

Erik Hanssen huddled under the heavy wooden table. Around him, the ground shook as wave after wave of missiles struck the barren desert, bringing pieces of brick and mortar down from the wall above his head. His granddaughter, Anna, huddled next to him.

“It’s gonna be okay, hon,” he said as she cried on his shoulder.

“I’m scared. Where’s mommy?” Anna asked.

Erik cringed. *How do you explain death to a nine-year-old?*

“She’s in a better place now, sweetie,” he replied, fighting back tears. “She’s with God.”

“Will we see her soon?” she asked.

“I don’t know, honey. I don’t know.”

QUOTE GOES HERE

—Attribution Goes Here

I can honestly say that nothing like it has ever been written and, God willing, nothing else ever will be.

—My editor

We said we would publish this when Duke Nukem Forever<sup>®1</sup> shipped. I guess that was a bad call.

—My publisher

Some stories are elegant in their simplicity. Others are just simple.

—Anonymous reviewer

It made us want to improve our products to better compete.

—The vacuum cleaner company down the street

As much as it pains me to say it, some rules were meant to be broken.

—Author of “Any Idiot Can Write”

This novel has single-handedly contributed more to global warming than any other book in the history of publishing.

—Guy Montag

If you prick me, do I not bleed? If I read this, do I not retch?

—Actor on the set of Merchant of Venice

It is impossible to estimate the impact his book had on me.

—Victim, great book avalanche of 2023

I never knew cats could be suicidal until I read this book to mine.

—The crazy cat lady

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<sup>1</sup>Duke Nukem Forever is a registered trademark of Gearbox Software.

# Patriots: Enemies From Within

Preview Edition

A novel by  
David A. Gatwood

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*For Maria. You'll always be my angel.*

# A Word from the Author:

A few years ago, I woke up one morning and had the urge to write a novel. Two years and lots of delays later, “Traitors in Waiting” was born.

Long before that novel was finished, however, I was driving across Highway 280 at De Anza Boulevard in Cupertino, heading to work, having recently muttered something about how I’d love to live in a private island nation where only intelligent, world-wise people lived. Suddenly, I had an idea for a story in which a family of super-geniuses ended up raising a mentally retarded child in just such a society.

A few hours later, I was thinking about starting a new book, with Traitors only fractionally finished, when another possible direction surfaced—the idea of combining the two books into one. However, I didn’t want to clutter the first book with something quite that unexpected or unusual, so it hit me that this would be a good start for a second book in a trilogy.

This book is the second in that series of three books. Unlike most trilogies, this book does not pick up where the first one left off. Instead, after providing a fair amount of backstory, it picks up somewhere between the first two chapters and the third chapter, then continues in parallel with the first book, telling events from the perspective of some of the opposing forces. The third book similarly parallels the first two stories.

The first book in the Patriots series, “Traitors in Waiting”, explores the great colonial war from the perspective of military officers born and raised in a loyalist Earth colony, who find out, much to their horror, that the military is being manipulated by traitors in high-ranking positions.

The second book, “Enemies From Within”, treats the story from the perspective of a colonist and his friends.

The third book, “Beyond the Veil”, tells the truth behind the war.

After the book, be sure to read “Closing Thoughts”, where I ruin it for everybody by explaining everything you wanted to know about the story, and probably a lot of things you never wanted to know.

# Special Thanks:

LIST OF PEOPLE  
GOES HERE



# Prologue:

*January 17, 2391*

Marc watched Kurt step to the podium before a crowd of about two hundred people in the crew mess of Portable Base 3. It was a crudely constructed ship for its time, but in many ways, it was an incredible achievement. From the very first sketch, it was designed to be a giant, space-borne research facility with all the amenities. Like most government projects, when push came to shove, they cut all the amenities....

The crew mess was one of the amenities. It looked like a filthy soup kitchen in a dark alley in Brooklyn, but it got the job done... *barely*.

Kurt Lawrence was the base commander, so when he spoke, everyone's ears perked up, but few more so than those of his closest advisors, Marc Hanssen and Kimberly Kurtz.

Marc had to admit that, friends or not, Kurt's meteoric rise to power over the past few years *still* gave him the creeps. Somehow he felt all too glad to be in the company of someone like Kim—possibly the only girl on the base who could be as cynical as he could. *It just makes life easier*, he thought.

"I have an announcement," Kurt told the onlookers. "I've just received word that Terran forces are taking Tularis Prime. We can't risk this project being discovered, and after that last attack, we are unable to fold. We have to move now."

Marc shivered. *The StarKiller was never supposed to be used except as a proof of concept, he thought, or so they told me. Why are we moving? Please tell me it hasn't come to this. I'd rather destroy the Omega Dawn project than use it as a weapon.*

“I thought the StarKiller was never to be used except as a deterrent,” Kim asked.

Marc relaxed a bit. *Wonderful. Someone else asked, so I don't have to.*

“The Tularis System has all but fallen,” Kurt replied. “Terran forces have already shown a willingness to scorch the earth after they take control of a planet. At this point, you should assume that everyone on Tularis Prime is dead or soon will be.”

Marc's heart sank. *My family...*

“We have decided to show the Terrans that we are willing to use the ultimate weapon—that we are even willing to make the ultimate sacrifice—to halt their advance on our territory,” Kurt continued. “Today, we black out Tularis, our sun.”

As a Commodore, Marc knew that he could technically pull rank and overrule him, but Kurt was in charge of this posting, and his orders came straight from Admiral Murrow, which made that a bad idea....

*Almost as bad an idea as blowing up a star,* he thought.

Marc closed his eyes, bit his lip, and sighed.

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ERIK Hanssen huddled under the heavy wooden table. Around him, the ground shook as wave after wave of missiles struck the barren desert, bringing pieces of brick and mortar down from the wall above his head. His granddaughter, Anna, huddled next to him.

“It's gonna be okay, hon,” he said as she cried on his shoulder.

“I'm scared. Where's mommy?” Anna asked.

Erik cringed. *How do you explain death to a nine-year-old?*

“She's in a better place now, sweetie,” he replied, fighting back tears. “She's with God.”

“Will we see her soon?” she asked.

“I don’t know, honey. I don’t know.”

Another explosion shook the house, bringing bits of the ceiling down on their heads. Anna screamed at the top of her lungs.

As Erik held her tightly, his granddaughter’s terrified cry was drowned out by the sound of engines whining—*a fleet of landing craft settling to the ground outside, no doubt*. As the bright lights bathed their house, Erik and Anna covered their eyes and waited.

Any moment now, the troops would start firing, their pulse rifles obliterating anything and anyone in their paths.

As if on cue, the landing troops began firing at the oncoming soldiers—a deafening cacophony that left Anna’s ears crying in pain—and all the while, air raid sirens blared in the distance.

Suddenly, an even more violent explosion rocked the house, sending a ceiling beam falling onto the table above them, and along with it fell darkness. As the power failed across the city, the sirens stopped, and their world fell into an eerie stillness—dark, silent, and cold....



Part I:

Early  
Colonial  
Life

Spring, 2304

## Chapter

## One

*About eighty-seven years earlier (2304)*

WHEN the doorbell rang at 10:30 in the evening, John Richards knew something was wrong. *Jane! Is she okay? Did something happen to Allison? Is Bobby hurt?*

The face at the door left him even more surprised, however.

“Mike? What brings you here at this hour?” he asked.

Mike Terrazzo was the headmaster at his children’s school. *What could possibly be important enough to keep me awake this late at night?*

“I came with some bad news, John,” he replied. “I wanted to tell you personally.”

“What is it? Are my children okay?” John asked.

“Yes, yes, they’re fine,” he replied, then added, “Well, no, they’re not fine. They aren’t hurt, but fine would be... well, that’s what I came here to talk to you about.”

“Get to the point, please,” John said curtly.

“It’s about your son,” he replied. “His Greenup test came back at only 25. There’s simply no denying that your son may be... developmentally challenged.”

“Don’t you call my son a retard,” John snapped. “He has more brains than you’ll ever have.”

“I didn’t call him a retard,” Mike calmly answered. “He simply has problems learning. John, you should really get him some help. I’m told there’s an excellent school for mentally handicapped students on Mars Colony.”

“We’re not moving to Mars,” John told him.

“You don’t have to move,” Mike explained, “but your son can’t stay here. They have a boarding program there, and since you’re financially strained, I’m sure he could get a full scholarship to cover all of his educational costs.”

“He’s staying here,” John informed him matter-of-factly. “We aren’t moving, and neither is my son. Our contract says that he is guaranteed perpetual education as long as we live here in Nashville.”

“A technicality, but one that is easily remedied, John,” he replied. “We can be very... persuasive.”

“Out.”

“What?”

“Get out of my house. Now. I don’t ever want to see you here again.”

As John shoved him through the open door, Mike turned to him for one final plea.

“At least think about it,” Mike said. “Things really would be better for him—and for you—on Mars Colony.”

And with that, John slammed the door in his face.

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“BOBBY,” the young woman said gently, “what are you doing here? This isn’t your class anymore.”

To a twelve-year-old boy, Mrs. Binkley was a beautiful angel, her long brown hair flowing around her pearly thirty-four-year-old face....

*And a body to die for,* Bobby thought. *What does she mean, “This isn’t your class anymore”?*

“You’ve been transferred to section 70,” she continued.

*Section 70? That's the handicapped class. There must be some mistake.*

"Isn't section 70 the class for retards?" he asked.

"No, it's for people with trouble learning, just like you," she replied.

"Ha, ha! Bobby is a retard," one child chanted.

Soon, the entire class was chanting, "Bobby is a retard. Bobby is a retard," over and over and over.

Bobby was horrified, and ran from the room crying.

"Kids can be so cruel," Mike said gleefully.

"Can't they, though?" Mrs. Binkley replied, grinning from ear to ear.

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"HEY, Bobby!" came a voice from across the playground.

Bobby turned. "Kate.... I suppose you're gonna call me a retard, too."

"Of course not!" she replied. "You know they didn't mean it.... Well, some of them did, but... you know what I mean."

"Thanks, Kate."

"I overheard Mrs. Binkley and Mr. Terrazzo talking," she said. "They said they want to ship you off to Mars, but your parents won't let them, and that's why they're putting you in the dumb class."

"They what!?" he exclaimed.

"Shh. Keep your voice down. I don't want them to know I heard them."

"Why not? It's not like you were doing anything wrong."

"I was kind-of sneaking around behind the school to make out with Matthew."

"Oh. I see," Bobby said.

"You know," she offered coyly, "you *could* get even.... You could make them pay."



“But how?” he asked.

Bobby could almost see the wheels turning in her head as she thought about this rare opportunity. Kate Hayward had always hated Mrs. Binkley—ever since she made her stay after school for putting gum in Pete Hillsdale’s hair back in first grade—and this was just the sort of opportunity she longed for—the opportunity to get back at Mrs. Binkley in a way that couldn’t be traced back to her.

And so it was with great anticipation that Bobby waited for her reply, and when it came, he was not disappointed.

“It’s simple, really,” she finally said, drawing a square on the dirt at the back of the playground as she spoke. “First, you wait until she is in the bathroom. Then, you sneak into Louis Belmont’s lab and steal the freon canister and use it to freeze the door shut. Next, you....”

## Chapter

## Two

*Three days later*

AT precisely 1:35 P.M., Bobby watched as Mrs. Binkley entered the bathroom, setting the plan into motion.

Bobby froze the door shut. A few minutes later, Mrs. Binkley began trying to open the door, only to find the lock mechanism hopelessly jammed.

Bobby couldn't help but wonder what Kate meant when she said "*Make sure you don't use too much fertilizer. You just want to scare her.*" He wasn't quite sure how much fertilizer was too much, so he only poured one bag into the wheelbarrow. As he sprayed the glycerine on top of it, it began to fizz.

Suddenly the door started to give way. Terrified, Bobby ran away. Bobby had already rounded the corner by the time his teacher slammed the bathroom door into the wheelbarrow and disturbed its rather unstable contents, but the resulting explosion nearly knocked him to his knees in spite of his distance.

"Jeez, Bobby, how much did you use!?!?" Kate asked.

"Only one bag," he replied.

"Mrs. Binkley!" she screamed in horror as she ran into the burning building.

As the roof of the school collapsed, Bobby curled up into a ball and cried.

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“I have some very bad news,” Mike said, pushing his way into John’s house as he did. “Your son blew up part of our school today. Thankfully, no one was killed, but six students and a teacher are in critical condition.”

“I’m aware of what you claim he did,” John replied curtly. “I’m also aware that you drove him to it by moving him into a class with severely retarded children in front of all of his friends.”

“He locked a teacher in a bathroom and planted an explosive outside the door, John.”

“He wouldn’t know how to make nitroglycerine, and he’s not smart enough to figure it out on his own. Someone must have tricked him into doing it.”

“Regardless of your personal feelings in this matter, I feel—and the school board agrees—that your son is simply too dangerous, and cannot be allowed to continue attending our school.”

“Are you breaching our contract?” John asked demandingly.

“Your contract was breached the moment your son committed an act of violence against a member of our staff,” he replied. “Like it or not, your son is out. According to the law, your son will remain in the custody of the courts until he can be relocated to a boarding school on Mars Colony.”

“You can’t do this!”

“It’s already done.”

## Chapter

## Three

*Ten years later (2314)*

THE sun rose like a tiny, golden disc over the Martian landscape, the rarified, terraformed atmosphere glowing a deep bluish color in response, but before the first ray of sunlight shone in the distance, Tim Hanssen was already on his way to the fields.

“Hey, Tim!”

“Hey, Jeff!”

Jeff Atherton was a burly man, about two decades older than Tim, a mere lad of 28. Jeff ran the “A6 Farm”. This year, A6 was growing grain to replenish nutrients in the soil after last year’s corn season.

Because of the thin atmosphere, crop-dusting aircraft were nearly impossible to fly, and even at a reduced dosage, aerosolized fertilizers and pesticides would be dangerous to the planet’s inhabitants.

For tall crops like corn, they used crawlers—human-driven vehicles that had tall wheel stalks with long pipe sprayers in-between. In general, though, they had to spray most crops by hand.

Tim was stationed in A5, the fruit orchard, growing apple trees. Through the wonders of genetic engineering,

they had created a breed of apple tree that could withstand the thin air, but even with all their advances, the cold Martian nights were too much for them to handle.

To keep the trees alive, Tim came in early every morning and opened the giant glass roof to keep the plants from overheating, then closed it in the late afternoon to trap the sun-warmed air for the long night ahead.

During the hot hours, he monitored the irrigation systems from a cool control room. Later in the afternoon, he drove the picker around the orchard, picking fruit and carefully spraying for any undesirable insects.

But today was different. Today, Tim was going to the city to interview for a construction job on the new skyscraper.

Tim carefully strapped a filter mask to his face before entering the border zone.

As Tim activated the giant doors, Angela walked up behind him.

“Oh, hey Angela,” he said, slightly startled. “All you have to do is come in every hour and make sure the trees aren’t getting flooded, and don’t forget to push this red button at 3:30.”

“Relax, Tim,” she replied. “I’ve got it. Your precious trees will be fine without you for a day.”

Tim smiled. *Yeah, they’re in good hands*, he thought. As he walked back outside into the harsh midmorning light, he wondered for a brief moment if the new job was worth losing what he was leaving behind, but he put it out of his mind as he stepped into his pod car and closed the hatch.

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TIM had to squint at the bright sunlight as he stepped out of the pod car in New Paradise. Overhead, the monorail sped by, squealing like a pig on its way to the slaughterhouse.

Tim had barely taken his first step when a taxi pod shot by mere inches from his face. As it did, the taxi honked its horn. Tim could barely comprehend the shouting that followed; he thought the driver called him a forking Mormon, but he suspected he had misheard the man.

*The city is beautiful, he thought—the skyscrapers dotting the horizon, the deep blue sky; the orange-red dirt, the city lights.... I could really be at home here.*

And so he was in that state of mind when he entered the construction gate at fifty-first and Evelyn. The foreman met him and escorted him quickly into his office.

“Hey. Tim, right?” the foreman asked. He looked oddly out of place as he sat behind his mahogany desk.

“Yes,” Tim replied.

The foreman got straight to the point. “I understand you were a network technician on Earth, and you want to run fiber for us,” he said.

“That’s right,” he replied. “I shot the fiber for the Joswiak Center back in ‘03.”

“Wow, that must have been some stunt. I understand they ran over a thousand miles of cable after the building was finished.”

“Yeah, Joz wanted to make sure his network would always be the fastest, so he had us run it in conduit on the outside of the walls. Made the ceiling a bitch, though, ’cause he didn’t leave holes in the concrete.”

“Well, you’re obviously qualified,” the foreman replied. “The only real question is whether you’re ready to change jobs.”

“Yeah, that’s the one thing I *am* sure about.”

“In that case, I guess you should meet the architect. He’s up in the terrace dome.”

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THE elevator door closed with a thud as Tim stepped into the ninety-second-floor hallway in the newly constructed Connelly Center. The interior walls were still bare steel studs, with the occasional outlet box, conduit, or bare water pipe attached here and there. Overhead, he could see a bunch of walkways, and above them, a giant glass dome through which you could see the stars even during the day.

Tim was awestruck as he stared out the window at the Martian landscape. After a few moments, he noticed the reflection of a tall man walking up behind him.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” the man asked.

“Yes, truly,” he replied. “Are you Mike Lawrence?”

“Yeah. You must be Tim Hanssen.”

“That’s me,” he replied. “Say, this is a remarkable piece of work, but there’s something I don’t quite get.”

“What’s that?” Mike asked.

“We’re on the ninety-second floor. Why are the walls so thick?”

“It’s an air pressure issue. The atmosphere is so thin up here that we had to have thick walls and windows to withstand the pressure difference. That’s why you aren’t in a pressure suit right now.”

“What if a window breaks?” Tim asked.

“There are oxygen shelters and airtight doors every hundred feet or so. We’ll fill you in on all the details at the interior team orientation tomorrow.”

“8:00 sharp,” Tim replied. “I’ll be there.”

## Chapter

## Four

*A few weeks later*

At five o'clock, the shift whistle blew, and Tim Hanssen carefully placed his tools at the side of the room so the replacement shift wouldn't trip over them in the near-darkness of the forty-fourth floor.

Much as he did every day, Francois cursed nearby, muttering that he just needed to install three more sets of mini-blinds to be finished with this room. And as always, he quit anyway, and all feigned amazement as the blinds man put down his hammer and saw.

With this strange custom in the back of his mind, Tim stepped out onto the streets of New Paradise, softly bathed in the orange glow of the slowly setting sun.

The sunlight glistened off the evening dew as the thunder rolled ever closer—the storm looming in the distance like an ever-present monument to the depth of human ingenuity—and with every passing moment, Tim marveled at the beauty of this place.

It truly did seem like paradise—the towering buildings along the glistening, tree-lined boulevards, the mountains in the distance, the birds overhead, and the puffy, white clouds silhouetted against the deep blue sky—but even in



the presence of so much beauty, he still felt that something was missing.

Thus, as darkness fell and the rains fell and the dew fell, so too his heart fell, and Timothy Adam Hanssen found himself once again looking for his Eve in this city of paradise.

\*\*\*

TIM shivered in the cool mist of the A5, the tall trees dripping mercilessly upon his head. As he walked towards the control center, he felt a gentle tap on his shoulder, turned, and found himself face-to-face with Jeff.

“Tim!” he exclaimed. “Jeez, I never thought I’d see you in here again.”

“I’m looking for Angela,” Tim replied. “Have you seen her?”

“She left early to run some errands,” Jeff said. “Sorry you missed her.”

“It happens.... Listen, when you see her again, tell her I stopped by.”

“Will do, Tim. Will do.”

\*\*\*

ANGELA handed the driver a fifty as she stepped cautiously down from the taxi to the surface street below, the cold evening air burning her lungs like a bad novel thrown in a kiln.

Before her sprawled the Connelly Center—ninety-five floors of glass and steel—and, she hoped, her friend Tim.

As she approached, the foreman saw her and jogged in her direction.

“Ya lookin’ for somebody?” he asked.

“Tim... Tim Hanssen,” she replied nervously.

The foreman looked down at his watch. “You just missed him,” he said. “He left about an hour ago... said something about turning in early. Sorry I can’t be more helpful.”

“No prob. Maybe I’ll catch him another time.”

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“So, Tim, what’ll it be?” the bartender asked.

Joe Kurtz, Jr. stood tall at six feet, four inches, with short brown hair and a neatly trimmed goatee. His height helped hide his rather rotund figure, but his beer gut looked oddly larger today, Tim noted.

“I’ll have a Pulitzer, straight up,” he replied. “How are the wife and kids?”

“They’re good,” Joe said. “Maria just has a couple more weeks before she finishes college. We’re all really proud of her. And little James is an honors student in his third grade class this term. I even have the bumper sticker to prove it.”

“And the rest of your family?”

“Well, my sister, Sara, is still on Earth. She’s getting married next fall. My dad, Paul... well, he’s getting up there, but he swears he’s gonna make it to Mars to visit me before the wedding. I’ll believe it when I see it. And of course, my brother Tom is working with you on the Connelly Center.”

“Oh yeah?” Tim asked. “What’s he working on?”

“He’s a structural engineer working on the terrace dome,” Joe replied. “You ought to go up and see him sometime. He follows all that Chelsea Cup stuff like it’s rocket science or something.”

“Umm... it’s a shuttlecraft race. It... uh... actually *is* rocket science,” Tim said questioningly.

“Oh. Good point,” he replied. “Anyway, the point is, he’s a real fan. He could probably tell you every bolt that goes into making one of those things. That’s not saying

anyone could actually *understand* anything he said, just that he'd make it *sound* fascinating."

Tim chuckled. "So where's that Pulitzer?"

"Let's see, Award malt liquor, a gold cup of strawberries from a well-formed plot, simile for blackberries, blend in some sugar for spice, bring it to a boil, then at the climax, add ice and cool things off to a cathartic denouement, and top it off with a prize cherry from grandma's garden.... Yup, one Pulitzer, coming right up."

"Thanks, Joe."

"Say, Tim, you okay?" Joe asked as the glass of ice suddenly sublimed in a puff of steam.

"Yeah, why?"

"You don't usually order something that stiff."

"I'm drowning my troubles," Tim replied.

"Trying to wash away the lonely?"

"Something like that. Oh, and make it to go. I don't want to drive home with that in my gut."

"Sure. Will do."

\*\*\*

ANGELA stepped warily into Joe's Bar and Grille.

"Hello, Joe. Whaddaya know?" she asked jokingly.

Joe just grunted.

"Not much for talking today, eh?"

"Not much, Ma'am," he replied. "Say, your friend Tim was just in here a while back."

"Let me guess," she began, then was joined by Joe in saying, "you just missed him."

"One of those days, eh?" he quipped.

"One of those years."

## Chapter

## Five

*Two weeks later*

THE heated air shimmered above the sidewalk as Tim ran towards the Connelly Center. He was already about ten minutes late and getting later by the minute.

“Stupid pod car,” he muttered. “I should never have let those guys at Cheap Lube get their hands on it.”

The sidewalk seemed to go on for miles ahead of him in a never-ending line towards an ever-elusive destination. When he finally reached the construction entrance, he checked his watch. *Twenty minutes. Not bad for a mile and a half on foot....*

Tim cringed. *Oooh, my feet.... Ouch. Next time I call a cab,* he thought as he rounded the corner. Suddenly, his feet were not the biggest source of pain. He rubbed his aching head, then rubbed his eyes. *Angela.*

“Angela?” he asked, staring at the girl with whom he had just butted heads. “What are you doing here?”

“Looking for you,” she replied. “I heard you tried to catch me at work the other night.”

“Yeah, about that,” Tim began.

Angela interrupted him. “I have to get back to the farm before they miss me. Why don’t we talk about it over dinner.”

Tim stood in shock for a moment. “That... sounds nice,” he replied. “Dinner it is. Seven o’clock? Terry’s Steak House?”

“That’s good for me. See you then.”

“Yeah.... See you then.”

As Angela left, Tim couldn’t help wondering what just happened. *Did she just ask me out? And did I just want her to ask?*

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THOMAS Kurtz watched longingly as the hostess seated a young couple from across the lobby. He managed to get a reservation at one of the nicest restaurants in town, and still he’d been waiting for nearly an hour.

*Oh well,* he thought, glancing briefly at Marcia. *At least I have good company.*

With that, he stood and walked over to the hostess.

“Excuse me, miss?” he asked. “Any idea what the wait time will be?”

“Probably about fifteen minutes,” she replied.

“Tom?” a man asked from behind him.

Tom spun on his heel and ran headfirst into Tim, inadvertently knocking him into a chest-high planter.

“Tim!” he said, startled. “Good to see you.”

“Would you like to join us?” Tim asked. “We’re next on the list, I think.”

“Are you sure?” Tom asked.

“Fine by me,” Angela said. “I always like meeting Tim’s friends.”

“Honey?” Tom asked.

Marcia just smiled and nodded.

“Trish, could you make that a party of four?” Tim asked.

“Certainly,” the hostess replied. “We should have something in just a minute.”

A few moments later, they were seated at a small table in the front window. Above them, the space station Svoboda glowed like a small artificial moon in the night sky over New Paradise.

“It’s hard to believe you’re getting married, Tom,” Tim said.

“Yeah. Who’d have thought?” Tom asked, smiling. “I finally met the perfect woman. Marcia’s so beautiful, but she’s not vain like a lot of girls.”

“That’s always a good thing,” Tim replied.

With that, Marcia leaned over to Angela and struck up a conversation of her own.

“Have you seen my ring?” she asked, grinning ear to ear.

Angela smiled and nodded.

“She’s always really sweet, too,” Tom added.

“Hey, waiter! What’s the holdup? Where’s my escar-got?” Marcia shouted.

“And she’s smart, too.”

“Jeez, you’d think that they had to catch the clams,” she muttered.

“Isn’t she incredible?” he asked.

Tim smiled a quirky smile and nodded.

“When’s the wedding?” Angela asked, a look of disgust already beginning to creep across her features.

“It’s this weekend,” Marcia replied. “We’re eloping.”

“My parents said she wasn’t good enough,” Tom continued. “Shows you what they know.”

Tim just sighed and shook his head.

# About the Author:

David is an avid musician, writer, photographer, videographer, musical composer, and hard-core geek with a Master's degree in computer science and a Bachelor's degree in communications (broadcasting) and computer science.



In addition to writing this book, David also created various workflow tools used in its production, did all of the content production and design, redesigned many of the fonts, and drew the cover art.

His choral music has been performed by the Diocesan Choir of Monterey, California and the contemporary choir at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Santa Cruz, CA. He spends much of his spare time performing with musical ensembles in the greater Santa Cruz area.

For a complete copy of this book, visit:

<http://www.patriotsbooks.com/>