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# NEW EARTH 8

**Will Humankind Survive or Perish?**

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

**by Tao Mundus**

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## **~ Note to Reader ~**

*New Earth 8* is a work in progress. As such, it is not without its errors; grammatical, contextual, stylistic and others. Please, allow the author at least a small degree rhetorical leeway. Thank you.

Having come clear on this lacking, the story is coming along rather well with each new edition slightly improved over its predecessor.

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**- DISCLAIMER -**

This story is a work of fiction. All characters, business entities and incidents are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual people, living or dead, business entities, or events is coincidental or fictionalized.

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(Abridged Version)

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\* *Epilogs* 1, 2, and 3

\* *After*

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☯ **PROLOGUE** ☯

*Sustainability Begets*

Sustainability nurtures health and well-being.  
Sustainability produces abundance and prosperity.  
Sustainability cultivates strength and security.  
Sustainability engenders unity and peace.  
Sustainability fosters preservation and perpetuation.  
Sustainability creates safety.  
Sustainability is survival.  
Sustainable balance is the way.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

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*Excess Destroys*

Excess causes imbalance.  
Excess destabilizes systems.  
Excess is weakness in instability.  
Excess precipitates dearth and scarcity.  
Excess spawns discord and provokes war.  
Excess, 'The Destroyer'

Excess is unsustainable.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Humankind had exceeded its means.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Existential threat loomed over the world.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

The response to this impending danger,  
the survival plan for humanity was to  
planetary engineer Venus,  
to form a new world,  
a 'New Earth'....*Neagi*.

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## 1. UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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In the summer of 2019, a worldwide ensemble of billionaire philanthropists, fearing the socioeconomic and sociopolitical consequences of diminishing key resources joined together to found and fund the *Earth's Future Study*.

The objective of the forecasting study was to identify imminent threats to world civilization and to assign hard dates as to when such threats would likely become reality.

The extensive, all-encompassing analysis was designed and conducted by a collaboration of some 250 of the

world's top scientists, historians, economists, sociologists, and technologists in conjunction with over 100 universities, scientific organizations, and think tanks worldwide. This coordinated effort of minds comprised the largest brain trust ever assembled in history dedicated to the understanding the global dilemma.

The yearlong study produced a 2000 plus page hardcopy report supported by reams of analysis, thousands of verified tests and petabytes of big data. The projection and simulation models employed used the most advanced techniques and technologies.

The outcome of the examination was alarming. Results revealed an inordinately stressed global system that was rapidly approaching a point of collapse. The cause of the stress was multifaceted and complex, but found a common source in a destructive cycle of competitive growth. In its simplest terms, the problem could be reduced to the global economic war between nations. Developing countries fought for market share footholds, developed nations brawled to move up in the standard-of-living ranks, and superpowers competed for economic dominance. A self-perpetuating cycle of competitive growth propagated natural resource depletion, noxious waste production, and, subsequently, armed conflict and war. Through the ages, this unmitigated, relentless competition for socioeconomic and sociopolitical command, control and dominance was depleting non-renewable resources while it was laying the planet to waste.

Intensifying the problem, other stressors compounded the strain on the global system including overpopulation, climate change, the militarization of powerful new sciences and technologies, and irreconcilable ideological and cultural differences that put countries into direct conflict with one another.

This competitive cycle had gained such momentum, and become so habitual, through the course of history that the sociological pattern seemed virtually impossible to break and escape.

Caught in a riptide of destructive competition and subsequent limitless growth, the planetary system was forced to swim against the current, quickly tiring and struggling to keep afloat. The *Earth's Future* study concluded that based on current and projected rates of resource attrition - particularly with regards to depletion of energy, soil, and potable water - Earth's socioeconomic/sociopolitical global order had a ninety-seven percent chance of failure within the next 70 to 100 years. More precisely, between 2090 and 2120 it was highly probable that world civilization would collapse. Countless simulations and scenarios backed by hard data supported this time frame. Although there were numerous storylines as to how 'the great fall' would play out, the most likely scenario of this collapse was predictive of intensive competition over diminishing key resources, particularly energy sources. This economic rivalry between opposing powers would lead to armed conflict. Inevitably, conflict would escalate to a world war in which weapons of mass destruction would be extensively employed. The collapse of world civilization would follow.



Additionally, the Future Earth study revealed a second planetary threat, one of even more, severe consequence than global social collapse. Though not as imminent, the study strongly indicated environmental catastrophe of unprecedented scale, total biosphere failure, was a real possibility. Given current and projected rates of environmental degradation, the vast majority of environmental simulations and projections showed a ninety-one percent chance of biosphere failure occurring in roughly one millennium. Sometime between 2950 and 3150 the life-sustaining component of the planet's natural realm, the biosphere, would fail at which point all higher life forms on Earth would cease to be. In this not so distant future, the human race would end; human species extinction.

So unprejudiced was the testing, so demonstrative the facts, so damning the data, so solid the proof that the truth and seriousness of global system collapse and human species extinction could no longer be sidestepped, rationalized, dismissed, or otherwise rejected and denied.

Not only were the published results of the study distributed to all the world's governments, but they were also made available and aggressively circulated to all people, the entire global community. After all, Earth was the people's planet and they had a right to know the truth.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence, most heads of nations were hesitant to move on the findings. The world populace, the global community, on the other

hand, was in an uproar. “The end of our world? The end of the human race? No! No, this will not be our end”, they cried out. At last, knowing the truth, understanding the imminent existential threat quickly descending upon them, peoples of all countries and nations demanded their respective governments, leaders, and rulers take action.

People who did not see a concerted effort on behalf of their leaders responded in protest. Worldwide, ‘Save Earth’ activism movements exploded. Never had the world seen such a driven and empowered activist movement. In the millions, in the tens of millions, in the hundreds of millions, people took to the streets with their signs and their voices. Earth’s denizens would not see their planet destroyed and themselves along with it. They organized, demonstrated, protested, and relentlessly petitioned the decision makers of the body politic.

The people would be heard.

The world over, governments and public officials facing unpopularity, and confronted with the possibility of civil unrest, had been forced into a position where they were pressured to act. A global United Nations summit was called to address the matter at hand.

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Unlike other UN summits of this type, leaders pressured by their constituents and faced with hard, undeniable facts of the reality of existential threat before them, were encouraged not only to talk, but forced to cooperate and to act.

Under duress of such conditions, an amazing thing happened. For the first time since the dawn of civilization, the better part of the world had found a like cause that superseded differences. Under the banner of this common cause, in the name of the continuance of civilization and survival of the human species, the better part of the world suddenly found itself united as one.

With a special division of United Nations at the helm overseeing the enterprise, an accord was drawn up that set the conditions for participation. Every country was forced to make compromises. None were immune to concessions, superpowers especially.

Central to the accord was an interim truce, the *Global Truce Act*. Participating countries agreed they would not declare war on any participant member country working towards the Save Earth solution. All current grievances and hostilities must necessarily be laid to rest for the solution.

Participating nations and countries agreed to four principal conditions.

First, central to the truce was a mandate for 100% nuclear disarmament, accompanied by cessation of weapons of mass destruction programs. Key firing

components would be removed from nuclear missiles and key detonating components removed from nuclear bombs thereby effectively disarming them. Furthermore, all weapons of mass destruction facilities would be shut down. Regulatory inspection teams would be given the authority to examine any facility they saw fit to assure the 'No WMD' statute was held to.

Secondly, the truce would be attended by a reduction in military spending by at least ninety percent. Standing militaries would be reduced to ten percent, or less, of their current size. All monies budgeted for defense spending was to be diverted to whatever 'save Earth' solution was decided upon.

Third. To succeed to save Earth solution, the world would agree to work together. Hence, another key condition of the accord was tht countries agreed to put differences aside so they could work side-by-side. For the duration of the project, participants would work together as a team in 'coopetition', or 'joint-work economy', including coopetitive knowledge sharing. Economic and market conditions would be leveled and manipulated in such a way that all nations, regardless of wealth or power, would contribute to and benefit from the mission. Based on their respective contributions, each member would receive its fair share of economic and scitec (science-technology) discoveries that came of the project.

Fourth, all agreed to empower the United Nations to act as overseer and commander of the mission. The UN would be permitted to maintain an active army of five

million soldiers. This army would be comprised of military forces from all counties.

The Global Truce Act would remain in effect until the save Earth mission was complete.

While the joining of nations under a single banner was temporary, conditional, and somewhat uneasy, a great coup had nonetheless been won for world peace. For the duration of the mission, under the auspices of the Global Truce Act, world peace would be maintained. And so it was, for the first time in history, the better part of the world came to be at peace.

Understanding the direness of the situation, sixty-seven percent of the nations in attendance immediately agreed to the proposed accord. Included in this group were all the superpowers and thankfully so. Surprising, even a handful of rogue states, and more than a few extremist groups accepted the conditions to participate in this greater cause. In the months to come, many others would join the cause and the ranks participating nations would swell to over ninety percent. During the course of the truce, this figure would fluctuated, give or take, five to seven percent with nations joining and opting out for various reasons.

Having established an accord, the world's nations were finally ready to sit down at the table with purpose and intent and get to the business of finding a way out of the awful mess we humans had gotten ourselves into.

In the advent of the global system collapse as defined by the study, it was decided Earth needed an emergency backup plan, a Plan-B.

The world's best thinkers in their respective fields were assembled to devise solutions for the problem. Numerous stratagems were developed and reviewed. In series of successive examination and rating rounds, the best ideas moved to the top of the list. Finally, three survival plans remained from which a final selection was made. A plan was hatched to save the human race.

Earth's Plan-B became 'Plan-V', Mission Venus. In a nutshell, the idea was to planetary engineer Venus, that is to say, to make the now burning, poisonous planet inhabitable by humans. Then, should Earth's biosphere begin to fail, as had been predicted, humans could migrate to Venus en masse where continuance of the species could resume.

Venus was chosen over Mars for planetary engineering various reasons, not the least of which was the greater similarities the planet shared with Earth and the availability of elemental resources, which Mars lacked.

Not only was the sum of this collective, cooperative global effort a success, but an unprecedented success verging on the miraculous. As could be seen in a timetable of major achievements, the mission progressed at an incredible pace. With the resources of the entire world directed towards the mission, amazing things happened. Extraordinary accomplishments were achieved. Planetary modeling, affirmed to take from

1000 to 10,000 years, or more, was executed in a mere fraction of the time.

In less than 100 years, water was in abundance, the planet's surface was green with vegetation, the air was breathable, and a colony of over 2000 workers had been established. As a bonus, a viable energy source had been found on Venus. Through cooperation and a concerted effort, that which was believed undoable was done. The impossible had been achieved. The mission was triumphant.

Yes, solidarity, the concerted, communal effort of the world's nations, proved incredibly productive. When countries started thinking and acting collectively as a one-nation world, rather than as independent, competing nations, when we put our common good before our uncommon politics and ideologies, the progress which resulted proved to be truly amazing. It seemed solidarity had saved the world.

By 2086, the oxygen levels on Venus were able to sustain humans without the need for artificial breathing apparatus.

The planetary reengineering had been so comprehensive, the transformation so complete, that when the reforming was done, it was if a new planet had been created. As such, it was fitting that Venus be renamed. The name chosen for transformed Venus was 'Neagi', a combination of two Greek words, *nea*, 'new' and *gi*, earth. Venus had become, New Earth, Neagi.

Despite its outwardly pristine and utopist like appearance, already, Neagi was not without its problems. Here, on the brave new world, special individuals were needed to fix the problems. Resourceful, hardened men like Indus Kemp.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

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## **2. TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS**

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Master Sergeant, Indus Kemp of Earth had been brought to Venus, since renamed Neagi, tasked with the mission of exterminating *scolopendra gigantean Neagi*, a genetically engineered giant centipede pest control experiment gone wrong. The gargantuan insect threatened Neagi Base's food supply and hence potentially threatened the greater Neagi energy mining mission.

Hunting the ten to thirty-foot (3-12 meters) predators was dangerous work. Numerous members of his team had been injured and, thus far, three had been killed.



With the hunters near as often becoming the hunted, doing battle with these creatures was not so unlike being in combat.

Stalking and dispatching this unpredictable animal was extremely stressful work, work Kemp had been at nearly non-stop since he had arrived on Neagi two months past. Kemp's commanding officer could see the toll the arduous task was taking on his commander. Sergeant K was losing his edge, something he could not afford to do in the field where one mistake could get team members and himself killed. The CO made a decision to temporarily pull his sergeant out of the war zone. Kemp would be given a ten day, light assignment, an easy duty that would allow him to de-stress, recoup and recover.

Forty-eight hours later, Indus found himself in an open savannah speckled with trees and scrub and surrounded by mountains. The temperature was a dry 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20 C). His duty here was to provide support to a pair of scientists in their fieldwork. Compared to hunting thirty-foot monsters, this assignment was like a vacation in Shangri-La, and that was exactly what it was intended to be. Taking in a deep breath of fresh, clean air while looking out upon the dynamic, vibrant panorama spread before him, Indus found it almost inconceivable that, not so long ago, this had ever been a barren, dead planet.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Three days into the assignment he began letting go of the stresses of the hunt. For the first time in over two months, he started to actually relax. The bucolic setting, the absence of weaponry on his person, removal from the dangerous, high-stress environment all had a calming effect. Just what the doctor had ordered.

Come the morning of day four, the scientific fieldwork party received orders to investigate a distress signal some 850 klicks (530 miles) south of their current location.

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### ~ **Discovery** ~

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Arriving at the designated distress signal coordinates they faced with by a highly forested region in mountainous terrain.

“AX-1 to base. We've reached the spot. We've circled the area. No signs of crash or rescue victims. Nothing here, but trees.”

“Would you have a look on the ground beneath the tree cover, *Explorer-2*,” came the reply from base.

“Copy that.”

There was no place to put down in the immediate area which was heavily wooded. Upon scouting the area, they found a safe landing zone 1/2 klick from the said coordinates and here they put the ship down.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

“No need for all of us boys to work up a sweat. Why don't you let me get this one? Besides, the grunt work is what they're paying me for on this duty” Indus said, well knowing he would be able to operate more quickly, efficiently and safely without two scientists stumbling along behind him.

“You're going to suit up, aren't you? Regulations, you know,” said Nakamura, always the stickler for proper

protocol, watching Indus with a discerning eye as the sergeant began moving to exit the craft.

‘Gearing-up’, at least a ten-minute ordeal, was a pain in the behind. It involved equipping, checking equipment, donning a special suit, and going through a checklist half an arm long, as well as surveying the outside environment for all sorts of conditions and potential threats. According to protocol, any personnel leaving a craft into an unknown territory was required to gear-up.

“No, need, Nak. Just going to have a little look around. Besides, if something comes up I have my ACD [applications and communications device] and my SAFE [Safety Apparatus For Emergency] kit right here,” he said, displaying smart communicator in one hand and the multi-purpose survival staff in the other.

“Be back in a few,” Indus said, as he trotted down the rear service ramp and exited the craft. Outside the craft, he activated the GPS on his ACD and headed off in the direction of the signal. Soon the ship had been left behind behind lost among the conifers.

For the most part, the going was straightforward enough; however, now and again, the terrain became precariously steep requiring special stepping and balance to traverse. On one such section of decline, Indus stepped hard on a loose, slippery, mossy section of turf. The ground cover gave way sending a surprised Indus sliding, then tumbling 100 feet (30 meters) head-over-heels down a grade until the ground leveled at the base of the slope.

“We’ve lost visual. Check your ACD video cam.” came Bauer’s voice over the comm. The two scientists had been visually observing a Indus’s progress through the ACD’s video camera.

“Took a tumble. Bruised but unbroken.” said Indus as he came to his feet assessing himself for injuries.

“So, the snake eater busted his butt,” Bauer said chuckling.

“Thanks for all your loving support,” Indus said, silently cursing himself over his lack of surefootedness.

“I’m in one piece, but my ACD vidcam is busted up. Also, something’s draining the device’s battery. I need shut down audio and to divert power to GPS tracking or else I’m going to lose the homing signal. If something comes up, I’ll call in. Signing off now. Over.”

“Copy that, Sergeant Butt busted,” Bauer joked, not losing the opportunity to poke fun, knowing well the sergeant would not take offense to the jibe.

In case his GPS failed, Indus began marking his trail as he went.

For another fifteen minutes Indus zigzagged, following the route displayed by the GPS. As he came into a rocky clearing the GPS homing signal started beeping quickly. “This is it. This is the spot,” he thought aloud.

Here he began to see signs that indicated there had, in fact, been activity in the area; litter scraps, an empty

plastic water bottle here and there, boot prints, a fire pit. But whoever had been here was certainly not here now.

While making these observations, he became aware the ground had begun to tremble ever so slightly. An earthquake tremor was the first thought that came to mind. Indus did a quick survey of his surroundings for tress and boulders that could give cause for threat.

As he scanned the immediate environment for dangers, his attention was drawn to a disruption in the earth's surface roughly thirty yards (27 meters) from where he stood. The earth had begun to crack and split. The land was opening up.

To his amazement, from this opening in the earth, a large structure began to rise up out of the ground. The structure was comprised of two main parts. A 'U' shaped upper component affixed to a rectangular base. The rectangular base measured some 70 feet (21 meters) in length, 50 feet (15 meters) in width and 15 feet (4.5 meters) high. Resting atop of and affixed to the foundation, the sizable U-shaped configuration was nearly as wide as its supporting base and extended to a height of about 40 feet (12 meters).

As the building emerged to its full exposed form, the earth's trembling ceased. Silent and still, the monolithic construction, one of obvious intelligent design, stood misplaced on the natural landscape like a sculpture of modern art. The 'U' shape design of the construction was particularly peculiar, unlike any architecture Indus had seen.

An astonished Indus exclaimed beneath his breath. For some seconds he stood silently observing the oddity before him, not knowing what to make of the thing which had risen from the earth.

While Indus was observing the peculiar building, trying to assign meaning to it, he was about to get an even greater surprise. In the front facing side, a portal built into the wall slid open. Moments later a man wearing a plain jumpsuit uniform, bare of any technology accoutrements, stepped forth from the domain. The gentleman looked to be in his late fifties to early sixties. Though his appearance was somewhat unkempt, there was a spark to his step and even from a distance Indus could tell the well-postured gentleman was uninjured and without apparent sickness.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Smiling, friendly, hands open by his side, the man stepped evenly towards Indus. Generally, Indus could sense hostile intent in a person and there was nothing about this man that felt hostile. On the contrary, there was a warm geniality about him.

As the distance closed between the two, the men met eyes. Each peered at the other and both found honor.

Indus noted a dichotomy in the gentleman's eyes; at once peaceful and intense.

While holding Indus's gaze, the stately man humbly bowed his head and extended his hands towards Indus, palms up, in sign of welcome.

"Sergeant Kemp, Neagi Base-1," Indus said formally. He opted to not to shake the man's hand, as the individual's medical condition was uncertain. "My team and I were sent to respond to a distress signal received from this location. Are you OK, sir?"

To Indus's words, the gentleman responded with a quizzical look coupled with apologetic like body language. The words the man next spoke came in a language unknown to Indus. Indus thought the dialect may have been eastern European or Baltic perhaps, but was unable to translate a single word.

"Please speak the in the international language, sir," said a confused Indus.

Once again, the gentleman made a sign language gesture. He used his hand to mimic a chattering mouth, then shook his head as if to say he could neither speak nor comprehend the language being spoken to him.

'He does not speak the International language? How can this be?', Indus wondered incredulously. All personnel on Neagi was required to have a command of this common language.



This was a curiosity, indeed, one which Indus's mind, in its need for order, sought quickly to assign meaning to. He began to recall the rumors of secret, off-base R&D projects in distant, remote locals. One such whisper had to do with experiments on highly advanced, next generation, artificial intelligence, humanoid androids which were purportedly virtually indiscernible from real humans.

The language issue may be a programming glitch, or perhaps it was an intentional, deliberate part of the experiment in which the android was being tested for language adaptation. And this remote, isolate facility was a secret research and development ground. Yes, this must be it.

Still, interacting with the 'being' that stood before him it was difficult to believe he was associating so naturally with a machine based AI form. He considered the man before him, his mind scrutinizing every detail. So lifelike was the droid in every way that Indus could discern no difference between man and machine. Such degree of replication was remarkable if not perturbing.

If this was, in fact, a test of sorts, Indus had to assume he had become part of the experiment. 'Well I'm into it this far, let's play along a bit longer and see where the game goes,' he thought, playfully curious to see how his human intelligence would match up against the droid's nexgen artificial intelligence.

The humanoid placed a hand on its chest, and patting his heart voiced a single word, "Gorbac."

“So, your name is, Gorbac ”, Indus said, noting he had never before heard such a name.

At the sound of his name, the android smiled.

In similar fashion, Indus patted his chest and spoke his own name, “Indus”, which the humanoid acknowledged with a nod.

Dipping his chin, Indus heard the mandroid speak one word into a small communicator on his lapel, "Dreeca". He repeated the word a second time and raised a hand above his head.

Moments later, doubtlessly in response to this signal, other androids began filing from the building. Most garbed similarly to Goral, in work jumpsuits, they came with arms by their sides palms outfacing in a non-threatening, peaceful fashion. They looked ‘normal’ enough giving Indus no cause for alarm. In all, eleven, filed from the abode.

Leading the group, a square-jawed, blond -haired, 6’5”, 300 plus pound (2 meter, 135+ kg), mountain of a manoid strode forward strength emanating from his stout, broad body, confidence self-evident in his manner.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Behind this stone faced giant, shielded by his broad frame, followed a female humanoid.

Stepping out from the giant's shadow, the sunlight fell upon the female droid illuminating her fair form. At that moment, a strange tinge of excitement coursed through Indus's being. The female stood out, a peacock amidst seagulls. As she advanced closer, his gaze uncontrollably fixed upon her as if not else existed in heaven or Neagi.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

The droid was modeled after a woman of Far East Asian ethnicity, Chinese and possibly some Cambodian by the looks of her. Her peaceful, pale-skinned face was softly shaped and pleasant to look upon, though not remarkably beautiful by any means. She was rather tall, easily standing 5 feet 8 inches (170 cm). There was something far greater than the corporeal giving rise to Indus's inexplicable feeling of attraction.

Closer still she approached and his heart began to trill and flutter. Then, her gaze fell fully upon him. Their eyes met and in that moment Indus experienced a deep connection. Taken away and lost unto a harmonious alter reality, he seemed to float in a dulcet universe

where, for infinite seconds, space and time were strangely distorted.

With considerable effort, he averted his eyes from the depths of hers. As if waking from a dream, he returned to the real world and the present situation. Forcefully, he brought his attention back to the android leader who currently was conversing with a member of the group.

Taking a moment to collect himself, Indus contemplated the intense experience that had just taken place. He tried to make sense of it but could not. After all, the 'woman' was a machine. *'So strange. How can an artificial, non-human entity illicit such an acute, emotional reaction from me? I felt an intense connection with an android on a deep and complex level. Must be these new, next-gen androids have AI that can mess with minds. This must have been a test, and I was the unwary subject intended to test the effectiveness of this female droid's AI.'*

Try as he may to explain and rationalize what he had just occurred, the bottom line was something intimate had occurred, something which he could not dismiss. He found himself disconcerted and abashed by a preternatural attraction he could neither explain nor deny.

This silent, but ever so palpable interaction and interchange between Indus and the female was not lost onto Gorbac. The gargantuan, hard-faced one had also taken note and for a moment, uncontrollably drew back a trembling corner of his upper lip ever so slightly in snarl.

Gorbac finished speaking to a member his group, who handed him something, and then returned his attention to Indus, who had managed recompose himself. The leader gestured to Indus he wished to convey something of importance.

The conversation that ensued between Gorbac and Indus over the next 30 minutes was one of sign language, body language, facial expressions, and stick drawn sketches in the dirt.

Indus listened and observed intently to what Gorbac expressed. He understood well enough the idea that was laid out, but, given the ruse he had guessed to be afoot, believed nothing Gorbac told him.

Gorbac concluded this discourse with an odd and startling demonstration. Rolling up a pant leg, he pointed out a past fibular fracture that had not healed quite as it should. Then, using a razor, taken from the individual with whom he had recently had words, Gorbac made a minor incision on his forearm, which drew blood.

Indus took this display to mean, I am not a machine, I am not android, I am a living, conscious being just like you.

Indus's eyes widened realizing the implications of this display. His construct abruptly disrupted, he felt himself beginning to reel with uncertainty. Suddenly, without thought, Indus reached out and grasped Gorbac's hand in his own. He squeezed the hand firmly and

waited for the reaction. Goral's response to having his hand squeezed was varied and complex, and noticeably weaker than his own grip. A humanoid android response would have been to apply a calculated, acceptable, matching hand pressure, not to mention a grasp that was much less flexible, much more uniform in nature, and without warm 'human touch'.

Broken bones, free flowing blood, complex muscle response, no android or cyborg could replicate these highly complex physiological characteristics, not even a nexgen model.

Taking this physical demonstration into account, Indus was forced to come to grips with the fact that his initial theory that this was an android was fallacious. These were not humanoid beings, they were human beings.

If those who stood before him were, in fact, human, then the fantastic story Gorbac had told could also well be true.

Indus regarded the group in amazement his eyes pouring over their faces. For some seconds, he stood there staring at the group, dumbfounded, his face melting into a state of disbelieving astonishment.

"Uke", Gorbac said simply, realizing Indus's epiphany. 'Uke', was a word whose meaning Indus had come to learn in the brief course of their conversation as, 'yes'. Reaffirming his statement, the speaker placed his hand on Indus's shoulder and nodded his head in an affirmative manner confirming that what had just been communicated, his fantastic story, was, in fact, truth.

Indus realized he had forgotten to check back with the ship. So caught up in the chain of events had he become that he had neglected to report in. Repeatedly, he tapped the damaged AMC device with two fingers, fiddled with its modulation controls, and tweaked the transmission signal. Finally, the damaged device sparked to life and connection established. “Kemp, reporting in. Over. Do you read, Explorer-2? Over.”

“Lost you there for a while, Sergeant,” came the reply, a hint of relief in the voice. “We were about to come looking for you. What’s happening out there? Over.”

“I’ve made contact. Tell HQ to send an C232 transport craft immediately,” came Indus’s somewhat unsettled reply.

“Made contact? There are survivors then? Is emergency support required?” came Nakamura’s reply, surprised and jumpy.

“Need for emergency care not critical, but request HQ to send the transport craft ASAP”,

“Who are they, Indus?” Bauer’s shot in agog.

Looking incredulously at the group that stood before him, Indus spoke, he himself not totally accepting the words he was about to say. “If I have interpreted them correctly, and I feel I have, incredulously as it may sound, they maintain they are not from Earth. They say they’re...” and he paused to catch his breath which had shortened, “...that they’re...Venusians”. He paused

again, still reeling from the revelation. “They assert they are natives of this planet and that they have been here, sustained cryogenically, for over two-hundred thousand (200,000) years. I believe they’re telling the truth.”

As he finished his sentence, his eyes sought, once again, to look again upon ‘her’, this real living woman. When his eyes found her, she was looking upon him. Her eyes were glistening as were his.

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### **3. A MEETING OF WORLDS**

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[ILLUSTRATION HERE]



For nine days the Venusians were held in an off-base, quarantine facility. Here they were examined, treated, subjected to a battery of tests and, with the aid of their own translation tech, extensively questioned.

On the tenth day of observation, nine of the twelve Venusians, those who were deemed healthy, filed to a conference hall in the infirmary. Here, they assembled and readied themselves for council with Earth's leaders. Indeed, this was to be a historical meeting of worlds.

Anticipating such a meeting, the Gorbac Mikl had requested he and his fellow Venusians be permitted to learn about Earth's history. This bidding granted, for eight days the Venusians poured over Earth's historical annals.

Anxiously waiting for the commencement of the meeting, the Venusians made final preparations for their presentation. The group appeared quite excited as they talked spiritedly amongst themselves.

All spoken communication during the meeting would be filtered through the Venusian's translator technology. In a matter of hours, the Venusian's language tech had learned Earth's international language. The tech could reply to most spoken expression with little or no pause at all for translation. More complex articulations and ideas the tech may need a few seconds to interpret and translate and intended meanings could become altered.

With regards to Earth to Venus transmission time delay, advances in interplanetary space telecommunications had reduced the Earth to Venus radio wave

transmission time significantly, but there was still a notable wait between sending and receiving reception. Depending on the distance of separation between Earth and Neagi, one-way transmission took between 30 seconds to as long as 5 minutes. On this day, the time to transmit one way was roughly 90 seconds.

To help smooth this awkward transmission delay, it was predetermined each party would take turn communicating in extended time blocks. Generally, these broadcast blocks would last at least 90 seconds meaning that there would be communication overlap. In this way, some semblance of natural communication continuity could be maintained.

A chime sounded through the conference hall indicating a transmission from Earth was incoming in thirty seconds. The meeting was about to commence.

Those in the conference hall collected themselves returning to their respective stations about the table with Commander Gorbac Mikl assuming the center position. All conversation ceased and the room fell quiet.

Teleconference screens came on and from across the void of space, peoples on of two different planets took their first glimpses of one another. On the large center screen, the image of UN Madam Secretary Winifred Fawning appeared prominently. Ms. Fawning, born in the United States and educated in Europe, was well qualified to represent *EUNA*, the **E**uropean **U**nion - **N**orth **A**merican Alliance. Her visage was pleasant and formal. On two somewhat smaller screens to the left and right of the center screen played images of the some

the four hundred or so United Nations assembly members in attendance.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

From their side what the UN delegation saw was the Venusian party all standing, their heads slightly bowed, their right hand placed on their heart in a posture gesticulating honor and deference. Maintaining this gracious stance, did the Venusians respectfully wait to be addressed by the UN delegation.

“Earth welcomes you, people of Neagi, to our new world, to your new world,” came the first words from the smiling Madam Secretary Fawning, an undertone of strength and dignity in her voice. There was no transmission delay as she had conveyed this sentence 90 seconds before the communication’s channel had opened.

“We of Ifilios, now Neagi, as you say, stand before you humbly and honorably. With most graciousness, we thank you for this audience, for the care you have provided us, for your spectacular enterprise in reviving this planet”, Commander Mikl responded in kind. “May our peoples work together in unity, prosperity, and peace. Humbly, we stand before you at your service. We shall aid you as best we may in the healthful cultivation, development, and sustenance of your new world”,

Gorbac said, bowing his head while opening his arms, palms up, in gesture of offering. The other members of the group followed his gesture in kind. Unwaveringly, they held this respectful position for the full 90 seconds until the prompter acknowledged the message had been received on Earth.

Thus commenced the historic meeting of worlds.

“Well then, let us begin. Please, tell us of yourselves, of your people, and of the Venus, you knew” Ms. Fawning spoke warmly.

[90-second pause - During the pause, awkward as it was, the conference screen would go blue and music selections of various types would play]

“Yes, let us begin. Given the awkward transmission delay, for purposes of continuity and clarity, I request that I be permitted to make our address, in near entirety, without interruption. Discussion and question and answer session will follow the presentation.”

“Yes, please proceed.”

“As will become clear, you already comprehend us and our world much better than you think. To know your own world is to know ours.” Gorbac said, hinting at greater meaning. Gorbac quickly went to the heart of the matter. “During these past days, we had the opportunity to study Earth’s history. While studying the story of your peoples we made an astounding discovery. The histories of our two worlds run closely parallel. That’s to say, the world civilizations of our two planets developed along very similar lines. Back and forth,

within a timeframe of 150 years or so, about ninety percent of all the major events, and nearly two-thirds of the supporting events, that took place on Earth also occurred on Venus. For all intents and purposes, it would seem our two worlds are virtual facsimiles of one another.”

“I know this occurrence of parallel histories seems incredible, but it is true. Please, allow me to quell your doubts. I shall provide plausibility to and prove this claim.” With this, Gorbac brought up a side-by-side display of the chronological timelines of the two worlds on his computer, which was then projected to the central conference screen. Starting with ancient history, he proceeded to draw lines connecting major corresponding events on the two worlds. Seeking to drive home the point of parallelism, Gorbac went on with this ‘connect-the-events’ exercise for some time. He worked his way through the entire span of history; from the first civilizations, through the Middle Ages, into the Industrial Revolution, then the 20th century and the modern era, and finally to the present, SciTec age. The rise and fall of nations and empires, the great wars, the prominence and waning of political and religious ideologies, great happenings in business, art, science, invention, in every noted field of thought and action the histories of the two worlds were analogous. As it was on Earth so too had it been on Venus.”

“True, none of the historical events were identical in terms of timing, participants, setting and what exactly took place, but the natures and outcomes of events were essentially the same. That a clear relationship between the two worlds’ patterns of historical development

existed was evident. Give or take about 150 years, it was as he had said, some ninety percent of the key historical events were mirrored on both planets. All and all, the two histories, roughly mimicking each other in tandem, were remarkably similar.”

“Surely, there be those among you question the authenticity of the claim of parallel histories. For those of you who hold the slightest doubt, are urged to verify the phenomenon for themselves. For your interest and examination, we present you with, *The History of Ifilios*. This work contains over one-hundred thousand pages of text and images along with over one thousand hours of video programming. Immediately, upon your request, a translated copy shall be made available for download.”

“Given that we accept this postulate of parallel histories, what of the future? What does the future hold for Earth?” asked Secretary Fawning, noting that Commander Gorbac halted his comparative historical analogy around the year 2000, roughly 100 years short of the current date.

“Indeed. The future, what is to come, what is to become? Surely, I shall address this most pressing of questions, but en route to this foretell, first please allow me to briefly explain the origin and nature of this phenomenon of parallel histories.” Gorbac said, leading into his next key point.

“Let us proceed with the chronology and see where it takes us.” Resuming his processing through time at Earth’s year 2000, Gorbac advanced along the

chronology noting historical similarities. At one particular key parallelism, he took pause. "Here, in 2051 on Venus, the rough equivalent of the year 2020 on Earth, once again, our histories overlap. It's at this point where Venus's history becomes Earth's history, so to speak."

"Just as your global system is currently overtaxed and failing, so too, some 220,000 years ago, our planet was also in grave jeopardy. Putting differences aside for the sake of a greater, common cause, disparate nations joined, made truce and, working together as one, we set out to solve the desperate problem confronting us. In the event that our planet's critical resources became depleted and our biosphere failed, we too devised a backup plan. Your Plan-B was Venus. Our Plan-B was...Earth. Yes, before you came to Venus, we went to Earth. So it was and is, that both peoples, suffering the same problem had, at roughly the same time, arrived at the same answer to secure the future of the species."

"Unlike Earth, we had no moon to shoot for and, as such, Venus trailed Earth by more than 100 years with regards to space aeronautical science. Nevertheless, the nations of our world banding together and working feverishly developed an interplanetary space program at breakneck speed. Desperately driven, within fifty years we had succeeded in reaching *Yi*, the name we had given to Earth."

"Landing on Earth for the first time, we rejoiced that our probes environmental assessment of your planet had been correct. Earth's natural world was homogenous to our own. Your planet was inhabitable

without any need for environmental modification whatsoever, the antithesis of the noxious Venus that necessitated your extensive reengineering process.”

“Upon arrival to Earth, our astronauts with their robot force immediately set to building a base. Within three years a sizeable settlement supporting some 2000 residents had been established and colonization was underway.”

“Not long after the establishment of the Earth settlement, disaster struck Ifilios. The home planet was assailed by the dreaded cataclysmic event of which science had forewarned. Ifilios’s global system had begun to collapse and catastrophic failure threatened. It was an existential event.”

“Within a month, essential supplies from Ifilios to Earth were all but cut off. With a global emergency with which to content, Mission Earth had essentially been cast aside. Without key provisions, particularly special fuel catalysts used in the manufacturing of the energy source that powered their advanced scitec equipment, the colony could not sustain itself. Operations on Earth Base soon began to fail.”

“According to the last communications received from Earth Base, it appeared that in a desperate attempt was made to improvise a new power source. High risks had to be taken and a massive explosion was triggered. The explosion, the equivalent of a two megaton nuclear blast, obliterated the colony. All was lost. All were killed.”



“Luckily, at the time of the detonation handful of workers were off-base at various distant locals and escaped the blast. That there were survivors we are sure because there are verified records of post-blast dated communications apparently transmitted through distant, outlying broadcast substations situated beyond the electromagnetic pulse range of the blast.”

“It is believed, of those few who that escaped the destruction of that day, a hardy, resourceful few reverted to back to primitive ways managing to survive in that prehistoric world. They eked out an existence and carried on through the millennia.”

“What I’m trying to say, for those of you who have not already deduced this, is the Ifilosian survivors of the Earth Base blast, some 220,000 years ago, are your ancestors, your direct descendants, your lineage. This small group of Ifilosians who endured through the ages and propagated are the true origin of species Homo sapiens from whence every human on Earth finds its ancestral lineage. The Ifilosians are the original human species on Earth. All of you in attendance today have some remnants of Ifilosian genes in your DNA. So to speak, you came from us.”

“There is no evolutionary hominid at least not in the sense of the so-called ‘missing link’ you have been seeking. Modern humans, the human species homo sapiens takes its origin, not from apes, chimps, or some subspecies of hominid, but rather are direct descendants of the Ifilosians. Earthlings are the ancestral progeny of Ifilosians. Such was the beginning of the history of humans on Earth.”

“From that handful of Ifiliosian survivors grew your planet's current populace of some twelve billion. The alien race that stands before you now is not alien at all, but rather just as human as you. Though Earthlings and Ifiliosians are of two different planets, we are both human, one in the same; the same species, the same race, the same people.”

Gorbac paused, allowing his audience to fathom this moment of truth, the birth, and origin of their race. He could feel their eyes intently upon him in shock and awe. Could he have witnessed the audience's response in real time he would have seen and heard gasps of disbelief and vocal retorts rejecting his explanation.

Despite objections from a portion of the audience, Gorbac continued with his explication, “Taking this understanding or origin of the species into account, the mystery of our parallel histories is solved. As impossible as it may seem at first, logically and scientifically, it makes perfect sense that two peoples of identical cognitive makeup, operating in near homogenous environments, and having near equal resources would develop along the same lines socially, culturally, scientifically and, so forth, and hence share similar histories. Being that we are one in the same creature, of the same mindset, driven by essentially the same psychologies and instinctual motivations, it is a reasonable assumption that our social development would mimic one another, and that we would arrive at roughly the same place, at roughly the same time, over the course of our respective histories. Given proper circumstance and conditions, as the adage reminds us,

history can repeat itself, within reason, of course. For the 5000 plus years Earth's history has been closely following Ifilios's and if the parallel events theory holds true will continue to do so."

Some of those in the UN audience, those that fathomed the implications of what was being said and sensed the elucidation Gorbac was about to provide, felt an unsettling chill run up their spine.

"On the timeline, Earth is here, on the verge of the year 2100", Gorbac pointed out, once again referring to his chronology displayed on-screen.

"Ifilios was here, the equivalent of your year 2231 when it experienced the aforementioned cataclysmic event the resulted in biosphere failure, global system collapse, and its subsequent end."

"Reading your history, we learned Mission Venus precipitated from the premise that based on the occurring rates of decline, Earth would experience global system collapse sometime between the years 2800 to 3200. However, if the historical parallelism between our two worlds holds true, this calculated time frame is grossly inaccurate."

"Ifilios's fall and demise occurred in the year 2147. Factoring in the 150 year mean deviation between major historical events, this means should experience a similar event sometime anytime in the 300 years surrounding 2147, or between 2081 and 2381 derived as follows:

$$2147 - 150 = 2048$$

$$2147 + 150 = 2297"$$

“The current Earth year is 2099. This means, in the best case scenario, Earth still has about 198 years to treat its malady and restore health to the global system.

2297 - 2099 = 198”

“However, in the worst case scenario, having entered the danger zone in the year 2048, Earth has already exceeded its safe survivability limit by 51 years.

2048 - 2099 = -51”

“Total global collapse for Earth is not 800 to 1200 years away, but rather could befall Earth any time now. As such, it may already be too late to enact the necessary changes.”

“At this point in time, Earth dangerously resides in the red zone and the red zone is the dead zone.”

“The fate of the human species is at hand. Ere here and all is lost....species extinction.”

“Do not let our fateful end become yours”, Gorbac implored his tone one of consternation. “There is still chance for you to change your future, to avoid the portending species extinction doomsday date. There is hope yet.”

“To begin to offer a solution, we must first properly define the problem.”

“Stated as simply as possible, the problem is, Earth is systemically imbalanced. That’s to say, the global

system, which constitutes Earth in its entirety, is out of balance.”

“An ‘imbalanced global system’, is one in which one, or more, of a system’s key components, overpower other key components, leading to a destabilizing, chaotic condition, i.e. imbalance, that undermines the order and harmony of the greater whole. The condition of imbalance weakens the structural integrity of the system. In its extremity, a condition imbalance, left uncorrected will lead to system malfunction, failure, and demise.”

“Contrarily, a ‘balanced global system’ is one in which all the global system’s primary components - natural, human, and human-made - coexist in relative harmony within a self-sustaining, symbiotic relationship.”

“If you hope to survive as a planetary race, you need to rebalance Earth’s global system. To achieve this goal, far-reaching transformation is called for. Indeed, a dictum need be issued for the global restructuring of Earthen civilization. To fill this high order of sea change, we offer you a plan, a blueprint for social transformation.”

Please allow us to present to you Mundus, the Mundus solution. Mundus provides a stratagem to restore balance to Earth’s imbalanced global system. It's a plan to save Earth, to save the world.

“The central tenant of Mundus can be summarized as balance through sustainable action. Mundus employs practices of sustainable action, restoring balance to the

disparate global system while managing the maintenance of this balance through regulatory actions.

Implemented correctly, Mundus provides for an Earthen global system that is virtually, indefinitely self-sustaining, a global system in which all people's the world over can live freely, in relative safety, in unity, and at peace, gainfully employed, in good health, with their human rights honored and all their essential needs met."

"Sound like a to good to be true utopist dream?"  
No, Mundus offers a bona fide solution."

"Although it forever strives for betterment, Mundus is not a utopian plan. To be clear, even at its best, Mundus does not, and will not, create an utopist world. It makes no such claim to construct the perfect global system."

"On the contrary, the solution is admittedly not without its flaws and shortcomings."

"What Mundus will do is provide a notably, if not far better way than what is being enacted in the current dangerous, unsustainable world order. Under Mundus, the global system will achieve a state of relative balance and become self-sustaining. Under such sound conditions, the human race can live with a high degree of safety, stability, freedom, and prosperity, while coexisting in a state of relative peace."

"Mind you though, such progress will not come without paying a price. Awesome effort and sacrifice will be

demanded. A hard step forward, Mundus is a demanding mountain to climb.”

Having captured the attention of the assembly, Gorbac proceeded with a more detailed introduction to Mundus. Mundus accomplisher global system balance restoration through the implementation of sustainable practice in six principal areas as follows:

- Environment
- Natural resources
- Economy
- Science and technology
- Population size
- Political ideology

Gorbac continued elaborating on how Mundus addressed each the six areas with regards to sustainable balance.

Upon finishing this introduction, Goral preempted anticipated concerns, rhetorically, “Bah, what fallacy is this, some of you are thinking. If Mundus is the solution then why did Ifilios meet its end under it?”

“Understand this, Mundus was working, it was working beautifully. The plan was doing exactly what it was devised to do. On a global scale, our world was rebalancing. Across the board, in all of the six major areas of civilization sustenance, massive positive changes were taking place; the malady we had brought and calamity we had wrought upon ourselves were reversing. A global restructuring was surely in effect.”

“The problem was, for all the corrective rebalancing that was taking place, the destabilizing, destructive forces at work were greater still. We had waited too long, acted too late. Our time ran out. World war besieged the globe. The biosphere collapsed and the planet died. Had you not resurrected the planet, and resurrected those before you today, species extinction of our world would have been final and complete. But the failure of Ifilios was not do to, or resultant from any lack thereof, Mundus.”

“Of this, we are certain, given the measured rate at which rebalance was transpiring, had Mundus been enacted a mere 10 to 20 yrs earlier, it surely would have brought us out of the danger zone. At this point, shielded from imminent collapse, the global system would have begun to rejuvenate, regenerate and restore itself, in essence providing the existing structure with wherewithal sustain itself. Without a doubt, the plan would have succeeded. Yes, indeed, as all indicators and measurements pointed to, that Mundus would have saved our world was a certainty.”

Having concluded his presentation, following a brief recess, Gorbac proceeded to the open discussion and Q&A session most of which addressed Mundus.

As this second, final portion of the discourse drew to a close, UN Madam Secretary Fawning offered some ending words, “Your Mundus solution will be taken under careful consideration by this UN delegation and, per your request, it shall be put forth to all of Earth’s nations.”



“Deeply do we thank you for your rumination of Mundus and your world will thank you more,” Gorbac said, speaking in an honored yet humbled timbre.

“Before this meeting concludes, we have a request. Those of us here today were not the only seed pod team. Numerous other seed pods were planted across the globe. There is a good chance there other survivors, some of whom undoubtedly are in need and possibly facing desperate situations. Also, in addition to humanitarian concerns, advanced Ifiliosian scitec may also be salvageable from the pods. We ask a search, rescue and salvage mission be organized as soon as possible.”

Ninety seconds later Commander Mikl had his answer, from Fawning, “Your request is granted. An expedition will be organized immediately.”

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## 4. SEEDS OF HOPE

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[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

## **Rescue and Recovery Mission**

On the tarmac, the two enormous retrofitted cargo aircraft, the Halvard, and its support craft the Ales, were undergoing final preflight preparations. Numerous personnel and vehicles attended to the big birds.

As the gear laden Sergeant Kemp walked the tarmac towards the transport aircraft, he recalled his meeting with his commanding commander at HQ two days past. “Seems you made quite the favorable impression on the Vs”, Major Neil Mandalla, his CO, had told him. “Commander Goral has requested you to serve as their liaison on the rescue and salvage mission.”

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

“This duty is optional. Should you accept this temporary duty, your assignment is three-fold:

- 1.** Serve as liaison between the crew and them, act as chaperone, and otherwise provide support as need be.

Answer their questions as best you can, without divulging classified information, naturally.

**2.** Aid in rescue, recovery, and salvage.

**3.** Gather intel. Although the Venusians have given us no reason to distrust them, until we understand them better, we must remain vigilant. As such, your third assignment is to gather intel on the Venusians. Get close to them, gain their trust and learn as much as you can about them. Gather information about their scitec, their valued resources, especially energy sources, their weaknesses and strengths, and anything else that may prove to be of strategic value. Also, try to determine if they are on the level or if they have some hidden agenda. Are they benign or a threat?”

In consideration of this duty, Indus had only one question for his CO, “Which V’s will be partaking in this mission, Sir?”

“There will be three,” came the authoritative African’s reply “the Commander, the one called Dachs, and the woman, Nobira.”

Indus make up his mind in an instant, “I accept the assignment.” When Indus undertook the duty, any thought of his three directives barely crossed his mind. The only thing in his head was the desire to see ‘Her’ again.

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## Teacher and Student

Amidst a bustle of pre-flight activity, Indus boarded Halvard. Once aboard, he immediately began scouting for the woman, but before he could find her, he himself was found by Gorbac Mikl.

"Ah, there you are Sergeant Kemp", said commander Goral, holding some sort of technical instrument beneath an arm. "I see your CO honored our request to have you along as liaison", came the translation barely a second after he had completed speaking.

"I hope you are not in disagreement with this assignment. I know your work clearing the invasive centipedes is important to you, but this mission is also of great vital. Lives of my people may be at stake. There will also be a chance to recover important, advanced scitec which will prove most beneficial to Earth", the VC said wanting to let Indus know his services were greatly appreciated.

"I'm at your service, Commander", he said standing tall and coming to attention respectfully acknowledging Mikl's higher ranking.

"Your dutiful respect is noted and appreciated, but, just so long as the chain of command is understood and rank honored, you may dispense with such formalities for the course of this mission. Please, feel free to address me as rank and file, 'Commander' or 'Gorbac', as suits you. After all, this is not a military mission",

Commander Mikl said, immediately easing any tension there may have been between the two.

“Doubtless, I will require your aid on occasion, Sergeant, but for the most part you’ll be assisting my second-in-command, Lieutenant Héxié I believe you two will work well together.”

‘Lieutenant Héxié? Did he mean the woman or the brutish one?’, Indus thought, hopeful that it was the former.

The Halvard’s engines rumbled to life. Although the craft was capable of vertical liftoff, it would use runway takeoff as this method of getting into the air was safer and more efficient.

Once in the air and underway, Indus proceeded to the aircraft’s small dining area. There he found Lieutenant Héxié, ‘the woman’. She was seated at a small table, her small, rounded chin propped in her hand, peering out the window.

He tried to compose himself, but, as he neared her, his heart began to race. So focused on her was he that he banged into a table causing it to shake and rattle loudly in the otherwise quiet space.

Turning casually, not startled by the raucous clamor, she looked over at him calmly. As he approached she smiled slightly not saying a word.

Their eyes met, but only for the briefest moment. Quickly, she averted her gaze so that the eye contact was no longer direct.

Indus turned on the translator device attached to his lapel.

“Lieutenant Donella,” Indus began, “I’m Sergeant Kemp. I’ve been assigned to work with you on this mission. You may recall, we met briefly the other day.”

“Yes, I remember you quite well, Sergeant Kemp. How could I forget my first contact with another world?” she said, unperturbed in a pleasant tone and smiled broadly.

“As we will be working together, before proceeding, I wish to quell any tensions there may be between our peoples, between you and I. I know your leaders are likely uncertain about us, which is understandable. As such, I’ll assume you’ve been instructed to gather information on us”, she said straightforwardly. “We’ve not to hide. Feel free to ask me anything you wish about my past world, and our peoples. Furthermore, if you have questions concerning any of those in our rescued group, including myself, do not hesitate to ask.”

“In the spirit of open friendship”, she said, “please feel free to call me by my name, if you like. My name is, ‘Nobira’ “, she said, bowing her head slightly while dropping her eyes. “Besides, we’re roughly of equal rank, or so I’ve been informed.”

“Nobira”, Indus repeated silently to himself in a wanting way.

Encouraged by her response and unable to contain himself, he pushed the matter at the forefront of his mind, “I don’t mean to be forward, but I must ask you, do you, do you feel a connection?” His question was referring to the time he first saw Nobira at the seed pod and was overcome by infatuation and it came forth not without some hint of melodrama in his tone.

She looked at him for a moment in pause. “A connection? With what?” came her puzzled reply.

Clearly, there was only one ‘connection’ he could mean, and she did not feel it. At their first meeting, he had felt something special but, alas, it seemed his affection was one-sided and unreciprocated. Apparently, he had created a romantic fantasy in his mind. He was crushed but allowed his external visage to display no emotion.

He broke eye contact, subtly averting his gaze. “With this planet, I mean. A connection with the planet”, he spurted out, in an effort to disguise his intent and save face.

“Yes, I do, Very much so,” she said, a tone of care and longing in her voice, unsuspecting of her dejected suitor’s intent. She turned her eyes to towards the window by her side, looking out upon the scenery passing below them, “Ifilios was...it still is, my home.”

“I thank you; our entire group thanks you, and your people for coming to our aid and will be forever grateful for bringing this dead world to life.”

Indus buried his sorry heart and forced his mind back to reality. “For the duration of the mission, I have been assigned as your liaison, support officer, and teacher. Should you have any questions about Earth and its people I will do my best to answer them, Lieutenant” he said formally, purposely not addressing her by her first name.

“It seems we have somewhat complimentary roles, then. Following the completion of my daily duties, I have been instructed to school you on the history of Ifilios and teach you our language and customs”, Nobira said in a tone mimicking Indus’s.

So, this was how it was how to be then, teacher and student. Keep it friendly and professional, Indus thought, trying to accept and consign himself to the actuality of the situation while at the same time fighting to repress the crestfallen emotion welling up within him. So be it.

“I know your profession - warrior - but you don’t know mine”, she continued her introduction. “On Earth, my occupational title would be ‘systems scientist’, more specifically, global systems scientist. I study how the world works from a systemic perspective; how the planet’s independent elements are interrelated and interact to form the functioning whole. My job is to identify overreaching, world-scale problems with the planet and design systemic, global solutions.”

“Systems scientist. Yes, the profession is well known on Earth. There many such as yourself on Earth hoping to solve the planet’s big problems and save the world.



Dreamers.” Indus said, not terribly impressed with her profession.

“Dreamers may be the future’s only hope”, Sogan countered, though without animosity.

“That pendant about your neck,” Nobira continued, calling attention to the nickel-sized circular medallion hanging from a leather chord visible through the opening in the v-neck of his jumpsuit “what does it mean to you?”

He scooped up the prized piece between thumb and forefinger. The Yin Yang symbol was embossed with dragon and tiger molds in relief. “It is the Yin Yang symbol, a central concept in Taoist philosophy. It symbolizes the dynamic balance of nature. These blending, intertwining halves represent the flow of nature’s opposing, yet complementary, interconnected forces. (It was given to me by me by, my venerable teacher upon departure to this world).”

“Good. Very good”, she said smiling, pleased with his understanding, even as rudimentary as it was.

“Taoism was prevalent on your planet?” he expressed, some little surprise in his tone.

“Ifilios had a correspondent philosophy to Taoism. It was called Chowa. Like Taoism, Chowa was based on the flow and balance of forces occurring in nature.”

“Chowa is represented by a symbol quite similar to the Yin Yang”, Nobira said, withdrawing a pendant from

beneath her uniform shirt and presenting it for display. The pendant was comprised of two Yin Yang symbols medallions, side-by-side, and joined in the middle. The shape of the medallion looked like a symmetrical numeral eight and turned on its side.

That they both wore Yin Yang pendants he took as a good omen. He had renewed hope that his one-way connection may become two-way.

“As you can see, the symbolic representation in both our pieces is essentially the same,” Nobira said, holding pendant up away from her neck. “Our Yin Yang sign was the symbol chosen to represent Mundus”.

“ ‘Mundus’, ” Indus reiterated, recalling the briefing with his CO “isn’t this some sort of high-minded scheme to save Earth? Part of my assignment is to learn about this. Please, tell me more.”

“Simply, Mundus is a plan for attaining and maintaining a sustainable global civilization. The proposal set forth by Mundus provides a starting point, guideline and actionable solution correcting Earth’s imbalanced, failing global system. The Mundus blueprint can and will save Earth from its own fateful demise, but only if the plan is commenced upon in a timely, unified fashion”, Nobira said with certainty.

And so began her discourse on Mundus. Over the span of the next several days, she offered a detailed introduction of Mundus and how this plan could rescue Earth from self-destruction.

Having completed her introduction to Mundus, she next proceeded to educate Indus on the history of her planet from systems science perspective. “Ours was a hirstory characterized by unsustainable excess”, she began, her tone disconsolate. “To know our story is to know Earth’s story and Earth’s future for they are one in the same.”

She explained to him the phenomena of the parallel histories of their two planets and of the origin of the species, how humans came to be on Earth through their Ifilosian counterparts. Though he did not believe her words at first, she supported her narrative with a virtual library of data, of documents, images, and film. The facts were all there and could be denied. Incredible as it all sounded, it was truth.

She told the sad account of how an intelligent people and the beautiful planet that their her home inevitably met tragic end; the rise and fall of a civilization and of a world.

Earth’s rise and fall was near paralleling that of Venus’s. One need only look to Venus’s timeline to measure Earth’s end. Though under Mundus, there still may be time to change the course of history she explained to him.

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## **The Seed Pod Initiative**

Nearly on a daily basis, for two to four hours per session, the two would find time to meet in order to discuss their worlds past, present, and future. Also, during these teachings, the two drilled one another in their respective languages.

The history and language lessons were intensive and relentless. While seemed to feed on the mental stimulation and its challenges, never seeming to tire, Indus wearied for this constant learning and required a break now and again from the regimen, if only to switch gears for a bit.

“Nobira, If you don’t mind, perhaps we might diverge from the planned curriculum today. I am very curious about your seed pod program and was hoping we might go over this. We’ve been out for three weeks now, yet I’ve little real idea of what the mission is about. Don’t you think it’s a good idea I at least know the basics?” Indus said, hoping he might catch a hiatus and give his brain a chance to rest.

“Of course,” Nobira said, open to the change of pace. “I was working up towards discussing this subject, but there’s no real reason why we can’t consider the topic slightly ahead of schedule.”

“The Seed Pod Initiative (SPI) was Ifilios’s Plan-B to assure the continuance of life should the planet’s biosphere fail” she began.

“From Ifilios’s global population of some 12 billion, the best of the best from all callings were invited to test to qualify for Project Seeds of Hope, as the seed pod initiative was clandestinely called. The world’s foremost scientists, technologists, engineers, tradespersons, artists and entertainers, athletes, businesspersons, academics, physicians, spiritualists and many others from all walks of life, be they 60 years of age or younger and in good health, were sought out to participate in the seed pod program. This group of exceptional individuals would comprise the gene pool for the population of the future civilization.”

“Although exact numbers of total seed pods worldwide are not known to us, we believe somewhere of the order of 50 to 100 fully functional pods had been planted around Ifilios before the planet met its end. In these pods some 800 to 1200 individuals would have been preserved in stasis”, Nobira explained, wanting to provide some idea of the scale and scope of the project.

“A ‘seed pod’ was a high-tech subterranean shelter designed to preserve humans, and other life forms, in stasis, virtually indefinitely, in the instance of an extinction level event. A seed pod was programmed ‘hibernate’, that is to remain in a low energy, dormant stage until its sensors indicated the planetary environment outside the pod was safe to inhabit. When the planet was shown to be able to support human life the seed pod would awake from hibernation. Those aboard the seed-pod would be revived from stasis link up with members from other pods and proceed to rebuild and repopulate the planet. Mundus was to serve as guide and rulebook for the intrepid planetary re-

builders. Based on Mundus, the new world, balanced and sustainable, would be stable, vastly safer, unified, and unique, disparate peoples would coexist in a state relative peace.”

“If the parallel history of our two worlds holds true, by this point in time it is likely that your Earth governments have already secretly commenced upon a seed pod project of their own. So as not to stir up panic, this endeavor would necessarily be unheralded and unbeknownst to the general populace.”

He considered the woman before him who had been lecturing him now for weeks. Erudite and of impressionable brilliance, a veritable intellectual giant, she possessed a knowledge well beyond her age. It was evident why, in the literally tens of thousands of candidates worldwide, she had been amongst the honored few chosen for the seed pod program. Though she never spoke down to him or made him feel lesser in any way, Indus often felt dimwitted in her presence, overshadowed and overpowered by the dominance of such splendid intellect.

“How is it you managed to survive for some 220,000 years, essentially buried alive?” This was a question command had pointedly instructed him to ask, the topic of new power sources naturally being of keen strategic interest to an energy-hungry Earth.

“Indeed, the success of the Seed Pod Initiative was contingent upon the availability of a power supply capable of keeping seed pod machinery, technology, operational systems and such running virtually

indefinitely”, Sogan started. “At the beginnings of the SPI, such a power source did not exist and great resources were invested towards this end. At length, breakthroughs came in the fields of harmonics and vibration.”

“I would ask you now to think back to when you came upon the seed pod our group was in,” Sogan said, standing up now as she spoke. “As the seed pod rose from the ground, you will recall hearing a humming and sensing a type of pulsation. That pulsating humming was the power source at work.”

“Now, if you recollect what that seed pod looked like, you will remember the shape of the structure resembled that of a ‘U’.” “This shape was not intended as an architectural statement, but rather was by design, built according to precise measurements. This U-shape of the seed pod caused the entire structure function as a sort of giant tuning fork.”

“Allow me to elucidate” she continued her explanation. “The breakthroughs in harmonics and vibration, I mentioned previously, had to do with natural frequencies produced by the planet itself. It was discovered that the entire planet generated natural reverberations resonating at specific frequencies. With the proper scitec, this wide spectrum of harmonic frequencies could be ‘tuned into’ and ‘captured’, so to speak. Special technology was created to calibrate a seed pod’s tuning fork to the spectrum of planetary harmonic frequencies in the region of the seed pod. By tuning into these frequencies, reverberations could be seized and transformed into vibration. Having seized

on a frequency, the tuning fork was used to make the sound waves resonate and vibrate. The captured vibration could then be turned into energy, which, in turn, could be converted to usable energy. In this way, by drawing energy from the natural harmonics of the planet, the seed pods were provided with an inexhaustible power supply.”

“To be clear, vibration energy scitec has its limitations. At the time the scitec was employed, the maximum area size that could be harnessed was roughly 160 square km (100 square miles). A single seed pod required at least 80 square km (50 square miles) to generate the energy required to sustain itself. Restricted as such, vibration energy could not be used, for instance, to power a city or even a small municipality for that matter, which would demand a vibration draw from thousands of square miles. Respectfully, without advancements, this energy source would be highly restricted with regards supplying Earth’s fuel and power needs” Nobira explained, guessing the original intent of the query.

For this day and the next, Nobira went into detail about the Seed Pod Initiative, a fascinating lesson well taken by Indus.

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## **Transition**



For most of his adult life, Indus held the belief that although the condition on Earth certainly was far from ideal neither was it dire. Furthermore, most any damage that had been done to the world could be undone through advancements in modern science and technology. There may be too many people, but planet could still support billions more. Although key resources were running short, there were still plenty out there to be found and eventually, they would be discovered. Although the climate was acting strangely this was merely a glitch in the larger meteorological scheme, one that would correct itself in good time. Although the world was falling ever more deeply in debt and global markets were unstable, more economic growth, more printing of fiat, and more government spending could and would always be able to stabilize the economy. Yes, admittedly, there was some need for concern, but there was nothing to fear. The alarmist protestations of concerned scientists, conservationists, environmentalists, academics, celebrities and others were over-the-top and ill-founded. So long as basic corrective actions were taken, using available resources at hand, we were in no real trouble. In the end, everything would sort itself out and all would be well. Such was Indus's worldview before his tutorage under Nobira had begun.

Now, merely a few short weeks later, her teachings had fostered in him a perspective of Earth's situation, one strikingly different from his original viewpoint. Gradually, of his own volition, without force or coercion, Indus's stance had changed dramatically. Her message had hit home and taken hold. His was now of a different mind, a mind filled with trepidation for a most

uncertain future. What had begun as an intelligence gathering mission for Indus had become an awakening and what his eyes had opened to was a grim reality.

His understanding of Earth's present condition had gone from one of relative stability to one of grave instability. His perception had changed from a world that was relatively secure and reasonably safe to an overloaded global system was excessively stressed, grossly imbalanced, highly unsteady, and verging on collapse. We were all living in a house of cards called planet Earth with a category level 5 hurricane bearing down on us. The seriousness of the matter could not be understated. Humans had pushed the planet, and subsequently themselves, to the brink of the abyss. Racing at breakneck speed to the precipice, the precipitous road Earth's nations were on was incredibly dangerous, no less than a headlong path leading to but one-furlong destination...self-destruction.

Precious little be it may, there was still time yet to correct and restore global system balance before the dreaded extinction event betook Earth. In Mundus, a ready solution lay at hand. Mundus offered a clear path to moderation and safe, sustainable practices under a unification of nations and a single, fair government of and by the people.

“You must know the truth”, she would say “your entire world must know the truth. They need to be awakened to the impending threat global collapse and species extinction. Earth is your planet, your home, your source of life and it is your right to know.” Nobira had provided Indus with a look into a future, a future of dread and

finality, but also a future of hope and renewal, and for this, he was deeply grateful.

Whatever the lesson for the day, her fundamental message was the same, “Don’t let our end be yours. Wake up to the truth. Restore global system balance through sustainable practice. Adopt Mundus to guide the way.” These were the prescient, prophetic words one having seen the apocalypse and would do whatever need be not to witness such horror again.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

As she was concluding her lecture for the day with such aforementioned words these, a call sounded across the ship’s intercom calling for, ‘All hands to stations’. A telling signal had been picked up. As the Halvard homed in on signal coordinates a structure could be made out closing in the distance. There was no question that what they were looking at was the distinct ‘U’-shape of a seed pod.

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## **The First Seed Pod**

Preliminary examination of the seed pod indicated no survivors. According to systems logs retrieved from the seed pod, it appeared, that sometime around 130,000 years after 'planting', the breakdown of certain hardware components caused the failure of stasis life support systems, consequently resulting in the death of all crew members.

Finding no survivors, the mission directive switched from rescue to salvage. Floor-by-floor, room-by-room, the seed pod was scoured for any recoverable Ifiliosian scitec that had managed to endure the test of time.

During the course of this search, a large windowless storage room on the lowest level was accessed. Upon gaining entry, the rescue crew was taken aback by what lay within. The chamber had been converted to a nursery lab. Here, amidst all manner of laboratory equipment, attended to by a trio of androids, were assumedly two human infants, a girl and a boy. Both babes looked to be as if they were roughly one year of age. Flailing there shortened appendages and crying appeared healthy.

“So, it worked, Gorbac thought, immediately understanding the meaning of the two small miracles he was looking at. In the event the stasis units failed at some point during the hibernation period, which they had in this instance, a plan-B contingency was set to go into effect. If and when the seed pod’s life support sensory systems confirmed that the environment outside the pod was habitable by humans, a vitro

fertilization procedure was initiated. In their incubator like cradles, the two sleeping infants before him were actually test tube babies, the byproducts of advanced vitro fertilization science. The androids tending to them were to serve as surrogate parents.

The babies were relieved of their surrogate android parents and placed in the welcome arms of warm, human care. Almost immediately their whimpering and crying turned to smiles and twittering laughter.

The baby boy was nicknamed Adam and the girl Eve.

Encouraged by their rescue of the infants and with scitec salvaged, the team pressed on with their seed pod search.

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## **The Second Seed Pod**

Over the next ten days, the Halvard searched a grid pattern covering thousands of square kilometers. Come the eleventh day, the second seed pod beacon signal was received.

The rescue team could hardly have arrived sooner. This time luck was on their side. Descending from the sky, their airship fell upon a desperate scene. The inopportune seed pod found itself haplessly situated in

a region that was volcanically active. Less than 15 km (10 miles) distant, a volcano was erupting, spouting smoke and ash, and spewing out rivers of molten rock. As seen from above, the elevated 1.5 square km (square mile) or so patch of land upon which the seedpod was situated was completely surrounded by steadily encroaching lava flows. The seed pod crew, uncertain of the gravity of the threat, and hesitant to leave the security of their seed pod, had probably waited too long to decamp the endangered area. Ringed in by lava flows on all sides, they were trapped and, as the surging molten rock advanced, quickly running out of time.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Viewing the scene unfolding below through a telescopic device, aircraft crew members observed a group of individuals ardently constructing something near the edge of a swelling lava flow. As the aircraft dropped lower, the observers could make out that the group was anxiously engaged in building what appeared to be a floating craft, likely constructed of special materials and intended to cross the glowing orange river of steadily flowing thick molten semi-liquid substance.

When those below finally noticed the ship descending from above, a momentary pause of astonished disbelief was followed by a cry and great cheer. Those below

waved their arms exuberantly and tossed what whatever was at hand up into the air.

Landing vertically, the Halvard set down. After a perfunctory lead-in address by the Command Mikl to the embattled seed pod crew, the recovery operation commenced. To buy time against the encroaching lava which was advancing on numerous fronts, a team engineered a perimeter of makeshift culverts and barriers about seed pod. It would not be long before the area was overcome by the molten flow.

For 40 hours straight, salvage teams, alternating in shifts, sought to recover whatever they could. Each seed pod had a forte and the specialty of this seed pod was medical scitec. Amongst medical scitect salvaged was a healing chamber said to be capable of healing all but the most complicated and advanced cancers. Also, a virtual trove of medical science data was recovered, although, upon closer inspection, as with the previous pod, most of the data banks had become corrupted over the millennia and would take considerable work to recover and repair.

With the rising lava threatening the little island on all sides, the team stayed on salvaging for as long as they dare, but then the time had come to make a hasty retreat. When the Halvard at last lifted off, it left behind an island aflame and a thick, glowing stream of lava, that had breached an embankment and perimeter barriers, beginning to envelop and consume the seed pod like some hungry, molten monster.

Of the initial 24 crew 19 remained. Two had succumbed during stasis. Since coming out of stasis, another three had died, two by fatal accident and one befallen to an incurable disease. Those rescued totaled 19. Of this group, seven were malnourished, ill, or worse and in need of special medical attention that even their med scitec could not provide.

The accompanying support transport craft, the Ales, which had remained aloft and out of harms way during the salvage operation, was sequestered into duty for the first time since the start of the mission. The nineteen rescued, along with the two infants recovered from the previous seed pod site, were transported aboard the Ales after which the entire group was dispatched to Neagi Base.

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## **5. The Last Survivors** *(Incomplete chapter)*

### **Approaching Storm**

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Twenty days of meticulous grid pattern searching passed before the next seed pod signal was picked up.

The Halvard could have easily been to the signal point coordinates within the day had it not been for the enormous storm front blocking its way. Coming from the southwest, the storm front the trajectory would soon overtake and engulf the area from which the signal was emanating.

For as far as the eye could see, a darkened sky spread broadly across the entire expanse of the horizon. Had this storm been categorized as a squall, or even gale, the ship could have proceeded into it without undue concern, but this was not a common storm. The storm front bearing towards them was as dangerous as it was ominous. According to the readings they were receiving, the storm possessed category four hurricane wind speeds. Even more menacing was the intense lightning and likely occurrence tornadoes within the storm itself, each threat of which was capable of downing the aircraft. Furthermore, energy surges emanating from of these meteorological monstrosities had been known to disrupt and short out electrical systems at distances exceeding 90 kilometers (55 miles). To enter such a storm would be to court disaster.

No, the best course of action would be to give this violent tempest wide birth. The decision was made to move out of the storm's path, seek safe haven, get grounded, and wait it out. There was no need to take chances and risk an incident. In good time, the storm would pass and the mission could be safely resumed.

Given the enormity and unpredictability of the prodigious front, not risk being consumed by it meant the Halvard would need to make a considerable deviation from its designated course and current position. To be safe, especially in the event the storm should it change direction, a refuge point on the leeward side of a mountain range some 1200 kilometers (750 miles) distant from their current location was chosen.

Two hours later, as they were scouting the snow-capped, mountainous region for an opportune place to put down, a curious signal was picked up. “Captain, we are picking up an odd reading. It is not a seed pod distress signal and the physical signature is much too large to be a seed pod”, said the officer attending the communications board. “The object registering as some sort of metal, an enormous iron deposit maybe”, the officer guessed.

“Pilot, navigate nearer”, the captain of the Halvard ordered. “Let’s try and get a look closer at the anomaly.”

As they drew nearer, another oddity presented itself. “Sir, whatever it is, it’s giving off pockets of heat”, the technical officer said noting the thermal readings of the signature. The geological instrumentation did not indicate the presence of a geothermal heat source, such as volcanic or a hot spring. “Captain, If I were to guess, I’d say the heat is being generated by some sort unknown subterranean energy source”, the technical officer contributed.

At this point, thinking they may have stumbled upon a new form of energy, the commander's curiosity had gotten the better of him. "Let's check it out. We have time. Find someplace to put the big bird down and prepare for landing."

Maneuvering through the mountain range, like a giant condor gliding the winds, the airship honed in on the signal. At length, the signal trace brought them into a shallow valley. The closer they got to the ground the more dispersed the signal got. "I can't get a clear lock on the signal. It seems to be coming from every which direction. Well, wherever it is, it's somewhere in this hollow", the communications officer said sounding baffled.

At length, the pilot found a sizable snowfield free of large boulders, timber, and other obstructions and carried out a vertical landing.

The Venusians had requested they be permitted to accompany the search expedition. Seeing no danger or harm in this, the ship's commander granted their request. Naturally, wherever the Venusians went, Sergeant Kemp's orders were to follow, so he was also included as a member of the exploratory group. In addition to these four two ship crew members and one labor robot and one android would fill out the remainder of the team.

Having suited up and geared up, the team of eight set out on foot in search of a puzzling signal and a mystery energy source. A wispy wind upon their faces and a light

snow falling upon their heads, into the valley they slogged.

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## 6. BIO ARK

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[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Come the fourth day, in the early hours of the morn the crew embarked. It was early afternoon when they arrived at the signal location.

Thus far, each of the seed pods visited had rewarded them with some enthralling interest, unique attraction, and modest adventure so the crew they could not help but wonder in anticipation what surprise, sights, and excitement were in store for them en route to their destination. The globetrotters were not to be disappointed.

From rugged snowy peaks studded with conifers to a coastal, jungle highland rainforest the Volant was running the gamut of the planet's natural regions. With respect to plant growth, the lush green canopied area they were currently passing over was, by far the most 'alive' and biodiverse ecosystem Indus had yet seen on the planet. The rolling jungle region below still had at least another 30 to 40 years before reaching its first level of maturity.

As the Volant approached the designated coordinates, the seed pod was clearly visible from the air. This pod had the same characteristic 'U' shape design, but the base structure appeared to be roughly a third larger than the other pods they had since encountered.

There was no place to set the Volant down in the thick growth so the craft made its own landing area. While hovering at an altitude of 55 (180 ft) a pair of high-powered laser guns, extending from the underside of the fuselage, cut out a 120 meter (400 ft) diameter circular clearing in the jungle below. The felled trees in the center of the perimeter were then reduced to ash by controlled, quick burning, superheated incendiary bombs. Finally, any fire that may have spread outside the perimeter was succinctly put out with using fire extinguisher cannon dispersing a nitrogen agent.

They Volant landed vertically in the clearing it had created, touching down roughly 200 m (650 ft - 1/8 mile) from the seed pod.

The team that set out through the jungle for the seed pod witnessed signs of the recent maelstrom all about. Fallen branches and a green carpet of various leaves littered the forest floor. Here and there a tree had been uprooted by high winds. Pools of rainwater great and small collected. More than one smoldering, charred tree showed signs of lightning strikes.

As evident by the perspiration soaking through their full body jumpsuits, it was hot here, currently 30 C (86 F), with the hygrometer showing a humidity reading just shy of 100%.

As they approached the seed pod, a faint barely audible call sounded in the distance. The instant Indus heard the sound he stopped dead in his tracks, head cocked, ears perked. Feint as it was at first he doubted his own ears, but then the high-pitched sweet call came again, 'ChirpChirp-Cheep...ChirpChirp-Cheep'. No, he had not been mistaken, that was a bird's song. In and of itself, a chirping bird was hardly strange, except that, aside from the aviary on Neagi Base, there were supposed to be no birds on this planet. For that matter, as far as Indus knew, no vertebrate animals whatsoever had yet been introduced into Neagi's ecology. Though, he reasoned, it was not beyond question that one, or more, birds had escaped the aviary, or perhaps had purposely been set free. He looked around at the other members, but none had seemed to have heard the bird call amidst the mix of other jungle sounds.

Shortly thereafter, as the group was approaching the seed pod, Indus spied his first sign of animal presence. Excitedly, he dropped to a knee to examine a small paw

impression left in the mud. The print looked to be that of a rodent.

Of these two discoveries, Indus decided to mention nothing to the group just yet so as not to detract focus from the more important assignment of investigating the seed pod for survivors.

First a bird, then a mammal; something was afoot in this place.

Furthermore, had a Neagi Base botanist been a member of this party the scientist would have told the group that some of the plant species growing in the vicinity were not any of the varieties seeded during the planetary engineering and should not be here.

Having approached the seed pod from the backside and coming around to the front side the entrance way to the building could be seen wide open. At the gape, Gorbac hailed to any within, announcing his presence, but no reply came.

A search of the vessel revealed this was a biodiversity repository unit, a type of zoological Noah's ark. Rather than preserving humans, its function was to disseminate and propagate animal and plant species into a new world. Indus's intriguing little mystery had been solved.

This category of seed pod was attended to by androids and robots and was without human crew members.

It was decided that animal and plant specimens be retrieved and brought back for study. In the days to follow, Indus was to lead an effort in the collection of plant specimens and the live trapping of animals.

Shortly after commencing upon this assignment, Indus began finding indications that a variety animals were all about. Tracks, broken brush, territorial markings and scents, droppings, punctuated by the occasional call in the jungle, to his trained eyes signs were abundant. Indus had also noted numerous species of insects here as well, just so long as they were not giant centipedes, he mused.

While laying live traps, Indus came upon a track giving him such startled pause as to cause him to stop in his own tracks. It was the paw print of a cat and quite a large cat at that. It was the track of some sort of panther, a tiger perhaps. This may explain why more than once Indus had sensed he was being stalked when out in the bush. In retrospect, it made perfect sense to have included an apex predator in the ecosystem mix.

Making this animal a priority, he set up a cage trap to catch the cat. Two days later he had caught the animal, but it was not species he thought it would. That is was a panthera was for sure, but it was unlike one he had ever seen. The fierce-eyed, long-fanged, snarling cat in the cage was smilodon, a saber tooth tiger. This specimen was fully a third larger than a Siberian tiger (*panthera tigris altaica*) which had since been driven to extinction on Earth. Judging by its bone structure and length, Indus believed this super predator, properly nourished, would weigh in at around 400-450 kg (900-1000 lbs).



The animal's coat resembled that of an Indian tiger although the stripes were half the length and did not extend fully around the animal's body. At near 18 cm (7 inches), its incisor fangs were somewhat smaller than those of similar genus fossils uncovered on Earth but no less deadly. Apparently, this species had not gone extinct on Venus, or perhaps it had been revised by some advanced zoological science, whatever the case it stood live before him.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Half starved, the tiger could not resist the scent of the meat and had been easily lured into the trap, Indus presumed. Perhaps the large prey animals released were far and few between, perhaps the hunter had slain all the game, whatever the case, the animal was severely malnourished, as evident by the ribs which stood out clearly on its flanks. Weakened from lack of food, its posture sagged. The famished smilodon was dying of starvation. Of the 10 kg (22 lbs) of meat that had served as bait, not a scrap remained. Only bare bones remained, upon which the tiger's tongue lapped almost caringly and its teeth gnawed voraciously. When it noticed its capturer emerging from the bush, the sabertooth bore its famous fangs, snarling and hissing as it did so. Despite knowing the big cat would render him limb from limb given the chance, Indus felt a kinship with the great, primal hunter.

In the days that followed, twice daily Indus would visit the saber in its steel caged enclosure bringing the beast snacks of raw red meat which it ravenously devoured. It did not take long before the animal began to recognize Indus as a source of food rather than regard him as a food source.

Come the sixth day at this location, message was received from Neagi Base HQ that the services of the Volant would shortly be needed for an important job. They were ordered to finish up their current objective and return to base within seven days. At this point, for all intents and purposes, the mission was over.

That evening Captain Akili Tau gathered the crew and, speaking briefly complemented one and all on a successful endeavor. This group had done their job in exemplary fashion. Before setting out on the return journey to Neagi Base halfway round the world, the Captain said they would take two days to wrap things up, then the entire crew would be given two days of well-earned leave.

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## **Two Worlds Meld**

Indus's hoisted his trek pack, loaded with camping gear and food, onto his back. He knew exactly how and

where he was going to spend his leave time. Destination in mind he set off an eager spring in his step.

From the shadows, an unknown figure watched Indus as he strode off out of camp along an ill-traveled trail and disappeared into the bush.

About an hour into his hike he broke free from the bush to a clearing. From his vantage point on the ridge, the wide expanse of blue sea opened before him. Below, at the base of the hill, a sandy beach and cove beckoned. While laying traps, Indus had discovered scenic spot and now he would get a chance to experience its beauty.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Weaving through trees and hopping across boulders, Indus made his way down the hill to the beach below. Once upon the beach, he scouted out an opportune spot to pitch camp. He chose a spot between a pair of palms so he might string a hammock. Later, to avoid the risk of getting royally crowned, he would knock any would be loose 'coconut bombs' from the two palms with his slingshot.

Green hills at his back, a turquoise sea before him, soft white grain sand beneath his bare feet, enormous, puffy, white cotton clouds sailing slowly above, immersed in

the natural beauty of this wondrous place made one feel light, carefree, and energized.

A sanctity prevailed here in this sanctuary of nature. Save for that single, lone seed pod there virtually lost unto the jungle, there was nothing human here, for literally millions of square miles, nothing save pristine, primal wilderness. Just the way Indus liked it. Here in the wilds, Indus felt at home.

Satisfied with his camp set up, Indus drew up a piece of driftwood and propping his back against it, his rear side resting comfortably in the white sands, proceeded simply to sit and breath, allowing himself to become one with nature. For some while he sat there, he himself becoming part of the beautiful scene the surrounded him without and suffused him within. He released his mind, letting it effortlessly sail out over the sea's open vista and the endless horizon that lay before him. Gentle, waves lap, lap, lapping upon shore's edge, set his mind adrift over the vast expanse of calm sea.

Indus looked out on an idyllic tropical beach panorama spread before him, the blend of soft colors like a living pastel painting. From the watery realm, he turned his attention to the dimming firmament awash in shades of pink, violet, and blue pastels. The phase of night was coming to Neagi, but first preceded the long setting sun. The glowing orb of the long setting sun suspended just above the horizon. This state of early twilight would last a week or more, the sun ever so slowly dropping off behind the horizon.

In Neagi's early twilight, the stars were not yet visible save one, the brightest, Earth. Observing this luminous point he could not help but to contemplations the uncertain future and possible catastrophic fate of his homeworld. Here on Neagi Indus was relatively safe, but within 12 months, come the completion of his tour, unless reassigned, he would be shipped back to Earth, back to the ticking time bomb.

To escape such dark thoughts and help ease the perturbations of his mind he shut his eyes and turned his mind to her, to Nobira.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Since having arrived at this present seed pod, Indus had seen little of Nobira. Their duties differed and had kept them separate. She was busy in the seed pod lab and he was busy in the bush. For the sake of the animal specimen trapping, Indus had even been camping out in the jungle, not returning to the Volant or the makeshift camp they had set up adjacent to the seed pod. There had been no time for their history and language lessons. He missed her.

Over their discourse these past months the two had enjoyed many deep discussions, heated debates, and much engrossing conversation, not to mention no

shortage of laughs and good times all of which lent to a growing admiration and respect for one another.

Throughout this process of learning, so too had a degree of trust been gained. As their trust strengthened and each came to feel more comfortable with the other, their conversations became increasingly open and personal. A sharing of hearts and minds took place. They learned a good deal about one another in this time and with this growing familiarity so too did their affinity grow.

Try as he may, Indus could not refrain his feelings for this woman from another world. On the contrary, he found his sentiment and desire for her had been growing only more still. Undeniably, an ardor had befallen him and taken hold of his heart.

He could not deny that she enraptured him this woman of another world.

Her way beguiling, special like no other.

Her face enchanting, its beauty unique.

Her voice like music, a siren's song.

Her mind so bright, a beacon of truth.

Her nonchalant brush gave him rush.

Her sway of hips, alluring indeed.

Her eyes so soft, to soothe his soul.

Lost in this daydreaming state, he heard her softly call his name. Then, as if carried upon a wisp of air, it came again, "Indus". So real did the summoning voice sound, that it startled him. Shaken from his state of reverie, he opened his eyes.

In the distance, 130 meters (140 yards) Indus made out a figure walking along the shore. The individual had just passed Indus's low lying, somewhat concealed spot and was proceeding down the beach following the shoreline. Though he could not make out details, Indus knew there was only one person that could be. It was Nobira.

As Indus shot to his feet to hail her, she stopped, turned back towards him, and, before he could call out, she raised her arm and waved, and started in his direction.

Indus stood, still not entirely sure that what he was looking at was not an apparition from a dream.

He walked towards her and she to him. Nearer she approached. The two met halfway. She dipped her head slightly in greeting and he responded in kind.

"I heard you call my name also, and when I turned you were there," she told Indus, a hint of uncertainty in her voice.

"That's odd, I heard you call my name as well."

"No, I said nothing." She said queer

"Nor did I. It seems then our ghosts are talking. "

The two looked at each other, paused, then laughed together at a mystery neither could solve.

“I saw you, this morning, as you left camp. You forgot this on the bench.”, she said producing his communicator device.

“Oh, that, no, I left that thing purposely,” adding “with the coordinates where we are at now, in case an emergency came up.

“So my effort has been for not.”

“Not at all, I’m happy to see you.”

“I set out after you, hardly three minutes behind, but you outpaced me. When you went off the path, it took me some time to pick up your trail, but then I lost it and I myself became lost. I guessed correctly you were headed to the coast.”

She turned half away from him and looked out upon the majestic panorama spread before her. “This spot. It’s truly beautiful.”

“Yes, it is”, he said, looking at her and not else as a breeze picked up her hair blowing it across the delicate features of her profiled face, “truly beautiful.”

When Nobira turned back to face him, Indus’s telling eyes were upon her.

‘What was this?’, he thought with a start. Oddly, Nobira did not turn away as was her customary manner. Rather, she held his gaze unwaveringly. Not only that, but her eyes, they appeared to be glistening, glistening as they had the first time they met.



He sensed something of wonder was about to happen and his heart began to beat heavily.

Looking at him warmly, she spoke, “When you came to our aid at my seed pod, from that first time I saw you, there was something special. Over these past months, together”, she paused to take a breath before expressing what she longed to say, “I have fallen in love you...and I know you love me.”

“For some time I have felt this wonderment, but I had my orders which were to educate you as unbiased as I could. I could not allow sentiment to obfuscate your understanding nor taint your judgment. Also, I dare not expose myself until I was sure your intent was not merely lust. Over these months, your dotting intent has not wavered. You have proven yourself and, now that the mission is ending, I can finally release my heart to thee”, Nobira said, the words gushing forth. “I feel...”, but her words were cut off.

Indus had heard enough. Sweeping her up into his arms, he drew her tight and crushed his lips to hers in long, deep, mesmerizing kiss that sent two connected minds to another reality. Finally, at long last, the moment both had so longed for had been realized.

Hand-in-hand, in such pleasant state of mind, the two walked along on the shoreline for quite some distance, traversing the length of the cove and then some. As they went, now and again they frolicked in the water giddy, foolish and uncaring as children.

At one point while wading in the warm water, both witnessed a small fish break surface directly in front of them, momentarily freeing itself of its watery realm. 'A fish here?', both thought simultaneously, ever so surprised. They looked at each other with wide eyes reasoning the only explanation was that a roe must have been delivered to these waters by the seed pod ark. Whatever good fortune that had allowed this miracle of aquatic life to take place, this fish species evidently had found a food source upon which to sustain itself.

As the day's end drew nigh they returned to camp, built a fire from driftwood, prepared food and ate.

A most pleasant evening accommodated them. The twilight eve was warm, but not uncomfortably so and intermittent cool, refreshing breezes blew in from the sea, caressing them in a pleasing fashion. Nigh perfect was the eve.

Here, amidst these prepossessing, enchanting settings, nature took its course.

beneath in the cove looking out onto the sea, in attendance of the long setting sun,  
Here, beneath the boughs of an overhanging palm tree, on a bed of palms, in the audience of the setting sun, while they gazed into the depths of each other's eyes, he took her up in embrace. He felt her swoon in his arms and in a flurry of overwhelming romantic passion, possessed of amore, they consummated. As the two beautifully became one, so too occurred a sacred melding of minds, hearts, souls. There was but one way to describe this romantic act...pure love.

In the morn, the lovers roused from oh so pleasant sleep, gently. They awoke together, entangled in one another's embrace, their faces close, their eyes softly searching. They kissed tenderly. He clasped her hands. "I shall marry you if you will marry me", he said definitively, though not without some fearful doubt that she may reject his proposal.

"Yes...together we shall be as one", she accepted. "One of Earth and one of Venus, two worlds together as one", Nobira said, happily.

With these words, she removed her precious pendant from her neck and draped the figure 8 Yin Yang about his. In kind, he reciprocated placing his Yin Yang pendant around her neck.

They swam in the lagoon then had breakfast. For breakfast, they foraged, taking clean, fresh water from natural pools, flavorful fruits and nutritious roots from the bountiful, healthy land.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

After breakfast, they set out on a leisurely hike along the shore that took them in the opposite direction from yesterday's jaunt. They traipsed and meandered about the sandy beached coast for many miles, sometimes heading into hills to gain a rocky outcrop vantage point,

sometimes swimming in the inviting turquoise waters. Together they enjoyed the surrounding pristine, virgin wilds, never touched by human hand or foot other than their own. As vigorous as they were throughout the day, they hungered not, so sated were they in the joy of each other's love.

As quickly as a second, or so it seemed, the happy day together drew to an end. They packed up and returned to the Volant. As had been planned, they entered the camp one at a time, with time well spaced between each arrival, and from opposite directions. It had been decided this tryst would remain their secret, at least for the time being.

Sixteen hours later, the Volant and its crew were speeding homebound to Neagi Base-1, near half a world away. The betrothed were careful to remain professional in their duties though their eyes and gestures did not play the part and a palpable energy could almost be seen when they were close.

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On the return trip, Indus prepared an intelligence report summary for his commanding officer. As he lay in his bunk composing the report, Indus found himself beset with disquieting thoughts. As much as a favorable impression Venusians had made, as amiable as they were, something did not sit right with him. He had witnessed private, hushed conversations and at least one covered exchange of salvaged scitec between Dachs

and Gorbac. There appeared to be a clandestine undertone about them. Try as he may to pass off this qualm as nothing, he could not ignore the uneasiness in his gut.

Given his current love affair with Nobira, he needed to force himself to be honest with himself. Could he go against the woman to whom he had just proposed, tainting their love? Doing so would implicate the Venusian's and Nobira likely bring them under increased scrutiny. Indus contemplated the difficult decision. Duty was first, duty's honor even before love. No, he must file the report.

Indus's summary report to Major Mandalla read as follows:

- The Venusians have been cooperative, forthcoming with all information requested of them, and otherwise agreeable. They have been effective, if not exemplary, in fulfilling their mission objectives and in working alongside Neagi Base crew members.
- Overall, the report on the Venusians positive, however, something does not seem quite right. On several occasions, I have witnessed the group in hushed discussions amongst themselves and once I observed what appeared to be a concealed exchange of technology salvaged from one of the seedpods, but, then again, these queer occurrences may be nothing at all. Other than the heretofore mentioned incidences - circumstantial evidence - and a gut feeling, I have no concrete proof to support my suspicion of questionable intent.

- To note, on several occasions, Commander Mikl has openly expressed contention with United Nation's failure to act on Mundus.

\* Conclusion: Ongoing surveillance of Venusians recommended.

Had Indus known the true nature of these secret meetings, had he heard the exchanges that took place, he would have done more than simply recommend ongoing surveillance of the Venusians, much more.

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## **7. WHEN ALL REASON FAILS**

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[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Upon return to Neagi Base-1, Commander Gorbac provided a mission report to Commandant Pele on the mission. Account is given of the survivors and the salvaged scitec, as well as special happenstances that occurred during the operation.

Gorbac's inquiry of the Venusians rescued on the mission finds that all save a few of his fellow survivors have been released from the infirmary and are currently residing in the Venusian's off-base compound. The two infants rescued from the first seed pod, Adam and Eve, are recuperating quite well in warm, caring human hands.

Commandant Pele is pleased to inform Gorbac that she has received word to loosen most of the restrictions previously imposed on the Venusians and to grant additional liberties. Included in these privileges is the right to move about the base freely without permission, chaperone, or wearing a tracking device.

However, not all restrictions had been lifted and the order still held that the Venusians were to not to interact with any base personnel, save those designated staff members who had been assigned to them and for which communication was authorized. Concerning this matter, the Venusians would remain segregated from the greater base community in their off-base compound, at least for the time being.

With not some little anticipation does Gorbac ask Commandant Pele for an update on Earth's adoption of Mundus. In response to Gorbac's inquiry, Commandant

Pele says she has not received any new information other than Mundus is still under consideration.

“It has been more than two months since we set out on the mission. In so many words, I was told that, by the time we returned, decisions were going to be made, forward motion asserted, and action taken”, Gorbach said, unable to mask his disappointment and frustration.

“I can understand your disfavor with the proceedings. Indeed you’ve been patient. I would ask you to remain tempered just a bit longer while the decision makers can arrive at a determination. In the meantime, regarding this matter, I’ve been instructed to advise you to communicate with the UN directly through your assigned correspondents.”

“I see. I’ll do that then. Please send my thanks to Earth command for their diligence in the matter” Gorbac said, with an undertone of derision, his smile obviously forced.

After concluding his report with the base Commandant, Gorbac proceeded to learn all he could about Mundus’s adoption and enactment. Going through his normal United Nations channels and standard contacts, Gorbac is able to pick up bits and pieces, but when no one is really forthcoming with information of any real value, it becomes all too apparent he is being stonewalled.

Changing tactics, Gorbac sought out his special, off-the-book UN liaison, an individual on the inside who was an ardent supporter of Mundus who wanted to see the plan



and was willing to risk breaking protocol towards this end. From this covert contact, Gorbac learns Mundus is meeting strong opposition from a number of key nations, nations who were unwilling to make the concessions called for under the plan. As a result, forward motion on the plan has slowed to a snail's pace. Unless agreement could be reached, it was highly unlikely Mundus to be adapted. The plan had become bogged down in an impossible amount of red tape and had been put on hold, indefinitely. At the rate things were moving, it could take years before serious actions were taken. The informer had also heard more than more than once key decision makers discussing the likelihood that the plan would be cast aside and substantive action would never be taken.

Gorbac also learned a Venusian delegation, led by he, himself, will be requested to go to Earth on the next transport craft leaving to Earth. This tour was scheduled to take place in less than a month's time. The purpose of the trip was to be to discuss scitec, as well as a world tour of Earth, but there was a secondary agenda. Intel reports to Earth were indicating a possible insurrection brewing on Neagi Base 1 and Earth did not want to risk the top Venusians becoming casualties. Intelligence was mounting that a group, yet unknown, was planning to take control of the base.

To secure the base against any possible insurrection, a military craft, the Defensor, was currently en route and was set to reach Neagi in less than two weeks. Aboard were three companies of elite UN troops, some 300 special operations soldiers. The first warship designed for space, the Defensor was a cruiser class military

transport and gunship and was heavily armed with the most advanced weaponry to date.

When Gorbac asked his source how certain he was about the Defensor and its ETA, the informant confirmed he was more than 90% certain that this intel was accurate.

Ever since the first assembly with the UN, the so-called Meeting of Worlds, Gorbac suspected there was more than a fair chance Mundus would not move forward. Anticipating this opposition to Mundus, Gorbac had long since prepared an appeal. The strongest point of the said appeal, which in essence was a sanction of sorts, asserted, 'Nations failing to comply with the initial agreement stating Mundus would be adopted shall not qualify to receive Venusian scitec for production and use'. The entreaty appeal ended with a plea to enact Mundus before the predicted end event destroyed Earth. Gorbac promptly sent the petition to UN Madame Secretary, politely requesting the courteousness of a reply within 72 hours.

On the fifth day following the submission of his appeal, Gorbac received a reply. The UN response read, 'Your concern has been duly noted. Mundus is still under consideration. At this time, no date can be specified as to when the plan will initiate, although we are moving as quickly as we can to begin actions. Thank you for your patience in this matter.' These were not the words Gorbac had hoped to hear, although they were roughly the words he had sorely expected to hear. "How could they deny this danger. Why couldn't they do the right

thing?”, Gorbac thought, a frown upon his face, patience at last lost.

The next evening, a Friday, marked the end of the work week and, as was customary every other Friday, most, if not all, the Venusians gathered to enjoy a cookout on the beach. The new, scenic location chosen for this outing was about twenty minutes drive from their compound. Aside from the usual good food, fun, music and spirited conversation, this social outing had other, more serious agenda.

To note, none of those recovered from Portis were in attendance. Gorbac had politely asked if they would mind sitting out just this one gathering, stating he needed to speak to his group about a private matter.

After a spit-roast meal had been enjoyed, Gorbac prepared to speak to the group. Before taking center stage, Gorbac looked towards Singrītisis, his communications technician who was busy operating a music player device, or so it seemed. When Singrītisis noted Gorbac’s eyes upon him, he replied surreptitiously by flicking two fingers downward, making a fist, then dipping his head twice affirmatively. Singrītisis’s furtive message told Commander Mikl that the two Neagi Base drones observing the group had been neutralized. Singrītisis’s music player, which was also a hacking/jamming device, would make sure the drones surveying them would only be able to transmit audiovisual static to for the duration of Gorbac’s talk.

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Confident of their privacy, Gorbac spoke forthrightly to those who had assembled about him. “We here, the sole survivors of the seed pods, the last of our beloved world lost, have all sworn to uphold Mundus. Upon entering our seed pods, each of here swore an oath that, should we somehow endure the long sleep, we would make it our lives to revive, restore and institute Mundus to the world we woke unto. The restoration and furtherance of Mundus is our primary mission.

All of here have witnessed the horror of the end event. I needn't remind you of the ocean of untold pain, suffering, death. In the wake of the destruction, twelve billion lives had been lost and an entire planet laid to waste. Such a catastrophic episode cannot be allowed to repeat itself. The doomsday that approaches must be stopped before it becomes inexorable and this world meets absolute extermination.

We had great hope that Earth would embrace Mundus and make it their own; however, given what I have recently learned, adoption of the plan within the necessary timeframe seems nearly impossible. Mundus is being met with overwhelming opposition by some of Earth's leaders. As such, our mission is in jeopardy.

The rule of Earth shall undoubtedly become the rule Ifilios. If Mundus is not adopted on Earth, there is no reason to hope it will be inaugurated here on Ifilios.

Without Mundus acting as check and balance, an unsustainable, destructive cycle of excessive growth,

consumption, and waste will surely resume. As the Earther's say, the writing is on the wall. In short order, quite possibly in less than a century, nations competing amongst themselves for Ifilios's limited resources, and for control of its land, will fall into war one another. Ifilios's global system will collapse. The use of highly destructive, advanced weaponry, fueled by our own advanced military scitec, will result in the destruction of the biosphere. This time, there no recovery, no miraculous save, no return from this finale. It will be the utter end, human species extinction and the end of advanced life as we know it. Oblivion.

“We assembled here today are the only ones who may be able to prevent this atrocity from happening. It is up to us stop the apocalypse. We lost our world once, we shall not lose it again.”

“Our diplomatic efforts have failed to institute Mundus on Earth. Our council has failed. Due process has failed. All reason and reasonable action have achieved next to nothing. Most recently, even the threat not to provide Earth with our scitec has been unsuccessful in getting them to move forward with Mundus.”

“We had all hoped, and worked for peaceful resolve, but it is apparent that such amicable settlement shall not result in the necessary time frame. The time for committee and reason has ended. The time for words is over. Action need be taken, and, if necessary, bold force applied.”

“To assure Mundus, only one course of action remains; we must take control of this planet.”

“There is danger in the task before us. Some, or all of us, may die in this deed which is why I need ask all before me now, if there are any amongst you that, are not prepared for such sacrifice, for whatever reason, to step away now. There is no shame or cowardice in wishing to safeguard one's life. Existence, though fleeting, is nonetheless precious and not an easy thing of which to let go. I would You have my word; you will not be scorned or labeled for such decision. Understand that should you commit, there is no turning back. Now, who among you wishes not to partake?”

Amid those gathered before him, there was not so much as a stir. Not a single person came forth. When he looked at each of their faces, he saw only resolve. “All right then,” satisfied with his force “let us set forth upon this most honorable mission to restore Mundus, save the human species, and prevent the destruction of two worlds. We will succeed or we will die trying.”

As his speech came to an end, those assembled about him rose and burst into cheer.

“Now, let there be music, song, and dance, let us enjoy our festive gathering this eve, for tomorrow the time for action begins.” Understanding the seriousness of what lay ahead, the merriment continued until the wee hours of the morn

When Gorbac had finished speaking and all had returned to normal activities around the campfire,

Singritisis turned off the jamming device allowing the drones to resume their normal transmissions. Back at Neagi Base, the drone operators were pleased to have regained control of their surveillance devices. “We’re back online; must’ve been some type of meteorological interference”, one operator said to the other while monitoring the screen before him. “Nothing to report here but a bunch of folks enjoying themselves on a Friday night.”

Sometime later, as the gathering came to its end and the goers began to disperse, Gorbac found Nobira. When no one was within earshot he queried her discretely, “Indus, is he with us?”

“His hand cannot be counted, Commander. My sense is, this man’s duty lies first with Earth”, Nobira said, regret and sorrow for her lost love in her tone, then added, “and my duty must remain first with Mundus.”

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

## 8. ACTION NOT WORDS

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Having made the decision to act, the Ifiliosian rebels quickly initiated their plan. The plan must be carried out before the *Halvard* warship and its contingent of 300 special-ops soldiers arrived in twenty days time as there would be little if any, chance of success once this military force appeared on the scene.

The objector's objective was to firmly establish Mundus on Neagi, and, if possible, secure the doctrine on Earth as well.

To accomplish this objective they would first, attempt stratagems that employed soft force. Should soft methods prove ineffective, they would escalate to the use of hard force. If all else failed, they were prepared to take control of Neagi Base by any means necessary.

None of the Venusians had wanted to resort to this type of decisive action, especially after having befriended the



Earthers, but all peaceable efforts to export Mundus had failed and, with their backs were against the wall, they were rapidly running out of time.

The plan commenced this day actually initiated roughly one year ago, the day the newly woken Venusians realized the presence of the Earthers on Ifilios. At this point Commander Gorbac, knowing all too well the ways of governments and the shortcomings of human nature had begun to make provision in the eventuality that Mundus was rejected, which so it had been. No, he must not fail in his primary mission, the implementation of Mundus, and contingency was afforded towards this end.

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## **Press Leak**

The Venusians first course of action was to go to the major Earthen news stations, with their story. They would leak a video transcript of the Meeting of Worlds in its entirety, as well as other revealing information, to Earth's leading news agencies. Mind you, at this point, the people of Earth were as yet still unaware of that Venusians had been discovered on Neagi, let alone the story of Venus's parallel history with Earth and its apocalyptic end which would also be Earth's.

The hope was that once the peoples of the world learned the story of the Venusians, the end of Venus, and the

Mundus solution, the masses would pressure decision makers and Earth's government's, demanding the prompt adoption of Mundus. If Mundus was inaugurated on Earth the Venusians knew there was an excellent chance the action would eventually be carried over to Gi.

To draw suspicion away from themselves, when the Venusians released the press leak, they made it appear as if the breach into base's classified log files had been accomplished by hackers operating from Earth working in conjunction with Neagi personnel on the inside. So advanced was the hacking technique that it would take weeks, if not months, to trace the leak back to the Venusians, more than enough time for a Mundus mandate to have gained global momentum on Earth.

All that day and into the next, the Vs waited to see the breaking news of their leaked press release on Earth-TV, but nothing. What had gone wrong? That the transmission had been sent they were certain.

What they did not know and what was learned later when they carefully investigated the path of the file transfer was that although a 'Received' notation had been sent, the file never left the base's server. Believing an error may have occurred they tried a resend, but the same thing happened; the file became locked-down in the base's server.

What they did not know, although concluded with accuracy, was that all news and media marked files leaving the base were, 'for purposes of global security', reviewed and, if necessary, censored. Furthermore, due

to the sensitivity of some of the goings on at Neagi, there was an enforced agreement between the base and all the major news agencies to uphold the censor accord. Thus, even if they were able to somehow bypass security and get their story to press, the news agencies, under government order, would by law not be permitted to release it.

The press leak plan had been thwarted hardly before it began. Not only that but now security was on heightened alert that transgressors were afoot within the base confines.

Commander Gorbac gave the order to commence Plan B immediately.

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## **System Hack**

Having failed in this first action a second, more assertive operation was taken up.

Some three months ago, shortly after arriving at Neagi Base, Venusian technicians began working alongside Earth technicians in an effort to improve and upgrade some of the base systems with superior I-tech. During this co-op effort, the Venusians were not only reconditioning the base tech but, unbeknownst to the Earth techies, were also creating backdoors into many different areas in the system.

Working from these numerous backdoors the plan now was to hack into the command center mainframe and gain access to the operations master control codes (OMCs). These codes were the key to victory. To possess the codes was to command the base operating systems. Management of the OMCs gave one power over the base, the energy mine, the space elevator, pretty much all the entire complex. Furthermore, the I-techs had discovered that, in event of an emergency, the OMC for each system had three built-in, escalating failsafe mechanisms:

- (1) Electrical system shutdown via physical disconnect of power source turn-off
- (2) Electrical system destruct via electromagnetic pulse (EMP)
- (3) System total destruct by detonation (including nuclear explosives)

Essentially, to control the operations master codes was to control the planet.

Although the I-techs were successful at infiltrating and gaining access to numerous base systems through their pre-laid backdoors, the mainframe remained impenetrable. For three days, try as they may, even utilizing their most sophisticated hacking programs and techniques, the V-techs could not crack the base mainframe's extremely effective, layered security defenses. For all the technical work they had done in and around the base, the Ifilosian technicians had never been allowed in the command center, let alone given access to the mainframe, and hence were unable

install backdoors directly into this central system. Their efforts to use critical data transfer exchanges between secondary systems to try and bypass the mainframe's defenses had yet to yield success as there was always some oddity in the transfer protocol, or in the code, that the mainframe's security questioned and hence barred entry.

The Ifiliosians had been careful to make it appear as if the hacking was an external threat, a cyber attack originating from Earth. Such attacks were not uncommon. Attempts to hack the system were regularly made by Neagi opposition groups, terrorists, even governments who felt they had been disenfranchised from the Neagi mission. However, when it was determined that technology being used in the attack was beyond anything available on Earth, a one plus one deduction would lead directly to the Venusians being the only ones capable as such an incursion. As such, this hack attack was high risk and, needless to say, the longer it went on, the greater the chance of discovery.

Do to the possible insurrection threat, the base was already on elevated alert.

They tried to trick the system to opening up, but something in the code did not compute and they dare not extend the cyber assault longer. Any more perceived danger, especially a threat that was internal as opposed to external, could well result in a base lockdown.

They had managed to hack into the base's communication system, at least the less secure, non-private channels. The Venusians knew about two-thirds

of what was going on in and around the base as well as interplanetary transmissions. Listening in, they were already picking up chatter that the Earth-based hack was being traced and its root would soon be identified.

Given a week or so more, there was a good chance the V-techs could have broken through the defenses and gained access to the mainframe, but a new development would immediately curtail any such effort. While listening in on interplanetary transmissions it was learned the military spacecraft, Guardian, thought to arrive at Neagi in ten to twelve days, would reach the planet in just two days, maybe three days tops. They were quickly running out of time.

The pressing reality of the soon to arrive Halvard had forced their hand. Gorbac called to initiate the third, final, and boldest action. The only way to get the command codes was to get into the command center and gain physical access to the central control room itself, the most heavily protected point on Neagi. If this effort failed, all would be lost.

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## **Hard Ball**

It was a few minutes past 8 PM when Gorbac rang the doorbell to suite No. 300 in the officer's building. Moments later, the portal opened, framing

Commandant Anna Pele in the doorway. Still in uniform, she appeared relaxed if not slightly weary.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

“Forgive me, Commandant Pele, I don’t mean to trouble you at this hour,” Gorbac said in an apologetic tone “but there was a matter of some importance that could not wait.”

“Of course. Please, come in, Commander,” Anna said, her broad Brazilian smile welcoming her unexpected guest.

As Gorbac was led in, he noticed a beverage placed on the coffee table where she had been sitting on the couch in the den. For a moment he focused on it intently.

“Might I trouble you for a cup of water?” Gorbac politely asked.

“Of course. Please, have a seat and make yourself at home”, she said walking into the kitchen.

While the Commandant was drawing water from a dispenser in the kitchen, Gorbac passed in front of his host’s beverage, momentarily pausing before it before turning his attention to a glass figurine on the mantel.

Seconds later, Anna returned carrying a glass of water. She handed him the glass. “Before we get started on the topic at hand, let’s drink to the continued prosperity Earth and Neagi.” Gorbac said, coming to his feet.

“Yes, to Earth and Neagi,” Commandant Pele said, picking up her beverage from the coffee table, “here, here”. The two tinged glasses and toasted to their respective native worlds.

“I’ve come to discuss Mundus”, Gorbac said, his tone becoming more serious. “I’ve grave concerns for Earth’s future.”

“Yes, as do I, but I firmly believe Earth’s leaders capable of making the best decision in the Mundus matter. I want to help...I...I...”, Pele stuttered, unable to complete her sentence. Rather suddenly, the Commandant felt her head felt heavy, like a stone, as it rolled loosely around neck muscles becoming flaccid. Teetering slightly, she began to lose her balance.

“Commandant Pele, are you alright?” as he helped set her down on the couch just as her eyes rolled back in her head. Gorbac snapped his fingers before her face and gave her shoulders a steady shake, but the Commandant stirred not. She was out. He quickly checked the woman’s vitals. Pulse and breathing were slightly elevated, but not of major concern.

Activating his communicator, Gorbac texted five numbers, ‘7’, ‘1’, ‘3’, ‘6’, and ‘4’. ‘71364’ was code for, ‘Target down. Drug success. No complications. Initiate security countermeasures. Begin target move.’ The code



was received by the three Venusians accomplices waiting in a vehicle on a side street close to the building. Having received the coded message, the three moved to do their respective parts in the abduction of the base Commandant.

Anna Pele was in a semi-conscious, drug-induced state when the Ifiliosian commander's co-conspirator arrived at the doorway wheelchair before him. Unable to control her muscle function and loose as a goose, Pele had to be lifted and placed in the wheelchair.

A second accessory gave signal that the hallway was clear and smuggling the base chief out through a side exit, the trio absconded the building into a waiting vehicle. The compromised security camera's had been made to play in an infinite loop, so all a wary watchperson saw on the video cams was empty hallways as the abductors exited the building with their snatched prize.

Now that they had the base commandant, the plan was to use Pele to gain entry to the command center, or, if necessary storm it by force. Once within, they would neutralize any defenders.

After securing the facility, Commandant Pele would be administered a powerful psychoactive truth serum drug, one they had acquired during the seed pod salvage. Under the influence of the drug, the base chief would be coaxed to give up the security passwords that would grant them access to the command center's central control room. Having penetrated the inner sanctum, the

Venusians were confident they could use their advanced tech to access the master command codes (MCC).

Once in possession of the MCC, the Venusians would then have complete control over all major operations on Neagi including the base, the mining complex, the space elevator, farming operations, and all major supporting facilities, as well as other critical equipment, robots, centers, and functions. From this position of power, Commander Gorbac and his band would essentially be in control of the planet.

Shortly after exiting the residential building with their drugged prisoner, their utility box truck neared command center located at the front end of the base. All was going according to plan. However, as the armed group approached the command center and was preparing to disembark, sirens suddenly burst forth in screeching protest.

Gorbac's natural reaction was that somehow the abduction must have already been found out. A short distance from the command center, within their vehicle the now interlopers watched with distress as corrugated, solid iron shutters lowered over windows. Heavily armed, stern-eyed guards appeared at the entrance, weapons drawn, scouting for threat. Without the element of surprise, attempting to storm the command center now would be suicidal. No, they would have to decamp and to do so quickly as it would only be a matter of minutes now before the base went into lockdown mode.

Those responding to the alarm believed this was just another surprise drill, as such drills were not uncommon. Security personnel were yet unaware of the abduction. Nonetheless, all involved in these practice maneuvers were instructed to take them seriously and play their part accordingly.

What no one knew was that thirty seconds earlier, the drugged Commandant, despite her intoxicated, muzzy, carefree state was still just barely cognizant enough to realize something was not quite right with the milieu. Instinctively, her thumb had located the tiny button on the inside band of her wedding ring. Pressing her thumb hard to a dot of a protuberance on the ring for two seconds triggered security systems, and sounded a base-wide alarm, as well as put out a personal distress signal.

As part of the security team, Indus also responds to the alarm. He quickly gathers his gear, snatches up his weapon and is out the door. Outside his building he procures a public utility vehicle and expeditiously proceeds to his assigned post and duty which was to protect the command center. In lieu of his current suspicions with concern to a possible Venusian plot, Indus could not help but suspect this alarm might be more than just a drill.

When those responsible for organizing these practice drills realized that none among them had authorized this exercise, and when they were unable to get in contact with the Commandant Pele to see if she had called for the drill, they aptly concluded that rather than a rehearsal maneuver this was, in fact, the real thing.

The base was immediately moved to 'condition lockdown'.

Realizing their plan had been foiled, Gorbac aborted the mission on the spot. Moving as quickly as they dared without drawing attention to themselves the now endangered group scuttled to abscond the base before the perimeter gates locked and trapping them within. They were only a short distance from the front gate and not seeing any security as they approached, the driver accelerated hard. Red lights were already flashing on the front gate posts indicating the lockdown was about to happen. They were not more than a few seconds out of the front entrance when the gates locked sealing the perimeter.

Searchlights caught the speeding vehicle in their cross-crossing beams briefly before the speeding truck was lost in the darkness beyond the base.

Once outside the Neagi Base the exfiltrators sped at speed towards the extraction point. They made good time, arriving at the aerospaceport in under six minutes.

As they approached the aviation complex they could see security lights and searchlights in the distance illuminating the dark. It was evident the aerospaceport was on high alert. 400 meters (one-quarter mile) out, Gorbac had the driver pull off the road and he observed the goings on at the airbase with binoculars. At the main entrance, armed guards conducted security checks while robots inspected vehicles and security cameras monitored everything. They certainly were not going to get in through the front door.

Switching the truck to all-terrain drive they went off-road. Across rugged terrain, from an unsighted direction, Slowly they made their way to the distant flight complex. Their diverted course skirted the un-walled and fenceless complex on a route that took them away from all the activity at the front entrance. At length, they came upon to a poorly lit section of the perimeter not covered by security cameras and unattended. Here in this dark, unused section of landing/takeoff zone they crossed the boundary line demarcating the airfield and drove onto the facility grounds unnoticed. Minutes later they had traversed the vacated zone and had moved to the central terminal. With all manner of vehicles about tasks on the runways and terminal, the Venusian's truck readily blended in without drawing notice.

Once on the air base grounds, a GPS beacon guided them into a location where several aircraft were parked, assumedly their designated evac craft one amongst them. As they approach this docking-service area, Gorbac texts, '331' and watches the string of planes for a reply. Towards the end of the line of planes, from the cockpit of an enormous aircraft appear two, quick green light flashes, followed by a pause, then two more green flashes. This signals the commandeered aircraft is secured, ready and 'Set-Go' for disembarkation.

The party of fugitives quickly and furtively boarded the parked craft via an awning equipped, passenger boarding stair truck which is in already in position.

Immediately after having passed through the passenger entry door, Commandant Pele is patted down and

scanned for any electronics she may have on her person. The electronics scanner wand is of Ifiliosian make, detects the 'safe ring' that activated the base alarm and now doubt was leading security forces to this location this very minute. In a second, the ring is briskly removed from her finger and disabled.

Confident she is clean, Pele is securely bound, loosely gagged, sedated and moved into a locked holding area within the aircraft's cargo hull with six other hostages all of whom were as compromised as she. The hostages included four personnel who had been tending the plane at the time it was commandeered and two pilots who had been lured onto the aircraft under the pretense that their professional opinions were required regarding technical matters concerning flight control software.

The appropriated plane, the Condor A-2, was an enormous transport plane of the same make and model of the aircraft used for the rescue and recovery mission, the Halvard.

With all parties aboard, the plane that had been silently resting in the apron area, starts its electromotor taxiing engines, moves to the runway, and, turbines whining to life, prepares for takeoff.

The taxiing plane now revving its engines at a time when all aircraft were supposed to remain grounded did not go unnoticed. "Condor A-2, you are unauthorized for takeoff. Please taxi to the terminal", came the message from the control tower.

“Sorry mission control, please repeat. Transmission garbled. Message unclear”, came the V-pilot’s delayed reply buying seconds as the plane’s engines revved to takeoff speed.

“I repeat, Condor A-2, you are unauthorized for takeoff. Return to terminal immediately” came a second, more urgent order.

This time there is no response as supercharged turbine engines begin to propel the craft down the takeoff runway. As security vehicles race down the runway to intercept and blockade the plane, the aircraft reaches liftoff speed. Its front wheels break contact with the runway pavement and seconds later the gargantuan bird is terra firma free.

“Condor A-2, you have not been cleared for flight. Return to base,” the control tower signaled to the irregular aircraft, and then repeated, “Condor A-2, you are not cleared for flight. Land immediately or you will be forced down.”

Ninety seconds later, having cleared the base and gained a degree of altitude Commander Mikl hailed the control tower. His message of warning was not only to the aerospace defense forces but also to the Neagi Base security team whom he knew would be waiting for this video call. “We have Base Commandant Pele and several other captives. Do not attempt to intercept, pursue, or track us, or hostages will be executed. I repeat, do not engage or hostages will die”, came Commander Mikl’s deadly clear message. The live video feed shifted from Commander Mikl to a man wearing a

black balaclava and holding a high caliber handgun. The armed man stood in front of the group of bound, gagged, and now head-bagged hostages who were seated on the floor and lined up against the wall of the plane's cargo area.

Minutes later, as the Condor A-2 sped across the strait in a northerly direction towards the mainland, the radar technician picked up a plane in pursuit. "Commander, there are two, cloaked, armed aircraft following at steady a distance of 5 km (3 miles)."

Mikl's response to the aerospace base was prompt and direct. "There are two aircraft tailing us. You were ordered not to pursue this craft. Apparently, you are not taking us seriously. Take a good, hard look at what happens when you disobey orders. Do a hostage" said Gorbach, his voice like a knife.

A minute later, the live video feed showed a large Venusian in a balaclava, likely Dachs, manhandling a head-bagged captive in one hand and waving a hefty handgun in the other. The hostage was in a loose jumpsuit and because the captive's head was covered it was not possible to identify who the individual was. In the seconds that followed, the prisoner was unceremoniously cracked off the side of the head with the handle of the pistol and forced to their knees. Then, the gun muzzle was pressed to the side of the hostage's bagged head and discharged point blank. In the next second, the body went limp crumpling lifeless to the floor.



So sudden and brutal had the scene of violence been that it shocked virtually all onlookers. Even the combat soldiers present in the room, hardened to death by gun, were taken aback by the harshness of the execution. From the Neagi base command center, Indus watched the sickening scene disbelieving the friendly, warm-hearted man he knew as Gorbac was capable of such savagery.

The screen switched back to Gorbach who spoke authoritatively, “Now, call back your planes and disable any tracking devices aboard this craft. Do it, or another hostage will die. You have sixty seconds. 59, 58, 57...” In the next five seconds the pursuing planes broke off and reversed direction, and in less than 10 seconds the tracking device indicator that was blipping disappeared off the security countermeasure screen.

“So, you do know how to listen. Good. Now if we can stay on the same page, no one else needs to die”, Gorbac said, somewhat haughtily and not without disdain.

“All further communications will be relayed on channel 14. Keep this line free and open at all time. Note that this comms channel is outbound only so you will not be able to contact us. What you will do now is to inform UN Madame Secretary Fawning of the situation here. Have her alert and link to as many of Earth’s leaders as she can in the next 60 minutes. You have one hour to assemble an Earth UN delegation. Wait for our communication on channel 14. Do you fools copy?” Gorbac said, wanting to make sure his instructions were received and understood.

His message had been received.

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Precisely sixty minutes later, in a soundproof UN video conference room, the communications console beeped indicating an incoming message from Neagi Base. Those in assembly, UN Madame Secretary and several national leaders accompanied by generals, and a handful of other powers heavily vested in Mission Venus who had managed to gather on short notice, waited in anxious attendance.

A video connection between worlds having been established, UN Madame Secretary Fawning speaks first. Her stance is hardline. “Commander Mikl and collaborators, your current acts are in violation of Earth law, Neagian law, and interplanetary law and are hereby under arrest” You will be taken into custody, tried in a court of law where you shall be held accountable for these criminal and terrorist actions. You are ordered to release all hostages, lay down your arms and surrender yourselves into the custody of base security immediately. Failure to comply promptly will result in aggressive action being taken. What have you to say for yourselves?” UN Madame Secretary said firmly, her tone surprisingly controlled despite the tenseness of the situation.

A roughly two-minute pause follows as her message transmits some 170 million km (106 million miles) across the space separating the planets.

“We, the upholders of Mundus, hold you accountable in the wanton desecration of your precious planet, in the abuse of its resources, in your failure to unify and make peace. In a hundred ways you are guilty of crimes against humanity. We, the supporters of Mundus, say those responsible for Earth shall be held accountable for such heinous acts against the global community”, Commander Mikl retorted, his eyes showing fury. “You, the leaders of Earth, have failed to grasp, or simply ignore, the gravity of situation both Earth and Neagi face. By failing to enact Mundus you threaten the destruction of two planets and every living creature on these worlds. Dare not label as terrorists, criminals or the like, we who would die to save two planets from destruction and preserve the human species against extinction. It is you, leaders of nations of Earth in your failure to unify, in your greed fueled competitions for economic supremacy, in your selfish unwillingness to sacrifice, in your rape and destruction of nature, who commit terrorist acts against your world, in your ignorant blindness to see the cataclysm, who commit crimes against all peoples of the world.”

“Despite promises made you have failed to move forward with Mundus, let alone begin to implement it in any significant way, nor, as I have learned, have you any intention to do so. It is your own unjust acts that have brought this fight.”

“The time of reason and pleading has now since passed. We shall talk nor beg no more”, Gorbac asserts definitively, the placid scientist transformed into warring general. “Do not doubt our resolve in this

matter or the severity with which we are prepared to employ to achieve our objective. Behold, a demonstration of but a small part of the power at our command.”

“Bring up grid coordinate H-17”, the screen flashed to an image of a multi-story, abandoned building under construction on the outskirts of the base. “Detonate grid coordinate H-17”, came Gorbac’s issued command. Multiple explosions ripped through the building. Seconds later the infrastructure crumpled to the ground in a heap of rubble.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

“Take heed. Throughout the entire base complex, and the mining facility, explosives have been planted by hacked labor robots and androids operating under our control”, the commander pronounced authoritatively.

“Now, the mine. Disable tunnel Shaft 5.2E.” the commander ordered continuing his demonstration of devastation.

The screen image switched from Gorbac’s stern visage to images of a mine shaft at the mining facility. Here, deep within the earth, under conditions deemed too dangerous for human workers, all manner of remotely operated machinery and construction robots ceaselessly

toiled. The robotic laborers bore into the bedrock extracting the precious energy catalyst mineral known as vis-88. Earth desperately needed vis-88 to power its voracious industrial engine and to keep its ravenous world economy running and afloat.

Working on her laptop, the Venusian technician zoomed in on an enormous, heavy equipment drilling vehicle at work in the mine. The digger's numerous robotic appendages were performing various functions all aimed at extracting the invaluable mineral vis-88 from the tunnel wall. Having gained control of the vehicle, the V-tech typed in a command. Upon receiving its new task instruction, the machine ceased its current operation and traveled across the tunnel to a new spot adjacent to the tunnel's main support beam. The V-tech entered another command and the robotic work vehicle's primary, heavy duty drill came spinning to life with a high pitched whine. Next, the drill pressed its tip to the central support beam and began to bore.

“Get control of that digger!” the new base commandant ordered watching the event take place with widened eyes.

His fingers furiously flying over the keyboard and multiple touch screens, the service technician in charge of remotely overseeing mine operations worked desperately to try to override the current command and regain control of the vehicle but failed to do so. “Sir, I have no control over that vehicle. It appears to be operating under a separate task program.”

Seconds later, the machine's drill split the joist. A crackling sound could be heard as the main support beam buckled and gave way. The cave-in that followed buried the tunnel, crushing everything within beneath untold tonnage of earth, rubble, and boulders. Shaft 5.2E, a high yielding tunnel that had taken more than two years to dig, had been buried and knocked out of commission in less than two minutes.

Replacing images of the collapsed tunnel, Gorbac's commanding face reappeared. "Just as we controlled that piece of mining machinery, we've also hacked many of your systems in and around the base and can control them remotely at will."

"Furthermore, we have a Venusian weapon at our disposal possessed of such destructive power that you can only begin to comprehend. You have no defense against it and, unleashed, it will obliterate your forces."

"Heed well my foe; though we are few in number we are great in force. Doubt not, we are well prepared to wage war."

An interlude of several minutes proceeded before the next transmission was received from Earth.

"We don't want war. If you release the hostages and stand down all charges present against you and your force with regards to this incident will be dropped." Fawning said, in an effort to negotiate, cognizant now of the power confronting them and coming to grips with the position they were in.

“And what of Mundus’s instatement?” Gorbac queried, addressing the real matter at hand for the Venusians.

“Mundus adoption shall proceed”, she said careful of her words and then added, “as nations come to agreement regarding adoption of the doctrine.”

“Lies. No. Your actions and admissions to this point, as well as recent information I have learned, speak of an agenda not intent on change. There will be no more indecision, no more stalling, no more deceit. The time for talk is done. You will meet our demands or, by the testimony of our witnessed demonstrations and other means, Neagi will meet its end.”

“We are sending our demands to you now. The file is titled, ‘Mundus Directive-1’. Upon reception of the file, open it, scroll to its end, and acknowledge that the entire document is intelligible.” Gorbac said, not wanting there to be any excuse for ambiguity or confusion regarding the comprehensibility of the contents.

Some four minutes passed before a reply was received. “Yes, the whole file is readable and understandable.”

“You will have, 30 hrs, until noon on the second day following this day, to offer consideration to our demands. The demands are non-negotiable. Accept them and there will be peace. Reject them and there will be war. If you choose war, your Neagi mission will be no more.”

“Over the next 30 hours, we are well aware you will be able to locate and disarm a good many of our explosives, as well as regain control of some of your hacked systems and support robots, but, rest assured, your best efforts will not be enough, not nearly enough, to win this battle. Despite our few numbers, doubt not, we are well-equipped to wage war. We, who stand proudly before you are prepared to die and will fight to the bitter end.”

“Be forewarned, violation of our space will be regarded as a hostile act and response will be accordingly. If, during this period, if any of your flag attempt to assault this craft, or we detect incoming missiles aimed at this ship, we will we will execute all hostages and unleash our weaponry in all its destructive malevolence. You will adhere to this formal respite and maintain your distance, or the thirty-hour truce is defunct.”

“As do you, we hope to end this affair without further conflict and before there is an escalation, but if you do not yield nor shall we. This difference can end in one of two ways; peaceable and easy or violent and hard. Reject our peaceable terms and the refusal will be taken as a declaration of war...a war of worlds. If no word is received before the designated time, be prepared to suffer our attack anytime thereafter” Gorbac said, making sure there was no question of their intent.

“You have borne witnessed to but a small demonstration of the destructive might that we can bring to bear. You will meet our demands or we will destroy Neagi Base, the energy mines, the space elevator, everything. At noon, Neagi time, on the second day following this day, be prepared to receive our



message on this channel. You have 30 hours to make your decision, a decision that shall decide the future and fate of two worlds.” His eyes were unyielding determined

At that, the screen went dark.

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Indus was amongst those in the present council chamber who had heard the issuance of the ultimatum. So, his gut feeling that Venusians were a camarilla had been correct all along. Also, the intel assessment report that an insurgency was at afoot on had also been correct, except that instead of earth-based conspirators, the insurgents were the Venusians.

Perturbed by the current events, Indus’s thoughts turned to Nobira, the woman he loved, the woman who had now become his enemy.

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## 9. PEACE OR WAR

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Thirty hours later, at the hour of noon, channel 14 opened and, as a line of transmission was established, the video screen in the UN Council Chamber sparked to life.

All across the globe, the world's leaders were glued to their conference screens which were tied into the UN's main video teleconference hall.

The critical moment of decision had arrived. Would there be peace or would there be war?

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“Leaders of Earth, you know our demands. What say you; do you accept or reject our ultimatum?” were the first words Goral spoke, without ado. Commander Mikl appeared, stern-faced, of serious intent, and evidently wearied and stressed by the lines that crossed his brow. “What is Earth's decision? One word, ‘peace’ or ‘war’?”

As they waited for a decision, hearts pounded with bated breath. They thought of loved ones, of their own lives, and they prayed. Soldiers on both sides grasped their weapons ready to spring into action at moment's order or, perchance, to die where they stood without even firing a shot. The silent pause was stifling in those

two minutes Earth's reply was transmitted across the vastness of space.

The decision had at last come. The UN Neagi Council's proclamation was...

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## **Demands of Settlement**

The principle demands were outlined as follows.

- Terms and Conditions For the Surrender of Neagi /Venus -

Earth agrees:

- To the unconditional surrender of Neagi
- To relinquish the operational control codes for Neagi base including any and all passwords to self-destruct mechanisms.
- To present the Ifileosians with a deed of ownership to Neagi. This deed will signed by all nations. Planetary ownership includes Neagi and all the planet's resources, natural and otherwise, human-made constructions, and the orbiting space station. Deed of ownership shall preside for 100 years. After 100 years, Neagi ownership

shall be seceded to Earth, only under condition that Earth has proven itself worthy of the responsibility of such ownership. If during the 100 year period, Earth has failed to prove itself capable of such possession, Neagi will remain the property of the Ifileosians.

- To recede complete jurisdiction over the planet to the Ifileosians and to accept the Ifileosians, and only the Ifileosians, as the ruling party of Neagi for 100 years. The jurisdiction and governance of Neagi shall be seceded to Earth after 100 years, only under condition that Earth has proven itself worthy of the responsibility of such governance. If during the 100 year period, Earth has failed to prove itself capable of such ruling power, Neagi will remain under the jurisdiction of the Ifileosians.

- To sign a treaty of peace with Neagi to be honored in perpetuity including:

- \* Maintain no military presence on Neagi, or within two million miles of the planet
- \* The building of long-range weapons having a range exceeding two-hundred thousand miles shall be prohibited.
- \* Relinquishment of the space battle cruiser, *Halvard*, which shall become the property of the Ifileosians.
- \* The building interplanetary military spacecraft shall be prohibited.
- \* The weaponizing of Iffiosian scitec is strictly prohibited.

- To present Mundus to the world and make such provision that the peoples of all nations can vote on

whether to accept or reject Mundus in full or in part. The world's people, not the world's rulers, shall decide if whether Mundus is a solution that meets their needs.

In preparation for this global Mundus vote, a worldwide educational program shall be made readily available to all peoples. As well as presenting Mundus in depth, education topics will include Venus Hirstory and Earth and Venus parallel hirstories.

All nations must agree to honor the outcome of the majority vote and agree to adopt Mundus if the vote calls to do so.

- To reverse, drop, and otherwise pardon all charges, against all Ifileosians involved in the uprising on Neagi. From this day forth, the uprising on Neagi shall be stricken from the legal records and hold no negative bearing on future relations between our peoples and planets.

The heretofore terms stated are non-negotiable.

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In exchange for meeting the stated demands, the Ifileosians and the United World Republic of Neagi agree:

- To supply Earth with all its energy needs for 100 years (at 20% below market value)
- To promote fair trade, commerce, and economic development between the two planets

- To share select science and technology, providing that such science and technology not be militarized or used in an uncontrolled or otherwise irresponsible manner
- To assist Earth in paying down, and paying off, the debt of Mission Venus/Neagi by means of steeply discounted energy prices and favorable interplanetary trade and commerce.
- To make provision for immigration from Earth to Neagi (subject to limitation)
- To maintain a treaty of peace with Earth, including an agreement not construct interplanetary warcraft or long-range weapons having a strike capability exceeding two-hundred thousand miles. The Halvard shall be decommissioned, but not disarmed.
- To honor the outcome of the Earth's worldwide Mundus vote. If the Earth global vote is against adopting Mundus, the Ifileosians and United World Republic of Neagi shall honor such outcome and will not penalize or sanction Earth with respect to interplanetary energy provision, commerce, trade, or science and technology exchange as stated in the agreement.

Such are the terms of surrender. Should Earth break the heretofore Agreement in any way, Neagi shall not be bound by its agreement to Earth.

The Ifileosians were demanding much. Essentially, their ultimatum specified for complete ownership and jurisdiction of the entire planet for 100 years, a planet that Earth had spent the last 80 years and all its resources bringing back to life. But if Earth did not relinquish control of Neagi, they risked obliteration of their creation.

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## **To Fight or To Yield**

With two planets at stake, the control of Neagi and the critical upkeep of the Earth, the decision whether to fight or to give into the demands was not an easy one to reach. Giving up the operational codes essentially meant giving up Neagi and all its assets. However, if they did not give them up, and the Ifileosians blew the mine, Earth would lose the energy supply it so desperately needed to keep Earth's world economy and civilization from collapsing.

There was no easy answer and the argument to secede or to fight waged back and forth with all the world's leaders weighing their persuasive stance on the matter.

- *Could Earth rebuild the Neagi facilities in the necessary time frame if the Ifileosians destroyed them?* If the Ifileosians destroyed all the key facilities on Neagi, as they claimed they would and could, would Earth be able to muster the resources needed to rebuild and, if so,

would they be able to rebuild in time? The answer to this question was, 'maybe' they could rebuild, but it would likely take 20 years, quite possibly longer, and that was given Earth was able to locate a new large energy mine on Neagi, something which they had not been successful doing yet. Without Neagi's fuel input bolstering the Earth economy, as it currently was, a rebuilding project may be an economic impossibility. Earth's fossil fuel reserves were already at a critical level and would likely drop to as low as 1-2% over the next 20-25 yrs. Could Earth afford to take such a risk?

- *Could a special maneuver overcome the Ifileosians?*  
Could some tactic, special operations group, or covert action be employed to take the Ifileosians off guard and defeat them?

Here, various scenarios were played out for several SOG missions, but in the end, the best of them were given only a low probability of success. Such bold courses of action would be high risk.

- *Which side held military superiority?*

The Neagi base fighting force outnumbered the Ifileosians by more than 10 to 1 and it was far better armed and equipped so Earth held the clear advantage with respect to force size. Compound this strength with the arrival of the state-of-the-art Halvard space battle cruiser and its 300 elite soldiers, in 72 hours and Earth's fighting force was clearly superior.

In the Ifileosians favor, it was now confirmed a notable percentage of Neagi's technology systems have



been hacked and compromised, significantly weakening Neagi's overall offensive and defensive capabilities.

Then there were the explosives. The true extent of their demolitions subterfuge - how many explosives they had planted and where they had been placed - has yet to be determined. Bomb squads had already located and defused several devices but they could only reach so many in 29 hours and counting.

But the big question was the mysterious, deadly secret weapon the Ifileosians supposedly possessed, a weapon against which they claimed there was no defense.

The Halvard was still three days out from Neagi. If the Neagian forces engaged the Ifileosians could they hold out for three days until the Halvard firepower and reinforcements arrived or would they, and the base, be wiped out in the face of this special weapon?

Bottom line: Direct military engagement involved a high-degree of risk.

- *Were the Ifileosians bluffing?*

Did the Ifileosians truly possess an advanced weapon capable of 'obliterating' Neagi's defense forces or was this merely a ploy to coerce surrender? "A Ifileosian weapon will be unleashed upon you that you can barely begin to comprehend", they had threatened. The question here was, did they actually possess the weaponry they had claimed. Although they had shown science far beyond anything Earth currently possessed, they had never actually demonstrated anything.

Although it was reasoned, if they were to make show of their secret weapon, countermeasure may be developed against it. If they were bluffing, if they did not actually

possess such means of destruction, then their coup attempt could likely be stopped.

However, if in fact, they did have a weapon, it had to be assumed they would deploy it maximally. The abduction of the base commandant, the destruction of the mine, the theft of the aircraft, the bombing of the building, the pitiless killing of a hostage, they had demonstrated hard resolve. Furthermore, such determined actions strongly indicated they would destroy the Neagi base and everything else if pressed to do so as they declared they would.

• *Could the Ifileosians be trusted to honor their end of the agreement?*

Their demands were not entirely beyond reason if the Ifileosians upheld their end of the bargain. The Ifileosians seemed reasonable, and had, up until this affair, conducted themselves in an entirely civil, law-abiding manner, but with so much at stake could their word be taken in good faith? In reality, once in possession of the master command codes and the self-destruct keys they would be in control and could do essentially whatever they pleased regardless of what Earth said or did. Could they be trusted with such responsibility?

If Earth met the Ifileosian demands the ordeal would end. On the other hand, if they did not give in to the dictate, went to war, and defeated the Ifileosians, Earth would control Neagi and could run it however it pleased. As rulers of the planet, all monies earned from the substantial Neagian economy would go directly into

Earth's needy coffers. This massive income stream would transform Earth from a world teetering on the brink of economic collapse to a world that would experience a period of progress and growth unprecedented in the annals of its history.

Beyond fiduciary reasons, there were more than a few involved in this decision, those who either did not understand or agree with Mundus, that held an unyielding position that under no circumstances should Earth secede Neagi. It was unacceptable, yes, insufferable even, that Earth should give up that it had toiled so long and hard to achieve and had only just begun to reap the benefits from. Earth had brought this dead rock back to life and by this birthright relinquishment ownership was insufferable. Who were these Ifileosian scum who would attempt to steal Earth's rightful property? How dare they propose to dictate terms to those who had brought them back from the dead and saved their lives.

Such were some of the numerous deliberations given to the decision soon at hand.

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## **Pressured Decision**

Point for point, back and forth the debate waged, all parties weighing in on what they believed to be the best course of action given the circumstances and situation.

A decision would need to be reached in short order as the hour of decision would soon be upon them. Up until the last minutes the debate waged on, then, come the eleventh hour, the final vote was cast.

Commander Mikl appeared, stern-faced, of serious intent, evidently wearied and stressed by the lines that crossed his brow. “What is Earth’s decision? One word, ‘war’ or ‘peace’?”

Hearts pounding with bated breath, thinking of loved ones, of their own lives, praying, soldiers on both sides grasped their weapons ready to spring to action at moment’s order or, perchance, to die where they stood without even firing a shot. The silent pause was stifling in those two minutes Earth’s reply was transmitted across the vastness of space.

The decision had at last come. The UN Neagi Council’s proclamation was... ‘*Peace*’. “Your terms have been accepted unequivocally.” Madame Secretary pronounced, though not without a hint failure of in her tone.

On both sides, a great sigh of relief resonated. So great had the tension and fear been, with their lives on the line, that some, as hard as they were, broke into tears. War, a war of the worlds, had been avoided.

Ultimately, Earth’s decision had come down to one of risk vs. reward. In this case, the majority had ruled the reward of maintaining total ownership and control of Neagi was not worth the risk of losing the base and Earth’s energy supply. To lose the battle would mean

the destruction of Neagi Base-1, the mining complex, and the space elevator. Should these main facilities be destroyed, Neagi Mission scientists calculated it would take at least 20 hard years of non-stop rebuilding to get back to where they were today. During this twenty plus year period, Earth's total remaining fossil fuel energy supplies would have dwindled to less than five percent. Fierce competition for control of the remaining reserves amongst large and small powers alike would cause regional conflicts and could well spark world war. No, this was simply too much risk to take.

In the final analysis, the stake had been considered too great to warrant the risk of defeat in uncertain battle. Earth's global economy hung in the balance and with it the continuity of civilization. Without the energy and essential resource shipments from Neagi, within ten years, quite possibly even within five, Earth would all but come apart at the seams. Economic breakdown would quickly lead to social breakdown. No, the chance of losing the principle energy source that now powered their world was a risk simply too great to take.

“The master command codes and self-destruct passwords shall be transferred immediately per your request”, said UN Madame Secretary, still not one hundred percent resigned to the monumental action she was about to enact.

“Send them at once, please. Upon possession, verification and activation of the codes and passwords, the truce, and terms of the Earth-Neagi agreement will become effective.”

The received codes and passwords were verified as valid and operational. With possession of the codes, the Ifileosians were now in control of the base, space elevator, mining facility, the orbital space station and all other critical planet command and operations systems. For all intents and purposes, the planet was now essentially and effectively under Ifileosian charge.

‘Victory! At long last, victory! Ifilios is saved and, perchance, Earth as well!’, Gorbac thought. He turned his eyes upward and raised his arms to the heavens, an uncontrolled, unabashed, broad smile of satisfaction lighting his face.

Under free, just, unified, peaceful reign of Mundus, Neagi would be sustained and the human species preserved. Life in our solar system would endure. Indeed, this decided day Neagi has come under Ifileosian rule and Mundus order is the day of the greatest victory in the history of humankind.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

And it was a victory made all the sweeter being one that came without the need for immense destruction, mass casualties, and death. So it came to pass, that an interplanetary war of worlds had been fought and won without a single fatality. Not one life had been wasted to war.

But what of the captive personnel on the plane that had been brutally shot dead in the head? Shortly after the treaty had gone into effect, it was revealed that no hostage had been executed. The head-bagged captive that was witnessed being shot was, in actuality, an android. The android had been dressed as a base personnel. Ketchup and assorted condiments had taped to the side of its head.

Had the Ifileosian's bluffed? Did they actually possess the secret weapon they claimed would defeat the Earthers? This is a story for another day, but on this day, if bluff they had, their bluff had won.

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## 10. BEGINNINGS

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[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Per joint order of the UN Mission Neagi Council and the UN Security Council, active immediately, all Neagian security and military personnel, including those aboard military spacecraft Halvard, were hereby ordered to stand down and surrender their arms. They were instructed to file to a holding center where they would wait for deportation to Earth.

Personnel serving in non-military and non-security capacities that wished to stay on Neagi were permitted to do so under provision that they agree to the new rule of order and swore a pledge to uphold Mundus. Earth workers understood their performance would be evaluated regularly and an individual could be deported at any time should it be determined he or she was not up to standard.

Upon being introduced to Mundus, fully three-fourths of the current Neagi Base staff, some 1500 personnel, were found to be overwhelmingly in support of the plan. These personnel were permitted to stay on base in the capacity of their current duties under condition of periodic review. In an effort to prevent possible future insurrection, the months that followed would see each and every Earth worker undergo an extensive evaluation to determine if their loyalty was truly with Mundus.

The remaining twenty-five percent of the labor force, those of whom were either possessed of conflicting



viewpoints or outright opposed to Mundus, including those who unreservedly disputed to the takeover of Neagi, were earmarked for deportation to Earth.

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Through the entirety of the siege ordeal, Indus and Nobira had longed for one another, both wishing that the two sides would reach an amicable resolution for peace, while fearing the worst in war.

After the base had fallen, Nobira assumed Indus was amongst the Earthers in the holding compound waiting to be deported. Knowing that she may never see him again once he had been expelled from Neagi, the morose Nobira repeatedly tried to gain entry to the detention facility. However, no visitation was permitted in this secured, off-limits area and though she tried to get word to him through various means her efforts were to no avail.

Eight days after the secession of Neagi, a routine space transport cargo craft arrived at the planet's space station. Four days after arrival, six days ahead of schedule, the ship took off with a greatly reduced energy shipment, its cargo holds retrofitted to accommodate roughly one-thousand deportees.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

That same day, when a downcast Nobira answered a call from an unknown number she could hardly believe it when she heard Indus's voice. When he next told her he had been granted a temporary Neagi visa and that he was still on Neagi, the elated Norbira felt like a captive songbird that had been released from its cage. The two made plans to meet.

Why wasn't Indus on the ship back to Earth? Being classed as security/military personnel, he was not amongst those allowed to remain Neagi and was scheduled for deportation. What had happened?

Indus was now a different man of a different mind from when he first arrived on Neagi. Nobira's teachings, his awakening experience in Haven, his deeper comprehension of the motivations of the powers that be on Earth; all these understandings had caused him to open his eyes awaken to a more accurate worldview, a greater truth based on the survival of humanity. His primary mission, rather than with Earth, now lay in the protection of Neagi and the fulfillment of Mundus, Indus was set on remaining on planet. He told himself he would do whatever it took, within the law, to make this happen.

Pleading he be given a chance, he appealed his extradition. After undergoing an intensive assessment, which included extended questioning, three face-to-face

interviews, and a polygraph examination, Indus was granted a six-month probationary stay. A handful of other security trusted personnel, those who also passed the assessment examination, were likewise offered a similar deal.

Immediately upon completing his visa procedures and having his personal belongings returned to him, including his communicator, he contacted Nobira.

The following day, the two rendezvoused at the cliffs overlooking the sea. Upon sight, they rushed into one another's arms and fused together in deep, lasting kiss. Ever so happily reunited, the lovers walked carefree along escarpment above the shore. At length, they arrived upon a spot of extraordinary scenery and here they sat and rested. Looking out on the clear, calm blue waters, they held each other close and melded with the beauty about them, basking in each other's love.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Soon they would wed and babe they would beget. Their child, the first interplanetary human conception in history, would be born unto a bright new world; unified, at peace, free, a world of great opportunity with much hope for a safe, secure, progressive future. Great

comfort was theirs knowing the precious being they brought into this world would have a good life raised under the wise, peaceful, safe guidance of Mundus.

To symbolize the eternity of their togetherness, he presented her with an infinity necklace, draping it about her nape. How perfect this moment. The Tao was here and with Mundus as steward, hither the Tao would remain.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Indus looked skyward, wishing well upon his first home and hoping beyond hope the living jewel that was Earth, and all its denizens would survive such uncertain future drawing ever near.

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As the fitful story of Neagi's passage to Mundus came to an end, another story of equally great consequence had just begun. Per order of the Neagi-Earth Peace Agreement, Mundus would be put to worldwide vote on Earth. The Mundus Directive had been pushed to the forefront of Earth's global agenda and would now receive the attention it duly deserved. Would the world choose to enact or reject Mundus? The outcome of this

vote would decide the fate of planet Earth and all its good peoples.

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**~ EPILOG(S) ~**

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As mandated in the terms of surrender, a global vote would be taken as whether or not Earth would adopt the Mundus solution. Rather than being a ballot based solely on the determinations of nation's leaders, the vote would be put forth to all the world's peoples. It was the people's world, and, as such, it was their right to decide their future.

So that the peoples of Earth would understand the issue upon which they were voting, the documentary, *BEGINNING TO END - A History of Ifileos Civilization*, was aired worldwide. The twelve-part series, plus numerous supporting episodes, took the audience from Ifileos's beginning to its fateful end.

Prior to ballots being cast, *BEGINNING TO END* ran continuously, 24 hours a day, for thirty days straight. Translated into every language, the documentary was broadcast worldwide on television networks, online, and an all-audio version over radio networks. In addition, discussions and debates, both closed and open, moderated and un-moderated, were held. Both sides of all issues, pros and cons, were represented as fairly as possible. Needless to say, by the time had come to cast the ballot, individuals were well informed and prepared to make an educated vote.

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, February 2, 3, and 4, in the year 2089, the decision was put forth before the people of Earth to adopt, or reject, the Mundus. On these three days, 92% of the world's eligible voters, an unprecedented eight billion persons, turned out to cast their ballot. Over the next two days, the ballots were tabulated. On Monday, February 7, 2089, at 12 PM Paris time the results of this historic decision were made public.

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## Epilog 1

# Catastrophic Event

February 7, 2089

- Mundus Solution global vote results:  
45% in favor | 52% opposed | 3% non-vote
- Result: Mundus Directive rejected

The results of the vote were regarded by most in disbelief. Even those who had opposed the Mundus solution were surprised as they believed they were going to lose the vote. This result was especially odd, as going into the polls, most surveys had Mundus adoption winning over opposition by nearly a 2 to 1 ratio.

This suspect outcome immediately led to allegations that the vote had been rigged. Fingers were pointed at several large nations and a multitude of small nations believed to have tampered with the ballots. It was said of the accused government leaders that they had no desire change system of rule or to lessen their ruling powers as necessarily mandated by Mundus and so they conspired against their electorates in order to tip the balance of the vote.

Such misgivings only furthered to spark public outrage. All over the world, there was uproar. Angry and disillusioned, screaming corruption and demanding justice, the people had taken to the streets. Protests

were often heated and more than a few had turned violent.

In an effort to appease the riotous populous, governments under fire enacted select Mundus amendments, but the changes instituted were, for the most part, minor and token in effect.

It will be said a several nations did the best they could to adopt Mundus, but without a unified world effort, their noble contribution and sacrifice would have little impact. At least ninety percent of the world's nations had to willingly participate, including all of the superpowers, or the Mundus would not work.

For a decade or more, the world seemed well as it enjoyed unprecedented growth, but beneath the great lake's visibly calm surface, foreboding turbulence stirred as a monster of the deep began its ascent from the depths. True, the acquisition of the Neagi's energy source had prevented global economic collapse and staved off an impending resource war, but having an energy source was not the end-all solution to the serious issues facing the planet. Having an adequate energy supply solved but one facet of a multifaceted problem.

It was as the Ifileosians and certain experts at the first Future Earth had warned; the study had miscalculated the timing of the extinction event. The event was not going to occur in 800 to 1200 years. The extinction event was war and was happening right now.



And so it was, on that fateful day, as December 31 became January 1, 2100, amid dispute over control and ownership of critical resources, lack of trust and failing negotiations between ruling powers and fears of preemptive strike, a surprise attack was launched. War had come. Two superpowers were now at war. As war was declared, tens of thousands died in those first sixty seconds and nuclear conflagration engulfed the planet.

Global thermonuclear war ensued. Missiles, bombs, shells, mega-death rained down from the skies. In a matter of minutes, over 1000 nuclear missiles were airborne streaming towards long-established targets. The war escalated quickly and numerous countries, many armed with nuclear weapons, were drawn into the fight. Over the next six days, over 15,000 strategic and tactical nuclear weapons were detonated. On the seventh day, a Sunday, truce was called and the thermonuclear war ended. There had been no winners. In less than one week, 2100 years of civilization had been laid to waste. The great makings of man were little more than rubble and the world burned.

A sad and solemn earthscape, the planet was a war-torn and diseased wasteland. All the great cities were in rubble and burning. Dust-sized radioactive contaminants leached the earth and circumnavigated the globe on poison winds. The skies had gone grey with nuclear winter and plants fought to grow. Everywhere, rotting and charred bodies were unceremoniously piled in mounds and bulldozed into open grave pits. A global catastrophe of unprecedented proportions had befallen Earth. Ravaged by war and pestilence, never had the world known such devastation and destruction.

In this, their state of sufferance, they pledged never to allow such calamity befall the human race again.

Though they must focus on the future, they would never, not ever, forget the past, and so did they swear not to let history repeat itself. To this end, they the survivors, the new owners of Earth, vowed to adapt and follow the Mundus Solution as their way and guide to rebuilding this fallen world. Took oath, did they, that nothing would sway them from the passage provided by the Mundus Solution. Whatever the sacrifice, at any, and all, costs, they would not ere, save 'till in unrelenting labor death do them part.

It was decreed by them, the builders of the new world, that any sort of governance attempted by those who had led them to destruction would be rejected. Furthermore, dissenting rulers who refused to observe and comply with Mundus would, if left without option, be forcibly be removed from power, their rights to govern rescinded and disbanded forevermore. Return to the old way, the repeat of history, would not be permitted.

Rescue missions came from Neagi, but with only four interplanetary spacecraft at their disposal, aid efforts were far and few between. The Ms would do their best providing aid, but given the distance and the limitations of their craft, there was only so much they could do. Tens of thousands were saved, but millions more could not be helped and would die.

They would rebuild, these few, determined Survivors. Moderation was the means. Sustainability through moderation.

*Peace in unity.*

This simple, but profound idea, was to be the guideline towards building the new Earth.

Mundus would offer the guideline.

The catastrophic event had decimated the human race. The casualty count from the war and the calamities that followed was astronomical. It was estimated, more than two-thirds of the world's population had been wiped out. And the dying was not near done yet. Mass starvation and a new wave of pestilence were still to follow. It had been approximated that before the death was done, of 11 billion, somewhere between 20 million to 200 million broken souls would keep their lives. An incredible 98% to 99.99% of the world's population had perished, wiped out, extinguished. The four horsemen had cometh and grisly toll did they take.

Had Mundus had been adopted by the world and acted upon, the conditions for global conflict would not have been present for World War III to have occurred in the first place. To begin with, international tensions would have been significantly less. In the unlikely event that a situation of large-scale conflict had arisen, nations would have had open, peaceable channels of communication in which to settle their differences.

In solemn dismay did the survivors think of the Earth as it was not so long ago, in all its splendor. Had only the Mundus been adopted, had only nations expressed the strength to make the necessary sacrifices. Had only the leaders been willing to sacrifice for a greater good this profound loss of life, this dumbfounding tragedy might well have never happened.

Civilization had met its end. As determined as the survivors were, recovery and continuance of the human race were uncertain.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

As Earthen civilization collapsed and its peoples suffered untold woes, Neagi flourished under Mundus.

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## **Epilog 2 Existential Event**

Earth global vote results to adapt or reject Mundus:  
35% in favor | 62% oppose | 3% non-vote

Result: Mundus Directive rejected

The nays had won by a deciding margin.  
There had been no foul play in the decision process. The vote was fair.  
Mudus was denied and would not be adopted.

The majority had decided the sacrifice demanded of Mundus, the price for change, was too great given the unproven risks.

"A complete restructuring of worldwide government, total control over scientific and technological innovation, managed global population reduction to one one-hundredth of the current size, severe rationing of resources; all this, all at once, and all now. What you're asking is preposterous. This is absurd. We cannot, we will not comply. Mundus demands too much in too little time", they said. "We have plenty of time, centuries to solve any problem that confronts us. Such rapid, drastic change is unnecessary. We will make necessary changes, but they will be on Earth's terms, not Neagi's. Besides, that our two planets have similar histories do not mean Earth is destined to end as did Venus", those opposed to Mundus had argued.

The uplifted state of the economy also had more than a little to do with influencing the decision to reject the Mundus. With the flow of Neagi energy imports steadily increasing and Earth's economy bolstered by the booming economy of its well-to-do sister planet, times were prosperous. For the first time in over sixty years, all over the world, average working people had money in their pockets, and for many, that was all that mattered. In this bountiful atmosphere of the economic turnaround and newfound income, many had forgotten the greater danger. Lulled into a false sense of security, detached from the reality of the situation, too many had grown complacent. Economically, life was good and getting better. Who needed change, let alone change demanding of such sacrifice?

But having enough energy to power the global industrial complex did not solve all the world's problems. Conflict over other critical resources and myriad ideological and territorial conflicts continued, and as competition intensified, tensions between nations increased. Withstanding such kindled circumstance, war was an inevitable eventuality.

And so it was, on that fateful day, as December 31 became January 1, 2100, amid dispute over control and ownership of critical resources, lack of trust and failing negotiations between ruling powers, and fears of a preemptive strike, a surprise attack was launched. War had come. This world war was not to be like the last, nor was its destructiveness to be comparable to any other conflict on the face of the planet - it was total, global war.

In addition to nuclear devices, new weapons of mass destruction were brought to bear. These weapons, unknown to the general public, had been developed in secret and were intended for use as a surprise trump card against an enemy. Both sides possessed such secret weapons and, if need be, both sides were more than prepared to deploy them.

Ungodly weapons, some whose design tampered with the very fundamental principles of physics, biology, chemistry, and computer technology. As frightening as it sounded, more than one of these weapons was reportedly so powerful that if used at full strength they could literally destroy the entire planet. It should have been unlawful, a crime that such things could even be

built in the first place. The mere presence of these mega-monsters of death and destruction was a crime, no, a sin against humanity.

Perhaps even more frightening though was that although the weapons had been lab tested on a very small scale, none had been tested in a large, uncontrolled environment such as a battlefield. Furthermore, some of these *next-gen scitec weapons* (next-generation science and technology weapons) had been designed developed using new sciences and technologies, which in themselves were largely theoretical and hence not well understood. All of the weapons developers expressed trepidation over deploying weapons such as these, for their full effect, destructive and otherwise, was unknown, but war was war and subordinates had their orders to obey when commanded to do so. And when commanded to release hell upon the world, obey they did.

War engulfed the world and raged non-stop in all its untold terror. Once it had begun, there seemed no end to the horrors one side could inflict upon the other. All manner of weapon of mass destruction, including several next-gen scitec weapons, were deployed enforce without impunity. Because most countries had numerous targets of strategic interest, military and otherwise, few parts of the world were spared from the assailment and the subsequent devastation that ensued. Conventional armed forces were sent in to take up where the WMD left off. In the name victory, no sacrifice of life seemed too great. The degree carnage was sickening. The entire planet had become a human slaughterhouse.

For 57 days world war raged. The world was destroyed in 57 days.

On the fifty-eighth day, truce was called and the massacre of humankind ended. Neither side had much of anything left. In this short period, some 3.5 billion persons, roughly one-third the world's population, lay dead or dying.

The destruction on both sides was roughly evenly matched. There was no definitive victor. The only winners were those few that managed to emerge from the holocaust with their lives. Both sides had been slaughtered. MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) had come to pass. This atrocity of unprecedented tragedy proportions had far surpassed anything known.

As they collected the dead, they contemplate their sin against humanity.

The war had finally ended, but, unbeknownst by all, an even greater and deadlier war was a brew and about to befall the already downtrodden planet. The war had unleashed a Kraken, a monster greater than any weapon of mass destruction yet used. A beast that favored not one side nor the other, knew not right or wrong, and for which mercy had no meaning. A truce ended the war, but the ruination of Earth and its peoples had just begun.

Since the war's end, some three months past, the climate had grown increasingly chaotic. Around the world, the climate was exhibiting odd behaviors, even more so than its normal acute extremities. The



atmosphere, in particular, was acting strangely. Wind storms were prevalent even in places that normally were calm. It was as if some sort of shift was taking in the realm above. The very air somehow seemed different. An indefinable uneasiness pressed. As those of deep religious persuasion looked with trepidation up into the changing skies and sought shelter from the inexplicable scourging mega-storms, believers of the prophecies exclaimed the end of days was upon the human race.

Meteorologists and other earth scientists, alarmed by the current events, soon determined the cause of the climatic disturbances and it caused them to shudder. Somehow, the greater atmosphere system had been disrupted, become destabilized, and was collapsing. The ozone holes over the North and South poles were widening at an incredible rate allowing the sun's harmful radiation to strike the Earth unabated. Of even greater concern was that the oxygen was breaking down and disappearing at an alarming rate.

Frantically, natural scientists from all disciplines desperately sought to understand the problem so that a solution could be promptly sought. All the knowledge gained during the engineering of Venus's atmosphere was applied to the problem. In addition, Ifilios's most advanced meteorological sciences and scitec tools were recruited and set hard to solve the impending problem. Two worlds tried desperately to fathom what was happening, but little real progress was being made.

What was determined from this comprising effort was, it appeared some sort of aversive chemical reaction had

taken place on a grand, planetary scale. It was if the entire earth space, planet, and atmosphere, had been placed in a test tube, arcane ingredients added, and a chemical reaction triggered. The essential chemical composition of the atmosphere had been altered and, in doing so, the structural integrity of the atmospheric system comprised. The Earth's atmospheric system's finite ability to adjust to compositional changes had been exceeded and, subsequently, the system had been destabilized.

Best as could be figured, the cause of destabilization had resulted from the use of one, or some combination of the weapons of mass destruction which had been deployed in the recent war. It was believed, the profuse byproducts and massive effects of these weapons had reacted with the Earth's atmosphere in an unknown, unfavorable fashion causing destabilization of the atmospheric system. More fragile than believed, the atmosphere, already weakened by three centuries of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and myriad other chemical pollutants and, had been pushed beyond the brink of sustainability and now was rapidly collapsing. *The sky was falling.*

Basically, the solution this cataclysmic problem was to understand the nature of the reaction in progress, then design a counter, neutralizing reaction capable of reversing the process and restoring the system to its balance point. The problem was, understanding the reaction was proving virtually impossible. Determining the components involved in the key reaction, let alone the exact amount of the components and the manner in which these components interacted was exceedingly complex. There was more than a little doubt that even if

the basic mechanism of the reaction was understood, that it could be turned off and stopped in time. The situation was grave.

One would think an event of such global magnitude would take centuries, if not eons, to unfold, but the atmospheric breakdown was occurring quite quickly. The ozone layer was dissolving at a rate of more than one million square miles a day, over the North and South poles and from other hole points that had begun to open up all over the world. At the current rate of dissipation, in roughly 200 days the fragile ozone layer would be totally dissolved leaving all unsheltered life completely exposed to sun's deadly ultraviolet radiation.

Even more horrifying was the gradual dissipation of breathable oxygen, the lifeblood of all living things. Already, those with respiratory disorders were finding it noticeably more difficult to breathe and a good many thousands had died.

At the current rate of oxygen loss, in less than 30 days, individuals would require an oxygen tank to supplement normal breathing requirements. In less than 60 days, there would not be enough oxygen in the air to sustain most higher life forms, humans included. In roughly 90 days, the only life forms that could exist outside oxygen supplemented habitats would be certain microorganisms.

An answer to the problem was not forthcoming and was nowhere in sight. Time was quickly running out.

It was too late for much of anything save to run and hide. Scurry to a safe haven - if such safe haven possessed of an electrolysis O<sub>2</sub> making equipment could be found - hunker down, say your prayers and make your peace, was what those few who could escape were doing. After the atmosphere had failed, while the masses perished in an inhospitable environment, the survivalists retreated to their hidden, specially designed, heavily fortified bunkers. When life was at stake their seemed no end to the ingenuity birthed. The more sophisticated of these self-contained shelters were capable of producing their own food, water, and air via electrolysis. At least for a time, these few would subsist, clinging to life. Their painstaking 'prepping' had bought them some time, but realists amongst them knew long-term survival was an impossibility.

Their only real hope for those clinging to life was that a Mars rescue mission would locate them before their life support ran out. And so, with desperation, they hung on, praying for deliverance from above. A lucky, select few would be rescued in time, but for the vast majority, their reinforced stone and steel shelters would become their tombs.

Inevitably, a habitat would run out of a key resource, or some complex piece of key life support equipment would break down one too many times and the group would die of dehydration, starvation, suffocation, or disease. Microhabitat by microhabitat succumbed and those within perished. Even the best built, city-sized, underground or under-mountain, government mega-shelters eventually failed. One hundred years after the

atmosphere had collapsed, the best of them, the last of the survivalists, were gone.

Roughly one-hundred years is what it took for the species homo sapiens to go extinct on the planet. Earth had become what Venus had been, a dead planet. As had been the demise of Venus, so too was the demise of Earth. In the end, the Ifileosian's incredible apocalyptic tale had proven true. A history that never happened had repeated itself. Earth's civilization had come to its tragic conclusion. On this late great planet, humans were no more. These 'intelligent' creatures had destroyed their habitat and in doing so had destroyed themselves. As intelligent as the life form was, it had failed to make the necessary adaptations in order to survive. Unable to adapt to its environment, homo sapiens proved unsuccessful species. They had failed evolution's test, and the price of their failure was extinction, species extinction.

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Not a sign of life could be seen; no people, not one bird, fish, or scurrying squirrel, not an insect, not even a microbe. Not a single living organism. There was nothing alive here.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

That which, not so long ago, has been vibrantly alive was now barren desert.

Without an atmosphere, breathable air, water, arable soil, and vacant of life, this world was a wasteland; yet but another dead planet afloat in the graveyard of space.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

An eerie, disquieting still pervaded the listless quiet; it was the silence of death...human species extinction on Earth. It was as had been foretold...

The end of all life.  
The end of the world.  
~ The end ~

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

As the dead and barren planet Earth was lost unto eternity, Neagi flourished under Mundus.

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## Epilog 3 Transition to Balance

Earth global vote: 77% in favor | 20% opposed | 3% non-vote

Vote Result: Mundus Directive ratified and adapted

When the vote was put to the world, the world chose change. By right of the majority, the peoples of the planet had accepted to take on the challenge put forth before them. They realized the intended change would only come at a price and were prepared to pay that price. They understood that the mountain towering before them would be most difficult to conquer, but also knew attainment of the summit was not an impossibility.

A century of sacrifice ensued, *'The Hundred Hard Years'*, it was called. All over the globe, everyone sacrificed; every individual, family, business, government, state, kingdom, and nation toiled. All did their part. Some nations necessarily had to make more sacrifice than others as the structure of the new government, constitution, and judicial system was fundamentally different from that which they were accustomed, but sacrifice they did, relinquishing a degree of power and control in the name a far greater good. They sacrificed for world peace, for

environmental and resource sustainability, for the survival of humankind.

The transition from a gluttonous and excessive, short-sighted society to a responsible and moderate, long-term society is unsmooth and difficult. We are not so willing to give up our gourmand ways and bad habits die hard.

With hurdles and setbacks a many, change did not come easy, not by any means, but, with concerted, discerning effort of billions, it did come. One-by-one, tasks were completed, benchmarks met, and goals reached. The accomplishment of small goals led to bigger goals, and bigger goals to noted achievements. Mountainous obstacles fell before a world of will and determination. Decade after decade, resilience was relentless.

It had taken a century but the world finally began to see measurable return on their great effort. Population growth was negative and population size was falling rapidly. Resource consumption, both renewable and non-renewable was in decline. Pollution readings, particularly CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, were decreasing markedly. For the eleventh consecutive year, global temperatures had dropped slightly. The number, intensity, and erratic appearance of storm systems and mega-storms had dropped off and, although it was still too soon to be sure, the climate appeared to be stabilizing. Science and technology innovation was well monitored and under control. Serious global conflict and threat of large-scale war were non-existent.



After 300 hard years of abuse, Earth's global system had finally been granted an opportunity to begin recuperating and rejuvenating. One hundred years of moderation and sustainability measures had already relieved the global system of considerable stress. The planet had begun to heal.

The catastrophic strain on the planet had been eased and hardly a moment too soon. The experts knew the world was racing against an unseen clock to survive, but even the elite of this elite group never realized just how close to the edge of the abyss the planet had come. Were the people of Earth able to see how near they were to utter destruction, not a single sane person on the planet would have voted against Mundus. Had leaders and nations known the narrow gap that separated them from decimation, they would have worked non-stop in dread fear to avert termination. Most everyone thought there was plenty of time to change but was not. It was only a matter of years, certainly less than fifty, maybe less than twenty, quite possibly even fewer than ten before the overstressed global system collapsed and a human extinction event occurred. Indeed, the world skirted the brink of the end.

It would take centuries, perhaps a thousand years or more, to undo the great damage done to the global system, but with the Mundus Decree as guide and marshal, most of the harm could and would be reversed. The planet was healing and, given the right nourishment, would continue to heal. Staying this path, in the not so distant future, Earth, refreshed and cleansed, will emerge, safe, sustainable and strong. A new age of Earth, the Ecos Age, will have dawned. The

start point of this age will be marked the day the Ecos Solution was adopted, the point in time when humankind took control of their destiny instead of being destroyed by it, the point where the human species evolved socially by unifying. In this age of peace, safety and growth, the peoples of Earth shall attain unmatched levels of achievement and greatness in all disciplines and endeavors.

The new Earth would not be a perfect world, far from it, but, it would certainly be a better world. No, this new Earth would not be an utopist paradise where all its denizens lived harmoniously and happily ever after, but based on principles of unity and sustainability, such as it was, the planet would enjoy a lasting and unprecedented state of safety and progress. No longer lost to uncertainty, Earth a home of hope, a world with a promising future. The sun was rising over planet Earth, basking all beneath in the riches of its golden light.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

In its quintessential transition from intemperateness to moderation, civilization had adapted and humankind had survived. From a planet of disparate, warring, excessive nations, Earth had become a united, peaceful, sustainable world.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

Having succeeded this challenging paradigm shift, those of Earth had arrived at the dawn of a bright and hopeful new age. The *Age of Balance*, as it so became known as, would see all peoples living well in a safe, bountiful, free, sustainable world provided for under Mundus.

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**\* AFTER \***

In commemoration of Earth's great global endeavor that had revived Ifilos, the name 'Neagi' would be honored on all formal documents that passed between the two planets, however, once the Ifilosian's had resumed dominion over the planet, decision was made to rename their reclaimed world. The once, Ifilos, now Neagi, became *Gya*, and the Ifilosians became *Gyans*. Gya, pronounced /gī.ä/, /gī.ə/, or /geɪ.ə/, was taken from an ancient civilization of Ifilos, Gya, that was

noted for having lived in harmony socially, as well as with the land, for millennia. By understanding, acknowledging, and not exceeding the limits of their resources the Gyan's lived in natural balance with their environment and among themselves. Having achieved such a social/natural balance, they were able to perpetuate the continuance of their civilization for more than ten thousand years. The word, 'Gya' translated to 'endless fruit', 'boundless garden' and 'forever bearing'. The New Gyans purposely chose this word to name their planet so they might always be reminded that adherence to sustainable practice was the only way they and their world would survive and thrive into the future.

[ILLUSTRATION HERE]

*~ End ~*

*No, actually, 'Begin'.  
Begin, New Earth 8.*

~ **Note to *You*, Most Honored Reader** ~

I hope you found the story entertaining and educational.

With so many forms of media recreation just a click away available, it is not the easiest thing these days to read, let alone find the time to read an entire book. Your audience has been greatly appreciated. Thank you ever so much. 😊

I would enjoy hearing what you thought about the story. Your comments, suggestions, and (constructive) criticisms are most welcome. Keep in mind, *New Earth 8* is a work in progress. You have just completed the abridged, 'novella' version of the story. A complete version is currently taking shape, but this full novel will take some time to complete.

To learn more about Mundus, to support the 'Save Earth' cause, and, perhaps most importantly, to contribute your own ideas about how to make this, our world a better place, you are encouraged to visit [SENE8.org](http://SENE8.org) (and to ask your like minded friends on social media to visit as well).

Saving the world is an historic undertaking, an endeavor that will not be achieved without the global community coming together and working as one. [8SOW.org](http://8SOW.org) needs all good people of this world to take up this noble cause. Sustain Earth New Earth 8 needs you. The power to help and change the world starts with you.

The sad, disastrous endings recounted in Epilogs 1 and 2 describe the perilous paths the planet is currently on. Our world does not have to end this way. We must make

Epilog 3 our chosen reality. Indeed, there is n choice but to succeed in this historic endeavor, the greatest challenge ever to face humankind or we, the human race, shall perish.

Support planetary safety.  
Support global prosperity  
*Support sustainability.*  
Go to 8SOW.org and...

Submit your 'Better World' ideas, donate if you can, maybe lend a skill, offer a few minutes of your time, and, while you are there, please, share the site with all your social media and real world friends.

Whatever little you are able to do means a lot. What may seem a tiny, insignificant contribution in realty can be a great help. When many give a bit, big things happen. Together we can change the world. Together we can save the world. Let's make Epilog 3 happen...a safer, sustainable, better world.

~ Tao Mundus

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To download your free, illustrated version of  
NEW EARTH 8, and for story bonuses,  
please visit **[www.8sow.org](http://www.8sow.org)**.  
Thank you for your support.