

THE WATCHERS:  
HOME WORLD

A novel by

TRENTON HAMM

The Watchers: Home World  
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CHAPTER ONE  
THE ELOHIM

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*Please indulge me as I attempt to tell a story, an epic of a noble people, my people, of our world, of our struggles, of our failures, and of our triumphs. I will not belabor the fact that we squandered our inheritance—that we were poor stewards of our home world, but I am mindful of the grace that the Creator has generously poured upon us since that failure.*

*I do not wish to spoil the story, but I do pray that El may grant me the wisdom and the inspiration to tell it well and properly.*

*It is a story that I know personally, for I have lived it. And, “who am I?” you ask. I am Uri, an old (some might say ancient) sage of my people, and though it has been many sessuit—no, it has been much longer than that—since the story began, I recall each moment vividly to this day.*

*Regardless, how long ago the story began is not important. What is important... is the story.*

*To this end, I have solicited the assistance of one of your own to aid me in translating our story into your language. At my request, he has attempted to use terms that more closely represent my words rather than using the vernacular of your common language. While the words that we have chosen may seem arcane, even awkward, I believe they better represent the fundamental nature of my language and of my people.*

*Finally, to those among my people who may read these words, I ask for forgiveness as well. In this account, I draw liberally from your private thoughts and have published them here for all to read. I hope that you will excuse this*

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*as artistic license, though none was explicitly granted, and forgive my intrusion.*

*So, if you will offer me these small indulgences, I will begin the story.*

Uri il Asra

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“According to calculations,” Uri said with obvious doubt seeping through his voice, “we should be at fourteen hundred *khiloi* per *sec* now.” He was not certain of Muri’s conviction to remain at this speed when they dropped into normal space, which was far too great for Uri’s comfort. It was just below the maximum speed controllable by the space vessel when operating in normal space, and neither he nor Azaz were certain that the vessel could assume immediate control upon dropping out of isolation. Muri disagreed.

“Muri?” Useleya asked.

“All right. Everyone, we have no idea what we will see. Azaz, Armen, collect data and transmit everything toward Enki continuously.” *A precaution*, Muri thought. “Uri, Remi, and I will keep the vessel in control for Useleya to command it. I need a verbal affirmative; is everyone ready?” All responded in sequence, and Muri disabled the isolation generators.

Immediately, the mottled mix of colors flashed away to deep blackness. They were in normal space, but no one could see the stars yet until their eyes adjusted. The vessel rocked about.

Useleya shouted, “I cannot see anything! Get me a reading where in El’s creation we are!”

Uri reported, “We are within five hundred thousand *khiloi* from Ninazu. We should see it directly ahead!”

Useleya again shouted, “I see only this damned darkness! Wait! There it is! We are tumbling toward it!”

Indeed, they were rolling over and over in the forward direction as they lunged closer to the ice giant Ninazu at tremendous speeds. “Remi, I need more sensitivity!” Useleya shouted as he pulled the vessel into control and pushed the sphere directly forward, concentrating the beam of gravitation particles directly ahead. They had less than five

*primes* to correct their heading before they plunged headlong to their deaths into Ninazu. Useleya's corrections stopped their uncontrolled spinning, but their speed was again increasing... and they were headed directly for Ninazu.

"Hold on," was all that Useleya could manage to say as he quickly pushed the *Margidda* to the left just as they hit the upper atmosphere of the gas giant world. The little vessel initially hit the vapors of hydrogen and ice particles broadside. They impinged upon their vessel, scraping and heating the surface until they were enveloped in a great flame seemingly plunging to their deaths in this behemoth. The view port changed from black to frosty white to orange to red and then to searingly white hot in only *secs*. All the while Useleya twisted the *Margidda's* gravitation beam to reorient it on edge, which would allow it to slice through the atmosphere. Even with full sensitivity on, sweat dripped from his body as he pushed the control sphere. Every one of them believed they were dying in that instant. Sirens began to warn of overheating, and the cacophony of klaxons from systems failures spelled their impending doom.

Uri read the velocity as they impacted and slowed in the atmosphere of the icy giant. *Five thousand ... Three thousand ... One thousand ... Ten hundred ... Seven hundred ...* They slowed as the view port blazed overhead, blurring the readings. Amidst the glaring flames, he saw readings of less than a *sessum khilioi* per *sec*, and Uri was certain that they would not survive. The last reading that he could make out as the white-hot light blinded his reading the panel was nearly thirty *khilioi* per *sec*, which was extremely close to the minimum escape velocity of Ninazu.

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There comes a time at least once in the history of a people, which inspires future generations and alters the course of their history. When this happens, a people have a choice to make: do they fight to survive, or do they ignore the facts, and, through willful ignorance, travel the same course to their doom? It was in one of these times when this story begins.

The home world of the Elohim was dying, and the Elohim along with it. Some might argue that it was the death of the home world that caused the death of the people, and some might argue conversely.

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Regardless, as with most species, the Elohim were intertwined with their beloved home world such that its death spelled certain doom for them as well.

Their world was entangled in the beginnings of a runaway greenhouse. The skies were choked with deadly gases, and temperatures were rising not just fractions of a *dael* but by two or three *dael* per year! The polar ice packs were all but gone. Arid regions expanded by square *khilioi* each year and became largely uninhabitable. Crops in former fertile regions failed season after season as each of these fertile regions succumbed to the desert. The oceans grew increasingly acidic and no longer harbored life, as it had for prior eons.

Betwixt among all these alarming trends were the Elohim. Those people among them who were unfortunate enough to live in underdeveloped areas often starved, while those in affluent provinces saw costs of goods soar while options decreased. It seemed that arrogance and ignorance of many *sessuit* of poor stewardship of their world had finally caught up with the Elohim.

Countless sages among the Elohim argued that their dire predicament was directly coupled to their propensity for burning fossil fuel. Nearly every source of power—from powering personal land ferries to watercraft to monstrous electrical generation stations—was generated in this manner. Others argued that it was the increase in their sun's output that was clearly to blame. Regardless of the cause, climate change was upon them and threatened the very survival of their world—and of the Elohim.

Today was Uri's last day at the Monitoring Station, and most of his colleagues were cordial in wishing him well. Most thought him insane for leaving such a noble effort. Some thought him selfish, and some were simply jealous. There were also a quaint few who realized that they were still colleagues striving for the same goal but faring different paths to get there.

Uri was of average stature for the males of his people, standing at approximately two and a half *ells* (quite tall by human standards, at nearly seven feet). His hair was very pale blond, which was again a common color among his people, and was not cut but left long to be pulled and tied behind him in a thick mane. His skin was pasty white, and his eyes were deep black. He typically wore close-fitting navy

blue leggings and a deep dark red tunic. This was his uniform, for it represented his status as a sage of the Monitoring Station, the highest honor that an associate sage could achieve in his time.

His long-time supervisor, Khim, who had scaled the bureaucratic ladder always one rung ahead of him, called him to her office for one last meeting. When Uri entered, she stood behind her desk facing away from him and staring out the window. Uri sat down in the chair facing her desk as her assistant announced Uri's presence. Khim did not speak and simply motioned for the assistant to depart, which he did closing the door.

Khim was usually a direct, no-nonsense person, so the delay in getting to the subject of the meeting was a bit uncharacteristic. In a few *secs*, she began to speak very softly, "Uri, the readings that you have pursued for so many years are accurate, and the coral growth is dying. I could never discuss this openly before, but your concern is justified..." She paused and turned to face him. "You have been wasting your skills here. I know that you are leaving because of your wife, but pursue this new challenge with all your ability, and you may yet save our people."

Her honesty was shocking. Uri did not have any words to speak. He simply nodded as he looked away from her. The sadness of the moment would not let him say anything useful anyway.

Khim stepped around from behind her desk and stood in front of Uri as he looked away. Sensing her emotion, Uri stood and hugged her tightly, as she whispered, "Remember we are really the same, you and I. Pray for me as I will for you." With that, Uri pulled from her and left as a tear swelled in his eye.

Regardless of the outcome, he was committed to the cause now.

*Strange*, Uri thought as he considered this, *I always believed myself committed to the 'cause' before*. But, now it was different. This cause was different.

For the better part of his adult life, nearly three *sinsers* since he completed tertiary school, Uri had strived for the singular goal of saving his world. He, more than most, was committed to "the cause": to successfully implementing what his people called the Danel Proposal.

As a child, Uri was greatly inspired by the ideas of Danel and of her plan. Though he was male, he dreamed of becoming a great leader as she was. This inspiration led him to excel in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools. He then obtained sufficient experience elsewhere in various apprentice positions, and, when the time was right, he spoke

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with the right sages to receive assignment as an associate sage at the Monitoring Station so that he too could be a part of the salvation of their world.

Uri's job was to acquire daily water samples of the ocean near the sequestering beds and to check for the effects of out-gassing on the local and the global water-life. Each day he would present these findings to his immediate supervisor who sent them to her supervisor and up the chain of command until it finally reached the Council. The readings that Khim mentioned were what convinced Uri that the Danel Proposal would inevitably fail, for they provided clear evidence that acidity levels near the sequestering beds were increasing each year. It was what made him question everything: the Danel Proposal, the World Council of Sages, and his own purpose. It was the incompetence of all that, that sealed his decision to leave.

Later that afternoon with luggage in tow, both physical and emotional, Uri made his way to the monorail station on his way to Eridu. Tonight he would travel down the northeastern coast of Punt to the great city, the first segment of his long journey to Uz in the far, arid south. It was here that Uri's old friends Mikh and Penne had built their settlement, which they called the Community.

More than just a farm or compound, Penne and Mikh built the Community to be a proving ground for their ideas about reversing the runaway greenhouse. Truly Uri did not believe Mikh's ideology, but Uri's wife Armen had studied Penne's publications and found tremendous merit in them. In the end, despite Uri's skepticism, he joined the Community because it was his duty to follow his wife more than because he believed in the radical ideas of his childhood friend Mikh.

Uri had known Mikh for as long as he could remember. They grew up together on the same street in the west residential section of Eridu. Back then, Mikh was a stocky, elhim with rust-colored hair, pale cream skin with freckles, and a short temper to go along with his physique. Together, they managed to get into quite a bit of trouble teasing young elohim, romping off to some forbidden location, and being elhimi in general. As an adult Mikh was still stocky, not more than two *ells*. He still had rust-colored hair and, from time to time, still let his temper show. One often did not cross Mikh without expecting at least a verbal fight, but, more than this, Mikh was a born leader.



As Uri heaved his bags into the overhead compartments and behind the seats of his little cabin, he wondered what he might find when he reached Uz. Mikh spoke of lush pastures and orchards, but Uri could not get past the fact that the area had been desert for more than three *sessum*. *Mikh had settled there for scarcely one and a half sisers; how could he have an orchard at all?* Uri thought, but he also knew that Mikh was not one to exaggerate either.

As the monorail picked up speed, the Adar began to sink low on the western horizon, darkening the sea to his left in the east. As it did so, the great world Enki slipped over the darkening horizon, making its nightly appearance. Uri watched the performance for a few *primes* as Enki's entourage of satellite worlds followed the giant in a sea of darkness like birds following a mother fowl. The concert of the cosmos was always soothing to Uri, and he often wondered why he became an inventor rather than a pure physical sage. As he watched, the anxiety of what awaited him ascended into the sky and united with the great world. Gently the motion of the monorail rocked Uri, and he sank into a deep sleep.

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