

DLite Press

P.O. Box 1644

New York N.Y. 10150

<http://www.dlitepress.com>

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Once Upon A Time Warp

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DLite Press/ published by arrangement with the author

PRINTING HISTORY

DLite Press/ July 2011

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Cover design and digital illustration

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For purchase information contact:

Dlite Press

www.dlitepress.com

ISBN: 9781937143107

Printed in the United States of America

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Chapter 1

Fargasoids look almost human, but they are not. With an average height of about four and a half feet or 135 centimeters they look like cute and cuddly children, but they are not. Originally from the all mineral planet of Fargas, their society developed in insular and almost sociological unanimity. As intelligence is the most prized

asset on Fargas, all Fargasoids are thinkers and philosophers with very few actual doers – activity not being their strong suit.

The Fargasonian sedentary way of life led them into close liaison with their environment. Their world is a crystalline place of great beauty and geological diversity, as are the creatures themselves. A Fargasoid is actually a silicon-based life form – as is most of the life on that world. Even the plants are more mineral than vegetable.

Quartos and Micos were two such Fargasonian thinkers, but alas they were also doers, although they did very little and what they did do, they did very slowly. Fargasoids live approximately 10,000 times slower and longer than humankind and this, together with their stone-like features, makes them appear almost as statues. Somewhere in the fortieth or fiftieth century of their lives as they progressed towards middle age, Micos discovered crystalline polymorphous encephalography: CPE. Sounds very complicated, but in reality it is only a very large term for the simple act of changing intelligent Fargasonian rocks into a thinking, machine-like device. On other worlds it would have been called a computer and on some worlds, an estan.

Quartos married the CPE with the ancient principal of temporal exaggeration: TE. Now although TE was nothing new on Fargas, it had never before been coupled with CPE. For millennia it had been used to make transportation easier. The idea being that no one actually had to exert energy in order to go anywhere – they merely thought of a place and arrived at the same time, though not actually in person. The nearest thing on earth would be astral wandering – a spiritual belief in the ability to move through solid objects or cross great distances using the mind.

The CPE, coupled with TE, produced an extraordinary effect that no one except Quartos and Micos had any use for. Their curiosity and sense of adventure led them into forbidden temptation. It became a simple case of curiosity almost killed the Fargasoid.

With TE one simply imitates sleep by entering a trance – not a difficult accomplishment at all for a Fargasoid – and the mind or psyche then roams the known provinces of Fargasoidal space. In this way a Fargasoid can meet all his or her relatives anywhere in the world and it costs nothing and takes virtually no time – quite an advantage when you are physically the slowest creature in the universe. TE is the reason all Fargasoids are fat and apparently lazy. The only exercise they get is going to the dorgas for a meal.

It was the dorgas that clinched the entire adventure. No one grows food or even bothers to go shopping. Since the invention of

the dorgas, everyone has one and of course knows how to use it. All a Fargasoid has to do is touch the dorgas, think of a food or whatever else they want and then any known material or combination of materials will appear before them. It looks like magic, but it is not. The air or atmosphere is filled with atoms and by using transcendental morphography or TM, the air atoms are reorganized into any structure required – sort of an advanced form of nano technology. The complexity of the new structure depends on the power of the operator's mind rather than a pre-programmed pattern.

By incorporating TM into CPE and coupling it with TE, Quartos and Micos created a device they called Gluk. Gluk can look like anything, be like anything and go anywhere in an instant. The perfect house or home with the ability to live forever, produce any type of food and imitate any structure or natural formation. Not only that but it has the ability to think almost as a living rock, sustaining itself through morphic transmutation of material into energy and vice versa.

The disaster struck when Quartos and Micos were in the Gluk and one of them thought of outer space. You could see outer space from where they lived. No one had ever actually thought of outer space before; after all, there is nothing there, so why would anyone want to go nowhere? Anyway, the Gluk flashed into infinity and became an asteroid with a window overlooking the universe. The two Fargasoids were fascinated by the wonders of space, which is a place that no Fargasoid had ever been before, or at least had not admitted to. Now this was reality and far from astral wandering. The trouble with space is everything moves and one's home seems to disappear into the infinite cloud of stars.

It was not long before the two Fargasoids discovered that one has to know where one is in order to go to another known place. Jumping from unknown zone to unknown area is rather like a flea hopping on a hot griddle – eventually one may hop into the source of the heat. This is of course what happened to them. By pure chance, while they were planet hopping and trying to find home, they landed on a world of crystal very similar in appearance to Fargas.

Physical investigation is something that Fargasoids usually refrain from. Instead, using the Gluk as home base, they TE'd all over the planet and after some time discovered the surface to be unused. The inhabitants of this new world were in fact machines of strange and wonderful design that lived beneath the surface, clawing and digesting the rocks at what seemed to a Fargasoid to

be lightning speed and ferocity. The machines appeared to be ruled by a carbon-based creature also exhibiting great speed.

The heart of the place was apparently a palatial and very artificial zone where this extraordinary carbon life form resided. It was an unusual-looking creature with seven tentacle-like extremities. The ruling creature, being organic and based on carbon, consumed oxygen and operated at near light speed compared to a Fargasoid. That in itself was not a problem, it was that the thing did not seem to have any TE powers at all and therefore communication was ethereally impossible.

Quartos and Micos decided they would have to do something different and actually make physical contact with this creature. One has to realize that Fargasoids had never heard of, or ever encountered, any form of violence or hostility. After all, what purpose could it serve?

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