

# *The Moses Probe*

## *Discussion Guide*

As *The Moses Probe* opens, Jac and Cheryl are about to be married when Jac is chosen to be part of a forty-year mission to Alpha Centauri. However--as an astrophysicist--Cheryl knows of a highly experimental form of space transport. She urges Jac 'before he goes away forever,' to check it out. This they do, finding themselves thrust onto an alien world where the Eulons and Basarans are locked in endless war. While set in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, readers may find the problems and solutions of the future bear an uncanny resemblance to what's going on today.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) In the opening scenes, Jac and Cheryl have called off their upcoming marriage due to Jac's changing job circumstances. How much of 'who we are' is based on what we do? How much is based on family, friends and who we chose to be with? What of Cheryl's invitation to Jac? What did she risk? Was she 'up front,' or did she go 'sly?' *chapters 1-8*
- 2) How does the crew of Satellite Apollo regard Dr. Leahy? Why is he mocked or honored? In general, how are people (nerds) with special knowledge received? Could/Should this be different? *chapters 1-3*
- 3) Did Commander Hazard in any way shape or form 'approve' of Jac's relationship with Cheryl? What about the possibility of applying D'Aggioscoppian physics to space flight? If he did approve, was it 'official,' or 'on a personal basis.' What do you think of having two different kinds (formal and informal) of 'approval?' *chapter 3*
- 4) Cheryl has memories of her childhood 'piqued.' What about you? Does childhood seem like a dream? Is childhood a helpful/unhelpful reference point for living as an adult? *chapter 8*
- 5) What kind of relationship does Jac have with his parents? What do you think his father, Janssen Flyte knows about Dr. Leahy? *chapter 9*
- 6) Genera Campus has fallen under the power of an unseen extraterrestrial presence. How can an unseen enemy be fought? What resources can the resolute survivor tap when 'no' resources are readily found? *chapter 11-13*
- 7) The Jacket copy says *Jac and Cheryl must choose: pick up where Leahy left off, commit to being a team, commit to the quest for intergalactic laurels—or—die.* What kind of a choice is that? In theory, it looks clear-cut. Go! Yet in practice, when faced with a challenge, 'freezing (doing nothing), isn't totally unheard of... What motivates you to work hard? Is it the possibility of future rewards if you do <or> future pain if you don't? *Close of chapter 12.*
- 8) On Protos, information is shared *mentally*. Telepathy, a science fiction staple, has made vast advances in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. PBS has explored this very subject *-in the present day-* <http://www.pbs.org/22ndcentury> *chapter 13 on...*
- 9) How would you characterize Lucius Helf? Angry? Foolish? Intimidating? Megalomaniac? What do you think would happen to anyone who opposed

him? What about Mooly Gren? How much power has she? Is she in anyway defying a system she sees as unjust? *chapters 14-19*

- 10) In the opening of Chapter Twenty, (page 119) Jac contrasts ‘random (natural) selection with ‘systems theory.’ He says ‘Energy has to enter the system somewhere.’ What names could be given to this source of energy? *Will to survive, tenacity, creative spirit?* Would it be a stretch to call it *God?* At Drath Cohort Seven, Jac and Cheryl ‘armor up.’ What role do clothes play in confidence, security? *Ephesians 6:10-18 chapter 20*
- 11) Until Jac meets Day Helena in Raveena, the people he encounters on Protos have not been especially friendly or forthcoming. What do you think about first impressions? What does the tone of a person’s voice, their manner of conducting themselves, say about them? *chapter 22*
- 12) The Utmohn is supposedly a fortress, a refuge in Raveena. But while the ‘external’ enemy may not be present, how does Jac defend against ‘enemies within?’ (He runs). Any other choices? *chapter 23*
- 13) When Jac again meets Cheryl, she has changed dramatically. How do circumstances, especially problems, affect our personality? Were Cheryl’s actions heroic at the Maelstrom heroic? What about Jac’s actions in leaving the safety of the drax?
- 14) For several chapters (26-32), neither Jac nor Cheryl is quite themselves. Lucky Helf has them in his grip. Is his grip mental, physical or both? Yet as Chapter 27 closes, Jac and Cheryl decide to keep the birth of the drax’s hatchlings secret from Helf. What would Helf have done, should he had known about the hatchlings? Did they talk about that openly? The decision appeared was made wordlessly...unconsciously, as if silent wisdom within them made the decision for them. Have you experienced a power like this? While we’re on the subject, the young are often kept sheltered from the rigors of the world. Could just this been part of why Jac and Cheryl did with the draxlings what they did? Does that diminish the act?
- 15) Gabreal, (possibly Gabriel), appears when Jac is in a ‘teachable moment,’ overwhelmed by Pam’s capricious death. While Gabreal had been sent to take care of Pam, he also takes time to serve Jac. Is this an example of an ‘arbitrary story element?’ Is a larger realistic dynamic at work? Is it an example of “Be careful what you wish for—you may get it?” Jac has wanted to go to Basara for some time. Now he has met someone who can make it happen. *Chapter 32*
- 16) Old TUG seems modeled on a Hollywood actor. Omar Sharif comes to mind. The ancient people considered their kings divine and admittedly, for many people today, that metaphor for God still has power (or a strike against). Anytime we attempt to explain the ‘metaphysical’ (the Unknown), in terms of mechanics (in terms of the known), there is bound to be something lost in the translation. Does your worldview include a concept that could be defined as “A powerful source of resiliency, health, security and strength that stands in the face of adversity? Mellowness in the presence of good fortune? Wisdom to meet challenges? Does it include solidarity, goodwill and encouragement from contact with other like-minded individuals? Does such a concept do enough? Could it do more? It is realistic? Does it need to be realistic *today?* Could this

concept be an apt description of ‘God/Faith/Belief?’ The acronym TUG (The Unknown Guide) is modeled on Acts 17:23. *chapter 35*

- 17) When it comes to fighting, it has been said ‘It takes two to ‘tangle.’ What about peace? How many parties does it take to make peace? Where is ‘God’ or ‘wisdom’ in the midst of the trials of life? James 1:2-8. *chapter 38*

- 18) Jac and Cheryl meet again at the Taj Mahal. Her *kore-body* has been stolen and resides at The Great Pyramid. Is she ‘helpless’ in insisting her *kore-body* be restored to her? How does she conduct herself? What about concepts like *kore-body*, *spoosh*, and *drath*? What do you think they mean?

*chapter 40*

### *Concluding Thoughts*

- 19) Once the story has been told, it appears to begin again. Jac and Cheryl are asked to plant the Moses Probe on another planet. What advantage is it to the Basarans if another intelligent species becomes space-faring sentients (they may become new Basarans).

- 20) Protos appears to be a polarized planet, with Eulons and Basarans engaged in ‘a war that lasts forever between trouble and happiness.’ Again, a planet may be a clumsy metaphor. We know that evil is a present danger for everyone. Even Paul of Tarsus, the foremost promoter of Christianity in its early days, admitted “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Romans 7:19.

- 21) How do you think different species receiving the Moses Probe will respond to it? Will it be answered by individuals acting on their own? Could it be more broadly sponsored by the whole nation? The whole world? Could those responding from Earth be initially deceived by the Eulons? What if more sentients responded to the Basaran methods instead of being entrapped by the Eulons? What if the Eulons were the only ones flying the drax?

I hope you loved the book!