

ON THE ROAD TO EDEN



ON THE ROAD TO EDEN

Science-fiction novel

By

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WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS

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THIS FICTION NOVEL CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR, VIOLENCE, CRUELTY AND SEX, AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS THAT ARE UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN. WHILE THIS NOVEL DEPICTS SOME HISTORICAL PERSONS AND EVENTS FROM THE PAST, THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION AND WORDS OR DEEDS ATTRIBUTED IN IT TO PERSONS WHO EXISTED DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT HISTORICAL REALITY.

ABOUT THIS NOVEL

ON THE ROAD TO EDEN is a science-fiction novel and the sequel to SPACE-TIME ODYSSEY. In 4021, a Human Expansion space fleet loaded with refugees fled the Alpha Centauri star system just before alien invaders destroyed it. However, the Human fleet was then hit by an enemy experimental weapon which unexpectedly projected the fleet to the distant past. Finding themselves in the year 861 C.E., the fleet's occupants then decided to build a new home for themselves on Medieval Earth and settled unoccupied lands in New Zealand, plus established a major outpost in Toulouse, in Southern France, where they arrived at an understanding with a number of local nobles. However, the reactions to the arrival of these newcomers from the future among the various rulers of the 9th Century were far from being all positive.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to pay a special tribute to the German pagan-medieval musical group FAUN, which is featured on the cover of this novel, for having partly inspired me in writing this present book and whose music enchanted me. They truly capture the spirit of past medieval traveling minstrels.

OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

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

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CHAPTER 1 – AN EMPTY PARADISE



11:18 (Hawaii Time)

Wednesday, October 14, 861 C.E. (Common Era)

Southern coast of Oahu

Hawaii Islands, Pacific

Jenna Chong, standing on the sandy beach next to her landed corvette, took in with delight a deep breath of the pure air brought in from the sea by a moderate wind. The beach she was standing on could also be described as 'perfect'. All in all, this cove on the southern coast of the island of Oahu could be rightly described as a corner of paradise. It also strongly reminded Jenna of her native world of Alpha Centauri A-2. That thought then brought tears to Jenna, as her native planet had been destroyed a mere four weeks ago, according to her personal biological clock, by those monstrous Morgs who had waged an extermination war against the worlds of the Human Expansion in the year 4021 C.E. Over two billion Centaurians had perished in the destruction by the Morgs of the Alpha Centauri System, along with nearly a fifth of a million men and

women of the Human Expansion Navy who had fought ferociously to defend the Alpha7 Centauri System against the Morg invasion fleet. That Human fleet, which had represented nearly all that was left of the Human Expansion Navy, had caused huge losses to the Morg fleet but had still lost in the end, overwhelmed by the enemy's crushing numerical superiority. However, their sacrifice had given enough time for the huge exploration cruiser H.S.S. MARCO POLO to load up over sixteen million Centaurian refugees, either in its cryogenic vaults or aboard its emergency quarters, along with millions of tons of equipment, prefabricated building elements and supplies, and then flee the doomed Alpha Centauri A-4 with an escort flotilla and two large cargo ships transporting another two million refugees. Unfortunately, the Morgs had time to unleash an experimental weapon against the MARCO POLO and its escort flotilla as it sped towards Earth, the last surviving Human-occupied system left. That Morg weapon had made a direct hit on the flotilla but had then a totally unexpected effect, throwing the MARCO POLO flotilla back in time, all the way to the primitive early medieval period of the Ninth Century C.E. Now, everything that Jenna had known was 32 centuries in the future, with the MARCO POLO and its escort flotilla stuck in the Ninth Century and utterly unable to return to the future. Administrator Lynn Tsu, who was the political leader of the MARCO POLO flotilla and of the millions of Centaurian refugees brought aboard the exploration cruiser, had then grudgingly decided that Medieval Earth would have to become the new home of her citizens and had directed the flotilla to start settling New Zealand, a land which was still completely bereft of Human occupants in the year 861 C.E., as the first Polynesians would only start arriving there in about 200 years. In order to help feed the 1.2 million refugees which had not been put into cryogenic sleep aboard the MARCO POLO, Administrator Tsu had also directed that an outpost and commercial exchange point be established next to the medieval city of Toulouse, in Southern France, so that foodstuff could be bought. That outpost, with a giant residential tower now known as the 'Toulouse Tower' being its centerpiece, had proved to be an inspired initiative, with hundreds of tons of precious foodstuff regularly bought or collected from traveling merchants there. Still, the refugee flotilla could use more of both foodstuff and usable, unoccupied lands. That last need was why Jenna Chong and her 110-meter-wide corvette, the H.S.S. LA PÉROUSE, was presently in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. Jenna Chong was about to turn around and return to her ship, shaped like a flattened sphere with a maximum diameter of 110 meters and a height of seventy meters, when her wrist videophone buzzed, making her raise her left forearm to the level

of her face. Punching the 'talk' button, she saw the face of her executive officer,⁸ Lieutenant Commander Erwin Markus, appear on the tiny viewing screen of her videophone.

"Yes, Mister Markus?"

"Commander, we have just completed the analysis of the survey data and images that our drones collected around Hawaii."

"And?" asked Jenna, tensing up: that survey mission of hers had the potential to seriously improve the prospects of the refugee flotilla in this century.

"And it is now confirmed without a doubt, Commander: the whole of the Hawaii Archipelago is still empty of human presence, if you except of course our own corvette. The historical data that indicated the 11th Century as the arrival date for the first Polynesians to reach Hawaii was thus correct."

Jenna felt both relief and triumph on hearing that: the people of the MARCO POLO flotilla now had a new place that they could occupy without infringing on other Humans, a place that could rightly be described as a paradise.

"Prepare that data and analysis for my review: I am returning now to the ship. I want to make doubly certain that we didn't miss anything before I pass the good news to Administrator Tsu."

"Understood! Markus, out!"

Walking off the band of beach sand, Jenna arrived at her corvette and went to the retractable land access lift tube hanging down from the underbelly of the ship. Pushing a button, she made the outer door of the access airlock of the tube open up and walked in, then closed the outer door and waited a few seconds, letting time for the security and decontamination systems of the five-meter by four-meter airlock compartment to ensure that no foreign insect, small animal or germs had entered with her. The LA PÉROUSE, one of the 110 corvettes normally carried by the exploration cruiser MARCO POLO, had been designed and built mostly for missions of exploration, survey and reconnaissance within a planetary system and was superbly equipped with a full array of sensors, cameras and exploration drones. It was also designed to be able to work in hazardous environments and was built to prevent accidental contamination of its interior and crew while on a planet surface, thus its various access airlocks were protected by multiple decontamination systems. After a ten second wait, Jenna Chong got the green light to open the inner airlock door and stepped inside the lift tubes

compartment, which contained two personnel lifts and one cargo lift. Using one of the two personnel lifts, she went up to the command deck of the corvette and, exiting the lift, went to the reconnaissance and survey center, where she found her executive officer, Erwin Markus, waiting for her.

“Okay, Erwin, show me what you got!”

“I have prepared our data for review at this workstation, Commander. Our central mission computer, plus our various scientists and specialists, have already reviewed it and unanimously concluded that no traces of past human presence or occupation existed in the whole of the Hawaii archipelago.”

“Good! I will do a final review, then will pass on our data to our administrative headquarters in New Auckland. Have we scanned the ocean around the archipelago for the presence of any human embarkation?”

“Yes, Commander, and we still have six early warning drones deployed and flying around the Central Pacific, covering a zone extending out by 2,000 kilometers around Hawaii. The only things they detected on the surface were whales, dolphins and orcas.”

“Very well! I should be done with my review in less than one hour.”

Jenna was sitting down at the work station when Markus spoke further.

“Uh, Commander, I got a number of requests from our crewmembers to get permission to go out and use the nearby beach during their off time.”

Jenna only had to think that over for a second before nodding her head: her crew, like herself, had been struck hard by the destruction of the Alpha Centauri System and by the news that they were now stuck in the distant past. Her men and women definitely could use some recreational time in a nice natural setting.

“I have no problems with that, Erwin. In fact, put the ship on minimal manning status and let our crew go out. Just make sure that we post a few combat robots outside to protect the perimeter around this beach area, just in case. And that includes you, Erwin. Be ready to take over bridge watch at four.”

“Yes, Commander!” replied the happy officer before walking away, leaving Jenna alone at her workstation.

10:45 (New Zealand Time) / 12:45 (Hawaii Time)

Human Expansion Administrative Center

Mitsumoto Tower, New Auckland, New Zealand

“What do you have for me, Lana?” asked Chief Administrator Lynn Tsu, a 52-year-old Centaurian, to her aide, Lana Tensing, who had approached her table at the cafeteria of the administrative center. The younger woman smiled and handed her a data pad.

“Some very good news from Hawaii, Lynn. This is a report sent by the corvette LA PÉROUSE some twenty minutes ago. It will probably make your day.”

Putting down her fork and knife, Lynn Tsu took the data pad and started reading the first page displayed on its screen. She only needed to read the three first sentences of the executive summary of the report before nearly squealing with joy.

“YES! This is positively fantastic news! We are now free to use the whole Hawaii archipelago for the benefit of our people. Has Commodore Ferguson, on the MARCO POLO, been informed of this?”

“He got an info copy at the same time as us, Lynn.”

“Then, we must exploit this with most of our resources still available for deployment. Do you know what we have available at this time in terms of prefabricated ground habitation and community services units?”

“I took the time to check quickly on that with our chief of logistics before coming to see you. We still have available in storage 23 emergency habitation unit modules which have not yet been allocated to specific projects, plus three communal services modules. They are still aboard one of our two cargo ships, the CONFUCIUS. In total, they could help settle a total of up to 4,232 persons in Hawaii within a couple of days.”

“That would be a good start, but I am really impatient to see more habitation and services modules being produced in the industrial plants of the MARCO POLO.”

“Well, the production facilities aboard the MARCO POLO are already working non-stop at maximum capacity, producing both basic industrial elements and extra habitation facilities for our people, plus ground infrastructure elements. Those facilities are impressive by any standards, but they still have a finite production capacity. As the saying goes, Rome wasn’t built in one day. Right now, our Phase Two Infrastructure Program will take another seven months before it will be fully completed. Only then will we be able to truly expand our building programs in order to be able to wake up from their cryogenic sleep the more than ten million people still aboard the MARCO POLO. The good news is that our herds of cattle planted in our various grazing areas in New Zealand are multiplying quite rapidly.”

Lynn Tsu nodded at those words, encouraged by them. The New Zealand that they had found at their arrival three weeks ago, apart from being devoid of any human occupants, also had been devoid of any predatorial land species. It had thus been the perfect place to augment the local indigenous population of birds and small mammals with various types of cattle animals which could then develop and multiply in free-grazing areas of New Zealand, with little human interaction apart from periodic, controlled culling. Small herds of buffalos, dears, caribous and moose, picked up from the grassy plains and forests of North America, had thus been added to the original moas and emus native of New Zealand, soon augmented by sheep, pigs, chickens and cows either bought from medieval farmers or raised inside the farms of the gigantic MARCO POLO, which had been built to be self-sufficient in food for its crew. Also, one of the ultimate acts of Grand Administrator Djael Anaker before Alpha Centauri A-4 was destroyed by the Morgs, which was to have a number of flying fishing vessels loaded aboard the MARCO POLO, had proved to be a truly inspired one. Those twelve flying fishing vessels, each of them over 110 meters-long, had early on proved to be a godsend, providing enough fish to help feed the initial two million Humans who had been awake and functioning aboard the fleet at its arrival on Ninth Century Earth.

“Well, let’s call a planning meeting of our urban and industrial committees for two o’clock. There, we will review the best ways to start using the Hawaii islands to settle some of our people.”

16:57 (New Zealand Time)

Industrial Production Planning and Coordination Center (IPPPC)

Industrial production sector, exploration cruiser H.S.S. MARCO POLO

In low Earth orbit

Command Engineer Klaus Grundig was waiting for his assistant to show up and take over from him for the evening when a new tasking showed up on his computer screen. That tasking was marked ‘Top Priority’ and had been sent from the office of Chief Administrator Lynn Tsu, with Commodore Henry Ferguson signing on it. That meant that Klaus now had to reprogram his production schedule to give first priority to that new tasking. Klaus couldn’t help grumble a bit at that: the industrial production facilities of the MARCO POLO, which occupied a volume of over 800 million cubic meters inside the gigantic exploration cruiser, had already been working at maximum

capacity for over three weeks to build various types of structures, machinery and 12 equipment needed to help resettle on Earth the Centaurian refugees still in cryogenic sleep inside the ship. Those facilities, controlled via sophisticated computer programs and extensively using industrial robotic systems, could produce about anything, including small spaceships, as long as they were provided with the needed basic construction materials. In turn, those basic construction materials were provided via 24 giant flying mineral extraction and processing plants, each 300 meters long, 130 meters wide and eighty meters high, which could fly out to a known source of the desired ore or chemical, be it on a planet or inside an asteroid, where they would let out excavating machines which would dig out the ore. Right now, all 24 of those flying extraction and processing plants were out of the MARCO POLO, either landed at chosen sites on Earth or busy mining M-Type ferrous-nickel asteroids. The raw metal ingots or chemical compounds that these flying plants produced were then regularly sent to the MARCO POLO via cargo shuttles, where they fed the various industrial complexes of the exploration cruiser. All that helped the MARCO POLO to fill its original main mission: to open new worlds to Human colonization and support those new colonies by building an industrial base for them on a chosen planet or moon. With Ninth Century Earth having possessed next to no industrial capacity worth mentioning, the facilities of the MARCO POLO were now working at maximum capacity in order to produce more habitat and industrial modules in order to resettle the eighteen million refugees from Alpha Centauri.

Klaus was still reading carefully the new tasking order he had just received when his assistant, Senior Engineer Lena Sarsgaard, showed up. A tall, 38-year-old Scandinavian blonde who was both a top production engineer and a certified genius, Lena also happened to be quite pretty. However, Klaus appreciated her mostly because of her competence and knowledge, not for her physical beauty.

"Aah, Lena! You are just in time to review with me a new top priority tasking order I just got from Chief Administrator Tsu."

"Oh? And what do we now need to produce so urgently, Klaus?"

"A variety of medium-sized habitat and urban services modules destined to establish new population centers, this time in the Hawaii Islands. Such modules were already high in our list of priorities but they are now at the top of our list."

"Hawaii?" said Lena, a grin appearing on her face. "Yes! Let me switch on my work station and I will review that new tasking with you before you go off shift."

Sitting down at her control station, which was next to Klaus' station, Lena switched on her computer and opened the tasking message received by her comrade and supervisor, studying it carefully before speaking again.

"Hum, that tasking is actually relatively modest, compared to what we already have on our plate. Let me check on our onboard reserves of steel, concrete, glass and polymers, to see if we will need to order more raw materials."

A couple of minutes were enough for her to answer her own question.

"We have enough aboard the MARCO POLO to fill this production tasking, now that it has top priority over our previous taskings. Since standard module designs have been specified for this order, we will be able to immediately launch their production. I calculate that the first modules will be completed in 72 hours, with the full order filled within fifteen days. Did our construction crews also receive this tasking order?"

"I am going to contact them now and advise them of this, Lena. In about three weeks, our first people will be able to go live in Hawaii. Damn, I wish that I could be part of them! Hawaii is such a beautiful place."

"I wish that I also could end up there." agreed Lena. "Well, I could always book my next vacation period there. To be able to tan myself on those nice beaches..."

09:06 (Universal Time)

Friday, November 6, 861 C.E.

Reanimation center, cryogenic sleep vaults

H.S.S. MARCO POLO, in low Earth orbit

Nina Le Ming was nearly in tears as she watched medical technicians at work and in the process of waking up the members of her family from their cryogenic sleep. She was holding her eight-month daughter Suzy in her arms while standing next to the cryogenic pods containing her husband Lee and her five-year-old son Kwang. Nina had been separated from Lee and Kwang for nearly two months now while taking care of her little Suzy in the emergency living quarters section of the exploration cruiser. Due to the fact that small babies were sensitive to the effects of cryogenic sleep, the babies and very young toddlers who were part of the eighteen million Centaurian refugees evacuated from Alpha Centauri aboard the MARCO POLO and two cargo ships had been separated from their siblings and fathers and had been kept with their mothers in the emergency living quarters section. Nina had to care alone for Suzy during those

weeks while living in crowded conditions, all the while crying for the destruction of her¹⁴ home world of Alpha Centauri A-4 by the monstrous Morgs. Now, however, Nina was going to be able to reunite at last with her husband and her son, having been selected with another 20,000 mothers and babies for resettlement in the new installations in Hawaii.

The medical technician assigned to the awakening of the Le Ming let Nina approach the pod containing young Kwang when the latter's eyes fluttered open. Still weak from the cryogenic sleep process, the boy could only turn slowly his head to look at his mother and baby sister.

"Mom? Where am I?"

"You are aboard the exploration cruiser MARCO POLO and we are in orbit around Earth, Kwang."

"Earth? What about our planet?"

"Alpha Centauri is gone, destroyed by the Morgs. We will have to start another life on Earth. Your father should wake up in a few minutes, at which time I will be able to inform you better about our present situation. Now, stay still and follow the instructions of the medical technician, who will guide your return from cryogenic sleep."

Nina then stepped back by a couple of paces to let the technician do his work.

Some twenty minutes later, Lee and Kwang were transferred to an adjacent recuperation lounge, where Nina was able to sit with them around a small table, her baby girl still in her arms, and discuss with them their family's situation. Lee took hard the news of the destruction of Alpha Centauri A-4 but the news that they were now stuck in the distant past left him in disbelief and shock.

"We're in the Ninth Century? How could that be possible?"

"Our scientists don't really know, but it resulted from the fleet being hit by an unknown type of Morg weapon. Our scientists are unanimous in saying that returning to the 41st Century is impossible. The good news is that the Morg threat is now three millenniums in the future. We can now resume safely our lives without fear of seeing the Morgs show up again."

Lee lowered her head and stayed silent for a moment while digesting all this. He finally looked back at Nina, who was cradling little Suzy in her arms.

"And where are we going to live exactly on Earth, Nina?"

"In Hawaii, more exactly in Oahu, at the location where Honolulu was...or15 rather would be in the future. The fleet has by now built and installed a habitat center there and one apartment is waiting for us in New Honolulu."

"New Honolulu..." said Lee in a rather discouraged tone. "Will I be able to work there and earn a living, or will we be simply idle refugees in a near virgin land?"

"We won't be idle, Lee. We, like the other refugees selected to go to Hawaii, were chosen according to our personal skills and past occupations. As an experienced agronomist, you will be able to work in the hydroponic gardens tower that was built as part of our new community, while I will be able to resume teaching once Suzy will have grown up more."

Her words seemed to bring some relief to her husband, who however still felt immense sadness at the thought of all the souls who had perished in Alpha Centauri. Nina then patted his shoulder in encouragement.

"Come on, Lee! The important thing is that we survived and will be able to resume our lives as a family. They showed me pictures and videos of our new place on Oahu and it is truly a splendid place, while our new community center includes all the communal services and facilities we would have expected on Alpha Centauri. Let's resume our lives with a positive attitude, for the sake of our children."

Lee could only nod his head at that, realizing the wisdom of her words.

CHAPTER 2 – ON THE ROAD TO EDEN



Western Europe after the splitting of the empire of Charlemagne between his three sons in 843.

14:03 (Rome Time)

Tuesday, January 3, 862 C.E.

Via Appia (old Roman imperial road), 132 kilometer southeast of Rome

Principality of Benevento, Italian peninsula

The group of seven men, women and teenagers walking along the old Roman road while pulling a small, rickety cart loaded with their baggage and supplies, formed a rather heteroclit band, with some of them wearing cheap but colorful clothes and with a young teenage boy playing a flute while walking next to the group's cart. The man pulling the cart, who was obviously the oldest member of the group and who appeared to be in his early thirties, was a tall, strongly-built man with blond hair and blue eyes somewhat atypical of the local Southern Italy natives, for the good reason that he was

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