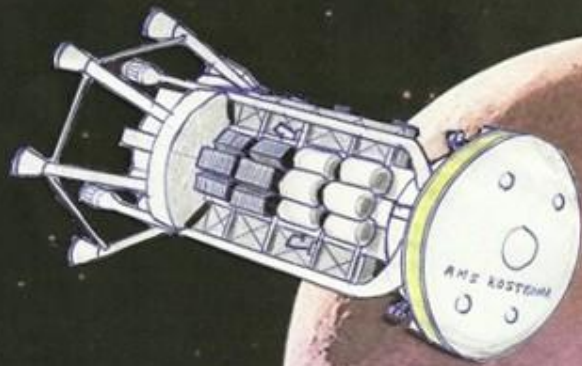


# The KOSTROMA Saga



By

**Michel Poulin**

# **The KOSTROMA Saga**

A SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL

BY

**MICHEL POULIN**

© 2025

## **WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS**

**THIS NOVEL CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR, VIOLENCE AND SEX, AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS WHICH ARE UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN.**

### **ABOUT THIS NOVEL**

This novel is a revised and reworked compendium of five of my previous novels, written between 2012 and 2021, which described the saga of the mighty super-heavy Space cargo ship A.M.S. KOSTROMA and of its captain and owner, young Tina Forster. That saga starts in the year 2315, when the Spacers' League, representing the Humans living in Space in the Solar System, is growing increasingly tired of the authoritarian rule of the government of the Earth Federation and revolts in order to gain its independence.

### **OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR**

(All available free online at [Free-Ebooks.net](http://Free-Ebooks.net), or can be ordered direct via email to the author at [natai@videotron.ca](mailto:natai@videotron.ca).)

#### **Kostroma Series**

JOVIAN UPRISING -2315  
THE ERIS PROTOCOL  
LOST AMONG THE STARS  
WAR AMONG THE STARS  
MIGHTY NOSTROMO  
THE FIGHTING NOSTROMO  
A NEW ERA  
NOSTROMO ON THE PROWL  
NOSTROMO LOST IN TIME

NOSTROMO IN SPACE AND TIME  
THE KOSTROMA SAGA

**Nancy Laplante Series**

CODENAME: ATHENA

ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME

CHILDREN OF TIME

TIMELINES

DESTINIES

TIMELINE TWIN

FROM THE FIELDS OF CRIMEA TO THE SANDS OF MARS

THE ADVENTURES OF NANCY LAPLANTE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

UNITED STATES SPACE CORPS

RAISING NANCY

ANGEL GIRL

AND AN ANGEL SANG

IN THE SERVICE OF FRANCE

THREE PROUD WOMEN

A FULL LIFE

FEMALE FIGHTER PILOT – INGRID DOWS – AN ALTERNATE STORY

INGRID DOWS – AN ALTERNATE STORY PART 2 – THE JET AGE

INGRID DOWS – AN ALTERNATE STORY PART 3 – THE SPACE AGE

CODENAME: ATHENA (2025 Edition)

ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME (2025 Edition)

CHILDREN OF TIME (2025 Edition)

TEMPORAL AGENT

**U-Boote Series**

THE LONE WOLF

U-900

THE LONE WOLF (2025 Edition)

**Sinner Series**

SINNER AT WAR  
ETERNAL SINNER  
AMERICAN SINNER

**Lenoir Series**

A MINOR GLITCH  
A NEW REALITY

**CIA Series**

FRIENDS AND FOES  
A DEADLY TANGO

**Odyssey Series**

ODYSSÉE TEMPORELLE (in French)  
SPACE-TIME ODYSSEY  
ON THE ROAD TO EDEN

**Nauca Series**

NAUCA – DAUGHTER OF THE STEPPES  
CARAVAN TO PATALIPUTRA

**Standalone books**

THE LOST CLIPPER  
A MARS ODYSSEY  
THE MAIN BATTLE TANK – STILL RELEVANT OR IN NEED OF EVOLUTION

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

<b>CHAPTER 1 – INHERITANCE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 – CARGO RUN</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 – PIRATES ON THE PROWL</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 – REFIT AND SHORE LEAVE</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 – A BRAND NEW SHIP</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 – POWERPLAY</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7 – MARS EXPEDITION</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8 – BATTLE FOR MARS</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9 – COUP D'ÉTAT</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10 – NORTH AGAINST SOUTH</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>CHAPTER 11 – THE WAR IS OVER</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>CHAPTER 12 – A VILLAGE IN SPACE</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>CHAPTER 13 – SPACE BROTHEL</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>CHAPTER 14 – BACKLASH</b>	<b>320</b>
<b>CHAPTER 15 – DEPARTURE</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>CHAPTER 16 – SPACE ROUTINE</b>	<b>334</b>
<b>CHAPTER 17 – CLOSING IN</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>CHAPTER 18 – ERIS</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>CHAPTER 19 – A SHOCKING FIND</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>CHAPTER 20 – FIRST CONTACT</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>CHAPTER 21 – POLITICAL REACTIONS</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>CHAPTER 22 – GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER</b>	<b>389</b>
<b>CHAPTER 23 – RETURN TO JUPITER</b>	<b>425</b>
<b>CHAPTER 24 - WELCOMING</b>	<b>442</b>
<b>CHAPTER 25 – A NEW HOME</b>	<b>456</b>
<b>CHAPTER 26 – A STROKE OF GENIUS</b>	<b>459</b>
<b>CHAPTER 27 – SPACE REFIT</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>CHAPTER 28 – ON THE WAY TO THE STARS</b>	<b>483</b>
<b>CHAPTER 29 – GLIESE 667C</b>	<b>490</b>

<b>CHAPTER 30 – GLIESE 625</b>	<b>504</b>
<b>CHAPTER 31 – GLIESE 581</b>	<b>517</b>
<b>CHAPTER 32 – A BIG BLUE PLANET</b>	<b>524</b>
<b>CHAPTER 33 – A TENSE SITUATION</b>	<b>546</b>
<b>CHAPTER 34 – TEACHING A LESSON TO A BULLY</b>	<b>578</b>
<b>CHAPTER 35 – A TERRIBLE TASK</b>	<b>598</b>
<b>CHAPTER 36 – A NEW ERA FOR HUMANITY</b>	<b>610</b>
<b>CHAPTER 37 – RESUMING THE QUEST</b>	<b>636</b>
<b>CHAPTER 38 – DEEP SPACE RENDEZ-VOUS</b>	<b>660</b>
<b>CHAPTER 39 – THE ROSS 128 INCIDENT</b>	<b>677</b>
<b>CHAPTER 40 – PLANNING THE FUTURE</b>	<b>696</b>
<b>CHAPTER 41 – EXPLORING A NEW HOME</b>	<b>717</b>
<b>CHAPTER 42 – SOUTHERN REACTIONS</b>	<b>729</b>
<b>CHAPTER 43 – A NEW LIFE</b>	<b>750</b>
<b>CHAPTER 44 - DISHONOR</b>	<b>772</b>
<b>CHAPTER 45 – DEALING WITH A CRISIS</b>	<b>778</b>
<b>CHAPTER 46 – LIVING ON A NEW WORLD</b>	<b>787</b>
<b>CHAPTER 47 – THE TROUBLE WITH ROSS 128</b>	<b>792</b>
<b>CHAPTER 48 – TAKING A HUGE RISK</b>	<b>799</b>
<b>CHAPTER 49 – A SHOT AT DIPLOMACY</b>	<b>806</b>
<b>CHAPTER 50 – THE BATTLE OF ROSS 128</b>	<b>835</b>
<b>CHAPTER 51 – A SPREADING FIRE</b>	<b>851</b>
<b>CHAPTER 52 – NEW FRIENDS</b>	<b>867</b>
<b>CHAPTER 53 – BOOMING BUSINESS</b>	<b>886</b>
<b>CHAPTER 54 – A MISSED RENDEZ-VOUS</b>	<b>890</b>
<b>CHAPTER 55 – BREAKTHROUGH</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>CHAPTER 56 – WAR</b>	<b>908</b>
<b>CHAPTER 57 – DEMONSTRATION OF FORCE</b>	<b>937</b>
<b>CHAPTER 58 – PEACE AT LAST</b>	<b>948</b>
<b>CHAPTER 59 – MOVING ON</b>	<b>967</b>
<b>CHAPTER 60 – A NEW SHIP IS ON THE WAY</b>	<b>974</b>

<b>CHAPTER 61 – BORDELLO ON THE MOVE</b>	<b>990</b>
<b>CHAPTER 62 – DEATH IS COMING</b>	<b>999</b>
<b>CHAPTER 63 – FIGHTING FOR SHEER SURVIVAL</b>	<b>1010</b>
<b>ANNEX ‘A’ – THE KOSTROMA</b>	<b>1031</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>1032</b>

## **CHAPTER 1 – INHERITANCE**

**09:18 (Universal time)**

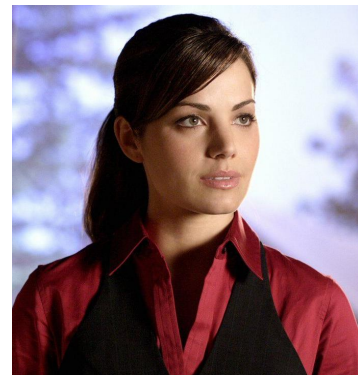
**Thursday, February 4, 2315**

**Notary's office, city of Callisto Prime**

**Callisto (8<sup>th</sup> moon of Jupiter)**

**Jupiter System**

“...I hereby bequeath total and complete ownership of my ship, the MSS KOSTROMA, to my beloved niece, **Tina Forster**. This includes all the unattached spare modules, ground support equipment and stocks of spare parts, fuel and other supplies held in my name in the hangars and warehouses of the Jovian Shipping Lines at the Callisto Prime spaceport, plus the bank account linked to the MSS KOSTROMA.”



The 28-year-old tall, brown-haired young woman sitting in one of the chairs set facing the notary's desk opened her mouth under the combined shock and surprise of hearing this part of her uncle's last will. The MSS KOSTROMA, a multipurpose super-heavy interplanetary cargo ship in which she held the positions of first pilot and temporary captain, was a behemoth with a mass when empty of 2,560,000 metric tons and an overall length of 1,260 meters. Even after nearly 26 years of plying the commercial space lanes, it was still worth over seven billion credits! Then, the full realization of the demands and responsibilities this unexpected gift meant dawned on Tina. Even though interplanetary space travel was now routine, space commerce was still a risky, fiercely cut-throat business. Many negligent or incompetent ship owners had ended up bankrupt, buried under debts from bad contracts or catastrophic breakdowns resulting from negligent maintenance. One could not as well lay still and wait for contracts to show up, on pain of seeing the better deals snatched away by more savvy entrepreneurs. Even though she knew and understood well the rules of that game, Tina knew as well that she

was no business shark or shipping magnate. Fortunately, she had as part of her crew someone who could take good care of the financial aspect of this incredible gift from Uncle Bill.

The few other witnesses invited to the reading of Bill Forster's last will, distant relatives and friends mostly, ended up on their part with minor but still valuable parts of his estate. Bill Forster had been a widowed man and had few relatives left alive, with Tina being the closest in the remaining family tree. Tina herself had lost her parents and two siblings in a tragic space accident which had also cost the lives of 64 other people seven years ago, when the ship transporting them had been hit by a stray piece of space debris near Jupiter. As glamorous as life in space could appear, it was still way more dangerous than living on the old Earth, as polluted and depleted as it was now. Spacers, as they were called by Terrans, realized that but most would not even dream of returning to live permanently on Earth. In 2315, the cradle of Humanity was an overcrowded place, with its 9.2 billion inhabitants living on a world whose natural resources had been severely depleted, or even fully exhausted in certain cases. Herculean efforts had been made to clean up the worst of the pollution from centuries of neglect and abuse, but much of the past beauty of Earth was now gone forever.

The notary, his reading of the last will completed, then distributed the deeds, electronic checks and property titles which had constituted the estate of Bill Forster, making the recipients sign for them before shaking hands with them. On her part, Tina left the office with the ownership papers of the KOSTROMA and its various ground equipment and stores, plus the bank account, debit and credit cards linked to the KOSTROMA's space operations. That account by itself was worth 48.3 million credits. However, Tina knew that this seemingly huge sum would be needed as a financial buffer to pay the ship's operational expenses, like the personnel payroll and the fuel bills, until profits from future or ongoing contracts could refill that bank account. It would definitely not be smart to burn that money in a wild spending spree. At the age of 28, Tina was a responsible woman, made even more so by her thirteen years spent as a bridge crewmember of the KOSTROMA.

Leaving the ten-story building in which the notary's office was located, Tina glanced up at the curved ceiling of the giant air and water-tight tube containing this

section of the buried city of Callisto Prime. The tube itself had a diameter of 120 meters and was connected to a series of similar tubes forming a two-kilometer-long residential and commercial district, with its avenue lined on both sides with prefabricated buildings and parks. The ceiling was covered by a huge plasma screen which presently showed a clear blue sky, with a few dispersed white clouds. That would progressively change to a star-filled night sky in the evening, to give the impression to the citizens of Callisto Prime that they were living on some Earth-bound city. That, and the Earth-like gravity provided by artificial gravity matting installed throughout the city, helped the inhabitants to feel at home on what was in reality an alien world, half water ice and half rock, with a tenuous, unbreathable atmosphere. Those who wanted to observe the real landscape of Callisto, with the huge orb of Jupiter in the black sky of Space, had to go up from the city complex, situated forty meters under the ice crust of the moon's surface, to one of the observation domes emerging from the ice. Callisto Prime, with a population approaching two million people, was made up of hundreds of sections of tubes interconnected together and buried under the ice to provide protection against space radiations and meteorites. In this, Callisto Prime was very similar to the other cities of the Outer Solar System.

Jumping on the rolling sidewalk running the length of the avenue, Tina then jumped again, this time on the parallel high-speed sidewalk, and let herself be transported by the mobile rubberized carpet. If she wanted to go the other way, she would only need to get off the high-speed strip, step on a second low-speed sidewalk, then on a fixed walkway, before stepping again on the rolling sidewalks, which formed a long closed oval along the avenue. The whole system, using electric motors, was both pollution and noise-free, while permitting its inhabitants to go around at speeds of up to ten kilometers per hour. For the handicapped without the minimal balance needed to use the rolling sidewalks, they could use small electric karts along the fixed walkway, which was also used by small delivery vehicles. After a fifteen minute trip, Tina arrived at her destination, a bank which held the account she had just inherited. There, armed with the papers received from the notary, she formally put the ownership of the account under her name.

To get to her next destination, the offices of the Jovian Space Administration, or JSA in short, Tina took the electric subway line running the length of the central spine tubes of the city, arriving in six minutes at the Callisto Prime Spaceport. The sprawling

complex, situated for safety reasons four kilometers outside of the city limits, was also mostly under the surface ice of the moon, except for a dozen landing platforms on elevators which stuck out of the ice. Taking a deep breath before entering, in order to control her growing excitement, Tina walked into the reception hall of the JSA and made her way to the third floor offices of the Space Registrar. The clerk who greeted her there with a big smile was a young and handsome man of Asian descent, prompting Tina to smile warmly in return.

“Good day, mister! I am here to register the change of ownership of a ship, the MSS KOSTROMA.”

“Certainly, miss.” said the clerk while typing quickly in his computer the name of the ship, calling up on his screen the ship’s file. “It is presently listed as being owned by a Bill Forster. Do you have documents to prove the change of ownership, miss?”

“I certainly do, mister. My uncle, Bill Forster, recently died and he bequeathed me his ship and associated equipment and supplies in his last will. Here are the documents given to me by the notary.”

The young clerk took the documents handed over by Tina and examined them carefully, then made a number of computer searches to confirm their authenticity. While doing so he smiled apologetically to Tina.

“You will excuse me if I run a number of checks, miss: your new ship is a multi-megaton-class cargo ship at full load and represents quite a large value. I will also have to have my supervisor verify himself your papers. There aren’t very many megaton-class cargo ships in the Jovian lists. In fact, there are only six such ships in the Jovian lists. Your KOSTROMA is the third biggest of the lot, miss. If we look at the whole Solar System, there is a total of just 22 megaton-class ships still in operation. Your ship is sixth in order of mass at full displacement in the Solar System. You have the right to be proud, miss.”

“The sixth biggest? I thought that it was only the seventh one.”

“They recently retired the old SIRIUS, miss. Apart from being over ninety years old, its technology was outdated and made it commercially inefficient on the interplanetary lanes.”

“The sixth biggest ship in the Solar System. Hot damn!” exclaimed Tina, not a little proud. “Thanks for that info, mister.”

“You’re welcomed, miss.” replied the smiling clerk, liking this very pretty client. “My own checks are completed. I will now transfer the dossier to my supervisor, who will do the final checks and approval.”

That took another nine minutes, at the end of which the clerk’s supervisor came to the reception counter to shake hands with Tina and congratulate her on her new ownership. He then promised her that all the customs and space authorities in the Jovian System would be informed about that change of ownership within the hour. Feeling like a queen, Tina left the JSA offices and then wondered what she would do next. Feeling her stomach grumble, she checked her wristwatch and saw that it was nearly noon, Universal Time, which was based on the old Earth’s Greenwich Meridian Time. Seeing a good restaurant nearby, she decided to celebrate her newfound fortune with a good meal and a bottle of wine. She certainly had the financial means for that now!

The restaurant was actually a five-star establishment which catered to the rich, most notably to big industrial or shipping magnates and to high-level politicians and functionaries. Tina’s working-class jumpsuit got her a snobbish up and down look from the maître d’ but she still managed to get a small table in a far corner of the dining room. Mentally sending the maître d’ to a choice location, Tina took hold of the wine list first and nearly choked with indignation on seeing the prices. Even though she was now technically rich, she had always been rather frugal in her personal needs and tastes, like many of the spacers who lived often in minimalist conditions aboard their ships, which were effectively their homes for them and their families. Most of the wine bottles in the list she was reviewing cost nearly as much as what a ship technician earned in a week! Being well aware of the costs for shipping cargo across the Solar System, Tina still found the prices outrageous, until she thought about the state of the food industry, and of the general economy, on Earth. With much of its resources depleted and burdened with 9.2 billion inhabitants, the planet barely managed to feed its masses with its own food products and had in turn to import from space many of the raw materials its industries needed to manufacture goods. Plastics, hydrocarbons and chemicals were in particularly short supply on Earth, with the planet’s oil reserves having dried out during the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century. Pollution and rising sea levels due to climate warming had in turn cut on the amount of arable land available for agriculture. With every possible arable

surface now exploited, the production of such luxuries as wine and alcohol had been limited by the planetary authorities, and for good reasons. This had caused the prices for those products to jump up to the stratosphere. Grape production in hydroponic gardens had helped provide a source of relatively cheap wine, but at the cost of quality. The truly good wines, those who would not be spat out by expert wine tasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, were still being produced in places like Europe, South Africa and South America, but in limited quantities. Ironically, that put them out of the reach of the pockets of most of the citizens of Earth, leaving only the few rich ones to enjoy them.

Watched by an impassive waiter, who had noticed her shocked expression on seeing the prices, Tina finally chose a bottle of French red Bordeaux that cost the niggardly sum of 640 credits, or five days-worth of her past salary as a ship's pilot. Next, she explored the menu, with its prices which would have made the wine list proud, and ordered a Kobe steak imported from Japan, followed by a platter of varied pieces of French cheese. When she was finally served, the meal proved a memorable experience to Tina. Standard ship food was healthy, balanced...and rather bland. Most spices were very expensive, while the meat and fish produced in space farms somewhat lacked the full taste of the original product. Chewing pieces of Kobe steak washed down with red Bordeaux wine made Tina close her eyes with delight. The platter of cheese, accompanied by the rest of her wine bottle, was nearly as good. She finally ended her meal with a shot of French cognac. With the maître d' looking like he expected to have to get her arrested for grand theft, Tina asked for the bill. She actually managed to keep a straight face on reading the bill, which amounted to a whopping 2,185 credits. Making a show of patting her various pockets under the severe eyes of the maître d', Tina finally took out her new personalized debit card, the one linked to her ship's account, and presented it to the maître d'. The latter then paled on examining it: it had the black and silver color of the type of debit card good for withdrawals of more than one million credits at a time. Turning red with embarrassment, he ran the card in his electronic reader, offering the unit to Tina so she could add a tip and sign on it with her thumbprint. After a short hesitation, Tina decided not to be mean and left a 400 credits tip, getting the maître d' to bow to her while proffering his thanks. Tina finally got up from her table and left the restaurant, feeling like a million credits. Once outside, she could not help break out laughing.

**15:49 (Universal Time)**

**Bridge of the MSS KOSTROMA**

**Docking Station Number Four**

**Orbital terminal of the Callisto Prime Spaceport**

Patricia O'Neil, the sensors and communications technician on duty on the bridge of the KOSTROMA, raised her head long enough to speak to Frida Skarsgard, the second pilot of the ship.

"Frida, Tina's runabout is on approach. She should be aboard in about four minutes."

"Did she say anything about what is going to happen to the ship, now that Bill is dead?" asked Frida, a beautiful young woman of 27 years with reddish-brown hair. Patricia, an Irish red-head with green eyes, shook her head. Since the sudden death of Bill Forster two weeks ago, the crew of the KOSTROMA had been worrying about its future, not knowing if the ship would be sold and, if yes, to whom. Bill Forster, apart from being a good man, had also been a fair, caring boss for the 123 women and 89 men of the crew. His space savvy had kept the ship intact through many tight spots and his business acumen and many contacts had kept the contracts coming. With him gone, it would be hard to find as good a boss and owner. A few minutes later, after the small craft piloted by Tina Forster had entered one of the secondary craft hangars of the ship, the voice of Tina came on the ship's intercom.

"Attention all hands! Attention all hands! All crewmembers except those presently on cargo and passenger transfer operations, plus one bridge duty personnel, are to assemble in the main crew lounge immediately. I repeat: All crewmembers except those presently on cargo and passenger transfer operations, plus one bridge duty personnel, are to assemble in the main crew lounge immediately."

"I will stay here, Frida." volunteered Patricia. "There is no real need for you here at docking stations."

"Thanks, Pat!" said the pilot, rising from her padded chair and heading quickly to one of the lifts. Calling a cabin and jumping in it as soon as the doors slid open, Frida Skarsgard pushed the button for the crew facilities' level and waited impatiently as the cabin started going down. A few seconds later and four levels down, she exited the cabin and immediately met a number of other crewmembers who were pouring out of other lifts. None spoke, continuing instead on their way to the main crew lounge. More

than one face reflected worry, something Frida could easily understand. To her disappointment, Tina Forster was nowhere in sight when she entered the lounge. She was still looking around when Tina finally appeared, coming from the elevators and with a large box in her hands. She seemed in good humor, something which reassured a bit Frida, and made her way to the center of the lounge.

“Please, sit down, all of you!”

After some shuffling around, Tina looked around at the close to two hundred persons now present, waiting to see if anybody else would show up. Finally, she spoke up in a strong but warm voice.

“You can relax, my friends: the ship is not going to be sold and you will all keep your present jobs. I went this morning to the reading of my uncle’s last will. There, I learned that Uncle Bill was bequeathing to me this ship and all its ground-based equipment and supplies, plus the bank account holding its operating funds. We will thus keep flying the KOSTROMA, with me as your captain and owner.”

A concert of cheers and happy screams greeted that announcement, cutting her off for a moment before she could speak again.

“From what the notary told me, my uncle had no outstanding debts to his name, thus he was able to give me the KOSTROMA with a clean slate and some operating funds to continue our business. I thought that such an outcome deserved a proper toast. Winnie, get behind your bar and break out glasses for everyone! I have some good bottles with me to fill those glasses.”

Winnie Zambela, the black barmaid of the lounge who also acted as assistant purser, hurried behind her counter as Tina carried the box she had brought to the bar, putting it on the counter and opening it. Murmurs of surprise and awe went around when Tina took out of the box six bottles of fine French cognac which had to have cost a small fortune. She then went around the bar to go help Winnie pour shots of cognac, making sure that some of it would be left for those not present in the lounge. Once everybody was served, she raised her own glass high.

“To the memory of Bill Forster, a good man, a good boss and a good uncle. May he rest in peace!”

“MAY HE REST IN PEACE!” replied the crowd in unison, before downing their shots of cognac. Tina shivered as the strong alcohol burned its way down her throat and exploded in her stomach, then looked at the crowd around her.

“That’s it for now, my friends. Return to your duties and pass the good words to those who could not come now. Piotr, I will want a word with you after this.”

The ship’s purser, commercial agent and finance officer stood still while the others left the lounge, then approached Tina. At the age of 49, Piotr Romanski had a receding hairline that left him half bald, but was otherwise a strong, solid man of medium height with a round, sympathetic face and a small goatee. Piotr took out of a pocket of his business suit an electronic tablet as he stopped in front of Tina.

“I believe that I know what you want to know from me, now that you are the new owner, Tina. While you were taking care of your uncle’s affairs, I took the liberty of booking a few cargo deliveries for our next run.”

Tina smiled gently at Piotr, thanking her good fortune at having such a good commercial agent as the ethnic Russian. Much of the KOSTROMA’s good financial fortune was owed to the competence and dedication of Piotr Romanski...and to his numerous well-placed contacts.

“So, where are we heading next, Piotr?”

“Titan! We will first pick up here at Callisto Prime ten empty bulk liquid tanks which belong to the Titan Chemicals Corporation, plus a few passengers and a number of cargo containers. It will not bring us much but it will at least cover our trip’s costs. Once in orbit around Titan, we will load up with twenty full bulk liquid tanks: eight of propane, six of acetylene, three of ammonia, one of liquid nitrogen and two of liquid air.” Tina nodded her head, pleased. Titan, the seat of the Saturn Governorate and the second biggest moon in the Solar System with a diameter of 5,151 kilometers, represented a fabulous reserve of hydrocarbons for the oil-depleted Earth. As such, the refining industries on Titan shipped regularly to Earth huge quantities of such hydrocarbons, destined to feed the various chemical and plastic industries there. That commerce was worth a fortune in terms of shipping fees, but only the largest cargo ships could handle such large quantities in an economic manner. Fortunately, the KOSTROMA was such a ship.

“So, we then do a straight run to Earth afterwards?”

“No!” answered Piotr, surprising Tina. “Then, we go first to Vesta, to drop the tanks of liquid air and liquid nitrogen, along with some passengers and cargo containers. Once at Vesta, we will pick up more cargo containers and passengers, plus about 121,000 tons of metal ingots and powders.”

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

