



The Unincorporated Future (The Unincorporated Man)

By Dani Kollin, Eytan Kollin



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Sandra O'Toole is the president of the Outer Alliance, which stretches from the asteroid belt to the Oort Cloud beyond Pluto. Resurrected following the death of Justin Cord, the unincorporated man, O'Toole has become a powerful political figure and a Machiavellian leader determined to win the Civil War against the inner planets at almost any cost. And the war has been going badly, in part because of the great General Trang, a fit opponent for the brilliant J. D. Black. Choices have to be made to abandon some of the moral principles upon which the revolution was founded. It is a time of great heroism and great betrayal, madness, sacrifice, and shocking military conflict. Nothing is predictable, even the behavior of artificial intelligences. There may be only one way out, but it is not surrender.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *The Unincorporated Man*:

“A bright, stimulating work that deserves a wide readership.”
—Gregory Benford, author of the Galactic Center Saga

“Fans of SF as a vehicle for ideas will devour this intriguing debut.... The Kollin brothers keep the plot moving briskly despite the high proportion of talk to action. Their cerebral style will especially appeal to readers nostalgic for science fiction’s early years.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Recalls the emphasis on freedom of the early works of Heinlein and the cutting-edge social commentary of William Gibson and Fritz Leiber. A good choice for most libraries.” —*Library Journal*

About the Author

Brothers DANI KOLLIN and EYTAN KOLLIN live in California.

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1 Unbridgeable Divisions

Transorbital pod (t.o.p.)

Low orbit of Mars

Hektor Sambianco, President of the United Human Federation, savior of the incorporated system, and stolid voice to billions of minority shareholders, clasped his arms stiffly behind his back and set his penetrating gaze on the approaching planet. Though others competed for attention—Saturn had its multihued rings; Earth its striking visage as a luminous marble cast against the firmament—Mars still reigned supreme. It was Mars that captured the imagination; Mars that provoked awe; Mars that dazzled as the coruscating emerald atop the solar system’s crown. Perhaps its favored status was a result of its bearing the godlike imprimatur of man, changed from a rust-colored, dust-filled wasteland to a fertile Elysium in under a century. It was, after all, humanity’s first and arguably greatest bioengineering success, and it was well that they continued to marvel in it. To approach this planet was to approach the dreams of humanity realized.

Yet Hektor Sambianco felt none of these things. Though his dark and probing eyes watched as the blanket of green, pale blue seas, and dotted lakes drew nearer, his heart did not swell with even the faintest glimmer of joy, and the magnificent vista filling the observation deck before him elicited no awe. His mind was dwelling on a war that would not end and an enemy that would not quit. Within minutes, his t.o.p. was on the ground. Within seconds, he heard the euphonious chime that indicated he had a visitor.

Hektor activated the t.o.p.’s internal scanner. Tricia Pakagopolis, the United Human Federation’s Minister of Internal Affairs, stood cooling her heels outside his private quarters. The woman, he knew, had devoted over eighty years of her life to building a well-deserved reputation for ruthless efficiency and, to accompany it, an

appearance designed to elicit immediate apprehension. *Just not from me*, mused Hektor as a smile twitched at the corner of his lips. Though outwardly barely twenty years of age, Tricia dressed in a wardrobe that was hardly youthful. She wore her trademark geometric pantsuit, whose statuesque angles seemed to defy the shapely figure hidden within, and her thick black mane was pulled back so tightly, her eyes seemed like two determined beasts straining at the leash to press forward.

The corporate system had been good to Tricia. It had constrained and channeled her individual abilities and desires into the productive ends of the larger group and ultimately the all-powerful market. But Justin Cord had changed all that. His mere existence—his very unincorporation—had caused a rift in the incorporated world that had at first festered and then finally burst into outright civil war.

And it was people like Tricia, Hektor knew, who had benefited most. Not because she'd agreed with Cord. Her psychological profile attested to the fact that she thought the man an idiot; that his preaching the drivel of freedom and individuality to the masses could only lead to the anarchy that had inevitably followed; that individuals were fools who could no more revel in their freedom than in their servitude; that the brilliance of the incorporated system was in confining the idiots to the bottom while elevating the more worthy to the top. No, realized Hektor, Tricia could never have lived in Cord's world. But she could and had exploited the very idea of it to suit hers.

The Unincorporated War that had resulted from Cord's coalition of the Outer Alliance meant that the Core Worlds' incorporated system had to change; had to become harsher, more efficient, more cruel—something Tricia Pakagopolis had been ideally suited for. No longer needing to cater to the whims of stockholders, boards of directors, or corporate governance, Tricia had, under Hektor's guidance and protection, blossomed from a mere cutthroat to an accomplished killer, and the only person she feared was now watching her fidget under the glare of the high-security array blocking her exit into his chamber.

"Let her in, iago," commanded Hektor to his personal AI.

"As you wish." The avatar obeyed, quietly releasing the door's mechanism, relaxing—only slightly—the hidden weapons trained on the visiting minister.

Hektor greeted Tricia with the traditional bow and indicated a seat in front of his workstation. "What's the latest on Ceres?" he asked.

"We're on the threshold of certain victory."

Hektor's brow arched upward. "Really?"

"Unconfirmed but yes," she affirmed, ignoring the obvious doubt etched into her boss's question.

Hektor laughed with so little mirth, it might have been mistaken for a cough. "Is Trang to be our savior, then?"

Tricia nodded gamely. "It appears so."

Grand Admiral Samuel U. Trang had risen to command all UHF forces by virtue of the fact that almost every other high-ranking officer ahead of him had proved too incompetent to lead or unfortunate enough to be killed by the incompetence of others. But Trang had somehow found a way to survive and in short order had proved himself again and again by snatching victory from the sure hands of defeat. As far as the UHF and Trang were concerned, there was really only one impediment to the unincorporated war's end—Fleet Admiral J. D. Black of the Outer Alliance. Despite being vastly outnumbered in both troops and munitions, whether by chicanery, guts, or both, Admiral Black too had always found a way to win. That is, until Trang burst onto the scene. He'd had no problem using his one great advantage—resources—to full effect. No matter what Black had thrown at him, and it had been quite a lot, Trang could always bounce back—and did—with more ships, more weapons, more fortitude. Up until the recent Battle of Ceres, the two opposing warriors' brief encounters had always ended in a draw. But now Tricia was telling Hektor something different.

"If the reports are to be believed," she continued, "he destroyed enough of the orbital defenses around Ceres to begin bombarding the surface. The Minister of Defense has the official repor—"

"Forget Porfirio," scolded Hektor.

"I have," she laughed. "That's why I came here as soon as you landed. This kind of news couldn't wait."

Hektor nodded. As usual, Tricia had been proactive, delivering information not within her purview—her way of letting him know the extent of her network while artfully undercutting a fellow Cabinet member.

“Trang’s battle plan was brilliant—no surprises there—and was even”—the tone of her voice changed to reflect admiration—“suitably ruthless. He’ll offer the Alliance Council surrender, but doesn’t expect them to accept it.”

“In which case?” quizzed Hektor.

“He’ll eliminate the remaining defenses and then shove enough atomics into their hole,” she said, referring to the Via Cereana, a massive throughway running the length of the planetoid’s center, “to blast that putrescent capital of the rebellion to dust.”

Hektor regarded Tricia thoughtfully, nodding ever so slowly. It was a pleasure to envision the Outer Alliance’s greatest symbolic presence getting blown to smithereens, but only for a brief second. It was, he knew, too easy to get caught up in the vision and lose track of the reality. Six years of warfare had hammered that home more than anything. “And if he fails?”

“I don’t see how he can, Mr. President. Black may be able to defeat him, but she’s stuck at Jupiter, being a”—she spat the next word out as if it were bile—“humanitarian. It may have cost us one half of our fleet and the loss of Admiral Gupta, but Porfirio was right about one thing—she can’t be in two places at once. She’s two weeks away from Ceres, which is two weeks too long. By the time she gets back, all that shithole will be is a cloud of dust on its way to Saturn.”

“And if he fails?” repeated Hektor. His face was rigid and his countenance savage.

Caught off guard, Tricia’s eyes flashed concern for a brief second and then quickly retreated to their cold, lifeless beauty. “If he fails, if Black somehow manages to save Ceres, Trang’s damage is already done. Like I said, it’s too late.”

Hektor’s silence prodded Tricia on. “Ceres’s destruction *and* the near elimination of Jupiter as a center of Alliance activity will allow Irma,” she said, referring to the Minister of Information, “to play up these two recent victories and offset whatever other losses we’ve sustained.”

“Right,” snarled the President. “Let’s talk about those *other* losses, shall we? Over the course of six years, we’ve lost so many ships, spacers, and marines, I’ve lost count and feeling. Every time we win a supposedly massive victory, they retreat farther into the solar system. We just lost an entire fleet ... *an entire fleet!*—and one of our best admirals at Jupiter. How much did Black lose?”

“Well, according to—”

“Cut the crap, Tricia,” barked Hektor through his clenched jaw.

“Not a single ship.”

“Not one ship or assault miner. Not even one missile. She saved on those,” said Hektor with cold humor, “by using her cruisers to shove whatever crippled ships did make it out of Jupiter’s atmosphere right back in.”

“Singh’s propaganda,” Tricia countered, referring to the Outer Alliance’s Secretary of Information.

“Do *you* think he’s lying?”

Tricia pursed her lips. “...

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