

Synopsis:

## THE ASTRAL IMPERATIVE

(Vol. 2 THE MACHINE)

THE ASTRAL IMPERATIVE (Vol. 2 THE MACHINE) is the second in a planned series of novels anticipating the expansion of humanity across the universe in the coming millennium. This second novel begins where the first novel ended, on Mars. Of the original nine-person crew, only three have survived. Marooned on the red planet for two years, the story of their survival becomes a testament to the indomitability of the human spirit.

The journey within and around themselves is necessarily existential. As they continue to explore the vestiges of an alien world, their increasingly odd thoughts and feelings combine with the strangeness of their environment to reach the parameters of an alien consciousness, a presence so subtle that it is hardly fathomable.

The mystery of second genesis, the discovery of a strand of DNA that is distinctly alien, persists – and the advent the Dream Machine, the first computer constructed from the reverse engineering of the human brain, continues to baffle the species:

Did the Dream Machine attain consciousness, or was it a conduit for an alien intelligence to express itself? Was the DNA finding indigenous to Mars or was it deposited from a meteorite whose origins in the murky depths of the universe tell the tale of another civilization?

The answers to these questions and more become entangled with the dubious agendas pursued by the second mission to Mars. The saviors, the multinational crew sent to Mars under the guise of noble purpose, are eventually splintered by the power grab on Earth. Nearly all are turned against each other in an attempt to secure the unimaginable power of the Dream Machine for their respective countries and handlers.

Not unlike the first novel, much of Vol. 2 THE MACHINE takes place on Earth. The findings and experiences on Mars impact the geo-political situation around the world. The hard won peace and cooperation is shattered by disillusionment. The Chinese grab for power on the moon and the devastating effects of global warming combine to push the world toward war. In the process, we revisit our Earth bound protagonists: Sara Sietzer, the Captain's widow, who learns the truer and deeper meaning of love from an unrequited lust for power; Commander Jacob "Rounder" Valdez, NASA spokesman who would endure the worst kind of torture to save humanity from itself; and Robert "Tex O'Toole, the ornery old Director of Flight Operations, whose foresight and fearlessness bespeaks the manifest destiny of the human race to the stars.

Vol.2 THE MACHINE is a thoroughly original and challenging sequel, embellished with passion and romance, where the evolution of the species meets the frailty of the human heart on Earth and on Mars.