Prelude to Destruction

By John C. Meyer

January 12, 2084
Geosynchronous Orbit above the Earth

Laura Engler enjoyed living on the edge. She had called the Moon her home for the past eight years, and she thrived on the day to day challenges of that hostile environment.

Her current challenge was not on the Moon. She was construction General Manager for the installation of the newest IPT's (Interdimentional Power Transmitters) on a Hydroteck, geosynchronous solar power satellite. The IPT's accessed the newly discovered, Interdimension, and then transmitted energy from that power-rich formally unknown dimension to our own four dimensional world. The energy was then converted into microwaves and transmitted down to Earth, to be converted into electricity.

Before this assignment, Laura had almost given up on being able to use her degree from MIT in Space Construction.

Her degree, plus her zero gravity experience, space ship piloting, and Moon construction experience, uniquely qualified her for this task.

Hydroteck had a short critical window of twelve months to get the IPT's installed on this satellite and ready to test on January 31 2085. That was the date the loans Hydroteck had to procure against the assets of the company came due.

Ten IPT power generators had to be shipped to the satellite and installed in that short amount of time. If the IPT tests were successful, the loans would, by contractual agreement, be extended.

These IPTs were re-engineered versions of the IPT that had caused the 2081 New Mexico disaster. The New Mexico IPT had had an uncontrollable release of energy, totally obliterating a two mile diameter area of the New Mexico desert, killing more than three hundred people at the test facility. Lawsuits were still pending about that incident. The new tests would be conducted in geosynchronous orbit, twenty-two thousand-three hundred miles above the Earth, to prevent another such devastating tragedy. If these IPT's failed, Hydroteck could go into bankruptcy.

Laura was acutely aware of the economic and political considerations of her current assignment. Hydroteck, the second largest power company in the world,

was in constant, fierce competition with Lunarcom the largest, and Lunarcom was continually working toward surpassing or discrediting Hydroteck.

Lunarcom's president and major stockholder, Arthur Helman, had come from nowhere twenty years before to surpass all other power companies by building solar power satellites. His solar power empire was now threatened by Hydroteck's new innovative approaches to power production.

Besides the highly innovative IPTs, Hydroteck was only eighteen months away from finishing a helium three, (He3) nuclear fusion power plant in Houston, Texas that would generate eight thousand megawatts of electricity. Besides being the largest He3 plant in the world, it would also be the safest nuclear plant. He3 fusion generated no radioactive waste.

Laura had trained for a year with four other engineers before starting this project, but Hydroteck knew that it would take someone with Laura's overall expertise to accomplish this monumental task.

After attaching her space suit umbilical to a metal bracket next to her open office hatch, Laura floated out of the hatch to watch the docking of the latest supply ship.

This solar power satellite, called M-1 measured one-hundred-fifty meters by twenty-five meters. The first time Laura had seen it, she was reminded of the huge black monolith in 2001, a space odyssey.

M-1 permanently hovered in its orbit, over Honiara Island in the Solomon islands in the Pacific Ocean. Two microwave transmitting antennas on the satellite zeroed in on a microwave receiving antenna on the island.

Because of the 2081 IPT disaster, M-1, had been moved, at enormous expense, from its original site above the Mojave Desert to this geosynchronous orbital site above Honiara island. All the governments involved believed that this would be the safest place to test the new IPT's. The government of the Solomon Islands enthusiastically welcomed this possibility of a new and more reliable electricity source.

M-1 was now the base for the advanced IPTs, and for the future hopes of Hydroteck.

As Laura watched the ship, Magnalift I docking, she tuned her communication gear to the ship communications channel.

"Let her drift for twelve more seconds," Tom Robinson in the satellite communications office said to the captain, "then apply your ten-thousand PSI breaking jets until you are at a standstill."

"Counting down," said the Captian,12,11,10,----"

Laura had seen this maneuver dozens of times and her eyes wondered down to the blue-green planet below, to one specific area in the Gulf of Mexico, the island of Galveston.