

KIERAN EGAN

ABRASAX

I'm up for the scramble for planets and moons
with Elon, Jeff, and the other techlords.
I've planned better and am not crazy enough
to fall in with their wacko ambitions
to land on pockmarked chunks of sterile rock,
where lack of gravity, and so much else,
sees organs, bones, and muscles wrecked in months.
What kind of life can be imagined there
compared with mother Earth's enfolding warmth,
where we have co-evolved with all this stuff?
I'll be ahead of their absurd ambitions
to make Earth's moon, or Mars, or gloomy Ceres
worth visiting more than once, to hop around;
lethal to attempts at colonizing:
everything, impossibly, has to work
perfectly always; and the crap weather!

My Abrasax rocket, propelled spaceward
by massive Improbability Drives,
has delivered me to a neat planet,
discovered by newly interpreting
the Babylonian star catalogues,
the Elamite tablet of Ammisaduqa,
and hitherto misunderstood calculations
of the sublime Chaldean Saros cycle.
Though landing was tricky and the place damp—
a vast ocean with one patch of dry land,
an equatorial island the size of Ireland—
the planet Abrasax welcomes us home.

On this gleaming Kassite horse of the sun,
this archon of the spheres of Ouranos,
this utopian dream of Basilides,
a second Eden will soon develop:
the sweet warm rain falls in sunshine,
fields packed tight with wheat and barley,
the island fringed with silver beaches
and grey cliffs falling to the ocean,
rich in clamorous sea-birds,
low-rise towns in the green valleys
where the young and old at dusk walk by the rivers.