

Ares Unbound

by W. W. Wolf

*“Before time began there was no heaven,
no earth and no space between.*

*A vast dark ocean washed upon the shores
of nothingness and licked the edges of night.”*

-Hindu Creation Belief

Darkness. Void. Nothingness...

Energy. Mass. Existence...

All that was and is and will ever be, flashed into existence with an unknowable event where time itself was born. Since its singular beginning, the blazing cauldron expanded and cooled, controlled by some unknowable supreme Intelligence or simply by the consequence of physical laws, randomly decreed and congealed into being during the first thousandths of a microsecond after existence. Countless stars and entire galaxies had been born and died, spewing the contents of their nucleogenic furnaces into the mass of expanding, primordial gases; seeding the birth of those to come with material to which those that had existed before had not had access. What had been for nearly a thousand million years a Universe primarily consisting of hydrogen and helium, was now, ever so slowly, being contaminated with heavier elements, as well as strange, new, feeble compounds of nitrogen, oxygen and carbon formed in the ever increasing interstellar space.

Space-time continued to expand; the Universe continued to evolve, until the fateful moment when a large swirling cloud of gas and dust containing the newly formed elements and molecules, only one such cloud of countless billions of others throughout the Universe, no different, no more special than its neighbors, started its transformation.

Whether the cause of this transformation was due to infinitesimal 'blemishes' in the uniformity of the cloud present since flashing into existence, or compression waves generated by a nearby supernova, or the finger of God stirring the contents in His cauldron of Creation, the omnipresence force of gravity took hold and over additional eons the Solar System coalesced. Its central mass becoming increasingly dense and heated, until the nuclear furnace within ignited, giving birth to a new star, the Sun, and bringing the first glimpses of true light to this once dark, cold region of endless space. But gravity, the consummate sculptor of the Universe, had not yet finished this latest of its masterpieces.

Other masses, not as large as the infant Sun, formed, as particles and clumps and mountain-sized chunks succumbed to the pull of gravity and combined. Near the center of the cloud, only material heavy with the star-generated matter could withstand the great heat of the Sun. Further out, icy matter combined with rocky material and gases to form gas giants, as the Sun's energy swept the region clear of the remaining gas and dust.

Millennia upon millennia passed, the planets evolved, life took root, and the remnants of that mere cloud of interstellar debris produced a miracle surpassed perhaps by only that of Creation itself – sentience.

The rise of *Homo sapiens* on Earth took time. In the four thousand million years since life had been first spawned on this rock, entire galaxies had formed, stars ignited, burned and died, thousands of species evolved, rose to prominence and disappeared. Finally, conditions or events unknown aligned to produce a species of self-aware, big-

brained, nearly hairless monkeys capable of asking, “*Why?*”

Many looked to the heavens for answers. We observed and plotted; measured and theorized, all in an effort to understand the Universe around us and our place within and perhaps, even to commune with its Creator. In our observations we found amazing structure and order, but the answers to our most pressing questions as to our purpose and our fate remained hidden.

The answers were there. The only unanswerable questions were those that were never asked. We asked the questions; we sought the answers, and not the least of those was the question, “*Are we alone?*”

There were only two possible and simple answers, *yes or no*. If the answer is *no*, personal and racial motivation enter the mix, for there is the question of the other intelligences with which we share this Universe. What of them? Just the concept sparks a racial fear of domination. A fear rightly placed. Consider the numerous times

throughout human history when a relatively primitive culture met one that was significantly more advanced. Violent or benevolent, it did not matter. Within a few generations, the primitive culture was absorbed by the more advanced one. Perhaps it would take longer if the advanced culture was truly alien and they were peaceful, but it would happen, and if they were not peaceful.... Survival of the human culture, if not the human species, demanded that we take to the stars and meet whatever was out there as peers, not isolated creatures wallowing in the backwaters of a nondescript galactic spiral.

However, if the answer to the age-old question was *yes*, then what obligation, as the sole sentient beings in the whole of Creation, do we have to the Universe or the God that spawned us? Are we morally or intellectually justified to simply huddle on our beautiful blue planet and await some despot to come along, armed with one of many civilization-destroying weapons to put an end the Universe’s greatest creation or perhaps it would be another of the Universe’s more modest creations that does the

deed through a series of deadly pandemics? Even if these catastrophes are averted, we are still left to face the one that will eventually befall us – a planet-killing meteor strike. It has happened before and it will most certainly happen again. Or are we obligated to venture forth from our oasis to be fruitful and multiply and fill the Universe, a Universe created solely for us, thus insuring the survival of intelligence to fulfill whatever ultimate purpose that lay before us?

We look to the Heavens for answers and guidance... and the Heavens beckon, *“Come, fulfill your destiny, and I will shower you with wonders beyond imagination.”*