

## EARTH 7

And the History Department at the University of Centrum Kath

By Steve M

Yeah, I wrote this. Blame no one else.

2017

## Dedication:

To my wife and best friend, Barbara.

## Other Titles (by genre)

### **Science Fiction:**

Mortuis Luna and the History Department at the University of Centrum Kath  
(Book 2)

The Finite Void and the History Department at the University of Centrum Kath  
(Jan 2018)

The Last Believer

### **420 Action Thrillers:**

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Forced Entry – The Unravelling (Book 1)

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## CHAPTER ONE

“Deploy the distress beacon,” barked the man at the helm, sitting on a seat slightly larger and higher than the rest. Beside him sat his copilot. Behind them sat three people strapped tightly into their seats. Sparks shot out from an electrical panel far back inside of the spaceship. While they did not see it happen, it was vital to their immediate future. It was the gyro-stabilizer unit and it had stopped working.

“No sir. Distress failed to instantiate,” replied the woman seated beside him.

“Does anything on this damned ship work?” the captain said angrily.

“Captain, we’ve got Earth 7 within range if we can vector 11.74 and 171” said his copilot.

“Do it,” yelled the captain. The copilot poked the hologram in front of her. Then she got an all blue image.

“Shit,” she replied. “Navs went down. I’ve got no way to tell if we changed course correctly. Visuals look like a success, but can’t trust that. Not until impact.”

Then there was a large puff of smoke, it came from the hologram in front of them. Not real smoke, mind you, just hologram smoke indicating that the control systems for life support were failing. It was some clever design engineer’s idea of a smart-assed way of indicating system failure way back during the system design phase. The design team chuckled for quite some time after coding it into the system. The next highest-voted alternative to indicate system failure was a big red stamp slightly askew, reading KAPUT.

The captain and his copilot looked out the front window of their ship and saw off in the distance the small dot that was Earth 7 approaching rapidly.

“What does that mean?” the captain demanded to know, pointing at the second hologram.

“I’ve no idea,” she replied. “Does anyone know the meaning of KAPUT, K-A-P-U-T? Speak up.”

“It means ‘broken,’” replied a man sitting behind them. There were tears in his eyes and his face was contorted by his fear.

“I don’t want to die drifting out in space,” said one of the men in the seats behind the captain.

“I’d rather die slamming into a planet,” replied the copilot cynically.

“My brother still owes me a lot of money. Selfish. Always has been. Mother encourages his behavior.”

“Dillon. If we survive this, I’m going to hunt you down and kill you. You said this bucket was in perfect condition. Just a little dispute about ownership,” said the captain.

“Historian, give me a report. Quick,” demanded the captain.

“Earth 7. Colonized 2,500 years ago by one million prisoners from Earth Primus. Memories wiped and left to develop. 92% famine loss. Quarantine planet. Hasn’t met any of the contact criteria. Current population about twenty-six million humans. Still subject to wars. Ending their second dark age. Scientific level is primitive 3.”

(All planets in contact quarantine are called Earth and given a numerical designation).

“Great. If the crash doesn’t kill us, the natives will,” said the worried man seated next to the historian.

In the distance, Earth 7 became larger. The central continent of Panju was distinguishable from the blue oceans surrounding it.

“We’ve lost manual steering,” reported the copilot.

The pilot spoke up in a loud, clear voice.

“Everyone, we’re probably going to die when we hit the surface of the planet. But just in case we don’t, I want you to turn on your PPS (personal protection suits) on low. Do it now. Turn it up until it bumps the person beside you. And remember to protect your head. Put your hands around your head to prevent being shaken to death.”

“I don’t want to die,” said the historian calmly. “I never finished my first mission,” he complained.

“I never got to tell my mother I forgive her,” said the nervous man beside him.

Sometimes it’s the tiny things. And it was like that for the occupants of the old, broken spaceship of disputed ownership. There was a very slight bump, a soft nothing of a bump, as something very small struck the spaceship. But a small thud had large consequences, and the spaceship, formerly right way up in a universe without a right way up for anything, this same spaceship began to slowly roll over ever so slightly. It was like a very slow Ferris wheel or the landmark in London, on Earth 5.

But slow is not the way of the universe, and the pleasant London Eye ride gave way to things slightly more dramatic as the speed of rotation began to increase. Most of the crew passed out before it reached 200 RPT (rotations per tox. A Tox is a minute, a Tix is a second. Don’t worry, you get used to it.).

And it didn’t take long before the rotations passed the point of survival for the humans inside. They were splattered across the interior by the ever-increasing centrifugal force. But first they would be strained through the microfiber of their personal protection suits, leaving behind only their skeletons still sitting upright and strapped in. The rest of them, the softer bits, migrated according to the laws of physics until their remains, after seeping through the crevices and cracks, finally came to rest as a brownish-reddish-gray goo much like the finest smooth plaster, pressed hard against the inner hull of the ship.

When the spaceship entered the atmosphere, it was rotating in excess of one million times per tox. At this speed, its form would be impossible to distinguish, and all that could be seen was a bright white light coming from rapidly revolving exterior lights. These lights were one of too many components of the ship that, despite the dearly departed captain's complaints, actually exceeded the manufacturer's recommended operating conditions. And this would prove to be a significant problem.

Oh, dear.

## CHAPTER TWO

Allor and Roan walked down the trail high above the river. They would cross it at the rope bridge a few hundred mataars further along. The two boys looked down the steep cliff into the river. The water was rushing down it, frothing as it hit the many rocks in the river.

"Buno is lying" said Roan. "No chance he could have survived it from up here."

"I don't know," replied Allor, "maybe with the right combination of lucks," said the handsome younger boy with the dark eyes and jet-black hair.

"No way. Even if he missed the rocks when he entered the water, he would have been smashed against them and killed within seconds," said Roan emphatically. "The shit from his ass comes out of his mouth without delay."

"You may be right," said Allor as he tossed a wooden stick down into the torrent. It landed and was immediately sucked under in a vortex just to pop up a moment later on a collision course with a large gray-pink boulder. It hit hard and broke against the massive stone.

"I can volunteer next year," said Roan.



“Exciting,” said Allor with a sparkle in his eyes. He kicked a small stone over the edge of the trail and they watched the long fall down into the river below.

“Rope harvest and tending, probably. That’s where they start most of us.”

“But it’s outside, and fun,” replied Allor.

“Hot, sweaty work with long, sharp tools to cut down the giant plants. Then drag them to the wagon. I am beginning to wonder if this was a smart idea at all,” replied Roan with a smile and in the voice of his grandfather as well as the affectation of the old man’s bent way of walking.

“Its important work,” replied Allor. “If it’s not done, we can’t go to the Toggis plateau except by the long way. Imagine no honey anymore. Or flying fish?”

“I once ate flying fish fourteen revs in a row when our family went on the hunt. My uncle sets up trading for the hunters and we sent him everything we took from the herd.”

“You do the kill prayers?”

“Sure did,” replied Roan. “Even let me lead them sometimes. Imagine that, all those brave hunters gathered around the fire and the only ones they wanted to hear speak were children. It was like they were sick from all the killing.”

“But how were the fish?” asked Allor.

“The softest most wonderful taste ever. And with the herbs from the coast, it becomes so sweet. Every night I went to the fish fire. The men cooking were friendly and happy to see me. They would tease the men at the other fires because I would never go to any fire but theirs.”

“When they have the best, it makes sense,” replied Allor.

They rounded the curve on the trail carved into the side of the mountain. Ahead, they could see the huge timbers and ropes of the bridge. The broad woods stuck out of the ground proudly and nestled with others at their lashings. Large ropes held them back from the steep fall into the river below. Roan smiled when he saw it. His father had helped rebuild this bridge two years ago.

“Why didn’t they run them to the Toggis this year?” Allor asked. He picked up a rock. After tossing it up twice to gauge the weight and feel, he hurled it far, well past the bridge before arcing downwards into the river below.

“You’re the only person I know that can do that,” said Roan.

“I know,” replied the younger boy.

Allor had fallen out of a tree a year earlier. Once he healed from the accident, he discovered that he was able to throw stones remarkable distances. But only a few times before his shoulder would start hurting. Still, it was something he could do that no one else could, and this made the young boy happy and made him feel special.

He would daydream of a world where it was the most needed skill on the planet and vital to stop some catastrophe from happening. Because of his ability and the numerous times he had saved the people of the Confederation, he was made king over all lands and all peoples.

His daydream was destroyed a few weeks ago when Roan told him that the Confederation doesn’t permit kings. Allor was angry. He had to reimagine his entire dream story from the beginning again, this time as an emperor. But he didn’t share his annoyance with Roan. He just became silent.

“If they run the herds into the Toggis again, it will be too much for the grasslands,” said Roan. “Two years is all it can support before we have to leave it grow back for a year.”

“Noril coast is pretty,” said Allor. “Supposed to have flowers you can eat. And sweet too.”

“Yeah, can’t wait until I get to go hunting there,” said Roan.

They were about fifty maatars from the bridge when they saw the light far off in the sky. It was unlike anything they had seen before and it was coming towards them.

“What is that?” Roan said pointing to it.

Allor looked at his older friend. “I don’t know. I’m scared,” he said.

“The cave over there,” said Roan, pushing Allor towards the hand-cut cave meant for shelter from bad weather. As they scrambled to the cave, they heard a loud high pitched screech getting louder and louder. As soon as they were inside, they turned around just in time to see a bright white light flash by them heading along the ravine. An instant later there was an explosion and the ground shook under their feet. Then silence. No birds, no other animal sounds, no wind in the trees.

They stayed in the cave for a long time, at least twenty tox (minutes), before they summoned the courage to step outside. They moved with bodies that pushed out from the cave but with feet always at the ready to take them back in an instant. Roan walked out the furthest and was able to look down the ravine and the river. On the walls of the ravine were cuts, large cuts, as if a giant had stumbled down the ravine drunk on semu tea and had broken off boulders as it stumbled from side to side.

Roan pointed far down in the ravine.

“Look there,” he said. “See the steam rising from the water, way down there?”

“Yeah,” said Allor excitedly. “I know a way down there,” he added.

The way down was long. It took many tox for them to reach the shore of the river below. The trail was not used often and was not maintained. The sun was high in the sky, and the boys were sweating as they finally stood on the shore looking in wonder at the river. In the water was a long, fat, round cylinder that was shiny and gray. At one end there was an orange glow like a fire. It was the reason for the steam rising from the river. They stood there watching the water boil in a small circle surround the tube.

Allor was the first to see it. He pointed to the large group of fallen rocks. There were a few trees that were also pulled out of the ground and integrated into the fallen rocks.

“Let’s go,” said Roan.

“I’m hungry,” said Allor. “I need to eat first.”

Allor had been a sickly child most of his early life. It was only after his mother had met a woman that studied food that Allor's health began to improve. Key to his improvement were small meals every few hours and less bread.

The two boys sat on the rocks in front of the crash site and ate their food.

"I bet it's a falling star," said Roan.

"What else could it be?" replied Allor.

"But what, what if it's..." said Roan, hesitating, as if to mention something horrible, "what if it's Ceros come back," he finished with a laugh. Allor started laughing too.

The Cult of Ceros believed that one day their prophet Ceros would return again. He was last seen about 500 years ago when he traveled the land telling everyone who would listen that it would be really nice if we could all be really nice to one another. His message was simple? Don't be a dick!

Because of this, many people hated him. Some people take comfort in being disagreeable, their mouths pre-formed for the word 'no', and their opinions pre-formed to the position of 'against'. It seemed apparent that those that hated Ceros were dicks, dicks who refuse to change.

But many adored him for it and became his followers. They saw the sense of it. The efficiency of accomplishment without constant barriers from sour-pusses. And in his time Ceros helped people become better than they thought they could be. There is plenty of satellite surveillance of him that indicates he was really a very pleasant person. A gentle man that travelled with a cat. But a cat not as a pet, he'd speak often of the wrongness of having pets. It was more like an acquaintance that he fed twice a day and shared a life with.

But as time does so often, it morphs A into Z. This happened to the followers of Ceros. Over the years after his death they had evolved into the most ill-tempered, intolerant group of people on the planet. From a message of 'be nice' they had added 'only to our own'.

The followers of Ceros are now known far and wide on Earth Seven for their meanness. Instead of being really nice to everyone, they were only nice to other followers of Ceros. To everyone else they were complete and utter assholes. And this resulted in them being extremely grumpy most of the time. Then they would even tell you how miserable they were. And tell you, and tell you. It was like that relative that won't ever shut up about their health and the disease is being an asshole.

But don't you are suggest they change their ways...no, that will just piss them off and then they will become violent.

And they had reason to be grumpy most of the time. What had started as a revolution of behavior had been taken over by opportunists bent by power. When the followers of Ceros reached one million, a group of priests with a very conservative viewpoint overthrew the Council of Love set up by Ceros himself. In its place they became the Responsible Committee. They were responsible for all successes. Failures were theirs only in that they assigned responsibility for the failure. And it never was their fault. They were the ones that created the religious police.

The followers of Ceros became a people living in a state of perpetual fear and torment. This was caused by a religious police force that would harass them constantly. They demanded public acts of devotion and most importantly submission to their authority. Even the slightest hesitation in displaying respect would result in a beating and prison.

The police would roam the public places in groups of five. Often they would sit drinking coffee at an outside table in a café, scanning the people walking past to decide whom they help next. Yes, help. They believed that forcing the population to live within the tight rules of behavior as dictated by them was in fact the highest form of worshipping Ceros, a man who very clearly said 'don't worship me'.

They would approach the unsuspecting and demand immediate prayers from them and instant tithing. ‘Kneel and prove your devotion of Ceros and the High Priest’ they would demand in the voice of authority, their hands on their swords hinting at other possible responses. Then when the faithful were on their knees the police would demand tithing.

But a people learn through repetition. As a result the Ceros rarely left home with anything of value, lest the cops confiscate it as tithing. This also meant they never had any money in their pockets except for two of the smallest coin in value, the Ceros Dupon. This made them very stingy when they were out and about as they have almost no money to pay for anything. A Ceros restaurant is still one of the only places where you have to prove you can pay before your meal.

And the followers of Ceros were also slaver owners. Ceros was not a slave owner. In fact he spoke against it. But that part of his teachings were ignored in favor of the bits they like more. So instead of following Ceros and renouncing slavery, the most horrible practice imaginable, they embraced it like a Human Pig Smerker snorting Kuewlu Dust off the dorsal fin of a hot Merchita. They bought slaves at the public auctions after raids against other territories.

The miserable followers of the Cult of Ceros were eagerly looking forward to the return of Ceros. He would finally put an end to those damned religious police once and for all. But they really want to talk to him about being allowed to retain their slaves. After all they did pay for them. And it finally gives them time to enjoy the finer things in life.

The boys laughed a long time and started reciting “No You Can’t,” a song taught to children in the Confederation. It mocked the Ceros.

“Momma can I have my dinner?” said Allor.

“No you can’t, boy, no you can’t,” sang Roan in reply.

“Momma can I go to bed?”

“No you can’t, boy, no you can’t,” sang Roan.

“My water?”

“No.”

“My fish?”

“No.”

“My favorite dish?”

“No you can’t,” sang Roan in reply.

They sang and ate in an age-appropriate manner—that is, they made a mess and sang off key.

When they finished the meal, they began to explore the site. Something had hit the side of the ravine and buried itself deep into the rock wall. Roan climbed up the fallen rocks. He scrambled to the topmost point where they met the undisturbed cliff face.

“I think I can see it in there,” he said. “It’s like there is a candle way down in there burning.”

“Maybe I can fit,” said Allor as he scrambled up the rocks. He burrowed his way between the large boulders. But each time he came to a series of smaller yet still large rocks that blocked his path.

“Let’s keep looking,” said Roan.

“Help me,” said Allor, with his shoulder against a large stone taller than him but precariously fallen to where it could be shoved down out of the way with just a little more force than Allor could summon. It rolled down from its perch and settled at the edge of the river. Back upstream, the boiling of the river continued, but now only in spurts. The orange light under the water was flashing now.

The boys spent several hours trying to find a way to move the rocks in their way. But each time they met an immovable object. Finally, with the sun casting shadows on the far wall of the ravine, they stopped looking for a way in.

“A good night’s sleep tonight,” said Roan as he rinsed his hands at the water’s edge.

“Me too,” said Allor. “I’m coming back tomorrow,” he added.

“Wait for me to finish my chores, OK?” asked Roan.

“OK,” replied Allor.

They walked along the water’s edge. When they got to the boiling water, they stopped.

“Wonder what it is? Why does it boil water?” asked Allor.

“I don’t know. But tomorrow I am bringing some rope. I will swim down and attach the rope, then we can pull it up and examine it,” replied Roan.

“Excellent. I will bring some of my father’s tools. They might be useful.”

“Good,” replied Roan.

Allor picked up a rock and let it fly. It disappeared after a few seconds. He was bending over and picking his next rock. As he was straightening up again, he noticed it.

“Why is there a hole in the cliff face over there?” He pointed to the rock face in line with the boiling water. It was round and very precisely round.

“I don’t know. Maybe that thing made it,” he said, pointing to the glowing tube.

“But where does it go?” asked Allor.

“I don’t know,” said Roan.

Then Allor did a thing most kids would do. He picked up his rock and threw it at the perfect hole in the rock wall. The flat stone with the rounded edges disappeared but continued to make a noise as it bounced from side to side in the tunnel through the stone of the cliff. A moment later there was a large clanging sound. It came from behind the rocks the boys had spent hours trying to move.

The look they shared was wild enthusiasm. They ran towards the perfectly round hole as fast as they could. They stopped at the opening of it. It was large enough for them to fit inside, single file on their stomachs. Gone were concerns about the time of day, parents that might worry about them, schoolwork waiting for them, and evening chores. It was an adventure, and they were children.



Roan entered the hole first. After the first ten maatars it became dark as the hole curved through the stone. They were near the end when they saw the first glow of light. They crawled faster.

Roan and Allor didn't go home that night. They spent the entire night and most of the next day examining the contents of the spaceship. Their efforts were made difficult by the terrible smell inside of the craft. They finally went home late the next day after bathing in the river.

These two boys knew the greatest secret on Earth Seven.

But that is how this history started a long time ago. Let me tell you about recent events. You may find them more interesting. They are certainly more dangerous.

## CHAPTER THREE

7.926 Killorevs (~22 years) later

Allor was sitting on the steps of a Ceros temple. He was still shielded so no one could see him. He sat at one of the high corners of the smooth stone stairs. He would leave soon and move away from the temple. The patrols near the temple were always more numerous than in other parts of the city. Allor tapped his sandals against the stone steps then put them back on his feet.

He walked away from the temple and towards The Grand Platz Lesser, the smallest of the three largest squares in the capital city of Pyramos. It was the major trading square and formed the edge of the labyrinth of warrens and alleys that made up the souks of the capital city. As long as the religious police got their 12 Dupon entry fee, they stayed out of the Lesser.

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