

New Fiction by David James: The Infiltrators



Barabbas walked hurriedly down a dusty side alley in the old city of Jerusalem, glancing side to side before furtively ducking into a low doorway of a house where he was finally able to drop his uncomfortable human disguise and assume his true form. His size and shape remained roughly the same, but his skin changed to something akin to scales of a metallic green hue, and his face flattened and slightly elongated with completely black eyes and mere slits for nasal and auditory apertures. His mouth became a toothless oval, fishlike. For though he clearly was not a creature born of this earth, his own planet was mostly marine, and the intelligence that developed there were originally aquatic. Human biologists would lately describe the phenomenon as convergent evolution, and it applied equally to interplanetary organic life. He had actually come to Earth from a planet orbiting the star that

would eventually be named Theta Herculaneum. He had not come alone, however, but as the leader of 17 emissaries that were to meet their foe on neutral ground for negotiations to a possible peace treaty of a war that had lasted nearly 100,000 years.

Across the empty room from Barabbas sat a curious structure: two dark metallic cubes sitting one on top of the other, with a third much smaller cube placed on top. This smaller top cube slowly turned a quarter of a rotation and back again, as sound emanated from it.

“Barabbas, I assume,” came the voice from the cube. “You are ten minutes late from the time agreed upon.”

“I was stopped by two of the humans. Soldiers of the Roman faction, apparently. They tried to detain me and were holding their iron blades as if to strike.”

“And what did you do?” Asked the cube.

“I killed them, of course. It takes so little for these fragile creatures. I merely used a charged neutrino stream and they never knew what hit them.”

“That may have been unwise,” replied the cube.

“What do I care? I disagreed with the council’s decision to come to this planet, and I don’t understand what we should have to do with these mammalians. It’s revolting seeing their absurdly primitive society dragging itself around in the dust, using organic labor to pile up rocks to live in. They haven’t even figured out the periodic table on their own yet!”

“Perhaps you should judge not lest you also be judged. Where do you think your species came from? Or mine, for that matter. We, too, started out as organic, carbon-based matter. We infiltrators, too, had to take the long, hard road to hyper-enlightenment and transmorphosis. From what I have intuited

from the archives, my own original world was not dissimilar to this one. That world which perished in a supernova 500 million years ago. Yes, these humans are a primitive, barely stage one intelligence. But your own species, Barabbas, is not much older from my perspective, and still merely at stage three. Still dependent on solid organic matter, still stuck in slower than light speed travel."

"Fine, you made your point. Let's get on with things, shall we? We both came a long way for this meeting, after all. By the way, what shall I call you?"

"The name I have been using here is a common one in the local dialect: Jesus."

"Do you have a real name?"

"Not one that can be conveyed aurally."

"I heard some talk from the local humans about someone named Jesus that has been putting on displays of breaking the laws of physics as they understand it. Something called miracles, apparently. What exactly have you been up to?"

"Nothing you need worry about. Our terms for peace are simple. We will agree not to destroy your species and to let you maintain your influence over all systems within 50 lightyears of the Theta quadrant. All we require is that you leave the Sol system and all its planets, including this one, and never return."

Barabbas, normally an acute thinker and decision maker, took a moment to process the shocking offer he had just heard. It made no logical sense to his evolved ichthyic brain, nor could he compute what permutation of game theory the infiltrators were pursuing.

"What is so special about this world? And what makes you think we're interested in it anyway? We have plenty of our own, with much more promising species under development," replied

Barabbas.

Jesus maintained his same equanimous tone, his machine intelligence never betraying a hint of anything resembling emotion or sentiment, "Our terms are clear. If you agree, we will cease the dismantling of your star systems effective immediately. You must closely follow my instructions before leaving this world never to return. The rest we will be under our purview."

Barabbas felt unable to raise any objections, though he still did not totally trust the machine, or understand what factors had changed recently to cause such an unexpected outcome. Yet he hesitated momentarily once more, warily and wistfully, before replying, "Agreed."

The next twenty-four hours Barabbas spent on the planet before leaving were unusual, but remained forever mysterious to the aquatic Thetan. He sent a message via a quark stream to his diplomatic counterparts located around the globe telling them to exfiltrate immediately. He was then led outside the house by Jesus, into the busy streets of the primitive human city of Jerusalem. Both had obviously shifted their outer appearance back to that of local humans of the Judean tribe. Ironically, they shared a close resemblance at this point despite their almost infinite divergence of mind. They both had short, dark wiry hair with thick black beards, dark olive wood complexion, and wore loose linen robes with leather sandals. If not twins, they might have almost been mistaken for genetic siblings.

Jesus led Barabbas to another nearby house where he ingested some bits of plant and animal food with a small group of human followers. After leaving, Barabbas was suddenly beset by a larger group of Roman soldiers and arrested. He resisted the urge to neutralise them all instantly due to Jesus' strict instructions to cause no harm to any human. He was subsequently released by an apparent local leader of the humans less than six hours later. As he ambulated towards the

exit of the palace courtyard, he saw Jesus under guard by the same group of soldiers. Jesus glanced at his former adversary briefly before silently continuing his entrance to the prison. Barabbas left and walked out of the city, preparing for his departure according to the terms of the treaty.

He could not overcome his innate curiosity, however, and he delayed his escape to learn more about the Infiltrator's plan. He waited on a small shrubby hill south of the city throughout the night. In the morning, he witnessed a slow procession approach in his direction centered around Jesus. He appeared dirty and covered in liquid blood of the human type. On one part of the hill a piece of dead wood was raised vertically to which Jesus was attached with ropes. At a certain point he lifted his head to the sky and said something in the local dialect, which Barabbas interpreted as "My progenitor, how have you forgotten me?" His head drooped down, seemingly lifeless. Almost imperceptibly, however, his eyes looked directly at Barabbas in the distance, as if signalling he knew the terms of the agreement were being broken by his lingering presence.

Barabbas felt fear for the first time in centuries, and immediately vanished from the city. He soon reappeared in his vessel orbiting the planet, where he briefed his companions on the demands of the Infiltrators, and the decision he had made on all their behalf. "If he leaves our sector of the galaxy alone, let Jesus have his plans for his human planet," he thought to himself as they accelerated toward their 50-year journey home.