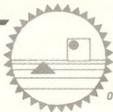


4 July, 22.75



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

To: Elijah Baley, C-7
From: Commissioner Wilson Roth

URGENT

News has just come over the hyperwave relay that Dr. Han Fastolfe has been murdered on the planet Aurora. Although the Department prefers otherwise, you are being assigned to the case—it seems the Aurorans have requested the services of “Earth’s most famous detective”.

Yes, it will be very difficult for you to live up to that oversized reputation of yours, Baley, now that your deeds have been glorified in a hyperwave drama. Your life story is known throughout the planets ... everyone has heard of the great “Lije” Baley. But perhaps the outcome of this case will change their minds. Perhaps you and your reputation will finally be cut down to size.

You see, the Aurorans think Dr. Fastolfe’s murder is unsolvable. That is why they have sent for you. Now the facts. Fastolfe, as you know, was the inventor of the positronic humanoid robot, the most revolutionary design ever to emerge in the field of robotics. The doctor was also an outspoken politician who advocated “open door” space exploration, an unpopular philosophy on Aurora. He earned other enemies with his sympathy for Earth, because anti-Earth sentiment is very strong in the Auroran population.

Fastolfe was a controversial man—a Humanist in the midst of a robot-dominated society. Those who were his friends will staunchly defend him; but be forewarned, many of his colleagues long to get their hands on his formula ... with his secret humanoid equation unveiled, Globalists could send thousands of robots into space to conquer new lands in the name of Aurora.

This assignment is fraught with difficulties, and the fact that you are an alien, an Earther, will make your task all but impossible. You must ask many questions, but there are those who would prefer not to answer. You are instructed to exercise diplomacy at all times. If you do not tread carefully, you will jeopardize the future relationship between our planet and all Spacer worlds.

Finally, your assignment to this case is unofficial. Should you fail, it will be Elijah Baley’s failure, not a failure of the Earth ... and I anticipate that you will fail. You are expected at the spaceport within the hour. I hope you will not disappoint me, Baley.

Signed,

Wilson Roth