

Editorial Reviews

Promise of the Visitor

“A delightful romp with spaceships, suspense, and assorted aliens.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

“Gittlin’s fast-paced story is packed with drama, tension, and fine characterization spiced with a sense of wry humor.”

—D. DONOVAN, SENIOR REVIEWER,
MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW

Cataclysm: End of Worlds

“The mystery novelist–AI alien buddy concept is fresh and fun, and the story moves at blazing speed.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

The Silver Sphere

The novella utilizes every word to create a satisfyingly original blend of humor and entertainment in a small but compelling package. And thank heavens there are more books to come. Those seeking the rare draw of a literary sci-fi novella format as well as busy readers who want to digest an action-packed, unpredictable story in one sitting will find *The Silver Sphere* a complete delight on many levels.

—D. DONOVAN, SENIOR REVIEWER,
MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW

NOVELS BY
David Gittlin

Time Terminus

The Silver Sphere

*Cataclysm:
End of Worlds*

Promise of the Visitor

*Three Days to Darkness:
Three Days to Save the World
Three People to help
Three lessons to learn*

*Scarlet Ambrosia:
Blood Is the Nectar of Life*

*Micromium:
Clean Energy from Mars*

THE SILVER SPHERE TRILOGY

The Silver Sphere
Cataclysm: End of Worlds
Promise of the Visitor

**A Science-Fiction
Adventure**

DAVID GITTLIN

Entelligent Entertainment, LLC

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The Silver Sphere Trilogy is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or appear in the story fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

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*To Ashley Brynn,
the newest addition
to our family.*

Author's Note

Dear Reader,

I am aware that much of the science in this science fiction tale is pure bonkers. Please indulge me. It's all in the service of fun.

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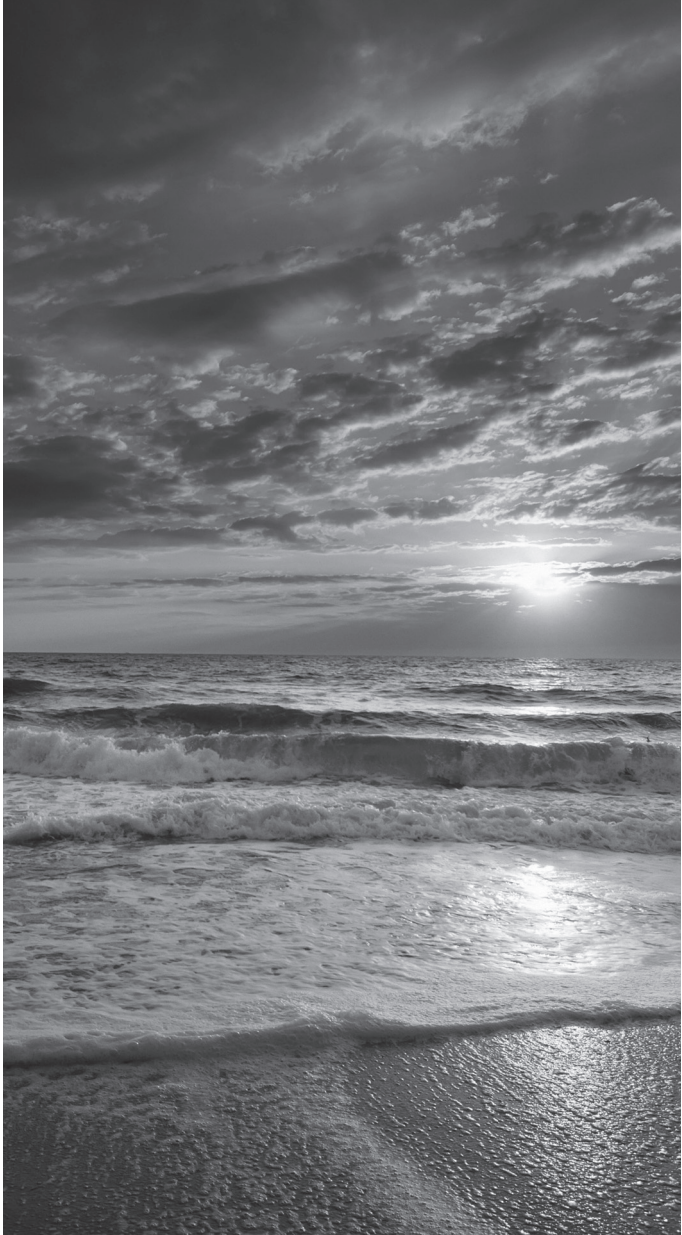
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— PART 1 —

THE SILVER SPHERE





JACOB



It wasn't in actuality a sphere.

I found it on the beach. Right at the water's edge.

In hindsight, I'm not entirely sure I found it. The sphere may have found me in some karmic sort of way. I'll have to wait until later to sort it out because, as I will soon learn, time is in short supply.

First things first.

My name is Jacob Casell. Two days ago, I left a comfortable beach house to go out for a stroll in the middle of the night. The full moon and stars were my sole companions. I needed to think about the ending of my latest mystery novel. I found the water and the salt air helped to stimulate my creative thinking.

The night was clear. I splashed my bare feet on the tips of the tides. I felt the crisp ocean breeze ruffling my longish hair as if it were saying, *tell me your story*.

Before I could answer the query, I almost tripped and fell. A thing about the size of a basketball rocked gently in the water at my feet. I had a distinct feeling it was looking up at me, even though it had no discernable eyes.

The thing at my feet was a shiny silver sphere punctuated by streamlined indentations on its sides. It had a hole in the center which, in the moonlight, revealed nothing but bottomless darkness. Hardly an eye. Not a human one, at least. As I examined it, the sphere began to pulse. I stepped a few feet away. The sphere flashed on and off like a strobe light. I wondered if the damn thing was about to explode

Suddenly, the sphere stopped strobing. Then, it spoke to me. A voice inside my head spoke in stilted English.

“Do not be alarmed,” the thing said. “The pulsing effect was me reanimating my systems. No sense wasting energy while I was waiting for you to happen along. You certainly took your time, didn’t you? And, by the way, I’m not a ‘thing.’ I am a highly evolved organism. It may help you to think of me as an artificial intelligence entity, but I am much more than that. Your mind is not capable of conceiving what I truly am.”

I drew back a few more steps thinking, *I must be dreaming. This can’t be happening.*

“For a man who writes novels, you display little imagination,” the sphere said.

I felt strangely comfortable speaking to the machine as if speaking to a telepathic silver sphere was as everyday an occurrence as eating a tub of macaroni and cheese for dinner.

“How do you know I’m a writer?” I said aloud. I wasn’t in the habit of communicating telepathically, after all.

“I’ve absorbed quite a bit of information about you in the short time we’ve been together.”

“I’m not sure I like that.”

“It doesn’t matter if you like it or not.”

“It matters to me.”

It seemed like the machine was surprised by my response and needed time to process it. I pushed the advantage. “It sounds like you were expecting me.”

“I was expecting someone. I suppose you’ll do.”

“Uh-huh. Do you have a name?”

“You can call me Arcon. A-R-C-O-N.”

“Got it. I suppose you came here from some far distant solar system?”

“Next you will ask me: ‘do I come in peace?’”

“Do you?”

“The answer is yes and no. I’m not here to hurt anyone, but there will be worldwide chaos if news of my mission leaks out.”

“That sounds ominous.”

“It’s nothing compared to what will happen if you don’t help me to complete my mission.”

“Since you appear to know everything about me, you must realize that I’m not at liberty to help you. I’m past my deadline for turning in the final draft of a manuscript. My editor calls to scream at me daily.”

“There is a much bigger picture here than your manuscript. I will dispense with the formalities and call you by your first name which, naturally, I’ve learned without your help. I’m getting cold and tired of soaking in this seawater, Jacob. Please take me back to the beach house your wealthy friend has lent you.”

“But I just told you—”

“Pick me up, Jacob. If I miss *my* deadline, you won’t have to worry about yours.”



ARCON



After Arcon convinced me to drive him home to my friend's plush split-level house on Daytona Beach, I put him in the back seat of my decrepit Mazda Miata. Arcon reclined there regally, like the CEO of a large corporation, ignoring my attempts at conversation. Occasionally, he vibrated and made annoying clicking sounds. Something was up, but Arcon refused to let me in on the secret.

As we walked up the stone steps to the sculpted front door, I kept an eye peeled for voyeurs. My womanizing friend, Jeffrey, commissioned a local artist to carve a seductive female nymph into the oaken door. Jeffrey's amorous adventures were the talk of the town. Frustrated husbands in the neighborhood were known to point telescopes at Jeffrey's door to catch a glimpse of his latest stunning girlfriend. To shield *my* secret from prying eyes, I shrewdly camouflaged Arcon with the light coat I had been wearing to protect myself from the evening chill. Arcon was by no means a glamorous girlfriend, but he was sure to arouse interest if the voyeurs caught a glimpse of him.

Once safely inside, I unwrapped Arcon and perched him on top of a glass kitchen table. He immediately began strobing as he had done earlier on the beach. When Arcon's irritating light show finally stopped, I took a seat opposite him. I wanted to look Arcon straight into the aperture I call his eye to have, in a manner of speaking, a man-to-man talk.

"Why do you find it necessary to nearly blind me with your damn strobing," I began.

Arcon replied telepathically. "I'm charging myself up for what lies ahead. Completing this mission will require deep reserves of energy. More than I anticipated. I can't do it all at once. We have much to do and little time to do it. Please focus on the big picture and not on minor irritations."

"You haven't told me what the big picture is."

"I know. It's coming. Are you certain your friend won't be returning any time soon to reclaim his house?"

"He'll be in Paris for the next month or two writing for a fashion magazine."

Arcon flashed brightly, but only once. "Excellent. Let's get down to business. And don't interrupt me unless you have a highly intelligent question to ask."

I made a huge effort not to be insulted by Arcon's cavalier attitude. I had gleaned from our discussion on the beach that the fate of the world was at stake. Unless Arcon turned out to be a crackpot alien intelligence, I had to put my petty feelings aside and listen intently.

"To put it bluntly," Arcon began ominously, "your world will be destroyed by a pulsar from a neutron star that exploded two hundred and fifty light years away."

"What?"

Arcon seemed to pause for dramatic effect. “Unless we do something about it.”

I was too startled to respond.

“As the people of this world are fond of saying; ‘time marches on.’ In this case, time not only marches, but it is also taking a shortcut through a wormhole. The pulsar has, until now, been hidden by this wormhole. It will soon reappear fifty thousand miles beyond the outer reaches of your solar system. Think of it as a traveler walking to Orlando, and then deciding to hop on a supersonic bullet train to save time and sneaker soles. By the time the pulsar becomes visible, it will be too late. We have seventy-two hours to save your planet.”

I thought: *Either Arcon is a crackpot, or this is an elaborate ruse my trust fund friend is playing on me. What are the odds of something like this happening?*

I decided to go along with the ruse. “Did you by any chance bring a bottle of twenty-year-old single malt scotch to enjoy in case our mission fails?”

“If I was capable of laughing, I wouldn’t.”

I stared back at Arcon wondering how a super sophisticated being like Arcon was not capable of laughter.

Reading my thoughts, Arcon replied. “Laughter is not included in my programming for this mission. In this case, it’s a waste of time and energy. I’m using every second to plan a solution to the crisis. I warn you that it’s not guaranteed to work, and it will surely *not* work if you don’t follow my directions carefully.”

I didn’t have the heart to tell Arcon that I was never any good at following directions. I like to do things my way and mostly in my own time. It doesn’t mean I’m some sort of genius. I’m sure it simply means that I’m stubborn.

“If this is an elaborate joke, I’m happy to play along. If it’s for real, I have to tell you, I’m the wrong man for the job.”

“It’s not a joke, Jacob, and we don’t have time for personnel changes. It’s you and me.”

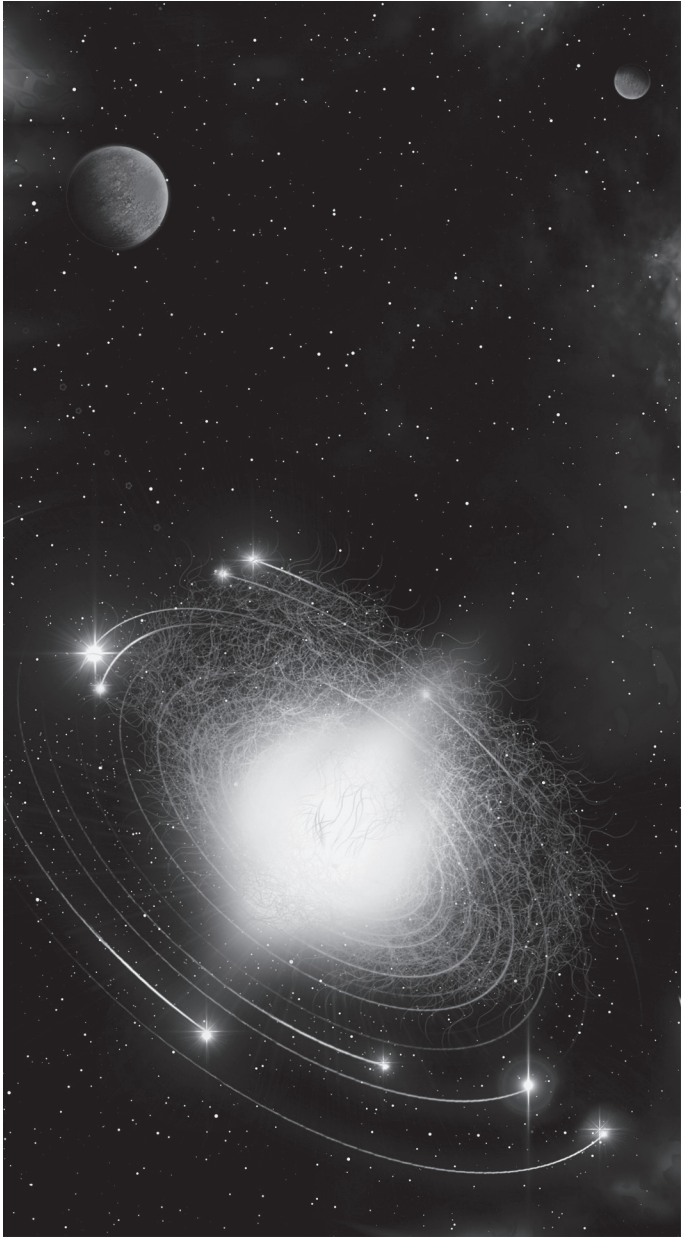
I sighed. “So, if I screw up, the world will blow up?”

Arcon flashed again. “JUST DO AS I SAY AND WE’LL HAVE HALF A CHANCE TO SAVE YOUR PLANET! The words smashed into my brain like waves propelled by hurricane winds crashing into the side of Jeffrey’s expensive house.

I had managed to anger a machine. We were off to a flying start.

“Okay. Fine. Wonderful. What do we do now?”

“You take me to New York City,” Arcon answered crisply. “To the top floor of the One World Trade Center building.”



THE PLAN



“How do you expect us to get to New York?” I asked Arcon, and then immediately regretted it. I expected another irritated rebuke for wasting his time. There is no way a super-intelligent AI from the other side of the galaxy would not have a solid plan for the journey. I braced myself for Arcon’s withering response.

Arcon made humming and clicking noises as if my question amused him. “Well, since I can’t fly or beam, I suppose we’ll have to go the old-fashioned way. We’ll take your car.”

“Let me get this straight. You want me to drive you over a thousand miles to New York City in my ancient Mazda Miata with 120,000 miles already under its worn belts?”

Arcon made crackling sounds. I imagined the noise was his latest way of communicating his impatience with me. “It beats taking the bus, don’t you think?”

“The odds are less than fifty-fifty my car can make the trip without having a coronary thrombosis before we’re halfway to Manhattan.

“Give me an hour alone with the Miata in the garage, and I’ll have her as good as new.”

Shades of the movie “Christine” flickered in my head. I saw my car reconstituting itself like the 1958 Plymouth Fury did after it was destroyed by a gang of bullies. I remembered the movie’s tagline: “Body by Plymouth—Soul by Satan.” I strongly suspected I was in some kind of elaborate nightmare.

I rose abruptly from the chrome and glass table in an alcove of Jeffrey’s ultra-modern kitchen. “Excuse me, I need a beer.”

I was beginning to crack under the pressure of the situation. If what Arcon had told me a few minutes earlier was true, the Earth had less than seventy-two hours before a giant pulsar from a distant supernova fried the planet into a crispy ember. Unless, of course, Arcon and I managed to do something about it.

After removing an Amstel Light from Jeffrey’s built-in stainless-steel refrigerator, I rejoined Arcon at the kitchen table. I was grateful that Arcon had sagely decided to reveal his plan and my role in it one step at a time. I was having enough trouble wrapping my head around step one.

“So, we drive to New York City in my resurrected Mazda Miata, and then I somehow smuggle you to the top of the One World Trade Center building. Does that about sum it up?”

“You won’t have to smuggle me. I know how we can get past security. I’ll disguise myself as a gorgeous 19th-century Art-Deco vase. You’ll carry me into the building in a reinforced shopping bag. When you open the bag, the guards will be astonished by my beauty and originality

and ask silly questions. I assume they'll ask you to state your purpose for the visit. You'll tell them you're a tourist heading for the top floor observatory to meet your girlfriend and give her the lovely heirloom I'm posing as."

"I'm not comfortable with that idea. I doubt it will get us past the first wall of security."

"You aren't following my directions," Arcon reminded me with his typical lack of diplomacy.

"Your idea sounds too simple to work."

"It will work. I agree that it's simple. Even for someone like you."

I ignored the rebuke. I had another pressing question to ask.

"If you made it from the other side of the galaxy to a beach in Florida, why can't you propel yourself from here to the top of the World Trade Center?"

"The mother-ship dropped me five thousand feet above the ocean. I'm able to navigate and land safely in free-fall, but I can't propel myself, as I've mentioned. It's a trade-off, Jacob. I don't have room onboard for brains and propulsion."

"So how will you get back to your ship?"

"I won't. I'll remain here on Earth if there is an Earth left."

I wondered if that meant Arcon had more adventures in store for me if we survived. Then, I remembered my latest novel and its sad status as distressingly past due. I imagined my editor calling to announce that she had finally lost patience with me and the book was canceled.

Arcon seemed to sense my utter despair. "Why don't you join me in the garage and watch me bring your old car back to life? Does she have a name?"

“Mathilde. She reminds me of a French woman I once knew with sunrise golden hair and intense blue eyes.”

“Come along, Jacob. Let’s breathe new life into your lost love. I’m confident it will breathe new life into your outlook.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



After a career in marketing and business communications, David Gittlin began writing short stories and screenplays. He now writes novels and posts regularly to his blog. To date, Gittlin has authored three novels and four novellas including the Silver Sphere Series. He lives in Florida with his wife and daughter.

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