

Forbidden Outpost

Tony Rubolotta

DSC Adventures

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or, if real, are used fictitiously or based on the characters that appeared in the film "Forbidden Planet"

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For the fans of Forbidden Planet
in hope that this sequel is at least half as
entertaining as the movie that inspired it.

Special thanks to my nephew, Geraldo Damazio who took
time during his visit from Brasil to do the cover design.

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Chapter 1 Prelude

In a few more seconds, United Planets cruiser C-57-D would be 100,000,000 miles from Altair 4, the safe distance necessary to avoid damage from the exploding planet. The countdown to the planet's doom began 24 hours earlier when the reactors of the planet's core were set to overload and trigger a massive chain reaction. It was too late to question the wisdom of the decision to destroy the planet. The process was irreversible and reaching a safe distance was now the highest priority.

Several crew members and the boatswain were gathered near the astro-navigation station at the center of the main deck. Their attention was focused on the replica of the ship at the center of the crystal astro-navigation sphere and the robot at the helm controls. It was strange to see Robby the robot seated at the console because he had always been seen standing until today. But there he was, performing the duties of an astro-navigator. The ship model at the center of the crystal sphere was level and straight, indicating level and straight flight directly away from the doomed planet.

Commander Adams took Altaira's hand as they turned away from the astro-navigation station and walked toward the main view plate adjacent to the engineer's station. Crewman Randall sat at the engineer's console with his attention focused on the ship's chronometer and with a com-link in hand. Adams pointed to the view plate, "See, Altair 4, the bright speck below the star." The main sequence star Altair was a slightly brighter dot near the middle of the view plate.

"15 seconds." announced Randall. Altair 4 had already exploded but it would take another 15 seconds for the light and radiation of the blast to reach the ship.

Adams moved behind Alta, putting his arms around her waist as they both faced the main view plate and he spoke softly and slowly. “There's Altair, your father, my ship mates, all the stored knowledge of the Krell. Five seconds... four... three... two... one...”

In the view plate, the light from the explosion of Altair 4 expanded to a bright white disk set against a black background studded with pinpoints of bright stars. The brightness of the disc overwhelmed the nearby pinpoints of light and cast a bright light on Adams and Alta. The disc created by the glowing debris field held its place for several seconds, then quickly receded and then suddenly disappeared. Adams turned his attention to Alta as she turned to look away from the view plate and toward him, returning his gentle embrace and resting her head on his shoulder for comfort.

“Alta,” he said, “about a million years from now, the human race will have crawled up to where the Krell stood in their great moment of triumph and tragedy. Your father's name will shine again, like a beacon in the galaxy.” Adams slid his hands down from her shoulders to her arms, pushing her back slightly to look into her eyes while she lifted her head from his shoulder and looked back into his eyes. “Yes, it's true, it will remind us, after all, we are not gods.”

Adams pulled Alta closer, cradling her head on his shoulder again as she tightened her arms around him. Altair 4 was the only home she had ever known. Her father was the only man she had known until the arrival of United Planets cruiser C-57-D and its crew, and Commander J. J. Adams in particular. Emotions she had never known, grief, romantic love, fear and anxiety, had taken her on a chaotic and stressful emotional ride in the past few days. She was emotionally spent and physically exhausted.

Adams had some idea of what she must be going through and walked her toward the officers quarters at the stern of the ship. He thought Doc Ostrow's quarters would be best for her. She was present when Doc revealed the secret he had learned

about the great Krell machine, and then died. Being in Doc's quarters might refresh that dreadful memory, but these were the most suitable quarters for a young woman on her first space voyage. The cabin was small but it was private and afforded some space to store her belongings. Doc was a cultured man and the small personal items he placed in his cabin reflected his refinement. Adams walked behind her and stopped at the doorway, pointing to the two aluminum trunks the crew had moved into the cabin.

“Alta, I have some things to take care of now. Why don't you start unpacking or rest. We only have a few minutes. I won't be long, and...” said Adams, hesitating to say more. Alta had enough on her mind now and he thought it best to give her some privacy and time to escape, even if it was for only a few minutes.

Adams closed the cabin door, took a deep breath, pulled himself to attention and walked briskly back to the astro-navigation station where most of the crew had now gathered around the robot. He asked the boatswain “Is all the gear and equipment stowed?”

“Closing up the compartments now sir.” the boatswain responded while pointing to a few crewmen to the right and upper deck who were busy securing compartment hatches, doors and loose equipment.

The crew was eager to get started for home and had made all of the ship's systems ready for the jump to faster-than-light (FTL) speed. Randall was running through the systems checklist, and for each item waiting for an aye aye before continuing. The crew had been on Altair 4 for only four days after a trip of over one year to reach the planet. But what a four days of terror it had been with little time to relax. They were eager and anxious to get underway.

“Robby, do you understand the sequence of operations for a light speed jump?” Adams asked the robot while glancing about to see what the crew was doing. Most were waiting for orders while a few others were moving toward the astro-

navigation station.

“Yes sir.” the robot answered. Robby had learned the ship's helm and navigation systems quickly but had not yet been through a light speed jump. The jump to FTL wasn't particularly difficult but had to be done in proper sequence and timing to avoid injuries or death. Robby was making a few adjustments and the very act of doing that raised Adams's confidence in the robot as he looked over Robby's side. Most of the crew had gathered around the astro-navigation station and were speaking in low voices.

Adams raised his com-link to address the entire ship's company. “We will make our jump to light speed in a few minutes. Make a final check on your gear and report to DC stations when instructed.” Adams turned toward the officers quarters looking for Alta to emerge. He was thinking she must have heard the announcement and understood it applied to her as well as the crew. That was confirmed a few seconds later when she came out of her quarters and started toward him.

Adams turned to greet Alta and holding her shoulders at arms length, he spoke with a consoling and soothing voice, “Alta, in about 377 days, we will be on Earth, our home.” Our home, she thought and beamed a reassuring smile, which Adams returned as he issued his orders. “Boatswain, sound DC stations. Robby, execute light speed jump on DC stations ready. Execute the course for Earth at maximum speed.”

Two aye ayes followed and the crew started toward their DC stations. Alta stayed close to Adams as they moved forward on the ship toward the compartment where the DC stations were located. Adams pointed to one of the floor plates, then the ceiling plate and shallow hood directly above it. He would take his place in an adjacent station. This was Alta's first jump but she knew to drop her arms by her side and to stand in the center of the floor plate.

The ship's warning lights, used to signal DC stations were still flashing when the DC beams were turned on, spanning the floor and ceiling plates of each DC station, enveloping each

occupant in a cylinder of pale blue-green light. The sound of a barely audible hum from the ship's core and propulsion driver surged in volume as the devices powered up and the ship accelerated.

The silver, saucer shaped ship accelerated toward a distant pinpoint of light in a black sky with many visible pinpoints. The light from Altair reflecting off the hull of the ship and onto the camera of the view plate turned redder as the speed increased, and then blue as the ship passed the light barrier and the camera view shifted forward. No one could see the view plate directly from the DC stations compartment, but the light reflected from the ship's interior was clearly visible. As the camera returned to facing the stern, the colors shifted again toward red.

The jump to light speed was completed in about 12 seconds and the pale blue-green DC fields vanished. A typical side affect of the DC field was a slight muscular stiffness in the neck and back, and Alta was no exception. Like most of the crew, she was gently massaging her neck and stretching her back as she left the DC station. As they were leaving the compartment, Adams said to her "I have a few things to do but the ship is yours."

While Adams made his way straight to the boatswain and began the post-jump check, Alta decided to see what the main view plate was showing. She was caught completely by surprise by what appeared on the screen a few seconds later. The ship had caught up with the light waves from the explosion of Altair 4. She relived the experience of seeing her former home world destroyed but in reverse and at a faster speed with a much redder light. Despite the distortion, the affect on Alta was much the same as it had been the first time, filling her with a sweeping sense of loss, despair and loneliness.

She did not want to see the destruction of the planet again, but it was done. A few seconds later, Altair and Altair 4 could be seen as they were before the explosion. Alta turned from

the view plate, wiped a tear from her eye and made her way toward her cabin. Perhaps if she busied herself unpacking, the memories would fade, even if just temporarily.

...

Commander Adams made his round through the ship while composing a top secret personal log entry in his head. He would encrypt and protect this log using thought pattern technology. That would allow him to extract selected parts for inclusion in the official mission log. He was unsettled on how some details might be received and wanted additional time to consider and compose the official report.

“This log is personal and top secret. Time synchronization will follow. Our mission to Altair 4 in the Altair star system to discover the fate of the ship Bellerophon and the science prospecting expedition sent there 20 years ago has only been partially successful but tremendously costly. We located Dr. Edward Morbius, the sole survivor of the expedition. We also discovered Morbius had a daughter, Altaira, from his marriage to another member of the expedition, Julia Martin. We learned later that Mrs. Morbius died giving birth to their daughter, Altaira.

We also discovered Morbius had the company of an advanced robot he had constructed during the first few months on Altair 4. The robot was constructed using alien technology discovered on Altair 4, which I will discuss more thoroughly later in this report. Soon after the robot was built and within the first year of the landing on Altair 4, every member of the Bellerophon expedition, with the exception of Dr. and Mrs. Morbius had been violently killed by some unseen presence of unknown origin at the time of the incidents. We now know the cause of those deaths and it will be explained in this report in the sequence it unfolded.

Dr. Morbius reported the discovery of an extremely advanced civilization called the Krell. He reported them to be one million years ahead of human kind in every way, but they had been extinct for the past 200,000 years. Apparently,

according to his discovery, the entire civilization was wiped out in a single night by some unknown force while the Krell were on the verge of a fantastic achievement. The Krell, he said, had devoted their entire energy on a project that promised to free the Krell from all dependence on physical instrumentality. Unfortunately, Morbius had no other details concerning this fantastic project.

We did learn about some of the Krell technology from Morbius, including the presence of an enormous machine beneath the surface of the planet, a cube measuring 20 miles by 20 miles by 20 miles. Morbius did not know the purpose or function of the machine. He also showed us a Krell laboratory. Everything we saw had been maintained in new condition with no indications of wear or age.

It was Doc Ostrow who discovered the secret of the great underground machine by using a Krell device discovered by Morbius in the laboratory. Morbius called the device an educator and claimed that it boosted the user's intellectual capacity, if they could survive the severe shock of using the device. Unfortunately, the shock cost Doc Ostrow his life but before he died, he learned and told us the gigantic machine was the great Krell project and it had been finished.

The machine allowed the Krell to mentally manipulate matter and project it anywhere on the planet, in any shape and form they desired. The Krell were destroyed as a consequence by monsters from the id, that is monsters the machine created as commanded by the subconscious minds of the Krell when the great machine was activated. The Krell, despite their highly advanced state of intellectual and cultural development, still harbored a suppressed subconscious lust for murder and destruction. The entire race, enabled with the ability to create subconscious monsters, perished in a single night 200,000 years ago. All traces of the Krell civilization have since disappeared from the surface of the planet. Only the self-repairing machine and underground laboratories had survived.

It was Dr. Morbius who, after using the Krell educator

device and receiving the mind boost, was able to subconsciously operate the great Krell machine though he was not aware of this ability. It was the monsters created by his id that killed the Bellerophon party and four of my ship mates. Those killed include engineer Chief Quinn, executive officer Lt. Jerry Farman and crewmen Strong and Grey.

The last monster Morbius created was about to kill me and Alta, his daughter when he finally accepted his responsibility and removed the monster. Morbius died, apparently as a consequence of the mental and emotional strain of the realization he had subconsciously murdered so many people. His last request was that I throw a switch that would cause a runaway chain reaction and destroy the planet Altair 4 and the great Krell machine with it.

Before we left the planet and it was destroyed, we were able to recover Morbius's journals and a few Krell artifacts. There was much we could not remove from a Krell laboratory without destroying the equipment. Some equipment, made from an incredibly energy absorbent material called Krell metal, could not be cut for removal. Altair 4, the great Krell machine and the vast knowledge store of the Krell was all lost though the robot we call Robby may reveal some of the Krell technology.

This log is now closed and sealed by order of Commander J. J. Adams.”

Adams finished his tour of the ship, satisfied the crew had attended to their duties and was prepared for a long and uneventful flight home. He would record the words exactly as he spoke them in his mind. What he would enter into the official mission log, he was uncertain.

...

Alta sat on the edge of the small armchair in the cabin, looking at the trunks on the floor in front of her. Robby had fabricated the aluminum boxes using the Krell synthesis machine on Altair 4. Alta recalled packing them with the few possessions she had and those she found in her father's room.

She had postponed unpacking to avoid a fresh confrontation with her memories from Altair 4. She would need her clothes now and could not delay unpacking any longer.

The first trunk contained mostly clothing Robby had made for her. She removed each piece carefully, taking a few seconds to look it over before placing it in the small closet of the cabin. Smaller articles she placed on the closet dresser. She paused when she found the dress she asked Robby to make especially for her to wear for Adams. She remembered Robby asking her if the garment should be "Radiation proof" and her response that "Eye proof will do." That brought a small smile and giggle, a tiny release of tension and a welcome memory. The diamonds and emeralds on that dress were brilliant, even in the dimly lit cabin. When finished, she sank back into the armchair, staring at the second trunk. That was the one she dreaded.

For the moment however, she would enjoy the tranquility of the ship's hum. The sound was barely perceptible but a reassuring lullaby of the ship protecting its inhabitants from the dark and hostile cold of deep space. Alta felt snug and secure as she looked up at the ceiling, her eyes closed and her thoughts drifting into a semi-conscious dream state. The voices that comforted her when she slept on Altair 4 had followed her aboard the ship. The speakers were formless and hazy but their words were clear and in a language she recognized but did not understand. The voices were soothing, drawing her from semi-consciousness into a light sleep.

She could see the forms moving around her, each waiting in turn to speak to her. The soft words lured her into a trance, a twilight slumber.

The softness of the voices was suddenly shattered by the piercing loudness of a klaxon. The hazy forms fled instantly, leaving her semi-paralyzed as the loudness of the klaxon shocked her to awaken. The tranquil hum of the ship was gone and the sound of danger overwhelmed the once quiet cabin.

Chapter 2 Core Critical

The klaxon reverberated throughout the ship as the crew members scrambled to their emergency duty stations. Half the crew was off duty and half of those were sleeping when the rude alarm broke the quiet of the ship. Commander Adams emerged from his quarters and looked about to assure himself all crew members heard and responded to the alarm. Some of the crew were jumping from their hammocks and scrambling to put on their uniforms. Adams called to the boatswain and then signaled with his finger to his ear followed by a throat cutting gesture to kill the klaxon while he moved toward the chief engineer's duty station.

“Randall, what have you got?” the commander asked. The commander looked over Randall's shoulder at the panel, his attention caught by several blinking red and amber lights in various display cells.

Randall was focused on the instrument panel, then turned his head toward the commander and replied “A core temperature spike sir and still rising.” Randall's focus returned to his instruments as the commander crossed his arms and turned his gaze from the panel to Randall. “Sir, primary cooling level zero, pressure zero, flow zero, secondary cooling level 100 percent, pressure 11.3 bars and rising, flow at 60 percent of capacity. The core will reach critical pressure and temperature in 5 minutes.”

The core generated all power for the ship and if it were lost it meant death in deep space. The reserve power cells would keep them alive for a short time but would eventually be drained.

Commander Adams asked “What is the charge on the reserve power cells?” It had only been a short time since

departing Altair 4 and making the jump to light speed, certainly not long enough to achieve a full charge.

Randall brought up the cell monitor on his panel, gave his head a twist and a slight shake and said “Thirty per cent sir.” As the commander glanced around, he could see every crew member looking his way and waiting for his next words. This was J. J. Adams’s call and what commanders are supposed to do. The immediate danger was a core meltdown and power failure. Everyone knew what that meant and it was up to the commander to stop the impending disaster.

Adams was looking at the panel to his side but the orders rang out loud and clear in every direction. “Robby, cut all power to propulsion. Youngerford, reduce life support levels to safe minimum requirements and trim gravity to 60 percent. Randall, reduce core output by five percent and divert all surplus generation to the reserve power cells.” Each order in turn was punctuated with a loud and clear “Aye aye sir.” Adams's plan was to reduce the load on the core to slow down the rate of core heating and charge the power cells enough to run the ship while making emergency repairs.

“Randall, we have to go to DC and drop from FTL before the core temperature goes critical. Give me the time to reach 45 percent charge capacity and critical temperature.” Adams said as he started toward the astro-navigation station where Robby was attending to the propulsion system shutdown. Robby's data cord did most of the work but his hands were still required to operate some of the controls. The sound of relays dropping as Robby worked at the console assured Adams the robot was doing as requested.

“Aye aye sir.” came the reply from Randall as he busied himself checking and setting instruments.

Adams quickly glanced about and surveyed the ship. It looked as though the crew had been reassured by his demonstration of command and prompt, decisive action. Crewmen were busy at their assigned stations making the adjustments necessary to adapt to the new environmental

conditions. Though Randall had his full attention on the monitor, he spoke up with a clear voice for the commander to hear. “Sir, reserve power cells will be at 45 percent in two minutes and 20 seconds. Something is wrong with the secondary coolant flow but the core won't overheat for at least three minutes at present generation levels.”

Commander Adams did not acknowledge Randall directly but spoke to the boatswain saying “Order to secure from general quarters and make for DC stations in two minutes. We have plenty of time so don't rush.” That wasn't quite true but the commander needed a calm and cool headed crew to get through this crisis.

“Aye aye sir.” replied the boatswain. “Secure from general quarters. DC stations in two minutes.” The boatswain had one of those booming voices that did not need the com-link to be heard. The crew made final adjustments at their duty stations then stood at attention facing the boatswain to signal completion.

Adams was looking about intently with a puzzled expression. Cookie sensed the reason for the commander's actions and piped up “She's over here sir!” as he pointed to the officers quarters aisle way. Alta had come out of her cabin to see what the commotion was about that so rudely interrupted her dream world. Adams motioned for Alta to join him since they would go to DC stations very soon. Alta moved to Adams's side and asked about the problem. Adams could see she was obviously groggy as he took her by the arm to guide her. As they moved toward DC stations, he told her the core cooling system failed and they would have to make repairs. He assured her they would be safe.

Robby had laid in the speed change commands and signaled the boatswain accordingly. The boatswain gave the order for DC stations and the crew moved in a rapid and orderly manner. Robby remained at his post. Robots were not affected by the light speed barrier crossing. Warning lights flashed as the DC station fields engaged and the ship

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