

Arrays of Heaven:

A Novel

By

Timothy J Gaddo

Does the world seem to be spinning out of control?
Does humanity seem doomed?
Could JFK have made a difference?
What if he'd had help?
Lots of help.

Timothy J Gaddo
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, dialog, businesses, places, events and incidents are either products of the author's imagination, or used in a fictitious manner.

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PROLOGUE

Adonis! You old dog! Spying on mortals again, are we?

Ah, Kronos! Come, have a look. I've been observing this peculiar species. They've just assassinated their leader, and they...

Wait! Wait! Wait! What am I looking at? Where in creation is this?

Oh, sorry, I forgot how spatially oriented you are.

Well, you can't expect me to just plop into the middle of something like this with no idea where in the cosmos I'm looking!

Ok, take a deep breath. If you'd quit your babbling long enough...

What?

I said... Look, right here old man. The wide view of the multiverse.

Finally!! Now, which dimensional plane?

I'm drawing into this one, just here.

Ah. That's better.

And deeper, to this galaxy...

Um hm...

Near the inner rim of this spiral arm, to this star system.

Yes Yes.

And this planet. Mostly water...

I got eyes!

Well, figuratively speaking, I suppose.

Hmmpf. OK? What's so fascinating about this planet?

A curious form of sentient life has developed there. They're amusing to watch. Look, I'll rewind into their operative past just a bit...

There. Have a look.

Um, yes, I, see what you mean, the... Whoa! You see that? I thought you said they're intelligent!

No, I said sentient. I've seen them approach intelligence a number of times, but they always manage to make a hash of things. The incident I was studying just now is a good example. Watch, I'll fast forward a few centuries from their functional present.

Hm. Well, yes, I'll grant you, they have set themselves upon quite a dismal path. Two centuries of escalating violence, class and religious wars, then, look, global famine, and a dark age lasting nearly a thousand years. One could almost pity them.

Indeed... I'm thinking of... Stepping in.

Adonis! The fate these mortals chose for themselves may be pathetic, but I hardly think The Committee will approve *Intervention!*

What if I can prove the existence of a Critical Singular?

Ah... A what?

A rare occurrence. It seems unfair, doesn't it? The destiny of the species channels through one poor soul, and he doesn't even know it. Then, before he makes whatever contributions he would have made, he is erased by an inept, graceless maladroit. The worst part is it's downhill from there. No matter what choices they make after the assassination, the dark age will follow, and...

Now see here, chap! My sympathy to their plight notwithstanding, there simply is no way for you to know that. Being timeless, we can see their future, their *actual* future, the result of bad choices they will *actually* make. Hundreds, or thousands of decision points lie between the assassination and their eventual downfall. If they can't make a few good decisions here and there, are they worth saving?

What I am saying, Kronos, is after the assassination, *all* choices available to them lead to doom.

I say again, there is no way for you to know that. Ah... Is there?

Um, I take it you've not read the techie bulletins.

What! That bunch in the basement? A lot of bio-dimensional hocus pocus if you ask me! "Tune your focus this," "Expand your vision that." Their motto should be "Let's take something simple and make it complicated." Why, for two coppers I'd... er... well... Bulletins, you say? What, um, to which, of their ravings, in particular, are you referring, Adonis?

Virtual Realms, VR, they call it...

Oh, please, Adonis, enlighten me. What is a virtual realm?

A method, nothing more. The techies have only discovered things we always could have done, if only we'd known. Once I mastered VR, I staked out a Realm in deep space and evoked within its bounds a full-sized replica of the system I'm studying.

Wonderful! Now you have two identical systems. So what?

The new system exists metaphysically, old man. I can change any element, or group of elements, at will, and then watch the results.

We seem to be drifting off point. How does this VR prove this species will be doomed after this one assassination?

Isn't it obvious? I've created a test system. I can initiate thousands, or millions, of variables, then observe the results of each alternate reality for a few hundred or even a few thousand of their years.

Ok, genius, how long will that take?

Well, we are eternal. We don't exist in dimensional time.

Bah! I keep forgetting that.

So, while my test runs would take eons as seen by mortals...

Yes yes. It'd be just the blink of an eye to us.

Exactly, Kronos. Except we don't have eyes.

Hm. So, you can demonstrate that after the assassination of one mortal, this Singular, all possible futures lead the species to doom?

Precisely!

Ok. But do you think you can convince The Committee that your little test system is accurate? That the “All Roads Lead to Doom” result is valid? They’d have to believe your test system is an accurate and faithful representation of the original.

Yes, I think I can make a convincing case. Especially since I can also prove the flip side. Preventing the assassination bodes well for the species. If the CS lives beyond that point in their time line, all choices available to them lead to some level of prosperity. Many even lead to a golden age.

Really, Adonis? I must say, you’ve piqued my interest. How did you remove the assassin in your test runs?

A vapor pulse did the trick.

Um. You vaporized him?

Quite.

Something else. In test runs, how soon after the prevented assassination did the CS begin making contributions that save the species?

Heavens, I hadn’t paid much attention, but, almost immediately, now that you mention it. Within a few weeks in most runs. Why?

Adonis, listen closely. How likely is it this species is so inept that it should, of its own doing, knock-off the one champion who could save it? And the timing, immediately before his first significant actions. What are the odds that occurs naturally?

What are you...? If it doesn’t occur naturally, that means someone interfered. How could? It would have to be someone like...

Keep going. Someone like?

... Like... Us?

Bingo!

No! Why would an immortal go to such lengths to ensure the doom of one simple, isolated culture?

Well Adonis, we don't all hale from the noblest of beginnings, do we? Who's to say what dark motivations might drive some of us? And, what makes you think there is only one such incident?

I don't like where this is going.

It's going to its logical conclusions, old man. We've stumbled upon one incident of negative-impact tampering with mortals. If we searched in earnest, would we find more?

We, Kronos? Dare I deduce, from your use of the pronoun 'we,' that you now wish to be considered for membership to this exclusive and righteous undertaking?

OK OK. I'm in. But now it becomes critical our actions are undetected, both in preventing the assassination, and in discovering if there is a villain amongst us. We can't even involve The Committee, for fear our villain is one of them.

I'm liking this less and less, Kronos. And, if I may be so bold, you seem to be liking it more and more?

Feels great too, by Jove! It's been far too long since last I bloodied my knuckles. Didn't know how bored I've become with eternal life. First, we search for more tampering. Your basement boys can help us. Choose one you can trust to stay mum. His algorithm should search for a CS in worlds on the verge of success, and the search must be undetectable. Next, we'll try to prevent the assassination.

I say old man, you seem to have a knack for this. I couldn't have chosen a better partner.

Yes, well, I... Wait! Chosen? What? This was a set up?

Well, I—

You! You manipulated me? Well PLAYED, old chap! I didn't suspect a thing! Now, you mentioned the functional present of this species. Do I correctly assume the assassination is in their future, at a point beyond their functional present?

Of course, Kronos. As you know, we can peer into their past and future, but we cannot rewind time for them.

Good. Now, are we agreed that our work must not be detectable?

Agreed. We must use indirect and devious methods.

Extremely indirect. We can't just vaporize the shooter.

Well put, Kronos. Let's see, we could direct someone to shoot the shooter, an enforcement type perhaps?

No. The aura of our imprint could be detected far too easily. Instead, we should find another to imprint with an imperative.

I see. One mortal has an imperative to be in place at the proper time, and the means to direct another mortal, an enforcement type.

What are they called there, the enforcers?

Let's see... well, soldiers, or policemen. So, we imprint someone to direct a policeman. But, giving someone the means to direct another, that could still be detectable, no?

Not if we act early. We can imprint the essence of the mortal before its melding with the physical being, before birth. By the time it matures our imperative will have become one with the physical self, and traces of our action will have faded away.

My word Kronos! Have you done this before?

Humph. How many of their years, as they measure time, between their functional present and the assassination?

Well, let me see. Hm, about twenty-five of their years.

How many of their years represent physical maturity?

Varies a bit, between eighteen and twenty of their years.

Excellent. We shall choose a mortal who will mature at the proper time. One from the lowest station of life, whom we can redirect without upsetting any events important to the species. A throwaway mortal, far removed from our prime. See here, what land mass is on the other side of that world from our Singular?

That would be here. They call it Asia. It appears the female of the species occupies the lowest station in much of that region.

So, we'll choose a female from this mountainous region in Asia, imprint the imperative giving her the means to direct any other mortal needed to facilitate accomplishment of our directive. She completes her mission and leaves before the action starts. If someone should poke around, there shouldn't be anything to find. Just a random factor policeman, a lucky shot.

What an excellent plan! One thing though. Won't it be difficult to bestow the ability, the means to direct another, in sufficient strength and duration to match the task, and no more?

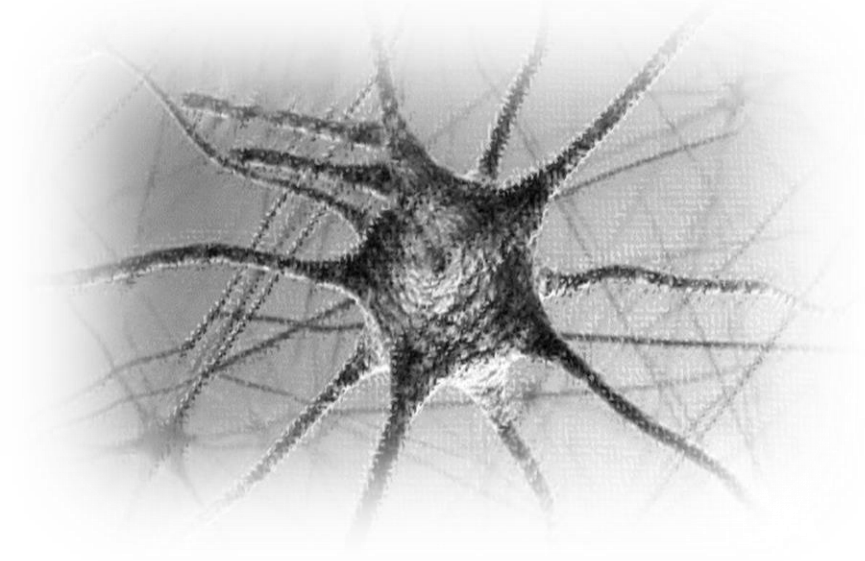
Yes yes, we'll have to aim for a bit of overkill. Can't be avoided. How about this? We'll implant the gift as a non-conscious ability. Our mortal will go through life unaware she is structuring her activities in a manner that will place her in the correct spot at the correct time, and unaware of the directives emanating from her visceral self. If she notices how helpful folks seem to be from time to time, she'll have to assume it's her dazzling personality, eh?

What about the Singular, Kronos?

He doesn't *need* to know anything, but, I suppose, it's only fair he's aware there was an attempt on his life. Maybe even a little peek at what things would have been like without him, eh?

Indeed, only fair. Welcome aboard, Kronos.

So it would seem, Adonis.



CHAPTER 1

1943, NOVEMBER 23, TUESDAY, EASTERN AFGHANISTAN

Her sudden self-awareness might not have been quite so traumatic for little Isobel Brahamms, had it come later in life, after she had learned to speak, perhaps, or after her eyes had learned to focus on the world into which she'd been born. Even if self-awareness had had the courtesy to wait a few short minutes while she indulged in her first feeding before it latched on to her psyche, she would at least have had that comforting meal in her tummy before facing the second traumatic event in her life. Coming, however, mere seconds after an unknown thug had wrenched her from the only home she had ever known, pulled her naked, wet and cold into the vastness of the world, the otherwise wondrous awareness-of-self that pulsed across her mind was anything but wondrous.

Railing against her removal and awareness, Isobel screamed louder than any other babe encountered by the seasoned delivery team responsible for her unhappiness. Awareness, perceived not as words to this newborn lacking a language, but as severe, instinctive perception. Awareness infinite but selective: her small body, where it ended, where the cold world began, but nothing of things beyond her. Those unknown and unknowable bright lights, fuzzy images and rough hands were more fearsome when considered against the total knowledge of self that had been thrust upon her without her consent, so she showed her displeasure the only way she could.

She screamed until she had expelled all the air from her lungs and her face turned blue, then she paused long enough to draw in another full measure of wind and belted out her next aria of discontent. She continued until she had worn herself out. When she awoke 20 minutes later, now clean, dry and bundled in a warm blanket, her awareness was of hunger. She screamed again, but quieted when the nipple was pressed to her lips. As she fed, self-awareness once again intruded upon her mind, but familiar now, welcomed.

She would not, for several years, wonder as to the meaning of that self-awareness. She accepted IT the way infants accept. IT settled comfortably into her core and curled up like a sleepy kitten, purring with an air of quiet assurance. IT was constant, but inobtrusive. IT grew stronger as IT became a part of her, and as IT became a part of her, IT faded to It, then to it, and by age one it had melded complete into Isobel's essence and disappeared, even to Isobel.

On the day and hour Isobel turned one, she felt a strong need to go Somewhere, but the need was stronger and more matured than her comprehension of it. She didn't know how to put the need into action. It frustrated her. She had crawled every square foot of the two rooms she knew as Home, and she had glided with Mother through Door to the vastness of Outside. Even Outside, however, didn't measure up to her mental image of Somewhere. Somewhere was beyond Outside, beyond her knowledge, and therefore scary. But her need trumped her fear.

Undaunted, she set out, and crawled to Door before Mother,

laughing at her child's sudden industriousness, plucked her up and returned her to her toys. Twice more Isobel crawled to Door, twice more thwarted by a puzzled Mother. Isobel sat then, frustrated, as she struggled with the still-overwhelming need to follow the path she could almost see. Her frustration built as she sat among her toys, casting about for another means to achieve her goal. But there were no other options to consider. As she repeatedly considered and rejected her only option, her frustration level rose, and just as it reached the screaming level, something unexpected happened. Mother walked to Door, pulled open the inner one, pushed open the outer one, and held it there, staring out.

November air chilled the two-room Home, but Mother appeared not to notice. Crawling at top speed, Isobel darted through Door, fell to the single masonry step and somersaulted to the frozen ground. The bump on her head and skinned right knee brought wails of pain, but she continued to crawl away from the house. Her cries snapped Mother out of her languor. Confused, unable to recall the reason she'd opened the door, and incredulous that she had stood by as her infant daughter crawled past her and out the door, Isobel's mother rushed to scoop her up and hustle her back into the house. She stood with Isobel in front of the fireplace then, cooing and coddling the child, as the room warmed. It took 30 minutes to quiet her, and then she was afraid to let go of her.

The frightened young mother needn't have worried, however. Her need to travel sated for the moment, Isobel was, for the first time, considering a concept, now with actual words skimmed from her mother's language: "I am one," she thought. "I am old."

Is it possible for a one-year-old to have such well-formed thoughts? Humans cannot remember the age of one, so who can say with any certainty? The fact that a thought is not remembered, after all, does not preclude the possibility that it occurred.

Her need to travel returned, but less urgent, less demanding, and in that manner the need became a part of her, a thread that twined itself into her life. While at first, she could feel it, hear it, see, smell and even taste it, by age two it was gone as a constant,

and after that it only occurred to her fleetingly on rare occasions when the thought of Somewhere would pop into her mind. By age two and one-half years, with her need now blanketing her entire village and the mountain beyond, her active young mind took its well-deserved rest.

Early in March 1946, Saji Tal, fifty, six-foot four and stout, watched from his small window as Isobel Brahamms skipped, walked, hopped and jumped her merry way down the stone path to the office behind his home. He smiled at the child's carefree manner, and he thought once again about her given name. An old family name, they'd told him, from the mother's side. He'd learned it was a Hebrew name meaning "God's Promise," one more element of mystery for this little girl already brimming over with it.

The village knew her as Bell. She was tall for her age, and a more adorable child was hard to imagine. She wore her long, jet-black hair pulled back and tied into a single braid today; her mother never tired of rearranging the child's hairstyle. She had the most startling blue eyes Saji had ever seen, nearly perfect facial contours, and flawless skin appearing lightly tanned regardless of the season.

Tal opened the door just as Bell was about to knock.

"Good morning, Princess," Tal said in English. The child had been speaking for nearly a year now. Tal had used English words whenever possible, and Bell had been catching on nicely.

"Good morning, Mr. Tal, Sir," she said, her English still heavily accented.

Pointing a finger as if to scold, Tal switched to Dari and said, "Now Bell, I thought we agreed you would call me Saji?"

Standing in the doorway, fidgeting with her fingers, Bell looked up at Tal as she said, "Um, yes Sir. But Uncle say not."

"Well, we don't want to disobey Uncle, do we? Oh, please, Bell," Tal said as he stood aside, and motioned with his hand, "come in. Have a seat."

Bell said, "Thank you, Sir," as she crossed the room and hopped onto her customary chair in front of Tal's desk.

“How would it be,” Tal said, as he rolled his large swivel chair out from behind his desk and placed it nearer Bell’s, “if you were to call me Saji only here in this office, when you and I are here? Do you think that would work?”

“Yes, Sir.”

When Saji said nothing, Bell realized her mistake and clamped her hand over her mouth, which seemed funny to them both. Bell tried to suppress her laugh for a few seconds, and they broke into uncontrolled laughter that hurt their stomachs.

When they had settled down, which took a few minutes, Bell sat up straighter in her chair and said, “S... Saji?”

“Yes, Bell?”

“Why?”

“Why what, child?”

“Why want you I call Saji?”

“Well,” said Saji, surprised, “I don’t know. Let me think for a moment.” He really had not thought about it until just now, but in doing so, he discovered he had an excellent reason.

“I think, Bell, that I want to know you for a long time. I want to hear from you, to hear what great things you are doing, and I think an inner voice told me you might remember me better if you knew me by my first name. Does that sound reasonable?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Bell, I wondered if we could talk more about the long journey you will make soon. Is that OK?”

“Yes, S... Yes.”

“I know you must leave us, Bell. I still don’t know why. Have you thought any more about that?”

She fiddled with her fingers as she looked at the floor for a few seconds, during which time Saji said nothing. He had discovered that allowing the child time to sort through her thoughts sometimes produced an unexpected answer. Far from clearing up the mystery of the girl, those answers had only added to the puzzle, but Saji was hopeful. After ten seconds, Bell raised her eyes and looked around Saji’s small office as if checking that they were still alone. Then she

leaned forward, and in a quiet, reluctant whisper she said, “Purpose...”

“Purpose?” Saji said, switching to a whisper himself. “You have a purpose for leaving? Do you know what the purpose is?”

Bell thought for a moment and then said, “Yes, yes, no.”

Tal smiled, “Will you ever know, do you think?”

Whispering again, she said, “I must only be in place.”

“Do you know what place?”

After thinking again for several seconds, Bell said, “In time. Long time.”

“Bell, this is hard for me to understand. You are well loved by everyone here. No one wants you to leave. Yet everyone agrees you must leave. Even your mother. Do you know why?”

“No,” Bell said. Then she closed her eyes, cocked her head to the right, and wrinkled her brow, as if she were accessing an inner store of facts she’d just discovered. After holding that pose for several seconds, and switching to Dari, she said, “The mortal... must have... a strong visceral will.”

Saji was floored. This wasn’t the first time she’d blurted out something that made her sound much older than three. Or like she was being directed. No matter how right it felt to send her away to the west, he had misgivings, brought on by talks just like this.

The eerie implications in things she said made Saji want to abandon this plan to send her West, and keep her here instead, where he could protect her. From what, he didn’t know. He only knew that every time he thought about keeping Bell here, the feeling that she was needed elsewhere only got stronger.

He decided it was time to write to his old college roommate. As an anthropology major at Emory College in Atlanta, Georgia, class of 1919, Saji had roomed with an American student named Britten Houston, a business major. He was the kindest, most ethical person Saji had ever met. Bell would be safe with him. They’d kept in touch for a few years after college, and Saji still had his address. He’ll have to lie, and tell Britten that the girl’s parents are dead. Even then, his request will sound preposterous.



CHAPTER 2 20 Years Later: The Present

1963, November 21, Thursday, Dallas

Bell arrived by bus Thursday afternoon. It was misty, but otherwise pleasant, in the mid-sixties. She took a cab to her hotel.

After checking in, while walking to the elevator, she passed a stack of newspapers. She glanced only fleetingly at the headline above the fold of *The Dallas Morning News*. She was waiting for the elevator when the words she'd read registered consciously. She walked back and reread the entire headline: *Storm of Political Controversy Swirls Around Kennedy on Visit*.

A Kennedy visit? Where, she wondered? Scanning the first few lines of the lead article, she found her answer: the president would be in Dallas tomorrow.

She hadn't known that, but it didn't alarm her. Her presence here couldn't have anything to do with President Kennedy. She walked away, then stopped, went back and bought the paper. Only five cents. Wouldn't hurt to read the article.

As she rode the elevator to her floor, the newspaper tucked under her arm began to feel bothersome. She ignored it at first, determined not to panic at the chance encounter with a few words of text. But the feeling grew stronger, as if the paper might reveal a glimpse into her future. She knew it wasn't logical, but logic hadn't played an important role in her life, thus far. She'd learned to trust feeling over logic. That kept her safe. She was tempted to rip the paper open now and start scanning the article, but she wanted to be alone when

she learned whatever it had to tell her. When the elevator doors opened, she hurried to her room, dropped her suitcase and small duffel bag just inside the door, closed it, and opened the paper.

On the front page were two tiny articles about upcoming classical concerts, a small weather blurb, six column-inches about a USA/Russia confrontation on the Berlin autobahn, and a quip, prominently displayed at the top-right corner of the page, that proclaimed, "Nixon Says JFK May Drop Johnson in 64". The remaining 90% of the first page comprised three full stories about the JFK visit to Dallas on Friday. She began reading the first one as she walked to the bed and sat on the edge.

She felt better after reading the first two articles. She'd found nothing to suggest that her trip to Dallas involved the president. The third piece gave her pause. It described the route the presidential motorcade would take as it made its way through Dallas. That's when the first real voices of worry began to nag at her.

Bell had memorized the street intersection to which she would take a cab on Friday, shortly before noon. She had also picked up a Dallas city map at the bus station and stashed it in her duffel bag. She took it out now, found her intersection on the map, and then looked at the grainy map sketched in the newspaper. "Oh please, no," she said, aloud, to the empty room.

She stood up and began pacing, nearly in a panic, muttering to herself, "This can't be. Just can't be." It's too big, she thought, whatever this is, involving the president, it's too important, and she was just one small girl. What if she failed? What if...

But I've never failed. Never before. Self-aware from the day she was born, she knew her gift was a side effect of that awareness. She had done things with her gift, even when she was young, but she had acted unconsciously then. Her own awareness of her gift, and things she could do with it, had come only in increments throughout her life. Fragments of an incident would occasionally migrate from her subconscious to her conscious mind. Leakage, she called it, and by her early teens she had begun hacking into that leakage, into her own subconscious, looking for answers.

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