Beyond This Star - Final Chapter

James L. Daniels Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: https://louis.uah.edu/space-journal

Part of the Astrophysics and Astronomy Commons, Propulsion and Power Commons, Space Habitation and Life Support Commons, and the Space Vehicles Commons

Recommended Citation
Daniels, James L. Jr. (1958) "Beyond This Star - Final Chapter," Space Journal: Vol. 1: No. 3, Article 12. Available at: https://louis.uah.edu/space-journal/vol1/iss3/12

This Space Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Space Journal by an authorized editor of LOUIS.
Synopsis of Preceding Installment

The Palomar Group, a scientific organization dedicated to the survival of mankind in the universe in 1971 had succeeded in establishing an Observatory on the Moon. The Group sought then some evidence of life elsewhere in the solar system, in the hope of finding answers to the dilemma of man's eternal conflict on Earth.

The high albedo of Europa the third moon of Jupiter seemed artificial, and artifice indicates intelligent life. Brad Hudson of the Palomar Group with a two-man crew, Steve Amheast and Myron Drake, in a magnetic drive space craft, arrived on Europa, where they found great cities surviving under gigantic glass-like domes. The human inhabitants of this hermetic world had survived a dying planet, but, in doing so, had submitted to an absolute communal government under a central body called the Primesters.

The Earthmen were held for observation by the various Socio-, Bio-, and Psycho-Physiological Councils. In Ko-Pall, the ruthless Judge Superior of the Primesters, Brad found the incarnation of Earth's own power-driven totalitarian political leaders. Ko-Pall declared the Earthmen a threat to Europa and ordered their destruction. In Mu-Bar the gentle Director of Bio-Sciences, Brad found a surviving champion of reason and hope for humankind. And in Kay-Bar, Mu-Bar's beautiful blonde daughter, Brad found the love that he had never had time for on Earth.

Mu-Bar, on pretext of scientific study, had secured permission to move Brad temporarily into his own apartment. Now a plan of escape and return to Earth for the Earthmen had been arranged by Mu-Bar.

Part II

Brad had come from the shower and stood looking through the skylight at the never ceasing eruptions on the face of Jupiter. Almost like a sun in itself, for this moon, Europa, Jupiter was the sun. Europa's whole power system was harnessed to Jupiter's miraculous high pressure hydrogen activity. So many strange reactions unknown on earth were possible under those tremendous pressures. Some day maybe an expedition could be landed there. Maybe Ko-Pall was right, perhaps Earthmen were a threat to his world. They would all think the same way about expeditions to this world. They would crawl here like maggots, over and in and around these domes.

The sharp whine of the door buzzer announced a visitor standing in range of the scanner. Brad faced the door and in a firm voice addressed the mike pickup above it, "Open."

The door slid back silently, revealing the wizened figure of Mu-Bar. Mu-Bar entered quickly and crossed the room to stand by the now neatly covered bed, which served during waking hours as a divan.

"I had almost forgotten that today was the day," Brad said.

"I have arranged for your friends to be
brought to my laboratory in the Scien-Dome. The ship is there and ready. Now to the event. The car awaits in the port. You must go directly to the Primester Chambers. Remember that only with Ko-Pall as hostage can you expect to have any guarantee of safety until we can get you into space. Once out, there is of course nothing to stop you. There are no ships to pursue you."

Brad had stood facing the small man while he talked. "I've wondered about that, Mu-Bar. It's one question we haven't discussed. Why no space craft?"

"You recall that I told you of how, in the ancient times, our people crossing space stopped on the moons, and how the inhabitants of each of the moons in turn died, until only Europa was left. Here, in trying to survive, we sacrificed many things. The secret of space travel was one of these.

"Since the building of the Domes we have had neither the inclination nor the desire to travel through space," Mu-Bar told him. "We have our world recreated and livable. We survive. We need not go further. Perhaps, since surviving a dying planet and ostensibly establishing the perpetuity of our race, we have become complacent in a sort of racial security. We have accomplished the ultimate; hence, our race kultur became one of stagnation—not a dynamic thing. You see we truly did grow old as a race. Preservation of the race entailed the complete and utter submission of the part to the whole, so that the individual, as you have seen here, is nothing. The society is the organism. The entire economy, laws, technology, everything, is geared to this, to the perpetuation of the perfect balance this organism has attained, the balance that alone assures its continued existence." Mu-Bar broke off abruptly and then added "—but we have talked of this so many times, you have cited the communal half of your own world and the slow submission of your entire Earth people to its spell. And so you must get back—for the sake of the human kind you must get back and tell them—show them that that way can only be the end. Remember,

Brad, if you value anything I can tell you, that if I had the right to give a dying word, that word is 'doubt'—forever plant doubt in men's minds. If once they fail to doubt, they are dead—for curiosity, the fertile ultimate that will let man survive, is born only of doubt. Only through doubt can we avoid anchorage to hindsight. Doubt and you can shed old doctrines—open the mind to new, to change, to foresight. When man has all the answers he needs, when he accepts a stalemate balance—a compromise of self for existence of the social whole—then it is all over. Brad, your answers lie not in dead worlds and old people, but in the young ones and new worlds. It's up to each new generation to adapt, and to learn, and to progress—to find in the universe the expansion of the glory of creation. Each generation must expand its ability to comprehend, must go beyond the limited horizons of the generation before. If there are answers to your questions, they lie far beyond this star you call the sun and its nine insignificant worlds. Some of the answers lie in the fact that there is a beyond, a frontier yet to be explored by the young
and curious. Yes, Brad, go back to Earth and lead man out into the grand cosmos.

"But enough, the time is near. Off with you. We must have Ko-Pall in hand. You will barely have time to get him at his first session rest." Mu-Bar was propelling him with gentle pressure toward the door.

"I will have my daughter at the Scien-Dome to see you away," Mu-Bar said, and faintly smiled as Brad looked back at him in surprise.

"I know how you feel about her." They were out in the apartment corridor now near the Transi-port. Mu-Bar turned and hurried away before Brad could reply.

Left alone, Brad was conscious of the fact that he had no weapon. He remembered however, quickly, that weapons were nonexistent here, for physical threats on Europa were nothing. Sacrifice of a life was only a scratch on the hand of the social entity.

A few moments later in the Transit Tube he sped toward the terminal under the Primester Dome aboard Mu-Bar's tear-drop Transi-car on a frictionless cushion of air.

There were only ten cars in the huge terminal when he arrived, which meant only a Primester Session—no crowd of petitioners to complicate the situation. He left the car beside the one with Ko-Pall's black cross insignia on it.

Upstairs in the circular corridor Brad found Ko-Pall's cubicle. He slipped inside the dark room and waited. His breath rasped hot in his lungs. Oh, for a breath of real air. He could not remember, now, even the smells of real air, after months of breathing this stale canned stuff.

He had almost relaxed when the door suddenly swung open. A figure shadowed the slit of light across the floor. Brad tensed against the wall. The door slid shut. There was just one way—a primitive flying tackle. He crouched to spring at the shadow.

"Brad," the whisper was Kay-Bar's.

"Here," he moved to touch her.

"Quick, we have not much time. You must go. Ko-Pall knows of your plan. He has monitored your movements. He will try to stop you here. My father says to forget Ko-Pall and come directly to the Scien-Dome; he will have your friends there."

"If Ko-Pall knows, he will have them guarded."

"Only from you. He will not hinder my father. Now let's hurry."

Brad slipped into the empty corridor and started toward the terminal elevator.

"No, Brad," Kay-Bar tugged his arm and pulled him past the elevator door. "They'll be guarding the terminal." They raced on around the corridor to a smaller and unobtrusive door. It opened into a chute, slanting downward.

"Come," Kay-Bar pulled him in. A sled type transporter stood near the door. "Get on," Kay-Bar stepped onto the sled. "This sluice my father has kept in repair. Only he knows of it. It was used by the Ancients eons ago. It is primitive but my father has kept it in repair since he discovered it. He had his Scien-Dome built at the other end of it after Ko-Pall became Judge Superior. And this tunnel is shielded. The Scanners can't follow us." He sat down on the sled and gripped the handrails. Kay-Bar sent it hurtling along the tunnel.

At the Scien-Dome Mu-Bar hurried them from the closet where they stopped. "The others are here," he said. "I had to narcotize them, but they'll recover." He opened a final door to let them into a scintillating room of plastic and metallic fixtures.
Beside a long table in the center of the lab were Amheast and Drake, sitting erect and stiff in an obvious, hypnotic state. "They'll respond to any command, Brad. You'll be able to operate the ship all right, even with them in this state. Just give them detailed instructions and they will handle their regular duties efficiently." Mu-Bar turned to the men. "You will rise and board the ship and take your usual stations. The ship is directly across the ramp beyond that door." Mu-Bar pointed to the door across the room. The two men rose and shuffled zombie-like across the room and through the door which Kay-Bar opened for them.

Mu-Bar turned to Brad with brows knit. His shoulders slumped lower. He looked from Brad to Kay-Bar.

"You must take her with you," he said. "We are dying. Your world is young yet. We are long past our grave, a society in its senescence. We may drift on a few more of your centuries; but it must end, for we with all our science, all our eons of effort, have not found the noble answers which you came seeking. Perhaps we never started to look for them. Neither our technology nor our sociology could save us forever. The communal society, as you have seen, is not the answer for human kind; for such a society stifles the innate curiosity of the individual. We killed it here and started to die intellectually even as we learned to survive physically."

Mu-Bar moved to the door and looked after the two men who had gone out. "I am sorry that you must return to your young world without answers; yet, perhaps before you are answers better than any that you or I or anyone could formulate; one is that each world must solve its own dilemma, not borrow from others; another is that if life can exist simultaneously on the same form as ours in two places in our own system, then there must be millions of other worlds where life exists in this eternal universe. A never ending frontier! Conflict itself perhaps cannot be eliminated, but the energies which would be exerted in struggle can be channeled into curious sniffing about, as long as there is a frontier to sniff in. Find ways to probe it, Earthman, and your Earth kind will live. Do not build up walls around you and try to outlive your own world. Find new ones. Since you have started as young as your world is and have made such progress, there is no reason why you cannot continue to reach out and out into this infinite universe."

"And you, Mu-Bar, you will come with us, too," Brad urged.

"No, I must stay. It is too late for me—for me. I am of this world. My daughter is young enough not to have absorbed this world's culture. As I have told you since her conception, I have guarded her from it. She is, as you have said, like an Earthwoman. Besides, I shall die happy, knowing that this world survives in yours—that the old is part of the new, that your mating represents the survival of our world after all, since truly your progeny will be sons of this world, too. Now it is time to go." Mu-Bar rushed them toward the door.

From the starboard port Brad, with Kay­Bar's quiet tears hurting as his own and with his arms around her, watched the tiny figure of Mu-Bar standing inside the Dome while the portable launch ramp Mu-Bar had constructed wheeled their ship into position outside.

The ship silently spiraled up. The crushing acceleration began. Brad turned with Kay­Bar to the forward port and looked long across the darkness at the tiny point of pale blue light—Earth.