

**OMEGA**  
The Promised Land

**LETRAS**

**Contents**

CHAPTER I.....	7
CHAPTER II.....	23
CHAPTER III.....	33
CHAPTER IV.....	70
CHAPTER V.....	86
CHAPTER VI.....	105
CHAPTER VII.....	130
CHAPTER VIII.....	147
CHAPTER IX.....	182
CHAPTER X.....	209
CHAPTER XI.....	233
CHAPTER XII.....	258
END OF VOLUME 1.....	269

## CHAPTER I

“Imagine you have in front of you a huge colour palette, fanned out, and it has at least a million shades... one more fascinating than the other. They catch your eye. You don't know which one to grab and which to enjoy first.

That's life. A million mixed colours and shades. Your goal is to enjoy each one of them one by one, patiently, to savour them leisurely, and when you feel that you've finished them, to begin anew, again and again, to the end of life...,” said the faceless voice. Warm and masculine, well-known and yet distant.

The action continued abruptly from a completely different place and time. He was surrounded by buildings that looked new and covered with beautiful, shiny layers, and people, just as beautiful and shiny, moved strangely, in somewhat orderly rows. Everything was just... too tidy, and the surreal image made him doubt reality.

Not everything could be perfect. He felt it like an itch under his skin. Then he began to notice that the woman next to him and then the man next to her was showing signs of disgust. Their hands went to their mouths and noses as if the horrible smell they were absurdly avoiding could not pass through their hands. The rows of people which just a few moments ago were in perfect order now shifted to the well-known congestion and disorder, and the rush for ventilated spaces with filtered air recommenced in its familiar way, as if he

weren't on a new and clean planet... and how the music...

"Why are you running??" he got to shout. "Why are you running?! The air isn't toxic here, it doesn't smell bad! Nothing's going to happen to you! Listen to me!... What's with this noise?!... he cursed angrily, but the music of the preset program did its job and rushed in his ears at higher volume, and Karl awoke somewhat abruptly from his sleep, dazed and effortlessly, understanding in a fraction of a second the meaning of his dream.

He couldn't even call it a nightmare... he had those before and he knew that this was just a bad dream, born out of the fear of failing.

Now he was just lying in bed, with his arms under his head, daydreaming. His black hair, bristly after his sleep, was in sharp contrast with the impersonal white of the bedsheets, even in the dim light of the room.

He didn't get out of bed right away but gave himself some time to process what had just happened.

"I should write a book. Like a journal. To help me think... to heal. About all these years of desperate searches and about having eyes on me," he thought, affected by the pressure he felt starting with the very early moments of the day, intensified by the not-so-subtle dream that woke him up in a cold sweat.

As a child, Karl had been strongly impressed by the contrast between the frailty of the paper pages, as he remembered them from the museum and the power of the ideas they contained. An antithesis that always reminded him that in life nothing is as it seems at first glance. Like his existence. He was so powerful and envied by billions of people... and still, he knew that his worth would amount to nothing if he failed. A small

idea, like a whiff of “imposter syndrome”, shrouded his thoughts for a second, but he let it pass through him and fly away. Although it made him feel bad for a moment, he appreciated and respected this reaction of his mind. It helped him stay grounded. To not get overly confident, to keep his balance, his humanity. All his life he had worked with people who were TWELVE or upwards on the AID scale, but not all of them had a soul of TWELVE or beyond.

The word “book” remained as an affectionate archaism. In reality, any type of information was now imprinted on a synth-gel crystal or, if you could afford it and wanted it, even in a human cell of your choice. The richest had spare cells for all types of tissues stocked and they could multiply or use them to store information as they pleased. All it took was enough credit and anything was possible.

Karl was a sort of museum exhibit from this point of view. The entirety of his tissues was stored as consistent samples. He could be regenerated, worshipped, filed or destroyed. He shook his head. Negative thoughts that stemmed from worry and fear.

He didn't like to play the victim but now, before departure, he felt that all that responsibility was too much for just one human being. In fact, it was an entire team, a large team at that, but he was the Captain and it was his name that appeared first on all continents, in all prayers, in all the commercials, and, above all, in all their hopes. This made him feel responsible for the fate of the entire humanity, which was not easy to accept and bear, despite his neuro-cognitive training. He tried to look at things scientifically, but he barely managed.

Although this was the day that the entire planet had been waiting for, the day the first terraforming expedition would be launched, the first day in the adult life of humankind, for him,

it was the first day of the last journey.

“Who knows... maybe I’ll have time when I’m old... to start travelling again, to meditate, to write my memoirs,” he consoled himself with a faint trace of humour in the corner of his mouth, half smile, half grin, and gently shook his head as if chasing away a part of the pressure and all those thoughts. He couldn’t allow himself any doubts or hesitations, but he could use self-irony for therapeutic purposes.

He rose to the edge of the bed and looked around the unfamiliar apartment, his property, but still unfamiliar, in which he had slept. Just a fleeting phase...

For all humanity, this expedition was the end of adolescence, the moment when the young adult leaves home to find his own path and create his own nest. Late adolescence and a desperate departure, true, but it could be described as such, from a positive-romantic perspective.

Not for Karl, however. He felt this journey as an ending, an ending accompanied by enormous responsibility, unique in all its aspects. There was no precedent for what he was trying to achieve, and therefore no guide to follow. And he couldn’t shake off the thought that, whatever happened, mistakes will be made, and he will be tried for them by the narrow minds of the people who wouldn’t be able to resist in his place not even for five minutes. In a way, for him, it was the due date. And one thing was certain. He did not intend to settle on Terra toward the end of his life, although all his life he had fought for her and her people.

He already would have liked to skip all those years to follow, anticipating the hardships and the unexpected that lay ahead. That is why he was thinking of old age. He was a seeker, a discoverer of planets, but now his mission had been changed. He was now given the task of taking the first beings to a planet

to become humanity's second home and working with them in the terraforming process.

Although the responsibility was colossal, and the glory even greater, and there was no other being among the fifty billion humanoids who wouldn't have liked to be in his place, Karl wanted... something else. He wanted to return to the immensity of interstellar space, to his incredible and unforeseen explorations. This is what suited him – rummaging through galactic dust, not planting bio-vegetal nurseries, and laying-out buildings. He had to admit that he was saddened when he found out that he would have to abandon exploration and focus on a single planet, designated as... optimal, fit for life. It was inevitable for him to end up here, he had lived and trained for this, but still, he felt that a feeling of beauty, an idea that was part of his essence got taken away from him, had been forbidden or, in the best case, postponed for a very long time.

However, what he wanted and what he had to do were two different things, and he was a man of duty to his very core, so he decided to banish all these thoughts in a manner that suited him – through action and humour: “Move it, Meyer, or you'll grow algae in bed!”

In the very few days he spent on Terra, he was pampered, of course. He had never been a rich person when it came to the number of credits he owned, but humanity knew how to repay its top individuals. He was certain that if he had decided to remain on Terra, he wouldn't have had to work to cover his personal expenses not even for a second and he wouldn't go down the AID even a single unit.

He couldn't even remember the last time he checked his credit balance. He knew that he owned them virtually, in Terra's reality, quite a large amount. But in the immensity and the solitude of cosmic space, the credits were just a joke, that's

why he didn't even care about them and he hadn't checked his finances for years.

Ironically, millennia of public consciousness had proven that during their lifetime, people were primarily looking for recognition of their merits and the possession of as many assets as possible. He had them both, but neither had improved his existence, at least not up to this point in his life. He never lacked anything from a material point of view, but neither did he have too much, plus he had been taught to think on a cosmic scale, and individual wealth was an expired notion for him.

Karl did not necessarily appreciate favouritism, but he did not refuse comfort when it was being offered to him. The truth is that he and Terra didn't know each other very well.

In consequence, he accepted without hesitation a living space offered by the Earthen Aviation and it seemed to him quite small compared to his quarters on the ship, certain he was making a modest choice, although, in reality, that cubiculum was standardly designed for a group of three people with exceptional financial resources and stable emotional relationships. That is, for a family with a child, in the ancient meaning of the phrase.

He had some vague notions about what standard life on Terra meant, notions he had gathered not from experience, but from the reports he received as a commander with the Earthen Aviation. He had very rarely come into contact with reality, even less so with its gloomy side, unpublished on media channels. Not necessarily because he didn't care, but because he did not have the time for such interactions. His mind had been trained to focus on specific tasks and not to waste his cognitive or emotional attention on problems he could not solve. He had even taken a full course on this, Integrative Individual Neurocognition, but this morning he

had the feeling he did not remember anything of it, except its annoyingly long, useless name.

He had been on Terra for only a few days and, at his team's insistence, he had taken up residency in this apartment. For what purpose, he did not know, but he assumed... to be shown to the world. So that everyone could be told that he was leaving from here, among them and for them, to build them their future. Of course, he wasn't happy to be used in this way... again..., but he understood why this decision had been taken. He had had to compromise on many occasions for global peace, so another one would make no difference.

In the short time before leaving on this crucial mission he didn't even activate his holopartners, that's how misplaced he felt in his... allocated area. He missed seeing them and interacting with them, but it would have felt extremely awkward to materialise them in this space which was so strange and almost devoid of sense to him. In any case, every night he got back exhausted. Anyway, it didn't matter now...

He got out of bed abruptly, in an unconscious gesture of transforming his determination into action and he surrendered to the Personal Multifunctional, as it was natural for every human being. The mimetic mattress, which had had, up to that moment, the shape of his body, straightened itself out perfectly. It adjusted its temperature from 25°C to 20°C, according to the utilitarian program which managed the apartment's functions. The luminous intensity gradually rose to allow the eye an easy adjustment. The oxygen concentration in the air also increased slightly, only half per cent, to boost the metabolic and thinking processes.

He got out of the sleeping room at a brisk pace, meaning he acquired an optimal amount of energy, just as his Personal Multifunctional had confirmed, and headed toward the body

sanitizing room. He never forgot to check the PM to see if all his parameters are in order. No sane person ever forgot that.

He took off his disposable pyjamas and threw them in the alcove that automatically opened up in the bathroom wall. A gust of air absorbed them toward the recycling pocket. He knew that there they will be soaked in an enzymatic solution and integrated into the recycling process. Everything was designed and organised according to maximum efficiency principles.

He raised his hands in front of the sensors to signal that he was ready and a stream of water of precisely  $39,5^{\circ}\text{C}$  was trailing up and down his perfectly proportionate and athletic body, making him flinch. And woke him up completely. His body then relaxed a bit because it anticipated that a gush of vapours like a soft mist would follow, which he knew contained a mixture of disinfectants, dermabrasion substances, emulsifiers, and perfume. Another stream of high-pressured water removed the excess sebum, dead skin cells, and any potentially pathogenic microorganisms, followed by a draft of warm air destined to dry the skin and replant the saprophytic organisms required for good epithelial health. Everything unfolded with medical precision and efficiency, according to the precise indications of the PM, which was permanently linked to the Synthetic Brain of the apartment. Without a moment of pleasure or actual relaxation. It wasn't an issue for him... He'll have time for this at some point.

Meanwhile, his thoughts continued to focus on the future. This time, Karl was to lead the first group of earthlings meant to colonise and terraform a planet. The First Planet. A new home for the people who had overpopulated Earth and had depleted its resources.

Although the number of births was now strictly controlled

on Terra, the phenomenon had long outgrown the resources of the little blue planet. It was only in the last hundred years that the planet succeeded in actually implementing demographic control. Before that, despite all the voices advocating against overpopulation, the law had been selective. People's mentality had not kept up with technology, and religion and politics continued to interfere with reason for a long time. Numerous ancient religious trends had fought for hundreds of years for the right to have children, as many as possible, to defy restrictions, without considering the harm brought upon the species and leaving the future in the hands of divinity. Politicians had also played their sad part, not wanting to remain in history as those who confined the ancestral rights.

Karl used to joke about this every time he had the chance. He didn't want to get involved in politics, but he hoped to make a difference for the ears that wanted to listen:

"My greatest curiosity is to meet an alien population, not to see whether they are green or blue, but to see if they also can lie to themselves so serenely for millennia on end!" he stated in one of the public meetings before the expedition when he had discovered the new planet, the one toward all hopes were aimed at now.

The meeting had been held at the central headquarters of the Earthen Aviation and was broadcasted live on all intercoms on the planet, due to the colossal importance of the news to be announced.

Karl was just telling the truth. He was neurocognitively conditioned to not be able to lie unless he was lying to save his life... his or that of any other being depending on his claims. That was why his truths, exercised for decades, were simple, direct, exhaustive, and, unintentionally, cruel.

What he did not know was that his declarations were amplified or adjusted accordingly in such a short time so that the entire broadcast seemed real, and his ideas were in perfect harmony with those that administered the whole system. No sentence was left to chance and could not be suspected of absolute originality. It was difficult to instantly harmonise opinions that could decisively influence fifty billion people, or so would have said the people who moderated the holo transmissions and were directly responsible for the impact of each word.

The fate of humanity radically changed at the moment when the organic converter was invented when it became capable of transforming any substance that contained carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen into simple saccharide, protein, and fat molecules. Thus, worldwide hunger was eradicated and the primary nutritional needs were covered. Enough with the hunger! But not poverty.

The planet's resources were invested in the most enlightened brains, as well as gigantic research facilities, in the hope of finding some quick means to relocate such a large number of people. Karl was one of these brains.

As an irony of millenary proportions, the eradication of hunger was the only issue that woke the conscience of the human species. Somehow, politicians and scientists suddenly realised, at the same moment in history, that the demographic explosion caused by the open access to nourishment will bring about the end that everyone feared, but few dared to call out loud. Every miracle has its price...

Once the sanitizing process was finished, Karl went to get dressed. He headed towards the command panel and asked, out of habit, for a standard uniform.

"No, correction," he said after two seconds. "The Captain's