

ANTARES DAWN

A Novel By

Michael McCollum

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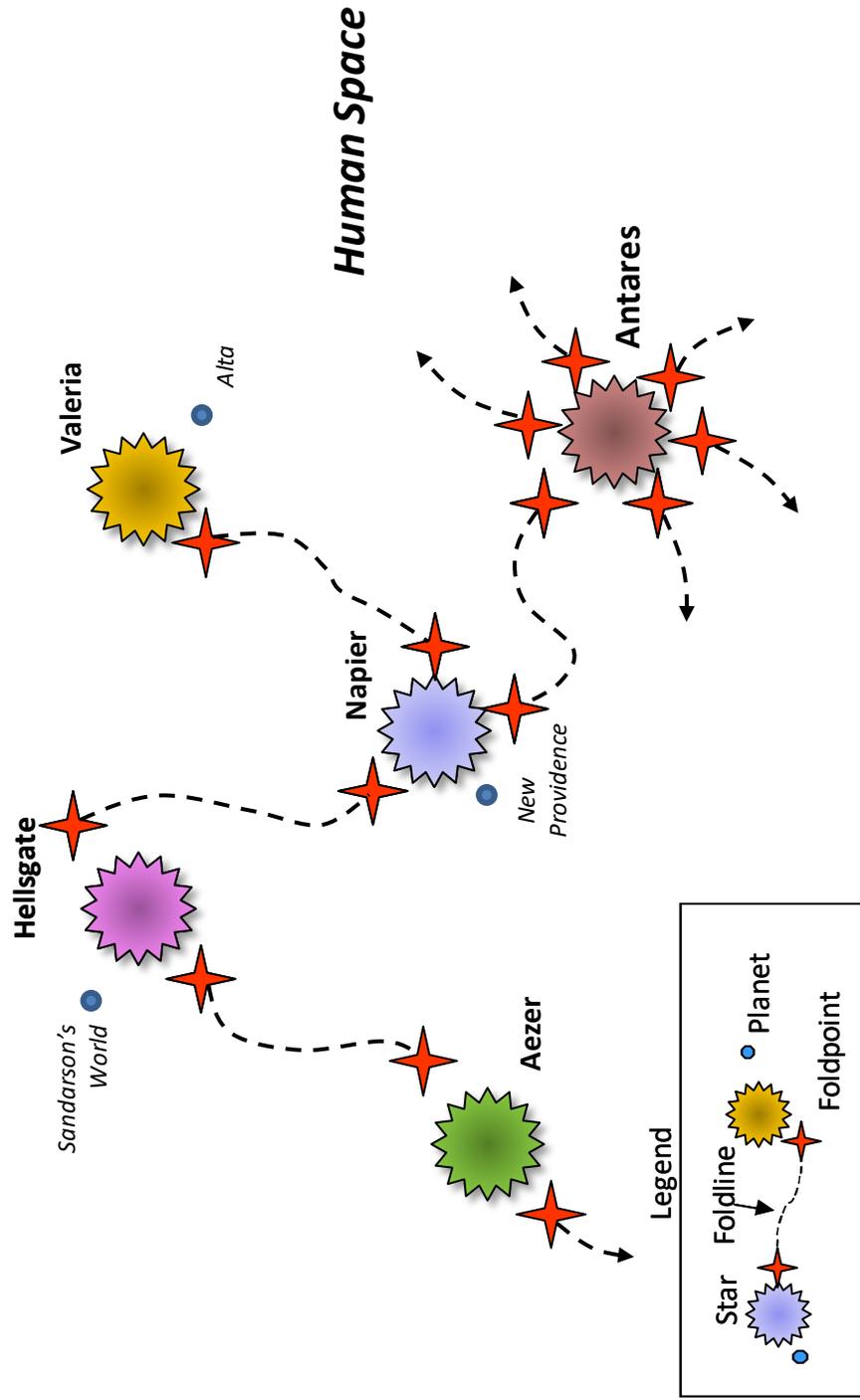
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Foldspace Chart

Antares Cluster – Napier Sector

Structure of Foldspace prior to August, 2512



CHAPTER 1

The landing boat fell in a nose-high/belly-down attitude toward the blue-white orb of the planet below. Outside the hull, the first whisper breaths of the hypersonic wind tugged at the boat's wings and control surfaces, causing them to be bathed in a nearly invisible envelope of plasma glow. Inside the hull, the keening of the wind was more sensed than heard, and the first gentle tugs of deceleration were but a foretaste of the pressure soon to come.

Captain-Lieutenant Richard Drake, commanding officer of the Altan Space Navy Cruiser *Discovery*, the landing boat's sole passenger, lay strapped into an acceleration couch and gazed out the viewport next to him. Drake was of medium height, with a slender build, black hair, and the faded tan of an outdoorsman who has spent the last eight months in space. He was thirty-five, but looked younger. His hair, which he wore in the close cropped style of a military spacer, showed a touch of gray around the edges. His eyes were green, and widely spaced above a broad nose and high cheekbones. A whitish scar ran diagonally across one of his eyebrows – the result of a collision during a secondary school athletic contest.

Drake's expression was pensive as he gazed at the plasma flow building up on the leading edge of the landing boat's wing. In his pocket was a message flimsy that ordered him to report to the Admiralty Building in the Altan capital of Homeport immediately. The message was stamped *Most Secret* and signed by First Admiral Dardan himself.

"What have we done to deserve this high honor?" Commander Bela Marston, Drake's second-in-command, had asked when Drake showed him the order aboard *Discovery*.

"You don't suppose he's found out about those extra field coils we requisitioned the last time we were undergoing maintenance at Felicity Base, do you?" Drake asked, only half in jest.

Marston shook his head. "No reason to worry there, Skipper. Those old coils should have been junked ten years ago."

"That won't save us if Dardan thinks he's going to have to go back to Parliament for a supplemental appropriation this year."

"Good point," Marston said. "Shall I have your yeoman lay out your armor-plated underwear?"

Drake had nodded, laughing. "Not a bad idea. I might need them."

The landing boat touched down at Homeport forty minutes after it encountered the first tenuous wisps of Alta's atmosphere. As soon as the craft had parked at the passenger terminal, Drake unstrapped and made his way to the starboard airlock where a nervous crew chief watched intently as a cantilevered loading bridge maneuvered slowly over the boat's still-glowing wing surfaces.

"What's the matter, Chief?" Drake asked. "Don't you trust the port handlers?"

"Trust them fumble fingered goons with *Molly* here, Cap'n? No, sir. Not as far as I can spit under triple gravs."

The landing boat had touched down well past local sunset, but the million-candlepower

beams of the spaceport's polyarcs had no trouble turning night into day. Drake watched as the loading bridge sealed itself against the hull. When the Chief signaled that all was secure, he stepped onto the spidery trusswork and crossed to the terminal beyond.

Inside, he found Commodore Douglas Wilson waiting for him. Over the years, Drake had served three tours of duty under the older man's command. He had long since learned to sense Wilson's every mood. Drake could tell that the Commodore was excited and trying mightily to hide the fact.

"Good to see you again, Richard," Wilson said. "How was your trip?"

"Rough enough, sir. I have not had to suffer through a maximum performance reentry since my days at the Academy. What's up?"

"The Admiral will brief you," Wilson said noncommittally. "Come on, I've a car waiting."

Drake followed as Wilson led the way to an Admiralty limousine. An enlisted driver helped him with his hand luggage, and then slid behind the control panel while the two officers arrayed themselves in the back seat for the ten-kilometer drive to the Admiralty.

"How is that young lady of yours?" Wilson asked as the driver maneuvered the car into the heavy traffic headed for Homeport.

"Cynthia? She's fine, sir." Drake gestured at the overnight bag. "I was hoping for a chance to see her this trip."

Some unidentifiable emotion flashed across Wilson's features. "Sorry, Captain, but you won't be on the ground that long."

"Oh?" Drake accompanied his question with raised eyebrows, but the commodore refused to rise to the bait. Instead, he leaned back in his seat and gazed out the window at the shadowy trees zipping past at two hundred kilometers per hour.

They rode in silence for several minutes until the driver gestured toward the eastern sky.

"Antares is coming up, sirs!"

Drake turned to follow the driver's pointing finger. Sixty kilometers to the east was the Colgate mountain range. By day, their snow-capped summits and forested slopes provided a view that was a favorite among the purveyors of scenic holocubes. By night, they were a jagged black wall looming against the horizon. As Drake watched, a single star of eye searing, blue-white brilliance rose from behind the central peak of the mountain range. In that moment, the scenery around them changed dramatically. The scattered clouds, which had reflected the dull orange glow of the Homeport streetlights, suddenly blazed forth with a blue-white fire of their own. The once dark forest on both sides of the highway was suffused with an internal silver sheen, sending long, jet-black shadows leaping westward across the highway.

"Is it always like this?" Drake asked, gesturing to the view beyond the limousine window.

Wilson nodded. "It has been ever since the nova began rising after dark. Before that it wasn't very impressive at all – just a star bright enough to be visible in daylight."

"It still looks that way from orbit," Drake said. He gazed at the passing scene in silence for

several seconds. “Who could have predicted that a disaster of such magnitude would be so beautiful?”

#

The first person to postulate a rational theory of gravitation was Sir Isaac Newton in 1687. His *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* established the theory that gravity is a force, one by which every atom in the universe attracts every other atom. Newton’s views on the subject remained essentially unchallenged for nearly two and a half centuries. The reign of Newtonian physics ended in 1916. That was the year Albert Einstein published his General Theory of Relativity. Einstein suggested that gravity is not a force at all, but rather a curvature in the very fabric of the space-time continuum caused by the presence of mass. No one seriously challenged Einstein’s view of the universe until Bashir-ben-Sulieman published his definitive treatise on macro-gravitational effects in 2078.

Sulieman was an astronomer working out of Farside Observatory, Luna. He had spent his life measuring the precise positions and proper motions of several thousand of the nearer stars. After two decades of work, he reluctantly concluded that Einstein’s simple models of gravitational curvature could not adequately explain the placement of the stars in the firmament. The discrepancies were small and exceedingly difficult to measure; but nonetheless, they were there. Try as he would, Sulieman could not explain them away as “data scatter” or “turbulence,” as had earlier astronomers working from deep within the terrestrial atmosphere. The longer Sulieman pondered his data, the more convinced he became that, besides being curved locally in the presence of stellar and planetary masses, space is also folded back upon itself in long lines that stretch across thousands of light-years.

The idea that the space-time continuum is multidimensional is an old one. Classical space-time has four dimensions, three spatial and one temporal: up/down, forward/back, right/left, past/future. However, if four-dimensional space-time is curved (as Einstein postulated), then there has to be at least one additional dimension for it to be curved *into*. For General Relativity to be correct, space-time must possess at least *five* dimensions. Bashir-ben-Sulieman’s contribution was to add yet another (or *sixth*) dimension. He reasoned that if Einstein’s *curved space* was indeed curvature in the fifth dimension, then his own *folded space* must be curvature in the sixth. To keep the two separate, he established the convention of “vertically” polarized curved space – indeed, humanity’s very concept of vertical depends on gravity, which is the prime manifestation of curved space – and “horizontally” polarized folded space.

He theorized that the origin of the long, intricately woven *foldlines* was the massive black hole that occupies the center of the galaxy. He went further. Noting that the foldlines stream outward along the spiral arms, he wondered aloud whether the lines of folded space might not be sweeping up interstellar matter as they rotated; in effect, acting as the catalyst for star formation. The problem of the relative overabundance of stellar births in the spiral arms was one that had long plagued astronomers and cosmologists.

Sulieman spent the remainder of his life improving on his theories. At the age of 92, he proved that the sixth-dimensional foldlines are distorted by the fifth-dimensional curvature that is gravity in much the same way that a lens distorts a ray of light. Sulieman demonstrated

mathematically that whenever a foldline encounters a star-size mass, it is “focused” into a restricted volume of space. Usually, the effect is so small as to be undetectable. Sometimes, however, the “focus” is sufficiently sharp that a weakness appears in the fabric of the space-time continuum, and a *foldpoint* is formed.

Twenty years after Sulieman’s death, scientists discovered a practical use for foldpoints. They positioned a spaceship within one of the two foldpoints known to exist within the solar system and released copious quantities of energy in a precisely controlled pattern intended to warp space even further. The energy release caused the ship to drop into foldspace, thereby instantaneously transporting it to the next weak point along the foldline. One moment the research ship was floating high above the sun; the next, it was in orbit about Luyten’s Star, some 12.5 light-years distant.

There was no holding the human race back after that. The Great Migration began almost immediately. Over the next several centuries, the leakage of population into space became a flood. The pattern of the migration was determined entirely by the shape of foldspace. While some stars were found to possess only a single foldpoint, others possessed two, three, or more. The biggest, most massive stars were discovered to be especially fertile ground for foldpoint production. The red super-giant star Antares was the champion throughout human space. Antares had six foldpoints, a fact that made it the linchpin of a network of star systems on the eastern edge of human expansion.

Since the foldlines were aligned with the spiral arm that contains Sol, humanity found it easiest to expand along the axis of the arm. Distances between colonies were figured, not by the spatial distance between their respective stars; but rather, by the number of foldpoints between them. In order to reach the star next door, it was sometimes necessary to first jump to one five hundred light-years distant, then double back.

Early in the great migration, survey ships searching the systems of the Antares Cluster (those stars associated with the foldline hub in the Antares system) found an Earth-like planet circling an unnamed G3 spectral class star some 490 light-years from Sol. They named the star *Napier* (after the ship’s captain) and its single habitable planet *New Providence*. Charter companies were formed and vast quantities of resources were poured into the system. New Providence prospered and attained self-sufficiency in less than a hundred years. As the colony matured, it too began to look around for stellar systems in which to invest its excess capital and manpower.

The Napier system was close enough to the giant Antares to be affected by the larger star’s warping of foldspace. Because of this interaction, New Providence was blessed with more than its fair share of foldpoints. In addition to the foldpoint leading to Antares, there were two additional gateways in the system. Beyond both foldpoints were systems containing prime real estate in the form of Earth-class worlds.

With the New Providence colony firmly established, these additional systems became the targets for two competing colonization drives. The better funded of these concentrated on the metal-rich *Hellsgate system*. The smaller colonization effort was left with the job of establishing a colony in the system of an F8 dwarf identified only by its catalog number. The New Providence colonists in this latter system gave their new home world the name of *Alta*. They named their

star *Valeria*, and quickly devolved to calling it “Val.”

The Altan colony grew apace, although more slowly than Sandarson’s World in the Hellsgate system. By Alta’s bicentennial year (2506 AD), it was beginning to look with longing toward the surrounding stars. However, the Valeria system was one of those unlucky enough to possess only a single foldpoint. Altan starships were thus forced to traverse the Napier system to reach either the Antares hub or its sister colony in the Hellsgate system. In 2510, negotiations were begun with the New Providential government to allow Altan ships unimpeded access to the Napier system. Two years later, with both governments largely in agreement as to terms, the question of access became suddenly moot.

For, at 17:32 hours, 3 August 2512 (Universal Calendar), the Altan space liner *Vagabond Traveler* reported that its instruments could no longer detect the Val/Napier foldpoint at its charted position. Survey ships were immediately dispatched. In a matter of weeks, they had confirmed the extent of the catastrophe. For reasons that no one could explain with certainty, the sole foldpoint in the Valeria system had ceased to exist. Alta was cut off from the rest of human space.

#

The Admiralty building was a large, unsightly pile of steel and glass left over from the first years after the founding of the Altan colony. Drake and Wilson exited the limousine in front of the Admiralty’s main entrance, acknowledged the salutes of the guards on duty, and stepped briskly through armor-glass doors into the spacious lobby beyond. The building had originally been constructed by the central government of Earth for use as an embassy and ambassador’s residence. The familiar continental outlines of the Mother of Men were still visible in the marble tile work of the floor.

The guard at the interior desk was less ceremonial than those at the entrance. He sat within an armor-glass cubicle and required both of them to insert their identity disks into a slot in the cubicle wall. A computer in a sub-basement consulted its files, concluded that they were who they said, and flashed a green light on the guard’s control panel. The guard saluted them as they retrieved their identification. Wilson led Drake to an old elevator-style lift and ordered the car to the topmost floor. They soon found themselves marching down a quiet hall between portraits of previous First Admirals. Wilson stopped in front of a heavy door carved from a single slab of *onyx wood*, knocked, and was rewarded with a muffled order to enter.

Beyond the door was First Admiral Dardan’s private office. The First Admiral was seated at his oversize desk. His attention was focused on a small, white haired man who stood before a lighted holoscreen. At the sight of Commodore Wilson entering through the door, the First Admiral rose from his desk and moved to greet the newcomers. His sudden movement caused the white haired lecturer’s voice to trail off into exasperated silence.

“Ah, Richard, good of you to come so quickly. May I present Professor Mikhail Planovich, Chairman of the Astronomy Department at Homeport University.” Dardan guided Drake by the arm to where the lecturer stood. “The professor was just starting to review what is known of the Antares Supernova for us.”

"Pleased to meet you, Professor Planovich," Drake said, shaking hands.

"Likewise, Captain."

Dardan pulled Drake toward a man who was slouched on the couch opposite the Admiral's desk. He held a drink in his hand and appeared totally relaxed. "I believe you know Stan Barrett, the Prime Minister's troubleshooter."

"Yes, sir. I met Mr. Barrett when I served as Navy liaison to Parliament two years ago. I'm not sure he remembers me, though."

"Of course I remember you, Drake," Barrett said, shaking hands without rising from the couch. "Your last job, I believe, was the five year forecast for the cost of fleet operations. We really nailed the lid on old Gentleman Jon's coffin that time, didn't we?"

"We were successful, anyway," Drake replied. The "Gentleman Jon" Barrett had referred to was the Honorable Jonathan Carstairs, leader of the Conservatives, and no friend of Navy appropriations.

Barrett laughed. "Talented and modest, too! I like that, Captain. I think Luis here has picked the right man for the job."

"Save that for later," First Admiral Luis Dardan said. "Find a seat, Captain Drake, and we'll let Professor Planovich finish his talk."

"Yes, sir."

Planovich turned to the holoscreen and pointed to a bright red star with a speck of blue-white near it. "As I was saying, Admiral, Antares, otherwise known as Alpha Scorpius, is a supergiant star with a mass twenty times that of Valeria, and a diameter four hundred times as great. Antares is..." Planovich looked up from his notes and smiled sheepishly. "Antares was an M0 stellar class star that possessed a companion of spectral class A3. You can see both stars on the screen. Stars of the "M" class range from red to red-orange in color owing to their surface temperatures of 2600-3500 degrees Kelvin. The name 'Antares' comes from the Greek, meaning 'Rival of Ares.'"

"What's an Ares?" Barrett asked.

"I believe, sir," Professor Planovich said, "that it is a reference to the reddish color of Sol IV, as viewed from Earth."

"I thought Sol IV was named Mars."

"The Greeks called it Ares, after their God of War. Mars is the Roman name. Now, if I may continue, sir..."

"Sorry," Barrett said without sounding the slightest bit sincere.

"Two months ago, the appearance of Antares changed rather dramatically." The holoscreen view changed. In place of the red speck with the blue-white dot beside it, the screen now showed the retina-searing point of brilliance that Drake and Wilson had watched rise over the Colgate peaks less than ten minutes earlier. "The change, of course, is due to the Antares Supernova of twelve decades ago. Since the distance from Antares to Val is 120 light-years, the wave front is

just reaching us. Our analyses are not yet complete, but it appears as though Antares is the largest supernova on record.”

“Larger than the Crab Supernova of 1054?” Wilson asked.

“Actually, the Crab exploded in approximately 4000 BC, Commodore. It was, however, *observed* on Earth by Chinese astronomers on July 4, 1054. It was visible in sunlight for 23 days and for two years thereafter at night. And yes, the Antares Supernova is far larger!”

“I stand corrected,” Wilson growled.

“I do not make the distinction to be pedantic, sir,” Planovich said, stiffly. “The speed-of-light delay between explosion and observation is important. Since we know the distance from Val to Antares, and the precise moment when we first observed the supernova, it is an easy matter to compute the date on which the star actually exploded. That date, it turns out, was 3 August 2512.”

“The same day our foldpoint closed,” the First Admiral mused.

“Yes, sir,” Planovich said. “The correlation is as exact as we can make it, considering that we are unable to pin down the exact moment of foldpoint failure closer than a sixteen hour period on that date. We have long suspected that something catastrophic happened on that day, something large enough to disturb our local foldline sufficiently that the Val/Napier foldpoint lost its focus. Obviously, the Antares Supernova was the culprit.”

“Then we weren’t the only system affected?” Barrett asked.

Planovich turned to face the advisor. The white glow from the holoscreen illuminated half his face, leaving the other half in darkness. “You may rest assured, sir, that we have not been singled out for Divine Wrath. If anything, we have been luckier than some. I greatly fear for the fate of our parent world.”

“Why?” the First Admiral asked.

“Surely, sir, you must know that New Providence is but fifteen light-years from the supernova.”

“So?”

“Even before the explosion, the New Providential poets spoke of ‘the baleful glow of the one-eyed warrior, a-glimmer on the snow fields of a crisp winter eve.’ They were, of course, referring to the brightness with which Antares shines in New Providence’s Southern Hemisphere before the winter solstice.” Planovich strode to the window and pulled back the curtains, allowing the silver glow from outside to flood the room. “Can you imagine what it must be like to have *that* shining 64 times as bright in the night sky?”

“Are you suggesting that New Providence could have been placed in danger by the supernova?” the First Admiral asked.

“Not ‘could have been’, sir. *Was!* A supernova throws out all manner of dangerous particles: everything from gamma and X-rays, to high-speed neutrons, protons, and electrons. There will even be a goodly amount of anti-matter in the cosmic wind from such an explosion. In all

likelihood, when Antares went supernova, it sterilized New Providence and the entire Napier system!”

“And if their foldpoints were disrupted?”

“Then three billion people died, horribly.”

Drake felt a shiver run down his spine at the university professor’s cold matter-of-fact words.

“How the hell could something like this happen without warning?” Barrett demanded.

“It didn’t,” Planovich replied. “Astronomers have long been aware that Antares is a star well into its dotage. The first explorers of the Antares Hub noted that the red giant’s neutrino production rate was way above normal. That indicated that the star’s core was well into its iron-enrichment phase. We knew that it was only a matter of time until it ran low on nuclear fuel, collapsed in upon itself, and exploded. Only, where stars are concerned, ‘a matter of time’ is usually on the order of a few million years. No one expected it to happen quite so soon.”

“What should we expect now?” Barrett asked.

“A good question,” Planovich responded. “The radiation from the explosion will be considerably diluted after a century of expansion. Alta’s atmosphere should have no problem filtering out the harmful particles. There *will* be a measurable rise in the background radiation in space, however; and it may be necessary to equip all exo-atmospheric installations with additional radiation shielding.”

“What about foldspace?”

Planovich shrugged. “The effect on foldspace is anyone’s guess. There are those who believe that our foldpoint might heal itself once the discontinuity of the nova wave front passes.”

“Really?” Dardan asked as he exchanged looks with Barrett and Wilson.

“That is the theory, Admiral. Personally, I have no strong opinions on the subject one way or the other.”

“Perhaps you should.”

“I beg your pardon.”

Dardan took a deep breath and leaned back in his chair. “It may interest you to know, Professor Planovich, that approximately twenty hours ago, one of our sensor stations picked up an object materializing high in the northern hemisphere of this system. That object is very large and is under boost even as we speak. From its radiation signature, we have concluded that it is a starship from outside the Valeria system!”

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2. Procyon's Promise - ^{US}\$7.50

Three hundred years after humanity made its deal with the Life Probe to search out the secret of faster-than-light travel, the descendants of the original expedition return to Earth in a starship. They find a world that has forgotten the ancient contract. No matter. The colonists have overcome far greater obstacles in their single-minded drive to redeem a promise made before any of them were born...

3. Antares Dawn - US\$6.00

When the super giant star Antares exploded in 2512, the human colony on Alta found their pathway to the stars gone, isolating them from the rest of human space for more than a century. Then one day, a powerful warship materialized in the system without warning. Alarmed by the sudden appearance of such a behemoth, the commanders of the Altan Space Navy dispatched one of their most powerful ships to investigate. What ASNS Discovery finds when they finally catch the intruder is a battered hulk manned by a dead crew.

That is disturbing news for the Altans. For the dead battleship could easily have defeated the whole of the Altan navy. If it could find Alta, then so could whomever it was that beat it. Something must be done...

4. Antares Passage - US\$7.50

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.50

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

6. Thunderstrike! - US\$7.50

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$7.50

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$7.50

Starhopper was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$7.50

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.50

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

11. Gibraltar Stars – First Time in Print — US\$7.50

The great debate is over. The human race has rejected the idea of pulling back from the stars and hiding on Earth in the hope the Broa will overlook us for a few more generations. Instead, the World Parliament, by a vote of 60-40, has decided to throw the dice and go for a win. Parliament Hall resounds with brave words as members declare victory inevitable.

With the balance of forces a million to one against *Homo sapiens Terra*, those who must turn patriotic speeches into hard-won reality have their work cut out for them. They must expand humanity's foothold in Broan space while contending with a supply line that is 7000 light-years long.

If the sheer magnitude of the task isn't enough, Mark and Lisa Rykand discover they are in a race against two very different antagonists. The Broa are beginning to wonder at the strange two-legged interlopers in their domain; while back on Earth, those who lost the great debate are eager to try again.

Whoever wins the race will determine the future of the human species... or, indeed, whether it has one.

12. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$6.00

Where would you visit if you invented a time machine, but could not steer it? What if you went out for a six-pack of beer and never came back? If you think nuclear power is dangerous, you should try black holes as an energy source — or even scarier, solar energy! Visit the many worlds of Michael McCollum. I guarantee that you will be surprised!

Non-Fiction Books

13. The Art of Writing, Volume I - US\$10.00

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