

Book Four of the Dave Brewster Series

Tears of Gallia

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Chapter 32

Dave Brewster knew he was dead. He had just been run over by a speeding car in the parking lot. He remembered the sound of his bones and joints cracking as he slammed into the front of the car. He snapped over at the waist on impact, causing his head and face to slam into the hood of the car. Then he was airborne, tumbling in the air toward a wall and some bushes. He was about to hit the wall when suddenly he was far away, speeding through space surrounded by millions of strings of light. The searing pain and agony he had felt at the crash was gone. He felt perfectly fine, but not quite conscious. Was he in shock, or was this the road to Heaven or a quick ride to Hell?

He noticed he was being carried by a giant angel. But it was made of light and not flesh and bone. As he watched it, he noticed it was more like a massive featherless bird. But this bird had two arms which were wrapped tightly around him. He had never imagined the afterlife being anything like this. Then the thought of Darlene filled his mind. If he was dead, how would she survive alone? He prayed for her health and safety. Then he thought she would have Bill or Cybil move back in or maybe sell the house and move in with them. He realized he could not control that anymore, making him desperately sad.

That thought dissolved into the image of the man driving the car at him. Why would someone want to kill him? He was out of work with little savings. He had no enemies that he knew about. It just did not make any sense. The intense look of hate in that man's odd eyes was locked into his mind. Perhaps he thought Dave was someone else? More likely, the poor soul was insane and delusional. But he was alive and Dave was dead. He realized he could not change that either and looked around himself more closely.

He seemed to be traveling in deep space with solar systems zipping by at an incredible rate. As he continued, he noticed fewer and fewer stars in front of him. He had no idea how long this ride would last, so he tried not to think about where he might be going. He looked at the strings of light all around him. They were in many colors and were spinning around him like a Fourth of July fireworks display. As he tried to look at individual strings, he saw them morphing into other shapes. Some seemed like people, but others were like spiders or even lobsters with hands instead of claws. What a magical place, he thought.

After what seemed like hours, he had the sensation he was slowing down. A single star was visible in front of him and the winged beast seemed to be taking him there. As they approached, he could see only one large gas giant planet circling the star. There were very few other stars visible, and he assumed the few he saw were actually distant galaxies. Approaching the planet, he noticed it had two moons. One seemed lush like Earth, while the other was red and sandy like Mars. He hoped he was going to the lush planet, but the creature instead chose the red one. As they entered the atmosphere, only the bird creature was still there, holding him tightly. They descended through the air which smelled sweet and clean to Dave. He thought it was very odd that a spirit could smell anything. He

could feel himself inhaling and exhaling. Was he dead? He was not certain anymore. As the creature landed on the planet, Dave fell asleep.

Hours later, Dave woke to find himself in a small bed. He looked around and discovered he was in a small stone building. Several candles provided light. He was very surprised he could sit up after the crash had crushed his legs and pelvis. He was overjoyed when he stood with no pain. He looked down and noticed his clothes were stained with blood and ripped in many places. He also had no shoes. He quickly pulled off his clothes, but could find no evidence of cuts or breaks anywhere. "This is freaking weird," he said. He saw several robes on a hook and found one that fit. There were pairs of simple sandals by the door. After he put a pair on, he stepped outside.

The sun had been down for some time and it was very dark. The air was warm and the land smelled like desert. The fragrance of wild flowers permeated the air, but remained unseen in the darkness. There was a long bench on the porch, so he sat down to ponder his situation. "Where in hell am I?" he said out loud. "Hello!" he shouted, but there was no reply. He sat back and closed his eyes. Perhaps the crash had been a dream? But if so, why was he not in bed in San Diego with Darlene? He noticed a glimmer of light in his peripheral vision, opened his eyes and turned to see a light string on the bench next to him. Gradually, it began to swell and turn into a large blob of light. He kept watching it as it twisted and changed until the ten foot bird man was sitting beside him. Somehow it had transformed from a string of light into a massive flesh and bone creature towering over his head. "Well, that was impressive!" he said.

"Hello Dave Brewster," the creature said. "My name is Fa-u-Bay. I hope you're feeling okay now."

"Thank you for saving my life, Fa-u-Bay," Dave said reaching out his right hand.

Fa-u-Bay shook his hand and said, "You're welcome, but it wasn't really me. I did bring you here though."

"That I remember," Dave replied. "But where exactly is here?"

Fa-u-Bay laughed. "Long ago, I gave this moon the name Solander, after one of the gods who brought life to my home world."

"But why me?" Dave asked. "People die in crashes everyday. Why am I here and can I go home? My wife will be agonizing that I disappeared."

"She doesn't know you are gone yet," Fa-u-Bay said. "And she never will. I will make certain you get home in time to get that coffee at Starbucks."

"I'm not so sure I want to get hit by the car again, if you don't mind," Dave chuckled.

"That can never happen again. But I need you here for a while. There is so much to explain, even though I cannot tell you much of your future," Fa-u-Bay replied. "Time will play out as it was meant to. Hopefully the only change will be you arriving at the coffee shop ten or twenty minutes later."

"But I've been gone a lot longer than that!" Dave argued. "I feel like I've been sleeping for hours. And how long did it take to heal my injuries?"

"Dave, you believe that time moves along a straight line, but it does not," Fa-u-Bay said. "Your people have not yet discovered time travel. But the man in the car came from a different time. He knew the man you were going to become and he hated you for that. So he went back in time to kill you."

"So, you're telling me I can be back home just minutes after what I remember last and go on with my life?" Dave asked. "That's seems pretty hard to believe."

"But it's easy to believe you are talking to a Gallican on a moon at the edge of the galaxy with no injuries following a major crash," Fa-u-Bay mocked.

"I keep thinking this is a dream and I'm going to wake up from a coma in some hospital," Dave replied. "Then if I can ever walk again, I'll need months or years of therapy. I mean, look around, this can't be real."

"Dave, get some sleep," Fa-u-Bay chuckled. "Lubna and the sun will be rising in a few hours. Then we can talk some more. I'll make certain there is food and water. I doubt there is any coffee here."

"That is a shame," Dave replied. "Right now, I need a cup to get my brain straight." Dave rose and walked over to the door. "Good night, Fa-u-Bay. And thank you again for your part in saving my life."

"Dave Brewster, it was my honor to help you," Fa-u-Bay smiled. "If you had any idea how much you were going to do for my people, you would understand why. I am the one who owes you more than I can ever repay."

"Tell me more about it in the morning," Dave yawned. "Maybe the nurse in the hospital looks a bit like you. That would make sense. If I'm still here in the morning, I'll listen to everything you want to tell me. Good night." He went inside and lay back on the bed. In seconds, he was sound asleep again.

Chapter 33

The intensely bright sunlight poured through the small window near the bed where Dave was sleeping. In his mind, the light seemed like the headlights of an onrushing car, coming back to finish him off this time. He struggled to run away, but the vehicle was gaining ground on him quickly. He could not imagine being hit by yet another car! Just as the car reached him, he woke up with a start. He was still on that small bed in the stone building. He could see the candles had all burned out. His bloody clothes were still in a heap on the floor next to him. After he climbed out of bed, he tied the robe around him and slipped on the sandals. The room was very simple, with just the bed, one small table and two side chairs. There were small windows on two walls and the single door. The floors seemed to be made from the same stone as the walls. It was rough as though hewn from a quarry with ancient axes.

He walked out the door and felt the heat of the sun on him. It cast an odd light that did not seem natural. Looking up, he saw the massive gas giant filling one quarter of the sky. A brilliant white star was rising above the opposite horizon. There were very few clouds in the sky to block the light. Looking around the building, he could see sparse fields of cacti and boulders baking in the heat. A few small birds circled overhead looking for breakfast. A single bird appeared to be heading his way. He watched it approach. As it came closer, it became larger and larger. The image of the bird man last night reappeared in his mind. Fa-u-Bay landed twenty feet in front of him. He hadn't noticed last night, but the Gallicean wore blood-red body armor and carried four daggers on his belt.

"Good morning, Dave," Fa-u-Bay said as he removed a bag that was slung over his back. "Is this still a dream to you or are you beginning to believe you are really here on Solander?"

"It's still a dream," Dave replied. "I want to believe it's real, but you have to imagine how strange all of this is to me."

Fa-u-Bay sat on the bench and opened the bag. "I'm not surprised. No one from your time has ever left your solar system. You were in a major accident and woke up with a giant being from another world. It does seem far-fetched, even to me." He removed a set of clothes and set them next to him. Then he pulled out bags of food, two bottles of water, and what appeared to be a thermos of coffee. "Perhaps this coffee will make it more real to you." He opened the thermos and poured some of the coffee into a mug that he had also removed from the bag. He offered it to Dave.

The coffee smelled real to Dave, but he could not imagine where Fa-u-Bay could have found it on the edge of the galaxy. He sipped it and found it to be wonderful. "See, this proves my point. If we're on some isolated planet, where did you get all of this?"

Fa-u-Bay took a sip of the coffee from his own mug and laughed. "I see your point. Do you remember the other moon in this system from when we arrived last night?"

"I remember hoping we would go there rather than here," he replied. "It looked more hospitable than this rock. Is that where this came from?"

"That's correct. Fistan is a heavily populated world, full of people like you, although they are not quite as tall. I believe they are called Nan," the Gallican replied.

"Nan? Gallican? I don't know what any of that means," Dave said. "If that other moon is inhabited, why didn't you take me there?"

Fa-u-Bay frowned. "Dave, this is not a joy ride. I didn't bring you here to make new friends on Fistan. Drink your coffee and eat something. Then we can have our talk and you can get back to saving the universe."

A dazed expression crossed Dave's face as he took a biscuit out of a bag. "Save the universe! I think you have the wrong guy." He nibbled the biscuit. It was delicious and reminded him how hungry he was. He ate it quickly and took another.

"I was being a bit melodramatic, I know," Fa-u-Bay laughed as he took a biscuit. "Let's eat now and work out the details later."

Half an hour later, Fa-u-Bay was flying Dave high over the planet again. Dave was wearing the clothes the Gallican pulled from the bag. They were identical to the clothes he had been wearing during the accident. Even at this altitude, the heat was becoming unbearable. Solander was not inhabited, so there were no air conditioned buildings to escape the heat. A range of tall mountains was approaching in the distance. Dave could see snowcaps at the peaks, so cooler weather was possible here. After another twenty minutes, the two landed halfway up the tallest mountain, where scrub brush broke the monotonous red clay and sand. The temperature here was much cooler. Looking back from where they came, he could see waves of heat rising off the desert. Fa-u-Bay led him over to some smaller boulders that could serve as seats. He handed Dave one of the water bottles and took the other himself. Sweat was rolling off both of them.

"Okay, I'm starting to believe this is real," Dave panted as he drank water. "I've never sweated like this in a dream before. And the heat is unreal here. Are you sure you don't want to go to Fistan instead?"

After drinking from the bottle, Fa-u-Bay poured the rest over his head. "I'm sweating pretty well for someone who has been dead for thousands of generations!"

"You're dead?" Dave gasped. "How is that possible? You look very real to me."

"I am real, Dave," he replied. "As I told you before, time, life, and existence are not as linear and simplistic as most Beings believe. When you return, you will learn more about that. In fact, you will remember all of this adventure as well. However, it will be like the memory of a dream."

"Why am I here, Fa-u-Bay?" Dave asked. "I still don't understand."

"The acts of the man who tried to kill you seriously affected the flow of time. If you had remained there, he would have made certain you were dead. The accident had a major impact, but your death would have been disastrous to the future," he replied.

"But I'm just an out-of-work accountant living in San Diego," Dave argued. "I'm nothing in the scheme of things. Of course, my death would devastate my family."

“You forgot what I already told you. That man, Fola Untor, was not from your time. He was from more than one thousand of your years in the future. You know who you are and who you have been. He knew who you would become, and the effect you would have on his future,” Fa-u-Bay responded.

“Who will I become and what did I do to him to make him so homicidal?” Dave asked.

“I cannot tell you any specifics, as any memory of this visit might change the time line as well,” Fa-u-Bay replied. “Reverse time travel is incredibly dangerous, as you know firsthand. That is why the Bolofaz guard it so well. When they sensed this impending change, they asked me to help you. They are the ones who saved you and had me bring you to their world.”

“They brought you back from the dead to help me?” Dave asked. “Why didn’t they take me themselves? And what the heck is a Bolofaz? Are they around here somewhere?”

“You ask a lot of questions, Dave Brewster,” Fa-u-Bay replied. “Life and death are not what you believe either, but this is not the time or place to discuss that. I am here with you for two reasons. First, the Bolofaz asked me, and second, the things you will do for my people are so important even death couldn’t keep me from helping you.”

“I guess I’ll have to take your word for that!” Dave exclaimed. “I have no idea what I can do, but I will do my best. Why am I still here?”

“Fola Untor, the man who attacked you had been traveling extensively to your time while planning his crime,” Fa-u-Bay answered. “Such travel causes ripples and eddies in time. It takes a while for those to calm down. If you were there, other things could change and risk the future. Also, several of your friends from the future jumped back in time to help you and then jumped right back. That is upsetting the flow of time as well. So far, the only change the Bolofaz have detected is the car accident and the shooting death of Fola Untor. Those two changes appear to have no real impact so far. The Bolofaz asked me to keep you here to insure the distortions have stopped. When they are satisfied the normal flow of time can resume, you will be home.”

“Wow!” Dave sighed. “I have friends from the future who tried to save me? That’s really cool. Did one of them kill Fola?”

“Yes, thankfully,” Fa-u-Bay said. “That man would stop at nothing to kill you and my descendant, Fa-a-Di, who would have been his next target.”

“So how long do we wait?” Dave asked. “If I’ll be back at the same time, I guess it doesn’t matter. I’m just curious, although I’d love to get off this sizzling planet.”

“I don’t know. Only the Bolofaz can make that determination,” the other replied. “I know they want to spend some time with you before you go back.” Dave was gone. Fa-u-Bay smiled, saying, “I guess we know now.” The Gallican dissolved into a shimmering blob of light and shot out into the stars, leaving Solander to bake in the midday sun.

Chapter 34

Dave was flying through vast clouds over a mysterious planet. But something was very strange. He looked downward and could see no land, just bands of differently colored clouds rushing by at amazing speed. He moved upward toward a layer of clouds hundreds of feet above him. As he pushed to the top of the clouds, he was in space. The mammoth planet spun below him. He could see Fistan and Solander in their orbits nearby. He imagined Fa-u-Bay was still there wondering what had happened to him. Suddenly he realized he was on Lubna, the gas giant. But he was not a bird, so how was he flying?

A massive snake came out of the clouds underneath him. He thought this must be a Bolofaz. The creature came up under him and Dave landed on its back and held on for dear life. He could

feel the creature speaking directly into his mind. “Hi Dave, my name is Ondeen.” The two dived back downward into the gas clouds. The snake was impossibly large, and Dave was a tiny spot riding on its back.

“Ondeen, are you a Bolofaz?” Dave asked.

“Yes I am,” Ondeen replied. “My friends and I wanted to meet you firsthand before we send you home. How are you feeling? I hope you have no remaining injuries from the attack.”

“Frankly, I feel fantastic,” Dave laughed. “The air here is so refreshing. It makes me feel alive! But I thought gas giants had mostly hydrogen and helium atmospheres. I can’t breathe that!”

“That’s very true, but we have compensated for that,” Ondeen replied. “We wanted to meet you, not kill you. If that was our motive, we would have left you with the assassin.”

Dave could see thousands of similar snakes flying with him now. They would turn their heads and smile at him, their eyes shimmering in the light. “Thank you all for saving my life. Right after the crash I thought about my wife and children. I didn’t want them to suffer at my loss.”

“It was our pleasure,” Ondeen replied. “As Fa-u-Bay told you, we are the guardians of time. This planet and others throughout space are home to our species. We exist outside of your sense of time, because it is our duty to make certain the past does not change. Fortunately such disturbances have been rare so far. Life and reality flow along a defined course and changes to what has already happened cannot be allowed.”

“What Ondeen says is correct,” another Bolofaz interrupted. “Your life will end one day. That is the nature of physical existence. However, disturbing the past to change the present has terrible consequences. That is why we watch reverse time travel. We make certain changes do not occur that could affect the future.”

“That’s a relief!” Dave sighed. “For a minute there, Fa-u-Bay had me believing this was about me, Dave Brewster, the accountant. But it’s more about safeguarding time. That makes more sense.”

“Fa-u-Bay was partially correct,” Ondeen said. “Each life has an impact on the future. Most impacts are modest on a cosmological scale. All are profoundly important on a personal level. If you had died at Fola Untor’s hands, another future would have taken its place. Your family would be impacted the most. However, the things you might have done never would have happened, and no one would know the difference. The future would just be different. In your case, you had already done many things which your friends value greatly. Fola wanted to make it as though none of those things occurred.”

The other Bolofaz continued, “Even we do not know the future, Dave. The rest of your life may be wonderful or horrible. But it will be the future that was meant for you, not the delusions of a madman bent on revenge.”

“That’s not very reassuring,” Dave said coldly. “But I must have done something to get Fa-u-Bay to help me. So there’s that at least.”

Ondeen laughed. “The future up to the moment when Fola Untor left his own time to kill you has been written. That should give you some clue about your near term prospects. If you were an accountant in San Diego, why would the greatest leader of Greater Gallia come out of time to help you? However, you will have to experience those things yourself. While we cannot tell you about those events, we know you did some great things. Your future can be very bright!”

“Perhaps, but there is more,” the other said. “While the timeline is now secure, there is great danger approaching you and your friends. You will all face incredible odds at great personal risk. That future awaits you. How it will end is up to God.”

“If I can be with my family, I’ll be fine,” Dave said.

“We wish you the best of luck, Dave Brewster,” Ondeen stated. “Believe it or not, your future will likely affect us as well. If and when that time comes, and you are drawn back here, you can count on us to help you in any way we can.”

“Thank you, Ondeen,” Dave smiled. “It would be a joy to be with you and your friends again. What happens now?”

“Just relax and close your eyes,” Ondeen said. “Now stand on my back with your eyes still closed.” Dave complied and could feel the strong winds lifting him off the creature’s back.

“When you’re ready, just open your eyes.”

Dave was floating in the atmosphere of Lubna. He could not sense the Bolofaz anymore but was enjoying the feeling of floating in the air. He thought of Darlene and their children and smiled. He hoped he would remember all of this so he could tell her when she came home from work. She probably would think he had been sleeping and dreamed the whole thing. After all, being hit by a car and then traveling to a distant planet was not believable. It was beginning to seem like a dream to him as well. The images of the Bolofaz, Fa-u-Bay and traveling in space were already slipping away. He tried to hold onto them, but was failing. He remembered Fa-u-Bay told him it would be like the memory of a dream. Too bad, he thought. It would make a great sci-fi book. He laughed out loud. He took another deep breath and opened his eyes.

Dave was standing next to his car in the Starbucks parking lot. He noticed a number of police cars near a section of the lot that was cordoned off with yellow tape. An ambulance was there and two paramedics were examining someone lying on the ground. Dave thought he could see blood on the sidewalk. He imagined some poor guy had been run over on his way to buy a coffee. He looked at his watch and thought if he had left home a few minutes earlier that could have been him lying there. He shuddered at the thought of being stricken by a car. Deep in his mind, it all seemed too similar, as though he was the victim or knew him well. He felt bad for the person and hoped he would be okay. As he approached, he could tell the man on the ground was quite tall and had light blonde hair. At least he knew it was not his own body. It took longer for him to reach the coffee shop as he had to walk around the large crowd of bystanders.

As Dave opened the door to the store, he could smell the fragrance of coffee and scent of cinnamon in the air. Before he could step in, a woman in a business suit rushed toward the open door with a large coffee in one hand, and a cell phone in the other plastered to her ear, forcing him to step back and let her go by. He thought of a smart response but only managed a soft “Have a nice day,” as she dashed to her car without even noticing him. As he stepped into the store, he could not decide if he was upset by her gruff actions, or just jealous that she had somewhere to go. *That used to be me*, he thought to himself.

Three others were in the line ahead of Dave, so he took his place at the end of the line and browsed the menu.