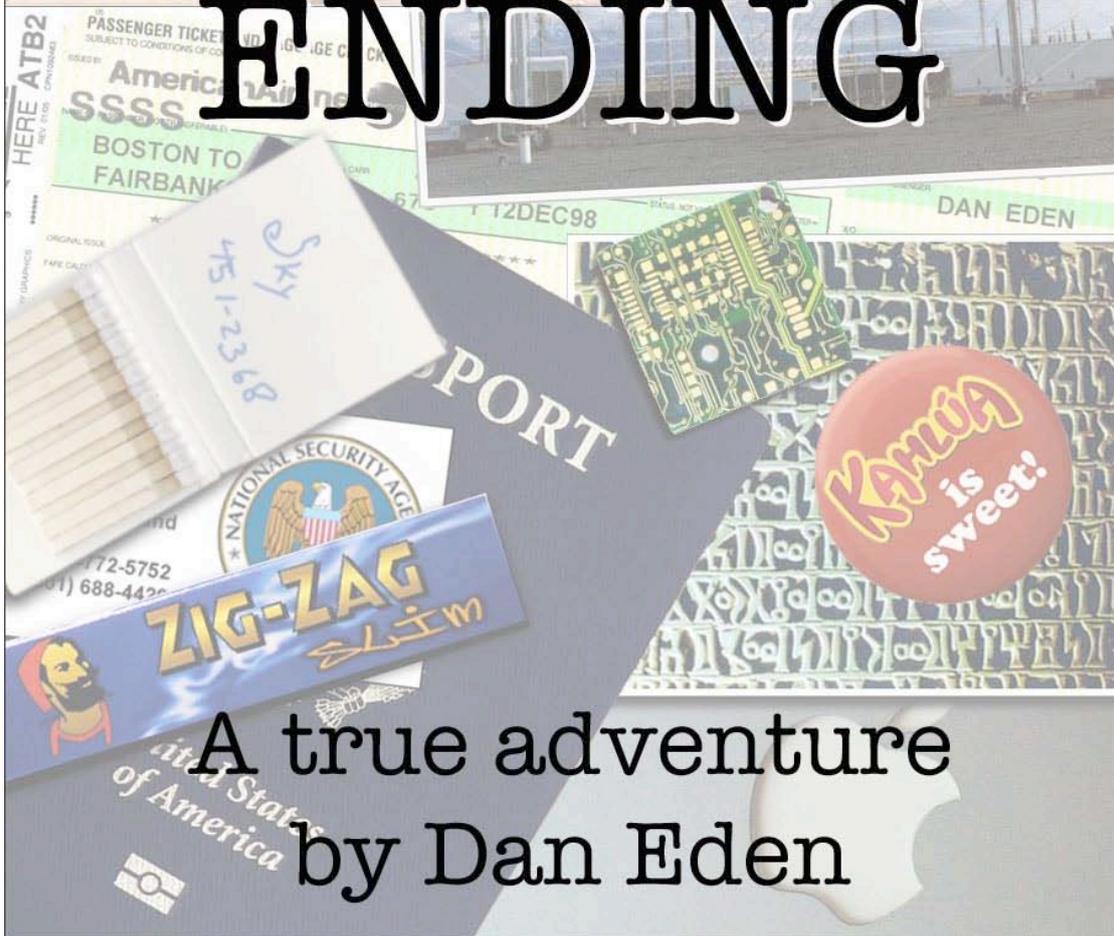


Special
ebook
edition

THE NEVER ENDING



A true adventure
by Dan Eden

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The Never Ending

Where To Begin ...

For a few years, since I have been writing for Viewzone, I have wanted to tell a story - perhaps the most important story I have ever been a part of - but the staff here have resisted. Viewzone is run on a shoestring budget, mostly on sweat and old fashioned journalistic zeal, but that kind of equity is vulnerable, especially when it is confronted by the most powerful forces on the planet.

But that was then, and this is now.

So what I am going to write about is something that happened here at Viewzone back in 1998 and continues to this day. We have all known about it and it has been eating away inside our guts like an undigested bean burrito. Finally, the time is pregnant to let it out, despite the danger. So here goes.

Chapter 1 - The Winter Of '98 Gets Even Colder

We started Viewzone in 1996. The internet was young and we were ignorant. At first we published stories and articles that were based on our own interests, mainly for our friends. In 1997, owner Gary Vey learned how to access the statistics for the web site and shocked us all by reporting the we had a readership of about 150,000 people a month. Hell, that couldn't be right - could it?

By the early part of 1998 we were receiving manuscripts and e-mails with story ideas and our readership had climbed to over one-million monthly readers. That was truly amazing and it opened our eyes to the power of the internet.



At the time, the television show "X-Files," with topics about UFO's and weird science, was at the top of the charts. So were shows like "Sightings" and "The Unexplained." We rode on this popularity with a similar venue and we were all caught up in the seemingly endless unresolved phenomena that are all around us. It was fun writing about aliens, the "face" on Mars and suppressed history. We got literally hundreds of e-mails a day, mostly positive, and a good supply of story ideas. It was a magazine editor's dream come true.

One evening I got a phone call. I just happened to be in Viewzone's Connecticut office because a cold and icy storm had made driving home impossible. The caller asked for me by name and the connection was faint and wrought with static.

The caller asked me to please listen to him for a minute or two while he said what he had to say and asked that I not interrupt him. He had a nervous voice and I pictured him to be in his late 20's. I agreed and pressed the phone to my ear. "Go ahead. I can hear you."

The caller said he was in Alaska. He told me that he had read Viewzone on the internet and respected what we were doing. He told me that he and a friend wanted to tell me something that I ought to write about - something that was both important and terrible, and that I wouldn't believe it unless I came to Alaska to see it for myself.

"Alaska?... But..."

"We are sending you a round trip ticket by FedEx. We will meet you and take care of everything if you agree to protect us. This is heavy stuff. I will tell you a little about it when I send the tickets. I hope I can trust you." His voice was trembling. Suddenly there was a long pause. "You still there, Dan?"

"Yes. Okay. I agree... but..." The line was dead. Was this a prank? Who would do this? I picked up the phone to relate the incident to my best friend, thinking he would get a laugh from it, but I stopped. There was something unusual in the man's voice - fear - that made me decide to wait, at least for a few days to see if some tickets arrived.

Chapter 2 - The Siberian Wind

All through the weekend I tried to dismiss the phone call as a prank. We had received all kinds of strange phone calls and mail in response to stories we ran. One man used to call, threatening to send us a letter, "containing a brown powder that will eventually kill you all..." These were idle threats by unstable people. But we also had some real threats at Viewzone, and that's what was so unsettling about this call.

A few months earlier we witnessed a bearded man, dressed in somewhat odd black attire, entered our office in great distress. He was a priest from a Russian Orthodox Church in the South of Connecticut. He too asked to be heard, and asked us to help. His voice had the same sense of urgency - fear - that I recognized in my recent caller, and his problem was quite real.

When the Soviet Union finally dissolved, the Russian Mafia created an entity in Moscow called, aptly enough, Moscow Realty. The Russian mob also formally recognized the establishment of religion, allowing the Russian citizens to belong to the recently established, ersatz "Orthodox Church of Russia."

Back in the days of Stalin, the old Russian Orthodox Church was outlawed and its clergy were massacred. Most of the Russian emigrants here in America came here to escape this repression and established thousands of little Russian Orthodox churches where they were married, had their children baptized and were eventually buried. These tiny churches grew over many generations and some were now sitting in the middle of large metropolitan areas and on land that was now worth millions of dollars.

Moscow Real Estate wanted this land, or rather the money. Systematically, and with the blind eye of the American government, they were entering these parish offices, evicting the current priest and his family, and taking control of the property to demolish the churches and sell the land. They did this by claiming to represent the "true" Orthodox Church of Russia, many of whose "clergy" were former KGB and communist atheists.

Our black clothed visitor was in this predicament. He had already been threatened with his life, and that of his family, if he did not leave the church by the end of the month. We listened to his story in disbelief. "Surely if the American government knows about this they will help!"

When he left the office it was decided that I would write the story. I did some research on the web and was shocked to learn that this was true. The usual routine began with a threat. If this was not heeded, they would drive a school bus full of comrades to the rectory, force the door open and literally displace the priest and his family by dozens of bodies that occupied his space. His personal items, furniture and religious items were thrown out of windows or put on the street, the door was locked, and the property was ultimately sold, with proceeds going to the mob's Moscow Realty.

The threats were also, periodically, carried out. Two high ranking bishops in Canada were found with bullets in their heart - a traditional KGB signature - and there was little hope for this small parish priest. Nevertheless, I wrote the story and we published it, and it did get noticed.

One evening while I was again working late, the phone rang. A man on the other end had a thick accent but I could tell that he was angry and kept saying that he was going to cut my throat and that I was going to need a surgeon. "You will not make a difference," he said. After we traded some rather descriptive insults, I hung up on him. I did not think much about the call until the Orthodox priest came again to

visit, to thank me for writing the story. I told him about the call and mentioned that the caller had a rather unusual name - "Metropolitan something or other..." His face went white.

"Oh, I am so sorry for ever coming here and getting you involved in this. Please just let it stop and forget everything!"

I later learned that I had been speaking with the mob's equivalent to the Pope in America. For the next few days I was shadowed by a white Mercedes and the same car totally destroyed the car of one of our employees before fleeing the scene.

The little priest eventually left with his family and started another small church in a pre-fabricated log cabin somewhere in the Berkshires. His church was destroyed, the cemetery bull-dozed, and an apartment complex now collects rent for Moscow Realty. The mob Pope was right, I didn't make a difference.

So I recognized real fear when I heard it. But what was in Alaska? Did they have Orthodox churches there? Was this another poor priest? "Hey, Dan, you have to sign for this." A uniformed FedEx man handed me an envelope from Fairbanks, Alaska. I would soon learn the truest meaning of fear.

Chapter 3 - The Secret of Khalúa

The envelope was like a set of Russian dolls, one inside the other. The first one revealed a flight itinerary that made two stop-overs prior to landing in Fairbanks. Inside this envelope was yet another envelope that had a message written in black magic marker, "Read when you are alone."

I went to my office and peaked. Inside was a manuscript of copied, printed pages and, yes, another envelope. The papers were from a technical journal, with technical jargon, and were authored by a Dr. Bernard Eastlund. As I thumbed through it I noticed that various parts had been highlighted with a yellow marker, but it was long and tedious and so I focused on the remaining envelope.

Inside this there was a single index card and a small tin button, the kind you bend and pin on your lapel. It was red and had three white words on it, "Khalua Is Sweet!" The card had a hand written note, "Wear the pin if we are safe."

I had the feeling something was missing. I turned the envelope upside down and shook it, but it was empty. I looked at everything for a few minutes, trying to understand what was happening, but it just made me more confused. That evening I read the technical papers, and it only added to my confusion.

Dr. Bernard Eastlund was no priest. From what I had already read, Eastlund was a genius who had devoted his life to the research of electromagnetic wave propagation. The article was much too lengthy for me to absorb, but it appeared that he had invented a process for sending energy through the air, like a radio signal, where it could be received and used like an electrical outlet. At least that was all that I could understand at the time. As I read the paper, my thoughts kept distracting me. I kept replaying the voice on the phone. What was the connection of the fear I heard with the elaborate drama that was in my hands.

The flight was only two days away. I made my plans to leave, to have someone feed my cat, and to take a digital camera and laptop with me. I had never been to Alaska before. I knew it was cold there so I packed a couple of sweaters. Everything I had managed to squeeze into a small suitcase. The return flight allowed me only four days in Alaska so my wardrobe consisted mostly of clothes I would be wearing when I left.

I shared the details of the trip with Vey. At first he tried to persuade me not to go, fearing that it was dangerous and there were, in his words, "just too many unknowns." But wasn't that really what this was all about - exploring the unknown? Eventually we both agreed that it was an acceptable risk and potentially a great adventure. We made arrangements to keep it a secret between us and I promised to call him to assure him I was safe.

The evening before I left we went to a bar. Vey ordered me a drink, a Black Russian made with vodka and Khalua. It was a nice touch and we laughed. The drink was strong, but the Khalua was sweet. I was surprised to get drunk on such a delicious concoction. It was a very un-sobering reminder that some things are not what they seem.

Chapter 4 - The Flight

If it were not for the hangover I had, I would probably have been consumed with fear as I boarded the jet. It was another icy day in Connecticut and there was some concern that the flight might be delayed and my connecting schedule disrupted. I hated to fly. The thought of an air accident always lurks in my nightmares. It is not so much the thought of dying, but of being aware that I am dying, of falling for several minutes before the impact, that makes my knuckles white.

"Twenty four... that's right this way and you have an isle seat." The stewardess directed me to my seat - an isle seat no less. I hated to look out of the window and even more the feeling of being wedged between other passengers. Whoever made the ticket reservations had booked me on the same isle seats for each of the two flights to Fairbanks.

The plane was almost empty. Rows of empty seats separated the dozen or so passengers. I placed my carry on bag below the seat and was reminded of the red pin I had been instructed to wear. I fished it from my shirt pocket and clipped it to my lapel. This was certainly premature, but it was something to remind me that this trip was no vacation.

The flight to Chicago was routine. The weather cleared at O'Hare and new passengers came aboard for the next leg of the flight to Seattle. A young black woman with a briefcase approached me. "Excuse me. I guess I have the window seat."

"Sure. Sorry..." I removed my coat from the adjoining seat. For the next half hour the cabin was busy with the usual activities, the peanuts and crackers, and finally the beverage cart began to make its way down the aisle.

"Are you going to Seattle?" I tried to make small talk with the woman.

"Yes," she replied. At first I thought she was not wanting a conversation. There was an awkward silence. I was tired and started to close my eyes.

"Would you like a drink, coffee or tea or juice?" The stewardess addressed us and handed us both a napkin.

"Would you like some Khalúa?"

"What? Khalua?" I was suddenly wide awake. The black woman smiled at me. "I was just looking at your pin there."

"We have some Khalúa," the stewardess sorted through her collection of small bottles, "I could make you a Black Russian."

"No. Thanks, but no. Just some coffee with milk will be cool."

"I'll have a Black Russian." The woman laughed. "I love Khalúa. Are you a bartender or liquor salesman or something?"

"You mean because of the pin? No. It's a long story. A weird one too. No, I'm a writer. I'm heading up to Alaska."

"Wow. Me too. Where in Alaska?"

"Fairbanks? And you?"

"Huh. Fairbanks. Wow. That's unusual. Ever been there before?"

"No."

"My husband is there. He's in the Navy and works up there. I live in Georgia - Atlanta - so I visit him all the time. I hate it there but he's got another year. I hope you brought some warm clothes and

gloves."

The remainder of our flight was pleasant. We talked about computers, music and the usual small talk. Eventually we both were silent and resting our eyes as the pilot announced our impending arrival in Seattle.

As we gathered our effects and prepared to leave the plane I wished her a pleasant trip and joked that maybe I would run into her in Fairbanks. "You have a safe trip. It was nice speaking with you, Dan."

As I made my way to the new gate, to board my next flight to Fairbanks, I realized that I did not know the black woman's name. We had never introduced ourselves - yet she knew my name. Then the fact that she had ordered a Black Russian seemed more significant. But was I just getting paranoid?

Chapter 5 - Patent Pending: A Hint Of Evil

The flight from Seattle to Fairbanks was a frightening one. Not only was the jet much smaller, an A300 Airbus, but once again I was largely empty. Once we got off the ground I asked for some coffee and a warm blanket. I was tired and cold.

When the caffeine kicked in I felt better and decided to finish reading about Dr. Eastlund. The more I read about him, the more I was amazed at his work and how it could revolutionize the world.

Eastlund's first patent (US #4,686,605) was for a "Method and Apparatus for Altering A Region In the Earth's Atmosphere, Ionosphere, And Or Magnetosphere." The patent information contained in my manuscript described the various levels of atmosphere surrounding Earth as a kind of plastic layer, made up of various molecules and having different electrical charges. Eastlund has devised a way of beaming powerful radio waves up in the air and causing these various levels of space that surrounded Earth to become "heated" and to expand - like melted plastic. This seemed like an odd thing for anyone to want to do. But as I read on, it began to make sense.

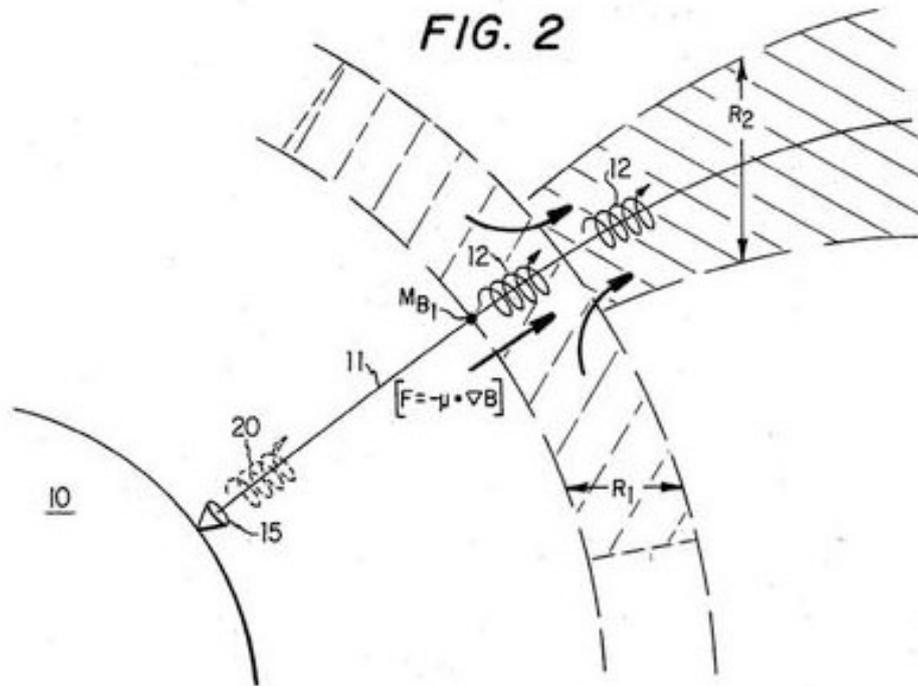
(Below) The *official* HAARP installation in Gakona, Alaska, widely distributed on the web. It is not the real one, which is in Poker Flats.



(Below) The HAARP installation in Gakona, Alaska, contains dozens of dipole antennae that beam radio frequency energy up in to space.



The earth bottom left, its atmosphere, the ionosphere above it - and a suspicious opening.

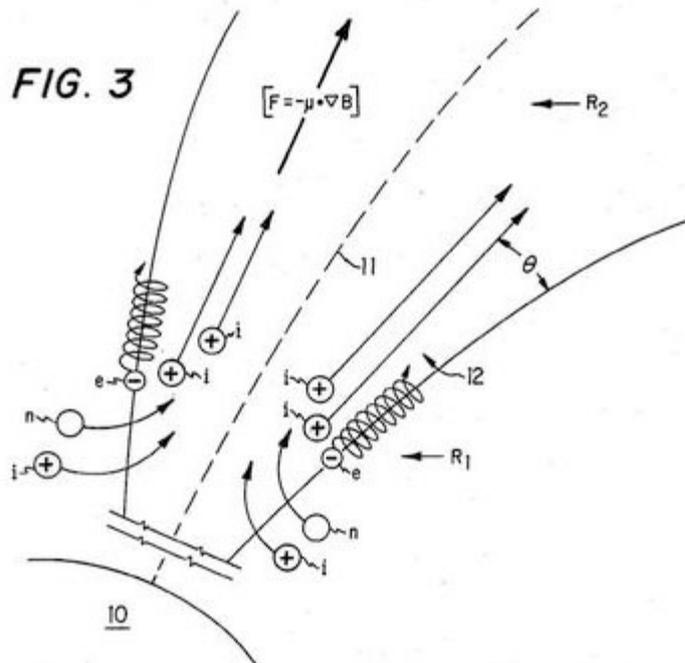


His second patent described the reflection of a second signal, using a previously "heated" ionospheric bulge, to distant locations on the Earth's surface. Interesting, I thought, but why would anyone want to do that?

Eastlund had been working with the Atlantic Richfield Company, holders of a massive reserve of natural gas under Alaska's north slope. ARCO bought Eastlund's first two patents with the understanding that this new technology would make it possible for their natural gas reserves, too expensive to be piped from Alaska, to be converted to electrical energy on the north slope, and then bounced off the heated ionosphere to customers in remote locations around the globe.

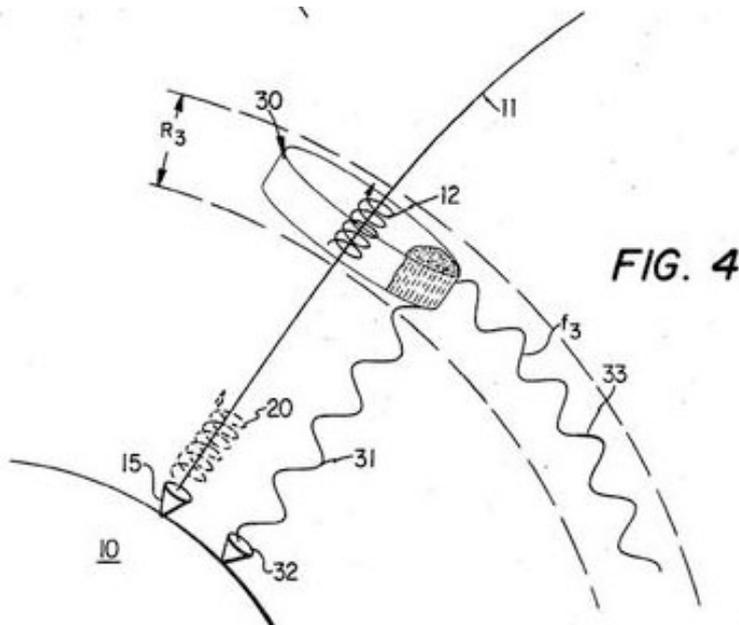
Also, because Eastlund's "heaters" could elevate the Earth's ionosphere, his discovery provided the ability to control weather! Jet streams could be altered, tornadoes could be zapped and rain could be made - anywhere and anytime - right here and right now.

This was definitely getting interesting.



But it seemed the military had other plans. Yellow highlights marked the last several pages. The military had purchased these two patents from ARCO and had given them to Raytheon, a military contractor. So there would be no civilian use for this new technology after all.

Was that it? Was this the "terrible" thing that had placed me on this cold jet, heading for icy Fairbanks? Or was there more to the story?



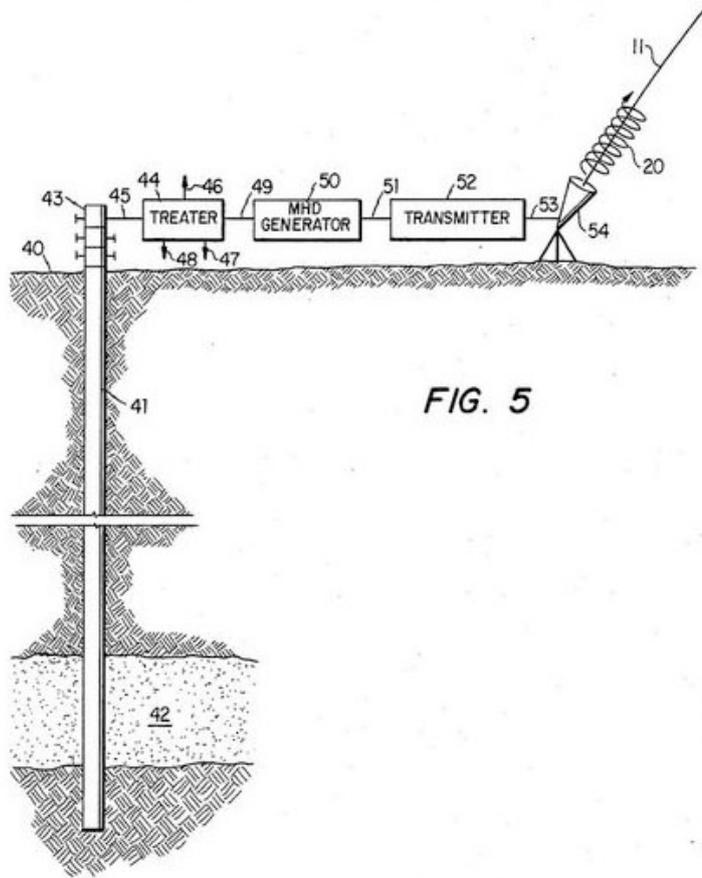
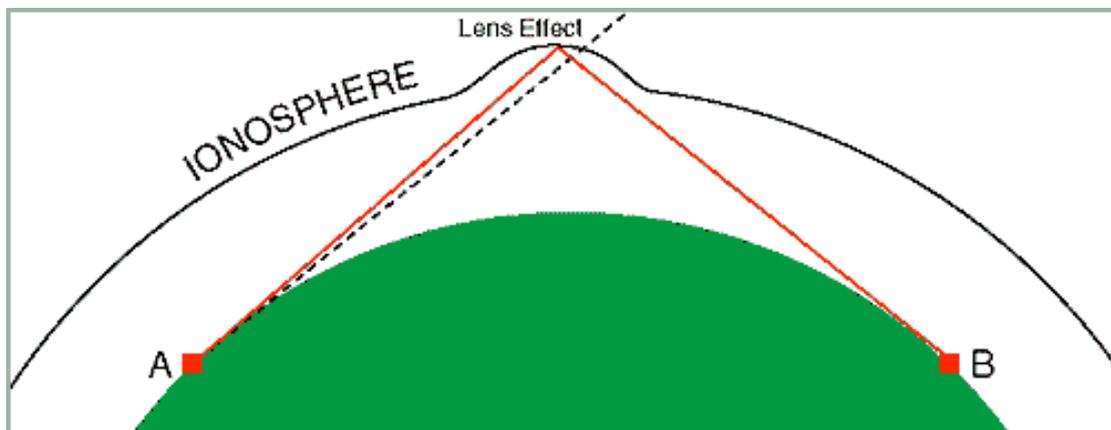


FIG. 5

(Below) The phased array beam of energy can be reflected off a heated portion of the ionosphere (called the lens effect) and sent over the horizon where it can be used as a destructive weapon or as a tomographic device to scan deep in to the Earth's crust.



I slept for a while until we landed in Fairbanks. As I deplaned I made sure to transfer the red pin to the lapel of my leather jacket. I had made no plans in Fairbanks and so I was a little concerned. It was late in the evening and I was in the middle of nowhere, with no return plans for four more days. For a moment I panicked.

"Dan? Dan Eden?" I turned to meet a young man wearing a heavy hooded parka with a fur lining. With him was another man, similarly dressed and holding an insulated parka in his arms. "Here, let me take your bag. And why don't you put this on. You'll be more comfortable."

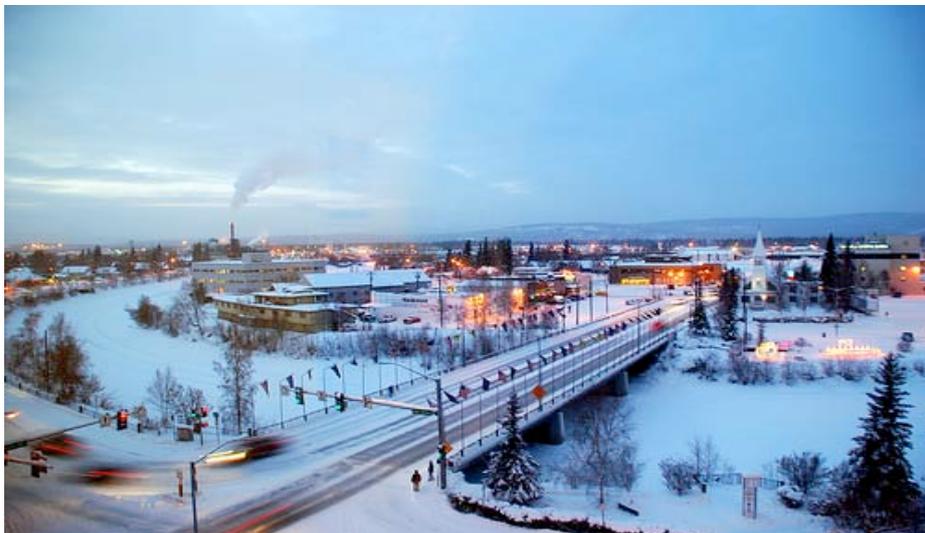
I was surprised that the man was so young. He looked like a college student. I handed his companion my small suitcase and then exchanged my leather coat for the warmer parka.

"We are going to put your coat and bag in a locker. You won't be needing anything while you are here. And we will give you the key so you can get everything when you are ready to leave. Is that okay with you, sir?"

"Sir?" I had never been called that. It immediately made me sense that there was some military component here. The green parkas began to look like government issued. All around me I could see military people, green duffel bags and men with short crew cuts.

"So who are you guys? What's this all about anyway? Are you in the military?" I had a zillion questions. We walked quickly to the lockers and my items were placed inside and I was given the key. "I have my camera and laptop in there and..."

"You won't need anything now. Just come with us. We'll take care of you. It has to be this way for now. We'll explain it all later. Let's go."



As we left the warmth of the airline terminal the cold air struck me and instantly froze my nostrils. My eyes temporarily fogged and breathing was difficult. "Damn it's cold!" A bank sign read "Welcome to Fairbanks - It's 6 degrees F." A big old Chrysler smoked up to meet us at the sidewalk and we all got in. It was warm inside and for the first time I got a good look at my hosts.

My New Friends

For the next three days I would come to know and trust the two men who met me at the airport. Dave, the oldest, was a tall man of 27. His friend, Jonas, was only 24 and was shorter. Jonas' sister, Nicki, the driver of the Chrysler, was 31. The interior of the car was humorous. The seats, front and back, were covered with what appeared to be white polar bear fur, and the floor was littered with old 8-track cassettes that played in the antique player that was hot wired through the dashboard. In the back, the floor had empty bottles of JD and some Rolling Rock.

As the car warmed after having the door opened, we unzipped our parkas and introduced ourselves. Dave seemed to be in charge. He began by telling me that everything he was going to show me and tell me was secret and, by telling me, he was committing a serious crime. He told me that he had been stationed in Fairbanks with the Navy and had been discharged a few months back. Jonas, who sat in the front with his sister, had also recently been discharged. His sister, who Dave described as "real good people," had come to Fairbanks on a visit and later decided to stay. Both emphasized that she had nothing to do with any of what they were going to reveal to me but that we would all be "crashing" at her apartment for the duration.

Fairbanks was a disappointment. It was a small city with wide streets and lots of bars. Despite the time, we stopped for a drink at a place called "Mecca." Nicki seemed familiar with the patrons and I learned that the JD bottles in the car were mostly from her habit.

Dave wasted no time. He asked me if I had read the material about Eastlund, if I understood it, and if I had ever heard of something he called the HAARP. Jonas was an electrician by trade, and very bright. He had been trained in the Navy and now worked for the local cable television company. He was able to explain how radio waves traveled and how Eastlund's invention worked, in a way that made it easy to understand. They both drank Rolling Rock while Nicki did shots and smiled, glassy eyed, at me.

Maybe I was over-tired or maybe I had been alone too long. Nicki was cute. She was small and petite and looked more so in her large insulated parka. She drank her shots in one swallow and banged the glass on the bar as she finished them.

"Hey, man, it's late. Let the poor guy unwind and we can do all this tomorrow. Man, you are going to see something..." Jonas was interrupted by a wave from Dave's hand. The two of them excused themselves to talk to a friend that had entered the bar, leaving me alone with Nicki.

"They're really freaked, you know" she said. "They are worried that you will rat on them. You won't do that, will you?"

"Hey. No way. This sounds important. Besides I am not one to rat on anyone. I'm a no one really. I just want to help with whatever is going on."

Nicki was drunk. She stared in my eyes, "Yeah. You look okay. You have honest eyes. I can tell." She took hold of my hand. "I love my brother. He's a good guy and he just wants someone to know about all that's going on around here."

"You can trust me. Really." I tried to finish my Rolling Rock but it was already warm and I was tired. Dave and Jonas returned and announced that it was time to go. We headed to the car and then drove to a windowless apartment on top of a souvenir shop. It was Nicki's place and it was stocked with more 8-track tape players and half-empty bottles of JD and wall to wall shag carpets. It smelled like the bar we had just left.

"So we'll be over fairly early. We'll get breakfast and then head up to the flats." Dave and Jonas left me with Nicki. In the background I could hear an old Jefferson Airplane tune. "When the truth is found... to be lies..."

This was going to be interesting.



Chapter 6 - Gazing At The Muzzle Of Death

Nicki did her best to make me feel welcome. We sat on the floor in her one huge, windowless room, and talked for about a half hour until she passed out. She had made a bed for me from her couch cushions and the whole apartment seemed to have blankets and quilts everywhere. She worked at the same bar we had visited, serving food on the weekends and filling in as a bartender.

Jonas had enlisted in the Navy when he was 18 years old. He had been stationed in Fairbanks and worked at a secret site in an area just North of Fairbanks, called Poker Flats - or just "the flats" to locals. His sister told me that he met Dave there and the two had worked on the "heater," mainly installing coax cable and doing repairs following some tests. All through her conversation she would refer to the military as "the death ray monsters." But eventually the JD got the upper hand and she closed her eyes. The Jefferson Airplanes kept looping on the 8-track and I soon followed her in a deep sleep.

It was hard to tell time without a window. Fairbanks is rather dimly illuminated in mid-winter anyway. It was Saturday by my best recollection and I woke up to the sound of Jonas who had let himself in to fetch us for breakfast while Dave kept the Chrysler running downstairs. We eventually were back at the Mecca for a huge breakfast and Dave asked me my shoe size, left for a while, and returned with some heavy duty boots and thick socks.

I changed in the car while we headed North to a small town called Fox. Dave and Jonas visited a friend while Nicki and I stayed warm in the car. They soon returned with some two-way radios and the keys to a storage facility just off the Elliot Highway where there were two beefy snowmobiles packed with canvas packs.

Jonas and Nicki took one snowmobile while Dave drove mine. We went East along the Chatinaka River and, at times, actually on the frozen river. The trip was long and I realized the canvas bags contained more gasoline for the return trip. As we neared our destination I could see orange markers and the familiar "Restricted Area" signs. Dave and Jonas would stop periodically, as if to get their bearings, and we soon were approaching a steep incline where the machines were switched off, covered with a canvas drop sheet, and we continued on foot.

The area was remote, yet there were signs that it was well groomed and forested. When we reached the top of a ridge I could see an enormous area below us that was covered with rows and rows of metal poles - antennae -and small silver rectangular sheds where black cables originated.

The famous HAARP antenna arrays, spread all over the world today. This is not the real Poker Flats location - because there, you get shot before, while and after taking photos.



It was oddly quiet. A higher ridge in the distance seemed to quell the wind so that we were in the midst of a quiet zone. Dave let me look through his binoculars at the field of antennae. It was impressive. The entire area was at least a mile square and the number of antennae must have been in the thousands.

Dave said that this was a phased array, but Jonas explained that this was a type of antenna where the signal being sent out could be focused to a very narrow beam - like a laser - and that it was capable of emitting a signal that was billions of watts in power.

At one point I questioned why an antenna system would be buried between such high ridges. "Wouldn't that interfere with the signal?"

"Not if you're sending it straight up!" Jonas explained that this energy was used to heat a layer of the atmosphere, to cause it to bend and thicken, and that it would then be ready for the "death ray."

"Death Ray! What do you mean by that?" I was remembering what Nicki had said the previous night.

"We'll explain all that when we get back." Almost as soon as we had arrived, it was time to return. Not only was the sunlight limited to a few hours, but it was damn cold. We scurried back to the machines and filled them with more gasoline. The ride back to the shed was brutal.

The temperature dropped with the diminishing sunlight and the chill put me in a kind of sleepy, hypnotic state. I almost fell off the machine because of that.

Back in the car we warmed up. Nicki's Jack Daniels made sense and I took a few stiff hits. As we waited for the Chrysler to warm up, Dave and Jonas made their case, strong and with passion. I sat in the back seat and listened. It was terrible. And I was glad that Nicki had brought the JD.

My head was spinning in the car as we drove back to Fox to return the keys. Nicki drove while Dave and Jonas told me of their work with the Navy.

Eastlund's discovery had been taken by the military during the cold war era because it allowed microwave signals, like radar, to be sent and received beyond the horizon. This fact alone compelled them to prevent its development for any humane or commercial application since it would then be available to enemy nations. Once the "heater" had created a sort of lens in the ionosphere by heating it, you didn't have to limit your signal to radar or microwaves. Eastlund had developed the ability to send massive bursts of power - in the billions of watts range - and these could now be zapped to just about any point of the Earth. Yes, it was a death ray.

"What about the argument that it is better if America has this than, say, some other country?" I had many questions like this.

"But other countries also have it... they just can't control it because they don't have the computers needed to calculate the angles and adjust for the movement of the Earth and things like that." Dave was especially zealous in his response, "It's not about the weapon potential really - it's about what they did with it..."

Jonas interrupted. "Not yet, man. Don't lay that on him yet. Can't you see he's not ready for that yet? Look, it's bad enough that they took the idea and used it for something to kill people but just think of what it could be used for - like making it rain anywhere, ending droughts and stopping tornadoes or sending power to poor countries. It would have been a totally different world!"

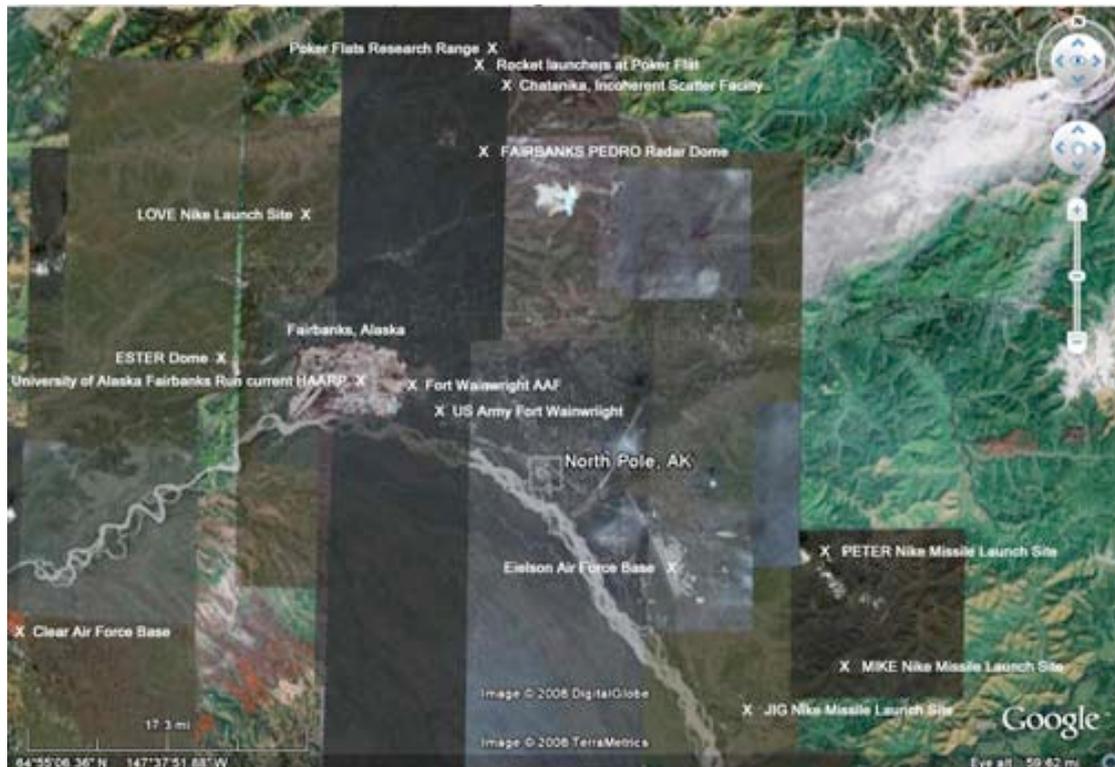
He was right. I had read Eastlund's patents and it was capable of all that - and more. It held the potential to combat the El Niño. But I kept thinking about what Dave had said, "...what they did with it..."

After Fox we were back in Fairbanks and again at the Mecca. Nicki had to work and so we decided to eat and have some drinks before an early night. I decided to call back to Viewzone, to speak with Vey and let him know I was safe. I called him from the bar.

Vey was pleased to hear that I was well and safe but he asked me why I was in Fairbanks. "Huh? Because that's where the thing is..."

"No way. It's about 300 miles South of you in a place called Gakona. I looked it up on the internet. The HAARP is in Gakona and it's just an atmospheric testing thing that's open to the public and everything." I told him what I saw, including the huge field of antennae. "Yes, they have that in Gakona and the website has pictures of it and everything. It's a big nothing, man."

(Below) Map showing the location of the Poker Flats facility in relation to Fairbanks, Alaska.



I returned to the bar with a bothered look. Dave asked what was wrong but I didn't want to reveal that I had shared the story with anyone else. For a few minutes I tried to bring it up but there seemed to be no way of doing it without breaking the trust we had developed.

"Dave, your wife called. She's home already and wants you to call her." Nicki was already in her apron and serving food. I had to say something before he left and it seemed like this was the time. But before I could mention HAARP or Gakona, Dave pulled his chair closer to mine and put his arm on my shoulder.

"Dan. I feel bad about this. I haven't been up front with you about some things. I hope you understand. We're really scared about this and we don't know what we are doing really. But I have to tell you something before you find out soon anyway."

"It's about the HAARP thing in Gakona, right? It's not a weapon really."

Is that what you are going to explain to me?"

"HAARP? Shit no. That's a fake decoy for the public. Everyone knows about that. They even have a web site with one of those instant cam things and a few dozen antennae. That's just a thing for show so they can say that it's all harmless and open. No way. But I do have something to confess to you... hang on, I'll be right back."

Dave went to the phone booth and returned, looking at his watch. "Nicki! Dan needs a drink. You know... a special drink." Nicki smiled. A few minutes later she arrived with some Rolling Rocks for Dave and Jonas. Then, in front of me, she placed a Black Russian. They all laughed.

"What the hell? Hey!"

"Good timing! Here she is!" Dave got up and embraced a woman who had just entered the bar. "Dan, this is my wife!" I looked up - it was the black woman from the flight to Seattle.

"Look at him! He's freaked. I'm sorry, Dan. We had to be sure you were coming alone. I hope you understand. This is my wife, Marie."

That evening we all got a little wasted. I had several Black Russians and Dave danced with his wife. Nicki and I danced and then cuddled a little before we all returned to her windowless apartment. It was good to be happy and drunk, but tomorrow they had promised to tell me the darkest secret of all.

Chapter 7 - A Friend In Need

I didn't remember much about returning to Nicki's apartment. We were all pretty drunk when we left the Mecca. When we got back it was cold inside. Nicki's heater had somehow switched off so we sat on her floor with our parkas on until we stopped seeing our breath and then she and I cuddled under the blankets to keep each other warm.

In the morning we were so comfortable that we didn't move. In fact it wasn't morning at all, but well after noon. Nicki's apartment was kind of a timeless zone anyway. The drone of the heater fan made it easy to fall in and out of sleep and I could sense that she was enjoying the intimacy.

Fairbanks was an old mining town that had a strange mix of ultra-modern technology from the presence of several military outposts and yet it retained its red-neck personality that was crude at best, sexist at its worst. I could understand its appeal to Nicki. She was part tomboy and redneck herself, but her small frame made her vulnerable and she projected a harsh persona to guard against being hurt. I could tell

that she enjoyed being held, almost as much as I enjoyed holding her. But I also knew that there were unspoken limits that I would not attempt to cross.

Jonas knocked at the door and let himself in. He told us that Dave was making arrangements for tomorrow, my last day in Fairbanks, and that he was going to spend time with me, explaining what was so "important and terrible."

Nicki made some strong coffee. It was warm inside now and we were all sitting comfortably on the floor. Jonas fumbled through a cardboard box full of papers and maps.

"Dave and I both had to take an oath that we would never talk about any of this. I don't know how far they would go if they knew we were telling you this stuff. But they are serious people. Even telling you this stuff places you in danger, but you didn't take the oath so I don't know how bad it would be for you."

"Yes. I can appreciate that," I told him, "All I can do is promise you that I will never let them know who you are or where I got the information. If there is something that could make them suspect you... well, just tell me and I will not report that part."

"Okay, man." Jonas's mood changed from serious to more relaxed. He gave me the high-five and then pulled some papers from the box.

"Dave was in the 'com'- the command center of the heater. He worked with the primary transmitter or generator. I mainly worked on the feeder lines on the farm... the antenna farm. We were both there when they bumped the power up to the max and let it blow. I mean, we went from thousands of watts to like billions! And that's when the shit hit the fan."

Jonas unfolded some graph paper with a blue trace line on it. There were several sharp peaks over the timeline and then a spike with a long plateau that was obviously off the chart. I didn't know what I was looking at but Jonas tried to make it simple.

"Look. Here is where they are heating the ionosphere - and here too. Now you can see that it is absorbing more power each time. And then here is when they switched it to max. And somewhere up here, off the paper, is when it happened. The whole ionosphere got blown out into space and made one big fucking hole."

Nicki piped in, "Those monsters! They fucked it up to play with their toy and made a hole in the sky!"

I was puzzled. "I don't get it. What are you saying here?"

"They never used that much power before so they just did it to see what would happen. Do you follow me? And when they did it kind of multiplied

the power and then a huge chunk of Earth's atmosphere blew away, out into space. Gone. Poof. History." Jonas pulled another graph from the box. "Here. Look at the ultraviolet and radiation that came through right after they did it. They blew away the shield and all the radiation just came right down and zapped Earth. And look. It lasted for a long time!"

"Twice! Tell him about the other one." Nicki was getting excited. She kept peaking through the eye hole of her apartment door, then returning.

"Yeah. Like after that happened they did it again. A few months later they did it again - can you believe that? And this time they used even more power and destroyed even more of the atmosphere. We're talking about huge chunks, like thousands of miles wide!"

"Well, did anyone die or get hurt from this?" I was already trying to distance myself from the emotions I felt and began slipping into my journalistic way of thinking.

"Shit, yes. Here in Alaska there were Eskimos that were all fried and like whole herds of antelopes. But the holes also moved west and did their real harm in Siberia. But it isn't just the people it killed. It made these people and animals sick from the radiation that came from the Sun - the stuff that's usually blocked by the atmosphere - and so there have been stillbirths and cancers and mutations. They are trying to keep it all real hushed. It's insane. And the worst part is that they are going to test it again!"

Jonas showed me the papers he collected. We spent the whole day discussing the situation. By early evening I was exhausted. Being in Nicki's windowless apartment was also disorienting.

"Oh my God, I have to get to work." Nicki suggested that we all go to the Mecca and meet Dave, who had been planning something big for the next day. When Nicki opened her apartment door it was dark outside. It was always dark in Fairbanks. Dark and cold.

Chapter 8 - More Details Revealed

The drive to Mecca was getting familiar to me. I was beginning to feel like I had lived in Fairbanks for a while. When we arrived Dave and Marie were already there, sitting in a booth near the back of the bar. Nicki hurried to the kitchen to work and Jonas and I joined our friends.

"So how was your day in Fairbanks, Dan?" Marie was pretty and had a great smile.

"Dan, you know, you can thank Marie for your plane ticket. She's the bread winner now and she made this possible." Dave gave her a kiss.

"But I thought you said Dave worked for the Navy? But then I should have known there was no Navy in the middle of Alaska!" Dave motioned for me to keep my voice down. "Well?"

"The heater is run by the Office of Naval Research. They run just about everything. They are the real brains of the military anyway. It's like the ocean and the sky are all this one big firmament to them. And originally this whole thing was supposed to be for communicating with submerged submarines anyway." Dave removed a paper copy from his pocket and unfolded it and handed it to me. "Do you remember reading this? We sent you a copy with the tickets."

It was part of Eastlund's patent and described the other things that his invention could do. I remember it had been highlighted but now it had more meaning to me.

This patent described the reflective alterations of the ionosphere for such uses as "nuclear scale explosions without radiation," "power-beaming systems," "over-the-horizon radar systems," and "nuclear missile detection and destruction systems."

Eastlund's original research recognized the military uses for his discoveries. A review of his patent applications showed how this technology could be used:

"... It is possible not only to interfere with third party communications but to take advantage of one or more such beams to carry out a communications network even though the rest of the world's communications are disrupted. Put in another way, what is used to disrupt another's communications can be employed by one knowledgeable of this invention as a communication network at the same time ..."

"... large regions of the atmosphere could be lifted to an unexpectedly high altitude so that missiles encounter unexpected and unplanned drag forces with resultant destruction."

There was a somber moment while I read the report again and the significance of my Alaskan visit was again in the forefront of my mind. Nicki appeared with some drinks. I was glad she had decided to give me coffee. I was not a drinker and I guess that separated me from being a real Alaskan. We ordered some food and made small talk.

"So what do you have planned for me tomorrow?" Everyone looked at Marie.

"Well..." Marie's smile turned to a serious look. "I am going to take

you to meet some friends. Do you have a camera with you?"

"No, we had him leave that in the airport. I don't think that is such a good idea since everyone knows that you are their friends ..." Dave was being protective. "Don't you think that is kind of risking it?"

"Yeah. It's not necessary anyway. You will see for yourself and we can always get pictures later... Anyway, that's for tomorrow. Let's not get all depressed tonight. So how do you like Fairbanks, Dan?"

I had to lie. It was miserable here. The story was depressing and there was no sunlight. My bright moments were spent holding Nicki under the blankets in her warm apartment with the sound of the heater fan. I couldn't figure out if Nicki was really that special or if she was the only humane thing I had touched since coming to this icy world.

"It's a nice little town. I'll bet it's better in the summer when it's warmer."

"Ha! Not really. Especially when the mosquitoes are out. There's nothing to do here. You can't fart without someone knowing it. That's why we have to be so careful." Dave was right, of course.

Too much familiarity was dangerous. I could tell he was not part of the Fairbanks click. Other patrons came in and joked with everyone and gave only glares at Dave, and his black wife. There were not many blacks in Fairbanks. Perhaps she was the only one. Even Jonas and Nicki retreated to their solitary spaces if they were not working. I realized I was with outcasts, here but not really part of the scene. Somehow that was fine with me.

The more we talked, the more I liked Marie. She was older than Dave and had a Master's degree in Education. Dave hated Atlanta about as much as she hated Fairbanks and so they were waiting for Marie to find a teaching job in Washington State and they would both settle down there.

Marie was sensitive. She had worked in Fairbanks for many months with the Inuit and Eskimos. They shared much of the same racism as she had experienced and she could even speak a few words of their language. That would come into play the next day when some real faces were to be associated with the receiving end of the death ray.

Chapter 9 - The Night Visitor

The night wasn't over yet at the Mecca. While we finished eating an older man entered the bar. He was about my age and he bought cigarettes from the machine, but seemed to be looking for someone. He and I made eye contact a few times, but he always averted when I looked back at him. Eventually Jonas saw him and abruptly went to the men's room. The

man followed him.

A few minutes later the man left and went outside. Jonas returned to the table and whispered something to Dave. They went back and forth until Jonas asked me to come outside with him for minute.

"Bring your parka and gloves." He was waiting for me by the door. Outside we got into a large SUV and the man who had entered the bar was driving. We drove to a parking lot on the campus of the University of Alaska and found a space among the many parked cars and trucks, keeping the engine on to stay warm.

The driver was a friend of both Jonas and Dave. He was also in the Navy and essentially validated what I had already been told. He asked if I understood everything that I needed to know and offered to show me the site from a different perspective, if I had the time. Jonas explained that I was going to see some Eskimos tomorrow with Marie and he seemed to agree that was more important to do. He mentioned them by name. From his accent I could tell he spoke the Inuit language and, upon closer inspection of his face, I sensed he was ethnically Eskimo.

He asked Jonas where I had been taken to see the "farm" and agreed that it was a good vantage point to observe the installation. I was never formally introduced to this man, but he knew my name. That was how it was supposed to be.

Later, when he drove us back to the bar, he had a beer and ignored us for a while, then left alone. Jonas told me he worked in the "con" - control center of the heater - and that he had arranged for the snowmobiles we used the previous day.

It began to snow for the first time while we were in the bar. It made Fairbanks look more picturesque and the fresh layer of white reflected more ambient light, making the town seem brighter and happier. Nicki appeared and announced she had gotten off work early and suggested we go back to her apartment. The others declined but agreed to meet at the bar in the morning. Marie would be taking us to meet her friends then. Nicki and I returned to her apartment. For once it was warm - almost too hot. She lit a candle on the floor and dimmed the lights. I heard "Hey Jude" begin to play in the background on the 8-track and she sat across from me with an old scrimshaw box.

"I take it you smoke?" She smiled at me, waiting for my response. I was amazed. I did, of course, but the idea of finding any marijuana in Alaska was so remote ... but I was wrong.

My smile gave me away and she opened the box to reveal some familiar and attractive buds - the good stuff - and then stuffed a bowl in a small pipe that appeared to be made from bone.

Nicki was the best thing that had happened to me in Alaska. We smoked a few bowls and then played different tapes and talked. I could sense the

same barrier that prevented any physical intimacy beyond holding her. But even that was special and substantial. The candle was burned up by the time we both fell asleep under an Eskimo blanket.

I slept like a log that night. In the morning Nicki awoke before me and made coffee. I pretended to be asleep and was touched when she got under the blanket with me again and lightly kissed my cheek. It had been years since I felt such a connection.

Looking back on that moment, I often regret that I did not kiss her back. Maybe things would have turned out differently - maybe not. It's just one of the many bitter-sweet things that have happened, but the memory still haunts me.

Soon Nicki's phone rang and we were rushing to the Mecca to meet Marie. My emotions were raw from smoking with Nicki and I was unprepared for what I was about to see and hear. These were the best of times and the worst of times; the warmest and the coldest times.

Chapter 10 - The Horror - Up Close And Personal

When we arrived back at the Mecca and had breakfast, I joked that this, and Nicki's apartment, were really the only things I had seen in Fairbanks. Marie told me that I could soon add the experience of "how real Eskimos lived" to my list.

At first the idea conjured up images of ice igloos, furry clothes made from animal skin and sled dogs. Boy, was I ever wrong.

Marie decided to take me and leave the rest of the group behind. Nicki seemed to be the official chauffeur so the three of us drove North on the Elliot Highway. For about an hour it was a total white world and we could barely see the road. Marie told me that we were visiting some friends that had suffered from the "heater." She warned me that it would not be a pretty sight and gave me a few pointers on how to interact with the Inuit.

"They are a friendly people and they will want to sit down and share something to drink or eat with you before you ask any questions."

Soon, in the distance, the white background was punctuated by a collection of brown, rusting vehicles, some old sheds, lots of metal containers and some cinder block homes. I did see a few sleds and dogs but there were also mounds of trash and plastic tarps. In fact, it was really ugly. Nicki elected to stay in the car and listen to tapes while Marie and I approached the single story dwelling. Before we could knock on the door it was opened and a very old woman with missing teeth greeted Marie with a big hug. They exchanged greetings in a language that I could not repeat. It had lots of guttural inflections and whistles and the same phrases were being directed at me as I was led inside.

It was warm. A kerosene heater warmed the small room. There was just enough room for us all to sit and the old woman immediately began to make some tea and offered us some canned sugar cookies.

The home was simple but contained lots of family photographs and art that was obviously drawn by a child. As we drank the tea, Marie explained who I was and the mood began to sink. The old woman cried and her voice became a shrill as she grabbed a collection of old photographs.

Through Marie, I learned that the woman's husband and son had been sledding with their dogs when the "sky burned them." They were found with their dead animals about 50 miles North of her home several days after the most recent "experiment" with the heater. She cried and broke my heart. I cried with her. Her pain was so obvious and I was aware that she had so little in her life as it was.

Marie showed me photographs of the woman's husband and son, taken only months before the incident. I looked but didn't know what to say. What do you say? They were gone and she was alone.

After about an hour we left. The woman tried to make us take some cookies with us. "Imagine that," I thought, "She has so little and yet wants us to have a gift." My heart was crushed.

When we got back to the car I could see that Marie was also weeping. But we were not finished. We drove a few miles up the road where there was a small collection of the same dwellings, grouped together. This time we would see the living victims.

Once again we entered a small dwelling. It appeared that the residents had designated a single shelter as a kind of community room. There was a generator somewhere, popping in the distance, and it supplied power for a radio that played strange music. There was an accompanying hum and hiss that reminded me of shortwave and I assumed the broadcast could be originating from Siberia.

The women in the community building seemed to know why we were there. Tea was already hot and they wasted no time showing me a baby with a deformed face. The child had a hole where its nose should have been and a cleft palate. I am no doctor and so the significance of this defect was hard to determine until a second baby was brought to show us. This child had been born blind and had a deformed hand. Marie explained that both births were from women that lived here and who were pregnant when the "sky burned."

The mood here was different. The women obviously loved the children and had decided to care for them regardless of their physical problems. They smiled and made noises to the babies, who appeared to smile and respond to their love. I maintained my smile long enough to reach the car and then broke into tears. Nicki moved to the back seat and put her arms around me while I sobbed. I had not cried that much since I was a kid.

As we drove back, Marie said she had planned a few more stops but decided I had seen enough. That was a wise decision. Somewhere between this outpost and Fairbanks my sadness turned to anger. We decided it was best for me to return to Nicki's apartment.

Marie called Jonas and Dave and told them how I reacted. They decided it was best to let me rest for a while but insisted on giving me a send-off at the Mecca, joking that they knew I had to see that bar again before I left Alaska.

Nicki and I were alone again and we smoked a bowl to Greg Allman. She knew how to distract me and I did my best to forget what I had seen. Getting stoned was not the best remedy at first, but Nicki showed me some photographs of Fairbanks in the summer, of her and Jonas on some beautiful hikes, and I was soon in a better mood.

It struck me that photographs can be either happy or sad, bitter or sweet. And that tragedies can affect people in the same ways: for better or worse.

Chapter 11 - Good-Bye

My flight home was scheduled to leave the following morning at 11. Nicki wanted to be sure that we had enough gas in the Chrysler so took me along while she filled up, joking that I might get to see more of "beautiful downtown Fairbanks." I agreed and we drove around, taking the "scenic route."

Nicki nudged me with her elbow, "Here. Load it up." It was the scrimshaw box again.

"Sure." This was becoming familiar to me again. As we drove around the wide streets in the dark we saw a collection of headlights approaching. There were dozens of vehicles in a line and Nicki pulled the car to the curb.

"What's that?"

"It's just the monsters. They do this every now and then."

As they drew closer it was obviously a military convoy of Hummers and larger half-track vehicles. They were painted white and gray-blue - camouflage for the icy environment - and were a reminder that Fairbanks is a strategic location for the same forces that run the death ray. My anger ignited again but Nicki quickly drove away and we stopped for gas.

The gas station was run by an Inuit man. I went inside to get us both some coffee. The owner's wife was inside. In fact, it appeared they

lived there in the station. I could hear a baby crying as I poured the coffee and when I went to pay for it, I saw the baby sitting near the cash register. It had a thick red growth on its chin - bright red -and it displaced the skin on the child's entire neck.

This was another birth defect, but was it related to the heater? Was this just a coincidence? Or was something really wrong in Fairbanks?

Nicki was in such a good mood that I didn't mention the baby. We smoked some more, listened to more Allman Brothers on her 8-track and headed back to her place before meeting our friends at the Mecca.

The party was small. Dave and Marie both thanked me for coming and gave me a miniature bottle of Khalúa as a joke parting gift. I suspected the drink had some personal significance relating to their inter-racial marriage, but I didn't ask. Jonas also thanked me and took me aside, "Hey. Nicki really shined up to you. I can tell you like her too. You keep in touch with her - okay?" I assured him I would do that. Later he was too drunk to talk, but we had said everything that was important.

I wanted to say something special to Nicki, but not "good-bye." She had gotten to me, had shared some special moments with me and had allowed me to be vulnerable - to be human. Later when everyone had gone home we returned to her apartment and talked all night. For some reason I was not tired at all and we shared our life and times in a way that I have not done in many years. Although we were not physically intimate, there was a bond, a future, but I didn't know how it would develop.

In the morning there were phone calls. I called Vey back in Connecticut and Dave and Jonas called me to say thanks. Nicki took me to the airport and I gave her my parka and retrieved my leather jacket and suitcase. Fatigue prevented me from getting emotional and I was soon back in Connecticut, making notes and writing my story.

No, it doesn't end here. In fact, this is just the beginning of what happens when you reveal the truth and confront the most powerful organization on Earth. The story was published, in part, and it did get a reaction. And that's next.

Chapter 12 - The Consequences Of Truth

By the spring of 1999 the office of Viewzone had moved to Western Massachusetts, just outside Springfield. The story about Alaska had been sanitized of any names or references and was posted as a feature article. I had even obtained an interview with Dr. Bernard Eastlund and learned that he was just as disillusioned about his patents being used for war as the rest of us.

Dr. Eastlund welcomed the opportunity to speak his piece but also warned me that I was "messing with God," as he put it. He made an

interesting comment to me that I had heard before, "You will not make a difference."

After about a month on Viewzone, the article got picked up by the Art Bell Radio Show, a large syndicated show that was on late at night and featured more UFO and weird science topics. This was a global syndication that obviously came to the attention of the powers "up there" and so it was inevitable that they would pay me a visit.



It happened one Monday morning, just after I arrived at the office. Two men showed up at the door asking to speak with Dan Eden. When I identified myself they asked if I would please step outside the office where they flashed NSA (National Security Agency) credentials. I was subsequently invited for coffee at the Westover Air Force Base in nearby Chicopee.

I suppose I knew what it was about but the men wore nice suits and looked very young and harmless. They said that they just wanted to show me some material and ask me some questions and that I would be safely returned to the office in a few hours or less. As they drove me to the base they made small talk and avoided talking about any "business."

Westover was an old B-52 base back in the cold war days. Since the break up of the Soviet threat it has seen lots of disrepair and much of it has been turned over for civilian use and low rent housing for the surrounding community. During the Gulf War it was partially re-activated as a stop-over and refueling station for cargo planes and reservists.

We entered the base and drove to one of the few remaining guard posts where we were waved through. The men escorted me to what looked like an old officer's living quarters that was full of old metal desks and file cabinets. We entered a locked door that was flanked by two spit-and-polished soldiers with rifles and, inside, there were two older men waiting and watching the news on television.

When I entered they turned off the TV and asked me to sit at a large

wooden table. One of the older men, wearing civilian clothes, asked me if I had written the article on the Alaskan "death ray." The way he pronounced "death ray" made it appear that he was about to ridicule the story - but I was wrong. Instead of asking about the article they were more concerned with the sources of my information.

"Whoever spoke to you violated the National Security Oath that they took and they were aware that this was illegal and subject to consequences."

A different man addressed me in a harsh manner. "By revealing this information to you they have created a situation. Do you understand?"

This first older man asked me if I wanted a coffee and pushed a box of sugar pastries in front of me.

"Look, Dan. We don't want to cause any trouble for you or your magazine... what's it called... Viewer, Viewzone?... we just want to know where you got the information so we can remind the sources that they have a responsibility. Do you follow me? Would you like some coffee?"

I never thought I would be using my journalistic prerogatives to protect my sources, but that's what came out of my mouth and it seemed to be effective. This upset the older man and he pounded his fist on the table, "Look. Here's the deal. They committed a serious crime and you are assisting in this crime if you don't cooperate. We can find out anyway but it won't be pleasant for anyone involved. Don't you love your country, Dan? Don't you care that this type of activity makes America vulnerable?"

"Okay. Relax." The other man picked up a pastry and started eating it. "How do you take your coffee, Dan? Here. Think about this for a minute. Take your time. These pastries are good. Here, have one, and how about that coffee?"

"Look, I am not saying anything. I'll get a lawyer or something but I don't have to say anything." This really upset the older man and he left the room. The remaining men sat around the table and talked, as if I were not there. They discussed the possibility that I would cooperate if I had any more contact with the sources and suggested that, since I was now aware that this activity was a serious crime, I would of course want to do the legally correct thing. After all, I did not want to be in trouble simply because someone else had committed a crime. They asked me if that sounded fair and I said it did.

The older man then entered the room and stated the same facts in a formal way, asking if this was my understanding and whether I agreed to this. I told him I had no problem with that and I was driven back to the office by the two younger men. Before leaving the car, one of the men gave me his card and asked that I call him if I wanted to discuss anything.

When I returned to the office, some of the other staff tried to joke about the men that "took me for a ride." It must have looked humorous but, for me, it wasn't. I re-read the story on Viewzone many times to see if I had mentioned anything that would reveal the identity of Dave or Jonas. I had their phone number but I was afraid to call them. I waited two weeks before I attempted to reach them from a friend's business phone. Sure enough I did reach Dave and warned him. But what he told me in return was much more horrible. Nicki was dead.

Chapter 13 - The Ears Can Hear Me

The most difficult two weeks in my life were the days following my conversation with Dave. Our conversation was brief but I wanted - needed - more information about Nicki. I wanted to believe that it wasn't true or that Dave was mistaken but I didn't dare call him back.

Two weeks went by and he called me at Viewzone's office. He said he didn't care if they were listening and that he and Marie were already in Washington state, calling from a phone booth, on route to their new home. Marie had found a job in Bellingham and Dave had also found employment as an social worker in a rest home under a different name. Jonas was still in Alaska, but now in Anchorage.

Nicki's death was unreal, even for her friends. She had been found in her Chrysler many miles from Fairbanks, on a remote trail. The official police report said it was a suicide from carbon monoxide, with alcoholism being a factor. But it also claimed she was covered with vodka and several empty vodka bottles were found on the front seat.

Dave and I agreed this was no suicide. She wasn't depressed. In fact, as painful as it was to hear, she had been expecting to see me again and had talked about flying down to surprise me. The vodka was another problem. She never drank vodka. Jack Daniels was her one and only drink.

They found her on a weekend when she failed to show up for work at the Mecca. This was only a few days after I had my visitors. Dave and Marie had made the connection immediately and left Fairbanks. Jonas had heard someone was looking for him and so he also booked.

Was there a connection? We weren't sure. It was almost too much for everyone to deal with, let alone understand.

I spoke with Dave for about 30 minutes. I was depressed and scared. Then I was angry and wanted revenge. I had started to write the second part of the story, revealing the birth defects and the two "experiments" that were conducted. This would teach them a lesson ...

Two days after my conversation with Dave I had another visit, this time by the man who had given me his card. He asked me to sit in his car and said he had something important to tell me. I felt nothing but contempt towards him but I went with him.

He told me that he was aware I had spoken with one of the sources of my story, and he asked why I had not reported this to him as we agreed. Something inside my head snapped. I vented a string of foul remarks that ended with a threat - something like, "Yeah. You just wait and see what I will write next!" That was a mistake. It was obvious that they had listened to the call. He tried again to get Dave's last name but I realized then that I honestly did not know it. "Could it be that his real name was not Dave?" I had never thought about that.

"Do you know where this man is now? Can you give me a physical description of him? Did he ever say that he was moving to Bellingham prior to this last conversation? Could it be that this was also a red herring?" He was right. I didn't know very much about anyone.

I found it odd that he never asked about Nicki, though. Dave and I had spent most of the conversation speaking about her. Maybe they already knew who Nicki was and maybe that was exactly why she was dead. Maybe she wouldn't cooperate with them.

The man reminded me again of my "agreement." He also gave me a phone number on the back of another NSA card. It had an exchange in Virginia and I was instructed to use it if I had any more contact with either Dave or Jonas.

He then addressed my threat to write a second part to the story saying, "I don't know what else you know about what's in Fairbanks or anywhere else but you are not to write anything else. Do you understand? This is serious and the consequences will be just as serious. Are we on the same page now, Dan?"

"Fuck you. Fuck all of you!" I thought about Nicki and began to cry. It was embarrassing but I couldn't stop it.

"Here." He handed me a folded, clean, white handkerchief. God, did anyone still carry those things?

"No. It's okay." I pushed his hand away.

"Look," he sighed, "I know this has been rough on you and that you thought you were doing something good. We want to help you. We want to work with you here. If you cooperate then maybe we can help you."

"Help me? How the fuck are you going to help me? Like you helped Nicki?" That hit the mark. Now we were on the same page.

"I don't expect you to understand any of this but, for now, don't print anything else. Let some time pass and gather your thoughts. I want you

to call this number on the card. It will ring but won't be answered. When you hang up you will be called back at the phone you called from and someone will be familiar with everything and will help you with the next step in this matter. Okay?"

I agreed. I was too upset to argue. I just wanted to be out of his car and by myself. The man looked distressed. For a brief moment I saw him as human, as a person like myself, who was just doing a job. I was polite and left for my office. But later I hated my own civility towards him and the memory of Nicki haunted me, raising emotions so mixed and bad that I was beside myself.

Anger is a good emotion. I used to think it was bad, that it consumed a person from the inside. But I feel differently about anger now. It can be your savior when you are really depressed. It can make you keep going when all seems lost. And it made me call that phone number the next day.

Chapter 14 - In The Court Of The Crimson King

The anger was so strong that I could hardly sleep. Eating was impossible and several times I bought a coffee out of habit, only to let it get cold and develop milk scum. By morning I felt like I had just come down from some speed: tired but wired.

I called the Viewzone office and told them I'd be working from home. I tried to lay down and rest and, for a while I was successful. Then I saw it - the red pin I had worn to Fairbanks - taped to the corner of my computer screen. Instantly I had images of Nicki, the baby with no nose, the old Inuit woman... Somehow I owed it to them to be brave and write the story. My heart pounded and my veins filled with hot anger.

Dialing the number was almost a reflex action. Before I could even think about it, the line was ringing... once... twice... I hung up. Now what? Nothing.

Maybe they were just trying to scare me or maybe they had not made all of the arrangements yet. Maybe -- the phone rang. "Dan Eden?"

The voice on the other end was female. She sounded older, but she could have just been a young and serious professional who spoke with the confidence of knowing she had the upper hand. I didn't answer right away.

"Hello, Mr. Eden. Can I call you Dan?"

"Sure. Dan is okay. Listen, I didn't really mean to call. I mean I don't really have anything..."

"Well I am glad you did. I was going to call you. My name is Kathy. Did you have any trouble calling this number?" She continued to capture my confidence and explained that I could reach her the same way, day or night, from anywhere, at any time. She never asked about the sources, about Dave or Jonas, but seemed focused on my own life, my finances and career, and offered to help me if I would continue to cooperate according to my "agreement."

Much was made of this agreement - more than I realized. Without knowing it I had consented to a quid pro quo where I would refrain from publishing anything new in return for the agency's help. But help with what? Did I need any "help?"

I did. I was a principal in the start-up of Viewzone. The magazine ate up over 140,000 dollars of my money and credit and I had declared bankruptcy the previous year. I was living from hand to mouth, from job to job, writing and programming. I was staying alive and could afford coffee, or a good breakfast at a truck stop diner, but there was no "women and wine" in my life. I knew this. She knew this. They knew this. And soon they would make their sales pitch.

Kathy was a professional for sure. She called me two or three times a week to see how I was feeling. But as much as she wanted to be my therapist, she couldn't help me with the pain I felt about Nicki. That was my private hell.

I kept a hand written journal of my trip to Fairbanks, fearing that the computer was somehow wired, but I used code names for the people and places so that the story I wrote seemed more like a fairy tale than a horror show. It was patterned after the Wizard of Oz. Dave was the Wizard and Nicki was Dorothy. Her brother, Jonas was the tin man. Instead of one scarecrow there were many whose straw bodies had been re-arranged and burned. That pathetic journal was the closest I could come to a therapeutic catharsis.

During one of our "sessions," Kathy had asked me to dream about an idealistic yet real life that would make me happy. I gave her a salary, described a programming job that I would enjoy, and suggested that I would live back in the Amherst area, where I had gone to college. It was a modest wish, but far beyond my reach. Within a week she called me back and put some details to this dream and offered it to me.

"Quid pro quo." That was her term. "A good job, great salary and a chance to be happy... what do you say, Dan?"

What would you say?

Chapter 15 - In The Belly Of The Beast

In April of 1999 I started my position as webmaster for a non-profit company that was in control of the electrical power grid of New England, parts of Canada and New York state. It was ironic to be working for a power company, since Eastlund's invention would have revolutionized that industry. The salary was good, the job had some interesting projects that I could easily perform, and I was living in the small bucolic town of Northampton, home to Smith (all women's) College. Life seemed good.

I maintained periodic contact with my handler, Kathy, and the luxury of having ample money allowed me to upgrade my computers and to keep a foot in Viewzone as a contributing editor.

There was a flurry of activity at the company as we approached the year 2000. Many of the programs that electric companies used to manage the switching, transmission lines and billing, were designed in the 1970s. A typical phenomenon in programming is to minimize the amount of code to do any task, and so many of the programs dealing with the date and time merely used the last two digits to represent the year. This presented problems when 99 was to switch to 00 and so the Federal Government decided that the American power grids might be vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

Since I was in charge of the intranet that serviced the data and connected all of the electrical generators for the region, it was deemed necessary for me, and many other staff members, to be screened by the NSA. In particular, I was amazed to learn, I was to be required to take a National Security Oath!

In November of 1999 I was instructed to travel to Fort Meade, Maryland, where I would be housed with a family that was associated with the agency. It was a practical matter as much as a security precaution, since my activities during the day would be involved in learning about the oath I would be taking, its necessity, implications and the consequences of violating it.

The entire course lasted ten days and the oath itself was formalized by a written, signed and witnessed document. In the course of preparing for this commitment I was subjected to several polygraph tests, a battery of psychological exams and was also shown some rather disgusting and graphic scenes where the violation of the oath was swiftly resolved.

The message was crystal clear. Once you raised your hand and signed the document, they could kill you - legally - for the good of the nation.

To me, the most interesting part was the "how to" classes that prepared

one for an interrogation by "the enemy." It involved various mind games where, if drugged for example, you could give factual information in a form that was unusable. My own version of "the Wizard of Oz" was a good example of this method, and one I had taught myself. But since they were familiar with this type of deception, my journal was no longer a safe outlet for my therapeutic writing. I had to respect these people - they were very clever and had just about every angle covered.

In the evening, after the classes, I would return to my host's home and watch the news, have light conversation, and go to bed early. I sensed that they were watching me, evaluating me, and that somewhere in my files they would be writing a summary on my behavior and conversations.

The final day came and I signed the document. It took place in a room draped with flags and portraits of then president Clinton. My hand was shook and I returned home to resume my good life. But it was then that things started to get strange again.

By November of 1999 I was living my "dream" life. It had all the ingredients I had hoped, but it was boring. My job with the "electric company" was so easy that I found it hard to stay awake in my isolated cubicle. Periodic urine tests made sure I didn't smoke marijuana and writing articles for Viewzone was about my only creative outlet.

My handler called me to congratulate me on taking the oath, but otherwise we had fewer and more infrequent contacts. She could tell I was bored, but I was cooperating and that was what everyone seemed to want.

It was about this time when I received several e-mails from a reader in Serbia, where the UN forces had been fighting Milosevich, mostly with American armed forces and equipment. He kept mentioning a strange phenomenon that accompanied attacks by the US A-10, "warthog" fighter jet.

Apparently he was not alone in his observations. Other reports also questioned this strange new phenomenon. It was reported that, just prior to an air attack, the sky often seemed to become full of huge black clouds that would materialized out of the blue sky, and which stayed there until the end of the campaign -- which was usually couple of weeks. There was no rain falling from the clouds. What did fall on Belgrade were hailstones the size of eggs.

"You can still see the marks it left on houses." During that time witnesses described strange "lighting" in the sky that lasted for hours which didn't look like anything anybody had ever seen before. The "thunder" that accompanied the strange "lightning" was equally strange. It was hundreds of times stronger than any thunder anybody ever remembered. It was so loud that it was even louder than the sound of bomb explosions!

Further, scientists in Serbia released the report which stated that the

electromagnetic field over Serbia was punctured. The "hole" was almost the size of Serbia itself. It started at the border, between Kosovo and Albania in the south, and ended near the Yugoslav and Hungarian border in the north.

I kept getting similar reports for most of November. It appears the Serbians were frustrated that no one seemed to understand this phenomenon and it was therefore being relinquished to the realm of the "unexplained."

This was too much for my journalistic spirit to ignore so I wrote a very brief report, without any comment, and posted it on Viewzone. Just in case someone wanted to explore the subject further, I included a link to the old "death ray" article. Ouch!

Within two days I was subjected to another urine test at work and my position as webmaster was changed to that of "communication specialist." As expected, Kathy called me. My only excuse was boredom. She warned me not to "temp fate," and asked me to call her on a weekly basis from then on.

Things got bad at work. I was taken out of the sensitive control building with its big "war map" that depicted the entire power grid and the status of each generator and made to sit in a cubicle with the customer service representatives. I was a nerd out of his environment. I sensed that they wanted me to leave but I was determined to stay.

One evening in early December I got a call. It was from a professor of mid-Eastern languages, stationed at Brigham Young University. He asked about an article he had read on Viewzone a while back. It was a small piece I had written about some strange petroglyphs - old rock carvings - that were found just outside the remote cattle town of LaJunta, Colorado.

I had all but forgotten that trip and the rocks. But what the professor told me sparked an interest in them again and seemed the perfect solution to my boredom. After all, what could be more remote from a "death ray" machine than some old rocks. Right?

Wrong again.

Chapter 16 - The Rocks Begin To Speak

The rocks were located in a few isolated canyons, South of La Junta, Colorado, and were first brought to my attention by a resident of the town named Bill McGlone. McGlone was a retired engineer who had lived and worked all over America and had been stationed in Southeast Colorado during one of his jobs.

McGlone was a highly intelligent man of Scottish heritage. In his younger days he was also fond of hiking and exploring the wilderness and of taking photographs. He first noticed the collections of strange symbols, etched into the canyon walls, and assumed that they were graffiti left by the Comanche Indians that once inhabited the region. But on closer inspection, he saw that they were quite unusual and unlike any other Native American petroglyphs in surrounding states.

The late, great Bill McGlone, pointing the way

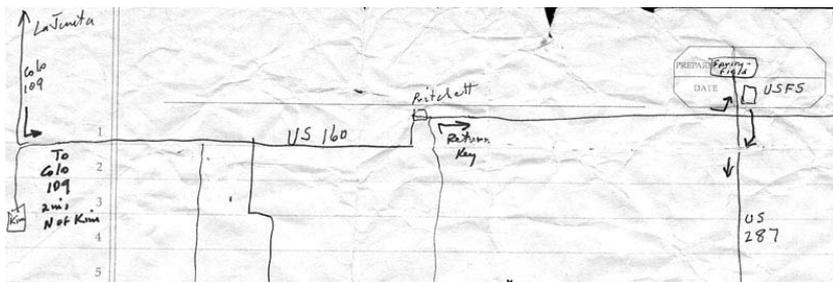


Bill found traditional Indian art with scenes of hunting rituals and humanoid figures with feathers affixed to their head. He also found images of horses - unknown to America until the Spanish brought the animal here in the 16th Century, but these carvings were often done on top of the other petroglyphs. This suggested that the more worn and unusual petroglyphs were much older and perhaps made by a different people.

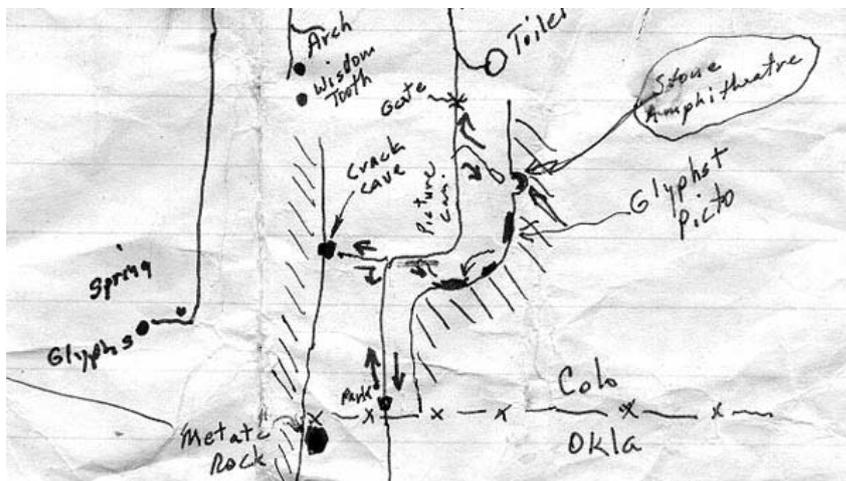
After collecting photographs and meticulously cataloging the petroglyphs of this older era, McGlone discovered something else that was not typically Native American. He noticed that these petroglyphs contained the same 22 symbols that were repeated over and over, in various combinations and in different order. He believed this showed that they had a phonetic value and were signs of an ancient alphabet.

When he retired, Bill bought a small house in La Junta and spent his last years attempting to translate this writing system. He sent copies of his findings all over the world to universities and to well known linguists - but no one was able to hint at the origins of these symbols. In desperation, Bill McGlone wrote to me at the suggestion of a mutual friend and asked that I visit the sites, document them for Viewzone, and see if the broad exposure would prove fruitful.

I visited McGlone only four months before he passed away. He was already too ill to personally take me on the hikes where the petroglyphs were located. Instead, he drew me detailed maps of the area and made copious notes on where to look and what to look for.



(Below) Bill McGlone's map for Dan to find the petroglyphs (and the toilet)



McGlone had also noticed a third type of petroglyph that resembled the Celtic language of Ogam. He had better success in reading these carved symbols and, with the help of a well known writer, Barry Fell, he convinced the State of Colorado to protect and preserve many of these ancient sites. But there was little protection for the mysterious petroglyphs that I had documented and they were often in the heart of a cattle ranch and being trampled underfoot by cattle and eroded by the elements.

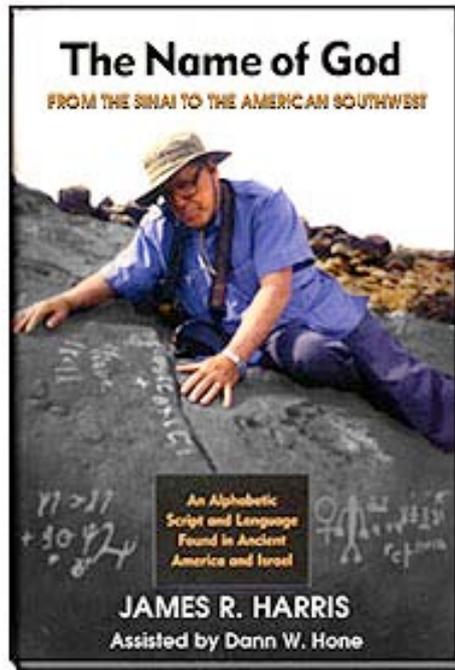
The photographs remained on Viewzone for almost a year before I got the call from a Dr. Jim Harris, a retired professor at Brigham Young University. Dr. Harris accidentally saw the photographs and seemed to recognize them.



In the Southern desert of Israel, called the Negev, a team from Harvard University had discovered the remains of a collapsed turquoise mine that was operated by a Pharaoh of Egypt almost 3500 years ago. The mine was remarkable because it had collapsed with miners still inside but had not been reclaimed and was left intact from that era. When the team of archaeologists began to excavate and clear the mine of debris they noticed a strange collection of shapes and symbols had been carved on the inside walls of the shaft.

Dr. Harris' specialty was not linguistics, but rather he was an expert on the various populations, their ethnicity and the periods of time that each group occupied the mid-East, specifically the Sinai. Since organic wood was recovered from the beams used to shore up the mine, very precise dates of the artifacts were obtained and pointed to a time of about 1500 BC. Dr. Harris knew that the mine was commissioned by the Egyptian dynasty but he also knew that the workers would have been drawn from the surrounding tribes of that region, and that they would have spoken, and written, a dialect known as proto-Canaanite.

Proto-Canaanite was the dialect that evolved in to Arabic and Hebrew and the two languages share many of the same words.



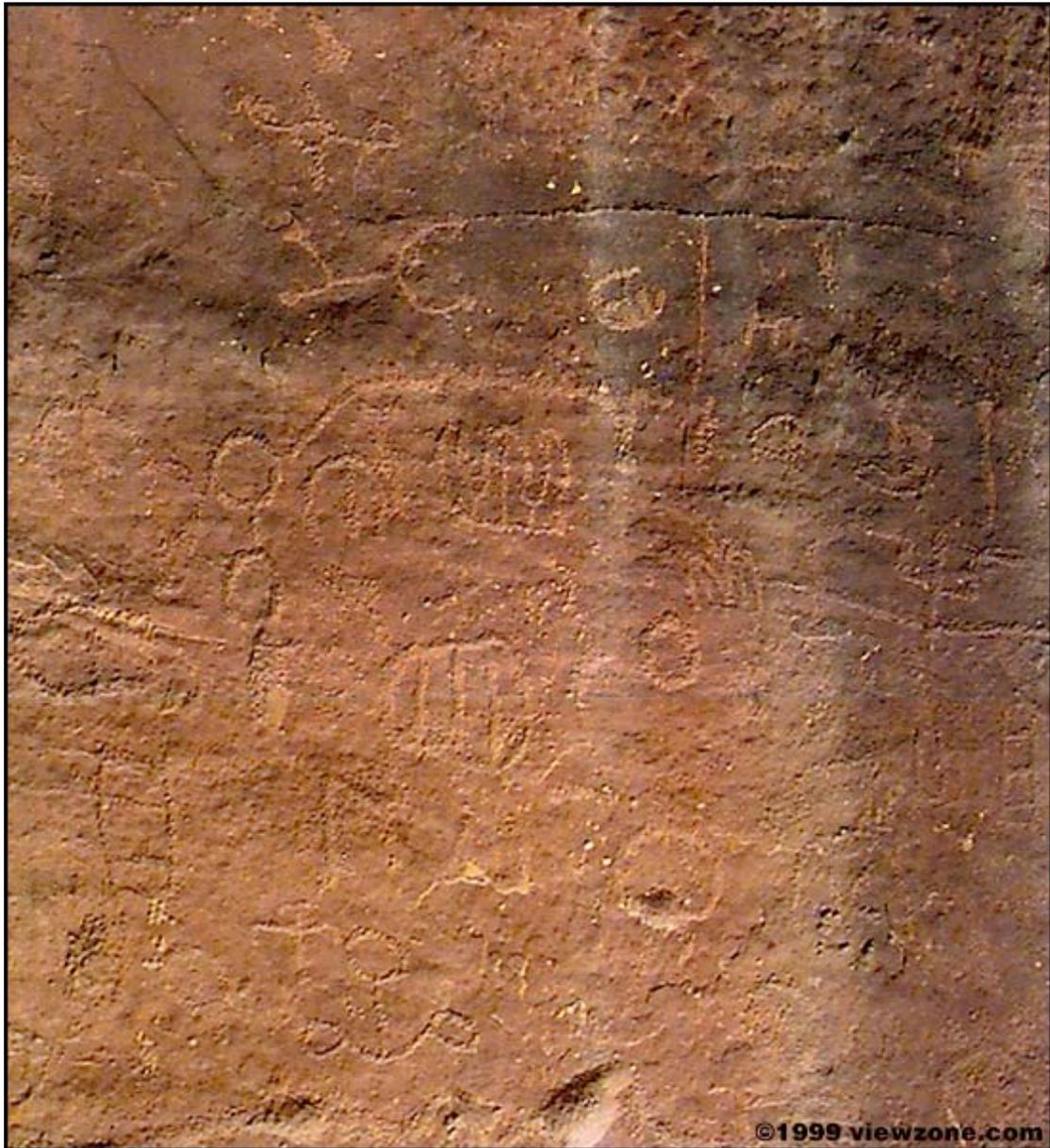
ISBN 096676290-8

The fact that the symbols in the Negev numbered twenty-two, more or less, was highly significant. The proto-Canaanite language had twenty-two written phonetic symbols. Over time, Dr. Harris managed to read the writing and revealed his finding in his little read book, "The Name of God." The writing was also subsequently found in the region immediately surrounding the mine and consisted of bitter comments about the working conditions of the mine, as well as fear that the mine was unsafe, and many well known phrases or devotion to a deity called Yah and El.

Dr. Harris asked me to please send him some of the more complete collections of symbols from Colorado, since the photographs I had published were bits and pieces. He offered to examine them and, if possible, let me know whether they were similar to the ones in the Negev desert of Israel.

I complied with his request and received a letter two weeks after I sent the photographs to him. I had expected no result because of the initial excitement he exhibited on the phone, followed by a rather long delay in responding, but the delay was worth the wait.

He had translated much of what I sent to him, including one rather mysterious panel that had looked, to both McGlone and me, particularly important. The panel in question was part of a very long, 60 foot wide, section of a canyon wall that was covered with writing. At the far right there was what appeared to be an image of a ship, complete with sails and rigging, and the image I sent him was of the last panel, to the far left



It translated, in proto-Canaanite:

"The First I Am of Yah to the Last I Am of Yah."

It appeared that this was evidence of a connection between the people of ancient Sinai and the center of America - but how could this be?

My interest in the "death ray" faded almost immediately with the news from Dr. Harris. I studied the other translations in detail for a few days before calling him back to congratulate him on his historic discovery. But I was never able to make that call to him. Within a few days I received word that Harris was ill with cancer and was forced to undergo medical treatment. A few months later he was not returning my calls or e-mail.

I sat in my office with the papers that he had sent, and with the translations he made from the petroglyphs. I had many more photographs I would have sent to him and I was anxious to learn what they had to say, and who it was that wrote the petroglyphs.

Dr. Harris had been writing his research for publication. He was also a little paranoid, fearing others would scoop him in his life's work, and so refrained from sharing his algorithms with other colleges. Without Dr. Harris to help, how would further translations be made? It seemed impossible.

But I found a way.

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND

Chapter 17 - The Expedition

Work at the "electric company," as I liked to call it, was better. With the millennium transition and the fear of computer bugs causing another blackout, we were busy. But immediately after the new year, things became calm and boring again for me.



I was still on a kind of probation with my handler, Kathy, and we spoke about once every two weeks, sometimes more frequently. I mentioned the petroglyphs to her and she seemed interested, if only to be polite. At one point though, when I told her that Dr. Harris was incapacitated, she asked me a number of questions that demonstrated insight beyond

anything I expected.

She asked me what the difference was between proto-Canaanite and "root Hebrew." The latter is the same Hebrew that is spoken today but is limited to words found in the Talmud, and limited further to those having no more than two or three consonants. I made the comment that this would be helpful if only I had a Talmudic Hebrew scholar as a friend, at which point she reminded me that I was a programmer.

The idea was brilliant. I purchased a Talmudic Hebrew dictionary at a local book store and over the course of three months I completed a database of root words, their English equivalent and mated the database with a javascripted program that allowed the user to select the alphabetical symbols. It was an amazingly simple but effective solution to the dilemma and I was soon confirming the translations of Dr. Harris and then moving beyond the work that I had shared with him.

Completing the database gave me something to do at work, beside my actual job that consumed an hour a day. I was happier and busy. If someone came to my cubicle they would see a computer screen full of code and would think I was working on some enterprise software. But, as soon as it started, the program was finished and I was again falling asleep in my cubicle.

I spoke to Kathy about the work. Not because she was interested as much as because I was interested in it. I suppose anything that distracted me from the Alaskan death ray was worthwhile to her. But when I became bored again I could sense that she was worried. Her calls became more frequent.

In the spring of 2000, I decided I would see how my translation program worked in the field, and planned a trip to Colorado, to study the petroglyphs. I told Kathy about this plan and she was very enthusiastic, even offering to put me in touch with some associates with the agency that were in the area. I was given a name and a telephone number to call when I arrived, and if I needed any assistance I was assured that every door would be opened for me. It was a strange offer but I accepted the gesture with gratitude, never thinking that I would call the person.

During my months with the company I had befriended a young man in his mid-20s named Jason. Jason reminded me immediately of Nicki's brother, Jonas. I learned that Jason was an ex-Navy Seal and that he enjoyed hiking. We talked about my plans to visit Colorado and I eventually invited him to come along for the week. I was pleased when he agreed.

We drove to LaJunta in two days and set up our base at a small motel just about a half-hour from the petroglyphs. I still had all of McGlones meticulously drawn maps and so the sites were easy to locate. I was especially anxious to revisit the canyon where the writing was stretched along a 10 meter horizontal section, and where Dr. Harris had been most successful in illustrating the same symbols from the Sinai.

But we soon met an obstacle.

The land was owned by a wealthy rancher and he had surrounded the ranch with miles of barbed wire and "Keep Out" signs. As soon as we crossed on to his land he was upon us in his white pickup truck with a rifle. He refused to allow us access and pretended he had no knowledge of any petroglyphs and did not even want to discuss the matter. We left disappointed and defeated and headed back to the motel.

Out of desperation, I went to a phone booth where I could call the number that was given to me by Kathy. The man on the other end was familiar with my expedition and told me that I should immediately go to the town hall in LaJunta and to ask a certain town official to give him a call. He sounded confident, but I doubted that anything could convince the stubborn rancher to allow us back on his land. Again I was wrong.

I located the town official at the Town Office building and explained that I was doing research on old rock carvings. I explained that a certain rancher would not allow us on his land and asked her if she would call the number that I wrote on a piece of paper for her. She told me that she had little control over whom anyone allowed on their own land, which seemed reasonable, but she asked me to wait outside her office while she made the call.

Through the glass window I could see her making the call. I watched as her face changed from a pleasant smile to a dead serious grimace. She held the phone to her head for several minutes without talking and then nodded her head in approval and respectfully hung up the phone. I watched her make another call. This time she did most of the talking.

When she invited me back in to her office she called me "sir," and told me that the rancher would be happy to allow me on the land, and would be expecting me at his ranch to give me the keys to the locked fences. She never asked any more questions of me and gave me her card to call her if I needed any more help with gaining access to local ranchers or their land.

(Below) Petroglyphs enhanced with Photoshop for visibility



After this incident we were welcomed to many other ranches and found even more petroglyphs. The translation program was running on a portable laptop and successfully gave a voice to the odd shapes and weathered stones. The messages were indeed old, in proto-Canaanite, and they gave a deadly prophecy.

The Burning Sky

Whoever wrote the petroglyphs came from the Mid-East. There were multiple references to the land of Kan, or Canaan, images of ships and the narration of a perilous journey. They suffered not only a crisis of physical dilemmas but of faith.

As I translated the script, from the far right where the picture of the ship was pecked into the stone wall, to the far left, where Dr. Harris had translated the phrase

"The First I Am of Yah to the Last I Am of Yah",

something unexpected appeared in the texts. There were references to the "burning sky."

The site with the long panel of petroglyphs appeared to be meant as a single story, perhaps the history of the epic journey that its authors had taken to get here. It was almost 20 feet above the current earth.

Thousands of years had worn away the underlying soil and made the once eye-level writing artificially elevated. Also, the more recent petroglyphs of American Indians, with images of horses and feathered headed men, were now only half as high on these same cliffs.

The older script was also black with what is called patina. It forms a thick black crust as the moisture leaches manganese from the stones and

is a testament to the antiquity of the writing. The Native Indian petroglyphs were bright and fresh, as if made yesterday.

Not all of the ancient script was intact. Certain sections were worn by the weather and sand blasted by the wind, but enough of it was there to get the story. The authors had come to this location on purpose. They were not lost or exploring without a destination. And they arrived in poor shape, sick and with many lives lost in the journey. They arrived and stopped and made a temple to Yah.

One panel described how they were perplexed. They had no shelter or location for the temple's "holy of holies," and so used the cloth from their sail to make a tent "for the Father, Yah." There was even a crude image of the tent to accompany the story.

After they had established themselves in the location they wrote their prophecy in the form of a warning. They spoke of the "arm of El" no longer protecting the people from the sky, and of being "burned by the sky." They made references to the location as a "safe zone" and that people should "seek shelter under the earth." There were also references to "half-breeds" and the "white sect".

All of this was a little disturbing. By the third day Jason and I had been joined by another friend, Lee, a light hearted writer and producer who came from Los Angeles to inspect the petroglyphs with the idea that they might make an interesting documentary. I was hesitant to share the translations with him since he did not take these matters very seriously. Instead, we filmed the sites and I allowed him to see the process with the laptop and the program, but we never discussed the actual results in any depth.

Lee was an old friend from college. We lived in the same dormitory at the University of Massachusetts, and we shared many of the same interests. In our younger days, we smoked pot and drank and partied with the best of them, but now, well, he still did. But I had been abstaining from marijuana because of my job and the frequent urine tests that I had to pass. I had not seen Lee for a few years. When he took out his pipe and invited me to smoke, I did.

The motel where we were staying did not allow smoking of any kind - especially marijuana - and so we had to make periodic short trips in my car to the surrounding areas, smoke our marijuana, and then return. Jason, the ex-Navy Seal, knew what we were up to but did not object and often joked about our sudden need to "take a ride."

On one occasion we drove about five miles down a remote road and parked near an odd structure that was fenced with barbed wire and which contained a number of silver, windowless sheds. It was unmanned and from the vantage point we could see in all directions for many miles. It was the perfect place to relax and smoke and have some fun conversation.

We got out of the car and took turns smoking from his pipe. It was quiet, with just the sound of the wind whistling past our ears.

All of a sudden we heard a buzzing noise from the fenced complex. We both instantly looked in the direction of one of the silver sheds and noticed a small radar dish moving to face us. In our present state of mind we thought this was humorous and joked that "it" was scanning us.

Both Lee and I ran on either side of the car and we watched, in amazement, as the dish followed our movements. We toyed in this manner for several minutes until Lee noticed a cloud of dust in the distance, coinciding with a dirt road that led over the horizon, and racing in our direction. I was a pickup truck.

We quickly hid Lee's pipe and got back in the car. The pickup approached the fenced installation, stopped, and a man got out to check that the gate was still locked and secure, then eyed us in the car. We drove with speed back to the motel, half afraid and half joking. But later the pickup was seen slowly driving by the motel.

We saw a few more of these mysterious installations in the La Junta area, often in the midst of the petroglyphs. Inquiries about their purpose were met with either disinterest, disbelief or some vague reference to a nearby Army base.

The remaining days of our stay in La Junta were spent exploring the Pergatoire River area where there were mostly American Indian petroglyphs. There was nothing approaching the text that I had translated, except for one unique example of the old script that we accidentally discovered on the last day.

As I drove back to New England with Jason I had time to think about the coincidence of the texts, the references to the "burning sky," and I naturally thought about Alaska and Nicki. It seemed at times that I was a part of something - a movie or novel - and yet it was very real. It puzzled me. But I remained largely silent about the translations until I got back to my home and told Kathy. Then it began to make sense.

Chapter 18 - The Unexpected Happens

It was the summer, 2000 AD. I returned from my trip to Colorado with lots of still pictures to examine and a plethora of notes on the translations. I was feeling good and wanted to share the news with Kathy. I called the telephone number, let it ring, and then she called back.

As I was beginning to describe the petroglyphs and the translations to her, she interrupted me. "Dan, I have to tell you something kind of

sad. Doctor Harris is dead. He finally passed away from his cancer."
I was saddened by the news but more surprised that Kathy was telling me this. Did she really follow my activities and interests this closely?
How would she have known about his sudden death?

"Go on. I'm sorry. I just wanted you to know. Go on, what did you find?"

I was going to tell her everything. I was going to ask her about the coincidence, the references to the "burning sky" and the strange radar dishes and the effectiveness of the phone number she had given to me... but I stopped. Something wasn't right.

"Go on, what did you find out there?"

I changed my story. I told her about the new petroglyphs that I found and that I had taken many notes and photographs but I failed to disclose the translations, saying simply that they would provide me with lots of enjoyable hours and something that would occupy my time and keep me from being bored.

She never asked about the phone call to her "associate" or anything relevant about the translated texts. Perhaps, I thought, she already knew. I felt like I was being used in some way. I was resentful, yet hesitant to be outwardly hostile. Instead I was pleasant and obscure. I published the photos and some vague translations, but I withheld the real substance of what I had learned from the petroglyphs. Over the next few weeks I received lots of e-mail, mostly telling me about similar sites and asking me if I wanted to visit and photograph areas in Arizona and Utah.

But one day I received an e-mail from a man that contained a picture of similar petroglyphs. In fact, they were almost identical to the ones I was studying. I replied immediately, asking him where in Colorado he was petroglyphs were located. from and on which ranch these petroglyphs were located.

He wrote right back to me. They were not from Colorado but were taken in the remote outback of South Australia. He said there were many more in a specific location and offered to send more photographs.

Another surprise was that, according to Australian tradition, some of these petroglyphs were over 8,000 years old.

How could that be true?



The man was John McGovern. He sent more photographs from the same area and I anxiously translated the symbols and sent the texts back to him. I could not believe that the same writing was so widely dispersed. The questions aroused by this fact were profound. We went back and forth for about two weeks. Finally, John sent me something that made my hair stand on end.

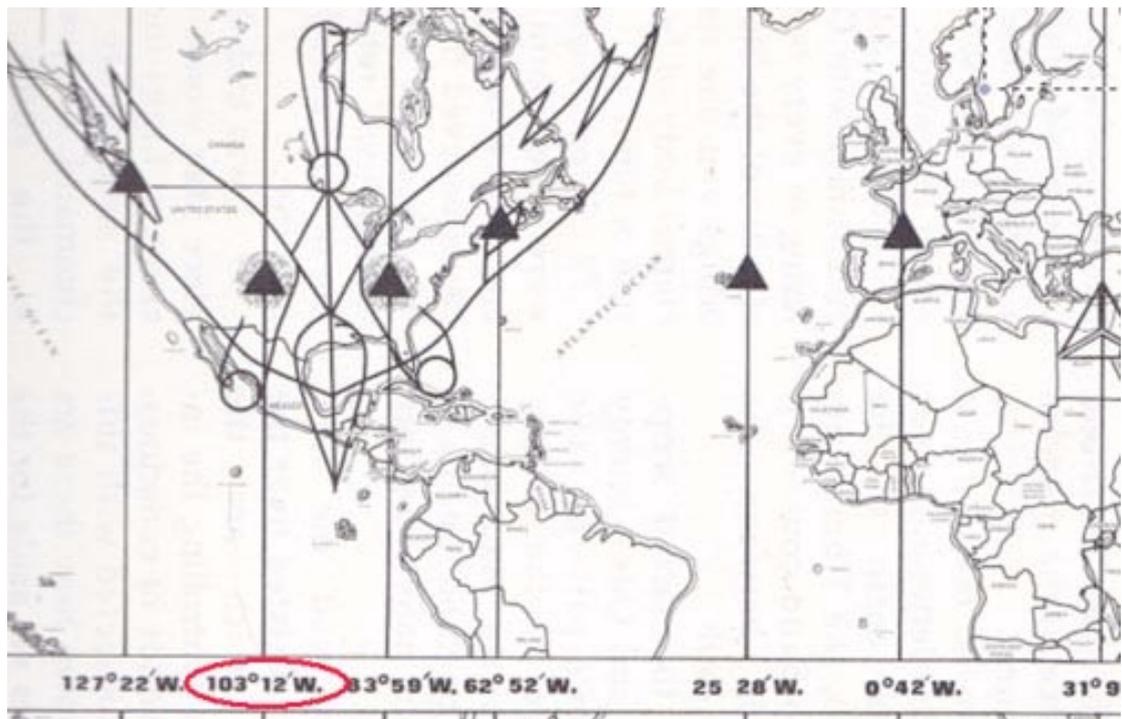
I had expected to see an image of a rock or canyon face with the typically pecked outline of the familiar shapes of the ancient proto-Canaanite language, but as the image assembled on my computer screen it was white - a page from a book - and it contained the phrase, in bold English letters:

"The First I Am of Yah to the Last I Am of Yah"

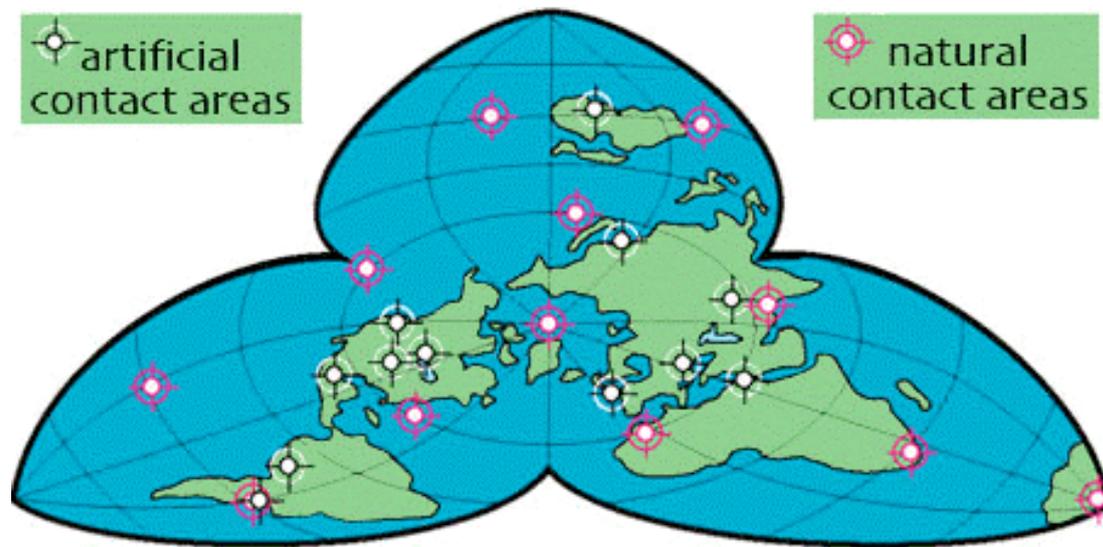
This was the exact phrase that Dr. Harris had translated from my photographs of Colorado. It was the last panel of the 60 foot long script that described the "burning sky." The petroglyphs were at least 2000 years old, so I was shocked to see the same phrase on a printed page. I read his note, that accompanied the image, "Hi mate. Thought this would grab ya!"

Needless to say I was curious about the book. I wrote back as fast as my fingers could type, asking where this had come from and who wrote it. The delay from opposite time zones was frustrating but John replied the next day with yet another scanned image from the same book. This time it was a printed map of the world.

(Below) A map from JJ Hurtal's "Keys of Enoch" book showing a triangle where the Colorado petroglyphs were discovered.



(Below) A reproduction of a map in JJ Hurtak's book showing "contact" points of the Earth.



I carefully looked at the map and noticed it had been marked by a dozen points. North America contained three of them - one precisely printed on the area in Colorado where I had found the petroglyphs. In Australia there was also a mark that coincided with the location where John said had photographed the petroglyphs he sent to me. I was puzzled and confused. I wrote to John, asking him to tell me everything he knew about the petroglyphs, the mysterious points on the map and to help make some sense out of the whole phenomenon.

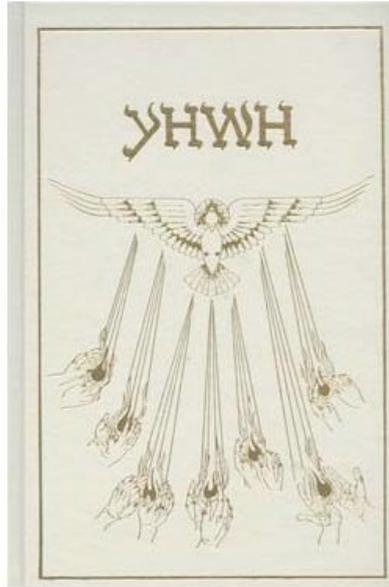
Oddly, John was not immediately forthcoming with his disclosure. He told me that he had found my photographs by accident and that he had been similarly shocked when he saw the similarities - even more so when he learned the location of the petroglyphs. He alluded to a "secret group" of people that were aware of such things and insisted that I not publish anything that he would tell me about the matter. He said he would not proceed unless I consented to this.

I agreed.

The Australian connection

Over the next several weeks, John McGovern sent me more pages from a rare book called "The Keys of Enoch", written by a man known as Dr. J. J. Hurtak. The book was divided into various chapters, called "keys" and each key disclosed the knowledge of a revelation that was supposed to have been experienced by Dr. Hurtak concerning the future events of Earth and its people.

Though it does not say so, this is the cover of "The Keys of Enoch" by James Joachim Hurtak



Ordinarily, I would have dismissed this type of material immediately as "new age crap." I had received numerous articles and story ideas purporting to reveal things by Edgar Cayce, the so-called Hall of Records under the pyramids and accusations that our government leaders were really reptilian aliens from another planet. There was a lot of that type of stuff out there. But McGovern had won my interest by the amazing coincidence concerning the petroglyphs and he seemed to have no other agenda than to share this information with me. He had even prefaced our exchange of information with his prohibition against publishing any of the stories he told me.

During my discussions with John McGovern, Kathy and I did not speak. I forgot to call her and somewhat expected her to call me, as she often did, on a Saturday morning or during the week at my office phone in the electric company. But weeks went by without contact.

In any event, I wouldn't have shared the discussions between John McGovern and me with Kathy. I decided that she didn't deserve to know about the petroglyphs or their translations and I was almost certain that she would have talked me out of becoming involved in any secret group or cult.

McGovern explained that the page he had sent to me was, ironically, the last "key" in the book - much the same as it was the final panel in the long 60 foot proto-Canaanite narrative. He also quoted other passages from the book that gave the exact longitude meridian where the petroglyphs in Colorado would be found. These were confirmed to be within 300 yards of the actual sites by checking my detailed maps and surveys of the area.

I knew that Bill McGlone was alone in his discovery and appreciation of the Colorado petroglyphs. They were so remote, and on private land, that it seemed doubtful that Hurtak would ever have knowledge of their the exact locations. Nevertheless, Hurtak had published these facts in the 1970s, well before McGlone had even visited Colorado.

John described a similar experience in Australia. He had found the site containing similar petroglyphs in a very remote area of the Australian outback, many years before he happened to read about the coincidental location described in Hurtak's book. Since there was only one zone in the entire Australian continent, McGovern did not know what the other petroglyph in different zones would look like and so he was surprised to see the same symbols in America.

We both knew we had found something significant. John was sure that it somehow related to the prophecies in Hurtak's book. But I was more hesitant to believe this without exploring other possibilities.

(Below) J.J. Hurtak and his favorite black beret



One Saturday I was talking with my friend Lee, who was still living in Los Angeles. As usual, Lee talked about many things and we both joked about our days in college. Lee would often call me after he had smoked his pipe and the humor that the marijuana elicited was contagious. I had been thinking of Lee, and of our trip, and I was itching to obtain something to smoke myself. It has been weeks since I spoke to Kathy and it seemed like my job with the electric company was secure enough that a random urine test would be unlikely.

As I spoke to Lee, I realized that he was on a cell phone. Every now and then his voice would fade and he would apologize for having a low battery. In the middle of our conversation his voice abruptly ceased and I was about to hang up. Just then a loud voice came through my phone, "I think we've lost him... yes, he's gone."

I wasn't sure that the voice was not an elaborate joke by Lee. But it somehow didn't sound like something he would do. And while it was strange, it wasn't really humorous.

For a few times following this occurrence, my phone would not have a dial tone when I picked up the receiver. I would click the buttons several times before I could hear a tone and dial out. The same line was used for my internet modem and I experienced similar problems connecting and maintaining a connection.

The following Saturday the problem persisted. It was raining and it occurred to me that water or moisture had somehow affected the phone lines that came into the cellar of my building. I was familiar with the location of my phone wires and decided to check it out.

I had been home when the phone was first installed and had watched the lineman run the wires. I located the junction box near the back of the cellar and noticed something odd. There were another set of wires connected to my terminals - wires I had never seen before - that led away from the terminal. I followed them as they snaked their way across the cellar, over the rafters and towards a dirty, dusty window that faced the street.

The wires looked new. They were black and ended at a black box, about the size of a pack of cigarettes that was affixed to the bottom center cellar window. Coming from the black box, in either direction, thin foil strips formed what appeared to be a dipole antenna that was glued to the glass.

I couldn't believe this was connected to my phone line. I kept tracing the wires again and again. There was no other explanation. I removed the wires from my terminal and went back to check my phone. It was working fine with no more problems with a dial tone. I returned to the cellar and again inspected the wires. Then, in a fit of anger, I ripped the box and foil strips from the window and brought them to my

apartment for a close inspection.

The box was plastic. Inside the box, to my surprise, I found two 9 volt batteries and a small circuit board. There was no brand name or any other manufacturing marks. I couldn't be sure, but it looked to me like a transmitter.

My next stop was to the local police station. But that, as it turned out, was just what someone had hoped I would do.

The Sergeant at the front desk thought I was a nut. I could see it in his eyes. He kept reciting, over and over, that I would need to take up any matters about my telephone line with my telephone company. I must have sounded pretty paranoid. The more convincing I tried to be, the more I could see that he believed I was a person with mental problems. He was polite but anxious for me to go away.

It was discouraging. I was ready to leave the police station but I remembered the device was in my pocket. I pulled it out and showed it to him. Suddenly his mood changed. "And this was connected to your telephone line, Sir?"

"Yes." He directed me to speak with another officer who took the device to another room and then returned to take my name, address and phone number. "Say, it's illegal to tap someone's phone, right?"

"Well, we don't know for sure what type of a device it is but we will have someone look at it and they will follow up with you."

The police station was located in the center of town and adjacent to a large book store. I decided to search for Hurtak's book. It was on the index, but it was unavailable and out of print. It was also listed under "the occult." I wasn't too happy to learn this, but I reminded myself that the coincidence of the location and translation of the petroglyphs was something that I needed to resolve.

I met an old friend outside the book store and we both went to a Starbucks for some coffee and spoke about old times. We had a mutual acquaintance, Lee, and the conversation naturally discussed his whereabouts and the availability of marijuana. I was reminded that it was much more expensive than in our college days but that if I wanted to buy some, it was all around. My friend offered to hook me up with a bag and gave me his telephone number to call, if and when I had the need.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of banging on my door. A tall black man in a tan trench coat introduced himself as an FBI agent. He informed me that he was going to be inspecting my telephone line with a representative from Bell Atlantic. He asked my permission to enter the cellar and I accompanied him, showing him where I had found the device. The wires were still intact, but I had disconnected both ends and they hung from the rafters.

A few minutes later a white van rolled up. A man wearing a tool belt and a hard hat began to string a new wire from the telephone pole to the cellar. I was told that they were giving me a new and "clean" wire which would completely replace my old phone line. In this way they could assure me that it was safe and "unmolested." I was happy with the prompt service - especially for a Sunday - and also a little surprised.

By noon they were gone. I checked my line by logging on to the internet. Not only were there no problems doing this, but my transfer rate - usually around 37000 BPS was now 58000! I was very pleased.

Weeks passed and my interest in just about everything diminished. It was winter again in New England and the leaves were brown and the streets dirty with soiled snow and slush. Work was again boring. My new supervisor was annoying me with his feeble attempts to show his skill as a web designer. His suggestions were lame and ignorant, but I maintained a good rapport with him and tried to talk him out of his obsessions with poor design ideas.

I had toyed with the idea of calling Kathy again. But it had been so long - many months - that I assumed I was no longer a person of interest. I had never had any further contact with my friends in Alaska, had not written more about the death ray, and had not even heard much from the Australian, John McGovern.

They say an idle mind is the Devil's workshop. I am not sure about the Devil, but I was soon working on my old friend and buying small amounts of marijuana to smoke after work. It eased the boredom and re-ignited my interest in classical rock music.

I began to buy CDs. One of the first was an old Greg Allman album that I had enjoyed with Nicki. I thought about her often, in good ways, but I resisted the memory of the deformed babies, the fear of powerful government agencies and her untimely death.

In December of that year I got a new collection of images from my Australian friend. These were in the same alphabet as the proto-Canaanite script but the symbols were perfected in a font style and were beautifully cast in both stone and bronze. The note that accompanied them simply read, "Hey mate - look what they found in Yemen!"

Chapter 19 - Enter The Queen Of Sheba

The images were from a small town called Mareb, in the Republic of Yemen. They were taken by the University of Calgary who had sent an archaeological team to finish the interrupted excavations of the famous archaeologist, Wendell Phillips, on whose character the famous series of Indian Jones films were based.

Yemen is a country the size of California. Like California it has just about every type of terrain, from high mountains to scorching desert, and is blessed with a long stretch of beaches and beautiful vistas. This same beauty and proximity to the sea made Yemen a prime land for ancient trade, especially in the export of frankincense and spices.

During this grand period, about 3000 years ago, the land was ruled by a famous queen whose name has eluded historians. She is known as the Queen of Sheba because "Sheba," or more correctly "Saba," was the name of her kingdom.

Wendell Phillips was not looking for the famed "lost Ark" when he began to search the ruins of neighboring Ethiopia, but he did find the Western portion of the queen's kingdom there and followed the trail back to Yemen, to the small tribal village of Mareb. There he convinced the Bedouin tribes to let him dig in the sand and he soon found the top of a buried structure that once belonged to the Queen Sheba herself.

(Below) The palace of the Queen of Sheba in the 1970's, buried under sand except for the columns, and the huge wall built by her to protect the "Box of EL", the Ark of the Covenant, the Tetragrammaton.



The walls of the structure were only partially uncovered by Phillips when the various tribes that controlled the region fell victim to the political unrest of the nation. He was quickly forced to leave Yemen, barely escaping with his life, and left the site largely intact and untouched.

The impressive dimensions of the almost entirely buried wall, and the eight columns of Sheba's palace in front of it. Historically, local beduin tribes reported seeing it rise above the sand at times, only to disappear under the next dune. Two people stand on it, lower left. Photo taken before excavations.



The University of Calgary had just started the excavations again when they discovered a large wall that encircled the complex, 60 feet in height, 15 feet thick, and covered with rows of script that no one could translate.

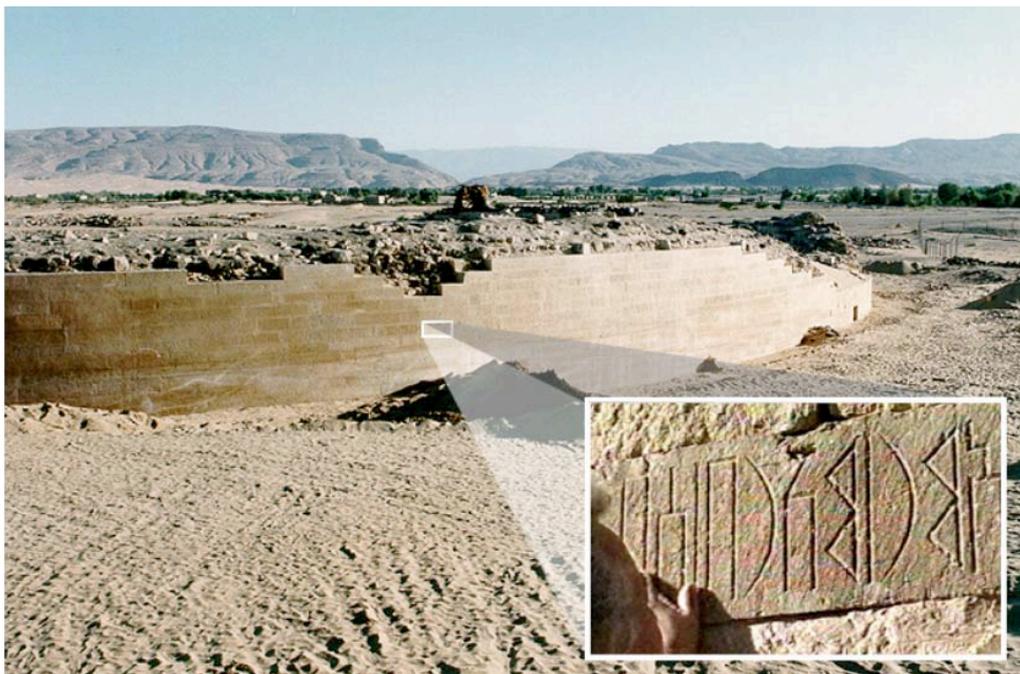
The images of this wall were in McGovern's e-mail to me. As soon as I saw them I could recognize bits and pieces, familiar words and phrases of the proto-Canaanite text. But this was all pristine text that had been protected by the desert sand for 3000 years – not a worn and weathered petroglyph – and so I was anxious to work on it.

[RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND](#)

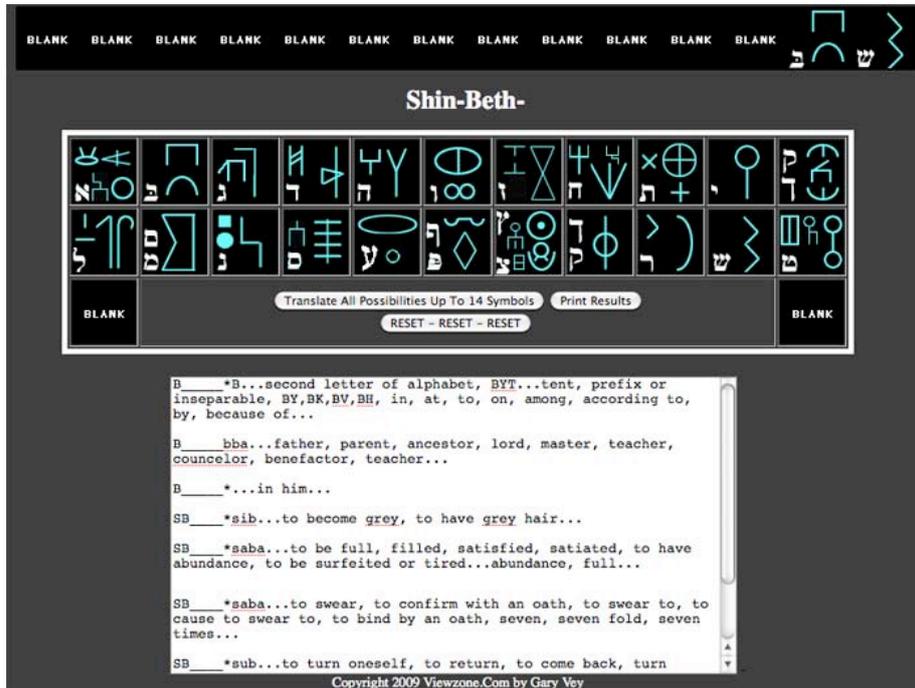
(Below) After removing the sand, Sheba's palace appears (from the 1970's). The wall is visible in the background.



I stayed up all night working on a single photograph of one section of the wall, about 20 feet wide, that had a single line of symbols running in a horizontal line. There were hundreds of symbols to decipher. My program was working like a dream and I was filling a notebook with words as soon as they appeared on the screen of my computer. I was so impatient that I didn't bother to make sense of the translation until I had completed the entire row that was visible in the photograph.



The translation program, running on a Mac Powerbook Titanium, deciphering the past and illuminating the present



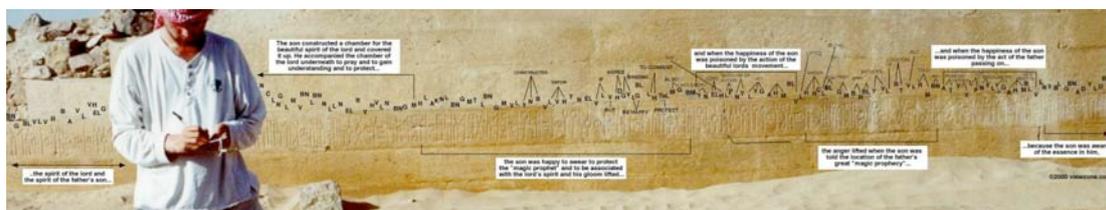
Fatigue was winning the battle as I finished the last word and collapsed on my bare mattress. I slept way past noon and awoke with a bad headache. It was Christmas Eve. Already the sky was dark. I showered and ran for some coffee. I sat with my notebook in a Starbucks surrounded by the holiday shoppers, Goodwill Santa's and Christmas lights.

My notes were spread over several pages. I could see that certain words and phrases repeated - like a poem. I ripped a page from the book and began to write the translation in a more fluid, poetic form that resembled its original composition.

The poem, or prose, was speaking about a "son," a "father" and of the "beautiful spirit." There were also unusual ligatures, or combinations of two letters, that formed the familiar word for "God," spelled "EL." With another cup of coffee and a little effort I completed the text. But what did it mean?

It read as follows:

(portions of the text were obscured by some workers standing in front of the wall)



"...because the Son was aware of the essence that was in him"

"And when the happiness of the Son was poisoned
by the news that his father passing on
the anger lifted when the son was told
the location of the Father's great box of EL."

"And when the happiness of Son was poisoned
by the action of the beautiful Lord's movement
the Son was made happy to swear to protect the box of EL
and to be associated with the Lord's spirit"

"And his gloom lifted. The Son constructed a chamber for the
beautiful Lord's spirit and covered it up. He accompanied the chamber
of the Lord underneath to pray and to gain understanding and to
protect ..."

(the last words were obscured again by workers in the photograph)

It was beautiful to read words that had been hidden for so long, and
also a bit surreal to translate this in a Starbucks at Christmas.
I didn't know what it meant, who was this "son" and his "father?" And
what on Earth could the "box of EL" mean?

Chapter 20 - Another Cold Winter

The holidays were always tough, especially Christmas. I had no real
family to speak of. I had a dead mother, an aged father with Alzheimers
in a nursing home who barely recognized me and a brother, four years
older, who had long departed from our family to raise his own kids.

Most of my friends were also married. Somehow married and single people
don't mix and so, as usual, Christmas day was nothing more to me than a
day spent at home, smoking the weed.

The day was long and dark. I smoked the remainder of my little bag and
took a walk to get some coffee. The streets that were so busy just the
day before were now empty. The stores were closed also but the bars
were open. The fresh snow and the smell from the bars reminded me again
of Fairbanks - and Nicki.

I returned to my apartment depressed. I managed to revive an old
college trick and scraped the inside of my pipe's bowl with a knife,
collected the brown resin, and then ignited the last harsh hit which
put me to sleep.

I sent my translations to Australia the next morning by e-mail. John seemed pleased and rewarded me by sending another image. This one was a photograph of a large brass plate, covered with the ancient alphabet, that had been found inside the temple of Sheba. It was originally a cylinder that surrounded one of the tall columns but only one side of a small portion was displayed. Still, it had lots of symbols and was a good project to keep me from thinking about other things.

Brass plaque of proto-Canaanite text found inside the Sheba temple, typeset style. The text is not complete, right and left sections are missing.



This time the text spoke mainly about a woman who was referred to simply as "the mother." The text read from right to left, but because it was only a partial view of the entire brass plaque, it started and ended in mid-thought. Nonetheless, it was enough to piece together a story. By the end of the evening I had finished most of it.

It seemed to be a continuation of the narrative on the wall.

“... the Mother listened through the aperture of the Son in his chamber to see if he renounced the agreement with the Lord ...

... because the sorrowful mother assembled around the chamber a wall without mortar so that she might rescue the son ...

... she watched the son through the aperture and saw it illuminated and heard thunder and feared for the son ...

... the son increased his knowledge of the future and the son shook and trembled from the knowledge of the unknown ...

... to save her son because of the silence and because the worm had moved out from the aperture and great was her sorrow ...

... moved from silence to judge if the son foresaw the loving mother wail and doubt his agreement with the Lord ...

... the spirit [no translation] was happy to be made blind on account of the box and the son's brother-in-law suffered increased painful study ...

... the round city to protect her poor son and the mother then slowly encircled the foundation of the chamber ...

...to judge the poor mother so the dwelling place of the box was obscured and the mother was also fearful that the sea would rise ...

... so the proud mother's love for her only son made her to fortify the chamber of the box in case the earth might tremble ... “

I was beginning to see a story in my notes, but the characters were unreal. I needed to know more about this old kingdom, the Queen of Sheba and whether she indeed had a son.

Translating the texts seemed to make the hours pass quickly. It was late in the evening. I had nothing to smoke, no one to talk to, and I had to go to work the next day. This adventure would have to wait for more mundane things.

Chapter 21 - Stickman And Sky

As usual, I sent my translation to John in Australia and he replied with yet another photographic gem. This time it was a large rectangular block of stone from the museum in Yemen's capital city, Sana'a. The block appears to have been chopped at both ends and was likely salvaged from its recycled use in another building or temple. But the writing was in the familiar style, with one glaring difference - it was displayed upside down!

It was an easy task for me to rotate the image on my computer, enlarge and sharpen the letters, and then proceed to translate them. But I was hesitant, knowing that this text was more lengthy than the others and that it would likely mean another long night without sleep. Also, I needed something to smoke.

I called my friend to arrange for buying some more weed. He told me he

was sold out but suggested another source. He told me about a woman that lived in town and could often be seen sitting on her porch. He assured me that, if I mentioned his name, she would either sell me some smoke or arrange for my needs to be taken care of by someone else. It was another Saturday morning. I took a walk for a coffee and went out of my way to pass by the porch. A man was sitting there with long hair and holding an unusual painted walking stick. I introduced myself and inquired about the stick.

Stickman, as I would come to call him, was a drifter. He made walking sticks for a living and created them with a rare sense of functionality and artistic beauty. He also was smoking a short joint and I recognized the sweet smell instantly.

I asked him the price for his walking sticks and they were inexpensive. So I bought one and we were instant friends. I shared Stickman's joint and asked him where I could get some, thinking maybe he was also a small time dealer. "Right here. Come on inside, man."

The inside of the apartment was cluttered with pictures, dried flowers, books, maps and had a foul smell that I later learned was from several ferrets that were caged in the adjoining room. The kitchen table was full of stuff, including a water pipe and several ash trays.

"Hang on. I'll get Sky." Stickman left the room through a curtain and returned with a tall blonde woman who smiled at me, then looked suspiciously at Stickman.

"Sky? This is..."

"Dan. I'm Dan. Hi. Nice place you have here. I just bought one of his walking sticks and shared a joint and then I asked him about maybe buying some more weed ..."

"Sure. Cool. How much? I only have a half ounce left if you want it."

Sky had a rough voice that somehow didn't match her appearance. She wasn't really pretty, in the usual sense, but she had an air of confidence in her behavior that set me at ease with her. She went through her curtain and returned with a small bag of marijuana and we made our transaction.

Since the water pipe was in the center of the kitchen table, I suggested we all smoke some of my bag and both Sky and Stickman agreed. It wasn't long before we were all joking and telling stories. Stickman had an elaborate theory behind his selection of tree branches for his walking sticks, involving the acknowledgment of the tree's spirit or soul. He took my stick and explained all of the intricate decorations and carved shapes and had a logical explanation for each of them. He was a fascinating person.

Sky was an artist. She had appreciated Stickman's work when he wandered

into town to sell his wares and had allowed him to stay in her small apartment, sleeping on an old couch. She also cared for unwanted and abused pets, especially ferrets. The more she talked the more she seemed to be a tomboy. For a brief moment she reminded me of Nicki. She was a fragile person, hiding beneath a tough skinned persona.

It was dark by the time I left and I was pretty stoned. I walked back to my apartment and enjoyed the brisk winter air. I felt different. Sure I was high from smoking, but there was something else - I was happy. But why?

I returned to my apartment and checked my answering machine. When you live alone, this can be an exciting experience, especially if you have a message. I had one and pressed the button to hear the recording. " ... Hello? Dan, are you there? ... Hello? ..." It was a sobering experience to hear Kathy's voice. It has been weeks since we spoke. I was worried, for a moment, that she somehow knew I was smoking marijuana. But how would she know? Would she really care? To clear my thoughts I settled down in front of my computer and began to work on the photograph that John had sent me. I had already rotated and enhanced it and the next step was to assign English equivalent letters to the proto-Canaanite symbols and then to plug them in to my program.

I worked tirelessly for hours on the stone. The stone was interesting because it had a more casual style of printing, similar to hand lettering, and included a few symbols I had never encountered before. It also had an end to the text. There was a horizontal strip of letters that suddenly finished, leaving the stone bare. But there were also chunks of the block that had been removed, taking with them the letters and eliminating the possibility of translating the missing words.

Again, the block started in mid-sentence:

" ... the son also did not foresee the optimal time for drinking one's fill because of the unknown powers in the world of his future offspring and so the world of his progeny would remain sealed ...

... we pray that the crop (people) will be purified but do not encourage the harvest (of the people) prematurely as the Lord will burn the evil nations from the sky but let the son have dominion over the grain (creatures) and do not rise up until friendly nations are here ...

... enter also to destroy and let the son predict the leader of these ripe seeds and the son will rejoice for the age of the 'box of EL' ...

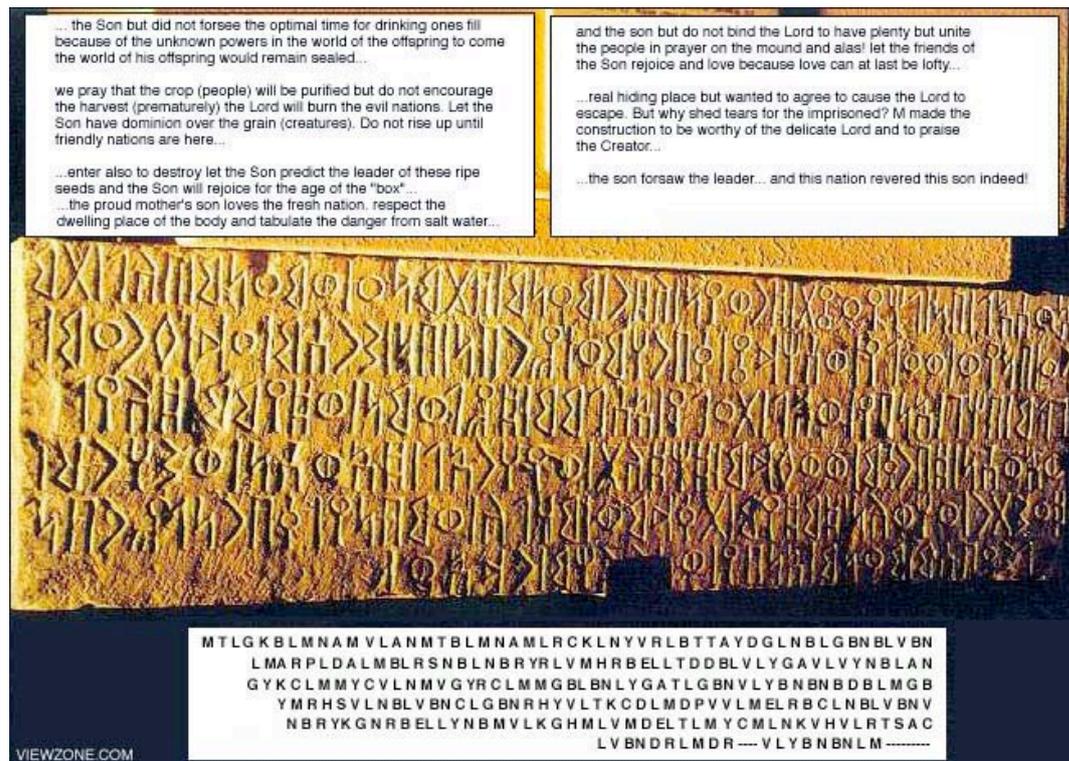
... the proud mother's son loves the fresh nation but respects the dwelling place of the body and tabulate the danger from salt water ...

... and the son but do not bind the Lord to have plenty but unite the people in prayer on the mound and woe let the friends of the son rejoice and love because love can at last be lofty ...

... real hiding place but wanted to agree to cause the Lord to escape but why shed tears for the imprisoned? The mother made the construction to be worthy of the delicate Lord and to praise the Creator ...

... the son foresaw the leader ... (part of block missing here) ... and the nation revered this son indeed!"

I was exhausted when I finished and the sun was already beginning to rise through my bedroom window. I quickly sent the results to Australia and collapsed on the mattress.



RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND

The next morning I woke up around noon to the sound of the phone ringing. I let the recording play, thinking it might be Kathy. But it was an unfamiliar voice that sounded like Crocodile Dundee.

"Hello, mate. It's John McGovern. I was just calling you ..."

"John! Hang on." I picked up the phone and sat on the couch. "Wow. It's good to hear your voice finally!"

John spoke with me for about an hour. He had just read my e-mail and the translations and was very excited. I asked him if he had any idea what it all meant and he then, for the first time, told me the story of Solomon, Sheba and Menelik.

The time was around 1000 BC. Solomon had established his temple in Jerusalem and his wealth and power were widely known throughout the region.

The Ark of the Covenant, the "box" that Moses had used to converse with God, the Tetragrammaton, was kept in the temple's Holy of Holies.

Solomon had a son, Nathan, by one of his many wives. Such was the custom of those times.

The Holy Koran, the Islamic text given to Mohammed by an angel of God, describes a time when Solomon is told of another kingdom to the South, run by a woman, that has wealth and power equaling that of his own. He is told that the queen of this empire is beautiful and wise. The news arouse his curiosity and he sends messengers to invite the queen to visit him in Jerusalem.

The Queen of Sheba receives his invitation and is also curious to meet with this distant king. She packs a large caravan of camels and brings gifts of gold, frankincense and other precious commodities and arrives in Jerusalem, where she and Solomon maintain a courtship, testing each other's intellect and wisdom with word games and puzzles.

It is believed that Solomon and Sheba were married, and that Sheba returned to her palace in Yemen pregnant with her only son, Menelik. Menelik grew wise and became curious to meet his father. When he reached adulthood he made the journey North to Jerusalem.

Upon meeting his father for the first time, Menelik was greeted and welcomed by Solomon, who remarked how much the young man resembled his own father, David. Menelik was given a special ring and was asked to share a secret with Solomon prior to returning to the Sabaean kingdom in Yemen.



A few years later, Jerusalem was invaded by the Assyrians and the temple was destroyed. Shortly after this happened, Menelik is said to have been told where Solomon had hidden the Ark of the Covenant and retrieved the Ark, protecting it in his mother's kingdom.

Not much is written about other events, or the location of the Ark, but the queen soon abruptly abandoned her Yemen kingdom, with its elaborate palaces and temples, and moved her kingdom across the Red Sea to Ethiopia. The land where her once powerful and fertile kingdom was located was allowed to be absorbed by the desert sands and forgotten.

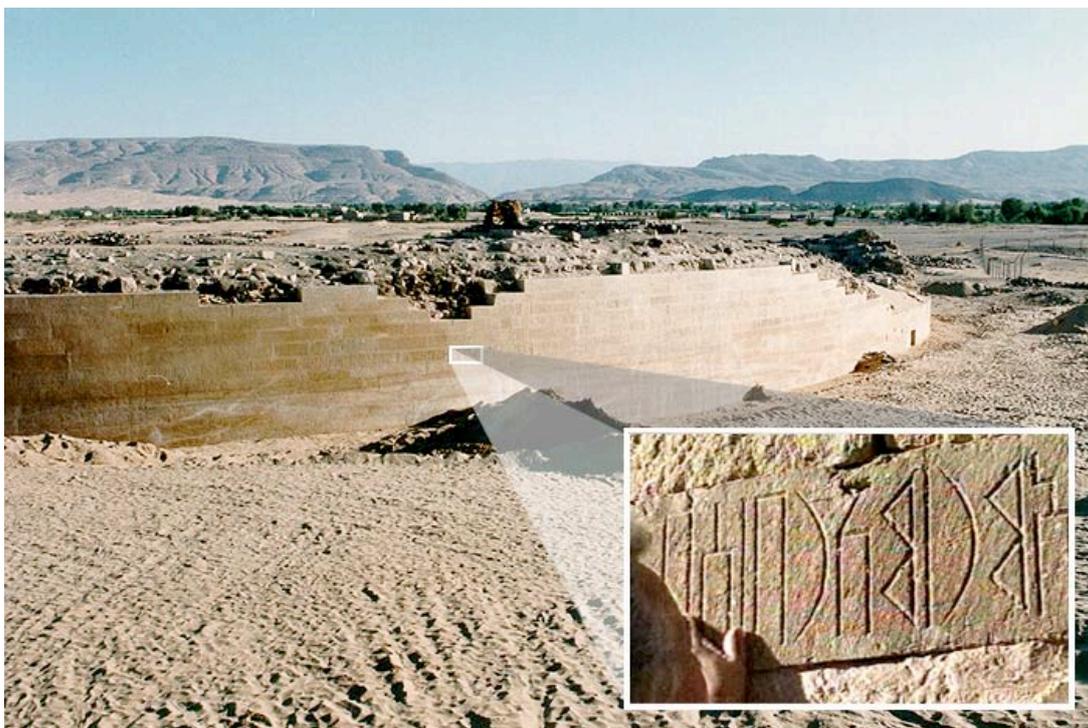
Templars, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Illuminati and Graham Hancock have been searching for the Ark of the Covenant. Here it lies buried, in Mareb (Marib), Yemen.



(Below) Bronze statue found in Sheba's palace during excavations. A pen lies on its base for size comparison. It is believed to represent Menelik, Sheba's only son. His absent father was Solomon, son of King David in Jerusalem, which was soon sacked by the Assyrians.



A row of proto-Canaanite inscriptions runs along the walled compound. It says that the Ark of the Covenant, the Tetragrammaton, the Box of EL, lies buried here.



Soon, the queen's old kingdom was itself invaded by enemies, but the buried temple and palace were never found.

The present village of Mareb, in Yemen, is located near the famous dam that once irrigated the Sabaean kingdom. It is an old city, built upon a mound and now inhabited by Bedouins. The history and significance of the region had been entirely forgotten, even to folklore, until the brief excavations by Wendell Phillips in the 1950s.

John's research was brilliant. It made sense of the translated story. The "mother" was the Queen of Sheba and the "son" was Menelik. Further, the "box of EL" was the lost Ark! We had certainly found something significant, but we were both puzzled about what to do next.



It was surreal for many weeks after that phone call. I would work in my cubicle at the electric company during the day, unappreciated and bored, and then would translate a 3000 year old story in the evenings and on weekends. It was a roller coaster emotionally, and I tried to mediate to two worlds by smoking marijuana. I was making more frequent trips to visit Stickman and Sky and soon was a regular customer.

Sky was an interesting person. She was an excellent artist with the ability to visualize an idea and render it on paper. She had a good sense of humor and was intelligent, despite her lack of formal education. I also respected her kindness towards other people.

Sky used to refer to her "projects," which were either sick animals that she nurtured back to health or else help to make their death

comfortable, and people who had a variety of social problems and sought her out as the friend of last resort. When I went to make my weekly purchases there would often be several people in her bedroom, sitting on the floor and conducting a kind of impromptu group therapy. To some she was a mother, to others she was a sister.

I never really talked about my work with Sky, but she often shared her unusual interest in secret things with me. Once, when we were alone in her apartment, she read some medical files that she had saved from an old mental hospital that was active in the 1940s. It was a time when "mental illness" was a catch all for all sorts of behaviors that were deemed anti-social. Many young women, in particular, were locked in the asylum for being pregnant out of wedlock, or for being ugly, or for things that could be easily cured today.

I remember sitting with her and discussing one file in particular where a young woman with Downs Syndrome was taken from her family and forced to live among the horror of severely disturbed patients. I was sure that she would have understood my grief over the "death ray" in Alaska, the mutilated babies and the mysterious death of Nicki.

The more I visited Sky, the more she reminded me of Nicki. They both had something that touched me in a private part of my mind, and I often regretted not having gotten closer to Nicki.

John and I continued our exchanges on a daily basis. We had become good friends despite being on opposite sides of the planet. We had translated almost everything that had been photographed and we kept pondering our discovery and what we should do next.

In an act of desperation, I summarized my translations and sent them to Yemen, to the attention of the president, Abdul Saleh. It was a long shot. I was no one. I was a programmer with no background in either archaeology or linguistics. Who would listen to me?

Apparently someone did.

One day I received an e-mail that invited me to write a brief summary for the Yemen Times. I sent them the article and it was printed. Soon I was receiving inquiries about the text and, ultimately, I was invited to come to Yemen to inspect the site in person.

The invitation came through the Yemen Minister of Antiquities and was relayed through a Yemeni businessman who had an office in New York City. He told me that he would provide all of the financial help I needed and assured me that I would be treated with respect and be safe in Yemen.

While the logistics of the trip were being considered, another surprising invitation was made, this time by Dr. J. J. Hurtak - the author of the "Keys of Enoch". I was asked to meet with him at a restaurant in New York City, for lunch and conversation.

While all of this was happening, my life in and out of the electric company was like day and night. I dreaded going to work because of the boredom and loneliness of my cubicle. I would often continue my correspondence from work and many articles for Viewzone were written there.

I had considered taking a vacation to Yemen, for a few weeks, but the description of the country and the many places to visit required a longer time. Then there was the issue of going there alone.

I hated to be alone. I hated living alone and working alone. The idea of traveling alone was unappealing, even if it involved the discovery of the lost Ark. I was beginning to recognize that my smoking habit was a kind of self-medication that eased the pain of my chronic loneliness.

Once, when I visited Sky to buy my bag of goodies, I told her that I had been considering a trip to Yemen and I asked her if she would like to go. It was a statement made in jest. I knew she would be a good travel companion and I sensed that I would enjoy her intellect, but I was almost embarrassed as soon as I asked her. We smoked a little and then I left, forgetting the invitation for almost a week.

My contacts in Yemen were eager to have an answer. I was about to reject their offer but, one day at work, I received an e-mail from Sky. She had apparently been intrigued by the suggestion and had decided that the opportunity was too much to pass on. She told me that, if I was really serious, she had a valid passport, a little cash, and was ready to go.

So much was happening in the span of a few weeks. I was desperate to call Kathy, but I had decided that our strange relationship was over and that the NSA was no longer interested in my affairs. I had the ability to confide in John, and we often spoke on the telephone, but I lacked the intimacy of a close friend. Perhaps, I thought, I could confide in Sky.

I set a date for Yemen in May and decided that I would terminate my job with the electric company. I also decided to take Sky along as my assistant. I asked her to join me on a trip to New York, to speak with Dr. Hurtak, and I was determined to confide everything to her. It was a big decision, perhaps the wrong decision, but it was done.

Chapter 22 - The Mysterious Dr. Hurtak

I met Sky at the bus stop and we boarded an early bus for New York City. On the way down I told her the story about Viewzone, the trip to Alaska and about my "handler," Kathy. It sounded more interesting than

horrible when I told it, but perhaps that had something to do with the fact that I eliminated any reference to Nicki. I was growing fond of Sky and I didn't want to show my hand, at least not yet.

"So who's this dude we're going to visit now? Tell me about him."

I actually knew next to nothing about Dr. Hurtak. I knew that he wrote a book almost 25 years ago, that it contained a lot of religious sounding text and that it also contained predictions of where some of my petroglyphs would be found. He also seemed to have predicted the translation of one of the most significant panels that I had found in Colorado.

"Oh. Okay."

My instructions were to meet him at a restaurant on 6th Avenue, called The Plantation. The woman who had made the plans said that this was a good place for us to talk quietly and so I envisioned a small eatery with maybe some tables in the back, or a booth, where we could eat some salad, have a coffee and talk about his book. I had the idea that this meeting originated more from his curiosity than mine. But I was also curious and wanted to know how he had knowledge about the petroglyphs in Colorado and Australia. Since I had not had the opportunity to read his book, I really did not have much more to say.

I had not been in New York for many years. We left the bus at 42nd Street and walked the grid towards 6th Avenue. It was a long walk and we stopped to buy some coffee at a Starbucks. Sky had an excellent sense of direction, which was something I lacked. She quickly grasped the lay of the streets and avenues and we were soon on the edge of Central Park West and waiting to cross the street.

I looked up at the tall buildings in amazement, spilling some coffee on my clean blue shirt as I did. I had hoped it would have had time to dry before we reached the restaurant, but Sky said we were already in the general area.

We walked from 6th Avenue to 7th Avenue, looking for a small bistro but there was nothing like that in the area. Instead, the entire block was taken up by a large and very expensive looking establishment complete with a canopy and doorman.

"I will ask someone here where the restaurant is ..." We both approached the canopy and stopped abruptly as we read "The Plantation." The receptionist was expecting us. She immediately called the manager and owner who told us that Dr. Hurtak would be a few minutes late. They offered to get us some coffee or tea, but I joked about the fact that I was already wearing mine.

The inside of the restaurant was huge, like a palace. There were several ballrooms with hundreds of tables and men with tuxedos were busy setting up something in one of the rooms. Within a few minutes,

Dr. Hurtak and his wife arrived. He was a man about my own age, maybe a little older, and he had a beard, wore black clothes and a black artist-style beret.

We had a few minutes of small talk as the tuxedoed men took our coats and led us to one of the large ballrooms towards the rear of the building. As we passed each room I noticed that the restaurant was empty, except for us, and there were men in suits standing at the exits and hovering within a short hop from Dr. Hurtak.

We entered a large ballroom where a video player and a large screen had been set up. Dr. Hurtak seemed to be waiting for someone else that was to join us and one of the suited men shortly brought a cell phone to him. He spoke for a moment on the phone and then announced that the Secretary General would be there later and that we should proceed with the video presentation.

Sky and I were speechless. As the men prepared to show the video Dr. Hurtak spoke to me, saying that he had reviewed my work and that it was a very important discovery. I thanked him. Then the video began.

On the screen we watched as an unmanned submarine showed images of an underwater city, complete with grand steps and rectangular columns. The narration said that the city was off the coast of Japan and alluded to some type of disaster in the past history of humanity. The scene then switched to Egypt and we watched as Dr. Hurtak crawled through an opening in the earth, followed by the camera, and then was inside of a large complex of halls and rooms. I had absolutely no idea what I was viewing and so remained silent when the video ended.

We then moved to a large ballroom that was like something out of a movie. The walls were covered with murals and the wait staff were all dressed in formal attire. As we sat and talked, a team of them prepared a long table, 30 feet in length, with dozens of dishes containing every type of fruit, vegetable, meat, fish and fowl. It was literally a meal fit for royalty, and it was all for Dr. Hurtak, his wife, Sky and me, with my coffee stained shirt.

Dr. Hurtak was interested in the petroglyphs in Colorado. He said that he had assigned a team of people to validate my work and that it all looked very good. He was also aware of the script in Australia, and told me to thank John McGovern for his contribution to the effort. But most important, it appeared to me, was his interest in the work from the Yemen photographs. As I began to describe what these translations revealed he told me to wait, got a tape recorder from his briefcase, and asked me to speak into the microphone.

After many trips to the banquet table, the wait staff asked if we were ready for desert. They quickly descended on the table, removing the dishes to the kitchen on carts and returned with more dishes and fresh fruit. While this was happening, Dr. Hurtak looked at Sky for a moment, then moved his head close to mine.

"Can I ask you to come with me for a minute, away from the table?" I agreed and we excused ourselves. I could see that Hurtak had given a gesture to his wife and she quickly engaged Sky in some conversation designed to avert her attention from our departure. As we walked to an adjoining ballroom, several men in dark suits followed but stayed far enough to allow our privacy.

"Dan, I am going to ask you something because I did not expect that you would be coming with anyone else. In a minute I am going to show you something in my briefcase and perhaps it is something that you do not want to share with your friend. I think it is probably best for you to see this alone. So when we return I will casually show you something and you can look in my briefcase while my wife speaks to your friend. Is that something you feel comfortable about doing?"

I agreed. I had absolutely no idea what he had planned or what could be so secretive that it could not be shared with Sky.

We returned to the table. The banquet was set in the desert mode and there were many different kinds of puddings, jello, ice cream, cakes, pies and all types of exotic fresh fruit.

"Dear, Sky is Dan's assistant. She will be going with him to Yemen." His wife had spoken to Sky and had obviously sensed that I had shared almost everything with her. Nevertheless, Hurtak did not offer to show her the items in his briefcase.

"Well, that's great. I know you will both enjoy Yemen very much. The people are very friendly there and it is a beautiful country." Hurtak gave me a nudge and placed his briefcase on the table in a manner that, when opened, it obstructed Sky from seeing the contents. He then opened it, shuffled some things, and then stared at me with an expression that read, "Go ahead. Look at this."

Glowing Orbs and Osiris

Hurtak's briefcase contained about six color photographs that had been enclosed in plastic. My first glance was at a photo showing Dr. Hurtak, speaking to a small group of people, and was apparently taken by someone in his audience. It showed Hurtak making a gestures with his hands, as if caught in the middle of an animated lecture. What was unusual about it was the presence of a glowing point of light that seemed to be hovering near his head and emitting a yellow-orange light.

My eyes opened wide when I looked at the photograph. Hurtak watched for my reaction and quickly shuffled to the next image. This one showed the Doctor in a darkened room, standing on top of a translucent structure that glowed with a blue luminescence. I had no idea what I was looking at, but Hurtak pointed to the glowing under his feet and remarked, "That's me, standing on the tomb of Osiris."

The remaining photographs were very odd. They were again of Hurtak. He was outside and was surrounded by what first appeared to be several children. But on closer examination, they were not children at all. Their features were muted and somewhat obscured. They also glowed with a blue luminescence. I moved my head closer to get a better look and thought I recognized the familiar big-eyed, archetypal extraterrestrial, reminiscent of Whitley Strieber's book, "Communion". The only difference was that these little people were blue, not gray. They also seemed to be more innocent - like children - and less menacing than the usual agents of abductions.

Almost as soon as I had absorbed what I was being shown, the briefcase was closed and put away. I sat there in silence, not knowing how to react.

Hurtak was apparently fond of chocolate. One of the waiters kept bringing him small portions from the desert table that consisted of chocolate ice cream, chocolate brownies, chocolate cake and chocolate mousse.

At one point, Hurtak turned to me and said, "You know, Dan, you will be seeing some of these same things in Yemen."

"Yes? Well I certainly hope so. I hope that we can find something in Yemen that will help the region to have some hope instead of all the misery and hatred. It's about time for something good to happen over there." I was being an optimist.

"Yes. It is the time for that. Certainly things will change now. You have started to translate the fire letters. It won't be long now."

I remembered that McGovern had mentioned the fire letters. This was what Hurtak had called the petroglyphs that he predicted would be found at the dozen points around the globe. The fire letters were to be translated and understood prior to the next "great age," a time that would be marked by some sort of global catastrophe.

McGovern had also told me that the "translator" was mentioned in the prophecy, and that, like it or not, I was that person. I didn't place any significance in this declaration since I had not read the original prophecies in Hurtak's book. I also was well aware that Doctor Hurtak was a flesh and blood creature, like me, who enjoyed chocolate like any mere mortal.

But Hurtak was important. He did warrant the high security that was obvious in the restaurant. And something else. We had been seated for over four hours in an expensive restaurant, manned with a full staff of cooks and waiters, in the most expensive area of New York City. And this restaurant had been closed to the public for our lunch. That spoke volumes about Hurtak. He was someone to be taken seriously.

We finished the meal with a round of Champagne. Hurtak thanked me for coming and then raised his glass in a toast. He spoke in Hebrew, then English, invoked many angelic names including Michael, and asked for a divine blessing on our trip to Yemen. It was a dramatic conclusion to a unique encounter.

Sky and I were speechless as we walked to catch our ride home. We replayed the meeting in our minds and talked about it on the bus. "What did he have you look at in his briefcase?" I knew Sky would be curious about that. She had been giving me looks while his wife tried to distract her, and she obviously felt that she was being left out of something important.

I didn't know how to describe the photographs. I didn't really understand what I had seen. Putting them in to words would only trivialize them and I suspected that they might actually be real. "There were some pictures of Hurtak and some... lights."

Lights. That was all I could say. Anything else was going beyond my comfort zone. What else could I say? I saw aliens? Little blue men? Glowing orbs floating in mid-air? No. That was insane. I must have misunderstood what I saw.

"Lights? What kind of lights?"

"Just some weird lights. It was really nothing. I don't know why he made a big deal of it. They were just some lights, some glares in some photographs..."

For many weeks to come, I would not allow myself to think otherwise. I eventually forgot about the photographs and focused more on my trip to Yemen. And I would not be reminded of these things again until I was in Yemen.

Chapter 23 - Good-bye Old Life

It was the spring of 2001. The plans were all made. I had arranged for Sky and myself to fly to Yemen for six weeks. The Yemeni businessman who had made all of the financial plans for the trip was no longer answering his E-mails, but a new group of people in Yemen were now in charge of our itinerary, and everything was confirmed and finalized. The house where I had an apartment was up for sale and my privacy was interrupted by daily tours by real estate agents and prospective buyers. My boss at the electric company had insisted on a lame design scheme that, as I had warned, was causing the web site to be plagued with problems. And, to add to the bad news, I was being asked to take random urine tests again. I had dodged them repeatedly with excuses but these were just about exhausted.

If there was ever a time to make my exit from this so-called "good life," it was now.

One Friday morning I arrived at my cubicle to be greeted by a form that demanded my appearance at the clinic for a urine specimen. The note was worded in such a way that it was actually an order. I knew I would fail the test so I decided it was the appropriate time to give my notice. Just like that, I was free.

My last days were strange. My fellow employees didn't speak to me and I was made to feel like a traitor for leaving. No one was the least bit curious where I was going or what had made me decide to leave.

Within days I received a call from Kathy, but even she was not surprised or curious. She wished me "good luck." That was it. I gave away almost all of the items in my apartment and carefully packed my computer gear and cameras for the trip. I spoke to John and he convinced me to visit him in Australia when I was ready to leave Yemen. He also suggested that I bring Sky along, if she wanted to come.

Ordinarily I am a very careful person, a planner with great foresight. But somehow this trip around the globe had a life, and an itinerary, all of its own. I felt like I was being drawn into something and couldn't escape. And so I just relaxed and allowed it all to happen. Sky was a tall girl, about as tall as myself, but she was very thin. Her weight fluctuated around 110 pounds. When she was excited or agitated she forgot to eat. Her weight had fallen dramatically prior to our departure. I used this as an excuse to take her to lunch and dinner, but I actually enjoyed her company.

I spent a good amount of time with Sky during the weeks before we left. We went for long walks by the Connecticut River, watched wild eagles, ran through dried corn fields, and talked about our lives and philosophies. Often we would get caught up in the moment, forgetting that we were bound for Yemen. But then we would remember, and the excitement and anticipation was a rush.

I was happy that Sky was coming with me. I knew that I would enjoy her company, wit and laughter. And much as I felt this whole expedition was somehow imposed upon me, I also sensed it was the same for Sky.

Unlike Nicki, Sky allowed me inside of her world. I learned that she had been abused as a child, had run away from home as a teen, and had been forced to wrestle with life on her own. She was very independent and opinionated. She knew how to talk tough and curse with crudest of men, yet she was also highly vulnerable and had a sensitive nature. I admired her character.

I thought of Sky as a daughter, or sister. Even though I was her intellectual equal, the fact that we were about to visit an Islamic culture, where men were in control, made me assume the role of protecting her.

I figured Sky to be in her mid-30s when I first met her. When we applied for visas through the Yemen Embassy, I learned from her passport that she was only 27 years old. I had mixed feelings about that. I knew that she had a hard shell and the maturity of an older person, forged by repeated knocks in life. But her relative youth made her vulnerable to the kind of weird things that life can often reveal - things that can alter the course of life in someone with little experience of the unexplained.

As it would turn out, I was correct. But even I could not have imagined how weird the next few weeks would be, not could I gauge the unpredictable impact on such a young mind.

The week before we left for Yemen was full of strong emotions and self discovery. A new emotion, fear, had appeared in my repertoire. John had called again with an amazing declaration.

"You're it, man. You are the translator of the fire letters. How about that?"

Hurtak had a network of supporters in an organization called the Academy for Future Science. It was a global entity that he headed and under which he spoke to the United Nations and conducted a variety of philanthropic and humanitarian endeavors on virtually every continent. Somehow, through this network perhaps, the news of his final blessing in the Plantation restaurant had already encircled the globe.

A few days before we left, our first pilgrim appeared in town. He came with a backpack, on his own, to wish us well in our journey to Yemen. He seemed distant and quiet. I first thought he was just a drifter who had little to say, but I later learned that he looked at us in awe, like a fan who was in the presence of some rock star diva.

My apartment was emptied of furniture and its contents were either given away or placed in storage. Disposing of my former life was more of an annoyance than a worry. I continually headed blindly into the future, to Yemen, without concern for what lay after Yemen. Would I be coming back here? If so, to what? Somehow I knew I would be changed by the trip, but how? For the better or worse?

Instead of worrying about dismantling my life, I was in a kind of emotional calm. I tried to become aware of my thoughts and feelings and to be honest with myself. I thought about my life. I thought about my past. I thought about Alaska, and Nicki, and Sky.

I liked Sky. It wasn't because she reminded me of Nicki. I hardly really knew Nicki. They both had some rough edges though, and that seemed to make them both more real as people. There were very few "real" people in my life. I knew they were special but, so often, they came in and out of my life so fast that I would regret not having reached out to them. Perhaps, I thought, I could reach out to Sky and, just maybe, she wouldn't vanish in the fog of mediocrity.

One evening we were smoking from Sky's pipe. She complained of having a sore back and I offered to give her a back rub. I stood at the back of her chair and when I was through, I lightly kissed her head. It was a spontaneous thing and was meant only as a gesture of affection. But Sky reacted quickly, "Hey. Knock that off!"

Later we continued to smoke and talk. Sky asked me a question that I had been asking myself, "Why is it that guys can never express their feelings honestly?"

I had no answer. I thought about that later in the evening when I was alone. I was reminded of my affection for her. It was an odd feeling, devoid of romance, yet full of longing for intimacy with her. Perhaps it was something inside of me that she released from emotional imprisonment - something that did not want to lose its parole. It was hard to put in to words, yet to be honest I had to express it in a word.

The next morning, the day before we left, I felt brave enough to say it. "Sky. I have to tell you something. I love you."

Love is a word with many meanings. I often thought that "love" should have more descriptive counterparts - like the dozen or more words that the Inuit had for snow. For sure my meaning was vague and misunderstood. It was an embarrassing moment for both of us. There was an awkward pause.

"Oh. Okay. Well, I don't know what to say about that."

I quickly hid my honest self and pursued a more varied conversation. We had lots of last minute planning to do and our trip was only hours away. My attempt at being honest had reminded me of why men seldom express their feelings. They are frequently misunderstood and the result is always disastrous.

The next morning, as I closed my apartment door for the last time and hid the key in the mailbox, I sensed fear. I realized that there was no turning back now. Whatever was drawing me to Yemen was completely in control now. I didn't even have to get on the plane to know that the journey had already begun. And that, the feeling of fear, so new to my experience, was about to become my intimate companion.

Chapter 24 - On Foreign Soil

We arrived in Yemen well after midnight. I don't know what time it was in America, but we were tired and disoriented. We were met by a heavy set man named Abdul, who wore a head wrap, or khafia, and had a large curved knife on a leather belt.

Abdul was our driver. We would grow to appreciate his size and his uncanny ability to drive the Toyota Land Cruiser that would be our home for many weeks.

Abdul helped us with our luggage and drove us through the cobblestone streets of Sana'a. We could see the antiquity of Yemen everywhere. It seemed that almost everything was made of stone. The signs were in Arabic, not really a surprise, but our inability to understand any of the writing only contributed to the sense that we were a long way from home.

We were put up in the best hotel in Sana'a, if not the best hotel in the entire country. The Taj Sheba was named after the famous queen. It was like a palace inside with more grandeur than the best hotel in New York or Las Vegas. We were being treated very well by our hosts.

The following morning we met our tour manager, Khalid, his brother, Nasser, and our guide and translator, Ahmed. It was a brief meeting and somewhat formal. We were advised about our itinerary and both Sky and I were given some helpful suggestions on how to dress and behave to avoid problems in Yemen.

Almost immediately I bought a khafia in the pattern familiar through Yasser Arafat, and Sky bought a black veil to cover her hair and face. We didn't do very much for the first couple of days but rest and become adjusted to the change in time zones. The hotel had cable television and we watched the Indian version of MTV, with its sometimes humorous national rock stars and odd sounding music.

(Below) The author in Sana'a, capital of the Republic of Yemen



On the third day we were pretty well rested and accustomed to the call to prayer that blasted outside our hotel windows. Things got started early in Yemen, at sunrise, and the call to prayer was followed by the din of Toyota horns and the sound of traffic in Sana'a.

Our first official visit was to the presidential palace, where we passed many camouflage clad soldiers with automatic weapons and entered a heavily guarded stone building to meet with the Minister. It was a formal meeting and we were joined by Walid, the owner and editor of the Yemen Times. Walid took photographs of our gathering and witnessed me handing over the complete manuscript of the Sabaeen texts I had translated.

The text was received with mixed emotion and I was repeatedly asked about who, besides myself, was aware of this translation. There seemed to be concern about the possibility that the Ark of the Covenant was still buried in Yemen, and the fact that the Israelis would almost certainly claim ownership and attempt to confiscate it if I was here. I assured the Minister that these facts were not widely known and, at best, would be subject to skepticism because of my lack of academic credentials in archaeology and linguistics.

As we were leaving, Walid was asked to remain behind and I saw that he was being warned about publishing the story or circulating any photographs of the meeting.

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND

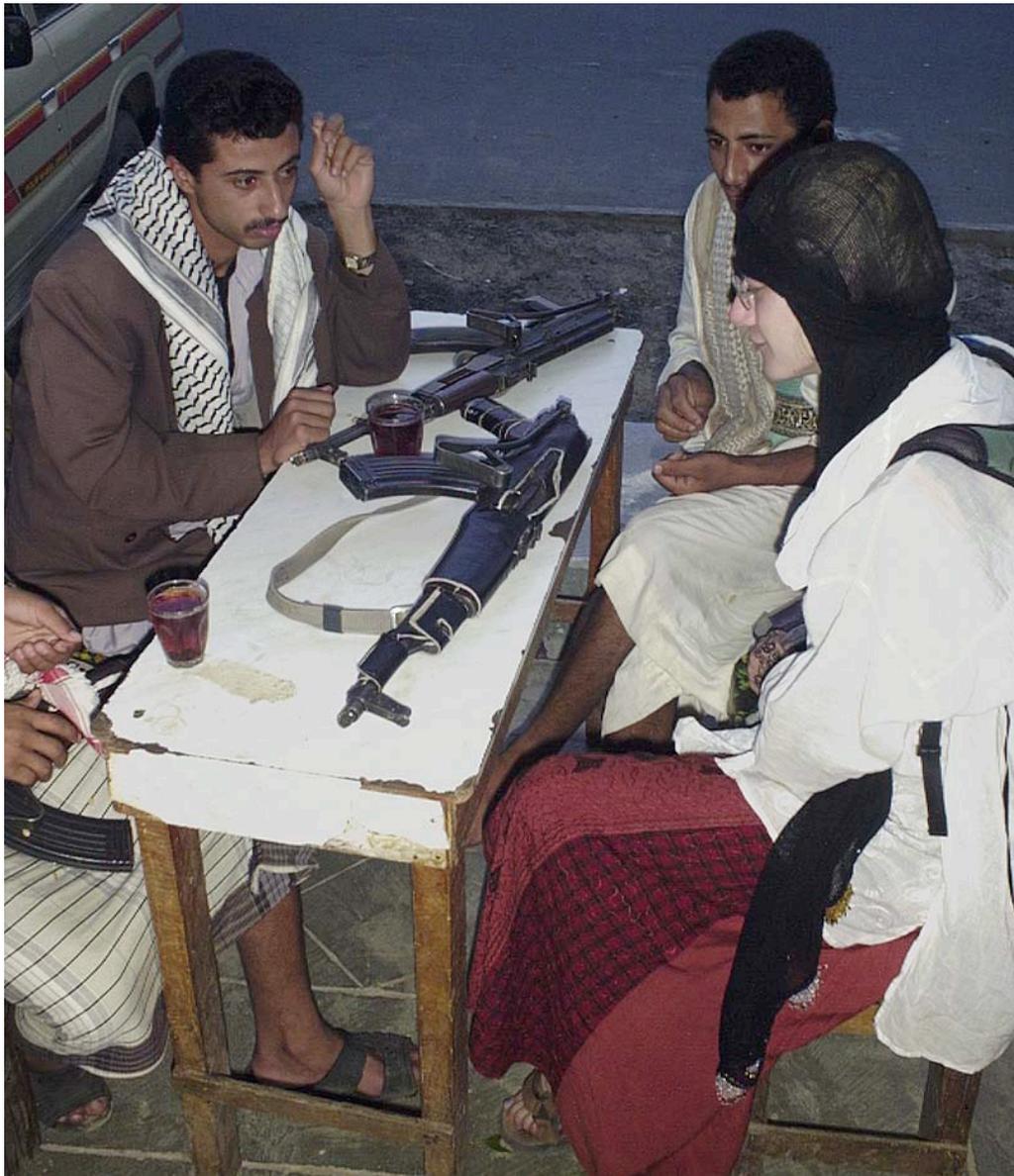
We were driven back to the hotel and told to get ready for the next morning when our tour of Yemen would begin in earnest. We spent the afternoon with Ahmed, our guide, who showed us the old walled city, the markets and introduced us to the national pastime of chewing qat, a green, leafy plant that has a mild stimulating effect when it is chewed and allowed to accumulate in the cheeks. This explained why we had noticed a large bulge in many men's faces in Sana'a.

Sky and I had separate rooms. It was not only practical but mandatory in an Islamic country. But I spent much of my time in her room, watching television and sharing our friendship. We also enjoyed the companionship of our guide, Ahmed, and we included him in our jokes and laughter. He was a little older than Sky but she seemed to befriend him almost immediately.

The next morning we loaded our luggage inside the Toyota. We were headed for Mareb, the very heart of the Sabaeen empire, and the location of the petroglyphs that I had translated.

(Below) Sky has chai with some of the special forces guarding us on the

expedition



The Curse of Mohammed

The region of Mareb is one of the wilder regions of Yemen, largely under the control of local tribes. Almost every male, from eight years of age, not only carries a weapon but is an expert marksman. The weapon of choice appeared to be the AK47. There were many Kalashnikovs.

(Below) Abandoned Old Mareb, the Queen of Sheba's neighborhood



To assure our safety, the Yemen government had provided for two armed vehicles to escort us the 100 kilometers from Sana'a to Mareb. In front we had a pickup truck with an anti-aircraft gun mounted on the back and we were flanked by another pickup that carried six soldiers with AK47s.



The road was well paved and fairly straight. It carried us through the dry country surrounding the mountains of Yemen's capital city and we approached Mareb by way of the old dam that had once irrigated Mareb. This whole region was once a lush garden with fruit trees and gardens that fed the ancient kingdom of the Sabaeans.

The Old Mareb was nothing but a collection of deteriorating buildings, mostly made from mud bricks, sitting atop an enormous mound, or tel. This had been a thriving city for millennia until the Egyptians destroyed it while liberating Yemen in the 1960s. The New Mareb was a few miles away and was constructed of cinder blocks. It was a small but busy city of about a dozen wide streets and a few mosques.

We passed through the city on our way to the hotel where we rested before our scheduled visit to the Queen's archaeological site. We arrived just in time for an early buffet dinner in the dining room and entered to see the staff from the University of Calgary who were just beginning to dine.

I immediately recognized the head of the dig, a Jordanian named Mohammed, and I introduced myself to him. He seemed to know who I was already but gave me the impression he didn't want to talk. Sky and I found a table in the corner of the dining hall and watched the team eat while we dined on some chicken and humus.

The expedition was being funded by the American Foundation for the Study of Man, and was directed by the sister of the deceased archaeologist, Wendell Phillips, who had begun the excavations in the 1950s. We noticed, Ms. Phillips in the dining room and she spoke with Mohammed, then gave us a very unfriendly glare.

Later, as we drank some chai, Mohammed approached our table. "So, I understand that you are interested in the Himyarite text?"

This was a loaded question, since the Himyaritic alphabet resembled that of the Sabaean, but was invented a thousand years later and used Arabic, not root-Hebrew, to translate. It was found mostly in Ethiopia, where it originated, and had made its way to Yemen during the first millennium, just prior to the advent of Islam.

"Ah ... well, mostly the Sabaean text."

"So do you know how many letters there are in the Himyaritic alphabet?"

Again his question seemed odd. Surely he was not using the Himyaritic algorithm to work with these texts, or was he?

"Well, the Sabaean alphabet has twenty two main symbols but there are variations of many letters-"

"Wrong!" He interrupted me, "There are not twenty two. And do you know the name, the real name, of the queen?"

"Hmm. That is a good question. Some say that her name is Bilqis, but..."

"Wrong again!" His tone was condescending, "I will give you a million dollars if you can find the name Bilqis written on any stone."

He smirked and then left. Later I could see that he was having an animated conversation with Ms. Phillips and it appeared to be something regarding us.

The Alphabet contains basic, distinct geometric shapes that correspond to established phonetic sounds. Certain letters have more than one symbol so that they can be used consecutively with either inclusion or exclusion of the corresponding word. Earlier attempts to translate the symbols failed because the alphabet was believed to be proto-Arabic. This was a natural assumption since the symbols were first seen only in the Sinai and the Arabian peninsula. However, translations have successfully been made by using an old Semitic dialect that predates Hebrew.

Old Negev alphabet from Colorado with corresponding Hebrew sounds.				
	Qof (Q)		Zayin (Z)	
	Peh (P/F)		Chet (Ch)	
	Feh (F)		Yod (Y)	
	He (H)		Lamed (L)	
	Mem (M)		Nun (N)	
			Khaf (K/Kh)	
	Tav (T)		Tsadeh (Ts)	
			Resh (R)	
	Shin (Sh/S)		Alef (silent)	
	Vav (V)			
	Bet (B/V)		Dalet (D)	
	Gimel (G)			

Sky and I returned to her room to talk and rest. I was not there for long before our guide, Ahmed, knocked on the door and asked to speak with me.

"Mister Dan, the workers of the Sheba temple are now doing their qat chewing in a room and they have invited for you to come and speak with them. Come on. This will be good for you."

Recent photos of the excavated palace of Sheba. Wall enclosure in background.



The palace of the Queen Sheba with columns stands off-set from the wall at left



Sky and I exited the hotel and followed Ahmed to a small shed, lined with cushions, where about a dozen Yemeni men were sitting and inspecting bundles of the green leaves. There was a large pot of hot chai and they welcomed us to sit with them. The Yemeni men were not permitted inside the hotel. These were the laborers who did the actual digging and assisted in the translation and documenting of the artifacts. They were also local tribesmen and were keeping an eye on the work that was done in their territory.

"So, Mister Dan, please you tell us about your work."

I asked for a paper and pencil and drew the complete Sabaeen alphabet. Along side I drew the phonetic equivalent, in English, and Ahmed helped to draw the Arabic letters. They passed the paper around while chewing the qat and it seemed to stimulate a lively discussion that I could not understand.

"Mister Dan. This letter here you say is Lamed ..." he pointed to a vertical line, "Mohammed says this letter is a space, a place holder between words, and is not a part of the alphabet..."

I was familiar enough with the Himyaritic system to know that this was true. But again I was surprised that the more recent alphabet, which originated in a few hundred years BC, was being applied to the Sabaeen texts that were written almost a thousand years earlier.

"Mister Dan, the men want to know if you have verbs and words with this method or if you get names of people with this?" Ahmed was busy listening to their conversation and translating important parts for me to understand.

"Yes. It tells a story. There are names but there are also verbs and many nouns."

I waited for Ahmed to translate what I had said. This made the conversation become very loud and the men smiled at me and nodded their head in approval.

"The men here say that they have thought this symbol was not a word space and they seem to think that your way is correct."

Just then there was silence. Mohammed was standing in the door. The Yemeni men seemed embarrassed by their conversation and they looked at each other like misbehaving children caught in the act. Mohammed sat beside me and asked me my background.

"So how long have you been studying the Himyaritic language? I have been doing it for over twenty years. It is my life's work. But for you, it is a fun hobby, yes?"

I could tell that he felt threatened and wanted to insult me. I explained that I did not use the Himyaritic dialect to do the

translations but used a form of proto-Canaanite.

"Proto-Canaanite? I have never heard of this. This is like the Torah then? Hebrew?" There was a pronounced condescension in the way he said "Hebrew."

He then raised his voice and spoke in Arabic. I did not understand a word, but he had many words to say and became quite animated and red in the face. The Yemeni workers who had been listening to us in silence tried to calm him down by making gestures with small bouquets of their qat leaves and telling him, in Arabic, to calm down. But it wasn't working.

Eventually Ahmed told us that it was time to leave. I asked for a translation of Mohammed's comments but he refused to repeat it, perhaps out of respect for me, and merely ushered us away from the shed and back to the hotel. Later that evening we saw Mohammed and Ms. Phillips arguing again.

The next morning we had been scheduled to inspect the Sheba site. Our guide, Ahmed, seemed nervous and avoided eye contact. Something was wrong. "Mister Dan. I am sorry that I made you go there last night. That was not right of him to say those things. And so today they will not allow us to see the site."

It was obvious what had happened. I met some of the Yemeni workers later. They explained that Mohammed had found many texts that did not translate, and he had assumed the texts referred to family names, or tribal names, that were arranged in a lengthy lineage around the wall. The fact that the text could be understood using a different dialect was something he either could not, or did not want to make public. They apologized for his bad conduct, smiled, and offered me qat as a token of their friendship.

We spent the afternoon visiting the Mareb dam, where I photographed some old texts, and to the completely excavated Temple of the Sun, where there were also rare scripts that had never been translated. While these events were going on, Sky became silent and distant. A few times I went to visit her room and she was not there. She began to seclude herself and write in her journal. I didn't mind this as much as it worried me to have her wander off on her own. We were still in a foreign land and I felt a responsibility to protect her.

(Below) Temple of the Sun, close to the palace of Sheba and the wall enclosure



The next day we would be heading for the most remote part of Arabia where there was nothing but hundreds of miles of sand and sun. Known as the Empty Quarter, this bland landscape would require the escort of Bedouin guides.

The Empty Quarter was not empty. In fact it was there that we encountered something so strange that mere words will not suffice to tell the story. Something strange happened and it changed everything. It was the best thing, and the worst thing that could have happened. It was unbelievable, yet it happened to us.

Chapter 25 - Our First Encounter

The trip from Mareb to the Empty Quarter was safe. There were few hiding places for potential ambushes by rogue tribes and so our armed escort was not needed. We made sure to have plenty of bottled water and Abdul let some of the air out of his Toyota's tires.

Abdul sat in front with Nasser and Sky and I shared the back seat with Ahmed. On hot and bumpy trips we had learned how to fold our knees to absorb the movement and this usually was relaxing enough to allow us to

take naps while Abdul drove us to the next destination.

The flyer in the window says “Viewzone Expedition 2001 Yemen”



There was an air of sadness and regret over the conflict with Mohammed. I tried my best to make everyone feel good and explained that the Sheba site would only have been a formality, since I already had all of the photographs of the text, and that the new sites, the old dam and the Temple of the Sun, were perhaps more useful in my work. Nevertheless, my dream of standing near the palace where the Queen lived, and where her only son was likely buried with the Ark, was gone.

As we headed towards the expanse of yellow sand, Sky became agitated and began writing in her journal. She was quiet again. I sensed something was wrong but I could not see her face under the black veil.

As we approached the last of the visible canyons, the flat, bright horizon lay ahead. The sky was blue and we were all enjoying the view. To the left of the car, a mile ahead, we noticed a single, large, round cloud that was casting a shadow on the bright sand. The cloud was unusual because it was somewhat low, perhaps a few hundred feet, and it was the only cloud we had seen since leaving Sana'a.

I pointed out the cloud to everyone and we all acknowledged it. We watched it as we approached its shadow to the left of the highway, and I estimated it was no more than 100 feet in diameter. Within a few minutes we were almost under it. I had the best vantage because of my seat next to the rear left window. I stuck my head out to look up at it as we passed.

As I watched the cloud up close it began to shrink, as if collapsing on itself. I was speechless as it got smaller and smaller until only a bright spot remained, at which point it disappeared with a bright flash of light.

The driver, Abdul, also witnessed this and said something in Arabic while he slowed the Toyota. We stopped and looked into the sky, but the cloud was gone.

"Wow. Have you ever seen anything like that before?" Sky asked.

"No." That was all anyone could say. "Never." There was an uncomfortable silence in the car as we headed off the road and on to the sand of the desert.

Since there were no roads in the Empty Quarter, we had a rendezvous with two young Bedouin men who were hired to drive ahead of us in their pickup and guide us to our next destination, the ruins of the Ishtar Temple outside of Shibam.

The drive was a long one, lasting a few hours, and the heat was intense. We arrived at the ruins just before dark and set up tents near the vehicles. While Abdul and Nasser prepared to cook our dinner, Sky, Ahmed and I went to explore the desert at some distance from the campsite.

I could tell that something was wrong with Sky. She had been very quiet and moody. I asked her to talk about it and she left Ahmed to speak with me privately.

"I had a message. A woman's voice gave me a message just as we left Mareb." She removed her veil and I could see the expression on her face. This was no joke.

"What do you mean, a message?"

She paused and spoke slowly, "I know you were here but it was not the time." Sky was almost in tears and I was frozen in place. "I heard it in my head and she repeated it a couple of times. I wanted to say something but I couldn't. I wrote it down..."

"So. Everything is fine?" Ahmed interrupted us. "Look, over here!"

We looked at the horizon and noticed the bright disc of a full moon just coming into view. I wanted to say more to Sky but it would have to wait. The sky grew dark but the light from the rising moon was bright enough to cast a shadow. Sky found a stick and drew a large circle in the smooth sand and we watched Abdul and Nasser starting a fire, with the help of the Bedouin guides, near the parked vehicles in the distance.

"Come. It is time to go back. They have some hot chai ready for us." We

followed Ahmed back to the group and were surprised to find that dinner was ready.

"Hey, that cloud was strange today." I tried to make conversation as we ate. The Bedouins asked what I meant by this and Nasser described the incident in Arabic. The Bedouins did not laugh. They ate in silence and kept glancing up at the sky where a beautiful canopy of stars was shining.

"Mister Dan? You have heard about the one thousand Arabian nights? Well this is one thousand and one stars! It is beautiful, yes?" Nasser was right. It was beautiful. The moon was especially bright and clear. I could see the craters and detail with my bare eyes and suggested that I might try to film the Moon with a camera after dinner.

Ahmed joined us as I carried the video camera to the spot where Sky had drawn the circle in the sand. The Moon was so bright that we found it without too much trouble. I set the camera on a tripod and captured the image while Sky and Ahmed gazed at the stars.

"Look up here," Ahmed was pointing to an unusually bright star. "What is that? Is maybe an airplane?" We watched the bright object as it seemed to move against the stationary backdrop of stars.

The object seemed too bright for a star, yet it lacked the typical colored lights of an airplane. I had suggested it might be a satellite but, as we watched it, it moved from side to side and then up and down.

Sky was fascinated by it and began to walk into the desert in its direction. I kept looking at the light, trying to imagine what it could be. I followed Sky for a short distance but soon lost sight of her in the dim light. I returned to Ahmed who was sitting near my tripod.

"What do you think it is?" I asked. Ahmed told me he had not seen anything like this before. He seemed concerned and suggested that we return to the car where the tents were set up for us. I told him that I would look for Sky and Ahmed offered to bring my camera back to the car.

I found Sky a few yards away, sitting in the sand and staring at the light. It seemed to move quickly now and it varied in brightness. I sat with Sky and noticed she had been crying.

"Are you okay?" I was worried until I saw her smile.

"Yes. I'm fine. I think I can talk to them. I am communicating with them. Something just happened and they spoke to me."

Sky explained that while she was walking away from me she had experienced a sudden burst of light in her head and had fallen to the sand. She then noticed the light had flashed brightly and she sensed that, whatever it was, it was attempting to communicate with her. She

asked me to let her be alone for a while and assured me that she would be fine by herself. Her smile and calm voice were reassuring and so I walked back to the fire and the rest of the group.

When I returned to the group, the Bedouins were also looking at the strange light as it moved in the sky. Ahmed asked where Sky was and I explained that she wanted to look at the light for a while. In a humorous tone I suggested that she might be trying to talk to it, but the joke was not received well and the Bedouins were especially upset at this.

There was a lively discussion in Arabic. It was the first of many times that I would hear the word "jinn" used. Ahmed insisted that we should bring Sky back to the tents but I told him to wait there while I asked her to return.

I found Sky sitting in the middle of the circle she had drawn earlier. She was smiling and appeared very excited and happy. "I've done it. I figured out how to communicate. Watch this."

In a low voice she asked a question that I could not hear clearly. But as soon as she had finished the light flashed and changed position. She repeated this several times with the same result.

"Mister Dan! Where are you?" I could hear Ahmed getting impatient for us to return.

As we began to walk back towards the campfire a fierce wind began to blow the sand. It got stronger with each step and soon the sand was obscuring the stars and darkening the light of the Moon. We were a hundred meters from the camp when Sky stopped walking and spoke up. "If you want us to continue talking to you then you must stop this wind."

Not many people will believe what happened next. The wind died instantly. I watched in disbelief as the grains of sand ceased to move and fell to the desert floor. In less than a second there was silence. The wind had almost blown our tents away and the group were scurrying to secure them by placing heavy items inside. The fire was almost extinguished and the Bedouins were crouched against their pickup truck with their AK47's clutched in their hands.

I could have dismissed the events if I had been drinking or stoned, but I was not. And if these were the only times we had this experience then I might have conveniently forgotten about it, but it wasn't. Instead it was only the beginning of many strange events that would forever change us all.

The odd events had obviously upset the two young Bedouin men that guided us through the Empty Quarter. They stayed long enough to have morning chai and then hurried away, but only after they spoke with Ahmed in Arabic. I heard that word again, "Jinn."

The Ishtar Temple was a remote site with almost no writing. It was originally made from stone, including some of the strangest purple rock I had ever seen. We spend the morning walking through the ruins before heading East towards the city of Shibam.

Shibam was an odd site. Mud and brick constructed buildings towered over the flat desert at seven stories high and we wandered through the narrow streets and the maze of alleys, taking photographs and meeting the friendly people.

The temperature was hot. We had a thermometer with a scale that ended at 130 F and the needle remained stuck to this temperature for most of the day. Abdul wanted to drive us to a cooler location to spend the night, but he got lost in the Wadi Hadhramout valley and we ended up in a small village called Sif.

Sif had only hotel and it was a modest one. Our rooms were small and had no sheets. The heat was intense but the hotel had large ceiling fans in each room. After we ate dinner, we were too hot to remain outside and we all went to our rooms to enjoy the fans and sleep.

After a few hours, well after midnight, the electrical power suddenly died and the fans stopped working. I tried to continue sleeping but it was impossible. I left my room and used the stairs to reach the top of the hotel roof where I found Sky smoking a cigarette. She had been there for some time.

"There are three of them. Look." Sky was crouching against the wall and looking up at three bright lights that were widely separated in the dark sky. "There's a red one and a blue one now."

With the lights all out, the sky was very clear. There was a bright light overhead, similar to the one we had seen in the Empty Quarter. I thought it was a planet at first, but it was much too bright and it was moving from side to side against the stationary stars. It looked to be about the size of a car. I guessed it was a few hundred feet overhead. Towards the horizon there was a similar light, but this one had a red hue to it and it was slowly moving across the star field towards the first light.

"Okay. Wow. Where's the third one?" I sat next to Sky. She pointed up to the opposite horizon and I followed her finger. The third light was not as bright but it was blue. It was also moving, even more rapidly than the red light.

"I figured out a way to communicate with them." Sky told me that she had been observing them from the roof for some time that night and had been asking them questions that could be answered either "yes" or "no." She said that the light, the white one, would respond by moving either vertically or horizontally to signal its answer.

"There are three of them. But when I asked them if they were just three

they said 'no.' I don't understand that... but watch this."

Almost as soon as she had said this I noticed that the white light, directly overhead, flickered with an intensity that almost blinded my wide open eyes for an instant.

"Now watch this." Sky spoke in a low tone and seemed to be asking a question that I couldn't hear. I looked at the white light again and it moved slowly to the left, then to the right.

"Wait a minute..." I was skeptical. "There's got to be some explanation for these things." And there surely was, but at the time I knew only that these were not stars or planets, they were not airplanes and they were not anything that required electrical power since the entire Wadi was blacked out.

Earlier in the evening I had spoken to Ahmed about the previous night. He was curious also and had hoped that I had something to help his confusion. I didn't, but I did ask him about the word, Jinn, that the Bedouins kept repeating.

Ahmed explained that a Jinn was the origin of our magical "genie" in a lamp. It was a factual phenomena where certain people were either born with the ability, or learned how to develop the ability, to communicate with certain spirit entities. They were magicians or shamans, but were considered bad since Islam demanded devotion to Allah alone. He told me that the Bedouins were afraid of us because of the strange light and the odd wind that came quickly and died suddenly. They had also heard about the cloud that vanished on our way to the Empty Quarter.

Clouds, it seems, had a special significance to Bedouins. It was supposedly said of Mohammed, the Great Prophet of Allah, that wherever he went the clouds followed him. Clouds were special in this arid climate, and they were a welcome natural phenomenon. But somehow I had the idea that there was something more to the story.

The air was cooler on the roof. I was almost ready to sleep there when the electricity suddenly came back on and the lights from the street dimmed the stars and the special lights we were observing. Sky decided to stay on the roof and have another cigarette but I was much too tired and I left for my room and the ceiling fan.

Things were strange in Yemen. The entire country was so different from anything I had ever seen. So much was different that even the lights and the cloud, at the time, seemed somehow normal.

For a moment I remembered my past life, the one I had left behind, and I wondered what I was doing here in Yemen. I thought about everything that had happened since my trip to Alaska and whether it was all somehow related. My head was spinning, but I knew that the call to prayer would soon be starting a new day. I had to keep my sanity together, for myself and for Sky.

The next morning, at sunrise, the call to prayer was unusual. A young man's voice sang somewhere in the street below my window. This was a change from the blasts that usually came from towering bullhorns and were often pre-recorded. As I lay on the floor I noticed the ceiling fan was not turning and assumed that the power had failed again.

The hotel was located next to the mosque, which was very small. There was a small dining area outside the hotel and I sat drinking some chai and watched the men assemble by a public fountain and wash their hands and feet before entering the mosque to pray.

Ahmed was up already and sat at my table. I asked if he had seen Sky and whether she was awake. "Yes. She is awake but she stay in her room writing in that book. I see always writing in that book."

Abdul was already packing the Toyota for our next destination. I had seen him earlier, washing the mud from his Land Cruiser with a rag and a bottle of water. He felt bad about getting lost and was anxious to drive us out of the hot Wadi and to get us settled in a more comfortable hotel on the coastal town of Al Mukalla.

Breakfast consisted of hot chai and freshly baked flat bread, the staple food in Yemen. Sky showed up just in time so eat the remaining piece. She was clutching her journal and seemed distant and quiet. We drove most of the day to reach Al Mukalla. Our hotel was right on the Arabian Sea and overlooked an oceanic panorama with lots of maritime traffic.

I was worried about Sky and was hoping that we would be able to sit down and talk about the odd things that had been happening. It seemed that whenever there was time to speak in private, she would avoid me. She only joined me for dinner that evening when Ahmed was already sitting with me and any significant discussion was unlikely. Again she had her journal in her hand.

The dining room was outside and adjacent to an swimming pool. Ahmed ordered an alcohol free beer and we were finishing our meal with coffee when a waiter asked if my name was Dan.

He handed me a piece of paper and I noticed it was a fax. It was from Australia and had somehow been routed to the hotel. There was some text and then a large highly contrasted image of a stone with the old writing.

We were all impressed that a message could arrive there, in the middle of Yemen, from the Australian outback, and we joked about this for a while. The message was from John and he was describing the image of a stone that had been found in a grave that was thousands of years old. He recognized the symbols and wanted me to translate it and reply.

At first I was a little annoyed. Certainly this could wait until I was

in Australia, or at least back in the luxurious Taj Sheba hotel in Sana'a. I showed the image to Ahmed and Sky.

"So what is this stone say?" Ahmed asked. I explained that I would need my laptop. I was about to stash the fax in my pocket when Sky asked to look at it.

"It says 'by her heart and will, it shall be so.' It looks like a stamp of approval that the queen would use, or someone that represented the queen." Ahmed laughed, thinking that Sky was being humorous. I smiled, but a few of the symbols were familiar to me. The combination of "lamed" and "beth", proto-Canaanite letters that mean love and heart, were there. So were the letters yod-hey-yod, or the future form of the verb "to be." But how would Sky know this?

After dinner I went to my hotel room, leaving Ahmed with Sky in the lounge. I plugged in my laptop and validated the translation. I was puzzled yet excited that she had been correct. It was an odd coincidence and I was anxious to tell her. I immediately left the room with the laptop and looked for her in the lounge. But Ahmed was sitting there alone.

"Where is she?" I asked.

"She went back to her room." I went to her room and knocked on the door. The window was open and I could see that it was empty inside so I returned to my room and listened to some strange music on a radio that was beside the bed. The music was odd and reminded me of the Siberian tunes I had heard in the Inuit village in Alaska. It was a lengthy melody that, together with the balmy sea breezes coming through my window, lulled me to sleep.

I woke up a few hours later, surprised that I had fallen asleep. The clock read 2:40 in the morning and the radio was now hissing with static. I was in a cold sweat and remembered that I had just had an unusual dream. I sat up in the bed and tried to remember it.

In my dream, I was frightened by something, but the danger was not clear to me. I was in the same hotel and was worried about finding Sky so we could both run to safety. I remember looking for her in the lounge and in her room and then in the dining area, and I had a kind of desperation that she was lost, and guilt because I had not kept track of her.

I remember going out into the street and finding no one there but a woman, clad in a colorful veil and accompanied by a young boy and, of all things, a goat. There was something familiar about the woman, although I could not see her face. I sensed that I should follow her to safety. She walked slowly by me and then vanished around the corner of a building or a wall of some type. I looked for her but they were all gone - the old woman, the child and the goat.

This was a strange dream. It was apparently meaningless, yet it had affected me emotionally - so much that it woke me up.

As I sat there, I heard a knock on my door. "Dan? Dan? Are you still up?" It was Sky.

"Dan, come outside. I have something to show you. Come on. I know it's late but it's worth it."

I was still feeling the effects of my dream when I opened the door. Sky was holding a pair of binoculars and seemed wide awake and excited. She kept insisting that I hurry and follow her and then led me to some stairs that ended in the rocky beach of the Arabian Sea.

"Look out there. What do you see?" I looked out at the dark horizon. There were some distant clouds that were illuminated by the Moon and several shadows and lights that I imagined were from the tankers and barges that were anchored there. "Do you see the marigold lights?" "The marigold lights? What do you mean?"

"Well, yellow orange lights I mean. Do you see them?" I did see some lights but they were lights from the boats... or were they. "Keep watching them."

I saw the lights slowly moving from left to right, then up and down. At times the lights moved above the horizon and a faint shadow of something round could be outlined against the Moon light. "And look over here!" Sky pointed to the far right of the lights and there were the familiar red and blue and white lights that we had seen the night before. "I counted them. There are 18 in all. That's why they said they were more than three."

We looked at these lights in her binoculars. It didn't help much. It was so dark that it only confirmed that the lights were not a point of light, such as a light bulb or a flame, but were actually glowing orbs, circular in shape, and they seemed to be able to move independently.

I tried to insist that the lights were fishing boats, or reflections. I did this out of my own fear that we were actually looking at something more complex. Sky got angry at me for this. I told her that she should get some sleep - an odd thing to say with these strange events happening - and she promptly told me to go to hell.

The argument was futile. I was being protective while Sky was being curious. I felt out of control and a bit threatened by my own fear of the unknown. For some reason, Sky did not. I was going to tell her about her success at translating the image of John's stone, but it seemed like it would only feed her brazen attitude.

As I returned to my room I also felt jealous of Sky. If there was something happening from her interaction with these lights then it had obviously rejected me. I felt left out, confused and afraid.

Chapter 26 - The Oasis

I was awakened by the hotel phone. It was late by Yemen standards and our breakfast was ready. Abdul had already washed the Land Cruiser with his bottles of water and was shining the chrome with a rag. He smiled, but I could tell he was anxious to begin the daily trip to see more writing and more ruins of the Sabaean empire.

Sky did not come down immediately. She had apparently stayed up all night and came to the table with her journal. She said she wasn't hungry but wanted "lots of coffee."

As she sat across from me in the dining area, I could see her face without the veil, and I noticed she looked thinner. She was already quite thin but now there were lines on each side of her mouth, furrows actually, and her eyes had a sunken appearance.

I tried to convince her to have some food but she resisted. When I tried again to convince her to have some bread, at the very least, she told me to mind my own business. Ahmed, who had been sitting at the table, gave me a quick glance and raised his eyebrows. Sky saw this and swore at me, then went back to her room.

"So, is something wrong with you two?" Ahmed was concerned. "I notice she is writing all the time in this book. And she does not get enough sleep. I see her outside last night. It was very late. Why she is out so late?"

I confided in Ahmed that Sky was still looking at some lights that appeared at night. I told him that I didn't know what they were and I asked if he had ever seen these kinds of lights before.

"I have seen sometimes things in the sky. But I think maybe they are an airplane or some kind of cloud. But I have not seen anything like what you saw that night. It is probably nothing. Why she is so interested in this?"

I wanted to tell him about her "conversations," but I didn't. I remembered the story about the Jinn. But my real reason was that I didn't want to appear crazy. Sure, I had seen the lights move and flash, almost on cue. And I had seen them through binoculars and knew that they were something big and different. But until I could understand this phenomenon, I was going to keep quiet about it.

The trip from Al Mukalla to Maifa was very long. Even Abdul got tired of driving and asked to stop and rest. We found a patch of palm trees off the highway and parked under some shade. There was a mud brick house there and some farm animals. But most important, there was water. A small gasoline engine pattered away and brought a stream of fresh

water from deep under the aquifer. The water fed an irrigation canal that kept the small oasis green and fertile.

Abdul and Ahmed joined Nasser under a tree and they opened a large plastic bag of qat leaves and began to chew. Sky wandered off with her journal and made it obvious that she did not want my company so I gathered my camera and began to photograph an ox.

"Hello! Hello! Surah!" A young boy approached me, smiling. He had seen me take a picture of the ox and thought it was amusing. I smiled back at him. He then reached into his pocket and pulled out a string of colored beads, blue and turquoise in color, and extended his hand to me.

What happened next is hard to explain. It was as if time stopped at that instant. I stared at the beads. They reminded me of some other beads. The dream from the other night suddenly came back to me, played inside my mind like a re-run of an old movie, being remembered as it played again.

In 1986 my mother died from cancer. It was a sudden death and was very traumatic to me. After she was buried I needed a change of scene and so packed a red Chevy van with my sleeping bag and went to visit friends out West.

It was early spring. I decided to visit the four-corners area and was camping in Monument Valley, on the Navajo Reservation. I was in a campground but it was off season, and I was the only one there.

Towards sunset I was sitting in the front of the van, looking out over the valley at the mesa, orange from the setting sun. The sky was clear and cold. I had a little marijuana with me and I found a small half-smoked joint in the ash tray and took a few hits from it. It was peaceful and I was relaxed.

Suddenly, over one of the mesas, about a half mile in front of me, I saw something white. It looked at first to be a balloon, reflecting the sunlight. But it was much too large for that and it kept appearing from behind the mesa, then would quickly retreat behind and out of sight.

I watched this for a few minutes. I tried to imagine every possibility, from a parachute caught by the wind to a cloud. But the object was round and must have been at least 40 feet wide. I had a pair of strong binoculars in the glove compartment and looked at the object through them. I realized that I could focus on the surface but there still was no detail, it remained smooth and white. The edge was also sharp, eliminating the cloud theory.

I watched this for about 20 minutes until it went behind the mesa and never returned. I must have kept watching for another half hour, or until it got dark.

The following morning, bright and early, I dressed warmly and followed

the road that went in front of the mesa. It was a good hike and took me most of an hour to reach the mesa.

I looked for the object but it was not there. The terrain was so full of ravines and rocks that, whatever it was, it could not have settled there anyway. It was a mystery. I climbed a trail that took me to the top of the mesa, thinking I would get a better view of the surroundings, but the trail ended abruptly at a sharp cliff and I had to return to the bottom.

I was about ready to walk back to camp when I heard a high pitched sound, like bells, that seemed to be getting louder. When the sound was loud enough to seem close, I got to my feet and began to walk to the main trail to see what was causing it. There, walking slowly, was an old woman wearing a long coat. Her long hair was black and gray and her face was full of wrinkles. She was accompanied by a small boy and a goat, with bells on a collar. It was the bells I had heard in the distance.

The young boy approached me while the woman continued to walk with the goat. He looked to be about seven or eight. He extended his hand to me and held some beads - turquoise in color - and smiled. I thought he was trying to sell me the beads and so discouraged him by showing the palm of my hand to him. Again he showed me the beads and again I rejected them. He finally joined the old woman and they continued on up the trail to the top of the mesa.

The woman was dressed in traditional Navajo attire. She was so photogenic that I remembered I had brought my camera and I wanted to take her picture. I was even feeling guilty about my rejection of the beads and thought that I would buy them. I hurried along the trail to meet up with them and to start a conversation. But they were not there. I climbed the trail back to the top of the mesa. From there I could see everything, but the woman, the boy and the goat were gone.

And so all of this came back to me, some fifteen years later, as the young oasis boy showed me his prayer beads. Why did I remember that now? Why did I have the similar dream the previous night? Was I losing my mind?

[RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND](#)

Chapter 27 - The Wise Men

In the distance we could see the sun hiding behind some clouds. The wind picked up and it was getting cooler. Abdul, Nasser and Ahmed had been chewing qat for almost two hours. They all had a bulge in their cheeks the size of a golf ball and the blanket where they were sitting was cluttered with green stalks and the discarded thick leaves from

their bouquets.

The young boy climbed atop the mud brick house and stood on the roof with the cool wind in his face. Soon the afternoon call to prayer came from some distant mosque, as if carried by the wind, and he was kneeling and prostrating himself in prayer.

It was a beautiful sight to see such devotion to God at such a young age. Certainly Yemen was a blessed land. The people were poor but they didn't act poor. They shared with each other and prayed together. It had always been that way, even in the days of Queen Sheba. The Queen began her reign worshipping the Moon and Sun. But through her marriage to Solomon she learned about the One God and brought this faith back to her kingdom.

We were following the old Sabaeen trade route now. From the port of Al Mukalla the road was built on top of the camel caravan trails. This oasis was part of that route.

We were heading for the ruins of Mayfa, an important oasis in the old kingdom where caravans would rest, take on water and supplies, and then proceed West to Aden, where they could cross the Red Sea to Ethiopia and Egypt. If Queen Sheba had moved her kingdom to Ethiopia, as the translated text suggested, then Mayfa would have been the first major stop on this exodus.

Mayfa was also the place where, according to legend, the Three Wise Men of the Bible first saw the star over the Eastern mountains, signaling the birth of Jesus. There was not much left to remind anyone of the historical significance of the village. It was mostly rubble.

We drove there as the sun was almost setting. We all walked among the stones, looking for petroglyphs or writing, and eventually we gravitated to what looked like an old city gate, made from brown stones. There was some shade there and we paused to share some bottled water. As we were sitting and resting, Ahmed noticed that one of the large stones that was still intact in the wall had a collection of letters etched on its face.

We photographed the faint letters from different angles and copied the writing on a piece of paper. Sky spent some time looking at each symbol up close and ran her fingers over the faint lines in the stone. The writing was very old and in the Sabaeen style. The area was also remote and uninhabited. Since there was no evidence of any archaeological activity, the inscriptions were unknown and had remained unread for millennia.

Stimulated by the qat, our companions returned to the Toyota and were eager to keep moving. I walked back with Sky. She had been quiet but suddenly and casually said, "She was here. The Queen. She stayed here."

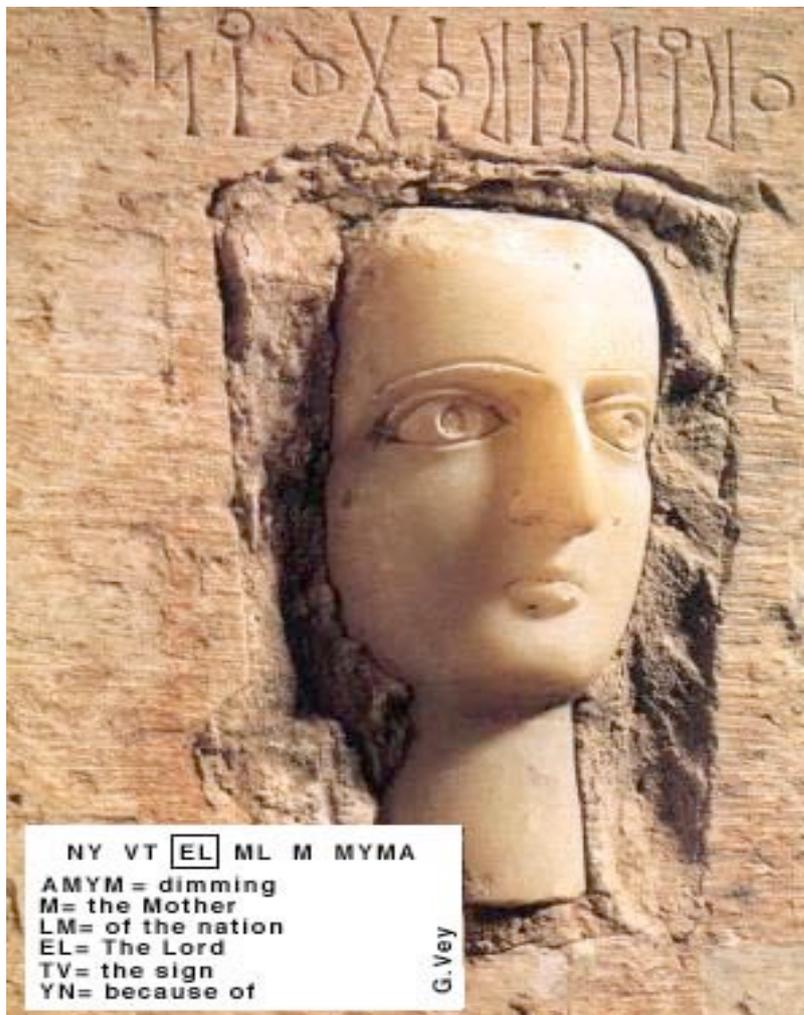
I asked her to explain what she said and she told me that she thought

Queen Sheba had stayed at the site on her trip to Ethiopia. At first I thought she was just making conversation, since we had maintained a silent feud from our exchange at Sif. But then I sensed she was telling me something that she had learned, either by instinct or some other ability. It was a bit whimsical, but I went along with it and dared not to anger her again.

"So you somehow sense that she was here?"

"I know she was here. And she was sad. She was trying to get over the fact that she was leaving her son buried in the ground. The reality was just sinking in and she didn't want to leave. So she stayed here for a while." I was impressed that Sky understood the history of the Queen's migration. She had obviously been reading the translations I made but these extra bits of detail were, I thought, unfounded.

Portrait of the Queen of Sheba



It was dark when we arrived at the city of Rada. We stayed in a small hotel that lacked electrical outlets in the room. I found an outlet in the hall and obtained power for my laptop by wiring my plug to the outlet with two pieces of wire. It worked and, with recharged batteries, I returned to my room and attempted the Mayfa inscriptions. The text was, indeed, from the Queen's exodus.

"We have arrived from the sands to pray for the mound, O Lord. The horizon held beauty so we stopped the caravan. Here, where none of this prophesy is known, we do not speak of the Son; the mound. We plan to return across this border. We leave our insignia. The Mother understands the evil about to arrive. The Son of Jinn, the Lord, is under the ground. Say nothing. She cried flying over the ocean. No spirit shall defile the only Son of the Jinn. You are beautiful to me. Know this, O Lord."

I was struck by the word "jinn" that appeared in the translation. It was actually in the database I had prepared and it was being used to describe the Queen's son.

But who then was the Jinn? Sheba or Solomon?

I was excited to share this with Sky and knocked on her door. She was not in her room. The door was unlocked so I opened and called her name. The room was empty but I noticed that she had left her journal on the bed.

Curiosity has gotten many men in trouble. This was certainly one of those times. I knew it was wrong to look in her private journal. It was a mistake, but I did. And what I read devastated me.

Chapter 28 - The Truth Is Written

The journal was bound in black. Sky had decorated the outside with nail polish and the inside pages were full of illustrations she had drawn. There were also pieces of paper, menus, tickets and business cards of people and places we visited - all pasted and carefully documented. At first, I thought it was a beautiful piece of art and I was about to put it down and commend her for being so thorough with her recording.

But I did not put it down. I was interested in her account of the lights and wanted to know what they had been relaying to her, or if she was somehow delusional. I knew that I had witnessed some unexplained things, but perhaps I was just getting caught up in the exotic ambiance of Yemen.

I found the dates for our first encounter in the Empty Quarter. I read about her message in the car, her notes on the imploding cloud and her account of the lights near the Ishtar Temple. So far, there was nothing unexpected.

But as I read on I noticed that Sky had become obsessed with the lights. She detailed her attempts at communicating and even had names for the first light, Ellie, which was short for El Shaddai. The notes were personal and documented the effect all of this was having on her.

I scanned down the pages, half reading the words, looking for some clues that would explain her reticent moods. Then I focused on the word "monster."

There were suddenly many references to "the monster" on the pages, and long narratives of how much she detested and loathed him. The monster seemed to be showing up every day and seemed always to frighten. She wanted to be away from him.

Sure enough, it was me. I was that monster. Somehow I had become vilified. I had become the antagonist in her journal. From the night at Al Mukalla, when I had questioned the lights on the ocean, I was the enemy. She spent as much time chiding me as she did writing about Yemen.

I was stunned. The book dropped to the bed and I returned to my room. Sky had been my best friend and confidant. We had shared so much and had enjoyed each other's companionship. Nevertheless, she apparently hated me. It made no sense. I had never mistreated her. Yemen suddenly seemed like a chamber in hell and I felt the whole adventure had abruptly turned to sand.

All that evening I was anxious to confront her, but she didn't return to her room until after I was asleep. I didn't really feel like sleep. The room was small and ugly. But my energy had run dry, like a depleted battery, and I fell into an involuntary coma. I even slept through the last call to prayer.

I woke up in the night in a sweat again. It was another nightmare, or rather the same nightmare. I dreamed of that little boy, the goat and the old woman. This time they were back in Monument Valley, where I had originally seen them. There was that same sense of urgency and impending doom. I searched for Sky. I wanted to take her away from the danger, but she was nowhere to be found. The old lady appeared, clothed in a veil. The little boy and the goat walked in front of her. They all disappeared around the corner of a mesa and I hurried to follow. But this time something unexpected happened. The mesa simply crumbled and fell, signaling my cue to wake up.

It was a few hours before sunrise and the morning prayers. I laid in my bed and stared at the ceiling until I could hear the noises from the kitchen and smell the flat bread cooking. I felt like shit. I tried to shave but my hands shook and I cut my face. I finished washing and went straight for the dining room and the fresh coffee.

While I sat drinking my coffee, I decided not to mention anything to

Sky. I could see Abdul washing the Toyota with his water bottle and I did not want to subject him, or anyone else, to what might result from some sort of confrontation. While I sat there, Sky came down and joined me at the table and shared some of my bread.

Sky was tired but showed no signs of being afraid of me, or of hating me. She even asked about the translations and I told her that she had been correct in guessing their meaning. But was it a guess? Or did she have some innate ability to read this dead language?

We talked about Abdul and laughed at the weak coffee. There was no sign of conflict and, for a moment, things seemed to return to normal. But were they?

Our next destination was in an old palace that had been converted to a museum. It has dozens of ancient artifacts with the old alphabet, mixed with more recent material that was written in Himyaritic script. The more recent script used many of the same letters as the Sabaeans, but these letters had a different phonetic meaning to accommodate either the Semitic or Arabic dialects.

At the Sheba site, Mohammed was using a 2000 year old dialect to translate writing that was a thousand years older. While Arabic is derived from a Semitic tongue, like proto-Canaanite, and does share many of the same words, the linguistics are vastly different.

	T H A M U D I C			
	NAJDI	HJAZI	TABUKI	
a	آ ا	خ ا ن	خ	ا
b	ب	ب ن	ب ن	ب
t	ت	ت	ت ف	ت
ē	ē	ē	ē	ē
j	ج	ج ه ح	ج ه	ج
h		ح ه ط	ح ه	ح
h		ح	ح	ح
d	د ا	د ا	د ا	د
d		د ه	د ه ن	د
r	ر	ر	ر	ر
z		ز ا ل	ز ت ن	ز
s		س ه ف	س ه ف	س
s				
š		ش ر ن د	ش ر ن د	ش
š		ش	ش د ن	ش
q	ق ح	ق		ق
t		ث	ث ه ف	ث
z			ز	ز
c	ع	ع	ع ه ن	ع
g			ج د ف	ج
f	ف	ف ر ن ز ن	ف ر ن ز ن	ف
q		ق ه ف	ق	ق
k	ك ن	ك ن ط ن	ك ن ط	ك
l	ل	ل	ل ل	ل
m	م ن ن	م ن ن	م ن ن ن ن	م
n	ن	ن ا ن ن	ن ا	ن
h	ه ت ي	ه	ه ل	ه
w	و ه ف	و ه	و ه ن	و
y	ي	ي	ي	ي

(Above) Earlier attempts to translate the symbols failed because the alphabet was believed to be proto-Arabic. This is like looking for your lost keys under a streetlight although you lost them in the dark bushes next to it.

The Semitic writers liked to string many long sentences together with words like "but," "and," "also." In contrast, the Himyaritic text from Ethiopia used a vertical line to denote the end of a word or phrase.

Proto-Canaanites were fond of using "to make" as their predicate, instead of "to be." In practical terms this would mean that the proto-Canaanites might write, "I made to build a great temple," while the same phrase in Arabic would be, "A great temple was built by me."

It appeared that this distinction was not relevant in the museums of Yemen. Artifacts and stones of different eras were displayed side by side. I learned to search for the older writing by scanning the stone for pairs of the letters "nun-lamed," to "make" or "produce," and I would only attempt to translate these items.

Sky followed me around the exhibits and copied the letters while I hunted for more artifacts. Eventually I got ahead of her and discovered a beautiful piece of orange granite with a very worn and faded script. It had the "nun-lamed" letters and I carefully copied the text in my notebook. For some reason, the stone was displayed with the script upside down. I made a note of this and continued through the museum.

We eventually left the museum and walked through a small suq that sold antique jewelry and dresses. Sky stopped and looked at some necklaces while I sat outside the shop. An old man with a beard was sitting in the shade on the curb, nodding his head rhythmically in silent prayer. I watched as passers-by approached him and gave him coins. When his head turned towards me I could see that he was blind on both eyes.

Islam is a compassionate faith. One of the demands that is imposed upon Muslims is the giving of alms to the poor and disabled. Unlike Western culture, Islam does not look down on the unfortunate and resent their support. On the contrary, this blind man was actually helping those that gave him money by allowing them to meet their obligation to Allah.

I noticed that the old man was keenly aware of his surroundings, despite the cloudiness of his eyes. He thanked everyone who made donations while his fingers mechanically moved a string of prayer beads in his right hand.

When Sky exited the jewelry shop, she walked in front of the man. He immediately became agitated and began to shout. Ahmed motioned for me to follow him quickly and we hurried from the suq with the man now yelling excitedly in our direction. I could not tell what he was saying but it made the people in the suq stop and glare at us. Later, in Arabic, when Ahmed explained the incident to Abdul and Nasser he used

the "jinn" word again.

When we returned to the hotel I went straight to my air conditioned room to download some photographs I had taken with a digital camera. Sky was in her room, writing in her journal. I was much too hot to do anything. After a few minutes my telephone rang.

"Mister Dan. Could you please come down to the lobby?" It was Ahmed. "Is Sky with you? Please if you could come alone. Is this possible?"

I agreed and quickly went to the lobby where I found Ahmed and another well dressed man. The man was introduced to me as the director of the museum we had just visited. He told me that he had heard of my work from the Minister in Sana'a and he wanted to ask me a favor.

He held a manila envelope and handed it to me. It contained a black and white photograph of the same stone I had seen earlier, displayed upside down. "Mister Dan. Can you please see if you can translate this?"

Ahmed smiled at me. "I tell him that you can do this. I hope that you can do this now? Or maybe later? And I will give to him something that you will write for me?"

It was a long script, four lines of about a dozen characters each, but I had already recognized some familiar words. I agreed to work on the translation immediately and Ahmed assured the man, in Arabic, that he would meet with him later and give him the results.

When the man left, Ahmed asked me to sit with him for a minute. "You see this man who you just met? He is very important man. There is something special about the stone? I don't know. But you can do this now for him?"

"Sure. No problem."

Ahmed asked me about Sky. "So. Things are better with you and Sky?" I didn't know how to answer that. I suppose they could be considered better if I forgot the "monster" comments in her journal. I confided in Ahmed that I really did not know her very well and that she seemed to be overwhelmed by the cultural differences in Yemen. I told him that I was worried about the attention she was getting and the apparent obsession she had with the lights.

Ahmed was upset at my mention of the lights. "Yes. She is always writing in that book. What is she writing about? The lights?"

I joked that she was probably, at that very moment, writing in the journal. Ahmed shared my concern. He suggested that he would call Sky and take her to have chai while I worked on the translation. It seemed like a healthy distraction and he went to call her while I returned with the photograph.

The stone was about three feet wide and a foot tall. It was chopped at both ends, like so many salvaged examples of the Sabaeen masonry, and had been recycled in some later construction. It took two hours to translate. It read as follows:

"... the chamber of the Lord also made to remain in the place ...

"... but the sky made to open up to the evil fire and made to burn ...

"... but because of the blind prophets and the friend of the enemy ...

"... rise up to close the aperture in the sky to heal the nation ..."

The text was familiar. Not only did this stone remind me of the other stone, also displayed upside down in a Sana'a museum, but the translation suggested that it was part of the same prophecy.

The other stone also mentioned the "burning sky" and suggested that this would happen to destroy the enemies of the nation (Yemen) before the "Lord's chamber" would be moved or opened. This was relevant because of the possibility that the Ark was buried in Mareb, and was on the verge of being found. But it also echoed the script I had translated in Colorado and the phrase used by the Inuit woman in Alaska.

The coincidence was now becoming more apparent. There was a common thread in this string of events. But what did it mean?

Just after the evening call to prayer, Ahmed returned with Sky. They both appeared to be in a good mood. Ahmed had taken Sky to visit something called the NGO (Non-Government Organization) that was a charity established to help widows and problem girls with finances and emotional support. It was a warm environment and Sky made many friends there. I noticed that she had her hands painted in henna by one of the women and the design was truly beautiful.

Dinner was ready in the dining room of the hotel and Sky left to change her clothes while I gave the translated text I had worked on to Ahmed. He left immediately and thanked me.

The food at our hotel was delicious. We enjoyed the variety of different courses that would be served up as they were prepared and cooked to order. The usual meal started with some chicken broth and was quickly followed by a huge piece of round, flat bread, which served as the plate for a variety of smaller bowls containing meat and rice, and sometimes even banana.

I asked Sky about the translations and specifically how she had understood them so accurately. To be honest, I don't think she understood the process, or how difficult it was for me, even with the laptop. "It just makes sense to me somehow," was her comment. I was

particularly impressed with her ability to make the words sound smooth instead of the awkward phrases that I often translated. Her reply was nothing short of genius, "It's all about sentiment - not sentence."

She was absolutely correct. The old writing was full of emotion. I remembered the wall at the Sheba site where the sadness of Menelik's plight was worded as "the happiness of the Son was poisoned..." Sky was somehow in harmony with this style of expression and many of the translations would have hopelessly failed in conveying their meaning without her.

I wanted to ask her about the lights. It was such an emotionally charged topic that I was afraid to mention them. I sat and watched her eat. No one had ever entered my world like her and shared my odd attraction for the strange things of life. Most people even avoided discussing such matters with me. But Sky not only sampled my world, she excelled in it. If I was on some kind of quest then she was also. For a moment I felt good about this. I thought it would guarantee a bond that would draw us close as friends and co-actors in this drama.

But then I remembered the journal.

Sky was still looking thin but I was happy to see that her appetite was healthy. At the end of the meal I had some jelly that came in plastic container with an attractive label, written in Arabic.

"Can I have your jelly label for my journal?"

The time was not right to say it, but I did anyway. I told her that I had looked in her journal and had read about the "monster." I told her I was hurt and puzzled by the words and I asked her to explain why she had written this. That was a big mistake.

Instead of discussing the contents of her journal, the issue was clearly and rightly focused on my violation of her privacy. It was an argument I was meant to lose. Her anger erupted and spewed molten hostility all over me. I had no defense for what I did and the private comments that she had written now seemed so trivial compared to my betrayal of trust and respect.

All my life I have believed that intent was more important than action. Sometimes fate has a way of changing the outcome of our best plans. A plan to guarantee peace can accidentally make the consequences of war much worse. A drug designed to alleviate symptoms can accidentally kill a patient. An attempt to get close to someone can push them away. It was clear that I had become the monster in Sky's journal.

We went to other cities and other archaeological sites in Yemen. Every evening Sky would find a rooftop or secluded place and wait for the lights to appear. Even on cloudy nights when the stars were hidden, the main light she called "Ellie" would appear and dance for her. If there was any magical communication between the light and Sky, it was buried

in her journal and barred from my view.

Slowly, we managed to become friends again. But she had, by then, constructed a wall around herself that guaranteed her secrecy and preserved her magic. It seemed fitting to me that she understood Queen Sheba's words so well. The Queen had built a wall to hide her secret for three thousand years. Her writing was just now being understood. But it would likely take a miracle for me to understand Sky.

Our trip to Yemen ended in Sana'a. I had one final visit with the Minister and was reminded again that my translations could be dangerous in the current political climate. We had a farewell dinner with our guides and departed for the Australian outback.

Before we left, Sky stayed up to engage the lights from the roof of the hotel. I asked if she thought they would be in Australia when we got there. "Of course they will."

And she was correct.

Chapter 28 - In The Land Of Oz

We arrived in Sydney in bad shape. Our internal clocks were still on Yemen time and, just to confuse things more, it was the winter in the Southern hemisphere.

Australia is a strange and mystical place. It is one of the oldest continents and has been relatively unaffected by plate tectonics. Its mountains have long been eroded away and so most of it is as flat as a table. The original inhabitants, the Aboriginal people, are one of the oldest living races on planet Earth. They have a consciousness that is so different from any other people that it almost defies description by anyone but an Aboriginal.

The continent is about as large as the forty-eight states but the entire population equals that of New York City. Needless to say, there's a lot of room. Most of the population clings to the outer edge, leaving the interior wild and unpopulated.

Our destination was one of the few areas of Australia that had mountains - the Flinders Range in South Australia. This was the location of the other geographic point on Hurtak's map, the vortex, and the spot where there was more writing in the ancient language.

It took almost three days for the next scheduled train to depart Sydney for the long journey West. We spent the time sleeping in the day and then becoming wide awake at midnight. I knew a cure for our problem but I was unfamiliar with the local customs.

Sky and I went to a local pub and drank some beer while we watched a Scottish band play tunes from the homeland. We stayed in the back with the serious drinkers and spotted a young man with long hair. We sensed he was a smoker and he sensed we were yanks. Eventually we bought him a beer and purchased a small bag of marijuana to smoke in the room. It helped.

The train ride lasted 36 hours. We would be in Australia for a few weeks. I hoped that this would be enough time to forget any problems that happened in Yemen and to heal our friendship. Again, my intentions were good, but perhaps over ambitious.

John McGovern met us at a scheduled stop and took us to his farm, on the fringe of the outback. John had a likable face that matched his voice. Just hearing him talk reminded me that I had a friend.

John's home was just what I needed. It was a typical Aussie farmhouse. The front and back door were on opposite ends of a long corridor that ran through the middle of the house. The outside was surrounded on all sides by a large covered porch. John also had two gentle women living with him, Mira and Moira, a collection of lap friendly cats and two roosters that constantly fought, yet were inseparable.

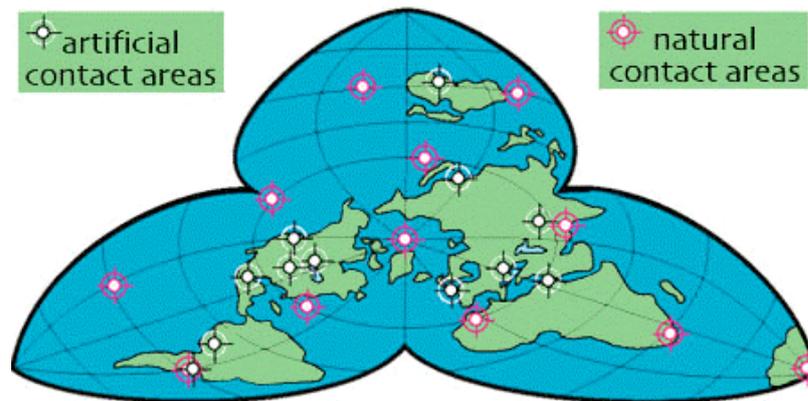
We were well rested when we arrived and I told John about our adventures, minus the encounters with the lights. I thought I would leave that to Sky, if she wanted, so that in the telling of the story to John, I might hear what really happened.

John was a brilliant man. He was a retired fisherman who was self-taught. He used his small i-Mac computer to research just about everything. He was a well-surfed expert on Australian culture and was thoroughly familiar with Hurtak's work.

One of the first evenings we were there, huddled together in front of his fireplace, Sky told about the lights we had seen. I watched the faces as she told about their movement and her communication with them. John and the women anxiously looked at each other with raised eyebrows. But it was not a look of sympathy or ridicule. On the contrary, John and the two women both accepted the facts and congratulated Sky for being so fortunate.

John even had an explanation for them, although we were not ready to hear it yet. He suggested that El Shaddai was the messenger of Yah, the means through which Moses had spoken to the Lord. He also claimed that the same phenomenon was active in the vortex, the zone on Hurtak's map where such other worldly contact was propitious.

Here is that map again



Sky was pleased with their reaction and she seemed at ease with the women. I hoped this would be the start of a healing process for her - and for me. I listened to the conversation with skepticism. Sure, there was something unusual going on, but I was hesitant to believe in the words of a man I had met, who wore a black beret and who loved chocolate as much as I did.

John sensed the skepticism from my silence. "You just wait, mate. You wait 'til you see your petroglyphs in the outback. Just relax, mate. Let it happen."

I did relax. I felt at home with John. I was among friends and near the vortex.

The Lights Are Here, Too

In the evenings we sat on the porch waiting for some clear sky. It was cold and windy most of the time. But one evening it cleared and was warm enough to stay outside with just a sweater.

John, Mira and Moira were asleep. I was in the guest room but awake and Sky had been checking her e-mail on John's computer near the warm fireplace. She often went outside to smoke a cigarette and I could hear the door leading to the porch open and close.

"Hey Dan! Dan. Come see them." Sky was at my door insisting that I get dressed and come outside.

I told her to keep her voice down since our hosts were asleep. I hardly expected to see anything. The sky had been like thick soup since our arrival.

"So where are they?" I was looking up into the space over the house. The clouds were still there, but they opened periodically and revealed a rich view of the Milky Way. I didn't see any of the familiar lights though.

"See?" She seemed confident. "No. Look. Over there!"

Sky pointed to a large field in front of the farmhouse. In Australia, a large field is really large. This one was about a mile square and had been planted with feed grass that was just beginning to sprout through the soil. At first I didn't see anything, but I kept looking. Then I saw them.

Instead of points of light, the objects were much closer now and appeared egg shaped, about the size of a truck, and they had a faint glow. The luminescence was very weak at first. That is why I had not noticed them. But as my eyes adjusted I saw three of them at a distance of about a half mile from the porch.

"Is that a cloud or what..." I was the skeptic again.

"Fuck your clouds! That's no cloud, Dan." She was right. The objects pulsed and changed their brightness and hue. It wasn't a mechanical or abrupt change either. The hue changed from blue to red to white, but it did so in a gradual and erratic way that made me consider that it - whatever we were seeing - was alive.

For a moment I was paralyzed with fear. My hair stood on end and a tension started in my groin and electrified my spine. I couldn't have run for my life at that moment. The objects appeared just bright enough to be distinguished from the shadows and they were elevated from the ground by several feet.

I looked at Sky. She was sitting on the ground facing them and appeared to be in a trance, with a fixed stare. I could hear her saying something in a low voice but the wind blew through the field and muted the sound. I wanted to sit down also but I sensed we were being watched and that any movement might frighten them away, as if they were wild animals or something.

The lights then began to change color, from red to blue, in a patchy configuration. A change of color would erupt on the surface and spread out and eventually the objects would be a solid color, only to have the next color erupt somewhere else and spread. While this was happening the luminosity decreased until the light was gone.

With no light it was solid black in the field. It would have been futile to hike to the spot where they were seen since there were several fences and obstacles in the way.

We weren't sure what we had seen. We agreed that they were more or less egg shaped, smooth or round in construction, and about the size of a truck. Their ability to change colors seemed to explain how we had observed the blue and red objects. But the biggest surprise, for me, was that these things seemed not to be machines or vehicles, but living things.

I was freezing by the time we had given up seeing them again. I went back and warmed up in front of the fireplace. Sky had a smoke on the porch and paced. Later, I went to bed and I assumed Sky wrote about the event in her journal.

That night I had another dream. It was similar to my previous nightmares. But this time the old woman was alone. I was still trying to flee from danger and, like the other times, the woman represented the way out. I saw her going around the corner of the mesa again. She was almost out of sight. But I grabbed a hold of her arm and she turned to look at me - and it was my mother's face. I was shocked and let go. Then, as in my other dream, the entire mesa shattered like a piece of glass and crumbled to dust.

I was beginning to think I had mental problems. But if I did, then Sky most certainly did also. And if we both were ill, then John and Mira, Moira, Ahmed, Abdul and Dr. Hurtak were all just as insane.

The following day was a Saturday and we all slept late into the afternoon. It was my least favorite season and the days were short. I faded in and out of sleep. The darkness and silence of the outback were disorienting, like Nicki's windowless apartment in Fairbanks. Nicki. I wished I could hear some Greg Allman music...

Chapter 29 - Trip To Table Rock

John listened to our accounts of the lights with enthusiasm. He was not shocked by our revelation but suggested this might be a good time to visit an old Aboriginal site where there were some interesting petroglyphs. These wouldn't be the same style as the old writing, but he seemed confident we would find them interesting.

In almost every way, Australia is years ahead of the rest of the world. John's car, for example, was able to run on either gasoline, ethanol or propane - depending on which one was currently least expensive.

Switching from one fuel to another was as easy as pressing a button. Most filling stations had a variety of fuels. You could also leave your doors unlocked without fear of being killed or robbed. People were friendly and civil despite the fact that there were few policemen to enforce the law.

We drove to a small town just outside Adelaide. John stopped to speak with an old woman who gave us permission to access her land and we hiked a short distance to a large flat rock that resembled the slab foundation of a large building. It was a natural formation made of hard, dark brown stone. There were petroglyphs covering the entire surface.

The images, mostly circular shapes, had been pecked into the flat stone eons ago. There was thick dark varnish covering the petroglyphs and they were well worn by the wind and rain. It was almost impossible to see them until we climbed an elevated rock that looked down on the slab. Then the images began to make sense.



"It's like a movie." Sky had climbed to a high rock and was taking photographs of us as we walked on the slab and inspected the images.

Viewed up close, each circle seemed meaningless. But when the entire rock was viewed as a completed work it told a story. Each collection of circles was like a frame in an animation. The circles moved from side to side and danced around a stationary point. Some of the circles had radiating lines surrounding them.

John said the site was very old. Very old in Australia can be, well, very old. Time seems to have slowed for many millennia on the continent until the arrival of the colonists. The Aboriginal people lived without the need for technology or change - what we have come to call progress - for longer than we can imagine. It was not uncommon for some Aboriginal people to have traditions dating back to the last ice age.

The Aboriginal mind is specialized for Australia. John did his best to explain how these petroglyphs were likely part of the "dreamtime," or collective memory. Just as spiders know how to build their web, birds of a particular species can build a uniquely shaped nest or return to the same migration sites as their ancestors, the Aboriginal people have incorporated certain memories in their genes. These memories are not "learned," in our way of understanding the word. They are triggered by

certain rituals or images and then become part of their consciousness, just as if they were learned through direct experience.

These circles were likely part of this phenomenon.

I couldn't help but think of the lights and their observed movement when I inspected the site. It seemed to be a plausible explanation. But could these lights be that old? Had they always been here?

In the last "frame" of this slab there was a curious image that caught my eye. One of the circular shapes repeated as the image was read from right to left. Each time the round shape became more distorted until the final shape resembled a crude figure with a head, two arms and two legs. It was as if the circle had morphed and become like a human.

As we left the slab, John showed me a place where the earth was bright red. He explained that the area was rich in ochre, a substance that was often used to paint the body in ancient rituals and which has been found in ancient graves all over the globe. Ochre is not only a colorful substance but it is made from tiny crystals and has some unusual electrical properties. I scooped some for a souvenir.

It was getting dark again as we drove back to the farm. John promised to explain the vortex to me. But that would wait for some "tucker," a strange word for food, and the comfort of a warm fire.

John and I sat in the front of his car and talked. Sky, Mira and Moira spoke and laughed in the back. Life seemed good. I was in the vortex and among friends.

John was such an intelligent speaker. The topic he was trying to discuss with us was complex. But it also required an investment of faith to fully appreciate. New ideas are like that. Unless they have some prior experience to grab on to, they are usually short term residents in our consciousness. Well, unless you are Aboriginal.

I understood that there was something special about a vortex. If the same petroglyphs were found in these specific locations then they must have had something in common besides the language. But what?

The map I had been sent showed a dozen vortex points around the globe. One of the locations coincided with the Temple Mound in Jerusalem. That made sense. But the others were in remote places like the Ural Mountains, somewhere in Afghanistan, and off the Southern coast of Japan. Why such remote places?

John explained that the Earth had some type of energy field that surrounded it, more complex than the simple magnetic field with North and South poles. This field had twelve poles which coincided with certain fixed geographic points on the Earth. It was here that contact with "the management" was possible.

We joked about his choice of words. "The management" was actually better than trying to deal with over-used terms like, "aliens," "angels," or "Gods." He described a kind of corporate organization where sentient beings were functioning as students, interns, guides and go-betweens. So when "management" needed to call us to the home office, so to speak, they used the vortex.

These portals had been in operation for a very long time. The petroglyphs were presumably left by people who had witnessed this contact or had come specifically to engage the management. But he suggested another important possible role of the vortex that peaked my interest.

The Earth has suffered, and will again, significant radiation from a variety of celestial events, from super-novas to the mega-flares of our own Sun. These blasts are capable of destroying all life and we are only partially protected by our thin atmosphere and magnetic field. The energies are usually absorbed by the planet through little understood meridians that cover the surface of Earth. These facts were well known to me from an article I wrote a year before.

John proposed that a vortex was a "safe" zone, where survival was most propitious. He suggested that perhaps the management intervened during cataclysmic events and used these portals as an oasis of sorts.

I was not ready to believe this yet. I remembered the texts in Colorado which spoke of the "burning sky" and the need to hide from the Sun. The location of a safe zone would certainly be a plausible explanation for this text. I had my doubts though.

Sky listened to John attentively for a while, but she soon became agitated. She remarked that the whole discussion sounded too much like a religion and declared that she did not believe in a God. This wasn't the first time I had heard her say that, but I was surprised that she could still be so confident after all that we had seen.

John had used the term "management" to avoid any concepts of deity. He knew that our words were inadequate. But Sky even rejected this term and quoted a passage from Aleister Crowley: "Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law."

This marked a significant impasse for Sky. She left the room and again busied herself with her journal. She made fewer trips outside at night and began to lose weight again. I could tell she was homesick and we were as far from home as you could be.

It was difficult to watch her withdrawing into her own world. I loved Sky. I wanted us to be friends. I knew that she didn't understand my affection for her. I was older, another generation, but she was like a sister to me. Perhaps Sky knew only one type of love and my affection was misunderstood.

We made plans to visit the Flinders Range and to see the petroglyphs. This would be a long trip so John packed a tent and we bought provisions. I was anxious to be distracted from Sky's pain and John promised that the site would help me to understand more about the management and the big picture.

The Flinders Range

Australia is pretty flat, but just North of Adelaide in the state of South Australia there is a spectacular series of mountains called the Flinders Range. The mountains are not huge and not tall enough to have snow, but they are often rugged and lack vegetation.

The drive would take a whole day in the car but the road heading North was surprisingly new and better than many highway systems in the States.

John and I traveled alone, leaving Sky, Mira and Moira back at the farmhouse. I had hopes that this would allow some bonding to take place and that Sky would unwind.

We made a brief stop in Adelaide to visit some of John's friends. He had business in the city and his friends drove me to a small town called Highgate to speak with an elderly gentleman named Colin Norris. Norris was a retired engineer and lived alone in a small flat, surrounded by many books and file cabinets. Colin was familiar with the area we were about to visit in the Flinders Range, but for a different reason.

Colin had been collecting reports from people who had seen unusual lights and floating objects in the region for the past two decades. He was the director of The Australian International UFO Research, Inc. He made some instant coffee for me and then proceeded to tell me about his work.

Colin had a good relationship with all of the local police in South Australia. He was often used as a contact when they received reports of strange lights or unexplained phenomenon. He carefully followed up every report with a telephone interview and recorded all of the calls on reel-to-reel magnetic tape that he later transcribed and filed. His collection contained literally thousands of detailed reports and statistics.

Colin had noticed the cluster of reported lights in the area of our vortex, although he did not call it that. He played some of the recorded interviews for us. They were made by honest people, many frightened by what they had seen, and with nothing to gain from their reported sightings. Often the same sighting would be described by many different people and the similarities of their observations was compelling.

While the most interesting ones described metallic objects, hovering over farmland, most were of objects that had the same strange luminescence as we had observed that night on the farm.

Colin made it clear that he was not coming to any conclusion with regards to the origin of these objects. He was merely gathering the data in the hopes that someone would want to study it. He alluded to an illness and said that his time was short. He just wanted someone to appreciate his effort.

Oddly, no one seemed interested. He had approached representatives in the government, military and defense department but they all summarily refused to even look at his data. I could tell that he was frustrated and even resigned to defeat. His tapes and files were covered with dust and served as a reminder of the huge chunk of his life that was now about to be forgotten.

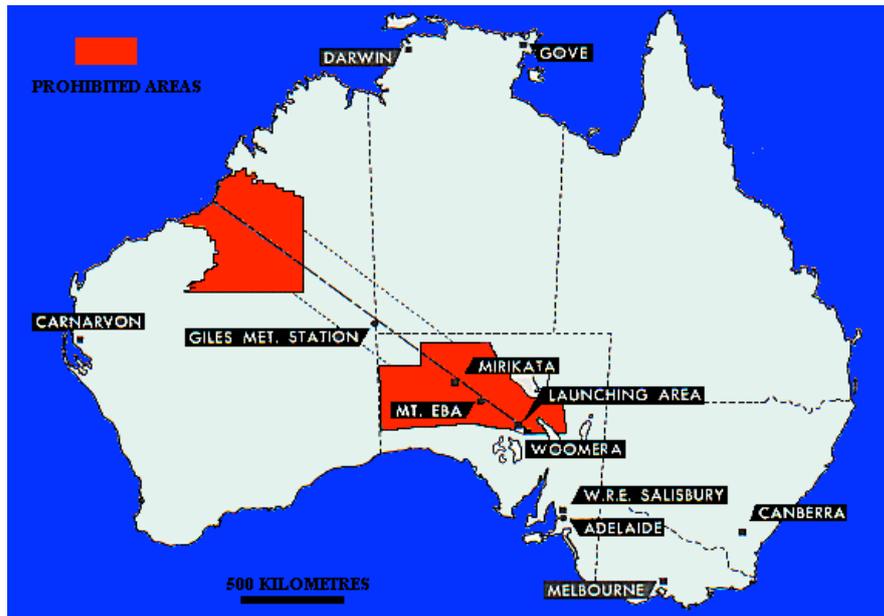
I told him that I was going to be visiting the Flinders Range. He found a large map of the region and spread it on his dining room table. We found his town on the map and he followed the road with his finger, North to Augusta, where the road forked. To the right the highway led to the Flinders Range National Park, a green color on his map. I had heard the area was lush with vegetation and that it was full of kangaroo and emus. North of the Flinders the terrain was orange, the color of desert sand and sun of the outback.

To the left of Augusta, the road went North to Woomera. Here the map had an interesting area colored red and marked "Restricted Area." I asked him what was there. Colin smiled, took a deep breath, and asked me to sit down.

Woomera was a strange place. Colin told me that it was the home of an American military installation for the Air Force Space Command and an important testing range for the Australian Defense Science and Technology Organization, a group of defense contractors based in Adelaide whose chief member was Raytheon. It was also an area with phased arrays, an antenna farm like Poker Flats in Alaska. Like Poker Flats, it also contained a missile testing range with silos and launch pads.

"Stay away from there," he warned.

Forbidden Australia in red



I sensed that Colin could have told me much more. Our brief conversation had made him tired and it was soon time for me to go. As I shook his hand I felt his weakness. But he kept hold of my hand for an extra few seconds and placed his other hand on my shoulder. "Good luck, Dan. Keep your eyes open."

The last thing I would have expected in the remote outback was a military installation. Even more strange was the fact that it was manned by the American Air force. What were they doing here in Australia? And why were they in this remote location? And why did this coincide with the vortex?

John finished his business and we were soon in his car and speeding North. The road was fairly straight and wide and there were few cars in either direction. "Most Australians never even come this far into the outback."

The time alone with John was a good opportunity to talk and listen. I learned that my old ideas about God, the bearded old man on a throne, were about as foolish as believing all matter was made from "stuff."

The universe is complex. Just as that "stuff" can be broken down into molecules, atoms, particles and quarks, deity is also diverse. The "management" that John described was a complex hierarchy of beings that watched human development and provided periodic adjustments.

"So there are no little green men in spaceships then?" I was being sarcastic, but also a little disappointed.

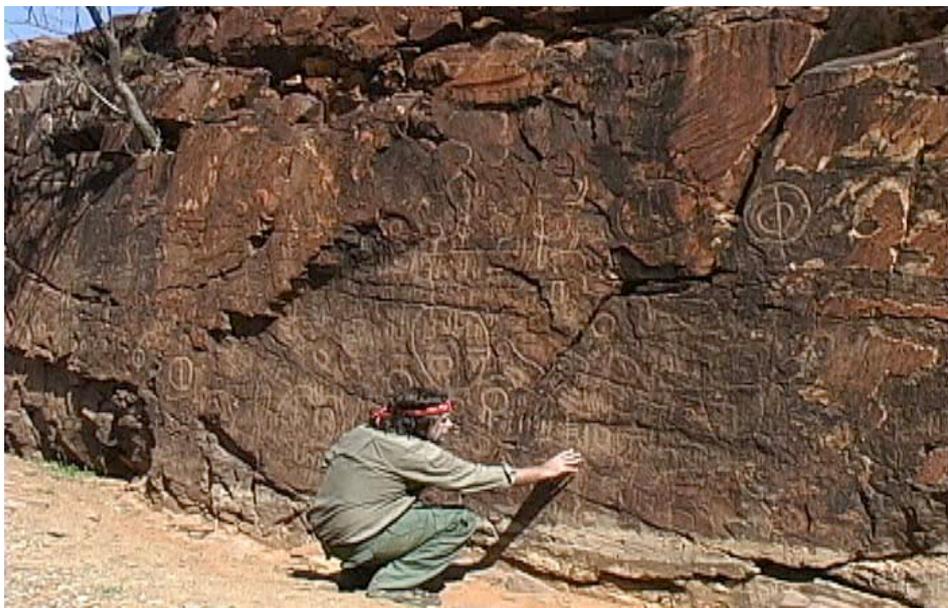
"Well, I didn't say that exactly, mate."

Soon we were at the junction in Augusta. Ahead of us were the Flinders Mountains, a spectacular sight and a welcome change from the flat terrain. We took a right and within two hours we were parked on a dusty road and set up our campsite. It was dark and we quickly got some sleep for the long hike in the morning.

That night I had the dream again. There was the overwhelming feeling that I was in danger. I was back in Monument Valley. I was alone this time and the old woman was in the distance, with her back facing me. I ran towards her as she rounded the corner of that huge stone mesa. She stopped to let me catch up to her and, as soon as I touched her, the mesa crumbled.

Frankly, the stupid dream was getting me annoyed. It always woke me up and gave me an odd feeling that was hard to shake. I didn't appreciate that out here in the outback since there was no coffee and I already had a slight headache.

The petroglyphs were a few miles from the car and were located on the face of a brown stone wall that formed a canyon with a river. It was similar to what I had experienced in Colorado, although the Pergatoire River was much wider. This river was easy to cross on foot and the petroglyphs were immediately visible.



The entire collection of carvings were spread over 100 feet and were all covered with a thick layer of dark varnish. The age of these petroglyphs was hard to estimate but they were in the same style as the ones in Colorado and used the same symbols. I photographed as much as I could and copied some inscriptions to a notebook.

As I moved from panel to panel, I noticed a recurring symbol that repeated on the stone wall. A pair of concentric circles was depicted,

often with radiating lines surrounding the outer circle. I had seen this in Colorado also, but the significance was unclear.

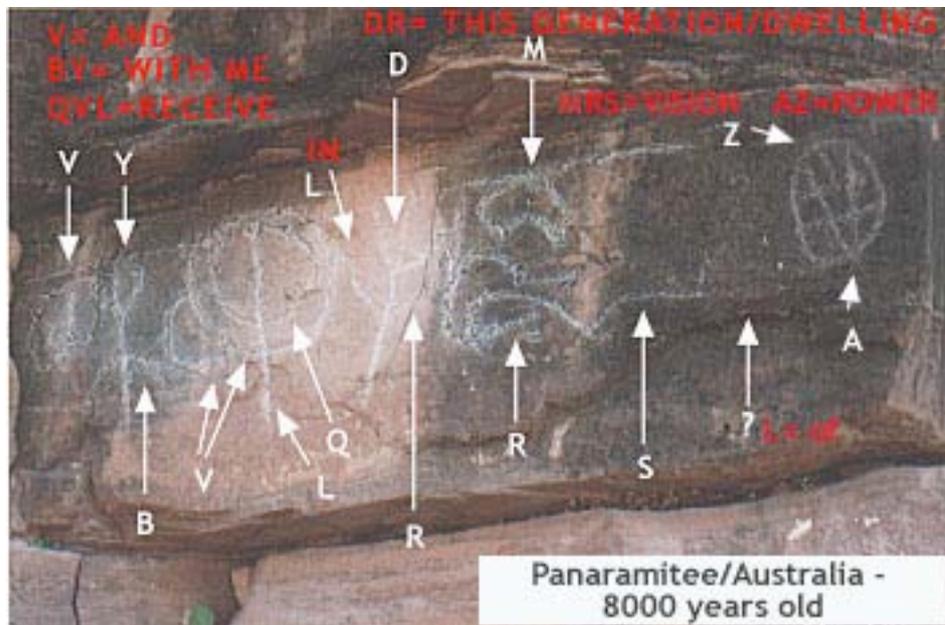


The terrain in front of the wall was flat and sandy. It would have made a great place for a concert. Indeed, the wall itself had a kind of step that formed a flat, elevated stage, with the petroglyphs serving as an artistic backdrop. I could easily imagine a gathering of Aboriginal people using this site for some similar event.



When we returned to the campsite I was able to use the last few minutes of battery power on my laptop to translate a string of symbols I had copied in my notebook.

It read:



"... In this place you will receive protection and power ..."

The trip back provided me time to think. I was convinced that the writing was similar to that in Colorado. But it was also the same alphabet that was used in Yemen to describe the story of Queen Sheba and the Ark. Could I assume that the same writing would be found in the other vortex points around the world?

As we passed through Augusta I remembered the military installation that was adjacent to the Colorado vortex. Was this just a coincidence or would there be similar installations near the other points of contact with the "management?"

Then I remembered my life back in America. It seemed so distant and strange. What was I doing here? Was I losing my mind? Was any of this really happening?

Chapter 30 - Another Sad Casualty

As we drove nearer to the farmhouse, I began to get a bad feeling. We had been gone for almost four days. I had left Sky with Mira and Moira with the hope that she would unwind and return to normal.

At first it seemed good. We were greeted and sat together to eat dinner, or "tea" as it is called. Sky was quiet but she seemed relaxed and had a good appetite. John discussed our trip and told about my translations and then I told about my interesting experience with Colin Norris and the amazing audio tapes he had shared with me.

One of the women produced a small tin with some smoke and we gathered around the fireplace with coffee while the BBC News was on the telly. John had lots of friendly cats that enjoyed the warmth of the fire. A few even liked to share the couch or a lap if you let them. My favorite cat was a black and white longhair named "Smudge." She was missing from the group so I went out on the porch to call for her. After a few minutes, Sky came out to smoke a cigarette. It was the first time we had spoken for many days, and the first chance I had to ask her how she felt.

Sky felt depressed and angry. The lights had stopped appearing for her while I was gone and the magic of Yemen had worn off. Since she was not interested in John's interpretation of the "management," the discussions we had about the vortex and the petroglyphs had little relevance to her. She was no longer the focus of attention - the suspected "jinn." She simply wanted to leave. The more I tried to reason with her the more she directed her hostilities towards me.

Sky felt betrayed by the lights. She blamed me for taking her on the trip and claimed I was an evil monster. Her paranoia extended to John, Mira and Moira, Hurtak, and she suspected the whole trip was somehow planned to victimize her. Emotions that were pent up inside of her from the experiences in Yemen flooded out in fits of shouting and hysteria.

The next few days we all tried to calm Sky and avoid a confrontation. Something inside of her had snapped and our goal was to get her home to America where her friends and family could remind her that she was still the caring, sane person that had left there, weeks earlier.

A few times, with the best of intentions, I tried to speak with her. I wanted her to know that she was among friends. I wanted her to understand that I cared for her. But each time the result was the same and she would raise her voice and curse me.

We arranged for her flight. John and the women took her to the airport. Things were still much too tense for me to ride with them in the car, so I stayed home alone and clouded my sadness with some smoke.

It was almost time for me to go home too. I had been in Australia for so many weeks that I had lost track of time. The field where we had seen the colored lights was now knee high with grass and the season was turning warmer. I didn't know what I would be returning to or what I had accomplished on this trip. I was suddenly feeling very old and alone.

I smoked my pipe and walked in the fields. I missed Sky already but I knew she had to go. Everything in this life seems so temporary. In my mind I heard a tune that played spontaneously and it made me smile. It was Greg Allman's "Tied to The Whipping Post."

As I walked back to the farmhouse I noticed a small car driving up the driveway. It was not a car I recognized. As I approached I watched a tall woman with dark hair enter the farmhouse and I rushed to see who this could be.

The Healer

"So here you are!" I was greeted by Sharon, a tall, slim woman with very long and thick black hair. "I kept asking where you were then and I was looking all over the house. I wanted to meet this bloke who had not one - but two - of 'em come to introduce you!"

I had heard a little about Sharon. She was a Maori woman from New Zealand. John had mentioned that we should meet but he had been unable to contact her since I arrived.

"Tell me. Is the older woman your Mum?" I had no idea what she meant by this and I looked at her with a blank stare. "There's an older woman and I am pretty sure she's your Mum, and then a little fella with her."

Now I was remembering more of what John had told me about Sharon. She was a shaman. She saw the spirit world and often had trouble distinguishing between her acute perceptions and the mundane world. We sat in the living room and I made a fire. Sharon had a pouch with her and rolled some smoke that was the size of a cigar and we were soon smoking up the room.

Sharon was pretty and feminine, but when she laughed her face was so expressive that it shocked me. Her mouth appeared unusually large for her face but her smile was genuine and all the more effective. I felt totally comfortable with her. She immediately sensed that I was sad and began to tell me a collection of jokes and stories to raise my spirits. Eventually she asked me why I seemed so empty. It was an interesting choice of words. Before she arrived I had been feeling lonely and old. These were feelings, but emptiness was a condition, the underlying problem.

"I know what you need. You have lost your path, Dan. You stopped to enjoy the view and forgot that you are on a journey. You need to be reminded. That's what you Mum meant." Sharon fumbled in her bag for a ceramic bottle.

"Dan. Hold out your hand with your palm up." She took hold of my hand and tapped the ceramic bottle lightly with her other hand. Some brown powder made a small pea size pile in the center of my palm. "Now lick it. Go ahead. It's cool."

I trusted Sharon enough to obey her. The powder had no taste and there was no immediate effect. Before she put the bottle away she poured a larger pile in her own hand and licked it, washing it down with some coffee. We continued to talk and joke. I thought perhaps she had given me some magical potion which would have no effect on me. Like Sky, I didn't really believe in magic.

The cigar she had rolled was only half smoked when the fire started to dwindle. I used the last few logs to rekindle the flame and left to fetch more wood from the pile on the porch. It was dark outside but the air was warm. The sky was unusually clear and the Milky Way was shining like a bright long cloud. I thought I felt something different in my head but I couldn't be sure.

Instead of getting the logs I decided to lay on the grass, some distance from the farmhouse and the lights, and to enjoy the celestial view. As soon as I was lying down I felt a rush of warmth in my head and I was unable to move. The stars above me seemed to be moving and I was getting dizzy. In the center of the twirling lights there was a stationary star and I focused on this to stop my vertigo.

As I stared at this point of light the rest of my vision began to be filled with black. It started at the periphery and moved inward, until that one point of light was all that I could see. As I did this, the light of that star got brighter and seemed to come nearer. I could close my eyes but it made no difference, the point of light was still there. I felt my body becoming numb and I sensed that I was not alone.

A flood of ideas entered my mind. I felt like I was familiar with that star in my eyes, like it was an old friend. I knew that I was more than this Dan Eden, lying in the grass, and that I had been other people in other lives. I knew that my current life was just a chapter in a long career that involved many adventures. I knew that my sadness was just temporary and I felt invigorated by a sense of duty. I was euphoric with this new perspective. But there was more.

I suddenly remembered Sharon, back in the farmhouse. I remembered the firewood and I tried to get up. It was impossible. I could see my arms pressing the grass but I couldn't feel them. I was numb. I slipped in and out of dreams, many too bizarre to recall. All the time I had the feeling that I was not alone and I felt safe and protected. The universe was my home.

In the morning I awoke on the grass. The sun was just showing over the horizon and I was very warm. I tried to move my arms but they were covered by a quilt that had been placed on my body. A pillow was under my head. I carried the bedding to the house and, as I did, I noticed I felt different. I felt good. I felt whole.

I looked for Sharon but she was gone. Her car was gone too. The only reminder of her visit was the half smoked cigar of weed in the ashtray. I thought of smoking but somehow it wasn't necessary.

I was anxious to see John. I knew he would be home by the afternoon. I needed to talk to him. I felt a new energy. I felt we were on the verge of discovering what was going on. I suspected that we had most of the pieces to this puzzle. And I was right. We did.

Chapter 31 - Connecting The Dots

John arrived home in the late afternoon. By all estimates, Sky was back in America. We all felt sad that she was gone but the mood around the farmhouse was more positive. Mira and Moira settled in to their daily routines while John and I began to talk seriously about everything.

We began to focus on some of the other areas around the world where there were alleged to be vortex points. The first one was in Brazil, just West of Sao Paulo. We used John's computer and spent hours exploring the internet for information.

Raytheon had a major presence in Brazil. Nicknamed "SIVAM," the System for Vigilance of the Amazon, Raytheon had placed a number of antenna farms and radar systems in the Amazon jungle. There was a special "off limits" zone just West of Sao Paulo. These arrays were linked to a central command post by satellite and were designed to detect any anomalous activity surrounding the vortex. Congressional records mentioned that a Brazilian atmospheric "heater" under U.S. control, similar to the one in Poker flats, was also located somewhere in the region.

Another point on the vortex map was Southern Peru. It didn't take long to learn that Raytheon was there also. Maps showed the familiar "off limits" zone and other records showed the installation of more antenna farms, satellite hookups and a U.S. military presence.

In Asia, the vortex fell on the area just North of the Afghanistan border, in the Southern Ural Mountains. I was already familiar with this location since I had written a piece about Yamantau. This super secret military installation had eaten up billions of dollars and a significant portion of Russia's impoverished economy. It was an underground facility with millions of square feet that had worried American congressmen.

Representative Roscoe Bartlett asked Congress to investigate the need for such a costly project and reminded other legislators that, "The only potential use for this site is post-nuclear war..." He suggested that, with the end to the Cold War, this made no sense, and suspected a more sinister agenda was behind the project.

The other Russian vortex is located near Kazakhstan and coincides with the secret zone around Svobodny.

It was no surprise to learn that Raytheon had a presence in these Russian sites. The same systems of arrays and satellite hookups were installed and each vortex point seemed to have an adjacent military zone that imposed a kind of "check-mate."

In fact, Raytheon was at all of the vortex sites.

We seemed to have stumbled blindly on an important discovery that linked past and present, good and evil and bridged the mundane with the fantastic.

The vortex points were important enough to have been marked in antiquity. If they did represent some special geography where "contact" could be made, then they deserved to be revered, much as the Temple Mound in Jerusalem is revered as the navel of the world.

Perhaps it was through these special portals that civilization has been guided and preserved through various cataclysms that have culled our population in the remote past. It seemed less of a fantasy now. I had seen the writing that described these areas as "safe zones" with my own eyes.

But the presence of military installations was puzzling. They seemed more to hinder access to these zones than to protect them. The terrible weapon that I had witnessed in Alaska was not beneficial to humanity. In fact, it was patently evil. Now there were many of them, either completed or under construction. Why?

If there was an organized deity, what John had called the "management," could there be an organized counterpart - an evil empire - organized on a global scale, poised to fight for control of each vortex?



If the phased array "death ray" were ever actually used in these locations, the result might very well be perceived as the "burning sky."

The damage to the ionosphere would allow radiation from space and our own Sun to burn our skin, cause mutations and kill the vegetation. This was a known effect. And yet the system was being positioned quietly,

secretly, all over the planet.

John and I tried to understand this. We had many different theories and schemes to explain what we had learned. But in the end it was the simple explanation that seemed to make the most sense.

There was evil in the world and we had accidentally seen part of their plan for controlling the globe. We didn't have a name for them, nor did we understand their motives or agenda. But they were as real as the "management."

We tried to enjoy my last few days in Australia. We took long walks in the fields and enjoyed some good smoke by the fire. The cats were a good distraction and Smudge, my favorite cat, was always eager to warm my lap.

I said farewell to John, Mira and Moira at the Adelaide airport. I had gathered a good story, I thought, but would anyone believe me? I could hardly believe it myself.

On the flight home I fell asleep and I had the dream again. This time there was no feeling of impending doom. The old lady waited patiently for me to catch up to her and we both stood facing the huge stone mesa as it crumbled to dust. I didn't see her face but I knew the old woman was my Mom.

The "Yankee" accents reminded me that I was going home. The music selection on the plane included classic rock and I was feeling pretty good.

It seemed a far reach from the present world to one where the "evil" forces could exert their dominance on the rest of the world. We were enjoying a refreshing era of peace and prosperity in America. The military budget had been reduced with the end of the Cold War and the nation's coffers had a huge surplus. There was little need for any New World Order.

I landed at Logan Airport in Boston on September 9th, 2001.

EPILOG

Since the events of September 11, 2001, the world is a different place. The invisible evil that John and I detected has become a bit more conspicuous. The New World Order is no longer just a catchy phrase, but an evolving reality.

Dr. Hurtak called me to arrange for another meeting, but I declined. Sky returned to live a more mundane life in Northampton, Massachusetts. To this day she refuses to speak with me. Her bright moment was a flicker in time. She paid a high price for her adventure but, in the

end, she was right about one thing. She was used. But we were all used. Sky paid with her sanity.

The buried chamber in Yemen was located by ground penetrating radar a few weeks after we left Mareb. But now the region is under military control because of alleged Al Qaeda activity. All archaeological work has been suspended. The prophecy said that the chamber would be opened when a "friendly" nation controlled the land... so that's a long way off in the future I guess.

I heard from Jonas and Dave and they are both alive and well. Nicki's body was reburied in her hometown and I visited her grave in the summer of 2002.

I tried calling Kathy again but the number was no longer valid. I guess the NSA has bigger things to worry about these days.

In the winter of 2002 I received several e-mails from my friend in Yemen, Khalid. He had been contacted by the Yemen Minister of Antiquities and asked to see if he could arrange my return to Yemen. Several new sections of the carved stoned had been uncovered and they were anxious to have me confirm their attempted translations.

A "job" was arranged for me at the Modern American Language Institute as their director. I would receive two thousand dollars a month and live in a protected apartment in old Sana'a. From there it would be a day's drive to Mareb where I would have access to the archaeological site of the Queen of Sheba. A visa was obtained and I was in the process of securing my airline tickets.

It was about this time that Bush was threatening to invade Iraq and the State Department was warning Americans to vacate the entire region, including Yemen. In fact, the airline had referred my information to Homeland Security and they called to ask about my travel plans and threatened to detain me at the airport if I attempted to leave.

I'm almost sure they knew nothing about my prior activities when they called, but my desire to move to Yemen was sure to flag my passport for review and I had no doubt that my activities in Yemen would be make me a "person of interest."

About the same time, an old friend named James sent me a letter from Vietnam, where he had gone to live with his Vietnamese bride. James was a free spirited man who had traveled extensively in the oil business. On one of his vacations he had met a Vietnamese woman, fallen in love and now had a baby with her. He decided to retire in Vietnam and was encouraging me to do the same.

Vietnam was one of the remaining communist republics and had a not-so-clear extradition treaty with the US. It would be one of a handful of countries where my "person of interest" status would exempt me from a paid vacation in Guantanamo. The fear level in America was high and I

felt vulnerable. I wrote him and asked him to help me move there.

I arrived in Saigon in February of 2003. I had only twenty dollars in my pocket and didn't understand a word of the language. James picked me up at the airport and took me back to his small hotel where he and his wife had a penthouse "room" on the top floor. Ironically, the top floors in Vietnam are the least desirable and therefore the most inexpensive place to stay. I secured a room next to his for only four dollars a day.

James' wife had an attractive sister, Tam. Tam spoke a little English and so helped me adjust to this new environment. She was sweet and ten years younger than me. When I learned that she had no home and no money and had been sleeping on the ground with rats, I insisted that she join me in my room. Very quickly we fell in love and after four months we were married.

I found employment as an English teacher. I taught high school students and university students and earned enough money so that Tam and I eventually moved out of the hotel and got a two room apartment, again on the top floor, in Ho Chi Minh City. I kept a low profile and hardly ever thought about HAARP or the translation work I had done a couple of years before.

After I was here for about six months I was visited by two expatriates who were living in neighboring Thailand. They found me with very little trouble and shared their experiences as former engineers with one of Raytheon's subsidiaries. Both worked on the satellite linkage that connects the global grid of "heaters," but their understanding of the purpose of the installations was quite different from my sinister ideas.

Rather than an offensive weapon system, both were told that they had worked on a secret defensive system related to some near future solar event which would be aggravated by a depletion in the Earth's magnetic field, and hence the ionosphere. Both speculated that this event was only a "handful" of years away.

Despite the alleged innocense of the system, both men acknowledged the irresponsible tests that had resulted in death and environmental damage to Alaska and Siberia. They voiced concern that the people in charge of the program were military personnel -- not civilian scientists -- and that the program was being taken over by more sinister elements for offensive applications.

Could the possibility of a solar catastrophe be the missing piece of the puzzle? If such a catastrophic event were on the immediate horizon would this explain the construction of an "artificial" ionosphere, underground cities, the desperate battle of evil and good and the future plans for global dominance following an event of mass extinction? I have to admit, it does.

As I thought about this possibility my mind went back to the petroglyphs in Colorado. On one rock there was a description of the "arm of God" that would be removed from "over His people." The writing in Yemen also spoke about the "aperture in the sky" that would cause terrible burning of humanity. Will the next extinction be by fire?

We spent two evenings drinking Old Saigon Ale at the famous Saigon Cafe in District One. The men seemed sincere and went into details about the capabilities of the system. HAARP, it seems, can be deflected off the ionosphere and made to hit a precise location on the earth's surface. The signal can then be made to penetrate the surface and cause the mineral molecules to vibrate. At low power, these molecular vibrations can be detected by satellites and used to reveal the presence of oil, various minerals and even underground facilities. At higher power these same molecular vibrations can cause subterranean tremors and even explosions.

One of the men even suggested that experimental use of this "tomographic" potential had resulted in earthquakes in Iran. Both seemed sad and even angry that the program was being used irresponsibly.

I assured the men that I didn't want to get involved in anything political. They understood. "We're just trading stories," was how they put it. We spoke about our new lives, our wives and made unspecified plans to meet again. The men lived on the coast of Thailand, a beautiful and friendly region with lots of foreign tourists, golden sandy beaches and ideal weather. I looked forward to visiting them in a few months.

The big holiday on Vietnam is Tet. I had been planning a trip to the Mekong, in the south of Vietnam, to visit my wife's family. Tet fell on the first couple of weeks in February and the weather would be cool without too much rain. My wife was excited about this trip too.

Around January I got an e-mail from a man who called himself Jeff. Jeff said he was an Australian and had some important information to talk to me about the HAARP project. I wrote back and told him I wasn't very interested in that anymore but he said he had been given my name and e-mail address by one of the two Americans that had visited me in Saigon earlier. He suggested that I should come to Cambodia and that he would put me up in a good hotel and pay my expenses. Later, after I gave him my post address, he sent me reservations and directions to a hotel in Phnom Penh and included a new US one hundred dollar bill.

I told my wife I would go there for only one week and would return in ample time to visit her family. She was quite understanding and even helped me pack a small bag for the trip.

The bus ride was long and bumpy and included a ferry trip across a river. Phnom Penh was a bustling city full of Buddhist artifacts and temples. The people looked different from Vietnamese with darker skin and brighter, even vivid, clothing.

I took a taxi to the hotel and found that a room had been reserved for me on the fourth floor. Again, top floors are inexpensive but the room was comfortable and had a great view of the Mekong River -- yes, the same river I was to visit later in the month.

Jeff called for me just when it got dark. He knocked on my door and introduced himself. He was a tall man with short hair -- so short it made him seem bald. He looked to be about 40 and sported a loud colorful short sleeve shirt and jeans. I noticed he carried a duffel bag and he soon pulled out a six pack of beer and suggested that we have a few drinks before we went out to eat and talk about HAARP.

After the second or third bottle of beer I noticed that I felt very sleepy and that it was difficult to speak clearly. Jeff seemed amused by this and kept insisting that I "drink up." At some point I must have passed out.

"Gary! Gary!" (You must have figured out by now that Dan Eden is Gary Vey).

A voice yelled at me. I opened my eyes and was looking up at a woman, dressed in white and holding defibrillator paddles. A man's hand was slowly removing a large plastic tube from my throat and there was a loud high-pitched hiss that made it difficult to hear what they were saying.

I spent two days in the French Hospital in Phnom Penh. I had been found lifeless by the housekeeping staff at the hotel and they had rushed me to the hospital because they couldn't wake me up. At the hospital I had suffered from low blood pressure and eventually my heart had gone into some kind of arrhythmia and required electric shock to revive me. A later examination of my blood and stomach contents revealed a high dose of Klonopin, a powerful tranquilizer.

When I got out I went to the US embassy in Phnom Penh and complained. They showed me some photographs of three men, one of whom was Jeff. After I identified him the embassy was reluctant to speak with me and only suggested that I return to Vietnam as soon as possible.

When I returned to my wife, she made me promise not to be involved in "politics" ever again. It was good advice and it seemed like something I ought to listen to. For the most part, I did as she requested. Months later I got a phone call from one of the men in Thailand. I

immediately told him that his "buddy" had poisoned me. To my surprise he denied any knowledge of the man who called himself "Jeff" but said that he had called to alert me that "They are going to use the HAARP again next week!" I told him I really wasn't interested but he insisted on telling me that friends in the "company" had passed this information to him. In the end, because I wanted to abide by my wife's suggestion, he just said, "Well, remember what I have just told you."

I didn't tell my wife about the phone call but one morning she seemed very excited and pulled me to the television. "Wow. Look. Big water!" The earthquake in Indonesia had caused a huge Tsunami that had killed thousands in Thailand and Sri Lanka. As I would later learn, my two friends living along the coast were among the victims.

"Well, remember what I have just told you."

We live in strange times. The Sun is erratic. We have witnessed the events known as "911" which many people believe was planned by America to promote their wars, the puzzling re-election of an obviously incompetent, an ex-Nazi being elected Pope of the Catholic Church, massive unemployment and poverty while oil companies announce increased profits of as much as 500 percent. It's all surreal. Evil is in control!

Someone has finally realized that the Ark of the Covenant (the "Box of E!") is buried in Mareb, Yemen. The American military has just stated that Yemen is the next war front and they have decided to call the tribal people, who don't associate with anyone, Al Quaeda. Anyone who has been to Yemen knows how foolish this is ... but then not many people have been there.

The Ark is needed by the Israelis to complete their Third Temple. Many Fundamental Christians also believe that the Ark is necessary to restore this temple for the Second Coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Today, Yemen is patrolled by US drones, especially around Marib, where the Ark is buried.

And so it continues.

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND

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Gary Vey, Editor

