

THE CRYSTALS OF VUHRAN

THE MILIAN SECTOR



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II. THE MILIAN SECTOR

IVAN BOLANOS

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First printed edition in Peru in 2010 by Ediciones SM

Edited by Tony & Vanchi

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INDEX

THE CRYSTALS OF VUHRAN	1
ABITHAN CLASS	4
ILOTHIA CLASS.....	5
LUSOR CLASS	6
RIDIAN CLASS.....	7
MILIAN SECTOR CHART	8
I. A TREASURE FROM THE PAST	9
II. THE SECRET OF DANIR.....	24
III. THE ALARIS, ZIRTH AND QERIN SYSTEMS	47
IV. ELST-GHYLANT	65
V. ECHOES OF REBELLION.....	85
VI. THE KLERIAN CORRECTOR.....	113
VII. DARING RESCUE	126
VIII. A NEW FACE	137
IX. ASSAULT ON ILIE.....	144
X. A DARK PLAN	160
XI. THE BATTLE OF ZIRTH-TWO	170
XII. A DESPERATE SITUATION.....	179
XIII. THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.....	191
XIV. THE LAST HOPE.....	203
XV. THE GATHERED CRYSTAL.....	214
XVI. COSMIC VISITORS.....	218
XVII. EPILOGUE	220
GLOSSARY	222

ABITHAN CLASS



ABITHAN CLASS

SPEED: 1.22% LIGHT

OVERALL LENGTH: 140 LAKETS

GROSS WEIGHT: 50,000 DAEMS

CAPACITY: 2,200 PASSENGERS

ILOTHIA CLASS



ILOTHIA CLASS
SPEED: 1.22% LIGHT
OVERALL LENGTH: 300 LAKETS
GROSS WEIGHT: 190,000 DAEMS
CREW: 45

LUSOR CLASS



RIDIAN CLASS

RIDIAN CLASS

SPEED: 1.25% LIGHT

GROSS WEIGHT; 10 DAEMS

WEAPONRY: PLASMA CANNONS

DEFENSE: AUTOCALIBRATION SHIELD



MILIAN SECTOR CHART

SYSTEM	PLANET (star distance)	MOONS
MILIAN	HILAN (0.75 duses)	
	ATLANTIA (Rodia, 1.05 duses)	MOSIRA, DUMIA
	KANEB (1.7 duses)	
	KALYS (4.1 duses)	
	RAGLIA (6.3 duses)	
	POLIAN (9 duses)	
	INTERDIMENSIONAL FRINGE (10 duses)	
ALARIS	ALARIS-1	
	ALARIS-2 (Alaris-Sten)	
	ALARIS-3	
	ALARIS-4	
	ALARIS-5	
	INTERDIMENSIONAL FRINGE (11 duses)	
ZIRTH	ZIRTH-1 (Zirth-Kihs)	LIAD
	ZIRTH-2	EPONTE, GOLANDRA
	ZIRTH-3	
	ASTEROID BELT	
	INTERDIMENSIONAL FRINGE (9 duses)	
QERIN	QERIN-1 (Qerin-Eanis, 1.13 duses)	TASIS
	QERIN-2	KUNARE
	QERIN-3	
	QERIN-4	
	INTERDIMENSIONAL FRINGE (10.5 duses)	

I. A TREASURE FROM THE PAST

Hundreds of gurlas from the city of Rodia, at the western edge of a vast plateau dominated by steppes, a man traveled in a small, fast one-person transport. It was a clear day; the sky and the conditions for flying at low altitudes were ideal. The vehicle moved silently. The speedometer indicated about one hundred and fifty gurlas per hour.

He activated his communicator: "I am fifteen minutes from the camp. Very soon, I will be with you."

Esius-Brys was an archaeologist dedicated to the study of ancient history, especially the time of the fall of Vuhuran, the kingdom that, according to the ancients, was founded by the gods through the atlantur Utaal-Lysen.

Esius was eager to confirm an important discovery. He soon flew over a river east of the northern Mansalia Mountains. He saw a small lagoon somewhat separated from the central valley and descended near the shore. Two old colleagues were waiting for him at a very well-equipped camp.

"We found it!" one of them exclaimed as soon as he was close enough to shake Esius's hand.

A smile of satisfaction appeared on the archaeologist's face when he recognized, hidden behind the thickets, the entrance to a cavern: "I can hardly believe it! So many years of searching."

Aided by the light of their flashlights, they entered a deep darkness.

In the depths of the cave, Esius-Brys's colleagues had found a precarious construction, many centuries old, and in one of its rooms, a small wooden chest, on the cover of which was engraved a symbol that those men of science had been studying for years.

"We prefer not to remove it from its place." The youngest explained. "We wanted you to see it as we have preserved it all this time."

Esius-Brys proceeded to lift and examine the chest carefully. "It has deteriorated over the centuries, but I agree it must contain invaluable information."

They immediately took it to the camp to open it. They discovered that the relic contained an extensive scroll in excellent condition.

"If we're lucky, the date should match my calculations," Esius-Brys stated enthusiastically.

The results of the subatomic particle test confirmed that the document dated from shortly after the beginning of the Priemic Era.

More than three thousand years had passed since the events in which the great Atlantur Aheolian-Priem participated, and the descendants of Atlantis now lived in peace.

Many hundreds of millions inhabited the different continents, governed by two councils of representatives based in Rodia, the capital megacity of planet Atlantia. The Galot-Orn Council, or lower house, comprised three hundred members, and the Kihan-Sery, or upper house, had fifty representatives.

While the delegates of Galot-Orn were democratically elected every six years, the position in Kihan-Sery was transmitted by inheritance; its senators had maintained the right to govern, passing it from father to son.

The most appropriate meaning for the term Kihan-Sery was probably “destined to rule.”

Both chambers comprised the Aztar and met in a large hall divided into two levels. There, the laws and issues of most significant importance to the government of Atlantia were debated. Local councils of legislators, who dealt with the affairs of each region, administered the rest of planet, subordinate to Aztar.

They had eradicated hunger and, for the most part, controlled diseases. People on all continents' coasts, deserts, forests, and mountains lived peacefully after achieving high cultural and technological development. The light of the Milian star was used to generate electricity, and wind energy was intensively used in the vast plains and coastlines of the entire planet. In short, the Atlanteans exploited the natural resources within their reach efficiently and cleanly.

Regarding space research and development, Atlantia's inhabitants, the Milian System's second planet, had also achieved important achievements. Advanced technologies in the field of propulsion allowed them to venture into outer space successfully. As these technologies were perfected, exploration ships went further and faster. The last frontier was being conquered.

First, scientists invented the nuclear fission engine in the year 3110. Its heart was a reactor capable of carrying out a process in which protons impacted the nucleus of radioactive elements. The decomposition generated highly ionized elements, passing through a primary gas chamber.

The energy obtained, which was used as an accelerant, made it possible to reach speeds of up to twenty-eight gurlas per second or one hundred thousand eight hundred per hour. Thanks to these advances in propulsion, it was possible to explore the entire Milian System. Atlantia was one of its seven

planets, and successive crewed missions, equipped with Yiron-class fission engines, allowed them to visit Hilan, Kaneb, Kalys, Raglia, Polian, and finally Cariat, located more than four hundred and seventy million gurlas from the star Milian. They established scientific stations on the surface of most of these planets, as well as on several of their satellites.

Some years before, cities had begun to be built on the two moons of Atlantia. Soon, thousands of people would move to the first permanent space colonies: New Golast in Mosira and New Lemas in Dumia.

But the Space Agency would only manage to develop the technology to make the first true leap towards the stars in the year three thousand one hundred and thirty-one. The antimatter drive, called Xires, would allow it to reach one percent of the speed of light, around eight hundred and fifty gurlas per second. That same year, a crewless vehicle was sent on a deep space mission to Yestia, outside the Milian System. The ship would take over three hundred years to reach the neighboring star.

"I still can't figure it out. It's useless. I can't find the key!" the frustrated archaeologist repeated.

It had been months since Esius-Brys and his colleagues had found the enigmatic chest in the cave of Mansalia, and, until now, working tirelessly in the privacy of his home in the village of Kols on the northern coast of the Verul Sea, Esius had not found a way to translate those ancient phrases.

"This is ancient Adianse, and yet I cannot understand it," he had concluded on more than one occasion. Despite the scroll's writing in the high

language of the once-great kingdom of Vuhran, he could not comprehend its meaning.

One night, someone knocked on the door when he was about to collapse from exhaustion after a long day of work. He looked at the monitor but couldn't make out anyone, so he didn't open it. Later, he thought he noticed a shadow near the window. He asked who it was and got no answer. Confused by lack of sleep or some other inexplicable reason, he opened it without knowing who the visitor could be.

When he opened it, he found a stranger, whose mere presence made him feel afraid, so he tried to close the door again.

"Keep quiet and listen carefully to what I have to tell you," the stranger prevented Esius from closing the door. "I mean no harm to you, Dr. Brys."

"Who are you?" the archaeologist asked in a nervous voice.

"I'm a friend, someone who also strives to uncover the truth about the past of this world. Someone who envisioned a glorious future for the Atlantean people," he responded with great conviction. "Doctor, you have in your possession a precious scroll. Don't worry. I'm not here to steal it. I think with my help, you will be able to figure it out."

The unexpected visitor seemed to know too much not to be considered, so Esius-Brys decided to listen. First, he spoke about a caste of ancient warriors who aimed to protect the heritage of Utal-Lysen from those who sought to use it for evil and selfish purposes. The surprised archaeologist learned details unknown to historians about the transcendental role that Aheolian-Priem played as a soldier of god in the last years of the Lysenic Era.

He also knew that he entrusted the last survivor of the atherant caste, the long-lived Elir-Ania, to create a brotherhood of guardians of the crystals, better known as the atolians.

“The atolians took good care of the heritage of Utal-Lysen for many years, but even under their surveillance, the crystals were stolen after the death of the atlantur,” the mysterious man revealed.

“Stolen? By whom?”

“The person responsible was the son of Urias-Kut, who led an obscure sect of fanatics won over to his cause: the purists. Thus began a human search and hunt that spanned several decades. The atolians tried to recover the sacred crystals, but the purists stayed one step ahead while protecting their lord.”

“What use did those men want to give to the crystals?”

“We only know that they never used them as weapons because the new atlantur had ordered them to do so. Their only purpose was to hide them so they would never be found by those they considered impure and unworthy of the heritage of the first atlantur.”

“Did the atolians never find Urias-Kut's successor?”

“They never did. Even so, they were convinced that, since he distrusted everyone, he must have spent his last days hidden and alone in some remote corner of Vuhran.”

“What you are telling me happened well over three thousand years ago. How can you be certain?”

“Because even though many centuries have passed, the atolians prevailed.”

“You are one of them!” Esius exclaimed, as if it were a living archaeological discovery.

“That's right, Dr. Brys, and although we remaining guardians are determined to find and preserve the greatest treasure of antiquity, we must beware of the purists, who have also survived to this day.”

After remaining silent for a moment, the archaeologist continued, “Well, you said you could help me decipher the scroll.”

The atolian explained that to decipher the parchment, written in ancient Adianse, a key had to be used, forgotten for centuries by everyone except the Atolian, which indicated the order in which the words had to be broken and rearranged.

With this invaluable help, the scientist began to make sense of the phrases of antiquity to understand part of the message in the manuscript. He discerned that a woman, whose identity remained barely revealed, had penned the manuscript:

My mother, whose name was also Gisbet, told me how the new elquidian of Eryahn came to our kingdom to bring peace after the devastating war on both sides of the sea.

During that war, the soldiers of god, the arm of Athar on earth, shifted the balance of victory in favor of the Eastern kingdom. The invincible warriors, wielding the power of thunder and the breath of the gods, successfully defeated the grand army of the perverse atlantur Tahel-Caler.

The mysterious woman's statement in another passage suggests that she had been a prisoner for many years:

Several months after the coronation of the atlantur Aheolian-Priem, I was kidnapped and taken against my will towards the north to the lands of the nomadic horse riders. The evil atlanat has total control over me, bending my soul with his magic, and has held me captive for many moons.

I've been expecting a child for months. The heartless old man has left me pregnant, and now I am contemplating the possibility of taking my life in order not to bring his offspring into the world, who will indeed engender evil just like him.

Elsewhere in the document:

My kidnapping from Unthea occurred many years ago. My son, who inherited his father's evil, took the sacred crystals and the secret lysenic tablet, stealing them from the capital of the new kingdom. After years of planning the future of Utal-Lysen's heritage, he finally headed to his refuge beyond the sea.

The words in the manuscript reminded Esius-Brys of some of the history of ancient times. Carved on tables, strange events were known about the past of the Atlantean race. In those chronicles from the beginning of the Lysenic Era, they spoke about a previous world and a cataclysm that almost wiped out that town of brave and proud men. They also told how the gods

had deposited thousands of survivors on the western shores of the island of Vuhran, as the continent that rises west of the Ziahn Sea is known.

On the one hand, science could not accept this version of the genesis of life in Atlantia, the result of the mentality of the time, more oriented to myth and legend than to rational thought. But, on the other hand, it wasn't easy to explain that almost all the existing biological species had appeared so suddenly and simultaneously on the planet's surface.

"There is then a tablet that has remained hidden to this day," Esius put forward the hypothesis.

"One that must explain the original world of our race. One that will change history forever," the atolian concurred.

"How could it remain hidden all these centuries?"

"We believe that the atlantur Aheolian-Priem decided to wait until the new kingdom was solidly established before revealing its contents. He feared that evil could be reborn during his first years of reign. But apparently, he decided to wait too long."

"The refuge beyond the sea that woman refers to. Do you know where it is located?"

"There is nothing about him in the records of the atolian brotherhood."

"The key you gave me seems incomplete and does not allow me to continue deciphering the scroll. I must continue studying it. I hope that among its lines, we find the clues we need."

"Doctor Brys, you should know that your life is in danger from now on. Purists also seek the sacred crystals and the secret tablet and will not hesitate to kill anyone who stands in their way."

The mysterious man bid farewell, but not before wishing the archaeologist the best of luck. He left the house without revealing his name and became lost in the thicket.

Esius-Brys knew that, through his findings, he must find where the refuge of the atlanat's heir was located. He felt immense excitement knowing that he was getting closer and closer to the greatest treasure in history. Just before dawn, he fell fast asleep, leaving the video screen on.

The morning news announced that everything was ready for the crew of the new Sabris-class exploration ship to make the test trip to planet Kaneb, whose orbit was bringing it closer to Atlantia.

Ered-Kihal, an experienced Space Agency pilot, woke up early that morning in his home in the coastal city of Kaser, at the southern tip of the western continent. He had been chosen as commander of the mission to test the newly developed Xires-Two antimatter thruster, capable of reaching 1.2 percent of the speed of light.

The Sabris had been designed to carry a crew of up to seventeen men, and its primary mission would be to initiate space exploration beyond the borders of the Milian System.

The transport picked up Commander Kihal punctually, at five in the morning, Rodia time, to take him to the surface station of the Ilie spaceport, near the southern tip of the eastern continent, on the opposite shore of the Ziahn Sea, near the site where the ancient city of Golast once stood.

As the transport traveled the distance of just over four hundred gurlas that separated Kaser from the station, the shapes of the space elevator became clearer. The giant structure rose, disappearing into the clouds.

The elevator, using akanium cables and a system of sequential thrusters, allowed personnel and equipment to be transported from the planet's surface to a low orbit in space.

The port of Ilie was located at the upper end of the structure, at an altitude of ninety-five gurlas. It had hangars, laboratories, and living modules to house permanent crews of up to two hundred and fifty people. They completed the trip from the planet's surface in just half an hour.

Because antimatter reactors were dangerous if their core was exposed to the environment, this orbital system became the main way to get to a minimum height for different space operations in a safe and efficient way.

At half past eleven, Sabris-One disconnected from the main dock. It would soon begin its first mission to another planet in the Milian System.

When a couple of gurlas had left, Ered-Kihal informed, "Ilie control... We are ready to begin the antimatter ignition sequence."

"Captain Kihal, you have authorization for Xires activation."

"Understood, Ilie. The activation will take place in sixty seconds. We will walk around Kaneb and return for breakfast tomorrow."

"Ered, bring her back in one piece, and I'll treat you," they exclaimed in the port.

Reaching sufficient speed for the inertia compensators to work, they activated the Xires-Two thrusters. The ship experienced extraordinary acceleration. After a few minutes, it was moving at almost 1,030 gurlas per second, quickly getting lost in the vastness of space. In just over nine and a

half hours, Ered-Kihal covered the distance separating Atlantia from the system's third planet, some thirty million gurlas. The mission was a complete success.

With the full support of the Space Agency, the efficiency and reliability of the Sabris continued to be tested on voyages that took it farther and farther. Soon after, the Space Agency redesigned the ship to attempt the most ambitious and audacious undertaking in history: the manned trip to Yestia.

The astronauts would travel most of the time in a state of suspended animation, staying awake for just one year for every fifty years of travel. If all went as planned, the outward journey would take approximately two hundred and fifty years to complete.

After several missions, which even took him to distant Cariat, Captain Kihal received top-priority communication from Ilie. He had been appointed to command the team attempting to reach Yestia. In a few days, the rest of the members of the transcendental mission to the neighboring star began to be recruited, which was not an easy task, given that those who went on that mission would probably never see their loved ones again. It would constitute the greatest physical and psychological challenge since, if they were successful, they would return five centuries after leaving. They initially transferred the crew, five men and five women, to the scientific station on Atlantia's largest moon, Mosira.

They would remain locked in a small room for a long time, so they had to get used to the challenges of confinement and the permanent coexistence of the small group. Part of the training would consist of living isolated in a bubble on the natural satellite's surface for a year and a half. From the first day, some expressed their doubts and deepest feelings.

“Do you think we will succeed?” The science officer asked Ered-Kihal.

“They have assembled the world's best men and women, and we'll travel in the space agency's best ship. Yes, we will succeed!” The captain responded with confidence and determination.

In addition to the challenging physical and psychological training, they had to train in various scientific and technical fields to successfully carry out their mission: medicine, aeronautics, astrophysics, astronomy, navigation, and propulsion were some of those disciplines.

Doctor Brys was in one of the Rodia Museum of History and Science rooms that day.

Silently admiring the mausoleum where the remains of the atlantur Aheolian-Priem rested, I tried to imagine the man who could unify two kingdoms of antiquity that lived in conflict for centuries.

Although he understood and accepted the magic and mystery of the sacred crystals and the odyssey of the soldiers of god as an interpretation of the heroic symbolism of the time, there was something that had him intrigued: what strange phenomenon could have caused the devastating destruction of Mesihn three millennia earlier?

Science did not explain the mysterious disappearance of the gigantic fortress between Pertegia and the Inem mountains. All that today's advanced and sensitive devices could register was a faint and unusual remnant radiation.

Another visitor who had been admiring the mausoleum in silence said, “Admirable, isn't it?”

“He was a magnificent ruler in his time.”

“A few years have passed, and you will have made progress with the parchment,” that man whispered. He was none other than the atolian.

Esius-Brys took a moment to observe the room, and after verifying that they were alone and that no one would listen to their conversation, he began to speak, “Yes, now I know that to find what we are looking for, we must go to the island of Adrosia, formerly known as Adros. The name of the ancient priest of evil will guide us to the treasure inside the prison where thousands of innocent people were locked up many centuries ago.”

“Danir! Who would have suspected it!”

“Why don't you come with me? I think it's time for us to join forces!” Esius-Brys exclaimed. “I still must wait for the Institute of History and Culture to authorize me to carry out the expedition to the island, but your help will be vital when I obtain permission.”

The atolian remained silent as if thinking about something: “I must comply with the will of the atlantur Aheolian-Priem. He decreed that the entire island of the prison stands to be considered forbidden. No one should set foot in Adros again, and as an atolian, I cannot fail to comply with that mandate.”

“I understand your motives and respect your beliefs.”

You possess a profound understanding of science. I must assist in uncovering the greatest treasure in history.

“How will you do it?”

“I know someone who could help us expedite the procedures to obtain the permit.”

“Do you think sharing what we know with others is wise?” The archaeologist was apprehensive.

“This is someone I trust entirely. You don't have to worry, Doctor Brys.”

“Then I'll wait for the good news.”