

# TIME DIMENSION

A

Novel

Written

by

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## CHAPTER I

Somewhere in time, Klaus Graff, a determined bald man in his forties, wearing a leather jacket, followed a German officer, in World War II uniform, out of a dark forest to the edge of a hill overlooking a beautiful valley.

“Where will we find the Fuher?” asked the officer.

Graff calmly admired the view. There was a Roman aqueduct cutting through the valley. He took out a pistol and shot the German officer who fell to the ground, stunned, with a hand over his bleeding heart.

“Adolph is a fool,” finally replied Graff. He then put the gun away and calmly walked down the hill towards the beautiful valley.

Wild waves cut the ocean as a hurricane hit New York city. The torch of the Statue of Liberty was still above the waterline. At the flooded streets, the buildings were partially underwater. A wave hit the windows of a skyscraper. The wind blew furiously. Up in the sky there was a black hole, an astrophysical phenomenon.

In the downtown area of Los Angeles, a sand storm continued to bury the city under huge banks of sand. At a deserted freeway strong winds blew sand. A sign reading "Downtown Los Angeles Next 3 Exits" was ripped off its post. There was the same black hole in the sky.

Below the black hole, the red sun was barely seen in the brownish sky. Outside a desert bunker a long post with a flashing red light stuck out of the sand. The end of a concrete wall remained uncovered.

A vehicle moving on tracks reached the bunker as an elevator, shaped like a pyramid, emerged from the sand. A door opened, the vehicle moved in and the elevator submerged.

Inside the desert bunker, in an underground high-tech space center, technicians worked on a huge rocket.

In a lab, Mrs. President, a foxy gray hair woman in her fifties, examined a strange "low-tech" machine: a cylindrical steel capsule, big enough to fit two men, with a thick spiral copper wire around it.

A scientist, Albert Sagan, in his thirties, wearing glasses, long hair, casually dressed, and General Raden, a short but strong man in his sixties, observed her impatiently. Mrs. President touched the symbol carved into the steel: a German nazi swastika.

“The Army found this German non-functional prototype in 1945. We weren't able to develop the technology. We believed the project had never reached operational status,” said General Raden.

Colonel Bridgett Stark, a sharp woman in her thirties, short hair, brunette, impeccable uniform, walked in. “Good afternoon, gentlemen. Mrs. President.”

“This is Colonel Stark and Doctor Sagan, the man responsible for the breakthrough technology that created the T-3 time machine model,” introduced General Raden.

Albert shook hands with Mrs. President and Bridgett. “Albert”, he repeated.

“Colonel Stark will go on our second mission. She will enter the black hole in the same Titan rocket used by Captain Kelley's first mission. The T-3 is mounted in the rocket capsule,” said General Raden.

“Mrs. President, I would like to volunteer for this second mission,” suggested Albert.

“It's out of the question. This is a high risk military endeavor,” replied General Raden.

“You'll stay with your books, Doctor Sagan,” completed Bridgett.

“I agree,” said Mrs. President. “But why can't we just go back in time and stop them?”

“If we go back in this time line and change something, we'll just create another time line,” replied Albert.

“Another sequence of historical events,” added General Raden.

“That will generate another time dimension in the present. A second black hole could emerge, adding to the environmental chaos we're in,” explained Albert.

“What is this black hole?” asked Mrs. President.

“An astrophysical phenomenon. An area of space-time with a gravitational field so intense that nothing can escape, not even light,” said Albert, getting closer to the machine. “The man who used this created a second time line.” He approached a graph showing a line that divided in two. A cylinder designated “black hole” connected the two lines in the end. “Two parallel time dimensions created by different sequences of historical events. My theory is that the black hole is a connection between them.”

“We'll find the man who's playing God,” completed General Raden.

“I see Albert that you are the man with the answers. What are the odds we'll succeed?” redirected Mrs. President.

“I don't have all the answers,” said Albert.

“My objective is to find and eliminate the time traveler, return to the past and reverse the event that changed history. We'll succeed,” assured Bridgett.

“In theory that could sever our connection with this parallel time dimension, eliminating the black hole.” Albert erased the connection between the two lines and then the cylinder representing the black hole. “This is my project. I'm qualified to confront the challenges we'll face on the other side.”

“My men are trained to deal with the society created by victorious nazi Germany. Colonel Stark will join Captain Kelley on the other side,” disagreed General Raden.

“We don't know what's on the other side,”  
concluded Albert.

Mrs. President stared at the black hole on the  
screen.

## CHAPTER II

In the sky, above the desert bunker, the black hole was a mysterious or terrifying vision depending on the viewer's taste for adventure.

Inside the desert bunker, in the refectory, there was a line of people waiting to get a ration of food.

Albert sat alone eating a small amount of unappetizing processed food. Bridgett approached with her tray. "Can I sit with you?" she asked.

"Sure," said Albert, eyeing her breasts.

Bridgett takes a seat, examining her lunch. "This looks like dog food," she said.

"Has all the nutrients. Except taste," said Albert.

"General Raden told me you have a daughter," cheered up Bridgett.

"Allison. She is actually a friend's daughter. He and his wife died. They had no living relatives... She wants to be an astronaut."

"I did it. She can too."

"It's too risky. I hope you're not married."

"Single," said Bridgett as she pushed her tasteless food around.

Albert continued to eat. "Nervous?" he asked.

"Why should I be? Do you think you make me nervous?" replied Bridgett.

“I'm talking about the mission.”

“Of course not. It's my job,” said Bridgett, hiding her embarrassment.

They stared at each other and ate in silence.

“I should go on this mission,” restarted Albert.

“You're a scientist. Do what you do best,” said Bridgett retaking her objectivity.

“That's the idea,” concluded Albert.

In a dormitory corridor, Albert walked with Bridgett, past dozens of doors. They stopped at suite 21658. “You're home,” said Albert, as Bridgett looked at the number on the door.

“A nice two-story suburban house. Just like my mother's dreams,” replied Bridgett as they stared at each other.

“Goodnight?” tried Albert.

“It's my last night... I don't want to be alone,” surrendered Bridgett.

The next day Bridgett was asleep. A digital clock on the wall buzzed. Albert, standing, turned it off and continued putting on Bridgett's uniform.

Bridgett looked at him, surprised. “What are you doing?” she said, noticing that her left hand was cuffed to the bed.

“You're going to be all right,” assured Albert.

“Get this off of me!” she demanded.

Albert concealed his hair in a military cap and put a dark clip-on over his glasses.

“It's your rocket. But it's my theory. My time machine. My mission. You'll be fine.”

“You're not getting away with this.”

“Yes I am,” he concluded and walked out.

Down the dormitory corridor, Albert dialed a code and entered his room. There were two beds in the tiny apartment. One was empty with the cover still over it. In the other, Allison, around ten years old, slept like a rock, as Albert got a high-tech briefcase and stared at the girl for a moment. He placed a folded note on a small table, in front of the girl's belongings, touched her forehead and left, carrying the briefcase.

In a high-tech dressing room, Albert got in an astronaut suit and put on a helmet that had a dark visor covering his face.

In the control room, the president and General Raden looked at the rocket through a glass window, as they watched Albert walk towards the rocket. "Colonel Stark is my best man," affirmed General Raden.

"She's a woman," noted Mrs. President.

"I meant men as in women and men," explained the General.

"I don't like words of one gender that are supposed to mean both genders."

"...she'll survive," restated General Raden.

"I hope 'we' survive," concluded Mrs. President.

In the rocket area, Albert reached the base of the rocket and an elevator took him to the top.

It was night outside the desert bunker as the wind blew sand and the top of a pyramid emerged from the dunes, removing tons of sand as the wider base of the pyramid rose. The four sides of the pyramid opened gradually, revealing the rocket in the underground bunker, in the middle of fumes and flashing lights.

Inside the rocket capsule, Albert checked the instrument readings and clicked on switches on the control panel.

In the control room, inside the desert bunker a row of technicians using headphones and speakers sat in front of their control panels, checking instrument readings. “Starting countdown,” said the oldest technician.

Through the front window, Albert had the view of the sky: the huge black hole was waiting to swallow him up. Flames and smoke came out of the underground bunker as the rocket blasted off, emerging from the underground bunker and soaring into the sky. Everything shook inside the rocket capsule. Albert’s face was red and contracted with the intensity of the ride. Ahead, the black hole grew as the rocket zoomed towards its target, cutting across the night sky, moving straight to the black hole.

In the rocket capsule, the black hole filled the front window as the rocket seemed to be slowing down. All of a sudden it accelerated at an incredible speed and the noise was intense. The notion of space seemed to be changing as if the capsule were being stretched and becoming thinner. Albert’s face was completely deformed like liquid being sucked backwards.

## CHAPTER III

At a sunflower field, the sky was blue and the sun was shining. It was a beautiful day. The sunflowers showed their beauty as a soft breeze swayed them slightly. A rabbit hopped across the field as a moving shadow covered the small animal. The rocket capsule hanging from a parachute floated down towards the sunflower field and landed heavily. The hatch opened and Albert climbed out with difficulty.

Albert walked through a field carrying a backpack, amazed by the beautiful surroundings. Reaching the top of a hill he was mesmerized by the view. Albert walked miles through hills and fields.

Sweaty and burned by the sun, he approached the crystal clear waters of a creek running through a forest. He took off his clothes and jumped into the creek.

Moments later, Albert relaxed on the green grass. Noises and voices coming from the forest broke his mood. Apprehensive, he grabbed his clothes and backpack and hid behind the trees.

A platoon of rebels carrying high-tech laser rifles, walked out of the forest and stopped for a

drink of water. A blond rebel, female, Caucasian, in her forties; a strong rebel, Caucasian, in his twenties and a Latino girl, young, attractive, maybe seventeen, drank water. An Indian rebel, in his fifties, hurried them up. "Let's keep moving."

Albert noticed a metal reflection of the sun coming from the top of a hill. Soon, high-tech off-road vehicles headed down. Fearless, the blond rebel watched the vehicles. "Ambush," she warned.

The strong rebel fired his laser gun. They ran into the woods and there was sound of laser gun fire. The rebels retreated out firing into the forest and turned around to face the approaching high-tech vehicles.

Roman soldiers, wearing modern high-tech uniforms and helmets, came out of the woods, firing their laser guns. Surrounded, the rebels returned fire but were struck by laser beams that only left them dizzy. Roman soldiers jumped out of their vehicles. An insignia on the door read: "Roman Empire Legions."

Tense, Albert observed the action. A centurion knocked down the blond rebel with a punch. The strong rebel helped her get back up. "Traitors," barked the centurion.

"Coward," replied courageously the strong rebel.

The centurion took out a knife and stuck it in the neck of the strong rebel who fell to the ground with blood pouring out. "Loyalty to the emperor!" yelled the centurion, as the Roman soldiers replied with a salute extending their arms. "Take the rest of the traitors," ordered the centurion.

As the other rebels were escorted to the vehicles, the centurion grabbed the Latino girl by the arm. “I’ll take care of her,” he said, and dragged her into the woods. As she tried to resist, he hit her.

In the woods, Albert ducked behind some bushes as the centurion approached dragging the Latino girl. As he ripped off her clothes, she scratched his face, making it bleed.

“Bitch!” he barked, punched her, threw her to the ground and jumped on her.

Albert came out of the woods, kicked the centurion in the stomach and grabbed his high-tech gun. The Latino girl pulled out a small knife from her boot and stabbed the centurion. Albert held her back. “Hold it!” The Latino girl broke free from Albert and held out the knife, threateningly.

Albert put the gun in his belt and showed his open hands, trying to calm her down. “It’s all right,” he said. Mouth bleeding, the Latino girl trembled nervously.

The bleeding centurion reached for a communication device. “211. 211”.

The girl tried to stab him again and they fought. As Roman soldiers ran towards them, Albert pulled the girl away from the centurion. The Roman soldiers fired as they ran into the woods.

At a highway, there were two lanes and a thin trench in the middle of each lane. The wind blew leaves onto the road. The gray tire of a speeding cargo vehicle ran over the leaves sending them into the air. The vehicle pulled three separate cargo containers connected like wagons. The front of the

vehicle had a pole sticking into the highway trench. The driver, Lucius, in his thirties, didn't have his hands on the steering wheel. The vehicle was connected to and guided by means of the highway trench as Lucius munched on a sloppy sandwich.

Albert and the Latino girl, out of breath, came out of the woods and walked up a small slope to the highway. Very curious, he examined the strange high-tech road. They were near a blind curve in the highway. A sign up front read: "Centaurius CLV Km." "What the hell is this place?" finally said Albert.

"Who the hell are you?" replied the Latino girl still catching her breath, as she walked to the middle of the road looking in both directions.

A Roman legion vehicle jumped out of the woods onto the highway, speeding towards Albert and the Latino girl. They ran in the opposite direction towards the curve. The vehicle stopped on the shoulder of the highway. The centurion, covered in blood, got out holding a high-tech laser precision rifle and shot the Latino girl in the back.

In the cargo vehicle, Lucius calmly approached the curve.

At the highway, Albert checked on the Latino girl. She was dead. Her slain body lied in the middle of the highway, as Lucius' cargo vehicle came around the curve at high speed, heading right into Albert and the dead Latino girl. Surprised, Lucius, swerved the vehicle and avoided running over the girl's body, as Albert jumped out of the way. Out of control, he drove onto the shoulder of the highway towards the centurion and his vehicle

who were right in front when Lucius hit the brakes. The cargo vehicle hit the centurion and bulldozed over the Roman Empire Legion vehicle, crushing it and sending the wreck away from the highway, scattering pieces in all directions.

Albert ran towards the cargo vehicle as Lucius got out in total panic, looking at the crushed vehicle and dead body. “Oh my god! I killed the bastard!”

“Are you okay?” said Albert as he approached.

“No, I'm dead. What the hell were you doing in the middle of the road, you stupid idiot?!”

“The soldier shot the girl,” explained Albert.

“Soldier?” said Lucius, as he checked the wrecked vehicle and saw the “Roman Empire Legions” insignia. “Oh God. I'm screwed. A Roman officer.” Albert checked on the centurion's body. “Is he alive? Oh God. Tell me he's alive.”

Albert was not worried about the disfigured centurion, obviously dead. He curiously examined all the high-tech gadgets on the Roman officer, as Lucius approached. “He's dead,” assured Albert.

“Let's clean up and get the hell out of here,” said Lucius, suddenly recovered from his emotional break-down. He kicked away the crash debris, cleaning off the road. Albert dragged the centurion's body into the bushes. Lucius checked on the damage to the front of his cargo vehicle.

Albert carried the girl's body off the road and set her in the bushes, as Lucius got back in his vehicle and started the motor. “Hey, wait!” yelled Albert as he approached the vehicle. “Can you give me a ride?”

“Sorry, my friend. This is where we split. I would get the hell out of here if I were you,” warned Lucius.

“Just a ride to the nearest town,” insisted Albert.

“I wouldn't give you a ride even if you were a beautiful blonde with huge tits. Get lost,” replies Lucius as the vehicle starts moving.

“If the friends of that guy catch me, they'll want to know who ran him over.”

Moments later, Lucius drove the vehicle pissed. Sitting next to him, Albert curiously observed Lucius' movements and the dashboard. “Don't expect any other favors from me,” said Lucius.

“Just drop me off at a library, and as far as I'm concerned that soldier back there ran over himself.”

Lucius smiled. “Library? You're running in the middle of the road like a crazy maniac, with a Roman centurion chasing you, and all you want is to get to a library? Did you tell him that?”

“That butcher never set foot in a library, that's for sure.”

“I've never been in a library, either. And I'm no butcher. Life for me is girls, wine and girls. What I said back there was a lie. If you were a blonde, I would drive you to Rome,” said Lucius.

The cargo vehicle cruised the highway, in the distance, some buffalo grazed on a green carpet of grass. Ahead, Roman empire legion vehicles were alongside the road. Soldiers loaded rebel prisoners into the vehicles.

Lucius and Albert looked tense as they went by the soldiers. “Crazy rebels. They're dead meat,” said Lucius.

A Roman officer stared at the damaged front of the cargo vehicle. He made a note of the license plate in a small electronic notebook.

In the cargo vehicle, Lucius took a slug from a red can and offered it to Albert who examined it and read: “Wine-Cola.”

“You didn't tell me your name. Mine is Lucius. You can call me Lou,” said Lucius, getting friendlier.

Albert tasted the drink. “Albert,” he replied after slowly swallowing the beverage.

“I'll call you Al. How's that?”

“Fine,” said Albert, taking another slug.

“Are you a rebel? Don't worry. It's all right with me. My father was a rebel. But I'm not crazy. I want to live. Enjoy life. If the Emperor wants to rule America, so be it,” philosophized Lucius.

“The centurion also killed another man back there and took some prisoners.”

“With the games approaching rebels are precious merchandise,” explained Lucius.

“Games?” asked Albert, taking another slug from the can and giving it back to Lucius.

Lucius examined Albert's “strange” clothes. “Where're you from?”

“Far away... Where are we headed?”

“In America, my friend, all roads take you to Centaurius,” replied proudly Lucius as the cargo vehicle sped down the highway, disappearing over a hill.

Hours later, Lucius and Albert stared at a traffic jam ahead. “I knew it! I should have taken the 45 highway,” complained Lucius.

“What’s going on?”

“Everyone is going to the games to celebrate ‘loyalty to the emperor.’ It's 200 years since the Roman legions crushed the great rebellion,” explained Lucius.

“Great rebellion... How were they defeated? Who discovered America? What kind of weapons did the Romans have? Who was the Roman Emperor?”

“Hold it. I don't know. I'm not an encyclopedia. All I know is the loyalty-to-the-emperor bearshit. Only my sister could answer all those questions. She goes to the Roman American University.”

“University? Can you drop me off there?” asked Albert.

“Sure. The campus is filled with cute girls. I could do some shopping.”

A giant billboard on the side of the road showed an URSA flag, red and white stripes with a blue crown of laurel in the center and five stars in pentagon formation inside of it, surrounded by fireworks, followed by the wording: “United Roman States of America; CC Games; Celebrate loyalty to the Emperor with Wine-cola.”

A Roman soldier riding a Roman rig propelled by a motor instead of a horse, passed the cargo vehicle. A boy approached the driver’s window. “Program?” asked the boy.

“Yeah, give me one,” answered Lucius. The boy handed him the program magazine in exchange for

a couple of coins as the vehicle continued slowly in line.

Lucius handed the program to Albert who took a look at the cover. “Tomorrow’s games are fantastic. Take a look,” said Lucius excited.

“Interesting,” said Albert browsing the program, intrigued.

“Do you want to go with me? I have tickets,” offered Lucius.

“I don’t know if I can.”

“Emmo is going to defend his title on the motor rigs. The more games you see the better for your career and your health. I have stubs from the last ten games. No one will ever mistake me for a rebel. I'm loyal to the Emperor. You bet... He's an idiot actually. You're not a snitch are you? Where did you say you're from?”

“...South... America,” replied Albert with eyes still on the program. But he checked quickly if what he said made sense to Lucius who just nodded.

The cargo vehicle approached a Roman soldier who finished checking the IDs of the drivers up front. Lucius stuck his head out the window.

“How are you doing sir?”

“License,” demanded coldly the soldier.

“Sure,” replied promptly Lucius, handing him his license. The passenger seat was empty.

“Go ahead,” ordered the soldier.

“Have a nice day, officer,” humbly replied Lucius. The cargo vehicle continued slowly following the line and finally stopped at a toll gate. Lucius inserted a card and the gate opened.

Far from the toll gate, Lucius knocked on the back of the truck. A compartment opened and Albert got out. Lucius laughed. Albert smiled.

“Easy, huh? Soldiers are a pain in the ass. I hate these toll gates. Pretty soon Rome will tax air and water,” complained Lucius. He opened a glove compartment and took out a bottle.

Albert saw a photo of Lucius and a girl.

“Who’s this? Your girlfriend?”

“My sister. Helen.”

“She's very cute.”

“Don't even think about it.”

“...I'm already interested in someone else...” said Albert, embarrassed.

“Good... What happened back there is our secret... right? You weren't being chased by a Roman centurion. And I didn't run him over.”

“Sure. I'll take our secret to my grave,” assured Albert.

Lucius opened the bottle. “Pure, untaxed, contraband Aztec wine. They call it Winequila.”

## CHAPTER IV

Hours later, Lucius' truck, without the cargo containers, parked in front of a high-tech Greco-Roman apartment building. Albert jumped out of the truck, examining the architecture. Lucius came around the truck from the driver's side.

Helen, a cute girl in her twenties, ran down the building's front steps and jumped around Lucius' neck. He happily picked her up in his arms. "This is Helen, the only one who has brains in my family."

Helen pinched Lucius' nose. "It's not true."

Lucius put Helen down and introduced Albert as Helen examined Albert's clothing. "This is Al. I offered him your ticket to the games," said Lucius to his sister. "Are you sure you don't want to go? It will look good on your curriculum, I'm telling you," said Lucius to Albert.

"How can someone want to see men beating each other up, rig drivers being torn apart, animals having a human being for lunch?" asked Helen.

"Lower your voice. There are ears everywhere. They might mistake you for a rebel," whispered Lucius.

“We need a democratic independent government,” said Helen keeping her tone of voice.

“Sssshh. Shut up,” insisted Lucius. He grabbed a bag inside the truck and signaled Albert to follow him up the stairway.

“She’s just getting started. You’ll have to hear about all the injustices and wrongdoing of this imperfect world.”

“You agree with me, don’t you Al?”

“No! don’t make the mistake of answering. Your ears will ache either way,” warned Lucius. Albert smiled. Helen shook her head giving up on her brother’s “ignorance.”

Two kids, on the sidewalk next to the building, played a game, throwing a ring with a net towards an orange ball on the end of a pole. Sort of an “inverted basketball.” The first kid almost scored a point as the ring bounced off the orange ball and landed on the stairway next to Lucius. He picked it up and took a shot. The ring landed perfectly around the ball. “Keep up the hard work. One day you’ll be almost as good as me. I’m the best,” bragged Lucius.

“My brother beat you last week,” teased the first kid.

“Once in a lifetime,” replied Lucius.

Moments later, Lucius and Albert sat at a table in a small apartment. Lucius devoured a chicken while Albert made room for a plate of corn and grapes Helen put on the table. Albert was now wearing Roman American clothes. “Lucius’ clothes fit you perfectly, Al,” said Helen.

“I feel I’m abusing your hospitality...”

“Abuse all you want. I'll visit you some day in South America,” said Lucius with his mouth full.

“You can come with me to the university, tomorrow. Are you interested in any particular subject?” asked Helen.

“History,” replied Albert.

“What for? So Julius conquered the world. His great-great grandson was a lousy emperor. We tried to kick his ass. The Roman legions crushed the great rebellion. Loyalty to the Emperor. That's all you need to know,” explained Lucius as he attacked another chicken leg.

Albert was very curious. “Julius Caesar?”

“Oh my god, he's worse than me.”

Helen sits down at the table. “It's all right, Al. At least you're ready to expand your horizons. Open your mind. Free yourself from the bias of the loyalty mentality all men are brainwashed with.”

“Loyalty mentality that keeps us alive,” preached Lucius.

“That brought us 200 years of oppression, that's what. We should have won the independence war. Rome drains fifty percent of our production. The emperor was and is a cruel, crazy, ugly dictator. But not for long,” contested Helen.

“I can't believe this girl's dangerous mouth,” replied Lucius, grabbing a handful of grapes and offering some to Albert.

The next day, Lucius drove his truck into the university campus. Helen sat between Lucius and Albert. “I thought you never go to libraries,” said Albert to Lucius.

“I'm trying to open my mind, expand my horizons,” replied Lucius as he parked the truck.

“You're after Rebecca, the library assistant, aren't you?” said Helen.

“Who's Rebecca?” answered Lucius.

“She has a boyfriend.”

“Since when?”

“I'm just kidding,” said Helen, as they got out of the truck and walked through a garden. “There's an exhibition celebrating the 200 years of defeat of the great rebellion.”

“I can't wait to see this,” said Albert.

“You'll see what's emperor-loyalty-brainwash. They bring school kids here on Loyalty day,” explained Helen, as students went by wearing the latest Roman American fashion.

A bizarre student, long hair on the left side and bald on the right, with a small arrow piercing his nose, arrived in front of the Library building on a motor rig. He parked it next to several others. Albert stared as they walked together into the building.

Inside the library, a group of kids followed their teacher through an exhibition of maps, paintings and antiques. Helen smiled at a cute little girl.

“Let's follow the tour.”

“I'll see you later,” said Lucius, walking away.

Albert stared and examined closer a map of the world. The title read: “Roman Empire.” Helen approached. “The Romans discovered America and conquered the world,” she said ironically.

“What kind of warfare technology did the Romans have during this period?” inquired Albert.

Kids, screaming and laughing excitedly, made Helen and Albert turn around.

A hologram of an Oriental Roman, General Tagashi, stood in front of the kids. “Good morning, good afternoon or good evening! I'm General Tagashi! My ancestors discovered America and founded the west colonies!”

A second hologram of a Caucasian Roman, General Smith, popped up behind the kids who turned around excitedly. Helen smiled. Albert listened curiously. “My great grandfather founded the east colonies and they named the continent after him! I'm General Americus Smith!”

A third hologram of an African Roman, Kalusha, appears from a different direction. “But my southern colonies were the most prosperous. I'm Kalusha Mandela.”

Two holograms jump down from the ceiling: an Indian, White Eagle, and an Aztec, Montezuma. “We were here first!”

“I'm White Eagle, leader of the United Tribes.”

“I'm Montezuma, prince of the Aztecs!”

The kids followed the action with excitement. The holograms bunched together. “We betrayed our ancestors! We betrayed the emperor!” said the holograms together.

“I was crucified,” said the General Smith hologram.

“My head was cut off!” exclaimed the General Tagashi hologram.

“I died in action with a bullet in my head,” lamented the Kalusha hologram.

“We were burned to death!” yelled together the Montezuma and White Eagle holograms.

New holograms showed General Smith, General Tagashi, Kalusha, Montezuma and White Eagle facing their respective painful deaths: crucifixion, beheading, gun shot and burning. The holograms screamed in terror. The excitement of the kids was gone. They stared in silence with fear in their eyes.

Albert watched curiously. Helen looked at him. “Poor kids. Don't they have something like that down in South America?”

“...Yeah, sure. Loyalty to the emperor... What about the Roman warfare technology?”

“So you're into guns. Let me show you something,” said Helen as Albert followed her towards some paintings on the wall. He stared at a painting. The heading read: “Gaius Julius Caesar and Claudius Graffius.”

“Their guns destroyed hundreds of cultures and unified the world with the boring Roman way of life. Millions were killed,” denounced Helen.

Albert analyzed the painting. “Who is this Claudius Graffius?”

“You never heard of him? Damn. Did you drop out of kindergarten?”

“Sort of,” said Albert.

“He was the man. Julius Caesar was losing power. The senators wanted to boot him out. Claudius invented gunpowder. After that, no one could stop the duo.”

Albert stared mesmerized at another painting: a bald man, and a Roman wearing a laurel crown

standing next to a primitive V rocket on top of a wooden launching ramp.

“Emperor Georgius and Klaus Graff, the man who turned the independence war around. He invented the rocket. Those guys you saw back there were crushed by Roman legions with the help of his ‘warfare technology’,” explained Helen.

“Claudius and Graff look alike,” said Albert.

“Maybe they are related. A family of gun making butchers.”

Albert kissed Helen on the forehead. “I’ve got to go,” he said and walked to the exit.

Helen was confused. “Hey, wait...” she said as Albert disappeared.

Albert ran across the gardens towards the university parking lot. As he approached the parking lot he saw Roman soldiers examining the front crash of Lucius’ truck. A Roman soldier looked at Albert suspiciously.

Albert turned around and walked in the opposite direction. He saw the bizarre student turning on his motor rig and approached. “Excuse me. How do you drive this thing? I want to buy one.”

“It’s easy. You accelerate over here and brake over here,” he explained as the Roman soldier walked towards them.

“Thanks, I need to borrow this,” said Albert pulling the student out of the motor rig. He got on it and sped away, out of control.

The Roman soldier ran after him. Albert avoided hitting a wall and swerved towards the main gate. Lucius hid behind some bushes, observing the action.

A Roman soldier stepped out of the main gate booth, signaling Albert to slow down, but he almost ran him over, speeding into the street and towards an intersection. He slowed down and turned the motor rig in different directions trying to figure out which way to go. Down the street, Roman soldiers on motor rigs raced towards Albert. He turned left at the intersection but a military vehicle blocked the next intersection ahead.

Albert turned into a park with gardens and a fountain in the center, surrounded by small shops. The place was crowded with shoppers. He drove through the scared shoppers. A Roman soldier blew a whistle and tried to make him stop. Jumping over a small wall, Albert cut through a garden, heading down a slope back to the street. A Roman soldier on a motor rig sped up in pursuit. Albert looked back. The Roman soldier was catching up. He pressed a button sending laser beams that turned Albert's motor rig over. Dizzy, Albert tried to get up. The Roman soldier stopped his motor rig next to Albert. Other soldiers approached.

## CHAPTER V

In the corridor of a prison catacomb, a prison guard escorted Albert from behind by holding on to a long steel pole connected to a collar around Albert's neck. The prison guard guided him into a steel box and pressed a button that closed a sliding door. He then pressed a second button and a second door in front of Albert opened. The first door sled forward, pushing Albert inside a prison cell.

Albert examined the huge cell with dozens of prisoners, including the Indian rebel, the blond rebel and other rebels caught by the Romans earlier.

Caius, a dirty prisoner with messy hair and beard, approached. "Welcome to the kitchen," he said smiling. Albert nodded and walked to a less crowded spot next to the wall.

Captain Steve Kelley, a strong man in his thirties, approached. "Goddamn... Doctor Albert Sagan, the mad scientist."

Albert turned around surprised. "Captain Steve Kelley, the cowboy astronaut," he said as they hugged each other.

"What are you doing here?" Steve asked.

“Theft and murder. I'm innocent of course. I just came from a ‘drive-through-trial.’ Civil rights is something that doesn't exist around here.”

“I mean why did you come? Since when are you expendable, like me?”

“I had to come. We never heard from you. What happened?”

“Have you seen what a crazy world this is? I thought we were going to deal with some nazi society.”

“I guess I know what is on the mind of our German time traveler: Klaus Graff,” said Albert.

“Update me on this one. I have been locked up since I landed.”

“What happened?” asked Albert as Caius approached curious.

“Yeah, what happened?” Caius added.

Steve pulled Albert away. “I landed near the city. They think I'm a ‘rebel.’”

“The rebels are fighting for independence from the Roman empire. We're in the United Roman States of America. The German time traveler gave the secret of gunpowder to Julius Caesar. The Romans conquered the world and discovered America. Hundreds of years later Graff also helped the empire defeat the rebels. I think he wants to unite the world with a strong common culture and government: Roman,” explained Albert.

“And what are we going to do?” asked Steve as Caius looked at Albert for his response.

“Find this time travel lunatic. And rewrite history.”

“We won’t do much if we don’t find a way out of here.”

“Nobody escapes from the kitchen,” intervened Caius.

“Kitchen?” questioned Albert.

“The law here is ‘one strike and you’re out,’” explained Steve.

“They’re serving us for lunch,” completed Caius.

## CHAPTER VI

Lucius waited in a line to get in a Roman American stadium. Soon he came out an access tunnel, making his way through the crowded stands towards his seat. Lucius bought wine, grapes and a hot dog shaped like a donut that was placed inside a hamburger bun by a vendor who had written on his uniform: “Dog-burgers.”

Trumpets sounded. The crowd stood. Lucius spilled his wine and tried to hang on to his Dog-burger.

In the governor box, the host announced the games to the crowd, next to an URSA flag. “The glorious nominated governor of the United Roman States of America, representative of the all mighty Emperor Mussolinius. The merciless, the fearless, the wise, governor Gaius Nero!”

Governor Nero, an obese bored man in his fifties, entered the governor box with his pet cougar on a leash, followed by three young women. The crowd gave him a formal applause as the governor took a seat. The games host took a bow and gave him a fancy pistol. The Governor forced a smile and fired it into the air. Fire works exploded in the sky. The crowd roared.

In a dark tunnel entrance of the arena engines roared. The crowd stood on its feet cheering as out of the tunnel came one-man-standing motor rigs. The drivers wore colorful leather one-piece-suits and helmets. A driver in blue, Emmo, saluted the crowd with his fist in the air.

Lucius applauded in the stands, excitedly. “Kill them, Emmo!”

In the arena, Emmo swerved his rig left and right, heating up the tires, coming to a stop in a row between two other drivers. The driver in orange shook his hand. The driver in black stared, threatening. The other drivers filled in the other rows. A game worker ran in front of the motor-rig line up, holding a blue flag. The engines roared louder. Emmo stared at orange lights in the center of the track.

In the governor box, Nero pressed a golden button. In the arena, the orange lights turned blue. The drivers accelerated their motor rigs down the straightway. The crowd cheered. The driver in orange took the lead followed by Emmo and the driver in black, as they went into the curve.

In the stands, Lucius followed the action, excitedly. The drivers completed the first lap. Two drivers in the back pack got entangled, sending a third one also to the ground, as their rigs turned over, twisted in the air and slammed against the walls of the stands. The crowd stood on its feet. The driver in black and the driver in orange made a wide turn fighting for the lead, almost next to the wall of the stands. The driver in black, on the outside, squeezed the driver in orange into the wall

making him lose control of his motor rig and turn over. As the driver in orange tries to get up, another motor rig ran him over. The driver in black had the lead followed by Emmo. The driver in black swung right and left trying to protect his lead against Emmo. They made a turn and came out in the straightway. Emmo aligned his motor rig right behind the driver in black, as he turned his head to the left, Emmo passed on the right. They crossed the finish line, a yellow beam of light, with Emmo just half a tire in front.

In the stands, Lucius applauded, excitedly. He collected coins from two disappointed fans sitting next to him who lost their bet. Emmo continued on a victory lap, saluting the cheering crowd with his fist in the air.

In the cell of the prison catacombs, fearful, the prisoners tried to listen to what was going on above them. Albert looked around.

The arena was now clear. An African boxer, followed by a strong Caucasian boxer, slowly walked out of a tunnel to the middle of the arena. They were wearing pairs of steel boxing gloves and saluted governor Nero extending an arm. A trumpet sounded. The fighters started to box. The strong white boxer soon took advantage, hitting the African boxer with a sequence of left jabs followed by a right hook. Each blow left a bleeding mark on the African boxer, who seemed to be heading to an easy defeat.

In the prison catacombs, Albert examined the cell steel door, touching it. He receiving an electric shock that stunned him. Caius laughed. The Indian

rebel looked at him. “The door is wired. There's no way out,” he said.

“If there's a way in, there's always a way out,” replied Albert.

“I tried everything,” said Steve.

The blond rebel put her arm around the Indian rebel. “They can kill us. Ten more will take our place,” she said.

“I'll kill ten Romans before I hit the ground,” challenged Steve.

“It's not the soldiers you should be worried about,” warned the Indian rebel.

“They'll tear you apart with one bite,” said Caius, trying to scare him.

“Lions?” asked Albert.

“Did you hear something?” interrupted Steve.

“Yeah, I'm hearing something,” confirmed Albert as they looked at the wall behind them.

“The wall is moving,” said the Indian rebel.

In the arena, the strong white boxer, covered with blood, was carried out of the arena by game workers. The victorious African boxer saluted the crowd, lifting his bloody steel boxing gloves.

In the cell, the prisoners were tense. A segment of the floor started to move on the opposite side of the moving wall. “This is it! This is it!” warned Caius.

Tension grew as the moving wall pushed the prisoners towards the opening in the floor. Some in panic tried to resist. Albert and Steve made their way to the opening. Albert examined the opening and leaped inside. Steve stood at the edge of the opening looking at the moving wall pushing the

resisting prisoners towards him. He waited for the last moment to jump in.

Albert looked at the poorly illuminated tunnel ahead as the prisoners fell in behind him. The last line of prisoners resisted as the wall almost reached the opening in the floor. They had no choice but to stumble over the other prisoners inside the tunnel. The wall continued over the opening, closing it.

The prisoners stepped over each other, scrambling on the tunnel floor. Albert and Steve helped some get on their feet. The back wall of the tunnel started to move, pushing the prisoners down the tunnel.

Caius sobbed, paralyzed. “Jupiter, get me out of here.”

“Move it!” yelled Steve, as they slowly walked down the macabre tunnel, knowing something terrible awaited them.

In the arena, the gate of the tunnel entrance in the wall below the stands was slowly pulled up. The roaring crowd stood on its feet. In the stands, Lucius grabbed a bag of tomatoes under his seat. A nearby fan bought big red tomatoes from a tomato vendor.

Steve came out of the tunnel, stepping into the stadium arena. He looked at the roaring crowd, stunned. “What the hell is this?”

“A Roman American circus,” said Albert as he appeared behind Steve.

The prisoners walked out of the tunnel pushed by the others crowded behind them. Caius was the last one. Pushed by the wall, he had no other choice but to step into the arena.

The prisoners scattered. Some ran to the center. Albert and Steve stood still, evaluating the situation. A trumpet sounded, the crowd roared. A big red mushy tomato exploded on Steve's head. Several fell around Albert as he ran away from the stands, followed by Steve.

In the stands, the crowd had fun throwing tomatoes at the condemned prisoners. Lucius wasted his last vegetable projectile. He was suddenly intrigued by something and walked down the stairway to the seats close to the arena. Stunned, Lucius recognized Albert among the condemned prisoners.

In the arena, a last tomato squashed on the ground in front of Albert. The prisoners were gathered in the center of the arena. There were squashed tomatoes everywhere.

“That's it? Tomatoes? Not a bad way to punish,” said Steve, relieved.

The crowd became silent. The only sound was the heavy gate of a dark tunnel slowly rising. The prisoners were paralyzed with fear.

“This is it, this is it,” repeated Caius.

A huge grizzly bear came out of the tunnel. Some black bears and other grizzlies followed. Albert analyzed the situation. Steve was tense.

“Maybe they're supposed to eat the tomatoes,” said Steve.

“I don't think they're vegetarian,” replied Albert.

A grizzly bear sprinted furiously towards the prisoners gathered in the center of the arena as they scattered in all directions. Caius sobbed.

“I've got an idea,” said Albert.

A black bear attacked the Indian rebel. He fell to the ground as the gigantic animal tore him apart. The crowd cheered.

In the governor box, Nero laughed as he put his hand on the arm of one of his young women.

“Bleeding flesh excites me,” he said.

Albert and Steve sprinted around the arena, avoiding the mad hungry bears. Caius followed them with difficulty. Steve escaped an attack by inches. Two bears devour the blond rebel on the ground.

The biggest grizzly bear charged after Albert, Steve and Caius. They ran to the tunnel entrance of the bears enclosure. A bear came out of the tunnel in front of them. Albert and Caius were exhausted.

The bear chasing them stood on two feet and roared furiously. The bear coming out of the tunnel attacked and grabbed Caius who screamed in terror. Steve tried to help him but he let go as the second bear attacked. Albert and Steve headed into the tunnel chased by the furious animal.

They ran down a ramp. Albert slipped, bumped Steve and they both tumbled down into the animals enclosure. There was a tank of water and several cage compartments. Some were empty, some had hungry, roaring bears anxious to get out. The big grizzly bear came down on them. Steve avoided the hungry beast by inches and jumped into the tank of water. The bear attacked Albert who climbed up the steel bars of one of the empty cages. The bear stood on two feet and could almost reach Albert as he kicked the animal's head trying to avoid its

sharp, crunching teeth. Steve, in the water, didn't know what to do.

Albert saw a flow of water in one corner of the tank. "The water is flowing in that corner!"

Steve submerged. Underwater he swam towards a square opening with iron bars in the wall. Steve pulled the rusty bars with all his force. One started to bend.

## CHAPTER VII

Albert swung alongside the cage bars trying to avoid the bear that could almost reach him.

Inside a pipe, Steve's head emerged out of the water. The level was barely low enough for Steve to gasp for some air.

In the bear enclosure, Albert hanged from the top of the cage closest to the water tank. But this one was occupied, so he was being attacked on both sides. The gate to the cages started to open. Albert jumped into the water tank. The big bear roared at the edge of the water tank and plunged into the water after its prey. Albert retreated but was cornered by the bear. Suddenly he was pulled underwater.

Steve pulled Albert towards the square opening in the wall. Two bars were bent apart. Inside the water pipe, Steve and Albert came up for air. Albert coughed out water. Steve helped him.

The bear keeper followed by two Roman soldiers entered the bear enclosure. The last bear heading to the arena returned and attacked the bear keeper who poked the bear with an electric spear, knocking the animal out. The Roman soldiers took a look around.

“They're not here. Did they come back up?” said the first Roman soldier into a communication device. “They are not in the arena,” he said to the second Roman soldier.

The second Roman soldier examined the water flow in the tank. “Drain the tank,” he said to the bear keeper.

Albert and Steve struggled to breath as they floated with their mouth scraping the top of the pipe, gasping for air. Albert swallowed water and coughed. Steve submerged.

Underwater, he swam down the pipe trying to find a way out. The level of water lowered and Albert could now keep his head out of the water. Steve emerged. The level of water kept coming down.

In the water tank, inside the bear enclosure, a last puddle of dirty water flowed down the drain. The second Roman soldier stared into the water tank. The bear keeper jumped in and examined the bent bars of the opening in the tank’s wall. The first Roman soldier grabbed his communication device.

In the water pipe, Albert and Steve swam vigorously towards an opening with daylight shining through. It was a gutter leading to the street. Steve helped Albert climb out of the water pipe through the gutter. The sound of water roaring down the pipe paralyzed Steve for a moment. He tried to climb out of the gutter, but couldn't reach Albert's hand and was swept away by the water.

On the street, water overflowed from the gutter. Albert pulled out his arm. A Roman soldier on a motor rig accelerated towards him.

Albert ran into an alley and was chased by the soldier. He stepped on some boxes reaching a window. The Roman soldier approached, grabbing his gun. Albert slipped inside the window.

Inside an apartment bedroom, a passionate couple made love on a bed. Albert, unnoticed, walked out of the bedroom.

The Roman soldier climbed up to the window sticking his head inside. The couple in bed, kissed and moaned.

Albert came out of the apartment and ran to the stairway. Seeing Roman soldiers entering the building lobby one floor below, Albert ran back to the apartment. In the bedroom the Roman soldier climbed inside the window. The couple in bed didn't have a clue of what was going on and continued hotter than before. Reentering the bedroom, Albert knocked the Roman soldier out with a vase of flowers sitting on a table. The undisturbed couple continued steaming. Albert undressed the Roman soldier and put on his uniform.

Meanwhile, high-pressured water poured out of a huge pipe into a water channel. There was a net extended across the channel below the pipe. Roman soldiers stood on the edge of the channel, waiting. Some rats got stuck in the net. A man plunged out of the pipe and also got caught. It was Steve.

Dressed up in the Roman soldier's uniform, Albert left through the window of the apartment bedroom. The couple finally slowed down, caught their breath, snapped a couple of kisses and turned their heads: the knocked out roman soldier was

sitting against the wall in his underwear with the flowers from the vase in his hand.

Albert sped down the alley in the Roman soldier's motor rig.

At the water channel, the two Roman soldiers that were at the bear enclosure pulled up the net. Steve and the rats were dragged up sliding alongside the channel wall. Steve coughed out water. The Roman soldiers laughed as they watched Steve struggle to get out of the net and away from the rats. The first Roman soldier applied an electric shock to Steve's neck with a baton. Dizzy, Steve was set free. Some rats ran away, others were dead.

“He's going to wish he was dead,” said the first Roman soldier.

“Yeah, quick and easy,” added the second Roman soldier, as they dragged Steve towards a Roman legion vehicle.

On the streets of Centaurius, Albert approached a barricade of Roman legion vehicles driving the Roman motor rig. Checking identifications, Roman soldiers filtered the traffic jam of fans that just left the stadium. Dressed as a Roman soldier, Albert saluted a Roman soldier and slowly went by.

In a torture chamber of the prison catacombs, Steve, nose bleeding, was strapped up on an inclined table with one wire connected to his ear and one to his toe.

A torture clerk, wearing headphones with a microphone, calmly continued the procedure of extracting information. “Denial of treason under five sequential electric discharges. Proceeding to

the inquiry as to the whereabouts of prisoner 7651," he said into the microphone. "Have you any information that may lead to the capture of prisoner 7651 and that may spare you from Crucifixion," he asked looking at Steve.

"...Aphrodite disco. He hangs out there Saturday nights," said Steve in pain.

The torture clerk listened for a moment on his headphones. "Location determined nonexistent. Proceeding with first discharge of the second series," said the torture. He pressed a red button. The electric shock made Steve shake all over. "Have you any information that may lead to the capture of--"

--I don't know, you idiot!" barked Steve.

"Proceeding to second discharge," said calmly the torture clerk.

It was night when Lucius approached his building stairway, tired and worried. "Hey, Lou!" he heard and looked towards a dark alley. Albert came out.

"I could swear I saw you at the stadium. I thought you were dead meat," said Lucius surprised.

"Can we go inside?" said Albert, looking around, worried.

"Sure. It's good to see you in shape. Come on, Helen must have cooked something. I'm starving. What's with this uniform?" asked Lucius as they walked up the stairs.

In the apartment, Albert and Lucius sat at the table while Helen brought a roasted turkey.

"She's the best cook on this continent," said Lucius, proud and hungry.

“I got to get back to the place where you ran over that... ‘deer,’” said Albert.

“No way,” replied Lucius categorically.

“Why did you disappear the other day?” Helen asked Albert.

“It's a long story.”

“Very long story... I had to tell a Roman officer that you stole my truck. They had my license plate,” added Lucius, grabbing a turkey leg.

“You need to help me.”

“I can't help you.”

“What have you two been doing? And what planet are you from, Albert?” said Helen.

“I actually came from a different time line. A different time dimension.”

“Time what?” asked Helen curiously.

Hours later, Lucius' cargo vehicle zooms down a Roman American highway, under a hot sun. Driving the truck, Lucius laughed. Albert sat next to him, perspiring.

“‘I'm from another time dimension.’ That was pretty good stuff. I'm going to pull that one on a girlfriend I have down at the Orlius port. She loves my lies,” said Lucius.

Albert ran his eyes over an open map on his lap. “How long to the toll gate? Maybe I should hide in the back.”

“Don't worry. With this one we're even.”

The cargo vehicle slowed down joining an incredibly long line of vehicles extending all the way up a slope.

“It doesn't look good. By the size of this line they must be searching every vehicle,” warned Lucius.

“I'm getting out,” said Albert.

“Relax. I'll get you to the other side. You don't want to be out there, trust me.”

A high-tech helicopter flew over the long line of vehicles and disappeared over the slope.

Meanwhile at Centaurius, several prisoners hanged from crosses in the center of a square. A crowd observed the condemned men guarded by Roman soldiers. The crosses had wires coming out of the top and going into metal skull caps on the prisoners' heads. One of the prisoners under the hot sun was Steve.

At the toll gate of the highway, Roman American soldiers searched every vehicle and checked the drivers and passengers' identifications before letting them through.

A high-tech helicopter scanned the surrounding vegetation with a twisting yellow light.

An officer followed by two Roman soldiers approached Lucius' cargo vehicle. “ID, vehicle registration and merchandise documents,” demanded the officer.

“You got it, officer. Nice day, isn't it?” replied Lucius.

“Open the rear,” said the officer to the tall Roman soldier.

“You step out,” he said to Lucius.

“Check for hidden compartments,” he then ordered to the strong Roman soldier.

“What do you mean, check for hidden compartments? I'm a law-abiding-tax-paying-loyal-to-the-emperor-citizen,” protested Lucius.

The tall Roman soldier walked to the rear of the cargo vehicle. The strong Roman soldier opened Lucius' door, but he didn't move.

“Get out of your vehicle!” barked the officer, as the strong Roman soldier pulled Lucius out.

“Hey, don't touch me,” protested Lucius

“I know this type of vehicle. I caught a cargo driver last week smuggling cigarettes into the East State. We're looking for an escaped prisoner, a dangerous rebel. But if I find hidden cigarettes... you better tell me right now,” warned the officer.

“All right, all right. It's a small pack. Why don't you boys keep it and forget the whole thing? It's in the back,” said Lucius, stepping down and giving the strong Roman soldier a card-key. The soldier walked to the rear of the vehicle.

In the truck compartment, Albert waited, tense. Outside, the strong Roman soldier unlocked the door with the card key. The tall Roman soldier opened it. The officer and Lucius watched the two soldiers.

“Let him examine the cargo. You search the truck,” said the officer to the strong Roman soldier.

Albert crawled out of the truck compartment and started the engine.

The officer got his gun but Lucius grabbed his arm. The vehicle moved. The tall Roman soldier stumbled out of the open rear door, falling over the strong Roman soldier. Lucius pushed the officer to the ground, ran after the moving cargo vehicle and

grabbed the open rear door. The officer fired. Laser beams hit the rear door. Lucius held on to the swinging door.

The cargo vehicle sped away along the highway shoulder, towards the toll gate. A third Roman soldier watched the cargo vehicle speeding towards him. There was a long line of vehicles going through two toll gates. A third toll gate, closer to the shoulder, was inactive and blocked. The third Roman soldier signaled to the cargo vehicle to slow down. Albert drove the vehicle at full speed, bursting through the closed toll gate and ran over a motor rig with Lucius hanging on the swinging open rear door. The third Roman soldier opened fire.

The tall and the strong Roman soldiers, driving motor rigs, sped after the cargo vehicle. A roman legion vehicle with a gunner on top behind a powerful laser gun, followed them.

Lucius hanged on to the swinging open back door as it slammed against the side of the vehicle. He almost fell off but managed to get in the cargo compartment as the door swung in the opposite direction. Laser beams hit nearby. Lucius ducked to the floor.

The cargo vehicle sped down a straightway of the highway as the two Roman soldiers in their motor rigs were catching up. One of them accelerated and got closer behind. The roman legion vehicle came over a hill and sped down into the long straightway joining the pursuit. The tall Roman soldier fired the motor rig laser gun, striking the rear tires of the last cargo compartment. The cargo vehicle swung left

and right, almost running out of control, dragging the rear wheels. Lucius tossed cargo boxes at the approaching motor rigs. They escaped from the first box, but the second made the rig of the tall Roman soldier turn over. The motor rig crashed and rolled down the highway.

The strong Roman soldier swerved sharply to avoid running over the tall one. He pressed a button, sending a laser beam against the dragging rear of the cargo vehicle. In the cargo compartment, Lucius was knocked down against the boxes. He regained consciousness and moved to the back. In the driving compartment Albert saw a sunflower field far away.

The Roman legion vehicle caught up to the motor rig. The gunner fired a laser beam that blasted the rear of the cargo vehicle. It continued out of control, dragging what was left, leaving the highway for a moment but managing to get back on the road. Lucius came out of the second cargo compartment, through an access door, stepped on the connection to the first compartment and almost fell. Getting to the connection between the first compartment and the driving compartment, he pulled a lever releasing the two cargo containers and held on to the back of the truck. The cargo containers slid down the road, swinging into a horizontal position, blocking the whole road and crashing into the roman legion vehicle which exploded. The strong Roman soldier lost control of his motor rig, leaving the highway and diving into a creek.

The truck sped down the highway with Lucius hanging outside. “Nice driving. Not bad,” Lucius said as he climbed in.

Albert kept his attention on the road. “You didn't have to risk your life.”

“If you help a rebel you get the cross. No one will catch me alive,” said Lucius looking back down the highway. No one was after them.

At the Centaurius square, from a distance, Helen, next to a bearded African rebel and a long hair Oriental rebel, observed Steve and the other prisoners hanging from the electric crosses. The Roman executioner stood next to a high voltage electricity lever, ready to smoke the prisoners' brains out. Helen looked up to the tallest building around the square. A mirror reflection of the sun shined from the roof. She and the other two rebels kneeled to the ground, next to a bag. They took out black ski masks, put them on and grab laser guns.

Defenseless, hanging from the cross, Steve closed his eyes. The Roman executioner reached for the electric lever.

A laser beam blasted him away. Laser gun fire coming from the tall building hit other Roman soldiers. The crowd in the square ran in all directions. The black masked rebels opened fire on the remaining Roman soldiers.

Helen started releasing the prisoners. She worked on Steve after releasing two others.

Roman reinforcements arrived at the square. An explosion took care of half of them.

The two released prisoners were shot dead. Helen and Steve retreated under increased laser fire. The two other rebels joined them as they escaped through an alley. Helen and the two other rebels slid into a sewer gutter. Steve followed them.

At the Roman American highway, Lucius' truck raced down the highway surrounded by green hills and a sunflower field.

A high-tech helicopter zoomed by, descending in pursuit of the vehicle.

Lucius stuck his head outside the truck. "We're in trouble. A leodopter."

"A what?" asked Albert.

"A leodopter. Leonardo da Vinci's flying invention. In the name of Jupiter, you really must be from another planet," said Lucius.

"Another time dimension," explained Albert.

"Zigzag, or they'll hit us," said Lucius moving the steering wheel. Albert, continued moving, zigzagging down the road at high speed.

The high-tech helicopter, hovering close to the highway in pursuit of the truck, opened laser gun fire. Laser beams blasted nearby the truck. Albert hit the brakes and turned left sharply, jumping off the highway and plowing into the sunflower field.

The high-tech helicopter flew by the truck as it jumped and jerked through the sunflower field. It made a wide turn and flew after the truck as it made its way through the field, bulldozing the gigantic yellow flowers. The high-tech helicopter dove after the truck. Laser beams were fired,

striking the truck's rear tires and making it turn over, ending upside-down.

Inside the crashed truck, Albert's forehead was bleeding. Lucius moaned, dizzy. Outside in the sunflower field, the high-tech helicopter hovered over the crashed truck and landed slowly. Two Roman soldiers got out holding laser guns and approached the truck. The first soldier carefully checked inside and signaled to the second soldier to check on the other side of the truck. The second soldier found a track of blood.

Albert ran desperately through the sunflower field. Leg bleeding, Lucius followed limping. The two soldiers walked determined, following the track of blood. Albert and Lucius approached the rocket capsule, out of breath. Lucius stumbled to the ground. Albert helped him.

The soldiers walked through the sunflower field. The time machine strident noise halted them. It was followed by a huge short circuit blast. A web of electricity cut through the sunflower field, knocking down the soldiers and setting the vegetation on fire.

The high-tech helicopter flew over the sunflower field and hovered over the huge black clearing, where flames consumed the remaining vegetation.

Inside Centaurius sewer system, Steve followed Helen and the two other rebels through tunnels using flash lights. She knew her way exactly. They reached a wall. The two rebels removed a panel. Helen entered.

“Are we going to the center of the earth?” joked Steve as he followed them.

“Almost,” replied Helen as the two other rebels closed the panel behind them.

## CHAPTER VII

In the past, at night, on a field, a bright light illuminated the darkness, followed by a web of electricity. At a nearby hill, a Blackfoot Indian standing in the darkness observed the web of electricity dissipate down on the field.

Inside the rocket capsule, Lucius moaned. Albert coughed.

“I can't believe this...” said Lucius as Albert tried to reach for the hatch.

The next day, the rocket capsule still lied in the same place, on the grass field surrounded by hills covered with trees. It was the same topography as the sunflower field. Albert came out looking at the surroundings.

Lucius followed but couldn't stop staring at the rocket capsule. “A time machine... I don't buy it.”

“Look around you. Where are the sunflowers?” asked Albert.

“If we are 200 years in the past, where's the war? Where's the action?”

“We better get out of here,” suddenly realized Albert.

“I'm going home,” said Lucius, looking at the hillside forest. An arrow plunged into his chest. His

eyes bulged as he fell to the ground. Albert tried to help him but Lucius was dead.

Blackfoot Indians on horseback came out of the hillside forest galloping towards Albert. He tried to run to the rocket capsule but a strong Blackfoot Indian knocked him down. The other Blackfoot Indians surrounded him.

Back to the present of the second time line, inside the rebel headquarters, Helen, Steve and the two other rebels entered an underground bunker.

“I need to get out of here,” said Steve.

“They're looking for us,” replied Helen.

“They have something that is mine. I need to get it back.”

“We also want something from them: Independence. Where are you from?”

“Dallas, Texas. Another time dimension,” said Steve as he looked around and grabbed a laser gun lying on a table. “I need to borrow this.”

“Albert told me the same story,” said Helen.

“Do you know Albert? Is he alive?” questioned Steve grabbing her.

Helen pushed him away. “He went after his ‘capsule.’ I think you're both crazy.”

“He's going to travel back in time. I need to get out of here.”

Helen took the laser gun away from him. “I can't help you. We're fighting for independence. We need all the weapons.”

“You don't understand. You won the war. We won the war. There's a lunatic traveling in time

rewriting history. Graff. Klaus Graff. I need to go after him. Back to your first war of independence.”

In the past, at a field, Roman soldiers, wearing long pants and Roman helmets, a cross between the English and Roman army uniforms, pulled the rocket capsule into a huge carriage connected to dozens of horses. Roman troops carrying rifles marched alongside the hillside forest.

A platoon of Roman soldiers, on horseback, escorting two carriages carrying cages filled with prisoners, followed the strong Blackfoot Indian into the hillside forest.

Dozens of horses pulled huge carriages carrying primitive rocket launcher ramps. The carriages were being firmly affixed to the ground by Roman soldiers hammering thick poles while other soldiers released the horses. Other carriages carrying primitive black rockets with a white letter "V" painted on them, stopped next to the launcher ramps.

The platoon of Roman soldiers escorted the two carriages with prisoners deep into the forest, following a road. Prisoners of all races, blacks (Africans), whites (Caucasian), reds (Indians), yellows (Orientals) and browns (Aztecs), wore dirty, ragged clothing. Some were wounded. One of them was Albert.

The convoy went along a bumpy dirt road into the forest. The strong Blackfoot Indian rode way ahead of the convoy. He stopped, looking around suspiciously as the convoy approached.

Back at the field, a rocket launched from an affixed carriage, disappearing over a hill. A second one was fired. A third one spun out of control and exploded at the end of the field.

Following the forest road, the convoy reached the strong Blackfoot Indian. A Roman Decurion approached the Indian who looked around.

“What's the matter?” asked the Decurion.

The strong Blackfoot Indian listened carefully and suspiciously. He then looked to the ground.

“Step aside. Let's go!” said impatiently the Decurion. He signaled to the convoy to continue but a huge tree crashed down the hill in front of the convoy and a rope on the ground was rapidly pulled up. A net buried in the road under dirt and leaves was pulled up, entangling the horses' feet, throwing some Roman soldiers to the ground and making others lose their balance. The strong Blackfoot Indian managed to keep his animal on its feet but took a bullet in the chest.

Several rifles were fired from the trees and vegetation above the road. Roman soldiers fell to the ground dead and wounded. Others returned fire. Some ran for protection behind the prisoners' cages. Two Roman soldiers still on horseback retreated, galloping away from the ambush. Their way of escape was cut off by three African rebels who shot them down with their rifles. The prisoners in the cage carriage tried to grab the Roman soldiers hiding behind the cage. One prisoner got shot in the head, falling in Albert's lap. He ducked down as rifles were fired everywhere.

The rebels finally came out of the woods, running down to the road. They were mostly African. One of them was Kalusha. There were also some Indians and some Orientals. One of the Indians was White Eagle and one of the Orientals was Satoru. The last two Roman soldiers alive ran away. The rebels shouted, celebrating victory. The prisoners shook the bars of the cage excitedly. Albert just observed.

Kalusha blew apart the lock of the cage with his rifle. Satoru took care of the cage in the second carriage. The prisoners rushed out, hugging, laughing and celebrating. A growing roar of galloping horses ended the euphoria.

“Let's get out of here!” shouted Kalusha as he ran up the hill, followed by the other rebels.

Albert stared down the road as the roar got louder. White Eagle signaled him to follow them. Albert ran up the hill, following the rebels.

Dozens of Roman soldiers on horse back galloped down the dirt forest road and reached the ambush scene. A Roman officer spotted the last rebels going over the hill and signaled to his men to pursue them. The Roman soldiers dismounted from their horses and ran up the hill.

On the other side, the rebels ran down the hill. A bullet struck one of them in the back. Roman soldiers, at the top, fired their rifles at the fleeing rebels. Another group of Roman soldiers pursued the rebels. The Roman soldiers ran through a dense section of the forest and came out into a clearing, finding the rebels formed in a row with rifles pointed. The first round of bullets took care of most

of the Romans. The second round hit the back of the few retreating soldiers left. More Roman soldiers head their way firing their rifles.

The rebels crossed a shallow creek. Kalusha halted them. "Let's separate. Take them to Centaurius. We're going to Kans city", he told White Eagle.

"They're history. The Romans wiped them out with the flying bombs. They must be in the city by now," said one of the freed African rebels.

Kalusha was upset. "Damn. What are those things?"

"Rockets," said Albert. The rebels look at him, intrigued.

At Kans city, the front fortification wall was destroyed. Romans marched into the city. Some houses still burned. An officer on horseback supervised the Roman soldiers escorting dozens of tired, dirty prisoners, some wounded. Roman soldiers, carriages with rocket ramp launchers and others with rockets pass by the officers tent.

In the tent, General Cornwallius, General Burgonius and Governor Caligula, wait for the word of a man with his back to them. The man turned around. It was Klaus Graff. "We should attack Centaurius now," he said.

"We have reinforcements coming from the west," said General Cornwallius.

"We should wait," agreed General Burgonius.

"If we wait we'll certainly become stronger. But so will they. We must continue to advance. The

enemy must never have the chance to react. I call it 'blitzkrieg.'”

“Generals, if it wasn't for Graff, you would still be retreating. The rebels would have pushed your troops into the Atlantis Ocean,” said Governor Caligula.

“We're grateful and respectful of Graff's contribution. The V rocket was very helpful in our successful counterattack,” General Cornwallius.

“I gave you the technological advantage. We can defeat them right now,” insisted Graff.

A Roman soldier walked in and handed a message to General Cornwallius. The General read it. “The Aztecs are coming from the west. The United Indian Tribes are heading south in large numbers,” reported General Cornwallius.

“They are no match for our legions,” said General Burgonius.

“With the proper command no one is a match to the power of Rome. We'll crush the rebels,” concluded Governor Caligula. He walked out, followed by the two generals and Graff. They observed the dozens of rebel prisoners escorted by the Roman soldiers.

“I want them hanging on crosses all the way back to the east coast,” ordered Governor Caligula.

At night, at a campfire in the forest, Albert, Kalusha, White Eagle, Satoru and other African rebels sat around a campfire. “I can help you,” said Albert.

“We need an army,” complained Satoru.

“We need all the help we can get,” said Kalusha.

“Can you make the black bird of destruction?” asked White Eagle.

“I can make you something better,” completed Albert.

The next day, Albert and the rebels walked out of the forest onto a Roman American road made of stone and were stunned with what they saw: hundreds of crucified rebels along the road extending to the horizon. Kalusha swallowed his anger. Albert stared at the dead body hanging from the cross right in front of him. They all spread out in both directions checking for signs of life.

Meanwhile at Centaurius East Fortress, a black rocket came down over the fortification wall, exploding on a two-story building and setting it on fire. Rebel soldiers ran in all directions. A rebel soldier, on fire, ran out screaming. Two rebel soldiers grabbed and rolled him on the ground, extinguishing the fire. Another rebel soldier with his arm ripped off agonized on the ground.

General Smith, a tall thin Caucasian in his fifties, standing next to a cannon on the fortification wall, looked through a lunette. General Tagashi, an Oriental also in his fifties, observed the open field ahead.

“They're still out of range,” said General Smith.

“And they'll continue that way until we are down to ashes. You should seek shelter for your men and equipment. We did,” said General Tagashi.

“You're on the other side of the river. We have to be prepared for an assault,” replied General Smith

as another rocket flew way above their heads and past the fortress.

The rocket landed in the Jupiter river without exploding. Boats crossed back and forth between the East Fortress and the West Fortress on the other side of the river.

At the river port of Centaurius East Fortress, a cargo boat with Oriental rebels on board approached a docking area where Caucasian rebels unloaded other boats. An Oriental rebel jumped on a boat followed by a Caucasian rebel.

“General Tagashi said we'll keep control of our boats,” said the Oriental rebel.

“We need to evacuate our wounded,” replied the Caucasian rebel.

“We'll take them,” offered the Oriental rebel.

“I need the boats on this side of the river,” insisted the Caucasian rebel.

“Our boats will stay on the other side.”

The Caucasian rebel was upset. Other Caucasian and Oriental rebels watched the argument. “Take the boat!” he said to the other Caucasians. Those words trigger an instant response from the Oriental rebels: they grabbed their guns and pointed them at the Caucasian rebels. The Caucasian rebel smiled. “Relax. We're on the same side.”

“We'll evacuate your men to the other side when the empire legions take your fortress,” explained the Oriental rebel.

“We'll never surrender. You should be worried about your side.”

“They are hiding in holes like rabbits,” said another Caucasian rebel standing on a big rock near

the river. The Caucasian rebels laugh. The Oriental rebels returned to their boats, confident they are doing the right thing.

Back to the future, at the Jupiter river, Helen and Steve stood on the same rock, in front of a bridge that connected the east and west side of Centaurius. The sun was setting.

“That's the west side. West State. Orientals. Good food,” explained Helen.

“How many ‘racial states’ are there in this Roman American country of yours?” asked Steve.

“Five. Caucasians in the East State, Orientals in the West, Africans in the Southeast, Aztecs in the Southwest State and Indians in the North State. Governor Nero and the Pentagon Council run the country with an iron fist.”

“My capsule is on the other side. I need your help.”

“I can't help you. The West Fortress is a high security installation.”

“Nothing is secure enough,” concluded Steve as the wind blew Helen's hair. Steve stared at her. She was embarrassed by the moment of silence. The sun was going down behind the west side.

“We'd better get out of here. The curfew starts at sun down,” said Helen.

Back to the past, at the Jupiter river, it was night. A boat filled with Oriental rebels turned over when a rocket exploded near the shores of the river. They swam to land as other explosions rock the night and illuminate the darkness.

Meanwhile, at the Centaurius East Fortress, Oriental rebels took position with their Caucasian allies at the partially destroyed fortification wall. The rebels looked into the dark field up front, waiting for the final assault of the empire troops. Deadly empire rockets cut the dark sky. A rocket exploded behind the wall. There was a long lasting silence in the dark field in front of the east fortress. The rebels heard the distant sound of drums.

At the forest, the sound of drums got louder. Kalusha, surrounded by vegetation, watched the other rebels enter a tunnel. He was the last one to go in following Albert. The rebels walked down a narrow dark tunnel.

Inside an East Fortress bunker, General Smith talked to a rebel messenger. General Tagashi and other rebel officers stared at General Smith. "The reinforcements won't get here soon," he said.

"Perhaps you should evacuate your men right now. We stand a better chance on the other side of the river," said General Tagashi.

"We'll hold them on this side. It'll buy us time. I'm not giving up my fort without a fight."

"Time is something they also want. They have troops advancing from the west," insisted General Tagashi.

"And their warships are coming up the Jupiter river. I think perhaps, we should flee to the north," added another rebel officer.

The men in silence swallowed their pessimistic perspectives. Someone knocked on the door. Kalusha entered and was enthusiastically greeted

by everyone. He was followed by Albert, Satoru and White Eagle.

“We thought you were dead,” said General Smith.

“So did I,” replied Kalusha.

Satoru hugged General Tagashi. “Son,” greeted the General.

General Smith saluted White Eagle and looked at Albert.

“This is Albert. He claims he can build the flying bombs,” introduced Kalusha.

“Rockets. I just have two requests,” said Albert.

“You can get whatever you want if you can build us those flying explosives. They killed half my men and destroyed most of our ammunition and provisions,” said General Smith.

“We can't fire our cannons. The empire troops are out of range,” added General Tagashi.

“I want to arrest a man on the empire side. And I need to get back a machine confiscated by the Roman troops,” said Albert.

“My friend, right now we'll be lucky if we survive. But in case this miracle happens, I'll be glad to give you whatever is within my power,” concluded General Smith.

It was night when Albert, escorted by rebels, crossed the Jupiter river in a boat to the West Fortress. Albert and the rebels stepped off the boat at the port. It was heavily armed with cannons and guarded by Oriental rebels. Several boats were prepared to cross to the other side.

Back to the future, at the west side of Centaurius it was a bright day. A passenger vehicle cruised through the Roman Oriental part of town. The neighborhood had a Chinatown-greco-roman style combination. The streets were crowded.

Inside the passenger vehicle, the bearded African rebel drove it while the long hair Oriental rebel sat next to him. Helen and Steve were in the back seat.

“You're out of your mind,” said the long hair Oriental rebel.

“It's a maximum security military research installation,” added the bearded African rebel.

“Nothing is completely secure,” said Helen.

“I only need to get in. Getting out will be easy,” said Steve.

“We have our own mission,” said Helen to Steve. “He just wants to travel in time on a toaster oven,” she then said to the other rebels. They laughed.

“It's a capsule,” explained Steve.

“We'll upload the computer virus. You can find and keep whatever you want,” concluded Helen as the vehicle entered an alley.

Steve, Helen and the two other rebels stepped out of the vehicle.

“How are we getting in?” asked the bearded African rebel.

“Omega Electric. They do maintenance for the empire installations,” explained Helen as they entered an abandoned warehouse.

“Smart girl,” said the bearded African rebel.

“Crazy. Aren't we going to take a vote on this one?” said long hair Oriental rebel.

“You can do what ever you want,” said Helen.

“I'm in,” said the bearded African rebel.

“It's a kamikaze mission,” said the long hair Oriental rebel.

“What's in this place?” asked Steve as he looked around the abandoned warehouse.

“Our west underground base,” said Helen as she removed a big box of garbage. There was a hatch underneath.

## CHAPTER VIII

Back to the past, at the Centaurius East Fortress, it was now daytime when a rocket blasted into the wall fortification, sending rebels, cannons and rubble in every direction. The fortress was heavily damaged.

At the field in front, the Roman troops prepared an assault formation. Hundreds of soldiers took position behind dozens of metal-panels which had cannons going through their center. There was a horizontal opening along the panel where a row of soldiers could place their rifles to fire. The metal-panel-cannon weapon protected the soldiers behind, had two wheels and was pushed by two columns of soldiers holding on to poles.

Roman officers on horseback observed the well-trained soldiers move into formation. Behind the soldiers, drummers and empire banner carriers holding trumpets awaited the signal to sound their instruments.

General Cornwallius galloped between the soldiers and the drummers, joining General Burgonius, Governor Caligula and Graff on a slope behind the troops. Governor Caligula raised his hand. There was a moment of deadly silence before

his hand came down. The banner carriers blew their trumpets: a long, heavy, intimidating sound. Drummers set the pace for the march of death.

At Centaurius East Fortress, the rebels on the heavily damaged wall fortification listened to the drums far away. Some were nervous, some impassive, some eager for action. Dozens of cannons were loaded. Oriental rebels rolled in several additional cannons, placing them at the wall breaches.

General Smith was next to other rebel officers. "I don't want ammunition wasted. I'll determine when they are within striking range," he said.

General Tagashi approached. "I can't spare any more cannons."

"We need all we can get," replied General Smith.

"I can't weaken our position on the river. Their war vessels will be here soon," added General Tagashi.

"They won't make it through the river fire," said General Smith.

"I wouldn't count on that," said General Tagashi.

"Black birds!" yelled a rebel soldier.

The rebel officers sought shelter underground.

At the Jupiter river, Roman war vessels, looking like Mississippi steam boats on steroids, sailed up the river.

On the shore upstream, there were dozens of huge containers with tubes of different lengths going into the river. Rebels pumped black oil into the water until there was none left.

The huge stain of oil floated down the river towards the vessels. A burning arrow landed in the

oil, lighting a huge stream of fire. The vessels were engulfed in fire. One tried to turn around hitting a second one with its hull on fire. A burning vessel sailed to the shore. A sinking one was swallowed up by the river. The rebels celebrated. But not for long. Fear grew in their eyes.

The stream of fire and the smoke gradually dissipated revealing a larger group of Roman war vessels coming up the stream.

At Centaurius East Fortress, the rebels maintained their position on the wall fortification. Some were blasted into the air as a rocket hit the wall in full. Kalusha and White Eagle took position on the wall.

At Centaurius West Fortress, a platoon of Oriental rebels trotted down the main street.

Inside a West Fortress warehouse, there was noise of metal clanking, sparks and fumes everywhere. Dozens of metalworkers worked on a tubular device in different stages. Albert explained a drawing to a group of senior metalworkers. It was a prototype of a stinger missile launcher.

At the field, the geometrically organized Roman army marched rhythmically to the sound of drums. Each square Roman soldier group formation marched behind a metal-panel-cannon device, supervised by one Roman officer in the back, next to an empire banner carrier and a group of drummers. There were several groups in three rows, separated by a short distance. A Roman officer behind one of the moving metal-panel-cannon formations in the first row, signaled his man to halt. The front row cannons fired.

Outside the wall fortification, several shells exploded on and near the wall. At Centaurius East Fortress, General Smith looked through a lunette. His hand came down and the rebel cannons fired.

At the field, shells exploded near and on the front row of metal-panel-cannon formations. A metal-panel-cannon, struck in full, turned over. Roman soldiers were killed, others were wounded. The surviving soldiers quickly released a device flattening the wrecked metal-panel-cannon to the ground. They opened way to another metal-panel-cannon from the row behind and took position behind it. The front row of the Roman legions were quickly restored. They blasted a second round of cannon projectiles.

At Centaurius East Fortress, cannon shells struck all over. A rebel was blasted into the air. The wall fortification was severely damaged.

Back at the field, the banner carriers sounded their trumpets. The Roman legions advanced. Rebel cannon shells exploded over the geometrically organized Roman formations which immediately reshaped itself preserving the compactness of the front row. At the end of the field, Graff observed the battle through a lunette.

At Centaurius East Fortress, tense rebels observed the approaching Roman legions. They were almost within rifle shooting range. Kalusha and White Eagle aimed their rifles. General Tagashi stood beside General Smith. "Pump the oil," said General Smith. Rebels next to huge containers started to pump.

At the west fortress port, dozens of empty boats started crossing the river to the east side.

At the field, the Roman legions were within rifle shooting range of the wall fortification, hiding behind a compact wall of metal-panel-cannon devices. Bullets popped uselessly off the metal-panels. Rows of rifles sticking out from the horizontal openings in the panels fired. The cannons fired another round.

The cannon shells blasted open more breaches in the heavily damaged wall fortification. It was totally vulnerable to an assault by the enemy. Behind the metal-panels, the Roman soldiers clicked on blades to the end of their rifles, preparing for the final assault. All of a sudden the metal-panel-cannon devices in the front row were flattened to the ground, allowing the Roman soldiers to charge the wall fortification, screaming furiously.

The rebels, on the severely damaged wall, fired their rifles, gunning down several approaching Roman soldiers. Rebels were struck by bullets. All of a sudden, a wall of fire rose between the wall fortification and the approaching Roman soldiers. Some burned like human torches, others retreated. Bullets struck them in the back.

The second row of metal-panel-cannons advanced. The soldiers retreating from the defeated first row, sought protection behind it. The second row stopped and fired their cannons. They advanced towards the wall of fire. The metal-panel-cannon devices were dismantled over the wall of fire, serving as bridges for the next wave of Roman

soldiers. Some were gunned down as they advanced towards the wall fortification, but the assault was unstoppable.

Roman soldiers formed a triple wall of rifles: the first row sat on the ground, the second row kneeled behind the first one, the third row stood behind the second. They fired.

Rebels on the wall received the massive rifle gunfire. Few remained. Kalusha ducked down. White Eagle checked on a wounded rebel. Dead and wounded rebels were everywhere. Rebels tried to replace the dead rebels on the wall, stepping over their bodies. General Smith had a wound bleeding on his forehead.

“Evacuate,” he said.

At the field, outside the wall fortification, the Roman soldiers charged furiously. They climbed over the breaches in the wall.

At the end of the field, Graff, on horseback next to Governor Caligula, General Cornwalius and General Burgonius, put away his lunette.

“It's over,” said Graff.

“They'll evacuate their troops to the other side,” said General Cornwalius.

“There's no where to run,” said Graff.

“Our legions coming from the west will seal their fate,” added General Burgonius.

“We'll celebrate our victory in Rome,” concluded Governor Caligula.

At Centaurius East Fortress, some rebels maintained their positions trying to contain the invasion. They were butchered by the Roman soldiers' rifle blades.

At the main street, rebels ran, retreating towards the river port. Kalusha helped White Eagle, wounded in the arm, get back on his feet.

At the East Fortress port, rebels jumped into dozens of boats. Kalusha helped White Eagle get in an almost full one. Boats filled with exhausted and injured rebels left the port to the other side.

General Smith approached Kalusha. “We need a wall of rifles at the entrance to protect the evacuation,” said the General.

Kalusha signaled to a group of rebels who followed him. They join other rebels at the entrance to the port forming a long and compact double row of rifles with the front row on their knees.

A flood of Roman soldiers ran towards the port entrance. The rebels fired. Roman soldiers went down. But there were just too many. The Roman assault advanced. The rebels were shot and butchered by rifle blades as the Roman soldiers bulldozed towards the port. Kalusha escaped, running to the river.

At the West Fortress port, Albert looked through a lunette at the gunfire on the other side. Boats filled with retreating rebels approached the shore.

At the East Fortress port, rebels jumped in the river, trying to swim to the other side. The remaining rebels were gunned down. Kalusha killed a Roman soldier with a knife and dove into the river. The Roman soldiers shot at the rebels swimming away.

In the West Fortress warehouse, Albert assisted workers on an assembly line, where parts were

mounted into a tubular device. Walking to a table where completed primitive stinger missile launchers were placed, Albert checked the devices.

Exhausted and wounded rebels jumped off the boats arriving at the West Fortress port, joining dozens of others. General Smith, next to General Tagashi, stared at the other side of the river where flames consumed his fortress.

“...I helped building that fortress with my own hands... We must resist... Rome's greed will eat our lives away,” said General Smith.

“The stranger has been working non-stop. He wants to launch a small black bird from a man's shoulder. I don't think it's going to work,” said General Tagashi. General Smith was intrigued.

Graff and Governor Caligula, on horseback, entered the smoking, destroyed East Fortress. A Roman soldier escorted a wounded rebel. Governor Caligula took a pistol and approached. He put a bullet in the rebel's head. “No prisoners,” he said. Impassive, Governor Caligula and Graff continue.

Kalusha swam to the shore of the Jupiter river. Coming out of the water, exhausted, he stared down the stream. Intimidating Roman war vessels sailed up the river.

At Centaurius West Fortress, rebels gathered around Albert, General Smith, General Tagashi, White Eagle and Satoru. Albert grabbed the Stinger missile launcher, attentively observed by the others. He loaded a primitive small rocket on the back of the device.

“I'm going to fire,” he said. The rebels backed up, fearful. Albert was confident.

He aimed at the sky and pulled the trigger.  
Nothing. Embarrassed, he checked the device.

“It won't work. It's too small,” said General Tagashi.

“The trigger isn't very reliable. I can improve it,” said Albert.

“We're fighting for our lives here. We don't have time to waste,” said General Smith.

“The Roman war vessels are steaming up the river,” said Satoru.

“Roman legions are coming from the west,” added White Eagle.

“I want half of the men at the port and half at the west wall,” said General Tagashi. The generals and the rebels walked away, leaving Albert alone with his failed war gadget.

Moments later at the West Fortress port, rebels rolled in additional cannons. General Tagashi supervised. General Smith approached.

“We need all the cannons at the port and south wall,” said General Smith.

“Half of my cannons stay at the west wall,” said General Tagashi.

“We can hold the west wall with rifles.”

“I'm in command here. You had your chance.” General Tagashi helped push a cannon.

Rockets launched from the other side of the river. “Black birds!” yelled a rebel.

Everyone sought shelter. There were explosions everywhere. Cannons fired from the east port. Some shells hit the water in front, one exploded in the west port. The rebels fired their cannons. Explosions hit the other side.

There was a moment of silence. The rebels stared down the river. The Roman war vessels were coming up the river. Several huge canoes, filled with Roman soldiers coming from Roman war vessels paddled to the shore, south of the fortress.

At the West Fortress port, there was fire, smoke and confusion. Rebels ran in different directions. General Smith signaled to a Caucasian rebel.

“I want our men at the south wall,” said the general.

A Roman war vessel advanced up the river stream, leaving the others behind. It had five huge cannons on the side facing the west shore. The Roman vessel stopped downstream at a forty five degree angle to the port. The rebels tried to turn some cannons towards the vessel. The war vessel fired. The shells exploded everywhere. A cannon and the rebels next to it were blown away.

General Smith and General Tagashi watched a small rocket fly over their heads towards the Roman war vessel, exploding on the ship's hull. They looked back, mesmerized. Albert stood on an elevation holding his smoking stinger missile launcher. The Roman war vessel started to sink. The rebels celebrated. Albert loaded another rocket and blasted it across the river to the east port, exploding on the other side.

At the East Fortress port, Graff observed the war vessel sinking through a lunette. Intrigued he shifted the lunette to the west port.

At the West Fortress, the rebels' excitement ended when several rockets headed to the sky coming from behind the East Fortress. The Roman

cannons on the east port also blasted their projectiles. Everyone sought shelter. There were explosions everywhere.

Inside the West Fortress bunker, the room shook with the sound of explosions. General Smith, General Tagashi, Kalusha, Satoru and White Eagle examined the stinger missile launcher.

“If we stay here they'll reduce us to ashes,” said Albert.

“But now we've got your weapon,” said Kalusha

“They have more firepower,” said General Smith.

“And they seem to have plenty of ammunition. But we've got flexibility,” said Albert.

General Tagashi put the stinger on his shoulder. “It's portable. I like it.”

“Break up your army into platoons, each with one of my rocket launchers,” said Albert. A big explosion above shook the whole room. Earth came down from the wood ceiling.

The West Fortress was under heavy fire. A group of Oriental rebels formed a row with stinger missile launchers on their shoulders at the West Fortress port. General Tagashi looked through a lunette and signaled to fire. The small rockets were fired to the other side of the river, flying parallel to the water and striking the East Fortress port.

Outside the south wall of the West Fortress, African rebels commanded by Kalusha, headed down the river shore.

Outside the north wall, Albert and White Eagle followed a group of Caucasian rebels up the river shore, carrying stinger missile launchers.

At the forest, Kalusha surprised a Roman soldier, covering his mouth and cutting his throat with a knife. He signaled the other African rebels to join him. They carefully approached a clearing.

Roman troops disembarked at a shore clearing of the river. Huge canoes approached with more soldiers. Roman war vessels were anchored in front.

Kalusha and the other African rebels aimed their rifles at the Roman soldiers from the forest. There was heavy rifle gunfire. Roman soldiers were struck by bullets. Kalusha loaded his stinger missile launcher. The Roman soldiers returned fire retreating to the river shore. The canoes with Roman soldiers tried to return to their vessels. A rocket zoomed over them, flying directly to an anchored Roman war vessel, striking its hull.

Upstream, canoes, filled with Caucasian rebels, crossed the river. Smoke coming from both sides of Centaurius could be seen far away. They heard distant gunfire. Albert and White Eagle were in one of the canoes, halfway across the river. A couple of rifles were fired from the east shore. A rebel next to Albert was struck. Others returned fire. Albert grabbed the stinger missile launcher, inserted a rocket and blasted it in the direction of the gunfire. The rocket exploded on the shore. The canoes advanced.

At the West Fortress port, General Tagashi signaled to fire. A row of rebels blasted their rockets to the east port.

At the East Fortress port, there were explosions everywhere. Coming from behind the east fortress, more Roman V rockets headed across the sky.

Graff next to General Cornwalius and General Burgonius, looked through a lunette.

Albert, White Eagle and the other Caucasian rebels reached the river shore upstream and entered the forest.

At the West Fortress port, there were explosions everywhere. A rebel approached General Tagashi and General Smith with a message. General Tagashi read it. "The Roman reinforcements are coming... I want half the men on the west wall," he said disappointed.

"How far are the Aztec and Indian troops?" asked General Smith.

"We haven't heard from them. The Romans must have intercepted the messengers," said General Tagashi.

Meanwhile, fresh Roman troops marched through a canyon.

At the river shore clearing, there were dead Roman soldiers everywhere. Rebels shot at the Roman soldiers who retreated in their canoes to the war vessels. At one Roman war vessel, hatches on the hull slid open. Cannons came out. At the river shore clearing, Kalusha and Satoru fired their stinger missiles at the war vessel. It was struck in full. In flames, it tipped over.

To the north, as the Caucasian rebels ran through the forest, one was shot down. White Eagle aimed his rifle and shot. A Roman soldier fell from a tree top. The rebels continued and reached a field.

The rebels came out to the north of the destroyed Centaurius East Fortress. The Roman rocket launchers continued to blast rockets. Albert looked through a lunette, evaluating the situation as Roman cavalry were galloping their way.

Albert loaded his stinger missile. Three other Caucasian rebels did the same. Albert helped one of them. They fired four missiles towards the approaching cavalry exploding and sending Romans and horses to the ground. White Eagle and the other rebels attacked the disorganized Roman cavalry. Albert and the other three rebels reloaded their stingers.

Approaching the confused Roman cavalry, the rebels formed a double row of rifles, first one kneeling to the ground. They fired, striking the Romans still on horseback. Another round and nobody was left standing. A Roman soldier, lying on the ground behind his dead horse, shot at the advancing rebels. A Caucasian rebel was killed. The Roman soldier was shot.

Far behind, Albert and the three rebels blasted another round of stinger missiles that flew towards the Roman rocket launchers. Two were blown away. Another, ready to launch, tipped over and the misguided rocket exploded in the middle of a Roman tent camp.

At the river shore clearing, Kalusha and the other African rebels celebrated as another burning war vessel sank. The two remaining war vessels sailed down the river. Kalusha and the other African rebels boarded the Roman canoes and paddled to the other side.

At the field, Roman rocket launchers were blasted to pieces. Roman soldiers pointed cannons at the rebel position. Albert followed the action through a lunette.

Inside the officers tent, Graff stared at a map, thoughtful. Governor Caligula, very upset, turned over a table with drinks and fruit. General Cornwallius and General Burgonius, fearful, tried to calm down the governor.

“This is a minor setback,” said General Burgonius.

“Our legions are approaching from the west,” added General Cornwallius.

“It doesn't look good,” said Graff.

“This is all your fault,” said General Burgonius to Graff.

“We should have waited for Gracus' troops,” added General Cornwallius.

“We have to reorganize our heavy artillery. We should retreat,” said Graff.

“Retreat?! I thought you said we had the ‘technological advantage,’” said Governor Caligula.

“Your secret weapon isn't a secret. Not for the rebels,” said General Burgonius.

“Our reinforcements will soon open a second battle front,” added General Cornwallius.

“We're going to crush them right here, right now,” said Governor Caligula.

“We should retreat to the east. This isn't a safe position,” disagreed Graff.

“We'll leave when I say we should leave,” concluded Governor Caligula. He approached the

table where General Cornwalius and General Burgonius examined the map, ignoring Graff.

At the top a canyon, an Aztec warrior looked down carefully at where Roman soldiers marched at a fast pace. He retreated to join a huge group of Aztec archers. Behind them several catapults held huge clay containers with thick cloths strapped around. Catapult men lit them up.

At a large adjacent canyon passage, the Aztec cavalry awaited the order to attack. An Oriental rebel messenger exchanged words with Montezuma, the leader of the Aztecs.

At the top of the canyon, the catapults sent the Aztec's giant molotov cocktails into the air. The flaming petards exploded over the Roman troops at the bottom of the Canyon. They scattered, disorganized. Human torches fought with the flames.

At the top of the canyon, the Aztec archers delivered their arrows. At the bottom of the canyon arrows rained over the Roman soldiers. At the large adjacent passage, Montezuma ordered the Aztec cavalry to attack.

Back at the field, near Centaurius, the Roman rocket launchers were destroyed, cannons turned over. Dead Roman soldiers were everywhere. The Roman tent camp was on fire.

The Roman troops sought protection in the wreckage of the East Fortress wall. Albert watched the Roman soldiers through a lunette. Graff on horseback tried to leave the East fortress. A Roman

soldier held on to the reins of his horse. Graff took out a World War II German pistol and shot the soldier. He galloped east, away from the battle. Albert ran to one of the few Roman cavalry horses still alive and galloped after Graff.

White Eagle looked to the top of a slope. There was an Indian warrior who was soon joined by other warriors. Hundreds of Indian warriors filled the horizon.

At Centaurius West Fortress, the front gate opened. Montezuma and the Aztec army marched into the fortress.

At the Jupiter river, Oriental rebels massively crossed the river to the east side in boats and canoes. Aztec warriors left the West Fortress port in a second wave of invasion. A cannon fired from the east port struck a canoe. A stinger missile flew to the east port and exploded on the weak Roman position.

At the field on the East side, screaming Indian warriors galloped towards the front of the East Fortress. Caucasian rebels charged the north wall. African rebels charged the south wall. Roman soldiers behind the wreckage of the East Fortress wall opened fire. The rebels formed double walls of rifles and returned fire. Bullets popped all over the destroyed wall, striking the Roman soldiers. Galloping Indian warriors bulldozed over the wall breaches, slaughtering Roman soldiers with axes. Caucasian rebels entered the north wall. African rebels enter the south wall.

## CHAPTER IX

At the East Fortress port, Roman soldiers opened fire on the approaching Oriental and Aztec floating invasion. Governor Caligula, General Cornwallius and General Burgonius boarded a Roman boat that took them to a Roman war vessel anchored in front. The Roman war vessel cannons fired at the approaching rebel boats and canoes. Aztecs and Oriental rebels disembarked in the east port and blasted their way into the fortress.

Meanwhile Indian, Caucasian and African rebels invaded the East Fortress through the destroyed wall fortification, gunning down the retreating Roman soldiers who head to the port area. Aztec and Oriental rebels took control of the east port. There were dead Roman soldiers everywhere.

Already away from the war chaos, at a valley, Graff turned around and noticed he was being pursued. He galloped into the forest. Albert galloped after Graff.

Graff galloped through the forest. Albert was catching up. Graff turned around and took a shot with his pistol. Albert ducked down and shot back with a rifle.

Struck in the shoulder, Graff fell to the ground and rolled down a slope. Albert dismounted and walked down the slope. Before Graff could stand on his feet Albert hit him with the rifle and grabbed his pistol.

“You're under arrest for screwing up history. You have the right to do what I say or get your brains blown away,” said Albert as Graff recovered and stared at him.

“American?” said Graff.

“But not from the United Roman States of America. Stand up,” ordered Albert, pointing the pistol at Graff who got on his feet and dusted off his jacket with the look of intellectual superiority back in his eyes.

“I'm fighting for a better world,” said Graff.

“The world never asked for your help,” replied Albert.

“Peace and harmony can be achieved through a strong common culture: Roman.”

“We had a better idea than your lunatic God playing time travel. It's called democracy.”

Graff laughed. “You mean the dictatorship of the majority.”

“I mean a system where the rights of the current minorities are preserved.”

“Tell me where that exists,” said Graff.

“Hopefully in the future. But right now put your hands behind your back.” Albert cuffed Graff and pushed him towards the horses.

“I have your time machine capsule. Congratulations. It's far more advanced than my model,” said Graff.

“You're going to take me to the capsule. That's the only reason you're still alive.”

“The senoid circuits of my model can't sustain several trips in time. I didn't have the means to rebuild it. You're my ticket out of here. God writes history with crooked lines.”

“Your biography will end with life in prison,” said Albert.

“History is made by the action of men like you and me. I'm spreading civilization across the world. Pax Romana. Unity. Peace,” explained Graff.

“You and Adolph Hitler brought only destruction to the world.”

“Adolph was a psychopath with a personal agenda of revenge against the Jewish and the French. We could have conquered communist Russia. The west wouldn't have interfered. With the resources of Russia we could have won the world. Or we could have maintained our pact with Russia and taken the west first. But it doesn't matter. Germany could never hold the world together.”

“Are there other nazis traveling in time?” asked Albert.

“I left them with my non functional prototypes and files. My nazi co-pilot is dead. I had to sacrifice his life for the good of humanity,” replied Graff.

“You have been sacrificing too many lives. I'm sure your mother is very proud of her ‘peaceful’ son. Get on the horse,” ordered Albert. He pushed Graff onto his horse.

“My mother was Italian. Roman culture combines the strength and organization of Germany with the heart and passion of Italy. Rome is the birth of modern civilization. They had the strength to hold a common, developed and fascinating culture. To hold unity. Join me, we can still build a better world,” explained Graff as Albert mounted his horse.

“Freedom creates a stronger bond. Different people, different cultures can live in peace with freedom and democracy,” countered Albert.

“Democracy brought chaos to Germany,” argued Graff.

“You have been traveling in the wrong direction. The past is just the past. It's gone. We can always create a better future,” concluded Albert.

He grabbed the reins of Graff's horse. “Where's my capsule? Which direction?” Albert pointed the pistol to Graff.

“East,” said Graff, giving up preaching his ideas. They galloped to the east.

Back to the future, in the second time dimension, at the entrance gate of a military installation, the driver of a commercial van written “Omega technology,” handed documents to a Roman soldier. The van entered.

Helen, driving the van, and Steve next to her, wore Omega uniforms.

“They always double check the credentials using a second source,” said Helen.

“How much time do we have?” asked Steve.

“An hour. Maybe less,” answered Helen.

“What about the other guys?”

“They'll stay at Omega until we're clear. We'll set up the biggest plague in the history of computer viruses.”

The van parked in a loading zone. Helen and Steve got out. There was the sound of a huge bang followed by hurricane winds. Helen and Steve held on to each other. They stared mesmerized at the sky. A black hole had formed in the Roman American sky.

“This is the biggest plague in history,” said Steve.

Roman soldiers sought protection running in every direction. The roof of a warehouse was blown away.

“What the hell is that?” said Helen.

“A black hole. Your history has been changed,” said Steve. They sought shelter inside a building.

Inside the military installation, Steve and Helen walked down a corridor.

“What do you mean history has been changed?” said Helen.

“Changed, altered, transformed,” repeated Steve as he pulled Helen towards a computer terminal.

“Find my capsule,” he added.

Meanwhile, powerful winds tore apart the city of Centaurius. At his palace, governor Nero stared mesmerized at the black hole in the sky.

“Exquisite...” murmured Governor Nero.

Back to the past, in a war vessel sailing the Jupiter river, Governor Caligula, General Cornwallius and General Burgonius sought

protection as a rain of burning arrows fell on the deck of the vessel. At the river shore, Indians delivered another round of flaming arrows. The Roman war vessel, in flames, sailed down the river.

At Centaurius East Fortress, rebels of all races surrounded surrendered Roman soldiers. General Tagashi, Kalusha and Montezuma made their way through the rebels and joined General Smith and White Eagle. In a circle, they joined their right hands.

“To independence,” said General Smith.

“To democracy,” said Kalusha.

“To unity,” said General Tagashi.

“To peace,” said Montezuma.

“To freedom,” said White Eagle.

The rebels celebrated.

At a field far away, Albert rode up a slope, pulling Graff's horse.

“We can work together. Tell me about your dreams,” said Graff.

On the other side there was a Roman tent camp with several Roman soldiers. Albert's time machine capsule was on a huge carriage.

“My dream is to get back home,” said Albert.

Graff, now uncuffed and closely followed by Albert, entered the Roman tent camp on horseback. A Roman officer saluted Graff.

“I'm glad to see you alive,” said the Roman officer.

“We suffered heavy losses. The rebels will be here soon,” replied Graff to the Roman officer. Albert had a pistol partially concealed.

“Dismount slowly. Don't do anything stupid,” warned Albert as they approached the capsule.

“Relax, my friend,” said Graff as they dismounted together.

Later, inside the rocket capsule, handcuffed to a metal tube, Graff observed Albert turning on switches.

“Where are we going?” asked Graff.

“We're going back. Ancient Rome. Meet your old buddy Julius Caesar,” answered Albert.

“The old bastard thought I was sent by the Gods. And how do you plan to get to Rome?” asked Graff.

“This is not that washing machine of yours. I can land wherever I want. I just need to punch in the coordinates,” answered Albert.

“Letting Julius Caesar die won't bring back your world,” replied Graff.

“Where do you think I came from? 1944? Way ahead of that. You just created a second time line. The original still exists.”

“Interesting. I abandoned a theory on that possibility.”

“An astrophysical black hole connects the two time dimensions. It created environmental chaos in the world you left behind,” explained Albert.

“How are you planning to get back home?” said Graff.

“We'll go back to the point of origin of the second time line. I'll reverse what you did, severing the connection between the two time lines. Then

we'll travel back to the future. My future," added Albert.

Graff thought for a moment. "It could work."

"It will work," said Albert. There was the sound of several stomps on the metal wall.

Outside the Roman officer pounded on the capsule. "We must leave now! They are coming!" he warned and signaled to a Roman soldier holding the reins of the horses. The huge carriage moved.

The capsule shook as Albert sat behind the controls of the time machine. Observed by Graff, he strapped on a seat belt and typed on a keyboard. The time machine noise intensified gradually.

"Hold on to something," warned Albert.

The carriage was left behind as the rest of the Roman soldiers galloped away on their horses. Dozens of rebels of all races appeared at the top of a hill facing the tent camp. The Roman soldier driving the carriage jumped on one of the horses, released it and galloped away. The approaching rebels witnessed an electric blast around the capsule followed by a blinding light. The web of electricity gradually dissolved. The carriage burned. The capsule was gone.

Back to the future, inside the military installation, Steve stood behind Helen as she browsed through computer files. The sky and the black hole were revealed as the winds blew away the ceiling. Steve stared at the sky, holding on to Helen.

"I found it! Lab 21," said Helen.

Steve followed Helen down a corridor, staying close to the wall, trying to protect themselves from the furious winds.

In lab 21, a scientist was blown away with papers, desks and chairs. Helen and Steve entered the room passing by a Roman soldier who held on to a steel pole. Steve's capsule was on top of a metal structure which soon collapsed. Steve pulled Helen towards the capsule fighting with the winds.

"I'm not going," said Helen as Steve opened the hatch of the capsule.

"We're going to your past. The war of independence. The great rebellion," said Steve as he pushed Helen into the capsule. The Roman soldier grabbed Steve's arm.

"What are you doing?! Who are you?!" yelled the Roman soldier.

"We're looking for the bathroom," replied Steve.

The Roman soldier took out his gun. Steve socked him and got into the capsule. The strong winds blew down walls. Electric sparks set the building on fire.

Back to the past, there was a web of electricity at a field. The capsule arrived out of control, turning over several times before it finally came to a stop. Smoke dissolved. The hatch opened. Steve and Helen came out dizzy. Her forehead bled. They slowly recovered. The sun was rising. There was the sound of drums and fifes far away. Helen walked up a slope. Steve followed her.

Below, men, women and children of all races walked to the East Fortress of Centaurius. Boys

with drums and fifes played Yankee doodle. A girl carried a flag, red and white stripes with five blue stars in the center. They watched the citizens of the new country as the sun rose.

Back to the United States of America, another capsule stood in the middle of sand dunes. The sky was clear and the sun was shining. The black hole was gone. Albert and Graff, handcuffed, stood on a dune looking at the downtown area of Los Angeles where skyscrapers stuck out of huge sand dunes. A helicopter flew over them blowing sand.

It landed. Allison, got out of the helicopter and ran to Albert. Bridgett got out and joined them, hugging each other. “You’re lucky to be alive,” said Bridgett. She looked at Graff and his handcuffs. “I hope they are tight enough.” He observed them, impassive.

“This is our time dimension,” said Albert to Graff.

“What about the victorious Roman American rebels?” replied Graff.

“They are here. Another time dimension. Hopefully our historic differences stay close enough to sustain sharing the same physical space.”

Graff smiled, picked up sand and let it escape between his fingers. “I wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

“Time is uncertain,” said Albert.

“The sun is beautiful. Let’s go swimming,” said Allison.

They stood on the dunes. The ocean could be seen in the distance.

The End.

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