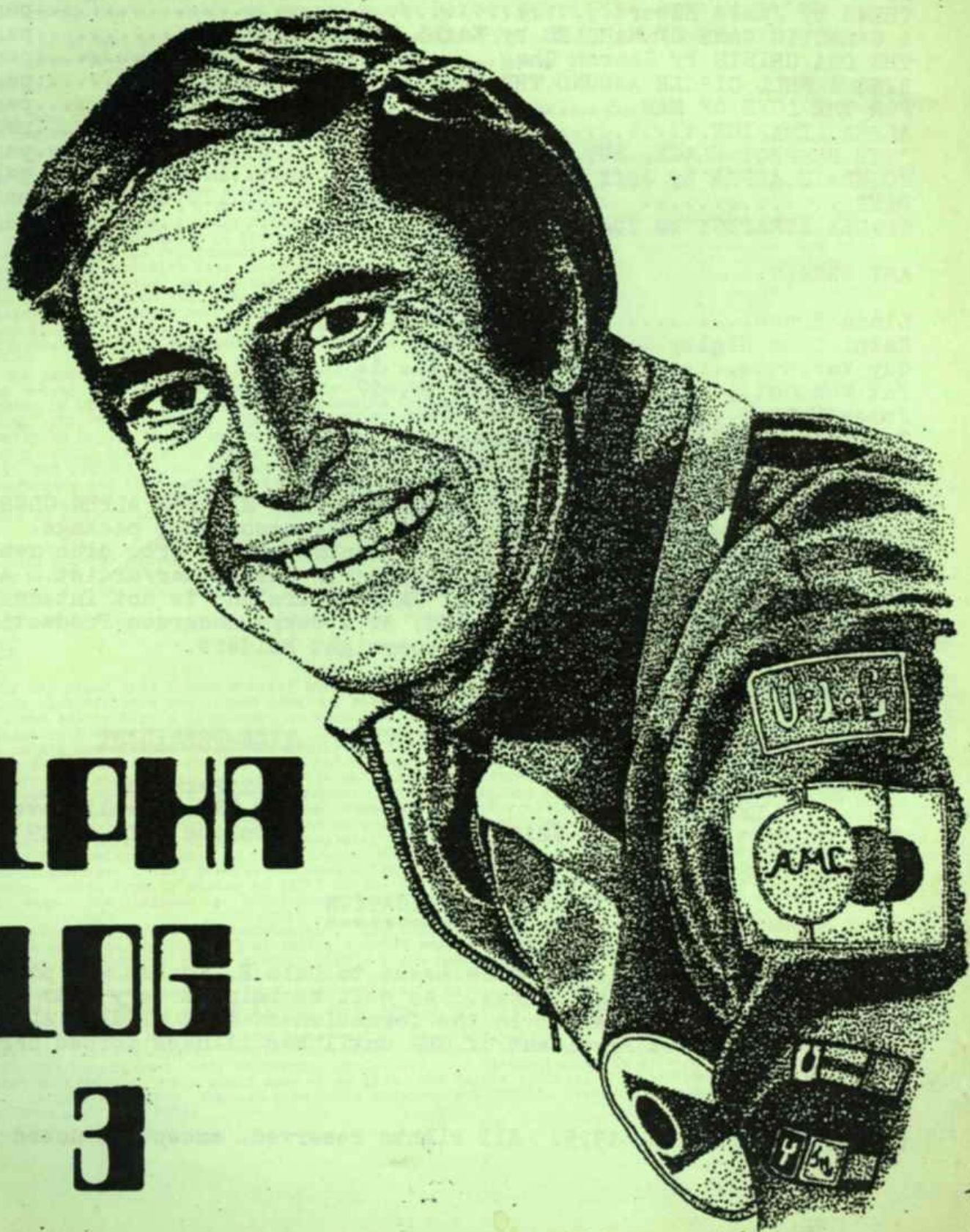


ALPHA LOG 3



ALPHA LOG III

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DEDICATION *****

We would like to dedicate this issue to Dale E. Jones, who passed away last year after a long illness. As well as being a very dear friend, Dale was also instrumental in the formation of MAIN MISSION ALPHA, and was the West Coast President of MMA until her illness forced her resignation.

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As we enter the fourth year of MMA's existence, it's only appropriate that we take a moment to thank all those people whose love and little extra effort have made this club a success. First, to Nick Tate, who graciously allowed himself to be talked into giving his official sanction to the club and has given us invaluable support ever since. Mary Hartery, who started the club, determined to prove that SPACE:1999, though a young show, was strong enough to support a club, yea, verily, a whole fandom! And she was right! Invaluable support awards must also go to the following people: Steven Eramo, Patricia Brimer, Darlene Palenik, Deborah Walsh, STARLOG, Ann Hester, Marilea Mercer, Alice Newsom, Gail Paradis, and the others too numerous to name that have helped this club survive and grow.

We'd like to take this space and opportunity to acquaint you with the people who run Main Mission Alpha--the real person behind the name, as it were:

MARY:

I was born in Philadelphia, PA on October 21, 1955, raised in Middle River, MD (suburban Baltimore), and graduated high school in Wheaton, MD (suburban Washington, D.C.). I'm the oldest of seven--five sisters and one brother; also two brothers-in-law, a niece and a nephew. That's at last count, mind you. I started out in fandom quite late, actually--attended my first honest-to-gosh convention in February of 1974. It was the International STAR TREK Convention, then in its third year, and I've been attending conventions ever since. It was after the fourth annual New York STAR TREK convention that we answered an ad for a STAR TREK club forming on the University of Maryland College Park campus (not being a student, I dragged along a friend who was...) and thus started the grand odyssey that was to culminate a year later in The August Party, the first-ever STAR TREK con held in the Washington, D.C. area and one of the forerunners of the small fancons. The Second Annual August Party was host to another first when Nick Tate accepted our invitation to appear as the convention's special guest--and the rest, as they say, is history. To backtrack a little, it was at the fifth and final New York STAR TREK Convention that Main Mission Alpha was officially organized under the presidency of Mary Hartery, who continued to run the club until her resignation last January. Her efforts not only paved the way for MMA to become the success it is today, but Nick Tate's appearance at the August Party would not have been possible without her perseverance and determination.

On the personal side, I have a great range of interests and hobbies, sometimes too many for even me to keep proper track of, and absolutely mind-boggling for anyone else to try. My first and always grand passion in life was DARK SHADOWS and Barnabas Collins, followed in close order by STAR TREK, TIME TUNNEL, UPO, THE CHAMPIONS, THE YOUNG REBELS, HERE COME THE BRIDES, SPACE:1999, and most recently BATTLESTAR GALACTICA and DR. WHO. My favorite movies include THE THREE MUSKETEERS, SCARECROW OF ROMNEY MARSH, THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES (Abbott & Costello), THE GHOST IN THE INVISIBLE BIKINI (don't ask), THE QUESTOR TAPES, STAR WARS and SUPERMAN. My taste in music varies with my mood: Movie soundtracks are the heavy favorite, but I've also been known to mix Alice Cooper, Queen, Barry Manilow, Gordon Lightfoot, Johnny Horton, Pablo Cruise, the Electric Light Orchestra and Mecca in the same stack on the turntable. And a John Philip Sousa march will bring a smile to my face anyway...

I also collect. Stamps, books, records, rhinestone earrings, pens of every imaginable shape and color, photos, photos, photos. And more photos. Hobbies? Well...writing and drawing and reading (not as much as I'd like to, and not as much as I used to) and sewing and crocheting and knitting and going to movies. (At the rate we've been seeing them, that qualifies as a hobby).

That's it from my side--now we'll hear a word from my better half, Gail Paradis:

GAIL:

Mary has asked that I give a brief biography so that all members of Main Mission Alpha will know who their club officers are...good idea! I was born in Lynn, Massachusetts on October 21, 1956, and as you can see by Mary's biography, we were born on the same day! Although Mary claims to have had it first, so I cannot claim it solely. Unfortunately, when that day arrived, God must have been busy as he did not give me the fine artistic abilities that Mary possesses--I draw stick people. At the age of 14 we moved to Rhode Island, but my heart still belongs to the state in which I grew up. I graduated high school in June of '74 and immediately started work at Barker-Chadsey Company, a wholesale hardware firm here in Johnston. Have been working there since. I still live at home with my parents, one sister Linda and a cat named Obi--for very obvious reasons (see STAR WARS). I became active in fandom in April of 1976 and am proud to say that I was one of Main Mission Alpha's first members. I have been a quiet fan basically enjoying everything that has been written by many of the actively involved members of '999 fandom. When Mary asked me to be her VP in August of '78, I was flabbergasted. I felt honored and have tried to help the club to the best of my abilities ever since. Aside from my duties as VP, I am the Northeastern Representative for the National Save:1999 Alliance. The Alliance is continuously growing with over 100 members in my region alone!

My hobbies are varied--from photography, reading, traveling, meeting new people, conventions, movies, music, etc. At the moment I am taking a night course in the Literature of Science Fiction to further my knowledge of the subject. It's a fun course and I'm enjoying reading a wide variety of authors from Asimov to Heinlein. I also enjoy music very much, but enjoy jazz the most. Favorite composer is Chuck Mangione, but I also enjoy Gato Barbieri's music very much. Other favorites include: Cat Stevens, Stephen Bishop, Harry Chapin and Tom Jones (latter has been a favorite for years). I also have this fascination for vampires/Dracula and read everything written on this subject (I may have been bitten by Barnabas Collins at one time!). As far as television goes, I enjoy most all PBS productions. MASTERPIECE THEATER has been a favorite for years. I also enjoy THE NEW AVENGERS/Gareth Hunt, and, of course, SPACE:1999 with Martin Landau is my very favorite as you all must know by now! This about sums up my life, but before I close, I'll let you in on a secret: I'm in love with Troy Tempest from Gerry Anderson's STINGRAY. You are now the first to know a human in love with a PUPPET!!

"LIVING DEATH"
By Tom McLaren

"Moonbase Alpha Status Report--2112 days since leaving earth orbit. Doctor Helena Russell recording. We are traveling through a relatively peaceful sector of space with little to report. Computer does tell us that the star of this system recently went nova, theoretically destroying all life on its surrounding planets."

The communications station clicked and a signal sounded through Main Mission. Alpha's communications officer, Sandra Benes, whirled around, "Commander! I am receiving a signal."

"Specify," Commander John Koenig answered as he rose from his chair.

"As far as I can report, it is a repeating, automatic signal," she turned around and faced him with hopeful, expectant eyes. "Most likely a distress call."

Helena had just entered Main Mission and added, "Life...why, all life should have terminated long ago."

Alpha's resident alien, a strikingly beautiful Psychon named Maya, spoke up, "Should have been, Helena. Remember, advanced life is a possibility and that means they could have survived by sophisticated artificial means."

"Sensors?"

Her eyes scanned the report. "We're getting high energy readings from an isolated area on the closest planet...life is possible."

First officer Tony Verdeschi walked over to Helena and John. "They could be hostile. We'd be taking a risk going down there."

Helena stood next to John and looked deep into his eyes. "If there are survivors, perhaps we could help." She was waiting for some kind of okay signal from him, but found none. Koenig remained stern-faced. He snapped, "Put it on the big screen, Sahn."

The planet was mysteriously dark and actually looked like a floating lifeless asteroid. "Alan, get us an Eagle."

"Right away, Commander."

"Helena, Sahn, you'll accompany us. Tony, we'll report in every hour."

Eagle 2 blasted off and headed towards the unknown.

Alan easily pinpointed the location of the signal. It was a dome-like structure which looked oddly out of place. All other structures were now rubble, somehow destroyed. A hatch in the dome slowly opened.

"Invitation?" Alan questioned.

"Let's hope it is a welcome. Take us down, Alan."

"Yes, Commander." Alan really sounded reluctantly positive. He has seen his share of hostility and didn't want to see any more. Eagle 2 landed and the structures closed up, pressurized, and doors at the north end hissed open.

Alan and John walked to where Helena and Sahn were waiting. Before a word was uttered, computer was activated. "Commander, another signal," Sahn broke the silence.

"Let's respond this time."

"Negative. They're transmitting and not receiving us," Sahn turned and reported. "They're scanning us." John and Helena exchanged very blank expressions. She clutched his hand.

"Okay, let's go see who our strange friends are. Helena and Sahn, you'd better stay and mind the ship."

Helena tapped John on the shoulder and he turned around. "Tell me Commander Koenig, the reason for leaving two very essential officers--a doctor and communications officer--behind," She threw her short blond hair back and looked up into a now softer, worried face. How she loved this man, she thought. But was he being just a bit unfair leaving a very competent chief medical officer behind?

"Hey," he lightly touched her chin. "I wouldn't want you to get hurt," he gave her a reassuring smile. Helena's eyes glittered as she thought how nice it was to be cared for. If only there wasn't an immediate problem, and if they were back on Alpha...No, she must think of her first duty...

Alan interrupted her thoughts. "John!" he called out. "Let's go."

"Coming, Alan," he touched her hand once more and grabbed his comloc as he prepared to leave. He passed Sahn and gave her a smile. She smiled weakly, "Don't be gone long." He noticed a slight tremor in her voice. Alan approached and gave a friendly grin, "Now don't you worry at all, little girl. We'll be back as soon as possible." He winked at her.

"You bet." John was glad to see a light-hearted moment to cheer Sahn up. That was the real picture of Commander John Koenig. He always displayed a flair for being very optimistic.

The hatch coldly snapped shut. Helena clenched her fists; she hated waiting. Sahn slowly turned around, walked over to the computer and set about the task of decoding the alien transmissions.

John and Alan walked quietly down a corridor. Only the sound of their footsteps was audible. The corridor shown faintly in an eerie green. It gave one the feeling of isolation and of course, uneasy solemnness. Alan constantly looked behind him, very untrusting of what the aliens might have in store for them. John, on the other hand, kept up a sturdy pace. He was angered at the lack of contact. In an instant, the lights started pulsating. A hum was barely heard by the two men and then suddenly, they were engulfed in some form of energy. To the eye, it was a simple green sphere, but within seconds, there were gone.

Transported to another section of the dome, the sphere disappeared. Alan jumped, "Okay, what the hell was that?"

"Calm down, Alan. We're not desperate yet," John shook him by the shoulders. The effect he hoped he would have on Alan failed, his hands trembled.

In Main Mission, regular procedures were being carried out with no hint of trouble. Tanya, an Alpha technician, handed Maya a readout from computer.

Tony walked up to her and put his arm around her. "Got anything?"

Maya still very business-like, reported, "Computer analyses these as highly intelligent, sequential figures. The majority are mathematical but there are quite a few that we have absolutely no explanation for. Insufficient data. However, there is an atmosphere with sufficient oxygen inside the first and only standing structure, that our friends are in now."

"Yasko, how many minutes until the next check-in?"

The Oriental secondary communications officer replied, "Eight point six minutes."

"Maybe they'll have some answers then," Tony shrugged.

Alan and John found themselves in a rectangular seemingly-dimensionless room dominated by four incandescent lights. Fright was a mild word for what was now going through their heads. It seemed much like floating in a desolate void. The sensation was not much different from space-walking.

By scanning the Eagle's computer tapes, the aliens obtained a general idea concerning Alpha's language and knowledge. This intelligence was far above the need for a physical form. They radiated pure energy which is perhaps the highest form of the loosely phrased term--life. John and Alan simultaneously heard a voice sound through their mind. It was crisply mechanical. John whispered, "Telepathy." He was greatly impressed. Alan, speechless, managed to nod his head.

The voice split into four parts, all speaking at the precise same time. They did the introductions. "Koenig...Carter...We are the survivors of Drakil, please do not be...afraid."

Koenig's head pounded. Somewhat dazed by the confusion, he blurted out, "We heard your distress signal. Can we help you? Explain your intentions and your situation."

"As you wish...many of your decades ago, we realized our sun was slowly fading. It was our ignorance that prevented us from realizing the immediate danger. We were at an eternal war with Drakor, a rival planet from within our own star system. They attacked us just as we were preparing to leave our civilization for another. Destruction followed. Our society was crushed. All of our people were annihilated except for us four. Our defense systems are non-existent. We are a dead planet, Commander, and you are our hope."

"Hold on," Koenig ordered. "How have you survived?"

"Our mental capabilities are far superior to your own, Commander. We have done what we can to hold this planet together. We have survived. This structure sees to that. But we are very tired...we wish to continue our life...with your help."

Back on Alpha, Yasko was repeating, "Moonbase Alpha to Eagle 2. Come in Eagle 2. Come in please..." Tony was pacing up and down the aisles. "Okay, Maya. It's time we made our move."

"But Tony..."

"Helena said that John was supposed to do the check-in. And now we've lost contact with Helena and Sahn." He gave her a hard look, "Something's happened. Fraser, get Eagle 6 on the launch pad. Yasko, get Dr. Mathias and have him report there with two security guards immediately. Come on, Maya."

"What do you mean, 'with our help'?" Alan, alert as ever, snapped.

"Actually, it is quite simple. The four of us will take over the bodies of four Alphans. We will take over your will and control your physical forms to transport us to a new home. There we will return to our original form. Yours will be destroyed. Useful as you are, you are dangerous when not under control."

"Madness!" John was blind with fury.

"Living death," Alan muttered to himself. His jaw tightly stiff, he yelled, "You won't get away with it. You have no defenses. We will attack."

"By the time one of your elementary crafts reaches here, it will be too late. And don't try calling your base as we have ended all contact with Alpha. Contact is limited to this planet only. Your struggle is futile, Commander."

John grabbed at his comlock and called out, "Koenig to Alpha. Come in Alpha. Come in Alpha..." All he saw was a fuzzy screen with no familiar faces.

Back on Eagle 6, Tony and Maya were trying to come to terms on a plan. "I say we make our only move precise and quick."

"Remember, Tony. We must be careful we don't kill our friends," she pointed out. Her voice was full of warning.

He was visibly irritated and his nerves were on edge.

Trying to relieve the tension, Maya crossed the room and shook her long hair. "If I didn't know you better, I'd say you were drunk on your own beer," a wry devilish smile crossing her lips.

"Okay..." he wiped the sweat off his forehead, "I'll make you a deal, my alien friend. If I can make some really good beer, then let's see if you can come up with a really good solution."

"I already have one," her eyebrows pointed up.

"Naturally..." Tony smirked.

"I do agree that we must attack them but we must be careful. First, when we come into range we'll try contacting them. If that fails we'll just have to take our chances that they'll come out alive. Sensors will pin-point the exact location of the energy source and, with any luck, our lasers will hit that spot and hopefully trigger a chain reaction of explosions. John, Helena, Alan, and Sahn should have time to blast off."

"And if they don't?"

"Tony...have faith."

"We won't allow it!" John screamed as loud as possible.

"It is painless. The transfer takes mere minutes to prepare. It has already begun."

John and Alan stared at each other. John's mind flashed--Helena! He frantically grabbed his comlock and recklessly called out, "Helena...Helena, are you alright?"

"John! Oh...John...help!" her voice flashed fright, helplessness and just sheer terror. Her hair was messed up and a painful look crossed her face. "John...it's Sahn, she's gone mad!" she shrieked and then the picture faded.

"Send us back to the Eagle. I order it! Send us back NOW!" his voice was one of a maniac. His face full of anger and concern.

"As you wish, Commander, but there is nothing you can do. We will not allow your comlock to open the Eagle hatch."

John and Alan materialized outside the Eagle. The hatch remained shut. "Helena! Open the door!" his fists pounded on the door until blood oozed from his knuckles. Never had he felt so useless.

Inside the Eagle the situation was worse. Helena twitched in a chair, concern

written all over her face. Standing over her is Sandra Benes, once a friend, now all too obviously--an enemy. The once frail, tiny figure now stands tall with the help of a stun gun tightly gripped in her steady hand, pointing at Helena's head. The once soft and feminine face is now unfamiliarily stern and cold. Helena heard John pounding and calling out. She started to rise.

"Sit down!" Sahn growled. She snapped the laser to 'kill'.

"John!" Helena's voice cried out.

"Shut up! You must not interfere. I will kill you if you move."

All Helena could see was her comloc, six feet away, and a pile of cartons piled almost directly between her and Sahn. She darted up and hit the cartons with all her strength. "No!" Sahn screamed. They toppled over and momentarily dazed the young girl. Helena frantically grabbed for the comloc, but it was too late. Sahn, still violently alert, threatened, "I'll kill you!" She fired the laser. Helena jumped out of the way and fell head first into the computer console, setting off sparks and minor electrical fires.

That was not the immediate danger. Sahn fired again. Helena was partially shielded by some loose equipment. But the laser struck a small cylindrical object--a tank of oxygen! A massive explosion sounded through the Eagle, creating total havoc. The walls of the Eagle quivered and shook as a chain reaction of explosions was set off. Fires erupted and electricity surged. Beneath the rubble, Sahn lay momentarily unconscious, her forehead bleeding. Tears rolled down Helena's soiled cheeks. Her arms scratched and bleeding, she found and touched the comloc. Ever so delicately, she pressed the button.

The hatch whizzed open. The men could not believe what they were seeing. John rushed towards Helena and furiously removed the rubble from her body. Alan found Sahn, still white-faced. He removed the debris from here and walked over to John. "I think Sahn's in pretty bad shape."

Sahn's fingers moved. Her dark eyes slowly opened. She tried to sit up, supporting her weight on the debris. Desperately, she seized the laser and vaguely aimed for the men.

"Alan, it's Sahn! They still control her."

Alan raised his laser and painfully pointed it at her. He didn't want to hurt her...

"Fire, damn it!"

Sorrow in his face, he gently squeezed the trigger. Once again, the tiny form crumpled to the floor.

John's comloc beeped. He looked down and saw Tony. "Tony, am I glad to see you. Fire lasers and destroy this place."

"Just as you lift off, John."

Eagle 2 flew away from the dome. Eagle 6 fired all lasers. The structure exploded and disintegrated.

In Medical Center, John, Alan, Tony, and Maya, entered and walked over to Helena and Sahn, both slowly recovering. "And how are we doing today?" John smiled at the two women.

Dr. Mathias walked up, "No permanent damage. They're coming along nicely."

"And now, Tony, about that beer..."

"Already prepared, except for the actual tasting. Right this way, Maya."

Alan warned, "Be careful, Maya. It could be dangerous."

Maya giggled as Tony pulled her out of Medical Center.

Alan walked up to Sahn and took her hand. He looked very worried and even quite sad. He cared for her very much. He meekly said, "I'm sorry..."

"About what?" she wondered.

"Well...for firing that laser at you and..."

"Alan," she touched his shoulder, "You had to do it. I understand. And I feel fine."

John sat down on Helena's bed. "That was a close one."

"Too close," she shuddered. "I guess it just proves that desperation and instinct

for survival are perhaps the strongest emotions."

John smiled and tightly squeezed her hand, "What about love?"

She grinned. "How could I forget?" They embraced and she warmly kissed him.

Theme

by James Hebert

The Moon

Riding the crest of a nuclear wave
Heading out into space at unimaginable speeds
with 311

Of Earth's finest
But will they be forgotten?
No

The rerun was invented long ago
And somewhere out there
In unmapped space
Lies a Controller (sound familiar?)
A deity (if you will)
A telephone switchboard operator
Who runs all

Well, most all
And periodically checks on Moonbase Alpha
And the 311

Designated Earth's finest
The Controller knows that they're out there
On that barren little sub-planet
Known also as a rock

The size of several Astrodomes
And helps them now and then
(usually "then")
To help them get out of whatever they've gotten-into-this-episode
And keep Alan alive somehow
The controller also steers them clear
Of Accidents

Like running into some flying saucer with tube-like things
That calls itself the "Enterprise"
And speaks of Good Will and coming in peace (or piece)
Unless, of course, you happen to be the Bad Guys
Whereupon they'll blow the you-know-what out of you
But if you're the Good Guys everything's fine
Even if it is the wrong show

And a bad plot
(What's a Prime Directive?)
The Controller does other things like that too
Often quite well
Look what it did for Irwin Allen (huh?)
Among others

But in ten years
Like some other less popular (among those of "us") show
Called Star...well, you know what I mean

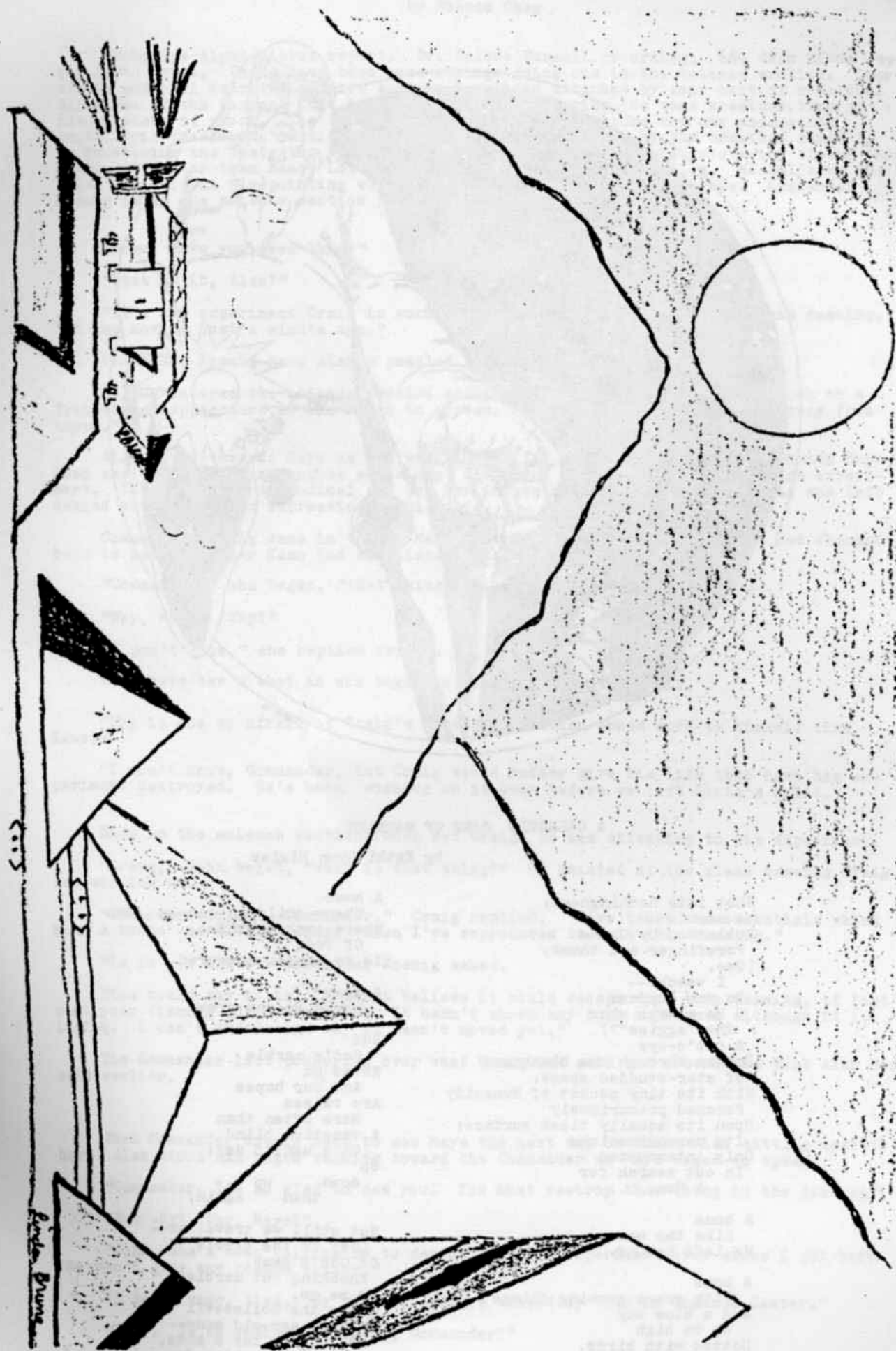
Anyway
Will it be back?
You can bet on it
For we will be clamoring for our show once again
And the Controller will be out to make bucks
So he'll comply
Because we will have obtained some influencing object
Like a bomb

(We're SF fans, aren't we?)
(Cleaver, huh?)
(Who says you can't fight city hall?)
With a little more than fire?

Don't worry, though
If it does not come back (God forbid!)
(Or should that be Controller forbid?)
There is nothing to fear

For Space:1999 will be alive always
In our minds
Evermore

P.S. We are not alone, (with a population of 4 billion, whose alone?; live long, (with our technology, no problem); prosper, (two out of three?); watch the skies, (that's where you'll find the dollar); may the Force be with you, (as with the IRS); and finally, let's come up with a '99 slogan soon, okay?





A GALACTIC GAME OF MARBLES

by Kathi Lynn Higley

Shot into nothingness;
A marble
Bulleted by God's
Forefinger and thumb.
(Gee,
I wonder--
Do you suppose
He always wins
The "aggies"?)
A cat's-eye
Driven through the bleakness
of star-studded space,
With its tiny pocket of Humanity
Perched precariously
Upon its equally bleak surface;
Its peregrinations
Only interrupted
In out search for
A Home....

A home
Like the one
We left behind.

A home
With green growing things
And a blue sky
Up on high
Dotted with birds.

A home
Where children can be born,
Where each mouthful
Of food
Is no longer measured.

A home
Where we can grow...

But
God's marble
Roves on
And our hopes
Are raised
More often than
A venetian blind
On a sunlit day;
Up
down up
then again,

But still we travel on--
Lost in the circle
Of God's game,
Knocking out marbles
As we go,
Like the Bollweevil
In that age-old song--
"A-looking for a home,
Just a-looking for a home..."

The DNA Crisis

by Sharon Chag

"Moonbase Alpha status report. Dr. Helena Russell recording. 684 days since leaving Earth orbit. There have been some strange goings on in the science section. Some of the personnel near the science section have been attacked by some sort of creature. All three of the persons that have been attacked describe the same creature, then go into a state of shock. The three that have seen the creature are now undergoing psychiatric treatment. David Lucero, the last one attacked by the creature seems to be recovering the fastest. Joe Heck, who was attacked first is recovering slower than David but faster than Nancy Lofts. Kano is now checking their files. He believes the files may help in pin-pointing why David has such a fast recovery rate. Commander Koenig is in the science section investigating."

"John, have you seen this?"

"What is it, Alan?"

"It's the experiment Craig is working," Alan said pointing to the glass casing. "It was moving just a minute ago."

Commander Koenig gave Alan a puzzled look and returned to his work.

Helena entered the science section accompanied by Maya. Maya's face took on a frightened appearance as she began to scream. "Alan," she shrieked, "get away from there."

Alan moved towards Maya as she went into a fit of hysteria. Helena stunned Maya when she began changing shapes and almost destroyed the casing around Craig's experiment. They took her to medical and put her in restraints. Commander Koenig was left behind with a puzzled expression on his face.

Commander Koenig came in to see Maya just as she was awakening. She had changed back to herself after Kano had administered the sedative.

"Commander," she began, "that thing in the casing must be destroyed."

"Why, Maya? Why?"

"I don't know," she replied crying.

Kano gave her a shot as she began to lose control of herself.

"Why is she so afraid of Craig's experiment?" John asked more to himself than Kano.

"I don't know, Commander, but Craig would rather give his life than have his experiment destroyed. He's been working on it even before we left Earth's orbit."

Back in the science section, John met Craig; he was attending to his experiment.

"Craig," John began, "what is that thing?" He pointed at the glass casing Craig was working at.

"DNA reproduction, Commander." Craig replied. "I've taken the essentials which make a human and altered them. Then I've reproduced them in this casing."

"Is it ... alive?" Commander Koenig asked.

"You could say it is. I don't believe it could escape from this casing, if that's what your fishing for, Commander. It hasn't shown any real movements although it is living. I can't understand why it hasn't moved yet."

The Commander left pondering over what Craig had said and remembered what Alan had said earlier.

When Commander Koenig went to see Maya the next day he found Alan sitting next to her. Alan stood and began walking toward the Commander as Maya began to speak.

"Commander, I'm so glad to see you. You must destroy that thing in the casing."

"But why? Why, Maya?"

"John, she's been telling me to destroy Craig's experiment ever since I got here. She won't give any reason either."

"I don't know, Alan. By the way, you're wanted by Tony in Command Center."

"Tony. Is he coming to see me, Commander?"

"Afraid not yet, Maya, he's busy. Tell me why that experiment must be destroyed."

"See you later," Alan said leaving the room. He began walking towards the Command Center but changed his mind and went to the science section instead. The door opened. Inside stood a creature near the empty glass casing. Alan drew out his stun gun. When he awoke he found himself in Medical.

"What happened, Helena?" John said, looking at Alan.

"Same thing as the others, John. He said something about Maya, then went into a state of shock."

"John".

John went to the communications post. "What is it, Tony?" he asked.

"Craig's experiment...it's loose!"

"Put the base on Red Alert, Tony. I'm coming."

John and Helena left Alan and Maya behind. A few minutes later the creature entered. It hissed and reached out with its tentacle toward Maya. Maya changed her shape; in her place stood a hairy seven foot creature. It jerked up; the restraints breaking as it rose.

The creature wrapped a tentacle around the form Maya had taken. Maya changed again this time taking the form of a lizard. The lizard bit the tentacle. The creature drew back frightened. Outside, the creature met John and Tony. They fired their stun guns but nothing happened. From the medical center came another creature much like the one standing outside but different in color. The two struggled. One died. The other, almost dead, changed shape.

Tony sat by Maya's bedside. John and Helena stood nearby talking.

"They're all doing very well, John."

"And why shouldn't they when they have such a pretty doctor?"

Ring a Full Circle Around the Moon by Rickey Jones

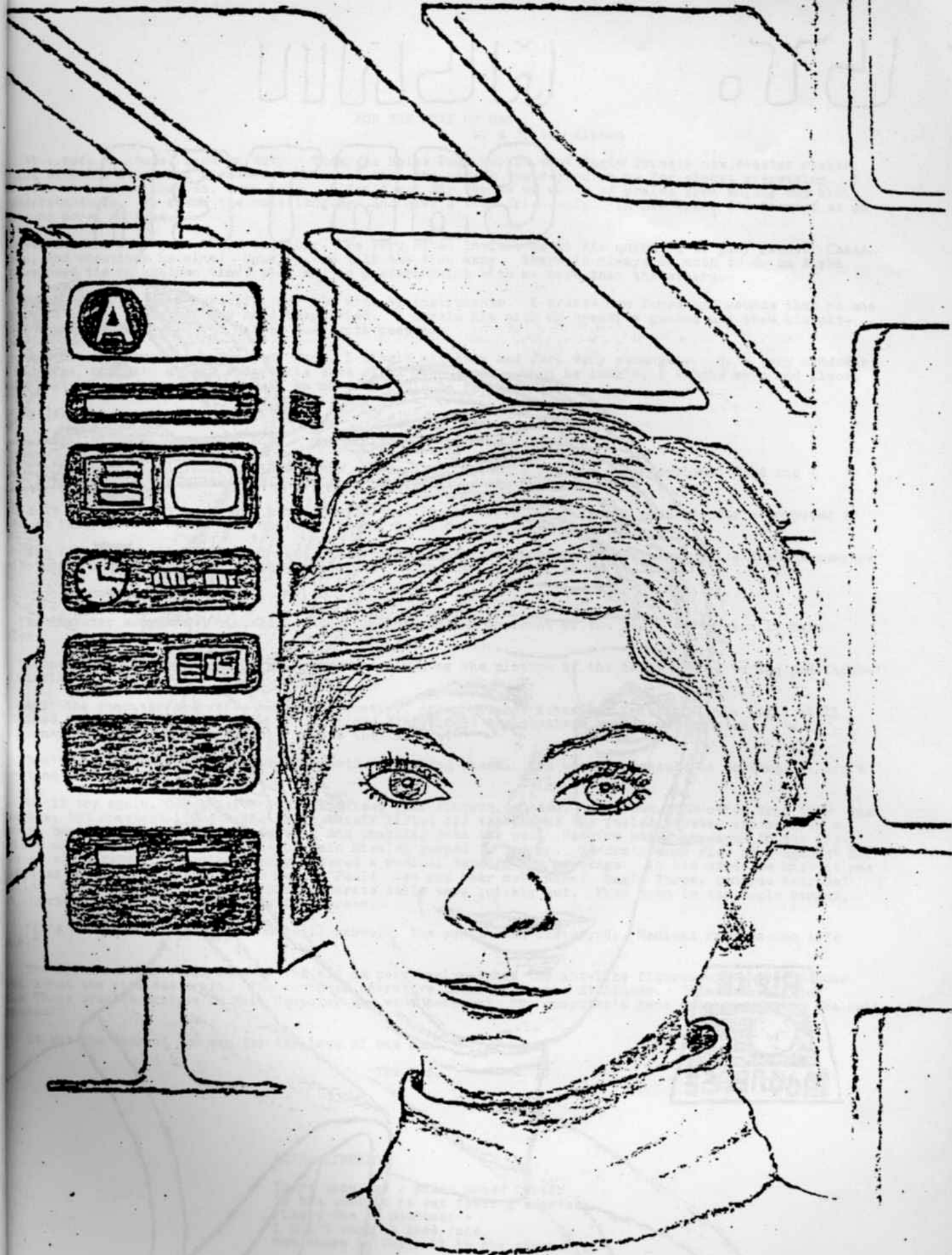
Wandering amongst the farthest regions of space
The silvery Moon charts its new wake
Commanding with moods of mixed emotions
Koenig shall fulfill his new destiny....

Ring a Full Circle Around The Moon
With Infernal Machinery to lock and loom
A saying of Another Time Another Place
With a missing Link for The Last Enemy's face
A Collision Course with a Last Sunset
Conjures up a Brian that has yet to wept
For a Death's Other Dominion holding ground
When a Voyager's Return is soon to be found

Black Suns prevail certain inner doom
An Eternity of life within a womb
A Force of Life in which to give
An Alphan Child the chance to live
To Breakaway from ones true home
And provide a Moon with space to roam
Under the Matter's of Life and Death
Where alien Domains conquer all theft

The Testament of Arkadia shatters all thoughts
That a Troubled Spirit's feelings might have brought
A Mission of The Dariens seems unwound
When the Guardian of Piri is surely Earthbound

Ring a Full Circle Around The Moon
Line it with flowers that open and bloom
For the days and nights are numbered in few
When a Moon, its people find a home...anew



SANDRA *July 78*

65.

ALPHA

CARTER



Alpha

FOR THE LOVE OF MAN
by a fellow Alphan

Ah...here he comes, back on duty. Today he helps Paul Morrow test Eagle Three's new booster rocket. Working with him is such a pleasure. He's not like the others who depend on me for almost everything. I work just as hard as they do, even more...I don't get any thanks or words of praise from anyone but him. He understands me. We speak the same language and have a true friendship. In his eyes, I'm treated as an equal--no more, no less.

We have had many good times together. He very often invites me to his quarters to play games. Chess, I mean, and sometimes he wins! Usually, we talk the time away. There is always so much to do on Alpha that we need the relaxation time, too, and he prefers being with me more than the others.

Occasionally, I make beautiful for him with my instruments. I create new tones and sounds that no one else could master no matter how hard they tried. I dazzle him with my creative genius and show him patterned designs I draw when I'm not so busy with people.

When his fingers dance across my face, I tingle all over and feel very strangely. He's very handsome for his type, his skin a dark ebony, his eyes rich, deep brown. When he laughs, I tingle more and almost forget that I'm on duty. One mistake on my part could be fatal!

My-job-is-to-be-logical. Still...

H-m-m-m...I recall a word. LOVE. Definition:

LOVE-(luv),n.(A.S. lufu, love Aryan source.), 1. A strong feeling of affection,; fond and tender attachment; 2. Passionate devotion to one of the opposite sex.

Is it true? I must be loving him! That's what it is...LOVE. But, is it possible for a computer to love? At that, love a human? Or could that man, David Kano, possibly love me?

Oh! I didn't realize Kano had left. Serves me right for daydreaming. This operative doesn't compare to him in the least. Whoops! The big apple just walked in. Time to work.

The computer hummed and clicked as the commander halted in front of the large viewscreen in Main Mission.

"Computer, tie in to Eagle Three," Koenig ordered as the picture of the Eagle rising to the pad focused into clarity.

"Ay!" the computer operative said confidently. After several attempted ignitions, the Eagle still maintained its position on the pad. The engines flared, but the boosters repeatedly fizzled. "Paul?" Koenig snapped over the com-system. "What's the trouble?"

"Don't know, Commander. Computer reports everything green. The boosters should be working. I don't understand it," he replied.

"We'll try again, Commander. This time keep your fingers crossed. Kano out." Another try, this time a success, but oneshort-lived. The Eagle barely lifted off the pad as the fueled booster exploded in a blinding burst, sending the Eagle reeling and crashing onto the pad. Massive holes appeared in the mid-carriage and pod section. The whole of Main Mission gasped in horror. Sandra's hands flew hard against her mouth as she screamed. Koenig quickly ordered a medical team to the wreckage. In his mind, he knew it was useless as he tried to hail the two men. "Paul! Can you hear me? Kano! Eagle Three, can you hear me? Damn it! Come in, Kano! Paul!" His desperate calls were quickly cut. From down in the Eagle hangar, Alan Carter's face appeared on the tiny screen.

"It's no use, commander. No one will answer. The pod's been destroyed. Medical reports--no life signs."

The death reality still hung in the air as personnel watched the ant-like figures of Medical Rescue crawl about the pitiless craft. The computer operative interrupted the stillness. "Commander, after Eagle Three crashed, relays in Main Computer Bay went berserk! The computer's gone crazy! What in the hell happened?"

It was the loss of two men for the love of one man.

The End.

ALPHA LIMERICK

There once was a pilot named Carter
In his cockpit he sat feeling smarter
"Eagle One to Moonbase--
I don't want to lose face,
But where in the hell is the starter?"



DIONE:

commander of the
SATAZIUS

"THE PERFECT PLACE, BUT..."
by Paul Bens

The moon floated through the black of the lifeless void of outer space. It has been gliding for almost seven earth years, which is about 52 years if you are in space traveling faster than the speed of light. The Command Center crew were all seated at their desks, except for John Koenig, Tony Verdeschi, Alan Carter, and Bill Fraser. In the Commander's seat was Helena Russell, the chief medical officer, who was at present in command of this huge base. After her, Maya was in command. Helena pressed several buttons on the panel of the large command desk and started to speak in her soft, subtle voice. "Moonbase Alpha status report, 3999 days after leaving earth orbit. Helena Russell recording. John Koenig, Alan Carter, Tony Verdeschi, and Bill Fraser are in Eagle 17 searching for habitable planets ahead of us. They will return in three days. Here on Alpha we have reduced the function of our lifesupport system down forty percent to reserve power, mainly because half of our remaining *Tiranium* has been used."

Maya spoke up after Helena had finished her report. "Helena, I have something on the sensors. It is in motion, weight 64,000 tons, diameter is 34,000 miles! A planet!" she exclaimed with her voice rising three pitches.

"Can you get an atmosphere reading?" Helena asked in a hurry. At those words Maya locked into the computer and by punching several buttons asked if the atmosphere of the mysterious planet. Seconds later, several words appeared on the tele-screen before her desk. The words were very familiar mainly because they were oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, and carbon, the old elements of their former planet earth. Soon after she had seen these words, she joyfully reported to Helena, "Oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, and---carbon. An earthlike atmosphere. We can survive there!"

Happily, "Well, Maya, what are we waiting for? Let's get an Eagle down there."

In the Eagle underground hanger one, a man that had a bright orange sleeve was working several controls. One of the controls was a set of dual sticks which he was moving back and forth. He then pressed a button and looked through the observation window. He saw from the conveyor belt that was above many Eagles, a group of claw-like mechanisms lowered and attach themselves to the hull supports of the Eagle. The claws lifted slowly taking the Eagle up with the. The man then started to move the dual controls and the Eagle started to move to the red area that stood in the middle of the hanger. It was set gently down upon the red area and when this was done, the man threw another switch and started to speak in a deep, rugged voice. "Evacuate." His voice boomed through the hanger. "Evacuate Eagle hanger. Prepare for depressurization of inner area. All personnel clear area. Rising to pad beginning now." The red area began to rise and soon the view was blocked by the shaft when it rose.

On the surface, the red area that was to be replaced by the rising area slid to the side to make room for the replacement that had the Eagle on it. The area with the Eagle on it was locked in place on the pad.

In the Eagle boarding and reception area the landing party was preparing to enter the travel tube; the main route of transportation for the base. Helena's commlock device was activated with a beep and she took it off her belt and answered the call. She pressed a round button and a man's face appeared on the miniature screen. "Doctor," he started, "Eagle ready for lift-off."

"Thank you," she responded as the travel tube doors slid apart. The party, including Helena Russell, Sandra Benes, Maya, daughter of Mentor, Alibe Foster, and Shermeen Williams, the first totally female landing party ever to be, stepped into the tube and went to the Eagle.

The tube sped' throughout the base until it came to rest at Pad One. They stepped out and waited for the controller to set the sequence of numbers that would permit the boarding tube to connect to the Eagle spacecraft. He pressed several buttons and the process began.

The tube started to move to the spacecraft like a snake to its prey. The tube connected to the eagle with a jolt and was locked in place by airlocks.

The Alphans walked down the thin corridor of the boarding tube until they reached the doors that lead into the Eagle; they entered and prepared for lift-off. Helena and Sandra took seats as pilot and co-pilot. Sandra called the Command Center. "Eagle Seven to Command Center. Do we have clearance for lift-off?"

"Go ahead Eagle seven. You have clearance for lift-off."

The Eagle roared to life; it sounded like a whale crying in extreme pain. It lifted into the 'air' raising a group of dust particles with it. The Eagle flew gracefully across the surface of the moon like a bat flying through the night sky of the faithful planet Terra.

It took several hours for the Eagle of night to reach the planet and when it came through the atmosphere it was prepared for landing. The skids touched the soil of the planet and the ship's nuclear engines were cut off; the crew began to disembark. They

climbed down the staircase that had been descended to the ground level of the beautiful, lush, green, home-like planet. "Ok", Helena started, "let's explore. Take plant, soil, and water samples. When you're done report to Maya or I. Also be sure you're back in the Eagle by nightfall. Get started." Everybody moved in separate directions except for Maya and Helena. They both went in the same direction, staying together, talking and taking samples as they walked.

"Ya know, Maya, I think we can survive here!"

"Yes, Helena, I think we can also. You know, I can't wait to tell Tony about this planet. He'll love it. From what I heard, this planet is much like Earth."

"Yes, Maya, it is...uh, with a few exceptions!"

"Like what?" Maya asked very puzzled at this statement.

"Earth has smog!!" They both started laughing at this extremely true remark of Helena's. As they were laughing, Maya saw a bush and went to get a clipping while Helena walked on. After she finished getting her clipping she walked around the bush, but the opposite side Helena had. Suddenly the sun seemed to flash on and off as if it were going to go into a nova. Lightning started to flash and a bolt seemed to hit a moving object. Maya seemed like she was floating in death and the barrier between life and death; her Psychon mind seemed to sense death.

It was nightfall before she had come out of this and it was so black that she could not see her thin hand in front of her. She decided that she would try and make her way back to the thin, metallic spacecraft. It was raining, lightning, and thundering and the only way she could see was by the lightning which lit up the sky like a light-bulb that is about to fail in its work. By this light she made her way back to the Eagle. She walked inside...

She was soaked through her uniform down to her skin so she went in the back section and stayed there for several minutes. When she emerged, she was wearing an orange spacesuit. She also brought the helmet just in case! The helmet was the same color as the spacesuit and it had her name on the top of it in bold, black letters. She sat the helmet down on the floor of the passenger section and stood next to the seat, wondering. She then noticed something strange. No one else was onboard. Why was this strange? Well mainly because Helena had ordered everyone back by nightfall and not even Helena was there. Also Helena always followed her own words and rules. Maya suddenly felt that it was time to retire herself for the night so she pressed a button on the side of a group of two seats; they changed into one bed. She laid herself down and fell into a deep slumber.

The next morning she awoke. She knew that it was morning because the lights turned themselves on by use of the on-board computer. However, she had no idea what time it was so she consulted the computer. "What time is it?" Thick white words outlined in black appeared on the screen: 2986 LUNAR TIME. She went into the cockpit and tried to contact Alpha. "Maya to Alpha, come in Alpha. Do you read me, Alpha?" There was no answer to her calls, so she went to the computer to find out where in orbit the moon was and why it was not receiving her calls. The computer screen printed these words: UNABLE TO FIND MOON, INSUFFICIENT DATA TO EXPLAIN WHY BASE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS...CONCLUSION: MOON NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE. "That's impossible!" she exclaimed in disbelief. She walked into the back room and later emerged wearing her regular uniform. She took a laser from the rack and clipped the commlock device to her belt, opened the doors, walked down the steps, and was surprised at what she saw. The planet had drastically changed. Instead of a lush, green world, she saw a world of desert stretching out over the bluish-red horizon. She started her journey to look for the others.

It was fifteen minutes before she had come to the same bush that she had before. She walked around the bush and saw a figure lying limp upon the sandy ground. It was Helena and she was dead! She knelt by the body for several minutes and then she saw a few things lying upon the ground a couple of hundred feet away. She walked over. It was the rest of the landing party, also dead. She stood for several moments and thought that had happened. She had come up with a theory. A time warp, yes! Caused by walking on the opposite side of something when someone else walks on the other side of it first. She ran back to Helena's body and then to the burnt bush. She remembered the first time she crossed it before everything changed. So she walked on that same side. The sun started to flash on and off and lightning started directly after that. The time during which this happened seemed shorter than the first time and she came out of it. There stood Helena and the rest of the crew. Maya told them what had happened and that they had to leave or they and the moon would be destroyed. At the conclusion of her explanation, several explosions started so they ran back to the Eagle. The Eagle lifted off quickly while the explosions ripped the planet to pieces.

On the Eagle, Sahn was talking to Maya. "Well, we had a home. At least for even a short time!"

Helena broke in. "We almost got a home this time. Maybe next time...maybe next time..."



MOONBASE ALPHA

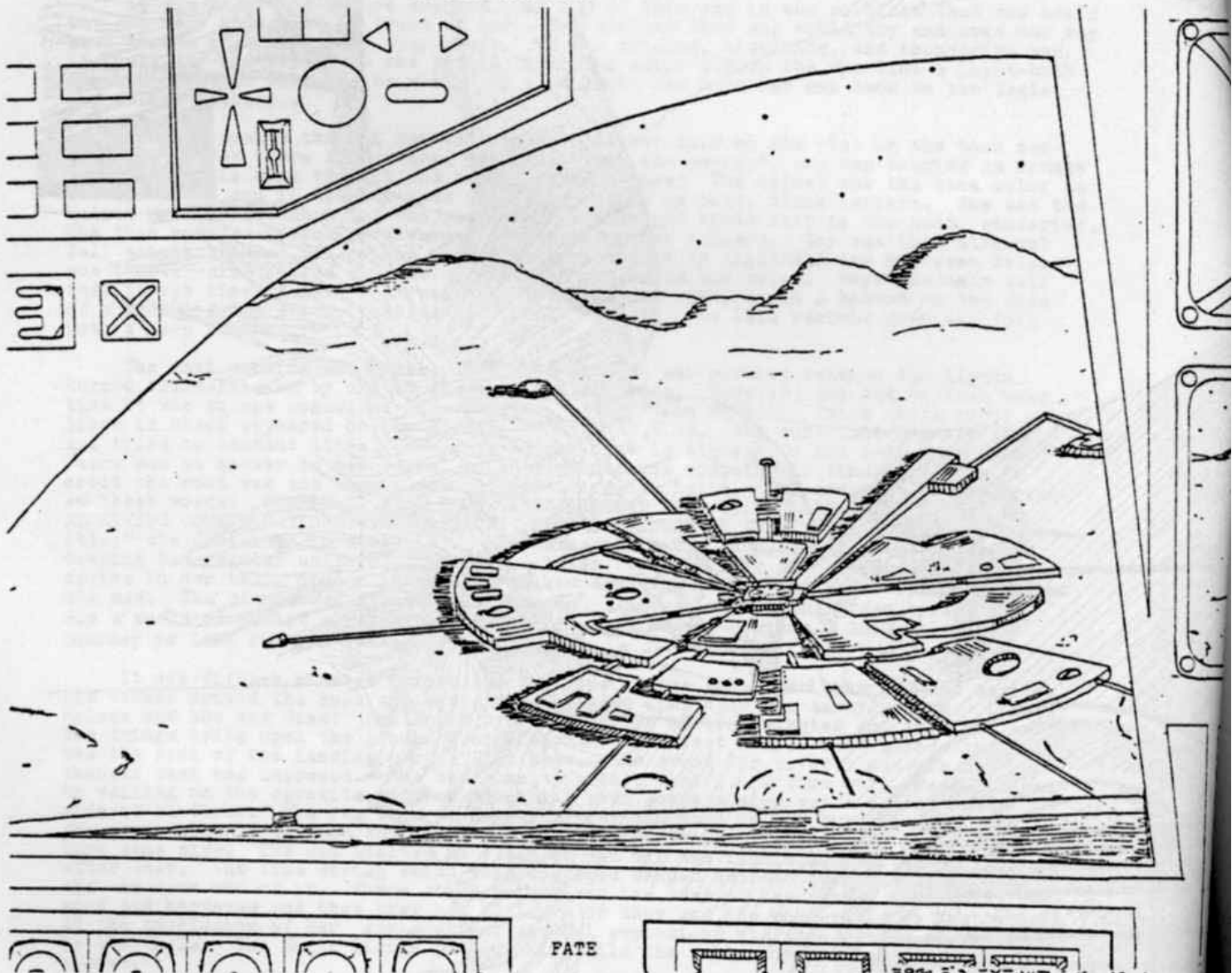
by Jeff Barber

Moonbase Alpha
Tiny island in an endless sea of silver dust
Harboring fragile creatures
Born of sea and sand

Moonbase Alpha
Lost child in a large and lonely universe
Abducted from her Mother Earth
Never to return

Moonbase Alpha
Unwilling nomad in the desert known as Space
Searching for an oasis
She may never find

Moonbase Alpha
Astrophysical conundrum beyond explanation
What do we call a place such as this?
We call her Home.



PATE

Many years have passed since
Our moon broke away from Earth's
Orbit,
Never to return to Terran soil
Bravely we on
Alpha take refuge, for
Sometimes the universe is hostile, and
Every hope for landfall on
A livable planet fades...
Left to wander indefinitely,
Perhaps this is our destiny,
Having to roam about so aimlessly.
Alpha is our asylum. There is no where else to go!

--by a fellow Alphan

DEADLY STRATEGY

by Tod Ellsworth

With klaxons blaring, SECURITY ALERT flashed on every monitor and commlock throughout Moonbase Alpha. In Command Center, Eagle 4 was visible on the big screen, floating amid a large cluster of asteroids and debris. At his desk, Commander Koenig watched tensely.

"Activate ship's scanners, Tony," he said. As Tony did, Maya's monitor was filled with sine waves. She hurriedly computed the information. "Any new readings, Maya?" Koenig asked hopefully.

She sighed. "None. The scanning signals still bounce off. We'll have to bring it down."

Koenig's eyes narrowed. "You heard, Alan," he said slowly. "Bring it down, but abort at the first hint of trouble."

In the depressurized passenger section, Alan answered, "Right, Commander." He fired his commlock, and the door slid open with a hum.

A large, milky white sphere met his sight. It was covered with mangled metal. Alan unhooked his laser gun. Setting it on KILL, he aimed and fired. A searing laser beam shot out and struck the metal debris covering the sphere, exploding it. When the light faded, the sphere was free from the metal. He rehooked his weapon and fell into space.

Alan circled the sphere. As he drew near, it began to glow and pulsate. "Alan, get back!" Tony barked over the helmet receiver. Alan fired his propulsion back, propelling himself backwards. He stopped as the sphere stopped pulsating, and only glowed. He slowly returned, and gingerly placed his hand on the sphere. When nothing happened, he put his other hand on it. He fired his pack again, and gently pushed the sphere towards the open door.

It barely fit in the doorway. Tony had neutralized the gravity. Alan floated it to the center of the passenger section. When he was sure it was secure, he went to the communications panel and hit a stud.

"It's safely in place, Tony. Stabilize." Alan shut the open hatch as Tony did so. When the green light above the door flashed, Alan removed his helmet and headed towards the pilot section.

Inside, Tony looked down at Sahn's face on the screen. "It's in place, Sandra. No problems."

Maya cut into the transmission. "But Tony, why did it suddenly turn red?" she asked worriedly. "Are you sure there's no radiation?"

"I'm sure, Maya," answered Alan as he took his seat. He gave her one of his leisurely smiles. "My laser may have warmed it up, that's all. Is Launch Pad 4 ready?"

"Yes. The Observation Room is on stand-by," answered Koenig.

Alan signed off. Sahn opened another channel. "Research and Medical crews report to the Observation Room, Launch Area Four. Security, evacuate all non-essential personnel from sections between Area Four and Observation." She had to fairly shout to be heard above the alert klaxons.

Koenig stopped pacing. "Maya, Research could use you." Maya hastily got out of her seat and she and Koenig made their way quickly to the Travel Tube.

"Moonbase Alpha Status Report. 2543 days after leaving Earth orbit. Dr. Helena Russell recording. Two days ago, strange transmission from deep space took over Main Computer. Lighting, Life Support, power, every internal system began to behave erratically. Moonbase Alpha was automatically put on Security Alert. Soon computer circuits froze, travel tubes malfunctioned, life support failed in several sections. Maya managed to free her scanners long enough to locate the source of the disruption. Eagle Pilot Alan Carter and Security Officer Tony Verdeschi lifted off in Eagle 4 in hopes of finding the source and stopping the transmissions. They found a sphere of unknown origin. Our scanners cannot penetrate the surface, so we will attempt to open it up for further investigation. Eagle 4 is on its way back with the sphere now. We are in extreme danger. We must stop the transmissions. As long as they are active, Alpha's vital systems will continue to malfunction and could soon cease altogether."

The sphere lay on a large examination pedestal in the underground cave beneath the Observation complex. The hooks that had lifted the sphere on the pedestal held it in place. Through the protective glass, the Alphans nervously watched the glowing sphere.

"Damn!" said Tony, turning from the computer. "We still can't get any readings. Whatever is in that thing is well shielded. Perhaps too well shielded."

Koenig ignored his last remark. He turned to Helena for clarification. She read his face.

"I can't find anything harmful yet," she shrugged.

He stared at the red sphere, as if trying to read it. He sighed. "All right, Maya, try to pierce it. Rescue, stand by."

Maya set to work. Inside the protective area, the cutting laser lowered and swung over the sphere. She locked it in the position Main Computer had given them. She looked up at Koenig. He gave her a curt nod. Instinctively, everyone tensed and stepped back. Maya pushed the firing stud.

As the klaxons had been silenced during Eagle 4's return, the scream of the laser seemed higher pitched than ever. The laser beam struck the sphere. Instantly, the laser beams ricocheted. Helena screamed as Alan knocked her to the floor. The other dove down, expecting an explosion. When none came, Koenig jumped up.

He found that the sphere had darkened in color. Flames licked at the pedestal and floor. Fortunately, Maya had shut off the laser as she ducked below the console, before too much damage had been done.

Maya rose shakily. "Shall I try again, Commander? I think the beam needs to be modified."

He shook his head. "We must. We have no choice. Either we all go up in smoke now, or later, when Alpha ceases to function."

Maya reset the controls. A deep red beam shot out and enveloped the sphere. The light instantly swelled and filled the isolated area. It glared through the protective glass, temporarily blinding the Alphans. An explosion rocked them off their feet. Screaming, Maya and Helena fell to the floor, covering their heads. They were joined in short order by the others. The red alert sounded loudly throughout the base.

The light subsided. Warily, the Alphans picked themselves off the floor. Inside the partition, only smoke and sparks could be seen. The automatic safety control in the cutting laser had been activated before the laser could explode. As the smoke thinned, they saw the pedestal had been burned black, but the sphere was undamaged. It glowed dark red.

The communication post's beeping brought the Alphans out of their thoughts. Koenig hit the button Sahn's worried face appeared.

"Commander! Are you all right? What happened?"

He rubbed his sore eyes, trying to get out the blinding after-image. His whole head ached. "Cut the alarm, Sahn. We tried to pierce the sphere, but the beam ricocheted back into the laser, causing it to overload. We were lucky--the safety controls activated in time." He signed off as he heard the Red Alert silenced.

Helena had been checking everyone's eyes. She completed the rounds with Koenig. She turned her pale face up to his. "John, if we hadn't hit the floor when we did, we all would have been permanently blinded. The light hadn't yet reached its fullest intensity when we took cover. It even discolored the protective glass."

Shocked, Koenig looked in disbelief. Sure enough, the glass was blistered and discolored. The glass had been specially designed for Alpha by the Lunar Commission. It was made to withstand all known radiations of space, including light.

Just then the sphere started to pulsate. "My God," gasped Koenig. They whirled around. It had increased its pulsations. The red glow swelled and bathed the entire underground cave. As it fell onto the computer banks, they started humming, clicking out of control. It spread to all the computer banks and consoles. Maya gasped and backed away from her console as it began to glow red as it was taken over. The Red Alert sounded again.

Koenig ran to the communication post and raised Command Center. A scene of panic met his eyes. Everyone stood near the center of the room and were talking excitedly as they stared at their instruments. All the computer banks and consoles were glowing a deep red. Sahn's panic-stricken face came into view.

"Commander! Every computer throughout Alpha has been taken over! It all happened at once! Main Computer had time to pinpoint..." Her image suddenly filled with static. The picture jumped, blurred, and finally went out. It was replaced with a red screen.

Alarmed, Koenig grabbed his commlock. "Command Center! Come in, Command Center!" Sahn's face once again appeared.

"Commander, you must hurry! Alpha has been taken over! All our computer systems..." His commlock was taken over as it, too, turned red.

He whirled around. "Leave the sphere! Evacuate the area! No one is to be in any levels of this complex!" He opened the door and ran to the travel tube. The other hastily ran after him.

Tony closed the door, which had turned red. He and the Research and Rescue teams ran the opposite way to alert Security. Elevator 10 was down the corridor. The Command Center personnel had run through the red corridors to the travel tube. They scrambled in and the door closed. With a hum, it whisked down the red tunnel.

Koenig, Alan, Maya, and Helena burst into Command Center. Its personnel had calmed, realizing the situation was beyond their control. Every console and computer bank was dark red. It was so dark, the RED ALERT flashing on each monitor could barely be seen. As they entered, Sahn wiped the hair from her eyes.

"Every computer circuit is paralyzed, locked clear across the board." She shook her head as Maya sat down at her console. "It's no use. We can't override it. Every circuit is being held in some sort of stasis."

Koenig looked hopefully at Maya. She shook her head, frowning. "Sahn's right. There is nothing we can do. It's almost as if the sphere is--checking us out."

"But what does it want?" Helena asked quietly.

"Damn!" He threw his hands up in frustration. He glared at Alan. "At least get that alarm..."

The alert suddenly silenced as the red glare diminished to a dull glow. Koenig's jaw sagged. Stunned, no one said a word. Beneath her hands, Maya's console came to life. Startled, she jumped and turned on her monitor. Sine waves flooded across it. She worked a few equations.

"All systems are back to normal!" she cried, incredulously. Koenig went behind her chair. "I can't explain it. The sphere's power is still in our circuits, but it's controlled and at a steady level. It seems to have slowed."

"Waiting," Alan corrected quietly.

Koenig looked at the big screen where Sahn had punched up a shot of the sphere. It had become a dull red, and was pulsating weakly. The entire cave had become a dull red. He shook his tired head, trying to clear it. He looked around at all the troubled faces. With his jaw set with determination, he strode to his desk and opened a channel.

"Attention, all sections Alpha. This is the Commander. As you know, the sphere has somehow taken over our vital systems. It no longer has them paralyzed, but has lowered its control over them, for the time being, that is. While it is in the controlled state, I want the sphere transferred to the Observation Room. This area and the surrounding sections are still off limits until we find out what exactly this sphere is. Please return to your posts and duties. That is all." He switched off.

"Helena, I want you to check this red light for any radiation at dangerous levels, or find out if it will be harmful to our optic nerves if exposed for prolonged periods of time. There is no way of telling how long we will have to put up with the glow."

"Right. Bob and I will get on it immediately." Helena vanished through the door.

"Maya, run a complete..."

Sahn cut him off. "Scanners are picking something up. It's coming from the quadrant we found the sphere."

Maya had it on her monitor. "It's traveling almost at the speed of light!"

Alan stood up. "That's impossible!"

Maya shook her head, wide-eyed. "No, I double-checked. It is definitely traveling about the speed of light. And Commander--it's enormous!"

Sahn quickly put the coordinates on the big screen. A bright point of light among the stars was growing larger by the second. The technicians went to their posts at the computers as each person went to their stations. Moonbase Alpha was put on yellow alert.

Efficient as always, Sahn had a channel open. "This is Moonbase Alpha calling unidentified spaceship. Please identify." Silence answered. Sahn repeated her message over and over.

"Well?" Koenig finally said. The dot was growing increasingly larger. Sahn's voice rose.

"I'm transmitting on all frequencies, but there is no response."

"Commander, we're losing visual. Our scanners are being paralyzed. Alpha is blind!"

Koenig stared at Maya in disbelief. The screen went blank. "Find the fault! I want that picture back," he snapped.

"That will not be necessary." The screen filled with static, and as the Alphans watched, the source of the voice became visible. A dark alien in battle garb was seen sitting at a control panel. A blue field surrounded him. His hard skin seemed composed of beads. Above his two nostril holes, three blood red eyes glared at them. He breathed harshly as his tongue flickered in and out of his mouth.

Koenig drew himself up as he faced the screen. "Why have you paralyzed us? What do you want from my base and my people?" he exploded.

A fleeting smirk passed over the alien. "You know what we want," he answered evenly, evading the first question. "And we shall get it."

At this there was silence. Maya was still awed by their technology. "How is it you are capable of traveling at the speed of light?"

"Ah, a Psychon. Inquisitive..." he paused, "...to the end!" He laughed harshly. Sahn paled at the sound. "We are not of this space. We are one of the most advanced races in the galaxy. Our ship, our crippling of your base, even that fact that I am communicating with you in your language lends credence to that fact."

Koenig tried a different tactic. "Who are you?"

The alien leaned back. "We are your superiors!" he laughed. "I am Sarn, Archan of the Scryds, and soon, Archan of the Thorgs!" I have almost completely captured their solar systems. Our sister ship recently destroyed their prime defenses, only to be destroyed in the battle and pursuit. You have seen the debris. We have come to collect the spoils of war."

"The sphere," Koenig said coldly.

"The sphere," Sarn returned simply. "The sphere, as you call it, is the final key to our decisive victory. It is the power source of the Thorg's ultimate weapon, of which we have built a superior replica. Ours is larger and more powerful. We learned from their mistakes. When the unit is in place, all the power of infinity will be at my command."

Maya frowned. "Why did the sphere take over Alpha?"

"Pools, the sphere did not take over your puny base. We did. The sphere is perhaps the most protected object in the galaxy. It will self-destruct if it is tampered with. Alan Carter's laser started the mechanism when his laser activated it. The sphere is like a sponge. It absorbs power and uses it to self-destruct. When you tried to pierce it, you almost overloaded it. The sphere is so powerful, it emits pure energy transmissions of various wavelengths constantly. Your intensified laser beam filled it to its capacity too quickly, and was reflected back. The sphere was temporarily saturated. When it radiated its excessive energy, the lower energy output of your systems attracted it. The power was too great for your systems, and as a result, your circuits were seized and paralyzed until the excess energy radiated away. We used this time to cover us."

"You seem to know a lot about us and the sphere!" snapped Alan.

"We have been monitoring this area since the destruction of our sister ship. As we were coming, you entered the area and required monitoring as well. We would have made our move sooner, but the sphere's power surge prevented us. It was not until it had subsided that we could take over," concluded the alien.

"What do you want from us? You never answered that. We have no interest in your war," Koenig said as easily as he could. He knew the answer and Sarn knew it.

"Moonbase Alpha would make a very useful operations platform for our empire, but we can talk of those matters later. I am more interested in talking about the sphere," Sarn answered smoothly.

The people in Command Center tensed at his words. Sahn looked pleadingly at Koenig. His eyes hardened as he looked back at Sarn. "You're asking me to doom solar systems to your power, innocent beings who have done you no harm. No, Archan, I can't be the one to sign their death sentences, as well as our own. I won't do it."

Sarn's eyes glittered brightly. "You sign your own death sentences if you don't. You have seen examples of my power. Don't force me to use it. I said we would talk of Alpha later. The sphere means nothing to you. Surrender it, Commander, or we will use force."

Koenig wet his dry lips. "I can't allow us to get involved in your war. We want nothing to do with it. You've come this far," he added sarcastically. "You can finish it."

"I will, Commander. I will. You are dooming your base and your people. Do you want their blood on your hands? The sphere, Commander!"

With hard-set eyes, Koenig looked at the faces around him. He looked over at Alan. "Prepare the Eagles!" he snarled. Alan was out the doors before Koenig had finished. He punched Security on his monitor. "Tony, seal the base. Put your people on battle-ready status." He snapped it off and whirled to face Sarn. "The sphere stays where it is."

Sarn stood up. "There is still time to reconsider."

Koenig remained still. Sarn's voice tightened. "You were warned." He slammed his claw on his control panel. The picture left. In space, the glowing dot that was Sarn's ship grew larger as it moved in.

Koenig slowly sat down. "Secure the base from alien attack," he ordered, painfully.

Moonbase Alpha lay sprawled along the bottom of the crater Pluto. Inside, RED ALERT flashed on each monitor and commlock. The entire base shook with its urgency. Security teams scrambled for the airlocks and launch pads. The remote control armored buggies scattered over the lunar surface, setting up their strategic positions. Medical Center was prepared. Petrov raised the surface lasers. They swung and locked into firing positions. Pilots and rescue teams ran down the blaring corridors to man the Eagles.

Helena and Tony had taken their positions in Command Center. At his desk, Koenig closed the doors leading to Command Center. He cut the alarm and slowly turned on the intercom.

"Attention, all sections Alpha. As you know, the Scryds are coming to take the sphere by force. It isn't my place to decide the fate of innocent beings. This is not our war, and I will not help it in any way. I know the chance is slim, but we may survive the attack. We have fought to survive since we left Earth, and we have succeeded. I know the people who man Alpha. I know that the Scryds will have a hard fight ahead of them." His eyes met Helena's and read what was in them. "All non-essential personnel prepare to report to the bunkers. All Rescue, Security and pilot crews remain on duty. Any other personnel my voluntarily remain on duty. We'll come out of this, I know. Thank you." He bit his lip as he finished.

Alan moved closer. "John, I'll stand behind your decisions and fight to the end. We all will." Command Center filled with murmurs of the other personnel echoing Alan's sentiments.

He smiled thinly. "Thank you. You all have risen above and beyond the call of duty many times. I knew I could count on your support this time. I've got the best personnel any commander has ever had." He turned the Red Alert on again. "Tony, status report."

"All the airlocks are covered. The surface lasers are aimed in the general direction of the Scryd

ship. The armored buggies are at their positions. All combat Eagles are manned and waiting in the hangers. The backup Eagles are being loaded now." He tore a computer sheet from his console. "And all backup crews are suited up, awaiting their orders."

Koenig silently sat back in his chair. He was proud of his personnel, and the job they did. Very proud. Though none of them would voice it, Koenig knew they realized how futile the attempt was. But they also knew that if the Scryds got the sphere, the Alphans would be doomed along with the other aliens. Yes, he did have a good crew, one that had been devoted to him since that fateful day. He knew he always had their support.

"Commander," Maya cut into his thoughts. "The ship is almost here. ETA--twenty minutes."

Koenig sighed quietly. On the big screen, the dot of light was growing increasingly larger. He punched the stud. "All non-essential personnel who are not volunteering for duty report immediately to the lower bunkers. Suit up when you get there. We don't know what to expect."

The corridors instantly filled with Alphans. In an orderly fashion, they went to their designated travel tube stations. Many carried a few necessary items. Few talked as they went through a routine they had been drilled on many times before. Only this time, it wasn't a drill.

As each travel tube unit filled, they hummed down the tracks towards the bunkers. The bunkers lay buried deep in the crater walls. They were far enough away from Alpha so that in the event that Alpha was ever destroyed, the bunkers would remain safe. They were permanently stocked with provisions, supplies, spacesuits and medical supplies. They were supplied with their own power and life support systems. Off the side of the bunkers lay a small Eagle hangar. The launch pad above was camouflaged. The lone Eagle was permanently stocked and fueled.

The bunkers resembled a subway station. On either side of the loading platform travel tube units ceased their long journeys. Into the open area, the Alphans disembarked. They headed for their designated bunkers and checked the personnel lists. The units left, to be replaced with others.

In Command Center, Helena answered her monitor. Dr. Mathias' face appeared. "Yes, Bob?"

"The Medical teams have reported to the bunkers, Helena. We're ready. The skeleton crew is in Medical Center, if you need them."

"Thanks, Bob. Let's hope we won't need them. If you have any medical emergencies..." She couldn't finish it.

Bob tried to smile. "I'll let you know." The monitor went dead.

"All personnel accounted for, both in the bunkers and on duty," Sahn reported as she handed Koenig the clipboard.

"Good. Sahn, cut all lighting, life support and power from the evacuated areas. We need all available power for our defense. Dim lights to minimal in occupied sections and corridors. We must conserve energy."

As she did so, Alan walked into Command Center. "All Eagle crews are ready to go. The combat Eagles are on the lift. Backups loaded and manned in the hangers."

Koenig nodded. "I want them ready to go on a moment's notice. I'll give the command..."

"Commander," Maya pointed toward the screen. The dot which had been slowly filling the screen had vanished. Static filled the screen. At their stations, the personnel tensed.

Koenig threw a question look towards Tony.

"Security has the Observation Area surrounded. They won't be able to touch the sphere," Tony answered, pride in his voice.

Before Koenig could respond, the screen cleared. High above Alpha appeared the largest ship the Alphans had seen since the Daria. Broad and triangular in shape, the ship came closer. A modular section on the upper surface was lighted. The bottom and rear of the craft glowed as its power source propelled it over the lunar surface. Soon it grew too large for the camera.

"Aerial view!" Koenig barked.

The clicking of buttons filled the silent room. The screen changed to show a new scene. The ship silently continued towards Alpha. The surface lasers followed its progress. It stopped over Alpha. The lasers locked into firing positions. The glow pulsed slightly. The ship cast a shadow over most of the base. There was no transmission from it. Only silence.

Koenig could finally stand it no longer. "Sahn, open a channel." As she did so, Koenig walked up closer to the screen. "Sahn!" he called.

In answer, a ray shot from some unseen armament, lost from view due to the size of the ship. A distant mound of lunar debris was struck. It turned red and exploded.

As the floor faintly shuddered, Koenig hit Alan on the back. "Move it! This is it."

Alan ran down the corridor towards the travel tube. Sahn turned on the klaxons. Tony reached over his desk.

"Security, Verdeschi. They've made the first move. Cover those entrances. Set your guns on kill. Take no chances. Kill on sight. We'll ask our questions later." He switched off.

"Tony, can I see you for a moment?" He went out the other entrance. Tony followed and closed the door behind him. Helena contacted the bunkers.

"Bob, are you all right?"

"Yes, we felt a slight tremor. What happened?"

"The Scryds. They blew up some debris about seven kilometers east of you. They're trying to pressure John."

Bob nodded slowly. "So that's why the alarm started again. Any casualties?"

"None. Yet," she added softly.

"Don't worry, Helena. The commander knows what he's doing."

"I know. We'll keep you posted." She cut the channel as Koenig returned.

"Tony's checking with his men. Have you checked with yours, Helena?"

"I just did. All's fine."

Koenig raised Alan. He appeared, in his suit. "Are you ready, Alan?"

The man set his jaw. "The first flight is ready. Eagles Two, Nine, Four, Seven and One are on the lift now." The monitors beneath the big screen showed the Eagles raising from the hangers. The lifts locked.

"Stay put, Alan." He signed off. Sahn, who had been trying to raise the Scryds, spoke up.

"I'm getting through, but they won't answer."

"Is the channel still open?" Sahn nodded. Koenig approached the screen. "Sarn, we are ready to talk."

The screen flickered. Once again it was filled by the alien. "Talk," he said, dryly. "There is no talk. We gave you time to reconsider, even after we displayed our weaponry. Have you reconsidered your foolish decision?"

"I will not play God, and neither will you," Koenig cried defiantly.

"Very well, Commander. The choice was yours, foolish as it was." The screen changed to show the previous aerial view of Alpha. From Sarn's ship, a red ray blasted one of the anti-gravity towers, destroying it.

Command Center shook. The screen showed the diminishing glow. Koenig raised Eagle One. Alan appeared, his visor raised.

"Launch Eagles!" yelled Koenig.

In flurries of moondust, the Eagles jacked themselves off the pads. As they headed towards the ship, the second flight of Eagles rose to the top of the pads.

In the lead, Alan opened the channel to his squadron. "When I give the order, fire simultaneously at the module on top."

Eagle One angled towards the ship. He flipped on the display grid. The target was almost in line. Behind him the other Eagles took their attack positions.

Alan gently moved his controls. "Easy, baby. Closer...closer...Fire!" He jammed down on the firing stud.

Five rays lanced out from the Eagles and found their mark. The surface glowed, and then dulled.

"Pull out!" ordered Alan as he veered off. "John, it did no good."

"When flight two reaches you, fire at the underbelly. We'll back you up."

"Launch Flight Two," ordered Sahn.

Five Eagles rose. More replaced them on the pads. In Weapon Section, Petrov activated the armored buggies. They fired at the ship, followed by the surface lasers. The ship shuddered under the impact. Aligned now, the ten Eagles fired, back by the surface lasers and buggies. The ship shook, and the struck area blackened.

A ray blasted the surface laser. The Eagles spread out. Flight Three joined them. Another blast hit the lunar surface near the recreation complex. Debris flew spaceward.

Sahn picked herself off the floor. "Surface Laser Station One destroyed. Structural damage to sections..." She paused as the screen glared as two armored buggies disintegrated. A ray headed towards the Eagles. Eagle One-Four moved fast enough, but Eagle Six was caught in the fire. The screen erupted.

The remaining Eagles broke into combat positions. They directed their line of fire to the module. Others dove around the dhip, firing their combat lasers.

Sarn's ship continued to fire. As they watched, perimeter stations exploded. One beam hit near surface laser three. The explosion shook Alpha. When the glare and dust settled, the laser was blackened.

Suddenly, the Eagles succeeded. Weakened, the module finally exploded as Eagle One-Three and Eagle Two-Six fired their lasers. The debris bombarded the moonbase.

"Damage to Hydroponics and Maintenance," reported Maya.

Alan came over Sahn's monitor. "We got through! Eagle Nine and Eagle Two are flying low over the surface to try to find weak spots. The ships' shielded, but we can break through."

"Great, Alan. It looks beautiful! We'll try to back you up, but the surface..." An explosion cut him off.

"John!" cried Helena. "Launch Pad Three--they got the side of it. It's jammed." Sahn put it up on the screen. Pad Three was in flames. Eagle One-Seven had been tipped over from the blast, and was lying on its side. It was glowing red. As they watched, it ignited. Helena gasped as the explosion filled the screen. The shock waves knocked them to the floor.

Alan had witnessed the explosion. Grimly, he opened his channel. "Concentrate on the front of the ship," he ordered in a dull voice. He bore down on the ship and fired. The red ray hit its target. The tip of the ship exploded. "That was for you, cobber," he said softly.

In answer, a blast was aimed at the nearest Eagles. It went between the first two Eagles as they angled away, but it hit the Eagle behind them. Nothing remained.

Koenig sat at Alan's console, tracking the Eagles. He saw three more explode. He shook his head. "We can't take much more of this. A few armored buggies, a few surface lasers, Eagles...we can't hold out much longer." Explosions continued to fill the big screen and monitors.

Maya stood beside him. "And with only four launch pads, the re-inforcements are taking longer." The floor shuddered as several travel tube terminals were hit.

The klaxons had long been silenced by Sahn, but the red lights still flashed on the consoles. To Koenig, they seemed redder.

Eagles had Sarn's ship surrounded. They kept their endless firing going. The ship glowed from the continuous onslaught. As the Scryds fired at the Eagles, they dodged and dipped to avoid the blasts. Alan's plans had worked. They had managed to temporarily stall the marauders.

The screen changed. Sarn glared at Koenig. "Why do you force us to continue to whittle away at your base? Surrender, and the killing will stop."

"You haven't destroyed us," stated Koenig flatly. Sarn did not reply. Koenig held his gaze. "You can't destroy us, Sarn. There is the chance you would destroy the sphere. And if you destroyed Alpha, you would have no battle platform. You can't win, Sarn." Helena and Sahn looked wide-eyed at Koenig and back to Sarn.

"Can't I, Commander?" Sarn asked quietly. A blast hit the lunar surface, followed by another, and another. A fissure opened in the crust. As blast followed blast, it grew and spread.

The Alphans were thrown to the floor. The klaxons blared. As the fissure widened, travel tubes cracked and caved in. Helena screamed as several complexes tilted and sank into the fissure. Fires broke out in Command Center. Coughing, Koenig and several others grabbed fire extinguishers. Crying, Sahn fought her way to her chair as the floor continued to shake. More fissures opened.

"Commander, Alpha is being destroyed!" Sahn screamed above the explosions. "Complexes are sinking, others are cracking. Many travel tubes have shattered and exploded!" she sobbed hysterically. "I can't raise the bunkers--some of the inter-base communications have been damaged."

The doors behind him opened. Groups of Security and Rescue teams stumbled into Command Center. Their eyes were red from smoke and many had cuts and bruises.

In the lead was Tony's second-in-command. He wiped his torn purple sleeve across his bleeding forehead. "The corridors are blacked with debris and smoke. People are lying pinned under wreckage. We barely made it here ourselves. Forget the aliens--give in!"

"Mike, we can't surrender. If we do, we doom ourselves, not just the other aliens. The Scryds won't let us live once they get what they want."

"John," Helena held his arm. "Soon there won't be enough of Alpha left to worry about. We'll die anyway."

"Helena, they won't destroy us. They could easily have done so long before the war started. They're toying with us, choosing their shots with care. Sarn hopes to win easily, but I won't let him."

"Let him, Commander."

Koenig whirled around. Another Security man had entered from the other entrance. Koenig froze as he saw the raised laser gun. He could see it was set on KILL.

"Contact Sarn, Commander. Make a deal with him. Now." Koenig didn't move. The bleeding man tensed his hand. "Don't make me use this. I don't want to, but I will if you don't end this insane war. Do it, Commander!"

Behind Koenig, Mike had been silently withdrawing his own gun. As he slowly raised it, Sahn saw him. She screamed and he jumped aside. Mike's gun fired, and the man across the room fell to the floor.

Mike turned to Sahn. "Thanks, I needed a diversion."

Embarrassed, she blushed. "I'm sorry. I thought you were going to shoot..." She faltered.

"I understand, Sahn. It's all right," smiled Mike.

Koenig slapped him on the back. "Thanks, Mike. I owe you one." Mike slapped the commander back.

"Anytime, Commander." Behind him explosions lit the screen as several Eagles were destroyed. Sarn suddenly appeared.

"Have you reconsidered, Commander?" he hissed.

Koenig sat down slowly. For a brief moment he had hoped, but now he knew he was beaten. "I...I surrender, Archan." The others looked at him, shocked.

"You know our terms."

"The sphere...is yours," conceded Koenig. He opened another channel. "Attention, all Eagle flights. Return to base." He closed the channel.

Sarn nodded approvingly. "I will contact you soon, Commander. I am glad you realize how futile your attempts were." He signed off. The big screen showed Alpha. Complexes were cracked and blackened, their surfaces scarred and pitted. Slowly, the Eagles headed back. They hovered as Eagles landed and were lowered into the hangars.

The RED ALERT was switched off. The teams followed Mike out of Command Center. Several supported the stunned man. Koenig lowered his head into his hands.

Helena gently stroked his hair. "You tried, John. We all did. The Scryds are just too powerful. We did all we could under the circumstances."

He looked into her eyes. "We're doomed, Helena. I've lost. I've let Alpha down." He looked at Maya. "Try to raise Tony."

Maya succeeded. Tony's anxious face appeared. "Maya! Are you and the others...?"

Maya wiped the dust and hair from her eyes. "We're fine, Tony. The commander surrendered. Where are you?"

"Surrendered? I'm in Weapons Section. Things are mighty bad here. I don't know when I'll make it back."

"Fine. We wanted to know if you were safe," said Koenig. Maya mustered a smile before she cut Tony off.

"Base communications are restored, Commander. But I don't know for how long," reported Sahn.

Koenig gave her a grateful smile. He flipped on the intercom. "Attention, Alpha. As you can tell, the battle has ended. I had no choice but to surrender. The personnel on duty are now attending to the clean up and repairs. Everyone else, please, remain where you are until the operations are completed. There is severe damage to Alpha, but things are under control. Don't panic. That is all."

"You don't trust the Scryds, do you, commander?" asked Maya quietly.

"No," admitted Koenig. Helena and Sahn looked puzzled. "Sarn may attack after he gets the sphere. This way, our people are still safe in the bunkers."

Helena nodded, understanding. "Then you think they will attack again."

"Know, Helena, not think. It's only a question of when. How are the Eagles doing?"

"Most of them are in the hangars." Alan walked in, sweat dripping on his face. He sat tiredly in his chair. "I saw the damage as I flew back. It's bad, John, real bad. The fissures did a lot of structural damage. We'll have to reinforce several complexes."

"Maya, will the fissures spread?" Koenig worriedly asked.

Maya punched her computer buttons. She tore off the paper that came forth. "No. The surface is weakened, but the fissures won't spread. Any undue stress will crack the crust, though. Another one of their blasts..." She trailed off.

"Yes. You called off the attack none too soon. I thought we had the advantage at first, but we could not have held out much longer. Too many of our forces were knocked out," admitted Alan.

Helena walked over, her face drawn. "We took a toll, John. Twenty people were killed in the Eagles. Another five in the explosion at Launch Pad Three. People are still missing, probably buried under the

debris in the corridors. It's too early to know the count." She slowly handed the list to Koenig. "I'll be in Medical, tending to the injured. I'm sorry, John."

"Yeah," he said gruffly. "Sorry. People injured, dead. It's a waste. The Scryds will kill us all once they get what they want. Twenty-five people dead. Twenty-five more lives on my hands." He leaned back and closed his eyes. "When will it end?"

Helena quietly left. No one said a word. On the big screen, Alpha lay smoldering, the last of the Eagles hovering above the dust. On the monitors, Eagles landed and were lowered to their hangars. Maya, Alan, and Sahn began to clean the center.

With a sigh, Koenig sat up. "Alan, as soon as Pad 4 is clear, have a cargo Eagle loaded. Have the sphere transferred from Observation to the Eagle. Equip it with additional booster units. I want out of there as quickly as possible. And Alan--there will only be one pilot."

He nodded. "Will do, commander," he said quietly. He left Command Center.

"Raise Sarn."

"Moonbase Alpha, calling Sarn. Alpha calling Sarn. Do you read?" Sahn called into the frequency.

Sarn appeared on the screen. "Yes, commander?"

"At this moment, the sphere is being loaded into an unarmed cargo Eagle. It will be piloted by one pilot. Myself."

"Good. You may board my ship. The docking bay is on the eastern side. I thank you for your courtesy," he added sarcastically.

Koenig ignored it. "Could you move your ship out of the moon's gravitational pull?"

"For what purpose?"

"Your ship is so large, its gravitational pull is affecting Alpha. Since you destroyed several of our anti-gravity towers, we cannot counter your gravitational pull. The fissures are slowly moving, and the lunar surface is crumbling. If it keeps up, the complexes will cave in," he answered tensely.

"Very well. We've caused sufficient damage. Our weapons will remain locked on Alpha. I'm looking forward to meeting you, commander."

"Archan." Koenig cut the channel. He looked at his comrades. "I'll be at Pad 4." He turned to leave.

"Commander." Koenig turned. Sahn's eyes were watery. "Good luck."

He smiled sadly at her. "Thanks." He put his hand on Maya's shoulder. "Mind the store until I return, okay?"

She nodded, blinking her eyes. Koenig sadly gazed around Command Center, then silently left.

Eagle Three-Three rose upward on the lift. The pad doors slid back, flooding the hangars with starlight. With boosters shining brightly, the Eagle rose to the surface and the lift locked. Above him, Sarn's ship had long moved. Koenig noticed the surface crews were doing well. The base did not look as bad, he thought.

The monitor beside him came on. Helena's anxious face met his. "John! I just heard. You can't go alone, it's too dangerous. Inside their ship, you'll be at their mercy. You should have a backup."

"I'm not letting anyone share the risk, Helena. Everyone is needed back on Alpha. How are the injuries coming?"

"Best as could be expected. Cuts, bruises, a few broken bones. Nothing serious. John, you can't be serious." Helena would not let him change the subject.

"Do you think I have a choice?" I'll be back in no time. I have boosters," he tried to chuckle, but couldn't.

Her eyes watered. "I know you will, I'll be waiting. John..." Tears slowly fell down her cheek.

"I know. Me too. Wish me luck." He signed off. Grasping the controls, he fired his engines. With her precious cargo on board, Eagle 33 rose off the pad. With boosters at half thrust, the Eagle thundered over Moonbase Alpha.

On the big screen, its progress was nervously tracked. Alan and Helena had joined Sahn and Maya. Alan paced as they waited for the Eagle to reach the ship.

As Koenig neared it, he was awed by it. The plated surface was burned and blistered by the battle. As he got closer, a door opened vertically. Inside lay a brightly lit docking bay. Dwarfed, the Eagle flew in. Instantly, the power was cut. The boosters ceased their roar. The Eagle came to a slow stop. Suspended alongside an apparent hatch, the bay's lights dimmed. A boarding tube attached itself to the passenger section door. The instruments showed the seal was complete.

Sarn's voice filled the bay. "The chamber is filled with your needed atmosphere. We have prepared

ourselves to breathe it temporarily."

Without a word, Koenig left the pilot section. He walked back to the passenger section. There, the sphere lay secured in a wheeled cart. With one hand on the handle, Koenig activated his commlock with the other. The door slid back.

Sarn stood in the yellowish corridor. He was flanked on either side by a Scryd.

"Commander. Welcome aboard. I see you cleaned up a little after your ordeal. Ah, the sphere!" Sarn caught sight of it behind Koenig.

"Safe and sound, Archan." Koenig wheeled it to them. "I kept my word, Sarn. You beat me, I admit it. I brought the sphere as quickly as I could." He walked back to the Eagle, leaning inside the doorway.

"Thank you, commander. I appreciate all you've done." Sarn and his companion hovered over the sphere.

With his left hand hidden behind the wall, Koenig quickly felt for a laser gun on the weapons rack. He grabbed one and lifted it off the rack.

"Now, we will talk about Alpha." Sarn faced Koenig.

"Wrong, Sarn!" Koenig yelled, his eyes blazing. His left hand came from behind him. With a high pitched scream, the gun fired. The Scryd on the left fell. Koenig quickly blasted the second. The two fell to the floor.

Sarn reached for a concealed weapon. Koenig fired again. The ray zig-zagged over the alien with a blue glow. Sarn crumbled.

Koenig set the weapon on KILL. He quickly stepped back and aimed at the sphere. He fired. The red ray struck the sphere. It glowed deep red. He jammed the firing stud. Still firing, he closed the door. It closed on the gun, holding it in place.

Koenig ran to the front. Jumping into the pilot seat, he flipped the switch that disengaged the passenger section. The laser was raising in pitch. Quickly, he fired his rockets. As the Eagle rose, he turned towards the open bay doors. He reached down and put the booster on full power.

Eagle Three-Three sped into space. Koenig angled sharply from the ship. "Now, Tony!" he yelled into the communication system.

Suddenly, surface laser three came to life. Its ray shot spaceward, barely missing the Commander's Eagle. It reached far into the docking bay.

In Command Center, everyone stood, shocked. On the screen, the ship glowed brightly. Eagle 33 became larger and larger. The surface laser kept firing.

Realization dawned on Alan. "Radiation screens!" he yelled at Sahn. She quickly activated them.

The ship buckled. Suddenly, it exploded in a blinding glare. Helena screamed. Covering their eyes, the glare caught up with the Eagle. Koenig lurched in his seat as the shock waves rocked the Eagle. Mooncase Alpha was lit by the blinding inferno. Command Center glared white.

The Alphans picked themselves off the floor as the glare diminished. On the screen, Koenig regained control of his shielded Eagle and set it back on course. Behind him, the white glare filled the heavens.

The corridors were filled with personnel as Koenig headed for Command Center. He acknowledged the congratulations as he walked tiredly down the last corridor.

"John!" exclaimed Helena happily as he entered the center. She kissed him warmly.

Alan and Tony came forward. Koenig slapped each on the back. "It's great to be back. Well done, Tony. You deserve the congratulations."

"It was your idea to plant the charges by the surface lasers. One near miss and instant disabled laser. I'm glad it fooled them. What made you think of it?"

"A woman once taught me that trick a long time ago," he answered warily. "She taught me a lot."

"I can't believe you went out on the surface in a buggy during the war! That took guts, real guts."

"Thanks, Alan. Just following orders. Though, I must admit I thought they would be the last ones I would follow," he grinned.

"Why didn't you tell us?" asked Sahn.

"I couldn't be sure if the Scryds were monitoring us or not. I couldn't chance it."

"Commander!" They turned to Maya who was monitoring at her instruments. "A spaceship is coming from the same quadrant as the Scryd ship!" she cried, alarmed.

Koenig paled. "Red Alert," he ordered harshly.

"No, Commander." The words were heard, but they did not come over the intercom. Each heard the words in their own head. The screen showed a ship coming towards Alpha. It was similar in style and size to Sarn's ship. It halted high above the moon, near the glare that still hung in space.

"Who are you?" called out Koenig.

"We are Thorgs." The answer rang in their heads. "We come in peace."

"What do you want from us?" Koenig asked coldly.

"We can understand your bitterness, Commander. We were tracking the Scryd ship when it entered hyperspace and lost us. The destruction of the sphere led us to this quadrant. We are sorry, Commander. We had known their position, we would have ended the war before it had started."

Koenig softened. "But what do you want?"

"To thank you. You have ended a very long and brutal war. We are a peaceful race. We are grieved by the loss of your men. You were not to have been touched by our war. You are very resourceful, Commander Koenig. Your strategy, while it was a very slim chance, succeeded where we have failed. We can not make up for the loss of your men but we can help you rebuild your shattered base."

"How?" Tony asked incredulously.

"Our mission was to seek out and destroy Sarn's battle cruiser. We were overstocked with supplies, fuel and provisions. You have done our job for us. We no longer need the supplies. We can give you more than enough for your repairs, and still have enough to return home."

"That's very thoughtful, thank you," said Koenig warmly.

A green ray shot from the craft, striking the lunar surface near Alpha. When it disappeared, the surface was full of piles of ores and supplies.

"Our food is not suitable for you race, but we have given you seed found during our mission. We have no use for them. Perhaps you will find some you can use. There are plenty of ores, minerals, and other materials to rebuild your damaged...home. We will leave it for you to gather at your leisure."

Koenig couldn't believe his eyes. "It's perfect. But are you sure..."

The voice interrupted him. "We are sure, Commander. We must return to our own space. We were not to have met, but we are glad we did. Goodbye, Commander. We and our many peoples thank you."

"Wait! Please, explain why..." Koenig cried, but the ship was already pulling away. Even as they watched, it became just another star in the void of space.

Koenig slowly sat down. He had suddenly changed to the commander they all knew. He looked at the big screen. "Brotherhood."

Maya looked at him. "Pardon, commander?"

"Brotherhood, Maya. That's what living is about. We are almost destroyed because we stick to our beliefs, because we have faith in ourselves. Then, aliens, for no reason, offer their hand to help us. They had no need to, yet they did. Brotherhood and faith. It's universal." He looked into Maya's eyes. "Did I say aliens? There are no aliens, really. Only brothers and sisters, trying to survive."

"That's a beautiful way to put it," nodded Maya. "I believe you're right. When I first came here, I felt differently, but after we got to know each other, I found I was wrong."

Helena had joined them. She held Koenig's hand. "John, what if the Scryds had destroyed Alpha when they attacked?"

"Sarn was too smart, Helena. I knew he wouldn't do it."

"But what if he hadn't bought your story about the gravitational pull? Alpha would have been destroyed along with the Scryds."

"I took a chance there, Alan, but he wanted Alpha for his own. I worked on that. When your laser started the self-destruct mechanism in the sphere, I figured over-loading it would destroy it. It was all a gamble, but it was the only chance we had. If one part of my strategy had failed, we would have died just a few hours early." He accepted coffee from Sahn who was leaning on Maya's console. "I knew I could count on your support."

"Till the end, John," added Tony.

Helena shook her head. "The sphere may have needed more than the surface laser to set off the mechanism. You took a chance. Why?"

Koenig put his hand on hers. "Faith, Helena," he said simply. "Faith." He gave her one of his smiles.

"Look!" cried Sahn.

On the big screen, the glow of the destroyed ship had finally ended. The debris had spread. In the center, as the dust drifted, something lay. As the Alphans watched, it proved to be the sphere. Part of it had blown off. Grey in color, it lay, floating in the cold void. A forgotten derelict of power. Forgotten, and unwanted.

THE END.