



PROLOGUE: FROM THE ANNALS OF THE ARCTURIAN ARCHIVES

Once upon a space-time vector, so it has been told, far beyond the fair Arcturian skies, in the distant galactic cloud, called by the wise, Velatropa, there was a stellar unit, Velatropa 24, which produced a planet, Velatropa 24.3. Now renown for its brilliant system of rings, trans-galactic travelers often ask: “how did Velatropa 24.3 get its rings?”

Naturally, as the keepers of the chromo-cellular archives of Arcturus 108x, having long-pioneered in extra-galactic communication, such queries are almost always directed toward our radiant orb. In the interest of putting to rest such well intentioned curiosity concerning Velatropa 24.3, we, the aging though not yet totally senile Archivists of the Arcturian Annals have compiled a definitive answer in the form of a story or, more precisely an interplanetary fable.

Culled from a larger record, THE ART PLANET CHRONICLES, our story, THE MAKING OF THE FIFTH RING, like any gem or fine stone, must have a proper setting in order to be fully appreciated. For this reason, we must first set forth our own tale, telling in as simple a manner as possible how it was that we of the Arcturian chromo-cellular brigades first discovered and established contact with our sister sphere, the harmonic-hued and distant, Velatropa 24.3.

As is well-known, and in accord with the Arcturian Articles of Unification, we of Arcturus 108x, have, by tradition as old as the Speaking Rocks of O-Mo-Lung-Ring, taken it upon ourselves by the Vows of Universal Liberation, to establish direct communication with intelligence, not only beyond our own stellar unit, but beyond the confines of the Arcturian Galaxy itself.

Well, it was during one of the earliest of the extra-galactic expeditions, the first one to utilize synchrotronic communication beams, that we penetrated the milky galactic cloud, the wondrous Velatropa. That celebrated expedition had been led by none other than AhKa IV. Intrepid cosmic voyeur, commandante extraordinaire, seer, knower

and weaver of the beginnings and endings of time and space itself—yes, it was the, nimble-witted space clown, AhKa IV who first narrowed the synchrotronic radiation beam on Velatropa 24.3.

*“How blue and fair this globe;
how breathful fine she be;
if only she possessed the mind
to know Arcturian camaraderie”*

Such was the first communication received from AhKa IV following his preliminary orbiting of Velatropa 24.3.

In his wisdom, AhKa IV knew not to intervene, at least not directly. “Honor the intelligence.” Guided by this slogan which comprises the pith-essence of the oath taken by all Arcturian Extra-Galactic Scouting Parties, AhKa IV checked his enthusiasm for this precious cosmic pearl, Velatropa 24.3. Though we were careful not to intervene immediately or directly, we also knew from prior experience that the entire universe resonates and is submissive to the law of mutual reciprocity. Thus, even though the mind of Velatropa 24.3 had no direct knowledge that it was now under surveillance by a chromo-cellular intelligence unit from Arcturus 108x, in what it later came to call its “unconscious,” it knew—“we are not alone.”

But back to AhKa IV. So enraptured had he become by what he encountered on the blue-green pearl, Velatropa 24.3, so akin did he feel to its polar energy tides, and so urgently did he wish it to become a galactic twin with Arcturus 108x, that he began to scheme and develop the following plan.

First of all, he requested of Hierarch Central an opinion on the feasibility of sacrificing himself and transmuting as a native Velatropa 24.3 life-form. While Hierarch Central went about the arduous task of correlating information fed back to it in the luminous corridors of Arcturus 108x, AhKa diligently continued his own reconnaissance, optimistic that a decision would be made favorable to his plan.

In brief, what AhKa IV himself observed about Velatropa 24.3 was this:

Oscillating delicately between two snowy magnetic poles was a fine, multi-leveled atmospheric sheathe. Diffusing itself out from the two poles in the manner of a constantly rotating electromagnetic ring, it was the richly pulsing foundation of this atmospheric sheathe that most attracted the highly sensitized light spores of the old galactic explorer. Swirling, gauzy blue, white, and green spirals of pulsating energy forms completely intoxicated AhKa IV’s cosmically weathered sense-spores. Love,

that's what AhKa IV felt for the teeming network of activity that formed the immediate surface of Velatropa 24.3; love—seasoned and spiced with a high risk dash of compassionate curiosity.

Though the texture of the planetary surface was a dense and profuse soup of countless symbiotically interwoven life-forms, the advanced sense-spores of AhKa IV picked out one genre in particular upon which to focus all of his keen-witted attention. These were the two-legged ones—the spirit-chasers, the seekers of enchantment, the dancers and the builders. Dispersing themselves from pole to pole throughout the capriciously changing land masses of the delicately pulsing planet, these highly mobile life-forms had created a fine invisible membrane completely enclosing Velatropa 24.3.

Skimming through rain-forests and over grassy plains in his rapidly vibrating space-cocoon, AhKa IV observed that whereas the majority of these two-leggeds found nourishment while roaming in simple patterns close to the ground, a few small groups, no more than half a dozen, cultivated the soil and erected in stone what the others only dreamed of in their dances. The former group AhKa IV called “the dancers,” the latter, “the builders.”

Though things had developed somewhat differently on Arcturus 108x, AhKa IV recognized that the over-all pattern on Velatropa 24.3 represented a much earlier horizon of intelligence than that now current on his home planet. Nevertheless, it was this fact alone which most instilled in the old galactic warrior a nostalgic yearning tempered by a sense of worrisome caution.

But finally, what most magnetized the curiosity of AhKa IV was this: no matter how simply they lived, no matter how monumental their aspirations in stone, the two-legged Velatropans endeavored to accomplish everything with a sense of proportion, maintaining a harmonic relationship between themselves and their temperamentally precipitous environment. It was this magnificent tendency, proof no less of a genuine intelligence, that moved the primal adventurer, AhKa IV to such rapturous heights of incantatory contemplation:

*“In Velatropa far away
though devoid of mind's full sway
in measured form with rhythmic heart
all that's done is done as art!”*

For this reason AhKa IV dubbed Velatropa 24.3 “the Art Planet,” while naming its two-legged pioneers of intelligence, “artiers.” It was Velatropa 24.3's prophesy to art that gave AhKa IV the ultimate incentive to abandon his highly evolved spore-frame