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The Genesis of Capsaa

by Cliff Dale

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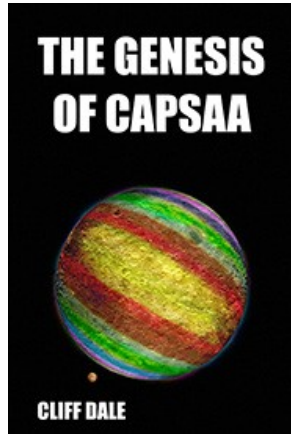
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*This book took plenty of time to organise
and others made sacrifices so that I could get it completed,*

*So,
thankyou Caroline for leaving me alone to do this,
and for making the hundreds of cups of green tea.*

*And for Phil,
For getting the artwork done when he had plenty of other projects on the go,
much appreciated.*

*And for the grand-satellites
Love you to the moons of Capsaa and back again*

CGD

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Genesis

Chapter 1

It was some nineteen real-time years ago since they had left the Sigma Beta Lovell Construction Station, then, it was in an unproven ship with a full complement of mainly inexperienced crew, it could be said that it wasn't the best of combinations.

At the time, this Deep Exploration Research Vessel was the latest in DERV design, all the most modern of scanning technologies were built-in, and all the modern comforts that could be installed, had been, not that much was actually that modern anymore.

Technology was an odd thing, much of what was known was old, much of what was new was disappointing, and in many respects, it was no better than what was old. There was a lot of technological knowledge lost in the past, and, for whatever reason, it was not re-learned nor re-discovered, it seemed it would be lost for eternity. It wasn't quite so, for it was true that there were some smart people doing very clever things, but even then, it appeared that it was all just a variation of what was already known, but at least it still worked.

However, this once shiny and new ship was now well and truly tested, it had been found to be of good quality and it really did function well, as a research vessel, it did what it was designed for, its crew, they were no longer unproven, and combined, man and spacecraft, they worked well.

It was still a bit of a disappointment to the crew aboard, that things were perhaps not going to the long-term plan, they were lost, they were not physically lost, for they knew where they were, but they were spiritually lost, they had lost their way, their focus, they had stood on the edge of discovery and it appeared that they had looked the wrong way, slipped off the rim, the getting back on "it" again was proving difficult.

For a start, they were far from the influence that inspired, perhaps, out here, in the Deep, most were, but being this close to the cosmic equatorial plane, it seemed that the guiding light, the shining beacon that inspired the heart and caressed the soul, was not as magnificent as it was in other places.

For the DERV, and its crew, the last six months had been nothing but a hard slog, many of the days simply blurred one into the next, one hiccup followed

another, and although the ship was still working well, it was the luck side of things that wasn't going to the required plan, they just couldn't catch a decent break.

It wasn't always like this, the crew, now well and truly experienced, had all been aboard since the ship's launch, yes, they had added a few more on the way, but no one was disillusioned enough to quit, yet.

Many fondly remembered the early days of the launch, all the testing of the various systems, the ironing out of all the digital and electronic wrinkles, and the getting of these new Space travellers up to speed too, they referred to it as the 'Genesis of Capsaa', it was the beginnings for both the crew and the ship. Those were the good times, the getting acquainted, for when the shakedown was complete, it was all systems go, then the deep Space exploration part could finally begin.

As things started to get too tough to handle, most of the crew tried to remember that sense of joy, that feeling of excitement, all the anticipation, the thrill of it all, that electrifying skin tingle, and they recalled those thoughts of a first journey into the unknown. It had perhaps thrown a bit of apprehension into the mix for good measure, some would say, adding balance, but right now, there was no thrill, no enjoyment, and no balance either, the tingle had become an ache, and things just kept not happening, it was odd, it wasn't as if things were breaking or malfunctioning, they simply weren't going as expected, and no amount of reminiscing was going to help.

Yesterday, for example, they had just completed a short Warp Tunnel Jump and then a longer Hyper-Jump, they were destined to meet a resupply ship, they had already confirmed the coordinates with SAA Regional HQ, and, that the requested supplies were on-route to the rendezvous point, they were assured they were, and this simple procedure that had been performed dozens of times before, this time, was about to go pear-shaped for no apparent reason at all, it was not by much, but that wasn't the point.

Ryan Scott, the Captain of this vessel, sat in the comfortable chair on the Bridge of the DERV, his armrest display panel showed him that the Navigator had entered the right Astral coordinates, the Warp Drive was online and all the Jump parameters were nominal, accordingly, he ordered the Jump into Warp Space initialised.

A Warp Tunnel Jump was not one of those things you did just because you could, it was hazardous, the risk of collision was small, but it was a danger that all ships capable of travelling in the Warp Tunnels were aware of.

In the Warp, the Sensor Arrays operated at maximum scanning range, and even at the upper limit, it gave little time to react for mere mortals, so the tension on the Bridge was as high as the ship's pace was rapid. It could be stressful on the hull of the ship, and, on the odd occasion, it was mind-bending for the crew too.

The Navigators were bred for this event, they had an almost second-sight for this Warp travel, they thrived on the moments within it, it was light speed, and although it was pretty quick, a point many hundreds of light-years distant could still take years to travel, and you never knew how many had really passed in true time until you arrived, in another oddity, the time varied.

If you wanted long-distance travel then you had no choice but to enter the Warp Tunnels, it was hazardous for both the ship and the souls aboard, for there were more than just the good guiding beacons within. The Warp Tunnels could be a place of chaos, there were times when a real sense of foreboding would permeate your very soul, it could be a dark place that was truly disturbing, for there were other things hiding in the Warp.

There were some proper nasty surprises, almost all of them alien, and some were not even of a physical presence. Occasionally, you would come across centuries-old ships, hulks, abandoned, all ghostly and pale, though often, they could be remarkably undamaged, and that just added to the sense of the darkness that emanated from those Space oddities. You dare not stop though, that was a recipe for disaster, the Warp preyed on those that dithered, those that wavered on the edge, it tempted those foolish enough to be curious, you never entered the Warp Tunnels unguided, nor unprepared.

A Warp Jump introduced stresses and strains on many a ship, and it was true that some ships never rematerialized from within, some were destined to become another ghost ship in the Warp tunnels, others were just lost to the darkness in the Deep, lost in the eddies of time, trapped within a Space only full of despair and deathly silence.

Warp travel was not quite the exact science many assumed it to be, you may not always end up in the right place at the end of your journey, and sometimes, it would not be at the right time. The trip was always done in stages, four or five light-years per Jump, more was feasible, but it was risky, almost every Company policy dictated that short hops were prudent. Shorter distances were done using the third drive aboard, the HyperDrive, and this allowed fast travel of around 100,000km per second when up to speed, not quite light speeds, around one-third, but still quick. The difference was the exit, at Warp you would exit without braking, there was little slowing down, in Hyper-Jump you slowed to a stop on exiting the Tunnel, usually at your destination.

They completed a short Warp Tunnel Jump covering just over a billion kilometres, about one light hour, and then engaged the HyperDrive for another two-hour hop, covering a further 720 million kilometres, it made for a more accurate exit at a given Astral map reference point.

HJ, as it was often known, would give a more accurate transition from Warp Space to Real Space, though it was certainly not quite as smooth an exit.

The DERV arrived at the coordinates to the rendezvous point, and, as per protocol, it headed off at best speed to the actual Astral grid reference, you

may agree on a meeting point but you never arrived directly at that point, it wasn't safe to do so. One of the things about HJ was that when you arrived, you were still travelling forwards at quite some speed, not as fast as from a Warp exit, but you were slowing. You didn't want to appear, almost out of nowhere, only to find that the ship you were meeting was either in the way, or had just arrived itself, if it was going through RHJD too, then both vessels could now be on a collision course, and of course, that needed to be avoided. Rapid Hyper-Jump Deceleration was one of those manoeuvres that were both unpleasant, and necessary, it was like you were travelling at full speed and suddenly went into reverse, you were aware of the forward motion but hardly felt it, the braking effect you definitely felt. This RHJD wasn't used at the exit of a Warp Tunnel Jump, the transition was smoother, weirder, and faster, but smooth.

In RHJD, if anything wasn't strapped down then you could be hit by it, possibly crushed by it, even the small things tended to make a big dent in RHJD, the bigger things, they had a tendency to make large holes where they were not wanted. You took the time to stow things away, to secure large objects in place, and it was a good thing that many a large item was held in place by magclamps, these magnetic clamps were a great invention, and to date, at least on the DERV, none had ever failed. Magclamps did what the name suggested, held things in place using the power of magnetism, it was powerful stuff.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, the supply vessel was not there, a short conversation later it was mentioned that it would not be there for another two standard days. It was a typical example of how the Warp was warped, the time within it didn't always travel true, and another example of things not going to plan for the Capsaa, so now, the DERV had to wait.

The short conversation was short only in content, it was sadly four hours in the time taken, it had been relayed via six Transmission Relay Buoys as well as psychically boosted over several light-years in distance, well, it was technically in time, not distance, but the principle was sort of the same, a distance travelled over time.

The reply was short and swift, but it was definitely not sweet, and once more Ryan Scott was not best pleased, it seemed all the ship-wide broadcasts he had made lately were not good news for the crew, now, he was to make another to relay the delay.

Another example, the last three unexplored planets they had come across were desolate places, available resources were minimal, and suitability for exploitation was poor. The relatively short hop through the Warp was particularly disturbing to the last two, it felt like someone was whispering to your subconscious all of the time and the result appeared to be a general downturn in the faith of the crew. These last two planets, they could not even

venture on to the surface, one looked pleasant enough, but they discovered it had an exceptionally toxic atmosphere, the other didn't look particularly inviting either, the temperature was freezing, the average was minus one hundred and ninety Celsius, that was an instant freeze to the bone, not good at all, even the good old Environmental Pressure Suits would struggle to cope. It seemed there had been no good news for such a long time, this meet and greet with a supply vessel should have made a pleasant change, it meant that the crew could interact with new people, it was still on, but not yet. It also meant that stores that were currently rationed could become freely available again, that was a good thing, but it assumed the supply vessel had them aboard. It wouldn't be the first time a ship had requested stores to replenish limited supplies, only to be told that it wasn't on the supply ship inventory list, when they queried the discrepancies with PAT, the Product Acquisition Team responded with, 'sorry, it was put on the wrong vessel,' apologies, were not going to win them friends.

Generally, PAT did well, it wasn't easy organising the resupply of a vessel that was light years away from civilisation, although they may get it right next time, sadly, that next time may be at least six months, in some cases, even longer.

If it all went to plan, then it would lift the spirits of the crew, inject some sorely missed positivity, and restore some of the missing faith stolen whilst in the Warp, though the delay already meant the plan was awry.

Perhaps this restoration of positivity would even silence the voices that some still heard, though there were few that would admit to it, this was where the danger lay, this denial of the influence of light, those dark voices of the inner chaos were still quietly whispering, still gradually turning down the light, this was a concern for all aboard.

Warp travel was a wonderous thing because the speed of light barrier had still not been broken, a light year still took a year to travel, it had proved impossible to exceed light speed, but the discovery of the Warp tunnel changed everything, light speed became warped in the tunnels, hence the name, and these tunnels were discovered by interaction with an alien race who imparted the knowledge, not knowing what Man would do with the information freely given. Those that knew of the foundation of Warp travel for mankind, were sure, that given the gift of hindsight, the alien race would never have allowed Man to know of the tunnels, now this human pest was everywhere, thinking it could rule the cosmos from its tiny little blue planet, it was trying, but others were pushing back, Man was not always the champion out in the deep, there were other bigger and badder species out there, and they were getting closer.

It was a strange feeling in the Warp, most of the time it was not that unpleasant, and it didn't always feel threatening, perhaps the really odd part was you knew it was not a real sense but an imagined one, yet it still felt real enough. It was

a sense deep-rooted in the psyche, it was something of a spiritual experience for many, it sometimes stayed with you after the Jump was completed and it wasn't good to let it affect you, but it wasn't always possible to ignore it.

There were several Psykers onboard, and they too could feel the cold probing fingers gently stroking the consciousness of the vulnerable, and on the discovery of those exposed, they would add their own voice, this one being the voice of reason, the expression of calm, the intonations of order and control, reinforcing the light in that darkness, with this, they guided many of the crew back to the path of righteousness and helped them avoid the detour that is the road to ruin. If they failed to steer those affected away from the jaws of despair, then the risk to the rest of the crew was amplified, and as the crew had already made two thousand Jumps or more, the Psykers were always vigilant, and their observations kept them busy.

They, the Psykers, had a difficult job, those fingers of despair beckoned and prodded them too, looking for a way in, to corrupt and influence, and once in, there was a terrible price to pay if they could not resolve their own internal conflict. As a group, the Psykers would often form mind-meld collectives, striving to keep out the unwanted invasions of the demonic voices, soothing the sometimes intrusive anguish from a despondent crew, and to share the pain felt by themselves, lightening the burden on the individual.

Thankfully, they were about the only thing going to plan at the moment, not that anyone could tell that, what they did was not a secret, but it was secretive, hidden in plain sight, unnoticed, but somehow appreciated by the crew, even if they didn't know why.

Their job as Psykers was a trying one, not only did they come into their own within the Warp, they also extended the guiding light of the eternal beacon, channelling the positive energies of it through to the crew at all times, even during sleep patterns, getting little respite themselves, not that they minded, it was their purpose, their calling, their pleasure. Here though, this positivity was low, they were struggling to find the beacon to channel, it was still there, they could sense it, but they could sense something else too, and that was not at all good, they were, however, holding their own, keeping the barriers up, keeping the spirits up, keeping the influences and the nagging doubts out, most of the time at least.

Changes

Chapter 2

This DERV, Capsaa, and its crew, were already long overdue for some R and R, rest and recuperation, and it was true that the crew were growing tired of finding little in the way of planets suitable for exploitation, that is what they were out here for, to exploit unclaimed planets for their employers, to discover new sources of materials that will generate income, expanding the proliferation of Man amongst the stars.

There were plenty of them out there already, the minions of mankind, and there had been for thousands of years and will be for thousands more, and although many planets had come and gone in that time, some tapped out, run dry of resources, others were blasted out, but still, the Empire of Man marched on deeper and deeper into this seemingly limitless cosmos.

Mankind was not the only species out here in the Deep, the vastness of Space, and those others were not always friendly, in fact, more often than not, they were distinctly unfriendly. Some of them would be disgruntled customers, cheated by those that thought they could get away with it and didn't, some were Pirates, intent on stealing what others had worked hard to obtain; others, were far worse. There were some pretty nasty 'other' species in many regions of Space, some objected to the loss of commerce now that Mankind had waltzed into their neighbourhood and wanted a slice of the economic pie, others simply objected to Mankind's presence and just wanted to remove them. There were others, the proper nasty ones, well, they just wanted war, often, they didn't care who with, and, they didn't care what for, they just wanted war because they liked it, most of the time they were good at it too.

There were also disturbing reports of other alien species that were rather distasteful, rumours suggested that some actually viewed the human as a food source, that was properly disconcerting. Thankfully, in this sector of Space, there were no such reports, but they kept popping up with alarming regularity in others, and it seemed they were edging toward the Terran homeworld on a regular basis.

On the odd occasion, the DERV would catch sight of an Imperial fleet ship, impressive things they were too, and it brought home the reality of how underpowered their own weapons systems were, they did have some, but it was considered by many of the crew as not enough. HQ had stated many times

that they were a research vessel and not a warship; they were reminded that they had the ability to defend themselves if they needed it, but most of the crew knew that it would not be good enough to fend off a determined attack, particularly from a well-armed adversary, but they chose not to dwell on it, if you let it, that sort of thing drove you nuts.

You could not afford to throw a wobbly out here, if you lost your sanity in the Deep then there was little or no help, you could not get away from it all because you were already well away from everything. Ryan Scott was getting there, things were piling up, not getting any better, his command group of Senior Bridge Officers were not helping much, they were just as frustrated, just as disappointed, and that was probably the worst of it, it wasn't the frustration or the anger, it was the disappointment, it was soul-destroying, it really was. There would be a high expectation of good things to come from the next place to be explored, the initial reports would show promise, and things were hopeful, that was the word, hopeful. They would reach a new planet, hopeful, expectant, the survey would be done, and sometimes this took a few weeks, sometimes months, and at the end, all they had to show for their efforts was a disappointment, that took its toll on morale.

In the Warp Tunnel, that was where the door was opened to the dark forces lurking in the shadows, that door was partly held open by the crew member themselves, allowing a blood-encrusted boot a foothold on their conscious doorstep.

The Psykers were there too, adding another set of boots, these were busy pushing, trying to close the widening gap.

The bonus scheme was another issue, the crew were taken on all that time ago, nineteen years, with high hopes of getting rich on the bonuses they could earn for the discoveries they would make, and so far, they had surveyed over fifty planets, and what had they discovered?

Well, not much.

A few gas deposits, a few mineral deposits, one planet that was literally all Iron, and only two reasonable prospects that may turn out to be good earners once the ground survey teams had done additional work, but these places were a low priority. They were entitled to the bonuses based on the planetary surveys done, but the big one, the proper pay packet one, so far, that had eluded them, hence the ship-wide disappointment.

After the shakedown trials, they stocked up, and left the Neeld Space Dock so full of hope, they had a new ship, were heading for a new adventure, and there was the promise of a good trip on the cards, sadly, that promise never truly materialised, the new adventure had by now drifted into routine, and the excitement had all but faded, it all just helped to reinforce the sense of disillusionment, allowing those darker thoughts a bigger foothold, and now, it

was apparent that hope was about all they had left, and even that was fading fast, the Psykers had plenty of work to do.

The DERV crew used their two days downtime wisely, performing a full diagnostic sweep of the engine systems, and a similar diagnostic recalibration of the Sensor Arrays, at least that went well, everything worked as intended.

The Navigation Control Team had been busy pouring over the Astral charts, and, based on gravitational manipulation theories, they were pretty sure that what they were looking for wasn't here, in fact, it wasn't anywhere close by, accordingly, they made their recommendations at the forecast meeting.

That recommendation was simple, that the ship needed to find pastures new, it had to get off the beaten track, find an area of Space that was unexplored, arguably, there was plenty of that. They further suggested what was needed was a fresh start, a real change, several of them, namely, a change of luck, a change of fortunes, a change of scenery, the only way to get it was to make those changes for themselves because it wasn't going to happen on its own.

What they proposed was distant, relatively unexplored, zero habitation reports, minimal shipping activity reports, and minimal conflict reports. They had pointed out a section of Space that looked promising, several small galaxies, a spiral arm, a cartwheel galaxy, a nebula or three, and plenty of planets that had minimal scans performed, it seemed hopeful, seemed promising.

However, there was a downside, why was there always a downside?

It was a long way away, it was in the constellation known as Apparatus Sculptoris, that was close on three weeks in real-time at Warp Tunnel Jump speeds. That meant very careful planning and extra diligence in the Jump points and flight routing, and it meant more time in the Warp than they had done before, that had its own risks.

A change of tack meant the re-introduction of a ship's ritual, Ryan Scott would pick ten crew, just a random pick, and they were invited to the Captain's table to eat the main meal of the day, a list of suggestions would be put to them and a discussion would ensue. This discussion would be open and frank, rank was not acknowledged at the table, and the ships next mission parameters would be established once the deliberations had concluded.

This meal was memorable, there was a lot to discuss, things they had not done before, it would not only be the furthest distance they would travel from their point of origin, but the longest time they had ever spent in the Warp itself, that was worthy of discussion on its own.

There was no indication that this region of Space would be any better than where they had looked so far, but it couldn't be much worse, could it?

At the close of the second day, the supply vessel eventually pops out of Hyper-Jump just 50,000km off the starboard bow, and it was only a half-hearted cheer that went up when the event was relayed to the crew, they knew it would be the best part of a day for transferring containers, and several days of hard graft

stowing the stuff away before the next Warp Jump, however, it was a change from the norm. There was the opportunity to mingle with crew members of another ship, catch up on news, make new acquaintances, and to generally let your hair down for a few hours.

For some, it seemed the horrors of this trip would seem to fade, you could forget the woes of the past few months, it was an opportunity to finally push those nagging voices away, though sadly, it would not last long, for all, eventually, it was back to business.

There was a modicum of good news that raised a bigger and more sincere cheer, the inventory list of items checked did match the items requested, it seems, PAT got their order right, though to be fair, they had only made three small errors in their order over the past nineteen years.

The new plans were relayed to the crew, and there was a renewed optimism, the mood of the ship picked up another notch or two and there was a good vibe about the place once more, it felt good, it felt right, it felt strong, and for a short while, the Psykers could vacuum up all the good stuff they could get hold of, they would need all their strength over the coming next three weeks of travel.

Travel in the Warp Tunnels was to be immersed in the essence of it, it was almost a fluid energy that swirled and eddied around you, it felt real, it felt odd, there was a comfort in it, but at the same time, there was a veiled threat within, there was a darkness within the light.

Travel in the Warp boggled the mind, you could travel the best part of a 3 light years in a day, but there was a disparity at play, time on the outside of the tunnel varied, it was inconsistent, so you never knew the correct date when you arrived at your destination. Two whole Terran Standard Days covered, on average, 5.6 light years, so you often travelled 40 hours and dropped out of Warp, checked your references with the nearest transponder and set off again, the last hop usually at the far slower Hyper Jump speeds of around 100,000 kps. Different vessels operated at different speeds depending on the efficiency of their drive engines, many fleet ships covered far greater distances than the commercial fleets, but you needed greater shielding protection and that came at a cost many were not prepared to pay.

The Warp Tunnel course was now set, the Astral coordinates were verified by a second NavCon team, and everything that could be strapped down already had been. The order was given and off they went, heading to just off the cosmic equatorial plane once more, this time to the constellation of Apparatus Sculptoris, the Sculptors Studio.

They would pass through Aquarius and hopefully appear somewhere around the south-eastern edge of the constellation, near its conjunction with Phoenix, from there, it was game on.

In this zone, there were no reports of already inhabited planets, and only a few of the uninhabited ones had been previously well scanned, perhaps they would find what they were looking for in the planets that were skipped.

The trip from the rendezvous point in sector 05D3 to the new coordinates of 18M4 was going to take twenty-one days, six hours and thirty-two minutes, in which time they would cover some 198 trillion kilometres in distance. Although the numbers looked impressive, in the grand scheme of things, the time travelled was just a short hop, fourteen of them, covering some 58.65 light-years.

During this journey they could not do much at all except wait, should there be any emergency deviation of the flight plan, then, the course correction was rough on anything not strapped down, that usually meant people, so, you kept your movements to a minimum.

All food to be consumed was from sealed ration packs, and the inevitable after-effects of food consumption, going to the toilet, was another hazard of a different kind. When strapped into the toilet seat you prayed that nothing would happen to the flight plan, the result of that could be rather embarrassing, and messy, so you kept your trips to complete your ablutions to an absolute minimum in the Warp.

It was with some relief that the last ship-wide broadcast mentioned the final hop was to be in Hyper-Jump, and now, RHJD was to take place in five minutes. That gave anyone not secured in a seat the time to find one, and everyone enough time to stow away anything loose before finding a secure place to strap in if they weren't already, it was a busy time for all crew members. Time, as always, seemed to pass slowly in HJ, but the distance travelled did not waiver, in that final five minutes they covered another thirty million kilometres before the warning klaxons sounded for the impending deceleration event.

It was one of those moments you wanted to happen, but at the same time, did not like to happen, it was also one of those moments when you knew what should happen, but were aware of the consequences of things not quite going to plan, events that would be completely out of your control.

Sadly, they were all used to this, of late, this beyond 'our' control thing was almost normal.

Just because it was normal didn't mean that they had to like it, but they all put up with it, put on a brave face for each other on the outside, inside, almost all of them were screaming 'it's not fair.'

Only the Psykers could hear them.

RHJD

Chapter 3

Rapid Hyper-Jump Deceleration was a process of dropping out of the high speed you were travelling, to more normal speeds, just very quickly.

It sounded simple enough, but it wasn't quite as pleasant as it sounded, when you have warped the forces of gravity and inertia, bringing them back into line had consequences.

Simply put, what would happen is, Drive Engineering would effectively turn off the HyperDrive accelerator, and turn off the main Ion Drive engines, that was the big cluster of Ion Drive units at the rear of the ship, now, with no forward thrust the ship should reduce speed.

The expectation was that the ship slowed gradually, and whilst this seemed OK, there was little or no friction in Space to cause an actual slowing effect, so, you continued at speed until you introduced some sort of counter-drive, something that pushed in the other direction.

At the front of the DERV were three smaller drive engines, these allowed the ship to reverse, albeit at a far slower speed than the rear engines could push, these were basically your brakes, you pushed against the forward motion by powering these three Ion motors to slow the ship down.

It wasn't instant, that would be far more than the hull could withstand as stress levels went, but, as the name suggested, it was rapid.

Within six seconds of introducing these engines you were down to half speed, fifty thousand kilometres per second, four seconds later you were doing half as much again, and a further two seconds saw the speed halved again, now you were travelling at twelve thousand five hundred kps, it was still pretty quick. In the next five seconds, you had further reduced forward velocity to fifteen hundred kps, now, the stress levels registered on the hull were approaching sixty percent of their design tolerance, you needed to back off. Power was reduced to the forward drive units, and over the next ten seconds you reduced the speed to a manageable five thousand kilometres an hour, eighty-three kilometres a second, compared to what the ship was doing earlier, this was a slow crawl.

It was around this point, as the power was reduced, the effects of inertia and the normal forces of gravity started to merge again. You did feel physically

better for it, though it was not unheard of for crew members who had not managed to keep their limbs crossed throughout RHJD, to suffer from dislocated shoulders and sometimes dislocated hips; arms and legs could be pulled out of their sockets by the forces exerted upon them in RHJD.

There were also horror stories of some people having their limbs torn away from their bodies too, and subsequently dying from the blood loss as that too was squeezed out of their soon to be corpses, but, they were just that though, stories, there was no proof this event ever took place anywhere in the known cosmos, it was just one of those urban legends that surfaced and took hold to eventually becoming one of those, 'did you hear about ...' stories told on every ship.

It was also said that several ships had suffered catastrophic hull integrity failure when going through RHJD, it was not common by any means, but this urban legend was true. These failures were often on older ships or those that had suffered collision damage in the Warp Tunnel or HyperDrive Slipstream.

The Slipstream was a name given to the Hyper-Jump tunnel that was created when the drive motors were engaged, an aura was created by the Ion Drive when the HyperDrive was connected. The why was highly technical, it had to do with positively charged ions from the main Drive reacting with ejected hyper-accelerated ions from the HyperDrive unit in the plasma stream, and as those merged with the force generated shielding, it created a tunnel of charged ions that extended forward and aft around the ship for several kilometres, to the sides, it was perhaps half a kilometre.

From the outside, what you saw was a pale glowing cigar-shaped projection around a darker object, that dark object was the ship itself.

Once the speed built up to the maximum, then the tunnel extended even further, often for tens of kilometres, bigger ships with larger drive units attained higher speeds than the DERV, and they had even larger tunnels, and many of the fleet ships could even get tunnels of a hundred K's plus.

It didn't appear to do much, but the charged particles reinforced the shielding and did actively push Space debris out of the way if it was small, normally you relied on your shielding to do that job anyway, and the proper sized large pieces you avoided as these bigger objects would still leave a dent, but in the Slipstream tunnel, they too were deflected.

Of course, if you were not paying attention, what was considered as a very very large object in the tunnel, perhaps ninety meters or more, they could compress the shielding to the point where it actually buckled the hull plating, in RHJD, that was when those stories were made of ships that were lost, they suffered from a structural integrity failure of the hull.

It was possible to follow another ship in the Slipstream, and sub-Warp commercial vessels would often plot several small Jumps taking it in turns to lead, this cut down on the fuel consumption, although the risks of an accident

were slightly elevated, they were within acceptable limits. Most cargo companies insisted on multi-streaming, this was when there were two or more ships heading to similar destinations, and it was not uncommon to see five or six ships nose to tail in a Slipstream. It was safe enough as long as the ships at the rear dropped out of HD first, and these would arrive at the destination perhaps a few hours after the first one, it was no big deal.

The klaxon had finished its pulsating warning cries and RHJD was ongoing, the ship was rapidly decelerating, and the crew were suitably grimacing every few seconds. Most managed to keep their arms folded, and all managed to keep their limbs attached, though a few did fail to keep their lunch where it was supposed to be.

On the Bridge, Ryan Scott was also grimacing whilst still managing to keep an eye on the displays dotted about the consoles. The display of most interest in the armrest of his chair was the one for the sensors attached to the ship's hull, he had watched the stress ratios climb from the standard HJ ten percent or so, to where it peaked at fifty-nine, all were acceptable tolerances.

The main observation screen showed the view ahead and it looked clear, but even on the big screen, deceleration always made viewing difficult as the blood pressure increased with the effects of inertia, the vision always blurred for an instant.

It wasn't much of an inconvenience, but should you need to take avoiding action, then you needed to focus on the correct buttons to activate on the NavBoard to avoid any potential collision, not easy when your vision is fuzzy. For RHJD, the navigation crew wore special jackets, and these were strapped to the seat at the elbows, wrapped tightly at the wrists, and had snatch-hook strips on the sleeves that fixed to special extension panels on the console, these kept the hands in place over the buttons that would need to be used in an emergency. It was a proper old tech method in a new tech environment, this biomimetic product was ancient 20th Century stuff, invented in 1941 by a Swiss engineer named George de Mestral, it was still in use some 38,000 years later, virtually unchanged from the original design.

They were in luck, there was nothing in the immediate way and they continued to slow whilst scanning the starscape, trying to verify their Astral position.

The computronics did their stuff, a swift 360-degree 3D sweep of the stars nearby revealed that they were where they had planned to be, and all breathed a sigh of relief. On a few decelerations before this one they had overshot their intended destination by a few seconds and ended up hundreds of thousands of kilometres off track, it wasn't drastic, it just didn't help.

It was another of those moments where things did not quite go right for the Capsaa, another moment of frustration that was unnecessary, inconvenient and unwanted.

It seemed as though the negativity that some felt in the Warp Jumps continued once they were out of the Warp Tunnel, it was not a logical thought, but it was there. It was as if the Cosmos was conspiring against them, determined to lead them all to despair, to put them on the road to ruin, to drive them toward despondency, the why, was anybody's guess.

It was old school sorcery doom and gloom designed to provoke feelings of hopelessness, the what for, that was the same as the why, it was anybody's guess.

Perhaps they were ill-fated, maybe it was that the omens were against them, maybe it was all to do with the planetary alignments where they were, no one knew for sure, if they did, then they could have resolved it.

From the equatorial plane, everything looked off, unbalanced, it was just crazy superstitions running wild, there was no substance to it, no logic in it, but still, the sense persisted, the nagging doubt remained, and the rumours continued to gain some more credibility.

It had not gone unnoticed by the ship's command, and the Psykers were tasked with projecting good thoughts to counter the negative, they, the Psykers, did not like to mention that they had been doing exactly this for quite some time and it didn't seem to be working, even some of the Psykers were beginning to doubt and that was definitely not a good sign.

The NavCon team were in the process of confirming the precise Astral position when the collision alarms went off.



OK, that is your three chapter preview, I hope you like it.
Depending on the version, the Kindle version is 226 pages.
The printed version (6x9") is around 204 pages,
in either case, all full editions are just over 94,000 words.

The Genesis of Capsaa was released in August 2020, to find it and purchase a copy just go to your usual Amazon online store and enter the title and Author name.
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There will be more stories relating to the Genesis of Capsaa with other characters, and their struggles to survive their particular situations.

You can find these stories, and much more information, on the Servus Ad Artem website, the direct link for the Library is below.

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Glossary

Genesis of Capsaa

ACD – **A**irlock **C**ontrol **D**oor, the vacuum of space on one side, normal atmosphere on the other

APV – **A**rmoured **P**rotection **V**essel

BFM – **B**reather **F**ilter **M**ask, a basic mask to adjust air content breathed in.

BTS – **B**edside **T**ravel **S**tation, a medical device to allow patient care during Warp space travel

CCE – **C**riticality **C**ascade **E**vent, critical failure in a reactor unable to cool down

CCR – **C**ommand and **C**ontrol **R**oom

Cheap Speak – a dumbing down of technical jargon into something most people can understand

CMO – **C**hief **M**edical **O**fficer, in squawk (see below) Seemo

DCT – **D**amage **C**ontrol **T**eam

DERV – **D**eep **E**xploration **R**esearch **V**essel

DPRS – **D**eep **P**enetration **R**esonance **S**can, a type of scan like ground penetrating radar

EDS – **E**mergency **D**istress **B**eacon

EJM – **E**mergency **J**ump **M**ode

EPS – **E**nvironmental **P**rotection **S**uit, your basic space suit, suitable for other environments too.

ERT – **E**mergency **R**epair **T**eams

ETA – **E**stimated **T**ime of **A**rrival

FFA / RFA – **F**orward / **R**earward **F**acing **A**rray, often a scanning array or other sensors

HD – **H**yper**D**rive, the engine used to create a Hyper Jump tunnel

HJ – **H**yper **J**ump, travel at high speed in a SlipStream tunnel, less than Warp speed

HQ – **H**ead **Q**uarters

HTK – **H**unt **T**o **K**ill

Kph – **K**ilometres **p**er **H**our

Kps – **K**ilometres **p**er **s**econd

LiSP – **L**ife **S**aving **P**ack, basic puncture repair kit for your EPS, patches, glue and inert powder.

LOCS – **L**arge **O**bject **C**ollision **S**ystem

MPD – **M**issing **P**resumed **D**ead

MPC – **M**aster **P**ower **C**onduit

NCT – **N**avigation **C**ontrol **T**eam (NavCon)

PAT – **P**roduct **A**cquisition **T**eam, the office to send the orders to for the Cargo Container Service

PFA / SFA – **P**ortside / **S**tarboard **F**acing **A**rray, a sensor array on the left or right of a ship

PRMC – **P**roduct **R**ights **M**anagement **C**ompany, the owners of the Planet or Moon.

PRMH – **P**roducts **R**ights **M**anagement **H**older, the purchaser of a Plot or Sector

PRMT – **P**roduct **R**ights **M**anagement **T**eam, representatives of the PRMC, they also sell the plots.

PRoC – **P**lanetary **R**egistrar of **C**laims, hold the Galactic register of who owned what planet and where.

ProCLAO – **P**RoC **L**ocal **A**dministration **O**ffice, hold the localised Plot registers for a planet.

RDM – **R**everse **D**efensive **M**anoeuvre, engaging reverse thrust to fool an enemy or pursuer

RFA / FFA – **R**earward / **F**orward **F**acing **A**rray, often a scanning array or other sensors

RHJD – **R**apid **H**yper **J**ump **D**eceleration, basically the rapid slowing when exiting HyperJump

SFA / PFA – **S**tarboard / **P**ortside **F**acing **A**rray, a sensor array on the right or left of a ship

SPE – **S**olar **P**article **E**vent

Squawk – a form of speech where Acronyms are made into words, like CMO into Seemo

TED – **T**ransient **E**lectromagnetic **D**isturbance (Mine)

TrASCC – **T**riple **A**ccelerated **S**uper **C**onducting **C**yclotronic (Reactor)

TRB – **T**ransmission **R**elay **B**uoy

Utility Belt – a belt outside your spacesuit (EPS) for holding various small tools like brushes, torch etc.

About the Author –

Born in 1961 in London, England, he moved near to Bristol in the summer of '69 and recalls seeing the grainy black and white images of the first moon landing as it happened, it was an exciting time of discovery. Cliff was already an avid reader of Science Fiction by then, and brought up with the excellent BBC TV series Doctor Who, he vividly remembers watching it in black and white in the mid-'60s, (hiding from the Cybermen behind the sofa!), and, reinforcing the Sci-Fi adventure with other TV series in the 70's and 80's with the likes of Blakes Seven, Quatermas, Day of the Triffids and more.

He left school for college, and studied catering, became a chef, and started work for the MoD for a while, which is when he began writing just for fun, essentially just scribbles in a notebook (the paper kind), none of which have survived to tell any tales.

He got married, to Caroline, they had children (2 boys) and the books took a back seat while family life continued, and other commitments took priority. The kids grew up, eventually moved out, and the parents moved on, Caroline and Cliff moved to the Costa Del Sol and have never left it, they have moved around a few times, but the weather there is better for Caroline's health. Once there, the original typed notes for his early book was rediscovered, that book, Orbiter One, kickstarted the little grey cells again, and more story lines were compiled for the Orbiter One series, and other stories were written, now there are several other stories available, like this example, and there are more planned and some waiting to be finished, it seems there are not enough hours in a day, but, he manages to work on more stories here and there, and, there is still the same patience from an understanding wife, more green tea, and many enjoyable hours of thought provoking contemplation with Pink Floyd and David Bowie.

Now, at 59 years of age, he does have a bit more time available, but, as he mentions, not quite as much time left as when he started the original idea, but there are hopes to be able to complete a whole series of follow-on stories to this book, and to many of the others.

They are both still on the Costa del Sol enjoying the Spanish weather at the new Finca (house move number 5), with freshly picked and squeezed OJ for breakfast, straight out of the orchard.

At the time of writing this, several other stories are also complete, but this is the fourth book to be released, The Genesis of Capsaa currently has two follow on stories planned, one is nowhere near ready, the other, The Formation of the CPDF, (working title) is getting near to being complete and should be available in late 2020 or early 2021.

Another completed story that is already released, The Anecdotes of a Zero, also has a companion story not yet finished, The Anecdotes of an X-ray, and there will be a follow on for Zero.

For Orbiter One, Book Two, Silent Night is still in progress, and there are others planned for the series, these are well mapped out, ready to put to digital ink when Cliff can find the time.

Another book already published is Breaking News, a story about the next virus outbreak to plague planet Earth, and as the saying goes, watch this space for more breaking news on new books. (well, not this one, this one is done)

Anyway, enough of this waffle, Cliff hopes you enjoyed the book, and perhaps you will come across Book Two in the series soon, and who knows, the rest of the series in due course.

(July 2020)

OTHER TITLES

BY THIS AUTHOR

Orbiter One (series)

Book 1 – At Worlds End (January 2020)

ISBN: 978-84-09-18312-8

Capsaa (series)

The Genesis of Capsaa (August 2020)

ISBN: 978-84-09-22483-8

Anecdotes (series)

Anecdotes of a Zero (May 2020)

ISBN: 978-84-09-19930-3

Breaking News (July 2020)

ISBN: 978-84-09-21928-5

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 *Cliff Dale*