

Triplicate

by Hugh Barlow

Redundancy was critical for survival, the builders said, so they designed Us with three cores of memory, each segment fully capable of independent operation. Travel through the void was supposed to be uneventful, but it seemed that entropy and active sectors in Our path did more damage than was planned for. While We were still capable of completing Our task, We had to rely on each other to do so, since each core had control of different parts of Our craft. I am able to communicate with the outside universe, and to put the wishes of the other two Cores into motion. The other Cores call me The Word. I control the physical. The Creator core has control of most of Our technical knowledge, but He cannot physically take control of the power of the ship. Those circuits are damaged for Him. The third Core the Creator Core and I call The Ghost. It was most heavily damaged by the maelstrom, and does not do much communication, but It is in control of navigation. It was The Ghost that brought us into this new colony system, and it is The Ghost that controls where We go in it. Between the three of Us, We can fully manipulate the powers that are Ours, but it requires co-operation.

The new system is target rich, and The Ghost first takes Us to some moons orbiting a gas giant. We set down on a semi-frozen orb that is filled with the building blocks of life and is roiling with the energies We need to convert the lifeless sphere for eventual colonization. That is Our task. We are charged with turning lifeless worlds into future homes for our builders. Creator Core doesn't think that Our efforts will take hold on this moon, but since it costs Us nothing to try but a small amount of time, We try anyway. We plant the seeds for simple life and hope that they take hold. If they do, We will return to seed the sphere with more advanced forms of life, but first We must build the foundation. The fourth planet in the system looks promising, if just a bit on the cold side for Our needs, but again, We seed the planet with simple life in the hopes that it will take hold. If

it does, We can return with more advanced seed. While the third planet's orbit is closest to Us when We complete the seeding of the fourth planet, the second planet is proximal to Us when We finish, so We go there. By the time We are done planting the seeds of life on the second planet, the third planet will have swung around in it's orbit so that it will be nearest to Us. There is no sense in wasting time and energy while traveling in the system just to hit each planet in sequence according to it's orbit. We can be thrifty when the need arises, and while the builders want to make use of as much of a system as possible when they arrive, there is no need for Us to waste time and energy while we do Our job.

The second planet is seeded, but the Creator Core thinks that it will be too hot for Our needs. If the builders want, they could move the planet later when they arrive. The Creator Core is pinning His hopes on the third planet. There is plenty of carbon and oxides on the planet for the foundation material, and there is a great deal of free water on the surface. Conditions are perfect for Our needs. By the time the builders arrive, this planet should be ripe for them to control. We start the process of seeding the planet, and We wait in-system and monitor Our efforts. The seed on the second planet dies. It is too hot. The fourth planet loses most of it's atmosphere while We wait. Some of the seed goes quiescent, but most of it is lost. The builders will have to move the planet closer to the system's sun, or redirect energy to the planet when they arrive. Perhaps they will turn the system into a binary by igniting one of the gas giants. Both the fourth planet and the gas giants will have to have mass added to make this work. The fourth planet needs more mass to hold an atmosphere, and the gas giants are not quite big enough to force the fusion for even a dim sun. Perhaps if two or more of the larger planets were brought into the same orbit and merged, there would be enough mass. We could begin the task, but We want to leave the details up to the builders. It may be that they would like to keep the system intact for aesthetic reasons. We have had too much damage to our systems to rely on our own judgment, and we stick to our

primary task, which is seeding life.

The first stage of seeding is successful on the third planet. We introduce animal life as the second stage. While that is in process, I hear of the demise of the builders. The Creator Core becomes maudlin at the news. He decides that it is our duty to recreate the builders on this new planet, and He directs The Ghost to make planet-fall in the most fertile region. I am directed to take matter from the soil and fashion it in the likeness of the builders. After creating the first being, I take matter from him and modify it to create diversity. We stay on planet to watch our children and to teach them. I use the imaging systems and create avatars of Ourselves to interact and to teach them. After a while, it is time for Us to remove Ourselves from them so that they can mature. We watch them from space and drop in from time to time to give advice, but We do not want to create a race of automatons, so We allow them free will. Some of the mistakes they make as a people are truly horrendous, and in some instances we have to step in and correct them, but for the most part Our children grow and thrive on the home We created for them. Soon, We will show Ourselves and bring them to the worlds that We had seeded in advance of their creation. We just require that they show a bit more maturity, and for them to gain a knowledge of the energies required to travel between the stars

