

The Saga of The Gatestrian Knights



The Jason Task Series

The Gatestrian Knights
Hazardous Task
The Sea Berets
Kang Zheng
Taliesin



The Migration Series

The Helix Plasma
The Organics of Europa
Jovari
Auxotroph



The Civilization Series

The Cilix Colony
Pibroch
Tantalus 5
Tratestria



The Evolution Series

The Descendants of Maruthe
The Genesinarians
The Sinesas Migration
The Great Novarians
Protocol 454
Epitah of a Planetary System



R.J. Godlewski

R.J. Godlewski currently lives in Houghton Lake, MI where he has begun work on the nineteen volume "The Gatestrian Knights" series. When not writing, he creates organizations including the Sara Ann Doss Cancer

Research Center project, in memory of his beloved Sara, to search the oceans for marine organisms which may be of medicinal value and the International Nuclear Emergency Response Team, a private effort to develop techniques and technologies to combat terrorism, an extension of a lifelong crusade.

Devastated by the loss of his wife, Jason Task has spent thirteen years creating wealth through various businesses including his infamous Tactical Extractions, Ltd., a business entity whose sole purpose is to rescue endangered individuals from the clutches of tyranny. Fully understanding the global reach of evil, he has decided that the time has come to launch a full-scale assault on those who choose to deliberately destroy innocent human lives. He has the resources. He has the motivation. Now he has the attitude....

The Jason Task series

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Yet, to save individuals is not merely enough to safeguard the progress of humanity itself. It must evolve like all life forms and this requires breaking the umbilical with the Earth itself. Thus enlightened, Jason decides to pour his massive resources into the goal of creating a space-based civilization, one that holds true to man's traditional morals and virtues, an objective that climaxes in the creation of The Gatestrian Knights – a modern version of the mythical medieval crusaders. Their goal is to "Protect the dignity and integrity of innocent human life, wherever and whenever it may be placed in jeopardy and by whatever means may be necessary."

Unfortunately, one cannot confront evil without making enemies, particularly very powerful ones, and Jason soon finds himself embroiled on several fronts, including that with an unseen U.S. adversary and a very potent Asian nation, bringing his plans to the brink of destruction before he even has a chance to begin.





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by

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In loving memory of my precious Sara
(07/25/51 –12/13/03)
who always encouraged me
right up until the last.

In love with you,
ALWAYS!!!

I

JASON TASK LONGED for the seclusion and sanctity of his northeastern Wyoming spread, the ten thousand acre ranch that served as his personal retreat from the masses that seemed hell-bent on driving him mad. He had nothing personal against people; he just viewed them with the same quiet indifference that he showed the herd of bison that grazed on the property, perhaps a little less.

His need to adapt to global business and his desire for personal freedom created something of a dual personality within his psyche. One, the astute, cultured businessman whose holdings circled the planet, and the other, the quiet, opinionated rancher whose quest for seclusion was served equally by the Jagged T Ranch and countless expeditions into the Pacific waters.

Jason made friends easily and frequently, yet the same was also true for his enemies, many of whom devoted their existence to his demise. His was a simple take on life; either you were right or wrong, and therefore either good or evil. No gray area was permitted.

This might've proven to be a problem had he created a retail or entertainment enterprise, but Tactical Extractions, Ltd. was neither. Jason Task provided that one most valuable of all commodities: *Freedom*. If one were held captive, lost within a hostile territory, or otherwise denied basic human rights, Tactical Extractions could rescue you – an invaluable option in a rapidly threatening world.

Aside from the romantic nature of the profession, Jason's business dealings were fairly straightforward. Indeed, he shared much in common with the dozens of overnight delivery agencies that spanned the globe, the primary logistical difference being that he dealt with

human lives. Still, ninety percent of his efforts were no more strenuous than the acquisition of airline tickets and hotel reservations often flared with ten percent that involved major military action and delicate domestic diplomacy.

Jason knew that he was right, if somewhat hated. Life was precious. Innocent life more so. His wealth did not come by way of social privilege and he took advantage of every opportunity to distribute his fortune and talents to those who needed it the most. Yet, he was highly selective in both his philanthropy and his consultations. One didn't become one of the richest individuals in the world by being a fool.

International extractions of the human kind required tact, discipline, well financed resources, and friends permanently anchored in high places. Jason Task had all of these qualities and more. He was intelligent, resourceful, and very determined. His crystalline definition of right and wrong often bordered upon the hypocritical, but he danced along the line with the grace and determination of an expert. People who were in trouble and needed his company's services mattered, semantics did not.

Jason's beliefs were forged partly by religious conviction - he attended Mass weekly and frequently prayed the rosary - and partly by narcissism - if God was going to punish him, then it would be for what *he* did and not because of what others forced him to do. Regardless of their origin, his beliefs were sincere and firm. They had to be.

Given the nature of Tactical Extractions, much had to be achieved in secrecy. Entering hostile territory with the intent of removing hostages or dissidents could not be done out in the open. Hence, Jason Task owned many businesses in such fields as computer technology, agriculture, commercial fishing, air transportation, and construction to name a few. He required the ability to be in all places at all times with the equipment necessary to accomplish a host of tasks, and all had to be done as legally as possible.

Nicknamed "Hazardous Task" by his best friend and business' number two, Jack Stephens, Jason took on a mystique that was hard to squash. Political figures feared him, despots despised him, and

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military commanders did not trust him. To the general public he was a hero; to the general administration he was a villain.

Any activity of this nature was destined to be defined as purely mercenary in nature and any proponent as simply a Soldier of Fortune. Jason Task, however, was neither a Whore of War nor an adventurer. He was a businessman with a passion for the underdog.

Such activities did not lead towards an easy life. Samantha, his wife, died of throat cancer many years earlier, her presence oblivious to the achievements that he would accomplish later on. He did not remarry, or even date. He could not bear to replace her with someone who more likely than not would turn out to be inferior in his eyes. Nor would it be fair for someone else to constantly battle with her memory. So, for the most part, he diverted his attention to creating things – businesses, organizations, forms of art, etc. In her memory, he did everything. In her absence, he questioned even that.

Time might've healed all wounds for others, but it always sat eager, lost somewhere in the back of his consciousness until it reared its ugly head and hastened any activity in which he was involved. Constantly he second guessed the treatment that Samantha received, wondering whether this or that would've prolonged her life. He became obsessed with wealth. Not the materialism of the New Age world, but pure monetary subsistence.

"If I had money then," he would always be overheard as saying, "then just maybe Sam would be alive today." It was a useless argument and he knew it, but it showed the world that he wouldn't let others go through what he had gone through.

Tactical Extractions was a natural evolution of this belief. By amassing wealth and equipment, he could ensure that the unfortunate would be served by his company and his personal philosophies. For him, the people of the world didn't need another charitable organization. They needed their own security force, independent of nations and administrations.

Greatness throughout history, he knew, was manifested by individuals, not committees. The Pyramids, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal – all achievements largely ensured by the superhuman endurance and motivation of a single individual. Jason's empire was

one inspired by dedication towards the preservation of individual lives, a reoccurring theme resulting from the loss of his beloved Samantha, the event that changed his life unlike any other.

Prior to her death, Jason was a typical forty year old man, living out a normal life largely unknown to the rest of the world. Samantha had been twelve years his senior and more than just a wife. She was his best friend, confidant, and his entire existence. She represented everything good about his character.

When Sam passed away, she took this goodness away from him and all that remained was a cynical, somewhat confused individual who doubted everything that he once held dear. True, these were the normal thoughts of anyone who had witnessed the virtual destruction of a loved one, but something else also happened to his character.

Jason's emotions waned. He was simply worn away from caring for his beloved wife. In short, he had no *feelings* left. On the one hand, he was glad that she was no longer suffering and had many visions of her appearance in Heaven during his sleep. This made him happy, for he knew that if anyone was in Heaven, it was her.

On the other hand, however, he had *felt* her passing. He felt the evil part of her, as minimal as it was, being ripped away from her soul so that she could enter Paradise direct. These evil spirits, he believed, tormented him for several weeks following her death. His character suffered, allowing him to become more cynical, more demanding, and relinquishing any undue emotional concern towards those closest to him.

For the most part, he was the same person that he'd always been. The primary difference now was the destruction of the *naïveté* that epitomized his life before he realized that truly horrible things can happen to *anyone*. Gone was the denial phase; life was indeed tough.

Samantha hadn't been part of his life; she had been his whole life. Now she was gone and he had turned his attention towards business and became successful. Though she could no longer participate within his life directly, he made no reservations as to why he was successful now. His life still held a purpose, and it was she who gave him this motivation.

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Although she was physically gone, spiritually she was with him and time, even more than a decade of it, did little to quell her influence as Jason was constantly reminded of his beloved Samantha. Her favorite color or movie or song frequently made an appearance and quickly darted past his stoic consciousness and memories of their life together flowed freely.

Jason often wondered why he handled her death so well when compared with others who had attempted suicide or lost faith in God and in life. Quietly, he assumed that it was because of the length of her illness; he had been worn down so deeply that when the time finally came, he was simply exhausted and could no longer fight off the inevitable.

Her dignity in handling her own death also played no small role in his admiration for his wife. She remained concerned for others right up until the moment that she passed away. She had appeared most beautiful as she laid in a coma, her facial deformations seemingly erased as she passed from one life into the other. For her husband, it wasn't so gradual.

One moment, she lay as beautiful as an angel. The next, a greenish corpse devoid of any similarity to Samantha lay in her place. The emotions for Jason ranged from fear to anger to frustration to relief to numbness in such intensity and complexity as he never imagined before, and within the timeframe of only a few seconds in duration. It was during this instantaneous moment of life altering events that Jason realized that his wife had won the battle over the evil spirits that try to control all humans.

The intervening years had educated him, but the memory of that day was as clear as could be. He was now, in all reality, a half person, desperately longing for her presence and equally determined never to forget her influence upon his life. She had made him what he was to become, but she did not have enough time to finish her assignment, and he feared that he would return to his pre-Samantha personality.

Prior to meeting Sam by way of a chance meeting at a local factory, Jason was something of a recluse, fairly uneducated as to the practicalities of life. He had experience, but failed to practice common sense. He strove for business success, but failed to realize that most

people, especially those whom he was trying to emulate, did not share his confidence and enthusiasm.

Most people, regardless of place or time of birth, do not have major expectations. They've become accustomed to notions of longevity at jobs, struggling to place food on the table, and never having a say in matters that matter most to them. Jason had almost a child-like belief in anything being possible. He had much to learn.

The youthful Task believed that all he had to do was have an idea and sooner or later, things would work out in his favor. This led him to such disasters as having signed contracts for real estate investments without having the wherewithal to finance the deal and once being sued for hundreds of thousands of dollars for promoting an expedition to the Amazon in order to engage as a wildlife photographer.

Samantha had changed all of this, and firmly grounded his dreams to the earth. His experiences with her engaged him with thoughts that hard work was, well, *hard*. He learned that dreams were fine and that having a great woman behind him made everything seem possible, but that reality dictated a certain price that remained to be paid. Often, they had to go without food or material possessions, struggling to make payments and more than once being evicted because employment opportunities were few and far between.

In the years since her death, his new rationalization of life kept his ambitions at bay, but even this could not bury them completely. Rather, his shattered character gave him just enough cynicism and solitude to slowly work towards his business. He no longer desired either fame or fortune, merely preferring capital success as a means for funding research organizations engaged in pharmaceutical development, for example.

As with many things in life, it was when he gave up the dreams for success that success found him. From designing technology to investing in commercial real estate to creating a shipping company to the final triumph of his aerospace company, his life began to surge forward and it was her presence in Heaven – his very own personal saint – that he knew was the reason for his new blessings.

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With the surging capital and more advanced technology provided by his stable of companies, Jason launched Tactical Extractions and the service company quickly became his darling, a tool for which he could alleviate the ills of the world. It was also a business that fit in neatly with his post-Samantha mentality.

What made Tactical Extractions fit in so well with his personality was that he, since his wife's death, became somewhat at odds with the rest of the world. He no longer valued much authority; *he* became his own authority. He once quipped that he listened to only God and the Pope.

A darker, more sinister feeling lay amongst his emotions, one that he rarely thought about. Jason felt that he, alone, was not worthy of the heavenly paradise that his own wife had undoubtedly achieved. It was turmoil between a desire to be with his wife for eternity and a fear that if he, such as he was, was permitted access to the blessed then, somehow, it would reduce the value of the paradise that she existed in.

He never knew if this strange thought subconsciously directed his actions, but he did notice that his desire to do well for the world, largely in memory of Samantha, became something of an obsession for him. When Tactical Extractions took off, he turned philanthropy into a science – a *military* science.

With his newly formed resistance towards authority, Jason Task developed a personal military force to aid those in danger. It was a quirky symbiosis that established a direct link between force and compassion, something that truly matched the current attitudes of its creator. He knew that the primary problem in the world was not famine or disease or even totalitarian rule. It was the inability to get aid to those most in need.

While the so-called United Nations failed in every attempt to be just that – united – and the American political system remained torn between liberal activism and conservative righteousness, Jason Task decided to throw caution into the wind and do what everyone else wanted to do but couldn't. He took matters into his own hands.

Tactical Extractions began simply as a logistics service and grew into the world's foremost paramilitary force, albeit in complete

secrecy. Rumors flourished as to what the company's founder was up to, considering that the company that occupied most of his time was by far his smallest enterprise.

Such criticism, however, was quickly dispatched with the plausible explanation that more effort was required to manage the newest and smallest company whereas its larger affiliates were already well established. Only Jason knew that Tactical Extractions was actually the largest of his business enterprises, owning, through various domestic and offshore entities, a sizeable portion of his other companies.

On paper, it looked as though that Jason Task owned a large percentage of several major corporations with various other organizations owning substantial chunks of his businesses. In reality, however, Jason owned everything. With the greater scrutiny afforded to public companies, for example, this ruse may not have been as effective as it was, but for a private company, who owned what wasn't quite as important. Still, the rumors persisted and Jason never quite fought off the charges.

He combined truth with cover stories and made the situation so complicated that not even the best and brightest on Wall Street knew precisely what was fact and what was fiction. The true target of this disinformation scheme, however, was the general public, that massive curtain of stupidity that politicians and strongmen feared.

A single, well orchestrated story, properly timed, could cause so much commotion amongst a country's population as to deflect all but the most arduous investigation. This was even more pronounced if the story in question sided with the public, such as when Task coordinated the story about a third world dictator siphoning off his nation's food supply. The story was hardly news, and even less of a lie, but the results were impressive and nearly toppled the dictator.

Jason had the story placed so that he could send *real* food supplies to a famished village. What nobody realized, however, was that the supplies that the government 'released' were, in fact, the food supplies that Jason wanted to get past a corrupt official. By having the local government accept responsibility for the deliveries, even though they never knew that it wasn't their food, he managed to feed three whole villages without having to resort to bribes or military action.

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Sadly, not all of his efforts were as calm. Once, it required a commando team of no less than ninety men to storm an African compound and annihilate the defenders in order to rescue some thirty nuns that were being raped and murdered by the thugs. When religious personnel were being harmed, regardless of their faith or religion, Jason had standing orders to pull out all of the stops. It was one of 'Jason's Rules' and his staff always kept his word.

Maintaining a private army was, at times, bewildering, especially for a tormented individual such as Jason Task and he lost much sleep over his activities. They became his obsession, his passion. He fancied himself a savior of the world and longed for some recognition of the services that he provided incognito. If it weren't for his loyal staff, he figured, he would've vaporized the planet long before.

Jack Stephens, as Jason's number one associate, was just the sort of person who could tame his activities. Cousins through marriage, Jack was himself a successful businessman, owning Stephens Oceanographic, the large Southeastern diving and salvage concern.

Jack's experience in business, his loyalty to family, and his intelligence - he held degrees in oceanography and astrophysics - supported Tactical Extractions' operations well. He also knew something about paramilitary operations, having worked the wars as a younger man, and married into the McIntyre Pharmaceuticals empire, which his wife Jamie took over after her father caused chaos by preventing lifesaving medicines from reaching market.

This combination of trust, intelligence, and business expertise reduced a significant amount of stress from the mind of Jason Task, and more often than not eliminated scrutiny from various parties by allowing the more personable Jack Stephens to work his way into the limelight. Then, whenever matters took a disastrous turn, the amiable Mrs. Stephens would walk in and charm the belligerents.

The Task-Stephens team worked to perfection, cooperating on numerous missions to save people from all over the planet. In fact, it was Jack's notion to turn Tactical Extractions into a salvation service, saving people from all forms of harm and captivity. Not quite as idealistic as his older cousin, Jack was nevertheless very keen on his suspicions that public officials were, as he put it, totally useless in any activity that didn't warrant kissing a baby.

The addition of affiliates in marine logistics and pharmaceutical research completed the global hold of Tactical Extractions, and there was no place on earth that Jason could not justify a presence in. In intelligence gathering alone, this capability improved their chances of success, indeed becoming the sole determining factor on many occasions.

Age, however, tempers even the most inflammatory individual and Jason was no exception to the rule. His longing for peace and tranquility played heavily on his mind for the past several years and he wanted to make an adjustment. Saving the world from itself was all fine and good, but maintaining the status quo was both time consuming and ineffective.

No, he reasoned, he had to change the *systems* in place. He had to ensure that every individual conceived had a fair chance at survival and, this was most important, success. To feed, protect, and educate was fine and dandy, but what chance did humanity have if evil could destroy these individuals after they were nourished, clothed, and taught?

Jason tried desperately to change the equation through numerous contributions to the Catholic Church and its global organizations, but even the Faith lacked the means necessary to defend those most in harm. To “turn the other cheek” was not something that either Jason or Jack cared to do. Therefore, something was needed to bridge the gap between the filial trust of Faith and the convincing power of a strong military force.

To be able to distribute food and medical supplies to an impoverished nation was one thing, to take over that impoverished nation in order to ensure that it could join the league of the civilized world was something altogether different and warranted much debate. Jason knew keenly that such activities would propel him from the thrones of heroism and land him squarely into the fiery pit of damnation.

Inasmuch as many within the world applauded his covert attempts to bring aid to the unfortunate, few would support open hostility and nation tampering. The thought reeked of the very totalitarianism that he had spent the past decade fighting against. No,

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if his latest mission was to succeed, he would have to bury his activities further into the secret nature of clandestine operations.

Another problem involved Jack's attitude towards this ambition. His younger cousin was more passive than he, and anything that might bring his beautiful wife into harm's way would sever his ties with Jason. Whether Jack would become involved or not, definitely decided whether this larger plan would succeed.

JASON WALKED OVER to his desk that sat conspicuously in the middle of his thirtieth floor office and gazed out through the windows towards the Oklahoma City skyline. He examined each glowing structure intuitively, and thought about the ramifications of his actions.

He was a long way from the seclusion of his Wyoming ranch and the approaching night illuminated the buildings in the distance, enforcing upon him the realization that people were involved, not just despots and terrorists. Everything that he did involved everyday people. To tamper with nations would undoubtedly alter the course of history and what the final outcome would be was up for grabs, regardless of his personal confidence.

Today, the interior lights shone forth from the buildings. Tomorrow, buildings all around the world may begin to blaze forth with real fires, if he were not careful. History would be made for certain, but what history would make of his involvement was equally important.

He reached over and subconsciously fumbled with the rosary that sat on the corner of the desk and mumbled a quiet prayer to Samantha, asking for guidance and, far more important, a simple sign. He believed that Jesus and the saints were in Heaven, but he *knew* that she was; she came to him within many dreams that were far too realistic to be anything but true visions. Because of this, he frequently prayed directly to her, for she was someone that he had actually known and touched, not some abstract saint from centuries past.

Jason had keen faith, but Samantha was his salvation. To receive word from her, regardless of how it was delivered, would ease his

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