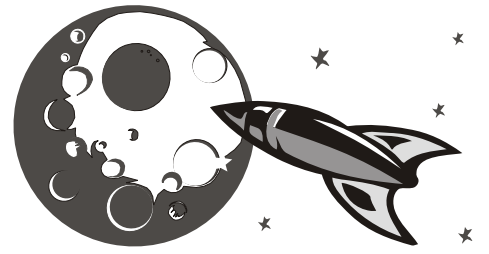


ROBOTS, RAYGUNS & ROCKETSHIPS



"Full Power to the Death Ray!"

TOMORROW 1952

Everything was completely different.

It was a great breakthrough in human history when, in 1936, Professor Samuel T. Brittlestone presented an amazing discovery to an unsuspecting public in New York City. The basic element of this scientific revolution was the proof of existence of the 9th dimensional quantum core, shortly thereafter popularly labeled "Q-Power" by the press and radio. Professor Brittlestone had quested for and found the fundamental components of energy and matter, simultaneously developing a method to harness its enormous hidden potential for the betterment of mankind.

In spite of the tremendous cost in material and manpower in constructing the first Q-Converters, scientists all over the world began developing practical uses for the new technology. Professor Brittlestone himself started building the Prometheus, the first spaceship ever to be created on Earth. With the help of another genius, Albert Einstein, Brittlestone invented a rocket propulsion system based on Q-Power that would make interplanetary travel possible. And so, in 1938, Professor Brittlestone accompanied by Nick Valiant, a young test pilot from the U.S. Army Air Corps, launched the Prometheus on its maiden flight into space.

They encountered a strange phenomenon. In a distant orbit around Earth, the intrepid astronauts discovered an immense alien artifact, later dubbed the "Protector". It is still unknown who or what created the mysterious satellite or how it even worked. The only thing human scientists discovered about the Protector was its ability to veil it's surrounding space from the curious eyes of Earth and, vice versa, to make the Earth and Moon invisible to other beings from outer space. For thousands of years mankind had been deceived by a clever illusion.

With its discovery, the alien artifact immediately ceased to function.

Suddenly and completely unprepared, humankind faced a living and breathing Solar System. Mars was a red desert, populated by warlike creatures that collected water from the depth of the planet in vast canals. Venus was covered by thick, steaming jungles. Terrifying creatures resembling those from Earth's distant past stalked its primeval forests. The caves of Mercury were the natural habitat of pale beings that created whole cities of gold, silver and gems beneath the hot planet's surface. Within the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, strange space nomads lived within even stranger vessels.

The first reaction of the leaders on Earth was panic. The governments of the leading nations perceived a whole new universe of potential invaders who had just found a rich world right in front of their solar doorstep. But public attention on Earth was diverted once again when, in 1939, World War II shook Europe. Of course the Q-Power soon found its way onto the battlefields: ray guns, missiles, even the first flying tanks were the sad children of the so-called father of all progress. In 1944, the war ended when the core of the Nazi regime faced imminent defeat and fled into space with a small fleet of secretly constructed saucer-like ships, taking with them many treasures plundered during their military campaigns.

With the danger on Earth defeated for now, nations hastily started to build their own spaceships to be prepared for the now-remembered potential danger from space. Soon it was obvious that it was not possible for any single nation to create a space fleet strong enough in such a short time. Though there was no imminent threat to the fragile peace on Earth, Mars made its first martial overtures towards the prized blue planet so rich with precious water. In early 1947, governments of many nations came together in Geneva to talk about possibilities. Even today historians are amazed how fast they came to an agreement. The summer of 1948 saw the founding of the United Nations of Earth, which would leave sovereignty up to each nation while establishing a common government to control the new Earth Space Force.

Soon enough the rag-tag fleet of human space fighters had to prove itself when Mars sent a war fleet to the new source of water in the Solar System. The two forces clashed just beyond the Earth's moon and Brigadier Nick Valiant saved the day when he almost single-handedly destroyed the Martian flagship, forcing the enemy to retreat.

In the years to follow, a fragile peace was established. Earth and Mars licked their wounds. Mankind colonized the Moon and explored the old and strangely new solar system. The first trading routes were established and shortly thereafter the first cases of space piracy occurred. Seemingly each new day on Earth saw a new use of the Q-Power. The Future had arrived very fast.

Then, in 1951, the inhabitants of the Solar System faced a new menace. A giant alien spaceship appeared from beyond Pluto. An audio-video ultimatum was transmitted to all planets. On their audvid screens, humans and non-humans alike for the first time saw the being they all would learn to fear: The Supreme Emperor Zartos from the Planet Stygia. The Emperor declared himself the almighty ruler of the Universe and demanded instant and complete surrender. His flagship was followed by a swarm of smaller vessels that wiped out a human settlement on one of the moons of Uranus to back up his claims. Once again war came to the Solar System. For a short time, the people of all planets united against a common enemy. Both sides took grievous casualties but finally the fleet of the Emperor was forced into retreat. The Emperor has since tried to conquer the Solar System with guile by a series of devious plots but every one has been successfully foiled so far.

Professor Brittlestone and Doctor Einstein invented a new propulsion system, making it now possible to break the barrier of light speed. One year ago, Brittlestone and Nick Valiant launched the "Prometheus 2" to find out more about the Emperor and to scout out possible allies against his empire.

Some time later, a message from the Prometheus 2 reached Earth. The fearless explorers had discovered Stygia, the home planet of the enemy, as well as thousands of subjugated planets, their inhabitants oppressed by the iron grip of the Emperor's might.

Since then, the Prometheus 2, Professor Brittlestone and Nick Valiant have disappeared.

Every day on Earth a new fiendish perfidy of Emperor Zartos is expected. The situation in the Solar System is far from being stable. The planets conceal a myriad of dangers and unsolved mysteries ready to explore. Meanwhile, Brittlestone's nephew, Albert Guldenfeld, tries to continue the work of his uncle while Susanne Brittlestone, the Professor's daughter, presses Earth Government to send a spaceship to the rescue of her father who she believes is still alive. There are reports of mysterious flying saucers attacking spaceships throughout the Solar System and the encroachment of space pirates into once-safe routes become more aggressive.

It is a time for new heroes.
