

# The Watchhounds of Ambit

by

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## Chapter One Invasion

No amount of careful planning can compensate for a deficient objective.  
— translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

No story really has a beginning. There are only events which were the ends of some things, and the beginnings of others. The tellers of tales choose a place to begin, and call it the beginning. I'll begin at the attempted theft of a flatbed truck.

My name is Garth. I was part of a Dexios incursion triad sent into Ambit. Gordon was in command of the triad, which consisted of me, him, and Benson. None of us knew a lot about the big picture, about what was going on throughout Ambit. A lot of what I'll tell here I learned later, some of it quite recently. Some of it is pure speculation, but most of it is fact. All we really knew at the time was that I was to steal the flatbed, Benson was to steal the sedan, and Gordon was to steal the pickup. We were to follow the Bear Gap Road, cross the border at Bear Gap, and be back in Dexios before dawn.

All went well at first. We'd spent most of the week on foot, covering the distance to the particular farmhouse which was our target, and learning the "lay of the land". We'd been very careful, and nobody had seen us. On the appointed night, we hid a short distance from the house, watched the lights go out one by one, and gave them an extra 40 minutes to get to sleep. Of course, we didn't have any trouble at all with the hounds. We were natives of Dexios, and animals were our life. These particular two of the dread watchhounds of Ambit had been close friends of ours for almost two days by the time we crept in to steal the vehicles. The vehicles though were something else. We crept up to them that night to examine the locks only to discover that the door on the sedan was already unlocked. As a precaution, and since it was a small vehicle and easily pushed, we pushed it a hundred yards or so down the road, where Benson stayed with it to try to start it. The doors on both trucks were locked, but I opened the flatbed with a piece of wire I took from a bale of hay, and Gordon just pushed in a side window on the pickup.

Of the three of us, Gordon was the only one with any real talent for mechanics. I was still trying to get to the back of the start switch, or what I thought was the start switch, when Gordon started the pickup. God! Who'd have ever thought it would be so loud. I learned later about things called mufflers, but they forgot to tell us about them during the briefing, so we didn't know it was important for a truck to have one.

What a horrible noise it was! When it began, I banged my head on the under side of the dashboard, and slid out of the cab onto the ground, a drop of about two and a half feet. The noise changed our plans considerably. There'd certainly be no chance now to get the flatbed, so I ran for the pickup. Gordon was trying to work the controls, and the truck jerked into forward motion as I ran toward it. I wanted to be in

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the back, so I dived ahead of my target just as it stalled in front of me. As a result, I crashed head first into the side of the cab. I'm lucky I didn't break my fool neck.

Lights came on in the house and Gordon cursed under his breath as he tried to restart the truck. I crawled over the edge and flopped into the bed, partially stunned. Gordon restarted the truck, and got us going, but the damned thing moved at a crawl, with its engine whining. The farmer dashed from the house in his *au naturel*, and chased us down the short driveway and onto the road. Gordon revved the engine to the point that even I, ignorant as I was, could tell that it was an unhappy machine. The farmer was obviously going to catch us, and I tried to recover my wits enough to do something about it. I was groggy from my crash into the side of the truck and I didn't particularly want to try fighting anybody just then. Fortunately there happened to be a 100 pound sack of some kind of feed in the back of the truck, so I heaved it at him just as he came up to the tailgate. He hadn't noticed me in back of the truck until I raised up with the feed, so it took him completely by surprise. He was a brave and sturdy man, and he didn't deserve to be laughed at. Chasing unknown villains into the night, nude, is beyond the spunk of most men. But the sight of him flat on his back on the road, with a hundred pound sack of feed across his chest, with only his legs, his balls, and his winkie waving furiously at me, while his dread Ambit watchhounds gamboled about him and yawped in delight, was more than I could bear. So to speak. I hope he eventually forgave me for my callous mirth. I howled myself breathless.

While I rolled around the bed of the pickup in helpless mirth, not knowing whether to hold my head (which still hurt from crashing into the side of the truck) or my belly (which ached from laughing so hard), Gordon got to where Benson had given up on the sedan, and was waiting for us. Benson was unclear about what had happened, and when he jumped in back with me he seemed more than a little puzzled by my attitude. Gordon slowed slightly, to study the controls, figured out how to shift the gears, and we were on our way.

It was only a mile or so to the turn onto Bear Gap Road, but just as we made the turn, we saw lights, and heard sirens, behind us. Gordon did his best, but we only got about two miles before we were overtaken by drivers who were without a doubt more skillful than we would ever be. They stopped us by the simple tactic of getting in front of us and slowing down. Then at gun point we were loaded into a truck that was only about half full of other Dexios men. Before the night was over, it was stuffed. I learned later that, of the many Dexios triads that were involved, only one got a vehicle successfully across the border. They did so with all three of them riding on it, a lone motorcycle which they had to abandon shortly afterward when the chain broke. The triad escaped capture, but the motorcycle was recovered by Ambit forces.

## Chapter Two

### The Football Field Massacre

Taking a man's weapon doesn't necessarily disarm him. Sometimes a circumstance can be a weapon. Sometimes, armament is a state of mind.

—translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

The next morning, about 500 of us were under guard in a football field. It was the only place in Trantor, the capitol of Ambit, big enough to hold all of us. The inexplicable speed of our capture became easier to understand after we all had time to talk about it. Of course, none of us had known much of the plan before, but once captured, we didn't see any reason to keep quiet. So we swapped information and figured out what the overall plan had been. Perhaps it wasn't a brilliant plan, but maybe it wasn't the stupidest one ever tried either.

Pyrus, the World's only continent, is shaped somewhat like a pear, with the big end at the north, extending well past the pole, and capping the planet with permanent glaciers. The resulting abundance of icebergs throughout the world's ocean, and of course the lack of another body of land, has restricted shipping to a few fishing fleets. The narrower southern end of the continent reaches well into the subtropical region, but is cold due to elevation and dry due to coastal mountains. This unoccupied region is called the High Plateau. Dexios occupies the eastern portion of the continent, extending as far north as the Arctic winters will allow and bordered on the south by the High Plateau. Gauland is on the west coast, and similarly bounded. Ambit separates Dexios and Gauland. Around the south end of Pyrus, completely encircling the High Plateau all the way from Dexios to Gauland, is the Southern Beach. During winter when the northern ice cap grows and sea level drops a foot or so, the Southern Beach is exposed. This geography of Pyrus was the source of the plan of which we had been such a dismal part. Somebody had decided that, with vehicles, we could launch a lightning attack along the Southern Beach, all the way around the High Plateau, and enter Gauland from the south completely unexpected. An ingenious tactic. Ridiculous, but ingenious.

The tactic was ridiculous because Dexios is a nation of hunters and gatherers. It isn't industrialized, and probably never will be. Since we couldn't make the vehicles, we tried to steal them. No one knows if we'd have made it all the way around the Southern Beach and into Gauland undetected. We usually maneuver on foot, or beastback. Probably, we'd never have been able to keep all those vehicles running long enough to get all the way around. I suppose it's just as well that we never got to try it. To have been caught by the rising water on that long curve of beach at the end of winter, with 1000 feet of vertical rock wall on the right and endless ocean on the left, would have been worse than getting caught trying to steal a truck.

The short term plan wasn't much better. That plan had been to disrupt both power and communications in Ambit shortly after sundown on the night of our heist, to

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cover our operations. The raid was planned for late spring because at that time of year, with the glaciers melting, most power generation in Ambit is hydro. Other kinds of plants are usually down for maintenance. Ambit gets all its hydro power from just two stations: Dobio Dam, on the Dobio river, in the northwest, and Kenyon Reservoir, below the Kenyon Glacier in the northeast. The lines at Dobio were toppled successfully, plunging western Ambit into darkness. Naturally, most of us were working in eastern Ambit, nearer to the Dexios border. The device planted by our saboteurs at the Kenyon Reservoir failed to explode, and power was undisturbed where we most needed a blackout, in eastern Ambit.

Communications were to have been jammed by jamming transmitters, broadcasting a strong signal on the Gauland military frequencies. The devices were smuggled in advance into strategic positions, and were to be activated just after sundown. One of them was inadvertently activated several hours early, and sadly, it was one of the few that worked. This was a tip-off to the Gauland communications people that something was in the wind. Dozens of transmitters going at once would have been difficult to find, but a solitary transmitter was child's play. Triangulation, they call it. The Gauland technicians are good at that sort of thing. After they knew what to look for, several others were discovered, and at that point the mousetrap was out of the sack.

We might still have gotten a few vehicles across the border, except that few of the undiscovered transmitters worked properly when they were activated. Some of them didn't work at all. The causes were various. Some had dead batteries. In two of them, the batteries had never been installed. Some had defective wiring. One didn't have an antenna. Like the batteries, it just hadn't ever been installed. Most of the ones that worked were so weak that they jammed communications for scant yards. Some were tuned improperly and jammed the Ambit frequencies, but not the Gauland military frequencies. You get the idea. Total SNAFU. The consensus was that we ought to have done better. I now know that we were intentionally sabotaged. I happen to know this because many years later I read the Incident Evaluation Report that was written by the Ambit specialists who secretly engineered the invasion. They engineered the whole fiasco for reasons of their own, and it was supposed to fail. They even had a dummy retail corporation secretly selling us our explosives and electronic jammers. The stuff was all manufactured by Gauland manufacturers and sold to us to use against them. No wonder it didn't work. Why did none of us ever wonder where all that equipment was coming from? We knew that Dexios couldn't manufacture the stuff.

Anyway, by about ten o'clock that morning, some 8,000 or so of the local citizens of Trantor had taken the day off, and thronged the spectator portion of the stadium to observe us. We were standing, some of us with hands bound, some not, in a roughly circular cluster in the field, surrounded by about 80 armed Gauland troopers. Most of the remaining Gauland forces in Ambit were out looking for more of our men. They were having great fun, rushing up and down the highways, startling milk-

beasts and birds, and in general having a good time. While we were all standing around, getting hungry, and wondering what would happen next, the commander of the Gauland Garrison in Ambit walked onto a wooden stage that stood at the 50 yard line. He wasn't alone. With him were a triad of armed guards, and a lone prisoner. The prisoner was Gondor Morgan, our commander. We learned later that he'd been captured with the fall of his forward observation post, just across the Dexios border, by an almost casual foray of Gauland troops chasing our inept car thieves. It was the same triad that had retrieved the motorcycle. At the time, however, we knew only that he'd been captured. There was a disappointed murmur when we saw him, and then silence.

The Gauland commander had a microphone, but he didn't use it. Instead, he handed it to Gondor. He must have expected Gondor to recite some prepared statement, but no one will ever know for sure. Gondor held the microphone for several seconds while the silence deepened throughout the stadium, then in a quiet, steady voice he said, "Kill the bastards". Then, he turned, and with a little flourish, handed the microphone back to the Gauland commander. The commander, startled by the unexpected statement, received the microphone as if one were handed to him every day. Momentarily off guard, he was totally unprepared for what happened next. It happened in an instant. Gondor simply kicked him in the groin, then in the throat. Without breaking his motion, Gondor side-kicked the nearest armed guard in the stomach. The two remaining guards shot Gondor neatly through the head. There was a brief stunned silence, while the echoes of the gunshots died away, and Gondor's body made a thump when it hit the wooden floor of the stage.

As Gondor's body rolled onto its back and came to rest, we turned as a man and kicked and stomped our 80 armed guards. They shot eighty-five of us during the 20 or so seconds that it took us to defeat them. Less than 60 seconds after the Gauland commander had handed the microphone to Gondor Morgan, not a soul had moved among the spectators, nearly two hundred men had been killed or wounded before their very eyes, and history had been changed. We all drew a breath, and then another, and then the remaining armed guards on the stage turned and ran.

As I have said, most of the Gauland troopers were scouring the countryside. The walls of Trantor were lightly guarded, with little expectation of an attack, and no expectation at all of an attack from inside. The walls were easily taken, and when we held the Trantor walls and the arsenal, we held Ambit. We also captured intact the entire garrison command complement, except of course, for the dead commander. Thus it happened that a terrible plan to invade Gauland, incompetently executed, achieved in one day the unexpected capture of Ambit.

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## Chapter Three The Wives of Ambit

An army in the field cannot survive for long if it must live off the land. Scarcity of provender will soon transform it from an army to a mob. —translated from the *Ancient Manuscript* by Garth of Ambit

We of Dexios were ill prepared to stand a siege. No, we were not prepared for one at all. We had all intended to be home for breakfast, or at least back among friends for breakfast. None of us had with him much more than a bag of pemmican, and while we'd been taking the walls, a few shrewd Gauland troopers had torched the Gauland Stores. We'd started the day as itinerant car thieves, and ended it as an impromptu and unprovisioned garrison under siege. The men of Gauland had all planned on lunch at the Trantor Mess. By evening, they wanted back inside their walls. Since we wouldn't let them in, they were pissed. The hungrier they got, the madder they got. They asked the Ambits to kick us out, but the Ambits wouldn't do it. The men of Ambit never take sides. We asked the Ambits for an escort through the blockade, so we could get some reinforcements. They wouldn't do it.

A few units of the little Gauland Air Force buzzed over Trantor, but I guess they didn't know who to shoot at, or if they should shoot at anyone. Air attacks are almost never made inside Ambit, since it's impossible to know from the air who you're killing. Neither we of Dexios nor our counterparts in Gauland want to kill the men of Ambit. Since there weren't any sufficient concentrations of anything in Dexios to make bombing worthwhile, the Gauland Air Force was mostly a form of reconnaissance. Gauland might have sent an overwhelming land force against us, but our victory had been so sudden that they didn't have one ready. The situation seemed so temporary that nobody thought we'd be there long enough for a force to be raised against us. Everybody just hesitated, and we all started getting hungry.

They say the end of civilization is never more than three days away. I guess that's about right. It wasn't long before we were taking food from Ambit pantries and tables. Outside the walls, the Gauland troops were doing the same. Within a week, we heard of looting and raping outside the walls, and I'm afraid that something of the sort was going on inside, as well. Clearly, something had to give.

As it happened, nothing gave. The people of Ambit simply bore up under the job of being victims, and waited. It only took a couple more weeks for our troops to become so disorganized that they no longer constituted a viable garrison. In that same time, the Gauland siege dissolved into a collection of stray gangs, mostly drifting west toward Gauland, doing a little pillaging and plundering along the way. As their guys trickled home, so did ours. If the Ambits had become involved in any way other than as victims, the thing might have gone on for months. As it was, none of us really had our hearts in molesting them, so we just drifted home. Except for me.

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## Chapter Four Mirror, Mirror....

Observation is a good way to learn. Study is another. Both require a receptive mind.

—translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

While I was in Ambit, I became acquainted with a local lady. She was a librarian, so I started hanging out around the library. One day, while waiting for her to clock out, I happened to overhear an argument between some Ambit scholars who were unaware of my presence. One was claiming that Dexios needed more technology. The others insisted that even a pastoral culture in Dexios was unwise, and an agrarian culture was positively dangerous. Hunting and gathering, they said, was the only possible setting that would maintain the status quo. Technology was out of the question. Any tolerance of centralization, they insisted, would destroy the attitudes in Dexios which were the necessary counterpoint to the centrally directed culture of Gauland. The Cultural Management Staff, they argued, must reverse the present trends.

Back then, I didn't know anything at all about cultural management. I'd never dreamed of such a thing. I was a hunter. But this argument indicated some sort of control by Ambit of the other two nations. I had always believed, if I thought of it at all, that we in Dexios hunted beasts because we needed food to eat. We sold a lot of extra to Ambit, and through Ambit to Gauland, because we had more than we needed. Sure, we bought hunting equipment from Gauland, through Ambit. Why not? Gauland made the equipment better than we could. They bought timber and meat from us because they'd stripped their land ages ago, and we had plenty of forests and range land. Nobody has everything. Sure, the trade was managed by businessmen in Ambit. We couldn't trade directly with our enemy, could we? But the scholars, and their argument, annoyed me. They piqued my curiosity.

Both Gordon and Benson had been killed in the Football Field Massacre anyway, so I decided not to return to Dexios. Instead, I stayed in Ambit and started reading about cultural morphology. I should mention, of course, that I didn't know how to read, so I had to learn that first. Eventually I read about cultural morphology. Twenty years later, I became the only man of Dexios in recorded history to graduate from an Ambit University. I graduated from Trantor University itself. The degree normally takes about 10 years, but it took me 20 because I started out with only the education of a hunter. There's only one kind of degree awarded at Trantor University. All other courses of study are prerequisites to it. My prerequisite specialties were Genetic Engineering and Population Dynamics. My degree, of course, was the only one available: Cultural Management.

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## Chapter Five

### The Watchhound of Ambit

God has arranged, for the sake of our sanity, that we never see ourselves as others see us.

—translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

Some time ago, the people of Ambit began to suspect the existence within their nation of some flaw. They couldn't observe it directly, as a man cannot directly observe his own face. But from changes in Dexios and Gauland, they deduced the flaw's existence, as a man may learn things about his own face by observing the reactions of others, who can see it. That was the beginning of Project Watchhound. The project members eventually decided that a mirror was needed, figuratively speaking, by which Ambit could better understand itself. One was sought throughout Dexios and Gauland. With the eventual selection of several likely candidates, the project engineered several situations intended to develop the potential of the candidates. One such plan created, over several years, the attitudes in Dexios which resulted in our bungled car thefts. Of the various plans initiated, only that one went to completion. It arranged for our internment in the football field, and orchestrated our capture of Trantor. I will say in fairness to the planners that the Football Field Massacre was more vicious than they had intended, but I must also say that they did anticipate some deaths. Even my lovely librarian was part of the plan, and she went on to other things after I was hooked into the university. They had carefully arranged for me to be in the right place at the right time so they could perform that particular conversation for me to hear. The scholars had, after all, known that I was there. Everything had been carefully orchestrated so I would react in just the right way. However, the precision of their maneuvering introduced into the result an uncertainty. That is, for centuries the men of Ambit had been the managers of cultures, and they were trying for the first time to manipulate individuals. The more finely you manipulate, the more fragile becomes the target. I did, as they intended, see them with the eyes of an outsider. However, before I had become sufficiently educated to be useful to them, I had learned things that fashioned my objectives beyond their control. My knowledge molded the clay of the past into a future not anticipated by my manipulators in the Cultural Management Staff.

Some important factors of my past were rooted several generations earlier, in Dexios. There had, at that time, developed a tendency for hunters to enclose portions of range land, making it easier to kill the game. This tendency developed into a concerted effort to domesticate the game animals. At the time that I researched my thesis, several herds were enclosed in fenced pastures. This had already disturbed the balance between hunter-gatherer culture and the small pastoral culture that had existed for centuries. Once begun, this trend would continue. Enclosed herds would create the need for farming to feed them, and an agrarian society would develop. Farmers would need more and fancier equipment, encouraging industry.

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Unless nipped in the bud, those few fenced pastures would lead to the industrialization of Dexios, a circumstance considered undesirable by the men of Ambit. As the subject of my thesis, I proposed a simple program of genetic engineering which I claimed would remove the trend. My plan was approved and I was awarded my degree. The members of the Cultural Management Staff failed to realize that my plan would only delay the trend, and not remove it. In reality, to delay the trend wasn't the main purpose of my proposal. Its primary purpose was a test of Ambit, and Ambit failed the test.

Based upon my thesis, the project triad developed a carefully engineered virus which would be endemic in the herds and be carried by flies. The virus would infect humans who were bitten by the flies. The virus couldn't survive in humans, but caused severe illness during the two weeks necessary for its death. The virus had an even shorter life expectancy in the flies, and died within about 15 minutes. Thus, the incidence of human infection by the virus was very strongly dependent upon the proximity of large numbers of infected flies, and that required the proximity of infected animals. Within a few months of implementation, it became very unhealthy for a human to stay near an enclosed herd of beasts in Dexios. The virus, of course, had a timed mortality gene. Within six months, it was extinct, but six months was long enough for the herds to kick the fences apart and for the men of Dexios to lose interest in rebuilding them.

The thesis accomplished three things, only two of which were visible to the men of Ambit. First, it got me my degree, which by then was of diminishing importance to me. Second, it delayed a growing tendency of Dexios to centralize. The third accomplishment existed within the blind spot, the part of Ambit culture that its men could not see. This third accomplishment was to confirm what I had already suspected about Ambit.

For more than 5000 years, Ambit had been learning to manage the cultures of Dexios and Gauland, for the benefit of everyone. I've studied the history of that management in detail. I'm familiar with the techniques which have been used, and I'm the only one who noticed the change within the last few centuries. There are sometimes things about a culture that its people tend not to notice. The change in Ambit was the failure of the men of Ambit to recognize in their own methods the end of management and the beginning of exploitation. Management preserves. Exploitation consumes.

I first became suspicious of the nature of the change when I learned the truth about the Football Field Massacre. Five hundred years ago, such a thing would never have been planned. I'll admit, they didn't anticipate Gondor Morgan's input, but they did anticipate some deaths. Indeed, the achievement of my intended frame of mind required the deaths of Gordon and Benson, which had been arranged in advance (in addition to the charm of my lovely librarian) to insure that I would linger a while in Trantor. The Football Field Massacre just happened to kill them first.

That doesn't relieve the conspirators of the guilt for what they had intended. Anyway, five hundred years ago, the men of Ambit would have devised a different plan to achieve their mirror. Of course, five hundred years ago they didn't need one.

Five hundred years ago, the men of Ambit would have insisted that the pastoral trend in Dexios be terminated by a method not so punitive. There wouldn't have been any deaths, and little suffering. However, they accepted my plan, which created gastric anguish among humans for two weeks and even a few consequential deaths. We knew beforehand that this would be the case, but Ambit approved the plan anyway. After the viral infestation was accepted and applauded, I knew what I had to do. I graduated with flying colors and earned a reputation for myself with several other projects which delayed other trends toward centralization in Dexios. Then, I asked for and received the leadership of Project Watchhound.

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## Chapter Six

### Wheels Within Wheels

Since the quantity of information potentially available in the universe is infinite, any amount of knowledge is in itself neither a large amount nor a small amount. The magnitude of knowledge can be judged, in practice, only by comparison to the wisdom by which it is accompanied.

—translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

The abilities of a culture are a result not just of that culture's knowledge, but of its knowledge and its wisdom. A culture with vast knowledge, and vast wisdom, lacks utterly the ability to injure others or itself, because its knowledge will never be applied in that direction. A culture with even a little knowledge, but no wisdom, always lives on borrowed time. It is a constant danger to itself and all others. The problem in Ambit was a long term accumulation of knowledge, and a slow erosion of wisdom. The people of Ambit had become so able to control the cultures of Dexios and Gauland that they began to feel as though they were above the natural laws that they so easily manipulated. They applied the principles of cultural management to others, but felt exempt from those principles themselves. Such exemption of self always enhances arrogance at the expense of humility.

I took over Project Watchhound about 10 years after my graduation, and have managed it now for almost 30 years. The project has been slowly reversing undesirable trends in both Dexios and Gauland. In fact, this is but a treatment of symptoms. These trends represent a growing independence on the part of both nations, an unconscious defensive reaction to growing exploitation by Ambit.

Within Project Watchhound about 20 years ago, I secretly created Project Mutt. That project was based upon my decision that the Triad consisting of Ambit, Dexios, and Gauland had become corrupted, and must be renewed. I concluded that it could be renewed only by purgation. Two years into Project Mutt, I determined that the only effective purgative was the destruction of the present culture of Ambit. I carefully staffed Project Mutt with a few trusted colleagues who'd been persuaded to my conclusions, and eight years later we completed the development of the specialized mosquito that will be the vector of a new bacterium, Ambit's pathological nemesis. It was necessary to protect Dexios and Gauland from the infection, and precise environmental sensitivities will restrict the mosquito to Ambit. The bacterium is contagious only through the mosquito. The project has carefully established all of the social and ecological machinery necessary to assure a maximum discontinuity of culture in Ambit, and the preservation of Dexios and Gauland. And here in the deep south, on the barren High Plateau, Project Mutt has also isolated the future people of Ambit and protected them with an acquired immunity to the bacterium. However, Project Mutt has also failed a test, and I with it.

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## Chapter Seven The High Plateau

One sees further looking down.

—translated from the *Ancient Manuscript*  
by Garth of Ambit

I eventually realized that even Project Mutt was infected. To replace a diseased culture with a cured one may not be reprehensible, but to kill the people of the diseased culture is murder. It seems that murder always creates situations which can be resolved only by more of the same. The ultimate cure, in my opinion, is that all must die. The fine art inherent in this cure is to arrange the situation so that somehow some untainted ones may arise from the ruins. That was the beginning of a project of which no one knows but me.

While Project Mutt was developing the mosquito and the bacterium, I took over the development of our needed immunity and made it my own personal project without a name. I alone developed the immunity, and it will not work. I made sure of it. Thus, those of us who are prepared to march into Ambit after the plague has eliminated the population will also die. But I know something else. From the understanding of cultural management achieved in Ambit, which has become its downfall, and which I have studied for nearly 60 years, I can predict the results of what I will accomplish. For several generations after Ambit is destroyed, Dexios and Gauland, like wives while their husband is on vacation, will bicker and quarrel. This unsupervised estrangement will reinforce their differences more than all the superficial meddling of Project Watchhound. It will retrieve and preserve their unique differences for the future. Dexios will retain its hunters, its gatherers, and its nomads. Gauland will retain its factories and its roads. The nationalistic love of each nation for its own ways, and its suspicion of the ways of its opponent, will preserve the necessary differences. Although they will squabble, they will also maintain the minimum of trade necessary for survival. The nomadic attitudes of Dexios and the resources of Gauland will therefore combine to establish the necessary trade routes across empty Ambit. Thus will be born from the two fertile wives of Ambit, along these trade routes, a new merchant class which will some day grow into the new Ambit. My calculations indicate that a dangerous level of knowledge in the new Ambit will not accumulate again for nearly five thousand years. I now realize the significance of the length of our recorded history. Present events are too timely to be entirely a coincidence.

This lack of coincidence is supported by artifacts that we have discovered on the High Plateau, during our work here. Within a deep vault, where we sequestered ourselves, we found the unquestionable remains of previous occupations. It seems that others have lived in exile here before us. The most recent was about 5000 years ago. Today, I have before me the fragments of several ancient manuscripts that were preserved here. From them I have learned certain bits of ancient history that have been otherwise forgotten. One of them deals with the origin of the triad,

## The Watchhounds of Ambit

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the accepted structure of almost everything we do. We see it in the authority of a Judge over his two Counsels, defense and prosecution. We see it in the relationship of a husband to his two wives. I always viewed the triad as inherent in our fundamental nature. And indeed, this pervasive structure does reflect our biological nature, but that nature isn't as it originally was. Originally, triplet births were extremely rare. Originally, the proportion of male to female births was about equal, not two females per male, as we expect today. Marriages were between two people only, not three. The inherent stability of triple relationships was undiscovered, and a kind of individualism that we can scarcely imagine was prevalent. From it developed cultures that were fundamentally different from ours. Men, and even women, acted purely in their own self interest. They formed organizations of almost any size. Businesses could form one at a time, without the supervision, production, and reclamation triads we have today. Nations were the same way. At one time there were as many as eight different nations on Pyrus, all competing haphazardly, each trying to be self sufficient, each trying to gain some advantage over the others. Those people developed an ability, and a clear predisposition to use it, that could have destroyed all life on the continent. Survival was achieved by an advance of knowledge in an unexpected direction. Of the wisdom of that advance, even today I'm unsure, but at least it allowed survival. A small group of scholars retreated to this high and barren place, the first such retreat in our long forgotten history. From here, they covertly conducted upon the inhabitants of the continent a genetic change. They manipulated the coding of reproduction to produce triplets. They changed the proportions of x and y chromosomes to produce two females for every male. Thus, they inserted the Triad into the character of our ancestors at the genetic level. This utterly destroyed the cultures of the day, and established for all time the stability of the triangle. Simplicity is the mark genius. Today, the structure of the triad begins within our genes and extends even to the arrangement of the nations on Pyrus. The next time you see a husband walking serenely along between his two happily bickering wives, consider the position of Ambit between Dexios and Gauland. You can easily see why Ambit doesn't need an army.

There have been here before me an unknown number of others like myself, and they are more my kin than my adopted kinsmen in Ambit, whose destiny I have secured, and must now share. I have recently become acquainted with the new mosquito, and I will stay here in this vault until the end. Though I will be forgotten, what I have done will be a beginning. I'm comforted to know that some day 5000 years from now, some other scholar will retreat onto this plateau to do a terrible work of great and necessary good. He will find here the remains of my visit and perhaps these memoirs, if time and the rats allow it.

No story really has an end. There are only events which were the ends of some things, and the beginnings of others. The tellers of tales pick some favored event, and call it the end. Now, satisfied with the work of my life, I write this memoir and choose to end it here.