

THE DUMAREST COMPANION

by Nino Lucio

1) Quick Reference

Earl Dumarest is a space traveller in the far future who has travelled throughout numerous worlds since leaving Earth, the planet in which he was born. The location of Earth has been generally forgotten by everyone (see the Cyclan entry), and its space coordinates have been purged from the memory banks of virtually all interstellar libraries, star maps and other data banks. The "Dumarest Saga" deals with the interstellar travels and travails of Earl Dumarest who attempts to return to Earth despite the near-universal ignorance of its location and the active opposition faced by Dumarest from an organization of cybers called "The Cyclan". The series presently constitutes 32 books and two short stories, but there is the possibility that more stories may be written by E.C. Tubb and published in the near future.

2) Descriptions

Dumarest

Earl Dumarest is the quintessential space traveller, who has no known family or property holding and is curiously obsessed with returning to Earth, the location of which is generally unknown and from which he fled, with very few happy memories. While a child of ten, Dumarest escaped a small mob of ragtag survivors (he had killed two of them) by stowing away on an old space freighter which landed on Earth (Dumarest did not know of space or spaceships at that time), though it is later intimated that the vessel should not have gone to Earth in the first place (and that might be the reason why the crew had to eventually die, as they did in Figonia).

When he was discovered after liftoff, old Captain Bazan Deralta considered ejecting Dumarest into the void, but was impressed with his lightning reflexes, and perhaps saw him as the son he never had, so he instead hired Dumarest as a general helper (e.g., cleaning and polishing the vessel's equipment, including the caskets used by "low" travellers). Dumarest grew and his physique strengthened with a regular diet and he soaked up the miscellaneous knowledge imparted by his crewmates. This period of relative "contentment" lasted three years, until the vessel landed on Figonia, where disaster struck.

The captain (who was then dying anyway) and the crew were betrayed to "someone" by Dorph, the steward of the vessel, causing the captain and many of the crew to be killed, and the ship was eventually destroyed by a conflagration apparently started by the engineer as a funeral "pyre" for the dead crewmen. A still-young Dumarest then got involved in an altercation with a sadistic security guard and, although Dumarest prevailed, he was injured and forced to seek refuge among the Monks of the Church of the Universal Brotherhood (see below).

It is from that moment that Dumarest apparently began his independent stellar travels, though E.C. Tubb may write additional stories to "fill in" the gap in this period of time (until the Winds of Gath). In his continuing sojourns, Dumarest matured and moved further away from Earth, and now attempts to return there based on tantalizing evidence he has been able to compile from scattered sources, such as fragments of the creed of the original people, the appearance of the zodiac constellations and other information.

Dumarest is a rootless, tough, resilient man who is oddly sensitive to his obligations to his friends. He is not particularly muscular but is blessed with extraordinary reflexes (even when young) and a special sensitivity to circumstances and opportunities which is often described as "luck". After a molecular diagnosis early in the series (in The Winds of Gath), the attending physician remarked to Dumarest that his structure was somewhat different in composition from all known molecular human types, which appears to be the basis for his quickness.

Dumarest has been employed in a number of odd jobs but, when down on his luck, he sometimes resorts to participating in publicly staged fights featuring knives or unarmed combat with another opponent, and virtually always Dumarest wins the match and promised reward (except in Angado).

The grown Dumarest is especially attractive to women, and indeed many of the early books in the series are titled after the leading female character (e.g., Derai, Kalin, Veruchia) with whom he develops a relationship. Although most of his women seem to fall in love with him, Dumarest appears to have truly loved only two women: Derai and Kalin (the latter being the great love of his life). Dumarest has even been loved by a sentient world, which created a female human simulacrum to interact with Dumarest. In all of the books, Dumarest appears to be a fully mature man and of the same general age as he wanders from planet to planet.

Affinity Twin

From Kalin he unknowingly obtained the knowledge of the "affinity twin", a molecular sequence of genetic units that, when properly assembled and injected into the brain cortex of two living beings (Dumarest has even used the affinity twin on a large space alien), allows the "master" to control the body of the "servant" and experience the world through all of its senses. When the "servant" dies, the intelligence is returned to the "master".

The affinity twin formula was stolen from the laboratories of the Cyclan by Kalin's first husband, and the Cyclan are bent on recovering the correct sequence of the formula. The Cyclan already possess knowledge of the 15 molecular units, but placing them in the correct sequence and testing them could take the Cyclan over 4,000 years, so having learned that Dumarest has the information on the correct sequence, the Cyclan have been hunting him in order to recover such information.

The Cyclan

The Cyclan is an organization composed by many logic-driven cybers who are developed when young men undergo an operation at puberty which removes their capacity to feel emotions and are engrafted with the Homochon elements (which are apparently obtained from blind creatures which live in some underground caverns, possibly on Earth). Mentally reviewing a particular complex mathematical equation, a cyber can place himself in a trance-like state which activates the dormant Homochon elements and thus permits him to have instantaneous communication across light year distances with Cyclan headquarters.

The location of Cyclan headquarters is a secret throughout the series; the early books hint that the Cyclan base location is somewhere well below the Earth's surface (which is another reason that the Cyclan opposes Dumarest and probably the reason why Earth's location has been purged from virtually all galactic star maps), but in the later books it suggests that the location of the Cyclan base was moved to Earth's moon or elsewhere.

Housed in the Cyclan base is a collection of thousands or millions of brains of former cybers who are kept in a nutrient solution and provide the gestalt which communicates with each of the travelling cybers. The "reward" of every good cyber (failure by a cyber is often regarded by the Cyclan as a terminal problem) appears to be when his brain is eventually removed and joined to the "pool" of existing cyber brains. These cyber brains are maintained in constant mental rapport and thus provide incredible human computing capacity in weighing circumstances and extrapolating results.

A subtheme of the later series of books is that a "madness" seems to be infecting the older brains; it is unclear whether this is a by product of the constant mental gestalt (briefly communing with the gestalt through the Homochon elements produces a psychedelic effect which is different for each communicating cyber, for example) or whether the older brains have evolved into a higher intelligence and are being incorrectly diagnosed as "mad" by the living cybers. The Cyclan are headed by the Cyber Prime, of which there have been many during the series (as they do not occupy this position for long, often due to Dumarest).

Being intellect-driven human machines, the cybers can feel no joy except the satisfaction of making correct logical deductions. The Cyclan are experts at making extrapolations from available data, and are highly sought out throughout the universe as advisors to kings and merchant houses. They studiously present a placid and inoffensive demeanour (although each cyber is gaunt and bald) and it is generally believed that the Cyclan do not choose sides but simply provide advice to those who employ them. Unbeknownst to all but the Cyclan and Dumarest, however, the Cyclan's private agenda is to control the universe through "puppets" (human and otherwise), which is why they desire to obtain the correct affinity twin sequence and are constantly investigating instances of human and animal telepathy. Dumarest is a continual thorn in the side of the Cyclan, and has survived a great number of attempts to kill him or trap him.

Dumarest's first encounter with a living cyber took place on the planet Figona, shortly before the disaster struck that set him loose to wander around the universe, although there are references that spaceships bearing the Cyclan seal sometimes landed at Earth. Although initially he had only neutral curiosity towards the cyber and his acolytes, a guard he met in Figona blamed the Cyclan for indirectly causing the death of his family. The guard described the Cyclan as "scum" and "swine". Also, it appears that Dorph, the double-crossing steward on Dumarest's first ship, was working with the cyber on Figona and may have been involved in the death of the captain and crew. If so, that would have left Dumarest with a very negative impression of the machinations of the Cyclan.

The Universal Brotherhood

A moral counterpoise to the Cyclan is the Universal Brotherhood, a kind of interstellar church that preaches against violence and has rituals similar to Christianity (communion wafer, penance and confession, do-unto-others creed). The Universal Brotherhood and the Cyclan do not oppose each other, but have a wary respect for one another. Dumarest often donates to the Universal Brotherhood and he is regarded as a friend of the organization, which attempts to help spacers down on their luck. Dumarest refuses to undergo the Universal Brotherhood's "benediction light", however, because he fears that doing so would hypnotically rob him of his capacity to kill others (which he needs to do from time to time).

In one of the new short stories, a 13-year old Dumarest is beaten badly in a fight with a security guard and is apparently nursed back to health by the Universal Brotherhood, who "save his life". That may explain the favourable disposition Dumarest has towards the Universal Brotherhood thereafter. It is possible that future stories might detail his experiences with the Universal Brotherhood and how he learned the truth about the "benediction light".

Creed of the "Original People"

This creed originates from the belief that mankind originated on a single world (Earth) and that "to the heavens they fled in terror" - a reference from the man-made cataclysm that apparently affected Earth (now a barren and desolate world) and caused humans to seek expiation for their sins among the stars. There really is no one organization which ascribes to this view, which appears to be the belief of a fragmented, scattered and nebulous quasi-religious sect that existed at some point in mankind's history (it no longer appears to exist or is otherwise well-concealed). This creed ties into Dumarest's search for Earth, and at various points in the later books, Dumarest uses fragmentary information about the creed of the original people to aid his search of the cosmos in locating Earth.

Interstellar Traveling

Mankind has spread throughout the cosmos in Dumarest's time and many openly rebuff the thought that all humans were descended from a "root stock" on a single planet. Distances are vast, and travelling on ships to go from planet to planet is difficult, time-consuming and costly (so much so that many services and products are quoted on the basis of how many "High Passages" are to be paid to the seller).

Quick Time and Slow Time

Rich travellers often travel "high", which means they are injected with a drug ("slow time") that subjectively slows down their perception of time and biological processes so that a trip of 20 light years can take place in about two weeks or so. Poor travellers have to opt for "low passage", which means they are doped up and ride in casket-type containers which slow their metabolism (they ride 90% dead), which often proves fatal to such travellers (15% mortality rate). Most spacers travel in "Medium", which means that they are neither slowed down nor doped up and stored away.

The opposite of "slow time" is "quick time", a drug which speeds up one's biological processes so that one can move at 40 times the normal rate. Although this is a dangerous drug, Dumarest has been forced to rely upon "quick time" on several occasions. A person who is on "quick time" and falls down, for example, hits the floor at a rate of over 50 miles per hour; he can also quickly starve if not almost continually fed.

Nature of Interstellar Government

There is little discussion in the series about the nature of any universal or galactic government. There appear to be scattered kingdoms, merchant houses and families which control at most several planets and constitute their governments. There does not appear to be any democracy virtually anywhere, or perhaps Dumarest is not very sensitive to these issues and they are never explored in the books. Similarly, there does not appear to be any organized intergalactic military force.

3) The Dumarest Saga: Printed Sources Bibliography

In *the Return*, which is the last published book in the series (No. 32), Dumarest manages to return to orbit around Earth, where he is confronted by a Cyclan vessel. Dumarest predictably overcomes the Cyclan and the Cyclan vessel is destroyed. Poised in orbit over Earth, with the Cyclan aware that he has rebuffed their latest assault, the book ends. It is not clear whether Dumarest ever lands on Earth, what he finds when he gets there (the early books describe the Cyclan as having a subterranean base far below the surface of Earth), what his purpose is in returning to Earth and/or whether the Cyclan continue hunting for Dumarest. Hopefully, a future story will clarify these issues.

Books in the Series

1. Winds of Gath (1967) (=Gath)
2. Derai (1968)
3. Toyman (1969)
4. Kalin (1969)
5. The Jester at Scar (1970)
6. Lallia (1971)
7. Technos (1972)
8. Veruchia (1973)
9. Mayenne (1973)
10. Jondelle (1973)
11. Zenya (1974)
12. Eloise (1975)
13. Eye of the Zodiac (1975)
14. Jack of Swords (1976)
15. Spectrum of a Forgotten Sun (1976)
16. Haven of Darkness (1977)
17. Prison of Night (1977)
18. Incident on Ath (1978)
19. The Quillian Sector (1978)
20. Web of Sand (1979)
21. Iduna's Universe (1979)
22. The Terra Data (1980)
23. World of Promise (1980)
24. Nectar of Heaven (1981)
25. The Terridae (1981)
26. The Coming Event (1982)
27. Earth is Heaven (1982)
28. Melome (1983)
29. Angado (1984)
30. Symbol of Terra (1984)
31. The Temple of Truth (1985)
32. Le Retour (France 1992), as The Return (1997)

Short Stories in the Series

- "The Child of Earth" (in Fantasy Adventures # 1)
- "Figona" (in Fantasy Adventures # 2)

The above listing represents all of the known Dumarest books and short stories.

Printed Bibliography

The first bibliography of E.C. Tubb's books was written by Michael Ashley and Philip Harbottle in *Science Fiction Collector No. 7* (July 1978). It contains a listing of all of the books in the Dumarest Saga until 1979. However, *The Tall Adventurer: The Works of E.C. Tubb*, by Philip Harbottle and Sean Wallace, was published by Roger Robinson of Becon Publications in a limited press run of 300, and is currently being offered for 12 sterling pounds or 20 US dollars.

It offers the collector, reader, and researcher some 200 pages of comprehensive critiques and listings of everything E.C. Tubb has written in his career. It also includes 20 pages of black-and-white cover reproductions of his books and magazine appearances. In the UK the book can be ordered straight from Roger Robinson, and his snail mail address is Becon Publications, 75 Rossllyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG. In the US copies are now available from Chris Drumm Books, Gryphon Books, or it can be ordered directly from Sean Wallace.

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