

THE HOLY LAND



ROBERT ZUBRIN

To save the Minervans from oppression in the central galaxy, the liberal Western Galactic Empire relocates the sect to their ancient homeland of Kennewick, Washington. But for the fundamentalist fanatics who rule the United States, the presence of pagans in the holy city is intolerable.

When direct assault to expel the intruders fails, the U.S. government tries to mobilize galactic opinion by moving the Kennewickians into miserable refugee camps and recruiting their children for suicidal attacks on the Minervans. But this play for sympathy falls on deaf ears of the policy makers of the mighty WGE.

If the Minervans are ever to be removed, the WGE needs to receive a more forceful message, and the President and his cabinet are prepared to deliver it. Camps for training planet assassins are set up. Soon, billions of pagan aliens would know the wrath of the followers of Jesus.

Unfortunately, there was one little problem with this brilliant plan.

Sitting in his cell in Minervan occupied Kennewick, Sergeant Andrew Hamilton, POW, watched the video screen in disbelief. Yankee Stadium was filled with people screaming "Death to the Western Galactic Empire!"

Then cheerleaders deployed throughout the stadium began leading the several hundred thousand attendees in a furious chant.

"Death to the Weegees! Death to the Weegees! Death to the Weegees!"

As the mob chanted, floats depicting the Milky Way Galaxy were paraded into the stadium's playing field. On signal, thousands of the reverend's flock jumped over the bleacher walls to storm the field. Surrounding each effigy galaxy, the rioters pulled down their pants and started urinating on its western spiral arm.

Hamilton heard a sound behind him. It was Priestess 3rd Class Aurora, his captress and case officer, watching the video over his shoulder.

"You Earthlings are quite insane," she said.

Hamilton turned to Aurora. A mass frenzy of the sort exhibited in the stadium could lead to war. "If it comes to a fight, what are our chances?"

"Less than zero. The Western Galactic Empire includes over a hundred million planets, and has a fleet of over a hundred billion interstellar battleships."

Hamilton was awed. "So they would just crush us like ants."

Aurora laughed. "There you go again, with your delusions of grandeur."

A renowned space engineer, visionary, and author, ROBERT ZUBRIN is the winner of the prestigious Robert A. Heinlein award. In *The Holy Land*, he takes us on a wild madcap exploration of a world crazy enough to be our own.

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