to Richard, the Starmen leave for Tharsos, land there, and marvel at how things have changed: there are new offices, the airlock (shattered by the pirates) has been fixed, and the asteroid is buzzing with activity.

As soon as the Starmen disembarked, a man came up and greeted them warmly. The man introduced himself as Dr. Namon<sup>139</sup>, and explained that he had been placed in charge of the rock and was directing operations. Zip greeted him and told him what they were doing there. Zip asked him if they have seen the three moon logo anywhere, and the man replied that yes, they had. He then brought them to an elevator, typed in a code, and the elevator began descending.

A few minutes later, the Starmen stepped out of the elevator, walked down a short hallway and saw the same chamber Zimbardo visited in TRA: the holographic room with a copy of the famous three-moon logo on the front of the doors.

Editor's note: This passage is pretty straightforward. After taking some time to be with their families, the Starmen went back to search for the Martians, and so of course they went to Tharsos. The Benefactors knew that they were going to come, so they arranged for one of their men to meet them there and direct them to the logo room. They want Zip to figure out where they are from, and then go to Mars where the Martians will tell Zip their story in their own peculiar way — and where Zip will run into the Banjoman. What the Martians didn't realize was how desperate the Banjoman was and how hard he would be on Zip.

### CHAPTER 3

Zip thanked Dr. Namon, and Dr. Namon walked back off to the elevator. Zip looked at the logo for a long time and pondered it. The logo was the biggest copy he had ever seen (it was more than 3 feet wide), and something about it rang a bell. Zip asked Joe and Mark if they saw anything familiar about it, and they shook their heads.

Zip said that he wanted to scan the logo, put it into a computer, and work with it to see if he could bring any more details out of it. Mark and Joe thought that would be fine, so they went back upstairs to get the equipment. After finding a supply room, they took a digital camera<sup>140</sup> with them and went back downstairs.

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<sup>139</sup> Just a little Easter egg: Namon, spelled backwards, is No Man. It's a hint: this man is a Benefactor.

Shows that the Martians have a sense of humor! Note also that it was a Benefactor who showed where the logo room was: no one else had been able to find it or descend into those layers.

<sup>140</sup> A small nod to modern technology! Digital cameras would by then be old hat, and could do the job easily.

After taking a picture of the embossed logo, Zip went upstairs to a computer terminal, loaded the image, and began working with it. That is when this scene occurs:

<begin actual text>

*Zip is impressed with the beauty of the planet and remarks on how much like Earth it is. The planet on the logo is mostly covered by clouds, but there are signs of continents and blue seas. Zip decides to transfer what he can from the flat image to a three-dimensional mockup on his computer. The first time he tries it, the result is a severe distortion. The logo is too worn to get a clear reading. He realizes he will have to plot each point by hand, a time-consuming job that will call for good imagination as well as good mathematics. Intrigued at the possibilities, almost idly he starts the work. Once he starts, however, he can't let it go.*

Zip plotted the points from the design, gradually building up an image of what the planet might have looked like. The three-dimensional map took shape on his screen. Mountain ranges, plains, valleys, and seas appeared. He couldn't see behind the cloud cover, and those areas he left blank. It was painstaking work, for the image was slightly faded and he had to guess at nearly half the points. More than two-thirds of them had to be refigured at least once, and several up to half a dozen times before they made sense.

After more than six hours of work without rest, he was tired and hungry. Something pushed him on and he didn't want to abandon the effort.

Mark walked into the room, keeping quiet. He could see that Zip was fully absorbed in his task, wearing a look that was a blend of inspiration and frustration. After a moment when Zip hadn't moved at all, Mark asked, "Would you like something to eat, Zip? You've been up here all day."

"No thank you, Mark," said Zip without looking at his friend. "I don't even know why I'm doing this, but for some reason I can't stop. I feel driven, almost called, to keep going."

"You're getting consumed by it, Zip. Come on, take a break. You can't go on forever."

"I know. I'll be down before long. But I can't let it go yet." Mark went out as quietly as he'd come in.

Zip added a few more points to the map. He hadn't been sure of them because their location was on the edge of the design and their meaning was doubtful. He set them up and pressed "enter." The planet's image changed slightly.

Suddenly he knew what he was looking at. His face drained. The conviction came with immediate visceral certainty, and emotions surged over him with enormous power, almost as if he had been thrown into a huge, violent whirlpool. He gasped, then



jumped up and stepped back, throwing the chair several feet behind him. His eyes were wide and the hair on the back of his neck stood out stiffly. He began to howl.

“AH, NO, NO! Oh no, *NO!*” Tears streamed down his face. “*Oh GOD! NO!*”

The others stampeded up the stairs and ran through the door.

“What is it?” they cried out. They were panicked. “Zip, what’s the matter?”

Joe spoke up. Of the three he was most in control of himself. “Calm down, Zip. What is it?”

Zip waved his hand toward the console where the planet stood out in relief. His hands were shaking badly. He gulped and he couldn’t speak. He was hyperventilating. Joe went over to him and put his arm around his shoulder. “Take it easy, Zip. Take it easy. You’ll be okay.” He picked the chair up and eased Zip back into it.

After a couple of minutes, Zip was breathing more normally. “Oh no,” he whispered, the tears still running down. He put his hands over his face.

“Tell us, Zip,” pleaded Joe quietly but urgently.

Zip took a couple of deep breaths. “That planet,” he said, indicating the screen once more. “I know what it is.” The others looked at him expectantly. “It’s Mars,” he said. “It’s *MARS!!*”

Joe looked at him as if he thought that Zip had been working and going without food too long, but he said nothing.

Mark spoke up. “What?” he said in a small, shocked voice like a whisper coming from far away.

“Look at it!” cried Zip. “*Look at it!*” He jabbed his finger at the screen. “Look! See this diamond shape? That’s the Antigones Pons! What other planet has a landform like that? I didn’t put it all together until I saw that come up. And look—here’s the Bo-reosyrtris, just north of where you parachuted onto Mars when the pirates had taken over Eagle City. See? Just below it is Crater 53. Come on! You know these formations as well as I do! This is *Mars!!*”

“Well...okay, for the sake of discussion, let’s say it’s Mars,” conceded Joe. “What’s the reason for the outburst?”

“Don’t you get it?” said Zip urgently. “This is *Mars!* A planet with oceans and clouds—it’s blue and green and white, like Earth!”

“That’s why it *can’t* be Mars, Zip. Mars is red.”

“Mars is red *now*—a dry, dusty, howling desert that was completely dead before terraformation! But now I know that it wasn’t always dead.” Zip began to weep quietly. “It was alive and beautiful once, filled with people, the kindest people we’ve ever heard of, the people who saved the Titanians. Something terrible happened on Mars, something I can’t even imagine but it terrifies me.” He was almost whimpering. “I can never think of Mars as a planet again. It’s a corpse.” He wept quietly; no one said anything.

Then Joe said, “Zip, you’re frightening me.”

Mark spoke up gently. “But Zip. It can’t be Mars. This planet has three moons. Mars only has two. You can’t explain that.”

Zip got control of himself and sighed. “I think I can,” he said.

“You can? Where’s the third moon?”

Zip looked up at them. He paused for effect. “You’re in it,” he said.

.....

A little later in the story:

“This is wonderful, Zip,” said Mark with conviction. “Tragic as it is, it’s wonderful! You’ve found the key to understanding the history of our Solar System. The human race can never think of Mars in the same way again! You should be the one to name this moon we’re on, Zip.”

Zip was subdued. He looked tired, exhausted. “I’d like to,” he said. “I’d like to be the person who names it. And I already know what I want to call it.”

Mark and Joe waited.

“Thousands of years ago, when human beings first saw the fourth planet, they called it Mars because it was red. Mars was the god of war in ancient mythology and its redness reminded them of blood and battle.” He sighed. “I suppose they weren’t so far off, now that we know its history better.

“Then when Asaph Hall discovered the two moons in 1877, he named them after Mars’ attendants in Homer’s *Iliad*: Phobos and Deimos. In Greek, Phobos means ‘fear’ and Deimos means ‘terror.’”

Zip was telling them what they already knew, but Mark and Joe waited patiently. It was Zip’s moment. He’d earned it.

“But now that we know that Mars had three moons, and now that we know better the history of Mars and its people, this moon will be called *Tharsos*—Greek for ‘courage.’”

Mark and Joe smiled. Joe clapped Zip on the back.

“Tharsos it is,” he said.

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 4

The Starmen put their heads together and try to figure out what to do next. The obvious course of action would be to go to Mars and begin searching! They have already seen some presence of this race on Mars before: their NPACS had the logo on it.

The Starmen decide to go to Mars and try to find Jogren again. If they can find Jogren, they might find the clue they need. The Benefactors *must* have left some presence on Mars – some well-hidden presence, but a presence that Jogren knows about.

The Starmen decide to thank Dr. Namon before they leave for showing them the logo that solved the mystery. The Starmen look around for him, but they don't see him anywhere. When they ask a nearby officer, the officer looks startled: there's no one on this rock by that name, he said. The asteroid is under the control of someone else altogether, and there was no one there that even fit that description. Besides, the officer didn't even know what room the Starmen were talking about: they never found a conference room and never found a copy of the logo anywhere.

Zip's blood ran cold. He knew instinctively what had happened: Dr. Namon was a Benefactor. The Benefactors wanted Zip to know their secret, but they did not want to reveal it to anyone else. They had paved the way: they were calling him to Mars.<sup>141</sup>

Zip thanked the man and went to his ship.

The Starmen flew their ship to the Moon, and went up to Richard Starlight's office to tell him what had happened. Richard was very impressed with the discovery and congratulated them. He, too, was impressed by its meaning and its enormous implications.

The Starmen told him that they were fitting their ship for a long expedition on Mars: they were going to search for a race that *must* be there. Zip was confident that they would find them, since the Benefactors had shown him the logo and practically gave away the answer. He thought that once they got to the desert again, they would be approached and the solution would be revealed.

Richard nodded and the Starmen left. After the Starmen left, however, he sat in his chair and did some deep thinking. Tharsos was an incredibly powerful asteroid: while its Key was missing, it was clearly built with the power to blast planets into cinders and warp through space at speeds far faster than light. The race that built it must have been incredibly advanced and powerful, and yet something came along and blasted their world into pieces. The race was still around, and evidently still inhabited Tharsos secretly despite SE's best efforts to find them, but they were scared: very scared. There was a reason why they were not being open about their existence, and whatever that reason was, it must be a powerful one to frighten a race that advanced.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> This becomes a recurring theme in the book: all throughout the book the Martians are there, softly guiding the Starmen, protecting them, and helping them when things get rough. They wanted Zip to know that they were there for them, so the Benefactor here 'gave' himself away, as an encouragement to Zip. Zip will need encouragement.

<sup>142</sup> This, of course, has been brought up multiple times by the time this book appears! Zip first mentions it in TRA.

Richard got up out of his chair. Finding the alien race, he decided, was of utmost importance, and it was probably extremely dangerous – more dangerous than the Starmen realized. He was going to follow the Starmen to Mars in his own ship and see what he could find. There was a piece of the puzzle missing, and he wanted to find it.<sup>143</sup>

[added 9/12/01]

Before he left, Richard called up the Rock and asked him to come into his office. He came over, and Richard briefed him on events and told him that he was going to go to Mars. While he was away, he asked him to keep an eye on things here and get in touch with him if anything happened. Richard said that he was concerned that something big was coming up, and he wanted to be prepared if anything happened. Richard and the Rock set up a special communication wavelength they could use if they needed to have a highly private communication, and then Richard left.

## CHAPTER 5

A few weeks later, the Starmen land at the spaceport of Eagle City. Before they headed into the outback to search for the Martians, they decided to do a little research in town. The Benefactors, Zip pointed out, did not just tell them that they were from Mars: they made Zip figure it out on his own. They were hiding from something, and they might not be willing to come out into the open with a brass band playing and flags waving. It would be a good idea to talk to some people around town and try to see if there were any hints of lost cities, strange happenings, aliens in the outback, or the like – something that would lead them to a more specific place. Once they got inside the lost city they figured they would be ok, but they might have to find it first. So, after leaving their ship in the hands of the spaceport security they walked off into town.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Later on in the book, the mayor of Eagle City starts a campaign against the Starmen. This campaign must be fought down, but the Starmen can't do it. The only person who could do it is Richard Starlight — and hence, Richard must be on Mars when all the trouble begins. This is an easy way to get him to Mars so he can be on the spot when trouble happens: Richard simply senses that there is more than meets the eye, and decides to go along. He does have other important work to do, but nothing as important as this.

<sup>144</sup> This is necessary for two reasons. First, it builds up suspense and gives the reader the first hint that something is going on in that area. Second, this tips off the Banjoman that he is about to have company, and paves the way for all the trouble Zip experiences. Had Zip not done this, the Banjoman wouldn't have suspected anything until Zip was actually flying over his base, and thus Zip would have missed out on all those exciting events! (Another reason is simply to pay homage to the Dig Allen series: when Dig Allen wanted information, that is always how he got it.) I know that all this could have been skipped, but I thought it was a great scene, it could help show off Eagle City, it could pay homage to Dig Allen, and it had a kind of Dig Allen-ish flavor to it.

The team then visited the haunts of the older miners and prospectors<sup>145</sup>, and discovered that a certain area of Mars had a mysterious reputation. No one went to the 'badland' area: too many have gone there never to return. An old man pointed out the precise section of Mars where it was, and the team was astonished: it's very close to where they landed in AOM — near where the fields of glowing fungi were growing. It seems that very few people knew that area at all: most folks avoided it out of fear.

The old man said that he saw from a distance what could have been an ancient underground city in that region (he drew a little diagram on a napkin on the table.) Zip became very animated, and asked if the old man would go with them and show them precisely where it was. The old man suddenly became scared, and refused: he said that he figured he had said too much already, and he got up and shuffled off.<sup>146</sup>

## CHAPTER 6

The team started walking back to the spaceport to leave for the outback after several days of walking around Eagle City when they walked right into Steve Cliff<sup>147</sup>! Zip was surprised to see him, but Cliff said that he had some business to attend to in Eagle City. Cliff asked him what he was doing in town, and Joe told him that they were going to go out into the desert and do some exploring. Cliff told him that he knew of that area and that he would be glad to act as their guide and go along with them. Zip had some misgivings but agreed, since Cliff had been with them when they met Jogren the first time and could be trusted.

The group decided that the best thing to do would be to make an aerial tour of that region. The problem was that the Star Ranger was not suited for that kind of flight: in order to glide over a region, a special type of powered glider built for the thin Martian atmosphere would have to be used. The Star Ranger would have passed over that entire region in a matter of minutes – much too fast to be able to see anything.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> This might be a great place to show the great respect and reverence that was shown the Starmen for everything they had done! This could set the stage for the rejection they later face in the book.

<sup>146</sup> This old man isn't anyone important: he is just an old, scared prospector. He could be the same one whose koalangs hadn't been fed for 3 days in AOM!

<sup>147</sup> Steve Cliff had been captured some days before due to his own explorations. When the Banjoman found out through his spy network what the Starmen were doing, he decided to disguise one of his own spies and plant him in the Starmen's company to 'guide' the Starmen and cause trouble. Since the Starmen had been searching for information for several days, he had ample time to get things ready. 'Steve Cliff' is important later on in causing the Starmen trouble. It's also a fairly unexpected plot twist!

<sup>148</sup> This is quite true, by the way: the Star Ranger is not built for gliding. It also makes for some great scenes, when the Starmen try in vain to find a glider to use, and are finally forced to confront Andy Regal, who (after finding out that the Starmen aren't going to give up) gets Jerry the major to start the man-hunt and shoot them down.

The group then leaves Eagle City and heads out to the landing field to see if they can obtain a Martian flyer. When they get to the spaceport, however, a man comes running up to them and tells them that their ship has been vandalized! The security guards found the man guarding their ship lying unconscious in front of it, and their control panel on board the Star Ranger had been hacked all to pieces. Zip was furious, and they rushed inside the rocket to check it out for themselves, and found things just as the man had described.

Zip also noticed something hard to miss: written on the wall in spraypaint was a message to the effect that the Starmen had better not travel to the badlands of Mars, or they would suffer the same fate of those boards.<sup>149</sup>

The team was outraged, and tried to find out who did it. The guards said that they didn't see anyone enter the ship and saw no sign of the intruder; they can't understand it. The Starmen have the boards replaced, but it takes several days, and they chafe at the delay.<sup>150</sup>

Outside the ship, Zip talks with various SE engineers and makes arrangements to have the boards replaced. He said that he can't understand what happened, and certainly has no intention of avoiding that area of Mars: if anything, he is even more anxious to explore that area now.

A few hundred feet away, on the top of the spaceport hangar, a man dressed in black was lying on top of the building. His suit merged perfectly in with the growing shadows of evening, and was all but invisible to the eye. The man had a small receiver in his ear, and after he heard Zip's words he quietly picked up a powerful laser rifle that was lying next to him. The man took the rifle, set it to maximum power, and carefully aimed it at Zip. When he was about to pull the trigger, a hand reached out from the shadows and whammed the sniper over the head, knocking him cold. The hand then grabbed the sniper and his rifle and carefully pulled him into the shadows.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> This is the Starmen's first and only warning. In all series books, the criminals always give warnings before muscling in: hence, there is a warning here as well. Warnings save resources for the bad guys: why use muscle — especially against Starmen — when a warning would do? Once the warning was rejected, then they move in with a vengeance.

<sup>150</sup> Notice that this delays the Starmen for a few days! This gives the Banjoman time to act and prepare things for the Starmen — namely, to destroy all the air gliders on Mars. The Banjoman knows that the Starmen are tough adversaries, and he doesn't want to have to fight them unless he has to — hence, he tries things like this first, since he doesn't understand his character.

<sup>151</sup> Here we have the first indication of the Martians (for it was a Martian behind this — namely, Jogren) stepping in from the shadows to help the Starmen. This, too, is a recurring theme in the book, and it's not new: the Martians also did this in AOM and TRA. The Martians don't dare do too much for fear of attracting suspicion, but they do help as they can. This not only adds suspense and mystery to the book, but it lets the reader know that the Starmen are facing a far more desperate and more organized enemy than they imagine.

## CHAPTER 7

The next morning, Richard Starlight arrived at the SE base on Mars. He had been somewhat delayed from following the Starmen due to pressing business matters, but he had made good time and made up for most of the delay on the flight to Mars. Richard heard from Konig<sup>152</sup> (the security man was still on Mars) what had happened to the Starmen, and he said that he felt that was only the beginning of their troubles. Richard told Konig that he had a hunch, and he went inside his office to do some research.<sup>153</sup>

Several days later, the Star Ranger's control boards were replaced, and the three Starmen and Steve Cliff boarded the Star Ranger. Zip had decided that the most convenient thing to do would be to fly to a town near the area where he thought the city was and try to find the glider there. Zip had checked a few days before and found that a number of settlements in the region were equipped with the large powered gliders he wanted.

Zip flew the Star Ranger into the settlement nearest the city (which was still several hundred miles away from where he wanted to be) and landed. The city was not much of a town: most of it was buried underground, and the region that's aboveground was under large domes. At most, there were probably 10,000 people living in it.

The Starmen went to the mayor's office and told them that they were doing some research in the badland area and would like a Martian glider. The mayor shakes his head and tells them that he's sorry and that they used to have some gliders, but someone had come in yesterday and requested use of them. The mayor suggested that they try another neighboring border town.

The Starmen fly to the other town and try it, but they met a similar problem: a few days ago, right after Zip called, someone had come and taken their gliders.

Puzzled, the Starmen try calling in the towns around the area. They learn that all the gliders are gone: some were damaged, some smashed, some burned, some stolen. There weren't that many Martian gliders to begin with (there's only a limited use for such an expensive craft, so few were made) but they all seem to be gone now.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> About Konig: I just picked someone from out of the air. This could be anybody: it doesn't matter in the plot.

<sup>153</sup> Doing research, of course, on what is known about Mars and other races!

<sup>154</sup> This whole scene is a nice tribute to Rick Brant #1: *The Rocket's Shadow*. In that book, Rick went all around trying to find a special tube, and just could not get one. Here, we have the Starmen looking everywhere for a glider.

The Starmen are at a loss over what to do. Steve Cliff<sup>155</sup> suggests that they should go see a friend of his, a certain prominent businessman by the name of Andy Regal<sup>156</sup>. Mr. Regal<sup>157</sup> was a multibillionaire and a powerful figure on Mars: Cliff said that he was close friends with Mr. Regal and thought that he might have a Martian glider among his personal possessions. Cliff tells them what town Mr. Regal lives in, and they decide to go visit him. The man lived a good distance away from where they wanted to be, but there didn't seem to be any other alternatives.

The Starmen land at the spaceport, walk into town, and enter Mr. Regal's office building, where his personal office was. The surrounding area and the office building itself were heavily guarded and crawling with security guards, but at the sight of Steve Cliff the guards made way and allowed the Starmen to get inside. Cliff explained that Mr. Regal had a lot of enemies and had to protect himself well.<sup>158</sup>

After going upstairs and passing Mr. Regal's secretary<sup>159</sup>, they make it inside his private office. Steve Cliff introduced the Starmen, and Mr. Regal greeted them warmly. Upon hearing their request, he said he would try to help them. Mr. Regal then brought up his computer database on the screen and did a query, and discovered that there wasn't a single glider in his possession. Mr. Regal shook his head, and told the Starmen that he guessed they would just have to give up their quest and do something else.

Zip said that they weren't about to do that; they'd just go to SE and have one built. That would be better anyway, he reasoned aloud: they could design it with special equipment that would better suit their needs – such as infrared and xray machines that would enable them to see underground.<sup>160</sup>

The Starmen thanked him and left his office. As soon as they stepped out the door, Mr. Regal grabbed his phone and told someone in it to stall the Starmen at the

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<sup>155</sup> Here we go! The spy finally makes his move. This is what lands the Starmen in real trouble.

<sup>156</sup> In the Tom Swift Sr. series, Tom Swift was beset by a nasty villain named Andy Fogger. Fogger spelled backwards is Regof, and it is only one step from Regof to Regal. Hence, a small tribute to the Tom Swift Sr. series.

<sup>157</sup> Mr. Regal, of course, is the Banjoman.

<sup>158</sup> Here we have another scene from a Rick Brant book, but in reverse! In the *Whispering Box Mystery*, the building where the work on Screaming Suzie was being conducted was inside a very well-guarded building. Here we have the flip side of the coin. (I didn't intend this as a tribute, but now that I think about it I do see a similarity.)

<sup>159</sup> This is needed in the defense of the Starmen. Later in the book, Rick points out that it is silly to imagine that the Starmen walked through the well-guarded building, past the secretary, and then shot Mr. Regal without making a sound and walked back out past the secretary. Hence, a secretary is needed to make the whole defense even more convincing.

<sup>160</sup> Bad mistake on Zip's part! This is just what the Banjoman doesn't want: he does not want the Starmen flying over that part of Mars with machines that can see underground! That would reveal his whole operations. Once he hears this, he knows that he has got to get rid of the Starmen.



spaceport and not leave let them leave. "I don't care what you tell them, but keep their ship grounded: you have got to delay them until I can get rid of them."

## CHAPTER 8

Ten minutes later, the Starmen walk up to the landing field. When they got to the gate leading into the field, however, the guard would not let them through: he explained that their ship had developed a radiation leak and was being worked on. They would have to stay a few more days until it was fixed, he said.<sup>161</sup>

Mark almost exploded<sup>162</sup> on the spot and said that their couldn't possibly be a radiation leak – not in his ship – but the guard roughly pushed him aside and said that he would let them know when the leak was fixed.

The Starmen walked a few paces away, out of earshot of the guards, and began talking to each other in puzzled voices. They don't understand what is going on. First their control board is smashed. Then all the air gliders on Mars mysteriously vanished. Now their ship has a radiation leak. What on earth is going on?

While the Starmen are talking the issue over, Mark suddenly noticed a tall man, dressed in a cloak, in the shadows who was beckoning to them. The man was acting like he didn't want to be seen, but he was clearly trying to get the Starmen's attention. Mark pointed the man's strange actions out to the team, and the group decided they should go talk with him.<sup>163</sup>

The Starmen, on their guard, walked up to him and he began talking with them in whispers. The man told them in a low voice that they were in trouble: they just stepped into a hornet's nest. There is no radiation leak on their ship, he told them: that was merely a delay tactic being used by powerful individuals who wanted to stall the Starmen. If there was a real radiation leak, sirens would be going off and their ship would have been contained, and the landing field (and perhaps even the city) would have been evacuated. Instead, the ship was still right where they left it, and a band of people – armed people – have surrounded the ship and are close to it. Would they really be there if the ship was leaking radiation?

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<sup>161</sup> This guard is not very bright! This is the start of another theme throughout the book. The bad guys are not perfect, and make a number of really stupid mistakes. It all goes back to the verse "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The bad guys don't fear the Lord or anyone else, so they act as real fools half of the time and have to make up for it in violence — and in the end, violence destroys them all. This is an important theme in the book.

<sup>162</sup> Mark, of course, would be the one to explode! He was the engine guru of the team, and was to the Star Ranger what Scotty was to the Starship Enterprise.

<sup>163</sup> Here we have Jogren helping them out again! He gives them some words of advice and then leaves quickly. It's up to the Starmen to decide whether or not to follow it.

He also points out that the guard they just talk to was not the same guard who was guarding their ship 10 minutes ago – and the Starmen realize with a start that he is right: something funny is going on.

The cloaked man tells them that they *must* get into their ship and leave the area immediately. If they did not leave soon, they would not be able to leave at all and might find their careers ended early. The whole town is against them: if they did not leave within 15 minutes the entire planet would be mobilized against them. With this warning given, the man walked back into the shadows and vanished.

The Starmen are inclined to believe him, but Cliff points out<sup>164</sup> that they had never seen this man before and that the whole thing might just be a clever trap. Zip concedes that this is so, and that a lot of funny things have been going on lately: it would be wise to verify this man's story first.<sup>165</sup>

Zip tests the story by walking inside the office of the landing field and asking casually how long it will be before the radiation leak is fixed. The supervisor says that he thinks it'll be a few days, but not to worry: his ship will be well-guarded<sup>166</sup>. Zip looked out the window of the office, and saw that the ship was surrounded by armed guards – and that other spaceships were busy landing on and leaving from the field.

Zip thanks him and leaves. The Starmen realize that tall man is right! If there was really a radiation leak, the entire field would have been shut down. The Starman realize that they have got to act quickly.

Zip spots a jeep, and he commandeers it and tells everyone to pile in.<sup>167</sup> Zip explains his plan: their unseen enemies probably think they have fooled them, and would not be expecting a sudden brute-force attempt to get their ship back!

Zip stomps on the accelerator of the electric ground car and drives it at high speed toward the gate of the field. When they near the gate, Zip simply plows into it and rams a hole right through the gate, to the absolute horror of the guard. Before they get to the gate, Joe leaned his head out the window and shot the guard's telephone: now he won't be able to radio his superiors about the invasion. The guard pulled out his gun and tried to fire a few shots at the Starmen, but he was too badly startled and his shots went wild.

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<sup>164</sup> Cliff, of course, is in on the whole thing and doesn't want the Starmen to escape. Hence, he tries to discourage them from following the man's wise advice. Wisdom speaks in whispers: foolishness is broadcasted in trumpets.

<sup>165</sup> This is discretion on Zip's part. He doesn't know what is going on, and decides that he had better test the story to see if it is true or not.

<sup>166</sup> This is a total accident, but this reminds me of another Rick Brant scene! In the Golden Skull, isn't there a policeman that Rick pleads for help with who is 'in on it' and doesn't help?

<sup>167</sup> Cliff has to go along with it so he won't blow his cover. He figures that he can cause more trouble later.

The car, damaged but still running (its engine and batteries were in the back), raced out toward the ship while Zip floored the accelerator pedal. Mark and Joe started shooting at the figures guarding the ship: they did not aim to hit them, but they did want to scare them away from the ship and get them to scatter. Joe's efforts are very successful: the men are startled and fall flat on the ground, while others start running away. Zip guesses that the men guarding the ship were not professionals; no one knew they would be coming to that city that day, and there probably wasn't time to get real professionals. These were just local henchmen – very frightened local henchmen.

The henchmen manage to hit the car a few times and damage it, but the Starmen still make it to their ship. The whole group then races inside it and takes off.

## CHAPTER 9

The Starmen are now flying high over Mars in the general direction of Eagle City. Something in the back of Zip's brain is nagging at him: he knows that something is wrong but he can't figure out what it is<sup>168</sup>. Events have simply been moving too rapidly: he hasn't had time to sit down and think things through.

Zip wondered aloud what the Starmen should do next, and Mark suggested heading toward the SE base on Mars: they needed a glider anyway, and that would be the place to have one made — and while they were there they could talk to security there and see if they could get some help, as well as report what just happened to them. Zip agrees that Mark's idea makes sense, so they head out toward the base. The base was a few hours away, so it would take some time to get there.

In a few minutes, however, the entire scene changes dramatically. Joe suddenly noticed that a blip had appeared on the radar screen – a very fast-moving blip that was aimed directly at them. Zip's blood ran cold: it was a cruise missile!<sup>169</sup> Then he saw another one, and another one, and still another one, and he began getting pale. This is

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<sup>168</sup> When I wrote this summary, I had a clear image of what Zip should have remembered. Now that I am writing the footnotes, though, it escapes me entirely.

<sup>169</sup> Here enters the second enemy into the story: Jerry, the major. Jerry is in league with the Banjoman (they go way back to the time of Troy Putnam). The Banjoman put in a call to Jerry as soon as the Starmen left his office, and Jerry instantly saw the problem and agreed to help. It wouldn't do at all to try to arrest the Starmen and bring them to court, because Starmen were 'untouchable' and no one would convict them. It would be a lot easier just to try to shoot them out of the sky, and use the press (which had also been corrupted by Troy) to paint the Starmen as villains who ought to have been shot down. Hence, he never tells the Starmen to stop or tells them what they are charged with: he just tries to shoot them down. This is symbolic: in the real world, evil never stops to debate with good — it just tries to run right over good and destroy it without a fight or debate. You're not going to get a fair shake with evil: they will just try to out and out destroy you however they can.

crazy, he thought: this was Mars! You can't do that on Mars: you can't simply start firing missiles at ships in the sky.

Zip pulled his ship up, gunned its engines and raced to gain more altitude. Joe had spotted the missiles early, so he figured they had a good chance to outrun them. Soon, though, he met up with another problem: a squadron of fighter jets<sup>170</sup>, coming in at him with their lasers blazing.

Zip realized that he had a problem. The missiles were hot on his tail, and ahead of him was a squad of jets that looked equally deadly. Where was he to run?

<begin actual text>

A few hundred miles away, Konig suddenly burst into Richard Starlight's office. "Richard! You've got to come and see this: someone is trying to shoot the Starmen out of the sky!" Richard jumped out of his chair, knocking it onto the floor, and ran out to follow Konig. On a large screen in the office, Konig had a radar display showing. Konig pointed out the Starmen's spaceship, and Richard's eyes got large when he saw the three cruise missiles – and the squadron of planes that were after them.

Richard looked at the panel. "Those are X12<sup>171</sup> missiles, by the looks of it – enough firepower to down a spaceship twice the size of the Star Ranger." Richard looked at the radar display in anger. "What's going on here? What kind of idiot are we dealing with? Firing at Starmen in broad daylight! Have they gone mad?" Richard clenched his fists, then unclenched them.<sup>172</sup>

"The Starmen are in trouble," Richard said. "I don't know how we can help them in time to do any good, but we *can* find out where those missiles came from, whose ships those are and what is going on." Richard became energized. "Get someone to trace those missiles and find out where they came from. Also, get our fighters – no, wait, we don't have any fighter jets here. On second thought, I'll call Eagle City and get them to launch their police fleet at once to protect the Starmen. If the Starmen can get away from those missiles, we'll have a force there to protect them. If the Starmen can't

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<sup>170</sup> This, of course, is the police fleet from Eagle City!

<sup>171</sup> I just picked a number from the air: this has no significance and can be changed to anything.

<sup>172</sup> Richard, of course, is outraged. Never before in history has anyone tried to assassinate Starmen in broad daylight, and especially not with cruise missiles and a fleet of planes. This, too, is symbolic: today evil does not lurk in dark corners but prowls the streets. You're not going to find the bad guys sticking to dark street corners: as in the Ken Holt series, you'll find them everywhere, doing things you would least expect.

get away,” Rick gritted his teeth, “then the police fleet will pound the living daylight out of the ships out there.”<sup>173</sup>

Konig looked pale. “I have bad news for you, Richard. That fleet out there – the one that is shooting at the Starmen – um, well, that *is* the police fleet.”

Richard fell over.

<end actual text>

Joe was at the helm of the Starmen, desperately engaging in evasive maneuvers. He was doing a pretty good job, but they were being riddled pretty badly with lasers from the fleet ahead, and the missiles were still closing in – and now they were only seconds away from impact.

Suddenly a light went off in Joe’s head, and he knew what to do. Joe turned the ship to head toward the incoming ships, and rammed the ship into overdrive. The Star Ranger flew toward the incoming ships, and was soon among them – and then past them. Meanwhile, the missiles had found a new target: the group of ships that had been chasing the Starmen! The ships suddenly broke formation and ran as the missiles began chasing them instead.<sup>174</sup>

Joe gunned the ship through the air away from the mess he had made, and collapsed into his chair from relief. “We did it!” he moaned. Then he saw Steve Cliff pull a gun out of his shirt and aim it at the Starmen. “Not quite,” Cliff said menacingly, in a voice that chilled the Starmen and made them realize that this was *not Steve Cliff at all*.<sup>175</sup>

## CHAPTER 10

<begin actual text>

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<sup>173</sup> Richard is totally blind to the fact that the corruption in Eagle City hasn’t been cleaned up yet: he doesn’t realize that until he discovers what Jerry is doing, and then everything hits him. He, like the Martians, has been too preoccupied with other matters to notice what was happening on his own doorstep.

<sup>174</sup> Something very similar was done in the Tom Swift III book #10, *The Invisible Force*. Like the Rick Brant “searching for a vacuum tube” similarity, this one did not enter my head until just now, but TSIII did use a trick like this to get away (i.e. he flew right through the horde of ships, and they couldn’t fire at each other because if they did they would have destroyed themselves). Was it perhaps a subconscious move on my part?

<sup>175</sup> Here the spy makes his move. He realizes that the Starmen are about to get away, and decides that the time has come to reveal himself and do what he can to nail the Starmen.

Back in Eagle City at that moment, things were humming. The mayor of Eagle City, Jerry Royal, was in his office on Eagle City barking out orders. On the wall of his luxurious office, which was located in the capitol building, was a large screen display. Currently on the screen was a radar display, showing three cruise missiles chasing the police fleet all over the map, and showing the Star Ranger flying across the desert.

“I want you to put every available man out there!” Jerry screamed<sup>176</sup>. “Every available ship! I don’t care what it takes. You’ve got to bring the Star Ranger down! You can’t let them get away: once they leave the planet they’ll slip through our fingers and we’ll never find them again.”

Inside the mayor’s office was a group of anxious reporters, taking in Jerry’s every word. A camera was broadcasting the scene live all across the solar system.

“This is awful!” said one local reporter. “Are you sure about this, Jerry?”

“Of course I’m sure!” Jerry barked. “Early this morning Starmen David Foster, Mark Seaton and Joe Taylor walked right into the office of Mr. Andy Regal<sup>177</sup> and shot him, turning him into a little pile of cinders. We’ve caught them red-handed: we’ve got piles of witnesses and a video tape of the whole thing. Right now I’m putting every available plane out there trying to catch them before they get away and shoot someone else. We’ve got to catch these cold-blooded murderers: we’ve got to show them that they can’t just waltz around the planet and shoot whoever they please.”<sup>178</sup>

One reporter spoke up, an edge in his voice. “You speak of a tape, Mr. Mayor. Just where is this tape?”<sup>179</sup>

“It’s in the hands of the police right now,” Jerry said evenly. “I’ll turn it over to the press as soon as they are done analyzing it. You should have it later tonight. Look, men, I’ve got a lot of work to do now: I don’t have time to sit here and talk with you. I’ll call a press conference later tonight and fill you in – but right now, I’ve got three desperate murderers to catch.” Jerry motioned to his security guards, and the reporters were sent out.

As soon as the door closed, Jerry picked up the phone and dialed a number.<sup>180</sup> “Listen, when are you going to get me that tape? I’ve got a bunch of reporters hounding me, and they want to know – ok, ok, but look, make it soon! I can’t put them off forever, and I’m going to be in big trouble if you can’t get it to me.” Jerry hung up the phone and then stared at the radar screen, grumbling and muttering to himself.

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<sup>176</sup> Here, we introduce the mayor and the part he plays.

<sup>177</sup> Mr. Andy Regal, of course, is alive and well: Jerry calls him not minutes later.

<sup>178</sup> This, of course, is deliberate: what Jerry is accusing the Starmen of doing is *exactly* what he himself was doing right that very moment. This is also symbolic: in the real world, evil spends much of its time accusing the righteous of things that the righteous are innocent of but that evil is guilty of.

<sup>179</sup> Reporters in 2150 were a little different than they are today! 2150 reporters actually ask questions and investigate facts.

<sup>180</sup> He is calling, of course, the Banjoman to see if the tape is ready yet.

<end actual text>

Meanwhile, the three Starmen were flying along the desert at several times the speed of sound<sup>181</sup>, while Steve Cliff pointed a gun at them. Mark screamed and said that he wasn't Steve Cliff after all, and the man admitted it: he was a spy planed to stop the Starmen from bumbling to where they weren't wanted. The man said that the Starmen should have heeded the warning they were given earlier, or they wouldn't be in this mess now. The spy told them that he wanted them to turn the plane around and fly in a general direction: he was going to take them for a ride.<sup>182</sup>

Joe thought quickly, and decided that he didn't want to go on a ride: the spy sure didn't have anything good planned for them, and he didn't want to go along. Joe agreed to go in that direction, and he turned the plane sharply – extremely sharply. The Starmen were trained pilots and used to excessive G forces, but the spy was not: the sudden G forces blacked him out. Zip grabbed his gun while he was blacked out, and when the man came to a few seconds later<sup>183</sup>, he found himself prisoner.

Joe then turned the ship and streaked across the desert until the patrol was out of sight.

The Starmen discussed what to do with this guy, and they realized that he was a liability they really didn't want to have. For whatever reason, the Starmen were now wanted by the police: they needed to find a good hiding place until they found out what was going on, and who knew what this man had planted on him or inside him? The best thing to do was to get rid of him.

So, the Starmen forced him to put on a parachute, and after slowing down they opened the door and had the man jump out. They knew that there was a settlement nearby, and that he would be rescued from the desert soon. They hated to get rid of him – they were awfully angry at him – but things had been going really badly lately, and they wanted to find a hole to hide in so they could put their thoughts together. This gang had tracked them ruthlessly and stopped them every step of the way: as long as the spy was there they couldn't be sure that they were safe.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> A good average cruising speed for 2150 on Mars.

<sup>182</sup> He wants to take them to the Banjoman's base, of course.

<sup>183</sup> Blackouts caused by excessive G forces don't last very long at all.

<sup>184</sup> I did this because I really didn't want to have to bother with the spy in the rest of the book: having him along in the rest of the story made things complicated and dragged the story down. Perhaps it would have been better to simply have the man break away and jump out of the plane on his own accord (with a hidden parachute) — come to think of it, that might be a lot better. Just so that he is eliminated!

Soon the radar started making noise again, and Joe looked at it and his heart sank. He had forgotten that a satellite-based planetwide radar network<sup>185</sup> had been established after the pirates had landed, and that the police could track any ship that flew in the Martian sky. Three fleets of police ships were closing in on the Starmen rapidly from different directions, and while they were still about ten minutes away, they did not look friendly.

Back in Richard's office, Richard had called up Jerry and talked with him<sup>186</sup>. The conversation was short: Jerry told him that the Starmen had murdered Andy Regal and were vicious criminals that had to be shot down immediately, Richard screamed that that was impossible, and then Jerry hung up<sup>187</sup>. Richard realized that something was badly wrong, and that if he didn't do something quickly his three most promising Starmen were about to become dust.

Richard realized that there was one thing he could do. The radar network had been built by Starlight Enterprise to defend Mars<sup>188</sup>. Since SE had built it, SE could also shut it down. Richard opened his computer and accessed the network, and typed in a few commands. When the words ACCESS DENIED came up<sup>189</sup>, he realized that this whole business had been planned ahead of time, and someone had illegally taken over the satellite network and SE now had no control.

Richard grimaced, and watched the planes fly closer and closer to the Starmen.

## CHAPTER 11

Richard realized that there was still one more thing he could do. Richard logged into his array of weapons satellites: satellites with high-powered lasers in them capable

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<sup>185</sup> Such a thing actually exists on Earth right now, and has been in existence for a long time. The United States has a cool version to where stealth ships show up as 'holes' in the radar network (since they don't reflect anything) and can thus be detected by the fact they don't show up!

<sup>186</sup> Richard, of course, wants to know what was going on. This is where Richard suddenly realizes that Mars is corrupt.

<sup>187</sup> Jerry has better things to do than talk with Rick, so he just hangs up on him. Jerry doesn't respect Rick at all, and later comes to regret being so rough with him (it doesn't pay to make Rick mad). Once again, the evil men are acting foolish.

<sup>188</sup> SE is #1 in space technology and heavy equipment! Who better to make such a network? This would have been put in place after AOM.

<sup>189</sup> The Banjoman didn't necessarily predict that Rick would try to use the satellites, but he didn't want the Starmen taking them over so he had Jerry hack into them. Later (after LROM) Richard took back over the satellites and had them fixed so that someone couldn't just take over the whole network like that.



of frying ships in orbit. Richard locked the orbiting laser satellites<sup>190</sup> onto the radar satellites, and had the satellites fire at the radar satellites: in seconds, a large swath of the radar network went dead, and Richard's radar map on the wall vanished. The Starmen were now invisible.

Richard knew that he was going to get into trouble for doing that, but he hoped that it would give the Starmen a chance to hide – and give himself a chance to figure out what on earth was going on.

[added 9/11/01]

Secondly, Richard sent a top-secret message to the Rock on the Moon, telling him quickly what had happened and asking him to use all the power and influence SE had in the Earth/Moon system and pull out all the stops to get the Mayor removed from office, get an investigation committee and possibly an army sent right away, and to convince Earth to side against Mars. SE was a large, powerful organization: Richard was not about to let someone simply walk in and assassinate his Starmen. He might be too late to save his Starmen, but he was going to make dead certain that the people on Mars responsible for this were removed from posts of power and brought to justice.<sup>191</sup>

Meanwhile, the Starmen had flown their ship to the area of Mars which someone had tried so hard to keep them away from, and they landed. The region had some rough scarred terrain in it, and the Starmen found a cave large enough to hide their ship inside. Zip taxied the ship inside the cave and powered the ship down. The three had noticed that the planetwide radar system had suddenly gone down, and they wondered why.

Now that the Starmen were temporarily safe, they decided to turn on the radio and see if they could get any news<sup>192</sup>. Zip found a newscast on the radio, and Mark, Joe and Zip listened in on a newscast.

The newscast had urgent breaking news: early that morning the three Starmen had walked into the office of Andy Regal and shot him. Footage from a security camera in his office showed them entering his office, shooting him, looting the place and then

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<sup>190</sup> Such satellites are being designed by the US air force right this minute, and could actually be flying in a few years.

<sup>191</sup> This is a good, clear place to show the enormous power that SE wielded. They were very important in a whole number of fields: power generation, ore mining, space transportation, space colonization, and so forth. In 2150, a lot of power is wielded by corporations, and here SE stepped in and used it. They were actually able to convince Earth to do something and to mobilize the planet against Mars. Richard had no idea if he could save his Starmen or not (help was on the way, but it would take weeks for it to get there) but he did know that when he got done with Mars it would not be the same.

<sup>192</sup> Joe, the pilot, would easily have noticed that the fighters were police ships, and since police ships were being used to shoot them down, it was easy to assume that whatever was going on would be on the national news. Hence, they check the news for info. They don't dare call anyone because calls can be traced, and they don't want to be found right now.

leaving. The newscaster said that a state of emergency had been declared on Mars, and a planetwide manhunt had been launched to find them. The voice of the mayor suddenly came over the radio, and he reiterated that these were dangerous Starmen, and that he had given out orders to shoot them out of the sky.

The Starmen's hearts sank very low.<sup>193</sup> A planetwide manhunt for them! They sure didn't commit that crime, but how on earth were they to prove it? If they so much as peeked their noses out the door, they would be shot.<sup>194</sup>

The newscaster went on to say that it was the first time in history a Starman had been accused of a crime, and that it was a black day in history — especially for three such outstanding Starmen. He went on to say that Richard Starlight had vigorously defended the Starmen and was certain that they were being framed, but it was doing little good: SE's opinion had been seriously damaged because of what happened in JTP, and no one trusted them anymore.

Far away, on the Moon, Zip's father saw the news come over the evening newscast and nearly had a fit. "It's a lie!" he screamed. "They can't do that!"<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> The news is just what they wanted to hear: the planet had declared them enemies of the law and was trying hard to shoot them on sight. After just saving Mars, they really didn't appreciate this one bit.

<sup>194</sup> Here we have what is perhaps the largest theme of the book: if I had to put it into two words, it would be Bob Janoe. The Starmen didn't do anything worthy of punishment, and yet they are being hunted down by corrupt men simply because the corrupt men want to stay corrupt. The Starmen get to learn what it's like to be hunted outcasts, hated by the world at large, and hunted with deadly force. This must change the Starmen's makeup: after this adventure, they are a lot more grown up and don't put quite so much trust in people's opinions — they've learned that opinions can change in an instant.

<sup>195</sup> Here we can have Allen Foster's emotional reaction. The hunting of the Starmen would doubtless be system-wide news, and would not have thrilled Allen Foster one bit — or Kathy or anyone else. This perhaps could be expanded upon.

## PART II: The Rolling of the Stone<sup>196</sup>

### CHAPTER 12

The Starmen are exceedingly angry. They know they are not guilty of any crimes, but yet everyone seems to be against them – despite the fact they had done so much good and freed Mars not once but *twice*. They are extremely angry against the person who is framing them, and long to bring him to justice. They can't believe how fickle people are.<sup>197</sup>

The Starmen think things over and come to some conclusions. The person behind all of this is obviously Andy Regal. The spy brought them straight to Regal, and right after leaving Regal's office and telling Regal what they intended to do the framing began. Regal obviously had a huge spy network, and had traced the Starmen from the moment they first landed on Mars. Mark said that what probably attracted his attention was when they went out to the café: the scared old man was right. Once they broadcasted their interests there, they had been ruthlessly traced, and when they wouldn't be deterred Regal began using force.

But how could one man have such power? The Starmen could understand his launching his own spies, but how did he get control over the police force?

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Zip's eyes suddenly lit up. "Troy Putnam!" he gasped. The other Starmen looked at him expectantly. "Don't you see? It's Troy Putnam that is the cause of all this."

"But –" Mark hesitated. "Troy is in jail right now, Zip: we put him away ourselves. How could he be the mastermind of this?"

Zip shook his head. "No, no, no. Look. How was Troy Putnam able to take over Mars? He placed a bunch of insiders, that's how: he filled the top ranks of Mars with traitors. When we rescued Mars, we captured Troy Putnam but left all of Troy's insiders in place! We were so caught up over Troy and Zimbardo that we never went back to Mars to clean it up. All the people who were in charge when Troy came in are still in charge today."

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<sup>196</sup> Once again, it doesn't matter to me what the parts are labeled. I just took the theme of the verse apart and used it: first was the Stone, then the Rolling, and then the Wake (or results — namely, the stone 'rolls back' and does the opposite of what it is intended).

<sup>197</sup> Starmen are usually honored and revered: they aren't use to this kind of treatment and injustice.

Zip continued. “That is why Andy Regal has such power: the men in power on Mars are totally corrupt and willing to sell themselves<sup>198</sup>. Regal doesn’t have control over the old people who have been there a long time, but all the new folks that Troy put in can be easily used. Regal probably called up the mayor and told him to shoot us down, so the mayor launched the police after us. Probably a lot of the *real* police are outraged, as well as the general populous of Mars – but the guys chasing us were probably all new, and all personally loyal to Regal and not the law.”<sup>199</sup>

Zip sighed. “This is kind of our fault, guys. When we rescued Mars we forgot to sack all the bad guys. Now we are paying for it.”

Back at the SE base on Mars, Richard Starlight and Konig were reaching the same conclusion.

“Of course the Starmen aren’t guilty<sup>200</sup>,” Richard was saying. “The media’s story is as phony as a nine-solar-bill. Even assuming that the Starmen were murderous criminals bent on assassinating this well-respected millionaire, they could hardly just waltz into his office, shoot him, and then waltz out without anyone catching them or even noticing. That is the height of idiocy: it’s ludicrous. You can bet that a flea couldn’t even get into that office – or out of it – without an entire army knowing. That story is a flat lie.”<sup>201</sup>

Konig looked concerned. “A lie! Why, that would mean that someone is framing the Starmen deliberately. But who would do that, and why?” A ghastly look suddenly appeared on Konig’s face. “You don’t suppose –”

“I do suppose exactly that: it’s the only practical explanation. Unless, that is, you would like to assume that Andrew Regal was suddenly kidnapped under the nose of his private army, and that the brilliant kidnapper who pulled that feat off suddenly lost his mind and decided to frame the three most famous and upright Starmen of all time to throw the police off his trail. No criminal would even try to frame a Starman: it’s a wasted effort. It would be like trying to frame a rock for robbing a bank.”

Konig suddenly understood. “Why – hold on, it’s coming to me. The Starmen must have stumbled on to something, and Regal didn’t want the world to know, so he decided to frame them and take the opportunity to vanish. Regal, then, must have had

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<sup>198</sup> This is true, and is true because Putnam spent years maneuvering such people into places of power.

<sup>199</sup> This is all quite true.

<sup>200</sup> This is the beginning of a highly philosophical passage that I spent quite some time writing. I think that it fits well into the book and goes along with the various themes of the book, and I very much feel that we ought to keep it in. I don’t think it goes too far into preaching, and it’s appropriate.

<sup>201</sup> Once again, we have bad men acting foolishly. Whoever said that bad guys were masterminds who never made a mistake? You don’t have to be clever when you are in power: just look at some of our leaders.

something he wanted to hide badly, and felt that the best way to do it was to vanish and reappear as someone else. But what was he hiding from?”

Richard shook his head. “I’m not sure; it could be a number of things. That is what I want you to find out, and quickly. Whatever it is, it must have been bad enough to make Regal lose his head: he pulled a stupid stunt that completely blew his cover. The only reason it is working is because Mars hasn’t changed since Troy Putnam took over.”

“I’ll get right on it, Richard, but – ” Konig looked puzzled. “Mars hasn’t changed? What do you mean?”

“Do you remember how Putnam was able to take over? Putnam had a sizeable force, but he was able to invade Mars without hardly a shot being fired because he had a whole network of insiders. Putnam – or something – slowly corrupted Mars over a series of decades, and that corruption still remains. Putnam was captured, but the traitors he used to assume power are still there, the only difference being that they are now working for Regal. Unless we can move quickly, I fear that Regal will use the corrupt men placed in the justice system, police force and news networks to frame the Starmen, ruin them, and at the very minimum sentence them to jail for life – and seriously harm Starlight Enterprise and all Starmen in the process. There is more at stake here than meets the eye.”

Konig felt his spirits sink within him. “Does it never end, Richard? The Starmen have saved Mars twice now: how many more times must it be done? What kind of man would do this?”

Richard sighed. “A very ordinary man, I’m afraid<sup>202</sup>. Andrew Regal, if he is guilty, is not out of the ordinary. How many men will lie to save themselves trouble? How many men will steal a few solars here or there if they know they can get away with it? How many men are willing to betray another under pressure? Regal, and Zimbardo, and Putnam, are simply cases of normal vices taken to their logical limit. A man who lies a little here will grow bolder and go onto other lies<sup>203</sup>. These things are not new; they lie in every man. Some men simply take them further than others and descend further into darkness.”

“What is unusual are men like the Starmen: men who will not lie no matter what the cost, men who won’t steal, men who are loyal and respectful to the end. Men like

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<sup>202</sup> To put it slightly differently, men are basically evil and need redemption.

<sup>203</sup> This is our theme! Those in the light go further into the light, and those in the darkness go further into the darkness. To put it in Biblical terms, to those who have more shall be given, and to those who lack even that which he seems to have shall be taken away.

this aren't ordinary at all: they men made new by the light<sup>204</sup>, as different from the old man as light is from darkness.

"The reason Mars was ever in danger was because it is filled with old men: men walking in darkness, fearing and caring for no man but themselves. The Starmen aren't going to be able to change that: as much as they would like, they can't change an old man into a new man, for only the Light can do that<sup>205</sup>. Mars may have its ups and downs, but it will never be completely safe until the last darkness is banished<sup>206</sup>. Until then, we battle on, resisting the darkness wherever we can."

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 13

The Starmen had slept and refreshed themselves. They looked over the ship, and found it to be in pretty bad shape: there were gashes, holes, burnt marks, and more. The ship looked like it had just been through a war<sup>207</sup>. The Starmen decided to try to patch up the ship as best they could, while one of them stood watch. The scene outside was pretty depressing: the massive police fleets were crawling over every inch of the sky outside and firing at everything that moved<sup>208</sup>. Zip had a feeling that they would begin carpet-bombing the area soon: there seemed to limit to the madness going on. He knew that it was only a matter of time — probably a few hours — before they were found and blasted to atoms. He wished there was a place he could run and hide, but if they left their cave they were sure to be found...

Back in Eagle City, Richard Starlight had called for a city council<sup>209</sup>. A good many people were hopping mad at the Mayor for what he had done, and they wanted him to call off the ridiculous manhunt right away. Richard noted that no one had mentioned to him about the radar satellites suddenly going down: the general opinion was

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<sup>204</sup> They are made new by Christ: Christ transforms men from the 'old' evil style into a new style, made after His image.

<sup>205</sup> Only Christ can change the hearts of men: Starmen can reflect the light, but they can't change hearts.

<sup>206</sup> In other words, until Christ returns and evil is banished forever.

<sup>207</sup> Which it just had!

<sup>208</sup> Jerry, after not finding them, had doubled the intensity of the search. He was desperate: now that he had gone this far he had to finish it, and that meant an escalation of force.

<sup>209</sup> Richard new that appealing to Jerry wouldn't work, but he thought that if he could get the whole city together and then appeal to Jerry — and have the city listen as Jerry flatly said no — that the people would get upset and revolt. As it turned out, that is exactly what happened.

that the Starmen had done it — and he realized with a start that they actually could have, except he beat them to it.

The council room at the City Hall was packed with people from the city<sup>210</sup>. A number of reporters were there to broadcast the meeting live over the solar system<sup>211</sup>. Sixty-five city councilmen were there, as well as the Mayor himself who started the proceeding.<sup>212</sup>

Richard and some others told the Mayor that the way he was acting was totally unacceptable and a horrible crime, but the Mayor and his council would not listen<sup>213</sup>:

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Richard Starlight looked the councilman in the eyes, with anger smoldering inside him. “What you are proposing, councilman, is not justice at all. Do you call it *justice* to shoot Zip Foster on sight without a trial? Do you call it *justice* to look for the Starmen with cruise missiles and conduct a planetwide manhunt based on the flimsiest of evidence?” Richard's voice rose with passion. “The Starmen could never have waltzed into Mr. Regal's office, shot him, and then walked out without so much as even being noticed. It's lunacy to think that they could have passed all the guards around Mr. Regal without any trouble, and that they would have shot him in his office — with his secretary just a few feet away — when it would have been so much easier to shoot him somewhere else. Besides, the reputation of the Starmen —”

The councilman looked at Richard Starlight and interrupted him. “Their reputation does not matter, Mr. Starlight. What matters is the seriousness of the accusation<sup>214</sup>. These men are accused of a very serious crime, and when confronted with it they fled from the law. That in itself is admission to the crime.<sup>215</sup>”

Richard looked as if he was about to explode. “Of *course* they fled! You started firing lasers at them and riddled their ship with holes: if they hadn't fled they would now be part of the Martian desert. You didn't give them a chance to explain or go with the police to Eagle City.”

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<sup>210</sup> Just as Richard had hoped.

<sup>211</sup> Thus, the folks back on the Moon get to watch this! The Starmen will also see that Rick is on their side.

<sup>212</sup> 65 + the 1 mayor = 66, which is shades of 666.

<sup>213</sup> Here we have the beginning of another philosophical passage. I'm hoping that we can keep this one too.

<sup>214</sup> This is something we hear in our culture all the time today. This dialog looked like a good place to show how foolish it really is.

<sup>215</sup> Notice the unreasonableness of evil! This is just like real evil in our culture today: they talk about fairness all day long, but when it comes right down to it they don't care about being truly fair at all.

“We *had* to start shooting at them! ” another councilman said. “These are highly talented Starmen: if we didn't show we meant business we would have all been shot out of the sky. Anyone who would walk into an office and shoot someone for no reason is a ruthless criminal who ought to be treated roughly. ”

“Absolutely! ” the other councilmen echoed. “You've got it absolutely right, ” another said.

The mayor looked at Richard harshly. “You, mister<sup>216</sup>, have no credibility at all. Your firm was the one that tried to blow up the entire expedition to Nyx a few months back, right after you told the solar system how safe your new radiation shield was<sup>217</sup>. Besides, these are *your* Starmen: of course you're going to defend them. You don't care at all about real justice or real peace. These Starmen have got to be shot down out of the sky: it's the only way to ensure the future safety of Mars. ”

Richard Starlight fought down the impulse to sock the mayor of Eagle City<sup>218</sup>, and tried to calm his rising fierce anger. “Let me tell you something: if it wasn't for these three Starmen which you despise so much, Mars and all its people would still be held hostage by Troy Putnam, and both Earth and Mars would have been ravaged in a fierce war between Putnam and Space Command. These Starmen risked their lives *twice* to save this world and set its people free, and what a lot of thanks they get for it!”

Richard continued, hammering his point home. “You care nothing for justice at all: you assume guilty until proven innocent, and want to shoot down the Starmen before there is any chance of proving them innocent. Anyone can make up forged video evidence: I could just as easily 'prove' that the Starmen shot you yesterday evening and that you're dead. You and your men ought to be prosecuted for attempted murder, and if I have anything to do with it you will be. You councilmen have the dubious distinction of becoming the first men to ever try to publicly destroy a Starman, and you will go down in history for it.”

The mayor looked at Richard with an angry light in his eyes. “You're being very funny, Richard, but no one is going to listen to your lies. We know those Starmen are criminals, and we are going to shoot them down if it takes every last man we have got to do it.”

“Nothing is going to stop us!” another councilman echoed. The other members of the council murmured in agreement.

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<sup>216</sup> Notice how polite the mayor is! His rudeness makes Rick mad and gets him into trouble later on.

<sup>217</sup> This is another lie — a twisted half-truth, just the kind evil specializes in. The shield was Robert Nolan's, and SE didn't make any claims about it.

<sup>218</sup> The mayor is being extremely mean, but Richard still respects the office of the mayor and refuses to fight.



Richard looked at them and decided to try another attack<sup>219</sup>. “If –,” Richard paused, “if you do manage to shoot them down, you will have me to answer to, and I will be very, very angry. You seem to forget that you depend upon SE for the air you breathe, for the electrical power you use, and even for your transportation. If you demonstrate, by continuing your barbaric action against the Starmen, that you will shoot our employees on sight, then we will have no alternative but to take all our equipment off Mars and leave you to fend for yourself.”

The mayor turned red and glared at Richard angrily. “You wouldn't dare do that, Richard. Think of what it would do to the people here – to all the lives in the cities! You're worse than your own Starmen.”<sup>220</sup>

“Yes, mayor, why don't you think of that? I'm not going to leave my employees here when you are going around trying to shoot them: that would be insane, and I could be prosecuted for it. If SE is forced to leave, your people will be very unhappy, and they will only have you to blame.”

As the mayor spluttered, Richard continued. “Oh, you would live: you could bring in other people's equipment and keep things going. It wouldn't be much fun, though, but you would live.”<sup>221</sup> I can say this: I am *not* going to stay here and let you use our equipment to hunt down our own men, without trial. If you intend to do that, then you'll have to come up with your own equipment.”

Then Richard turned and walked out of the council room.<sup>222</sup>

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 14

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<sup>219</sup> I don't know why I put this in here. There are some scenes I would hate to see removed, but this isn't one of them. I think I put it in to show that Rick cares about his people: he's honestly not going to stay on Mars and do business if Mars is intent on shooting down his men. They could get along without him, but it would be a big statement. Also, it could be Rick's way of putting further pressure on Mars.

<sup>220</sup> Notice how the mayor is always shifting the blame and refuses to take any of it for himself.

<sup>221</sup> Rick would never withdraw life support from people who were dependent upon him: that really would be horrible. They could get along without him: they would just miss out on a lot of luxuries.

<sup>222</sup> As it turned out, Richard Starlight didn't have to carry out his threat. It did what it intended: it roused the people of Mars and it convinced them to do something quickly before Starlight took drastic measures. The people probably wouldn't admit it, but they realized that Starlight was serious and had the power to do what he threatened. I imagine that at least part of the reason for ousting Jerry the next day was to act before Starlight could begin withdrawing from Mars: they were probably at least a little scared and did not want to face the wrath of Starlight.

The next morning, Jerry was sitting in his office, directing operations. His men still had not found the Starmen, and Jerry was busy ordering around armored tanks<sup>223</sup> and sending his men to scour every inch of Mars. He was also having the fried radar satellites replaced: he hoped that within a few days they would be operational again — and this time the Starmen weren't going to be able to fry them so easily.

Jerry had a lot of friends in the press<sup>224</sup>, and he had gotten the newspapers rolling with a vicious campaign against the Starmen<sup>225</sup>. Jerry thought that it was going pretty well: aside from Richard, he hadn't seen any opposition at all to his plan. As long as he wasn't getting opposed by anybody, he intended to continue on until those three Starmen were squashed — even if it meant resorting to intensive bombing campaigns.<sup>226</sup>

At this point, Jerry's door suddenly flew open, and what looked like an entire army of angry protestors surged into his office<sup>227</sup>. Jerry got out of his chair angrily. "Just what do you think you're doing?" he shouted. "Get out of here at once, all of you, or I'm going to call the police and have you arrested."

The man who appeared to be the leader of the group stood on front of Jerry's desk and looked him in the eye. "You listen to me, Jerry. I represent the people of Eagle City, and we are totally fed up with the way you have been treating the Starmen and the way you have been treating Mars. I don't care what you think about the Starmen's guilt: you have no right to go around shooting first and asking questions later."

Jerry tried to interrupt, but the man plowed on like a steamroller<sup>228</sup>. "Listen to me: we here on Mars have had all we are going to take of you. We believe in something you might not have heard of called the *law* here. It states that you've got to *try* people in court before convicting them of guilt: you can't just decide to shoot someone out of the sky because your liver was bothering you that day. *We are not going to put up with what you are doing for one more minute.*"

Jerry looked at the man with an angry light in his eye. "You listen to me, mister. I am the law here, and I am going to see that those Starmen pay for what they did to one

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<sup>223</sup> Jerry can't find the Starmen, so he is escalating the violence yet again.

<sup>224</sup> Placed there by Putnam, of course.

<sup>225</sup> Shades of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"!

<sup>226</sup> Here we have yet another principle: if you don't resist evil, then it will grow and grow and get worse and worse.

<sup>227</sup> Here we have another principle. Corrupt men don't remove themselves from office: they must be resisted by the people. Rick alone couldn't fix things, but the people could rise up and legally remove the man from power and pressure him to behave. The Starmen got off only because all the people of the city saw that there was a problem, got upset with it, didn't listen to what the media was saying, and went out to demonstrate and fix it.

<sup>228</sup> The leader of the protestors isn't trying to get along with evil: he's steam-rolling it. No compromises or butts and no giving even an inch of ground: he's plowing right along.

of our finest citizens. You are totally powerless to stop me: I have all the cards in my hand and you have nothing."

The leader of the protestors motioned to someone standing nearby, and another protestor walked open to the windows behind Jerry and opened them. Immediately the room was filled with the cries of protestors: the streets below were jam-packed with people — angry people.

"You see, Jerry," said the leader, "you and your cronies might think you run things, but you forget that there are an awful lot of people in the government and down there who live and work on Mars and run Mars who don't happen to agree with you. A lot of policemen and soldiers who were here before you came a few years back aren't happy with what you are doing and support us to the hilt."

"I'm going to give you a choice, Jerry. You can either stop the vicious campaign *right now*, or we will all revolt and forcibly arrest you until the commission from Earth gets here to investigate. You are a fraction of an inch away from a civil war — and you can completely forget about getting reelected next term, because right now you couldn't even get one vote for city garbage collector from those people out there."

Jerry looked at the leader, and he looked at the angry crowd outside. He might have an army, but the army was far away right now, and the angry crowd was right here in the capitol: if he tried to refuse now he had a feeling that he was going to be in trouble.

Jerry picked up the phone and called off the manhunt.

"I'm not about to stop looking for them," Jerry warned the leader. "Perhaps I was a bit overzealous about it, but those are still vicious criminals and they must be captured at all costs."

The leader looked Jerry in the eye. "See that you be mighty careful how you look," he said. "I don't think you'll have to look very far to find a vicious criminal who ought to be behind bars."<sup>229</sup> With that, he and the protestors walked out of the room. When they were about to leave, the leader turned back and said to Jerry, "Remember now: we will be watching you. If you don't keep your word, we'll find out, and you will have an awful lot to explain when the commission gets here."

Jerry watched them leave nervously, and as soon as they were gone he pressed the speaker button on his phone. "Yes, secretary, get me Bob<sup>230</sup>, will you?"

A few moments later the voice of Bob was broadcasted through the speaker phone.

"Hey, Bob, what's this I hear about the commission from Earth?"

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<sup>229</sup> He is referring — a bit uncharitably — to Jerry, the mayor.

<sup>230</sup> I couldn't think of a good name, so I picked one out of nowhere. This can be changed to whatever fits.

Bob sounded annoyed. "Come on, Jerry, what do you think? Here you went and launched a rough campaign, and didn't even stop to consult Earth about it first. You're not exactly the big shot on Mars you know: the bigwigs back on Earth have veto power over you, and it seems that you forgot to consult them when you started your manhunt. They weren't too pleased with that, Jerry, not too pleased at all."

"But what are they doing?"

"What do you think they're doing? They've sent a bunch of important people over here to investigate you<sup>231</sup>: they'll probably be here in two weeks or less. There are lots of rumbles going on about taking you to court and putting you away for a long, long time to come: the President himself is just furious. I think, Jerry, that unless you can pull a rabbit out of your hat, you're not going to keep that precious office of yours much longer."

Jerry thanked Bob and hung up. "I'm not defeated yet," he said sullenly. "They won't get here for two weeks — and until they do, this is still *my* Mars. I've still got some resources, and I'm not going to go down without a fight!"<sup>232</sup>

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 15

While all that was going on, the three Starmen were working on their Star Ranger. They had already completed most of the repairs they could to their ship. There were still a number of things wrong with it and it didn't look at all new anymore, but they couldn't fix anything else without taking it to a repair shop, and that was out of the question at the moment.<sup>233</sup>

The Starmen got together and talked over what they should do. Zip said that they came all this way to find the ruined city, and now that they were here they might as well look for it.<sup>234</sup> From what he could tell on the news broadcast last night, Richard

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<sup>231</sup> In other words, the Rock was successful. If we wanted, we could elaborate on this and include the scene of his convincing Earth to do something about Mars.

<sup>232</sup> This is big talk, but Jerry doesn't do anything, and in the end he loses everything. His big campaign to vilify and crush the Starmen backfired when the people of Mars didn't listen and revolted, and in the end he found himself behind bars, he lost all his power, and he was pretty much toasted.

<sup>233</sup> It's hard for me to believe that they could fix all the problems with the ship way out in the desert: surely there is some damage that needs repair at a professional shop (maybe engine trouble, body damage, etc.) Hence this line.

<sup>234</sup> The Starmen's entire goal in coming to Mars in the first place was to find the city, and now they are at last there. They are kind of pinned down at the moment, and need to wait and see if Richard can call off the manhunt before they can uncover the conspiracy against them. Besides, the Martians might be able to help them, just as they helped them in TRA.

Starlight was fighting hard for them. They couldn't fight against the whole planet: they would have to lie low and see if Richard could help them.

Zip suggested that he and Mark go out and see if they could find the ruined city, while Joe stayed at the ship, kept an eye on the radar, and guarded things back home<sup>235</sup>. Then, the next day they could rotate who stayed home, and so on. Joe thought that sounded fine, so Zip and Mark packed up with plenty of air<sup>236</sup> and headed out of the ship.

Zip and Mark stayed in the shadow<sup>237</sup> of the rough torn terrain, and soon came to a place that looked just like what the old man had described. The jagged canyon below had something in it: it looked like a number of passages went in a variety of directions. Mark looked off into the distance, and saw the large fields of fungi (which weren't glowing in the daytime). Mark squinted, and saw that there were some large machines in the fungi<sup>238</sup> – far, far from where any machines were supposed to be. Mark nudged Zip and pointed, and Zip looked across the field at what was going on.

Back at the ship, Joe was keeping a careful lookout. He had a channel open with Mark and Zip, and listened to their conversation, as well as said a few words himself sometimes. Joe noticed that the radar waved now and then<sup>239</sup> – it looked almost as if the radar was detecting something that wasn't there, or as if space was warping. The radar was almost detecting something, Joe said, if that made any sense. Zip replied that the radar was probably just a bit damaged from the fierce battle they were in, and not to worry about it: the radar didn't have trouble picking up real objects.

About fifteen minutes later, Joe was badly startled when he saw two small metallic robots crawl to the entrance of the cave and enter it. Joe glanced at the radar and saw that the robots did not appear! Before Joe could do anything, he was hailed over the radio:

<begin actual text>

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<sup>235</sup> This is a security precaution: they must not lose their ship, because it has all their food, air, supplies, etc. Hence, they need to leave someone behind to guard it. An added bonus is that the Star Ranger has radar, and can detect people coming a long way off.

<sup>236</sup> Just a precaution in case something goes wrong.

<sup>237</sup> So they wouldn't be seen, of course.

<sup>238</sup> These would be the Banjoman's harvesters: the fungi are in bloom, and it's time to harvest their crop.

<sup>239</sup> The robots that are approaching knew that the Starmen would be watching out for them, so they equipped them with light shields, similar to what the Martians had. The robots aren't of Earth manufacture, but came from the Xenobots — they're technology stolen long ago from the Martians. Here the radar is detecting 'waves' because the shields aren't perfect.

“Hello there, Joseph. This is the Banjoman speaking. Do you see those two robots? One of them is holding an atom bomb<sup>240</sup>. That's right, Joe: an atom bomb. See that thermos bottle he has in his hand? That is a nuclear device powerful enough to blow up you, your ship, and your cave.

“I can detonate that, Joe, if you like: I can do it in seconds – not nearly enough time for you to leave your ship. I'll give you a choice: you can either leave your ship with your hands raised, or I will blow you to atoms.<sup>241</sup>

“Go ahead, Joe: scan it. See if I'm telling the truth or not. I'll wait. Just remember, Joe: I can see what you're doing. The robot is equipped with infrared scanners: he can see right through your ship and watch your every move. Don't try anything funny, Joe.”

Joe nervously scanned the robots<sup>242</sup>, and found the man was telling the truth: the one robot really *was* holding a nuclear device. His hands grew clammy.

Joe realized that he didn't have a choice, so he told the man that he would come out and follow them – and he did. But what he didn't tell the man was that the radio circuit was open<sup>243</sup>: Zip and Mark heard the entire conversation.

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 16

Joe followed one robot, while the other robot boarded Star Ranger. Joe asked the robot how they had spotted them, but the robot replied that that was none of his business.

Zip and Mark, who had heard the entire conversation, were scared now: very scared. They knew their enemy was desperate, but they had never counted on anything like that. They did not know how their enemy had known where they were – and what's worse, they didn't know how they had been able to approach the ship without being detected.

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<sup>240</sup> I have heard that it is possible to build a nuclear bomb with the aid of a certain isotope of mercury that is no bigger than a thermos can but is capable of vaporizing an entire city block. That's what this robot is carrying. The robot doesn't have any other weapons: it's just a general service droid.

<sup>241</sup> Note now neat the trap is! Joe is sitting there with all that equipment and weaponry, but it isn't any good at all. This also sets the stage later on when Joe temporarily escapes from the Banjoman and angers him.

<sup>242</sup> He was looking for radioactive materials — which are easy to find — and he found them.

<sup>243</sup> This, of course, alerts the Starmen and gets them to run and hide quickly. Otherwise they would have been out in the open and defenseless.

Zip and Mark broke out in a run, and ran down into the canyon, trying to find a place to hide. After getting inside a passage, Mark kept an eye out for enemies while Zip pulled out his compad<sup>244</sup> and activated it. After linking into the ship, he saw that his fears were accurate: the other robot was standing in front of the control panel, and had pulled the ship out of the cave and was about to fly it out.

Zip grimaced. He would let the robot fly it to his base, but he wasn't about to let the robot keep his ship. His ship had all his air supply and food, as well as his transportation! If he let his ship get away then he was in serious trouble.

Zip watches the ship fly at a high speed toward a certain area of Mars<sup>245</sup>. The ship then began circling, and Zip noted on the radar a complex down below. That must be one of the Banjoman's airfields! His base must not be too far off. Zip chuckled: the Banjoman was getting very careless to fly a ship directly to his base! He must not have been expecting that his flight would be traced.

After making sure that his compad had recorded everything, Zip activated his compad's controls and used it to suddenly gun the engines to full thrust, normally reserved only for interplanetary travel, and turn the ship almost straight up. Zip saw on his monitor that the sudden shock had launched the robot away from the controls and smashed it into the cockpit wall: the robot was now smashed into many pieces, and the wall had a huge dent in it.

Zip then began flying his ship back toward him, when he noticed that three ships had lifted off the airfield and began chasing him! Zip was not happy: his compad could control his ship, but it wasn't built for it and Zip didn't have very fine control. Zip did have one thing to his advantage: since the Star Ranger didn't have any people on it, he could make it turn turns and achieve acceleration that would have otherwise been impossible (i.e. the g forces would have killed the passengers of the ship instantly).

Zip then flew the ship at a high speed and made a sudden turn – and gasped when the ships following him did the same thing. Zip tried out a few other maneuvers, and realized that the ships that were following him must be robotic ships as well!<sup>246</sup> There was no way the ships could have followed him otherwise: the pilot would not have survived.

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<sup>244</sup> Remember JTP? Zip was able to contact the large ship and download data from it. It seems logical that the Star Ranger would work on remote control as well: the Starmen do dangerous things, and it would make sense to have a ship that could be controlled at a distance. This works to the Starmen's advantage, when the Banjoman makes yet another mistake.

<sup>245</sup> Note the total lack of precautions on the Banjoman's part. He is a very proud, arrogant man, and had no doubt at all of his success. This gets him into trouble several times, and eventually spells his doom.

<sup>246</sup> Here the Banjoman belatedly realizes that he made a big mistake. Some quick thinking told him that an unmanned ship could use high G forces and run rungs around a manned ship, so he sent up some unmanned planes to chase the Star Ranger. Unmanned planes could also get off the ground a lot faster than manned ones.

Zip looked at the dots on the tiny display of his compad and suddenly grinned. When he was younger, he used to play computer games, and one game he had played was an aerial warfare game.<sup>247</sup> Zip could never turn his plane tight enough to shoot down the planes trailing him, so what he often did was pilot his plane so that his two enemies collided and destroyed themselves.

Zip engaged in some tight maneuvers, and after a few minutes he had his desired result: the two robotic planes hit each other and burst into flames. Now Zip just had one fighter to deal with – but he just couldn't shake him. Zip knew that the other ship must be riddling the Star Ranger with laser holes<sup>248</sup>, and if he didn't do something fast he would soon have no ship at all.

Zip decided to try something desperate. He suddenly dived the plane straight toward the ground, then leveled off in a maneuver that would have smashed him flat if he had been aboard, and flew the plane at 3 times the speed of sound directly over the rough solid desert floor.<sup>249</sup> When the robotic plane was directly behind him, Zip instantly flipped the plane upside down and executed an extremely tight turn that made his plane pass directly above the plane that had been chasing him.<sup>250</sup>

Zip's plane buzzed the robotic plane and rammed into the robotic plane's tail, smashing it and tearing it off of the plane. Zip knew that the collision couldn't have done his plane any good, but he had to do it.

The result was immediate: the enemy plane lost control and smashed into the ground a few feet below it. The plane wildly skidded and slid over the desert floor for a few miles (carried by its momentum), until it hit the sandy portion of the desert, where it rammed into a sand dune at 300 mph. An immense column of sand flew up, and when it settled there was a long scar in the desert floor.

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<sup>247</sup> This is my little tribute to an old DOS 1980's computer game I have called Sopwith, which I have really enjoyed playing for years. It's a very primitive game, but it's a lot of fun to fly your Sopwith Camel off the ground and battle with enemy Red Barons — and crash them into each other in the sky.

<sup>248</sup> Com pads are small, and he probably doesn't have much of a display. Zip is depending a lot on the computer on board his ship to actually fly it: he's just giving it directions. Zip probably doesn't have enough room on his tiny screen to both control the ship and see the real-time damage report.

<sup>249</sup> Zip wants to take a look at the enemy ship, so he maneuvered it into a place where, once it lost power, it would settle down onto the ground very close by and slide into the desert, until it coasted to a stop. Had he tried this high in the air, the plane would have been destroyed when it hit the ground.

<sup>250</sup> This has actually been done before in real life: the Russians used to try it, and there is actually a Russian who did it and lived. It's definitely not recommended!



## CHAPTER 17

<begin actual text>

Meanwhile, inside the base, the Banjoman was furious. "You *idiots*! How *dare* you fly the Star Ranger directly here? Didn't you know that the Star Ranger could *easily* be traced by the Starmen through their compads?" He looked as if he was about to explode. "Listen: I don't care how you do it, but *exterminate those Starmen right now*. They *must* not escape and go tell everyone where we are and what we are doing."<sup>251</sup>

The Banjoman paused for a second, then an evil grin appeared on his face. "Call up the metal buckets, Fred<sup>252</sup>. Tell 'em that their enemy — the one that scared them off of Nyx<sup>253</sup> — is down there in that canyon. That ought to do it: a couple dozen of those tin cans ought to be able to take care of two Starmen."

The Banjoman then turned and glared at the rest of his men. "Listen, though: I want *all* of you *out there* looking for them!! You have got to find them, or else we'll all be in jail by nightfall. Get moving!!"

<end actual text>

Meanwhile, Zip guided the Star Ranger into the canyon and hid it deep inside a cave in the wall. Zip figured that for whatever reason, the enemy must not be able to see inside the canyon or else they would have already captured the Starmen. The canyon wasn't the best place to hide, but it would have to do for now.

Zip and Mark crawled out of the canyon and looked around. Zip had been careful when he maneuvered the ship, and the robotic ship had smashed into a dune not far from the canyon entrance. Zip did this because he wanted to examine the ship: it was not one that he recognized, and he had a chilling feeling that he had seen architecture like it before.

Zip and Mark cautiously made their way toward the buried ship. The ship was mostly buried inside the dune, but it had made a colossal mess of the sand dune (as well as the ship — parts of it were everywhere), and it was still possible to get inside the ship

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<sup>251</sup> The Banjoman knows where the Starmen are, but now he doesn't dare call up the mayor Jerry and get the police to arrest him, because the Starmen know too much. Most likely, the Banjoman called up Jerry and told him to move his forces somewhere else for the time being, so that there would be no one around to watch.

<sup>252</sup> Before, the Xenobots were allied with Troy Putnam. Then they were allied with Zimbardo. Now, they are allied with the Banjoman. The Xenos keep changing allies, to support the worst bad guy around.

<sup>253</sup> The Banjoman would have discovered, through his Xenobot network, what had happened on Nyx and would know that the Xenos don't have a very fond feeling about the Starmen. They might not listen to anything he says, but they would jump at the chance to get these two particular Starmen.

(after brushing away a bit of sand). Zip knew that the enemy would be after them soon, but he wanted to get a look inside.

Zip stepped inside the control room, and found that his guess was right: the ship was not a robotic fighter at all, but simply a ship which had been controlled remotely.

Mark activated the ship's computer, and found that it would still work. The ship had slowed down considerably by the time it hit the dune, and the dune had helped cushion the impact: while the structure of the ship was badly damaged and the ship would never fly again, its hardy circuits were still awake and active.

Zip asked Mark<sup>254</sup> to search through the ship's computer while he looked around, and told Mark what he was looking for. Zip said that the ship looked very familiar to him: its architecture resembled the ships he had seen on Nyx!<sup>255</sup> It was the same basic totally alien pattern. Zip noted the seats, and saw that they weren't part of the ship itself: someone had come along later and bolted them to the deck. The labels on the control panel weren't originally in English either: someone had taped English labels on them. Zip felt his hunch was right: this fighter was a Xenobot ship, and implied that the Banjoman was in league with the Xenobots.

Then, this scene occurred:

<begin actual text>

Mark looked at the screen incredulously. "Zip, look at this! This is fantastic!"

Zip looked at where Mark was indicating and his brow furrowed. "Ok, Mark, just what am I looking at?"

"Do you see this number over here? This is the thrust the vehicle ordinarily gets: it's a sizeable amount, but nothing extraordinary." Mark pressed a few buttons. "Here is the ships speed...its firepower...fuel capacity..."

Zip nodded. "It looks like this ship is a pretty decent ship, Mark: I imagine the smugglers got a lot of good use out of it."

Mark nodded impatiently. "Yes, Zip, those numbers aren't bad – but look at *these*." Mark pressed a button, and suddenly all the numbers increased by several orders of magnitude.

Zip almost choked. "You've got to be kidding! There's no way this crate could move that fast or have that much power! There's got to be a mistake somewhere."

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<sup>254</sup> Mark, of course, is the expert with computer systems: he did the searching in TRA and JTP, so he would be the natural one to do this.

<sup>255</sup> I wanted Zip to find out about the Xenos limitation (that is, why they haven't invaded the solar system — I wanted to tie up that loose end), and hence I worked it out so Zip could have this particular ship to explore. As to how the Banjoman got it: perhaps the Xenobots have been providing him with ships, since they are in league with each other.

Mark shook his head. “There’s no mistake about it. This ship was designed with those speeds in mind: its hull strength, laser battery size, and everything about the ship was optimized for that set of numbers.”

“Well then, I don’t understand! Why were the smugglers only using a fraction of the ship’s power? They could have blown every police vessel out of the sky with this ship, so why didn’t they?”

“The answer is simple, Zip: it’s because this ship isn’t plugged in. You see,” Mark paused for a moment to gather his thoughts, “this ship has two different types of drives. The first drive is a normal nuclear fusion drive: there’s nothing very special or extraordinary about it. That is the drive the ship has been using: as of right now, that is the only power source the ship has, so it has been the pilot’s only choice.”

“However, the computers tell me that the ship has the capacity to draw power from an outside source. There’s a little box on this machine that can draw fantastic amounts of power from somewhere out in deep space. I have no idea how it works, or where that power source ‘way out yonder gets it power<sup>256</sup>. The fact of the matter is, this ship was designed to operate solely on that power source, but the Xenobots tacked on a nuclear fusion drive so they could operate without it.”

A light began to dawn in Zip’s mind. “So they could operate without it!” The whole picture suddenly clicked. “Mark – that must be why the Xenobots are in the shadows! All their devices must depend on this – this outside power source, and since they can’t tap into it from here they can’t oppose us directly. That’s why they are working through men such as Zimbardo and the Banjoman! They *can’t* come here, except in little fighters!”

Mark shook his head. “There is another alternative, Zip, that is much more likely. The Xenobots are definitely an interstellar race. Since they depend on this power source, it must not be hard to port around from star to star. It is more likely that the Xenobots are preoccupied right now looking for the Benefactors, and simply haven’t bothered to port their power source over. Zimbardo’s crew on Nyx told us that the Xenobots look upon us as being beneath their notice: we’re not even worth bothering about. Their sheer hatred for all forms of life has led them placing a few agents here to stir up trouble and try to get us to kill ourselves, or to weaken ourselves to the point where even the Xenobot’s ‘weak’ ships could crush us.”

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<sup>256</sup> Zip couldn’t know this, but we had already discussed this in our files: the Xenobots get their power from mining the Sun. A rather large space station is placed in orbit around each star, and it pulls power from the Sun. The various ships, then, draw power directly from the space station. The Xenos didn’t invent this technology: they stole it from a civilization they conquered, and thus they don’t really understand how it works.

“If that is the case, then we are sitting ducks: at any moment they might decide we are becoming bothersome, and simply port their power generator to this star – and then wipe us out as if we were defenseless.<sup>257</sup>”

Zip’s throat grew dry. “That means that if we do defeat the Xenobots here – if we push them back yet again, as we did on Nyx –there is the chance that they might get tired of us –”

“—after which it would all be over.”

“We must have more information, Mark!” Zip pleaded urgently. “It can’t be that hopeless. The Xenobots have a weakness: they rely completely upon this power source. We’ve got to find out more about it. How large is this power source? Where would they build it? How does it operate? If we could jam it – if we could keep them from building it in the first place – then we might have a chance. But we’ve got to find out more about it –”

“—and that means the Benefactors!” Mark suddenly understood.

“They’re our only hope, Mark. They have dealt with the Xenobots before: they would surely know how their systems worked. They *must* have the answer, and we have got to find them. They are the key to our whole problem, Mark. We can’t rescue Joe because the Banjoman has all of Mars against us. We can’t attack the Banjoman because the Xenobots are guarding him. We can’t go after the Xenobots because we just don’t have the knowledge – but the Benefactors do! They’ve dealt with them before. We’ve got to find them, and quickly. We *must* be close: they’ve got to be here.”

<end actual text>

The Starmen then got out of the ship quickly and ran back to the canyon. As they did so, they saw some ships fly through the sky. Zip’s blood ran cold: they were the familiar hexagon ships when he had seen on Nyx. There were three of them, and they landed and formed a triangle around the opening of the canyon.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> This, of course, is the accurate explanation!

<sup>258</sup> The Xenobots could cloak their ships, but the whole purpose of being there is to keep the Starmen hemmed in and very scared. They want the Starmen to see them and panic. They aren’t afraid of the police or anyone else seeing them, because the Banjoman called up Jerry and made sure that no one else was around.

## CHAPTER 18

Joe, meanwhile, has been walking steadily toward the Banjoman's base, guarded by a robot holding an atom bomb in one of his claws. Joe longed to try to escape, but he knew that if he even tried he would be blasted to atoms.

Presently Joe saw something in the distance, ahead of him. In the distance was a large lake, hidden among thick trees. In the middle of the lake was an island, with a small base on it. Above the base was a large cloud.<sup>259</sup> Joe looked at the base and had a feeling that the small base was actually a gigantic underground complex, and that Joe was about to get an up-close and personal look at it.

The robot brought Joe to the edge of the base, and soon a bridge extended across to the shore. The robot had Joe cross it, and the robot followed behind. As soon as they were across, the bridge closed.

Joe and the robot then walked inside the base, and the robot brought him to a room deep underground. The robot then stopped, and a door opened – and Mr. Regal stepped out!

Mr. Regal looked at Joe and smiled. "Welcome, Joe," he said. "It's great to have you here."

Joe instantly lunged at Mr. Regal, knocking him hard across the floor, and he laid on the floor unconscious. Joe then reached inside his coat, pulled out his laser, and ran. "What a fool!" he thought. "Imagine coming at me unarmed. The only defense he had was that tin bucket back there, and all he had was an atom bomb – and there was no way he was going to detonate that bomb *inside* the base with Mr. Regal standing there!"

Joe ran down an empty hallway. "I've got to find Steve Cliff and get out of here. They've got to have him in here somewhere: they wouldn't have dared impersonate him otherwise." Joe looked down the hallway and suddenly found what he was searching for. "A data port!" he whispered. Joe ran to the port, pulled out his compad, and connected it. A quick search showed that there was a prisoner down below; his compad mapped a route to it.<sup>260</sup> "It's got to be Cliff," Joe muttered. "At least, I hope."

Joe began running down the hallway.

In the base above Joe sat a very concerned security officer. He had just seen Mr. Regal knocked out and Joe grabbing his gun and running away. The officer immediately

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<sup>259</sup> Here is your African lake scene, David! You told me that you wanted the bad guy's base to be in the middle of a lake, with a perpetual cloud over it — something about how there was a lake in Africa like that. Well, here you have it!

<sup>260</sup> Here we have a tribute to Star Wars! I put this one in deliberately. In *Star Wars: A New Hope*, R2D2 plugged into a data port on board the Death Star to find the cell where the princess was being held.

alerted the security force, but the officer saw that there wasn't much of a force to alert: most of the men were out in the desert, combing it in search of the Starmen.

The officer alerted what men he could, and sent them down the hall to chase Joe.

Joe quickly raced down one hallway after another. Soon, however, he heard footsteps behind him: loud footsteps. Joe turned his head over his shoulder and saw that a group was chasing him in the distance. Joe pulled out the laser he had taken from Mr. Regal and tried to fire it – only to find out that it wouldn't fire! Joe suddenly realized that Mr. Regal must have been using a gun with a lock on it, which could only be fired by its owner. Joe suddenly realized that he was in lots and lots of trouble.

While Joe tried to run faster, he suddenly felt something hit him *hard*. He slammed into the floor, and everything went black.

## CHAPTER 19

Meanwhile, Zip and Mark watched the three Xenobot ships land and form a triangle around the canyon. Out of the ship emerged a troop of roughly two dozen Xenobots, which fanned out and formed lines between the ships.<sup>261</sup> From those lines, two very tough-looking Xenobots emerged, armed heavily with enormous-looking rifles. Zip was chilled: he had seen what Xenobot laser rifles could do on Nyx, and the guns these creatures carried were much bigger.

The two Xenobots began approaching the canyon while the rest stayed and formed a guard line around the rim.

Zip and Mark decided that now would be a great time to explore the caves in the walls and see if there was any place where they could hide. They didn't dare fly their spaceship out now: if they even tried the Xenobots would blast it out of the sky. They were stuck now, but good.

In the distance, hidden in the shadows of a cliff, a tall figure was watching the scene through binoculars.<sup>262</sup> He appeared concerned about what was happening, and spoke a few words into a small communications device he was holding. After hearing an answer, he looked concerned, and stepped back into the shadows.

Zip and Mark fled deeper and deeper inside the long maze of caverns. The complex wasn't exactly a city, but it wasn't exactly a normal passage of caves, either: it was

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<sup>261</sup> Once again, the Xenobots *want* to intimidate the Starmen.

<sup>262</sup> This is Jorgen, keeping a watch over them! He's very concerned about what he sees, and decides to visit Richard Starlight and get him to rid the area of the Xenobots.

more like a maze of twisty passages, all alike<sup>263</sup>. Zip and Mark knew that they could be easily trapped here, but they didn't know what to do.

Above them, they heard an awful noise. They both knew what it was: the Xenobots were tracking them, and instead of running through the caves after them they were simply shooting their way through the walls and carving passages of their own.

At the same moment, Richard Starlight was sitting in his office, concerned. Richard had not been able to get the manhunt called off entirely (although its ferocity had been greatly reduced), and the planet was still being scoured by the police. No one seemed to be listening to him there on Mars: he was immensely frustrated. He didn't know where the Starmen were: he had a feeling they hadn't been found yet, but he wished he knew more.

At that moment, a figure rushed into his office.<sup>264</sup> The man had a strained look on his face, and looked at Richard urgently. "We've found the Starmen," the man said. "They're in trouble, and they need your help immediately."

Richard jumped out of his chair. "How did you find them?" he said as he followed the man through the SE buildings.

"It was easy," the man said. "Have you forgotten already? All SE ships are equipped with tracers. SE ships weren't built with hiding in mind: space travel – especially the kind the Starmen do – is so dangerous that it is wise to equip ships to make them easy to trace. Therefore, the Starmen's ship has a little device in it that gave us its location. No one knows about this but SE; I don't know how you forgot."

Richard Starlight looked at him with big eyes. "Do *what*? I never knew –"<sup>265</sup>

"Later, Richard – look, here they are." The man pointed to the radar screen in the outer office, and Richard clearly saw the Star Ranger on the map<sup>266</sup> around a certain crevice in the ground. He also saw that the Star Ranger was surrounded by three large ships, and that a whole number of little dots were between the ships.

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<sup>263</sup> Here we have my tribute to the first text-adventure computer game of all time (which dates 'way back to the 70's). In this game, there was a very famous portion in which you wandered aimlessly about a maze, and the only thing the game printed on the screen was this phrase: "You are lost in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike!"

<sup>264</sup> This is Jogren, of course.

<sup>265</sup> Jogren didn't have a lot of time to think up a convincing explanation, so he did the best he could. He knew that Rick would find out later who he was, but he didn't mind. Rick could never prove he was an alien, anyway, since there was absolutely no evidence of his visit — or of any of the other visits Jogren had paid.

<sup>266</sup> This is the wizardry of the Martians. Previously, it was stated that when Richard shot down the radar network around the planet, the radar map on his wall went dead. The Martians hacked into his system and 'revived' it temporarily: when Richard returned to his office later, the map on his wall was dead again.

The man pointed. “Look, Richard, here is the Star Ranger. Here,” he pointed, “are three Xenobot ships. They have sent two men inside the canyon to chase the Star-men. The Starmen can’t leave because the only way out is being guarded by these ships, and they can’t run because of all the guards among the ships. Now...” he told Richard what he had in mind.

Richard nodded. “That ought to work! I’ll do it immediately.” Richard began running off toward his ship.

## Chapter 20

Deep below the surface of Mars, the Starmen were running wildly.<sup>267</sup> They heard the Xenobots approaching closer and closer, and knew that it was only a matter of time before the Xenobots caught up with them. The Starmen were tired: they were hot, out of breath, and on their last bit of energy.

Suddenly, Mark cried out. “*Look!*” Mark pointed, and Zip saw that a doorway ahead was glowing!<sup>268</sup> Zip recognized that particular glow: it was the same one which had guided them on board Tharsos! Zip and Mark ran toward the glowing doorway, and once they passed it they saw another glowing doorway, then another, and another.

Presently the sound of the chasing Xenobots grew quieter and quieter, and Zip knew that he was being led deep underground<sup>269</sup>. But – to where?

Far above them, Richard Starlight flew his personal spacecraft toward the fray. Richard lined up his approach so that his ship passed over two of the Xenobot ships, and at a height of about 40 feet, he passed over the two ships and the line of Xenos at 5 times the speed of sound<sup>270</sup>. The fierce sonic shock wave, coupled by the extremely turbulent sand carried by the shock wave, pulverized both Xenobot ships and sent Xeno-

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<sup>267</sup> The Starmen don't know where they are going, but they know they can't go back — and the Xenos are getting closer.

<sup>268</sup> The Martians decide it's time to give the Starmen a hand, so they pull the Tharsos trick again. By doing it this way, they can help the Starmen without the Xenos even knowing they are there: had they sent an alien, the Xenos could have detected it on their long-range radar.

<sup>269</sup> And out of the range of the Xenobot's radar! Part of the reason they stopped following them is because they lost track of them, and the other part is because Richard had just vaporized all their ships.

<sup>270</sup> This is not a new trick by any means, but it is quite effective! Sonic booms are immensely powerful, especially at close range. At five times the speed of sound, Richard would have flown over the Xenobots and be clear beyond the horizon before the Xenos even realized he had come.



bots flying everywhere. Richard then turned and flew over the remaining Xenobot ship, and it, too, was pulverized by the shockwave.<sup>271</sup>

Highly pleased, Richard loitered his plane high above the scene and watched the Xenobots scatter to the wind<sup>272</sup>. Once they were gone, he flew his plane in low and headed into the canyon.

Deep underground, the Starmen came to a small dead-end room. At one end of the room was a large solid metal vault door.<sup>273</sup> Zip looked at it for a moment, wondering if they were expected to try to open it, when the door opened of its own accord.<sup>274</sup> Beyond the door was what looked like an elevator, and Mark and Zip stepped in.

After they stepped in, the vault door closed behind them. A button lit up on the control panel, and Zip pressed it. The elevator then began descending.

Zip relaxed: he knew that at last they were safe. An overwhelming sense of relief poured over him. They were safe! He had begun to wonder if he would ever feel secure again. At last the two Starmen began to relax, as they felt themselves descend further and further into the dormant heart of Mars.

## CHAPTER 21

After descending for a long time, the door opened and Zip stepped out into an enormous room.<sup>275</sup> The room was lit with a cold gray light, and was so huge that he couldn't see the end of it for the haze in the distance. It reminded Zip of the power plant he had walked through on Tharsos, except this room had miles upon miles of shelves, stretching from one end of the room to the other. The whole room seemed to exist just to house an endless number of shelves, which stretched as high as he could see and for as far as he could see.

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<sup>271</sup> There are three ships, each at the point of a triangle, and hence only two can be flown over at once. Jogren couldn't do this because (a) his ship might be detected, and (b) that would risk giving their presence away to the Xenos — and they didn't dare do that.

<sup>272</sup> The Xenos knew they were licked, and only wanted to get away before Rick came back.

<sup>273</sup> Shades of the manhole and elevator on Eros in *The Forgotten Star*!

<sup>274</sup> As all doors have when the Martians are around. If the Starmen were to have come back later, they would never have found the door: the caves are not ordinary caves, and are controlled by the Martians to ensure that no one finds them.

<sup>275</sup> I picture this as a room the size of the power plant, completely hollow. Inside, at spacing of about 10 feet between rows, are rows upon rows of shelves. Each shelf has an 8 ft niche in it to hold a Martian mummy, and the niches are stacked on top of each other clear up to the ceiling. It's like a room filled with bookcases, but on the shelves are mummies instead of books.

Zip walked up to a nearby shelf and saw that there was a dried-out mummy on it inside a glass case<sup>276</sup>! A small golden plaque was on the wall beside the mummy; Zip guessed that the plaque had information regarding who the mummy was. Zip looked around, and guessed that there must be thousands upon thousands upon thousands of mummies here. But – why store so many mummies like this? Was this a graveyard – but if so, then why not bury them?<sup>277</sup>

Zip and Mark looked around for a while, but they didn't see anything but endless rows of mummies. The elevator light from whence they came started pulsing, so the Starmen headed back to it. Zip guessed that they were supposed to see something here, and that the Benefactors wanted to tell them something without revealing themselves, but he didn't understand what he was supposed to see.

Once they were inside the elevator, the door closed behind them and the button at the very bottom of the row of buttons lit up. Zip pressed it and felt the elevator descend further. The door opened a few moments later, and this time Zip stepped out into a long hallway. To Mark, it looked like some sort of ancient art gallery: on the walls were painted murals<sup>278</sup>, one after the other, stretching for hundreds of feet.

Mark looked at a mural nearby, and nearly shouted. "Zip, look at this!" he pointed. "These murals are depicting what must be the history of the Martian race!" He looked at the one nearest the elevator, which depicted a small tribe of Martians living in huts, hunting game inside a deep green forest. The following stylistic murals showed the Martians developing: they developed flight, learned about rocketry, sent up rockets, and soon were flying around the solar system. One mural depicted the construction of Tharsos: dozens of engineers were working on excavating and installing the base deep inside the moon, with a full Mars visible in the background.

As the Starmen walked on down the hallway, they saw the Martians take Tharsos and launch an expedition into the heart of the galaxy, searching for alien races. Things went fine for a while – and then a dark shadow appeared over the murals. The Martians met up with the Xenobots, and saw the total destruction they had wrought on

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<sup>276</sup> The case simply adding further protection: it's not actually interacting with the mummies. These are mummies in deep suspension: they are dried out in the process Mike Dodd talked about. They aren't like the ones on board Tharsos that can be revived by the press of a button.

<sup>277</sup> It's simple: as Zip realizes later, this is a grand storage room of mummies! There are probably around a million mummies in this room alone — and the elevator had dozens of buttons, each leading to another room. In this complex alone was something like 30 million suspended Martians, and this was not the only complex on Mars.

<sup>278</sup> This is a way to tell the Starmen what is going on, without actually having the Martians reveal themselves. In the first chapter, the Martians aren't sure of the Starmen yet: they want to tell them their story, but they don't want to put themselves at risk. Hence, they let them see the murals and watch their reaction. Later on, Jogren comes in person and tells the same tale to Joe, who was with the Banjoman at the time and missed seeing these. I see these as highly stylistic, colorful, and beautiful: something like the Marshal South mural I saw in California. It's the Hall of History.

planet after planet. One mural showed the Martians loading up little tiny men (Titians, Zip guessed) upon Tharsos and flying them to Mars to keep them out of the path of the encroaching Xenobots.

Then, the Xenobots attacked: a mural showed a surprise fleet of Xenobots sweep into the solar system and pulverize Mars. Almost overnight the lush, green planet was reduced to a lifeless piece of rock. The Xenobots tried to press on to Earth, but the Martians used Tharsos to stop them and drove them out of the solar system – and after rallying, clear back to their home planet, where they crushed them completely.

The next mural showed a group of Martians returning to the dead world that was once their home. Zip saw from the expressions of the figures in the painting that the Martians were sad: they had won the war but they lost their home. Rather than rebuild it, the next scene showed the Martians undergoing some treatment, then being carried into huge rooms lined with shelves – just like the one Zip and Mark just saw! From the colorful mural, it was evident that what was happening was that the Martians were placed into some sort of deep suspended animation, where they could sleep on for millennia, watched over by careful watchmen.

The following mural showed the Martians sleeping, while Earth began developing and experimenting with space flight. Then, the Xenobots returned: the Martian ships found Xenobot scouts in the Asteroid Belt. The mural showed the Martians hiding and leading the Xenobots away from their home, safe for the moment but not forever.

It was here that the color murals ended – but Zip saw that, drawn on the rest of the wall were murals of a dark pencil, which were yet to be colored in<sup>279</sup>. In a moment after looking at them Zip realized why: the color represented events which *had* happened, while the black line drawings represented the future – what the Martians hoped *would* happen.

The following mural showed a group of men – and Zip realized with a start that he and his friends were among that group – chasing the Xenobots out of the solar system and banishing them. Then, the Martians emerged from underground and began reviving their sleeping race. To do this, they got out huge machines and began harvesting the glowing fungi (so that's what it's for! thought Zip), crushing it, and using substances extracted from it to bring the suspended Martians out of their sleep.<sup>280</sup> Once they were revived, they began rebuilding Martian cities and rearming Mars.

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<sup>279</sup> Here the Martians have painted what they think will happen, if all goes well. It's a simple way to tell Zip what they want to happen, and see if he will support it or not, and what he does about it. I thought that using the murals was a much more interesting (and unique) way to communicate everything to the two Star-men than having yet another long dialog.

<sup>280</sup> Notice the deliberate contrast! The Martians used the glowing fungi to give life: the Banjoman used it to give death.

The next scene showed a fleet of ships, some of Earth design and some of Mars, heading out of the solar system to fight against a horde of Xenobot ships. The fleet was lead by the asteroid Tharsos.

The very last mural disturbed Zip and haunted him for a long time after. It showed the entire nation of Xenobots running to Zip, trying desperately to get him to stop doing something – Zip couldn't tell what, but it was obvious from the picture that whatever Zip was about to do would end the Xenobots once and for all and win the war<sup>281</sup>. However, the scene was not triumphant: a long dark shadow laid over Zip, and his two friends watched him from a great distance with sorrow. Zip wondered for a long time afterward what it meant.

## CHAPTER 22

Far above the two Starmen, Richard Starlight flew his ship in slowly toward the place where he knew the Star Ranger was. Richard had not been able to get the mayor of Mars to call off the manhunt against the Starmen completely. Richard, then, had an idea: he had decided to take the Star Ranger himself and pilot it deep into the Asteroid Belt<sup>282</sup>. This would make the mayor think that the Starmen had left Mars to go hide, and would divert attention away from the Starmen – hopefully for long enough to enable the Starmen to finish whatever it was they were trying to do.

Richard parked his ship next to the Star Ranger, and got out to look at it. He was shocked: the ship was badly scarred, banged up, scored with deep holes and grooves, and in general looked like it had gone through three world wars. He could hardly believe that the ship could actually fly.

As Richard approached the ship to board it, he suddenly heard a rough voice behind him. “And just what do you think you’re doing?” the voice asked him. Richard whirled around, and saw himself confronted by a large, burly, rough-looking man – who was aiming a high-powered laser pistol right at him.<sup>283</sup>

<begin actual text>

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<sup>281</sup> This is a reference to Starman #23, The Last Command. The Martians don't know if Zip will survive in the end or not (I know we haven't decided this ourselves yet, and there's no need to decide it anytime soon), so they painted a shadow over him. This will haunt Zip for a long time to come.

<sup>282</sup> The Belt is nearby and offers lots of great hiding places!

<sup>283</sup> Here we have a Wind Person! The Martians didn't do everything themselves: they depended on an entire network of people, and interacted with them in the same way that they interacted with Rick and the Starmen. Here we let the reader know what is going on, and that the Starmen have support they don't even know about.

Deep underground on Mars, the two Starmen were talking over the murals.

“What do you think of them, Zip?” Mark asked. “Do you think that the Martians know the future and have painted it here for us to show us what has happened and what is going to happen?”

Zip shook his head. “I don’t think so, Mark. If the Martians knew that those things were going to happen, then they would be history to them, and they would have colored them in. I think that they left them in charcoal because they are predictions: they are what they want to happen, and what could happen if everything goes well.”

“Obviously, a lot of that depends on us. Did you see that one mural that depicted us driving out the Xenobots? The Martians must be weak: they don’t dare emerge from their hiding place until the Xenobots are gone, and they can’t drive them out themselves. That’s why they brought us down there: to show us their history and explain their problem. *The Martians need our help as much as we need theirs*. If we let them down and don’t drive the Xenos out of the solar system, then they will be toasted just as much as we are.”

Mark shook his head. “That’s a tall order, Zip. Obviously the Martians think we can do it, but I don’t have all the confidence that they have.”

“I don’t either, Mark, but what can we do? I wish I knew why the Martians didn’t come out and talk to us in person: they’ve got to know we are here and are on their side.”

Mark thought a moment. “A lot is riding on removing the Xenobots from the solar system, Zip. If they trust the wrong person and the Xenos find them, then their whole civilization will be destroyed, and their long wait will have been in vain. It *could* be that they want to test us first, and find out what we will do when we are *really* under pressure. Or, it could be that the Martians won’t get chummy until the Xenobots are gone and there is no longer any danger.”

“What *I* want to know is what they meant in that last mural. For some reason, Zip, they think that you will be the key in the last battle against the Xenobots – yet instead of painting a victorious painting showing their last enemy defeated, they painted a somber one with a long shadow over you. What does it mean?”

Zip shook his head. “I don’t know, Mark: I can’t imagine. But I think it will haunt me until the last war begins.”

Zip was about to walk back onto the elevator, when Mark spotted a small side passage. He called for Zip to come over and take a look, and the two Starmen walked inside a small room. The room, which was ornately decorated, had a small pedestal in the middle of it with a large leather-bound book<sup>284</sup>. On the walls of the room was writ-

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<sup>284</sup> This is a Bible. This room is at the very lowest level of the compound: it is at the very foundation of Mars. What ought to be at the foundation of a civilization? God, of course — and hence this room. On the

ing: letters had been carved large and deep into the four walls of the room. Zip looked at the walls for a minute, and realized with a start that the symbols on the four walls were exactly the same: while he couldn't read the alien message, the message was repeated on all four walls.

Mark walked up almost reverently to the book on the pedestal and picked it up. He thumbed through it, and saw rows and rows of words – alien words which he could not understand. “I wonder what all this means?” Mark wondered aloud. “This room must have meaning: it feels like a special place. I hope that one day we can have someone come back here with us and translate it.”

After agreeing with him, Zip and Mark walked back out the door – and saw two cloaks lying in front of the elevator! Zip and Mark both started. “Cloaks! But where did those come from?” Zip wondered.

“The Benefactors must have been here just seconds before! They came here while we were in the room, left these, and vanished. But – why?”

Zip picked one up. “Hmmm. These look just our size. You don't suppose – I wonder.” Zip picked one up and tried it on: it fit perfectly. He felt something solid touch his waist, and he looked down and saw a small machine with a knob on it. He turned the knob – and to Mark's amazement. Zip vanished from sight.<sup>285</sup>

“Zip!” Mark called.

“I'm right here,” Zip said reassuringly. “I haven't moved – but I can't even see myself.” Zip turned the knob the other way, and he reappeared. A broad smile appeared in Zip's face. “Well, what do you know,” Zip said. “I bet this is just the thing we need to rescue Joe and Cliff! This must be how the Martains can get around without being seen.”

A twinkle appeared in Mark's eye. “I'm sure you're right Zip. This is just what we always wanted: a cloaking device<sup>286</sup>!” Zip swung a punch at him for that awful pun, but missed.

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walls are written, four times, the two commandments that Christ said are greatest of all. This is simply a scene that occurred to me some time ago, and it fit here, so I put it in. I have in mind a scene much later on in the series, when Zip goes back to this room with a Martian, and he translates everything and tells Zip why they chose this as their foundation. I have no idea if that second scene will ever appear in the series, but it's in my head.

<sup>285</sup> I put these in because they were used in the first Inter\*Stellar story: when the Martians came in and stole the scientist's evidence, they were invisible — cloaked. Hence, it makes sense that the Martians (who know the Starmen need to hide) would give them these two hide themselves with. I suppose that these could be deleted from the plot without losing too much, but since they were in the I\*S I thought they would be a nice touch. I especially liked them because, when Zip actually tried to use them, his overconfidence in them got him into lots of trouble!

<sup>286</sup> I know this is a sad pun, and I don't expect it to be in the story, but it was too good a chance for me not to mention it. Cloaking devices, of course, is a term commonly used for a device that renders something invisible.

“Now, Mark, it’s onward to rescue Joel!” Zip and Mark, wearing the cloaks, walked to the elevators arm-in-arm.

Richard eyed the rough-looking man carefully. “I was just exchanging my ship with that beat-up one over there.”

The rough-looking man eyed him critically. “Uh-huh. And when you do that, just how are the Starmen supposed to escape? Look, we’ve been watching you, Mr. Starlight. We saw what you just did to the Xenobots, and we were right glad of it: there was no way we could deal with those tin cans. Now, though, we see you sneaking in here and stealing their ship as soon as the Xenos are gone, and we want to know what is going on.”

Richard looked at him with a little more interest and hope. “I don’t know who you are, but you must know that the planetwide search for the Starmen hasn’t been called off yet: if they leave this hole they’ll get shot down in minutes. Their Star Ranger is a deathtrap to them: they need another form of transportation. I thought that if I could take their ship instead of them, leave them my ship in place, and then lead all the police on a wild goose chase...” he looked at the rough man.

The rough-looking man smiled. “I see! That’s a right good plan, Mr. Starlight. I think that might work. But – ” he hesitated. “Aren’t you afraid that they might shoot *you* down?”

Richard looked the rough man in the eye. “Sure. They might. But it’s a risk I have to take. These are my Starmen: I got them started in all this and I sent them here, and so if I possibly can I’m going to help them get out of it.”

The rough-looking man put his gun back in his holster and shook Richard’s hand. “You’re a good man, Mr. Starlight. We just wanted to make sure that everything was on the up-and-up. The Starmen have quite a few friends they don’t know about: not everyone has forgotten about the risks they took to free Mars. We can’t do a lot against the Banjoman and the tin buckets<sup>287</sup>, but we do what we can.” The man then slid back into the shadows and was gone.

After watching the man depart, Richard climbed aboard the Star Ranger. Before blasting off, however, he called up SE HQ on Mars and spoke to the director there. “Hey Konig, who was the man that walked into my office about twenty minutes ago?”<sup>288</sup>

Konig’s voice sounded concerned. “Do what? There hasn’t been anyone into your office all day: we’ve kept everyone out to give you some peace.”

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<sup>287</sup> Anyone who was on close terms with the Martians, as the Wind People were, would probably know about the Xenobots.

<sup>288</sup> I wanted Rick to realize that he was visited by a Martian, so I worked in this scene. It’s kind of crude, really, but Rick needs to realize all this somewhere.

Richard nodded, as if he had been expecting that. “Ok, so do we have anyone that looks like – ” and he proceeded to describe the man who had warned him about the location and predicament of the Starmen. “No, Rick, we don’t,” Konig said. “No one who is even similar.”

Richard’s smile widened. “Tell me one more thing, Konig. Do we have a policy of putting tracers in all SE ships?”

Konig sounded surprised. “Come on, Rick, why would we do that? We’ve never done that, and I don’t think your father ever did that either. Where did you get that idea?”

Richard settled back in his chair and got ready to take the Star Ranger back up into the air. “Oh – just from a friend of Zip’s.” It *must* have been a Benefactor, Rick thought. They’ve got a whole network down here, of both men and aliens, surrounding the Starmen and trying to help them out. The Starmen, he thought, would be fine.

Richard turned on the engines of the ship onto full throttle, taxied into the canyon, and then blasted into the sky at full speed – followed minutes later by a large fleet of police ships.

<end actual text>



## PART III: The Wake of the Stone

### Chapter 23

Far away, on a hidden region of Mars, was a large lake surrounded by trees. Above this lake was a circular cloud in the shape of the lake; in the middle of the lake was an island. On the island was a special building: it was the Banjoman's hidden headquarters.

Very few people knew this lake even existed. The ever-present cloud above the base hid it from aerial view, and the criminals who lived in the base made sure that no one came near.

Deep underground, inside the base, the Banjoman was mad. Very, very mad. He was mad that the other two Starmen had not been shot yet. He was mad that the Star Ranger had escaped his clutches. He was *especially* mad that Joe had effortlessly knocked him out and led his men on a wild chase inside his base.<sup>289</sup>

The Banjoman had a temper – a nasty temper, and he decided that he was going to get even with Joe. He, the Banjoman, had promised Joe that if he tried anything he would get blown into atoms by a bomb. Very well then: that would be his fate!<sup>290</sup>

With pure anger burning in his eyes, the Banjoman pulled up a computer database and searched through a weapons catalog. The Banjoman's base needed more tank storage space: he was running out of room, and needed to dig a big hole underground. What better way could there be to dig a hole quickly than with a nice powerful bomb? – and if Joe just happened to be there when the bomb went off, well, that would be just too bad.

The Banjoman scrolled through his catalog.

Code: SZYKLC<sup>291</sup>

Type: Plutonium Warhead

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<sup>289</sup> The Banjoman is a very, very angry man, and it is his own anger that ruins him in the end.

<sup>290</sup> Hence we have the purpose of Joe's attempted escape! It infuriates the Banjoman, and he is so angry that when he orders the bomb he makes the mistake that is his doom. Had Joe not tried to escape and hit the Banjoman hard, the Banjoman would not have been so angry and likely would not have made the error.

<sup>291</sup> These two listings are crude: I just came up with something off the top of my head. I know that we had a similar construct in TRA (when Zimbardo was asteroid-hunting), and we might should consider just phrasing all this data into the paragraph to avoid repetition.

Explosive Power: 4 megatons  
Cost: 670,000 solars

Nope, thought the Banjoman: not that one. That's way too much explosive power. He hit the Next button a few more times.

Code: JQURSB  
Type: Conventional Explosive  
Explosive power: 12,000 pounds of TNT  
Cost: 5,000 solars

The Banjoman looked at that one and smiled evilly. That was more like it!<sup>292</sup> He read the code a few times, then brought up the e-mail program. After writing a short e-mail to his henchmen detailing what he wanted, he sent the e-mail off<sup>293</sup>. Now, he thought, it was only a matter of time before he would have his revenge!

At the same time, deep underground inside the base Steve Cliff was languishing inside a cell. The door opened, and then Starmen Joe Taylor was put inside the cell as well<sup>294</sup>. The two people were surprised to see each other, and they quickly brought each other up to date.

Steve Cliff explained that he had been picked up some time ago. He was nosing around this part of Mars<sup>295</sup>, and he stumbled across the lake - so the criminals here quickly picked him up and imprisoned here. Joe explained that the criminals then assumed his identity, and nearly got them all put in jail.

Cliff said that before he was captured, he noticed that the island had a huge refinery on it. Evidently the criminals were refining some substance they were gathering in large underground tanks and extracting a substance from it which they later turned into flilox. Cliff guessed that they smuggled the flilox off of Mars via a smuggling network, and then distributed it all over the solar system. Cliff said that he suspected they had another plant, but he didn't know where it was.

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<sup>292</sup> The Banjoman, of course, had no intention of actually blowing himself to bits. He just wanted a bomb that would make a nice large hole.

<sup>293</sup> Just as the computer has given us fits, it gives him fits too! Only, instead of not delivering his mail (as happens to us), this person's mail is actually delivered. It's a pity he mistyped the code: perhaps if he had used a typewriter things would have been ok!

<sup>294</sup> After Joe was knocked out, he was carried to this cell and put in with Cliff.

<sup>295</sup> Steve, the adventurous one, was very likely to poke his nose where it wasn't wanted. It could have also been that Steve heard some rumors about the Banjoman's activities, and went to check up on him — and got captured.

Joe and Cliff languished in the base for a few days<sup>296</sup>. They were fed at semi-regular intervals, but nothing much happened. Joe and Cliff both knew that the Banjoman was never going to let them go, and that their usefulness was going to expire very soon.

Then one day their cell door opened, and a group of heavily armed guards entered their cell. The Banjoman was with them<sup>297</sup>, and Joe and Cliff knew that they were in trouble. The henchmen forced the two prisoners to get up, and the henchmen and the Banjoman began taking them on a march deep underground.

## CHAPTER 24

The two Starmen had finally made it back up to the surface of Mars. With their cloaks on, they carefully ventured outside, only to discover that all the Xenobots were gone. Where the Xenobot ships had been were now piles of debris and fragments. Zip speculated that something managed to wipe out the Xenobots here, but they weren't able to figure out what happened.

When they got to where their ship had been, they were very surprised to find their ship gone, and Richard Starlight's ship in its place! They looked around carefully, and then boarded it – and found a note that Richard had left for them, telling them what he was doing. They were very grateful to Richard, but they knew he was running a horrible risk. They hoped that he was ok. The knowledge of the gamble Richard was taking spurred them on. They would still have to be careful when they went out to be seen, but at least they wouldn't have to face the intensive manhunt.

Now that the Lost Race of Mars was off their mind, the Starmen consulted each other to try to decide what to do. It was obvious that Andy Regal had something in this area that he did *not* want the Starmen to know about – but what was it? They couldn't do much looking before because they had been busy responding to one threat after another, but now – especially with these suits – they had a chance to find out what was really going on.<sup>298</sup>

The Starmen had noticed a peculiar flaw in the suits. While the suits worked just fine if they held still, if they moved rapidly then someone could see motion or sense movement. It was as if the light suits weren't blending in properly and changing fast

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<sup>296</sup> I didn't plot everything out on a timeline, so I don't know how long the two should languish before the bomb is planted in order for their bomb to coincide with Zip's activities. It should be long enough for the Banjoman to have obtained the bomb.

<sup>297</sup> He wanted to be there to get his revenge!

<sup>298</sup> They had to figure out what was going on, so that they could get Joe back! Now that they had Martian aid, they had what they needed to infiltrate the Banjoman's hideout and rescue Joe.

enough to hide the person being cloaked: to someone looking at the person wearing the suit, it looked as if the wall was rippling or as if a portion of the air was suddenly refracting light much harder than usual. The suits were good, but they had to be used with caution.

The two Starmen got inside Richard Starlight's ship and refueled their air tanks. They considered using it to tour the area, but decided against it: the Banjoman might try to shoot any 'nosy' aircraft down, and they sure didn't want that. They got out on foot and decided to walk around the area to see what they could see. The only thing they noticed in the area were vast fields of glowing fungi: there was nothing else for miles. Zip thought idly that that must be the fungi which the Martians used to retrieve people from suspended animation.

Mark suddenly snapped his fingers. "Zip! Right before we went down to the Martian city, we saw some large vehicles driving slowly through the fields of fungi. Remember?"

Zip suddenly looked alert: he remembered. "I wonder what it is Mr. Regal is doing in those fields that he doesn't want us to see?" he murmured, as the two approached the fields of fungi more closely. Sure enough, there it was: a very large vehicle, busily driving among the fields of fungi.

While this was going on, Joe and Cliff had been herded into a large cargo elevator, and along with the Banjoman and his henchmen were carried underground. Joe and Cliff didn't know what was going to happen to them, but they didn't think it was going to be pleasant.

The eventually elevator stopped, and they all got out into a small stone room, roughly a hundred square feet. In the center of the room was a large cylindrical device that Joe instantly knew was a bomb—a very powerful bomb<sup>299</sup>.

The Banjoman motioned to one of his henchmen, and the henchmen walked over to the bomb, opened a panel on the top, and punched a code into the panel<sup>300</sup>. 'Arm the bomb,' the Banjoman ordered, and the henchman did so. 'Now set it for 24 hours<sup>301</sup>,' he ordered, and the henchmen did so. Joe watched the timer set, and saw the green numbers begin to count down.

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<sup>299</sup> Joe, being familiar with weaponry, knew what the Banjoman did not: he immediately recognized it as a very powerful explosive. He had no way of knowing how powerful, but he had a feeling it could make a mighty big hole.

<sup>300</sup> Now that I think about it, it might be better to have the Banjoman himself do this!

<sup>301</sup> I just picked a number out of the air: the Banjoman should set it to whatever makes sense in regards to the timeline. The Banjoman wouldn't want to have it set to explode right away: being nice and cruel, he'd want to have Joe get to watch the number tick lower and lower and lower...

The Banjoman then walked over to the bomb, took his laser pistol, and viciously, angrily smashed the control panel to smithereens<sup>302</sup>, but left the panel that displayed the time readout alone.

Then, in a quick move, he hit Joe and Cliff viciously on the head, knocking him out. Joe and Cliff fell on the floor. The Banjoman looked at them with anger all over his face: he was enjoying his revenge.

After calmly shooting out the lights to the room<sup>303</sup>, he walked back up to the elevator, and rode back up to the top layer. Once at the top layer, the man pressed a button and a series of explosions was heard: the tunnel collapsed on itself. The Banjoman chortled in glee. Joe and Cliff were now trapped: trapped under hundreds of feet of solid rock in a room with a powerful bomb. Now it was only a matter of hours before the Banjoman had his new holding tank – and his revenge!

## CHAPTER 25

Mark and Zip watched the large harvester for a while. It soon became obvious that the machine was harvesting the fungi – why, Zip didn't know, but he intended to find out. Zip thought that if he could figure out why they wanted the fungi so badly and what they were doing with it, he would be able to crack the whole mystery and figure out what had been going on.

The easiest way to do that, he thought, would be to hitch a ride on the Harvester and ride it back to base<sup>304</sup>. So, Mark and Zip slowly crept up to the huge Harvester machine. They felt nervous walking up to it in broad daylight, but their cloaks were working just fine: no one could see them. They saw a few good hiding places on the sides of the Harvester, so they jumped on it and sat down. They didn't know how long it would take for the Harvester to finish its task and return to base, but they knew it would happen shortly (after all, they didn't dare leave it out for too long lest someone should come along and spot it). At any rate, they were prepared to wait as long as necessary.<sup>305</sup>

Millions of miles away, Richard Starlight was having an easier time than he had imagined. The Star Ranger didn't look very pretty from the outside, but Mark had done a good job repairing the engines and it could sure pack some speed. He had a good lead

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<sup>302</sup> So that there was no hope of Joe deactivating it! He's not taking any chances.

<sup>303</sup> So that the Starmen couldn't see to do anything

<sup>304</sup> Let me put it this way: it beats walking! The Starmen couldn't fly there, and while they could walk it would be easier just to hitch a ride.

<sup>305</sup> Showing the Starmen in little hurry, while Joe is about to be blown to smithereens, will probably build some suspense!

over the police ships from Mars<sup>306</sup>, and they wouldn't catch up to him for a long time. His only real concern was being met by ships from the Asteroid Belt, but surprisingly there was a lot of division.

At the moment, Zip and Mark and Joe were very popular on Earth and in the Belt<sup>307</sup>, and the rest of the solar system did not support at all what Mars was doing. From the radio Richard gleaned the fact that Earth had sent a commission to Mars to investigate the mayor of Mars<sup>308</sup> and possibly press criminal charges against him for outrageous conduct: the commission would arrive within a few days (if it wasn't shot out of the sky, Rick though wryly). The mayor had pleaded with the Belt to get the Belt to send out a force to capture the Star Ranger, but the leader of the Asteroid Belt had flatly refused. The mayor was finding his support for chasing the Starmen diminishing rapidly, Rick thought: with luck, in a few days everything would be over. Even the President had waded into the mess and attacked the mayor of Mars severely: that was sure to have major political repercussions.

<begin actual text>

As it was, at that moment the mayor was feeling none too secure. He looked around his office, and felt as if everything was caving in on him: Earth was against him, the Belt was against him, the people of Mars were against him, and despite using every ounce of force he had he *still* had not captured the Starmen.

The mayor nervously picked up the phone and dialed a number. "Hello? – Yes, listen, I need your help badly. Everything is falling to pieces, and I'm losing all my support!"<sup>309</sup>

At the other end of the line, Andy Regal chuckled. "Well, isn't that too bad!" Regal was still elated with what he had just done to Joe. "That is *such* a tragedy, Jerry."<sup>310</sup>

Jerry got aggravated. "Don't you understand? In a few days a commission from Earth will be here! What am I supposed to do? The Belt won't help me capture the Starmen. I've done everything I can for you, but those Starmen have totally eluded me. You put me in this mess, and you've got to help me get out of it."

Regal shook his head in mock sorrow. "I'm *so* sorry, Mr. Jerry, but I don't 'got' to do anything. If you're in a mess, well, that's your problem. If I were you I'd think of

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<sup>306</sup> As was brought out in AOM, the Star Ranger was easily faster than the police ships.

<sup>307</sup> As was brought out in TRA!

<sup>308</sup> As was mentioned earlier in LROM, by Bob.

<sup>309</sup> This is the first time the reader finds out that Jerry the mayor and Mr. Regal are actually in cahoots. The mayor knew all along that the Starmen hadn't shot Mr. Regal! This ought to have been obvious: Mr. Regal couldn't have done half of what he did if he didn't have Jerry's help.

<sup>310</sup> There's no loyalty among the bad guys at all!

something quick, because otherwise you're going to be deported back to Earth and tried by a very angry and upset jury."

Jerry's voice got hard. "And just what are *you* going to do once I'm gone?"

Regal laughed. "I don't need *you* any more, Jerry. I've got – let's say – friends of my own<sup>311</sup> who have a lot more power than you could ever have. I'll be just fine: don't you worry your little head about me." With that, Regal hung up on Jerry and walked away from the phone.

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 26

After several hours, the large Harvesters finished harvesting the glowing fungi and began driving back toward the Banjoman's secret lake base. After several more hours, the Harvester rumbled up to the side of a cliff. Zip watched as the side of the cliff opened, and a deep passage - which had been invisible before - was revealed. The harvester drove inside the opening, and the cliff closed behind it. The lights on the harvester blazed on, and it descended into the darkness.

After a few minutes, the harvester stopped and the men got out of it. They hooked the harvester up to the wall via pipes, and began draining all of the crushed flilox out of it.

One of the men walked off into a nearby office, and Zip quietly followed him while Mark kept an eye on the other henchmen. The man called up the Banjoman and talked to him. The man said that he was at station #3, and that they had a full load of flilox (leading Zip to believe that this was not their main base). The man asked if they should bring the extracted chemical (once it was extracted) to the main base, and the Banjoman said no: they were already filled to capacity and didn't have room to store more. The Banjoman said that he was busy making another storage tank at the moment<sup>312</sup>, but he hadn't completed it yet.

The Banjoman told the man to truck the chemical to their processing plant in downtown Eagle City<sup>313</sup>. The Banjoman said that he would call up their Eagle City unit

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<sup>311</sup> The Xenobots, of course.

<sup>312</sup> A reference to the bomb that was about to blow up Joe.

<sup>313</sup> I know this sounds horribly unrealistic, but actually this was done by the Russians in real life. The Russians wanted to hide their rocket-building plant from the US spy satellites, so they hollowed out an apartment building in downtown Moscow and built their rockets there. The US had *no* idea where it was until the cold war ended: they never ever guessed. The building was sound-proofed, and the Russians simply trucked in the parts to the building. (There was a big article in Popular Science on this.)

and tell them to get a tank truck out there in 4 hours to pick up the chemical after it had been extracted from the fungi. The man said ok, and he hung up.

At this point, Zip started edging toward the door. The man looked up, startled, as he saw the wall suddenly wave slightly. (As had been said before, the shields were not perfect: a certain faint waving motion could be seen: it looked to an outsider as if space was warping or something. This is why he warned them to stay in the shadows and hold still.) Zip suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, but the man whipped out his laser pistol and fired at the wall<sup>314</sup>. The shot hit Zip's light cloak square on, and fried it out<sup>315</sup>. Zip wasn't hurt, but he suddenly found himself staring at a very vicious trigger-happy criminal who had no trouble seeing him at all.

Meanwhile, Joe and Cliff had finally woken up from being knocked out by the vicious blow the Banjoman had given them. The only light they had was given off by the bright green lights of the timer on the bomb that was counting slowly down, but that was enough light to where the two men could see each other. The two searched the room carefully, but it became apparent that they were truly trapped: there was nothing in the room but the bomb, the elevator shaft had collapsed, and all the compads and other equipment on their suits had been taken from them. Even Joe's suitlight wasn't working: Joe guessed that it had been smashed during some of their rough maneuvers.

Joe looked at the clock: it registered 12 hours left, and was busy counting down. Joe sighed and looked pretty glum: there wasn't much hope at all. Who could ever find them here – and even if they could find them, how could they get them out in time?

<begin actual text>

Joe sighed. "You know, Steve, it's crazy. Here we are, stuck in this hole and about to be blasted to atoms, while the Banjoman is out there living things up and having the time of his life. He's got it all made, and he's never done an honest thing in his life. On the other hand, we've spent our lives battling men like Zimbardo and we've gone through nothing but trouble."

Cliff stopped a moment and looked at Joe. "Well, of course! It's time to wake up and smell the roses, Joe. Of course the Banjoman has it easy: he's willing to commit any crime in the book to get an easy life. He has millions of solars and you don't be-

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<sup>314</sup> Drug runners tend to be trigger happy and don't take chances! Taking chances is a good way to get caught. Zip was being overconfident here: he forgot about the flaws in his light shield.

<sup>315</sup> This is important in terms of the plot! Since Zip can be seen, he doesn't make it inside the drug runner's base in Eagle City, and gets caught by the police outside. Since he's caught, he is able to lead them inside the base, where they arrest the bad guys. Had his shield been working, things might have been more difficult for them.



cause he is willing to rob and cheat and steal for them and you aren't. You spend your days battling crime, so of course crime is going to fight right back and give you a hard time. You can hardly expect to go around doing good and expect to live an easy life – not with all the greed and hate and anger that is out there.”

“I know, Steve, I know, but it just doesn't seem right. I know that crime doesn't pay and all, but so many men who don't seem to have a scruple in their body lead such easy and carefree lives. It's just galling.”

Cliff shook his head. “I wouldn't be talking about things you know nothing about if I were you, Joe. How do you know what it's like? Sure, it looks good from where you are standing – especially right now – but you're not seeing the full picture. You aren't seeing the loneliness and emptiness those folks have. I tell you, Joe, those people sold their soul for an easy life, and they have nothing left inside. They know what they are, and it eats them. You can laugh, Joe, and understand love and joy: men like the Banjoman can't. Their souls are gone. They can't sit down and enjoy a cup of Darjeeling tea. They can't love because in order to love you have to care about something outside yourself, and a man who cheats and steals and clobbers everyone in his way to get to the top doesn't have that capacity anymore. Do you really want to give up the things that make life worth living?”

“Besides, Joe, the safety and comfort they have is an illusion: it might be one they believe in, but it's an illusion all the same. All their lives those men will have to worry about getting caught in a lie, worry about the police catching up with them, worry about other men destroying them the way they destroyed others, and worry about their vast possessions and power vanishing. Their lives are precarious, and they can vanish away in a minute.”

“Remember the story of the beggar Lazarus<sup>316</sup>? These people will have to answer for their actions one day, Joe, and I don't think you will want to be in their shoes when they do.”

Joe sighed. “I suppose you're right, Steve. It's easy to believe that back on the Moon in my private study with my cup of tea; it's a lot harder to believe that right now. I suppose I wouldn't trade places right now with the Banjoman if I could, but oh what I would give it get out of here!” He looked at Cliff. “You don't suppose there is hope, do you?”

Cliff looked back at Joe. “Where there is life, Joe, there is hope: don't give in until it's all over. Who knows: our rescue might be at the door right now. Right now we've just got to wait and see.”

Joe turned automatically to look at the clock, and watched its glowing green numbers count down, down, down...

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<sup>316</sup> Luke 16:19

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 27

Zip lunged to the right the instant he realized he was found, and he just missed getting hit by a brilliant red laser shot. Zip fled out the door, slamming it (and locking it) behind him. As the man struggled to unlock the door (the lock was on the inside), Zip pulled out his laser and fired along the edge of the metal door, wielding it in place<sup>317</sup>. He knew that wouldn't stop the man for long, but he only wanted a few seconds to find a place to hide.

Zip soon had other trouble when he saw the other criminals who had been on the harvester run down the passage, weapons drawn. Zip called out for help<sup>318</sup>, and immediately ran into a side door and found himself inside a large warehouse. Zip took position behind a row of boxes and waited for the criminals to barge in.

Zip called again on his radio, but then he saw that it had been burnt out: the blast that fried his light cloak had also done in his radio, and he had no way of contacting Mark. Since he was wearing a light cloak, he couldn't see him – and unless he was keeping tabs on him Mark didn't know where he was, and he couldn't tell them. Mark would probably figure out pretty quick that he was in danger, but his ability to help him would be limited.

Meanwhile, Mark had watched the men carefully transfer the crushed fillox via pipes which led into the wall, and they watched the men push buttons on a console to get the refining process complete. Then they heard a commotion behind them, and they watched the henchmen charge down the hallway, just as a very angry man lasered open a metal door and emerged, yelling that he had just seen an intruder. Mark figured that he must have seen David: evidently his light cloak had failed and he had raced off. Mark called for Zip on his radio, but Zip didn't answer.

The three henchmen charged down the hallway, but were stopped short by a laser burst. Then they saw another laser fired out of nowhere, then another one. The henchmen got very scared, and begin running in the only direction they could: back outside. Mark, hidden in his cloaks, fired at the henchmen and 'coaxed' them back to the harvester. The men jumped aboard it, revved its engine, and drove it out of the base at top speed: being shot at by an enemy they couldn't see wasn't on their wish list.

Now he just had to find Zip - but the trouble was he couldn't reach him on the radio. The refinery itself was pretty small: it consisted of the hallway where the office

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<sup>317</sup> To buy a few more moments of time in which he could hide.

<sup>318</sup> Over his helmet radio — he didn't know it wasn't working.

and pipes into the wall was, and another hallway that lead to a warehouse. He figured that Zip must be in the warehouse, so he went inside and turned on the lights. When Zip saw the door open and close by itself, and then the light switch flip on by itself, he knew it must be Mark so he called out to him.

## CHAPTER 28

The two Starmen then got together again, and Zip explained what had happened. Zip took off the damaged light cloak and folded it up and put it away in a pack he was carrying. The Starmen then decided to wait until the other truck came to pipe out the extracted chemical, and then hitch a ride on that tank to their refinery at Eagle City the same way they had hitched a ride on the Harvester.<sup>319</sup>

The only problem was that now Zip didn't have a light cloak: Mark was invisible, but Zip was not. The Starmen decide that the only thing to do is to wait until the tank truck shows up and see if there is a place where Zip could hide on it.

The truck comes a few hours later (after the Starmen have refreshed their air tanks) and some men get out of it, connect pipes to the tank truck, and fill it with some liquid. The Starmen notice that there is no good place to hide for Zip: the tank doesn't have crevices like the Harvester did. The Starmen decide they just have to do the best they can: Mark and Zip both climb on top of the tank and lay flat on top of it, and held onto handholds on the sides while the tank left the cave and drove toward Eagle City. Mark can't be seen, but Zip can, and Zip hopes furiously that no one climbs up the tank and looks for him...

A few hours later, the tank entered town and drove downtown. Zip watches them as they head toward a certain large apartment building, and realizes it was one very near where they had talked to the old prospector - in fact, they had walked right by it. It is crazy, but it looks like their Eagle City refinery was right in downtown!

Zip thought quickly, and realized that he couldn't ride the tank into base: he would be spotted for sure. He talked with Mark, and decided to jump off the tank and go see if he could get some help.

Zip carefully jumps off the tank (not a hard thing in the low gravity) and slides into the shadows. It's evening in Eagle City, and Zip tries to blend in. He watches the gates of the walled brick compound open, admit the tank (which says SEWAGE on the side and is disguised as a sewage tank), and then watched the gates close behind them.

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<sup>319</sup> This is all they *can* do! They don't have any transportation right now: the bad guys drove away in the Harvester and left Mark and Zip stranded. They don't have compad access to their ship anymore because Rick is flying it far, far away.

Zip stood in the shadows, silently thinking for a few minutes over what to do, when he noticed a police patrol walk by<sup>320</sup>. Zip crept back into the shadows, but it was too late - he had already been spotted. A light immediately shown on him, and the policeman called out 'Hold on there, Mr. Foster!'

Zip's mind raced. How had they spotted him so quickly? Belatedly he realized that the gang's refinery doubtless had security cameras, and they must have spotted Zip, recognized him, and notified the police – police who, last he had heard, wanted him dead or alive for murder. Zip's chances of flight were minimal: the police had probably already notified other units in the area and were closing in.

Surely, though, the police would listen to Zip: after all, Zip had saved Mars not once but twice, and was a famous figure. They would at least check out his story.

So Zip walked a little closer to the policemen. He stood directly in front of a brick wall, roughly 10 feet high<sup>321</sup>. The policemen lined in front of him, all four with their weapons drawn.

Zip spoke to them and told him his story, about the Banjoman's operations, who the Banjoman was, and concerning how the apartment building behind them was a refinery for the drug. The policeman cut him short, though: they weren't at all interested in his story. The policeman got very angry at Zip for accusing that man as being the Banjoman: they told him that, unlike Zip, he was a fine upstanding citizen that Mars was proud to call their own. The policemen said they had no intention of investigating the apartment building: they knew it was just one of Zip's clever lies.

An crowd began forming around the policemen – an angry crowd<sup>322</sup>. The citizens booed Zip and let him know what they thought of him. Zip's blood boiled, and he realized that if he let the police take him away, he would be history and the gang would get away.

The policemen told Zip to take out his laser pistol and drop it. Zip carefully drew out his laser pistol, and dropped it – but he pressed a certain button on it, and

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<sup>320</sup> These police are men who aren't evil, but just deceived: they are men who believe what they are told and don't check out things for themselves. They aren't on the Banjoman's side, but they believed the story about Zip. Once they find out that there really are drug runners in the building, they arrest them and call for help — and once they find out that Zip is innocent, they apologize. Here we have an example of men who just believe what they are told and don't think for themselves.

<sup>321</sup> This could easily be jumped on Martian gravity: a wall 20 foot high could be jumped in a single bound without too much trouble.

<sup>322</sup> This isn't a normal crowd: it is largely a crowd of drug-runners and other men of that sort. It is symbolic of the crowd that called for Christ's execution: they didn't care what he had done — they wanted him crucified.

when it hit the ground it detonated in a brilliant flash of light<sup>323</sup>. When the light cleared an instant later, Zip was gone – nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile, Joe and Cliff were deep inside Mars. Cliff had fallen asleep; Joe was still wide awake and watching the little green clock count down the hours. Now only eight hours remained.

## CHAPTER 29

<begin actual text>

Far above Joe and Cliff, the Banjoman was talking with his henchmen. Something had been bothering the Banjoman in the back of his mind, and he finally figured out what it was.

“Say Mac,” Mr. Regal called, “that bomb down there that Starman Joe is sitting on seemed kind of large for a chemical bomb to me, and I know I ordered a chemical bomb. Just where did you get it?”

Mac looked startled. “A chemical bomb! You didn’t order a chemical bomb. You ordered a JQURBS<sup>324</sup> – the most powerful atomic bomb they come by. We had to snatch that one from the Space Command itself: we worked it out with Jerry to take one out of their arsenal. It was horribly difficult to get hold of one: you wouldn’t believe the trouble we had. I bet that bomb could vaporize everything for a radius of a thousand miles.”

Mr. Regal suddenly looked very angry. “You gave me a *WHAT??*” Mr. Regal began approaching Mac with an angry light in his eye.

Mac hurriedly backed away. “Don’t blame me, Mr. Regal – it’s all right here in your note.” Mac hurriedly pulled out a sheet of paper and handed it to him. Mr. Regal scanned it, and with rising anger he saw in his note that the last two letters had been transposed: somehow, JQURSB became JQURBS – and the difference was enormous.

“You *fool!*” Mr. Regal roared. “That bomb is big enough to vaporize not only our whole operation, but everything around for hundreds of miles! We’re stuck now: we couldn’t defuse that bomb if we wanted to! *Do you know what this means??*” He seethed over with anger. Mac saw his boss start to get mad, so he quickly turned and ran.

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<sup>323</sup> Detonating lasers isn’t really recommended, but I suppose it isn’t too far-fetched to imagine that a Starman could do it. It would cause a very brilliant flash, which would give Zip time to get away.

<sup>324</sup> This was just picked at random, and could be changed to anything.

Mr. Regal, frothing at the knowledge that his base was about to become vaporized into atoms, pulled out his laser pistol and shot at the retreating Mac. When he missed Mac, he raced down the hall after him and shot wildly, blindly with anger.

Unfortunately for Mr. Regal, one of his shots hit the big fuse box at the end of the hall<sup>325</sup> and sent more than 100,000 volts into the base's electrical power system. The volts quickly traveled to the tanks of flilox, where they ignited them and caused a very decent explosion. All the lights in the base went out, and Mr. Regal heard a series of explosions, followed by tons of falling rock. Mr. Regal and all his men were deep underground, and he had a feeling that he was now stuck there – as stuck as Joe and Cliff were.

<end actual text>

## CHAPTER 30

Zip was now on the other side of the stone wall, away from the policemen and inside the compound run by the drug smugglers. What Zip had done was ignite his laser pistol and caused it to explode in a brilliant flash. When the crowd was temporarily blinded, Zip jumped to the top of the wall (an easy feat in Martian gravity) and bounded over. The explosion had burned Zip fairly badly and he knew he was hurt, but he couldn't stop now – he had one more task to do. He knew the policemen would figure out what he had done pretty quickly, and that was what he was counting on...

Zip started running towards the apartment building (which Mark was already inside) and soon he heard the police break open the gates and charge in after him. Zip was in pain<sup>326</sup>, but he had to lead the police inside. He knew that the refining plant for the flilox was inside, and once the police made it in the building he was hoping that they would lose interest in him and gain interest in their surroundings.

Meanwhile, the large harvester had drove inside a garage and into the main building. From the outside, the building looked like an apartment complex, but from the inside it was easy to see that it was just a large hollow building, something akin to a

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<sup>325</sup> Mr. Regal's anger is what destroys him. His downfall is his fault, and his fault alone: had he not been angry — had he not ordered the bomb — had he not tried to shoot down the Starmen — he would have been just fine. As was said in AOM and TRA, evil falls as it decays from within; it self-destructs. Here the Banjoman self-destructs, and does to himself what the Starmen could never have done.

<sup>326</sup> The blast was a powerful blast, and burnt Zip's leg, hurting him. This puts him in the hospital at the end of the book.

warehouse, with a variety of tanks and so forth inside. The walls were soundproofed, so as to not allow sound to exit the building and alert the neighbors that something was up.

Mark slid off of the Harvester as the bad guys started pumping the flilox out of the Harvester. Mark cautiously walked over to a ladder on the wall, and scaled it until he could look out a third-story window. He saw Zip suddenly leap over the wall, followed by a stream of angry policemen.

A siren went off inside the building, and Mark saw that the people inside were about to evacuate and escape<sup>327</sup>. Mark didn't want that, so he pulled out his laser and started shooting at the tanks and various electronic boxes on the walls. The workers panicked even more when they saw lasers coming from nowhere, and a few seconds later there were some very satisfying explosions that sent crushed fungi everywhere<sup>328</sup> and blew out most of the windows in the building.

When the police entered the room, they saw drug runners strewn all over the room, and had more than enough evidence to convict every last one of them.

Meanwhile, Mark had grabbed Zip and they had taken a staircase in a rush to get to the top of the building. Mark and Zip were hoping that they would be forgotten about in the general mess with the drug runners down below. When they got to the top of the building, they saw what they had seen from the distance: a sleek high-performance aircraft<sup>329</sup>. The people below were going to use it to escape from the cops: it would allow Mark and Zip to escape just as easily.

Mark and Zip got inside the craft, and since Zip was in great pain and had injured himself from the flash, he directed Mark to lift off the ship and take off. Mark and Zip had wanted to use their remaining light shield to scout out the Banjoman's base, find him, and then bring the cops to his base. However, that was not to be: after Mark had lifted the ship off of the apartment building, he saw a stream of angry policemen appear on the roof of the building. They had arrested the drug runners, but they were not happy about seeing the ship. Mark thought a bit belatedly that it didn't matter if they thought Zip was inside or not: all they knew was that someone was escaping, and they were going to go trail them.

Zip decided to switch plans. He told Mark to head toward the base where the robot had almost landed their Star Ranger. With luck, a large fleet of policemen would follow them, and if they found the Banjoman there then the Starmen were sure to be cleared.

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<sup>327</sup> Once they saw the police coming, they knew they were in trouble and decided to evacuate quickly. By blowing up the works, Mark made it impossible for the bad guys to escape, and hence they were still in the plant when the police arrived.

<sup>328</sup> What more evidence could you want than having the room coated with a highly illegal drug?

<sup>329</sup> This is what the drug runners were going to use to escape.

So, the two Starmen flew in a beeline toward the Banjoman's base, with a growing collection of aircraft following them.

## CHAPTER 31

As Mark and Zip flew in close to the Banjoman's base, their ship starts getting hailed by an emergency SOS. A bit startled, Zip opens the frequency and listens to what the SOS is calling. To his surprise, the SOS is from the Banjoman! He was desperately pleading for someone to come and rescue him<sup>330</sup>: his base had collapsed, and a bomb was about to go off, and if someone didn't come soon there would be a major catastrophe. The Banjoman's signal wasn't very clear or strong, but the message was plain enough.

Zip heard the policemen come on over the frequency and start to question the Banjoman, but Zip cut them off. Zip asked the Banjoman if it was really him<sup>331</sup>, Andy Regal, and he confessed that it was. Zip also made him confess that he had made up all the lies about the Starmen just to frame them and keep them away from his flilox farms. The policemen were then apologetic, but Zip was in pain and wasn't feeling very friendly right then.

Zip and Mark and the policemen soon caught sight of the Banjoman's base, and they landed their ships on the nearby runway. Before they got out, Zip demanded to know where Joe and Cliff were. The Banjoman didn't want to tell them, and Zip said that he wasn't getting any help at all until he knew where Joe and Cliff were.<sup>332</sup>

By this time the Banjoman had cracked: the enormous strain of knowing he was sitting on an atom bomb, which was about to go off and vaporize both him and everything he had, had totally broken him. He told Zip and Mark where Joe was and how they were in the room with what had turned out to be an atom bomb — a very powerful one. He also told them that the bomb would go off in three hours, and pleaded with Zip to find a way to get them out of there.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> The Banjoman had found a radio with batteries, and was using it to call for help. Since he was underground, the signal was weak and didn't reach very far, but he could still call for help. This is important, since without it Zip would have no idea what happened or that Joe was in urgent trouble.

<sup>331</sup> Zip knows that he has the Banjoman in a bad spot, and wants to get everything out of him before letting him go: he doesn't want to take any chances.

<sup>332</sup> Joe and Cliff, after all, would be his top priority: not that he didn't care about the Banjoman, but he wanted to know where Joe was and what had happened.

<sup>333</sup> Thus, Zip doesn't know until after he interrogates the Banjoman about the time factor, and that everyone is in urgent danger.



Roughly thirty minutes later, a crew from the SE base on Mars, along with Konig (Starlight was currently in the Belt), had arrived on the scene and surveyed it. They told Zip that they just did not have the equipment to dig a hole through the hard Martian rock that quickly: it would take at least a day or two, and that was simply too much time<sup>334</sup>. They did have equipment that could dig holes rapidly, but it wasn't on Mars at the time and would have to be flown in — and that would take weeks. Aside from atomic explosions (which would have destroyed the base), there was just no way to dig a hole that quickly.

## CHAPTER 32

Zip and Mark were heartbroken. They couldn't even contact their friends Joe and Cliff and talk to them: Joe didn't have a radio transmitter, and even if he did they couldn't drive a signal through thousands of feet of solid rock. They still had two and a half hours left, but that was simply not enough time. They knew the bomb was there (they could detect it underground<sup>335</sup>) but they couldn't vaporize it without vaporizing Joe and Cliff as well.

Zip thought aloud that Joe was good at electronics, and could probably dismantle the bomb and deactivate it if he had the right tools. They couldn't dig a hole big enough to bring people out, but could they dig a hole through which tools and lights could be dropped?

Konig said that they couldn't *drill* the hole, but that the overhead laser weapon satellites could laser a hole a few inches wide, which was wide enough to do the job. The only problem was that doing so would empty the room of all its air. Zip called up the Banjoman (who was becoming incoherent<sup>336</sup>, after he found out that they couldn't drill the hole in time) and asked if Joe and Cliff had their suits on when they were put into the room. The Banjoman said that yes, they did: they hadn't bothered to make the room airtight, so Joe and Cliff were wearing their suits when they entered it.

Konig, then, had his engineers carefully calculate where to drill the hole. It was a very delicate operation: hitting a precise spot on the ground from an orbiting satellite hundreds of miles overhead was no easy task. They did want a hole, but they didn't want a hole too deep, and they especially didn't want a hole through Joe or Cliff.

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<sup>334</sup> Digging a hole 2000 feet deep is a major undertaking, to say the least! It doesn't happen overnight.

<sup>335</sup> Nuclear weapons actually can be detected underground today — don't ask me how because I don't know, but they can.

<sup>336</sup> In the grand tradition of Lurton Zimbardo, the Banjoman is also losing his sanity.

After the engineers had everything figured out, they tested the system a few times by drilling holes in other areas<sup>337</sup>. It took them a while to calibrate the system and get their shots accurate (they complained that these satellites were not meant for this kind of precision work), but they eventually got it right. Then they aimed the satellite and readied it to fire the crucial shot.

Inside the room, Cliff had awoken, and Joe and Cliff were having some light conversation. Joe wasn't very thrilled, but he hadn't fallen apart. Joe and Cliff both saw that the timer was counting down: there was less than 2 hours left.

Suddenly, a bright beam pierced through one corner of their room. There was a whooshing sound, and air began escaping. Joe scrambled over to see what had happened, and saw that a hole had just been drilled into their room! He looked up through the hole and saw light at the top of it.

Hope — a wild hope — filled Joe. Somebody was doing something — but what on earth could it be?

A few moments later, Joe saw a number of things fall through the hole<sup>338</sup>, each of which was wrapped around by a sheet of paper. Joe picked up the instruments, and saw that one of them was a flashlight! He turned it on, and read the piece of paper that was wrapped around the tools. A huge grin spread over his face.

"Cliff — we're saved! These items here are *tools*. Now we've got instructions on how to dismantle the bomb, and the equipment to do it with. Zip and Mark have found us, and everything is ok again!"

Joe got out the tools, settled down near the bomb, and began working to turn it off.<sup>339</sup>

## CHAPTER 33

The scene was about a week later. After deactivating the bomb, a larger shaft had been drilled and everyone was rescued. The drug smugglers were all taken off to prison, and the Banjoman was a wreck. The commission from Earth had arrived, and promptly filed charges against the mayor Jerry and a number of his friends (along with some of the police force), and they all found themselves in jail while the commission

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<sup>337</sup> You don't try something that delicate without testing it first!

<sup>338</sup> It sounds dangerous to drop something 2000 feet, but remember that this is on Mars, which has less gravity, and that these are sturdy tools. Since the hole is a few inches wide, it is conceivable that the items had little parachutes to slow them down, or that they were packaged well.

<sup>339</sup> If we want, we can work in the scene where Joe actually dismantles the bomb: it doesn't matter to me. Since Joe has the instructions and the tools, it couldn't be that difficult.

drew up a very long list of charges against them. Things were looking pretty bleak for them.

Zip was in the hospital at the moment, recovering from his injury. It turned out that he got a fairly serious burn when he ignited his laser pistol, and he had to spend some time there recovering. He didn't mind too much though: Kristina Bethany<sup>340</sup> had been on the moon recently<sup>341</sup>, and when she heard about Zip getting in trouble she came immediately to Mars, and arrived just days after everything was cleared up. So, she was now at the hospital visiting Zip. Kristina laughingly chided Zip for being sick yet again: she had warned him last time not to be sick next time they saw each other!

One evening, Joe and Zip and Mark were alone in the hotel room. Kristina had just left the room, and the Starmen were sitting quietly, when suddenly a tall alien materialized in the room! The Starmen were surprised, but they surmised that the alien had been there all along and was hidden by one of the cloaks.

The alien, to their surprise (or perhaps not! thought Zip) introduced himself as Jogren!

Jogren thanked them for what they had done, and he told them he had come to explain everything. Then, Jogren did explain what the Starmen had already guessed from the murals (but what Joe hadn't seen): he told them of the war, of ancient Mars, of Tharsos, and of their suspension after the war. Jogren said that he remembered ancient Mars; he had been the leader before and during the War. He was suspended, but had been brought out when the Xenobots were found to be in the solar system again; he was now leading the remnant of Mars.

Jogren asked the Starmen not to tell anyone of their existence, and he explained why (and once again, the Starmen had already guessed the answer). The Xenobots had a network of spies in the solar system. They were looking for the Martians; if they found them, they would launch an attack against the solar system — and Earth could not resist.

Right now Mars was too weak to defeat them again. What Mars was doing now was searching for the Xenobot outpost and trying to discover their spy network. Their goal was to find it and have Earth smash it. Once it was smashed, Mars would "come out" and begin rebuilding, helping Earth prepare for the battle. The Xenobots would relocate them, but then Mars would be ready.

Jogren says that he knows the Starmen have probably already figured most of them out, but he said he was telling them because the Starmen have proved themselves beyond all doubt. He apologized for the rough time they had, and said that he never imagined things would be so difficult for them — but he warned them that the hardest

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<sup>340</sup> I just thought it would be nice to work in Kristina again — this seemed like a good place to do it. She always seems to be nearby whenever Zip is in the hospital!

<sup>341</sup> Probably on shore leave!

times were yet to come. Jogren said that he had come to send them on their next mission. The Xenobots had to be expelled, but the Martians hadn't been able to find their base of operations yet, and until that was known nothing could be done. Instead, Jogren said that he wanted the three of them to go to the moon and retrieve a certain cache of suspended Martians — Martians with special technical knowledge that would be necessary to rebuild Mars a few years down the road. He said that it took a long time (several years) to awaken a Martian who had been suspended in the Deep Sleep, and they needed to start the process of awakening now.

Jogren tells them that he must go, but that he would keep watching them. When the time was right, Jogren would contact the Starmen again and send them on a search for the Xenobots.

Then Jogren melted into the shadows and was gone.

## Letters

Here are a few of the letters we exchanged about the plot for *The Lost Race of Mars*...

*DATE: MONDAY, JULY 17, 2000 2:12 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I got the website material! David, it looks great:*

Thanks. I like it too, although certainly anticipating all of your comments. I was really leery about putting in material for #5, since it does give away too much. Let's eliminate it entirely. I think it might be a good idea, though, to put in a teaser on #2 to build sales.<sup>342</sup> What I'm thinking of is the scene (or part of it) when the Starmen meet Montezuma Vly. That won't give anything away about the plot, and will show people that something really is coming next.<sup>343</sup>

*David*

*DATE: SUN, 24 SEP 2000 13:53:05 -0700*

> *First: our guesses about the brightness and size of the Martian moons as  
> seen from the Martian surface was correct!*

Outstanding!

> *But did you know that the*

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<sup>342</sup> When we were working on *The Runaway Asteroid* we decided to release part of the book as a sample chapter and post it on the website. David also suggested that we release the scene in *The Lost Race of Mars* that takes place just before Zip discovers the real identity of Ahmanyia. I said that I didn't think releasing that would be a good idea, and David agreed.

<sup>343</sup> We always liked to give people an idea what is coming next!

- > *brighest object in the Martian sky aside from the two moons was Earth?*
- > *Also, Earth's moon can be plainly seen: it's quite bright from Mars,*

Wow, no I didn't know that! We'll have to write that into LROM! It'll be another terrific scene.<sup>344</sup>

Also, I was reading the National Geographic today and had an idea for LROM. If I recall correctly, that book includes fighting the dealers in flilox. In the NG, there is a lake in Africa which occasionally has cloud cover in the shape of a disc, just because the lake below it is round. And it is surrounded by 15 miles of swamp. I immediately thought it would make a terrific scene for the flilox guys on Mars. A natural moat 15 miles wide, filled with who knows what kind of horrible swamp creatures.

- > *Second, I learned that Mars (as it is now) not only has clouds, it has fog!*

There is frozen fog in AOM! Cool!

- > *Also, (as goes along with our story!) the Martian surface is*
- > *terrifically scarred: ... Mars looks like a tortured, scarred planet...*

Right out of the already-written scene in LROM, when Zip says that Mars is "a corpse."

- > *The most fascinating thing I learned was this: the Martian atmosphere*
- > *has quite a lot of tilt in it, and hence over time the seasons can vary*
- > *quite a lot. There is speculation that, at certain periods, the Martian*
- > *polar caps melt naturally, ...*

Now that is a fascinating possibility—the natural hibernation of an entire planet. Neat!

- > *However, before spring came again the Xenobots returned, so the Martians*
- > *had to work with SE to awaken the planet early...*
- > *What do you think? Does this make sense?*

Absolutely. It also makes for a powerful resurrection theme!

*David*

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<sup>344</sup> This scene was included in LROM on page 249

DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2000 1:31 PM

- > *I think there's a great chance that our readers will be fascinated with Tharsos and*
- > *want to hear more about it. As things now stand, the Starmen never have*
- > *anything else to do with Tharsos for the rest of the series: it's not really in*
- > *any of the plots.*

Doesn't LROM begin with the Starmen on Tharsos? The asteroid isn't even named until that book. I can see that, as soon as Earth realizes that Tharsos belongs to Mars, it will be eventually moved back into Mars orbit to restore its third moon. Then it can be a major part of future stories! I still like the idea of a false wall in the asteroid, behind which there is another colony of sleeping Martians.

*David*

DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 01, 2000 9:23 PM

Dear Jon,

- > *I don't know if you've read the summary for #5 LROM yet*

Not yet.

- > *something similar happens to the Starmen: the Banjoman wants them out of the*
- > *way, so he frames them for murder and does his very best to railroad them.*

Say, I can write about that very convincingly. I've followed Bob's case for eight years and know a lot of the ins and outs about how a corrupt system works and about the few good people inside who try their best, and about the well-intentioned people who fade away leaving you hanging.

*David*

DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 25, 2001 8:31 PM

Dear Jon,

A long series book<sup>345</sup> may unprecedented, but shouldn't be a problem for our fans and customers. They'll enjoy it. We've made a good precedent of staying within the lines of the genre, while stepping out of it whenever we needed to for good reason.<sup>346</sup> This will be one of those "stepping out" times. I'm very much looking forward to the whole process of putting LROM together!

A good, teasing I\*S early in 2002 will help to raise needed funds<sup>347</sup> and may help build a customer base. Also, a longer period between #4 and #5 will allow us to sell more #1-4 and raise a bank account for the production of #5. I don't anticipate a problem with cost or sales.

*David*

P.S. It may not even be unprecedented. The Magic Talisman is 247 pages long. It was as long as the story needed to be once it was free from the formulaic restrictions put upon it by G&D.

DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 29, 2001 10:36 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *The plot for LROM is definately progressing!! I think I've got the whole*

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<sup>345</sup> By this time I had written the 33-chapter plot for book five and wanted to see what the rest of the team thought about producing a book that was so long.

<sup>346</sup> We've actually stepped out of it in a whole number of ways, now that I think about it. To list a few: each Starman book builds upon the previous volume; all the books together tell a single tale; the three Starmen are not always the ones who save the day; the books often show what the bad guys are doing and thinking; the books often move away from what the Starmen are doing and focus on what someone else is doing; the chapter and book length varies considerably; the action sometimes begins in the prologue; we have intense emotional scenes; and chapters do not always end on a cliffhanger.

<sup>347</sup> Funding was always a problem; this is discussed more in the book that focuses on printing the volumes. To this day we have still not discovered a good way to advertise the series: we're convinced that the series has broad appeal but all our ideas to bring the series to the masses have come up empty.



> picture now. Now I just wish I had time to sit down and write it all out!<sup>348</sup> At  
> least I know what happens: now I just have to find the time to sit down and  
> write it all. It will probably take a good number of hours

Sounds like a great book!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 01, 2001 7:03 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> I spent around four or five hours last night  
> working on the plot outline for LROM, and found out that the plot outline  
> included the use of a very large glider! I'd hate to get rid of my glider as  
> well. I think we could assume what you suggest and get away with it.

Okay, then. For whatever reason, in the mid-21st century there will be enough atmosphere on Mars to sustain a glider.

> Incidentally, the plot outline is coming along pretty well: I'm about  
> half done right now, and the outline is pushing 20,000 words at the moment.

WOW! That's almost half the length of a completed Starman book. You're really writing, there, Jon!<sup>349</sup>

> I am excited about this plot! It has some plot twists I think you'll enjoy.

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<sup>348</sup> I did not graduate from Marshall University until December of 2001 so I was in college at the time, taking a pretty intense course load in order to finish a four-year program in three years.

<sup>349</sup> One thing I did in this summary that I rarely do is include a number of passages that were written as actual text and not as a summary. I did this because there were times when writing the summary that I could visualize the entire scene in my head, and instead of summarizing it I just wrote it. I thought that David would just look at what I wrote, summarize it, and rewrite it, but to my surprise there were a few times when he took what I wrote and just used it as the actual text. If you are ever curious about whether or not I wrote a passage in the books, just look for colons and semicolons – those can almost always be traced back to me.

Good!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 01, 2001 7:03 PM*

Now for a little work on I\*S#2.

By the way, in case you will find it useful for your plotting LROM, here is a basic summary of the short story I'm working on.<sup>350</sup>

Identical twins Colin and Kevin Teagarden watch the last ship to leave Mars take off and return to Earth. It is the mid-21st century, and the Collapse is entering its worst years. Most citizens of pioneer-town Eagle City have gone home. A couple of thousand people remain, preferring to eke out an existence on Mars. Most of these remain in Eagle City, but several hundred head out for the Martian wilderness. Several dozen prospectors already live up to several days' journey away, where there are tiny centers, similar to the little mining colony we had in AOM. The Teagardens take their wives and children and a few others and travel by land-sailer to one of these outposts, which is where they had already established their home. They want complete independence from Earth. Colin retains computer files, but smashes all equipment that would allow contact with Earth. He is burning his bridges. The families have goats, maybe chickens, plants, seeds, etc., and pack up to go far away, even from Eagle City. They travel across the deserts to the northeast. The temperature is slightly warmer than Antarctica, but resembles Death Valley. Travel is difficult. There is water, but mostly frozen. A total of about 30 people make the trek. They hope to find a site where they can settle, raise goats, grow crops, start new. Eventually they come to a site where they discover a ruined city. It is nearly completely obliterated, but there are definite signs that it had been a place of habitation. It is discovered when one of the Teagarden brothers finds an opening that leads into a tunnel in a shallow valley. Desert winds have scoured the area and revealed the entrance. It can be covered with sand or uncovered depending on the wind. The Teagardens enter it and find the ruins of the city. They decide that this will be their new home, and they claim it as their own. It is the city that is mentioned in JTP.

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<sup>350</sup> This summary later became the short story, "The City of Dust." David wrote this from scratch, i.e. not from an outline or summary.

How's that? Will it fit into LROM somehow—or at least not conflict with it? It is intended to answer two questions: How did the Wind People get started (the Teagarden settlement is only one group of Wind People; there are others). And How did the city mentioned in JTP get discovered and who controls it now? What happens later but is not told in the story is that this is the settlement which first makes contact with the Ancient Martians. Their contact with the AMs over the next century causes the Wind Culture to develop in patterns far faster and differently from what would have happened had they just been on their own. The Teagardens and their descendants become the leading family in the culture of the reclusive Wind People. See pages 105-106 of AOM. If we decide to retain the story of a tyrant, that can take place in Eagle City and be independent of the Wind culture. What do you think?

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 04, 2001 10:53 AM*

- > I've finally finished the LROM summary! I'm attaching it to an e-mail*
- > which will follow this one.*

It came through just fine and I've placed it in my files. I'll look forward to reading it—probably today or tomorrow.

- > Keep in mind that this is not the annotated Author's copy! It will take*
- > me a few days to prepare that. The annotated one will have all the symbols I*
- > put into it, explanations of all the passages and why certain events happen,*
- > and so forth. I'm sending this so you can read through it and see it all as*
- > a story. If I sent the annotated version first, the impact of the story*
- > would be ruined: you wouldn't get the effect of the mysterious parts because*
- > they would all be explained, and so forth.*

Sounds very tantalizing!

- > What I ask is that sometime (it doesn't have to be soon by any means!)*
- > is that you read through it and get an opinion of it as a story. I'll send*
- > another document soon talking about the plot, so if you have any questions*
- > or anything, they will probably be answered in the document that*
- > follows!...The*

- > *reason I want you to read the story first without footnotes is because I*
- > *want the story to impact you the way it would impact one of our readers:*
- > *when things happen you won't know what is going on, and will have to keep on*
- > *reading — and thus you'll experience all the plot twists and so forth.*

Superb!

Blessings!

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 05, 2001 5:23 PM*

- > *Here we have it! It turned out to have more than 200 footnotes and more*
- > *than 27,800 words, but I have at last completed it. When I went over the*
- > *text for the footnotes, I noticed a few small errors which I fixed in this*
- > *edition.*
- > *I hope you enjoy it! The footnotes should answer all of your questions*
- > *and give you a good grasp of how the entire story fits together. I'd*
- > *recommend reading this version after reading the version without footnotes*
- > *so that none of the plot surprises are ruined.*

Great Jon, expect that I didn't get the text of the footnotes! All the numbers in the text came through, but no actual footnotes!

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 05, 2001 10:15 PM*

- > *I'll just print it out and send it to both of you as soon as*
- > *I can. I really hope the story is worthwhile, though!*

Here are my initial comments:

There is a LOT of action in this story. Our fans will like that!

Overall, I like the flow of the story, and I think it'll be a fine book. I found a few places where credulity was strained. No doubt when we get into the actual writing, these will get smoothed over, but I'm thinking, for example, of a crowd of people being willing to shoot on sight without a trial,<sup>351</sup> and the Banjoman's henchmen who leave Zip hiding in the warehouse and then apparently don't report that to anyone since the truckers arrive later with no inkling that there has been an intruder.

I'm sorry I came up with the name Banjoman, since we have no logical explanation as to how he got that name! Maybe it'll come to us.

How about if Andy Regal is the main man for the Xenobot contact, and that Troy Putnam really worked for him, rather than have Regal take over after Putnam. Would Regal bring a trained, young Starman into his presence with no one else there, thus making it possible for Joe to punch him out? Would he fire lasers in his own place, and be able to cave the whole place in?

Why have the bomb set for 24 hours? It is more plausible to have it set for a much shorter period of time. That makes the story more difficult, but we can come up with something.

It's great to point out that not all traitors were ferreted out in AOM, and that there must still be some left.

I think that the scene in which Zip learns that the Martians are the Benefactors might work better if it is not so early in the book; but it may be fine as it is.<sup>352</sup> Remember also that I drafted a scene in which Jogren reveals the city of the Sleepers. That could be used to great effect.

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<sup>351</sup> This part of the book was actually inspired by a real event. In April of 2001 a group of Christian missionaries were flying in a plane and were shot down while flying over Peru by Peruvian Air Force jets. To me it looked a great deal like a case of "shoot first and ask questions later." When I pointed this recent news item out to David he no longer doubted the realism of this part of the plot. I wished he was right, though: it would certainly be nice to live in a world where these things didn't happen.

<sup>352</sup> I wanted to work the scene that reveals the identity of Ahmanya deeper into the book, but I couldn't make it work out. The book is all about what happens to Zip on Mars, and Zip has no reason to go to Mars until he finds out the secret of Ahmanya. I managed to push the revelation back to chapter 3 but I could do no more.

Also, we have already said that the Starmen examine the pirates' asteroid early in DIE—that's at the end of JTP. (I hesitate to call it Tharsos until that's been made public in the story.)

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 06, 2001 10:50 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> I tried to put in all the action I possibly could:  
> I wanted to see how close I could get to a Ken Holt-type book.<sup>353</sup> I know that  
> you usually edit out about 25-50% of the action I put into summaries (for  
> good reasons, of course), so I imagine that the action content, by the time  
> it's all said and done, will be diminished and traded off for a neat thing  
> called plausibility.*

I didn't realize I was editing out that much action! At this point, I don't see too many places where any editing out is called for! It'll be a great story.

*> The easiest way I saw to fix the problem was to just have the police  
> come out shooting. Then Zip would have no choice but to flee, and we could  
> skip that lengthy jail process that really wouldn't have added much to the  
> book.*

Or we could have the police craft surround Zip and make certain demands that make him suspicious. He asks a few questions and gradually realizes that he's being setup—then he makes a run for it. That way the police don't come out shooting but Zip isn't ever in custody.

All these things are simple details, and they'll get worked out fine.

*> In real life, there are plenty of people who shoot folks down without a  
> trial. Look what happened to the missionaries in Peru (I think it was Peru):*

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<sup>353</sup> Ken Holt books are famous for their intense excitement! *The Lost Race of Mars* was my chance to plot a book as close to that as I could get.

> *the air force just shot them out of the sky and asked questions later. That  
> sort of thing happens all over the world, and I think it's outrageous.*

Excellent point!

> *Could we suppose that the two people who were scared off didn't want  
> to admit it to their boss who had a temper?*

Or their radios were smashed and their vehicle was crippled but not destroyed, so they limp out of the site but won't arrive for several hours. Something like that. No problem. We'll know when we get there.

> *That is something I actually did on purpose, for a couple different  
> reasons. Andy Regal has been successful on Mars for a long time: he's never  
> had any trouble, and he's gotten quite rich off of his illegal operations. I  
> wanted to show a man who actually wasn't very smart, and who largely created  
> his empire and held it through violence. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me  
> that is what criminals usually do: Mao ZeDong didn't hold onto China through  
> wise leadership so much as he did by shooting everyone who didn't like him.*

Ah, there's our model! I write better when I have a real event or a real person in mind. Then there is something I only have to describe and embellish, rather than make up out of thin air! Mao is our man.

> *I tried putting it as deep into the book as I could: originally it was  
> in Chapter 1, but I pushed and shoved and got it into Chapter 3. The problem  
> here is that the scene takes place on Tharsos, and Tharsos is about a 3  
> weeks journey from Mars! It's got to happen before they leave for Mars, and  
> the best I could do was work in 3 chapters before they leave.*

I realize that, and I think you're right. I had actually envisioned the chapter as coming quite early in the book when I wrote it—but that was before the plot had been developed, of course. I'm sure it'll be fine. I had envisioned the book as being mostly about the search for the Martians rather than fighting another major enemy...still, the Ban-joman was there all along too. It'll work out.

> > *Remember also that I drafted a scene in which Jogren reveals the city of the  
> > Sleepers. That could be used to great effect.*  
>

> Really? When was this? I don't remember anything about it at all. Are  
> you sure that I saw it?

I don't know, but I think so. I think I wrote it at the same time as the scene in which Zip discovers that the Martians are the Benefactors, but maybe not. I may have written it after you left California and never sent it on to you. I'll put it at the end of this email.

> I'm going to try to mail out the footnoted summaries to you tomorrow  
> (I'll print them today). I think they will be helpful: there are some things  
> about the story that you couldn't know (like what the alien writing on the  
> walls under Mars said!) unless you read the footnotes. Some scenes that seem  
> strained or odd might make more sense once you read the footnotes and see  
> what I was doing. You have read the plot: hopefully next week you'll be able  
> to read my explanation and defense!

Actually I didn't have any feeling of strain or need to have something explained. It flowed fine. I'm looking forward to the footnotes, just the same.

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 06, 2001 1:08 PM

Dear Jon,

> > I didn't realize I was editing out that much action!  
>  
> That could be because the editing made the book stronger, and when the  
> books were finished they definitely didn't seem to be lacking in action. I  
> can think of a number of scenes in JTP, for instance: the fight in the power  
> plant, the attempted mutiny on the way to JTP after stopping at Saturn, the  
> fierce aerial battle over Nyx that takes place when the Xenobots first saw  
> the Starmen (after the crew was captured), the explosion of the shuttlecraft  
> to scatter the Xenos and give Zip a chance to escape, and the dogfight in  
> the end when Zip uses the holograms to get the Xenos to fight themselves.  
> All that action was actually in the summary.

Wow, that's right!



> *something to think about: when I drafted LROM, I*  
> *pictured him as being able to speak very fluent English. Notice how he was*  
> *able to interact with a whole number of Earth beings and pass himself off as*  
> *being a human without being suspected! You can't do that if your idea of a*  
> *sentence is two words.*

Oh well, that'll work out too.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 09, 2001 12:09 AM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

One of the people in the reading group today suggested an explanation for the name "Banjoman." She (Mary Doman) suggested that it be a corruption of the Chinese name, "Bhan Zho Ma'an." That would work, except we already have the name Anthony Regal already. I wonder if Anthony could be Chinese, using the English name Anthony Regal as a front. His real name could be Bhan Zho Ma'an, which he uses to do his nefarious work (where he is known as Banjoman), while Anthony does the "legal, public" work. What do you think??

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 01, 2001 7:07 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

I just realized a FANTASTIC implication in the scene of LROM that's already been written: when Zip figures out that the Benefactors' planet is Mars. That scene was written in May 2000 before we had gone very far with the overarching plot. As time passed, we had Zip and the Starman gradually realize that the Titanians had been brought to Ti-

tan by "the Benefactors" and that "the Benefactors" had been on Nyx, Titan, and Mars. In DIE the big thrust is to find signs of them on Europa—a search which succeeds.

Do you realize that now when Zip finds out that the Benefactors are Martians, that he can only come to one conclusion? THERE ARE NO BENEFACTORS TO BE FOUND!! They were all destroyed thousands of years before when Mars was turned into a desert. Maybe a very few survived on the Asteroid, etc., but he'll have to conclude that the reason the aliens Mark saw are so afraid of the Xenobots is because THEY HAVE DWINDLED TO SO FEW THAT THEY HAVE NO POWER TO RESIST THE XENOBOTS IN THE 22ND CENTURY!!

This is the first twist in LROM. The second twist will be when the Starmen find Jogren and he shows them the hibernating Martians, and the Starmen realize that THE BENEFACTORS DO IN FACT EXIST! LROM, then, will have TWO major twists: one at the beginning and one at the end.

Our readers will have their minds completely blown into pieces when they get this book. We'll have to advertise it very skillfully to build the excitement!

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2001 11:58 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

My father,<sup>354</sup> of course, is the artist for LROM and has already done the cover. However, we never asked him about the internals. Right now we don't have anyone. Would you guys mind if I did them? I've done a lot of pen and ink work and some watercolor wash before (although it's been a long time), and hope I can do a passable job. The watercolor wash would, of course, just be in gray for the internals.<sup>355</sup>

*David*

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<sup>354</sup> Bill Baumann

<sup>355</sup> We thought this was a great idea, and so David began work on the internals (although he ended up not using watercolors due to printing constraints). I think that they worked out very well! It's not often that the writer of a series book also does the internal artwork for it. (At least that's one way to ensure that the artwork matches the text!)

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2001 9:32 PM

By the way, at the end of yesterday's reading group, I told the four people that the next time we meet, we'll be reading the first chapters of LROM in which the secret of the Benefactors will be revealed. I've told them, humorously but also seriously, that I will only allow them to participate in the reading group for LROM if they SWEAR on a Bible that they will not reveal to ANYONE, including family members, what they learn about the story. We REALLY need to build up the suspense for this book, and I think we can do it! But the secret must be kept until the book is distributed on October 12. Sound okay?<sup>356</sup>

David

DATE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2001 9:15 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I was working my way through our old e-mails to compile the Correspondence,*  
> *and I came across this exchange:*

>

> > > *But did you know that the*  
> > > *brightest object in the Martian sky aside from the*  
> > > *two moons was Earth?*  
> > > *Also, Earth's moon can be plainly seen: it's quite*  
> > > *bright from Mars,*

> >

> > *Wow, no I didn't know that! We'll have to write that*  
> > *into LROM! It'll be another*  
> > *terrific scene.*

Got it! Thanks for the reminder, Jon. It's in the notes for LROM now.

...

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<sup>356</sup> As you can see, we were *very serious* about not revealing the secret concerning the identity of Ahma-nya in advance – we really wanted it to be a surprise.

I've also checked with my brother, who is fluent in Mandarin Chinese, to make sure that our Chinese name from which Banjoman is adapted is a real name. He's checking with native Mandarin speakers to make sure we're right on target.

> *Then after that — after David's other article and the inter\*stellar, which*  
> *is hopefully almost finished — it's ON TO LROM AT LAST!!!!!!!!!!*

The third I\*S is in draft form, and should only take a few days to put together. As soon as DIE is finished, I'll do the article for the next Review. I also have to write the teaser scene from LROM that will go in the back of DIE. That shouldn't take more than one sitting. That'll come first, since it's really part of DIE. Then the Review article, then the third I\*S. THEN LROM. The ignition on that one should be about the 3rd or 4th week on January. I'm really excited about the book, so I don't expect long delays in writing it.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 2002 1:50 PM*

Today, I will write the excerpt of LROM which will appear in DIE. I've been sick for a couple of days but am getting better. I'll send it off to you later today.

My absolute deadline for finishing LROM is the end of June. That gives me 5 1/2 months, which should be enough. It usually takes me about 3-4 months to write a normal-length book. I'll do the illustrations as I go along. We can certainly delay I\*S#3 until LROM is well on the way and we have a comfortable margin of time. I'll get started on LROM this week.

*David*

DATE: SAT, 19 JAN 2002 17:51:23 -0800

Dear Mike and Jon,

I'm glad you liked the teaser, men.<sup>357</sup> I'll fix the error, Jon—thanks for pointing it out. It was fun writing it—it's almost as long as an entire chapter as it stands! It brought back very pleasant memories of Belle Isle for me too. I snapped lots of photos for the scene. Maybe we can post those on the web site when DIE is out so people can see that we're talking about a real place.<sup>358</sup> It'll really be a teaser, as you point out Jon, since the readers won't know what's going on! Why is Zip being chased by the police and why are the people so hateful to him?!

One thing I needed to change from the summary, but I think it'll be easy to accommodate: the summary had this scene taking place in Eagle City. Eagle City, however, is in a crater and is not likely to have a river running through it. I'm assuming that this scene will take place in a "suburb" of EC outside the crater. We can figure out the details when we get there.

I'll get started on LROM on Monday, but considering what's already been written, we've already got the equivalent of a couple of chapters!

Have a blessed Lord's Day.

*David*

DATE: SUN, 20 JAN 2002 17:53:45 -0800

Dear Jon and Mike,

I am planning on doing an illustration for the LROM teaser based on the photos.<sup>359</sup> I actually had that idea when I was on Belle Isle and is one of the reasons I took so many photos. There are other scenes for LROM that can be illustrated from the photos.

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<sup>357</sup> This is a reference to the portion of *The Lost Race of Mars* that we put at the end of the fourth Starman book.

<sup>358</sup> We did post one, alongside the pen and ink illustration based on the photograph.

<sup>359</sup> I think that David bases nearly all of his illustrations on actual photos, or other artwork such as known series book illustrations.

Your reworking of the summary looks fine, Jon. Now I have to figure out how to make it into a word document so I don't have to retype the whole thing!

I haven't read the summary since you first sent it to us months ago, Jon, so the first step in preparing to write the book will be to reread it.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2002 10:13 PM*

> > *Now—on to LROM!*

>

> *Yeaaaaaaah! The long-awaited moment has at last  
> arrived!! This, as they say, is the moment we have all  
> been waiting for.*

First thing is to read the summary and then compress that into an outline of quick snippets. I work from that to write the chapters, referring back to the summary for details. Since the summary is so long and detailed already, that'll take a while. Next week I'm spending a couple of days in the mountains on a private rest time and will take the laptop to get at least 2-3 chapters done. The first LROM reading group is already scheduled for 2/23. My hard goal is to have the complete draft finished by the end of June!

*David*

*DATE: SUN, 10 FEB 2002 06:08:03 -0800*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Good passage, Jon. I have a lot of Agatha Christie mysteries, including that one, but I haven't read it for a long time. The theme of LROM is death and resurrection—or at least the hope or potential of it. It has a powerfully Christian theme, including (as I wrote last night) proceeding on faith in the face of hopelessness. The passage in which

Zip faces the fickleness of the crowd—the excerpt in DIE—is similar to Jesus' unjust condemnation. The whole of the Starmen's ordeal in LROM is an echo of that. The note to myself to use the words of hymn 580 (from our Episcopal hymnal) is to insert a conversation about justice and hope—the Starmen's response to the realization that Mars is Ahmanya devastated—symbolically, Eden defiled. LROM will be a powerful book thick with the richest and deepest of Christian themes.

Let's all three of us make sure, as the book unfolds, that these themes are brought out in each opportunity—such as the one Jon mentions about Richard's plea to the authorities. There will be other opportunities.

On to the Lord's Day! The winds are blowing fiercely out here today. Very Martian.

*David*

*DATE: SAT, 09 FEB 2002 19:12:20 -0800*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I'm really glad you like the way LROM is unfolding so far, Jon. I hope you'll like SETI just as much.

- > A question: in the text you spelled it*
- > "counsel" — should it be council instead?*

You're right. I'll fix it. Thank you.

- > You worked in Dr. Namon very well! I like it a lot.*
- > His disappearance at just the right time was very*
- > cool! The Benefactors are clearly revealing themselves*
- > in a very subtle way.*

In the summary, you had the Starmen learn that he was a Benefactor in another way, in chapter 4. I hope that the way I've done it is okay. It added a bit more intensity to Zip's search of the image and REALLY emphasized the tragedy of the discovery.

- > <<illunas>>*

- > *Very good choice! Part of it seems to be from*
- > *"illumination" which is very close to what the fungi do!*

Right. It's a combination of "illumination" and "luna"—Latin for moon—it suggests "moonlight." In the summary, you suggested that the Benefactors use the word "plants," but as I was writing I figured that they would use their own word for it, which we would not translate. This tells the reader that there is SOMETHING critical under attack. The reader will figure it out gradually when he learns that the lichen is being exploited.

By the way, I have a model for Stenaphi,<sup>360</sup> the Benefactor. One of the college girls at the church has just the right look. Stenaphi is a hidden tribute to Stephanie Schnorbus, one of our great fans and AOM binder. I told her today she's in book 5 as a Benefactor. Her face lit up. She doesn't look the part, though.

- > <<Ahmanya>>
- > *I like this word a lot! It's a very beautiful word*
- > *for Mars. I did a quick word search on the 'Net and*
- > *found that this really does seem to be a new word —*
- > *it wasn't found.*

I think I explained the source of this word before: Aman—Tolkien's word for the Undying Lands in the Silmarillion—and the Japanese suffix -ya meaning "place of" or "store." E.g. In Japanese, honya is a bookstore=hon (book)+ya. Ahmanya, then, means "a place where delight may be found." Ancient Mars is subtly reminiscent, then, of Eden, which is the Hebrew word for Delight. Garden of Eden means Place of Delight.

- > *One thing I noticed: now Zip believes that there are*
- > *no Benefactors to be found, so why should he go off to*
- > *Mars?*

Because 1) there are certainly SOME Benefactors left; 2) those that are left are calling the Starmen to Mars by showing them the image and helping them in other ways; and 3) there's nothing else to do except sit and moan. Therefore the Starmen go to Mars simply on "faith" that something will happen. They keep going under the shadow of apparent hopelessness, waiting on trust that the Benefactors will guide them. It's a paradigm of Christian faith: in tough times, in the "dark nights," you keep going and God helps you on a "need to know" basis. This is why the last line of the chapter has Zip feeling a

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<sup>360</sup> Later the spelling was changed to "Stenafi." We realized that Ahmanyan had to be spelled phonetically.



"celebratory joy." It's inexplicable, but it's still there somehow. So he motivates the others to keep up the search, though he doesn't know what he's looking for now.

Richard, at last, will now become a major actor in a Starman story rather than mostly a "father figure" in the background.

By the way, Jon, in the summary you wrote, when I pass the cursor past a footnote, a balloon opens up with the text of the footnote in it. It even did that on my laptop when I didn't have the file of the footnotes loaded. That's very helpful!

*David*

*DATE: SAT, 09 FEB 2002 18:43:55 -0800*

Dear David and Mike,

By the way, the word "Bathysomething" in the LROM text I sent you is there as a place-holder because I wanted to use that long "R" word that is often used of the European sea—but I can't find it. I think it was something like "ramarynthine" or something—that's way off, but bathysphere reminded me of it so that's what I put into the draft. I still haven't found the "R" word but I know I've seen it in the research I did for DIE. If either of you know what it is, great, pass it on. If not, I won't use it. It's rather esoteric anyway.

At the end you'll find a note I wrote to myself about the words of a hymn to put into some dialogue in chapter 4, and the beginnings of the glossary for LROM. Just ignore that stuff.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2002 1:12 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

My brother visited yesterday—the one who is fluent in Chinese and whom I had asked about a suitable Chinese name behind The Banjoman. He brought not only the name but

also what it looks like in Chinese characters, in about fifteen different fonts. This will no doubt find a good place in LROM. More to the point, the name is also a translation which is marvelously fitting: it means "one who enters by the left door." In Chinese, the "left" side of things is suspect and implies evil. As you may know, in Latin the word for "right" is "dextra," but for "left" it is "sinistra." In English, we get the words "dextrous" and "sinister" from the Latin—same implication. So that the name (in Chinese it is pronounced something like Ban Zou Men) means "a sinister person." Neat, eh? I'm still getting a few details about the name from my brother about it. The person who supplied the name is Taiwanese, which means that the characters are those that go back 3,000-4,000 years rather than the simplified characters the Communists adopted about 60 years ago. The Communists made literacy easier to achieve for the masses, but wiped out 3 or 4 millennia of culture in the writing. The Taiwanese retained it. This will continue the Starman Team's reputation for attention to detail. I remember when Fred Woodworth spent years looking for a copy of the 1950 World Almanac before he finally found one, then set out to work the code that Chahda sent Rick and Scotty in The Caves of Fear—and found that it worked. Hal Goodwin later said that he made sure it would work because he just KNEW that some kid somewhere would try to work it out!<sup>361</sup>

On to LROM chapter 4.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2002 7:46 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Here is a draft of chapter 4. The only major change I made from the summary is to replace the journey back to the moon for a conference with Richard with a videoconference. A few reasons: I figure they'd have the technology to do that in the mid 22nd century and it would save time; we've had several similar scenes already in the first books and it could get old; it injects a note of urgency; and generally avoids having to put

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<sup>361</sup> This is why we want to make the descriptions of Mars in *Assault on Mars* and *The Lost Race of Mars* conform exactly to the actual Martian landscape – we just know that someday, someone is going to be there with a copy of the Starman books and is going to check and see if we got it right or not.

more into an already long book, such as yet another farewell to family and a blast-off scene. Is that okay?

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2002 9:26 PM*

Dear Jon,

*> Wow! I am very impressed: the chapter [4] is fantastic.*

Well, I'm surprised and pleased. I didn't think it was that good—mostly transitional.

*> I love the atmosphere*

*> of mystery and danger that you put into the second half of the chapter: it*

*> actually turns this book into a mystery — a very powerful one. Our readers*

*> will be on the edge of their seats wanting to know what will happen!*

I hadn't thought of it that way. Good!

*> Your comment about a project on Venus was a good idea! It'll leave our*

*> readers wondering what's up. It'll also leave ME wondering what's up! It's a*

*> good challenge for the team to face. It would be fun just to leave this as a*

*> side issue that never gets resolved:*

Actually the idea came from our (now abandoned) idea of the terraformation of Venus.<sup>362</sup> We're not doing that, but I didn't want to leave the impression that Richard sits around all day twiddling his thumbs until the Starmen call him up. He runs an enormous company and must have many other things to do. Everything else in the series moved outward—Mars, Asteroids, and Beyond—so I thought something inward (Venus or Mercury) would be a good change of pace. I don't think the project ever has to be explained, but if we ever want to do so, some groundwork has been laid. Or do you think

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<sup>362</sup> At one time we wanted to write a book entitled *The Venus Project*, which was going to be about the terraformation of Venus. (I think I may have even written a summary for it.) After a lot of research we decided that terraforming Venus was completely impractical, so we abandoned the idea.

we should mention something about the solar satellite that creates antimatter? That's already been mentioned...

A little more work on LROM tonight, but I don't think we'll see another chapter until Thursday.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2002 9:52 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

A thought: Andy Regal is named after the villain in the Tom Swift series, Andy Foger, with Foger spelled backwards and adapted. Spelling backwards is rather common in series books and we've already spelled No Man backwards. How about just calling him Andy Forge? —especially if the mayor is Jerry Royal—sounds a little contrived to me. Forge is more easily identifiable as a tribute to TS, and Forge sounds more evil than Regal, for sure.

What do you think?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2002 7:32 PM*

Dear Jon,

What do you call it when two planets are on opposite sides of the sun? Is that called being "opposition"? "Apposition" is when they are at their closest, right? I'm suggesting that Mars and Earth are in opposition (if that's the right term) in March 2153 when our

story begins. I don't know if that's true or not and I doubt anyone will check it, but I'd like to use the symbol of being "far from home" when the danger strikes.<sup>363</sup>

Regarding Anthony Forge—suppose we call him Andrew Forge, so that the name is closer to Andy Foger?

Finally—The summary calls for a Steve Cliff impersonator. This seems implausible to me; I've never been too convinced when someone in a story who is well known to the characters turns out to be an imposter. How about if we introduce a character who is similar to Steve and who is personally recommended by him, but turns out to be false? Steve has been introduced in AOM as nobody's fool and we can play that up when he recommends his friend. Still, the friend turns out to be a traitor who has even deceived Steve. What do you think?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2002 8:22 PM*

Dear Jon,

Does Richard Starlight tell the Starmen that he's coming to Mars?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2002 9:15 PM*

Sounds good. I'm trying a new method of writing this time, and it is helping me stay much closer to the summary—very important this time especially since you've put so much work into LROM.

Almost done with chapter 5. I think you'll like it. Maybe another hour or so.

*David*

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<sup>363</sup> Actually we ourselves decided to check it with the help of Valerie Kramer, and found that Earth and Mars are almost on opposite sides of their orbits from each other at the time *Assault On Mars* opens.

DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2002 11:03 PM

Dear Jon,

Got the answers this time to the small questions. Sounds great. We'll go with Andrew Forge then and we'll keep Steve—excellent reasoning.<sup>364</sup> You've really put a lot of work into this story. I like the idea of a robotic Steve. I'll contemplate the answer more later, but I think it has GREAT potential!

More later. I've been sitting here for four hours straight now writing chapter 5. Time for dinner.

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2002 9:54 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

I'm glad you liked LROM 5, Jon. I liked the way it was moving, too. You picked up on all the subtlties I wanted to get in there.

By the way, I received two more copies of your answer to "small questions" this morning. Somehow your first TWO messages were delayed overnight.

> *The prospector is*  
> *exactly right, and I was impressed at the way the Starmen got in touch with*  
> *him!*

Charles Stansby is a tribute to the Anglican 20th century author and Inkling, Charles Williams. His full name was Charles Walter Stansby Williams. I'm reading a biography of him right now so the name came to me in about 2 seconds.

> *Using the Martian plums was a terrific idea.*

---

<sup>364</sup> I don't fully remember my reasoning, but I think I said something along the lines that (a) the imposter would be a machine, and (b) only Mark and Joe had been with Steve and they had only been with him for a few days – and even then Steve had spent most of his time inside his spacesuit and they had talked very little. They really did not know that much about Steve.

That came to me rather immediately too. It seemed like something that would have impressed Joe and Mark no end at the time and tied them to Jogren in AOM, but wasn't the kind of detail they would have told Zip about when they told each other their adventures back in AOM, and it became the link to Jogren in LROM.

> > *Communication between the planets was at its most complex stage.*

>

> *Very good! I like it. Makes sense and adds depth.*

I'm glad you like it! You wrote it when you described the Interplanetary Network—an item that will appear in I\*S#3.

> > ... *Does technology improve people? ...*

>

> *Very good exchange!! It's very appropriate and it fits well — and it sets*

> *a good tone for the chapter. Gives our readers something to think about.*

This is a reworking/paraphrasing and modernization of one of the newer hymns in the Episcopal hymnal.

> > *The buildings were mostly constructed of hardened red brick ...*

>

> *Exactly right! Nice touch.*

Also your idea!

> *It's interesting how the driver was friendlier than the official! I like*

> *the distinction that creates: the people who end up supporting Zip are the*

> *average people — cabmen and waitresses and so forth.*

The official—who is not named—is not really a bad guy, just a bumptious bureaucrat, but he sets the tone for Jerry Royal. At first Jerry will appear merely to be another bureaucrat, but in his case, of course, it is worse. This lead-in, then, is a red herring to keep people from suspecting Royal too soon. Of course, that doubt doesn't last long.

> > *Jogren's who we're looking for. We came to Mars to find people like him.*

>

> *What a terrific way to end the chapter!! The chapter came off as quite*

> *realistic and logical. It's good!*

It does seem logical. Once they knew that the Benefactors are Martians, Jogren's identity would fall into place. This leads into the revelation of who the Wind People have been in contact with, but that'll come later. Also, this is as much as the Reading Group will get tomorrow afternoon! I can hear the groans of frustration now when they realize that that's all they're getting.

> *Your new method at writing seems to be working: you are following the summary astonishingly closely.*<sup>365</sup>

The only variation I made, I think, is the revelation of Jogren's identity. Now we have to find a way to keep the Starman in Eagle City rather than head right out into the wilderness. The Banjoman has to have time to create the pseudo-Steve, and that ought to take at least a few days. Of course, they don't get to find Jogren right away—the plot calls for their becoming fugitives before that happens.

> *I have put a lot of work into the story —*  
> *but that's not strange since it's my favorite one so far! It's been a lot of*  
> *fun working on it. I knew this would be good so I put a lot of work into it.*

Especially for that reason, I want to make sure that you are satisfied with the way it turns out.

I did the math yesterday. There are 33 chapters in LROM. Five are now written, plus the teaser at the end of DIE—so basically six are written. That leaves 27 chapters to be written between now and the end of June. That's 6-7 chapters per month. That's my goal. And the illustrations have to be done too! If I have to, I'll take some time off after Easter to make sure that we don't fail. The book **MUST** be ready for distribution in October!!!<sup>366</sup>

*David*

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<sup>365</sup> The funny thing is that by the time it comes to write a book, I've forgotten a good deal of what I wrote in the summary because by then I'm well into the summary of a different book. While we were working on writing book five I was deep into the complexities of the summary for book six, and had forgotten quite a few of the details I put into book five.

<sup>366</sup> In the fourth Starman book we printed a notice saying that the fifth book would be available at the October Series Book Conference, so we *had* to have the book finished by then. We did it, but it was a tough hall and I don't think we'd want to try it again.



*DATE: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2002 10:08 AM*

Dear Jon,

- > *The answer to this is right in the summary! The Banjoman finds out where*
- > *they are going and he wrecks their ship — ...When that fails he then uses everything*
- > *he's got.*
- > *Does that sound reasonable?*

Ah yes, I remember the wrecked ship! I'll have to read the summary again to get some of the details down here, but wouldn't they have just borrowed or rented a ship and gone anyway?

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2002 11:01 AM*

- > <grins> *Not if they expected the repairs to be done in a few hours!*

Beautiful! That works.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2002 7:28 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

The Reading Group left a short while ago. The four of them have now heard all five chapters of LROM. It was very gratifying that none of them suspected that Ahmanyas was Mars or that the Benefactors were Martians. That's a good sign that we haven't tipped our hands too much. They like the way the story is going very much. The only suggestions they made were minor typos and structure. Only one textual suggestion: they think that Charles Stansby got off too easily—he just got up and left the table and the Starman didn't do anything about it. I'll make them protest a bit more and that

should make that scene more realistic, except that I have to have Zip protest the most—Mark and Joe haven't figured out yet that Jogren is a Martian so they won't understand Zip's eagerness to hang onto Charles.

Chapter 6 on Monday.

*David*

P.S. I did actually have them swear on a Bible not to reveal anything about LROM!

*DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2002 10:54 PM*

Dear Mary,<sup>367</sup>

> *In rereading the physical*  
> *description of the Benefactors, I'm not sure how the Starmen didn't see*  
> *him as "other". Humans look, well...HUMAN rather than as an*  
> *approximation of human; they do not have skin the color of old papyrus,*  
> *nor do they have large brown almond eyes. The guys were in an elevator*  
> *with him...wouldn't they have seen something different about the*  
> *"doctor"?*

The model for the appearance of the Benefactors is basically Egyptian. To humans, they would not look nonhuman, but they would look, perhaps, "ethnic." In the world of the Starmen, this is taken for granted—the 22nd century is a POST racist world. The Benefactors have been described deliberately in the previous books as "just like us." In fact, because of the gravity of Mars, they are, on the average, generally slightly taller and thinner than humans, but not obviously so. People would see them and not think, "Man, that guy's not human!" They'd say, "Man, that guy's pretty tall," etc. There are variations among the Benefactors as there are among humans—tall, thin, short, dark, curly hair, different colored eyes, etc. Once humans come to realize that there are in fact living Martians, the distinction would become more clear to the normal person. One reason that some of them can pass, for a time, in human society, is because they are so unsuspected. You will find, as LROM develops, that there are some Martians who are fluent in English (e.g., Dr. Namon—No Man spelled backwards—Jon's cute idea) and others

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<sup>367</sup> of the Reading Group fame!

who are not (e.g. Jogren). We want to preserve for the Martians the same enormous variety that exists among humans.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2002 11:05 AM*

Dear Mary,

*> Thanks for clearing up my confusion on the Benefactors...they are very  
> attractive people! Can you tell me where it is said "they look just like  
> us"?*

I doubt it said that precisely, but it was noted that they were the same size, body type, etc. For example, see JTP, the middle of page 97. There are other passages, especially in DIE.

*> I realized this morning that you and I were talking about two different  
> kinds of beings. I guess I had pictured the Ahmanyans' eyes like those  
> often seen in the aliens from the "alien abuctees" sketches...large,  
> almond shaped, with no whites and no pupils...just pure black almond  
> eyes. I'm assuming our Martian friends' eyes look "human", with whites  
> and pupils, not like "alien" eyes only brown.*

Correct.

*> It is interesting to note that the people of Earth are now post  
> racist...very different from our world, ...*

Somewhere, I don't recall now whether it was the message board or somewhere else, I described what the post-Collapse world is like. I think it may have been some exchanges with my second cousin Laura regarding the alleged "sexist" nature of our books. Maybe it was the second I\*S when I wrote about the "starfolk" concept. But anyway, we have created the world of the Starman to be, in some way, an ideal. The whole scope is presented that way—"an age of hope and adventure" is how it is described on the book jackets. Obviously there is still evil and sin, but the background of the series is, in a sense, a "second chance." The Collapse is similar to the Flood. It

cleansed the Earth and allowed for a new beginning. The 22nd century is deliberately intended to be a "morning" world. We describe it in terms of an "ideal" to be striven for—even without any adventures at all, just daily life, it would be a world worth emulating and desiring. Armstrong Forest is one feature especially. All scenes that take place on Earth have been almost Edenic: West Virginia and Florida, and the references to Montana, New Zealand, and Canada. The only exception is the nuclear wasteland where DC had been, but that is presented deliberately as marked off from the rest of the 22nd century Earth by a "sharp line."

- > *Isn't it interesting that Mark was able to correctly sense that he was*
- > *seeing the alien Benefactors when his conscious mind was in a sleep-state*
- > *("Runaway Asteroid"), and yet when he was fully awake and in close*
- > *proximity to a Benefactor ("Lost Race of Mars"), he didn't recognize him*
- > *as an alien, but experienced him as a human.*

I hadn't noticed that, but I think the reason is this: in TRA Mark knew that there were no humans in the part of the asteroid where they were sleeping. Further, the two he saw were working the controls of the asteroid. His first reaction would have been, "These two belong here. They must be the people who made the asteroid." In LROM, once again it is the setting that suggests the identity of the unknown person: the visitor introduces himself as a member of the staff and everything he does confirms that, until he disappears. The Starman would have taken him at face value: Zip sent a question and Dr. Namon appeared in response. You will find in LROM that the time will come when the Starmen begin to question who is an incognito Benefactor, once they have experience with them. At the end of chapter 5, for example, you will recall that it suddenly dawned on Zip that Jogren must be one. In AOM, however, when Mark, Joe, and Steve meet Jogren and know NOTHING of the Benefactors, they take him for an odd, eccentric human prospector. The Starman Team knew from the beginning, of course, that he was in fact an ancient Martian. His stilted English is because he was not trained to be in contact with humans; other Benefactors are and their English is flawless.

Thanks for your insights and dedication to our series! You are making even ME think about it.

*David*

DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2002 9:59 PM

Dear Jon and David,

I just wrote a long e-mail regarding this topic and then accidentally deleted it! BLAST! And I just don't have it in me tonight to try and rewrite it. So I will give the short version.

Originally I interpreted the Benefactors/AMs to be Humanoids but not able to "pass" outside of dim lighting and hoods. It is one thing to populate the solar system with Humanoids...it is quite another stretch to have something close enough to pass for human being. Of course I am able to be flexible on this, but I think there is a way we can have our cake and eat it too. (Or to have the best of both Worlds.....pun intended) (grins).

Let's retain the suggestions I made about the "expanding Cranium" (some blood shunts away from body to the cranium, the cranium facilitates this by unhinging several plates, allowing for up to 70% increase in cranial volume. The descriptive and imagery potential here is intriguing.)

Also, I hope we are retaining the Strange abilities .....through the projection of images, secret through the eye IR communications, hibernation/suspended animation....also ability to "play dead".<sup>368</sup>

About Steve being replaced with an Android.....I initially had a problem with that.....I doubt in two hundred years WE will have the technology to fool real human being up close with robots.....but perhaps Alien technology will be more credible. (While on this subject...I prefer the pseudo-tissue style android (think Bishop in the first ALIEN movie) over motors/actuators/gears/wire style.

Mike

DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2002 10:37 PM

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *Let's retain the suggestions I made about the "expanding*  
> *Cranium" ( some blood shunts away from body to the cranium,*

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<sup>368</sup> Most of these "extra features" that are proper to the Ahmanyans have yet been revealed. The only hint was in the short story, "Return to Europa," where Saadervo's face shows a reaction that puzzles the Star-men.

- > *the cranium facilitates this by unhinging several plates,*
- > *allowing for up to 70% increase in cranial volume. The*
- > *descriptive and imagery potential here is intriguing.*
- > *Also, I hope we are retaining the Strange abilities*
- > *.....through the projection of images, secret*
- > *through the eye IR communications, hibernation/suspended*
- > *animation....also ability to "play dead".*

MAN, I had forgotten all about that! We've already invested a lot in the plot of LROM in which the Martians have to pass for humans in some circumstances. How can we do this—have our cake and eat it too?

- > *About Steve being replaced with an Android.....I*
- > *initially had a problem with that.....I doubt in two*
- > *hundred years WE will have the technology to fool real*
- > *human being up close with robots.....but perhaps Alien*
- > *technology will be more credible. ( While on this*
- > *subject...I prefer the pseudo-tissue style android*
- > *(think Bishop in the first ALIEN movie) over*
- > *motors/actuators/gears/wire style.*

I'm thinking some sort of inner workings with artificially grown skin over it. Will this work? It'll be tough to make plausible, but can we do it? The Xenobots, of course, will have to supply to basic workings through one of their shipments mentioned in DIE chapter 1.

Also, The Banjoman has only 2-3 days to manufacture a credible Steve and have him "meet" the Starman in Eagle City. Can it be done? Can we make it plausible? That's our next chapter.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2002 2:24 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Ah, I see now. I read the summary of chapter 6 more carefully and it all fits in. No problem except this: the summary says that the Starmen walk around Eagle City for a few

days before discovering the vandalism. I think that Zip would want them to press on to Jogren as soon as possible. How's this for a refinement? They're at Wind's End in the afternoon, then spend that night with the McTaggarts—just as the current chapter 6 reads. The next day they make preparations, etc., then go to the spaceport in the late afternoon (rather than mid-morning) to prepare the ship for early takeoff the following morning. I doubt they'd wait all day and then set out to launch as the sun is falling. At that time the vandalism is discovered and the assassination attempt is foiled as evening falls. The following day or even two later, while they are working on the repair, encountering the frustrating delay, and trying to find a glider, they run across Steve Cliff who recommends Andrew Forge. And we go on from there. Will that do? Also, the Starmen are unaware of the foiled assassination attempt, is that right?

Also, regarding the appearance of the Martians and their ability to blend into human-kind—haven't we already established that Jogren can do this in AOM? Further, he was not someone who was prepared or disguised, since he is not one trained for appearance among human society; he is a guardian of the sleepers and only goes out the rescue humans because they are in desperate plight. We can certainly add all the special features of Martian physiology, etc., but (unless I am missing something or you guys can think of something I can't) it seems we are kinda stuck with Martians whose appearance, at least under certain circumstances, can blend in with humans without arousing too much curiosity. Your thoughts?

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2002 9:01 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Some thoughts on Martian/humans.

1) The "expanding cranium/facial changes" concept is a viable way out of this problem. When the Martians are not in HyperCerebral mode...their heads and faces can pass for human. (The best of both worlds!)

2) Alternatively, Jogren (perhaps others as well) could have been surgically altered to pass for human. Jon mentioned the Hollywood movie make-up/prop idea....this is also a possibility , but I think that the disguises/make-up would have to be extremely superior to what Hollywood uses now ( IOW, Star Trek's Mr Data is not going to fool anyone up close.)

3) Jon is correct in remembering that Jogren passed for human in AOM only because he was wearing a pressure suit/helmet.

4) Having truly "not-quite human looking" humanoids makes for a more interesting story.

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2002 9:50 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> > *Also, regarding the appearance of the Martians and their*

> > *ability to blend into humankind—haven't we already*

> > *established that Jogren can do this in AOM? Further,*

> > *he was not someone who was prepared or disguised...*

>

> *Keep in mind, though, that he had his spacesuit on the entire time! No one*

> *could see what he looked like underneath the spacesuit. He could have been*

> *bright purple with orange stripes and three heads and no one would have*

> *known. He may not have been prepared, but that spacesuit with the opaque*

> *one-way glass was the best disguise he could have wanted.*

Ah right. How I do forget. Disturbing sometimes.

It all sounds good. Should I alter the description of the Martians in the first chapter of LROM? I think I'm zeroing in on what we're trying to do, but I'm still not completely clear. Keep me on track, men!

Thursday: the plan is the revise chapter 6 and produce chapter 7.

*David*



DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 01, 2002 12:22 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *The bad guys caught Steve and copied him, right down to the organization of*
- > *his brain. This guy looks exactly like Steve, thinks like Steve, and talks*
- > *like Steve. He would pass any fingerprint, DNA or retinal scan. ...*

Are you kidding?? This is actually in process now?<sup>369</sup> This is probably where I will come down more on a Biblically literal side and join the card-carrying idiots, though if science can really do it then it must be possible—but I've read that the brain is many many times more complex than the best computer. Also, the person is much more than a brain (of course) so that an electronic version of a person would still not produce a realistic individual. The soul, that which is communicated through the eyes when people talk and emote, would not be there.<sup>370</sup> I'd think there'd be a BIG difference. (I'm sure you guys are in agreement.)

Notwithstanding, I also think we ought to go with an android Steve and work with it. It'll be a challenge to us to make it plausible, but I think we can do it. It might even be a forum for having the Starmen discuss these matters—secretly while Steve is still with them and definitely after "Steve" is taken out of the picture.

- > *You know, come to think of it, it does fit: the story shows in other places*
- > *that the Banjoman has access to highly advanced robots (such as the*
- > *mechanical-looking one that captures Joe). This is also something that a bad*
- > *guy would do: forging a human for deception. That could be a high crime in*
- > *the 2150's — a very high and serious crime. (It brings identity theft to a*
- > *new level!) When the Banjoman realizes that they penetrated and disabled his*

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<sup>369</sup> Yes, it is – scary, isn't it? Scientists are working on producing better and better brain scans, with the idea of one day being able to map the entire brain and then reproduce it. The idea behind the android copy of Steve is that the Banjoman kidnapped Steve, scanned his brain, and then built an electronic copy of it. It wouldn't be perfect (even with some software tweaking) and it certainly wouldn't have Steve's soul, but all it would have to do is fool a few people who didn't really know him for about 24 hours. I have no idea what things are stored in the brain, but I think that things like memories probably are, and maybe things like speech patterns and vocabulary and so forth – and those are really all the things that the Banjoman needed to get. The soul of Steve – the thing that made Steve himself – is of course completely out of reach, but getting that wasn't necessary to pull this trick.

<sup>370</sup> This is true, and throughout LROM you can see that the android copy of Steve wasn't exactly right – it was as if there was something wrong, something missing. I do not believe that you can duplicate people, but I do think that you could make a pretty good approximation – and that's all we needed.

- > *droid (which happens early in the confrontation) that could make him panic*
- > *(just as Mao would have done) and cause him to suddenly become desperate.*
- > *Just some thoughts!*

Sounds excellent. This is why I suggested that his security force be mostly androids. It can be like cloning humans today: an appalling crime against humanity.

- > *I am completely for retaining all the suggestions*
- > *you made about the ancient Martians: I have carefully cataloged them and*
- > *have not forgotten any of them. Your ideas were just fantastic! We're going*
- > *to work them in and we're going to use them.*

Amen

- > > *Here is the revised chapter. Haven't got to 7 yet, but I*
- > > *may have some time later this evening...*
- >
- > *I think it looks great! I like it. It's exactly right!*

Good! Since I sent it to you I've gone over it again carefully and fixed a good number of small things and a moved a sentence or two around. I made the attempted assassination scene a lot more sinister. The whole chapter reads much better now. We're on the threshold of chapter 7, and the action will pick up!

- > > *Question: What do you think of having the security staff, or*
- > > *at least some of them, be androids?*
- >
- > *I like it! Let's do it. Very good idea indeed!*

Now that I've read through all of our emails again, I see that this is actually a suggestion you made before, as noted above!

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 01, 2002 2:25 PM*

I thought you guys might like the rewrite I did on the sniper in LROM chapter 6. We started with the guy's head being whammed. I gave it some more thought and put a martial arts spin on it.

When the sniper was about to pull the trigger, a dark figure stepped silently out of the shadows<sup>371</sup> and rapidly reached a hand toward the unsuspecting prone rifleman. He pressed his thumb into the hollow behind the man's right ear and wrapped his fingers loosely around his throat. Then with enormous force he brought the man's chin upward to full extension, lifted him up, and threw him back against the wall that enclosed the top of a stairwell. The gunman slipped down unconscious. Wordlessly and efficiently, the dark figure retrieved the rifle from the place where it had clattered aside, gathered the binoculars and listening equipment, and put all the gear into the sniper's own storage bags. He slung the bags over his shoulder, then grasped the unconscious man and quietly dragged him into the warren of rooftop fixtures.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2002 1:08 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Here's how chapter 7 is shaping up. It got to over 3,000 words so I just stopped even though I hadn't exhausted everything in Jon's summary. I think I can take the loose ends and combine them into chapter 8 and get us back on track.

I also added a small section in the Martian Plums chapter in which Donal McTaggart says that some of his patrons report that they have seen Steve Cliff in the city. That'll be the REAL Steve who is captured by the Banjoman's henchmen so they can make the android. It also prepares the Starmen for meeting him the next day. I'll print that below.

Blessings!

*David*

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<sup>371</sup> This was later revealed to have been Saadervo

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2002 1:16 AM*

P.S. Jon, I changed glider to dirigible, subject to your approval of course. A dirigible seemed to be better than a glider since (1) a dirigible provides, I think, a very picturesque image; (2) a dirigible would serve better than a glider for the purpose the Starmen want; (3) a dirigible would probably be really practical for the miners and explorers and scientists who are mentioned in the chapter as using them; and (4) it is a subtle tribute to Mike who builds zeppelins.

P.P.S. The words "long shadow" in the first paragraph are a Rick Brant tribute—see Caves of Fear, just as "galloping horse" and "invisible enemy" are in DIE.

P.P.P.S. I think you'll see what I did in chapter 7 to introduce Steve in a plausible way, yet pave the way for his later revelation as an android.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2002 7:45 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

David, the use of a dirigible is a splendid idea! Thanks for thinking of it. Also, it will be a nice precedent for when I write the dirigible-based short story I have been kicking about in my mind. LROM is coming along excellently!

*Mike*

*DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2002 10:53 AM*

> [LROM 8 part one] *It's great! It is really great. I like the addition of Richard's arrival;*  
> *was that in the summary?*

Yes, indeed it was!

> *Looking forward to seeing the rest of it!*

Oh yes—me too! The sparks really begin to fly now. The undercurrent of oppressive evil finally leaps into the open. My wife has to go to a conference this morning, so I can finish the chapter while she's away. Usually we spend all of Friday together and I spend Thursday afternoon getting household chores done. Recently (for several months) the house and yard have declined into chaos as I sit ensconced in front of the computer producing Starman instead. I may have to hire some of our college students to do yard work for me soon and I can pay them in Starman books.<sup>372</sup>

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2002 4:27 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

After I sent you chapter 8, I made a slight revision. The electric ground vehicle, usually called an EGV, is commonly known as a popper. Sound okay?

Also, we have 8 chapters out of 33 done, plus a good portion of other text that might count as another chapter. That means we've got the equivalent of 9 out of 33 chapters done, or almost one third of the book. It stands now at 95 pages at almost 22,000 words. At this rate, the book will be about 325 pages long and be about 75,000 words.<sup>373</sup>

Also, today I received your CD, Jon, as well as the one Kevin sent for the dj. Haven't opened either one yet.

More later,

*David*

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<sup>372</sup> Writing Starman books requires a huge amount of time. I really don't know how we were able to write two books a year; I do know that we came very close to burning ourselves out and ending the project with book five. We are not in nearly as big a hurry to write these books as we used to be, and I think that our more relaxed approach is much better for us.

<sup>373</sup> At the end, LROM turned out to be well over 400 pages and 98,000 words long.

DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2002 9:41 PM

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *Starlight Enterprise's main base of operations was situated less than a*
- > *hundred miles from the nearest edge of the ice cap.*
- >
- > *Does this match the location of the base as described in TRA? For some*
- > *reason I don't remember it being so close to the ice cap but I may be*
- > *wrong.*

Before, in TRA, we only mentioned that it was in the far north. I made it more specific in this scene.

Your comments about the Yangtze River are well taken. It is indeed the Three Gorges I was thinking about and I had forgotten entirely about the dam. I'll make it a pre-dam window.<sup>374</sup>

- > *There was no evidence of entry, and no breach of security.*
- >
- > *This whole passage is exactly right; I like it. It does ring a bell though:*
- > *we will probably have to explain things to the reader a bit later on. How*
- > *did the breach occur?*

We could explain it later or we might just ignore it and let the reader assume that the Banjoman fixed it up somehow. If we explain too many things, it interrupts the flow. I'd suggest that if a good place appears, we put it in—otherwise, we forget it. Do you remember the old Hardy Boys books in which the last chapter is filled with the criminals explaining every detail of their nefarious actions? ("I was the one who planted the handkerchief under the window, and Bill here made the mysterious phone call to Chet.") It wasn't needed.

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<sup>374</sup> In the original manuscript, David had the beautiful stained-glass window in the Banjoman's home depict the Three River Gorges. The problem with this is that right now the Chinese are building the world's largest hydroelectric dam on the gorges that is going to flood them – meaning that in 2150 there are no Three River Gorges.

I'm glad you liked the chapter overall. It was fun writing it, and it'll keep being fun. This is a psychological/moral/spiritual thriller as well as an adventure/mystery/action story. It's a fitting conclusion to the first Starman segment. We have come a long way.

Notice that I also explained why the Starmen hadn't heard of Mr. Forge before, in spite of his being so influential on Mars.

I've already thought through the way in which Forge turns the planet against the Starman. It'll be good and plausible! I'll be able to get to it on Monday.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2002 9:02 AM*

> > *By the way—did you catch the symbolism in the name,*  
> > *"Mrs. Dathan"?*  
>  
> *Nope, I didn't! It passed over me entirely. What have I missed?*

Dathan and Abiram were the two rebellious Israelites under Moses. I don't have the chapter and verse at my fingertips,<sup>375</sup> but they're the leaders of the rebellion whom Moses finally called to account and God opened the earth beneath them.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2002 7:02 PM*

In Chapter 9 we have cruise missiles shot at the Star Ranger. Steve Cliff, the bad guys' henchman is still aboard. Do they consider him expendable? Does he, as an android, fear termination? Does he have the power to take human life? If so, why not have him blast the Starmen and take the Star Ranger down. When the android realizes that the bad

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<sup>375</sup> I've looked it up; it happens in Numbers 16.

guys have tried to shoot the Star Ranger down with him in it, what does it do to him? Is he still on their side? Does he have a "self-preservation" program?

Suggestion: he does have a self-preservation program. As soon as the cruise missiles are recognized for what they are, he panics and jumps for the chute at that time. In the ensuing scuffle he is recognized as an android. In a great fight scene (Starmen fighters against an android), "Steve" escapes in the chute, leaping out while the Star Ranger is streaking through the sky at top speed. He tumbles in the unbelievable strong air currents and much of his clothes and chute, etc., are ripped off. He grabs the chute at the last second and pulls the cord. Too late, he slams into the ground. The Starmen, badly shaken, escape as in the summary and we continue from there.

Question: do we need the android again or can this be his end? If we need him again, he can snag the chute and survive the fall. Another question: what happens to the real Steve Cliff?

Tomorrow morning I'm writing chapter 9, so I'll need an answer by then if you can get one to me.

Blessings!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2002 7:23 PM*

Dear Jon,

Thanks! Just time for a quick answer. I think I have enough to put together a believable and exciting scene. In the summary I have, the Starmen are just cruising along to Eagle City when they see blips on the radar and recognize them as missiles. Maybe I have an earlier version or maybe I missed a few things when I prepared it for my working text. Your explanation is good and I'll put together a rollicking scene. Watch for it tomorrow!

*David*



*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2002 7:44 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

Yes! I like the idea of the android Steve terminating on impact without open 'chute. There is a palpable pathos there.....and interesting questions will no doubt arise in the minds of anyone reading that part.

*Mike*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2002 7:45 PM*

I'm glad you liked it, Jon. It was fun to write and went the fastest, maybe, of any chapter I've written so far in the entire series. It took no more than about two hours to write. If all goes well, I may even get a start on ten this evening. If not, definitely on Thursday. We're almost a third of the way through the book. If I can keep up the pace of two chapters a week, we ought to finish the book in plenty of time.

I liked the chapter title, too: A Walking Horror. It says a lot without giving anything away until the reader is in the midst of the action. The chapter titles seem to be coming rather easily, once the chapters are written.

I'm glad you want to change the mayor's name, Jon. I didn't care for Jerry Royal too much myself. We'll see what comes up.

For the illustrations, I will take a few photographs of me acting out the fight scene with some big guy and send them to you, Mike, so you can illustrate them. It'll be a knockout picture—no pun intended.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2002 9:30 PM*

Dear Mike and Jon,

A moment ago I suggested that we dedicate LROM to our readers and supporters. I have another idea—we could give them a separate acknowledgements page and dedi-

cate the book to Bob Janoe. I just scanned part of the summary and saw where Jon said he could summarize the book in two words: Bob Janoe. Might be a nice tribute. What do you think?

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2002 9:55 PM*

Dear Jon and David,

I am just fine with a separate page for our fans and a dedication to Bob Janoe.

And I look forward to the fight scene....the one that David will have photographed ...so I can sketch it. Coincidentally, last night I looked at the artwork in the Dig Allen books and certainly got inspired.

*Mike*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2002 10:31 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

*> I am just fine with a separate page for our fans and a dedication to Bob Janoe.*

Great. Let's do it that way, then. Unfortunately I'm not able to send him the books, you may recall. I went through the effort of making paperbacks for him and having them sent from a bookstore, and then they were confiscated. But I can certainly send him a copy of the dedication page. Hmmm—I wonder about just sending him a printout on 8.5x11 sheets. It would be easy to do.

*> I look forward to the fight scene....the one that David will have  
> photographed ...so I can sketch it.*

The photographs turned out very well! I even spent about 10 minutes in class choreographing the entire fight scene and got a few suggestions from people on how to im-

prove it.<sup>376</sup> I may not take up the suggestions, just because I couldn't tell them everything that was going on (since some of them are readers of the Starman books and I don't want to give away any plot details), but I may rewrite the scene slightly.

David

*DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2002 6:05 PM*

*> The rewritten fight scene is very cool! I like the extra details you've  
> added to it.*

They came about mostly as a result of comments made in the karate class. Mary Doman wondered why the laser pistol didn't go off in the struggle, so I threw that line in where Zip hopes Steve won't discharge it. Also, Mark enters the fight a little differently.

*> We left no doubt that it's a robot; it definitely shattered into thousands  
> of pieces.*

Note that it nowhere says that anyone actually SEES this happening! The Starmen certainly couldn't. It's just described by the narrator.

I'm nearly finished reading that book I mentioned a few days ago, *The Creator and the Cosmos*. It is a fascinating, powerful book!! One thing the author says, however, is that computers will eventually reach a plateau of capability and will never be able to match or record a human mind. The premise we're working on with the android, however, is that human beings WILL be able to come close. I'm not suggesting any changes in our text, but the concept is worth thinking about.

*David*

---

<sup>376</sup> This is not the first time David tried out the action scenes from the Starman books in his karate class! Trying them out helped ensure that what he was writing would really work and was the best way to do it.

DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2002 9:44 PM

> > *One thing the author says, however, is that computers*  
> > *will eventually reach a plateau of capability and will*  
> > *never be able to match or record a human mind...*  
>  
> *That is a concept worth thinking about. I've spent a lot of time*  
> *considering what I believe in AI, and right now I just don't know: it might*  
> *turn out to be possible or it might not....*

Your comments are very well thought out, make sense to me, and I don't find any concept in there that gives me pause.<sup>377</sup> When you read LROM 10, you'll see what I did with the Starmen's observations about androids. That's maybe as far as we need to go in our book. The android was only with them for about 10 hours. If anyone objects to the android as unbelievable, we can refer them to your comments. I think I'll save them for I\*S#4. They're good!

I await your response to LROM 10. I ought to get 11 done next Monday, and that'll finish part I of LROM! Next week being Holy Week is the most demanding and intense of the year, so I doubt I'll get much done after Monday. I did set aside Saturday afternoon, the 30th, for the Reading Group, so we will at least get through Part I. Then in the week that follows I can get cracking on part II: The Rolling of the Stone.

*David*

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<sup>377</sup> I think that what I said was along the line that it really depends on what you mean. I do not believe that a machine will ever become alive the same way a computer can or will ever be truly self-aware: computers are just calculating machines that are executing lines of pre-written code in accordance with the laws of physics. A smart programmer may be able to build a machine that can fool a person into thinking it is a human being, but it will still just be an approximation – the machine will still just be executing lines of code, and even its apparent choices are made in accordance with other pre-programmed instructions. However, in terms of processing power, I see no reason why a machine couldn't think faster than a human being: to get more processing power all you have to do is add another chip, and if you add enough chips you'll be able to surpass the roughly one-trillion-instructions-per-second processing capacity of the human brain. In a sense, though, this doesn't matter: calculators can out-perform human beings when it comes to math and no one worries, and electrical devices can out-lift and out-run human beings without giving anyone a pause. Being able to out-process the brain, I said, is not the same as being sentient or a living soul – nor is closely approximating sentience (even to the point of being able to “learn”) the same thing as being sentient.

*DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2002 8:37 PM*

Dear Jon,

- > *"DID ANY OF US mention the ancient Martians, or even the Benefactors, in the*
- > *android's hearing?" asked Zip. "Think hard!"*
- >
- > *Very good!! I like the concern here. Of course, they had said something and*
- > *did refer to the Martians as being the Benefactors, but it looks like the*
- > *Banjoman didn't catch it and thus it did no harm. The Starmen definitely got*
- > *lucky.*

Actually I went back, checked what I'd written before, and changed it from what you received. They HAD mentioned the Benefactors and Martians, so I reduced it to "allies" in the original encounter. "Steve" learned nothing definite, and that's why the BJM said what he did.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2002 9:45 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *The chapter is outstanding!! I read it over carefully twice this morning*
- > *and I thought it was really great. I love the way that you used the weather*
- > *to enhance the mood of the scene! The canyon was breathtakingly beautiful:*
- > *it reminded me of the cover scene.*

Hey, you're right! Honestly, I had forgotten completely that the cover scene had to exist somewhere in the book, but this scene does it! I may go back and change the text a bit to match the cover artwork a little more closely.

I'm glad you liked the chapter. So did I. Usually when I write a chapter I just sit down and write it at one sitting. This one took three or four sittings. In the middle I went out and saw Lord of the Rings for the second time, then came back and wrote the last part, where the Starmen wake up at midnight and fly into the desert.

The subtle imagery, probably too far-reaching to be recognized, is the baptism of Jesus after which he is driven by the Spirit into the desert. That's where the title of the chapter comes from. Also the line "it was night" is taken right from John 13:30—the scene in which Judas leaves the Last Supper to begin the betrayal. Even Joe making breakfast is slightly reminiscent of the account in John's Gospel of Jesus' making breakfast after his resurrection. All this is too general and too subtle to be recognized by the average reader, I think, but we can know that this is the imagery behind the scene. The midnight of death to the new dawn that awaits. It's the theme of the ancient Martians, too.

Well, off to a big week. I took Monday off—most of it, anyway—to prepare for a fiercely demanding week. The reading group is scheduled for this Saturday but other than that I'll be flying most of the time from now through Sunday. Then a quiet week next week and two more chapters.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2002 10:28 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I just reread and touched up portions of LROM 11. By the way, the "double crater" is taken from a photograph I took on Belle Isle when Mike and I paid a second visit to the site. I took several photos of the pools and hollows in the rocks in the middle of the river. Two look just like what I have in mind for that scene, and I'll base an illustration on the photo.<sup>378</sup>

I don't think I need to alter the chapter much to match the cover scene. The cover could just as well be the Star Ranger approaching the double crater at sunset, so I think I'll leave the text as it is. The cover doesn't match exactly but I think it's close enough.

By the way, the line "it was night" is at the end of chapter 10, not in chapter 11. It's when Andrew Forge is addressing his cronies.

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<sup>378</sup> Both photo and illustration are on the Starmen web site

The book is now 30,500 words and 131 pages long. At this rate we're looking at a final product of 90-100,000 words and maybe 400 pages.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2002 10:29 AM*

> > *I just reread and touched up portions of LROM 11. By the way, the "double  
> > crater" is taken from a photograph I took on Belle Isle when Mike and I > paid  
> > a second visit to the site. I took several photos of the pools and hollows  
> > in the rocks in the middle of the river. Two look just like what I have in  
> > mind for that scene, and I'll base an illustration on the photo.  
>  
> Very clever! I bet you are the only person who saw those pools (man, I  
> remember those well!) and made the connection. The inspiration was great!*

I do have a scanner with my new setup, but I haven't taken time to learn how to use it yet. Once I do I can send you two images of what I'm talking about.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2002 8:40 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

The reading group loved it. It took almost 3 hours to read chapters 6-11 aloud, but they all stayed with it and loved it. The action scenes really grabbed their attention.

They made a few comments, all but one rather minor and easily fixed. It is quite helpful to have this group as a part of this process.

The major observation, which none of us caught, is that at one point the Starmen need a dirigible because even a shuttlecraft will pass too quickly over the scenery, but a few chapters later I indicate that the Star Ranger can hover—which means they wouldn't

need a dirigible. Unless one of you can think of way to maintain both bits of info, I guess I'll have to rewrite it so that the Star Ranger can't hover. It won't be too hard to do, but it would sure be nice to have a hovering spacecraft. The only difficulty in the plot will be having the ship land on the ledge in the canyon at the end of chapter 11. It'll just have to land upright, I suppose, but that'll make it harder to conceal than if it could hover and move under the overhand. Any suggestions?

Blessed Easter!

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2002 9:33 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

Happy Easter!

Jon is right about the dirigibles "loiter/hover" capabilities.....it's one of the things they are good at. I seem to remember the area described as windy canyon type terrain.....a dirigible might not be particularly useful around such an environment (they are at the mercy of the wind).

*Mike*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2002 8:16 PM*

Arrgh!

- > *I seem to remember the area described as*
- > *windy canyon type terrain.....a dirigible might not be particularly useful*
- > *around such an environment ( they are at the mercy of the wind).*

Right, of course! NOW what do we do?? Can we assume that the dirigibles have been motorized and designed with Martian winds in mind? If a wind is really powerful it has to land, but it can maneuver in a breeze and stay where it's put?

*David*



*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2002 8:41 PM*

The android Steve, by the way, took them completely by surprise—they loved it and found it very plausible. Overall, the reaction we were hoping for is precisely the reaction we got. "People don't do business this way," was Leslie's comment about how things are run at the spaceport, etc. She was mildly upset about it, which is just what the Starmen were supposed to feel. It all fell into place later when she realized that the Banjoman was behind it. The action scenes were especially enjoyed—I even got moans and cries of excitement during the fighting and chase scenes. The picture of evil being "strong" and "stupid" came across beautifully.

Here is the full list of the group's suggestions. Let me know what you think.

- 1) When the errand runner goes to find the mascarian simulator, he goes from warehouse to warehouse. Surely all he'd have to do is just tap into a computer to see who's got one in stock. I suggest that he do so and find out that two warehouses have them in stock. When he goes to pick them up, he finds an empty box in one and a misfiled box in another.
- 2) Surely the Starmen would have all their files backed up—the text says that they have their working files backed up (presumably on their compads) but that they have to get their major files sent to them from SE. I suggested that what SE has to send them are the major files like star charts, etc. The Starmen's working files would be their personal stuff, etc. They had backed up files on the Ranger but they were smashed too—hence, they have to apply to SE for replacements.
- 3) If the Banjoman is so interested in finding out what they're after, and if he is so skilled at hacking into the planetwide radar network, why did he have the computers in the Star Ranger smashed rather than hacked? All the information he wanted was right at hand.
- 4) The Martian news is sent over a radio. Wouldn't it be sent over television, or the equivalent?
- 5) Forge is shown as being both "anonymous"—even the Starmen hadn't heard of him—and "a well-known philanthropist." I suggest that he be FAIRLY anonymous, but that the news say that he is known as a big rich guy, but it is now revealed that in fact he

was one of the greatest of Martian philanthropists most of whose work had been done anonymously.

6) The deal with the dirigible versus a hovering Star Ranger or shuttlecraft (Jon already answered that one) and Mike's observation about a dirigible not being best in the windy parts of Mars. In AOM we indicated that the winds come up every morning, but Jogren's site and the lichen field are a bit off that track—we could conceivably say that these places are off the windy track, but that would be stretching it a bit. Need some help here.

I plan to write LROM 12 tomorrow—at least if I'm not working to fix all the above.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2002 9:44 PM*

Dear Jon,

I've gone through LROM a bit today, and taken note that the three parts of the book are about "the stone" in Proverbs. However, the full text of the verse talks also about digging a pit. We're not using the symbolism of a pit, so I suggest that we reduce the quote to the following. Is that okay with you?<sup>379</sup>

*"He who rolls a stone will see it roll back on him."*

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 01, 2002 6:24 PM*

> *Ah, but we -are- using the pit! In a big way. Toward the end of the book,*  
> *the Banjoman digs a deep hole, ... I didn't deliberately plan for that to*

---

<sup>379</sup> We had a bit of discussion about what quotation to use at the beginning of *The Lost Race of Mars*. Originally we were using a verse from Proverbs, but then we got the idea of using the verse from Job and that worked much better.

> happen. Instead, I wrote the plot, and then sat back and realized that that  
> verse was appropriate. You can change it if you want (and the names of the  
> parts have got to be changed — they are awful) but the pit symbolism is  
> actually in there stronger than the stone!

I do remember the pit indeed, but it seems to me that we're talking about two different things: the pit is an episode in the plot; the stone is a symbol for the entire book. In that sense, the pit is actually -less- symbolic than the stone, because it is -actual- rather than symbolic. At present, I've titled the three parts of the book THE STONE, THE ROLLING OF THE STONE, and THE STONE ROLLS BACK, so that they match the verse closely—that's why I suggested dropping the part about the pit. If you like the full verse, then we could use it and title that particular chapter "the pit."

...

On to LROM 12.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 02, 2002 12:14 AM*

Dear Jon,

I was refreshing my memory by reading through the LROM summary tonight after I sent off chapter 12, and noticed that in chapter 13 it says that no one knew that Richard had blown away the planetwide radar satellites—everyone assumed that the Starmen had done it. Richard realized that in fact they could have done so.

However, in the draft so far (chapter 11), I indicated that Richard had admitted it openly and this information was put on the news.

How do you want to go? Shall we stick with the summary and change the draft or is the draft okay as is? I didn't make the change deliberately—I just wrote it as it came to me at the time and didn't realize that you had addressed the issue in chapter 13.

*David*

DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 02, 2002 10:34 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *Beautiful! Very very beautiful. I like what you did with it! It fits  
> perfectly and works great.*

I'm glad you liked it. I fixed the sentence that had an extra word.

Jon, I'm sending you an envelope today with a copy of the Friesens bill for your records. Also included is the print out my brother Richard sent me of the Chinese characters for Ban Zou Man. They were provided in about twelve versions. There's a note on it, which may be difficult for you to read, that suggests that the Banjoman has shown that he liked traditional things: his house is a traditional English manor house, he has the stained glass window of the Three Gorges, he's taken pride that he's descended from the Emperor—therefore the characters on the door to his office will probably be in traditional script. I put an asterisk by two of the choices that have the most traditional look. Take your pick for what you want to scan in for the book.

Mike, did you receive the sheet with the photos of what the fight in the Star Ranger looks like?

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 05, 2002 12:14 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *"A message from Richard!" shouted Joe. He pressed a button on the nearby  
> communicator and piped the message into the galley.  
>  
> Very nice! This wasn't in the summary but it makes a lot of sense that  
> Richard would have told them plus it's a great way to lead into the chapter.  
> Great touch!*

Even though the summary is very detailed, there are still a few things that come up and seem to make sense when I actually get down to writing the text. Since I put Richard's first "general message" in a previous chapter, it seemed logical that he have a follow-up so that the Starmen don't feel completely abandoned. Besides, it gives Richard a chance to speak to the public, too. It appears that one flaw in the Banjoman's plan is that he didn't know that Richard was on Mars when he started the falsehoods rolling. He had the primary influence on the planet and suddenly a worlds-famous person is unexpectedly present, who also knows how to use the media to advantage! —and who has truth on his side. The Banjoman is suddenly on the defensive and Edmund Warner is getting publicly squeezed pretty badly. The next chapter will show that!

> *"Further, they have orders to shoot you down at the slightest provocation. I am convinced that this second order is a ploy to ensure your murder by the police without witnesses."*  
>  
> *Very good! This is right on.*

...

> *"Each carried a lightweight, flexible ladder. Zip took the port side and Joe the starboard side of the ship. Beginning with the nose..."*  
>  
> *Very good detail! This is a great scene and was well done.*

I had to rewrite it! I had almost a full page done with the ship on its fins, the Starmen climbing straight up hand-over-hand, and a rope ladder thrown down and swinging in the breeze ten stories above the ledge, before I realized that the ship was horizontal!

> *"When the streets were well filled, a loudspeaker from one of the ships announced"*  
>  
> *It reminds me of scenes from old movies when a truck would go around town and announce something from a loudspeaker.*

That's what I had in mind.

> *"[DIE puzzle contest winner], the manager of Starlight Eagle City..."*  
>  
> *Very nice! What a great way to work in the contest winner.*

Well, a better place may come along, a more prominent one, but at least we've got this one reserved!

> *Just an idea: wouldn't Richard want this talk broadcasted to the rest of  
> Mars? If he can broadcast it to the Starmen then surely he can broadcast it  
> further than that. This is something that all of Mars should hear — and  
> that should be beamed back to Earth.*

I'm assuming that there is a public television station in Eagle City, for which Dana Gresham works, but also a private station for Starlight—like cable channels today. That network can beam its own stuff and will do so. However, Dana was invited by Richard to be a part of the events so that an impartial record can be made.

> *"[NOTE: The previous two paragraphs are slightly adapted from your summary  
> text, Jon. I have altered it to echo precisely an ACTUAL EXCHANGE made in  
> court when I was on the stand testifying on Bob Janoe's behalf.]"*  
>  
> *Wow! I really like those paragraphs: they are perfect. I'm glad you did it  
> that way! What a powerful exchange.*

I was testifying that Bob was not a violent person, and the prosecutor was trying to make the point that he was. The perjury against him came from his first wife, who had testified that Bob was violent. When I finished testifying, the prosecutor said that when Bob was arrested he put up a violent struggle and then asked me, "Now does that sound like a non-violent man to you?" I responded, "It sounds to me like an innocent man being arrested."

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 05, 2002 10:51 AM*

Dear Jon,

Oh yes, I forgot to explain something I put into LROM 13. In your summary you had the city council consist of 66 people. This is a huge number—even Los Angeles only has a few members. So I made it 6 to preserve the symbolism of 666—it also parallels

the number of pirates who fled to Nyx—however, I had SEVEN SE ships appears, 7 being the number of perfection, completion, and wholeness. Further, I indicated that the full council of Eagle City also consists of seven people, but that one person did not come. This is to suggest the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council that condemned Jesus (which DID have about 70 or so people on it!), which had Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who did not attend the council that condemned Jesus. I don't know if it will ever find a place in the story or not, but I am anticipating that the seventh person would be someone named Dorothea Josef—a subtle suggestion of Joseph Arimathea.<sup>380</sup>

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 05, 2002 9:54 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *You handle the fine details very well: I really like*  
> *the way this book is being constructed. It definitely surpasses my hopes!*

Good. It is really important to me that the writing satisfy both of you, but especially this time since you, Jon, have put so much effort into it.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 06, 2002 9:45 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> *I just now noticed this in the beginning of LROM:*  
>  
> *Introduction*  
>

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<sup>380</sup> This idea never made it into the book, but it shows how the Starman Team considers the symbolism behind even small points in plot development

> *Written by a Benefactor, reflecting back on the events of the mid-22nd century, or something like that.*  
>  
> *I was just curious: who is going to write this? Do you still have the blurb I drafted so long ago? I think this would be a neat thing to have (it would set a nice tone for the book) but I wouldn't die of heart failure if we left this out. I was just curious!*

I don't think I have the blurb you drafted, but I do remember that there was something. Do you still have it?<sup>381</sup>

> *What I have done is taken a series of LROM blurbs from the first 13 chapters that hint at the story but don't actually give anything away. None of the blurbs are "peak scenes" but they hint at things to come. The blurbs gradually work up in intensity each month as suspense builds until at the end it becomes nearly unbearable. It took some care (putting out blurbs like this is a delicate thing; you don't want to spoil the book) but I think it's just about right.*  
>  
> *What do you think: are these excerpts what you had in mind or were you thinking of something else?*

Very fine! Well chosen! Will you post them, then? Nice idea to take parts out of chronological order. It works.

...

> *I'll take a look at it and will let you know what I think! I did get the envelope you sent and think that either character you marked would work: I like the top one but either one would be fine. Those characters look very familiar! It brings back a lot of great memories of China.*

I'm glad you like them. There's bound to be a reader somewhere who knows Chinese and will know to what extent we go to make our stories accurate.

*David*

---

<sup>381</sup> Nope, I don't have it – it's been lost to the sands of time...



*DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 08, 2002 8:16 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Here is the first draft of LROM 14—I whipped it out extremely quickly—about an hour and a half—so I'm sure it's very rough. I left out the last part, Jon, in which the mayor calls "Bob" about the investigation. I think it's not needed since the investigation has already been mentioned along with the commission coming from Earth, and it introduces an extra, previously unknown character. I did, however, name the mayor's secretary Bob. If I've missed a reason for putting that part in, just let me know and I'll add it!

I'm really pushing to get the chapters done in time. That means writing when I'm not in the mood or have too little time to do a good job. At least we've got a draft, though—something to work with.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2002 8:34 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

...

Still managed to get the Reading Group together today for two hours of the first seven chapters of part II. They REALLY like LROM and had only a few comments.

...

If the air is thin on Mars so that the Starmen need to wear their helmets in the canyon where they're hiding, how can Joe light a fire to cook their breakfast? We could have Joe use a sterno can or something, or they could even just cook inside the ship, but I really like the imagery of gathering wood and lighting a cooking fire. It's reminiscent of Jesus' cooking fish in John 21. Is it possible that the air would be too thin to breathe easily, but (being in a canyon) have gathered enough air for a fire? Or could we even say that they could do without their helmets because, like Eagle Crater, the atmosphere machines have created enough breathable air that it can fill the lower places on the planet?

On the other hand, even if we DO say that, they're only about 100 feet below the table-land where the air is too thin. Whaddaya think?

Second, we have Zip turn the Star Ranger around and sheer off the pursuing ship's tail-piece. We later explain that the SR could survive most collisions because it was made of a titanium alloy (is that what we want—is titanium correct?). But later, I indicate that the framework on the wreck is so hard that Mark can't cut it—this is part of the evidence that the ship is Xenobotic/interstellar. I'd like to keep the hard framework on the pursuing (i.e. Xenobot) ship, but we can drop it to remedy the anomaly if we have to. But is there another possibility?

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2002 8:12 AM*

Dear Jon and David,

The "oxygen problem" is an interesting one. The reality of it is that there is fire then there is fire. The less O<sub>2</sub>, the "weaker" the fire...all the way down to non-ignition or non-perpetuation. The fuel is another factor...(What is Joe burning to cook breakfast?.....Currently the military uses cooking pellets that have available oxygen built in...not unlike a slow burning solid rocket fuel. The stuff would burn almost anywhere. I am not sure if Starmen will have these "pellets" around as a routine supply.) The right fuel might not need that much O<sub>2</sub>. Also, is there a way to force feed the thin air into the fire (i.e. like blowing onto a campfire to increase its speed and heat...like a bellows fed smelting fire.....thin air could be made to burn like normal Earth air this way...but it would require some sort of fan or bellows.) An N-PAC could easily be converted to feed a small fire.

Jon's suggestion seems very workable and actually helps "discover" an important clue about the underground base...but it also requires a Starman to be absent minded about a very basic fact (the low O<sub>2</sub> concentration)...Perhaps we could qualify this and have him set out deliberately to "just see" if he could get one started.

About the "Materials" questions on the spacecraft....Titanium and it's alloys are indeed the stuff that would be used in this present world...however we can always expect some exotic new materials to be used in the 22nd century. Jon's suggestion of "atmospheric parts" being made of weaker materials is a good one.....it works!.

*Mike*

DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2002 11:40 AM

> > *By the way, Jon, your footnote at that point in*  
> > *the summary said that I'd asked for a scene with an*  
> > *island in a lake and a cloud over it. I haven't*  
> > *the slightest memory of that now!*  
>  
> <grins> *I had a feeling that might happen! It's amazing how many ideas we*  
> *come up with but it's easy to forget them — that's where the Idea File*  
> *comes in. The letter where you mentioned it was written on 9/26/2002 and*  
> *here is what you said:*  
>  
> *" Also, I was reading the National Geographic today and had an idea for*  
> *LROM. If I recall correctly, that book includes fighting the dealers in*  
> *flilox. In the NG, there is a lake in Africa which occasionally has cloud*  
> *cover in the shape of a disc, just because the lake below it is round. And*  
> *it is surrounded by 15 miles of swamp. I immediately thought it would make a*  
> *terrific scene for the flilox guys on Mars. A natural moat 15 miles wide,*  
> *filled with who knows what kind of horrible swamp creatures."*  
>  
> *So there you have your lake! It's a good idea. If you want to change the*  
> *scene in LROM to match the idea a bit closer go right ahead!*

Ah—but even now I barely remember it. I can fix the text, though, to resemble the above, and I can go locate the NG article!

...

By the way, someone pointed out that we WILL leave one loose end at the end of LROM: we don't reveal the Starlights' original last name. Not too amazing, though, since even WE don't know what it is or why it is significant.<sup>382</sup> Someone suggested that it be Roosevelt.

> > *Also, another suggestion for LROM...*  
> > *instead of having Zip in the hospital, we have him*  
> > *at a place like a retreat center in the outlands*

---

<sup>382</sup> The revelation of Richard Starlight's original last name was a last-minute addition to the book.

> > *of Mars... When the Starmen arrive for herbalist help*  
> > *for Zip, they enter a grove of trees and the people are*  
> > *in the trees singing praises to God.*

>

> *Sounds great!*

Glad you like it.

> > *A question, though, about the plotline, which came*  
> > *to me. By declaring himself to be dead, the Banjoman*  
> > *has to abandon his entire estate in Seven*  
> > *Leaves. He can't put himself out as dead and then return*  
> > *later. Can we handle that in some way?*

>

> *Sure can! Say he left his estate and everything he owned to a George*  
> *Peters. George Peters is actually an android, and there is no doubt to the*  
> *police that Peters and the Banjoman are two different people — they've been*  
> *seen together in person at the same time and both have histories going back*  
> *for years. This Peters goes through the motions of inheriting everything.*  
> *The Banjoman waits for things to calm down, then has a little plastic*  
> *surgery, DNA therapy, and a few makeovers — and melts the android Peters*  
> *down — and boom, he turns into George Peters, walks back into his old*  
> *estate, and no one asks any questions. If Peters was given a personality*  
> *like him and looks fairly similar, no one would ever wonder!*

Great!

> > *This is because, when communicating with Joe, they were on*  
> > *tight beam—only "line of sight" communication is possible.*  
> > *On normal bands, the compad can go much farther and doesn't*  
> > *need line of sight. Maybe the best thing to do is simply*  
> > *eliminate the "limited range" for the compads. It's not needed*  
> > *for the story. The "line of sight" is probably still needed...*

>

> *That sounds fine! Let's go with that.*

Okay.

> > *I'm assuming that this was done by computer and not by sight.*

> > *The operator, remember, is with the Banjoman inside the island*  
 > > *base.*  
 >  
 > *That's true. I guess in my mind I had pictures a setup similar to that*  
 > *which is used by ballistic missiles. Ballistic missiles have cameras on them*  
 > *that give back a video signal to the person back at base flying it, and the*  
 > *video signal is used to fly the missile to where it needs to go. These*  
 > *drones, as I pictured it, would be giving back visual feedback. There would*  
 > *be radar feedback as well, but surely the Star Ranger would have some sort*  
 > *of radar-reflective paint or something that would make it very difficult to*  
 > *track by radar. In all likelihood the design of the ship itself was*  
 > *optimized for a small radar signature. The easiest way to track it would be*  
 > *by sight and the clouds of dust kicked up when the Star Ranger flew so close*  
 > *to the surface would make that method of tracking impossible. The computer*  
 > *controller would try to compensate by building an image with infrared and*  
 > *all, but it would take a few seconds — and those few seconds when the craft*  
 > *was blind were the seconds when Zip flipped the ship over, sheared off the*  
 > *tail, and downed the craft.*  
 > *Do you think this makes sense?*

Good.

> > *An explosion wouldn't completely vaporize the evidence,*  
 > > *would it? It would just scatter the parts around. Even*  
 > > *today investigators gather up parts of*  
 > > *airplanes, etc., and do their forensic examinations.*  
 >  
 > *That's very true; I hadn't thought of that. I just couldn't see the*  
 > *Banjoman allowing a ship like that (which could never fly again) to just lay*  
 > *out there for all to see — he would do something about it.*  
 > *What if he dropped a bomb of nano-goo on it? The horde of nanos would*  
 > *literally eat the ship alive: the 'gray goo' would ooze over it and*  
 > *disassemble the ship atom-by-atom until it was just a loose pile of ore. The*  
 > *ship would be far beyond piecing together: there's no way to tell which*  
 > *atoms had connected with which. I realize that there are scientific problems*  
 > *with having nanobots actually assemble things, but having a couple*  
 > *quadrillion of them merely dissolve the ship's molecular bonds before they*  
 > *run out of energy in twenty minutes or so surely isn't too far-fetched.*<sup>383</sup>

---

<sup>383</sup> Uh-huh. Sure. I don't know what I was thinking...

> *Nanos are cutting-edge science and it might make for a cool mention!*

Very cool indeed. What happens to the nano-goo when the ship is all gone?

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2002 10:29 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Last night in karate class I choreographed the fight scene when Joe takes out the Banjoman and the two guys with rifles. It worked fine! Doesn't need any changes at all!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2002 3:54 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

It came to me while I was in the car this morning: the Starlights' original last name. We've already implied that it is a name of significance that Thomas had good reason both to change and to hide. Logic indicates that it can't be a name that is recognizable today like Roosevelt or Reagan or Rodman—it would be too political or too contrived. Therefore it needs to be a name that was significant in the 21st century—enough so that the people of the 22nd century would recognize it. The only significant events we have put for in the 21st century are the Collapse and the assassination of a President during the Collapse. Having the Starlights be a descendant of a President would probably not be anything to hide or change. That leaves us with the Collapse.

Suppose, therefore, that the terrorists of the mid-21st century included some of the white supremacy, militant organizations in the US like Timothy McVeigh's group, and that these groups came to the ascendancy in the first half of the 21st century. Say that one of the leaders was someone named Jerome Riverside. His son was Thomas Riverside. Thomas, horrified by his father's activities, left the cult group, penniless and on the

lam until the worst years of the Collapse were over. He took an assumed name—easy to do during the Collapse. During this time his genius showed itself and he began to build a reputation for honesty as well as scientific acumen. Toward the end of the Collapse, when his father's unit had been disbanded and his father either captured or otherwise out of the picture, Thomas went back to look for his mother. He found her ill with radiation sickness. Before she died, she gave him the family tea set—the last heirloom of her family. All else had been lost.

In the latter years of the 21st century, the Riverside name was as black as McVeigh or Bin Laden or Hitler. Thomas, who had set out to undo the damage his father had done to society, took a new name, founded Starlight Enterprise, and the rest you know. It is a story of redemption and atonement.

This could become a short story, with the simple title "R."

Like it?<sup>384</sup>

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2002 3:55 PM*

*> This could become a short story, with the simple title "R."*

Or it could be worked into LROM, toward the end!!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2002 10:17 PM*

*> 1) Early on in the book have the mayor constantly accuse Richard of being a modern Jerome Riverside.<sup>385</sup> ...*

---

<sup>384</sup> Needless to say, we really really liked it! It was a great brain-wave and added another layer to the Starman Series.

- > 2) When Zip and Mark see the Martian murals deep below the surface, one
- > mural depicts the story of SE, starting with Tom's leaving Jerome, changing
- > his name, and starting a new life.
- > 3) Toward the end of the book, Zip tells Richard what he saw on the murals.
- > That's when Richard tells an abbreviated version of what is later in the
- > *Inter\*Stellar*.

Worth cogitating upon. I like the idea of a twist in the plot and I don't think that the murals lend themselves sufficiently to the full power of the twist. They might, though! I haven't got that far in the writing. But I'm glad you like the idea of the R.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2002 11:08 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *The Martians seems like the only*
- > *logical answer, and the murals are likely the only place where they are*
- > *likely to learn that tidbit. It's just a thought.*

Sounds logical. Good.

- > *One other thought: what would you think about changing the passage about*
- > *the use of androids in the Collapse to include a reference to Jerome*
- > *Riverside? We could say that Jerome Riverside used the androids to get*
- > *nuclear weapons into places that were previously thought safe, etc. Seems to*
- > *be a logical place to insert his name!*

Excellent!

*David*

---

<sup>385</sup> I wanted to see if I could find a way to work the revelation into *The Lost Race of Mars*; this was one of my attempts. In the end David thought of an even better idea, and that's the idea we went with!



DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 03, 2002 10:30 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

Someone told me recently that in England Darjeeling is always pronounced Dar-jee-ling and not Jarling, as I had heard once. Since a tiny part of the plot in LROM involves the correct pronunciation, I decided to check it out. I located and wrote to a tea company that sells Darjeeling and asked about the correct pronunciation, never really expecting to hear back. To my surprise, I receive the following in less than a day:

*Dear David,*

*I am not sure of the "correct" pronunciation of Darjeeling though my father who is native to Darjeeling and almost everybody I know pronounces Darjeeling as with the word eel combined within it. Darj-eel-ing.*

*I hope this helps.*

*Regards,*

*Harold Pradhan  
Proprietor*

*Darjeeling Tea Australia*

So actually neither is correct: it's DARJ-EEL-ING. Now we know—and I'll have to remove that cute vignette in which Joe sings his little song.<sup>386</sup>

*David*

---

<sup>386</sup> At the beginning of Chapter 2 in the original manuscript for the fifth book we had this scene:

“Is that Dar-jeeling tea?” asked Mark.  
Joe peered at the big Starman under lowered eyebrows. “It’s not pronounced Dar-jeeling,” said Joe. “It’s pronounced ‘jarling.’ If you were a connoisseur of tea, you’d know.”  
“Is that so?” asked Mark, who knew very well.  
“Yes,” asserted Joe. “Like this.” He began to sing.  
“Oh my Darjeeling, oh my Darjeeling, oh my Darjeeling, Clementine...”

*DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 03, 2002 11:19 PM*

The business cards came today, Jon. They look terrific! I've had a number of opportunities where a card like this would have been just the ticket! Thanks!

On the R. It suddenly occurred to me today that Thomas' father's name doesn't have to begin with R; his MOTHER'S name does! The tea set was from her family, after all. Maybe they'll both have names beginning with R. Anyway, how does the name Fallon Riverside sounds to you? He's called Fall for short—rather obvious symbolism, isn't it, besides being a cool name. I picked Jerome before because he was an irascible saint, but I don't want to name a villain after any saint. Maybe his mother can be named Rose.

Ready for the mud cave tomorrow. Camera's ready. I'll be back online Sunday evening or Monday morning.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 08, 2002 2:30 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Wow. I'm getting overworked on this alleged study leave, plus my father's wedding is this Saturday evening and I'm getting ready for that. Fred Woodworth wrote me a postcard to say he'd received the copy of DIE and that it "looks good." I haven't been ignoring LROM. Tomorrow I hope to be able to bring the current text up to snuff with all the comments and insertions and rewrites we've been talking about. Then on Thursday I hope to write another chapter, then get back on schedule next Monday.

> > *On the R. It suddenly occurred to me today that*  
> > *Thomas' father's name doesn't have to begin with R;*  
> > *his MOTHER'S name does! The tea set was from her*  
> > *family, after all. Maybe they'll both have names*  
> > *beginning with R. Anyway, how does the name Fallon*  
> > *Riverside sounds to you? He's called Fall for*  
> > *short—rather obvious symbolism, isn't it, besides*  
> > *being a cool name...*

>

> *The symbolism is a bit too obvious though! It almost grates: Fallon is so close to Fallen. We would definitely hear about it.*<sup>387</sup>

How about this? Thomas' father's name could be Reuben—Hebrew for "see, a son." That puts the focus subtly on Thomas. I don't have a last name yet, but his mother could be Rose Riverside. Reuben's last name could be either "Lantz" or "Terrastina." I don't know where the latter name came from—it just popped full-blown into my mind when I thought of the name Reuben. We need a good bad guy name like Zimbardo—a name that fits into the list of Hitler, Eichmann, bin Laden, McVeigh.

Let me know what you think. If I have time, I'll answer all the emails tomorrow too.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 09, 2002 2:33 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

How's this? Reuben for "see, a son" in Hebrew, preparing the way for Thomas, and Ridger for someone "on the edge."<sup>388</sup>

"There are still people who remember the worst years of the Collapse—they've got to be a little over a hundred years old by now," observed Joe. "But surely no one alive now can remember when Reuben Ridger led the stateside nuclear terrorists of the 2040s and used androids to bring nuclear devices into what were thought to be the most secure places of all!"

"History is easy to forget if you want to, Joe," commented Mark. "Remember what Richard told us when we first met him, when he drove us in the moonbus to prepare us for our assignment here on Mars?"

---

<sup>387</sup> The thought of what our readers might say was never very far from our minds.

<sup>388</sup> It worked! That's what we went with.

“Hmmm, yes—people who ignore the lessons of history are likely to repeat the worst parts of it—something like that.”

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 09, 2002 7:58 PM*

Dear Jon,

I am almost finished updating the current text of LROM, but I forgot where the nanogoo came from. I have all the notes about what it is and what it does, but where does it fit into the story? Does the Banjoman send a missile containing the stuff onto the wrecked ship? Does the ship contain it as a self-destruct program?

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MAY 13, 2002 6:53 PM*

LROM questions:

I've now made almost all the changes we decided on through chapter 18 and have five questions:

- 1) The book is more than half over and we haven't even mentioned flilox yet. That should come in earlier, I think. Where and how?
- 2) We haven't explained yet how the Banjoman knew where the Starmen were. To the reader what we have presented is a massive search for the Starmen, overtly run by Edmund Warner and covertly by the Banjoman, then suddenly the Banjoman knows where they are but he doesn't tell Edmund or anyone except those who are in his desert base. That needs some smoothing over.

3) I'm having reservations about the use of nano-goo. One, I think it's not necessary since the ship is a wreck and the Banjoman expects to eliminate the Starmen momentarily and no one else knows it's there. Two, the nano-goo is such a formidable weapon that it could put us into a tight spot to introduce it. If the Xenobots have it, I certainly can't think of a defense against it. Why didn't they use it on Nyx? Why didn't the Banjoman use it when the Starmen had just left Seven Leaves? The goo hits and in 20 minutes the bodies and the entire ship are gone. Unless you're seeing something I don't, I suggest we leave it out.

4) The denouement of LROM seems a little weak. The Banjoman is not conquered. He's caught between getting blown up and getting caught. He has to call for help. Shouldn't there be more of a battle, some kind of alternate plan, some desperate escape attempt, something?

5) In the next chapter or two Mark and Zip drop down into the caves and eventually find one of the cache of Martian mummies. I'd suggest first that they not see the mummies until later, when Jogren reveals them; if they see them now, it'll give away too much of the ending—that tale should be the powerful punch at the end of the book. Second, suppose they encounter a few Benefactors in the caves—such as Saavedro and Stenaphi—who finally talk to the Starmen face-to-face but do not reveal everything. They are under orders not to reveal the existence of the mummies, but they do explain the Banjoman, fillox, etc., and give a little encouragement about the resistance and information about the Xenobotic history.

Let me know what you think. I'm in high hopes of writing a chapter later tonight and another on Thursday. Getting back on track.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2002 8:53 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Wow, I'm tired. A lots been happening in the past few days.

...

> > *LROM questions:*

>

> *Oh goodie! This is the sort of thing I like: I get to think and come up*

> *with answers out of thin air. Let's see here....*<sup>389</sup>

I like all your ideas, Jon, except for destroying the Lux Mundi. How about if it just blasts or otherwise disables the getaway ship? I think it "feels" a little bit like flying airliners in World Trade Centers and stuff. I know it's unmanned, but still.

> *[Chapter 19] Very good! The chapter is good and I like the deviations you made; they*  
> *make sense and improve the chapter. A few comments:*

>

> *\* It would be good to reintroduce the Xenobots again — it's been a good*

> *while since our readers read about them.*

Good idea.

> *\* The passage with the Xenobots doesn't seem menacing enough: it could be*

> *hard for our readers to understand why all their options are bad. Perhaps*

> *some thoughts that run through our Starmen's heads would help, thoughts*

> *something like this: a) a flashback of sorts to their vehemence on Nyx and*

> *the utter devastation they caused so easily, b) the fact that they have no*

> *help and are wanted by the police, are lightly armed, and are vastly*

> *outnumbered, c) the fact that they are pretty much trapped in the canyon*

> *with no hope of escape.*

>

> *\* The Starmen seem to get away too easily. It would be great if we could*

> *play the scene just a little longer to emphasize that they are in real*

> *trouble.*

Sounds good.

...

> *Just read the latest chapter [20]. It's pretty good! It is definitely a bit*

> *rough (a few scenes, such as the battle, could use a bit more detail) but I*

> *think it works. I don't have a lot of time this morning (I'm off to see a*

---

<sup>389</sup> Trying to find answers for the questions that came up while writing the books was always a great deal of fun for me!

> *morning showing of Star Wars!)* but I did spot these things:

>

> \* *The sonic boom attack — it's good but I have the feeling that people who have no idea you can destroy something with a sonic boom (which is quite a lot of people) would wonder if we had lost our minds. It might be good to expand this, saying that as the Starlight warships flew over the craft at five times the speed of sound, the ships generated a fierce sonic boom via compressed air waves — a sonic boom fierce enough to destroy all the Xenobot ships. Also, just as a matter of detail, at one point it would be good to expand this section and give the destruction a bit more detail.*

What actually creates the sonic boom? They're already flying at 5 times the speed of sound—does the boom come when they get too close to the ground? How can they "aim" the boom so that it hits the Xenobotic ships?

Note: This is the first time in the series we are indicating a fatality.<sup>390</sup> Your summary was vague on that point but when I got to the writing I didn't see any way around it. Is it acceptable? It is okay with me when not to do so would be amazingly contrived. I think this scene calls for it.

> \* *At some point it would be good to re-describe the appearance of the Xenobots in this book.*

That'll happen, per your suggestion, at the beginning of chapter 19.

> \* *The text says that Richard flew through the canyon in 10 seconds. At five times the speed of sound, he could travel nearly 10 miles in 10 seconds. I don't think the canyon is that large! We'd better slow them down to under a tenth the speed they were flying before, which would be around 350-400 mph.*

The text indicates that the six ships slowed when they turned in the desert before returning to the canyon. I'll make it more specific that they slow to 350 mph.

> \* *It might be a good idea to have Richard get a bit nervous at the end when*

---

<sup>390</sup> One of our guiding principles was that no one (good guy or bad guy) was to be killed in the Starman books, and we always went out of our way to make sure of this. It was sometimes a challenge but so far we have been very successful: I don't think any of the Starman books have suffered because of a lack of fatalities. (This may seem like a strange principle, but there is so much death and violence in other books and in the media that we wanted to be different: we did not want to add to the problem.)

> *he can't find the Starmen. He was told that they were in the area and*  
> *perhaps when he can't find them he starts to wonder if they were caught in*  
> *the battle — or if they were in a side-pocket in the mountain that was now*  
> *sealed due to the battle! Might add some good tenseness.*

Okay, but keep in mind that Jogren's hologram told him that the Starmen would be saved by the Benefactors. I assumed that Richard would depend on that, but it would be good to have him wondering about it anxiously.

> *\* You know something? It would be cool if the Starmen knew sign language!*  
> *Maybe after this adventure, when they realized the need to talk in silence*  
> *without communicators, they could learn it. Just a thought. Might be an*  
> *interesting desire to have one of the Starmen to wish for.*

Good idea.

> *\* The appearance of the Benefactors is good, but it might be a good idea to*  
> *describe them as looking somewhat alien. Right now there's nothing in the*  
> *passage to mark them as being anything but human.*

That change I already made. I really enjoyed writing that scene! It's a good moment—Zip FINALLY gets his wish when he least expects it!

More later.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2002 11:04 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I have now made most of the editorial changes in LROM that Jon and Valerie<sup>391</sup> have put forth, and they improve the story greatly. If I have time I'll finish up the rest of them this evening.

---

<sup>391</sup> Valerie Kramer, who edited the fifth Starman book! Valerie was receiving the chapters by email without the benefit of having the summary. She didn't know where the story was going. She made her observations chapter by chapter, then emailed them back to David with copious notes and references to relevant websites.



...

Jon, I noticed in reading through your comments on Valerie's comments that our understanding of the devastation of Mars is different. If I understood correctly, you wrote basically that Mars was devastated and then the Martians attacked the Xenobots and then put themselves into stasis.

What I thought happened is that, during the great War the Martians unknowingly revealed to the Xenobots where their home planet was. The Martian fleet headed for the Xenobots' home planet to bomb them into the stone age while a Xenobot fleet headed for Mars. The Martians, having sufficient notice of the likelihood of this attack and knowing they could not defend against it, created the sites underground and put most of their civilization into stasis so that, when the Xenobots attacked, they were attacking a mostly empty planet. They destroyed the planet and its cities and forests, etc., but most of the inhabitants were already asleep in the deep. Then the Martian fleet came on the scene and wiped out the Xenobot fleet. Result: Most Xenobots gone and their home planet devastated; most Martians in stasis; Mars a ruin and unable to sustain life so the Martians had to remain in stasis until their planet became habitable again; a few living Martians appointed to maintain the capsules until there was enough illunas and Earth had advanced enough to restore Mars to habitability. As things would have it, the rise of Earth and the Xenobots' return happened at about the same time. Hence, the Martians cannot reveal themselves to men of Earth prematurely in case the Xenobots capture the Earthmen and learn what happened to the Martians and exterminate them as they sleep. Is that it?

I kinda need to know where we are on this since the next chapter I write is where Stenaphi and Saadervo and Jogren give Mark and Zip a rundown on the stuff.

I also noticed, Jon, in your comments on Valerie's comments, that you indicate that the Elder was alive during the great War. That makes him many centuries old. Do the Martians live that long or was he one of the few who was in stasis and then was awoken? I suppose that could happen. The Martians do have some illunas and a few people could be restored under the current circumstances. How shall we make it?

More later,

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2002 11:29 AM

Dear Jon and Mike,

> > *I like all your ideas, Jon, except for destroying the Lux Mundi. ...*

How about if we see where we are when we get to that scene? There will be some way to achieve our aim and it will become clear when we get there. I'm just not comfortable with the deliberate destruction of the LM. It doesn't seem as necessary as the collision Zip had to effect with the SR when he was being pursued. Maybe the LM could be made of titanium alloy like the SR and not be put at such risk. It's your story, though, and I want to make it as you want it.

Also, it always takes me a little while for a summary to sink in so that I can really understand it.

> *From what I understand, the sonic boom is centered around the aircraft. If they just fly directly over their targets, their targets will feel the boom.*

Great! That's what I needed to know.

> > *Note: This is the first time in the series we are indicating a fatality.*  
> > *Your summary was vague on that point but when I got to the writing I didn't see any way around it. Is it acceptable? It is okay with me when not too so would be amazingly contrived. I think this scene calls for it.*  
>  
> *This actually did not even cross my mind when I was writing the summary. I pictured the Xenobots as rather sturdy individuals and thought that they would get tossed all around and buried under the sand ...*  
> *Does this make sense?*

I see two problems: one, I doubt that the Xenos would be tougher than their ships. If the ships are blown into fragments, the metallic bodies would certainly suffer at least some damage. We've already illustrated them (JTP) as having appendages and with a boom as powerful as the one we're describing I suspect we're looking at some serious damage including appendages coming off as the bodies are rolled over and over. I found it satisfying and just that when their cases cracked open, the living substance was exposed directly to the Martian air which THEY had caused themselves in the devastation of

Mars. Secondly, what would the boom do to the Xenos in the canyon, and to the Star Ranger? If the Xenos in the canyon are also done in by the boom, wouldn't the Ranger be blown part? I had envisioned the boom blasting the surface but not necessarily blasting the Xenos in the canyon with the same intensity. What's best here?

You're right, though—would the Xenos attack Mars Base in retaliation? Would this attack cause them to notice Earth? We've already said (chapter one) that it is vital that the Xenos not lose their focus on finding the Martians and notice Earth—then we have Jogren telling Richard to come blast the Xenos. Where are the Xenos when the Banjoman sends for them? Are there others there who will set out to avenge their fallen vanguard?

> *Also, as another point: Zip could surely hear the  
> sonic boom even though he was deep underground. I imagine it would make him  
> rather nervous, wondering what was going on at the surface!*

Excellent point!

> > *Okay, but keep in mind that Jogren's hologram told him that the Starmen  
> > would be saved by the Benefactors. I assumed that Richard would depend on  
> > that, but it would be good to have him wondering about it anxiously.*  
>  
> *That's true! He did.*

I put in an notice that Richard remembered and trusted Jogren's message but still worried where the Starmen were when the battle was over.

> > *Jon, I noticed in reading through your comments on Valerie's comments that  
> > our understanding of the devastation of Mars is different. If I understood  
> > correctly, you wrote basically that Mars was devastated and then the  
> > Martians attacked the Xenobots and then put themselves into stasis.*  
>  
> *That's right! That is what our World documents says — the documents we  
> drafted some time ago. To quote from them: ...  
> It seems pretty clear! ...It's all right there in the summary  
> and is what we wrote in the back-history. Since it's what we agreed on way  
> back then it makes sense to me to write it that way!*

Ah yes, thanks for the reminder. Looks good.

> *I have pictured the Martians living a long time (longer than humans) but*  
> *not nearly that long; I imagined him as one of the vast numbers of people*  
> *who were put in stasis (hence they call him the Elder). He, however, was*  
> *awoken a while back when things started looking grim. The other Martians at*  
> *the meeting were caretakers — Martians who were never in Stasis but stayed*  
> *alive, tending the Martians in stasis and keeping an eye on current events.*

Good. That's what I assumed too. Just making sure.

Moving on!

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MAY 20, 2002 8:02 PM*

Dear Jon, Mike, and Valerie,

Here is an extremely rough draft of chapter 21. It's the longest one in the entire saga so far—more than 4,000 words. It took me about four hours to write it and it obviously still needs a lot of work. The last part especially—Stenaphi's tale—will need a lot of extras—pauses for questions, comments, other things to break it up, but that'll be easy to put in.

But at least you can see where I'm going with it. Let me know what you think.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2002 1:33 AM*

Dear Jon,

Good comments, and I will make those changes. I had already made some in Stenaphi's monologue, but more will come.

I had forgotten that they had the Elder to tell them about the Great War! When I wrote the monologue, basically all I did was turn our entry in our files into a narrative. Naturally we've progressed somewhat since then.

...

Chapter 22 on Thursday, and that'll complete Part II!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2002 8:57 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

I'm doing a rewrite of LROM 21 right now and adding a bunch of neat stuff. I suddenly had an idea—how about if we postulate that there was a small planet between Mars and Jupiter and that in the Ahmanyen-Xenobot war the Xenobots blew it up, thus creating the Asteroid Belt?

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2002 9:26 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

> > *I'm doing a rewrite of LROM 21 right now and adding a*  
> > *bunch of neat stuff. I suddenly had an idea—how about if*  
> > *we postulate that there was a small planet between Mars*  
> > *and Jupiter and that in the Ahmanyen-Xenobot war the*  
> > *Xenobots blew it up, thus creating the Asteroid Belt?*  
>  
> *I like it! It sounds like a good idea. Any thoughts as to what it was like,*  
> *how it was inhabited, etc. ?*

How about a small, Mercury-sized planet, uninhabited, and very volcanic because of internal stresses caused by being so close to Jupiter. The Martians used it as their first line of defense, and it was the first thing to go when the Xenobots attacked.

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2002 10:07 PM*

*> Great, great work!! I really like the way you have refined the chapter and  
> think that it's very good. The revisions are big improvements.*

Thanks! It still needs a little refinement, but I think it's almost there. I first titled it *The Shadow of the Past* as a tribute to Tolkien in *LOTR*, but I've since changed it to *A Refuge in Twilight*—it continues the theme of light in darkness. Okay?

The chapter is now more than 5,000 words long—more than twice as long as an average chapter, but I think it's a good one.

We need a good, plausible reason for why the Martians are keeping secret from Zip and Mark at this time that there are 8,000,000 mummies. In reality we want to keep the information as the final blockbusting secret to close the book, but what would be a good reason in the story? I've put something in the text already, but I think it's rather weak.

Also, thus far we have kept all our promises at the end of the previous four books to reveal all mysteries, except four: the origin of the tunnels under Eagle City, the explanation of the greegles, what the Martians were mining on Europa, and what is concealed inside the inaccessible 1,500 cubic miles of Tharsos. This stuff'll have to be worked into the narrative in some way.

*> Now that I think about it, I think that this verse is much more fitting:  
>  
> Job 4 (KJV)  
> 7 "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?  
> Where were the upright ever destroyed?  
> 8 As I have observed, those who plow evil  
> and those who sow trouble reap it.*

>

> *It's full of irony and double meanings, and is much better. The situation of the Starmen is much like the situation of Job: an innocent man under severe trials. Yet, in the end, the innocent did not perish — the one that plowed evil was the one that reaped it and was finished, while the Starmen (and Job) ended up greater than they were when they began. I think it sets just the right tone.*

I like it. I made the change and have titled the three parts The Innocent, The Plowing, and The Reaping. Okay?

> > *Chapter 22 on Thursday, and that'll complete Part II!*

>

> *Sounds terrific! I'm looking forward to it. BTW, in the summary, the manhunt didn't get called off, and thus it made sense for Richard to take the Star Ranger and head off into space to draw off the pursuers and give the Starmen a chance to escape. That has been changed, and I like the change. I would still recommend having Richard take the Star Ranger (I know it's in bad shape) and fly off somewhere with it, but this time the idea is to make the Banjoman think that the Starmen have fled Mars. That way the Banjoman doesn't keep looking for them on Mars, and the Starmen have the chance they need to finish him off. Just a thought!*

Great. I'll think of something when I get there tomorrow.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2002 11:53 PM*

Dear Jon,

> *This just in from April! She has a point. Your thoughts?*

> *"Whoo hoo!" Richard shouted.*

> *"Now for the rest of 'em!" Richard shouted.*

>

> *I had always sort of pictured him as more dignified. Was my impression incorrect?*

My impression is that in LROM Richard is finally "unleashed" as a major character.<sup>392</sup> He is certainly shown as thoughtful and dignified in the first four books and in the first half of LROM, but in the heat of battle his leadership style comes out through total commitment to the engagement. His emotions finally emerge in the excitement. It is the side of him that allowed him to build SE. Remember that in our outline he was often "out there" on the field with his people; however, we've never seen him there until now. If he launches the attack against the Xenos and just kind of says, "Good job, folks," the people would feel let down. I picture him as quiet but solid in his office, but when necessary can leap into action with the best of them and does so. At least this is my feeling. (If there is a better term than "whoo hoo," I'm open for suggestions!)

I've spent a lot of time today going over the text up through 21 and still have more to do tonight. No new chapter today, but the work was well worth the time. Chapter 21 in particular is really sharp now! Very moving.

More later,

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2002 12:00 AM*

> Yes, [the Banjoman] was mentioned in TRA! I had forgotten about that. I wonder  
> how many of our readers will remember it? I could see someone re-reading TRA  
years  
> from now and suddenly being startled — hey, they mentioned the Banjoman way  
> back here!

Indeed, that's why we were stuck with the name and had to sweat out what it meant when it was time for him to appear onstage! I threw the name in as a lark and suddenly it hit print and we were committed to it. I'd better be careful!

It looks as if it'll be no problem hosting you in July! That's just eight weeks away. It'll go fast.

*David*

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<sup>392</sup> And to think that when we first began *Assault on Mars* we planned for Richard to be a very minor character!



DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2002 12:03 PM

What did you think of the revised chapter 17? It seemed a little awkward or contrived to me, and it means that the Xenobots showed up moments after the Banjoman sent for them. I suppose they could do that if they leap immediately into their ships and zoom through hyperspace from the Belt to Mars, but do you think it is worth the rewrite just to guarantee that the wreck is pulverized? Will anyone notice it? Is it, in fact, something we might WANT to leave so that our good guys can examine the wreck later? After the roundup, the good guys will have plenty of stuff to sift through in the Banjoman's files and hangars anyway. I incline toward leaving the chapter the way it was but will go with whatever you prefer. Since both versions exist, it's easy to pick either one.

David

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2002 6:38 PM

Dear Jon,

> *The good guys won't have lots of files to go through, though! The Banjoman's base was wrecked, remember?*

Oops, I'd forgotten.

> *As for the time it takes the Xenobots to come: what if the Starmen don't escape the missile? When they are inside the ship, warning lights start coming on and Mark realizes a missile is coming. They run out of the ship (and the Banjoman thinks they got away), but the blast gets them and they are both knocked unconscious — and stay that way for a couple hours. That gives the Xenos time to arrive, and what wakes them up is the drone of the Xenobot ships as they land...*

Or else the Xenobots travel through hyperspace from the Belt and arrive in minutes. The Banjoman could say something like, "Call the tin buckets. They can get here in a few minutes since they can travel through hyperspace."

> *Do you think that makes more sense? Are we getting closer?*

>

> *Another point — what if the Starmen try to contact SE with the information  
> about the Banjoman, but can't because the airwaves are being jammed? If I  
> was the Banjoman that would be the first thing I'd do to ensure that no  
> message can reach them.*

Great.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, MAY 27, 2002 4:56 AM*

Dear Jon and Valerie,

Since we decided to have Mark and Zip actually meet the Ahmanyans rather than just see murals, we departed from the original summary radically for the past 2 or 3 chapters. After this one, we begin part III and probably get back pretty close to what you wrote, Jon. In the next chapter, they get the light-bending cloaks and the Ahmanyans send them back into the desert.

Couldn't sleep tonight, so wrote this between midnight and 2 a.m. I'm sure glad tomorrow is a holiday!

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JUNE 04, 2002 5:26 PM*

I'm glad you liked chapter 23, Jon. Sometimes when I'm writing it seems very poor as I'm cranking it out through oversleepy eyes or sluggish thoughts, but it seems to perk up a bit when I read it through and come across better than I feared. Amazing how things just emerge on their own—the whole idea of the six-mile abyss and the light sphere and the children wearing the light cloaks just appeared as I was writing. It seemed to me somehow a parallel to the abyss into which Nolan almost fell into.

I'm planning on taking a week off after Father's Day, including several days in the mountain cabin where I've spent time before. That'll give me a good lunge forward on getting LROM finished by the end of this month.

Well, more later.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 07, 2002 12:29 AM*

Dear Jon,

> *It is deviating a little from the summary, but I like what you are doing —*  
> *it makes a lot of sense. The way the chapter ended was very chilling! It's a*  
> *good story.*

I'm glad you liked the chapter. I did too. I've already added a few details to it since I sent it to you. It seems to me that we have changed the summary a number of times and I'd like to get back on track to make sure that what we've got is acceptable to you. Attached is my working summary—the original summary with various notes we've made as we've gone along. It's very rough, but you can see where it's going. Please let me know if it's okay or if you'd like to bring it more in line with your original idea. This is the set of notes that I'm working from. Some of the implications of the story had to be redone just because of internal consistency—for example, the harvester can't be driving the 700 miles back to Eagle City, so I made that a local town maybe a couple of hours away from the lichen fields. It doesn't change anything essential, but I'd feel comfortable with your approval.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 07, 2002 8:58 PM*

> > *EAGLE CITY IS ABOUT 700 MILES AWAY.*  
>

> *Not bad. If you had one of those cool hovercars like the Skywalkers have in  
> Star Wars, you could rev that harvester up to 700 mph and make it inside an  
> hour — and it would never touch the ground the whole way. That would make  
> for a great scene!*

...especially if Mark and Zip are wearing light cloaks and trying to hold on to the outside of the harvester.

You're totally right. Zip needs to get in contact with Richard. I'll work that in.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 07, 2002 10:41 PM*

Dear Jon,

By the way, the name for the herbalist community at the end of LROM, Itys Qualicum, has an odd origin. "Qualicum" is a small town near Victoria, Canada. Neil Lindholm will definitely recognize it. It must be some sort of Indian word. "Itys" is kind of an in-joke with the Averys and me. We were having some sort of adventure in Vancouver and at one point I commended Marge for not saying, "I told you so." Then it suddenly hit me that if I took the first letters of "I told you so," it made a neat name: Itys. There you go.

Yesterday was my wedding anniversary: 31 years of wedded bliss. Sherri bought some really cool flowers for me and I thought right away that Kristina could bring the same flowers for Zip when she visits him in Itys Qualicum. The idea was confirmed when I noted that the flowers are called "Stargazer Lilies." A photo of them is attached. I'm having fun making digital photos and attaching them now.

*David*

DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 09, 2002 8:18 PM

Dear Jon,

You know, if Zip contacts Richard via compad, the Banjoman could make note of it and trace his position. Zip could always use RRTF, but that will only keep the message from being intercepted, not make the sender invisible to tracking. For that reason at least, we don't want to have Zip send from too close to the entrance to the Ahmanyman refuge. Could we work Daniel Teagarden into the matter somehow? Teagarden obviously has contacts with the Ahmanyans, since this has been already explained and DT has been told of the Xenobots' arrival—presumably by the Ahmanyans. Could we have a Wind Person (Cave Johnson again?) meet Zip and Mark as they are leaving the arch and send a message for them to Richard? DT could say that he'd been contacted by the Ahmanyans. Alternatively, we could have an Ahmanyman use a hologram to send a message to Richard the way they did before. Your ideas?

...

> *I did a quick search, and it turns out that Itys was a mythological*  
> *character. The definition of Itys is: The son of Tereus and Procne.*  
> *Because Procne and her sister Philomela wanted*  
> *to avenge themselves on Tereus, they killed Itys and served the flesh to*  
> *Tereus during a banquet.*

Well, I don't know if we want to include such an implication in our story! What do you think? I didn't know the connection with mythology, but someone somewhere will and we really don't want that kind of subtle message in there. We could run into another golliwog problem—using a word with overtones we were unaware of.<sup>393</sup> Maybe I should abandon that otherwise rich word. I really liked it: Itys—although the Averys thought it implied some kind of infection, like tonsilitis and bronchitis.

Chapter 25 tomorrow. I have plenty of time for it.

David

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<sup>393</sup> In *Assault on Mars* we introduced an animal named a golliwog, which was the pet of choice for lonely asteroid miners. It wasn't until after the book was printed that we discovered that golliwog (a word we thought we had made up) was an obscure racial slur in England. Once we found this out we altered the text for the second edition and made them koalangs instead. Ever since then I've always tried to do a word search for any new word we invent on the chance that the word might already exist...

*DATE: TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2002 12:58 AM*

Dear Jon, Mike, and Valerie,

Changing the plotline by bringing Daniel Teagarden into the action involved making a couple of changes in the previous chapter. I have included those changes in this attachment so you can see how they lead in to the events of chapter 25.

Jon, in the summary, you had Andrew Forge mocking Edmund Warner when he begged for help. When I got to that part, it seemed to me that Forge would probably play it safe instead. After all, Warner is still a public figure and he has the goods on Forge. Also, would Forge really boast about his "other supporters"? The Xenobots just got their first defeat from Richard Starlight and Forge knows he's on the defensive now. And Warner, if he felt really abandoned by Forge, could very well try to save himself and go public with the deception, thereby turning the tables on Forge. Therefore I had Forge promise Warner riches and safety if he just hangs on. Of course, Forge's REAL plan is to blow up the Starlight forces including all three Starmen, then make a bold escape from Eagle City leaving Warner to fend for himself. I hope that alteration is okay with you.

Here's chapter 25.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2002 4:36 PM*

Dear Jon,

Great comments, Jon. I'm glad you liked the touches I put in there, and agree with your suggestions for tightening it up. I'll make the changes.

Yes, the book is feeling pretty good. When we finally get to the end, I'll spend a full day going through the entire text and tightening up a few more things, then get it off to you two for your read-throughs. Next week I'm spending Monday through Thursday alone in a mountain cabin and my plan is to write AT LEAST one chapter a day. If that happens, we won't have any problem getting a first draft done by the end of this month.

I've also written to Earl Schmidt<sup>394</sup> and told him we want to include the dust jacket with this project, and asked him what format Friesens will require. That means that we'll have to have a master on file somewhere, the way Kevin did DIE. Are you able to take the scan of the master painting of LROM, Jon, and put in words and the Starman logo, or do we need Kevin<sup>395</sup> to do that?

And while we're at it, how about making the new covers for TRA and JTP, following up on the awesome renderings you had a couple of weeks ago? Even for just a few of us, those covers would be outstanding.

I got my copy of Yellowback yesterday and the article on the Starman series is in it. Steve Servello did a good job. Maybe we'll get some orders from it.

Finally, I haven't forgotten the artwork for LROM. I've got lots of ideas and don't expect to have any problems getting that done in July. If I remember correctly from what Jon said before, the renderings have to be completely black and white, no grays. I'm planning on using pen and black ink on white paper, with some assistance from small brush.

LROM 26 on Thursday. We are rolling and the end is in sight. It's exciting!

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2002 8:05 PM*

Dear Jon,

Since we have now decided that the harvester and the Banjoman's evacuees will be going to the small town rather than back to the base, a few revisions had to be made in an earlier portion of the text. Here's the new version. It works out rather ironically that "Steve" suggests that they go to the very place where the production of flilox is taking place. It makes it very easy for the people in Brandow to prevent them from getting the dirigible.

*David*

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<sup>394</sup> our contact at Friesens, the printer we used to print *The Lost Race of Mars*

<sup>395</sup> Kevin Anetsberger, the person who did the cover art and internals for *Descent Into Europa*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2002 9:29 PM*

Dear Jon,

The Reading Group liked the five new chapters. We came up with a few tiny changes which I have already made—nothing big whatever. The scene when Forge set the trap got some gasps.

They did have two comments that I didn't follow: one, they wanted Zip and Mark to show more concern for Joe while they are visiting the Ahmanyans. I think it's okay as it is. They also asked whether the sentinels that Forge has flying around the area would guard the lichen field and therefore discern the presence of the Starmen even if they are in light cloaks. I made a note of that, then realized later that Forge has pulled the sentinels away in order to watch for Richard's attack. So I left that alone. Does that sound okay with you?

I suddenly realized, however, that we needed to make another change. Since the iron foundry scene was moved to Brandow, the little town 100 miles from the lichen fields, we rewrote the description of that town to match the iron foundry scene. But having done that, it suddenly made no sense that "Steve" would make the suggestion that the Starmen go there to get a dirigible! He'd want to KEEP them from the place!

So I rewrote the scene so that as soon as a dirigible comes up, Steve suggests right away that they go to Forge's place in Seven Leaves. His ploy is to get them to Forge. Zip, however, suggests Brandow since it's close to their goal. He'd been studying the map and realized it was closest to where they wanted to go. Steve tries to talk them out of it but Zip insists on trying it. It makes sense that it's the Banjoman's seat of operations and it also makes sense that the Starmen would want to go there since it's the closest town to their goal.

Then, in the conversation that takes place in Forge's basement, I altered that from being an address to four unnamed people who are never seen again to being an encrypted conversation with Peter Bellar. Bellar is the second-in-command in Forge's hidden base, which now becomes the place Forge set up to keep close watch on the lichen field. Bellar remarks on how well the crew in Brandow prepared to throw the Starmen off track as soon as they knew that they were coming there.

Is that okay? The new texts are below.



I'll probably have time to check messages tomorrow, but only briefly. After that I'm gone until Thursday. I hope that I'll come back with four new chapters.

I do have one question for you: right now, when the Starmen wear the light cloaks, there is no way they can use their hands. Should we add glove-like appendages so that they can hold things, use a pistol, etc?

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2002 8:16 PM*

Dear Jon,

I whipped through my emails and a bunch of other things as soon as I got home, and wanted to get the five chapters off to you right away, so I didn't take time to comment. Things are little more settled now, so here are a few explanations for you:

As often happens, a few details and items that didn't show up in the summary seemed logical when I got to the actual writing, so I deviated from the summary to include them. As always, such deviations are subject to your approval. For example:

Bringing the Wind People in as the first assault team on Brandow. Providentially we had located them in the vicinity of Brandow—which I did without thinking of it at the time. Since the flilox factory was no longer in Eagle City, Zip had no special reason to flee the police in Brandow except merely to escape—he was intending to lead them to the flilox factory before. So he and Mark had to return and capture the bad guys before they could hide or split.

Also, it seemed more logical to me that the police and other run-of-the-mill people such as the graveyard-shift commander at the Space Command tower in Eagle City would hedge their bets as to whom to back until things became very clear—as the Israelites did in 1 Kings 18:21. So each time they were put on the spot, they made no decision until they were forced into it. That's why chapter 30 is called Where Loyalty Is Proven—Mark Johnson makes his commitment early and sticks to it when it could have become costly.

Forge, also in Brandow but in hiding, had believed that Zip and Mark were with Richard. His first conclusion, once he learned that Zip was in Brandow, would be that an invasion was imminent. He was right, but for reasons other than he figured. So he had to flee to save his own skin. He abandoned Peter Bellar (whose last name is from Latin "bellum" for war) since he'd bungled the security twice. Of course, neither Bellar nor Forge could know about the light cloaks, so it wasn't Bellar's fault, but neither of them knew that.

Mark couldn't use the light cloak again (i.e., during the siege of Brandow when other people were watching) since he'd then have to explain where he got it! —and he wouldn't put the Ahmanyans at risk.

As soon as Richard knew that Forge was on his way to Eagle City, he'd likely call someone to head him off rather than just try to outrun Forge personally. So I had him call Jack Calvin (who'd appeared earlier as the manager of Starlight Eagle City), and Calvin called all the logical people in the logical order. That naturally put Mark Johnson back into the story, and that gave me the opportunity to put him into a key role in stopping Forge at the spaceport. I hope you like that scene.

Similarly, the authorities wouldn't act in any observable way either to support or hinder the unseen, allegedly escaping Forge until the truth of the matter were proven—which it was only when it was too late to make a commitment. So only Johnson gets the credit for stopping the villain. It also seemed more logical that Forge would have an entire fleet of ships rather than just one at the spaceport—therefore no one knew which ship was his goal, even if they HAD wanted to stop him earlier.

Finally, it occurred to me that if the laser guy could pinpoint a small corner of the chamber where Joe and Steve were hiding, he could even more easily pinpoint the bomb itself—since it was the radiating bull's eye. That raises a question: is it indeed possible to melt down and destroy a bomb like the one we've described? What would that do to the radiation? —remember it's an isotope of Mercury. If melting it is not possible, then the scene can be rewritten fairly easily but if Joe has to dismantle the bomb manually he will have to overcome the needle lasers on the arachnoid to do so.

At this rate, LROM first draft will be FINISHED by next week at this time—well within our goal of the end of June. My plan is then to re-read the entire story myself and fix things, then send the entire MS at once to you and Mike for your comments. Then while you are reading and commenting, I'll do the illustrations. You are due here in only four weeks. During your visit we could either make the changes together as a result of

your comments, or if we've already done that by email, we could bind the author's copies.

Oh yes—just in case anyone notices and perhaps objects, the word "godforsaken" in the text is there on purpose as a theological statement. Not a vital one so it's easy to remove if there's a problem, but I did put it in deliberately.

Speaking of which, now that we're working on second editions, how about changing "frozen wasteland" in JTP back to "frozen hell." Remember that term was also deliberately chosen, to be a parallel to the "pristine paradise" of Armstrong Forest.

I've already got lots of cool ideas and images in mind for the closing two chapters of LROM. Really, this is going to be a moving and exciting book.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 2002 6:06 AM*

Dear Jon, Mike, and Valerie,

Here is a first draft of an appendix to LROM. Valerie suggested that something like this be added. Let me know what you think. Just in case someone picks up the book and reads this first, I have not revealed in this piece that Ahmanya and Mars are the same. The only bit of information in the following that is revelatory is the notation that their planet had been destroyed. I could make that even more vague and say something like "after the war with the Xenobots." The "sleeping king," by the way, will be mentioned in the last chapter.

Lemme know what you think.

*David*

DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 2002 6:22 PM

Dear Jon,

> > *I didn't specify it, but it was the feeling people get when*  
> > *there is someone else around—like when you feel that someone*  
> > *is looking at you. I'll make it more obvious in the text.*  
>  
> *Sounds good!*

I added a sentence to make it clear.

> *Overall I think*  
> *it's a great story and I really like the way you pulled everything together*  
> *and managed to make a good ending. Great work!*

Thanks. I'm really enjoying it!

> *This is a great scene, and I like the use of the broom a lot (there are*  
> *some great fights in these chapters!), but I think it would be worthwhile to*  
> *explain why Zip decided to use a broom instead of the laser that he just*  
> *sealed the door with.*

Blast! You're right. Your idea about having the gun not work but still have energy works well!

> *The entire fight scene in the warehouse was fantastic! It has to be one of*  
> *the best action sequences in the series. Great work!*

Thanks. The fight with the broomstick is also martial arts—the weapon is called a bo. You'll see me work with one when you're here. I will set aside July 23, Tuesday night's regular karate class, for choreographing all the Starman fight scenes and getting them on video.

> *The scene where the bomb is melted is great! There is one tiny little thing*  
> *though: if Joe could hardly make himself heard by Steve, he couldn't very*  
> *well shout to make himself heard by a couple people more than a hundred feet*  
> *above him! He could probably hear the Starmen but I doubt they could hear*  
> *him without some sort of special listening equipment. Just a thought! I know*

*> that Mark had his compad, but I doubt Joe would have his!*

Hmmm, you're right! I had assumed that they were communicating by compad, but how about if they are communicating by the internal communication system in the suit itself? That's different, and as long as they have their helmets they can communicate through their suits. That should be clarified, though. Forge has taken everything from them, including in-suit nutrients, oxygen tanks, NPAC (what'll he do with that?? — I suppose that the Starmen will recover it when Forge is arrested), compad. He's only left them their suits and helmets. I guess that should be made clear too.

*David*

*DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2002 6:59 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Here's a little addition to the tale of the encounter of Ahmanya and Earth. It suddenly hit me that this was vital:

"Such peacefulness, such beauty," said Mark as they paused to gaze into the water. "It is such a contrast to the history you just shared with us, Stenafi. The tenacious spirit of Ahmanya is incredible!"

"Most Ahmanyans always valued beauty, Starman Seaton, but after our planet was destroyed the love of beauty and the skills to create it became most important to the survivors."

"Yes," said Mark somberly. "It is usually the case that after terrible suffering, great good will follow. The loss is real and becomes part of history, and the people are changed drastically-but the evil never prevails."

Stenafi discerned some emotional intensity in Mark's tone and glanced at him inquiringly. He was keeping his expression under rigid control. Suddenly she started.

"Mark," she said, deeply moved. "Forgive me. In telling my tale of the disaster of my planet and people, I had forgotten that your race has a similar story."

Mark stared intently at the foliage, but tears filled his eyes for a moment. "Several billion people," he whispered. "For us, only a century ago. There are still a few people on Earth for whom it is not history, but memory." The big Starman turned and looked directly

into the Ahmanyans' eyes. "But a remnant survived, and now we have come to Ahmanya, and we have become friends."

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2002 9:51 PM*

By the way, the chant that the Sisters are singing is Psalm 66:1-2 (with alleluias added), which is from the liturgy for the third Sunday after Easter. It seemed fitting for the occasion in the story:

*Be joyful in God, all you lands;  
sing the glory of his Name, sing the glory of his praise.  
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!  
because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.*

*David*

*DATE: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2002 9:48 PM*

Dear Jon,

Valerie made this excellent observation. Any ideas how to fix this up?

> *The Starmen have shut down the operation to convert the lichen  
> to drugs. They'll have to reveal that drugs were being made to clear  
> themselves and explain their own illegal actions (resisting arrest,  
> trespass etc.) and they'll have to be careful not to compromise the  
> security of the Ahmanyans. BUT, it seems likely there will be a  
> demand for the lichen to be destroyed to prevent anyone else from  
> making the drug. Maybe they could arrange for "protective custody"  
> so it could be analyzed for any potential benefits but that's kind of  
> thin. Seems like they may be out on a bit of a limb to protect the*

> *lichen from well-meaning people who don't know, and can't know*  
> *yet, of the Ahmanyans.*

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2002 11:54 PM*

Dear friends,

Here's a new passage in chapter 32 to help resolve Valerie's concern. Let me know if you think it works. It comes when Richard is sharing his news while the group is resting in Bethesda.

"What of the lichen?" asked Mark. "People will have to know that it is the source of the fillox, but they cannot know that it is vital to the Ahmanyans. Can it be protected?"

"It's a good question, Mark, and I've given that some thought," said Richard with a nod. "The lichen is a native Martian life form. Because of that, I'm going to do my best to see that it receives special protection. I'll ask that the whole area be made a nature preserve and declared off-limits. And I'll ask further that Starlight Enterprise, because of our extensive resources, be given the right to study it. Only a few of us will know that our real responsibility will be to protect and preserve it."

Joe lifted a hand. "Sounds great, Richard—now what about the Star Ranger? My buddies here have told me that as soon as my back was turned, Zip wrecked it by trying to fly it by remote control."

Richard laughed. "The engineers at Mars Base have been working on your ship, Joe. ...

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002 1:20 AM*

Dear friends,

The first draft of LROM is finished—on time! My goal was to complete it by the end of June. It took almost precisely five months. I think I began chapter one on January 25.

On Monday, I'll begin to read it through from the beginning and make revisions. Then I'll send you the completed version all at once for your comments.

*David*

*DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002 10:20 AM*

Dear Jon,

I'm glad you like the insertion about the lichen. It was a good solution to Valerie's comment. You think quickly.

Well, first draft of LROM is finally finished. What a great feeling! I imagine that with your move you'll be busy for a while, but I'm eager to hear your comments whenever you can get to them.

...

I've emailed Ryan Hildebrand of Friesens to see what we need to get moving on the printing.

Have you been able to send Kevin what he needs to get the dust jacket put together?

Looking forward tremendously to your visit in 20 days!!

*David*

P.S. The name "Bethesda" for the community where the Starmen get treated and rested, by the way, is a double tribute: one it is the name of the healing pool in John's Gospel, as I'm sure you know. Two, it is the name of the medical center where Hal Goodwin received his cancer treatment. Also, the Sisters of Saint Hildegard are named after an extraordinary Christian woman of the middle ages who was a pioneer in medical care and also wrote some magnificent music. She's been recently rediscovered even in the secular world and there is a CD out of her songs. They are truly unearthly. Lovely!



DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002 1:28 PM

> > *Jogren stepped into the darkness and, in a loud voice, cried, "Fenna!"*  
>  
> *Or to translate, Let there be light! And there was light...*

Exactly!

> > *"Prince Izmaka," said Jogren. "He is now High King of Ahmanya. His*  
> > *father, High King Santilla, die in defense of Ahmanya. When Prince*  
> > *Izmaka wake, he is High King."*  
>  
> *Shades of Return of the King! Very nice. A nice touch! I like it.*

Also a very, very distant hint of the Second Coming, of which the Return of the King is also a shadow.

> *I really hate to say this, but I just realized something. I understand why*  
> *Earth and the Martians would think that, and I think it's fine that they say*  
> *so in LROM, but actually things aren't that simple. ...The Xenobots have \*no idea\**  
*that*  
> *their ancient enemy was on Mars. ... This means, of course, that we'll*  
> *have to alter this bit of text: ...*

How's this?

We walk what you call a knife-edge, Mr. Starlight. As you well know, a small outpost of renegade Xenobots has already walked on Ahmanya, but their race has no suspicion that this is the home of their 'ancient enemy' and that it conceals our remaining population-or indeed that there is any remaining population to be discovered. For now, their implacable hatred seethes and causes them to search for signs of our presence in the Solar System. But if Ahmanya begins to bear life again, the Xenobots will know and will make every effort to attack our planet again and prevent our restoration. The fact that the planet is barren and occupied only by a few simple people from Earth is, indeed, our shield-and yours. But if Ahmanya does not become green again-even in part-the Ahmanyans must continue to sleep.

> > *On Monday, I'll begin to read it through from the*  
> > *beginning and make revisions. Then I'll send you the*  
> > *completed version all at once for your comments.*  
>  
> *Sounds great! It will probably take me some time to go over it since it's*  
> *so long and since I intend to go over it extremely carefully. I'm looking*  
> *forward to it though! It's a terrific story and one that I think we can be*  
> *proud of.*

Just keep in mind that we need to submit our package to Friesens by the end of July—revised text, illustrations, and formatting.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, JULY 01, 2002 8:56 PM*

Dear Jon, Mike, and Valerie,

I've done as much as I can and am now seeing double and triple. Here is the complete text of LROM as far as I can bring it. Now it needs fresh eyes. Naturally I'll need this back before too long—I'd say a week or ten days at the most.

Valerie, don't worry too much about typographical errors—Jon will see to those and you've caught most of them already. You can work mostly on flow, plot questions, inconsistencies, etc. You've already done this and I don't want you to feel that you've got to do your work all over again. Of course if you see an obvious typographical error, point it out, but what would be most helpful is if you can read it as if you were reading it for the first time and look for inconsistencies. (In reworking it today, for example, I realized that it needed a lot of work in chapter one to make it consistent with what we wrote toward the end of the book.)

It still needs illustrations (my next task) and after I get your comments I'll produce the final draft. Then Jon will have to format text and illustrations for Friesens. Our goal is to get the package off by the end of this month.

The Reading Group meets this Saturday for the last seven chapters.

I tried to call Ryan Hildebrand at Friesens today but July 1 is a holiday in Canada. I'll call tomorrow and do what needs to be done to get them started.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 02, 2002 9:48 AM*

Dear Jon,

I sent this message a moment after sending the text for LROM. However, I got an email this morning saying that delivery has been delayed so I'm trying again.

In the last seven chapters, you'll find notations in brackets such as [play Adagio in Cm from Tribute]—these are notes to me. I play music in the background when I read the chapters to the Reading Group and this tells me what music will set the right mood. I eliminate these notes as I read. Please pay no attention.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 04, 2002 12:59 PM*

No doubt you both noticed that I mention five short stories. Of course, we only have three so far, but R should be very easy to write. In fact, I'd suggest that we put SETI and R at the end of LROM—they're both very short. I can probably write R at one sitting and certainly ought to be able to do it in plenty of time to get the package off to Friesens. In fact, I've already got it thought through. It can be set during their stay in Bethesda, on the evening of their last day right after Kristina Bethany leaves. That's an ideal setting for it and would mean that having it at the end of LROM would be highly appropriate. There's no obvious place for it in the narrative itself, yet it ought to be available to the reader as part of the overall LROM story.

Then Return to Europa can be put into the fourth Inter\*Stellar, which can be ready shortly after LROM comes out. What do you think?

I'll get those items mailed to France first thing tomorrow, Jon.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 06, 2002 7:57 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

We definitely have a big winner in LROM! Only Leslie and Mary were able to make this last meeting of the Reading Group—at least for a long time—but they absolutely loved the last 7 chapters of LROM. It took almost three hours to read them, but there were only a very few, inconsequential remarks and only a few typos to correct. I am very pleased with the result!

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 06, 2002 10:02 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

Here is the short story about Richard's heritage. This could be placed, as I suggested earlier, at the very end of LROM as a separate short story. It is, however, short enough that it could be placed within the text of LROM itself in the place indicated, and break the chapter "Stargazer Lilies" into two parts. I think I prefer that. What do you think?

*David*

DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 07, 2002 5:48 PM

Dear Mike and Jon,

> *This in from Mike!*<sup>396</sup> *I think he's definitely right.*

> *Shouldn't 'Ahmanya' be included in the Appendix on the Ahmanyan language.*

First I put it in, then I took it out just in case someone might pick up the book and scan the appendix before the text and it would blow the shocker in chapter 3 when it is revealed that Ahmanya is Mars. Later I put it back in and added a note in block letters inside a box for the reader NOT to read the appendix until he'd read through chapter 3. So now it's back in.

By the way, Valerie suggested that "Varlicept" from AOM be included, but I reminded her that "varlicept" is Titanian, not Ahmanyan. I'm not keeping a record of Titanian vocabulary since there will be so little of it. I could, though, if we wanted. What do you think? We've probably got only half a dozen words right now.

I hope you like the idea of "R" being put directly into the text of LROM. I liked the idea so much after I sent you the original email that I went ahead and put it in. I created a new chapter 33 (called "The Making of Family") that starts with Kristina Bethany's departure and ends with the appearance of Saadervo in the Tunnels. The "family" in the chapter refers to several aspects of family, from the abdication of Reuben's fatherhood and the ruination of his own family, then the reconnection between Thomas and his mother Rose, the Tunnel People as family, and the coming of Saadervo as the beginning of a new "family"—several different kinds of families, all the best of which are chosen rather than natural. Then the former chapter 33 becomes chapter 34 ("The Desiccated Kingdom"). Of course, if you don't it this way, it will be easy to change it back and make R a separate story.

Tomorrow I will plan out the illustrations for LROM and get a start on them. I've already got a bunch of ideas and hope to have them all done within a week.

*David*

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<sup>396</sup> Mike, my brother, not Mike Dodd.

*DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2002 12:09 AM*

*> By the way, I mailed off my corrections to you today. You should get them  
> soon! Most of them were minor, but a few were important.*

Excellent. Valerie sent me her notes on chapters 1-23 and I made those corrections today. Not too many of them but there were some excellent observations. For example, she noted that in one place we have Zip's laser exploding, and in another we had the Starmen shooting the bad guys' lasers (in Seven Leaves) which could have opened the bad guys up to severe burns if we were consistent. Good observation! I changed the Seven Leaves scene to having the Starmen shoot holes in the guys' equipment packs and drilling their compads.

I'll make the changes in the text once I get your notes—then we'll have the FINAL VERSION of the text.

Mary Doman liked the addition of the R scene, but felt that it then made the visit by Kristina Bethany almost superfluous or even intrusive—it got such little notice. What do you think? I agree with her but not enough to take the scene out.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2002 6:42 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike and Valerie,

In Valerie's comments on LROM, she asked why Thomas Ridger or his mother simply turn Reuben in to the authorities. This was my answer:

Why didn't Thomas or his mother turn in Reuben Ridger? This is more subtle but very true-to-life. People who grow up in such a family almost never have the capacity to do that. Why don't abused children call the police, or turn on their parents when they grow to be bigger than the abuser? Same reason. Logically it would seem the obvious thing to do, but in real life it doesn't happen. They are too broken.

I gave the matter some further thought and added the following section toward the end of Richard's reminiscences. What do you all think?

"More than twenty years later, Thomas founded Starlight Enterprise. He was 46 years old. He had been severely emotionally damaged by his childhood years and it took him half a lifetime to be able to relate to another human being with any measure of trust. The year before he founded SE he finally married. I was born when my father was 51 years old-his only child.

"He determined to found a legacy through his family, so that his commitment could continue in future generations, and I became heir to his vision. Tom and his wife Sandy, my parents, were killed on Mercury in 2119 when a refinery exploded. I was 25 when the mantle fell to me." Richard paused, clamped his lips together, and gave his head a slight shake. He stared into the sky as if seeing into the past.

"The rest you know," he concluded. "The tea set belongs to me now. It is the only tie I have to my past. And the only one that I want. My name is Starlight."

It would be logical in this section for Richard to mention his four children. It's a natural lead-in. Shall we do it? E.g., "...when the mantle fell to me. And my four children are equally committed to the vision." or something like that.

*David*

*DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2002 10:25 PM*

Dear Jon,

- > *Very good! I like the addition — let's go with it! Makes a lot of sense.*
- >
- > *As for the mention of the children: I think it is a natural place, but the*
- > *problem I see is that right now we have no idea at all what we're going to*
- > *do with the children. ... I'd feel more comfortable referring to them if*
- > *we had a good, concrete plot idea behind us; shots in the dark (like the*
- > *Banjoman) can lead to a lot of hard thinking later down the line...*

Sounds good. We'll leave it as it is then.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, JULY 15, 2002 7:24 PM*

Dear Jon,

I have finished going through all your notes. The text of LROM is therefore now complete. Further, I have completed all illustrations but one, and I will do that one momentarily. By the end of this evening, I'll probably have a good start on running off the master for the author's copies.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2002 1:05 AM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

At last. Here is the final document for The Lost Race of Mars. I have also finished all of the illustrations. The text shows the spaces where they go. At the end is the section of Writer's Notes. The entire book is 420 pages long. (This one is 427 because of the Writer's Notes.)

Authors' copies of the book will be coming out in a couple of weeks. It'll be a big job to get them done since the book is so long.

Kevin Anetsberger is out of town this week, so he won't get the final draft of the dust jacket and 3D endpapers done until next week, but what he's done so far looks good.

This is easily going to be our masterpiece.

*David*



*DATE: SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2002 7:15 PM*

Two shiny metallic robots were lumbering across the ledge toward the Star Ranger. They were about three feet long and shaped like scarabs, but had eight long, doubly jointed arms. Two were in front, two in the middle, and two in the back.

Well, there are going to be a few flaws in every text, doubtless. Only God is perfect. The problem here is that at first I wrote that the robots only had six legs; then when I decided to model them after spiders I went back and changed "six" legs to "eight," but I forgot the sentence that followed. Sigh.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2002 7:53 PM*

I've been reading LROM. It IS such a fine book in every way. I've noticed a couple of small errors in that one, but nothing to choke over. It is a masterpiece and, as we have already agreed, we can be very proud of it.

*David*

*DATE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 07, 2002 8:03 PM*

Dear Mark,<sup>397</sup>

- > *I noticed only three typos (which is not bad for 430*
- > *pages!). Pretty was rendered as "petty" in one place.*
- > *A " appeared in the middle of a word. And "stanch" was*
- > *used when "staunch" was intended.*

---

<sup>397</sup> Mark Johnson

I fixed these errors except for the word with a double quotation mark in the middle. If you can remember where that is, I'll fix that too. I can't do a word search very easily on that.

- > *I noticed only one perspective error. "The book" at*
- > *one point says the square connected with SE's Mars*
- > *headquarters was "at least 2 acres". "At least" is*
- > *something a person would say. "The book" is*
- > *authoritative and thus would say "almost two acres" or*
- > *"over two acres" etc.*

Also fixed!

Thanks.

*David*

*DATE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2002 6:27 PM*

Dear Jon and Mike,

- > *I've been wondering something! It's been a number of weeks now since LROM*
- > *was released, and yet among the customers whose copies we sent out on the*
- > *Friday before the convention not a single one has written back and told us*
- > *what they thought of the story.*

Yes, curious. It may be that we hyped the "secrecy" so much before it was released that people are afraid to post something because it might spoil it for others. Maybe if you posted something on the message board and invited a response with a reminder to write "spoiler" over relevant portions. Tell 'em we want response. We had an enthusiastic post from Mark McSherry when he was on chapter 12, then nothing after that.

*David*

*DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 07, 2002 9:27 PM*

<sigh> I've noticed a number of errors in LROM—rather glaring—but no one has pointed them out yet and I will quietly correct them for the second edition. The worst is that two times in the last chapter I mention "six" people when it is obvious that there are three Ahmanyans and four humans. And I have the four humans at one point sit "three" abreast.

*David*

## Writer's Notes

### Special Notes of Interest

Quote from Shakespeare in *The Jinx of Payrock Canyon*, p. 52

Rephrasing of Episcopal hymn # 580 in Mark's speech in chapter 5

<i>Illunas</i>	from "illuminate" and the Latin "luna" for Moon, thus implying "moonlight"
Namon	"No man" spelled backwards
Stenafi	named for Stephanie Schnorbus, one of the college students in my church who helped bind copies of AOM
Charles Stansby	named for Charles Walter Stansby Williams, one of the Inklings, and a great Anglican writer and poet
Gillian "long shadow"	named for Gill Verderer, a member of my church at the beginning of chapter 7, a tribute to Rick Brant in <i>The Caves of Fear</i>
Dathan, Susan Gresham, Dana	named after the rebellious Israelite in Moses' time reporter in Eagle City, named after Dana Parsons, reporter for <i>Los Angeles Times</i> and sometime advocate for Bob Janoe
Pallas Avenue	named for Pallas Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom
Johnson, Mark	winner of the DIE "puzzle"; Starman fan
Zootz	named after a shop in Victoria, BC
Ridger, Reuben	"Ridger" for someone "on the edge"; "Reuben" ("see, a son" In Hebrew) as an anticipation of Thomas Starlight, nee Ridger
Derek Dewdney	"Derek" from shoeshine boy in Victoria and "Dwedney" from street of Westminster Abbey in Mission, BC
Sotik	a kind of plant in the Fullerton, CA Aboretum
Bellar, Peter	from the Latin <i>bellum</i> , for war
Desmond Ubuntu	for Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town who was instrumental in fighting apartheid in South Africa; ubuntu is an African word that means to be fully human: in relation with others, nature, and God.

## CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

- Quotation on title page is Job 4:7-8
- Mrs. Dathan named after Dathan and Abiram, the two rebels against Moses.
- “windows of the soul” quotation from Jesus
- “It was night.” line at the end of Chapter 10 reminiscent of John 13:30
- The sun stands still for Richard Starlight in chapter 20 the way it stood still for Joshua
- The Ahmanyen word for “little girl” is *talitha*, the same as the Aramaic Jesus used in Mark 5:41
- “Timon,” the name of the Ahmanyen boy, is from Acts 6:5
- Bethesda taken from John 5:2, where it is the pool in which healing may occur
- The Sister’s chant is from the proper for the third Sunday after Easter: Psalms 66:1-2, with alleluias added:

Be joyful in God, all you lands;  
Sing the glory of his Name;  
          sing the glory of his praise.  
Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds!”  
because of your great strength  
          your enemies cringe before you.