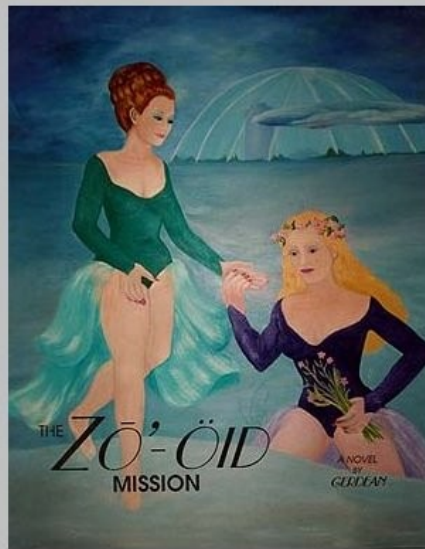


## ADVENT OF THE SUPERNALS

### THE ZŌ'ÖID MISSION



A NOVEL...

By GERDEAN

#### A REVIEW BY ALEX WALL

I am not much of a fiction reader. Nor am I a fiction writer. But, I do desire to grow up to be one someday. And I'm not kidding about that. I have been writing a sci-fi adventure story myself for about fifteen years now. It is my only fiction-writing project. I got a lot done last spring and hope to do more this summer. I can't make myself write, so when the motivation wanes the book is simply put back on the shelf for later. The frustrating thing is, I know the whole story that I want to tell, it is just the writing of it that I procrastinate on.

When I do *read* fiction, I am usually drawn to a classic, or a Stephen King novel (a fellow Mainer), but most likely, any kind of sci-fi does the trick. I am a kind-of non-fiction bulimic. I mentally ingest large quantities of information and then regurgitate it from memory. And for many people, what is produced is just as lovely as that image may be made. That is why fiction fascinates me so much. I can eat as much as I want and I never feel the urge to blab about it. Unless, I review it of course.

Now, I hate to say it, but most Urantia Book based fiction leaves me disappointed. It is not daring enough. It doesn't get down and dirty enough. And it is way too uninspired, fantasy-wise. This is strange considering that the Urantia Book seems like it would be a real treasure trove of unusual ideas to draw from.

There *have* been some some successes...BIG successes...

We are all aware that the late [Gene Roddenberry](#), was influenced by the Urantia Book and its concepts are all over the *Star Trek* universe. Roddenberry kept his association to the Urantia Book private. Had the series started after the end of the Urantia Foundation's copyright, it may have been a different story altogether. *Star Trek* is daring, dirty (sometimes), and full of inspired fantasy, but it hasn't been closely associated with the Urantia Book enough to do our reading community much good.

Usually, I'll give in to reading Urantia-based fiction, only because I know the person (like my grandmother's book, *David Zebedee and Ruth*), but they are often hard to finish. What kills it for me is the preachiness and obvious teaching style (Urantia Book terms used in the dialogues of the characters, religious moralizing, etc.). This ruins any sense of adventure and quenches not the reader's thirst for the bizarre and the novel. That IS why they call it a "novel" right? Well since 89% of my interest in life is motivated by the search for novelty, stale, fluffy, Urantia-speak feels like being crushed by boredom.

After this desert of other Urantia fiction, it was so nice and refreshing to jump into Gerdean's book, *The Zo-oid Mission - Book I: Advent of the Supernals* (TZM).

I had heard about this novel for years now. It has come up on UBRON many times (usually brought there by people who haven't read it but know of it). And, being the numb-skull that I am, I never seemed to retain the website built for it: [The Zo-oid Mission](#), in either my brain or my hard drive. Like so many folks the interest didn't push me any further, until...

This last winter at UBRON we were discussing what a future Planetary Government might be like and how it might be achieved. That's when Gerdean's ideas, no doubt worked out ahead of time by writing *TZM*, came through to me suddenly as very interesting. She eventually did mention *TZM*. That put the seed in my mind that I would have to read it sometime. Later on the forum was going back and forth about whether people interact with Midwayers or not.

Well legend has it (and it must remain "legend") that Gerdean had associated in some way with Midwayers. I checked into this a bit, and the belief that other people have in this legend convinced me that there was something to it. Whether or not that is true will never be known while we remain in the flesh I'm afraid. For years I've kept this interesting curiosity in mind. But it was just this year that more of the pieces of the puzzle seemed to fall into place. Now, I've heard a lot of crazy stuff here from Urantia Book readers. And I, myself have experienced a few things that (you will all soon see on another thread) are also quite impressive and interesting. However, I will be very candid and definite in saying that from all the anecdotal evidence I've seen (Urantia Book apocrypha, TeaM archives, my grandmother's accounts from the Trustee meetings at the Urantia Foundation, and my own personal experiences), I have never met anyone whom I definitely feel has met a Midwayer, besides Gerdean.

There is certainly some kind of influence on *TZM* too. But you - dear readers - will have to filter that out for yourselves whenever you have the opportunity to explore this extraordinary book.

Here are some basics about the story line.

The protagonist, Audley (pronounced "ODD-LEE," unless you are more cultured and emphasize the "Au" as "OH", which I am not) Blackstone, daughter of the prominent "Mindal Scientist" Dr. Wilhelm Blackstone ("Doc Will"), finds herself thrown into the heart of a super-secret, multi-planet operation. Being a freelance journalist she can't help but investigate.

It all starts after a harrowing flight from California to meet her boyfriend in New York City. Circling around the skies over New York, waiting nervously for a way to land as the city is gripped by a total blackout, she realizes her boyfriend, Bradford Spencer (a top computer scientist for the US Government) likely knows what is going on but neglected to fill her in on it. It doesn't ruin the story to say she made it down safely. But she is not pleased and she blows up at Brad in the airport parking lot, virtually hijacks his fancy car and intends to drive it all the way back to California where she had just come from.

At first she is thwarted by road blocks and and traffic jams, but manages somehow to find her way out of the city. Passing beyond the chaos of the city limits and driving on through the night, she reaches Western Pennsylvania by dawn and stops along a lonely and deserted country road to take a leak. During this awkward stop and upon discovering that her tire is flat, she *suddenly* meets the man of her dreams (the man of every woman's dreams)...as if he just fell right out of the sky...hmmm, Lanon Zenton. I will let you find out how he got that great name on your own.

Thus begins an adventure of magnificent discovery for Audley. She travels to Spain to meet Alexius Vessey, the weak-bodied but strong minded founder of a kind of social experiment called the Jural Colony Project (JCP). There she also meets the intriguing, "vaporous" and barely visible, Angus - my favorite character. She returns with him to the US to actually visit one of these JPC colonies (constructed under a dome). It is here that she meets the Zo-oid, a new breed of human with outstanding mental abilities and unchallenged technological achievement. I began to understand the plot as it was being slowly revealed much better at this point. It became more apparent that these Zo-oid were advanced enough to be taken seriously by alien and superhuman persons from far and wide.

In fact, Audley, Doc Will, Brad, Lanon, Angus, Sylvia Watergate (Audley's best friend from childhood), and some newly arriving characters (like the two lovely ladies on the cover, Cybelle and Flora) end up together and decide to cooperate in the completion of a great interplanetary project.

So that gives you some idea of what to expect. I don't want to say too much more about the details, because part of the beauty of this novel is being surprised by each new event as it takes place. Gerdean does a wonderful juggling act between revealing the story whilst holding it back.

Now for the fun analysis.

I - as you may know - am a man. This book is NOT written from (or possibly *for*) the male perspective. It is an interesting blend of serious scientific interest, New Age ideas, post-feminist perspectives and lipstick-blotted romance novel. I am generalizing terribly here. But, even before reading *TZM*, I was warned by the author to remember that it is [paraphrasing] "...a woman's take on things." And is it ever. I think more was unveiled to me about the interests and mindset of women than just about any other thing I've ever read! More than any Urantia Book connection

(and there are many), I found the interaction and thoughts of the women of the story mesmerizingly revealing: The love triangles, settling into couples; the careful description of clothing and appearances; the games women play in trying to deceive each other, while somehow always remaining friends.

There is also the strong sense of upper-class, posh values...

Sylvia squirms on the French Provincial sofa and quickly turns the page.

...beautiful people driving fancy cars...

She wheeled the Maxum onto Juniper Drive. God, it was good to be home! Each palm tree waved hello to her. She grinned when she maneuvered the potholes, but frowned at once upon seeing Sylvia's Mercedes in her driveway. She had not anticipated seeing anyone until she had had a chance to get organized. She needed a bath and Lanon needed more time. She needed to talk to her father and arrange for the return of Brad's car. She needed to get her MG from the airport and locate her abandoned luggage.

...generally, jet-setting around the world on mysterious expense accounts, hobnobbing with heads of state and influential people.

Personally, I was a little turned off by all this ambient glitz. But I'm a rough and tumble, bachelor, Yankee. I eat standing up. I buy my clothes at Good Will. I think exotic travel is a waste of time. Of course I still travel - to even greater and more distant lands - it is just done within my home instead of via trans-oceanic flights. The putting on of airs are something people from "away" do. Finishing schools and when-not-to-where-plaid are at the very bottom of my well of interests.

*TZM* is not overwhelming in this respect, men may pick up immediately as a "woman's" world, or they may get into its very subtle foo-foo-ness, with the same enthusiasm I used feel on the ride home with my girlfriend after school just in time to catch "Guiding Light." At first it was just because if I was a good boy and made it through a whole episode I would get some...ehemm...sweet lovin' afterwards. But, in no time I was really getting into the story line.

She'd want to head up to my bedroom after, and all I'd want to do is talk. ;D

Nevertheless, in *TZM* it can sometimes require a great deal of patience to put up with all the little things that women (at least in the case of *TZM*) appear to worry about and fuss over, if you're a man. I found myself wishing the women of this novel could be a little more liberated. For instance Dierdre (Alexius's wife - parodied as the "ideal" woman) explains to Audley [my bold]...

Dierdre shook her head. "Alexius confides very little of his work with me. We have our world that we share with each other and with the children. Alexius keeps busy and I give him freedom to have as much fulfillment as he needs. As for me, I am a wife and the mother of two very active little ones. And **Alexius allows me** as much fulfillment as I can absorb from that."

"I take it you're not into Women's Lib, then."

"Heavens, no," Dierdre laughed a lovely trickle of joy. "I'm not naturally sympathetic to American women. I don't think they need the ERA or whatever it is called."

[ERA here is a nod to what was happening in the real world while Gerdean was writing this novel over a 20 year period (1971-1991).]

I guess the only thing I've ever found confusing about women is how they admire each other for being strong, intelligent, loyal and beautiful - all noble traits even in men's eyes - yet they seem also to be so secretly enamoured with (or trained by society towards wanting) high social status, adventure, intrigue, wealth...even treachery, if it is worth the drama. And judging by the thoughts of the women in *TZM*, sex is overwhelmingly important. But it MUST include romance.

In this exchange, Angus gives advice to the very emotionally naive, Lanon...

"Romance," Angus extolled, "is a sentiment, a refinement of emotion. Romance calls up feelings of tenderness and beauty. Graciousness." He embellished his lesson with inflections and gestures. "The ideals inherent in the romantic situation are represented by things that depict romance, such as music and flowers. And gifts. Or candy."

Lanon was duly attentive.

"Women also long for adventure," Angus continued. "They want their hero to take them to new and exciting places. Not just physical places, but places in the heart and in the imagination. They do not want to be constantly taking care of things. Women appreciate a break from nurturing. They want to soar, and they want their mate to go with them on the flight."

Well, knowing that this was written by a woman, I was taking notes on that one!

I said I liked this book because it was different from other Urantia Book fiction. One way is in the portrayal of the drug use, implications about drugs in society and the hypocrisy displayed but Audrey and others.

Here Jesse (a Zo-oid leader of the colony) tells Audley a little bit about the Zo-oid history and the festivals that came out of it...

He grinned. "They had youth and idealism. It was a great era," he reminisced. "There were a lot of young people who threw in with us for something to do but there were old people who seemed to have been waiting for us all their lives. Many of the vets found out about us when they came back, as did the draft evaders and the girls who waited for them at home. They had a lot of hope, a lot of dreams."

Audley interjected, "A lot of drugs, too, I'd bet."

Jesse scowled. "Yes, and we lost some of them when they learned we would not build our Brave New World on chemicals. Most of them appreciated the fact that we were on a natural high, intent on actually doing something about society's ills, so every once in awhile we'd have a big party and burn all the paraphernalia and drugs to celebrate our mutual purpose. Those parties were the origin of our annual celebrations."

A few pages later, while being shown the wonders of the domed colony, Audley asks her guide, Ellen, where she can smoke a cigarette.

She smokes a joint before driving to the airport and a few other times. But she cuts it off when Lanon can "see" that she's high, by viewing the change in her "nucleus" (her soul) and is turned off by it. This freaks her out a little bit, and I believe there are no other instances of using the

dreaded and demonic Cannabis plant in for the rest of the story.

Fortunately, the colony is awash in alcohol and coffee which everyone drinks like little fishies. So...ah...at least everyone was sticking to the ideal of being...yeah... "drug- free."

There are some situations (like smoking on the plane, the ERA I mentioned before, and the unclear differentiation between illicit "chemicals" and socially acceptable drugs) that date this novel--sometimes significantly. But the reader has no problem re-sketching it in his/her own mind to fit our current times.

Amazingly, Gerdean anticipates something very similar to the Internet with her introduction of the TASC system (Transmit/Access System of Communication). It has a "viso-phone" (what would become Skype), inter-colony communication (networks) and information from financial and technological databases all over the world (what would become Google). I thought this was a great touch and was pretty accurate for essentially being Pre-World Wide Web.

Strangely enough, Gerdean makes her parallel world one that could be independent of any of our "times." She calls it "Urth."

When it comes to the Urantia Book references, Angus is heard to mumble "...foreign potentates..." [see The Urantia Book, Paper 53 - The Lucifer Rebellion], and this term comes up again during a board of Zo-oid trustees (each member is not-subtly named after a Jesus apostle) meeting. Angus' form is maintained by "Ultimaton Aggregation" [a ingenious condition that makes me think of "huddling" ultimatons]. There are many others, but THANKFULLY, they don't stick out. (Remember that THAT is what I'm always preaching about: leave the funny names out if possible, but shout the concepts out across the great divide.)

There are typos and spelling errors in every single book I've ever read. The only serious spelling error (though it may have been intentional to avoid the roving Urantia Foundation copyright attorneys at that time - ca. 1980's) I found was in the wording of the Prologue. An incarnation process is described using "life plasma," when indeed the Urantia Book would call the same stuff, "life plasm"; what, today, we call "DNA." Perhaps a simple spell check mistakenly turned "plasm" into "plasma" (typically thought of as a component of blood, not DNA.

There are some other astronomical, mathematical and scientific shortcomings that could be improved for believability. But for a laywomen who is not a scientist of math or science, and probably for a reader who isn't either, this does not detract from the book.

The real joy of this book is found in Gerdean's dialogues and interesting social interaction portrayals. They are always fresh. They never seem contrived or forced. One of the best scenes has Audley's boytoy, Lanon, standing in a motel room wearing only a peculiarly "elevated" bedsheet around his waist, as he thinks about her body.

And her descriptions of nature and atmosphere are enough to put the reader there. My favorite scene for mood and lighting would have to come in the beginning while Audley is driving alone throughout the night. Long, solo drives across vast areas, late at night are probably one of my favorite things. Nothing is more peaceful. Gerdean captures that peace in a way that is memorable in the story as well as in one's own life. She is good at that, for sure.

Her accounts of places, things, nature and especially, people, are first rate. Her use of dialogue (something that is difficult for me to do when writing fiction) is on a par with any great writer.

Finally, I have to say that the ending is very special, well-crafted and gave me shivers!

The clarity of thought and the directness of the writing makes for an enlightened, enjoyable and very often humorous portrayal of people finding themselves in the middle of great and universally profound events. The aliens and other beings are original and uniquely depicted. And the entire book is definite Urantia story, although it also expands upon the information in the Urantia Book and hints at the new wave of t/r-based material that would soon become a big deal in the Urantia movement shortly after the completion of this work.

I will conclude this extensive review by stating that important messages, prophetic events, and spiritual lessons can be extracted easily from *The Zo-oid Mission*. But if you like a story with romance, adventure, extra-terrestrial and superhuman ("Supernal") beings, science, social experimentation and futurology this is also your book.