

The stars my incarnation

You read it here first, folks.

Robert A. Metzger

“Welcome back, Creator Metzger.” I attempted a groan, but the noise sounded like a cat hacking up a fur ball. Before me stood several dozen black-robed priests, the nearest one dropping to his knees and shuffling toward my optical receiver.

“On this 200th anniversary of our arrival at the Centauri system, we wish to tell you of our progress, of our further implementation of Your Vision.”

I angled my optical interface upward, peering up through the transparent ceiling of the Cathedral. Night, and Alpha Centauri A burned bright, less than one light day away.

“Get over here,” I said to the priest.

He knee-walked to the optical interface.

“I’m not your Creator,” I said. “I was a little-known science-fiction writer of the early twenty-first century who had the great misfortune of getting published in a journal called *Nature*.”

The priest hid his face in his hands, and shuddered. “You gave us the stars, showed us where our destiny lay.”

I sighed, this time the speaker emitting a bark that sounded like a car backfiring. “Every time one of you wakes me up, I try to explain this to you, try to make it clear, try to set the record straight, but none of you seems to get it.”

“We are not worthy,” he said as he dropped to the crystal floor, grinding his nose into its rainbow-coloured surface.

“I’ll try once again,” I said, doubtful that

this time would be any different. “It was the year 2000, nearly 700 years ago, and *Nature* was celebrating the beginning of the new millennium with essays about what the next 1,000 years might bring. I wrote one of those pieces, about a future in which most of the Solar System had been transported four light years away to the Centauri star system.”

“And Your Will was done!” screamed the head priest.

“Yes, my will was done. In that fictional piece, I proposed that if the Sun’s magnetic fields could be controlled, then they could be used to expel a relativistic jet of protons, basically turning the Sun into a rocket engine. Under an extremely small but steady acceleration, just one ten-thousandth of a standard gee, after 200 years the Sun would be moving at nearly 2% the speed of light and would have travelled two light years. At that point, the direction of the acceleration would be reversed, and 200 years later the Sun would come to a halt in the Centauri system. The whole trip would consume only about 1% of the Sun’s mass.

“Of course it wouldn’t be an easy trip. Even under that gentle acceleration the big outer planets would be left behind, and Earth’s circular orbit would be turned into an ellipse. As a result, half of the year the planet would freeze and the other half it would bake. It seemed to me that the easiest way to get the job done would be if the Sun first achieved self-awareness.”

“Your Vision was made real.”

“Yes. I died back in 2027, the result of a Man-versus-Speeding-Bus event. They iced me down, keeping me in cold storage for

spare parts. The next 50 years saw the development of self-awareness in silicon-based hardware, which then gave way to self-awareness in plasma systems, the density of ions twirling about in a magnetic field far in excess of anything silicon was capable of producing.

“In 2083, one totally certifiable loon named Rufus Mapelton, a plasma hacker who spent every conscious and unconscious moment interfaced to the plasma network, stumbled across my long-forgotten *Nature* piece. Mapelton had a little ‘eureka’ moment, realizing that if he could transfer a self-aware plasma-based entity into the photosphere of the Sun, it could then take control of the Sun’s magnetic fields and implement my fictional vision.”

“He was Your Instrument.”

“I suppose so. Mapelton synthesized his plasma virus, unlinked it to one of the Sol-Corona satellites, and then had the satellite spiral into the Sun. Six weeks later the Sun achieved self-awareness and decided to head off for the Centauri system. It was then that they reconstructed what was left of my mind, hoping that I could help shut down the Sun’s desire for a new home. Of course, I couldn’t. Between the quakes, the comet impacts and the skewed orbit, intelligent life barely survived the trip.”

“And now we flourish,” said the priest. “And we wish to tell You of our further achievements.”

It was always like this. They listened, but never really heard me. “So what’s new?”

“We plan a wondrous journey.”

“Oh?”

“What few organics remain have decided to transfer their consciousness into the Sun’s photospheric magnetic matrix. Once the transfer is complete, we will resume the Sun’s journey, moving toward the Galactic Centre, transferring a portion of ourselves into each star we pass.”

“I’d also mentioned that in the *Nature* piece, hadn’t I?” I asked.

The priest nodded.

And I knew what would finally come. Each and every star would eventually achieve self-awareness, each setting off on its own journey of discovery and exploration. And in the end, the Universe itself would be aware, the organic having given way to the plasma, the Universe itself forever transformed by the ramblings of an insignificant twenty-first-century science-fiction writer. ■

Robert A. Metzger is a science-fiction writer. He has just completed a novel, Picoverse, and looks forward to the fame awaiting him in the twenty-eighth century.

JACEY

