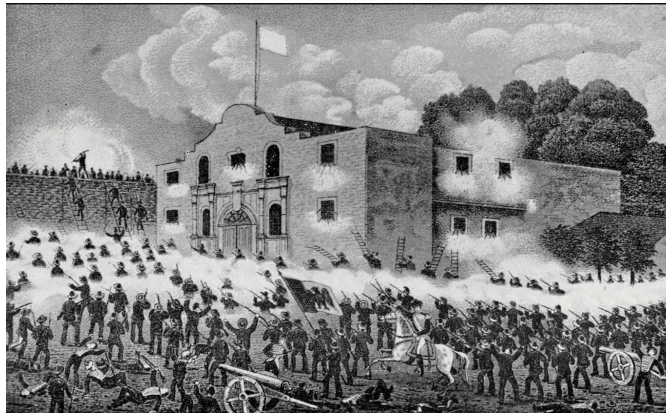


## *The Siege* (Prologue)

Throughout history we have heard of many epic battles against insurmountable odds. “Remember The Alamo”.



### **The battle of the Alamo**

Approximately 300 Texans fought against 5000 Mexican troops. All gave up their lives including the most famous of all, Davy Crockett. The Mexican general executed all 7 survivors of the Alamo.

**300 against 1 million Persians at the gates of hell.**

### **Battle of Thermopylae**



## The Gates of Hell



The Battle of Saragarhi led by Ishar Singh along with 20 other soldiers in the fort, all of whom were Sikhs, refused to surrender and were wiped out in a last stand against 12,000 Afghan tribesmen. The post was recaptured two days later by another British Indian contingent.



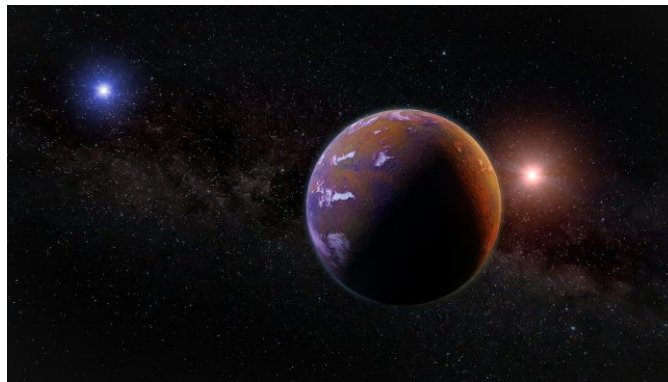
In 72 AD, 960 people of Masada refused to be captured by the Roman legion estimated at 15,000. It took the Romans three months to build a ramp. When the soldiers finally breached the wall, they found a citadel of death. All 960 committed suicide rather than be taken prisoners.



The Masada

These battles turned out to be nothing compared to what these colonists faced on this strange planet.

When our space ship Odyssey finally touched down on the planet Zorex, we found unusual conditions. We were greatly relieved to find the planet abundant in water and a pleasant atmosphere. One of the strangest things was the planet had two suns.



They were positioned opposite each other and provided continuous light. There was no nighttime. The suns were far enough away so as not to scorch the surface. One star was larger and provided the planet with 80 degrees of heat. The other being smaller cooled to 65 degrees. The two temperatures only varied a few degrees all year round except during the transition period when the globe rotated toward the other sun. This was going to be a great



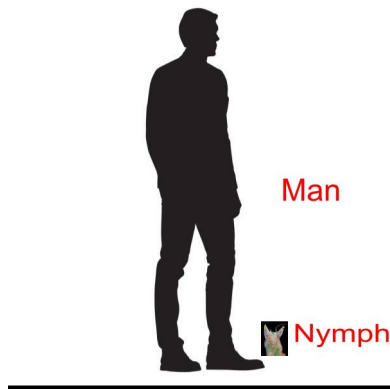
advantage for our homesteads. The ship had a large consignment of solar panels. We will have continuous electricity for our homes. One year consisted of 543 Earth days. The planet was more massive than Earth and in the beginning, it had an adverse affect on all. On Earth, I weighed 165 lbs. Here my weight increased to 220 lbs. It also made my frame contract so that instead of 6 ft. tall, I was now only 5' 10". Great, now I am a short fat guy. It took several months before I adjusted to the extra weight and could walk around normally. One more strange and pleasant feature was that all the water was drinkable. No salty oceans. It was as if the Great Lakes had been transported here.

At first we used the ship as our home base. It had everything we needed to survive. The ship was powered by cold fusion, just like Andy. Later some ventured out and started to build their own home environments.

### *The Siege* (Chapter 1)

Stephanie and I did stay together. We decided we were going to get married as soon as we established a homestead. There were lots of natural resources in this new land. The ship's supply group had foreseen the need for simple tools like saws, shovels, wheelbarrows, and buckets. As we set out to look for a nice spot to begin building, Andy approached me. Mr. Alex, I don't want to stay on the ship. I would like to go with you and help you with whatever you are going to do. Most people thought that the robots were just mechanical machines. AI changed all that. With their ever changing learning software, it almost seems like they had begun to acquire feelings. I checked with the captain and he said it was OK. He gave me Andy as a reward for saving the ship. Come on Andy, lets get to it. I am sure I was mistaken, but it looked like I saw a tiny twinkle appear in his eye lens.

We had sent a search party out soon after our arrival. Just to check on what dangers might be lurking in the new world. It didn't appear like there were any large animals roaming around. There were all kinds of life forms though. Mostly bugs, flies, and small lizard types. One type seemed to be everywhere. They were about the size of a locus.



They were kind of annoying getting into everything and plugging up our systems. Upon testing, they were deemed harmless. The waters had some kind of fish though. Something I would definitely want to investigate. At one time it was thought that the Great Lakes area had been covered by an ocean. In Earth's early formation, the oceans were less salty than they are today. When rain falls, mineral deposits collect in the waters that flow downhill. So rivers that empty into the ocean add salt. The Great Lakes all have outlets to the ocean and therefore flush all the salt deposits away. They remain fresh water lakes to this day. This planet only has fresh water. It is probably because of the two suns. The weather pattern is very mild and not much rain falls so the waters remain fresh.

The 5000 colonists were chosen for their useful professions. The ratio was purposely set at about 50/50. This was probably a discriminatory practice, but besides their professions, no ugly or fat persons were chosen. The reason was obvious. The scientists in charge of the project had wanted to make sure the colony would propagate. This also reduced the chance that there would be hostilities between the group vying for partners. Karl was a prime example of what could happen if the ratio was unbalanced.

Speaking of Karl, we three had met several times in the ship's bar. Henry was his same old self. Stephanie and I thought it was humorous listening to Karl complain about his situation. Three women were competing for his affection and he couldn't decide which of the three he wanted. Poor Karl, what a spot to be in. Other than the fact that Karl had tried to kill me, we did have a bond. We were the only ones who had experienced the failed pods and had

spent the first year as sole companions.

Andy followed me everywhere. I started to feel suffocated by his presence. I didn't want to hurt his feeling, if he had any. I thought of a solution, but was not sure if this was a good idea or a stupid one. Andy was not the only android robot on the ship. There were many service bots to clean up after the humans and to keep the ship spic and span. In the guise of needing some additional help with my homestead, I requisitioned another android bot. This one had been dressed up like a maid. Wig and uniform and all. Andy had been dressed like a shop worker. I commissioned her Alice. I brought the bot to my rudimentary construction and told Andy that I needed some additional help. At first he was reluctant to accept her. I told him that it was his task to teach her how to clean and cook in our humble abode. After several weeks, I noticed that Andy was leaving me alone. It seemed that my plan was working out. I was not sure what was going on, but one time I caught her polishing Andy's metal frame. Whatever, as long as he didn't cling to me, I felt my idea was a success. Andy always responded when I really needed him and so did Alice.

Here is a rendering of our new home planet.



Stephanie and I chose this location to build are home. Nice view and fresh water stream to try fishing.

I couldn't wait to try. The ship had lots of simple weapons along with modern ones. Bow and arrow, sling shot, spear, and of course fishing gear. Here are examples of my first catch.



Our biology specialist tested them for toxins or poisons. Both were deemed edible. In spite of the strange look, the spiny one tasted the best.

Author's note: These are actual fish found in our own fresh waters.

Many of the colonists started complaining about the abundance of the nymphs. They were becoming a real nuisance. Some among our group suggested we eradicate them.

Mankind has always tried to mess with mother nature. A good example is when Montana declared open season on wolves because they were attacking

the citizen's livestock. Killing off the wolf population had an adverse effect on the natural environment. With out wolves, the deer population increased exponentially. Many of the deer starved because there was not enough food to go around. They also ate the leaves off of every living tree in the forest. Montana later reintroduced the wolves back into nature and once again balance was achieved.

The group in favor of eradication increased and a plan to kill off the nymphs was approved.

This was the beginning of the end for many of the colonists.

### *The Siege* (Chapter 2)

Perhaps it was fate or just bad luck. The Odyssey had landed in an area that looked idyllic. In fact, it was the only place on the whole planet that was dangerous. It was inhabited by two groups of alien creatures. The first exploratory excursions had only detected the nymph bugs. They were unaware of the two alien creatures that lived up in the hills and caves not far from the landing zone. I had mentioned earlier that there was no night. That wasn't exactly true.

Zorex has 5 moons. It is true that there is no day and night per se. But because of the moons position between the suns and the planet, solar eclipses occurred frequently. In fact, one occurred the first week the craft landed. It was an eerie feeling and caught all the colonists off guard. The eclipses last anywhere from 10 minutes to ½ an hour depending on which moon blocked the sun.

Night creatures:

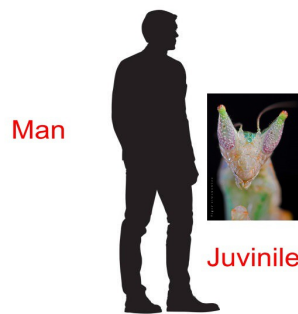
The Dark Bloods were huge creatures with sharp teeth and claws. They lived in up in the caves not far from the colonist's encampment.





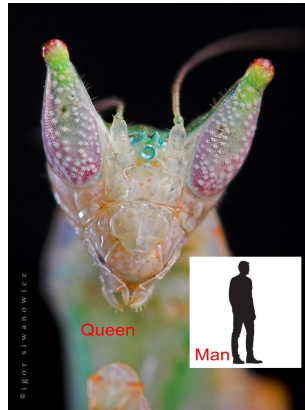
The nymphs were essentially larva produced by the queen. The queen lived in an underground burrow similar to an ant colony. She looked like a giant aphid. So I will refer to all these as alien aphids.

Because of the queen's enormous size, she required huge amounts of food. The nymphs performed the continuous flow of food during the day, but during the darkened periods juveniles and adults were sent out to bring larger portions. The cave creatures hunted the larger aphids during dark periods. The aphids were their only source of food. The aphids were not without defenses of their own.



The juveniles had pincers that grew into razor sharp claws as adults.



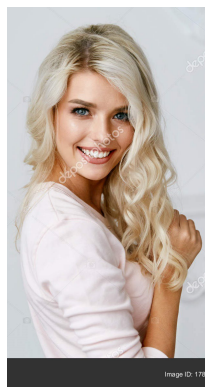


I don't even what to mention what the queen was capable of.

These were century old battles that took place during the darkened period. In the aftermath, the larger aphids retrieved the bodies of those that were killed as did the cave dwellers.

Eradicating the nymphs had an unforeseen disastrous effect. The queen started sending her larger offspring out, not just to battle with the cave dwellers, but to find out why the food chain had ended.

Many columnists had ventured out to build shelters. Some had stayed on the ship preferring the luxury and safety that it provided. The captain had ordered the ship be secured with steel lines tied to anchor spikes driven into the ground. This was a precautionary measure in case violent storms threatened to upend the ship. Karl had remained on the ship. He had finally chosen one of the beauties that had pursued him.



Good choice Karl!

In fact, he was now the senior officer on board, since the captain chose to live outside.

Many of the colonists, including me, didn't see the need to have lighting in our homes. The darkened periods were relatively short and most of us just used that time to relax and take a break.

It wasn't until we noticed some of the colonists disappearing during the dark periods that we knew something was awry. We also occasionally heard screams before their disappearance. We set up large flood lights to illuminate the encampments during the dark periods. That was when our cameras recorded the horror that was going on.

The situation had gotten worse. The queen ordered her minions not to wait for the dark periods. The larger aphids could move about in the light just like the nymphs.

I saw what was happening. We were too far from the ship to seek safety there. Many of the colonists did reach the ship. I had radio contact with Karl. I reported what was happening on the ground. I told him to get the ship out of there. He said he couldn't move the ship because it was tied down with the steel anchor lines. No one would dare go outside to release them. I knew that I had to leave our home area and seek shelter somewhere else. I brought Andy and Alice with me. I also took the crude weapons that I had taken from the ship. The closest shelter that I could see were caves up on the embankment north of us. That is where we were headed. That is also where The Dark Blood cave dwellers lived.

### **The Siege** *(The Final Chapter)*

As mentioned before, the Black Bloods only went out during the dark periods. They were blinded by the light. As you probably know, caves don't have much light. So when Stephanie, I, and my two robot companions entered the caves we were confronted immediately by the ferociously hungry

beasts. I used my rudimentary weapons to ward off the first attackers. Andy, don't you have any defensive weapons? I am programmed not to harm any living creature. Aren't you programmed to protect me? When is that self-learning software going to kick in? I see your point. How about now as he used some electrically charged device like a stun gun to push back the assault. There were too many of them. I returned to the cave entrance as Andy covered our flank. Approaching the hillside below, I saw a whole horde of alien aphids zeroing in on our location. They were climbing up the embankment. I radioed Karl. We are trapped in a cave not too distant from the ship. Can you pinpoint where my transmission is coming from? Karl responded quickly. Yes, we can see the hills. Where is the laser cannon on the ship pointed? It is exactly aimed at those hills. I need you to send a blast at the base of the hills. Won't that endanger your lives too? We have multiple dangers to our lives. We are going to retreat to the back of the caves. Give us five minutes, then fire away. I figured the resultant rock slide would take out a large proportion of the advancing alien aphids. Five minutes later there was a resounding blast. We were far enough back to survive it. Many of the Dark Blood creatures were killed in the blast. I returned to the cave entrance. My plan had backfired. Bodies of the Dark Bloods rained down on the alien aphids providing them with the food needed for the queen. It didn't look like they were going to give up and return to the nest. Just like ants can smell sugar, they could smell our protein. This time it appeared I was out of ideas. It wouldn't be long before we were overcome.

Author's note: This is the siege I had promised you. Millions against 2 humans and 2 androids. This is the end. No wait, I apologize for going to such ridiculous extremes to bail me out of a corner I had painted myself into. It took a whole bottle of wine to think of this.

I looked toward Andy. He was whispering something to Alice. Andy, this is no time to think of romance. I saw Alice lay down in one of the abundant water pools prevalent inside the cave. What is Andy telling her? Andy that is not a water bed. As soon as the aphids appeared at the cave entrance, Alice turned on her reverse vacuum port. A large spray of water emanated from the spout sending a continuous stream of water toward the cave entrance and down the hillside. Those in the path looked like the witches in the movie



“The Wizard of Oz”. They just melted. The flow of water continued like a river reaching within shouting distance of the space ship. A path was cleared.

Authors note:

I remember when I was about 16. I went to the theater and saw a movie called “The Day of the Triffids”. They were tree like creatures that had been deposited on Earth during a meteorite storm. They had vine like tentacles that would catch and choke victims. Nothing could stop them. At the end of the movie, one of the survivors was trapped inside a lighthouse. He used a fire hose to spray sea water and melted the Triffids.



I asked Andy, how did you know they were vulnerable to water? He said, it should have been obvious. The aphids lived below the earth in a moist free environment. If they had not been afraid of water, they would have overwhelmed the Dark Bloods long before our arrival. I guess AI is becoming smarter than humans. I never considered this. Watch out. Someday they will view humans as a plight on the Earth and decide to eradicate us just like the nymphs. I should have known this too. Even though the nymphs had been everywhere, we never saw any enter any water pools. The nymphs had been eradicated using a simple liquid solution mixed

with soap.

The four of us did not hesitate. We quickly took advantage and were able to reach the safety of the ship. Before I got on board, we all went around to unlatched the safety cables. Now the ship was free to take off again. We tried to reach the boarding platform, but the delay had allowed the aphids to once again catch us. I still had one bullet left in my gun. Andy and Alice did their best to protect us, but there were too many. I saw Stephanie had been caught and was about to be sliced to death. I used my last bullet to free her from a painful death. Andy, used his stun gun to put me out before I too became chop suey.

My last image before death was seeing the ship take off from the planet surface. I believed our species would survive in another place on Zorex.

### **The End**

### **The Siege** **(Epilogue)**

The ship did transport safely to the other side of the planet. Getting as far away from the original site as possible. Hoping that the new place would be free of the dangers faced before. It turned out to be true. No other alien creatures were found on the other side. Things progressed. The colony flourished.

### **Nine hundred years later**

Cities were built. Several other colonists ships had arrived. Humans had survived. Back on Earth, things had gotten worse. Wars had broken out. Not enough resources to provide for over population. Signals that had taken hundreds of year to reach back to earth reported the ideal environments and conditions present on planet Zorex. Lines for future space travel away from Earth were long. Not all the colony ships made it. Some ran into the troubles just like the Odyssey had experienced. Still hope prevailed.

On the other side of Zorex, the aphid colony had also prospered. The humans had created an imbalance in the former status quo. The Dark Blood creatures were overwhelmed by the aphid horde and completely wipe out. That allowed the queen to multiply ten fold. Without the Dark Blood supplying extra food, the colony needed to expand its territory. They made an exodus from their original home expanding all across the globe. It took centuries, but eventually they made it to the other side.

The population of Karltown could not remember how their city got its name. That was ancient history. A statue to someone named Karl was erected eons ago. Supposedly, he had made some heroic effort to save the colony in the beginning. Nothing was ever erected to a man named Alex though. That was lost in translation.

One day, a couple of residents noticed some small bugs landing on a flower. How cute she remarked. I wonder what it is?

The first of the nymphs had arrived.

I imagine in the future of the planet Zorex there will be an epic battle to eclipse all epic battles. One billion aliens against two million humans. I can envision it in my head, but I feel my literary talent is too limited to put it down on paper. Perhaps more exciting than World War Z. Maybe I need more wine?

Side note: Maybe you are wondering what happened to Andy and Alice. They had traveled along with the horde of alien aphids hoping to get a chance once again to aid mankind. The aphids had no interest in metal bots and just ignored them. The only visible effect from their witness of Alex and Stephanie's demise was a rust colored trace of some kind of liquid that had dripped down from their eye lenses.

***The Real End***